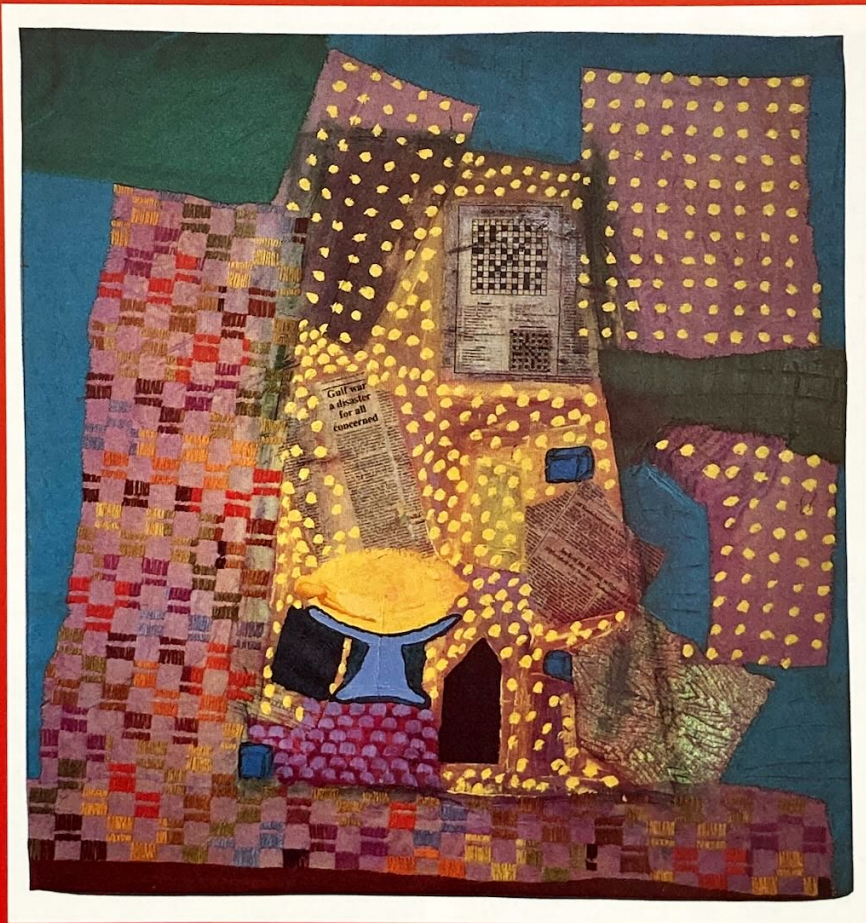
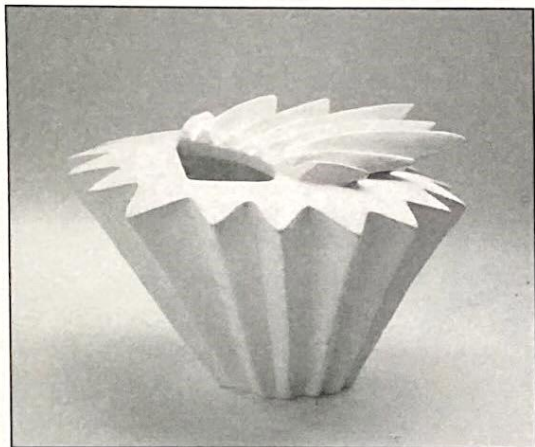


THE CRAFT FACTOR

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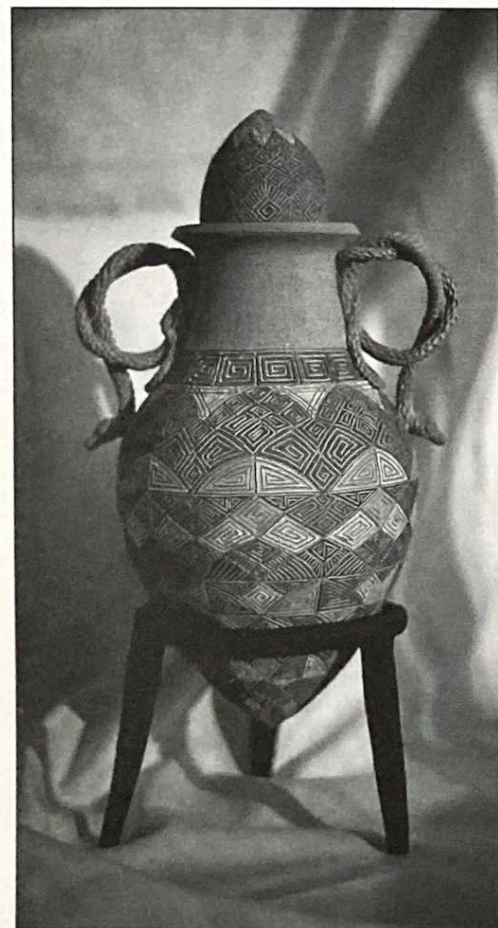
LEFT *Pleated Vessel with Wing*, ceramic, low fired porcelain, 16 centimetres in height, 30 centimetres in diameter, by Dianne Young.

BELOW LEFT *Snake Amphora* (1991), clay, engobes, sculpted additions, by Michael Willard Hamann. Photo: courtesy the artist.

BELOW RIGHT Hunkpapa Dakota beaded dress from the late 1800s attributed to Sitting Bull's daughter. Photo: courtesy the RCMP Museum, Regina, SK.

COVER #3 Saskatchewan 1991 Still Life (1991), mixed media on cotton canvas with linen stitchery, by Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber.

BACK COVER *Unsettling of the North #2*, clay, acrylic paint, thrown, cast additions, 72.5 centimetres in height, by Mel Bolen.



THE CRAFT FACTOR

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The Saskatchewan Craft Council (SCC) 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 SCC including gallery and touring craft exhibitions, craft markets, workshops, conferences, and publications. The SCC is an affiliated member of the Canadian Crafts Council.

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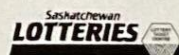
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When Worlds Collage

By TERRY BILLINGS

Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber
"Beyond Boundaries—Painted Tapestries"
 Saskatchewian Craft Gallery
 May 22 to June 30, 1992

Many different types of boundaries are recognized and reorganized in Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber's recent exhibition, "Beyond Boundaries—Painted Tapestries." As the title indicates, the pieces included in the exhibition work to dissolve the traditional boundary between the areas of painting and needlework. The interplay of the two disciplines involves an investigation into the attitudes implicit in each. Whereas needlework is often associated with careful planning and precise execution, painting is typically associated with a more immediate initial response and subsequent rethinking or redirection. Buchmann-Gerber's work challenges these attitudes and, in some instances, reverses them. Intricate figure/ground plays of space, pattern, and texture are produced through an interplay of thread and paint on shifting cubistic surfaces.

But the boundaries separating painting and needlework are not the only boundaries interrogated in Buchmann-Gerber's work. The geo-political boundaries of Saskatchewan as described on a map form a central motif in many of the painted tapestries. In *Saskatchewan's Raison D'etre #5*, for example, the province stands as a monolith amid mountainous white triangles and diamonds stitched with a herringbone pattern evocative of a forest of evergreens or the folding of rock on a mountainside. A bright red grain elevator hovers to the side of the province, uncertain how to insert itself into the painting. In *Saskatchewan's Raison D'etre #4*, the monolithic shape of the province and the red elevator are tucked together under a quilt made of mountainous white shapes.

These painted tapestries speak of several more boundaries. The mountain-quilt metaphor in *Saskatchewan's Raison D'etre #4* reconfigures the boundary which separates landscape space from domestic space. Further, this and other works question the boundary between direct symbolic reference and intuited evocation: although the central figure in *Saskatchewan's Raison D'etre #4* seems to identify Saskatchewan as the subject of the picture, the figure's staunch verticality and attendant mountains reveal a spatial sensibility attuned to a much different environment, possibly the artist's native Switzerland. Here, the artist locates and playfully investigates a more personal boundary between her memories of a past natural and cultural environment and her present

situation. In the three painted tapestries from the *Raison D'etre* series, I feel as though I am seeing parts of a narrative wherein the elevator/artist seeks its proper home, with the *geist* of Saskatchewan always present to prompt and guide its journey. Interestingly, in *Saskatchewan's Raison D'etre #8*, the map shape has come to rest on a convincingly flat prairie-like plane while a scaled-up red elevator looms assertively forward from the picture plane, confronting the viewer.

The evocation of a landscape space within a domestic context, or vice-versa, seen in *Saskatchewan's Raison D'etre #4* occurs in other works as well. In *A Piece of Daily Life #2*, a meeting of two vertiginous angles suggests a mountain pass, while a loose pattern of square blue paint marks suggests an interior pattern reminiscent of linoleum flooring or printed fabric. The surface of a fragment of richly embroidered tapestry in the centre of the work suggests an aerial landscape. Also centrally located is a floral-pattern wine glass along with two dark, vaguely familiar shapes. The phrase *BITTE NICHT STOEREN SITZUNG*,



ABOVE *A Piece of Daily Life #2* (1992), mixed media on linen canvas with cotton, linen, and silk stitchery, by Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber.

OPPOSITE *Saskatchewan's Raison D'etre #8* (1992), mixed media on linen canvas with silk stitchery, by Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber.

meaning "Please do not disturb the meeting," forms a pattern sewn under much of the painting and is also painted in grey in the centre. The use of German text here brings more boundaries into focus.

The use of text is becoming fairly common practice in painting. Text is often intended to be openly didactic, reinforcing a particular theme or idea expressed in the painting. Text can also be used to contradict or estrange pictorial representations, thereby revealing the more covert didacticism inherent in the act of representation itself. Once translated, the text in Buchmann-Gerber's work serves both purposes. Prior to translation, however, the German phrases serve a third didactic function, briefly acquainting monolingual, English-speaking viewers with the kinds of boundaries and barriers an unfamiliar language can impose. The inability to understand another language is an obvious barrier; however, even when another language is understood, problems can arise. Buried within a language are all the subtle and intricate codes and values of a culture, codes and values which influence everything from sharing a 'common sense' to appreciating a good pun.

In many of Buchmann-Gerber's canvases, the artistic

process of arranging elusive figural objects in a space composed of shifting layered planes is presented as formally congruent to the complex process of defining the identity of a place and finding a position within that identity. In *A Piece of Daily Life #2*, elements and symbols associated with different kinds of experience cluster together as though impelled by a kind of inner necessity while at the same time remaining somewhat distinct from one another, as though resisting any final reconciliation. In this painted tapestry, I get the sense of different aspects of the artist's life coming together into a precarious resolution. The balance achieved is tentative, and could be disturbed at any moment.

In other works in the *A Piece of Daily Life* series, the relationship between figure and ground takes the form of a witty play of negative and positive images. Representational shapes made of fabric are displayed with the remnants from which they were cut, thereby revealing the materiality of so-called negative space. Many of the works in the series also contain fragments of an embroidered tapestry, fragments which suggest the possibility of a new balance between painting and needlework. Although made with thread, which I tend to associate with a flat, potentially monotonous grid of weft and warp,

the embroidered fragments are very painterly in their concern with surface, texture, mark making, and colour. Another escape from a grid is provided by the square blue paint marks which appear in several of the works in the series. In one work, the marks are opaque and act as a loosely affiliated surface pattern. In another, they are transparent and cluster together atmospherically. In a third, they change colour and transparency and act as a stormy weather-front.

In a third series in Buchmann-Gerber's show, the shape of Saskatchewan acts as the central plane in a grouping of planes that together create the space for a still life. These still lifes incorporate bits of newspaper articles and crossword puzzles, the painted image of a lemon sitting in a vessel, and swatches and screens of pattern which suggest a domestic interior. Within this selection of still-life materials lies yet another boundary, this one between an intimately understood personal world and the world as described by the mass media in a series of current events. Each world rests upon a distinct way of ordering reality and insists on itself as the primary experience. The way that cubist collage combines found texts and textures with painted interpretations makes it a particularly appropriate convention for depicting these simultaneous realities.

In *#3 Saskatchewan 1991 Still Life* (see front cover), the map outline can be read as an iconic sign of Saskatchewan, as a plane floating in the middle ground of the picture, or as a metaphorical window. Within this Saskatchewan window plane, yellow dots form an atmospheric screen behind which vague shapes emerge and fall back. In the surrounding shapes, (continued on page 20)

Tradition and Beyond:

Cultural Persistence in First Nations Art

By CAROLYN F. ACOOSE

In Saskatchewan, there are five¹ distinct groupings or First Nations of aboriginal people, each having its own unique language, customs, religious beliefs, and aesthetic tradition. Saskatchewan's First Nations include the Dené of the Subarctic, the Cree of the North, Parklands and Central Plains, the Saulteaux or Ojibway of the East-Central Parklands, the Dakota and Nakoda of the Western and Southern Plains, and the Métis throughout the province. The artistic traditions of the First Nations are as diverse as the cultures and the artistic achievements are vast. Unfortunately, serious investigation into First Nations traditions has been stifled by the attitude that First Nations cultures have remained unchanged over the ages. But societies all over the world are constantly experiencing change as a result of political, social, and economic forces; why should Indian societies be any different? Indeed, it is the ability of First Nations artists to adopt and adapt new materials and concepts from a variety of sources that has enabled them to produce so many striking and arresting works of art.

Centuries before Europeans 'discovered' the Americas, indigenous people looked to this land both as a ready source of materials and for the well-spring of their creative vision. Pre-colonial² materials included bird and porcupine quills and hair from moose, caribou, and deer, which was dyed from various plant sources, including lichen. Animal hides were painted with mineral pigments combined with binders of fish eggs, bird-egg yolks, animal glue, or animal fat. Depending on the location, beads were manufactured from "gold, silver, copper; precious and semi-precious stones in great variety; bird, mammal and fish bones, including teeth and ivory . . . ; many kinds of freshwater and marine shells, and pearls, and finally vegetal materials."³ Beads were also made from drilled stone, basketry, wood, tree gum, wax, earthenware, and dried otter's liver.⁴ Grasses, hide, animal hair, wood, and clay provided material for storage and cooking containers. Big game animals provided the necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, and tools. Small fur-bearing animals provided their pelts for warm winter

clothing. A host of plants not only supplemented a diet of fish and game but also provided medicines for a variety of ailments. In short, indigenous people effectively and efficiently utilized their environment while also taking care not to overstress the land that shared its bounty with them. First Nations people were environmentally conscious ages before the concept became *de rigueur*.

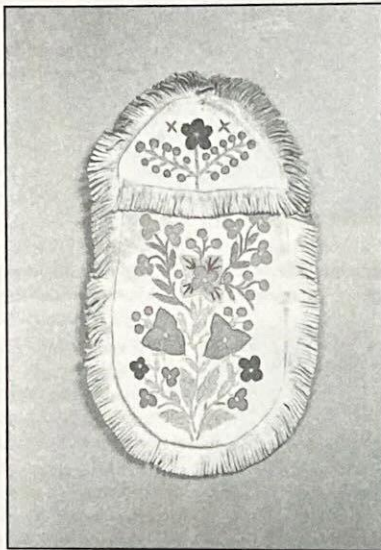
Although there are a multitude of differences in the legends and ceremonies of Saskatchewan's First Nations, certain basic concepts are shared by all. First Nations religions were generally based upon the principle of animism, according to which everything in nature, including rocks and soil, possesses a spirit power. There were benevolent and malevolent spirits, spirit helpers, and other powerful unseen forces. Also common to most First Nations people was the belief that one can secure certain powers through dreams or a vision quest. Men would go to an isolated location where they would fast and pray until they were visited by a spirit helper. It was through communication between men and their spirit guardians that the former acquired songs, artistic designs, healing powers, and so on.

First Nations societies were based on a philosophy of holism in

which everything in life was seen as interconnected, as more than merely the sum of its parts. Unlike Europeans, who strove to separate religion and art from everyday life, First Nations people viewed religion and art as vital and interdependent aspects of daily living.

To investigate the artistic traditions of all five of Saskatchewan's First Nations would be a massive undertaking, impossible within the confines of a single magazine article. Instead, we will concentrate our attention on the traditions of two contrasting groups, the Dené and the Cree.

The Saskatchewan Dené are part of the wider linguistic group of Athapaskan-speakers who occupy the Canadian and American Subarctic, southern Alaska, northern British Columbia, and the American Southwest. They are also referred to as *Chipewyan*, from the Cree word 'Chipewyanawok' meaning



"pointed skins," a reference to the pointed style of tunic worn by the early Dené.

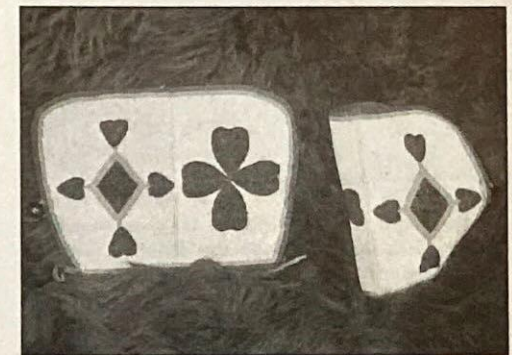
Traditionally, Dené artists produced works intended for local consumption. Very few items were made explicitly for sale or trade. Early works such as bone implements and bark containers, were decorated with engraving and sgraffito. Sgraffito is a technique by which images are created by scraping or scratching on the inner surface of tree bark, birch being the preferred medium. If winter bark is used, designs appear in the form of negative imagery because a thin, dark brown outer layer overlays the more lightly-coloured inner layer. Decoration on bone tools takes the form of simplified geometric elements—groups of parallel lines, triangular shapes, raised zig-zags, diamonds, T-lines, and the dot-and-circle motif. Bark containers bear geometric elements as well as highly-stylized representational designs. Because of the importance of bone tools to their owners, we can safely assume that the engravings are more than mere decoration, that they are highly-charged with symbolic meanings related to specific animals, natural phenomena, and entities referred to in legends. The two-dimensional imagery on bark containers features design elements which are very similar to those found on loomed bands of quillwork manufactured near or around the same time, suggesting a long-established and widely-adapted use of various designs.

Pre-colonial clothing and accoutrements were decorated with combinations of quillwork, moose-hair applique, dentalium shells, seeds, such as the silverberry, and a variety of furs.⁵ Europeans who were among the first to establish contact with the Dené marvelled at the high degree of artistic sophistication and technical skill they saw in the Dené quilled works. It was inconceivable, in the view of the Europeans, that a people who lived so far from 'civilization' would be capable of creating works of such beauty and technical excellence.

The quilling methods used by the Dené were common throughout all of North America, though there were definite regional preferences for certain techniques over others. The least complicated quilling method, *the simple band technique*, was used in the manufacture of baby-carrying belts. With this technique, split bird quills, preferred over porcupine quills, are lain in parallel rows along a backing and are attached with sinew along the centre and edges of the belt. Images are confined to varying sections of colour which can appear either randomly or in patterned sequences.

Slightly more complicated than the simple band technique are various *sewn techniques*, including the one quill/one thread method (also called the simple line technique) and the one quill/two thread method. With the one quill/one thread method, a single quill is twisted over a running stitch of sinew. The same form was also used for moose-hair embroidery. One quill/one thread sewing allowed for the creation of both fine curvilinear lines as well as parallel zig-zags and hanging triangles. Another one quill/one thread method is the sawtooth line. Flattened quills are folded back and forth creating a series of alternating triangles pointing up and down. The sawtooth line was used mainly to provide a decorative edging for garments and accessories.

With the one quill/two thread method, flattened quills are worked either under or back and forth over two parallel rows of



ABOVE TOP Dené moose-hair embroidery on white caribou hide, artist unknown. Photo: no credit.

ABOVE BOTTOM Cree beaded cuffs, artist unknown. Photo: courtesy of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, SK.

OPPOSITE Cree silk-embroidered pouch, artist unknown. Photo: no credit.

sinew. Working the quills under the sinew creates vertical bands of quill work; working quills back and forth between the rows of sinew forms rows of slightly irregular triangle shapes. Typically, several of these narrow bands were combined to form a broader band. Images such as crosses and stepped triangles were created through the introduction of different coloured quills at varying intervals.

Woven quillwork is a hallmark of early Dené art. It appeared in two forms. One style was created by weaving directly onto the hide; the other, by using a bow loom. With the direct-weaving method, flattened quills are woven over and under sinew warps applied to the surface. This type of weaving allows for the creation of flowing, curvilinear elements, depending on how the warps are placed. Loom-woven quillwork is produced on a bow loom with sinew warps strung across and attached to the ends of a flexible young tree branch. Quills are placed between the warps and then folded back and forth over the wefts. The loom-weaving technique restricts imagery to geometric (*continued on page 18*)

Postmodern Antiquities:

The Art and Craft of Michael Willard Hamann

BY DAWN HIPPERSON

"Art Gecko"—that's how potter Michael Willard Hamann playfully describes those of his works which incorporate a reptilian motif. But after viewing fifty-two pieces of Hamann's work on display in "Dimensions of Three," an art exhibit held in the Weyburn Public Library, the term that springs more immediately to mind is "Art Greco," because nearly all of Hamann's work to date suggests a strong Classical Greek influence.

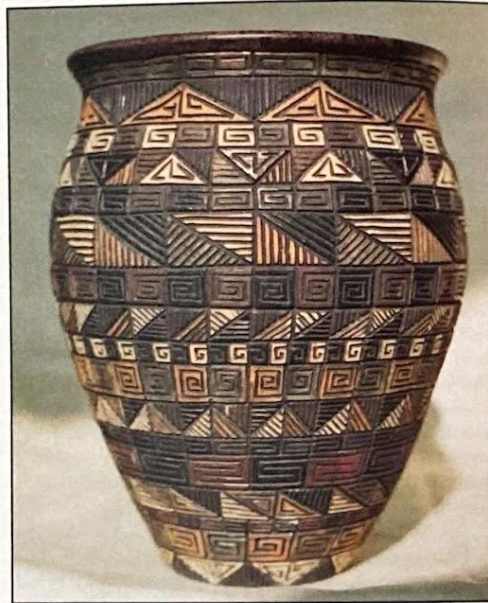
Indeed, the thirty-year-old Weyburn potter readily acknowledges that his love of ancient history and mythology serves to inform his works, which seek to replicate the recovered artifacts of the classical period. However, even as his preferred forms tend to follow in the tradition of the urns, vases, and amphorae of ancient Greece and Rome, Hamann does not rule out an Aztec or Mayan influence in the surface design of his works, nor an Egyptian influence in the sculpted snakes which entwine the handles of some of his vases.

And for those works which include the reptilian motif, Hamann creates his own mythology. He refers to these as "environmental pieces": "What's been broken and/or discarded by man . . . left laying on a hillside of Greece, nature has taken over; they [the lizards] have moved into it [the discarded pot] and have utilized it for their own purpose."

While Hamann has always been involved in some aspect of the creative arts, it wasn't until the fall of 1989 that he finally found his natural medium, clay. Until then, he had channelled his creative energies into charcoal portraits and drawing, but as he explains, "I'd have a picture in my head, yet I'd have so much trouble putting it down in a two-dimensional form. For several years, I knew that I had to get my hands on clay . . . I had to work three-dimensionally."

In the fall of 1989, Hamann enrolled in an eight-week pottery class offered by the Weyburn Pottery Club out of its permanent studio located on the fourth floor of the Signal Hill Arts Centre. Although he has since attended several workshops, Hamann describes himself as basically self-taught. He is careful not to borrow from or to imitate the works of other Saskatchewan potters for reasons both ethical and artistic. He not only respects the individual styles of other potters, but as he explains, "I stayed away from looking at other people's work because I wanted to develop my own style."

Almost immediately, Hamann's "style" attracted the attention of Weyburn's very active artistic community. In March of 1990 and again in 1991, Hamann received Honourable Mention at the local level of the Saskatchewan Art on the Move



adjudications, one of a series of adjudications sponsored province-wide by the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC). In January of 1992, Hamann entered three of his pieces in a Zone One craft competition held in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Winter Games. He received gold medals in both the Pottery and Sculpture categories, a silver medal in the Overall Craft category, and the People's Choice Award. Since then, Hamann's works have continued to attract the interest of professional artists, museum curators, and the general public alike.

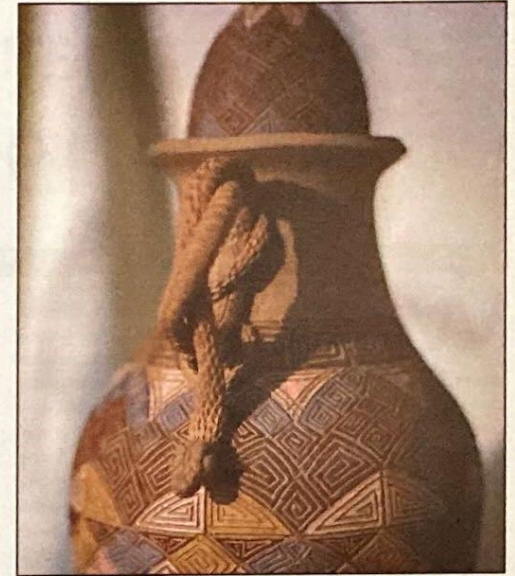
What makes Hamann's pottery so remarkable is the elaborate detail he provides to each work, whether creating an intact replica of a Grecian urn, vase, or amphora, or using what he calls a "throw and alter" technique to create the broken urns which house his sculpted lizards, salamanders, and snakes. Many of the works show the influence of the geometric style of Greek pottery belonging to the period c. 900-700 BC. The geometric style is characterized by simple geometric designs, such as narrow horizontal bands, and by rows of repeated figures and designs, including concentric circles, chequers, triangles, zig-zags, and various types of fret patterns. Hamann's intricate designs, regular

in pattern and colour, are the result of a three-step process. Once a piece has been thrown, Hamann draws his characteristic geometric patterns onto the wet clay. Then, using engobes, slips comprised of ball clay and mason stain, the artist paints the desired colours onto the surface of each square, triangle, or tear-drop pattern. Finally, he etches his designs into the wet clay and the piece is ready to be fired. The final result is breathtaking. Hamann's use of Grecian decorative motifs, combined with a worn or burnt appearance achieved through the use of mason stains and various combinations of oxides, speaks to the viewer of catastrophic, civilization-destroying events long past.

And just as Hamann's urns, vases, and amphora remind the viewer of recovered Greek artifacts on permanent exhibition in a museum, his environmental pieces capture the moment of archaeological discovery and recovery. The sculpted clay reptiles that nest inside or crawl on the surface of the burnt and broken pots seem to display a sense of ownership towards their homes. The two snakes coiling down the sides of Hamann's *Snake Amphora* (see inside front cover for full view), for example, can be viewed as part of the work, providing handles for the vessel, or they can be viewed as denizens of the natural world claiming proprietorship over the discarded piece. Likewise, the salamanders on the exterior of *Archaeologist's Dream—or Nightmare* neither retreat nor cower from onlookers; rather, their outstretched necks and bland facial expressions suggest an air of mild curiosity towards those who show an interest in their home.

The inherent irony of Hamann's environmental pieces is the idea that what we humans have discarded as no longer functional has been appropriated and made functional again by the world of nature. When, years later, we take back what we once discarded, our actions are based not on considerations of practical utility but on abstract archaeological, anthropological, and art-historical concerns. Further, Hamann implicates the viewer of his work in the moment of discovery and recovery. The viewer, in effect, becomes the archaeologist. As we gaze at the work, our own sense of discovery, our interest in the object, is reciprocated through the gaze of the reptiles, who seem to be experiencing a similar sense of discovery of the world of humans.

In the future, Hamann intends to continue to pursue classical themes in his art. Presently, however, time constraints and community involvement have taken Hamann away from the potter's wheel and placed him in the theatre. (At the time of our interview, Hamann was heavily involved in the premier production of *Cannington's Manners*, a Gilbert-and-Sullivan style operetta set in the late 1800s and based on the true story of an English aristocratic family who settled in the Carlyle area.) This autumn, Hamann plans to return to the studio to experiment further with the amphora form and, more particularly, to gain the metalworking skills necessary to create the tripods in which to set such works. As a relative newcomer to potting, Hamann ad-

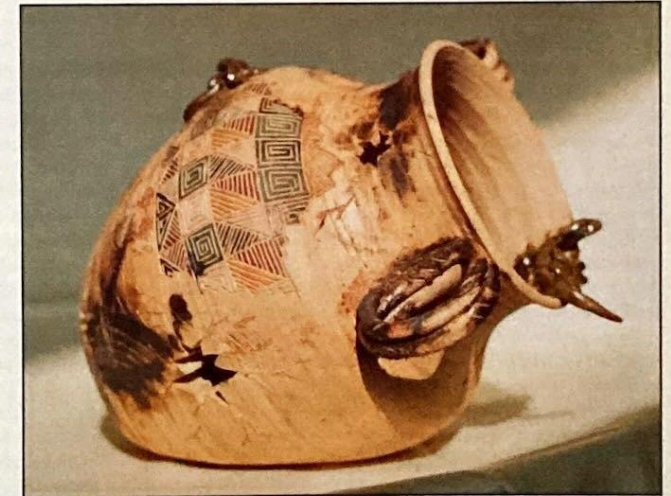


ABOVE *Snake Amphora* (1991), detail, by Michael Willard Hamann. Photo: courtesy the artist.

BELOW *Archaeologist's Dream, or Nightmare* (1991), clay, engobes, sculpted additions, by Michael Willard Hamann. Photo: courtesy the artist.

OPPOSITE *Untitled Vessel* (1991), clay, engobes, by Michael Willard Hamann. Photo: courtesy the artist.

mits to a strong need to "perfect my style." This seems a rather modest admission coming from an artist whose exceptional style has already excited and attracted the attention and admiration of many.



The Year of Craft 1993

BY SUSAN ROBERTSON

Working quietly in back rooms, almost furtively, secretively, is a group of committed craftspeople. It's not that they are unwilling to share their excitement about the project they are working on but rather that they are so busy working they have not taken the time to reveal their plans to the world. As the Chairperson of this dedicated group, the Celebrate Craft in Saskatchewan 1993 Committee, I have the immense pleasure of letting you in on all the mystery.

It's not that you won't have heard or read anything about Celebrate Craft in the Americas—The Year of American Craft 1993. Drips and drabs of information have been included in various publications, including the Saskatchewan Craft Council *Bulletin*. But most of us probably glanced over this information quickly, without allowing the import of such an event to sink in. 1993 will be a very special year for every craftsman, a time to stand up and proudly re-assert the cultural and economic importance of their activities. To quote *The Year of American Craft Participation Guide*, 1993 is a year to "celebrate craft and the craftsman throughout the Americas and to recognize achievement and encourage the further development of skills and creativity."

Started in 1990 as a project of The Crafts Report Educational Fund Inc., Celebrate Craft in the Americas—The Year of American Craft 1993 was originally inspired by Hortense Green's leadership of the successful "All Join Hands" celebrations in New Jersey, and her subsequent determined lobbying of craft groups in the United States. In June of 1991, the project also received sponsorship of the American Craft Council.

The Year of American Craft 1993 focuses attention upon the broad spectrum of craft involvement throughout the Americas, highlighting its historical roots and diverse cultural heritage, as well as the vigorous state of its contemporary craft. The celebrations are Pan-American in scope, including countries from South, Central, and North America. The Saskatchewan Craft Council is pleased to be participating in this event. It is an opportunity to sing the praises of Prairie craft, showcasing the wealth of talent that too often lies hidden and forgotten like a dusty book on a back shelf.

As a reflection of the rural roots of Saskatchewan craft, the Celebrate Craft in Saskatchewan 1993 Committee includes both an overall Chairperson and nine Regional Chairs. Each Regional Chairperson heads up a committee of volunteers who are responsible for coming up with ideas and plans for projects appropriate to their region. The Saskatchewan Craft Council felt it was important to reach back to our grass root beginnings and truly get

craftspeople, supporters of craft, and the general public involved, using the unique resources of each region in the best possible way.

As the first order of business, the Committee established the following general goals or terms of reference: 1) to promote ongoing craft activity in Saskatchewan, 2) to provide educational opportunities and experiences for the people of Saskatchewan (through workshops, displays, etc.), 3) to promote the SCC and its services to communities throughout the province, and 4) to raise the awareness of crafts and existing craftspeople and craft organizations in Saskatchewan.

While 1993 is designated for celebrations, the Committee felt that with our limited human and financial resources it would be best to concentrate our efforts in one month. We have designated October 1993 as the "Celebrate Craft in Saskatchewan Month" and have asked the Premier to officially declare it as such. While activities will be held throughout the year, the bulk of them will occur in October. The Regional Chairpeople will be seeking volunteers for the various projects planned and we hope that our crafts community will respond as it always has, with vigour and eagerness.

The Committee is presently firming up its plans and setting budgets with a view to submitting a special funding application to the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Once funding is in place, we will be able to announce a complete list of the activities planned, both provincial and regional. In the meantime, to give you a glimpse into the soul of these efforts, to whet your appetite and to sow seeds of interest, I present the following tentative list of activities and goals:

- have the Premier of Saskatchewan designate October 1993 as the Celebrate Craft in Saskatchewan Month; secure corporate sponsorship for the production and distribution of a poster promoting craft, craftspeople and the Saskatchewan Craft Council;
- liaise with Saskatchewan Education to encourage the inclusion of craft activities in schools during the Celebrate Craft Month;
- liaise with Saskatchewan Tourism to promote Celebrate Craft in Saskatchewan activities;
- secure corporate sponsorship for the production and airing of TV ads promoting Celebrate Craft in Saskatchewan;
- approach Dairy Producer's Cooperative to include the Celebrate Craft Month on the October milk cartons;
- encourage Saskatchewan's media to highlight Saskatchewan craftspeople through series of feature articles and interviews; encourage the display of local craft with various

provincial organizations.

In conjunction with the Year of Craft, the Saskatchewan Craft Council Gallery is planning a major touring exhibition, "Passed to Present," which will travel the province in 1993. The exhibition, curated by Carolyn Acoose (see article beginning on page 6—Ed.) and sculptor Douglas Bentham, will feature historical and contemporary works of First Nations craftspeople and early immigrants side by side.

Plans for projects at the regional level are inspiring to say the least. The North-West Committee, for example, plans to organize displays of local crafts in libraries and schools throughout their region. They want to compile information on craftspeople in the area which can be left in the libraries as a permanent resource for people in the region.

The South-West Committee wants to work with the galleries in their area to showcase and tour small craft exhibitions. Educators on the committee are planning to complement the exhibitions with workshops, demonstrations, and talks designed to inspire young people to become involved in craft.

The North Committee is looking at the idea of videos which can be circulated to remote parts of Saskatchewan and possibly to other regions as a way of developing awareness about First Nations craft.

In the years of my association with the Saskatchewan Craft Council, I have heard many thoughts and dreams expressed about what the Craft Council could be, should be. Many of these

suggestions have been dismissed with a sentence: "It can't happen here." Yet, under the guise of the Celebrate Craft in Saskatchewan, many dreams are becoming reality. 1993 promises to mark the beginning of a new era of craft in this province.

If you are interested in being a part of the planning process, either formally or informally, contact Chairperson Susan Robertson at 867-8921 or the Chairperson of your region.

South East: (position unfilled)

South West: Agatha Dyck, 773-7685

South Central: Wendy Parsons, 693-4212, 693-4426

City of Regina: Alinor and Lloyd Wood, 545-0557

West Central: Carmen Beaumont

City of Saskatoon: Phyllis Baker, 374-7410

North: Rose Mineau, 982-4751, 982-2223

North West: Linda Mushka, 389-4834

North East: Wanda and Del Canning, 278-2920

Why should you get involved? To again quote *The Year of American Craft Participation Guide*, "A successful celebration will open doors that will stay open; secure funding for ongoing projects, unify the craft community, and make connections with the broader arts and cultural community and with the public. It is an opportunity to rethink existing ways of doing things, to restructure existing programs, and to test new ideas. The impact of The Year will be a lasting one."

SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL

As part of its plans to celebrate the Year of Craft, the Saskatchewan Craft Council would like to encourage all members to give a gift of membership for 1993 to a friend or relative. Three membership packages are available:

Patron Membership . . . \$25.00 (open to all)	Active General Membership . . . \$40.00 (Saskatchewan residents only)	Non-Voting Membership . . . \$30.00 (non-residents of Saskatchewan)
Benefits include:	Benefits include:	Benefits are the same as for Active General Memberships with the following exceptions:
• subscription to <i>The Craft Factor</i> ;	• all voting rights and privileges;	• no voting rights or privileges;
• invitations to all Saskatchewan Craft Gallery opening receptions to view the works and meet the artists;	• the <i>Bulletin</i> and <i>The Craft Factor</i> ;	• participation in SCC events is subject to event regulations.
• invitations to market previews.	• special members' rates for SCC workshops and conferences;	
	• eligibility to apply to participate in all SCC markets;	
	• invitations to all Saskatchewan Craft Gallery openings;	
	• borrowing privileges at the SCC Resource Centre.	

Christmas is just around the corner and a membership makes an inexpensive gift. We'll send a welcoming letter to each new member, signed according to your instructions. Send in a cheque for the appropriate amount along with the name and address of each gift recipient to the Saskatchewan Craft Council today and help us

"CELEBRATE CRAFT IN SASKATCHEWAN."

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A New Dimension in Woodturning

By DEREK THOMPSON

No one really knows exactly how long or how widely the craft of woodturning has been practised: turned furniture pieces and the like have been pulled from Egyptian tombs, and it is not unusual to stumble upon woodturners plying their trade in the Third World. In recent years, however, woodturning has taken on a new dimension, with many woodturners beginning to use turned forms not as an end in themselves but as the basis for what often turn out to be multimedia works, the goal being not simply to preserve the woodworking tradition but to expand its limits. Although the idea of combining a variety of techniques and media in a single work is neither particularly original nor unique within the larger world of crafts, it has effectively revitalized the discipline of woodturning worldwide, making events such as this summer's

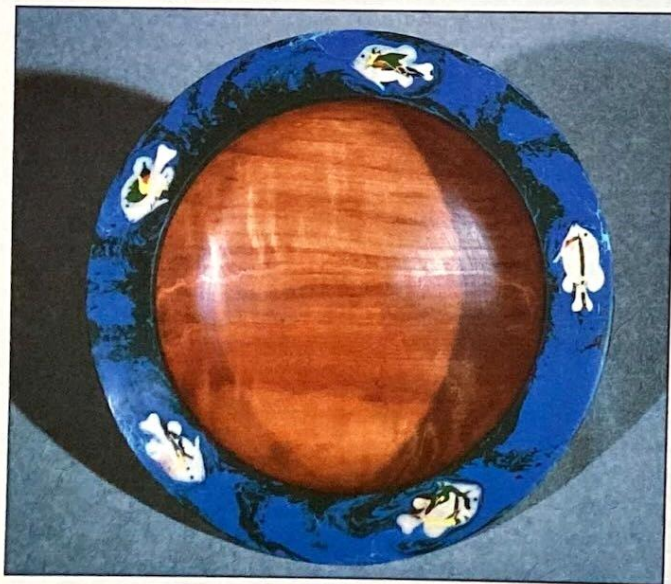
Woodturning Design and Technique 3 conference in Saskatoon well worth attending.

Wooden objects have always had romantic associations for those who admire, use, and/or make them. I would argue, however, that it is the makers of wooden objects who alone can fully appreciate the difficulties associated with displaying the inherent properties of a given material to their best advantage. Lathe work—sculpture at 3000 rpm—is very unforgiving. I have often seen four or five hours of my work explode in an instant (whoops!). Conferences such as Woodturning Design and Technique 3 are intended as venues for the discussion and diffusion of new techniques and ideas. The conference philosophy is simple: trade secrets are forbidden; give and ye shall receive. By sharing ideas, individual

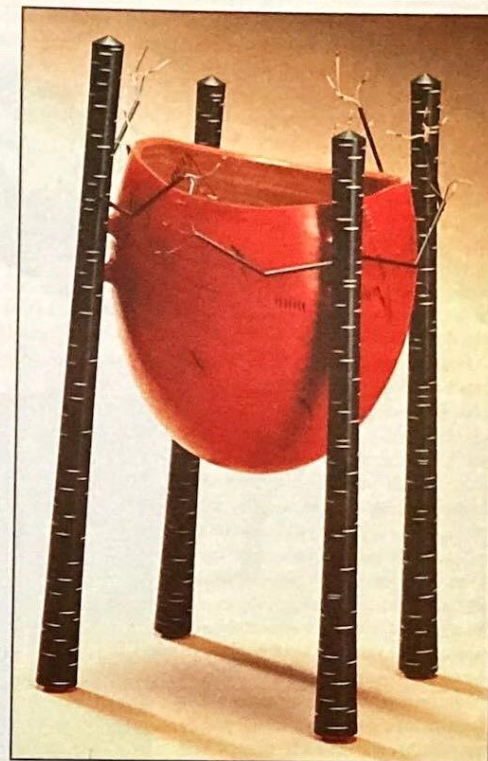
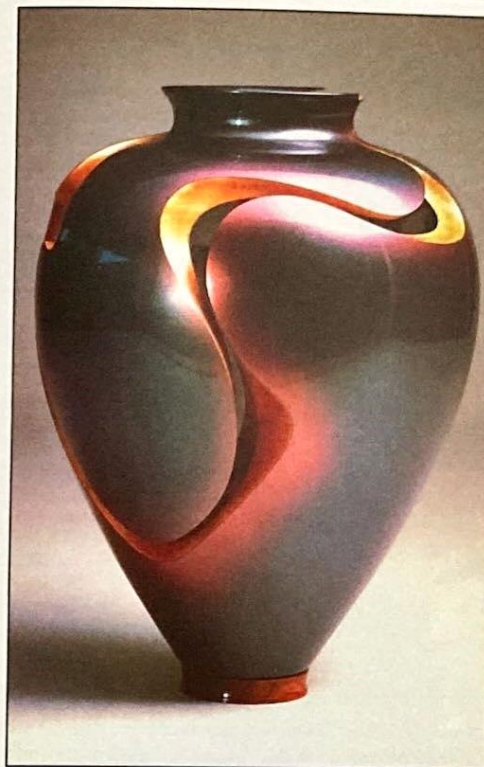
woodturners help to raise the general level of accomplishment in their field, thereby promoting the interests of the woodturning community as a whole. One must achieve some degree of technical proficiency before one is able to take one's work beyond the simple turned form, which in reality isn't all that simple to produce. One must sit at the feet of a master before standing on one's own.

The conference began Friday, July 31, with an evening slide presentation of past and present work by each of the instructors. Four of the seven instructors at the conference this year have been actively pursuing the new dimension in woodturning; the other three instructors are known for taking a more conservative approach centring on the technical aspects of turning. The presentation, which was open to the public, was a huge success; the massive lecture theatre at SIAST Kelsey Campus was packed, with many having to stand. Each presenter took about a half of an hour to review the overall progress of his work and the philosophy behind it. The audience was clearly impressed by the breadth of knowledge about and depth of dedication to woodturning shown by each presenter. It was indeed a grand kick start to a soul-satisfying weekend.

Over the next three days, the conference featured lectures and demonstrations covering the complete turning spectrum. It was a great mix: tool-making with Al Bakke of Saskatoon; surface decoration and hollow turning with Mike Hosaluk of Saskatoon; surface decoration/alteration with David Loewy of Toronto; surface decoration and split and off-centred turning with Mark Sfirri of New Hope, Pennsylvania; surface decoration with lacquer and anything goes with Giles Gilson of Schenectady, New York; tool sharpening and cutting technique



THE CRAFT FACTOR • FALL 1992



with Del Stubbs of River Falls, Wisconsin (formerly of Chico, California); and technique in turning bowls and boxes with Richard Raffin of Malua Bay, Australia. Because many the instructors had overlapping interests, they were able to draw inspiration from one another and thus often seemed to be getting as much out of the conference as the participants.

There were ninety participants at the conference, which was open to both beginners and professionals. Some saw the conference as providing an opportunity to test the woodturning waters by gaining hands-on experience. Others came to hone existing technique and design skills while chatting about turning for three solid days, a blissful rare occurrence for any serious turner. As at past conferences, technique was a major concern among the participants, though this year they seemed more willing to move off the beaten path, eager to approach and discuss turning not merely as a means of producing utilitarian objects but as a vi-

able medium of artistic expression designed to make a statement beyond the object.

By applauding the new willingness among Saskatchewan woodturners to experiment, I do not intend to diminish the work of those who continue to cleave to tradition. The skilled hand-production of useful objects such as bowls, plates, and goblets, as well as spindles and other pieces for furniture and architectural needs, must continue. The craftsmen who devote their lives to such production deserve our respect and admiration, for it is they who preserve the skills which provide the foundation for more quixotic developments.

Participation at the conference was overwhelming. Fifteen lathes were available for use, and participants were strongly encouraged to tackle small individual and collaborative projects during the three days. Most of the pieces fashioned at the conference were quite innovative, showing imagination beyond what many expect from

ABOVE LEFT *Black Ribbon Vase*, iridescent lacquers over wood, by Giles Gilson. Photo: courtesy the artist.

ABOVE RIGHT *We are all in this together*, painted elm, 38 centimetres in height, by Michael Hosaluk.

OPPOSITE *Fish Bowl*, curly European alder, tagua nuts, resin, by David Loewy. Photo: courtesy the artist.

woodturning. Nearly all of the techniques demonstrated by the instructors were attempted. All of the participants' work was sold at the wind up auction and brought in roughly \$5000 which went toward paying conference expenses.

An impromptu gallery of participants' work provided an interesting cross section of North American amateur and professional turning. The objects displayed ran the gamut from utilitarian to non-utilitarian, delicate to hefty, plain to decorated. As the conference progressed, new pieces were constantly being added to the assemblage, a testament to the consistently



ABOVE *Table with Legs* (1992), poplar top with 1 walnut and 3 birch legs, 43.4 centimetres in height, 91.4 centimetres in length, by Giles Gilson (texture and colour design), Laura Hosaluk (teeth), Michael Hosaluk (project coordinator), Richard Raffin (walnut leg), Jamie Russell (carving on edge of tabletop), Jason Russell (painting), Mark Salusbury (ring leg), and two unknown participants (other 2 legs). Collection of Bev and Grant Kernan.

OPPOSITE TOP *Untitled Table*, Wenge Bubinga maple, split-turned legs, by Mark Sfirri. Photo: courtesy the artist.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM *Demonstration* by Del Stubbs. Photo: Derek Thompson.

high level of energy and excitement among the participants. It was obvious at a glance that the work produced this year was an improvement over that produced at past conferences: fewer objects were incomplete in form; most displayed proficiency in basic turning technique as a given; and quite a few expressed concepts beyond the basic turned form, falling somewhere on the border between the object produced for everyday use and the object produced

primarily for contemplation.

The high quality of the work produced at the conference was, in large measure, directly attributable to the energy, talent, and experience of the instructors. Del Stubbs and Richard Raffin, for example, are not only masters of technique but have the ability to teach the intricacies of turning efficiently and effectively. Del Stubbs, best known for his extraordinary paper-thin vessels, approaches woodturning and woodworking with a respect, thoughtfulness, and devotion one expects to find only in a monastery. Richard Raffin has likewise gained respect worldwide for his proficiency in turning. A believer in fashioning turned objects for everyday use, Raffin produces pristine bowls and lidded boxes and has developed techniques which have become standard procedures for many turners. Raffin's books, articles, and videos have aided turners worldwide in developing basic skills and beyond. The largest crowds at the conference were gathered around Stubbs' and Raffin's demonstrations. I cannot overstate the importance of these two individuals in the world of turning; a

beginning turner would have been foolish not to have spent a good deal of time around them.

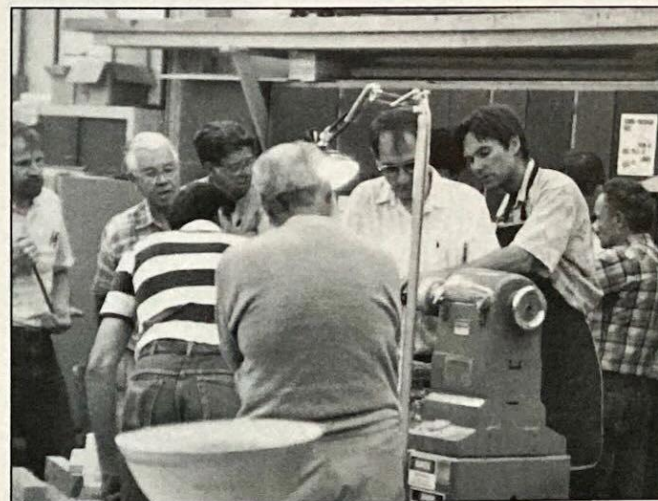
An article in *Ontario Craft* called David Loewy "A Pioneer in Wood" and so he is. In his pieces, Loewy invariably takes that extra step which separates a successful work of art from just another turned object. Always willing to experiment with new materials and techniques, Loewy has invented a method of inlaying metals such as recycled brass and aluminum or organic materials such as twigs, pine branches, natural reeds, and tagua nuts, around the rims turned bowls using bands of dyed epoxy. The effect is indeed striking, the thoughtful transplanting of materials foreign to traditional woodturning serving to enhance the surface energy of the finished pieces. It will be interesting to see whether or not this technique will manifest itself in the future work of conference participants or others familiar with Loewy's work.

Giles Gilson's curriculum vitae reads like one for a team of designers rather than a single person. Before meeting Gilson, my exposure to his work was limited to pictures in books and magazines about

turned objects. I was especially familiar with his turned wooden forms decorated with lacquer and turned metal rims and bases. Gilson has a reputation for combining classic forms with more contemporary types of surface decoration consisting of graphic patterns against a background of blended tones of colour. The coalescence of lines, tone, and texture in Gilson's pieces draws the viewer instantly toward them. In addition to producing exquisite gallery work, Gilson has been making industrial models and prototypes for years, has designed and produced objects for industrial ads and corporate awards, and

has worked as a consulting artist and technician. One of his most impressive achievements is the designing of a prototype Formula 1 race car for Honda. Gilson's other areas of work are far too numerous to mention within the limits of this article. Suffice it to say that Giles Gilson always strives to work with whatever material best serves the object.

Mark Sfirri has become well known using innovative turning techniques such as multiple centres and split-turning to create pieces which he then incorporates into his furniture. Multiple centres is a technique for producing asymmetrical



pieces by turning each a number of times, using a different centre each time; split turning involves gluing together blanks, turning them as one piece, and then spitting them apart. The pieces Sfirri produces using these techniques range from legs and rails for small tables to frames for mirrors. Sfirri explains his procedure as follows: "I use the lathe as a sculpting tool to give me a shape that is then cut and carved into a piece that is quite removed from its original round form." Sfirri also uses the lathe to create concave or convex panels for cabinets, thereby opening up a whole new dimension and function for lathe work.

Then there is Mike Hosaluk. Better known internationally than in his own country, Mike has made his mark as a highly innovative designer and fabricator of furniture and sculpture. Readers of *The Craft Factor* are no doubt familiar with his multi-faceted approach to creating objects. A master of turning technique, Mike gained his initial recognition by his use of the simple turned form to release the inherent beauty of the local Manitoba red maple burl. Mike then progressed to surface decoration, incorporating materials such as porcupine quills, twigs, aluminum, brass, plastics, and recycled wood products, into his pieces in an effort to make a statement beyond the turned form. Since first setting foot in Mike's studio in 1987 as an apprentice, I have seen his works take on a deeper meaning, becoming more and more personal in their message, telling the story of his influences and philosophy toward life. A strong believer in sharing knowledge, Mike has worked tirelessly to promote woodturning by organizing conferences and workshops, writing articles, etc., and has put Saskatoon on the map in the minds of woodturning enthusiasts worldwide. Many local woodturners, woodworkers, and the like, owe at least part of their success to the efforts of this man.

I have never experienced such a high level of excitement and energy at any conference. In the words of Mark Sfirri, "The conference was a huge success because there was something for everyone, participants got involved, and an enthusiasm was evident in the presenters because they were into areas that they had never tried before. I learned some things about basic turning . . . This conference really serves as a blueprint for success." ■

In Praise of the Eccentric

BY CALVIN DANIELS

"The Eccentric Vessel"

Curated by Susan Whitney
Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre, Yorkton
August 7th to September 20, 1992

"The Eccentric Vessel," a touring show organized by the Saskatchewan Craft Council, offers viewers a wonderful opportunity to see the work of 12 Saskatchewan craftspeople through the eyes of Susan Whitney, a woman whose refined taste and business acumen has enabled her to attract a number of Saskatchewan's finest artists and craftspeople to her Regina gallery. As the show's curator, Whitney not only had to sift through almost 100 formal applications but also took it upon herself to tour much of the province to ensure that even craftspeople who had not applied to take part would have the opportunity if their works fit the show's theme. The resulting selection of works provides an impressive example of the curator's art.

Unlike a juried show, where each work is judged, as much as possible, on its own merits, in relative isolation from the other works to be included, curated shows are typically unified by an idea or theme. The show's title typically gives the first hint at what awaits within the gallery. From the outset, it was Whitney's desire to extend the horizons of the term 'vessel,' which in craft traditionally denotes a hollow utensil used as a container. "I wanted something that was odd," says Whitney, "I wanted to get away from the norm."

This is where 'eccentric' comes into play. In everyday parlance, to call someone eccentric is not only to single him or her out as different from a group of others but also to identify that difference as non-threatening and thus tolerable. In some, eccentricity is little more than idiosyncrasy, whether endearing or slightly annoying; in others, however, eccentricity can be an accompaniment to real genius. Either way, eccentricity in human behaviour can work both to open up new possibilities for human development and to keep open important possibilities

that have been temporarily set aside by the masses. The same might be said of eccentricity in craft.

Walking into the exhibition space at the Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre in Yorkton, viewers are accosted by images that will almost certainly appear strange to those who continue to conceive a vessel as a simple utensil, like a soup bowl or a teapot. The vessels in the exhibition escape from the neat and tidy confines of utilitarianism, venturing well off the beaten path. Viewers willing to leave behind a few preconceived notions can expect an interesting, often exhilarating, journey.

One is immediately drawn to the centre of the room, where sits Mel Bolen's *Unsettling of the North #1*. The piece is stunning, if only for its size—it stands an impressive 95 centimetres high and is 56 centimetres in diameter. Clay-cast fish heads protrude at odd angles upward from the shoulder of the egg-shaped jar, while an orderly fringe of clay-cast fish tails sweeps down from the jar's lower surfaces to partially obscure the base. Because the heads and tails of the fish do not match visually, the potentially humorous *trompe l'oeil* effect of live fish emerging from or trapped in a huge iridescent drop of water is effectively under-

BELOW *Yellow Marbled Sevres Teacup*, ceramic, porcelain, 38 centimetres in height, by Jeannie Mah.



mined. And when the lid of the jar is lifted and the jar's smooth interior is revealed, the conclusion is inescapable: the visible parts of the fish are just that, parts. Thematically speaking, the piece provides a potent metaphor for the way in which Northern Canada is being drawn irrevocably into the technological age, an age characterized by its ravenous appetite for raw materials.

Interestingly, Bolen's second piece, *Unsettling of the North #2* (see back cover) may offer an indication that the north's future is not completely hopeless. Resembling a small Greek temple, but with fish in place of classical columns, the piece suggests technology may indeed aid the North, provided it respects the traditions of the past.

Jamie Slingerland's *A Round and Down We Go* is richly-textured ceramic bowl which, like Bolen's pieces, incorporates fish as a design motif. The bowl is actually created by a densely-packed school of fish moving in a circle, perhaps caught in a vortex which is dragging them to their doom, perhaps simply indulging in violent movement for its own sake, as an expression of life, however temporary.

Lee Brady's *Demon Dog Dish* is easily one of the most attractive pieces in the show . . . and also one of the most unsettling. A mixed-media work constructed of fused, slumped, and painted glass, aluminum, and clay, *Demon Dog Dish* is an elaborately detailed vessel that draws heavily on the pagan Celtic traditions of ornamental knotwork and zoomorphics. Three finely-crafted clay dog heads rise up through centre of a large, open-bottomed triangular platter to grasp and support a smaller triangular upper dish in their gold-coloured jaws. Both the upper and lower levels of glass are decorated with elaborate knotwork—the lower level features stylized birds of prey; the upper, snakes—and linear elements of gold-coloured aluminum. Thus, at the same time as I admired the breathtaking craftsmanship of the piece, I was disturbed by visions of dish being an integral part of a less than holy religious ceremonies, visions which lingered as I turned to the next piece.

But *Extinction of the Race* was no less unsettling. In this piece, Charley Farrero has taken an ordinary bowl and created a sombre look into the possible future of humanity. Tiny plastic cars follow one another in a spiral down the terraced inner surface of the eight-sided vessel only to disappear into the blackness at the bottom. Is Farrero's image of humanity rushing lemming-like toward oblivion the future we will follow? Or can such images help us escape the downward spiral?

Interestingly, Farrero's *Extinction of the Race* completely overshadows his other piece included in the exhibition, *Bowl of Fruits*. Where *Extinction of the Race* forces us to take a close look at the worst in humanity and, hopefully, to recognize the need for change, *Bowl of Fruits* plays on a weak ambiguity present in the title: the bowl is not full of fruits but is, in part, made of fruits, with bananas, pears, strawberries, and other types of fruit being embedded in its rough inner surfaces.

Like Farrero at his best, Sandra Ledingham forces the viewer to stretch with two dark and moody pieces, *Round Midnight* and *The Feat of Fitting a Square Peg in a Round Hole*, the title of latter piece providing a key to the thematic concerns of both, namely the imaginative exploration of solutions to an age-old conundrum. But the act of fitting a square peg in a round

hole does not produce a smooth and pretty work—the edges are ragged, and the finish, rough, earthy—suggesting that, in art as in life, any attempt to bring opposites together is always transformative, always violent.

While many of the pieces in the exhibition are disconcerting, others are delightfully whimsical. Despite their ominous titles, Wendy Parson's *Blue Monster Tea Pot* and *Monster Cream & Sugar Set* are actually enjoyable little creatures with bug eyes and tiny arms and legs, though the prospect of drinking tea poured from the extended snout of the *Blue Monster Tea Pot* may not appeal to everyone. These are creatures that one might expect to see coming to life on a Saturday morning children's show. *Blue Monster Tea Pot* and *Monster Cream & Sugar Set* would be perfect for a little girl's tea party—provided the little girl had just a little feeling for the bizarre.

Balanced precariously on tiny feet, Jeannie Mah's *Blue Sevres Teacup* and *Yellow Marbled Sevres Teacup* are brightly-coloured, fragile-looking pieces that playfully test the Modernist gospel that form must follow function. Looking more like champaign glasses or horns of plenty than humble teacups, these ceramic and porcelain pieces both parody and, in an odd way, seem to celebrate the artistic excess associated with certain highly-affluent societies in history.

Mike Hosaluk's works *Balanced by two bowls he set forth on his journey* and *Taking a stroll through life* are also animated by whimsy. These plaster, cloth, wood, glass, and string constructs draw heavily on native African design, mixed with references to North American Indian art. In many respects, these spindly-legged creatures exemplify the fabulous versatility of the vessel form, leading the viewer far beyond the object into a primordial landscape of emotion and imagination.

For those who are unwilling to stray too far from traditional notions of the vessel, there is always Madeleine Arkell's *Teapot*, a brightly-patterned functional piece which draws rather too heavily on contemporary commercial design, or Arkell's *Jungle Planter*, which lacks convincing integration of form and surface decoration. Or perhaps Diane Young's *Pleated Vessel with Wing* (see inside front cover) and *Pleated Vessel Aerial View*, two white ceramic pieces high on stylization but seeming somehow out of place in the show. While Young's pieces are skillfully crafted, they would perhaps be more at home in the furniture section of a department store, among the lamps and vases.

Anytime one views a show featuring a large number of pieces, there will be some works that so overpower the mind that one loses sight of others. Such is the case with John Peet's *Country Calabash* and *Calabash Bowl with Turquoise*, interesting earthenware pieces marred by an insensitive use of glass beads as decoration, and Jack Sures' *Formicating Bandicoots* (although the title is memorable) and *Eccentric Balancing Act*. *Eccentric Balancing Act* is perhaps the most successful of the four, providing a humorous parody of East Indian myth in which the world is carried on the backs of gigantic elephants; but it's not quite enough. A year from now, it will not be remembered.

Taken as a whole, *The Eccentric Vessel* elicits from the viewer an impressive range of responses, both intellectual and emotional, testament to the skill, imagination, and sensitivity of both creators and curator.

(continued from page 7) forms, but it is no less spectacular than direct-weaving in its presentation.

Bands of *plaited quillwork* were produced mainly for the purpose of covering three-dimensional articles such as knife hilts. Possibly the least labour intensive quilling technique, quill plaiting is produced by wrapping flattened quills over and under each other between two parallel rows of sinew or thread.

The Dené displayed a marked preference for producing narrow bands of loomed quillwork which were then applied to jackets at the pockets, yoke, shoulders, cuffs, and front openings. Loomed quillwork was also used on gun cases. Images took the form of independent, continuously repeated design elements such as diamonds, triangles, zig-zags, v-forms, and stepped lines. The designs appear very tight and compact, especially when compared with those of the neighbouring Cree.

European trade goods reached the Dené long before they saw their first 'Whiteman'.⁶ The Dené received glass beads via Cree middlemen early in the Eighteenth Century. In spite of the relatively early date at which beads came into their possession, however, the Dené seem to have continued using pre-colonial materials such as quills, moose hair, and deer hair. Dené artists did not adopt the use of beads to any great extent until the mid-1800s.

As a result of extensive contact with the Cree, voyageurs, and traders, the Dené began to adopt and adapt new materials, aesthetics, and styles in clothing. The pointed skin tunic decorated with shells, quills, and seeds began to take on a more European-tailored look, with more extensive fringing and decorations of cloth applique, beads, tin dangles, and yarn tassels. Earlier collarless tunics gave way to tunics with collars in a variety of styles. Trim along the shoulders and fringes on shoulder seams were modifications of epaulettes common to European military uniforms. The use of floral elements in Dené art did not become widespread until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Up to this point, abstract and geometric motifs dominated the design palette of the Dené.

Materials such as quills and moose hair were eventually used in tandem with, and later on were almost supplanted by, beads and silk-floss embroidery. Indian women learned the art of silk embroidery through contact with non-Indian women, largely nuns, wives of missionaries, and teachers, who set out to 'civilize' Indian women wherever they may be.

Dené artists attached beads to their garments using the applique technique in which the beads are strung on one thread and attached to the surface with a second thread, usually between every second or third bead. Early examples of Dené garments show that Indian sinew and European cloth thread were often used on the same item, though sinew was still preferred for stringing beads. When an article became wet, sinew was more elastic than thread so there was less chance of a strand of beads breaking. Designs could be placed on a garment freehand or using templates and worked with a variety of materials such as pencil, ink, and charcoal. For dark surfaces, white ink, a flour and water paste, or white thread was used to outline images.

Dené beadworkers seem to have preferred to begin with the outline of a design and work inward; normally, succeeding rows of beadwork repeat the shape of the outline. The appearance

of mirror images on paired items such as moccasins and jacket cuffs was achieved quite simply, but ingeniously. Let's say a pair of moccasin vamps was being beaded. A beaded outline was applied to one vamp. The mate was then placed on top, and pressure was applied by placing a heavy object on the vamps. This created an indentation on the unbeaded vamp which was a reversed duplicate of the beaded design.

Although not quite as prevalent among the Dené as beadwork, floss embroidery was applied to many items. On the majority of these works, silk floss, characterized by its lustrous sheen, is used; other examples employ a cotton floss, identified by its duller, matte finish. The three most commonly used stitches are the satin stitch, the button-hole stitch, and the chain stitch.

Dené embroidery is characterized by a flamboyant and complex use of design elements and colour. For the majority of works, images are applied asymmetrically, while the colour is symmetric and intense. Typically, a new colour is introduced every third row of beadwork. Also common to Dené beadwork are accents of faceted metal beads, which appear at leaf points and the outside row of flower petals.

Prior to European contact, the artistic media used by the Cree were very similar to the media used by the Dené: porcupine quills, some bird quills, the hair of moose and deer, beads made from shells, seed, and other natural materials decorated both secular and sacred works. There is also little variance in techniques, though, with quillworking, there is little to indicate that Cree artists ever used the method of weaving directly onto hides.

Loomed quillwork produced by northern Cree artists is very often confused with work created by the Dené. Closer examination, however, reveals a number of differences. As mentioned earlier, Dené loomed quillwork typically features a single motif repeated throughout the length of the band; Dené imagery is very tight and compacted. Cree loomed quillwork, on the other hand, typically features two alternating motifs along the strip. Cree design elements are often quite complex, usually combinations of triangles, crosses, and connecting lines. The colours used in Cree quillwork are more subdued than those seen in Dené work; Cree artists typically use red, yellow, blue, and black over a natural background. In Cree work, the design elements are generally equally balanced with the background; in Dené work, the design elements tend to subsume the background.

The original territory of the Cree was those lands south, east, and west of James Bay and southeast and southwest of Hudson Bay. With the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, the economy and lifestyle of the Cree altered greatly. The Cree all but abandoned traditional seasonal hunting-gathering activities in order to concentrate their efforts on trapping small fur-bearing animals and assisting as guides and hunters to the posts.

The Cree adapted quickly to European goods. Important items for the men were guns and ammunition, metal tools, and animal traps; merchandise such as glass beads, embroidery floss, velvet and other types of cloth vastly expanded the artistic resources and aesthetic vocabulary of the Cree women.

Despite the availability of European glass beads and other materials in the mid-1700s, the Cree artists continued to maintain the pre-colonial tradition of loom-weaving. The majority of

the design elements used were geometric in form. This is not to say that representations of plant, animal, and human figures are unattainable in loom weaving; it is simply that the finished images generally appear very angular and hard-edged. By the early 1800s, the Cree practised both the loom-weaving technique and the technique of sewing beads directly onto hide and fabric.

Images in Cree floral beadwork are as intricate as those in Dené beadwork, though not as complex. Writhing plant stems on Dené works contrast quite markedly with the more static Cree designs. The flamboyant and somewhat arbitrary colour schemes associated with the Dené are replaced by the subdued and comparatively limited palette favoured among the Cree.

Floss embroidery was wide-spread amongst the Cree, and Cree embroiderers were prolific. As with the Dené, young Cree women learned the skill of floss embroidery from non-Indian women such as Roman Catholic nuns and the wives of missionaries. At first, designs drawn by an instructor were copied by Cree students; as time went on, however, designs were revamped and expanded upon, becoming more reflective of the Cree aesthetic. Cree floral embroidery is visually stunning and dynamic, unlike Dené work in the same medium, which appears halting and self-conscious.

In the mid to late 1700s, the Cree started to look for other areas in which to settle. Some moved as far west as the Rocky Mountains, while others moved out onto the grassy plains region of southern Saskatchewan. It was here that the Cree renewed their age-old alliance with the Assiniboine (or Nakoda, as they refer to themselves) and adopted the mobile lifestyle associated with the so-called 'classic horse culture' of the Northern Plains people. At about the same time, the eastern Ojibway, whose traditional homeland is in the Lake Superior region, also made their move into the Prairie/Plains area and were subsequently known as the Plains Ojibway or *Saulteaux* (although many refer to themselves as *Anshnabe*). In addition, bands of Dakota, also a Northern Plains culture, began moving to Saskatchewan and Manitoba after what is recorded in the history books as the "Minnesota Indian War of 1862" and after the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.

Compared with other regional First Nations cultures, the cultures of the Northern Plains had a relatively brief heyday of 100-150 years. In the pre-colonial period, life on the Plains was largely sedentary, with smaller family groups forming larger units for purposes such as buffalo kills, ceremonies, and social events. In the early colonial period, however, the appearance of the horse drastically altered traditional patterns, making possible a free-roaming, highly-mobile lifestyle.

Plains art was portable and, for the male, served as a symbol of his status within the community. Although community and tribal solidarity were considered important, great emphasis was also placed on individuality, personal courage, and the male role in society. A successful raid was one in which there were no casualties, a number of horses were captured, and the men demonstrated personal daring. Prestige went to the man who either counted coup on an enemy or shamed him.

Hide painting was practised by both men and women. As a form of art intended specifically for public consumption, hide painting featured designs which were easily read. While women

typically used only geometrical images, men applied representational, abstract, and non-objective designs on articles such as shirts, wearing robes, tipi covers, and shields. Representational images were highly stylized and pictographic in nature, with only the most important features of the image emphasized. Realistic images appeared on wearing robes, tipi covers, and tipi liners, and told of the owner's horse-raiding or war exploits, thereby bringing prestige not only to the individual but also to the whole tribe.

Combinations of certain abstract images were usually associated with particular individuals. The designs were so highly personalized that individuals could be identified at a distance simply by the pattern of beadwork on their clothing and accessories.

Non-objective designs, which were highly esoteric and only understood by the maker and/or owner, were reserved for articles such as shields, shield covers, and paraphernalia associated with secret and religious societies.

Of course, the availability of horses was not the only reason for the drastic change in art and life on the Plains. Increasing European settlement of the west was also a critical factor. As the nineteenth century progressed, all aspects of indigenous life were transformed. Governments formulated policies designed to make room for settlers and the railroad as well as to 'civilize' the Indian. It mattered little that what the Whites considered civilization was destructive to the Indian way of life. The near extinction of the buffalo and the placement of Indians on reserves ensured the eventual collapse of the flamboyant warrior society of the Plains.

In spite of, or perhaps as a result of, a multitude of obstacles and upheavals, there was a dramatic increase in both the quantity and the quality of art produced by Plains Indians. Images were refined and redefined, a process indicative of the greater amount of time available to the artist. For example, a dress of the early colonial period might only have had a band or two of beads along the yoke and down the sleeves; on reservation period dresses, however, front and back yokes are solidly beaded, displaying highly intricate geometric and figurative forms. The Dakota took decoration to an extreme, often covering dresses from neckline to hemline totally in beads. The time and care taken by a woman to make an item as beautiful as possible, using the best materials, was a testimony to her skills as an artist and technician and brought pride to her whole family. There were two additional reasons for the increase in art production: collectors and tourists. Collectors often commissioned specific works, while museums, art galleries, and national parks provided outlets where visitors could purchase items made specifically with the tourists in mind. This not only kept alive the ancient traditions of quilling, beading, basketmaking, carving, and featherworking, but also provided the financial support necessitated by the transition to a money economy.

Today many people are under the false impression that Indian art traditions are either dead or dying. Styles and aesthetic principles may have changed, but techniques have survived the passage of time intact. Contemporary artists often combine tradition with innovation, giving birth to new and exciting creative forms. A visit to a pow-wow reveals how the threads of the past are woven into the fabric of the present. The history of First Nations people is outwardly visible in the dance outfits; but, more importantly, it is inwardly experienced in feelings of community, friendship, and solidarity.

Whither Dimensions?

By JAMIE RUSSELL

Another Dimensions show is sitting in the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery and the province's craftspeople are celebrating this year's success and planning next year's Premier's Prize, or mourning their rejection and planning next year's comeback. I feel that now is also an appropriate time to raise questions about and to discuss some of the options available to this, the Saskatchewan Craft Council's oldest and most distinguished annual event.

In an article *Assessing Dimensions* published in the Fall 1991 issue of this magazine, Michael Hosaluk argued strongly against the practice of hiring a conventional arts juror for craft exhibitions. The Exhibitions Committee seems to have listened to Mike in selecting this year's all-craft jury. This is the first year I have not been able to say, nor have I heard said, "How did that piece of junk get in?" The other common line quashed this year was, "What does this person from another medium know about mine?" I had the opportunity to discuss my pieces with two of the three jurors and found them to be understanding, insightful, and easily able to seize upon all the small flaws I thought might get past non-wood jurors. Dee Fontans' work as a goldsmith demands faultless surfaces and seamless joinery; Robert Held not only has a superb craft eye, he grew up down the street from world-famous woodworker Sam Malloof.

As more and more craftspeople crash the barrier into the arts side of the creative scene, it becomes easier to find jurors who command respect not just for their administrative position and string of degrees but also because they have paid their dues as craftspeople and have a firm grasp on technique. It is important to perceive the aesthetic merit in a piece, but appreciating the sweat and skill that went into it adds much to one's enjoyment and understanding of it.

The kind of people who achieve the stature desirable in a Dimensions juror do not usually get there by having tunnel vision limited to their own field. Many of them have secondary media and almost all are avid collectors, constantly adding to their knowledge and appreciation of craft. Should the Committee ever feel obliged to return to the previously used jury formula of two craftspeople and a curator, then they should stay with craft-oriented curators like past jurors Sam Carter and Clyde Jones.

I am sure many of you know people with the qualifications necessary to be Dimensions jurors, people whose work you admire and with whom you would enjoy a workshop. The jury selection process takes place in December and January. Rather than complain about the jury after it is selected, get your suggestions in to John Floch, the SCC's Exhibitions Chair, c/o

the SCC Gallery, 813 Broadway Ave., Saskatoon, SK, S7N 1B5.

For many of us, having the opportunity to assess our work with a knowledgeable and sensitive craft star is one of the most important spin-offs of Dimensions. Back in the good old days, jurying for Dimensions took place at Battleford immediately before the show opened and the jurors stayed around the market for a couple of days to do individual critiques. Since many of the entrants to the exhibition were also marketers, this worked out very well. The current format of a group critique followed by free-for-all with thirty to fifty people struggling for the jurors' attention short changes a lot of people. Formerly, of course, the jurors and entrants were in the same place for a longer period of time because we did not have to jury the show two and a half months in advance in order to prepare the exhibition catalogue.

The loss of one-on-one critiques is not the only negative effect of the catalogue. I also feel that the catalogue is a vanity publication, something we can ill afford in these days of cutbacks. Granted, the catalogue can be useful in promoting the SCC and the exhibitors. However, does the promotion of fewer than thirty people do as much to fulfill the SCC's mandate as some other things with a similar price tag. For instance, the recently cut fourth issue of *The Craft Factor* directly served the entire organization. The Incite symposia have drawn as many as seventy craftspeople, and Incite '91 cost about the same as the Dimensions '92 catalogue. Think about the things you would like to see the SCC spend six or seven thousand dollars on and balance them against the catalogue. The catalogue is one facet of Dimensions that should be reassessed.

The suitability of the Battleford venue is another issue SCC members must examine closely. At the SCC's 1992 Annual General Meeting, Exhibitions Chair John Floch moved "that Dimensions '94 be exhibited in Regina if a suitable gallery can be booked, and that the Award Presentations be held during or just before Bazaar." The motion was seconded and carried. Although the wording of the motion as quoted above from the unratified minutes of the AGM suggests that the move to Regina is a *fait accompli*, such is not the case. It is my understanding that the intent of the motion is simply to allow the Exhibitions Committee to investigate the *possibility* of moving Dimensions; if a suitable venue is found, the entire matter would then have to be placed before the membership again for ratification.

The main question all SCC members must consider is this: while the SCC is committed to the promotion of craft throughout the province, is it possible for our main event of the year to make a big enough splash in a pond as (continued on page 20)

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery

SCHEDULE

ECLECTIC ETCHINGS:

Scrimshaw by David Goldsmith

with

MAGNUM OPUS

A travelling exhibition of "Great Works in Metal" organized by The Metal Arts Guild

October 16th to November 24th, 1992

Talk by D. Goldsmith: October 16 at 7 pm,
followed by reception until 9 pm

STEPHANIE BOWMAN

Sons and Doggies and Flowers and Daughters

January 8th to February 9, 1993

MICHAEL HOSALUK

Faces/Places

February 12th to March 23rd, 1993

TOURING EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY THE SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT GALLERY

THE ECCENTRIC VESSEL

Grand Coteau Heritage & Culture Centre, Shaunavon, SK

September 23rd to October 21st, 1992

Moose Jaw Exhibition Centre, Moose Jaw, SK

November 10th to December 6th, 1992

Allie Griffin Art Gallery, Weyburn, SK

December 10th, 1992, to January 1st, 1993

The Chapel Gallery, North Battleford, SK

January 6th to January 31st, 1993

Estevan National Exhibition Centre, Estevan, SK

February 15th to March 22nd, 1993

IN PLACE: CRAFT FROM SASKATCHEWAN

Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, SK

December 4th, 1992, to January 24, 1993

The Canadian Craft Museum, Vancouver, BC

February 10th to March 29th, 1993

DIMENSIONS 92

Neil Balkwill Centre, Regina, SK

October 6th to 31st, 1992.

Opening Reception: October 9th

Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre, Yorkton, SK

December 2nd to 30th, 1992



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