

the

craft factor

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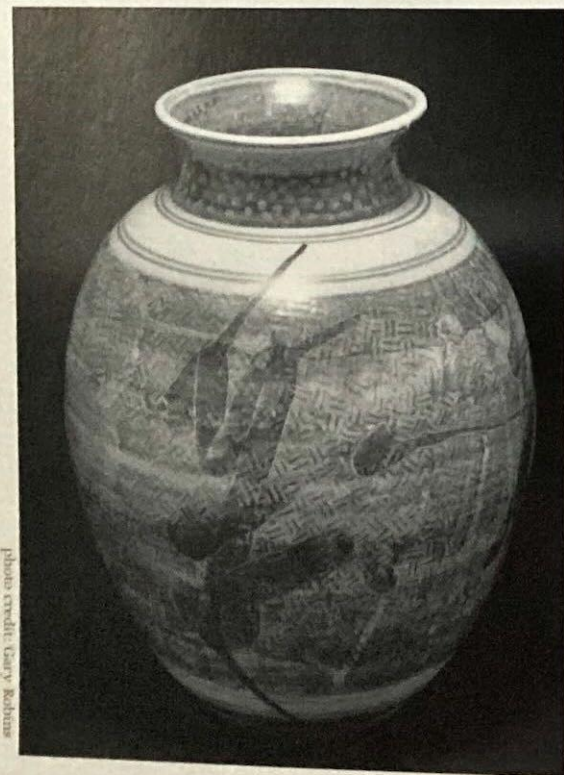
The Quarterly Publication of the Saskatchewan Craft Council





BRIAN RING *Untitled cup Porcelain, stoneware, gut*
ca.15x12x6cm

BRIAN RING *Untitled cup Porcelain, stoneware, gut*
ca.20x15x15cm



MEL BOLEN *Untitled Stoneware, glazed*
53x41.5cm 1988

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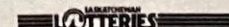
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INTRODUCING THE JURORS

DIANE MORTENSEN



photo permission of Shuttle Spindle and Dyestap

DIANE MORTENSEN *Two-piece dress Cotton, handwoven using supplementary warp technique*

I used to be able to say that I was simply a weaver. Now it is much more complicated. Usually I say that I am a weaver/instructor/consultant, as that defines fairly well how my schedule is divided time-wise. However, the first designation as a weaver is essential to my integrity as an instructor and consultant. If I were to quit working as a professional weaver, I would also decline any work in teaching or consulting. Pushing myself as a weaver, keeps a fine edge on my skills and an enthusiasm in all parts of my career.

I was born on a farm in southern Saskatchewan and spent my early years in Alberta and Saskatchewan. From a very early age, I was taught needle skills by my mother and other relatives. However, it wasn't until I was married and moved to Vancouver that I began to explore other crafts, looking for some outlet for my creative energies. I began weaving in 1972, after taking a summer tapestry course at the University of British Columbia. Within three years I had quit my job as supervisor of a pre-school in order to pursue weaving full time. The first few years were very difficult. Having always brought home a paycheque, I found it difficult to justify doing something in which I took so much pleasure, but which brought in very little remuneration. It was several years before I was able to look at what

I was doing as valuable, regardless of the monetary rewards. Though primarily self-taught, I have studied at the Banff Centre on several occasions and undertaken workshops with such weavers as Malin Selander, Mary Snyder and Peter Collingwood. During the early eighties I returned to university, obtaining a degree in Fine Arts at U.B.C.

Eventually I was able to turn my teaching skills into night school classes and began to receive invitations to conduct workshops throughout Canada and the U.S.A. I also began to receive commissions to weave custom fabrics, ranging from ethnic to couture, as well as wall hangings. Several stores approached me about producing table linens for them and, during Expo 86 in Vancouver, these were marketed both on and off site. Also during 1986 I was hired as a consultant to a well-known fashion designer. I now do consulting work for a number of fashion designers and professional weavers. Depending upon their needs, I might be doing anything from up-dating their equipment, training their weavers, advising them on new technology or efficient production techniques to designing new fabrics for them.

Two artists whose work has influenced me are Jack Lenor Larsen, a New York-based designer, and Dorothy Liebes, a weaver and designer for industry during the thirties, forties and fifties. Both display great skill in their use of colour and texture as well as their innovative use of materials.

I enjoy seeing craftspeople use materials confidently, without hesitancy, showing a knowledge of and ease with their materials which comes with experience and self-confidence. I want to see something which is skillfully designed and made; where fine finishing is an adjunct to good design, rather than an alternative to it. On the other hand, a wonderful concept can be lost if its technique or finishing is ragged and detracts from the work.

My work is moving away from its earlier emphasis on non-functional weaving towards functional fabrics. This is probably the result of two factors. I am by nature a problem-solver and enjoy creating unique fabrics which meet both the functional and design requirements of my clients and/or myself. As well, I love the challenge of using the doobby loom and the computer as tools for me to command, creating with threads and colour that which I conceive in my mind.

CLYDE JONES

I would title myself first a gallery owner dealing in fine craft and art; second, a woodworker. I am trained as a fine woodworker capable of creating furniture of the highest quality. But, I have operated a gallery for 12 years now and as the gallery has grown the wood-working has become a second place occupation.

As to my expertise, the gallery has exposed me to craftwork by literally thousands of people. As a result I have become familiar with practically all media. I have attempted to understand the techniques used to create the work I carry and as a result I feel that I have a broad knowledge of the craft field.

My college training is in fine arts with an emphasis on education and journalism. After college I worked for newspapers for 4 years. Following a year's sabbatical, I worked in the lumber industry for a few months where I learned how beautiful wood could be. During this time I saw a show of woodworking by the Mendocino Woodworkers Guild. This show was my first experience with craft. It inspired me to pursue the skills necessary to produce fine furniture. I had the good fortune to study under master woodworker James Krenov for about 3 months where I learned the use of handtools and joinery. I also owe the members of the Mendocino Woodworkers Guild a great deal not only for inspiration but also for sharing techniques and wood.

Simultaneously while I was learning to become a woodworker it became obvious that there was a need for a crafts gallery in our area. At that time there were many furniture makers and other craftspeople in the Mendocino area who had nowhere to show locally. So I started a gallery. That was 12 years ago and it has been a very rewarding path.

James Krenov is responsible for teaching me the techniques necessary to create fine furniture. He also helped me to gain a greater sensitivity to the aesthetics of wood — colour, texture, pattern . . .

It is difficult to name the second artist who most influenced my work. I feel that I am open to ongoing input. I appreciate antique work as well as contemporary. I enjoy Oriental, Scandanavian, European, Shaker and the different American period styles. Consciously and unconsciously the various influences have and will continue to shape my own personal creativity.

What I look for in a craft piece consists of many elements: mastery of technique, finish, attention to detail, overall craftsmanship, construction, originality of interpretation, balance . . . and many words that in the end all add up to the "feel" of the piece. Some pieces "feel" just right.

Currently my work is maintaining and improving my gallery. I am constantly looking for fine art and craft. With regard to my woodworking, I will continue to build pieces that will be technically sound, that incorporate distinctive wood, that are practical to use, and that are original but classic in design.



photo credit: Shawn Sprague

CLYDE JONES *Coffee table quilted Honduras mahogany 2'x4'x16" 1985*

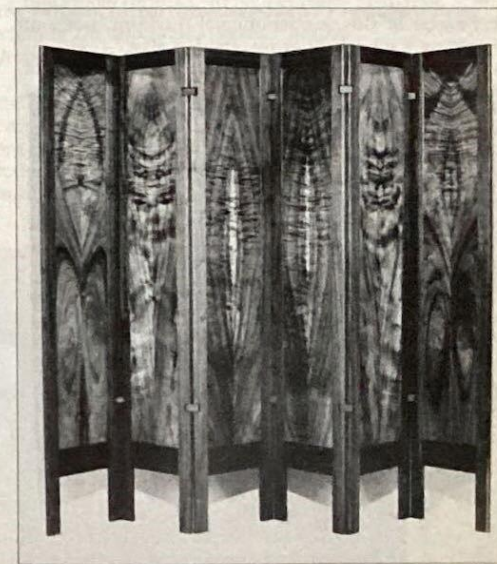


photo credit: Nik Wilson

CLYDE JONES *Screen/Room Divider Hawaiian koa panels, walnut frame; bi-folded, double sided 6'x8' 1984*

FRANCES BURKE

I am an artist/potter whose background in English and Art education has led me to write critically and descriptively on the crafts, to edit and publish a magazine, and, recently, to curate and mount a national, invitational exhibition of ceramic art which toured internationally during 1988. ("Fired Imagination '88")

I was born, raised and educated in Australia, arriving in Canada almost 20 years ago, as a young teacher of Music and English for the Edmonton Public School Board. For several years I worked as a music adjudicator at competitive Music Festivals while completing a further degree (B.A. part time with an art major) at the University of Alberta.

It was during a teaching leave of absence with a young baby that I first developed an interest in all aspects of clay making (pottery, tiles, murals, bricks, etc.), and began taking classes at the University of Alberta, as well as reading voraciously on all aspects of this vast subject. A subsequent trip to Chicago, allowed me to visit with muralist Ruth Duckworth (and to get a closer look at her famous work); and a summer session at Banff gave the opportunity to work with artist/potter/kitemaker Peter Travis. Both these artists exploit the natural colours and tendencies of this temperamental medium, without betraying the honesty or integrity of clay.

For five years (from 1982-87) I combined the roles of publishing editor of **Contact** magazine for the Alberta Potters' Association with the role of production potter. A direct result of this was attending national and international conferences on the crafts, visiting dozens of exhibitions, corresponding with editors of other craft publications, exchanging ideas and publications, and eventually writing a great deal, both for the magazine I was working on and other publications including **The Crafts Report**, Seattle; **Pottery in Australia**; the **Visual Arts Newsletter**, Alberta; **Craft Arts**,

Australia; and the essay and catalogue for the 20 year retrospective exhibition **Alberta Clay Comes of Age**.

Increasingly my work has moved from full-time studio production to "one-of-a-kind" pieces which allows more time for critical writing on the crafts and curating exhibitions. Since my resignation as publishing editor of **Contact** magazine I have been heavily involved with organizing, curating and mounting the first Canadian, national, invitational, internationally touring ceramic exhibition, "Fired Imagination '88", which just completed a successful tour of Australia, after an initial opening in Calgary during the winter Olympics.

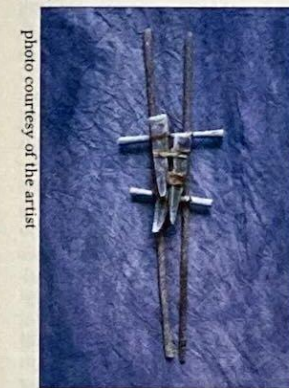
I am an experimenter at heart, and have been working successfully with crystalline glazes for the past six years. I have also completed tile commissions for a fireplace and for a kitchen in private homes, in both stoneware and porcelain. A new direction since the fall has been my work with porcelain and cast paper wall pieces, works which are still much too unresolved to be exhibited.

After a ten year absence I returned to teaching art and music with the Edmonton Public School Board, so my life has come almost full circle, back to where I began, many years ago.

What do I look for in a fine craft piece?

Excellence of execution. Because something is handmade it doesn't have to be poorly made. Evidence of thought on the part of the artist, and a respect for the traditions of the craft. Contemporary artists have to be able to take traditional crafts in new directions, which means that they must be people with vision, commitment, integrity and a sense of humour which will sustain them during the many failures along the way. Canada has hundreds of such craftspeople and is the richer for their work.

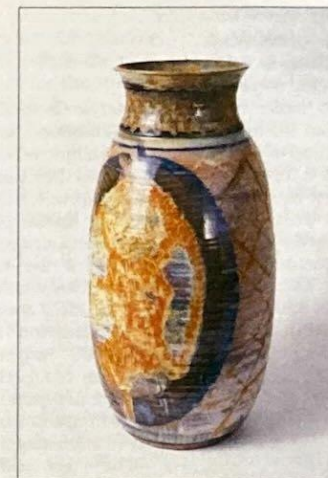
"1988 has been a good year for me" writes **Brian Ring**, a Saskatchewan ceramist who, for several years, has been living in Berlin, West Germany, — gold medal, **28th International Ceramics Competition**, Gualdo Tadino, Italy — Honourable Mention, **3rd Annual International Exhibition of Miniature Art**, Del Bello Gallery, Toronto — one of six ceramists from Germany exhibiting pieces in **Cafe Noir — The European Coffee Cup**, Brussels, Belgium, a competition open to all ceramists working in ECC countries, with some invited exhibitors from Canada, U.S.A. and Japan (see inside front cover)



BRIAN RING
Burden (Bundle series)
Porcelain, gut ca. 18x57cm

— accepted for **Europaisches Kunstanwerk '88** (European Crafts '88) an exhibition of works from 372 craftspeople from 16 East and West European countries — "a review in a major crafts magazine described my work as 'avant garde'. I've never thought of myself as representing the avant garde" (this page)

— an invitation to exhibit some pieces in **Berliner Fenster** (Berliner Window), Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin (Berlin Crafts Museum) — one of 6 guest participants at a week-long ceramics symposium at a factory in Yugoslavia.




MEL BOLEN
Untitled Stoneware, thrown, brush decoration, 2400°F reduction firing
left: 22x12" Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Mansour, Regina
right: 26x18" Collection of Mr. and Mrs. D. James, Regina

In the Winter of 1987/88, **Mel Bolen** was awarded a major Saskatchewan Arts Board grant. Part of it was to enable him to purchase a pugmill and some other time and energy saving equipment, and part was to enable him to buy time away from production work to develop new work. These large pots are part of that continuing process.



ANNEMARIE BUCHMANN-GERBER
Life around the Aquarium (A Trip to the Aquarium Series) detail,
Stitched and painted canvas 133x168cm 1988/89

Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber's exhibition of stitched and painted works **A Trip to the Aquarium** opens at the Frances Morrison Library, Saskatoon, on April 18 and continues to May 7.




HOT INCITE '89

The Saskatchewan Craft Council presents a continuous, participatory conference exploring the use of heat in a variety of media. With this approach the annual educational event returns to the spirit of the earlier INCITE conferences.

Dates: August 25, 26, 27, 1989
**Location: Sage Hill Conference Facility
Dana, Saskatchewan**

For further information contact Jim Sather (306) 525-8881
2044 Montague St. Regina, Sask. S4T 3J7



STANDARDS AND STRUCTURES

Megan Broner

The membership committee, Marigold Cribb, Kaija Sanelma Harris, Yoshimi Woolsey, Anita Rocamora and Megan Broner (chairperson) started reviewing membership categories, jurying and related areas under their jurisdiction as a response to much talk about the feeling that SCC had got off track, that a whole group of people were not being served by the craft council. It was not an easy area to tackle. My committee looked at how craftspeople could be served better, to the enrichment of the craft council, craftspeople and craft activity. The committee has met on a regular and frequent basis for several months. We have reviewed relevant SCC material, and systems used by other craft councils and similar organizations although nothing appeared directly applicable to our situation.

Marketing Membership

Status causes a perception that 'SCC equals Marketing'

It is always easiest to start by identifying the problems and that was what we did. From our discussions it emerged that the problems arose from the application of the standards rather than the standards themselves, that simply changing standards does not deal with the problems created by the structure. Looking at the mandate of SCC, it is clear that SCC seeks to foster and promote excellence in craft. The question then became whether we should redefine 'excellence in craft' or how to better foster and promote 'excellence' in order to fulfill SCC's mandate. It was evident after carefully reading the guidelines, standards and other material that our main task was not to redefine (yet again) excellence in craft (although there are areas of vagueness that must be clarified) but to work out:

- how to disseminate CLEARLY that definition to the members especially with regard to juried markets
- and how to reshape the existing structure in order to alleviate problems.

We first concentrated on developing a more effective structure. Active Marketing Membership seems to have many inherent problems which have surfaced over time and present themselves as accumulated errors.

- Marketing Membership Status causes a perception that 'SCC equals Marketing', detracting from the importance of broader participation in SCC by members, and from SCC's broader mandate. Because Active Marketing Membership is a separate category it encourages people to think narrowly about SCC.

Artisan Status is not a new idea

■ Active General Members are ignored by the system and classified as 'lesser members'. Many AGMs are craftspeople who work by commission and/or consignment. At the moment the office supplies only the names of AMMs when individuals and agencies request information about potential suppliers. With a broader marketing strategy hopefully AGMs who seek commissions but are not interested in direct marketing themselves would be better served. Marketing should not be solely connected to a membership category.

■ In addition the concept of Active Marketing "STATUS" implies a higher category.

■ Active Marketing Membership covers too wide a variety of types of members, who have different objectives in marketing and in making, and thereby fails to serve any category as well as it should.

There are additional problems arising out of the jurying for Active Marketing status. The 'peer' system, the random selection of members to serve as jurors, has some built-in problems — the main one being that there are new jurors each time which gives poor consistency. This will happen even with better guidelines, since it seems that guidelines are always interpreted differently by different jurors/people. Although having new jurors each time was perceived initially as a benefit, the disadvantages — inconsistent quality acceptability — emerged causing frustration among applicants. In addition, frequently jurors are new members, and may be new at what they do. The present method of juror selection does take into account inexperienced craftspeople being selected as jurors.

■ The concept of one-time jurying often suggests to craftspeople that after that, quality is no longer an 'issue'. There are no further guidelines for members so the incentive and ways to continue developing their craft and product is left impossibly vague.

■ The monitoring system has many problems too. Monitors are marketers and are preoccupied with their own booth preparation and so on; the markets are never set up in time for them to do the rounds with the necessary thoroughness. They also may have no idea of what work people were juried in for and that information is not easily supplied in a market situation.

So we decided to work on the following:

1. Replacing Active Marketing Membership structure with something that better serves the same function: that of consistency and expedience for marketers without compromising SCC standards.
2. Shifting the focus, generated by an Active Marketing Member category, from marketing in the narrowest sense to the wider mandate of SCC to promote development, excellence and education in the crafts sector.

This is what we propose:

1. The elimination of one-time jurying for market eligibility. Jurying would take place from slides for each market or event, probably twice a year, for the Spring and Fall markets. Possibly, jurying would be good for one year which would be an advantage for both members and administration, but application would have to be made for each sale or event. The committee feels that craftspeople who wish to promote themselves will have adequate slides available therefore bi-annual jurying would not be a problem.

There would also be frequent feedback from this process which would promote a more active dialogue in the crafts community, that in turn would foster improvement in the quality of work. Ongoing competition for spaces is likely to provide a healthier environment.

2. Shifting the focus to our broader mandate involves, of course, the efforts of all committees. The Membership Committee is recommending as a start, the following: a single category of voting members, a new Patron Membership category, and the reintroduction of Artisan Status.

One category of voting members will, while not denying the importance of marketing, unify and broaden the focus of SCC activity by involving all members on an equal basis and by responding to more individualized interests.

Artisan Status is not a new idea, but in the past it has not been clearly thought through and pursued. The committee agrees that Artisan Status will provide the members with something to strive for and will provide needed recognition of achievement of excellence. There would be an opportunity to apply every two years for this status. The jurying would be done by nationally

FORM AND FUNCTION WORKSHOP

Anita Rocamora

In January 1989 I was a participant in the Form and Function Workshop, held in the Ceramics department of the Banff School of Fine Arts. The workshop is held annually, usually in the first two weeks of January, and brings two guest artists in ceramics and approximately ten participants together for an intense series of lectures, demonstrations, critiques and practically round-the-clock discussions. The eleven participants, chosen from across the country, were all professional potters, each with many years experience and a very personal and distinctive approach to clay.

This workshop is designed to bring ceramic studio artists together for discussion and feedback on their production of the past year. The visiting artists this year were Penny Smith, a ceramic designer, teacher and studio potter from Tasmania, and Walter Ostrum, a well-known potter and educator from Nova Scotia. While the

membership

and internationally recognized craftspeople. Artisan Status would carry special benefit and responsibilities. Among the benefits, we suggest a group exhibition for successful applicants, which may travel to one or two major centres and would include individual colour brochures for each Artisan; active promotion by SCC such as assistance with portfolios, commissions and contacts with the Arts Board and Art Bank and others. Artisan Status would create a bank of names with "Established Credibility" which could form a data base. Artisan Status members would also be expected to serve as jurors.

3. The jurying system for markets: The jury would consist of a panel of craftspeople, not necessarily SCC members, but experts in their field and representing all media. Jurying would be done by the panel as a whole, providing expertise in assessing the technical aspects as well as providing a cross-reference for aesthetics. At first the panel would be appointed by the board; then draw from the Artisan members. The jurors would serve a two year term and the changeover would be staggered. Market monitoring would be done by 3 jurors on a rotating basis for consistency and to enable jurors to see for their future reference the market they juried. The need for monitoring would be greatly reduced and the task less onerous with bi-annual jurying.

4. Guidelines: More comprehensive guidelines for both jurors and applicants would be distributed.

This article is a report on our findings and the major recommendations (as they stand, March 31) so that you, the members, will have time to think about our proposals before the AGM. All members will be sent the formal list of proposed changes to the Bylaws as is required.

two artists shared a commitment to functional work, Smith uses semi-industrial processes while Ostrum describes his technique as "down-home, funky, hands-on and how-to-do-it". This diversity in approach helps the artists explore the complex relationship between form and function. It also provides a fertile atmosphere for the exchange of ideas.

I found this workshop extremely valuable. The insights gained from the experience have broadened and refreshed my attitudes towards clay. I strongly recommend this workshop to all Saskatchewan ceramists.

I wish to thank the Saskatchewan Arts Board for their assistance in this project.

For information, write: Form and Function Workshop, Ceramics Dept., Banff School of Fine Arts, Box 1020, Banff, Alberta T0L 0C0 (403) 762-6100

PAINTING WITH LIGHT —

LEE BRADY

Miranda Jones



Studio with African Stand-off in foreground.



clockwise:

Northern Lights Fused and slumped glass c.3x16" 1989

African Stand-off (detail) Fused and slumped glass, brass c.2.5x18x12 1989

Glory Hole Fused and slumped glass, copper overlay c.2.5x15" 1989

North Night Sky (detail) Fused and slumped glass, copper overlay c.2.5x13.5 1989 Collection of Brent Goff

Lee Brady's new 600 square foot studio is filled with light; bouncing blue and white off snow banks through the tall south-facing windows; flooding through skylights and dancing about the room in coloured rainbows as it passes through suspended glass crystals, hanging window pieces, and glass objects on window sills. More than just light, at the time of my February visit, Brady's studio was full to overflowing with a number of major projects in progress, not to mention benches, tools, kilns and case upon case of un-cut glass sheets. A partly completed church commission, a number of experimental 'bowls' for an upcoming exhibition and two large residential window pieces cluttered working benches and various nooks and crannies. Although Brady recently built the studio to his own specifications, already he finds it cramped. This is a healthy indication of the artist's growing reputation.

Brady is one of a handful of Saskatchewan artists working in the medium of fused and flat glass. After completing a BFA at the University of Saskatchewan in 1977, (where he majored in ceramic sculpture), Brady's interest in glass was kindled during a 12 month apprenticeship with Diane Paterson of 'Glassworks' stained glass studio (1979-80). This valuable experience and a growing demand for stained glass commissions and restoration work led Brady to set up his own studio. Workshops in Utah and with visiting artists, Paul Marioni, Peter Molica and Tim O'Neil have kept him up to date with new techniques and ideas.

He gradually began to get a number of church commissions and a 1984 project for 22 windows in St. James Anglican Church (Saskatoon), was the first of his own design. Other church commissions include St. Andrews Church, North Battleford; University Hospital Chapel, St. Phillips Catholic Church and Grace-Westminster United Church, Saskatoon; St. Andrews United Church, Esterhazy; Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Denzil and St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Humboldt. The latter commission is still in progress, due for installation this Spring. It consists of two circular windows, (each in four quadrants), approximately 7 feet in diameter. They are specifically non-representational and non-symbolic.

While the church commissions allow substantial flexibility in design, Brady admits they are his bread and butter. A growing number of commercial and residential commissions as well as sculptural and slumped glass pieces offer an opportunity to take risks on a smaller scale with new techniques. If you are not a regular church-goer but would like to see the artist's work *in situ*, you can visit a number of non-ecclesiastical institutions in Saskatoon — Mulberry's Restaurant, Crimpers Hair Design, Brass Rail Restaurant and The Saskatoon Public Library all have stained glass panels by Brady as does Diggers' Restaurant in Prince Albert.

Brady's particular area of expertise is fused glass. The intriguing thing about his new work is the multiplicity of techniques he employs. In addition to traditional lead glazing techniques, fusing, slumping, gilding, etching, double glazing, enamelling, bubbling, metal and lead overlays, and sand-blasting offer Brady an infinite vocabulary of forms and finishes which find their way into plates, bowls, wall hangings, doors, and windows.

Brady's imagery has evolved from derivative and formal university influences into an increasingly individual vocabulary of colours and symbols; his current preference leans towards abstract symbolism rather than representational images. At the same time the growing number of church commissions has necessitated a short course in religious iconography and symbolism and the influence of this can sometimes be detected in commercial and private work. Brady has made further efforts to enrich his iconographic vocabulary by researching a diversity of cultures. An example of this was his 1988 one person exhibition "Sundance Teaching", (Saskatchewan Craft Council Gallery), which was inspired by myths and legends of the Plains Indians, particularly the Cheyenne, Crow and Sioux. Recently featured in the glossy and prestigious *Stained Glass Quarterly** in a sumptuous six page spread, this exhibition was an attempt by the artist to deal with his reactions to a rich and 'hidden' culture, which in the artist's words, "preceded me in my country, surrounds me in the landscape, yet was as foreign to me as a distant religious sect". This exhibition and the feedback he received from it prompted a personal

inquiry into questions of cultural appropriation, personal imagery and the role of art in society.

Brady has an intuitive colour sense and clearly delights in the medium of glass as an avenue for expression. A number of recent works for exhibition in March, (Artworks, Broadway), include some exciting experimentation with fusing processes. By cutting and fusing different shapes of glass together, layering translucent glass (glazes) one over the other and slumping the resulting disk shapes into broad rimmed plates, the effect he achieves range from delicious watermelon translucencies with brilliant reflective surfaces to moody depths, sombre overlays and matt finishes. Linear detailing in some pieces adds a sort of new-age dynamism which is almost musical at times. These 'Mambrino helmets' are pleasing in their proportions and thematic variations.

His multiple-process approach is often tedious and time consuming, and requires careful testing of individual colours. This is important to ascertain properties and compatibility with other glasses as each sheet of glass has its own 'idiosyncracies'. Brady explained this while proudly showing me sheets of iridescent glass he had handpicked from suppliers in Toronto. Only once did a shipment of such prizes arrive in shards, not a bad record considering how far some of this glass travels. Some is imported from as far away as Germany and France. Just as devastating as the arrival of that crate of shards is the occasional 'pinging' sound as a nearly completed piece cools too quickly in the kiln or cracks under heat stress. Seldom can such pieces be salvaged. At times like this Brady confesses glass is a labour of frustration as well as love.

It is also a labour of accumulated skill in handling potentially hazardous materials. One might expect a glass artist's hands to be a mess of scars and scratches. Brady's hands attest to his professionalism; because he is handling lead and other toxic materials Brady needs to be meticulous about accidental cuts and general studio cleanliness. Regular studio mop-ups and medical check-ups to monitor lead levels are as important in Brady's working routine as design and construction.

As for upcoming projects Brady has recently won a Saskatchewan Arts Board grant to visit Pilchuck Glass School in Washington State this spring. He will study techniques in fusing, sandblasting and enamelling. According to Brady, there is a lot more happening in the U.S. in experimental stained glass work than in Canada at the moment, although he seems keen to change that.

**Stained Glass Quarterly*; Vol. 83, Number 4. Winter 88, pp 267-281.

Miranda Jones is a recent graduate from the U. of S. MFA Program, where she majored in painting, drawing and printmaking. She is also experienced in architectural and domestic fabric design and as a Crafts Administrator.

BLACK FIGURE, RED FIGURE



"If you will pay me for my song, O potters,
then come, Athena, and hold thy hand above the kiln!
May the kotyloi and all the kanastra turn a good black,
may they be well fired and fetch the price asked,
many being sold in the marketplace and many on the roads,
and bring in much money, and may my song be pleasing . . ."

Carole Hanks History Master, Sheridan College School of Craft and Design

So began the song, supposedly sung by Homer, on the firing of a kiln, an invocation for a successful firing and good sales, universal concerns for potters for thousands of years.

The pottery industry of classical Greece was rich and thriving. With perhaps as many as a hundred vase painters active at any one time, foreign markets from France to Germany, South Russia to Asia Minor and Mesopotamia to the Sudan were supplied with fine ware by the major pottery centre of that time, Athens. The height of this activity lasted some hundred and fifty years, from the middle of the sixth century B.C. to the disastrous end of the Peloponnesian war in 404 B.C. But this is hardly the story of Greek pottery. A rough beginning may be placed around the start of the first millennium B.C., with the development of a geometric style of decoration that was entirely different from earlier pottery produced in Greece belonging to the Mycenaean culture.

Attic red-figure cup by the Painter of the Paris Gigantomachy circa 470 B.C. from Orvieto, Italy 9.7x30.6cm.
photo credit: Royal Ontario Museum

Geometric Style pottery, made from about 1000 B.C. to 700 B.C., was one of tight, enveloping design. Laid out with compass or ruler, bands of small repeat patterns covered the vessel surface in rows of abstract and geometric motifs. The bands, varied in width, could be broken vertically for a change of motif or alternated with reserve bands of solid colour could include geometrically abstracted animal or human forms, blocks of unique pattern could be inserted or alternate units of designs. On the most highly detailed vessels, where no area of the surface was left unpatterned, the result had the rich visual texture of tapestry and fine basketry. This patterning was painted in a reddish-brown slip on a variety of simple, bellied vessel forms. The slip was a relative of the lustrous black slip that would reach technical perfection on the Black and Red Figure styles a few hundred years later. The Geometric pots were earthenware, being fired to temperatures around 950 degrees Celsius.

It should be kept in mind, that almost all European ceramics prior to the fourteenth century are what we, today, call low-fire ware. Although a 'proto-stoneware' was being made as early as the ninth century, it wasn't until the fourteenth, in Germany, that a true stoneware was developed and a true glaze resulted from salt firing. Thus all ancient Greek pottery, from the finest to the most pedestrian, was decorated with slips, when it was decorated at all, and fired at low temperatures. The soft visual quality and the beautiful sheen of the pottery's surface was the result of the physical properties of the classical Greek slip and low temperature firing methods.

Painted decoration on early Greek ware continued in the Geometric manner for some three hundred years, until traded goods from the eastern Mediterranean, the ancient Orient, began to inspire painters to try their hand at eastern motifs; mythical and actual beasts, exotic birds, and abstract but non-geometric human representation. This new approach has been labelled Oriental. Black slip was still used for drawing on a bare clay body, but touches of iron oxide red and purple began to be added, and the figural aspects became larger and bolder. Painters initially incorporated the new motifs into their old geometric scheme, but eventually the figures took precedence over the patterning, developing in a direction that was soon to be the chosen style of decoration for the finest Greek pottery.

Both Attic Black Figure and Attic Red Figure wares have been much studied for their stylistic elegance and technical sophistication. Both wares reached their highest development in the area known as Attica and its major urban centre, Athens. Black Figure developed slowly through the working of outside influences on traditional ideas and Red Figure represented a development of drawing techniques and experiments.

Black Figure was developed first, and by the early sixth century B.C. it was a pottery style of boldly drawn black figures and border designs, balanced against the warm reddish glow of the Attic clay body, which was, in turn, painted in bands or sections of metallic black. The sensitivity to design and excellence of draughtsmanship, the delicacy of the sgraffito used to delineate figural detail, and the careful use of colour accents (reds, purples and cream) were all aspects of its high level of achievement. Black Figure was a careful and designerly style, a balance of aesthetic concerns in both two and three-dimensional aspects of the ceramic art, and a true blending of cooperative craftsmanship by painter and potter.

Around 530 B.C., Red Figure style was invented. It did not evolve. It was a reaction to Black Figure style of drawing and it was, thus, the province of the painters. Its painting technology was the same as on Black Figure pottery except reversed, that is, the figures were outlined in slip, then left in the natural clay body colour, while the background was slip-painted. The draughtsmanship, however, was soon very different from that of Black Figure work. The Red Figure style did not make much use of sgraffito, it made use of slip applied with a brush, and, as a result, the drawing was freer, more



Geometric pitcher (Olpe) by the Birdseed Painter Attic Late Geometric (730-720 B.C.) 37x25.2cm

fluid and more naturalistic than the stiffer, more abstract drawings on Black Figure pottery. The painters became interested in the intricacies of drawing, foreshortening, figure studies and perspective, which led them further and further from the concerns of pottery design. Nonetheless, Red Figure style reached heights of refinement and elegance equal in all respects to that of Black Figure pottery. Compositional grace and superb drawing from the painters combined with great subtlety of vessel form and the ease of brilliant clay technology from the potters, marked the finest Red Figure vessels. The style had some major off-shoots and variations and lasted for nearly two hundred years.

Toward the end of the fourth and beginning of the third centuries B.C., Red Figure stopped being made in Athens and all other production centres. Black Figure, which had never been completely discontinued, was still being made. Later on in the third century, pottery that was painted after firing was produced, which marked the end of the older, ceramic, approach to Greek pottery painting. In fact, ceramic painted decoration had stopped altogether by the end of the third century B.C. and relief decoration took its place.

In the ceramic profession of the ancient Greek world, the painter and the potter, with rare exceptions, were two different people. The potter, naturally enough, was responsible for the shapes of the vessels.

photo credit: Royal Ontario Museum

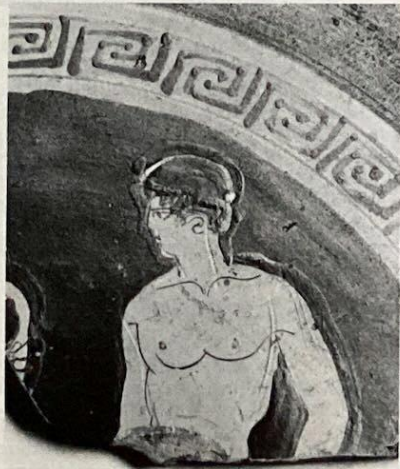


Attic black-figure neck-amphora with additions in deep red and cream paint circa 560-550 B.C. Probably from Italy 33.4x22.4cm

He was constrained to work within the proscribed limits of utilitarian purpose. Greek pottery was a tightly disciplined aesthetic. For all their painted decoration and elegance, Greek pots, first and foremost, were made to be used. By far the majority of the standard shapes were meant for holding liquids: wine, water, oil and the like. The amphora stored wine, honey or oil and needed to be of acceptable, adequate size, sturdy and lidded. The hydria was used for fetching and storing water and needed to be a combination of pitcher and vase, thus having a particular shape and also three handles of particular configuration. The krater was a mixing bowl for wine, with four variations available, but all having in common a large mouth to allow for the ladling of wine. The oinochoe was the pitcher used for ladling the wine from the krater into a cup. There were variations here, too, but the form fell into a general pitcher category of a particular size with either a plain or a trefoil-shaped mouth. Cups were large because they were used in a different way than cups today. It was Greek custom to mix wine with at least two parts water and it may also have been a custom to pass a ceremonial cup around to a company of guests. The two horizontal handles on the shallow, stemmed cup, called the kylix, served a practical purpose, they made the cup more easily usable for a diner reclining on a couch. Simple, wheel-thrown plates were also regularly made. All the forms had standard variations which were defined by use. A potter could do little more than make subtle modifications to the curve or weight of lip or handle or foot.

Responsible, also, for the practicality of the pots, potters had to figure out how to get the maximum strength out of their low-fire clay. Thus vulnerable areas of the vessels, such as the lip or the edge of the foot, were thrown more thickly to make them stronger, and handles had to be made sturdy and broad for secure attachment to the body. The resulting elegance of profile was a mark of design skill and a refined aesthetic sensibility. Curves, mouldings and attachment points, thickened of necessity, created graceful shapes and rhythms, balancing form and line. The measure of the ware's success in both design and function was the stability of its shapes, little altered for centuries, and its great popularity and wide distribution in its time.

The second part of the success story of classical Greek ceramic ware was, of course, due to the work of the painters. In actuality, most of the ware was scarcely decorated at all, frequently just being coated with plain iron-black slip. Selective display of only the most appealing examples, today, shows us a narrow range of elaborate and specialized pots. The vessel shapes, however, for both undecorated and decorated ware, were the same. This meant that the painter was working with standard blank shapes and could, and did, design quite freely for those shapes. Though there was much freedom for the painter in the arrangement of the primary subject matter, there was a severely limited range of decorative devices available and a limited manner in which they could be employed. In the best work, considerations for the parts of the vessel, that is, the lip, neck, handles, shoulder and foot, were always paramount. Decorative bands of designs, individual motifs and solid black areas divided up the form, acknowledging the curvature of the surface and emphasizing the construction and profile of the vessel itself. The painting, regardless of subject matter, was meant to be in harmony with the pot.



Attic red-figure cup (fragment) by the Disney Painter End of the 5th c. B.C. 11.8x7.5cm

The technique of Black and Red Figure Greek pottery is intriguing and impressive. The ware is comprised of only two colours, reddish orange and a metallic black with some, infrequent, use of accent colours of purplish red and white. The basic reddish orange colour is the natural colour of the fired Attic clay, but the black colour with its metallic sheen is clearly not a glaze and, for years, it puzzled potters and archaeologists alike. The process was rediscovered by Dr. Theodore Schumann in the early 1940s. Taking as a given the work of a previous scholar, Gisela M. A. Richter, that Greek pots were only fired once, Schumann assumed that the technical methods used by the Greeks would have been simple, then concerned himself with the physical properties of the Attic clay. He noted that even unpainted surfaces of Greek pottery had a faint sheen to them, suggesting a light wash of slip over the entire pot. He knew that such a slip would have had particular chemical properties to create such a sheen. Since the black painting on Greek pottery had this same sheen, though to a greater degree, and since it was clear that his black painting was not a vitrified material, it was assumed that the 'black paint' was actually the same material as the clay body. It was known that the clay body had the property of firing either to red or black, depending on the conditions in the kiln. Thus Schumann postulated that a slip made from this clay by the addition of potash and a 'protective colloid', would alter the effects of firing on the original clay body material just enough to allow a predictable two-colour result. Then in a sequence of firing procedures, the combination of clay body and slip would react to produce reddish orange out of the clay and a shiny black out of the slip. This firing process has proven to be the case, though the chemistry is still not certain. Further work by J. V. Noble, a scholar and a potter, allows the process to be more fully explained. "The reddish orange was produced by the natural colour of the fired Attic clay of the body of the vase and intensified by a surface coating of yellow ochre. The metallic black, the colour of the black glaze, was made by an ingenious process from the same red Attic clay as was used for the body of the vase, and the glaze turned black during the firing operation." The firing began as oxidation and the painted pot turned uniformly red. In the middle of the firing, the kiln atmosphere was changed to reduction by adding green wood and closing the air vent. This caused incomplete combustion and changed the red iron oxides in all the clay particles, black. Thus the pot turned from uniformly red to uniformly black. At this point, the air vent was reopened, the kiln re-oxidized and, because of a chemical reaction, the porous clay body once again became red. But the slip-painted areas had become partly sintered in the previous reducing atmosphere, that is, they had obtained a quartz layer which does not permit the re-entry of oxygen, and therefore they remained black. The intense shiny black was the product of the reduction of firing while the bright red-orange was produced by oxidation. It was at about 950 degrees Celsius, with reoxidation, that a reversal took place. If the kiln temperature had been raised more than another 100 degrees, the black oxides in the slip would have reoxidized to a red form and the shiny black would have been lost.

It might be wondered how such a critical firing procedure would ever be discovered, but the firing of combination red and black ware goes back at least to the third millennium B.C. and ancient Egypt. Although the procedure was not identical, nor were the results anywhere near the level of sophistication of classical Greek ware, the early examples of oxidation and reduction firing combinations are equally inventive.

A final technical consideration should be given to the reality of painting with this particular slip from classical Greece. The Greek slip used for painting was a thick, viscous material. Draughted lines fired onto Black and Red Figure ware can be seen standing in relief from the surface of the pot. Overlapping brush strokes often remain distinct and little blobs of pigment can be discerned where the painter's brush changed direction or stopped or started a line. Grooves down the centre of a black line mark the path of a brush stroke. Working with such syrupy material to create the refinement and detail of Black and Red Figure drawings must have been a challenge. It makes the results obtained by classical Greek pottery painters all the more impressive.

The size of pottery workshops in ancient Athens undoubtedly varied greatly, but it would have been the potter who owned it, acting as supervisor and hiring perhaps as many as a dozen workers. That would have been a large workshop. It is thought that the employment of four to six workers would have been the norm. There are enough vase paintings of potters at work to get some idea of the working situation and division of labour. For example, although it seemed almost always the case that men, only, worked in potteries, there is a Red Figure hydria that depicts a woman painter at work with the men. What these vases must have cost, in their own day, is also a matter of conjecture, but there have been attempts to determine realistic ancient sale prices for Attic pottery. The prices given by J. V. Noble, in his book on techniques of Attic pottery, are: an average-size Red Figure hydria about 4 drachmas, a medium-size kylix, 2 to 3 drachmas, and a small skyphos (a simple wine cup), 1 drachma. If you equate 1 drachma to the amount of a modern wage for one day, you have a general idea of what it would have cost you to walk into an Athenian pottery workshop and buy a good Black Figure wine cup.

Bibliographic note:

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LEARNER ARTISAN

The Northern Institute of Technology in Prince Albert opened its doors in September 1986, initially attracting learners in the traditional trades. It is a new, computer run school presenting a new method of learning, Competency Based Education, and a commitment to "distance education". In January 1988, the Provincial Department of Education made the decision to consolidate all postsecondary education (excluding Universities), amalgamating all four independent Technical Institutes and their neighbouring Community Colleges. As a result the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology was created, and subsequently N.I.T. changed its name to S.I.A.S.T. Woodland Campus.

In September 1987 the Fine Arts Department began accepting students into the Ceramics and Weaving programs. It was not until November 1988 that the Audio Visual Technician program got under way. Despite its late start the A.V.T. program is now full to capacity with 16 students enrolled.

The Craft Factor has published two articles about the school discussing the Fine Arts program and Competency Based Education, and the Drawing and Design component of the Fine Arts program. There are now learners involved in various stages of the program, two students write about their experiences.

Gail Sheard

Entering the weaving program in November 1988, I found that although there were other part-time learners who had started the course before me, I was the only full-time learner. I had access to a wealth of books, videos and slides in the school library, as well as an incredible variety of studio equipment. Since January, enrolment in the weaving course has increased to nine. There are now two full-time learners, as well as several part-time learners whose school time is scheduled around jobs and raising families. There are two distance learners from Saskatoon who commute to P.A. on a regular basis and either own their own equipment or are borrowing equipment from the school (any portable equipment can be borrowed from the studio, including small floor looms). Other learners in the course have decided to begin with the Drawing and Design or the Small Business Management components. A detailed outline is available as an overview of the course and learners are free to choose the order in which they take courses.

The learning for the course is done from Learning Guides. These guides list the resource books to study and contain reviews to test knowledge of the material just studied in preparation to writing a computer test. The weaving guides have been written by Annabel Taylor, the course instructor, and are available through the school book store. Though the guides contain some minor "typos" (which will be removed with a second printing of the manuals), they do present the material in logical sequence with explicit instructions. Any questions that remain at this point can be discussed with the instructor for clarification. Because there are no actual classes to attend the role of the instructor is one of a skilled and knowledgeable facilitator.



A student (Gail Sheard) working at a loom in the weaving studio.

I have been happy to find that most of my time has been spent working in the studio, at "hands-on" work. I am required to write one computer test a week to keep up with my course requirement, so very little of my time is taken up with the computer. I am a little disappointed that my general understanding of computers has not increased, but this will change with time. As part of the weaving course I will have the opportunity to learn to program and use a computerized loom, and to use a computer for design and pattern drafting — a great timesaving skill I have been told by others in the course who have already worked through this component.

photo credit: Matthew Toon

Jacqueline Guedo

Having had a post-secondary art school education, I find the competency based approach to learning art, craft and the business aspects of the art and craft world more focused, direct and complete than my university training. The ceramics program covers all areas of working in clay, the fundamentals of drawing and design, and a small business management course. Many things that are necessary for artist/craftpeople to know, but are rarely if ever touched on in University, are included in the program — designing a studio, photographing your own work, preparing a portfolio, preparing a resumé, mounting displays, marketing and promoting your own work, keeping your own books, even learning how to write a magazine article.

With Competency Based Education you can thoroughly explore different areas of the craft a piece at a time, with the benefit of working through and refining the skills required in each area, one on one with an instructor. Competency Based Education allows you to work through your program as fast as you are capable. It even allows you to take a leave of absence if the need arises, and to continue where you left off when you return to your program.

S.I.A.S.T. Woodland Campus provides a first rate ceramic studio. Although somewhat small, it is well equipped with access to varied materials and resources. One resource found in the studio is the other students, who bring with them various degrees of expertise and insight. I find I learn a lot from what other students are doing and experiencing. First rate instructors are also part of the package, with Annabel Taylor in the Weaving department, Roger Graham in Audio Visual, and Sandra Ledingham, the Ceramics instructor. They provide students with constant feed-back on the progression of their work, not just in the technical areas but aesthetically as well, which helps us as students to really "see" our work and think about the direction our work is going or could take. The instructors also help to provide students with exposure to the art and craft world, with trips to the local Art Centre in Prince Albert, the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, and last October, a class field trip to New York City, which was a definite highlight for all the students involved. Workshops with visiting artists have also been arranged for the students. Most recently Barbara Tipton of Calgary, former Associate Editor of *Ceramics Monthly* magazine, presented a one day workshop for all the Fine Arts students and interested persons from the community.

Besides exploring the outside craft world, students also show their work to the public. Several craft sales have been organized in the school by the Fine Arts students. There is the Corridor Gallery in the main campus building which often displays student work.



photo credit: Matthew Toon

Computerized loom in the weaving studio

Although all learning is done individually, having several people in the weaving studio leads to the opportunity to exchange ideas, solve problems and see a variety of work. The instructor is readily available to check completed work, for one-to-one instruction, to offer advice, help in problem solving and encourage exploration of the craft. At present, each person in the studio is working on different modules which constantly keeps in mind the broad spectrum of the craft. The occasions when one has the entire studio to oneself are an important step in learning to work in a studio alone and manage time effectively.

The weaving studio facility is excellent, not only containing looms and spinning wheels but also a dye kitchen with drying racks, and washing machine and dryer for the finishing of pieces or felting projects. New learners to the school are given guided tours throughout the entire building, including the weaving and ceramics studios. This gives a variety of people exposure to the crafts and an opportunity to observe working studios and makers.

Initially the idea of self-paced and self-motivated learning sparked the desire to go back to school; in addition I could finally learn a craft I had long been interested in without having to leave the province. The open and bright studio space in a "state of the art" building, and tuition fees considerably less than that of University tuition also attracted me to Woodland Campus. Revisions to the course are being made as problems are encountered or as new ideas are presented. So far the system has proved flexible enough to absorb these changes. The weaving course is a good one and can only improve as the final threads are laid into place.

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A small sales space has been allotted for student work in the school Tuck Shop. Students are also made aware of and are encouraged to enter work in local and provincial juried shows.

S.I.A.S.T. is a new school, and Competency Based Education is a new way of approaching the learning process. At first I was skeptical about studying art from a manual, and at first it is intimidating to write an examination on a computer. The manuals are learning guides, with theoretical guidelines and proposed exercises. They do not limit your creativity, but assist you in the "hands-on" work and technical skills that are required in the studio. As students work through their courses at their own pace, the computer makes it possible to keep track of their progress. The computer allows "distance learners" to write the examinations at their convenience. Even though students are dealing with a computer, the final decision if there is a problem or a discrepancy is a human decision.

As a student in this fledgling institute, I sometimes feel like a guinea pig. As one of the first students in the ceramic program, I have stumbled over some of the problems and suffered through a few of the glitches in the computer programs. The programs are not perfect and problems and difficulties do arise, but the programs are constantly being revised and streamlined.



Ceramic studio



SASKATCHEWAN GLASSWORKERS GUILD

hold their first exhibition

GLASS ART '89

Sedco Centre,
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon
April 21, 22, 23

ESCAPE ESCAPE

Lee Brady

The full potential of glass as an art form has only just begun to be realized in Western Canada. Yes, we have all seen leaded and soldered foil panels; the unicorns, flowers and grain elevators abound in craft fairs. But what about imagination and manipulation of materials? Who is taking chances with the medium in order to learn and create a new vocabulary? Basil and Glenda Ramadan give us a peek into a Pandora's box of glass in their exhibition.

Hot, warm and cold glass techniques were put to use to express the Ramadans' feelings of entrapment, release and dreams. Their use of hot formed 'colour bars', sliced and refired, is evident in half the work exhibited. This method of glassworking can be traced as far back as the ancient Egyptians. As the slices are very alike in colour and configuration, their usefulness as a repetitive design element is obvious. The Ramadans make good use of this feature in their leaded panels *Labyrinth* and *Hollywood Squares*. The former works well as a decorative panel and would be greatly enhanced by being placed within an enclosed environment (a door or framed window). *Hollywood Squares* offers the viewer more information with a variety of creature-like forms, it consequently hangs more effectively as an independent panel with a story of its own.

The spooky *Voodoo* panels go a step further in the break with rigid structure. They show 'faces' floating in a swirling atmosphere contained by heavy bars of lead. At this point repetition becomes self-defeating, the story could be sustained and more effective if the glass slices were more disparate. The mood of the three 'faces' is absorbed at a glance and as they are all alike and the background is homogeneous, closer scrutiny yields no interesting results. The leadwork, however, is very well executed and adds to the work a sense of strength and enclosure.

In the *Wandering Souls* panels imagination runs wild. The ghostly images though sedentary have many other figures to relate to. Time could be spent seeking solutions to these form and space relationships. Very similar fused work occupies *Fireworks*. Offered as a slumped plate form, *Fireworks* seems more successful than the *Wandering Souls* panels for two reasons. The edges are not confined by a tight circle of lead thus the figures seem more liberated and active. Secondly, the texture of the firing mould surface is less obvious than in the leaded panels. Texture is as important as line and colour in glass design. If used, it should contribute to the piece as an integral part of the visual structure. If texture is not needed to help express the desired result, it should be kept to a minimum so as not to be distracting. Subtle differences in background texture could have created a greater impact in the leaded window panels.

ESCAPE ESCAPE ESCAPE ESCAPE

GLENDA AND BASIL RAMADAN

SCC GALLERY

MARCH 1989

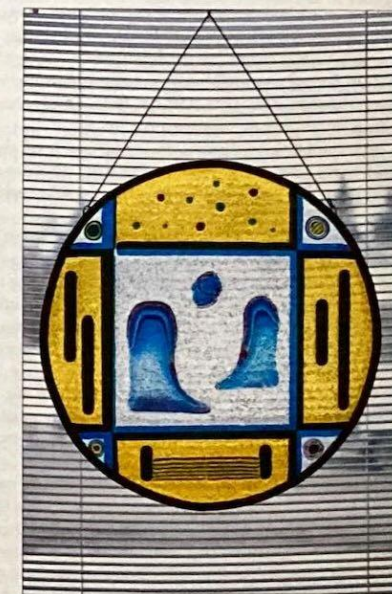
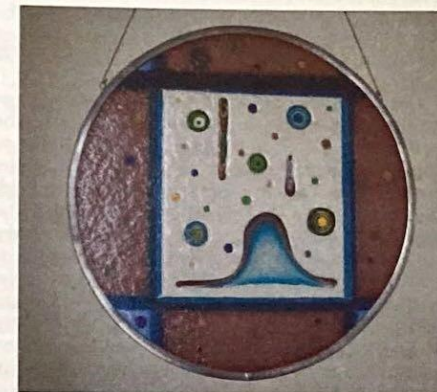
A very strong piece in the show is one of the least in size. The jewel box features strongly coloured crustacean-like slices framed by black glass. With reflection within the box, the creatures seem to come alive; simple and dramatic. Likewise, *Alfreet* effectively displays similar figures within a barred background upon a 16" plate form.

Bars are seen throughout much of the exhibition. The *Voodoo* panels make good use of their strength and repetition. *Enchanting Depths* also uses bars behind a subtle layering of iridescent and fracture-streamer glass; simple yet effective. The *Critical Perception* plates meet with less success. The bars lie over iridescent and square feature glass and react differently to the edges of their fusing partners. This in itself is not undesirable, but the variations of line should reflect some control over the medium. The overall *happenstance* weakens an otherwise useful contrast of soft and rigid.

Basil and Glenda do exhibit control over surfaces and glass abutments in *Which Side of the Wall*, a piece sitting quietly in the corner of the gallery. This piece deserves a close look at the levels of texture and perspective behind a simple facade. Layering of clear over iridescent creates a depth beyond the surface plain iridescent glass. The depth leads us beyond the wall to the seascape; beyond the medium to the message. This level of control would be a welcomed investment in the other *Seascape* and *Viking* plates which seem to exhibit the iridescent glass as an end result instead of a means to an end. It is attractive glass, but it can be overbearing if not controlled.

Two vase shapes displayed yet another direction in fused glass; within similar shapes, the pieces expressed vastly different feelings. *Witches Brew* swirls the sliced glass figures in space, the whimsical looseness is held in check by the rigid collar and solid form. *Reflections* offers a gentle geometric blending of purples, blues and roses. A soft textural change halfway down is the reward for a closer look at this vase.

I think the glass community is off to a running start in Western Canada. This show reflects the experimental nature of glasswork in the province. Experimenting in any medium requires a great investment of time and materials with no guaranteed results. Displaying the products of their struggle, Basil and Glenda Ramadan succeed in pushing out the boundaries of glass in Saskatchewan and may inspire other glassworkers to take chances with their medium.



GLENDA & BASIL RAMADAN
Fireworks Fused glass 16" Collection of Carol Blenkin
Wandering Souls Fused glass 17"

CHAMPIONING CRAFTS THE SECOND DECADE 1958-1968

THE ROLE OF THE SASKATCHEWAN ARTS BOARD
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRAFTS

Alexandra Wittock Professor Emeritus, University of Regina

In the Fall, 1988 issue of *The Craft Factor*, Jane Turnbull-Evans explored the first ten years of the growth of handicrafts in the Province under the aegis of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. These were brave years indeed, of hard work in a virtually unploughed field. Under the terms of the Order-in-Council of 1948, the Saskatchewan Arts Board might well have been depicted, Grant Wood fashion, gripping a trident, since its objectives had a three-toothed thrust and their implementation was triply delicate. The Board was to provide, province-wide, an opportunity to engage in quality crafts, with qualified leadership and instruction available, before an audience newly educated to an appreciation of the expertise required.

As always in Saskatchewan, geography was more than a bit player. A gifted craftsman in an isolated community had no standard of reference for evaluating his work, was a "prophet in his own country" with little recognition from his neighbours who saw him merely as one of themselves, and had no help from shared experience with fellow craftsmen.

Jane Turnbull-Evans describes the growth of these seminal years, 1948-1958. Their very real success can perhaps best be measured by the decade which followed.

What impresses most is the co-operative nature of the whole enterprise. It germinated at a personal domestic level, as perhaps art always must; but the climate was right to foster its growth. The homesteading base of the province's social economy, of course, makes neighbourly support a natural; and stitchery and weaving, patchwork and quilting, a bit of quiet whittling, are presumed to be traditional concomitants of rural life. But the Saskatchewan Arts Board, right from the outset, supplied a new direction and an encouraging concept of professionalism.

The hunger was already there. The hunger, the need, had first to be identified by the community. It was then met by an astonishing variety of resources. The University Women's Club in Swift Current would sponsor a representative to attend a symposium, a workshop, a conference; and the representative would then share her knowledge with a group back home; or the Kinettes, or Beta Sigma Phi, would respond in like fashion; or the Rotary or the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, or the Flying Farmers' Association, or the I.O.D.E.

The Provincial Adult Education Services identified very closely with the Board's needs and aspirations; and the Art Galleries, the Y.W.C.A. and the Colleges of Education were reliable supporters. But what emerges most clearly from the Arts Board's Craft Reports is the role of the Provincial Library. It supplied back-up print material for every occasion, and films wherever possible. It supplied reading lists for advanced study and responded to suggestions from the Board's Craft Director for new acquisitions. It did a great deal to promote and to unify the work of the Saskatchewan Arts Board in the craft field.

The principles that had worked so well in the past decade, the community's own identification of its need and the servicing of this need by professional instruction through workshops, conferences and symposia, continued. But in the second decade the scale of the operation became more ambitious and the process becomes more akin to "weaning".

In 1960, the Northern Handicraft Co-op was established at Lac La Ronge. It began in a very small way to co-ordinate the work of native craftsmen (actually mostly women) in the North, and to help find a market for quality products. Seventeen people turned up for the initial meeting in May and sixteen of them took out a membership at 25 cents, while the seventeenth purchased a fully paid-up share for 1 dollar; a total disbursement of 5 dollars. The enterprise flourished. By September, there were sixty-four members and because Japanese entrepreneurs had moved in with imitations, an identifying tag was attached to genuine local work and only products of the highest quality were accepted. For example, really beautiful snowshoes were produced — and highly valued. Interest was expressed by the Federal Department of Indian Affairs and the Department of Economical Development as well as by the Provincial Department of Education and the Ministry of Tourism. Traditional native crafts were given recognition, and prestige; and selected pieces were requested for display in Montreal, Florence and Rome. The perseverance of the Arts Board's Craft Director, Sheila Stiven, over practical details like consistent sizing of moccasins paid off.

Typically, a community interest had been nourished by resources and advice from the Arts Board and self-sufficiency was the goal. An interesting footnote was supplied by David Ross who reported negatively on a pottery workshop offered at Loon Lake; the community interest just was not there.

OVERVIEW

Not all handicrafts lend themselves to group development. Most, indeed, are essentially individual progressions. B. D. Reid's whalebone carving achieved international acclaim, but has not generated a succession of carvers. By inviting individual craftsmen to submit their work for appraisal — and often, indeed, for subsequent purchase for the permanent collection, the Arts Board was fulfilling its mandate to supply the opportunity for workers to ply their craft at a professional level.

Reid's carving and Ross's pottery were selected for display at Stratford and were then chosen by the Federal Government to exemplify quality Canadian craftwork at the California Fair in 1964.

Jewelry, puppetry, leathercraft, silkscreening, basket-making have all largely depended on individual interest for development, although puppetry certainly worked as a communal endeavor in the Prince Albert Jail, and craftwork as group therapy was increasingly sought by hospitals and rehabilitation centres in the Province. The Arts Board role was usually limited to suggesting competent purveyors.

Fine cabinetry, wood turning and wood carving found a growing Provincial market and superior practitioners. Ecclesiastical embroidery was recognized as a specialty with a legitimate art history. All of these crafts have been evaluated away beyond the hobby level thanks to the Arts Board with its mode of seminal instruction, and its insistence on quality and sound basic design principles.

The two crafts which have shown most growth throughout the Province in the first twenty years of the Saskatchewan Arts Board's leadership are pottery and weaving; and both of these developments notably fulfill the aims and objectives of the Board. The problem of sustaining interest in a craft, which beset some which initially promised well, simply did not arise for pottery and weaving.

Weaving has grown consistently in popularity and prestige from its small beginnings in homemakers' clubs to the internationally acknowledged Saskatchewan Weavers' Guild. And every festival and craft exhibition in the Province bears witness to this elevation. Much of the success is due to the energy, and the standards, of Sheila Stiven, Craft Director for the Board, with her lectures on basic design and colour, supplemented by books and films from the Provincial Library and samples loaned by Canadian Museums, and by bringing in internationally known weavers to give workshops at the larger Provincial conferences and festivals. The whole level of the craft thus so improved that samples of Saskatchewan weaving are now regularly sought for national and international exhibitions and competitions.

In 1960, the craft house at Fort Qu'Appelle was sold to the resident potter, David Ross. It had been purchased by the Board in 1954 and with Martin and Elaine Joyce as resident craftsmen had served as community workshop and studio classroom. By 1960, the Board felt that it had outgrown its original usefulness and the expense of its upkeep was no longer justified. The terms of sale included a proviso about its continued use for display and instruction purposes.

In 1964 the Arts Board was an active supporter of both the Western Potters' Guild and the National Craftsmen's Association. Pottery, like weaving, had been "weaned". The Arts Board continued to recommend skilled instructors, on request; to advise the Provincial Library on appropriate acquisitions; to help local groups with locating and purchasing equipment, such as kilns; to jury works submitted for exhibitions; to publish a list of approved craft producers; to purchase outstanding pieces for the Board's permanent collection and to display these throughout the Province. Beth Hone, Patricia Leigh (Wiens), Betty Harrup and David Ross were distinguished professional contributors on their home ground, and Kyllikki Salmethaara from Finland led the Pottery Symposium at Saskatchewan House in 1965. The success of, and acclaim for, Saskatchewan pottery continues to the present day; and while the involvement of the Arts Board was increasingly becoming a "support through grants" role, a fiscal responsibility, it retained throughout the sixties a direct involvement in teaching, disseminating, promoting, appraising and collecting.

In 1964, in response to the expressed needs of teachers and students for out-of-school instruction, a summer school for all the arts and crafts was set up in Briercrest Bible College, near Moose Jaw; and in 1966 a more permanent home was found in the old "Fort San" in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

In 1964-65, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia had set up Arts Boards like Saskatchewan's; and Manitoba followed suit a year later. It was the Saskatchewan delegate, Norah McCullough, however, who was elected as the Canadian representative on the Executive of the First World Congress of Craftsmen in New York.

Saskatchewan, meanwhile, was moving towards greater autonomy for its craftsmen through local craft councils, a movement which culminated in the creation of the Saskatchewan Craft Council in 1974.

And a whole new chapter in the championing of the crafts in Saskatchewan.

(This overview is based on the Minutes and Reports of the Saskatchewan Arts Board and on *Cornerstone of Culture* by W.A. Riddell to whom my thanks are due.)

Just Knitting

KATE SHOOK SCC GALLERY FEBRUARY 1989

Miriam Jackson



In the middle of our prairie winter, Just Knitting, a collection of works by Saskatoon fibre artist Kate Shook, was a treat for all the senses. From comments in the gallery guest book it was obvious that visitors enjoyed the feast of colours and the warmth of texture in this show.

It is a pleasure to view an exhibition that confirms an artist's complete mastery of technique and this mastery was evident in the work of Kate Shook. Control of the medium gave her the confidence to incorporate changes of colour and design successfully. Listening to her description of the garments in the show and her explanation of the design processes she employs, one realised that her sense of humour definitely played a part in her colour and design choices.

The history of knitting was also very much part of Shook's enjoyment of the process, and was evident in her choice of pieces for this show, as well as in its title. To quote Shook, "This show comes straight out of a people's craft. The classic sweaters, the Fisherman's rib, Aran, Gansey, etc. have become classics because they are well designed, look good and remain "undated" for many years." The timelessness of such designs was illustrated by the traditional Yachting Sweater and the North Sea gansey on display, and by the Baltic sweater, a garment which has been worn for over twenty years. The condition and beauty of this garment proved the quality of fibre and design.

On entering the gallery, one was immediately aware of colour. The colour variations in one garment hinted at the morning and evening horizon so often seen on the prairies. Another gave an impression of stained glass. Two garments showed very dramatic and vibrant colour variations, and reminded one of the colours of childhood — playful, bright and free.

The garments displayed used natural fibres, some were commercial yarns and some were handspun, hand-dyed yarns. The use of hand-dyed yarns produced the subtle colour range evident in some of the pieces. A mohair sweater in tones of blue, accented in taupe, demonstrated a delicate treatment of a classic fibre.

The sweaters included a variety of technical design features, as well as the pleasing palate of colour. One visitor commented on the 'accordion' sweater — her description of a vest knitted from side to side, using a pleat effect that suggested the name. As the sweater moved, little glints of colour became visible — a clever use of design to highlight colours. Garments of similar tones and hues displayed together often give a totally different colour impression. Two sweaters in similar hues of blues and mauves created totally different effects because of variation in the size of the diamond pattern and its placement.



KATE SHOOK Sweater
Vest Overdyed commercial wool

IRRESISTIBLE FORCES

Gale Steck

The formation of the Craft Marketing and Business Association of Saskatchewan in early January of this year, by an independent group of people interested in craft marketing was the end point of a series of events and pressures that probably go back a couple of years. It is my opinion that there has been a nebulous but growing pressure from craftspeople (both SCC members and other craft producers), the Saskatchewan Craft Council itself, several government departments including the Western Diversification office, the Saskatchewan Arts Board and independent craft co-ops, to respond to craft business opportunities that have been repeatedly presenting themselves and going unattended.

Not entirely co-incidentally, an opportunity was presented to the craft council. This was the possibility of using funding offered by Canada Employment and Immigration to set up a working committee, henceforth known as Human Resources Assessment Committee for Crafts (HRACC), which would determine the business and marketing needs of craft producers in Saskatchewan. Everybody was happy! The craft council would get much needed data about craft producers, their opinions, needs, etc; Canada Employment and Immigration would get information related to the numbers of people in the province who are craft producers and the potential for expanding their businesses and markets. The contract was signed by the Saskatchewan Craft Council and Isabelle Gress of Hanwood. Isabelle represented craft employees in the province. These two signatories were required by Canada Employment and Immigration for the use of the funds. SCC would be represented on the committee by Lorraine Ziola, present board member, and Gale Steck and Ralph Reid, past chairpersons of SCC. Betty Thauberger chaired the committee and, as well, was a hired consultant to the committee. The committee first met on August 12, 1988.

In September, the committee (HRACC) went to work to try to find out who were the craft producers in the province; what they required to produce and market crafts in the province; and if they were interested and would support a craft marketing organization. This was to be done by a questionnaire distributed to as many craft producers as could be identified. The committee decided to split the questionnaire into a simple preliminary one which would return names, locations and a general indication of interest in a business and marketing association. The second questionnaire would be a complete craftsperson profile and would follow. Focus groups in Regina and Saskatoon were to be part of the information gathering done by the committee.

Without a doubt both the questionnaire and the focus group sessions stirred up interest and raised the possibility of the emergence of a craft business association in the minds of those responding. Hindsight being the wonderful thing that it is, the committee could now

look back and see that neutrality about the concept of a marketing organization was not its strong point. All the feedback coming to the committee was in favour of the emergence of such an organization; even discussions with individual board members led one in this direction. We were also very aware that there was a steam engine building up pressure on the siding.

At this point other happenings tended to obscure the main plot. A reported chance encounter by chairperson Betty Thauberger resulted in an expression of interest in the committee's work from Dr. David Rothwell, Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Tourism. The possibility of a craft operation in the Moose Jaw CP train station, a historic building now almost vacant, was mooted. The committee, realizing it could take no action on its own called in additional SCC board members, specifically the chairman Charley Farrero, Doug Frey and the executive director, Terry Schwalm, to meet with government representatives and Pendragon Consulting team who were investigating uses for the CP station. At this meeting on October 14 at the Premiers Office in Saskatoon, the SCC indicated that no commitment could be made by their organization and this was later confirmed by letter to the HRACC committee. Admittedly the timing was tight, a decision was required by January 31, and the SCC board could not really jump into a commitment to rent, buy or occupy anything without going to its members at an annual meeting.

During November the committee proceeded to mail out the questionnaire letting the Moose Jaw station incident fade for the time being. Responses dribbled back at a slow rate, but showed positive support for the idea of a business marketing association even in early tabulations. Eventually 323 were returned — a small sample by anyone's judgement.

On December 10, the HRACC committee made a formal presentation to the SCC board. Armed with the preliminary results of the first of the two proposed questionnaires and the focus discussion results, the committee felt there were very strong indications from both SCC members and craft producers in general that "craft producers would like to see set up a craft business/marketing organization complimentary to but separate from the SCC". Later, final compilation of the data from the question about a marketing organization would result in 80% of all respondents replying yes (85% of SCC members, 91% and 92% respectively of full and part-time craft producers). Ralph Reid made the formal presentation to the board suggesting that there seemed to be strong support for the formation of a craft business association and there was growing pressure from several groups, identified by questionnaire and focus group sessions, to proceed with formation of a craft business/marketing association separate from the SCC.

A NEW MARKET

Susan Robertson Terry Schwalm

On Friday, February 3, 1989, at 7:00 a.m., pitch black and 39° below, Terry Schwalm, Executive Director, and Susan Robertson, Marketing Consultant, set out to load and drive a van full of craft products, display equipment and related information to the Albert Gift Show organized by Southex in Edmonton. The lock on the storage shed door was frozen and the door had to be completely removed, however, once the display equipment was in the van, the rest went fairly smoothly.

The SCC had been offered a very good rate on booth space and decided early in January to participate in the show. Marketing members, who were sent a letter describing the show and outlining expectations, responded enthusiastically. In the end, fourteen members were to be included in this exciting pilot project.

Arriving at Southex around 4:00 p.m., we expected to find utter chaos, but were pleasantly surprised by the experienced management of the move-in period. The SCC had three 10'x10' booths adjacent to each other and Charley Farrero's shelving fitted the space nicely. We also used SCC table top display cases and participants' lights. The "Craftmen's Choice" section contained 25 booths and the SCC was complimented by show organizers and other exhibitors for having one of the best displays in the area.

Bright and early Sunday morning, we painted on our most charming smiles and set off to work. At 9:00 a.m. the crowds began filtering in and they were there to do business. As the show is very large and contained in two buildings on three levels, many were doing "the rounds" first, marking down what interested them for later decision making. More experienced buyers would buy on the spot. Sunday was, without a doubt, the busiest day with a total of \$4,198.15 in orders.

Monday and Tuesday had sporadic spurts of buyers. They seemed to be "shopping" more and comparing prices. You would think that buying would be easy to do with only 25 booths of craft, but these people were buying from a show of massive proportions. Sales on these days were \$2,643.70 and \$3,207.90 respectively. On Wednesday, things picked up a little as buyers madly flew through the area placing last minute orders, totalling \$3,275.40.

A trend that show manager Peter Henderson noticed is the buyers' desire for a product that is unique, and

well crafted. Encouragement came regularly from the buyers, as they welcomed the opportunity to buy crafts and to buy a number of different crafts in one location. There were some other craft booths. When asked why they were not designated by the Craftsmen's Choice banner, we were told that they did not meet the criteria set out by Southex; jurying was done by representatives from Southex and the craft community.

Another interesting thing to note is that not only retail owners come to this show. We met several gallery owners — some with adjoining shops, some looking for craftspeople for exhibition purposes. Corporate consultants were also amongst the throngs of buyers. They were interested in finding high quality items and people interested in commission work. Distributors were there in abundance and for those who may wish the personal touch (ie. an agent), this is the place to find them.

There are some areas in which the SCC can be of assistance to our members. Packaging was not so much troublesome as inconsistent. Some members use crates, others use boxes (with and without markings), some use paper, some use styrofoam, and so on. A seminar in packaging would be of benefit to some. Pricing is another area where members asked for assistance, specifically for an explanation of the wholesale/retail margin. "Terms and Conditions" for purchases were different for each participant, (i.e. minimum order, warranty, shipping, terms of payment). We had a small booklet that included a page on each craftsman with a short biography, product and price list, as well as the "Terms and Conditions". The booklet was extremely well received by the buyers. For some who were unable to purchase or were just looking at this time, it was an advantage to have something they could take home with them. Many buyers were pleased to know that they could personally contact the craftsman at any time.

All in all, the experience was very positive. When entering a new marketplace, one always likes to make a good impression. The buyers expect professionalism and we must deliver that. The craftspeople who took part in this project were pleased with the results and many have stated they would like to return. The buyers also need to see the same craftspeople repeatedly to be convinced that we are there to do business. This show may not be for everyone, but there are certainly some members who can benefit from participating in it.

BREAKDOWN OF PURCHASES

Medium	Participants	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Total
Functional Pottery	4	\$ 614.25	\$ 653.10	\$ 343.40	\$ 341.40	\$1,952.15
Glass	1	\$ 292.00	\$ 278.00	\$ 602.00	\$ 276.00	\$1,448.00
Sculptural Pottery	2	\$1,379.40	\$ 506.60	\$ 276.00	\$ 721.00	\$2,883.00
Jewellery	3	\$ 589.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 787.00	\$1,904.00	\$3,280.00
Fibre	1	\$1,205.00	\$ 555.00	\$ 82.00	\$ 0.00	\$1,842.00
Wood	3	\$ 118.50	\$ 651.00	\$1,117.50	\$ 33.00	\$1,920.00
Total	14	\$4,198.15	\$2,643.70	\$3,207.90	\$3,275.40	\$13,325.15

Average order = \$201.90

Average total sales/participants = \$951.80

gallery schedule

The Collection from Maxwell House Handmade Coffee Services

Opening: April 28

April 29 to May 25, 1989

This is a touring show organised by the Ontario Crafts Council and sponsored by General Foods. The Coffee Sets of 26 Canadians from coast to coast were purchased by General Foods from this juried competition as the nucleus of their permanent collection and all will be on display in the gallery.

Woman Words

Opening: May 26

May 27 to June 22, 1989

Martha Cole and Connie Mitchell both work with fabric — layering, collaging, appliqueing — and share a love of words and books. Images and words will be integrated in their works which will speak with separate but complementary voices.

Functional Sculpture

Opening: June 23

June 24 to July 20, 1989

The members of the Prairie Sculptors Association will experiment with function in their sculptures. Many media will be used including clay, stone, wood and granite.

The Wood Show

Opening: August 4

July 22 to August 10, 1989

An exhibition that goes hand in hand with the Contemporary Furniture Design and Technique Conference being held in Saskatoon Aug. 5 to 7. The work shown will be by the Instructors and Organisers of the Conference. Five of these are outstanding woodworkers from the U.S.A. and the U.K., the rest are talented Canadians.

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery

Open daily: 1:00 - 5:00

1231 Idylwyld Drive N., Saskatoon (corner of Idylwyld & 34th)

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery exhibition proposals are accepted at any time. For more information or applications contact Marigold Cribb, Gallery Co-ordinator.



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