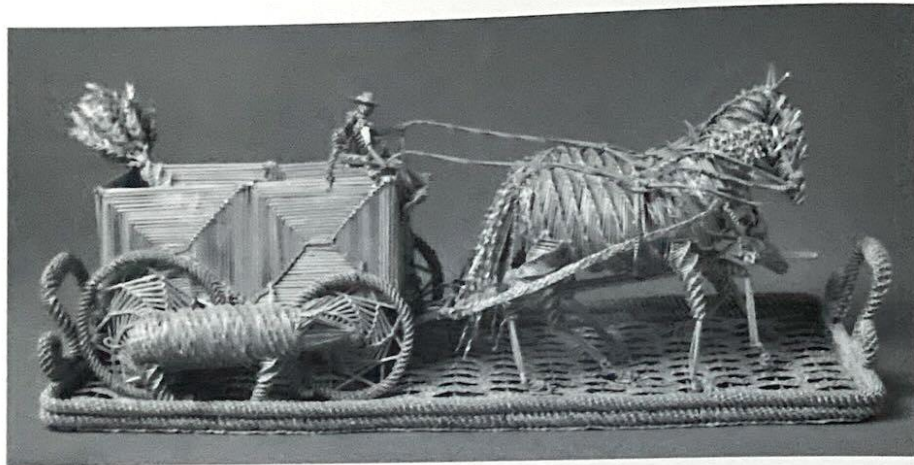


THE CRAFT FACTOR

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL • WINTER 1991/92 • VOL. 16/4 \$3.00





Garry Hayes, Saskatchewan Western Development Museum

A.R. RHODES, *Zelma Cart and Horses Marquis wheat* 20x28x61cm c.1920s Saskatchewan Western Development Museum, Saskatoon



Garry Hayes, Saskatchewan Western Development Museum

Man's Traditional Suit, from the Doukhobour community, Verigin Linen c.1915
MRS. BLUDOFF grew, processed, spun and wove the flax, ANASTIA NEMANISHEN machine sewed the garments Saskatchewan Western Development Museum, Saskatoon

See Judith Whitethorne's article on searching for pioneer crafts, page 4.



THE CRAFT FACTOR

Saskatchewan Craft Council is a non-profit organization formed in 1975 to nurture and promote the craft community. Craftspeople, supporters of crafts and the general public are served by the many and varied programs of the Saskatchewan Craft Council including gallery and touring craft exhibitions, craft markets, workshops, conferences and publications. The Saskatchewan Craft Council is an affiliated member of the Canadian Craft Council.

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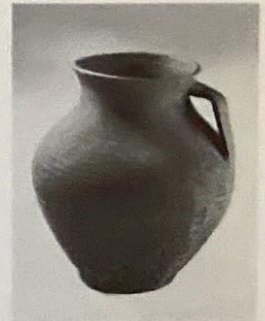
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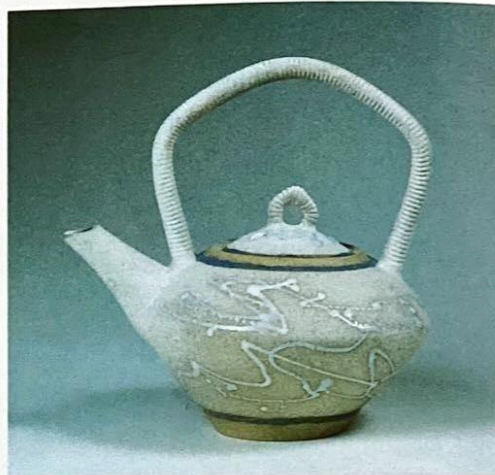
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JUDY TRYON *Just Tip Me Over Porcelain, handbuilt*
12x5in Private Collection

POT-POUR-EASE

SASKATOON POTTERS GUILD SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY AUGUST 16 – SEPTEMBER 10

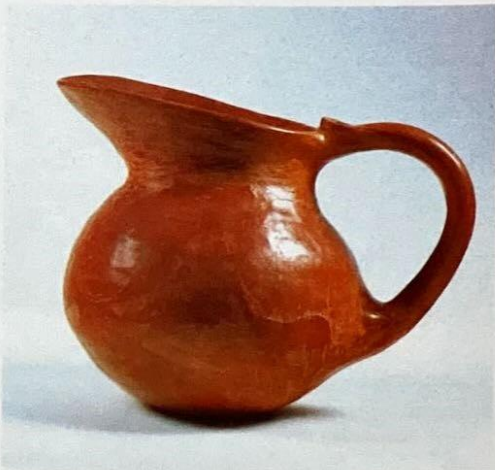
by Louise Roy Mark



ALICE HYLAND *Teapot* Stoneware, thrown
25x24cm

BARBARA GORETZKY *Persian Pretty* Clay, hand-
built, wax resist, raku fired 13x5in Private Collection

ROBERT ROSS *Red Pitcher* Clay, thrown and hand-
built, terra sigillata 9x12in



Last August on a sunny afternoon, I ran in to take a peek at the Saskatoon Potters Guild show at the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery. I went quickly from piece to piece getting more and more excited as I went around the room. The guild had mounted an exhibition and done it very well.

This exhibition had a theme, as hinted in the title "Pot-pour-ease", the pieces in this show should have a spout to pour from or such a pouring possibility should be suggested. Gale Steck, a Saskatoon potter and former member of the group, curated the show. Nine guild members were represented and they all offered a personal way of playing with clay.

Barbara Goretzky's *Persian Pretty* first caught my eye. It is a stunning piece of raku. Put together with slab construction, it is a pitcher that stands fifteen inches tall. It has strong, definite lines with a ribbon of clay that defines the top and bottom. The spout and handle are boldly executed and the whole piece holds together well. But what really makes

this piece especially striking is its decoration. Barbara used wax resist to create a pattern between the blackened clay and multicolour patina. The raku 'magic' did its trick and the result is gorgeous. It is interesting to note that Barbara's other pitcher *Toucan* has been fired with the same patina and this time the effect is much toned down. Her slab-built vase *Summer Solstice* has an energetic feel and a pleasant pattern on the front of it. It is however unfortunate that the back of the piece has been overlooked. It would be nice to see the whole vase tied together.

Two of my favourite works in the show are by Robert Ross. His *Watering Can* is a subtle piece that grew on me at each of my visits to the gallery. A spout a bit too long gives it a slightly awkward look but I like its quietness and simplicity. It is basic, functional and totally unpretentious. An anonymous brown glaze completes it. The other piece of Robert's that excited me is his *Red Pitcher*. This jug thrown and handbuilt, has a strong appeal. It has no decoration, no glaze, only a burnished coating of terra sigillata. It is squat and lively. It reminds one of old primitive pottery when basic function was the sole concern.

Alice Hyland is a lady who is forever exploring and experimenting with different clays and ways of glazing. In this show, her *Teapot* captured my attention. Some of the outside surface was left unglazed revealing a beautiful gray stoneware. The shape of her teapot and the handle that tops it have been pleasantly integrated.

Loraine Sutter's *Black and Blue Bowl* is approximately twenty inches in diameter, it is elegant, graceful and somehow looks as though it has been done effortlessly. A gentle pattern has been sgraffitoed through the glaze.

Judy Tryon's *Coffee, Tea or...* is my next choice. It is a small porcelain teapot with an incised pattern in which a celadon-like glaze has pooled. A pulled handle has been added over the lid. It is delicate yet sturdy and a joy to look at. The transparency of the glaze allows one to enjoy the whiteness of the porcelain. Judy's *Just Tip Me Over* (front cover) is neat and humorous. It is a handbuilt coffee pot that sits well on its base, but its body leans over at an angle of about 50°. It is nicely built with soft slabs of porcelain that give it an organic look. One wonders if it was made that way intentionally or if it was an *accident de parcours*.

Susan Robertson's *Butterfly Pitcher #2* is handbuilt, glazed on the inside, with stain decoration in the shape of a butterfly on the outside. What first strikes me in this work is the fragility of its handle, I think I would be afraid to grab it. The use of black and other colours contrast well with the whiteness of the porcelain but I would encourage Susan to use colour more loosely and not follow a pattern that is too precise. Her *Lemonade Pitcher #2* is more successful. It seems very functional. I like the way she has designed and built the spout to retain the ice.

SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY

813 Broadway, Saskatoon, SK
Everyday 1-5 pm

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ORNAMENTAL METALWORK

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Reception: Friday, January 24 7-9p.m.
Artist's talk: Sunday, February 2 2p.m.
Functional works that deal with the artist's ongoing sculptural concerns.

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LIGHT PLAY

February 28 to March 31
Reception: Friday, February 28 7-9p.m.
Artist's talk: Saturday, February 29 2p.m.
An interplay between sculptural glass and controlled light sources.

THE ECCENTRIC VESSEL

April 3 to May 10
Reception: Friday, April 3 7-9p.m.

A touring exhibition organized by the Saskatchewan Craft Council and curated by Susan Whitney of Regina. Twenty-four works by twelve Saskatchewan based artists whose work fits the title theme.

Lemon slices cut out of porcelain slabs have been applied to the outside surface giving it a cool fresh look.

The Saskatoon Potters Guild has been operating for over twenty years offering classes, workshops and mutual support. Even though quite a few of its members were professional potters, the guild has mostly kept a low profile over the years, working hard and surviving virtually without grants or help from governments. The sheer love of the mud kept its people together and still does. This is the first time that the guild has had an exhibition at the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery. I was really happy to see this show. I personally left the guild two years ago and I sense that since then a new wind of creativity has blown over it. I found that in the past, guild shows tended to be more traditional and conservative. "Pot-pour-ease" clearly indicates a new direction. I feel that everybody has more confidence and is willing to seek new challenges.

SEARCHING FOR PIONEER CRAFTS

by Judith Silverthorne



PETER RUPCHAN Bowl Earthenware, glaze, handthrown 20x30.5cm Ukrainian Museum of Canada, Saskatoon

Researching 'pioneer' crafts and craftspeople is like uncovering a long-forgotten mystery. Although the trail is substantially cold, the thrill of tracking down leads and fitting in the missing pieces of the cultural puzzle can be exhilarating!

The search often starts as simple curiosity about a piece of work noticed at a garage sale, on the auction block or while visiting a neighbour down the road. One question leads to another and before you realize it you want to find out all there is to know about this intriguing piece of workmanship and the person who crafted it.

Uncovering the related information can be difficult as very little has been recorded about early Saskatchewan craftspeople. In fact the average person probably does not realize what crafts were done during the early settlement periods in this province. More than likely their only frame of reference has been to view handcrafts as historical artifacts in museums rather than in a craft context.

There are a wide variety of crafts one might stumble across. They range from hooked rugs, woodcraft, pottery, toys, furniture, quilts, stitchery to wheat weaving, most frequently done by Doukhobours, Mennonites, Hutterites and other ethnic groups from eastern Europe. Existing craft objects were of ten the necessities of everyday living, made by ordinary people and therefore of little monetary value, and not noteworthy at the time. Fortunately they sometimes were of sentimental value and today turn up in museums, antique stores and at estate sales.

Setting out to search for 'pioneer' crafts can literally be like searching for a needle in a haystack. These precious artifacts are quite rare and more often than not are unwittingly disguised. For instance, a valuable pottery jug, one of Rupchan's masterpieces, was camouflaged as a flower pot on an unsuspecting person's back porch ledge. A small bowl was a catch-all for odds and ends in an oily machine shop. Many unrecognised works of art have been carelessly tossed aside in junk piles only to be routed out at the last minute for inclusion in farm auctions. There, luckily, they may be snatched up by knowledgeable collectors or simply admired by a local buyer for their true beauty and craftsmanship.

Once you have found an object, discovering anything about the craftsman takes a fair amount of sleuthing as there are relatively few sources to turn to. I found local residents to be the most valuable sources of information but contacting museums, art galleries, private collectors, antique dealers and even rural auctioneers, may be a useful starting point in identifying a craft object or craftsman. One might expect provincial museums to have an abundance of information, but they, and even the handful of private and public antique collectors and art dealers who specialize, have limited knowledge. They simply have not had the finances, time or the opportunity to uncover much information. Because these treasures are poorly documented contacting a library for published works is usually futile.

Depending on where you discover or acquire a craft piece, a logical starting point is to question

the former owner about its origins. The investigation assumes the form of a typical detective case where you begin making inquiries of the local residents, and following every lead or clue no matter how insignificant. You might even be so lucky as to stumble across relatives of the craftsman.

For instance, before I began working on my book about Peter Rupchan, the Ukrainian potter from the Parkland area, I had heard casual references to "a fellow who used to make pots north of Usherville somewhere." There was little doubt after hearing him mentioned for the third or fourth time, in connection with using clay found on his farm and building his own kilns, that I could ignore an investigation any further. I began with the intention of writing an article on him.

At the time I was living in the same area as Rupchan had lived in, so it was not too difficult to make contacts. I began with the local telephone book, calling anyone with the same last name. They turned out to be his sons, two of whom owned their father's original homesteads, where the remains of buildings and one kiln still existed. Although important sources of information, their memories were limited and actual dates of events had never been recorded. I met and interviewed several times the oldest, the youngest and one of the middle sons. They came from a family of thirteen and all had been born quite far apart, but fortunately the information they gave me overlapped so I could begin piecing their father's eccentric life together.

One of the most extraordinary people I discovered was a local historian. He had a wealth of general knowledge and photographs of the area, and he was able to direct me to various other sources of important information. It also turned out that Rupchan was buried on his farm.

By this time I was totally hooked on unravelling the history of Rupchan's life and pottery operation and I knew there was going to be enough material for a book. I continued by contacting archives in search of homestead papers, old newspaper articles, photographs, and any general information they might have. I have found most statistics offices, newspapers or libraries will helpfully search for information within five years of a given date, but beyond that there is little hope of uncovering the information you want without a great deal of time and expense.

I discovered several pieces of Rupchan's pottery were housed at the Ukrainian Museum of Canada along with some initial research done by others. Besides examining these notes, I wrote dozens of letters to other museums, private art collectors, government organizations, libraries, churches and individuals in the hope of getting more information. Bits and pieces began to filter in and my search widened.

I tracked down former residents of the area who might have known Rupchan. Although most were elderly and quite vague they sometimes recalled amazing anecdotes. One fellow in his nineties, had left Usherville in 1914 and had never been back, so his descriptions of Rupchan's operation confirmed my suspicions that Rupchan had begun his pottery business earlier than his family could recall. This Canora man was also able to substantiate a story about Rupchan's brother's unfortunate demise between the wheels of two steam tractors. Until that point I had been researching a false lead. The date on the headstone in the cemetery was wrong by seven years and therefore placed all of my information slightly off kilter - some industrious soul had mistakenly painted over the correct date turning 1912 into 1919. Although I was never able to unearth a newspaper article about that accident, nor an obituary that might have mentioned other names to contact, once I had the right date I located a death certificate and was able to jog the memories of others about events happening around the same time. Once again things began falling into place.

I came to realize, even though there were occasional false leads, that just about everyone I contacted had something to contribute even if it did not make much sense at the time. It became incredibly important to jot down any and all information I came across for future reference, and more often than not, it enabled me to go back to one of my initial contacts with the 'right' questions.

I was constantly amazed at the information I uncovered and the links that lead to other people interested in Rupchan's work. One of my choicest finds was an anthropologist studying Rupchan's pottery for her thesis. Her information and mine dove-tailed nicely. Patient probing, careful organization of information, consistent cross-referencing and continually following clues eventually led to a successful overall view of this particular craftsman.

Most people I am sure would not desire to go to such great lengths or detail. However whether it is a unique piece of hand-crafted furniture or a distinctively constructed weaving, it is beneficial to learn more about our early craftspeople and their crafts - not just in terms of historical value, but also aesthetic component and craftsmanship.

Contemporary crafts, craft-making techniques and craftsmakers have come to the forefront in Saskatchewan in the last couple of decades. Hopefully their 'pioneer' counterparts will also become less obscure as people are alerted to the importance of documenting this significant heritage and artistry before these links to the past are totally forgotten. ■

ESCAPE INTO MY GARDEN

SUSAN CLARK SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY OCTOBER 18 - NOVEMBER 12, 1991

by Catherine Macauley



SUSAN CLARK *Fall Leaves Hanging with Downy Woodpecker* Silk, hand dyed, gold resist 117x149cm Private Collection

SUSAN CLARK *Shibori Coat* Silk, immersion & hand dyed Size M/L Private Collection



The silk industry was first established in China over four thousand years ago and was protected to the point that smuggling silkworms out of the country was punishable by death. As a result, for several centuries only the finished fabrics reached the rest of the world, along the famous Silk Route to Europe. However by the sixth century, despite the harsh penalties, a handful of traders and adventurers had taken the risk and the production of silk slowly spread throughout Asia and India. By the twelfth century silk was being woven in Italy, and was taken up by France four centuries later. Silk became prized as a royal cloth throughout western Europe. The art of painting on silk also originated in China about 400 B.C.; however, it really took hold in Japan, where there was an abundance of indigo dyes, and in India, where colouring silk became an important art form.

With such an intriguing history, it is no surprise that the combination of lustrous, shimmering

fabric and clear, jewel-like dyes make hand-painted silk objects a visual joy, and Susan Clark's exhibition illustrated very well the many possibilities inherent in this activity.

Susan has always been interested in fabric and fibre, and, having spent part of her childhood in Japan, where over sixty percent of today's silk is produced, perhaps it was inevitable that she chose the medium of handpainted silk to explore artistic issues. Her practical introduction began several years ago when she took a one-day workshop at Prairie Lily Knitting & Weaving Shop. She is mainly self-taught. However, over the years she has managed to fit in an eclectic mix of short classes in silk painting and fibre, and studio classes at the University of Saskatchewan when she is not working full-time as adult programmer at the Saskatoon Public Library. (A one-year leave of absence has enabled her to concentrate on her art, and find the time necessary to complete enough works for the exhibition.) She has

found a mentor in Bill Morton, who is an instructor in dye techniques and processes at the Alberta College of Art in Calgary, and who lived in Japan for ten years, apprenticing at a kimono studio. Susan herself has been back to Japan several times; each visit provided further inspiration and technical skills to add to her repertoire.

Susan's main aesthetic interests involve the study and depiction of light and colour and her sources of imagery have often been found in her garden, as is indicated by the title of the exhibition. She brings into her workspace cut flowers from her yard and in the winter months finds images in her healthy collection of houseplants.

The exhibition presented us with sixteen widely varied (perhaps too varied) works to study and appreciate. Included were items of clothing — vests, a blouse, a coat, a jacket, a dress — two quilts, three hangings, an 1800s rocker with silk cushions, and two wooden chairs. The two painted chairs, both found objects, although carefully decorated with handpainted leaves and foliage, did little to enhance the show. The rocker, however, was a considered attempt to combine the beautifully painted and decorated fabric on the cushions with the rest of the object. Thus the painted foliage escaped from the cushions onto the frame of the chair, and the back.

This urge to go beyond simply using traditional dye techniques involving gutta and wax resist, and watercolour and salt processes was the predominant theme of the show. Susan is reaching for new ways to apply colour and texture to enhance the resulting handpainted and dyed surface of the silk, thus transcending the functional to produce objects notable for their aesthetic qualities. She often adds embellishments, using gold resist, embroidery, beads, sequins and thick fabric paint brushed directly on to the surface of the silk. She also experiments with using a jacquard silk in some of the works, which provides a textured surface upon which to work and presents the challenge of integrating this surface character with that of the images being imposed upon it. The presentation of several of the works also demonstrated a tendency to add on, to make the hanging of a work a little out of the ordinary or unexpected. While these innovations were not always totally successful, often not completely integrated with the actual technique and subsequent character of the handpainted dyes, in the end, the work was more provocative for their inclusion.

A major issue that Susan explores is the contrast between a design with strong shapes and forms against a simple ground and a design with a very dense surface where the forms and ground combine to form a lush, intertwined image. The latter was evident in *Tulip Blouse*, a classy response to the concept of the Hawaiian shirt. This garment was notable for its brilliant and dazzling colour;

the graceful shapes of the tulip plants meshing effectively with a complex ground to blend into a wild, densely patterned surface. The use of gold resist worked effectively here, as it could not overpower or detract from the design, and instead underlined the richness and lushness.

In contrast *Fall Leaves Hanging With Downy Woodpecker* used a much more open composition with richly coloured autumn leaves standing out against a warm, blue September sky. Again gold resist was used in a manner integral to the entire work. The variation in hues and tones within each leaf was a visual delight. However, the addition of the thickly painted-on woodpecker was an intrusion rather than an addition, not in keeping with the gracefulness of the work as a whole. This was also a jarring note in *Peony Quilt*; the heavily painted hummingbird and scattering of flower blossoms were incongruent with the water-colour-like bright transparency of the dyes interacting with the luminosity inherent in the silk.

A variation of a slightly different kind was evident in the *Shibori Coat*, a more subdued garment, as the blazing colour was confined to the lapels. The body of the garment was dyed in a subtle horizontal abstract of deep, rich, closely related hues that worked effectively with the loosely draping shape. The coat has a regal presence that did not require the addition of the rose-hip-like baubles across the front.

Thanksgiving Cactus Hanging was perhaps the least embellished work; the nature of the foliage with its graceful forms defined the design. However, the border proved to be problematic, its size and less than graceful draping qualities overwhelming the subtleties of the image. Susan is obviously trying to work out the most effective ways of framing the two dimensional works, since all of the wall pieces used a different kind of border as a framing device.

Susan does not ignore the practical and functional aspects of the work. The pieces were competently stitched and well constructed. Because of the steaming process used on the fabrics, the garments are completely washable and the dyes very permanent.

The explorations evident in the exhibition — in enhancing the handpainted and dyed silk product with other techniques and media, in finishing, in presentation, in the variety of objects exhibited — resulted in a show that required careful (and enjoyable) study and analysis. While each of these explorations presented some still-to-be resolved problems, the work effectively demonstrated a range of exciting possibilities. Susan's facility for producing beautiful fabric is obvious; her interest in going beyond that stage should be applauded. She is off to Japan for several weeks this winter, and will no doubt return with more ideas, images and innovations. ■

THE NOISE FROM EMPTY VESSELS

by Paul Greenhalgh



courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Earthenware Copyright MIRAGE Studios 1990 Victoria and Albert Museum, London

From *The Noise from Empty Vessels: Ceramics in the 1990's*, delivered at the International Ceramic Seminar at Calgary, May 16th, 1991 by Paul Greenhalgh, Curator of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.

The Uses of History

My first thought is taken from Milan Kundera's novel, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Kundera is a Czech novelist whose greatest work so far has been concerned with the idea of history, especially with regard to the oppression at work in pre-Havel Czechoslovakia:

In February 1948, Communist leader Klement Gottwald stepped out onto the balcony of a Baroque palace in Prague to address the hundreds of thousands of his fellow citizens packed into the old town square. It was a crucial moment in Czech history – a fateful moment of the kind that occurs once or twice a millenium.

Gottwald was flanked by his comrades, with Clementis standing next to him. There were snow flurries, it was cold, and Gottwald was bare-headed. The solicitous Clementis took off his own fur cap and set it on Gottwald's head.

The Party propaganda section put out hundreds of thousands of copies of a photograph of that balcony with Gottwald, a fur cap on his head and comrades at his side, speaking to the nation. On that balcony the history of Communist Czechoslovakia was born. Every child knew the photograph from posters, schoolbooks and museums.

Four years later Clementis was charged with treason and hanged. The propoganda section immediately air-brushed him out of history, and, obviously, out of all the photographs as well. Ever since, Gottwald has stood on that balcony alone. Where Clementis once stood, there is only the bare palace wall. All that remains of Clementis is the cap on Gottwald's head.

All that remains of hundreds of cultures are the pots which are stacked in rows in our museums. The pots, like the cap, stand for things which have disappeared. Lives, loves and liquids, thousands of pairs of lips, of hands, table-tops and kitchen sinks have touched the pots in the Victoria and Albert Museum. They come from all times and all cultures. They adorned the tables of aristocrats and they held the beer of the peasants. They held the ashes of believers, the contraceptives of non-believers, they were the greatest of sculptures and the friendliest of knick-knacks. If they had been capable of recording and playing back to us all that they had heard, our knowledge of the past would be transformed in an instant. But they were not, and we are left, as historians and practitioners, with the tantalising job of trying to understand exactly what it is that their mute beauty is trying to convey. But there is quite a lot of noise from these empty vessels.

In his novels, Kundera treats history not just as "the past" in a passive sense, as things that have happened before now. He sees history as being the things which physically remain with us from the past, the things that remind about what the past was like. "History" for him is the accumulation

of objects (books, statues, buildings, films, clothes, engines, pots) which remind us of things; they are our data-base, if you like, upon which are recorded our individual and collective memories of how and what we are. A person without a memory of any kind is barely a person at all. James Joyce said, "what is imagination if not memory?" A culture's history is its collective memory, its essence without which it would lose shape and cease to be. That is why the Soviets pulled down the statues in Lithuania and Estonia when they moved in; that is why Franco banned the Catalanian language and customs, including its national dance, the Sardana; that is why Hitler wished to erase Poland's folk heritage. All three understood that if you destroy the history of a thing, it will fade and eventually disappear. They had a fear of history, for they knew that Marx was correct when he said that "those who ignore history will be forced to relive it".

What has all this to do with pots? First, at this time, the written history of ceramics is still very poor compared to the written history of painting, architecture and sculpture. In recent decades it has fallen badly behind industrial-design history and it is frankly laughable compared to literary history and musicology. It is better than most of the histories of the other applied arts, but that is no cause for celebration. Thus the memory of the discipline is not in good shape, despite the fact that it has more to remember than virtually any other. There has been more written about Pablo Picasso's painting than there has about the entire history of ceramics from the Renaissance to the present day. The literature on American ceramics in the twentieth century, as good as it is in terms of the applied arts, is feeble compared with the literature on American painting. This has had its effect on the quality of the discussion on ceramics in general, and must have implications for the way that ceramists make and sell their work.

We might add that when we ponder upon why ceramics has such a slender historical record compared to, say, painting, we rapidly enter into the murky waters of cultural politics and class history. These are things the potter should always be aware of. When a historian labels the potter a crafts-person, he is allocating her a position in relation to the artist.

Second, in these post-modern times, in which many people are attempting to use history again to various ends, an awareness of the history of one's genre has become a prerequisite to the creative act. Even when you want to ignore it, you need to know what it is you are ignoring, so that you know that you are ignoring it. This is because history often works through us without us necessarily being aware of it.

Third, and perhaps most important, ceramists need a properly worked out history so that they do not lie to themselves about what it is they are involved in. To return one more time to Kundera's novel the whole point about the cap on Gottwald's head is that

it belonged to Clementis, whom Gottwald had murdered. Without that piece of history, the image has no meaning. So it often is with pots from the past; you need to know about them at least a little before they reveal their poetry.

A good example of the poor service that history has provided to ceramics is the 'so-called' art/craft debate. How many times have we heard the question, is it art, is it craft? How many times have we witnessed the intellectual elitism of the put-down, she is not an artist, she is a craftsperson? Historically, of course, this divide has no validity whatsoever. 'Craft', when it is used to denote a group of practices, pottery, metalwork, textiles etc., is a twentieth century invention. It did not exist in this form before then. Art and craft were not conceptually divided out in the way we divide them now. To talk of craftspeople and artists the way we do these days, as though historically this divide existed since the Renaissance, is simply wrong. People always classified genres as belonging to one group or another, but the groups themselves, and the genres in them, changed from period to period. History teaches us, I believe, that the spurious and divisive split between art and craft, which is so much a feature of the English speaking world but which barely exists outside of it, is coming to an end. In any case 'Craft' was mainly a self-righteous dream of William Morris, a great politician, designer and poet maybe, but the worst historian to go into print in the later nineteenth century.



ALISON BRITTON *Yellow Triangle* 1981 Earthenware Victoria and Albert Museum, London

courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London



JACQUELINE PONCELET *Form* 1981
Stoneware Victoria and Albert Museum,
London

Ultimately, the potter can do anything she likes with history except claim that it is not there. It is the collected knowledge of all the potters who went before her and so it will haunt her regardless of her wishes.

The British Scene

All this leads me to the contemporary scene in Britain, where, for a decade now, the debate has ranged over what exactly it is that things mean. We need to remind ourselves of what had happened in Britain during the course of the twentieth century before we can understand the shape of things now.

Bernard Leach returned from Japan to Britain in 1930 and set up his pottery in Cornwall; in 1940 he published his book 'A Potter's Book'. The book and the lifestyle have dominated British ceramics ever since, and arguably have transformed the standing of ceramic practice throughout the world. In Britain, by 1960, Leach and his followers dominated every aspect of studio pottery.

Such dominance could not last forever, and when it did finally begin to give, it did so in two stages. The first was the break from the absolute Leach orthodoxy made by Hans Coper and Lucie Rie. Second, and far more telling in my view, was the generation who came through in the early 1970's, who in large part studied at the Royal College of Art under Hans Coper and Eduardo Paolozzi. This so-called Krazy Kat generation, including Alison Britton, Jacqui Poncelet, Janice Tehalenko, Gordon Baldwin, Nicholas Homoky, Geoffrey Swindell, Liz Fritsch, Gillian Lowndes, Ewen Henderson and Carol McNicol, was interesting for the way that it was dominated by women, as opposed to the overtly patriarchal Leach circle. It matured rapidly into a mature group of individuals - without any real stylistic cohesion - who succeeded to Leach's empire.

As it gained power, the new generation, as is normal in life, came under attack itself. It seems to me that there were two conceptual threads to the criticism levelled at them. The first I would label the 'traditionalist' and the second the 'anti-abstractionist' lobbies.

The first was exemplified by the critic the late Peter Fuller, whose venomous writings frightened all but the bravest among us:

One of the worst and regrettably amongst the most fashionable of practitioners must be Carol McNicol - a 'liberator' of clay, McNicol clearly believes that she has done something significant when she weaves, pleats or folds clay, working it in unusual ways. Similarly she is always questioning the conventions of whatever it is she is making. For example, she is making plates that do not include flat surfaces but "these appear, posed as a plane within a structure, or suspended like ceramic chords".

Such works are not only quite useless and singularly unattractive to look at, they are also uninteresting.

The traditionalist lobby then, had three basic features: it called for a rejection of experimentation which carried ceramic away from function, i.e. the practical vessel form. The non-functional vessel was the focus of this attack. It called for ceramics to sink back into its own heritage, or tradition, and to stop aping the other arts, especially painting and sculpture. It asked for a return to the ideas popularised by Bernard Leach. Certainly, Peter Fuller saw Leach as the definitive potter.

Traditionalists dislike Krazy Kat and its offshoots and demand a return to tradition. This, of course, is where we encounter all kinds of ahistorical nonsense which show us how much we are in need of a properly constructed history.

Bernard Leach was not a traditionalist. He was a Modernist, an anti-traditionalist who embraced many different sources: Japan, English vernacular, China, Modernist painting. To invoke him to support a traditional view-point is the same as invoking Picasso as a supporter of academicism. Moreover, the idea that non-functional vessels were somehow an invention of the 1980s is equally nonsensical. We have had five thousand years of vessels in every form one could conceive of, and quite a few one would not wish to conceive

of. Vessels function symbolically as well as practically. Apart from vessels, objects of all kinds have been made for all manner of purposes by all cultures. If a culture wishes to produce ceramic cabbages, penises, boxes, rabbits, it can do so; so far, there is no law against it. The only real question which arises is at once the most simple and most difficult: is it any good?

Of course, well to one side of the traditionalist arguments, there have been and always will be studio potters making superb functional ware. At present, the West and the North of England are providing us with excellent salt-glaze, the leading makers being Michael Casson, Walter Keeler, Jane Hamlyn and Peter Starkey.

False traditionalism to one side, the second source of disillusionment with the Krazy Kat generation, the anti-abstraction lobby, seems to me to be rapidly seeing off the older generation in Britain. There is a general sense of the limitation of abstraction, and a corresponding urge to use symbolism and figuration. Essentially, this new opposition does not believe in the values which abstraction represents. Abstraction implies a belief in universal form and intrinsic formal qualities. It has an underlying idea in it of permanent truth in abstract beauty. Many believe that such values do not exist. Others have come to see that abstraction as a twentieth century experiment has not yielded lasting results.

Some have followed the path broadly outlined by the American funk generation but overall funk has had relatively little impact. Rather, the new wave, when it really gets moving, will come more out of a mixture of Surrealism and Expressionism.

Thoughts on Relativism and Value
Much of the debate over the past decade - traditionalism against avant-gardism, abstraction against figuration, has had a hidden theoretical agenda in it. The post-modern debate has mainly been about value in objects. That is to say, there has been a broad assumption during this century, and before then going right back through the Western tradition, that there are intrinsic qualities and values at work in some objects, and that the essence of art is in the achievement of these qualities. Followers of Plato called it the Theory of Form, Roger Fry called it Significant Form, Bernard Leach called it Truth. All great objects have consistent, universal value.

MICHAEL FLYNN *Angel, Flight* 1989
Raku fired earthenware, concrete base
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Post-modernists dispute this, and say that all is relative. Each society and successive culture, they would argue, has its own symbols and signs, which it uses to identify its objects. These have no intrinsic value, they are not universal and they are not true or false, they simply are.

How has the Museum coped with this struggle between relativism and value? Every year we buy lots of objects, and at the moment we are buying lots of twentieth century things. What criteria should we use? In the past, intrinsic beauty was always the guide; the problem is, we do have some amazingly ugly objects in our collections which were bought on the basis of beauty, which seem to imply that values do indeed change and that beauty is rather a subjective phenomenon.

Should we believe that there is an intrinsic value of beauty and meaning in some objects, or should we accept that this doesn't exist, and simply acquire objects which typify our culture today? I will answer this by talking about two things purchased by the Ceramics Collection of the Victoria and Albert, in the last year, the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and Michael Flynn's *Angel, Flight*. As with all objects which enter the Museum, a written justification had to be provided for the two purchased. The justification appearing on the form for the *Turtle* vessel was as follows:



The 'Hero Mutant Turtle' phenomenon made marketing history during the course of 1990, as the most successfully orchestrated "total strategy" campaign of all time. When the items were purchased, at Christmas 1990, 240+ products were on the market from the Turtle camp, most of these being conceived of at the time of the campaign's origins. As items of mass-popularity, and as exemplars of mass-marketing, the Turtles are of design-historical interest.

The iconographic significance of the Turtles should not be overlooked. They enjoy plural ethnic origins and were invented at a time when cross-fertilisation between cultures is at an all time high. They are named after Renaissance artists; they have Japanese fighting skills and religious convictions; they have Anglo-American habits; they speak a mixture of Black and Hispanic American dialogue; they have provenance in American sport; in Nordic, Oriental and Classical mythology.

As 'mutants' they raise racial issues. As the inventions of marketeers they provoke immediate debate along culturalist/structuralist lines. They are, in short, extraordinary cultural signifiers. They were (the campaign has already ended at time of writing) extraordinarily successful and popular. They represent to a considerable extent the continuing Orientalism of European-American culture and the voracious potential of marketeers.

There were two justifications written for the Michael Flynn piece. This is one of them:

Michael Flynn's work belongs to the ceramic world, regardless of the fact that his work has nothing to do with the vessel form. There has always been a sculptural tradition of this kind directly associated with the output of the pottery industry; during the last twenty years it has been revitalised in the Colleges of Art and Design in Great Britain . . .

The scale, technique (Raku) and function of Flynn's work has its main meaning in the ceramic context; accordingly he has consistently shown in Applied Arts galleries, received grants from the Crafts Council and been reviewed in specialist Applied Arts magazines . . . The Ceramic Galleries at the Victoria and Albert are the natural place for his work.

The two objects represent what we consider to be the range of ceramic production. Popular, mass consumer products which exemplify a certain aspect of our culture, and high, fine, handmade objects which represent the struggles of individual expression. In one hundred years, curators and practitioners may find the Flynn vulgar and the Turtle sublime. This is not a problem for the museum curator alone, it also haunts the practitioner whenever she takes clay into her hands. It is the problem I shall leave you with. ■

CANADIAN CRAFTS

by George Fry

In the October 19 Bulletin, Terry Schwalm mentioned the 'Visioning Workshop' which encouraged the Canadian Craft Council's moves to develop a national crafts policy for and with the Department of Communications. George Fry, Director of the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design was a member of that workshop and here gives an account of that experience. The quotations are from the workshop report 'The Visioning Series; Canadian Crafts in the Twenty First Century' and are selected by the Editor. The CCC has produced a report 'The Visioning Workshop - The Next Steps', both are available from the SCC office.

The brainstorming session was called together by the Bronfman Family Foundation and the Woodlawn Arts Foundation in collaboration with the Canadian Crafts Council. The two foundations are those which contribute most to the encouragement and development of Canadian crafts. The purpose was to ask people involved in Crafts to forecast their future, and to envision the role of the funding bodies in that future.

In recent years I have been involved in a number of events of this kind, which I have begun to approach with considerable cynicism. "Oh God! Another of those do's where we eat too much, stay up too late, and get goaded on by some hearty to write half-arsed statements on the walls."

No one needs to be told again how beautiful the Banff Centre is. Through all our long sessions, twelve hours a day, the presence of the mountains, the forest, the animals and the sky pervaded our discussions. When in small groups, we found for ourselves balconies, gardens and secret places in the sun where intense discussions would take place, the mountains and pines were always there.

I have never been to an event which was so stimulating and at which one felt such an immediate affinity with the participants. What was so positive was the deep and honest exchange which took place, nobody held back. In the final report it is said that "lengthy explanations were not necessarily on many issues; we were already on the same wave length." This was absolutely true, and by the end of the first evening, the unusual mix of people had established a strong rapport. The group represented a variety of craft involvement, from the commercial to the aesthetic, the curator, the educator, the civil servant, the

... it is essential that our professionals are able to understand and express their own belief in the underlying value of crafts before they can convince anyone else.

IN THE NEXT CENTURY

CANADIAN CRAFTS

architect, the patron. The five participants from outside Canada, representing the U.S., Britain, Australia, Czechoslovakia and Germany, were of enormous value. Their objectivity and lack of parochialism was like a plunge into a mountain stream, bringing us back from flights of fancy and narrow thinking.

The task was formidable. In the two and a half days at our disposal we were supposed to justify the continuing existence of Craft, and if justified to recommend how to keep it alive and well in these days of decreasing support, both public and private.

The diverse levels of government can dictate some policies which recognize the economic and cultural values of crafts, but this support will only be valuable to the degree that the public at large is sensitized to culture ...

Two factors seem to have influenced or provoked a Golden Age [in Quebec crafts]: the rise of nationalism and the teaching of arts in the primary school.

Crafts were eventually rationalised as statements of a people's culture, their heritage and their spiritual values. On the practical side, crafts contributed to the economy to a considerable degree (six billion a year was quoted for Canada) and consequently to employment. However these latter were not considered by any to be the major function of craft, the cultural and spiritual values being given as the *raison d'être* by everyone present.

We are exceedingly foolish if we expect a young crafts person to see their work as upholding a long cultural tradition if they have had only the most mean, intermittent, and second-hand exposure to what that written, oral, and visual tradition is.

Through charts, discussion, role playing and experiences recalled, we eventually came up with at least a rationale for the nineties, which after all is predicted as the decade of arts, where they will become the most important factor in communication and possibly resolution? However I think none of us felt that we were capable of bringing down the tablets of the Law, although we were up a mountain.

In many countries teachers in secondary schools and community colleges not only belong to profession craft associations, but encourage their students to join while still at school.

The five visitors opened many eyes through their personal commitment and commentaries on the situation in their own areas of interest. Julia Kunovska told us that suddenly, with the breaking of the communist bond, the Czechoslovak people had been given creative freedom but there were no longer any structures through which to work. The communists, although oppressive, were super organised and culture had a framework, albeit circumscribed. Now there was nothing.

Pamille Berg from Australia talked about her desire to involve creative people in architectural developments. Her problem was that while she was willing and desirous of helping makers towards collaborative commissions, she was not prepared to nurse them through the business aspects of the work. They had to accept that commitment for themselves. Their job was more than creation.

Given the proper training craftspeople can become consultants to industry, makers of prototypes as well as mentors or models for industrial production. Precedents for such activities are found in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Austria and many other countries - but hardly ever in Canada.

Hans Jurgen Aberle, the Peter Weinrich of Germany, astounded us with the enormous range of his clientele. In his country many more aspects of making are part of his organisation involving what our francophone colleagues might name "artisans". This made for a gigantic organisation with massive funds and political clout.

The purpose of the brainstorming was obviously not concerned with Canadian crafts alone. It is imperative that our crafts are seen in a global context, when especially faced with the economic unions which are emerging. Jane Griffiths, associated with our American colleagues' "Aid to Artisans," was able to contribute expertise on the problems of third world craft development and how it could affect

North America. We are caught in the dilemma of being rich countries of humanistic sensibilities, and our own economic exigencies.

It is not simply technical training that we need, but specific training in design, particularly three-dimensional and industrial design, so that not only can the professional make one-offs but has the knowledge to adapt designs for production.

We Canadians have extremely good advocates for our profession; creative thinkers who are able to verbalise their concepts. But two and a half days allow one to only shave the tip of the iceberg. I remember for example Michael Fortune's description of third world craft industry and what we take so much for granted compared to the problems they have to deal with; Brian Segal's arguments for the production craftsman and the need for business savvy; John Hobday's desire to encourage makers to defend their territory and to define their role; Les Manning's plea for greater recognition of the training institutions through both fiscal support and academic recognition.

It is impossible to capture in a report, the dynamic and wisdom which we were exposed to during the two and a half days. Although our results were somewhat inconclusive, we all came away with a more profound understanding of our drives. I knew many of the participants, but there had never been the opportunity to share our deeper reasons for being what we are, or to explore so freely in our attempt to rationalise our motives. But in the end, so much we are all concerned with cannot be neatly codified and packaged.

Craft is a stabilizing force in the economy. Small and medium enterprises are able to adapt themselves to economic and technical changes.

Six points of discussion I brought with me for further thought and action.

- The lack of business sense of craft practitioners, many of whom still see commerce as a dirty word. Apparently only one creative school in Canada makes Business a compulsory subject. Hans, the German, was appalled that this was so.
- The need for creators to become much more involved in society and not to allow themselves to be abstracted from society. It was agreed that this must be generated by creators themselves, the public would not come to them. It was noted that culture of all kinds is a natural part of

Czechoslovak life, they have after all voted in a poet as president. Many felt that the training centres of artists and makers were greatly to blame by fostering the "touch me not, I'm a creator" attitude. This was felt to be further supported by so many of the lecturers who frequently ceased to be serious creators in the comfort of academia.

- The lack of serious interchange between artists, particularly craftspeople, the other design professions, i.e. architects, landscape designers, furniture designers, etc., and industry.
- The lack of Heroes. In many countries the advent of the awarding of an accolade of the status of the Bronfman Award would receive major publicity. The performing arts have heroes, as does literature, but the crafts do not.

We need to say why an object is good, not just stick it on a pedestal and say, here, admire this.

- The inability of Canadian craftspeople to behave as professionals and to be respected as such. The comment of the architects and the gallery owners was that craftspeople underprice themselves and do not market themselves professionally.
- The need for much greater public awareness of the importance and worth of Craft and Design. It was suggested that an aggressive approach must be developed, e.g. why isn't Paloma Picasso holding a perfume bottle crafted in Canada - why isn't Wayne Gretzky congratulating a Bronfman recipient, etc., etc.

Perhaps the most important product of Banff is that twenty three people of very varied persuasions came together for a brief period of shared thought and went away confirmed in the value of what they are dedicated to, determined that it must be preserved come what may. And if their deliberations were shared, argued over and stimulated others to action, the two and a half days would be more than worth it. "The power" must be grabbed by the artistic community. Nobody is going to do it for us.

Since the gathering, Peter Weinrich has come up with one of his masterly reports "The Next Steps" in which he passes the baton back to the individual maker. What do you want? It is up to us to tell our Councils and the C.C.C.

... the Pentagon is the single largest sponsor of craft teaching programs in the United States...

PORTFOLIO 5: WINSTON QUAN



I never intended to be a craftsman. My goal was to be a scientist. In graduate school studying Physical Chemistry, I became interested in polishing rocks. Later on when I started to make my own settings in silver, I read jewellery-making books and taught myself goldsmithing.

In 1978 I left teaching and started to make a living selling my jewellery. I like to make things. Science, astronomy and science fiction have greatly influenced the design of my jewellery. The other members of Handmade House collective regularly give me feedback on the pieces as the work is designed and executed. My customers are involved in the design process when they order custom-made jewellery.

I work mostly in gold and silver alloys and use faceted gemstones, cabochons and gemstone beads. As well, my production includes costume jewellery in brass, copper and nickel silver. Some of the cabochons I use I cut and polish myself. These are usually non-standard sizes and shapes. I also facet gemstones once in a while, usually tourmalines, my favourite gemstone. For example it was a rubellite tourmaline in 14K gold which won me a Merit Award at Dimensions in 1988.

I do some enamelled copper and silver jewellery. My plans were to do some larger panels and sculptures in enamelled copper but life got in the way. Maybe next year.

I enjoy the lifestyle of an independent craftsman. I do not think I could work for someone else again. I hate getting ready for craft sales, which I do four times a year but they help pay the bills and generate interest in my custom-made jewellery. It is still fun doing all this. I do not know what I will do when I grow up.

Born 1943, Livelong, Saskatchewan. Attended University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon B.A. (65), M.Sc. (72), B.Ed. (80). Worked as a Research Chemist for CIL 1966-67, Science Teacher 1973-78. Joined the Handmade House group in September 1978 and am the resident craftsman. Chairperson of Artisans' Craft Market Co-operative since its founding in 1980. Treasurer, Saskatchewan Craft Council since May 1990. Member of the New Building

WINSTON QUAN Ring
14K gold, tourmaline,
diamonds Private
Collection



WINSTON QUAN Earrings 14K gold, sterling
silver Saskatchewan Arts Board Collection

above centre:
WINSTON QUAN Man's Ring (Chinese Temple Dog)
14K gold, diamonds Private Collection

Committee, SCC. Merit Award in Saskatchewan Craft Council's Dimensions 88. Earrings purchased by the Saskatchewan Arts Board Permanent Collection 1991. Sells work through Bazart, Wintergreen, Artisans' Craft Market, Saskatchewan Handcraft Festival, Handmade House.

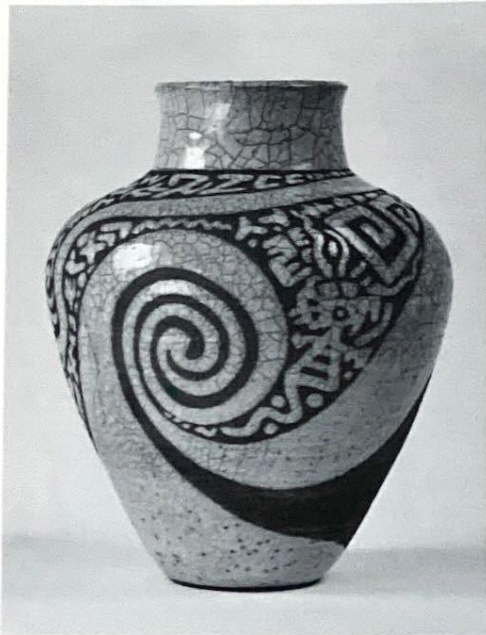
For further information contact the artist at: Handmade House, 710 Broadway, Saskatoon Ph: 665-5542

courtesy the artist

TIME MOLDS

JOHN FLOCH SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY NOVEMBER 15 - DECEMBER 11, 1991

by Sandra Flood



JOHN FLOCH *Ode to an Olla 3* Clay, raku fired 30x24cm Private Collection

Anasazi pottery, travelling from the south northwards in the same direction as the original influx of techniques and ideas.

Exposure to the work of the Anasazi peoples has inspired John's exhibition of raku vessels. To my eye (educated only by pictures and books), this source is not immediately obvious. In neither shape, decoration nor technique does John's work resemble that of Anasazi pottery. His thrown shapes, pulled upwards from a swiftly spinning lump of clay, do not have the low bellied, rounded curves and flattened shoulders peculiar to the slower process of coiling, scraping, shaping and smoothing. John's tactile, braille-like patterning of glossy, clotted glaze riding on the blackened clay body contrasts with the Anasazi artists' polished, slipped surfaces decorated in two or three colours with complex, often repeating, graphic designs precisely painted with a strip of yucca leaf. There are references to the enigmatic petroglyphs of the ancient rock art of the south western area and John's veined white glaze symbols against the dark clay body do have a passing resemblance to the pecked figures pale against patinated desert rock. But John's even scattering of units is quite unlike the erratic spacing and overlaying, the changes in scale and the significance of every mark in rock art. There are in his work also references to the origin myths of the region. So perhaps the inspiration comes more from the experience of contact with a tradition of pottery manufacture which extends back almost 2000 years, and his empathy with that ancient civilization.

More obviously, the work seems to spring directly out of John's current interests. Twenty three vessels and bowls deal with the effects of the raku process, and with the interplay of black and white, glazed and unglazed surfaces. By restricting the work to this simple theme, the exhibition presents a strong and coherent image with enough variety in decoration and shape to provide interest and to comfortably fill the gallery.

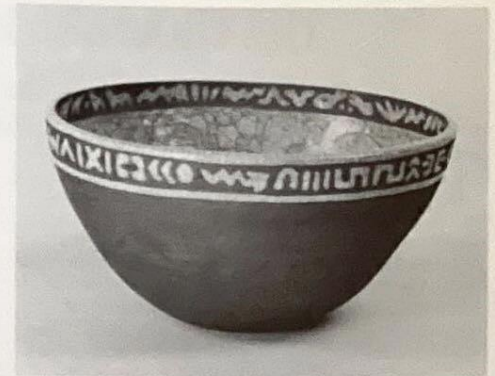
The vessels are, for the most part, sturdy, shapely and tactilely appealing. Decoratively they fall into seven groups of which the most spectacular and perhaps the most successful are the 'snake and spiral' pots such as *White on Black on White* (shown on the invitation) and *Ode to an Olla 3*. These are mainly tall, swelling, high shouldered, narrow necked pots notable for an elegance of shape and

John Floch lives in relative isolation from the pottery world in a small village on the eastern border of the province. He works on a seasonal basis at Duck Mountain Provincial Park, enjoying the security of a regular paycheque when it comes, relishing the opportunity during the Winter to pursue his craft. He started making pottery after taking part in a Community College course run out of his house, "the wheels were there, so after the other students left I just went on throwing." Initially he worked with stoneware. A weekend raku workshop at Flin Flon awakened an immediate response, "I wanted to know what was going on in the kiln. I found the transformation of the glazes, and the lustres captivating."

He finds being a member of SCC "opens doors not otherwise found so quickly" and it was at SCC's Incite 87, at Steve Heinemann's workshop, that he first saw slides of Anasazi pottery. Three years ago he traveled to the southwestern United States to explore the Anasazi homeland, their cities, petroglyphs and pottery. Last year John got a Saskatchewan Arts Board Study Grant and spent nearly four weeks looking more closely at

the fit of the confidently drawn designs in which white glaze curves swoop down from the shoulders into spirals, and the snake drapes like a neckpiece across the shoulder. Filling the space between these major motifs are a dense scattering of smaller motifs some of which are recognisable (animals, tree, manikins and so on), some of which seem to be nothing more than traditional patterns and space-filling marks. These areas of small motifs act both as a third 'colour' against the areas of black body and white glaze, and as possible carriers of meaning. One's eyes search for recognisable symbols, trying to piece together a message, a story. In the series of four bowls with narrow bands of glaze motifs, the motifs become even more like a syllabary.

In his Artist's Talk, John spoke of his longstanding fascination with the interaction of black and white patterns, and their strength. John draws directly onto the pot with the glaze. He makes no preliminary outline of the design. "The challenge is to get into a non-thinking state with the brush design", not allowing an intellectual control, much like the intuitive, anti-rational techniques of automatism and free association which so interested the Surrealists of the 1930s. John says he finds it difficult to maintain that state. The success of these pieces including the splendid bravura patterns of the two flared *Cylinder* vessels says much about John's spacial ability and visual imagination.

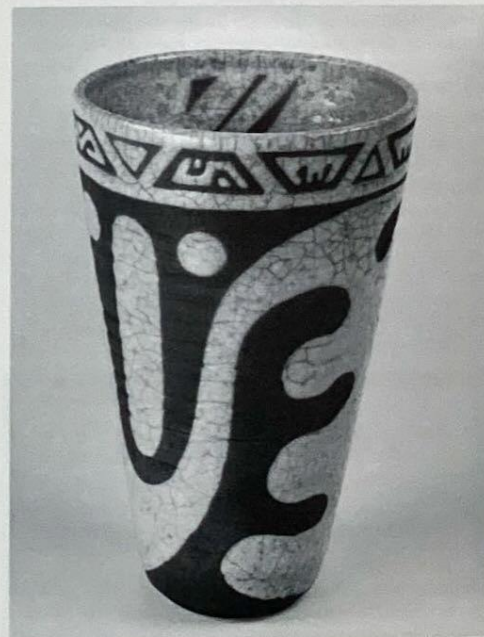


JOHN FLOCH *Bowl 3* Clay, raku fired 13.5x29.1cm Private Collection

If "decisions about forms and surfaces are the hardest part", raku firing obviously still holds all the excitement of accident and active intervention. After bisque firing, the vessel coated with a glaze which matures at a low temperature is placed in a simple kiln and rapidly heated. Able to see into the kiln during this process, John can decide at which stage in the glaze maturation to remove the vessel. Having removed the pot John makes it "do a little dance, offering it in the four directions - you can hear the ting, tink, tink", the sound of rapidly cooling glaze forming the cracks into which the smoke will penetrate once it has been thrown (yes, thrown) into a newspaper-filled garbage can sunk into the ground. Over the next hour the carbon from the reduction process will penetrate deeply into the body and glaze crackle. Newspaper as a reduction material produces the required rich black and a further rapid cooling takes place when the pot is removed from the bin and "kicked around in the snow." Scrubbing to remove the soot completes the process.

The results of this stressful, fiery genesis are one of the subtle pleasures of this show. Only one glaze is used throughout but the colours of the pots range from a slightly caramelized cream to snow white to pinkish to grey glaze, running smoothly over the body or clumping to allow spots of tiny crackle and glimpses of pinkish clay. There is a variety of crackle size and density, the colour can vary from sharp black to faint blue. The body colour ranges from grey to rich black. *Olla 2*, a plain glazed pot, is a prime example of these subtle pleasures. On a creamish glaze there is a widely spaced, dark crackle over a closer, fainter crackle over a tiny dense fragmentation of the glaze which gives a mica-like sparkle and dimension.

It is clear that despite his comparative geographic isolation, John ranges widely in search of inspiration, information and a response to his work. ■



JOHN FLOCH *Cylinder 1* Clay, raku fired 31x19.7cm Private Collection

THE THOUSAND MILE CONFERENCE

by Sandra Ledingham

The Thousand Mile Ceramic Conference, which has been held annually for the past two or three years, was held this year at the University of Regina from October 16 to 21. This invitational conference includes ceramic departments from within an approximately thousand mile radius. Traditionally those involved are the University of Manitoba, Alberta College of Art, University of Regina and Red Deer College. This year SIAS Woodland Campus Ceramic Department was also invited.

The focus of the conference is education in ceramic arts geared towards student involvement on all levels in discussions, presentations, exhibitions and so on. Three guest artists were invited as resource people, to stimulate ideas, discussions, interaction and activities by slide presentations, hands-on demonstrations, moderating panels and casual interaction with participants.

Richard Zane Smith from New Mexico handbuilds magnificent, finely coiled, large pots based on old Anasazi pots but places the pots in the latter half of the twentieth century with intricate modern slip surfaces. Richard arrived three days before the conference to begin the labour-intensive task of building a large pot. This was an ongoing activity for him throughout the conference. Every day meticulously handrolling one thin coil after the other, pressing the coils on in a sometimes undulating pattern, we witnessed a man in love with clay and its heritage. Richard so inspired the students that on Saturday evening, during the wild and raucous dance party, students migrated into the throwing room to build pots, to throw, to discuss, to play and soon a throwing party coincided with the frivolity in the adjacent room.

David Furman from Pitzer College, Southern California, showed slides of his students' works both from Pitzer and from teaching stints in Latin America. He outlined various fun and folly student projects he uses, showing the corresponding results on slide. David also showed slides and videos of his own superrealism 'trompe-l'oeil' work, his installations and the construction of a practical sculpture, his adobe house on a mesa in New Mexico.

Patrick Ekman, a studio potter from Montana, discussed his own development over twenty years, and conducted a two day workshop on his thrown and airbrushed, functional, electric fired work. The latter was co-sponsored by the Regina Potters Guild.

Co-inciding with the symposium was a student and faculty exhibition at the MacKenzie Gallery. Each campus was asked to select eight works as their contribution to the show. Bruce Anderson from the McKenzie Gallery was then responsible for the task of making a unified show of the sundried works.

A student representative from each campus was responsible for a slide presentation on student work. It was a great bit of information sharing for all of us and I must say for Woodland Campus it was a valuable opportunity for us to advertise our programs.

Perhaps generating most interest and interaction was the student panel moderated by David Furman, 'Ceramic Object - Mundane or Metaphor'. Acting as a "provocateur", Furman first suggested "Why art objects? Do we really need more things to clutter up our world?" The topics covered the gamut but kept retreating back to the old issue of semantics/labels - is it art and or is it craft? One of our illustrious educators summed up that topic: "Art is something you piss on, while craft is something you piss in."

Do artists/craftspeople have a responsibility to society, to themselves, as transmitters of ideas, as educators? Is content a necessity in art objects, should it be a metaphor or can it be mundane? Do critiques and curators influence artists' choices in their work, can they make or break a person's career? Are artist's statements, artist's written librettos accompanying shows, artist's verbal interpretations to the public necessary, desirable or even justified if art is for art's sake and if art should be able to stand alone? What do Art Schools do for the practical future of their students, do they feed them Utopia only to drop them into the real world? They were all discussed.

Roger Lee, art historian from the University of Regina added some food for thought by suggesting that when we create, we should consider four things: "our intention, the content, the context in which we work, and the reception we receive." Although these four ideas are rather general, they do indicate that as makers we should also be thinkers. We should enter this process with some understanding of why we do what we do and develop our own interpretations of our work rather than leaving it to the critics' serendipity. ■

Writers Wanted

The Editor welcomes suggestions for articles, and enquiries and tearsheets from writers knowledgeable about crafts and the craft scene.

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BRIAN GLADWELL

SUSAN WHITNEY GALLERY, REGINA OCTOBER 10 - NOVEMBER 5, 1991

by Meta Perry

Brian Gladwell considers himself a furniture maker, first and foremost. A look at his work reveals he is indeed a maker of furniture, but a maker in the classical sense: making that is concerned with the use of appropriate materials as an instrument to give form to ideas. For Gladwell, furniture is an object that occupies spaces, and as such, must address issues of form, surface, line, proportion and balance - issues that would also interest a sculptor and have interested Gladwell since he began designing and building furniture in 1976.

The five pieces in the show - a pedestal, two cabinets, a wall cabinet and a wall shelf - highlight Gladwell's imaginative and inventive use of wood and cardboard as materials. The pieces also demonstrate his concern for the function of his objects. Although Gladwell brings a sculptural orientation to his work, his furniture is very much intended to be used.

Gladwell's approach to furniture making and design make him part of a larger movement in studio furniture in North America. A movement which has grown out of the background of art schools and a renewed interest in craft. Studio furniture makers in the 1970s looked to William Morris' nineteenth century Arts and Crafts movement for their roots. These roots also include some high style influences from the Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - references to which furniture makers and designers were looking in the 1980s.

The line also brings in some sculptural influences, such as those of American furniture maker Wharton Esherick in the 1950s, and Wendell Castle. Esherick and Castle were trained as sculptors and maintain a sculptural orientation in their work. The effect of these influences was to make furniture increasingly an expression of personal ideas.

Gladwell's work forms part of that line. Consider *Pedestal* (wood, 1991). In this piece, Gladwell explores the cabriole shape he has worked with in earlier pieces such as the *Table with Cabriole Legs* series in 1989. The cabriole shape, with its tapering line swelling outward at the top and inward at a base that often ends in an animal paw or other decorative motif, is found traditionally in the legs of eighteenth century furniture. *Pedestal* explores the inter-relationship between external and internal space. Its elegant curved lines define the object's placement in space but,



BRIAN GLADWELL *Cabinet* Cardboard, fibreboard, lacquer 58x19x14in. approx. Susan Whitney Gallery, Regina

unexpectedly, one side of the pedestal is open, admitting light to the shadowy interior of the piece. The delicate tangerine-coloured ribs of the pedestal allow further interplay of external light and internal shadow. The piece plays with ideas regarding the nature of the object: does it define or is it defined by space?

A sense of the unexpected also informs *Cabinet* (cardboard, lacquer and fibreboard, 1991). The cabinet begins with a simple rectangular base, with a smaller rectangle set atop. Then the cabinet explodes with sunburst patterns ornamented with colors of gold and green and red to create a work of exotic ostentation. Surprisingly, the decorative elements that give the cabinet its opulence and richly textured surface arise from the material of which it is made. That material is humble corrugated cardboard. The piece creates a tension between surface and substance and raises questions involving the values of appearance and reality. ■

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I read with some concern Mike Hosaluk's view of the jurying process in his article "Assessing Dimensions" (TCF Fall '91). He raised valuable questions we should ask ourselves and each other as we consider what we want from the Dimensions exhibition. Voicing our frustrations and expectations can be a constructive exercise. But misdirecting the salvo of criticism can also be destructive and unfair.

Mike asks 'what do jurors from the arts community know about crafts?' We are the arts community. Such a question reinforces artificial limitations and tiresome stereotypes of ourselves and our work. You could ask what do potters, woodworkers or glassworkers know about aesthetics or sculptural integrity. We all concern ourselves with function, form and colour. We strive to balance the relationship of the parts to the unity of the entire piece. We make aesthetic decisions. Insight and feedback from all visual artists should be sought and welcomed.

In choosing jurors for Dimensions, the qualifications of the individuals to do the job are an obvious concern. A weaver or goldsmith may not know every aspect of all other crafts, but if they are shown to have taken a wider interest in other media, their

opinions are a valuable resource. Perhaps we should approach jurors from the Fine Arts sector with similar criteria for selection. It is unfair to tar them all as "bush league critics with Masters degrees in the History of Art".

If we are unsatisfied with any juror we select, we should look to the selection process, not the individual and surely not an entire sector of the arts community. If we can shelve our paranoia and work together, the environment for creativity can't help but improve.

Lee Brady

Dear Editor,

The Regina Weavers and Spinners Guild wishes to thank The Craft Factor for covering our 'Fun, Fibre and Friendship' conference. We appreciated the opportunity to share this successful event with our fellow craft council members. This was a unique occasion, and sponsorship by the Saskatchewan Craft Council allowed a large number of fibre people to meet and contribute to everyone's general education.

Positive response to the fibre articles and the suggestion that what one small guild can do, others can as well, will undoubtedly lead to other groups approaching the Saskatchewan Craft Council for financial help and advice.

We are proud of what we accomplished and the Fall issue of The Craft Factor brought home again just how much we did, what we learned and what we can do in the future.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Wolfenberg, President, R.W.&S.G. ■

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The over 200 SCC members who collectively donated over \$30,000 worth of their products and services.

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We still need to raise \$80,000 to cover the remaining costs of purchasing and renovating the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery and SCC offices. Donations are gratefully received. Please ask at the SCC office about Donor benefits.



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