

# THE CRAFT FACTOR

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL • FALL 1991 • VOL. 16/3 \$3.00



# SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY

813 Broadway, Saskatoon, Sk  
Everyday 1-5 pm

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October 18 to November 12 1991

Artist's Talk: Sunday, November 10 2p.m.

Manipulated and embellished silk quilts, garments and furnishings.

JOHN FLOCH — TIME MOLDS

November 15 to December 11 1991

Reception: Friday, November 29 7p.m.

Artist's Talk: Saturday, November 30 2p.m.

An exhibition of simple forms with black and white decoration, these raku vessels stem from John's interest in early ceramics of the American southwest.

CHARLEY FARRERO — BROKEN IDEAS

December 13 to January 21 1992

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DON FOULDS

January 24 to February 25 1992

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SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL

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# THE CRAFT FACTOR

## 2 Paint With Whatever You Please

Leesa Streifler writes about early 20th century art movements which influence the ways in which we see and make art and craft

## 5 A Looming Woman

RoseMarie Fennell with Sharon de Lint writes about being a weaver

## 8 A Great Weekend

Cheryl Wolfenberg reports on a successful first provincial fibre conference and its aftermath

## 10 Dimensions 91

Pictures of more of the prize winning craftspeople from Dimensions 91

## 16 Clay and Paper

Brian Ring writes about his recent work and a sojourn in Korea

## 17 Assessing Dimensions

Michael Hosaluk takes a critical look at our annual account of the state of crafts in Saskatchewan and finds that it does not measure up

## 18 The Craft Business

Thinking about going into business, wondering why things are not working out? Read Annabel Taylor's concise guide

## 17 Incite 91

## 21 Book Review

## 22 Gallery Schedule

## 6 Reviews

14

24



Dee Fontans Necklace  
Compressed aluminum foil core,  
silicon rubber  
Photo Credit: Charles Lewton-Brain

FRONT COVER:  
Susan Rankin 1990  
Wing Vessel Series Blown glass,  
enamel, paint, crayon 21x20cm dia.

BACK COVER:  
Jeannie Mah Chiaro  
One of 2 installations from  
Chiaroscuro Porcelain cups  
Photo Credit: Patricia Holdsworth

# PAINT WITH WHATEVER YOU PLEASE

by Leesa Streifler

*"You may paint with whatever material you please, with pipes, postage stamps, postcards or playing cards, candelabra, pieces of oil cloth, collars, painted paper, newspaper."*

Apollinaire, 1913<sup>1</sup>

The Fine Arts are not an isolated island, complete unto themselves. Nor are Crafts. Both are reflections of and feed into the contemporary swirl of ideas, philosophical and visual. With hindsight this is easy to see – garments, furnishings, vehicles, paintings, vessels, doorknobs fall into distinct periods and reflect the concerns and ideas of their age. The Eighteenth Century, the Victorian Age, the Twenties, the Fifties, each is visually unmistakable and coherent.

Without doubt it is possible to react strongly to an object about which one knows absolutely nothing, to let form, shape, colour, pattern, materials and the maker's imprint speak for themselves. And having looked, our next words are "What is it, what does it do, where does it come from?", curiosity being an innate part of our intelligence. However, I think that we do not come to most things in such a state of visual innocence. Whether we recognize it or not we bring to the object our own knowledge, experience, and our taste influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the contemporary fashions and interests of our country. The more we know about all these factors which come to bear when we look at the work of others (and our own), the more open we can be to the unfamiliar in other work and our own, and the greater our visual vocabulary.

The ferment of ideas which found expression in a number of art movements in the first half of the twentieth century also had repercussions in the craft world. In short they freed craftspeople too from the rigours of tradition. The crafts both fed from and fed into this new freedom. Non-traditional materials began to be used with traditional techniques, traditional materials were used in untraditional ways. Found objects, both natural and manufactured began to be incorporated into work, became the entire work. Collage influenced imagery and the design process, and so on. Leesa Streifler introduces some of the movements, ideas and artists that were influential.

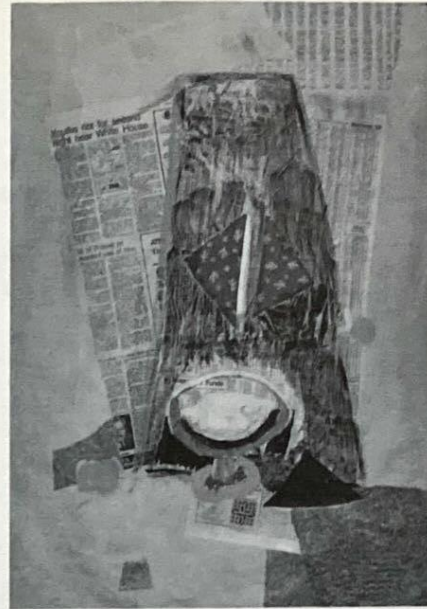
The history of mixed media parallels the development of Modernism in art. Western art, from the Renaissance to the mid-nineteenth century, had been confined to the traditional practices of drawing, painting and sculpture. Painters applied oil paint to the canvas, pencil and charcoal to paper and sculptors chiselled stone or built clay models which were then cast into bronze. Subject matter was categorized into hierarchies and based on creating an illusion of the "real" world via the artist's skillful manipulation of specific art materials. This tradition was challenged in the 1860s with the Impressionists and later, in 1909, with the development of **Cubism** in France, with Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque at the forefront.

Cubism was based on the analysis of three dimensional space and the representation of the experience of three dimensions on the two dimensional picture plane. Traditional subjects such as still life and portraiture remained the armature for analytical divisions of volumes and space. Beginning in 1911, Picasso and Braque in keeping with their desire to represent reality more accurately began introducing bits of printed paper into their cubist drawings and paintings. Pieces of newspapers and various commercially printed papers were chosen for their graphic interest as well as for the poetic associations they would lend to the work. This manner of working,

called *papier collé* in French and *collage* in English, raised the issue of illusion versus reality, an issue which was to engage artists throughout the twentieth century.

The **Futurist** movement of 1909-1914 occurred in Italy at the same time as Cubism in France. The Futurists issued a manifesto which codified theoretically the use of diverse materials in art. Unlike the Cubists, the Futurists were not interested in the examination of textures, materials or objects. Rather they were interested in putting into their art their interest in technology, machines and light, and the ways in which they moved and worked. They rebelled against the tyranny of Ancient and Renaissance authority and their dictums of harmony, order and good taste in art. The Futurists endeavoured to break free of the structures imposed by the approved forms and attitudes in order to merge art and life.

The **Dada** movement, reacting to the Futurists, sprang up during World War I beginning in 1915 and ending in 1923. It was concentrated in New York but occurred as well in the industrialized cities of Zurich, Hanover, Cologne, Berlin, Paris and Barcelona. The artist Marcel Duchamp, along with Max Ernst, Francis Picabia, Kurt Schwitters and Man Ray were instrumental in the movement. The meaning of the word Dada is sometimes interpreted as French for hobbyhorse, but it is generally agreed that it was essentially chosen as a nonsensical term.



Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber *Saskatchewan Lemon Series, untitled* Linen, linen thread, acrylic paint, paper, fabric Painted, collaged, stitched 36x36in. approx.

Dada's attitude can be characterized as being anti-art and anti-establishment. Its anti-establishment position blamed society's belief in and worship of scientific and technological advancement for the horrific state of world events. In order to reproach the mechanical, logical, scientific thinking which it criticized, Dada art was intentionally anti-rational, absurd, intuitive, confrontational and nihilistic. Dada was not a style but rather a philosophical stand, assailing whenever possible traditional notions of what art should be.

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), the legendary iconoclast of modern art, is considered the principal figure of the Dada movement. A French expatriate living in New York, his famous 1912 painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* caused an enormous commotion at the Armory Show in 1913 in New York due to its cubist division of space in depicting a nude woman in motion descending a flight of stairs. Soon after Duchamp gave up painting because of his belief that art should be about ideas. He was against the manipulation of art materials which enhanced the visual beauty in the work of art thus removing the art from its association with the real world. Beginning in 1913 Duchamp began selecting common hardware store items which he titled and signed and called Ready-mades. His first work *Bicycle Wheel*, an "assisted" ready-made, consisted of a wooden stool with a bicycle wheel attached to it. Duchamp selected numerous readymades made between 1913 and 1923 including: *Fountain*, 1917 (a urinal); *Comb*, 1916; *Bottle Dryer*, 1914; *Why Not Sneeze?*, 1921 (a small bird cage containing marble blocks in the shape of sugar cubes, a cuttlebone and an applied title); *With Hidden Noise* 1916

(a ball of twine in a brass container). Because these ready-mades are made from manufactured found objects, their meaning is very different from that of organic found objects.

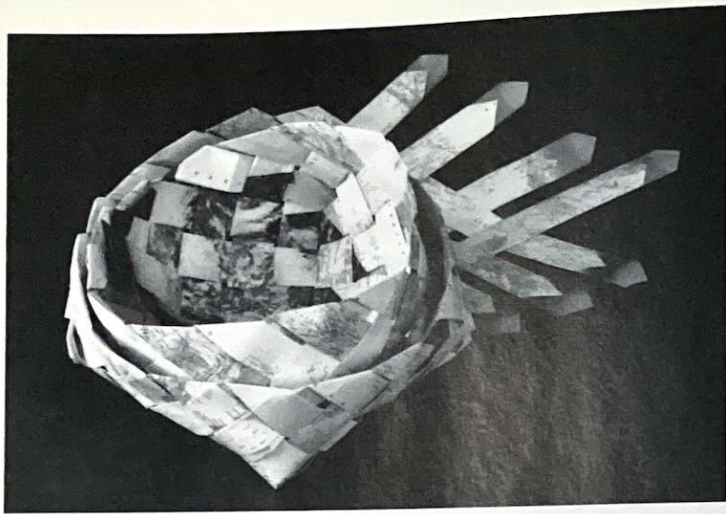
The ready-made for Duchamp was a vehicle for denying the possibility of defining art. Duchamp declared all man-made objects 'works of art' thus questioning the notion of the artist as producer of the unique, the beautiful and the profound. Still considered a necessary and valid concept today, Duchamp's spirit of the absurd as well as his ironic sense of humour broke down traditional barriers about the appropriateness of certain materials and objects in art enabling generations of artists to have the freedom to explore vast artistic possibilities. Duchamp's philosophy was especially important to the conceptual artists of the 1970s whose work celebrated the pure expression of idea without an undue emphasis on formal properties.

Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), a German Dada artist, is known for his intimate collage works comprised of bits of urban debris such as ticket stubs, matchbook covers, letters, weathered wood, corrugated cardboard, wrappers, wire mesh, printed cloth, and photographs. These found materials were composed into abstract works with the structural rigor of cubism but without the adherence to cubism's pictorial genres of still life and portraiture. Often typeface was cropped so as to give only clues of the former meaning. Unlike Duchamp, Schwitters often chose to improve the formal properties of his work with the addition of paint. The element of time is evident in the used items which he carefully located according to a formal as well as narrative logic. Schwitters called his works *Merz* pictures – the random selection of the word *Merz*, part of the printed word "Kommerz" used in one of his collages, revealing his Dada sympathies.

In 1924 Schwitters began working on architectural constructions he called *Merzbau* which were life-sized three dimensional collages made of wood, cardboard, iron scraps,



Dee Fontans *Hand on Head Hat* Fabric, plastic, silicon rubber, gold foil 1989.



Marigold Cribb *Home Planet-Fragile Container* Planetary, political, geographical maps, origami paper Woven in Maori technique for temporary baskets 19x28x61cm.

broken furniture, picture frames and so on. These works incorporated the formal concerns of his collages as well as literacy and symbolic allusions.

The *Surrealist* movement, beginning in 1924 in Paris and continuing as an internationally established movement until well after the Second World War, added the element of psychological absurdity to the found objects assembled by artists such as Salvadore Dali, Max Ernst, Rene Magritte and Meret Oppenheim. Utilizing fortuitous accident, chance occurrence, and by combining unrelated objects, surrealist works produced psychological associations and created new meanings.

American artist Joseph Cornell's (1903-1972) work takes the form of shadow boxes, each one a theatrical presentation of urban detritus brought together to create a magical world reminiscent of childhood yet at the same time alluding to the present as well as the future. Cornell, living in New York, did not have formal art training, but was an incessant collector of everything from maps, marbles, movie memorabilia, astronomical charts, figurines, printed cards and papers, reproductions of famous people and historical art, to stuffed birds. He was inspired by the collages of surrealist artist Max Ernst, which he saw in 1931, and began making objects out of his vast collection. In 1932 Cornell was included in a Surrealist group show and in 1936 in the Museum of Modern Art's survey show "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism". Unlike Schwitters, Cornell used objects for their specific associations and treated every object as a precious entity. Cornell's work with its gentle seductiveness differed from the aggressive shock tactics of the Surrealists' works. While his work possessed characteristics of sweetness and nostalgia, it achieved a bold exploration of the unconscious and a powerful fusion of time and space. The commonplace objects and the intimate settings in which he contained them set off a chain of free associations in the viewer that take the work out of the moment and expand its meaning. The qualities of psychological insight, child-like charm, and sophisticated aesthetics co-exist to make Cornell's work noteworthy in the development of mixed-media art.

In 1953, Jean Dubuffet coined the term *Assemblage* for small archetypal figurative sculptures which he made out of organic materials such as roots, sponge and charred wood, the resulting works possessing an earthy, primitive quality. This working method was in sharp reaction against the subjective preciousness involved in the creation of shapes and elaborated surfaces of the abstract sculptors working at the time. Assemblage came to mean the use of non-art objects and materials (often rubbish) of man-made or organic origin found in the urban centres of major industrialized centres. Selection and combining and constructing in an "additive" rather than "subtractive" process are important components in the assemblage process. Assemblage works often have a disturbing rawness due to the use of junk materials, and simultaneously, they exude a delight in everyday things as well as a subversive attitude towards established culture. The juxtaposition of objects, often of diverse origin, creates a new work inherent with new meaning. One of the earliest assemblages, Picasso's *Bull's Head*, 1942 attached a bicycle seat and handlebars to create a sculpture focusing on the formal properties of the objects and completely changing their former meaning.

These movements and artists were instrumental in the removal of rigid barriers imposed on artmaking by traditional attitudes and practises which no longer reflected the contemporary world of the twentieth century. As we approach the end of the century, mixed media has maintained its presence internationally in the work of contemporary visual artists.

1. Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters*, New York, Wittenborn, Schultz, 2nd ed., 1949, p. 23.

For further information:  
Two videos from the Museum without Walls series cover 'The Cubist Epoch' and 'Germany Dada'.  
William G. Seitz *The Art of Assemblage* The Museum of Modern Art 1961  
Nikos Stangos Ed. *Concepts of Modern Art* Thames and Hudson  
D. Porzio, M. Secchi *Understanding Picasso* Newsweek Books ■

## A LOOMING WOMAN

by RoseMarie Fennell with Sharon de Lint

When someone asks me why I, RoseMarie Fennell, became a weaver I can tell, usually by his patronizing expression, that he is anticipating some vague, mush-mouthed utterance about 'creative expression' or 'the satisfactions of craftsmanship'. Well, the truth is, he would be dead wrong. I took up weaving for the same reason a kid would run away with the circus — for The Adventure!

I must admit this spirit of derring-do was not altogether obvious, even to me, at the outset. Purists will cringe, but I have to confess that my initial motive was a legitimate one for any woman with three small children — to get out of the house. The weaving class happened to be the only one that matched my daughter's nursery school times. So, there was a certain amount of serendipity involved in my first foray in the world of weaving and spinning. And those of you who know anything about my mechanical abilities or may have heard about some of my more disastrous escapades in this relatively safe craft should be sighing with relief that my daughter's nursery school time slot did not coincide with, say, a class in creative welding or electrical wiring for beginners.

Given that my initial steps into weaving were done in that now well-known 'throw-of-the-dice' spirit, it will likely come as no surprise to you to learn that I have no scholarly dissertation to deliver on the subject of craft. All along I seem to have approached weaving by jumping in with both feet while flying by the seat of my pants. An ungainly position, I grant you, but certainly conducive to adventure and surprise.

I am proud to report that I have not selfishly kept any of that adventure and surprise to myself. In the course of my various weaving-related activities I have been quite liberal in sharing the surprise and adventure and confusion and downright terror with all around me. It has its advantages. For instance, answering the door wearing a safety mask and with red dye spilled all down your front will quickly and effectively disperse the most adamant vacuum cleaner or seafood salesman.

And my family! My family have been witnesses, not to mention active participants, all through my weaving career. They have all, for example, been effectively scared off the annoying habit of checking out dinner in the pots on the kitchen stove after a few occasions when they discovered the contents to the macerating marigolds, or possibly something even worse.

I recall with fondness my very first project — nine yards of curtain fabric — that somehow got into a tangled mess.

My husband graciously undertook to straighten out the tangle and did so, though not without a protracted, frustrating battle. I knew that night that the only reason my loom did not get chopped into firewood was that we did not have a fireplace at the time. My husband Art has been very patient and supportive about almost every aspect of my weaving career — with one notable exception. He once solemnly requested that I avoid warping my loom while the children were present. He pointed out that on those occasions they stood in very real danger of learning a vocabulary which would make a stevedor blush. When we have been travelling he has kindly indulged any weaving research I have wished to conduct. Art can proudly claim to have seen the inside of nearly every yarn store on the continent. And he has affected to ignore the trail of motel room phone books with the weaving supplies sections torn out that we have left behind on our journeys.

As with most adventures, there has been an element of danger in the pursuit of my craft. Not danger to me, of course, I have come through relatively unscathed. But I recall the time I was asked to baby-sit my daughter's small kitten. The tiny beast fell asleep on my lap while I was spinning and I am sure you can imagine the picture of timeless domestic peace this would have presented — would have, that is, if the kitten had not stood up, stretched, and arched its little back. I was unaware of this movement until I realized that its fur had been incorporated into my yarn and it was being drawn inexorably across my knees toward the wheel. I hasten to assure you that no serious harm came to the poor creature but I was faced with a dilemma. I could not simply cut the animal loose — how would I explain the bald strip down its spine? So I laboriously picked the cat, hair by hair, out of the strand of yarn. Here is the perfect example of one of the great virtues of a hand craft — while the fingers are busy the mind has the luxury of time to contemplate such soul-searching questions as "how the devil did I get myself into this mess?"

I cannot believe, however, that living with a crazy weaver has been terribly traumatic for my family. My daughter, Liza, undaunted by her 'warped' mother's eccentricities, has also chosen to pursue a fibre craft — quilting. And my granddaughter Danielle, at six, is taking her first steps on the slippery slope by letting grandma teach her to knit. Not too damning an indictment from a family who always said, indulgently, "Don't pay any attention to Mom — she's looming."

RoseMarie Fennell, besides being a weaver, is an active member of the Regina Weavers and Spinners Guild and is Education Chair on the SCC Board. ■

# A JOY FOREVER - JANE A. EVANS

SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY JUNE 6 - JULY 9

by Judy Haraldson

Jane Evans' rug show had a comfortable and warm feeling, most of the pieces were ones you could easily appreciate on your wall or floor. As Jane explained in her excellent artist's talk on June 12, she has developed her techniques from her study of Latvian household textiles. The topic of her Canadian Guild of Weavers Masterweaver thesis led to her book, *A Joy Forever*, which focusses on traditional Latvian weaving and modifications for contemporary weavers. Jane's innovative use of these traditional weave structures results in wonderful rug fabric - sturdy, consistently flat, with design flexibility. The majority of the rugs were done with free-form designs. This technique uses two or three wefts in a single line of weaving and brings one to the surface as needed to create the design while the other, one or both, are woven on the back of the rug.

All but the three wool-weft rugs were woven with cotton yarn and cotton flannelette cloth strips as weft. The softness of the cloth strips (not rags), the printed colours and her own dyeing provide Jane with the qualities she wants in her rugs. Many of the pieces had a subtle colour interest provided by shifting shades of a colour throughout. Jane likes to create pointillist effects from bits of colour "peeking out", by using the original printed pattern on the cloth or when using two or more wefts, by letting the one or both being woven on the back occasionally show at the edge of the one used on the front of the rug. Her inspiration for designs comes from her surroundings, plants, shells, nature, and from the traditional textiles she has studied.

The superb weaving in the rugs was not always matched in sophistication by the images or the colours used. *Buckle Rug I* and *Buckle Rug II* exemplified this in their innovative use of a Latvian technique, but their rather uninspiring design and colours did not attract one close enough to appreciate and study them. Similarly with *Flickering*, where an interesting technique using free-form asymmetrical shapes in a symmetrical bordered design was not exploited fully. The dull browns and golds used did not live up to the flames suggested by the name and the shapes in the design.

*Ginger's Rug* had several elements that should have resulted in successful design. The interrupted border of subtle orange raised strips, the orange background with brown-painted irregular rectangles and the complementary turquoise rectangles of painted warp and inlaid stripes were interesting, but the whole effect was unsatisfying. Perhaps the "rectangularity" of the rug was not emphasized enough, or not escaped from enough, by the design shapes. And for my personal taste, the colours bothered me.

Some of the images in the rugs were static and looked as if they needed more design work or play. In *Heron III* and *Goldenrod*, the shifting background colours and the pointillist effects were quietly intriguing but the images needed more life. I found myself wondering why the plant shapes in *September Sunrise* and *Traces of Summer* were stuck in where they were, without any unifying plan. *River's Edge* had a fairly successful design where the possibilities of the free-form technique for rendering details were more fully realized in the "weedy bits" throughout the watery background. At first, I thought the colours could have been more lively, but the greys and browns do remind one of the murky old South Saskatchewan river.

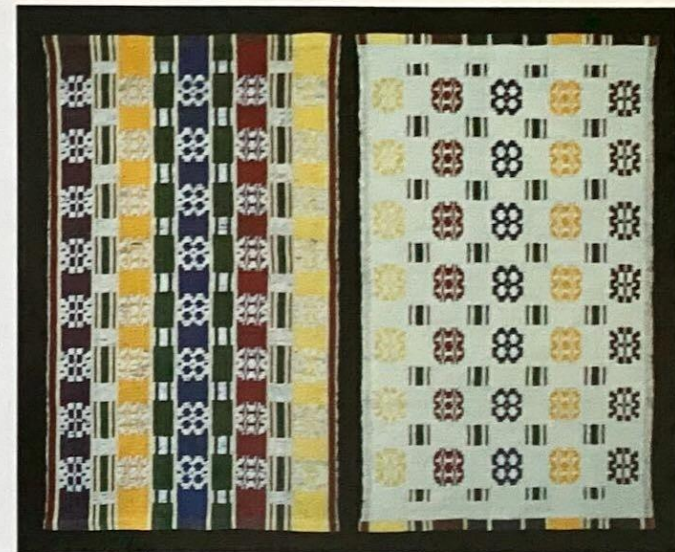
The more traditional designs used in *Blue Shadows*, *Majolica I*, *Majolica II* and *Weaver's Garden* resulted in comfortable and satisfying rugs. The complex loom-controlled weaves limited the images to traditional, ethnic ones that are familiar and whose designs have been worked out long ago. The colours in *Blue Shadows* were lovely and I liked the shifting effect of the pattern as one moved around the rug. The bright "beach towel" colours of the two *Majolica* rugs added a playful note to the technically complex pieces. *Weaver's Garden* explored the possibilities of variety within traditional motifs and succeeded beautifully. The colours were similar to the other garden piece, *After the Rain*. Her control of the complexities of the weave in this rug demonstrated why she is one of the foremost technical weavers we have. The variation in the geometric, stylized flower motifs and their placement result in a lively, enjoyable design.

*Ripple Effect II* was a wonderful example of what Jane can do with her free-form weaving when she plays hard with a design. This reversible rug had a Middle Eastern feel from its complete border, checkerboard edges and the hooked motif on the sides. The differing yet complimentary shapes on each end provided interest and unity. The hand-dyed cotton flannelette weft shifted from yellow to orange through the length of the rug. At the same time the blue-green and purple painted warp shifted and lightened from end to end. These effects, combined with reversibility, gave the piece its long-lasting appeal.

My favourite piece in the show was *After the Rain*. The water-colour wash floral images were formed by a combination of warp-painting, dyed cotton-strip weft, and both warp-face and weft-face weaving. The colours were fresh and vibrant, while the contrasting textures of the woven areas drew your eye through the piece. This rug is both a culmination of Jane's work in these adapted rug-weaving techniques and a starting point for further exciting free-form designs.

Jane A. Evans *Majolica I* Reversible rug  
Loom controlled design in 4:1 tied  
Beiderwand on 12 harnesses Warp cotton;  
weft cotton tabby, cotton flannelette strips  
44.5x26.75in. 1990

Jane A. Evans *Majolica II* Reversible  
rug Loom controlled design in 4:1 tied  
Beiderwand on 12 harnesses Warp cotton;  
weft cotton tabby, handpainted cotton  
flannelette strips 43.75x26.75in. 1990



Jane A. Evans *River's Edge* Rug  
Freeform design. 4 harnesses in 2:1 tied  
Beiderwand weave Warp cotton; weft  
Swedish rug wool, cotton tabby 57x33in.  
1991



Jane A. Evans *After the Rain* Rug  
Freeform design on 4 harnesses, paired-tie  
weave Warp cotton handpainted; weft  
hand-dyed cotton flannelette strips, cotton  
tabby 45x29.5in. 1991

# A GREAT WEEKEND

by Cheryl Wolfenberg



courtesy of RWISG

The Regina Weavers and Spinners Guild hosted the first provincial fibre conference on June 8 and 9, 1991. It was an unqualified success. Perhaps the time was right for an event like this or perhaps we were just lucky, but for whatever the reason, weavers, spinners and dyers mixed, talked and enjoyed each other's knowledge and work. For our guild a daydream had become a reality that surpassed even our expectations.

In reviewing the process that our committee and the guild as a whole went through to accomplish our fibre weekend, it is important to keep in mind our original goals. The main purpose was to get our guild working together using the common focus of the conference to achieve a sense of pride in ourselves and our accomplishments.

In the months preceding the conference our guild worked hard on a multitude of projects that the steering committee requested help with. Some members took time to weave all the bookmarks for name tags, while others worked on their demonstrations. Some summoned up courage to wear the garments they were spinning, knitting or weaving for the fashion show. Everyone was involved in some way and at a level that they were comfortable with. While it took the steering committee of seven to plan and organize the event, it took a whole guild to put it all together and give it life. Without everyone's co-operation and enthusiasm over the long haul and everyone's patience with each other in the last few frantic hours, this event could not have been as successful as it was. I am sure that some of the requests made of our members seemed a little strange and some-

times did not make sense, but no one complained. They just did it. The end result was an overwhelming feeling of pride in what we had accomplished and the knowledge that dreams can be made a reality when you all work together.

Another aspect of the planning of this conference that became more apparent as time went on, was that everyone on the Steering Committee had picked the job area that they liked and were comfortable doing. It is much easier to do a volunteer job if you are getting some personal satisfaction from it. The fact that we have all remained friends through the good as well as the rough patches of this conference speaks well for us and our level of maturity and co-operation.

From the evaluation sheets that we had returned to us, we realized that this type of event was something that was long overdue for fibre artists in this province. The need to meet one another, talk and see each other's work is very important. Most of us work away at our looms or wheels in isolation and we need to surface every once in a while and see what the rest of the world is doing. We need to know that we are talented, creative and good craftspeople. For some of our guests, this was the first opportunity to have their work viewed by fellow craftspeople and to realize just how accomplished they are.

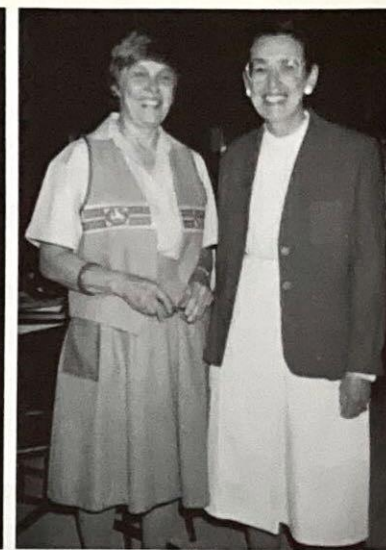


courtesy of RWISG

Cheryl Samuel's latest Raven's Tail Robe of twined wool worn by Cheryl Wolfenberg in full dance regalia with Cheryl Samuel (above)



RoseMarie Fennell from Regina Weavers and Spinners Guild modeling her handwoven silk outfit



Marybelle Powers and Mary Volk from Regina Weavers and Spinners Guild modeling their handwoven garments; collottes and vest, and a tailored wool jacket

courtesy of RWISG

The evaluation sheets also gave us a good idea of how successful our programme was and what people would like for the next time. With seventy-five per cent of our questionnaires returned, a fairly accurate picture of how we did and what we need to improve on is available.

Because this was a new idea for a lot of the province's weavers and spinners, most people, including our own members, were not exactly sure what to expect. Comments were overwhelmingly positive and reflected the success and good feelings the weekend had generated. The fact that so many took the time to respond with well thought out comments reflects how much the event was enjoyed and how much people would like it to reoccur. The committee appreciated all the remarks. Some problems, we had already anticipated. For example, due to budget constraints, we were limited by the size of facility. Next time, money would be spent to ensure that we have adequate space for our speakers to present their topics without infringing on other speakers. We did not anticipate that participants would be so eager to listen to and discuss seminar topics and would need more time than was available. What our programme planners had viewed as short overviews of several topics, would next time be given much more time and adequate space. The need for people to exchange ideas and points of view came across most strongly. Our choice of topics and speakers were obviously very appropriate. The main speaker of the weekend, Cheryl Samuel, created just the right mood of fellowship, enthusiasm and interest to keep our participants involved and thinking. We had anticipated that by lunch time on Saturday we would know whether the hours of work and planning would all be worthwhile or not. By morning coffee we knew that we had organized a successful event.

Another goal of this conference was to see if it would be feasible to establish a provincial association of guilds that would co-operate in the area of communications,

workshops and libraries, and future conferences. Representatives from seven guilds met and discussed the idea. All guilds go through various stages and have different needs. The general consensus was that this idea had merit and needed to be pursued. Each guild will provide a representative for a meeting to be held in the late fall and final plans will be hammered out then. To have this association become a reality will benefit all fibre people in both the urban and rural areas. The Regina Guild will be donating three hundred dollars to a special fund to help make this dream come true.

This conference also had the unexpected benefit of raising public awareness of fibre arts. Articles in the Regina Leader Post, the Regina Sun, and The Craft Factor, and television coverage by "For Art's Sake" have resulted in numerous phone calls asking for instruction, information and "when will our guild be doing something that the general public can attend?" The pride of accomplishment that the guild has in itself will make it easy for us to set new and challenging goals for the future. We are looking forward to continuing the process of education for the public and ourselves.

In the weeks since the conference we have all had time to think about what we did and what we should have done. As president of the Regina Guild and chairman of the conference, I am very proud of my fellow guild members and what we have accomplished. By working together towards a common goal and putting personal bias aside, we created something very special for all of us to enjoy and take pride in. Knowing that there are fellow artists out there to meet again and share ideas and dreams with has made it all worthwhile.

The Regina Weavers and Spinners Guild gratefully acknowledges the support of the Saskatchewan Craft Council, Saskatchewan Arts Board, City of Regina, Saskatchewan Government Insurance, and Sask Tel in putting on this event.

# INTRODUCING MORE PRIZEWINNING CRAFTS PEOPLE FROM DIMENSIONS 91



Sandy G. Dumba *Dragonflies at Dusk* Vessel Clay  
Raku fired 26x16cm  
Town of Battleford Purchase Award



Lee Brady *Triune Mystery* Stained Glass Panel  
Stained glass, lead, zinc Fused, sandblasted  
105x76cm  
Battleford Allied Arts Council Purchase Award



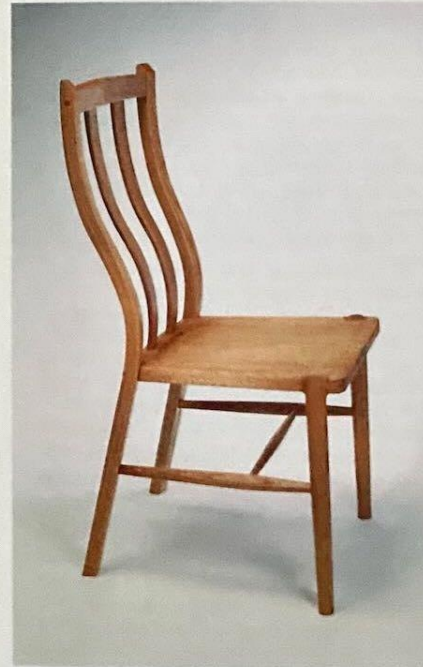
top right:  
Merle Bocking *Warmer than wool* Scarf  
Qiviut, hand spun Navajo 3-ply Lace knit  
25x120cm  
Qiviut spun by Moira Theede  
Award for Excellence in Hand Knitting



In the Summer issue of The Craft Factor we featured the six major prize winners in the 1991 Dimensions exhibition. In this issue we present the rest of the prizewinners.



far right top:  
Donald Smith *Ruffed Grouse* Whitepine, maple, acrylic paint 32x27x23cm  
Saskatchewan Woodworkers' Guild Award for Excellence in Wood  
People's Choice Award



far right centre:  
Mel Bolen *Flat Head Vessel* Stoneware 2400° F reduced Wheel-thrown, paddled, air-brushed, glaze trailed 20x56cm dia.  
Tree, Saskatoon Award for Excellence in Clay



Zelma Hurd *Blossoms in the Mist* Quilt  
Cotton, poly batting Machine pieced, hand quilted  
240x283cm  
Battlefords Environmental Awareness Movement Award

Jamie Russell *Deanna Side Chair* Red oak Bent lamination, carving, turning 98x45x54cm  
Award to an SCC Active Member

Coleen Nimetz *Emma's Dream* Cardigan Kid mohair, wool, Hand spun, hand dyed, hand knit in traditional Fair Isle Method Ladies Medium  
Award for Excellence in Hand Spinning



# INCITE 91

Incite 91 was held at the Neil Balkwill Civic Arts Centre in Regina on August 16, 17 and 18th. The theme of the conference was Design. The resource people were Leesa Streifler, an artist and professor from the Visual Arts Department of the University of Regina; Bunty Severs, Past President of the Embroiderers Guild of Canada and a fashion designer; and Dee Fontans from Calgary, a designer, maker and marketer of jewellery who also teaches at a jewellery studio run jointly with her partner Charles Lewton-Brain.

A small attendance did not seem to dim the interest and enthusiasm which the participants brought to talks, demonstrations and workshops. The Neil Balkwill Centre was a pleasant and practical venue. Coffee breaks and meal times gave a chance to socialize with Dee, Bunty and Leesa and with other participants, old friends and new, to find out what was happening in other workshops and to talk about craft in all its aspects.

## Mixed Media Workshop

The workshops this year were small due to low enrollment and thus accommodated much discussion, sharing, brainstorming and work.

Leesa Streifler's approach to her work and to people is one of directness and of encouraging dialogue. As a resource person she has the ability to aid people to tap their potential, and to support and direct in an intelligent way. I found it refreshing to exchange ideas with someone who concerns herself not only with aesthetic and design issues but also with content. Understanding our own work, its sources and ultimately its meaning, I think remains a challenge, particularly where the work is non-objective or the primary source is not functional. We discussed the dilemma of how much less prepared craftspeople are to confront this dialogue compared with people coming from Fine Arts backgrounds; perhaps because of less opportunity and impetus.

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*Eventually design becomes a language, a dialogue between the viewer and the object and we learn to make informed choices instead of only guessing.*

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The theme Design for this year's conference was the main thread and all three resource people often made reference to it. Design training is not a brief exercise. We all need a foundation in design elements and principles, however that is the easy part as the theory can be quite condensed. The key is working over and over and over again with the principles – looking and never stopping looking and analyzing each time we have an opportunity. Eventually design becomes a language, a dialogue between the viewer and the object and we learn to make informed choices instead of only guessing. This is a very exciting process. I love the challenge of this very large puzzle called Design and at 'Incite' this year we had a hands-on opportunity to attempt again to fit the puzzle pieces together.

Sandra Ledingham

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*Understanding our own work, its sources and ultimately its meaning, I think remains a challenge ....*

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## Jewellery Design Workshop

There were two unfortunate misrepresentations in the Incite 91 promotion. One, most people I have talked to were not aware that this was to be primarily a hands-on event. Two, Dee Fontans is not just an "art school" jeweller, she is also a serious production craftspeople, who makes a good part of her living selling costume jewellery at craft fairs. As a marketer and marketing juror, I am very aware of how many costume jewellery makers there are and how many of them could use design and quality guidance. Dee's presentation was tailor-made for production, non-precious jewellery makers.

As a teacher Dee is very vivacious and an excellent communicator. Her morning slide session ensemble of a short, basic, black A-line dress covered in multi-coloured pom-poms, over mauve tights and red knee-high boots was as good an eye-opener as half a pot of strong coffee. It also prepared us for her work. This woman will wear or use anything including an outrageous veil made of coloured wire or vicious looking (but actually quite soft) spiked searuchinlike balls made of silicone caulking. Once she had us completely stimulated she turned us loose on the collection of junk, found objects and general "neat stuff" she and the students had brought.

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*Dee stressed thoughtful design and careful finishing.*

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*As a marketer and marketing juror, I am very aware of how many costume jewellery makers there are and how many of them could use design and quality guidance.*

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Besides the baubles, beads and feathers one would expect in such a collection, Dee had some more esoteric junk like brightly coloured wiring harnesses salvaged from computers, tiny electrical resistors like mini-Berber beads and a wide variety of plastic fittings. Her approach is that the more stuff you have, the more of it will interact. For instance, two different sizes of plastic, folder spines slid inside one another to make a clasp. Or the metal tips of baby booty laces were a press fit into multitubed plastic stuff of suspected medical origin. One student used the laces and tubes, wrapped the resistors around the laces and presto – a bracelet. Even with this kind of playful piece Dee stressed thoughtful design and careful finishing. A useful trick she showed us was mixing tempera paint powder into the adhesive, this can turn your blob of epoxy into an integrated, finished part of the design.

On Saturday afternoon, Dee touched on working with wire. On Sunday, she spent a couple of hours showing us twisting, forging and riveting. Bought findings are not always appropriate for a piece. We learned how to make shepherd hooks, earring posts and a variety of clasps and joiners quickly enough to be competitive with bought findings. I particularly liked a style of brooch known as a fibula. Brooch and clasp are made by bending a single piece of wire.

Ms. Fontans is from the 'real jewellery' school of makers. This means she frowns on using adhesives to join metal to metal. On Sunday afternoon she had each student silver solder and hammer texture a simple silver ring. She also demonstrated making a bezel and mounting a stone in it, and soldering on earring posts.

My usual experience with two and a half day workshops is that the students start disappearing about an hour before the scheduled finishing time. An hour and a half after Dee's scheduled finishing time I was dragged away leaving Dee and about half the class still going strong. This is a pretty clear statement about Dee's teaching ability and the desire here for hands-on learning experience.

Dee and her partner, Charles Lewton-Brain, recently finished building their "dream studio" in Calgary. The studio is equipped to handle up to six students and various teaching programs. I highly recommend Dee as a teacher.

Jamie Russell

## Fashion and Design Workshop

Learning should be fun – a philosophy held by Bunty Severs and one she shared throughout her presentations and workshops. Though her delivery was informal and amusing, full of anecdotes from the Royal School of Embroidery in London where she trained and pictures of her delightful studio on the Newfoundland coast, her talents and knowledge were immediately evident. The workshops were well prepared and well presented. She seemed to know intuitively how far and how fast to go to challenge without overloading.

The one thing missing was more of her own work. She had intended to bring more articles but had had an unexpected sale just a few days before leaving for Regina. This was great for her but left few samples for participants to examine. Those works we saw demonstrated her specialist expertise in embellishment techniques using sequins, beads, foiled leathers and gold and silver threads, and her interest in period garments as a source of inspiration.

Of all the information garnered from Bunty the most important was a way of looking at fashion. With the use of slides and overheads, Bunty encouraged us to look at period costumes for ideas, not to copy but for inspiration, taking a small detail and working with it to create new and exciting garments. One would do well to go to history books rather than fashion magazines for more creative ideas.

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*One would do well to go to history books rather than fashion magazines for more creative ideas.*

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Successful pattern drafting is a skill that takes months and years to perfect. Most of us who wish to create a few original garments cannot or will not put the time in to learn this skill. Bunty has simplified the process. Using a basic pattern we learned how to adjust it to fit, then how to use it as a basis for imaginative original designs. Bunty worked individually with each student, always encouraging them to be innovative while giving good practical advice.

She discussed sewn embellishment techniques and demonstrated the use of gold (24K) threads and beads. Discussion about all aspects was continuous, Bunty was very generous in sharing practical advice and the names of suppliers, equipment, books and so on. Her enthusiasm for her craft was very obvious, a craftswoman who was ready to take her own advice that you will never know how it will turn out until you try it, even if that meant working through several nights in a row to complete a commission at short notice.

RoseMarie Fennell  
Carol Seradiak



# SUSAN RANKIN



above: Susan Rankin 1991 Vine Vessel Series VV519  
Blown glass, enamel, paint, crayon 34x22cm dia.

top left: Susan Rankin 1991 Vine Vessel Series VV619  
Blown glass, enamel, paint, crayon 18x23cm dia.

below left: Susan Rankin 1991 Vine Vessel Series VV68  
Blown glass, enamel, crayon, paint 22x32cm dia.

## ESSENCE

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery July 12 - August 13

by Sandra Flood

Hot glass has to be the most dramatic and intensely demanding of crafts. As with thrown clay, the vessel grows swiftly before your eyes but with glass the vessel grows from breath and a hot, fluid material which has to be kept in constant motion to defy the pull of gravity, a material in which temperature is critical. Against the hellish backdrop of the glass furnace, the gaffer (glassblower) and her assistant are in constant motion, which with experience attains the rhythms of a dance, totally concentrated on the demands of the developing vessel. Like most crafts, control over the medium demands many hours of practice, unlike many crafts there is no stopping to reconsider once the piece is started, no unpicking and revamping. All is heat and action, a constant outpouring of physical energy and thought until the vessel comes off the pipe. In the case of the Vine series vessels in this exhibition, that could take from fortyfive minutes to an hour and a half "if it is not a good day." The Garden series hot colour vessels, seen on slides during the artist's talk, take two and a half hours on the pipe. It is a craft requiring physical stamina. At Harbourfront Studios in Toronto, where Susan Rankin currently works, the analogy with theatre is even closer as the artists perform under the gaze of the public.

The process of making the Vine series vessels is in itself fairly complex. Susan blows the bubble forming the vessel. Her assistant blows a series of small bubbles which are flattened to form patties. Reheated, the first of these is attached to the vessel bubble, and one by one they are built up to form the 'stem' of the vessel, lastly the three feet of solid glass are added and in the later vessels, the tendrils around the feet. This is now transferred onto a punty (a metal rod), the blowpipe is removed and the bubble opened up to become the vessel.

Remember that throughout the process the viscous glass has to be constantly rotated to hold its shape against the forces of gravity and constantly reheated to make it workable and consistent with the heat of the attachment and that temperature has to be controlled precisely so that things do not melt off or crack off.

The opened vessel is now distressed by the assistant into its final folded shape, says Susan "At this stage the public leaves." The 'vines' of solid glass are pulled, stretched and flipped onto the vessel, followed by the finer tendrils and the leaves "hot bits, snapped, squished and twiddled on." Finally the vessel is put into an annealing oven to slowly cool and strengthen. The vessels are of clear glass and only "worthy" ones are later coloured with enamels, acrylic paint and crayons.

For exhibition the artist had selected 13 vessels from the Vine series, with 4 from the Winged Vessel series and 10 small prints taken from glass plates. The prints offered little of interest in comparison with the vessels. The Winged Vessels were simpler, more formally elegant goblet-like forms with sprigs of twisted 'wings' applied in pairs or singly. The more rococo Vine Vessel Series consisted of bowls and vases, folded, and entwined by stems with

tendrils, buds and leaves. Because the glass had been painted with black enamel and acrylics, the colours were muted and sombre; none of the brilliance and glowing translucency associated with glass remained. The overall effect was of subtle variations on a limited theme. In choosing to show work primarily from one series rather than a variety of current work, Susan may have done herself a disservice.

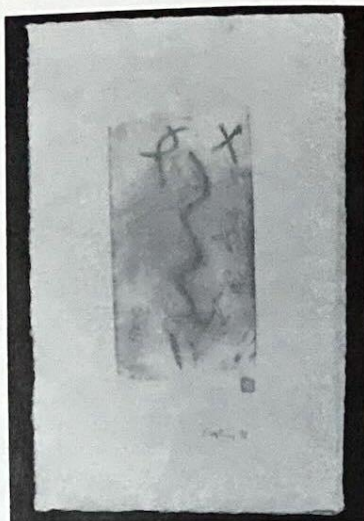
Susan Rankin is a young, talented and very hard working artist who has been taught by and is touch with the work of some of the leading North American glass artists. After six years of working with stained and fused glass, four summer sessions at the Pilchuck Glass School, Washington State, and two years at Sheridan College School of Craft and Design, Oakville, Ontario, Susan is in the third year as an Artist-in-Residence at Harbourfront Glass Studio. "I literally haven't stopped blowing since I started." Although goblets created from sticks, stones and birch bark made as a student exercise at Sheridan were the immediate inspiration for the Winged Vessel and Vine Vessel series, Dale Chihuly's Venetian series is an obvious point of comparison, and perhaps inspiration. Unlike Canadian glassblowers, glassblowers in the United States tend to work in teams and mature, recognised artists such as Marvin Lipofsky and Dale Chihuly naturally have access to a wide range of facilities, glasses and technical expertise when they are creating their large, brilliant and complex works. I think it admirable and appropriate that despite the limitations of Susan's situation, she should aim at the highest levels of expertise in order to be able to freely translate her ideas into glass.

Those limits did affect two aspects of the work, form and colour. The technical mastery sufficient to make the vessels convincingly look as though they were deformed by the strangling vines, as the artist intended, was not achieved. Both vessels and vines were too flaccid, drooping and encroaching rather than in active combat. Although I have reservations about the fragility of paint, pencil crayon and oil pastel on a glass vessel, in her ingenious solution to the expensive problem of colour Susan has created something distinctly her own. The effect of sombre, semi-opaque colours in a limited range of purples, blues and tawnies for the vessels, and the curious stoney effect of the feet and vines and, frequently more gaudy, leaves could not belong to any material other than glass yet contradicts its intrinsic qualities. Colour and form contributed to a slightly decaying, decadent autumnal ambience.

The Saskatchewan Craft Gallery committee looks for "a desire to expand boundaries" in exhibition applications. In solo exhibitions where the artist has taken the opportunity and the risk of exploring a new direction, conceptual or technical, the result may not be a body of fully realized work nor contain the variety of work exciting to the casual viewer. That does not diminish the importance of such exhibitions, the journey being at least as important as the arrival.

# BRIAN RING - CLAY AND PAPER

SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL RESOURCE CENTRE JULY 25 - AUGUST 13



Brian Ring *Image and Print* Clay, handmade Korean paper *Image size 30x20cm approx.*

On September 2nd, 1990, Seoul, South Korea's capital city suffered its worst flooding this century. For some people it was tragic, for some an adventure or a rare day off work. Most were glued to their televisions watching with horror and fascination as the waters of the Han River rose over ten meters about their banks. I was driving through the rain and steadily deepening water, my car loaded with pieces for my exhibition in Seoul, due to open the next day. I did not make it to the gallery. The streets became impassible before I got through.

I had been in Korea for over a year, getting to know the country and the culture, learning about its history, focusing on its rich ceramic heritage, and sharing studio space with a Korean ceramist in Seoul. Shortly before I was due to leave Korea, a gallery owner had offered me a solo exhibition. After much work, everything was ready. Now this 'act of God' seemed about to cancel my show.

Overnight, however, the waters receded. The next day dawned clear and sunny and when I drove into Seoul, the city had returned almost to normal. The opening proceeded as planned that evening.

Several years earlier in Canada, my work with coloured clay had led me to develop the technique of printing with clay on paper. This technique involves producing an image in coloured clay and then printing the image from the moist clay onto paper. The stains and oxides used to colour the clay also colour or stain the paper. While the process sounds somewhat muddy, in fact surprisingly complex and detailed images can be transferred to paper, while still retaining somehow a feel of their origin, a sort of texture in the image on the paper which hints at the clay original. I had continued working with this technique in my studio in

West Berlin. After moving to South Korea, one of the many fascinating things which I discovered was handmade Korean paper, a wonderful paper, some types of which are ideally suited to printing with clay. This paper, along with the (at times almost overwhelming) influence of the Korean culture, produced changes in my work: changes in the product, changes in the process, and changes in the basic attitude with which I approached the work.

I found, for example, that the palette of colours I used became less colourful, more subdued, more subtle, while the images became simpler, less complex and busy. Because the paper is stronger and more robust, it allowed me more freedom and more time to work with an image, or to print more than once on the same piece of paper. Generally I was free to approach the material and the process in a much more casual way.

I believe that being in Korea, learning about Korean ceramics, and watching Korean artists at work has somehow given me the freedom to approach my work in a more relaxed and playful manner, to be more prepared to take risks. These things seem positive to me and have had, I believe, a beneficial effect on my work.

My exhibition in Seoul, consisting of a number of prints accompanied by their clay originals, was held in ToDoRang (or To Potters Gallery), considered one of the most influential galleries for contemporary ceramics in Seoul.

The exhibition was gratifyingly well received. What had threatened to end before it began ended on a much more human and happy note in a small nearby restaurant with everyone sitting on the floor around tables loaded with delicious food and drink. ■

# ASSESSING DIMENSIONS

by Michael Hosaluk

Dimensions is our annual account of the current state of crafts in Saskatchewan. People from all media enter their best pieces and entrust three jurors to evaluate the work. Each year the same controversies arise as the jurors' process and selections are discussed. When I hear that last year a piece was rejected from Dimensions and this year it is entered and wins a Merit Award it seems to me that something is wrong with the system. How can this happen? Is the jury process that much of a crapshoot?

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*"Art jurors are strongly prejudiced towards traditional craft. They always encourage us to explore and experiment, then reject the most exploratory pieces ..."*

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Every year we invite three people to act as jurors to select an exhibition. It is important that we select qualified jurors who can make knowledgeable judgments on all aspects of craft, people who we can respect for their opinions even if we do not agree with them. The work that is entered in this exhibition is craft so why do we persist in selecting as jurors people from the arts community? In other craft council contexts it may be appropriate but is Dimensions really the place to educate them about craft? As James Prestini said in a lecture I attended in Los Angeles, "What do bush league critics with Master's degrees in the History of Art know about crafts? If they sharpened a pencil with a knife they would cut off a finger." This may be a bit overstated but getting a little closer to home, Jamie Russell commented, "Art jurors are strongly prejudiced towards traditional craft. They always encourage us to explore and experiment, then reject the most exploratory pieces ... They want to keep craft stuck in the sixties." This year's jury wanted to see more experimental work but chose a safe show. When I was in Ontario I inquired about the Ontario Craft Council's juried exhibition and the opposite was true, too much experimental work and not enough traditional work. Dimensions is meant to generate interest and excitement and to educate the public about crafts in our province. It should also stimulate growth in us, the craftspeople. "Not all people are going to appreciate new experimental work. It is important to have your community respond to craft in all its aspects" says Megan Broner, a Saskatoon goldsmith.

I can sympathise with the jurors. When three people from varying backgrounds are put together and asked to select, from a wide variety of objects, an exhibition which makes a clear, concise statement about excellence in crafts it is a

daunting task and maybe even an impossible one depending on the entries. Or is there some common ground such as the use and understanding of materials, and technical skill? How much can one expect the jurors to intuit the maker's intent or to recognize personal development? To what extent is the juror's personal taste an acceptable criteria? With three jurors, there will always be compromises and there will always be balances. Would having one juror make for a clearer statement or is the burden of making and defending decisions too much to ask of one person? I am not asking for super-jurors but for people who can substantiate their decisions with constructive and consistent criticism.

Every year there is good work rejected. Many entries are rejected for valid reasons such as technical flaws. But work is also rejected because of size restraints imposed on the exhibition by budget restrictions, this year the exhibition contained 39 pieces, last year 49. In selecting the pieces the work itself can generate a look or an idea and jurors may reject good pieces which do not 'fit'. They may come with a concept of the kind of craft they expect to find in a prairie province or a direction they would like to see craft go.

Dimensions represents the finest crafts being produced in our province or does it? Is everyone really giving it their best shot? How many of us really push the limits of our media or even care to, it is very easy to become complacent once you find a niche. Don Chester asked why are some of the top people not entering. Have a lot of the senior craftspeople of this province matured beyond having to enter juried competitions? Why are so few people from the guilds entering? Do we need to advertise more widely or in different places, to actively encourage craftspeople to enter?

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*I am not asking for super-jurors but for people who can substantiate their decisions with constructive and consistent criticism.*

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If there was no Premier's Prize would we have less entries? Would people still enter? What part do prizes play and what message do they actually give. I think prize money is encouraging and always welcome, however, there has so often been controversy over the awarding of the Premier's Prize that I sometimes feel that it detracts from the intent of the exhibition. Maybe we should increase the Merit Awards to balance the Premier's Prize better. Nowhere is it made clear why works receive the prizes they do, what

particular aspects of that work make it stand out from others. Should we award prizes for other reasons than the excellence of a particular piece of work, for example, for a craftspeople's achievement and development over a period, or a Rookie Award to encourage young and up-and-coming craftspeople. It is also not clear what some awards are for — is the Award to an SCC Active Member for that person's contribution to the craft community or for a particular piece of work done by an SCC member.

Each year when the deadline for Dimensions rolls around I look forward to this event, to the anticipation of possibly winning the big one, to pushing myself to produce something new and seeing what other people have produced. "I like to think of it as a test, a chance to push myself to produce the finest work I am currently capable of" says Don Kondra, twice winner of the Premier's Prize. "The critique part of the show is perhaps as important as the show itself. It is a chance to discuss my work with my peers and receive a critique from qualified jurors. This constructive criticism is invaluable whether or not the piece is accepted."

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*Nowhere is it made clear why works receive the prizes they do, what particular aspects of that work make it stand out from others.*

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Throughout my career I have entered many juried exhibitions and have had modest success but have also had my fair share of rejection. For some people rejection can have a devastating effect, causing them never to enter juried competitions again. When my work is rejected I try to channel that negative energy to positive, and go at it all the harder, hoping that the next panel of jurors will be more knowledgeable or will recognize my intent. I guess we accept rejection as part of the process even if the reasons don't satisfy you. "We have grown up considerably and have to progress about our attitudes toward the jury process and learn to accept rejection" says Frank Sudol, a Paddockwood woodworker.

I guess that all you can do as a hopeful exhibitor is enter what you know is good. Do not take it too seriously, have a little fun, do something to satisfy yourself, forget about what you think the jurors might like. As Pat Adams says, "It's like going fishing, you never know what you might catch and you can't catch anything if you don't go."

*Michael Hosaluk is a woodworker who has exhibited work in juried and invitational exhibitions, both national and international. He has also given numerous workshops including at the American Association of Woodworkers National Symposium in Denton, Texas this June. His work has appeared in major craft magazines.*

*Opinions in the form of 'Letters to the Editor' are always welcome.*

by Annabel Taylor

*Annabel Taylor teaches the weaving program at SIAST Woodland Campus Prince Albert. This article is from a workshop given at the Fun, Fibre and Friendship Conference. Although it was addressed originally to weavers, the information holds good for all craftspeople.*

Most of us, as working craftspeople, are involved to some degree as producers or manufacturers, as artists, and as wholesalers or retailers. In addition, trained craftspeople often find employment as gallery operators or dealers, agents or sales representatives, researchers or historians, writers, designers, restorers or conservators, arts administrators, teachers or making reproductions. Most craftspeople combine production with elements of these or other careers. How many of you actually think of yourself as a professional? How many as an artist? What does your perception of yourself do for you?

I attended an Interweave Forum on the "Business of Weaving" in Denver in 1988 and was impressed with the calibre of people there and the way in which they presented themselves. Here are thumbnail sketches of some of the resource people: Arianthe and Kris collaborated to produce a line of handwovens, ponchos, scarves and stoles. They analyzed their sales; limited their selection to six pieces, limited their six pieces to six colourways and developed a very successful business. They did well selling wholesale but eventually concentrated on retail craft markets for the bulk of their business.

Hoffman and Hunt were two very classy ladies who travelled the US acting as agents and selling handwoven garments and jewellery to retail stores. They did very well with a 15% commission. They took with them two to four pieces of clothing from each weaver in one style but different colours or a slight variation in design. They wore a handwoven garment when they called on retailers. Marcia and Frank Phillips developed a line of one of a kind clothing, very expensive high style with painted warps which they sell by attending four major sales each year. In 1988 their dresses were selling for \$300.

Tony Sykes represents artists to architects and interior designers and she and her husband publish a book called Guild each year which features the craftspeople whom they represent. Sandy Carson runs an art gallery and acts as a consultant. Vicky Leslie sells handmade items on consignment. These people impressed me as being very successful, professional craftspeople.

Next a definition of the elements of marketing. Every textbook I have seen lists the same four basic elements, whether for small or large businesses. They are the 4 P's.

**Place. Product. Price. Promotion.**

**Place** is the market, where you will sell your product.

## THE BUSINESS OF CRAFT

There are lots of options such as craft fairs, trade fairs, retail outlets, studio sales, mail order, galleries, agents, commission or custom work. Retail outlets will differ, some will buy outright and others on consignment. Some are run cooperatively so that you spend time working there and have a voice in management. You need to do some serious market research to determine which is the most promising outlet for you and your work.

**Product.** What will you produce? The recurring theme for successful sales seems to be to design a limited collection, to narrow the range of what is produced. Building a better mousetrap applies, it has to be different or better than other products which are competing for customers. Jack Lenor Larsen assigned a project to a group of students. It was to design a collection; make samples, provide sales materials, assess market potential and consider the limitations. That struck me as being a worthwhile exercise for all of us — if we are already producing, try designing a new line.

If you think of names like Jack Lenor Larson, Anita Mayers, Randy Darwall, Ted Carson or those closer to home — Jane Evans, Pat Adams, Kaija Harris, what do they bring to mind? Usually you can picture the kind of work they do. They have all been able to focus on one particular aspect of their craft and to work on it until they have reached a degree of expertise and efficiency and have established a reputation in their field. Choose an area which interests you, focus on it, really push your exploration and be very good at it before moving on to anything else.

**Price.** When you set out to design a product, your goal must be to design one that can be produced economically and efficiently and marketed successfully. When talking about producing economically and efficiently, we have some of the criteria upon which to base the price. You need to take into account the cost of materials and labour and in order to do this you need an accurate costing of both. You need to be able to pay yourself a reasonable hourly wage if you are reasonably efficient. You need to consider overheads and this includes cost of administration and design time as well as costs for rental of studio space, depreciation on equipment, office supplies, memberships and all of the other costs associated with your business. You need to build in an allowance for profit, to allow for ups and downs and problems but also because that is what you should aim for. If you are selling wholesale or through galleries or an agent they will add to your price anywhere from 15 - 100% to arrive at the selling price. When all of these are added up, you need to ask yourself if this is a price the market will bear, because that is the bottom line. More market research may be in order!!!

**Promotion.** In the SIAST weaving program, we have our students design a logo, a promotional item, a display, a portfolio and do a resumé. Many of us find this difficult but it is important to project a professional image which reflects the kind of work you do and only well designed material can do this. Good slides are crucial to any proposal or portfolio. They are difficult to get. At the very least, you should know what the characteristics of a good slide are and be prepared to hire a photographer and work with her until you are satisfied.

**Business Management.** The areas of small business management that are common to all business, no matter how small, have to do with finances. Keeping good financial records is a necessity for a number of reasons. You will need to know where you stand at Income Tax time, when you remit GST and PST, and be able to produce good records if and when the auditor should appear. You need an accurate record of accounts receivable and accounts payable. You need to know if your business is healthy, or at least, getting that way, and an Income Statement or Balance Sheet will help you to see your overall financial picture including your assets and liabilities. Simple records will do the job, have an accountant help you to set up a system which will suit you.

Keeping inventory is another task which will need to be done regularly, not only for income tax purposes but for the sake of efficiency in production and in financial management. Inventory ties up money, requires storage and insurance and has to be there when you need it. You should consider shipping and packing costs, billing procedures, and municipal, provincial and federal regulations. If you are able to start a business and establish good systems and efficient practices, it will make life easier in the long run.

One of the assignments that students also complete is to prepare an application for a grant or a proposal for an exhibition or commission. Grantsmanship is a very useful skill to practice. Organizations such as the Canadian Craft Council, Saskatchewan Craft Council, your local Guild and Arts Council, Canadian Artists Representation Association (CARFAC), and the national guilds and organisations related to your craft keep you informed about available grants, conferences, educational opportunities and general information on what is up to date.

*Further information about SIAST Applied Arts courses is available from Box 3003, Prince Albert, Sask. S6V 6G1.*

*The Craft Factor has carried articles on Portfolios Winter 1990/91, Vol 15/1 and Better Booths, Fall 1988, Vol 13/3.*

# JEANNIE MAH - CHIAROSCURO

DUNLOP ART GALLERY, REGINA JULY 6 - AUGUST 11, 1991

by Greg Beatty



Jeannie Mah *Fragmented cup Porcelain*

Recently, the Dunlop Art Gallery presented the ceramic installation *Chiaroscuro* by Regina artist Jeannie Mah. The installation, which was located in the gallery's front display cases, consisted of a selection of delicate porcelain cups that depart radically from conventional notions of ceramic form, function and decoration.

In viewing these objects, one is struck by their fragile beauty. Mah achieves this effect by rolling the clay into paper-thin sheets, which she then uses to construct exotically-shaped vessels that seem to defy gravity. By emphasizing form over function, she subverts the cup's traditional identity as a symbol of sustenance and comfort, and encourages us instead to see it as a metaphor for human evolution and social change. Indeed, since the cup is basic to both the domestic and ceremonial life of virtually every society, archaeologists and anthropologists have long considered the design and decoration of a culture's pottery to be a key indicator of the political, economic and social conditions that prevailed at the time.

As the title *Chiaroscuro* suggests, this installation was marked by theatrical contrasts of light and dark. By choosing a glamorous historical art term for the title of her exhibition, Mah challenges the division that has traditionally existed between fine art and craft in Western culture. The term *chiaroscuro* refers to the treatment of

light and shadow in a painting or drawing to produce an illusion of depth or to heighten dramatic effect. In her installation, Mah gives an ironic twist to this artistic illusion by presenting three-dimensional objects in tableaux that, framed and glazed by protective coverage, read initially as two carefully composed paintings.

The east display case contained four porcelain vessels which were inspired by an ancient Minoan earthenware cup which Mah saw while visiting a museum on the Mediterranean island of Crete in 1982. The Minoans, who were named after the legendary King Minos of Knossos, were the first advanced civilization on European soil. Strategically located on the main trade route between Asia and Africa, the Minoans benefitted from contact with other advanced cultures such as the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, and became known for their stately palaces and fine craftsmanship in the areas of fresco painting, jewellery making and pottery.

The west display case (see back cover) contained a selection of fourteen cups which were inspired by a visit Mah made in 1988 to a museum associated with the famous Sèvres porcelain factory on the outskirts of Paris. The factory, which dates from the early 18th century, was established in response to a demand for porcelain among the elite of European society. Unable to duplicate the type of hard-paste porcelain that came from China because of the lack of the mineral kaolin, Sèvres developed a brand of soft-paste porcelain that was uniquely suited to the decorative excesses of the late Baroque and Rococo periods of French design.

By juxtaposing works inspired by cultural artifacts from the Aegean Bronze Age and 18th century France, Mah comments on the history of Western cultural development.

The four *Minoan* cups, for instance, are all squat and relatively unadorned. The decorative pattern, which is confined to light geometric shapes such as the circle and square painted on the dark surface of the cups, recalls the distinctive 'light on dark' colour scheme of Minoan Kamares ware from the Middle Bronze Age, 2000 to 1550 B.C. While this type of pottery was often decorated with elaborate abstract patterns, as well as life-like images of plants, animals and mythical beasts, the simple design of Mah's cups reflects their status as domestic utensils. By incorporating these drinking vessels into her installation, Mah evokes the notion of home. Specifically, she seeks to celebrate the home as a place where we replenish our physical and mental strength so that we may better cope

with the frustrations of the outside world. Her focus on the home as a center of Minoan life is supported by an analysis of architectural remains on the island. The functional design of Minoan palaces, villas and houses all point to the existence of large-scale, closely-knit family units.

The fourteen *French* cups, in contrast, are light and supple. Each one has been decorated with the more elaborate geometric shapes of the spiral, which may be taken as a universal symbol for life. Because the soft-paste porcelain produced at the Sèvres factory had a lower firing temperature, it had a unique capacity to absorb colour. From the outset of production in 1738 this capacity was exploited, and Sèvres porcelain became known for its remarkable colour range. The colours favoured by Mah in her installation – daffodil yellow and cobalt blue – are associated particularly with the reign of the 'Sun King' Louis XIV. The elegant design of these cups reflects both the relatively sophisticated nature of French civilization, and the important role vessels would have played in the rituals and ceremonies of the French court.

The *Minoan* cups were mounted in linear fashion on reproductions of classical architectural cornices made for Mah by fellow ceramicist Bill Rennie. Their static appearance, against a sombre background of black and brown, emphasizes their status as 'historical' objects from the distant past. On the floor of the display case, Mah has carefully arranged the fragments of a cup into a rough approximation of its original shape. The museum-like treatment of these cups and fragments reflects the tragic fate that eventually befell the Minoan people after a series of natural disasters in the 15th century B.C.

The *French* cups, on the other hand, were mounted in a more dynamic fashion on metal shelves set against a yellow and pink faux-marble background designed to resemble the exterior of the Grand Trianon at Versailles. Their dynamic presentation, which also includes a reference to an evolutionary cycle of destruction and creation, reflects the relative importance of this period of French history to the development of modern civilization. Indeed, during the 18th century France was the dominant power on the continent, and the many advances that were made in areas ranging from art and architecture to philosophy and science continue to percolate through Western society.

Born in Regina, Jeannie Mah has studied at such well-known institutions as the Emily Carr College of Art in Vancouver, the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts and the Université de la Sorbonne in Paris. She has participated in a number of national and international exhibitions, including 1re Triennale De La Porcelaine in Switzerland in 1986 and 3e Biennale Nationale De La Ceramique in Trois Rivieres in 1988. She will be participating in the exhibition *Eccentric Vessels*, which will be held at the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery in Saskatoon in the spring of 1992.

*The exhibition Chiaroscuro was organized for the Dunlop Art Gallery by Helen Marzolf.*

*Greg Beatty is a freelance writer from Regina with an interest in visual arts.*

## MADE IN SASKATCHEWAN: PETER RUPCHAN

The settling of the prairies in the early part of this century did not encourage or sustain rural craft industries. Widely scattered settlement, the rigours of establishing a farm and making a subsistence living and the government policy of shipping manufactured products from Central Canada (and Britain) to the agricultural West conspired against those immigrants who arrived with craft skills and training. Peter Rupchan was one of these.

In lively and readable fashion, Judith Silverthorne tells the story of Rupchan, who came to Canada in 1905 having learned the skills of a potter in a small manufactory in the Ukraine. Like many early immigrants, Rupchan's first years here were entirely spent in scraping a living to support himself and later a wife and growing family, and in proving up a succession of homesteads. However it is obvious that Rupchan's first love was making pots, and to this he returned whenever time allowed.

With great determination he prospected for clay and other necessary materials, built his own equipment and kilns, and marketed his simple, functional pots through the surrounding communities. Among the very few potters working in a rural craft tradition, Rupchan appears to be almost unique in trying to establish a viable market. Inventive and indomitable, Peter Rupchan pursued his craft despite hardship, tragedy and setbacks. Ms. Silverthorne nicely balances Rupchan's personal history against detailed information about his pottery and its production.

The history of craft and craft makers on the prairies has hardly begun to be explored so Ms. Silverthorne's small book on Peter Rupchan is a welcome addition. It is well illustrated with period photographs and with drawings of Rupchan's kilns, equipment and inventions. For people interested in seeing Rupchan's work, the Dunlop Art Gallery is displaying approximately 24 pieces of his work at the Sherwood Village Gallery during December and at the Glen Elm Gallery during January. The author will be launching her book at the Sherwood Village Library on November 27 at 7:30 pm.

MADE IN SASKATCHEWAN: Peter Rupchan,  
Ukrainian Pioneer and Potter

by Judith Silverthorne

96pp., 45 illustrations, photos and maps  
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