

# THE CRAFT FACTOR

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# VESSELS

Muttart Art Gallery, Calgary May 1990

text by Franklyn Heisler, Curator

A distinguishing factor separating art and craft, so often pointed out, is the perception that art has a more spiritual nature. In addressing the issues of an art object's inherent value, it is important to accept that its translation, as art or otherwise, is in the hands of the viewer. However, the argument that art is more valuable and the experience of art more pure continues to be the focus of attention. The historical lines dividing art and craft are drawn by arguments of language and cultural difference. For instance, European-based attitudes exclude the spiritual potential of utility in art.

The lack of recognition of a craft-based object as art reflects a lack of education. A work of art is constructed using the basic formal elements, and so too is a craft object. Art in any form bridges a gap between what we know and what there is to be discovered. In the case of a vessel the assumption that it is not art is made on the basis of utility. It is this utility, however, that makes certain vessels 'art,' for through the integration of function (utility) and form a spiritual essence can be reached.

For the past 40 years, contemporary vessel-makers in North America have seen dramatic ideological changes. They have altered the forms and purposes of handmade containers. Many artists continue to make functional containers; others are influenced by fine art and make vessels which fuse art and craft. They explore form and content relative to the container tradition and negate the confines of utility. Contemporary vessel-makers alter the forms of other cultures as a means of investigating their relationship to the past and to present ideals and social values.

Vessels have been an important vehicle through which we learn about the habits, rituals and changes of past cultures. Their shapes, surface patterns and methods of construction illustrate social values and technological sophistication. Also, vessels are basic to every society for domestic and ceremonial use, and therefore have a strong impact on daily, ritual and spiritual life.

Changes in technology affect the way objects are constructed. In Europe, the Industrial Revolution drastically changed the construction of vessels. A plentiful supply of cheap labour and assembly line production made it possible for the nineteenth century household to own a wide variety of domestic and decorative containers. These factory produced vessels virtually wiped out handmade vessels in England.

Job satisfaction deteriorated as individual workers no longer controlled the process of making an object from beginning to end. Eventually the sense of loss and

alienation from production spurred a movement to re-establish a link with handmade processes among a group of artists. Industrialization had freed the artist from the need to make objects specifically for daily use and ironically encouraged a return to the romanticism of making objects of spiritual and ceremonial significance by hand. The nineteenth century Arts and Crafts Movement in England led an enthusiastic revolt against the coldness of the technological age. For artists, a recognition of the importance of personal vision combined with the awareness of the significance of handmade objects laid the groundwork for twentieth century vessel makers in Europe and North America.

Many artists responded to changes in the container tradition with an attempt to make the language of discourse more specific. The generic term 'vessel,' which refers to a hollow receptacle, has become a specific term which implies that a vessel is sculptural and incorporates spiritual and ritual functions. These objects may serve a limited utilitarian purpose, however, the utilitarian function is subordinate to the formal concerns. When utility is the foremost concern the term 'container' or 'pot' is used, even though sculptural qualities may be factors. Such distinctions between vessels, containers and pots serve as a means of clarifying intent rather than value.

The title for this exhibition, "Vessels" was chosen because of the sculptural nature of the work. Each of the Western Canadian artists, Lee Brady, Marigold Cribb and Michael Hosaluk from Saskatchewan; Crys Harse from Alberta; Micheline Larose, Georges Gamache and Kathryn Youngs from British Columbia draw inspiration from other cultures, traditional forms, craft history and contemporary society. Their materials—wood, clay, glass, paper, metal and willow—are traditional although their attitudes may not be. "Vessels" provides an opportunity to view the works in relationship to both container traditions and sculpture.

The pieces by Marigold Cribb, Michael Hosaluk and Kathryn Youngs are quite abstract. When a vessel form is rendered non-functional, the aspiration of the artist is to utilize the container's form for reasons other than utilitarian. The artist's interpretation is an abstraction of traditional functional containers. By denying the object a utility and distancing it from the customary format, the importance of the form itself is heightened. The idea of a container becomes the subject, as the figure is to other artists. In the case of Cribb, Hosaluk and Youngs none of the pieces were made for use, but the existence of an interior space, either real or illusionary, establishes and clarifies both subject and intent.

photo courtesy Muttart Art Gallery

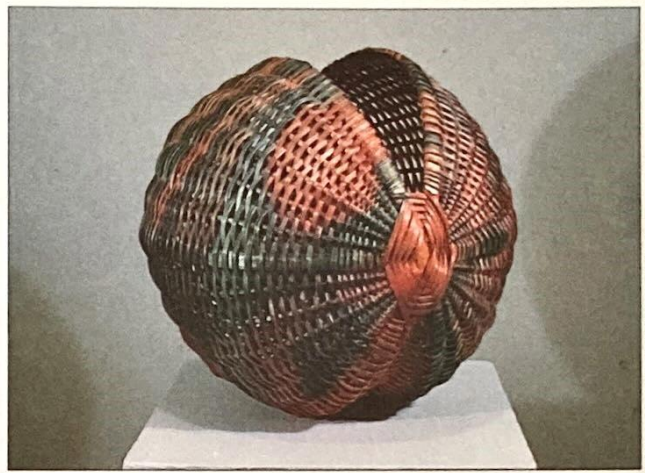
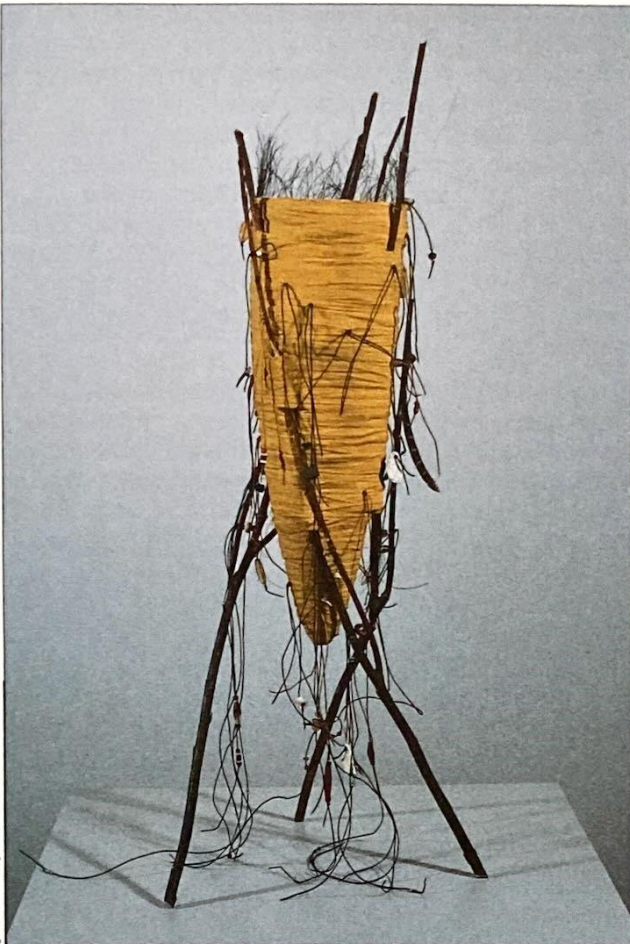


photo courtesy Muttart Art Gallery

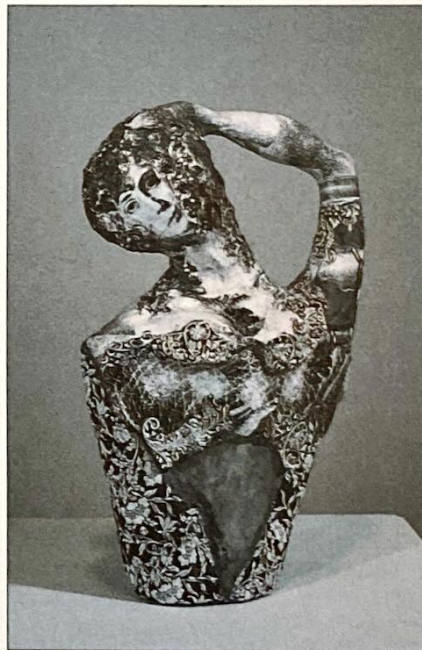


photo courtesy Muttart Art Gallery

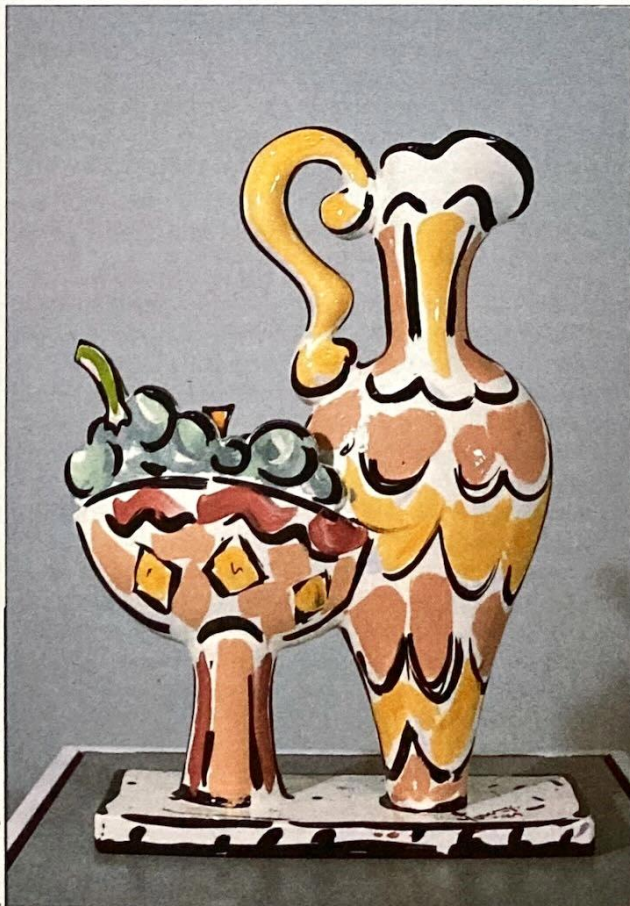
top left:  
**Michael Hosaluk** *Tribute* Cloth, plastic, glue, linen thread, willow, beads, horsehair 14x5in. 1990

top right:  
**Crys Harse** *Ball* Wicker, fabric dye 19in.dia. 1989

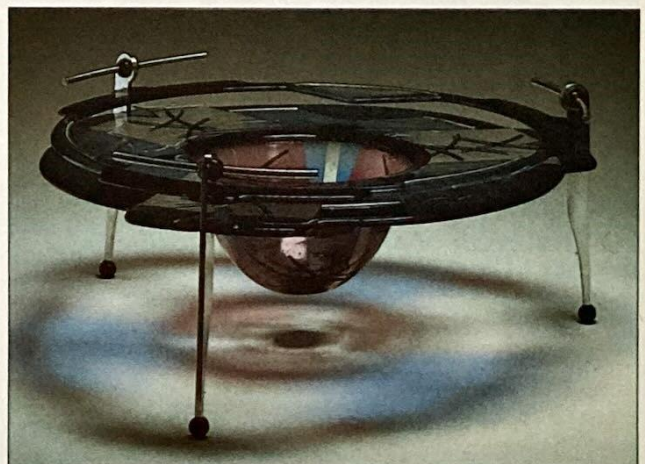
centre:  
**Micheline Larose, Georges Gamache** *La Femme Noir* Papier Maché 12x8x5in. 1990

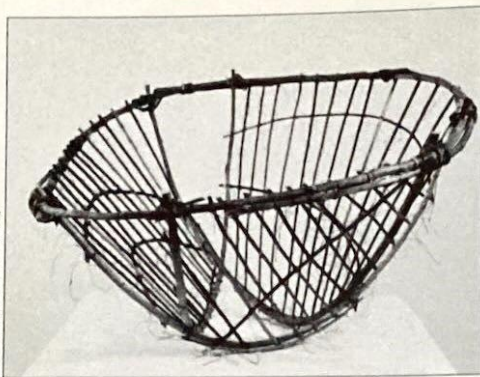
below:  
**Lee Brady** *Cassandra Bowl* Glass 17x6in. 1990

photo courtesy Muttart Art Gallery



**Kathryn Youngs** *Still Life: Pitcher with Grapes* Earthenware 21 x 14 x 6in. 1990





**Marigold Cribb** *Holding* Many types of branches, wax thread  
26in. 1990

The pieces by Lee Brady, George Gamache, Micheline Larose and Crys Harse can serve as containers, but they reflect the artists' concerns with both form and function. The potential use of their containers offers an opportunity for personal and intimate contact with the object. Though their works function, they are not mass produced; each is an original.

Lee Brady depends on formal elements to relay the visual power of the work. The surfaces and forms of his pieces are developed by layering sheets of coloured glass and painting lustre to embellish and define the surface. In both the non-objective and narrative works the integration of surface and form is essential. In *Nesting Bowl 1* recognizable images (painted feathers, egg shapes and linear elements formed by wire and two-dimensional drawn lines) construct a literal, poetic reference to a bird's nest. The less familiar non-objective and abstract surface patterns are made accessible through the familiar bowl form. Brady's pieces, although sculptural, invite contact and set the stage for celebration.

Micheline Larose and Georges Gamache work together with papier maché. Papier maché has been used as a sculpture material in many countries for centuries. It was first discovered by Europeans in China during the time of Marco Polo. Since the Italian Renaissance, it has been used to make a variety of objects such as masks, toys, furniture, decorative mouldings and to construct entire houses. Larose and Gamache's decorative vessels have functional limits due to the nature of the materials. Their vessels range from simple shapes with painted surfaces, to ornate shapes with lavish designs taken from newspapers, magazines and patterns photocopied from books. These whimsical sculptured forms exude a mood of celebration. The element of humour is essential in this work. The painted surfaces vary from transparent washes to more opaque colour, while others are covered with a collage of complex patterns. The combination of these patterns present a playful portrayal of cultural nuances as seen in the European themes taken from classical or folk Italian and 19th century French or English country scenes.

Crys Harse's interest in vessels began with basketry. The natural rhythms, movement and linear structure of willow and grasses became prime motivators. Harse often explores the potential of materials through sculptural forms. There has been a recent shift away from basketry to mixed-media and the use of metal dominates her contribution to this exhibition. Her intimate metal containers explore the vessel format as a sculptural entity within the context of limited function. Her work reflects the relationship that exists when one carries the concern of a tradition while searching for a personal identity.

Marigold Cribb uses a wide variety of materials—bamboo, handmade paper, wire, willow, pine needles and bark—to construct her works. Cribb's forms vary considerably in style and content. The strength in her vessels lies in the formal structure and the articulation of the interior. Each object's interior is unique. Some are open cage-like structures, others confining and constrictive spaces. Cribb's work touches our senses through the use of materials, textures and forms. These vessels, like formalist sculpture, depend on the significance of their form to serve in nourishing the soul. However, unlike formalist sculpture, there is no attempt to dematerialize the constructions.

Michael Hosaluk's mixed media vessels draw upon a variety of spiritual, ritual and ceremonial traditions, old and new. Growing up near a reservation, he became aware of how indigenous peoples use natural forms and materials to symbolize and enhance their beliefs and ceremonies. Many of Hosaluk's vessels begin with a central structure upon which he adds beads, bone, sticks, feather and porcupine quills to develop cultural nuance. Unlike many artists influenced by native cultures Hosaluk's pieces have a spirituality of their own. Working with the romantic implications of both materials and forms, Hosaluk searches through the past to explore the present. The resulting delicate and often fragile vessels embody some fundamental characteristics of a personal ritual and spiritual ceremony.

Kathryn Youngs, who was trained as a printmaker, constructs shallow, three-dimensional, still lifes from earthenware clay. Youngs' sculptures depict domestic vessels, such as cups, fruit bowls, vases and pitchers, presented singly or in groupings, sometimes with fruit and vegetables. The bold line and colour of her forms are influenced by Picasso, Matisse and Max Beckmann. Through an altering vantage point these vignettes mimic the spatial concerns of cubist artists such as Picasso. Her use of graphic lines and cut-out shapes emphasizes the two-dimensional. It is this quality that connects her work to the tradition of still life painting. Similar to the way still life in painting establishes place and interprets the objects, Youngs portrays the vessel form and separates it from use.

"Vessels" presents a dialogue on the functional, spiritual and sculptural concerns of these artists. The individual visions, illustrated in these works, refer to the history and vitality of this age old art form. As in past vessel traditions, the works in this exhibition are an important visual tool in cultural realization. The complexity of issues, diversity of form and individual ideals reflect our modern society.

## INCITE 90: THE CRITICAL PROCESS

a report by Sandy Cameron

The role of critical analysis is central to artistic endeavour. For three intense and creative days, August 24 to 27, the Saskatchewan Craft Council's Incite 90, a participatory conference exploring the critical process, was held at St. Peter's Abbey, on the southeast edge of Muenster. Co-ordinator Anne McLellan and the Incite committee brought together twenty-eight craft council members with four resource people to apply the critical process in two workshops—one on writing, the other the production of an installation.

The weekend opened with slide/talk presentations from all four resource people. Conference participants then chose which of the two workshop groups they would join. "Margot and I were afraid we might end up with three or four people interested in writing. We ended up with about half the group," Peter White said. Saturday and Sunday were spent in the two groups, with the whole conference coming together on Monday morning to share and define the various experiences within the critical thinking theme.

Saskatchewan sculptor Joe Fafard and Calgary ceramicist Greg Payce set out the guidelines for an installation piece. There was a restricted range of materials. "We then threw the process open to the decision of the participants," Fafard said, "We were trying to leave as much room for creativity as possible which means a high level of anarchy was built into the system." The installation group spent most of the first morning in a detailed discussion about their project, its placement, its theme and the process of decision-making to be adopted. A suggestion of "landscape" as the theme was expanded, through discussion, to the broader concept of "environment."

"The real benefit of the project is the intensity of the process they are involved in. Here we have experienced arts and crafts people involved with each other in a totally different context than their normal work habits," Joe Fafard said. For Humboldt potter Mel Bolen, the most instructive parts of the weekend workshop were the initial group discussions and the implementation of the group plan working in teams of two. "Doing something neither of us (Mel and his partner Angie Hanple from Prince Albert) do, working with materials that we never use in our individual production, and working with a person we'd never known was really exciting. It's the first time I've ever done anything like this."

*We are inhibited by certain kinds of concepts about critical thinking . . . underneath all that fancy prose . . . is a set of ideas and sometimes those ideas are well thought out and sometimes they aren't.*

In the writing workshop Margot Coatts, an exhibition organizer and writer from Middlesex, England, and Peter White, curator/director of Regina's Dunlop Art Gallery, worked with a group of craftspeople examining the role of critical thinking in a variety of writing about the arts. The writing workshop examined articles, reviews and exhibition catalogues. Many of the participants looked for the first time at the assumptions behind the articles, for hidden agendas on the part of the writers and whether the writings had real meaning beyond their form.

After analysing an article as a group and then analysing a range of articles individually and reporting back to the group, the thirteen participants chose writing assignments. About half the group interviewed the installation workers, while the other half designed an exhibition from the works that craftspeople had brought and then wrote a description or rationale for the show curated.

*The exercise forced people to make decisions based on critical thinking and analysis and allowed them to discover their own high level of articulation and erudition.*

"The exercise forced people to make decisions based on critical thinking and analysis and allowed them to discover their own high level of articulation and erudition," Peter White said. "I think that people don't recognize in a way that they have it in them. Perhaps one of the things we found is that we are inhibited by certain kinds of concepts about critical thinking; that we think that it has to have a certain tone, level, loftiness, density and perhaps even obscurity to be credible. On the contrary, critical thinking is a much more direct process. Underneath all that fancy prose . . . is a set of ideas and sometimes those ideas are well thought out and sometimes they aren't."

The combination that came together at St. Peter's Abbey for the last weekend of August seems to have been ideal. Creative resource people, dedicated craftspeople and the opportunities presented led to a clearer understanding of the role of critical thinking and analysis in the life of an artist. "There is a perception with craft that there isn't as much critical thinking in the process as there is in the visual arts," said Peter White. "The changing kinds of knowledge and perception that are current in the art world demand that critical analysis, and the crafts are a part of that world."

Sandy Cameron is a Regina free-lance writer.

# JUST LOOKING THANKYOU

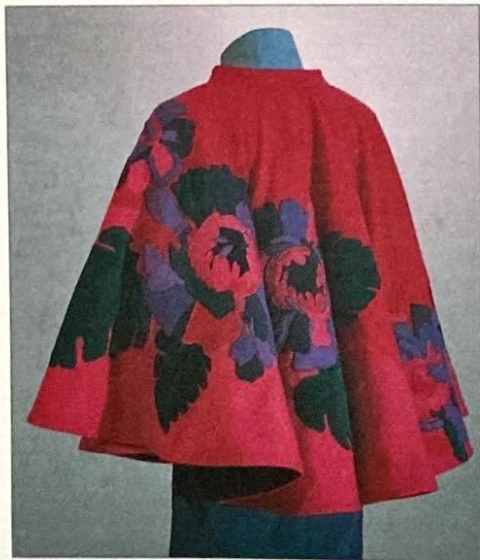
Phyllis Baker Gordon Snelgrove Gallery, Saskatoon June 1990

by Yvonne Yuen

The exhibition of work by Phyllis Baker consisted of eight garments executed in various fabrics but incorporating a common floral theme. The artist's passion for flowers is apparent not only in the design of the garments but in the names she has chosen for them. The three most exciting pieces were *Chrysanthemums*, *Lilacs and Roses* and *Poppies*.

*Chrysanthemums* is a garment which maintains a traditional look but is executed in some of the most vibrant colours imaginable. Red has always been a woman's colour and the purple indicates the royalty of treatment a woman deserves. The bold floral appliqué dominates the garment, particularly the cape. The balanced use of bold but harmonious colours is in perfect touch with the simple styling. The style of the garment is reminiscent of the 1940s and 1950s but the appliqué technique demonstrates the effective use of modern technology. The garment is executed in wool and polyester flannel, and Thai silk. The colours appeal to current tastes.

*Lilacs and Roses* (back cover) is styled after the traditional Central European folk dance costume. The green of the bodice and the pinks, reds and lilacs represent the freshness of spring. The applied lilac and rose flowers reflect the joyfulness of youth and the spirit of dance resulting in a strongly ethnic theme. While the costume is traditional in styling, the use of materials is not. The



Phyllis Baker *Chrysanthemums* Wool & polyester flannel, Thai silk Machine appliqué, satin stitch



Phyllis Baker *Poppies* Acetate shot taffeta, acetate taffeta, silks Machine satin stitching, hand appliqué

skirt and sleeves are made of iridescent polyester organza which has a plastic-like appearance. The body is made of silk taffeta. This garment transports you from the steppes of Central Europe into the Twilight Zone.

*Poppies* is my personal favourite. Phyllis described herself as a "period" designer concentrating on the styles of the 1940s and 1950s. *Poppies* is a strapless evening gown with a 1950s style fitted bodice. The seductive charcoal grey garment blossoms below the waist into a full-bodied skirt with a scalloped hem line. The vibrant colour and gigantic scale of the poppies would make Georgia O'Keefe envious. To me this garment represents a woman's step out of her traditional roles towards the goals of self-determination and independence. The design of the dress effectively bridges the generations. In short, it is wonderful.

The work of Phyllis Baker is strongly traditional. The techniques and craftsmanship are superb. While a number of her pieces successfully combine traditional styles with modern materials and techniques, some pieces could be considered anachronistic.

Yvonne Yuen is a fashion designer who also runs a design and sewing school in Saskatoon.

# CRAFTBOOKS

by Miriam Caplan

Whatever your craft, in colour, design and ideas the objects in these books provoke and enhance creative inspiration, and enlarge an appreciation of the variety and universality of craft.

These books were chosen from the collection of craft books and magazines at the Fine and Performing Arts Department, Frances Morrison Library, Saskatoon. If your library does not have these books you can request them through inter-branch loans.

## More Glorious Knitting

Most knitters need no introduction to Kaffee Fassett. Fassett's first book, *Glorious Knitting*, set the knitting world on its heels with photographs of garments in dynamically lush colours and painterly designs. Oriental carpets were lifted off the floors, paintings were taken from the walls and all elements of the visual world were inspiration for a glorious colour and design palate. Knits became a wearable art form.

In *Family Album*, Fassett in association with Zoe Hunt offers even more clothing suggestions. Organized into chapters by motifs such as squares and plaids, circles and dots, stripes and boxes, flowers and bows, the authors present a superb array of garments for all ages. Children's cardigans, pullovers, skirts and pants along with adult clothing are pictured and knitting directions given. If you think this is just another book giving knitting patterns, you need only randomly open the book to any colourful page to be struck by a wonderful sense of joie de vivre. Each garment, each design, each backdrop is carefully choreographed to display a rich variety of colours which have a spontaneity and sense of fun to stimulate even the most casual reader.

Just as Kaffee Fassett applied his art background to clothing design, any craft person can apply the ideas here to his or her craft. Colours and designs are juxtaposed together enriching one's imaginative repertoire. By the artful arrangement of the colours, designs and backdrops in each photograph, Fassett presents a whole new range of creative possibilities.

Fassett, Kaffee and Zoe Hunt. *Family Album: Knitting for Children and Adults*. London: Century, 1989.

## The Eccentric Teapot

On the cover of this book is a white, porcelain teapot in the shape of a bellhop striding by carrying a suitcase. Wacky and fun with lots of visual puns and tongue-in-cheek metaphors is probably the best description of Clark's book. Part of the irony and humour lies in the contrast between the social function of the tea party and the visual parody in the teapots.

Clark has included teapots from different cultures and different ages that have a modernity which make them fit right into contemporary society. Pictured on one page is a stoneware teapot three inches high that looks like a wrapped package with a knot at the top. It is squarish in shape, dark in colour with flecks of gold, a rectangular spout and a handle resembling a C-clamp. The date of the pot is 1645.

On the facing page is another pot using the same idea of a wrapped package. It is 11¼ inches high, more vertical in shape with a body and spout that appear to be wrapped in clay paper and then tied with clay string. This teapot was made in 1982. Only physical time separates these two examples of the same concept.

Garth Clark has brought together numerous examples of humour, satire and lighthearted whimsy from different ages and cultures. *The Eccentric Teapot* shows the similarities of the aesthetic, domestic tradition of crafts throughout the world as well as the unifying force of humour and satire.

Clark, Garth. *The Eccentric Teapot: Four Hundred Years of Invention*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1989.

## Interlacing: the Elemental Fabric

Interlacing is the generic term used for fabric constructions where each element passes over and under the other elements that cross its path. To be even more precise, knotting, plaiting and weaving are the three basic means of interlacing. It is this exactness and precision of terminology that Larson strives for in this book. Only with clear definitions can we communicate with different societies and understand the relationship between cultures.

Starting with containers, Larson carefully analyses all the means by which one can join two or more elements. He begins by classifying the different types of interlacing both by the number of elements as well as by whether they are two-dimensional or three-dimensional. Each process is carefully described and illustrated with diagrams as well as pictures of the objects themselves.

Again and again, Larson juxtaposes the unfamiliar with the familiar, the mundane with the exotic. Different cultural interpretations of the same techniques highlight the dissimilarities amidst similarities. To demonstrate a form of braiding, there is a person wearing a dance mask made in the U.S.A. on one page while on the facing page there is a Sri Lankan wearing another kind of face mask. Each serves its purpose, but the different cultural backgrounds are reflected in the kind of designs that are created for each mask.

Larson's careful graphic analysis helps one not only understand the construction and design of interlaced crafts, but also reaffirms one's appreciation of the universality of humankind.

Larson, Jack Lenor. *Interlacing: the Elemental Fabric*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1986.

## Contemporary Manufactured Furniture

In Italy in 1960, Dino Gavina started a furniture company based on the premise that there were enough customers willing to buy expensive, high quality manufactured furniture in contemporary styles for him to establish a business. His assumptions turned out to be correct. In *The Adventure of Design: Gavina* Vercelloni, using numerous illustrations, traces the development of Gavina SpA furniture.

Gavina looked internationally for designers who reflected his ideas about modern aesthetics and commercial manufacture. One of the first people he approached was Marcel Breur whose principal pieces were made during the Bauhaus movement. Breur's designs retained a modernity and freshness which made them contemporary classics. Gavina SpA's commercial success began when a Breur chair design was industrially produced in significant numbers.

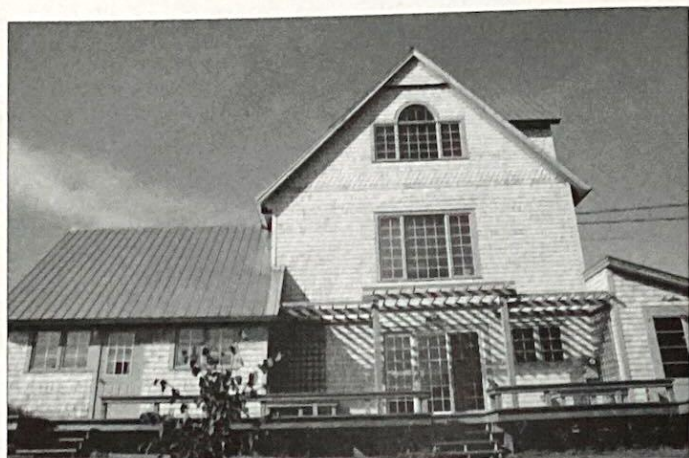
There are numerous photographs of Gavina SpA's products throughout the years. Modern industrial materials ranging from steel tubes to plastics were explored as well as a variety of original uses for fabrics. Various drawings of designs completed as well as the failures which were scrapped show the stages in the process of designing and creating works.

The numerous candid photographs of key personalities working or socializing can be regarded as a merit or a redundant feature, depending on one's interest. However, the book is worth perusing just to see some of the finest pieces of twentieth century, avant-garde contemporary furniture and its creators.

Vercelloni, Virgilio. *The Adventure of Design: Gavina*. New York: Rizzoli, 1989.

# THOUGHTS ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

by Peter Powning



Peter Powning's new studio in the New Brunswick countryside

I have been a potter for twenty years now. When I started out I was blithely unaware of any but the most obvious of health risks associated with my calling. In the ceramics class I attended we routinely used white lead with no precautions at all. Standard operating procedure in dusty areas was to squint or if the air was incredibly bad to hold your breath and run in and out of the room for fresh air. I do not think my experience is too much different from that of many others in the tangible arts.

As time went on I became more aware of the health risks I was running, principally as a result of inhaled dusts but also from ingestion and skin exposure to chemicals and solvents. Since I now incorporate a bronze foundry and glass casting operations in my studio I have added additional hazards. Two years ago I designed a new pottery studio and converted my old studio to a glass/bronze foundry. I tried in the design to make the building a safe and healthy place to work. Here are some of the things I did which may be of interest to others.

## Cleanliness first.

First off I wanted to reduce airborne dusts as much as possible. I designed all work areas so that tables and equipment were either on rollers or in closed cupboards so that thorough cleaning is possible on all exposed surfaces. The floors are vinyl tile or painted concrete and are kept clean with a thorough cleaning weekly. My old studio was a veritable nest of dust traps. The new one minimizes this problem.

I included a commercial central vacuum system which is filtered and then exhausted outside. Any fine particles of dust go outdoors. That eliminates the problem of having a vacuum cleaner picking up the big chunks but blowing all

the really hazardous particles back into the air circulating in the building. We never sweep. We vacuum first then wet mop with water and vinegar. Anything too big to vacuum gets scraped up with a big spatula. Sweeping puts too much dust in the air, even with sweeping compounds. We also try to stick to wearing coveralls, aprons or work smocks which we wash regularly in an old washing machine in the studio basement. Towels and rags are regularly washed as well. Having a clean studio is not only healthier it makes for a nicer place to work in. The creative funk does not get to the point where it drives me out of the building.

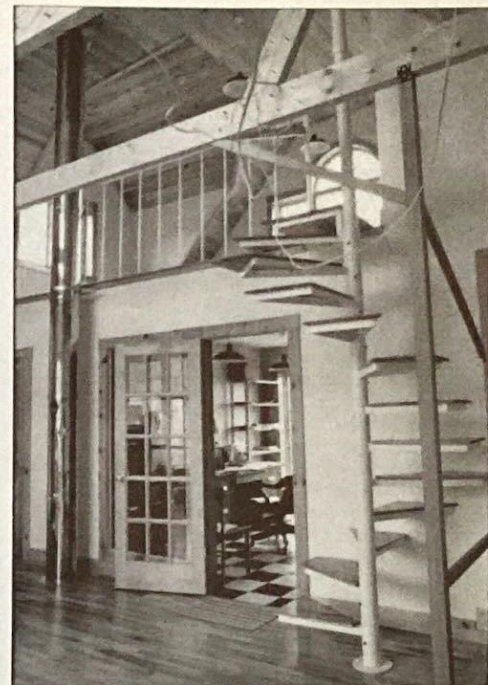
## The air we breath.

I incorporated a large air to air heat exchanger in the design of the building and retrofitted the two other shops with air exchangers too. These exhaust stale dirty air from the building and bring in fresh air from outside. They are designed so that about 80% of the heat from the outgoing air is recovered and warms the fresh incoming air. That means that the process is energy efficient compared to a simple exhaust fan. The system is designed so that my electric kilns heat the building when they are running without making the air in the building foul. The building is also heated with a forced air system which has an electrostatic dust precipitator in it. This is an electronic filter which is meant to reduce airborne dust electrostatically and seems to be quite effective. Since the air exchanger is also running most of the time there is not much left for the filter to deal with. It does however fry any houseflies which get trapped in it with very smelly results, somewhat like burning hair. This is a mixed blessing. Malodorous fly ghosts.

I have two "dust" areas where especially dusty operations are done. One has a direct exhaust fan outside for mild weather. The other area uses another air exchanger pre-filtered by a powered cyclone type dust collector used in the jewelry industry. This is meant to prevent gumming up the air exchanger with crud. So far (it has been in use six years) it has worked well and is energy efficient. This system is attached to our sand blasting cabinet which can be a source of a very hazardous form of silica dust. By switching various collection hoses we manage to make this system deal with a variety of evils from welding and sand blasting to collecting fumes from hot patinas.

*Having a clean studio is not only healthier it makes for a nicer place to work in.*

I wear double barreled respirators with proper filters when dealing with dusts or fumes even when I am working in the dust hood area or, preferably, I use a fresh air supplied face mask although it means being tethered by an air hose. I have made several simple air supplied masks by adapting a belt mounted cartridge type respirator. I built a wooden box with an electric blower which is mounted in an area with a secure source of fresh clean air. This is connected to the face mask with flexible hose like that used for swimming pools and is about a 1 1/4" in diameter. This is all very cheap and effective as long as the air supply is good. I use this kind of arrangement during raku firing indoors where the smoke gets extremely thick. I cannot even smell a hint of smoke (unless the hose detaches as has happened once or twice).



There are commercial versions of this type of system available but they are not cheap and are no better than a home made rig as long as you use common sense and care in constructing your own. Because air is supplied to your face under slight pressure, supplied air systems are easier to wear for long periods; your lungs do not have to work against any filters or valves. You also do not have to worry about having the right cartridge or filter for whatever it is you are working with. Still it requires common sense not to create situations where failure of the mask puts you at risk.

## Find substitutes for, or stop using extremely hazardous materials.

There are some materials that we should just stop using under any circumstances. Asbestos, probably lead, cadmium, many solvents, the list is long. I think it is important to know about the materials that I work with. I get Material Safety Data Sheets on all the substances I deal with and read them. I find out what I can about hazards through art books or other sources. I recommend becoming informed about general hazards by buying and reading books on the subject. It is a pain in the neck but I am afraid it is necessary. I have just gone through the process of eliminating talc from my clay body. The only reason for doing this was because of a serious potential health threat that talc may pose. I did not want to do it. It took time and the generous help of my clay supplier and resulted in a more expensive clay body that lacks some of the characteristics my old body had but I felt it was necessary as a safety precaution. There are whole ranges of patina chemicals I would like to use but will not because I cannot safely handle them or dispose of them with my equipment.

My attitude has changed from an almost complete lack of concern to one of overwhelmed impotence to one of feeling that I had better at least make a good try at understanding what I am exposing myself, my family and the people who work with me to. If you feel overwhelmed by all of this you are not alone. My best advice is to tackle one problem at a time and gradually tackle all the most hazardous problems first.

The following are publications and organizations that I have found helpful:

**The Artist's Complete Health and Safety Guide**  
Monona Rossol, Allworth Press, NYC, NY \$16.95 US  
Can be ordered through:

ACTS, 181 Thompson St. #23, New York, New York 10012

The above should be an excellent guide. I have just gotten off the phone with the author and she says the book will have a good bibliography, entries by material, cross referencing for various disciplines, and a layman's guide to the chemistry needed to help to understand what is going on with the materials we use and their interaction with our bodies. It is coming out August 1, 1990 so should be very current. I am sorry I cannot review the book but I have attended one of her workshops. She can be pretty scary and pedantic but she has a passion for her subject and a clear understanding of artists and how we work. I believe that this should be a very worthwhile book.

**Health Hazards Manual for Artists**, Michael McCann PhD. Published by the Foundation for the Community of Artists. The most recent edition is 1981.  
280 Broadway/Suite 412, NYC, NY 10007,  
212-227-3770 phone

Information source:  
Center for Occupational Hazards, Inc.  
Michael McCann, Director, 56 Pine St.,  
New York, NY 10005

**Contemporary Patination**  
by Ronald Young, Sculpt-Nouveau, 21 Redwood Drive,  
San Rafael, CA 94901

This book deals with the patination of metals, primarily bronzes and copper. It has good sections on safety and includes Material Safety Data Sheets on the chemicals recommended.

ACTS: Arts, Crafts and Theater Safety  
181 Thompson St. #23, New York, New York 10012,  
1-212-777-0062

Source for safety information, they will send information on specific concerns that you have. Monona Rossol is the editor. Subscription is \$10 US for 12 issues, (one year).

*Peter Powning is a potter and sculptor who lives in New Brunswick. He talked about studio design and safety at the 1989 "Hot" Incite.*

## SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY



**813 Broadway, Saskatoon**  
Open weekdays from 10am-5pm  
Saturday, Sunday 1-5pm

### GALA OPENING

**Friday, December 14, 1990, 7pm**

Our honorary patroness, the Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan Sylvia Fedoruk O.C.S.O.M. will open the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery and Saskatchewan Craft Council Offices at 813 Broadway

### SOMETHING NEW ON BROADWAY

**Friday, December 14 to Tuesday, January 8**

Grand Opening Exhibition of the new Saskatchewan Craft Gallery. All media are represented in this exhibition of new work by provincial craftspeople. The exhibitors are all award winners from the last 15 years of our Dimensions exhibition. They have responded to this special occasion with enthusiasm and creative energy

### IN PLACE: CRAFT FROM SASKATCHEWAN

**Thursday, January 10 to Tuesday, February 5**  
**Opening: Friday, January 11, 7pm**

An exhibition of work selected by curator Wayne Morgan. Artists are Megan Broner, jewellery; Don Foulds, steel chairs; Michael Hosaluk, vessels; Kaija Sanelma Harris, tapestries; Brian Gladwell, furniture; Lee Brady, glass. The exhibition will travel for a year around Saskatchewan and then across Canada

### MEGAN BRONER • DOUG FREY NEW JEWELLERY

**Thursday, February 7 to Tuesday, March 5**  
**Opening: Friday, February 8, 7pm**

An exhibition of recent work by two of our best known jewellers.

### SCC TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS RITUALS AND RITUAL OBJECTS

**November/December, Estevan.**

### JUST LOOKING THANKYOU—PHYLLIS BAKER

**December 1-31**, Weyburn Arts Council,  
Allie Griffin Art Gallery;  
**January 7-24**, Maple Creek Arts Council,  
Jasper Cultural Centre;  
**February 1-22**, Shaunavon Arts Council,  
Grand Coteau Centre;  
**March 1-15**, Morse & District Arts Council,  
Morse Museum

## MANY HAPPY RETURNS



## THE CRAFT FACTOR 1975-1990

by Sandra Flood, Editor

Late in 1975, after the founding conference of the Saskatchewan Craft Council and its first board meeting in mid-November, a hand-typed xeroxed, 16 page 'newsletter' went out to the 67 founding and newly joined members and to "others interested in the development of crafts in the province". One of the four major proposals at the founding conference was to improve communications by producing a newsletter four times a year and eight bulletins interspersed between newsletters. These were to be "a vehicle for pulling together the province's craftspeople as well as transmitting timely information about all the craft and craft-related activity going on" (Vol.1/1). "We hope the newsletter will provide useful information for craftspeople; we also hope that craftspeople will start to contribute their ideas and information to the newsletter, so that a vital exchange begins," said the first editorial.

In a province where there was (and is) a high level of professional and amateur craft activity and where craftspeople were scattered over a wide area, the need for a vehicle of communication was obvious. It was also obvious from the beginning that if the SCC mandate was to promote quality craft the magazine, as the public face of the organization, should reflect the same high standards. These conditions and aspirations were not unique among provincial craft councils, what was unique in Saskatchewan was a provincial government who valued the contribution cultural activity has to make to society and had put in place the structures and money to support and encourage this. The second issue (Spring 1976) of the Saskatchewan Craft Council Newsletter was funded by a one year grant from the Department of Youth and Culture.



The third issue of the newsletter, "although judging by its bulk it's trying to be a magazine", had a heavy cover, 42 pages, was illustrated by drawings and (rather poor) black and white photographs, and although still typed was printed at SSRU Printshop. Articles on craft council activity, materials and media information, government arts policies, profiles of craftspeople, even recipes, had quickly expanded the number of pages. Typesetting and printing the newsletter was, no doubt, a response to the onerous burden put on the fledgling craft council and its volunteers of gathering, typing, xeroxing and putting together a newsletter. Like the craft council itself, The Craft Factor struggled with demands that exceeded its capacity to deliver; there was not enough volunteer time, money or member's contributions.

However from the beginning The Craft Factor has had a series of hardworking and dedicated editors. The first, Norma Morgan, edited the first newsletter as one of "two foolhardy board members and two hardworking SCC members doing all the work; on dining room tables, and living room floors". Five issues later the editor was "restricting her commitment to gathering, shuffling, and prettying up the information served, with the motivating promise of an honorarium from the board". Then for two issues Barry Lipton and Elly Danica joined forces to produce the magazine while SCC searched for a new editor, "creativity and dedication a must", offering the princely sum of "\$250 paid quarterly on publication". They found Paul Bettle, agriculture reporter for the Regina Leader Post, who with a varying group of co-editors, Marian Gilmour, Roscoe Bell and Kathy Kakatailo, saw The Craft Factor through the next year. In December 1978 Seonid MacPherson, a weaver and formerly information officer at the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources, became editor, to be succeeded in 1982 by Peggy Forde, a professional writer and editor, followed in 1984-85 by Michelle Heinemann, another professional writer. Each editor brought to the job far more time, energy, expertise and professionalism than could be paid for by SCC. In 1985, the longest standing employee position at SCC still only received an honorarium.

From the second issue on there was criticism of content, layout and focus. Responding to demand, to criticism, to the realities of magazine production (and the pursuit of excellence), the magazine constantly re-evaluated its purpose, content and format. In 1978, Paul Bettle wrote "not only stories but photographs to break up the dull grey pages some readers found so objectionable in the earlier edition. We have changed our head style, used a new body type and attempted to use more creative layout techniques. . . . Without participation, the magazine degenerates into a fragmented compendium of bits and pieces which frustrates everyone" (Vol.3/2). An issue later Paul Bettle was contemplating "rumors. . . that the SCC is considering a drastic revision in the format of The Craft Factor. . . . much less formal production, type written. . . . gestetnered or photo-copied. . . . some feeling on the board. . . . that the money it costs to produce the present magazine is not well spent . . . . difficult to justify spending \$1500 to produce a magazine when most craft people would be satisfied with a much simpler effort put out by volunteer labour". The outcome was a happy one for the magazine and the craft community. As "the face the SCC presents to the community at large and to other craft organizations", The Craft Factor was continued with a new layout, typeface and cover design, and with the content linked firmly to media, one media predominating in each issue. In 1979, SCC had 95 active and 76 subscribing members.

In 1984 when Michelle Heinemann came to the magazine, the magazine was again under attack. The council was facing cuts of more than 20% by their principle funding body Sask Trust and was in the process of buying the first craft council building. "Claims were made that articles were poorly written, uninformative and misinformed". "The areas of publications needs to be reviewed. Again because of the evolutionary process, The Craft Factor, once the vehicle for communiques and information between members, is beginning to lack direction. It will likely emerge serving another function. At best right now, SCC will try to reduce costs or at least stay on par" (Vol.9/1). Michelle Heinemann's task was "to assist SCC in redefining the

## *On its 15th anniversary The Craft Factor is an achievement worth celebrating. In it SCC has gone further than most other craft councils in an attempt to regularly deliver its programs to all members and to promote the work of provincial craftspeople.*

purpose of The Craft Factor"; her major aim was to ensure that The Craft Factor adhered to professional standards and would hold its own against any similar magazine.

Although the magazine remained more or less the same in layout, it was no longer predominately media orientated. It covered the range of SCC activity, topical issues, profiles and now included reviews of the regular exhibitions in the new craft council gallery. Dated information - exhibitions, calls for entry, workshops, markets and SCC events - now went out from the office in the form of a typed, xeroxed Bulletin.

I took over the editorship from Michelle early in 1986. With training and experience in art, crafts and art education, I hoped I could continue the good work Michelle had started and contribute to the broadening and deepening of magazine articles. Developments in the last four and a half years have included the addition of the Dimensions catalogue featuring the exhibition works in colour, and the development of that catalogue into an insert allowing an overrun for free distribution at the exhibition's venues. The Fall 1988 issue carried the catalogue for the SCC travelling exhibition "Collaborations" (with overrun) and had a full colour cover. A small budget surplus meant that the Winter 1988 issue also had a full colour cover and four pages of colour. Because colour is an integral consideration in any craftwork, it was decided to continue including as much colour as the budget would allow. It was also recognized that if we were to increase the number of subscriptions and bookstore sales, thus producing some revenue, colour was an advantage.

In 1986, after some searching we found the printers who currently produce the magazine, Houghton Boston. Craftspeople in their own right, Houghton Boston have actively supported our desire to produce the best possible quality magazine on a small budget. In response to the increasing amount of material being packed into a constant number of pages, in Fall 1989, I redesigned the format of the magazine. The SCC's new letterhead type Bodoni is now used for 'heads' and the body type is Plantin.

In 1990 the SCC again faces funding cuts of 20%, is in the process of buying a new building and questions are again being asked about the cost, production methods and necessity of having a magazine.

On its 15th anniversary The Craft Factor is an achievement worth celebrating. In it SCC has gone further than most other craft councils in an attempt to regularly deliver its programs to all members and to promote the work of provincial craftspeople. Only Ontario, affluent, with a much larger population, many craft colleges and with a lively and well-staffed Toronto-based crafts council has a comparable magazine (which also celebrates its 15th anniversary this year). Because of

distance, most of our members do not see SCC Gallery exhibitions or attend workshops or conferences. Only a quarter of our members are involved in markets. The Craft Factor (and Bulletin) is the only SCC program which goes automatically to all members. It promotes and reports and extends through articles, reviews and interviews all SCC programs. There are no permanent collections of historical or contemporary craft on display in the province and there are few national travelling exhibitions. There is no national craft magazine. The Craft Factor attempts to fill this gap by interviewing nationally and internationally recognized craftspeople, who come to the province as teachers or jurors, and by inviting them to write and show their work in the magazine. Above all The Craft Factor highlights the work and achievements of Saskatchewan craftspeople, fulfilling SCC's mandate to inform about and promote quality craft.

The Craft Factor does not only go to SCC members, it also goes to government departments and funding agencies, to other provincial and territorial craft councils and cultural organizations, to associated guilds, to libraries, galleries and craft colleges, to donors to the New Building Fund, and to those "others who are interested" in crafts and craftspeople. As to costs, Publications (The Craft Factor and Bulletin) falls into the middle range of SCC programs along with Exhibitions and the SCC Gallery.

In considering the original aims of the magazine, "transmitting information" may be, relatively, one of the easier functions. The "hope that craftspeople will start to contribute their ideas and information" proved to be the despair of successive editors. However great the desire for a dialogue, it may be an unrealistic expectation particularly where craftspeople's first concern is with making not writing. In an attempt to fulfill the spirit of that hope, for the past five years contributing writers have been, almost without exception, craftspeople or people working in visual arts, and the editor and committee have attempted to keep eyes and ears alert to issues of concern and interest.

As the current editor I would like to salute all who have contributed to this magazine over the past 15 years - the Publications committee members and chairpeople, the editors, writers, photographers, printers and above all, the craftspeople for whom and about whom this magazine is. Here's to the next 15 years!

*Please answer and return the questionnaire included in this issue of The Craft Factor. It is important, if the magazine is to maintain its present size and quality, that we are able to demonstrate member's support for this program to our funding agencies and others. In addition, it gives you the opportunity to influence what direction The Craft Factor should take by telling us what you enjoy in the magazine and what areas are not covered.*



# PILLARS

Cathryn Miller

Gordon Snelgrove Gallery, Saskatoon August 1990

by Shirley Spidla

In order to be a weaver, especially a tapestry weaver in Saskatchewan, one must have the same enduring tenacity that it takes to be a Saskatchewan farmer in the 1990s. Neither endeavour is likely to hold the position of top commodity in a market-driven economy. Cathryn Miller, who has been weaving since 1974, has proven in her recent exhibition that she has the enduring spirit required of an artist in this medium.

The title of her show "Pillars" symbolizes the focus of her recent work. At the artist's presentation on August 14 at the Snelgrove Gallery, Cathryn Miller talked about her preoccupation with the horizontal elements in her previous work, especially in her landscape pieces. Within the constraints of the grid structure of weaving, she has made a conscious effort to concentrate on the vertical element in this body of work. Her direction was strengthened by the creation of the stage set for *Uncle Vanya*, produced by Persephone Theatre last Fall. That design involved a grove of poplars, but it was the vertical figures of the actors that heightened Cathryn Miller's interest.

With this objective in mind, Cathryn Miller has chosen two techniques for her expressive forms, gobelin tapestry and an inlay method called 'half tapestry'. The half tapestry technique is done on a floor loom, and a common ground (weft) thread, shuttle thrown, is used throughout the piece, the work therefore develops evenly in a horizontal fashion. A variety of yarns are hand manipulated on top of the ground thread to make the images.

Cathryn Miller's concern for a better future and the desire for world peace inspired *Wishing Pillar: Papercranes* and *Peace Pillar*. Four cranes, portrayed in different tints of yellow, fly across a foreground of purple/blue which is used as the common ground thread. The background is mixed with magenta in a striped pillar fashion. Despite its charm, the regular placement of the birds and the in similarity of form does not create the tension necessary to maintain one's attention. *Peace Pillar* is composed of six vertical strands of paper cranes folded in the origami tradition. Cathryn Miller's fascination with the patterns created from folding the recycled paper and the multitude of colour variations makes this piece a logical inspiration for the other.

In *Pillars of Fire: Hot Peppers* the rhythmic variety of curved, elongated orange, orange-red and red shapes clustering at both edges of the frame and extending beyond it, demand our interest. The green tops of the fruit

accentuate the colour contrast of a wine red background. This message of heat is direct yet playful.

*The Wood Demon: Pillars of the Forest I* is the largest of the half tapestries and resembles the stage for Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. Related to it is *Poplars: Pillars of the Forest II*. It seems the size of these two works should have been reversed. *Poplars: Pillars of the Forest II* has the potential to command a larger statement. The dark, circular regions in the tree trunks are delightfully echoed in the yellow and blue circles of sunlight shining through the leaves of the trees. The white bark stands out against the crisp, green, undulating environment of the forest. In comparison *The Wood Demon: Pillars of the Forest I* appears flat, its uniformity is not enhanced by its size; the same idea in a smaller format would have greater appeal.

Half tapestry has a characteristic flatness because it is woven like yardage and it is less adaptable to intricate interpretations. The figure/ground relationship and yarn combinations must coalesce to express the artist's motif. The gobelin method allows for a more complex visual rendering. It does not rely on a common ground thread and is hand-built in an irregular fashion commanding the weaver's total involvement.

The gobelin tapestry *Pillars for Baba Yaga* is inspired by a Russian folktale about a witch in search of children's bones. For the mobility required to accomplish this task, her hut is attached to chicken's feet. These two exaggerated depiction complete in tones of variegated orange. The ominous atmosphere is accentuated by the large shadow cast over the field which forms the central area of the picture plane. The plain sky contrasts with the variegated areas and the contours of the landscape and the buildings, which represent Red Square in Moscow. The embroidery on the buildings seems superfluous. Using gobelin technique, Cathryn Miller has attained a sophisticated sense of depth within this piece while sharing her own version of this tale.

Cathryn Miller's careful attention to the structure and order of the gobelin method is particularly evident in *Pillars of the Family* and *Pillars of Industry*. The ability to imagine the unseen while adhering to the discipline of the medium gives the finished piece the basis of its power. Cropped images create ambiguity in both pieces. In the 1990s when men and women both strive to be emotionally supportive to children, *Pillars of the Family* (front cover) evokes a positive display of feelings of intimacy. The solid,



Cathryn Miller *Pillars of Fire: Hot Peppers* Warp cotton & polyester; weft wool Half tapestry 57x88cm.



Cathryn Miller *Caryatids: Pillars of Fashion* Warp cotton; weft wool Tapestry 64x100cm.

square shape of the piece is echoed in the symmetrical pose of an adult on a chair comforting a young child. The frontal view of the adult is cut off midway between the elbow and the shoulder. It is Cathryn Miller's delicate yet precise depiction of the hands, the extremities through which our emotions and desires pass, that is the essence of the portrait. The soft, muted colours compliment the sensitivity evoked. This piece shows Cathryn Miller at her most accomplished.

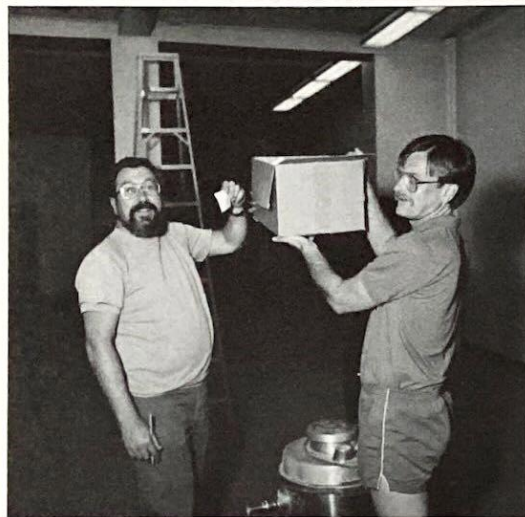
In *Pillars of Industry* the colour contrast is greater giving the edges more definition. A pair of very slim legs, perhaps female, wears work boots. The knees of the jeans and the laces of the boots embody the richness and complexity that can be conveyed by this medium and method. Surrounding the legs are a variety of tools in silhouette, dark fuchsia shapes on a plain grey ground. By alternating the warp thread in the meet and separate technique the suggestion of the toothed edge of the saw is both practical and effective.

*Pillars of Fashion* does not hold up to the same scrutiny as the other gobelin works. Perhaps it was meant to be the transition piece between the two techniques. The most compelling aspect is the gradation of the legs from light to dark blue while the ground shifts from dark to light red. A diamond pattern in which the weft turns back on the warp is incorporated over the entire piece. The red/blue contrast creates an overall richness and enhances the hard-edged image.

The combination of materials, techniques and ideas in this distinctive exhibition exposes the visual richness possible in constructed textile imagery.

Shirley Spidla is a tapestry artist. The photographs accompanying *The Language of Tapestry, An Interview with Archie Brennan, Summer 1990* were by Shirley Spidla.

# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE



## RAFFLE WINNERS

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| L. Eddolls, Saskatoon     | Turned Burl Bowl,<br>Michael Hosaluk          |
| Norman Wallace, Saskatoon | Handwoven Wall Hanging,<br>Pat Adams          |
| Pauline Larson, Saskatoon | Large Stoneware Vase, Mel Bolen               |
| Vivian Hay, Swift Current | Porcelain Bowl, Jack Sures                    |
| Grant Miller, Saskatoon   | Fused Glass Bowl, Lee Brady                   |
| Donna Bowman, Saskatoon   | Handmade Knife, Bill Schiller                 |
| Margaret Swan, Saskatoon  | Handwoven Blanket,<br>Kaija Sanelma Harris    |
| Della Kurulak, Saskatoon  | Porcelain Figurine,<br>Anita Rocamora         |
| Pat Kada, Atwater         | Etching on Handmade Paper,<br>Ursulina Stepan |
| Brian Hosaluk, Saskatoon  | Silver Brooch, Doug Frey                      |

## SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY & SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL OFFICES and RESOURCE CENTRE 813 Broadway

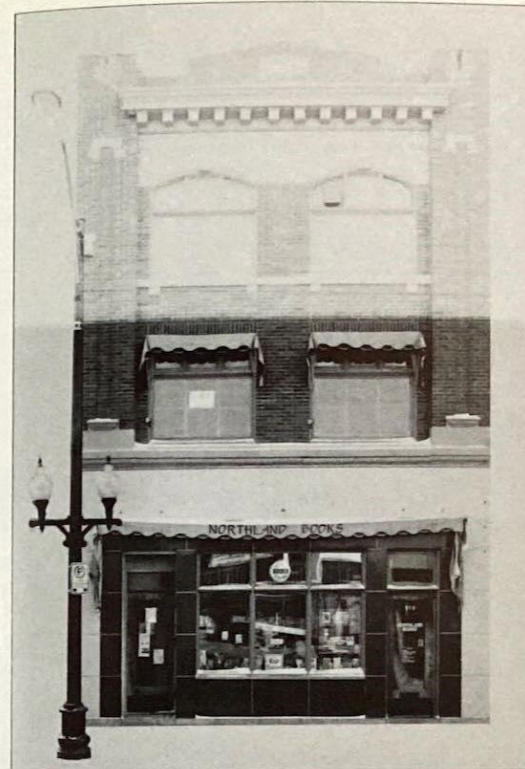
### GALA OPENING

Friday, December 14, 1990, 7pm

Our honorary patroness, the Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan Sylvia Fedoruk O.C.S.O.M. will open the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery and Saskatchewan Craft Council Offices. Come and celebrate!



Scenes from the fundraising auction held in the new SCC building on September 8



This photograph of our new building represents the total fundraising objective for the Building For The Future campaign. The solid area illustrates the amount we have obtained as of August 24, 1990, about 60% of our objective. The lighter area represents the amount that we still need to raise. Your efforts and your contributions can help make this a totally solid picture.

The Honourable Marcel Masse, Minister of Communications, talks with SCC Executive Director, Terry Schwalm and SCC Treasurer, Winston Quan at the craft council's new building on Broadway after announcing a contribution of \$72,500 towards its purchase and renovation.

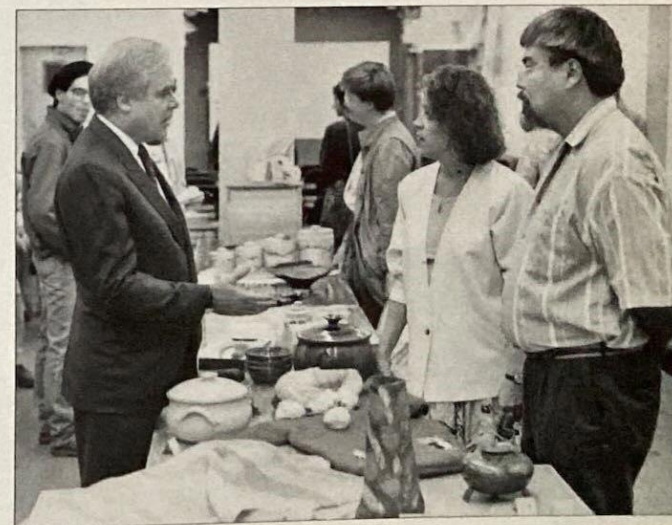
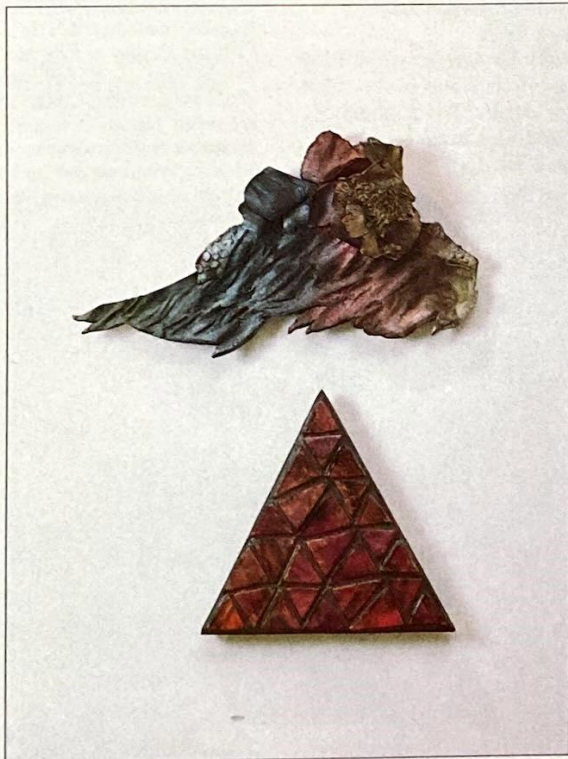
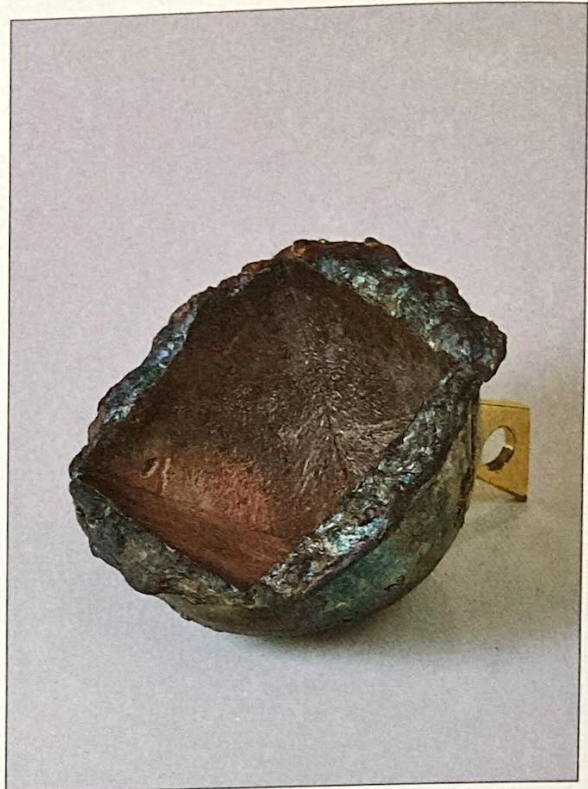


Photo credit: Bob Anderson, the Saskatchewan Mirror

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*top:*  
**Sandra Ledingham Polarity** Earthenware casting slip, raw sheepswool, metal shards, antiglaze, silver nitrate Cast, raku fired 9½ × 18½ × 3½in.

*below:*  
**Birute Ona Spink Potent with Resolution** Clay, acrylic, smoke, plywood, grout, lustre, ceramic sealant 16 × 22 × 5½in.

*top:*  
**Sandra Ledingham Feat of Fitting a Square Piece into a Round Hole** Earthenware casting slip, raw sheepswool, antiglaze, silver nitrate, 18C gold lustre Cast, raku fired 8 × 8 × 10in.

*below:*  
**Birute Ona Spink Slab of Obscurity** Clay, acrylic, smoke 12 × 14 × 1½in.

# DUALITIES

Sandra Ledingham and Birute Ona Spink

Gordon Snelgrove Gallery, Saskatoon July 1990

by Gale Steck

In "Dualities", Sandra Ledingham and Birute Ona Spink displayed recently made objects of clay, wood, acrylic and glaze.

Sandra Ledingham's raku forms were placed on pedestals around the centre of the gallery. They are vessel-like but are not functional vessels. The texture of each is a cindery, volcanic surface shot through with wonderful hues of metallic colour. Iridescent oil spot colours can result from the raku firing process. These pieces were formed by soaking raw sheep fleece in slip and laying it between an exterior and an interior mould. In firing, the fleece burns out leaving the piece resembling a freshly formed piece of metallic rock.

In comparison to Sandra Ledingham's earlier work, those subtle, earthy, smoked and burnished pieces for which she has gained recognition, these works seem less refined, less sophisticated, much less intriguing objects.

Sandra Ledingham's small, footed bowl *Syncopation* was a wonderful shape, a concave interior with a rough exterior on a beautiful tiny foot.

*Polarity* is shaped like a double ended bullet, the extra clay making a lacy collar at the middle. This piece presents an interesting profile but seems precarious as it sits on a very narrow base. *Consonance* another two piece, mould-formed piece is a cindery, metallic raku container pierced by a gold coloured fragment. The fragment seems to have sheared off some nearby bit of machinery and embedded itself in the surface of the soft pot. The effect of this machined piece of metal piercing the surface is somewhat of a cliché as one has seen this deliberate contrast before in other places and other vessels. *The Feat of Fitting a Square Piece into a Round Hole* is reminiscent of a Steve Heinemann piece from a few years ago. It loses a lot of impact because of its small scale and the absence of all the earthy qualities of clay. An inverted pyramid of negative space sunk in a halfcannonball-like casing again pierced by a machined fragment, the lack of warmth makes it slightly repellent.

Overall the objects are interesting and draw you to take a closer look. However, perhaps because of the feeling that the clay is transmuted into metal or stone untouched by human hands, I find it hard to remain involved for long with these pieces.

The works of Birute Ona Spink are slab-built pieces and occupied the walls of the gallery. *Potent with Resolution* is a

slab of clay containing a small moulded silhouette of a female head, an image used frequently in other pieces. The slab has some interesting textures and colours, pink and blue areas with finger indentations and little waves. Hanging separately and below is a triangular plaque made of glazed triangles in plum and copper grouted with black. *Slab of Obscurity*, another slab-built piece, has a myriad textures on its surface. Metallic copper and gold acrylic, a leather-like wing of texture, rebok track shoe patterns are all interesting for the viewer who pauses to take a close look.

*Proprius Optimus* takes you through a colour spectrum of lime green to purple slabs using as a focal point that same cameo-like female head. The wall installation is large and the acrylic colour graduations immediately catch the eye, but on closer examination it becomes quickly tiresome. The female head is not a strong enough image and the small textural changes and positionings of small elements are not enough to carry the piece. *Three Soles at Play and One Not* is an arrangement of three raku fish cavorting on a wall, one fish is caught on a rusted fish chain. Again the textural detail is interesting but the arrangement of the fish and chain is almost naive in its simplicity.

Altogether there does not seem to be much in this show for the sophisticated viewer. Certainly there are good beginnings in texture, colour and form but not quite enough to hold the viewer's eye for long. These are not pieces to get excited about, to want to possess or to be awestruck by their beauty. The exhibition has the feeling of a series of exercises, little studies, something started and worked on for a while.

I am usually entranced by the properties of craft materials, clay, wood, glaze, and enjoy a piece that makes you see those materials in a new way or with clearer vision. Here I find each material changed almost beyond recognition. This confuses me. I am, I suppose, a craft purist stuck with a love of clay, fibres, wood and glass, inspired by handsome materials. Ideas intrigue me when they are clear and strong. A few pieces meet these criteria but on the whole the show is lacking. It all comes down to honesty and hard work and the fact that there are no short cuts to creating memorable works of beauty.

Gale Steck is a Saskatoon potter and a member of Handmade House. ■



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