



Aaron Decker during his internship at Ornamantum in 2014



*It's (Not) All Fun And Games* at Ornamantum in 2021

## Aaron Decker

Aaron Decker, an American jeweler, attended Cranbrook Academy of Art under Iris Eichenberg and was the recipient of the MARZEE graduate prize, The Mercedes Benz Emerging Artist Award, and the Talente Prize. Decker's work is found in both national and international collections. Aside from making, Decker is a commended writer and poet within the field. Aaron Decker's writing can be found in *CURRENT-OBSESSION* and *ART JEWELRY FORUM*. Notably, Decker was one of the two writers for the Ruudt Peters Retrospective Catalog, *BRON*.

Decker's work is a poetic yet playful, using symbols reminiscent of childhood juxtaposed with refined technical finishes- the themes throughout his work allude to his queer youth growing up in a military family. Decker uses idyllic, bright color palettes to disguise violence and weapons. His skill and bold approach to enameling make his work hard to miss.

Aaron Decker's relationship with Ornamantum began with an internship in the summer of 2014 where he stayed at the family home where he had the opportunity to get to know Laura, Stefan, and their sons Kai and Lukas. His inspiration for the chess piece for Ornamantum's 20 Year Exhibition comes from a fond memory from that time.

“One morning I awoke to Lukas, who was not yet ten, challenging me to a game of chess.

We sat down to play. Lukas took his time looking across the board at every move, refusing to lift his finger from a piece until he was absolutely sure it was the correct one to make. He played slowly, thoughtfully, and exceptionally well. Every time I moved he would ask 'Are you sure that's the best move to make?'

That memory stuck with me for several years, long enough for me to learn to play chess, come back to Hudson, and kick Lukas's butt in one...single...revelatory...retribution match. Did I hold a grudge against a kid? Yes. Did it feel great to win? Absolutely.

When I was asked to make work for the 20th anniversary show, I couldn't get that memory out of my head. I love that story and the Ornamantum family. I dedicate this chess set to my time with them, and to the future to come <3.”

In Reflecting on the making of a chess set which will premiere at Salon 2022, Decker states

"Why the hell are we all protecting the most useless player, and why does he have so much power? The game of chess is a great metaphor. The sides mirror one another, they are literally the same, pieces. The pawns are many, the powerful are few. And the overarching idea, protect the weakest guy, but also, he is a king.... I wanted to reimagine the game of chess more honestly. A short, stout king with no visible weapon other than an idea, religion. A queen who we all know is the most powerful, her weapons pointy and stilted. The knight, bishop, and rook, all quite large, with only singular purposes. And the pawns, usually the youngest soldiers put to the frontlines, are literal babies. Each piece hinges at its waist. When taken by another side, the piece dies, is cracked open, and splat, lays flat with its legs and head up, as though broken in two. Games hide violent seduction. We all want to be powerful and win, don't we?"