

THE CRAFT FACTOR

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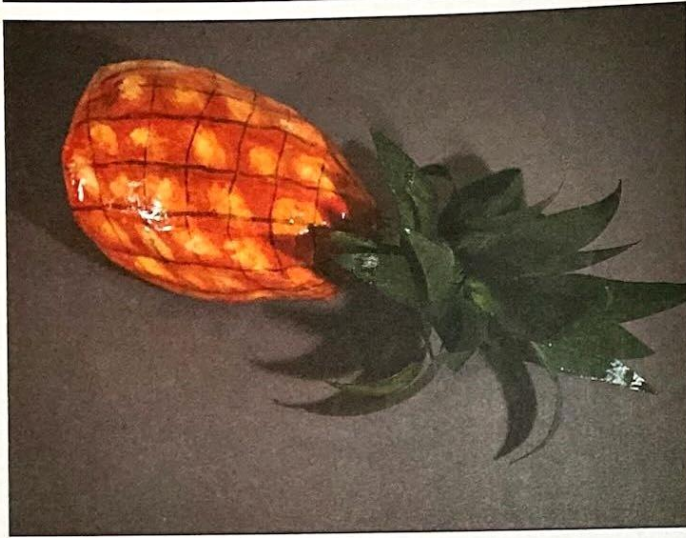
The Craft Factor

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FRONT COVER Elaborately embroidered Crazy Quilt typical of the Victorian period, maker unknown. Photo: Garry Hayes. Collection of the Saskatchewan Western Development Museum.

BACK COVER *Doubting Thomas* (1992), collagraph, by Stephanie Bowman.



Papier Mâché Magic

By Susan Clark

On my flight home from my Christmas holidays, I sat next to a dentist. When I mentioned that I work at a public library, he immediately asked whether my library had books on papier mâché, because he wanted to make some. To me, this was coincidental, because a friend had just given me a wonderful papier mâché pineapple for Christmas. When I arrived back at work, out of curiosity, I checked our shelves for books on papier mâché. All of them had been borrowed! The staff in the Fine and Performing Arts area then informed me that books on the topic were hot items and always in demand.

There is no doubt, Saskatchewan craftspeople are rediscovering the creative possibilities of papier mâché. Carla Thorogood and Jane Harington of Kindersley, for example, began working with papier mâché about a year ago, and their work has met with astounding success. They sold out at last year's Bazaar in Regina in about an hour. They currently sell through the Antique Mall in Regina and Country Cottage Crafts in Saskatoon. I was pleased to find out that these women made my gift pineapple.

Thorogood and Harington also make larger-than-life cats, birds, birdcages, ball caps, six-foot giraffes, and life-size cows and horses. "We make whatever hits our fancy....," explains Thorogood, "the pieces are bright, colourful, and not necessarily life-like. We each have different strengths: Jane's very creative and good at moulding and I like painting."

These two women see their work as a cross between ethnic and folk art. Both are originally from Africa and grew up in Zimbabwe, but never met until they were living in Kindersley. They began making papier mâché along with another woman from Africa, Ann Krige, who has since moved to Saudi Arabia and is selling papier mâché bowls and trays in markets there. They originally began working in the medium because it was something they could do with their children. In fact, Thorogood's work will soon be interrupted, because she is expecting another child.

Kate Hodgson, an artist working on a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Saskatchewan, has been using papier mâché for a number of years. She began by borrowing

Dan Reeder's book *Screamers* from the library and following the author's instructions for making papier mâché monsters. She then entered one of her creations in the 1988 Saskatchewan Open, curated by Greg Curno: it was accepted. Encouraged, Kate continued with the medium, making near life-size dogs and cats to go along with her monsters and soft sculpture people for a solo exhibition in April 1992. This past year, she took a second sculpture class at the University of Saskatchewan, again choosing to use papier mâché to complete many of her assignments.

"What I really like about papier mâché," explains Hodgson, "is that it's very simple and playful. It has no limitations in terms of detail and scale. I find it really interesting to use a medium associated with children's art, and have the discipline and frames of reference of an adult. Papier mâché provides an entry into art for children and parents, as well as the traditional art audience, and I appreciate that populism. People see my work and then go on to try it."

Hodgson is currently working on a gallery-sized installation called "Restaurant of Your Dreams." The piece includes sculpted scenes of anthropomorphic animals interacting with one another. One of the pieces she has already exhibited is of a larger than life cat waiting on a table of two dogs who are getting drunk. Hodgson has been experimenting with using a more fragile crumpled paper core rather than an armature, because she wants to see her pieces as fantasy and not permanent artifacts.

Gary Tisdale has been making papier mâché puppets for eleven years. The puppets are primarily used by the staff of the Children's Services department at the Saskatoon Public Library, where Tisdale works. The staff use the puppet characters to tell such stories as "The Paper Bag Princess," "Winnie the Pooh," "Frog and Toad," and "Rapunzel." As part of his work, Gary has taught puppet-making workshops to a wide variety of groups ranging from children to teachers.

Tisdale uses a commercial product called "Celluclay" because it mixes well, has a consistent texture, and dries evenly. He primes the hand-puppet faces with a combination of latex and tempera and then seals them with flat varnish. "In a public library," explains Tisdale, "papier mâché is very versatile. It lends itself to be formed in a variety of shapes, and the finished product is lightweight, washable, and stores well."

Papier mâché also has excellent sculptural qualities. Its surface can be smooth and finished, or rough and unfinished, depending on whether you carefully apply just paper and paste or use paper towel, terry cloth, gauze, sand, or other materials to roughen the

surface. The commercial product can be mixed with water and easily modeled like clay, but without all the technical requirements of firing, etc. Again, the surface can be incised or moulded, dried, and then smoothed with sandpaper, or left rough, with a rock-like texture. Most importantly, the final dry surface can be treated with a variety of paints and finishes.

Because papier mâché is both strong and fairly light weight, large pieces can be easily constructed using a frame of wire, aluminium foil, or rolled paper. French artist Niki de Saint-Phalle is famous for his humorous life-sized papier mâché sculptures of simplified female figures balanced precariously on small feet, called *Nanas* (Lorrimer 98).

Because making a papier mâché object is a relatively simple process, even individuals without a lot of training can produce finished products quickly and easily. Most of us learned how to make papier mâché objects in grade school. It was the perfect medium for children, the required materials being both inexpensive and non-toxic.

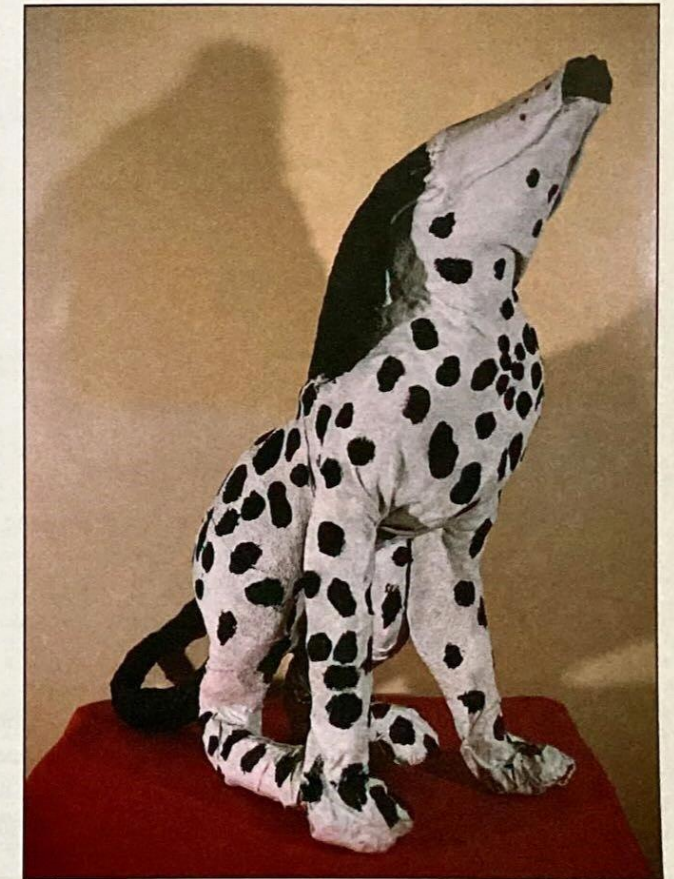
Papier mâché work in boutiques and at markets is colourful, fanciful, inexpensive, and novel. It is not precious and does not pretend to be something it is not (though there was an era when papier mâché was used to make fine furniture, and so much lacquer was applied that the medium was obscured.) The primitiveness of some papier mâché objects connects us with our childhood, while the lighthearted approach of others is often welcomed by care-worn consumers looking for inexpensive gifts and *objets d'art*. In a posh New York boutique, I recently saw a whole wall of papier mâché wild animal trophies that whimsically parodied another type of fantasy.

In my research, I was startled to discover that papier mâché was, in a sense, the plastic of the pre-industrial age. Author Robin Capon notes, for example, that papier mâché objects have been found which are at least 2000 years old (9). Betty Lorrimer points out that papier mâché was also widely used in early eighteenth-century England. Trays, boxes, doors, and furniture made of papier mâché were japanned and lacquered, and the material was also used as a substitute for plaster in moulded ornaments on ceilings and wall (Lorrimer 92).

My favourite story is of an English papier mâché firm which in 1853 manufactured ten cottages and a ten room villa for shipment to Australia. Some colonists wanted to make sure

OPPOSITE Pineapple (1992), papier mâché, by Carla Thorogood & Jane Harington.
RIGHT TOP Untitled, papier mâché puppets, by Gary Tisdale.

RIGHT BOTTOM Spot the Dog, papier mâché, by Kate Hodgson. Photos: Susan Clark.



they had decent quarters until they could build their own homes. It is not known whether the buildings still exist today (Lorrimar 92).

In Mexico, papier mâché is used for countless objects sold to the tourist trade, as well as for traditional dolls, masks, and colourful festival decorations. Moulds are often used for mass production and cords are used for decoration. Pieces are later gessoed, painted, antiqued, and varnished.

It is always difficult to imagine new possibilities for any medium, but with our voracious appetite for paper and increasing need to recycle, I'm sure more uses will be found for papier mâché. Plastic is now being recycled to make planks for decks, why not use papier mâché? I can imagine papier mâché turned on a lathe. I can also see it used to make mouldings for ornate picture frames. The possibilities for all kinds of three dimensional work in papier mâché have not yet been exhausted.

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Prairie Patchwork

By RUTH BITNER

"No other art brought so many people together to work en masse and no other art in the history of the world was so completely dominated by women."

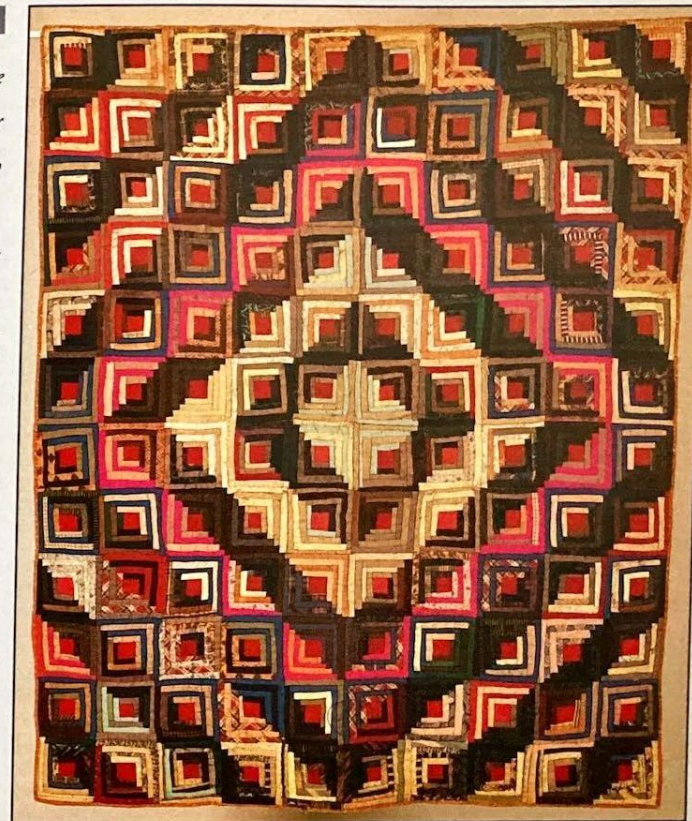
—Edith & Harold Holzer

Quilting is a technique by which a top, a fill, and a backing are stitched together. The top may be made of one large piece of fabric as in a "whole cloth" quilt, it may be made of small patches pieced together in a pattern, or it may be composed of layers of fabric stitched over one another in a technique called appliqué. Once the top is completed, it is placed over a layer of filling, traditionally wool or cotton, backed with another piece of fabric, and the three layers stitched or "quilted" together. Because the quilting process is so labour intensive, quilts have often been produced by groups of women working together on a single piece. Originally prized for their warmth and beauty, historical quilts not only speak eloquently of hard times when every bit of fabric was precious but also attest to the creativity of the women who made them.

"Prairie Patchwork," an exhibit organized by the Saskatchewan Western Development Museum to celebrate the Year of Craft in the Americas, was intended to provide interested viewers with an opportunity to view 25 outstanding examples of the quilter's art. Chosen to reflect the variety of techniques and periods represented in the Museum's permanent collection, the quilts were loosely divided into six different types: log cabin quilts, crazy quilts, pieced quilts, signature quilts, polychrome patch quilts, and commemorative quilts. By hanging examples of each type of quilt together, we at the Museum hoped viewers would notice not only the differences between types but also the differences within each type that make every quilt unique.

Log Cabin Quilts

The "log cabin" style of pieced quilt is constructed of blocks made by stitching narrow

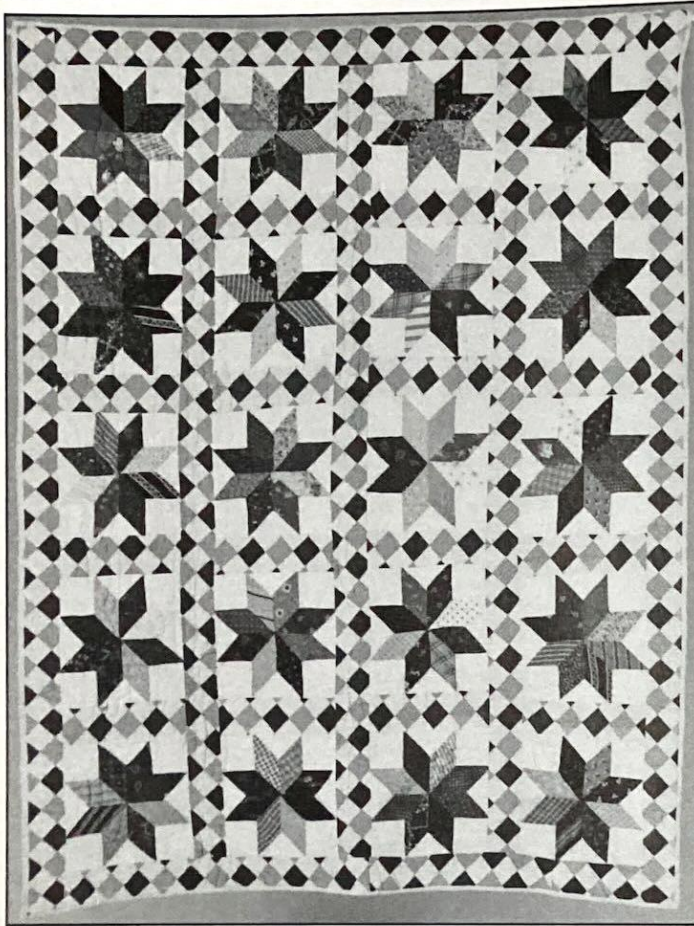


strips of light and dark fabric around a small centre square, with the positioning of the finished blocks producing variations in the overall design. Each variation has a name. The most common variations are "Barn Raising," "Light and Dark," "Straight Furrows," "Courthouse Steps," and "Pineapple."

Log cabin quilts are rich in symbolic meaning. Nineteenth century women were well-acquainted with this symbolism because it was part of their folk culture. Traditionally, the centre square was red, signifying the fire in the hearth, the heart of the pioneer home. The narrow strips surrounding the centre square represented the logs of the cabin. The blocks were typically divided diagonally into

two sections, a light section symbolizing the sunny southern side of the cabin and a dark symbolizing the shady northern side. In several variations, the placement of the light and dark blocks produces diamond shapes and in Barn Raising, diamonds within diamonds. The diamond motif in nineteenth century folk culture was symbolic of fertility.

"Prairie Patchwork" included five log-cabin



ABOVE Eight-Point Star pieced quilt, made in 1898 by Mary Smith of Walter's Fall, Ontario. Photo: Garry Hayes. Collection of the Saskatchewan Western Development Museum.

quilt. The oldest, reportedly made in Ontario by Mrs. Dobie for her daughter in about 1867, is composed of over 400 blocks, each made of strips not much more than 1 centimetre wide! The centre square in this quilt is yellow, and the blocks are arranged in the Light and Dark variation. The fabric is rather plain, likely recycled from old clothing. While the red fabric is constant throughout, the dark appears to have been cut from several sources since it ranges from black to dark brown.

Another quilt made in the same log cabin Light and Dark style gives quite a different effect. Composed of 56 blocks, the visual

impact is bold and vivid. The traditional red square forms the centre of each block and each is divided diagonally into a dark and a light side. The fabrics used are quite ordinary, suggesting the quilter used old suits or pants for the dark strips and other everyday wear for the light. Unfortunately, nothing is known of the maker of this quilt.

Two log cabin quilts made by Mrs. Whaley about the time of her marriage in 1877 contrast sharply with the two utilitarian pieces just discussed. Both of Mrs. Whaley's quilts are made of delicate, fine fabrics, including silks, and are trimmed with silk ruffles. Unfortunately, due to nineteenth-century fabric production techniques, many of the silk strips have deteriorated. The first quilt is composed of 36 blocks with a diagonally striped border at each end. The arrangement of the light and dark here produces a black diamond in the centre with alternating dia-

monds in light and black. This pattern was named Barn Raising because it suggested to pioneer families the raising of a barn.

Mrs. Whaley's second quilt, composed of 168 blocks, is arranged in the Light and Dark variation seen earlier. A wide variety of fabric types have been used in both the light and dark strips. The refined nature of both of Mrs. Whaley's quilts suggests they were used only for special occasions or by honoured guests.

A log cabin quilt made by Florence May Shain of Sheridan, Ontario, prior to her 1908 marriage to Albert Brooks, has strong visual appeal. Made from utilitarian fabrics, the quilt features a red centre square in all 120 of its blocks. The Barn Raising layout of the blocks produces a series of diamonds within diamonds, light alternating with dark. Shortly after their marriage, Florence and Albert Brooks brought the quilt with them to the Rosthern area of Saskatchewan.

Mrs. Brooks apparently made many quilts. The story is told how in 1929 when her daughter was ill with scarlet fever Mrs. Brooks sat by her bed, working on her quilts, recounting to her daughter what pieces of clothing she was using and recalling occasions when each was worn. Mrs. Brooks' supply of quilt patches was apparently supplemented by scraps sent by her sisters in Ontario who were dressmakers.

Crazy Quilts

Several Victorian-style crazy quilts, striking in their bold use of colour, are included in "Prairie Patchwork." The Victorian period was renowned for the over-decoration of everything from clothing to household furnishings. Elaborate crazy quilts made of patches of silk, satin, and velvet were used as bed-coverings, as throws over furniture, and as table covers. Crazy quilts were constructed of scraps stitched together in random fashion, usually into blocks which were then joined. The variety of fabrics and number of fancy embroidery stitches used is quite remarkable. Makers of crazy quilts aspired to include a hundred different decorative stitches in each quilt.

Mrs. Brooks chose to make her crazy quilt out of more common fabric. Thirty blocks of brilliantly coloured fabric, all feather-stitched together, create a quilt reminiscent of the brightly arranged pieces of glass in a child's kaleidoscope.

Other crazy quilts chosen for the exhibit are made from silks, satins, and velvets, with some having velvet borders. These luxurious quilts are sewn together with intricate embroidery stitches, with motifs such as floral sprays, animals, or birds embroidered on the patches.

One of these quilts was made by Annie E. McClung, [continued on page 11]

A Continuing Heritage

Ukrainian-Canadians have long been divided on the issue of whether or not they should encourage new interpretations of traditional Ukrainian folk art techniques and designs. While some see interpretation as contributing to the gradual dilution and eventual loss of a distinct way of life, others argue that interpretation is both inevitable and, within certain limits, desirable, enabling each generation to make the traditions their own by adapting them to the realities of contemporary life. This difference of opinion within the Ukrainian-Canadian community sometimes places cultural institutions such as the Ukrainian Museum of Canada in a difficult position with regard to programming. But the Museum's primary responsibility is to present a complete and accurate portrait of Ukrainian history.

Thus, when the Museum decided to organize an exhibition celebrating The Year of Craft in the Americas, we decided not only to include historical and contemporary examples of traditional Ukrainian folk art but also to acknowledge work by Ukrainian artists who have used and continue to use traditional designs and techniques in non-traditional ways.

As we began to discuss specific articles we wanted to include in the exhibit, however, we soon came to the conclusion that a truly comprehensive survey of Ukrainian folk art would require far more space than we had available. Hence, we decided to select works illustrating each of six traditional media: embroidery was chosen both because of its enduring popularity and because it has seen much innovation in Canada; *pysanky* (Easter



By ROSE MARIE FEDORAK

Embroidery

eggs), because of their symbolic role in the celebration of Easter, a holiday that continues to be of central importance to Ukrainians; straw weaving, because of its tie to agriculture; and weaving, wood carving, and *rozpysy* (folk painting), because they are examples of folk arts that have a rich tradition despite being less well known and less widely practised than other folk arts. However, because a number of relevant historical works were already on display elsewhere in the Museum, the space set aside for "A Continuing Heritage" mainly featured contemporary works loaned to the Museum by local craftspeople.

Although few actual embroidery samples have been found dating back beyond the seventeenth century, references indicate that the craft goes back to ancient times. In Ukraine, each region and village had its own distinctive colours, stitches, and designs. While the earliest decorations incorporated protective symbols, later designs were increasingly motivated by aesthetic considerations.

Contemporary Ukrainian-Canadian women often preserve traditional designs by applying them to non-traditional items. Embroidery stitches and designs that once adorned shirts or *rushnyky* (ritual towels) are now often incorporated into everyday articles such as place mats, napkins, tablecloths, and runners. Three shirts from the Museum's collection were selected as examples of traditional embroidery. Almost forgotten stitches decorate the sleeves, a common focal point in the design of women's costume. These shirts would have been worn for special occasions or ceremonies. When embroidery designs from shirts such as these are transferred to a new item, the colours can remain traditional, as in Mary Harbus' *Yavoriv* embroidery



TOP Two examples of *riz'ba*. Carved and inlaid wooden box, 30 centimetres in length, from the collection of the Ukrainian Museum of Canada. Carved and inlaid wooden plate, 24 centimetres in diameter, by Morris Sulatyski.

BOTTOM Cut-work embroidery, cotton, 52.5 centimetres in length, by Pat and Stan Hawryliw.

(a counted flat stitch laid vertically, diagonally, and horizontally), or they can be changed to match a particular decor, as in Pat and Stan Hawryliw's solid red, blue, and yellow cut-work pieces and Stan's macrame wall-hanging in orange and brown. In a similar spirit of adventure, Kathy Romanchuk applies traditional embroidery designs to entirely non-traditional items such as a bibbed apron and a belt with a large wooden buckle and has used traditional techniques to create a contemporary Christmas banner.

Nastyluvannia is a type of flat stitch from Eastern Ukraine, best developed in Poltava and surrounding areas. In Poltava-style embroideries, the flat stitch is combined with cut-and-drawn work, openwork embroidery, and auxiliary stitches. *Nastyluvannia* is often referred to as *hlad'* because of its smooth, satiny appearance. *Lyshtva* is a variation in which the embroidery threads lie parallel to the threads in the fabric. Examples of these techniques can be found in the work of Mary Harbus and Stan and Pat Hawryliw included in the exhibit.

Cross stitch, although not of Ukrainian origin, is arguably the most popular stitch in Ukrainian embroidery today. The technique probably spread to Ukraine from France or Germany through the distribution of albums of cross stitch patterns. Mary Harbus and Kathy Romanchuk have used this stitch extensively.

Vyryzuvannia, or cut work, is characteristic of central Ukraine. This technique requires cutting and removing ground threads and binding the resulting contours. Satin stitch (*lyshiva, hlad'*) is often used to enhance the design. It is interesting to compare the historical shirt's white-on-white embroidery with the Hawryliws' coloured contemporary work. Although the Hawryliws often use patterns from traditional shirts in their doilies, tablecloths, and runners, the result is somewhat unusual. Because the thread count of the Hawryliws' base fabric is much lower than that of the fabric used to make the shirts, the Hawryliws' finished patterns are magnified versions of the originals.

Pysanka

The *pysanka*, an ancient symbol of life, plays an important part in the Ukrainian Easter celebration. The designs are written on the egg with an instrument called a *kystka*, using a wax-resist technique. The designs are as old as the folk superstitions indicating that the *pysanka* had magical powers to heal the sick, ensure good crops, and protect flocks and herds.

Although Ukrainian artists once worked exclusively in the style associated with the region in which they lived, contemporary

Ukrainian-Canadian artists tend to work in a variety of traditional styles, depending on their individual preferences. This diversity of approach is evident in Marie Kishchuk's collection, as well as in Irene Yurashak's display, which, among others, includes the *drapanka* technique in which naturalistic floral designs are scratched onto a dyed egg shell, and black, brown, and white Trypillian designs which date as far back as 3000 B.C.

And what does one do if the family cat gets into the egg collection? Pat and Stan Hawryliw solved the problem by creating a collage of many broken pysanka bits!

Family members and friends still exchange eggs to bring good luck. In Western Ukraine, there is a belief that as long as egg decorating continues, the world will continue to exist. Given the popularity of the craft, there appears to be little doubt that the world will in fact remain in existence for a long time.

Straw Weaving

While the egg is a symbol of spring, straw weaving is a symbol of harvest. Although the origin of straw weaving is unknown, evidence of its prehistoric roots have been found in the form of imprints on ancient Egyptian and Chinese pottery, and one can probably assume that the craft was practised wherever grain was grown.

Common to most early agrarian cultures was the belief in the spiritual character of the cycles of nature and the fertility of the earth which led to a successful harvest. In many countries, including Ukraine, people believed that spirits resided in the grain itself; thus, at harvest time, choice grain was gathered into bundles or woven into decorative figures and brought ceremoniously into the homes.

Straw was also used for practical purposes. Mary Woroniuk, whose decorative straw weaving is featured in the exhibit, learned the technique from her father, who wove straw for hats and belts.

Rozpys

Rozpys, or folk painting, was used primarily to decorate homes, outside around windows and doors, and inside on the oven, ceiling, and beams. It was particularly important to decorate the home for weddings and holidays, and on completion of a new dwelling. Spring was a common time for painting as it was the custom to thoroughly clean the house, white-wash it inside and out, and renew the colourful patterns in time for Easter. The work was done mainly by women and each artist had her own style. Stylized plant, animal, and bird motifs were common, with similar patterns being used to decorate furniture, utensils and fabrics.

The examples of *rozpys* by Nellie Deptuch and her daughter, Phyllis Hrabok, illustrate

a more contemporary application on small decorative plates and bottles. Similar work is currently being done in Ukraine and is a very popular souvenir item among tourists.

Weaving

Although Ukrainian immigrants to Canada were often skilful weavers, their skill began to fade away as the demands of homesteading decreased the time available for weaving and advances in technology made manufactured fabrics more readily available. Daria Yanda, author of the book *Ukrainian Weaving Patterns with Instructions*, included in the exhibit, was instrumental in reviving the art of weaving. Mrs. Yanda inspired many others by providing instruction in weaving, organizing courses and weaving guilds, providing scholarships and prizes and donating looms to encourage the craft, and expanding her own skills by travelling to Ukraine to study. Works by two of Yanda's students, Anne Cholod and Pearl Turetski, included in the exhibit focus on the accurate reproduction of traditional forms. More specifically, Anne's skirt and belt echo traditional designs and techniques from costume pieces, while Pearl's samplers reproduce sections of traditional tapestries and belts.

Marta Skrypnyk's *kylymy*, or woven tapestries, are a bit more adventurous, the one combining motifs from the *pysanka* with a contemporary colour scheme, while the other features a stylized golden orange horse silhouetted against a dark background. Marta's delightful pieces contrast sharply with two contemporary *kylymy* from Ukraine, both of which reproduce traditional designs. However, because these two *kylymy* are from different regions, they are themselves a study in contrast: whereas the *kylym* from the mountain region features the severe geometric designs and bold colours associated with that area, the *kylym* from the central region features traditional floral patterning and more subdued colours.

Riz'ba

Riz'ba, or wood carving, was one way people could express their creativity and pride in their home. Past artists carved door posts, beams, window sills and shelves, along with functional objects such as furniture pieces, plates, spoons, candlesticks, chests, carts, and sleighs. Designs were engraved or carved in relief, with each region of Ukraine again having its own characteristic techniques and patterns. Contrasting inlays and wood burning added to the effects.

Contemporary artists such as local carver Morris Sulatyski and Vasyli Stratyckuk, who is currently visiting from Ukraine, tend to concentrate on smaller objects such as picture

frames, boxes, plates, and candle sticks.

The earliest examples of Ukrainian carving date back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and include items such as icons, iconostases, crosses, and church decoration. Continuing this tradition, Vasyli Stratyckuk also produces beautifully worked icons and crosses that recreate ancient designs. After this exhibit is just a memory, Vasyli's work will continue to be seen in the carved doors and baptismal font at All Saints Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Saskatoon.

Conclusion

Ukrainian folk art is rich in tradition. Symbols in colours and design have been passed down from generation to generation, the young learning from their parents and grandparents how to execute the designs and use the objects. "A Continuing Heritage" has included work exemplifying both traditional and non-traditional applications of traditional techniques, thereby honouring all those who have helped to carry on the legacy of the culture. □

PRAIRIE PATCHWORK

[continued from page 8] mother-in-law of early twentieth century author and social reformer, Nellie McClung. The earliest date on the quilt is 1883, possibly the date the quilt was begun. Embroidered on one patch is "To Florence from Grandma, 1925." Florence was Nellie's daughter, the donor of the quilt. It is thought that pieces of Nellie's own clothing have been incorporated into this quilt.

Pieced Quilts

The quaint names used to describe the different patterns of pieced quilts, such as "Around the World," "Beggar's Blocks," and "Eight Point Star," were well known to pioneer quilters and will be familiar to most contemporary quilters as well. The Beggar's Block and Eight-Point Star quilts included in the exhibit were made in 1898 by Mary Smith of Walter's Falls, Ontario, at age 18 while she was recovering from a broken leg. Both of Mary's quilts are constructed of colourful printed cottons. When Mary Smith married William Boyle in 1915 and came as a bride to the Hawarden district of Saskatchewan, the couple brought the quilts with them.

Another pieced quilt features forty-two stylized sunflowers set dramatically against a black background. Each sunflower has a centre of light blue silk surrounded by 13 diamond-shaped petals. Nineteenth century symbolism can be seen both in the pinwheel of the sunflower, which represented the sun or masculinity, and in the circle, which symbolized the moon or femininity. The quilt was made in Stayner, Ontario about 1875 by

Marrion MacDonald and was brought to the Kenaston area of Saskatchewan in 1907.

Illustrative of both pieced and appliqué techniques, the marriage quilt made by Mrs. Charles Durnin and her daughter Eliza for Eliza's wedding in 1875 is remarkable for its well-executed design and quilting. The motifs in marriage quilts were chosen for their symbolic meaning. Composed of 12 large blocks, Eliza's quilt has a central motif of a basket containing flowers. To the nineteenth century bride, a flowering branch growing out of an urn or basket symbolized fruitfulness, the renewal of life. The blocks are joined by an Irish Chain pattern, the meeting and crossing lines signifying the chain of life. This quilt was meant to be seen from the side, a fact made apparent by the way in which the baskets are arranged. It is expertly quilted, with the rows about 2.5 centimetres apart.

When the Agar family moved West to Cheviot, Saskatchewan, from Ontario in 1910, they brought Eliza's quilt with them.

Signature Quilts

Two quilts in the exhibit represent the signature or autograph quilt popular in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Church groups often made signature quilts as fund-raising projects. For a small fee, as little as 10 cents, individuals could have their names embroidered on a quilt. The completed quilt would then be raffled, with the proceeds going toward the church building fund or some similar cause. One of these pieced quilts, made from a pink cotton print and plain white fabric, has the signatures embroidered in red. The Carnuthers, Saskatchewan, United Church Women made this quilt in about 1916.

The signature quilt made by the Finnish Women's Sewing Association of the Dunblane, Macroe, and Birsay districts of Saskatchewan in 1928 reflects the Finnish heritage of the community. Won in a raffle by John Antilla, the quilt was used until the 1940s.

Polychrome Patch Quilts

From 1910 to 1925, brightly-coloured polychrome patches were offered as premiums with tobacco products. Issued in series, the patches were collected, traded, and used to make household decorations, including quilts. "Prairie Patchwork" included three polychrome patch quilts. Two of these are quite small and were probably used as throws or hangings rather than as bed coverings.

The first polychrome patch quilt features flags from around the world that have been machine stitched together in strips and sewn to a cotton backing. The Union Jack figures prominently in the central motif of this quilt. The second quilt is composed of larger

patches featuring young women dressed in colourful costumes and holding flags representing Canada, the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, and France. The images are excellent examples of the patriotic fervour that swept across Canada during World War I. One of the blocks in the quilt has been placed upside down. No doubt, this was a deliberate mistake, made in accordance with the belief that only God could make a perfect thing. Finally, the third quilt is made of patches with floral motifs. Each patch is numbered, signifying its place in a particular series of patches. Unfortunately, both this and the previous quilt have, at some point, been backed with material not in keeping with their age and design.

Commemorative Quilts

A final group of three quilts brings a more contemporary flavour to the exhibit. Each was made to commemorate a significant event. The first of these quilts, made in 1953 by the Conquest Homemakers Club, features the emblems of each of the ten Canadian provinces, with a crown in the centre. The crown represents the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. Entered in the Women's Institute's Tweedsmuir competition, it won first place at both the provincial and national levels.

The second commemorative quilt was produced to celebrate Saskatchewan's 50th anniversary. Made by the Saskatoon Friendship Club, with design assistance from artist Bill Perehudoff, the quilt features Saskatchewan's emblem and other motifs representative of the province's heritage.

The third quilt, entitled *Wheel of Time*, was created by Mrs. Sarah Wall of Saskatoon as her entry in the Western Development Museum's Commemorative Quilt Contest held in 1980 to mark the province's 75th anniversary. Extensively embroidered and appliquéd, Mrs. Wall's quilt features vignettes representing various aspects of Saskatchewan life within the 12 spokes of a wheel.

Conclusion

The quilts in the "Prairie Patchwork" exhibit are part of a diverse and venerable tradition that has provided and continues to provide an important outlet for women's creativity. The preservation of historical quilts is as important as the preservation of any other body of art. Through skilfully executed designs and carefully chosen symbols, quilters from every period have disclosed what was dear to their hearts.

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Portrait of a Production Worker

By Audrey Kyle

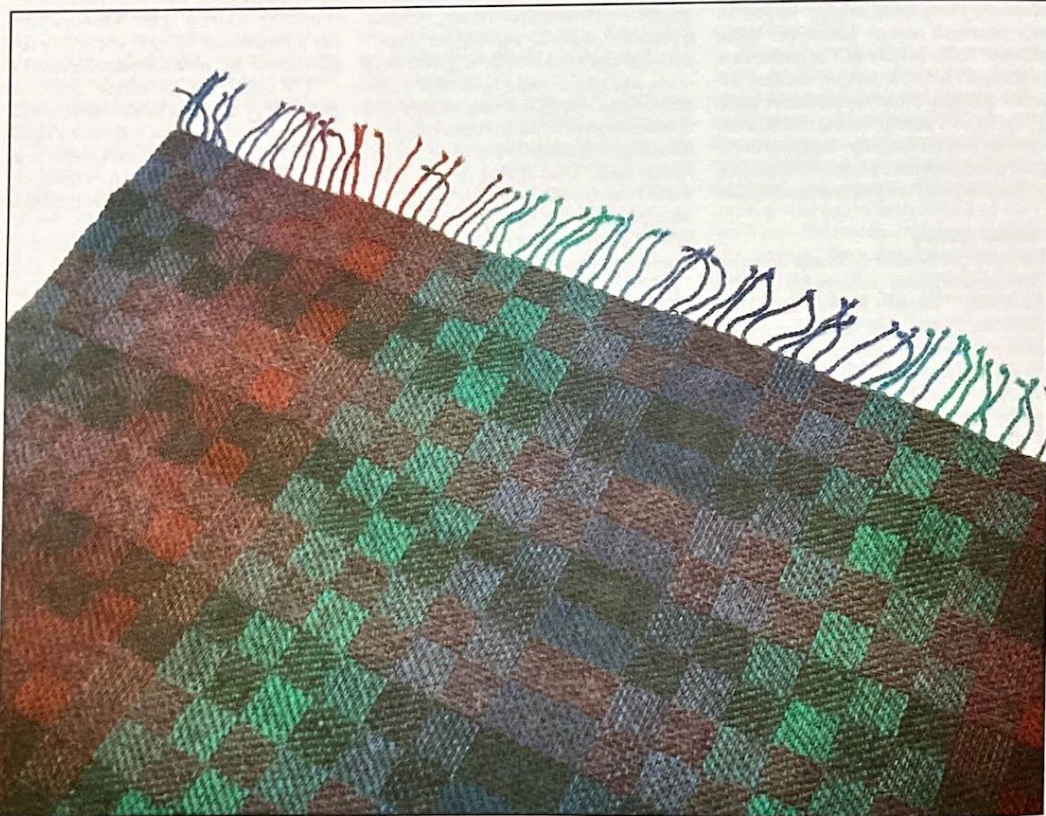
When you hear the term *production worker*, what do you think of? My immediate thought is of long assembly lines studded on both sides with emotionless beings clad in white. They are robot-like in their movements as they stamp and attach pieces to parts resulting in mountains of identically finished products. There is no warmth or individuality about the workplace, the workers, or the goods they produce.

Saskatoon has no massive assembly lines like this, but there are people in the area who are considered "production workers." They are only a small handful, but these production workers do not fit into the above description in any way: they are not robot-like in their movements; they are not emotionless in their work; they are definitely unique individuals. These production workers transform fibre, clay, wood, and other natural materials into finished products that are each individual and unique in their design, colour, and

texture, despite coming from a group of 10 or 100 similar pieces. One such worker is Myrna Gent, a weaver who lives and works in Saskatoon. A member of the Handmade House cooperative, Myrna is not only well-known in the city but has become one of Saskatchewan's most respected weavers.

Myrna has been working with fibre for approximately 12 years. Beginning with a class in tapestry, Myrna has since progressed to loom weaving and has gained experience and skill both by the age-old trial-and-error method and by attending workshops offered by the Saskatoon Spinners and Weavers Guild.

At present, Myrna spends her days weaving and blending interesting fibres and colours into high-quality scarves, shawls, garments, place mats, and other items for sale at various outlets in Saskatchewan. When she isn't weaving, Myrna can be found spinning or planning future projects.



The upper floor of Myrna's home is her studio. Baskets and shelves of colour are tucked neatly up against the walls, and the large east windows let in the brilliant morning light. The looms and table in the centre of the room offer an inviting place to stop. A small nook tucked into a corner of the room is set up to over-dye the finished products after they have been removed from the loom. This dyeing process is one of the most interesting and exciting steps in producing a finished piece because even when identical items go into the dye pot they always come out varied and unique.

As a production craftsperson, Myrna has had to learn to read the market in the areas of design, product choice, and pricing. She is able to supplement her living with the work she does but cautions that production weaving is not for everyone. A lot of hours and energy go into production work and sometimes it can be discouraging. Each year there are fewer weaving booths at the sales, and production weavers do not always have time to do things they might like, such as entering juried exhibitions, applying for solo shows, and so on. There is also the aspect of appreciation—or lack of it. Although people are more aware today of product quality and craftsmanship, they are not always willing to pay what the work is worth. This results in items remaining on shelves in stores or being taken back to the studio.

To those considering taking up production weaving seriously, Myrna advises that there are a few things that need to be thought out. First, you must consider what product you will make, always keeping in mind what the public might like. Second, you must price your work, taking into account not only the cost of materials and the amount of labour that has gone into the work but also what customers are willing to pay. Third, you must consider where you will display and sell your merchandise. And fourth, you must develop an adequate stock of both raw materials and finished works. A weaver, for example, should have a good palette of yarn and have enough yarn to do more than one or two items.

Over the years, Myrna has learned which production methods will allow her to produce the best quality products in a reasonable amount of time. With silk scarves, for example, Myrna has found that she can reduce her labour time somewhat by constructing more than one scarf on the same warp. The scarves are individualized through the use of supplemental warps of silk or ribbon and through the over-dyeing process. Over-dyeing is most effective when the original piece has been woven from lightly coloured materials, enabling the weaver to create patterns through the use of resists. One of the simplest types of resist is created by applying pressure to the fabric through the use of small clamps which, when tightened onto the fabric, block the dye and so preserve the fabric's original colours. Myrna creates different resist shapes



OPPOSITE Wool blanket, twill weave, by Myrna Gent.
ABOVE A series of four silk scarves, all from the same warp, by Myrna Gent, illustrating the effects that can be achieved through the use of supplemental warps, over-dyeing, and resists.

simply by placing small objects such as buttons between the jaws of the clamp and the fabric.

Larger production items such as wool blankets require a substantial investment of time and must be priced accordingly. Although Myrna has the ability to spin wool herself, she does not have time to spin enough yarn for all of the products she makes. Buying commercially available yarns enables Myrna again to reduce the total amount of labour time invested in each piece, thereby increasing her level of production. However, once a certain level of production has been achieved, it often must be maintained in order to meet the demand it creates.

But practical advice such as this is only useful if one has an affinity for the work. Myrna clearly enjoys the weaving process, investing a lot of care and emotion into each piece she produces. Relaxed in her surroundings and gentle in her movements, she possesses that inner strength that comes from the knowledge that one has found one's vocation.

Besides being a full-time weaver, Myrna Gent is President of the Saskatoon Spinners and Weavers Guild. She teaches a beginning weaving class and works a few days a week at Handmade House on Broadway Avenue in Saskatoon. Myrna is also a director of the Saskatoon Horticultural Society and soon her back yard will be full of colourful blossoms that will undoubtedly inspire future weaving projects. □

**As a production crafts-
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Exhibitions



Abaca-Dabra!

By MIRANDA JONES

Stephanie Bowman

"Sons & Doggies & Flowers & Daughters"
Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon
January 8 to February 9, 1993

A abaca is hemp from Banana trees that has been pulped into sheet form. It produced in the Philippines. It is also one of Stephanie Bowman's favourite materials. But it took more than the utterance of "abaca-dabra" for Bowman to convert abaca, flax, clay, wire, paper, and cotton into the strange, evocative figures included in her recent mixed-media exhibition.

Titled "Sons & Doggies & Flowers & Daughters" (for some obscure reason), the show was an eye-opening experience for anyone who believes paper is just flat stuff for writing on. Bowman has blended, mashed, pulped, and moulded sheets of paper to her own recipes, then combined these with various other materials to make hats, hair, hands, and appendages for a veritable circus of characters from Adam and Eve to Northrop Frye. The inclusion of five collographs reminds us she is also capable of working with more

traditional two-dimensional techniques.

Despite her fascination with materials, Bowman seems more philosophically than technically motivated in the creation of these figurative and strongly narrative works. She attempts to share her philosophical concerns with the viewer by way of cryptic titles and extensive inspirational quotations. But these verbal interventions rarely make a positive contribution to our understanding and appreciation of the works themselves, instead making them seem willfully esoteric and obscure. This is ironic when you consider that one of Bowman's main themes is communication. However, despite this minor irritation, many of the Bowman's works do convey an overwhelming sense of humanity, a delight in colour and, thankfully, a healthy dose of humour, all of which remain with the viewer long after the show is over.

Even the artist's choice of materials and techniques was philosophically motivated, leading her into strife on more than one occasion. Bowman wished to juxtapose the permanence of mother earth (clay) with the fragility of human existence (paper). Such was her dedication to the theme of creation that Bowman decided she had to learn raku techniques so that wood and earth would fire the clay instead of sophisticated gas-burning kilns. Bowman's "earthy" process of shaping some paper sheets—she cast pulp on rocks on the University of Saskatchewan Campus—inspired one passer-by to report the artist for defacing University property. Security officers arrived to investigate her suspicious activity.

Extensive experimentation with dyes and raw fibres was necessary to achieve some of the beautiful colour transitions and textures seen in this show, and Bowman appears to have leapt at each new challenge with joyful exuberance. Bowman's interest in paper stems from a BFA in printmaking and a twelve-month apprenticeship at MacDonald Papermaking Co. in Boston, Massachusetts, where she studied the mechanics and chemistry of papermaking. Bowman learned raku skills from members of the Saskatoon Potters Guild, who, she said, were extremely helpful and supportive. A born optimist, Bowman is already planning her next project, which is to study traditional Japanese papermaking techniques using Saskatchewan cereal and oil-seed fibres.

The innocence of creation, a major theme in the show, is effectively communicated through two rather strange pieces, *The First Adam* and *Eve's Wind of Vision*. These are not your run-of-the-mill biblical renditions of the "first" humans. Adam looks more like a pointy-nosed Puck with a crazy hat and drooping dreadlocks, while Eve beams a youthful effervescence at us from behind her old woman's bifocals. In each piece, a shower of cascading dreadlocks, decorated with colourful paper baubles, frames a dark face of raku-fired clay. Both Adam and Eve wear bulbous paper crowns, which serve to debunk what little decorum history may have bestowed on the two. In her attempt to portray the fragility of youth, however, Bowman runs the risk of becoming cutesy with these pug-nosed faces, whose Anglo-Saxon features are at odds with their dark complexions. Is this Adam and Eve before they ate the apple, or do Eve's glasses suggest a wisdom at odds with her innocent appearance?

A number of other attempts to communicate the theme of creation meet with varying degrees of success. In *Ancient for One*

Hour, Bowman strives to find a double metaphor for the creation of the earth and for the creative process of manipulating clay. The piece consists of a crude column of clay being extruded from between yellow-ochre paper rocks. In her enthusiasm to convey the emergence of the first animal life, Bowman has produced a somewhat phallic, slug-like "thing" that appears as though it is stuck in a muddy trough. In contrast to this unremarkable effort, *A Gathering Song* is a quiet little masterpiece that conveys all the inherent mysticism and wonder of the theme of creation without need of extraneous explanation. A clay figure of cinder grey and raw umber, bent into the wind, collects firewood. The heavy legs and small head suggest an impressive stature and a strength that contradicts the actual size of the piece. The figure seems to have emerged, half formed, from the earth itself, into which she could just as easily descend, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

One of Bowman's favourite visual images is that of a disembodied hand. Bowman considers the hand to be a sign of language as communication, yet I was inclined to read it as the hand of the creator, either religious or secular. *Earth Blood*, for instance, consists of a raku-fired clay hand emerging from paper boulders of simulated granite. The title of the piece refers to the chemical similarity between clay and blood. The hand itself, disturbing with its long fingers, knobby knuckles, and greenish tinge, suggests both generation and decay, creation and decomposition, life and death. As a symbol of communication, however, this hand fails to grab me.

The symbolic inclusion of the hand in pieces such as *The Story Teller*, *Her Story—Pilgrim Fires and Button Wholes*, *His Story*, *Hobo Seeds*, and *A Light Twist*, merely confuses the viewer, for the works actually present a collection of characters whose personalities and historical references are quite specific. In *The Story Teller*, for example, a Dickensian hatted figure with mustard green robes and an aloof expression seems to snub his audience, suggesting a lack of communication. In *A Light Twist*, a strange human figure entrapped in coils sits perched atop a rock of cast paper, while a distorted hand of clay seems to be creeping up towards the figure from the rock's base. This mass of mixed metaphors is awkward and bulky and fails to suggest the effortlessness of creation, which, in Bowman's words, is "like a cork which pops out of a bottle with a light twist." (This was definitely not my experience of childbirth!)

In *Her Story—Pilgrim Fires and Button Wholes*, a hand clutches a collection of logs and paper balls. The hand appears to belong to a zany, colourful female head which looks intently at the hand's contents. A joyous spill of twisted paper strings and thread, decorated with colourful paper baubles, cascades about the head, whose large nose and terra cotta complexion add an exotic touch of whimsy suggesting other cultures. "We are all human beings," says Bowman, "despite the amount of melanin in our skin." The only difference between races is "the amount of time we've been bisque fired."

One haunting piece stands out from amongst this weird and wonderful collection of personalities. *Tell the Ancient Whales I'm Home* is a charming and refreshing bust of an Inuit child dressed in a yellow parka with a blue lining of rolled paper. The hood of the parka frames a youthful face that shines with a natural curiosity and optimism. It was the artist's intention to convey the need to preserve traditional belief systems and ways of life. More specifically, the piece grew out of Bowman's respect for traditional craftsmanship (one of the artist's many variations on the creativity theme). Bowman talks of the amount of time it took her to make the paper for this piece, comparing it with the time and effort required to fashion traditional garments from animal hides. In the show, this piece was nicely balanced by a collograph, *Listen for the Stronghold*, which portrays a child in a parka who is intent on feeding her husky dog. Dwarfed by the surrounding whiteness of embossed paper, the child appears lost and alone.



OPPOSITE *A Gathering Song* (1992), clay, abaca, flax, cotton, by Stephanie Bowman.

ABOVE *Tell the Ancient Whales I'm Home* (1992), clay, wood, string, abaca, flax, cotton, by Stephanie Bowman.

The process of printing a collograph such as *Listen for the Stronghold* involves the application of an assemblage of textures to a flat surface, which may be inked with a roller, "spot" coloured by hand, or left uninked (for embossing), before being covered with a sheet of paper and run through a press. This is then repeated for subsequent colours. The process requires patience and skill and results in a single "one off" image.

Echoing the colourful beads, baubles, and silhouettes of the three-dimensional pieces, the images in the prints are composed of brilliant primary and secondary colours and bold cut-out shapes. Though the prints resemble the sculptures in their concern with figurative and narrative subject matter, sometimes the specific thematic links between them are somewhat obscure. In *Doubting Thomas*, for example, we see a human figure looking askance at a flying fish which floats in an ambiguous white space. The fish seems to be smiling as the figure glances over her shoulder. In *Looking for Home*, a mysterious figure in a top hat turns its back to the viewer while a large polar bear wearing a necklace intrudes into the flattened foreground. Like pieces in an incomplete jigsaw puzzle, the collograph characters seem to float freely in time and space, their apparent isolation leaving the viewer with a feeling of melancholy.

Bowman seems especially fond of hats, which appear in a variety of shapes and sizes both in the collographs and in the sculptures. However, while the hats do successfully transport the figures into different cultures and historical periods, only occasionally do they work to create a memorable image, as in *Looking for Home*. More often, they degenerate into clichés, as in *The Sentinel Appointment* and *Forgiven Agendas*, the latter being inspired by Joni Mitchell. Why Bowman wishes to use this time device is not clear, and indeed one of the more successful pieces, a cheerful caricature of Northrop Frye entitled *Literary Values*, wears no hat at all on his delightfully

balding head. Instead, the archetypal academic sports a colourful bow tie and a wry smile.

In summary, Bowman displays consummate skill in her handling of paper. She creates an amazing variety of textures and some exquisite colour transitions which she then incorporates into an impressive variety of forms suggesting clothing and accessories, rocks, and even water. In her enthusiasm to share her thought processes as an artist, however, Bowman tends to bombard the viewer with information. She might have been wise to have excluded some of the less successful pieces, paring the show down to more digestible proportions. Bowman creates her most compelling works when she lets her characters happen, then lets them be, thereby producing sculptures that transcend their individual personalities and inspire viewers to look beyond the surface to the symbolic. □

Waterways

BY GREG BEATTY

John Peet & James Slingerland

"Waterways"

The Rosemont Gallery, Neil Balkwill Centre, Regina

January 6 to 31, 1993

As anyone who has studied geography will know, over two-thirds of the earth's surface is covered in water. But because humanity is primarily a land-based animal, we tend to underestimate the place of rivers, lakes, and oceans in sustaining the global eco-system. In "Waterways," ceramists John Peet and James Slingerland present a collaborative exhibition that explores the subject of water from both an economic and environmental perspective.

For this exhibition, both Peet and Slingerland chose to work primarily in the mural format and so each faced a similar range of technical and aesthetic problems. Unlike most other forms of visual art, a mural is generally designed to operate within a specific architectural space and has, in the past, served primarily to honour political, economic, and religious authority. The subject matter of Peet's and Slingerland's murals, however, reflects a more critical view of authority.

In his ambitious wall-length mural *The Whole of the Moon* (1993), for example, Peet closely examines the role water has played in human economic development. Combining the vessel motif with references to lunar and tidal cycles, Peet links the stability and prosperity of human society to an abundant water supply. Historically, anthropologists have identified fertile river valleys in Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China as "cradles of civilization." By securing a steady supply of water, and controlling flooding through a complex system of dikes and irrigation canals, these societies were able to abandon nomadic hunting and gathering in favour of a more sedentary lifestyle based on agriculture. Peet dramatizes this development through the depiction of eight ceramic-tile

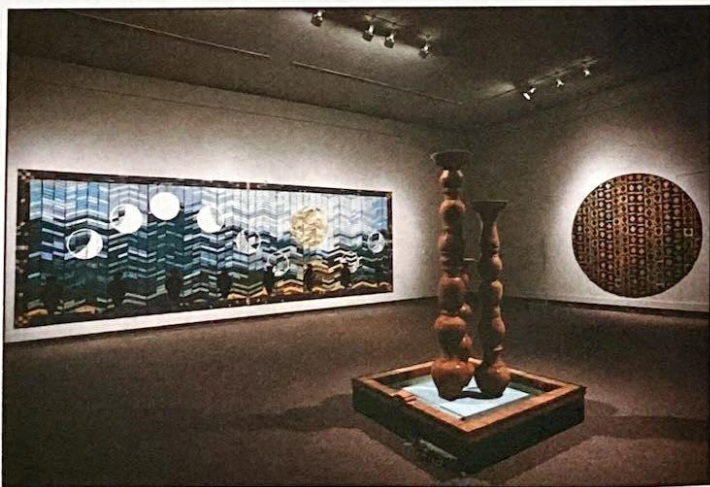
vessels whose visual cohesion fluctuates according to the amount of water present in the background. When water is plentiful, the vessel image, which serves as a metaphor for human society, is strong and intact. But when water is scarce, the vessel image begins to disintegrate, reflecting the weakened state of any society in which the water supply has failed or been poorly managed.

Peet's thematic ambitions in *The Whole of the Moon*, however, are undercut by a lack of unity and cohesion among the hundreds of small rectangular tiles that make up the mural. This problem was compounded by Peet's liberal use of polychrome glazes, which created a disjointed colour scheme, and by his use of silver- and gold-leaf to depict the phases of the moon and a somewhat incongruous sun. While the latter did create a formal and intellectual separation befitting the moon and sun's stature as symbols of celestial grandeur, the division between them and the tiles representing the earth, water, and sky was perhaps too severe.

In this regard, Peet's *Untitled* (1993), with its simplified design structure and repetitive decorative pattern was more visually unified and harmonious. Here, Peet reminds us of the existence of contemporary Third World societies which lack proper water management and sanitation systems. The mural refers specifically to Peet's recent experience as an artistic and economic advisor with CUSO, where he spent eighteen months in the Gambian village of Sotuma Sere in sub-Saharan Africa. The village had no running water, so the inhabitants would haul water for drinking, cooking, laundry, and personal hygiene from community wells and store it in their homes in large ceramic containers. Using a circular format, Peet presents a series of unglazed red and black tiles which contain contrasting black and red vessel images loosely based on the containers used by the villagers. In adopting either a "light on dark" or "dark on light" colour scheme in a majority of the tiles, Peet recalls an ancient form of vessel decoration. The presence of several vessels executed in gold-leaf, on the other hand, alludes to the tradition of using vessels for ceremonial purposes. Because ceremonial vessels are more elaborate, and therefore more expensive to produce, they have always been fewer in number than vessels intended for everyday use.

OPPOSITE *Caught in a Whirlwind*, wood, paint, dye, 29 centimetres in height, by Michael Hosaluk.

BELOW Installation view of John Peet and James Slingerland's "Waterways" at The Rosemont Gallery.



The Many Faces of Michael Hosaluk

BY ALICIA POPOFF

Michael Hosaluk

"Faces/Places"

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon

February 12 to March 23, 1993



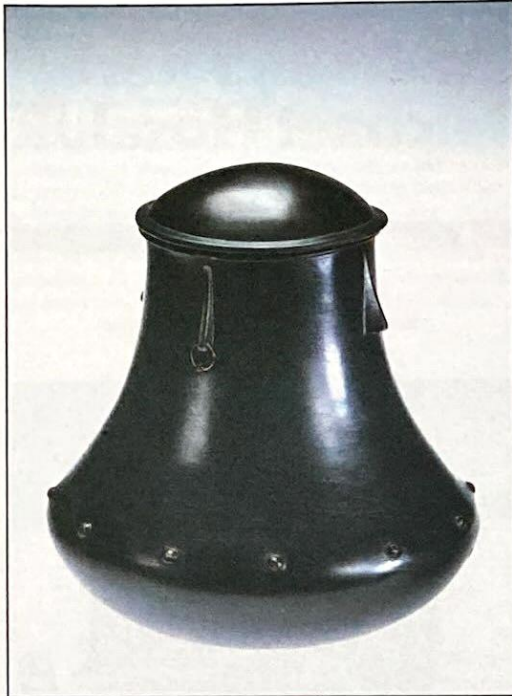
In contrast to Peet, who focused on water as an economic resource, James Slingerland concentrated on water's status as a living environment which supports and nourishes a myriad of plant and animal species. Furthermore, whereas Peet's work relies heavily on materials and techniques traditionally associated with craft production, the two ceramic murals of James Slingerland evince a concern for the formal properties of colour, surface, and texture indicative of the artist's academic training as a ceramic sculptor. In *Ity Bitty Wattum Bottom Chew* (1992), Slingerland presents a large-scale mural whose open ended structure and realistic subject matter, which includes large fish chasing smaller fish in a predatory manner, creates the illusion of visiting an underwater lake bottom. The dynamic nature of Slingerland's imagery, which was hand-built on slabs of wet clay, is reinforced by his use of tools to mark the clay surface so as to convey a further sense of energy and movement. After the tiles were fired, they were coated with white paint, and then layers of light-green and blue acrylic paint and oil stain were added to produce a translucent effect consistent with the depiction of an underwater environment. By constructing an irregularly-shaped mural, with a visual tension similar to a crossword puzzle, Slingerland creates a non-linear viewing experience which invites us to consider the possibility of life existing beyond the boundaries of the mural. However, by decapitating one fish in the lower left-hand corner, Slingerland may have gone too far in his attempt to create a "slice of nature."

In a second ceramic mural entitled *Goldfish Pond* (1992), Slingerland juxtaposes blue-green tiles representing water with red terracotta blocks to create an overhead view of a goldfish pond. The illusion of depth created by the contrasting colours is enhanced by the use of gold lustre to depict fish swimming in the water, while at the same time the rigid geometric shape of both the pond and the mural, coupled with the unnaturally smooth surface of the ceramic tile "water," remind the viewer that this marine habitat has been constructed by human hands. The mural, which can be read in relation to a number of environmental issues, from the current crisis in the offshore fishery to the damming of rivers for hydro-electric power generation, warns against the danger of over-managing our water supply in order to maximize its economic benefits. As humanity's demand for water for domestic, industrial, and recreational purposes continues to grow, we are depriving marine life of their habitat. Unfortunately, minor technical flaws, magnified by the tight compositional format where the intention was obviously to create a seamless tile surface, drew attention away from the imagery, making the viewer overly aware of the four-panel construction of the work. *Ity Bitty Wattum Bottom Chew*, on the other hand, with its loose construction and emphasis on surface and texture, actually benefitted from minor flaws such as tile warpage and separation between component panels.

As an added feature of the exhibition, Peet and Slingerland collaborated to create a ceramic fountain which was positioned in the middle of the gallery. In addition to introducing the sound and movement of water into the exhibition space, the fountain, with its three-pillared construction, also reinforced the vessel motif of Peet's murals. But the logistics of placing a fountain in a carpeted gallery proved too great for the artists to overcome. There were problems with exposed wires and a somewhat makeshift tile base, and while water was initially intended to flow smoothly down the sides of each pillar, the structure tilted so that water dribbled rather noisily from one side of each basin only, ruining the meditative and contemplative effect the artists sought to invoke. However, though somewhat overambitious in terms of scope and execution, the fountain, like the other works in the exhibition, did provide viewers with an interesting look at a range of aesthetic and conceptual issues associated with the subject of water. □

We know Michael Hosaluk as a woodturner, but in his recent work he has been pushing closer to the field of assemblage art. This change was evident in Hosaluk's exhibition "Faces/Places," which featured 40 imaginative works. Although I am largely unfamiliar with the technical aspects of traditional woodcraft, the painter in me was feasted on an impressive array of colours, designs, and textures.

Hosaluk creates his pieces by embellishing, painting, and adding on to basic turned forms, using simple vessel or bowl shapes as a starting point for his creativity rather than as an end in themselves. Yet there is still respect for the inherent qualities of the wood, and artisan as well as audience appreciate the visibility of the natural material. When you hear an experienced woodturner like Hosaluk speak of his medium, you quickly realize that there is an exotic forest



ABOVE *Burial Urn*, wood, paint, feathers, beads, linen thread, by Michael Hosaluk. Collection of Dr. Irving Lipton.

of woods that anyone could become lost in for a lifetime. But Hosaluk's affinity for assemblage does put him in the more radical wing of his craft. In a positive way, I refer to him as the punk artist of woodturners.

As I walked into the gallery, *Caught in a Whirlwind* met my eyes first. This yellow-gold and turquoise painted vessel is incised on the sides with Hosaluk's personal pictograms. The design treatment of this work is influenced by modern pop culture, with an Australian feel to it as well. At first *Caught in a Whirlwind* seemed too harsh, but repeated viewing revealed a powerful artistic statement, more harmonious than works such as *Fish Bowl* or *Gathering*, which did not seem as considered or successful.

Dogs & Cats & Bats & Bones & Bugs & Birds & Hearts & a Carrot, a very large platter turned from 150-year-old barn wood, introduces viewers to the whimsical side of the artist, giving us an example of the woodturner as painter. Multiple images twirl in and out of each other playfully. Hosaluk's personal references to family, travel, and his own full life fill this canvas. A delightful pop quality exudes from the piece, and the viewer is caught searching for the lone carrot in the kaleidoscope of shapes.

A formal concern I had with this platter was the apparent separation of the woodstained rim from the interior design. Possibly allowing the little figures to spill onto the rim, as the artist has done in other pieces, would have helped to pull it together. Though this is one of a kind work, it would be interesting to see this painterly style in a series of plates.

Wandering around the gallery, the viewer encounters numerous faces, cartoon-like Matt Groenig profiles, graffiti-style sharks and animals, as well as children's stick figures. They emerge out of the

forms in a variety of ways, often working like one of those positive/negative puzzles on perception found in psychology texts. Hosaluk had to show me where some of the faces were hidden, and he had to explain what places he was depicting, many of the references being known only to him. At first I considered his iconography to be too eclectic, leaving the audience out of the nuances of his expression, but being an artist myself I quickly realized that Hosaluk merely uses these references as source materials. As such, they act as valuable springboards to his invention.

Of the many pieces worth noting, a few seem a bit isolated, though they did pertain to the general theme of faces/places. For example, the modular, changeable unit called *Just Passing Through* was unique for its *De Stijl* influence and it immediately suggested Chicago to me. Yet if this work had been accompanied by others in a similar style, it may have grounded more in the show. The one wall piece, *Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall*, and the lone table, called *Sharks, Barks and Marks*, show the versatility of the artist and created a nice foyer near the front window of the gallery. Ah, but I felt they were not as heartfelt or original in execution as my two favourite pieces.

In which pieces does the artist discover that magical moment of creation where knowledge, skill, and emotion come together apparently effortlessly and sublimely? As viewers, we can't really know, though we sense it in some art, and in Hosaluk's *Burial Urn* there was this intrinsic quality. The elegant dark burnished finish of this piece harkens to distant times and places, bringing to mind ancient vessels from Africa or South America, and creating a sense of timelessness not generally present in the other works. And when the lid of the *Urn* is lifted, the viewer is confronted with a collection beads, feathers, and other talismanic objects that perhaps provide a glimpse of the artist's personal view. This tension between outward simplicity and inner complexity, between the public and private faces of the artist, helps to make *Burial Urn* one of the most cohesive works in the show.

Going off in a completely different direction was the piece *Off in All Directions*. Using the vessel shape as a starting point, Hosaluk has captured a playful spirit here and has created the most sculptural forms in the show as well. Like many of the other pieces in the exhibition, *Off in All Directions* evolved through various stages, bringing together a wide variety of materials and techniques. The coloured interior, for example, was made of rolled strips of cloth that the artist's kids had painted; and the long thin legs, with feet that were added much later, gave the work its title. The simplicity, subdued colour, and wonderful plaster texture of this sculpture combine to charm the eye, the assemblage approach conveying an attractive openness to intuition and accident.

The only problem I had with this work brings up a problem I had with the entire show: it needed more room to breathe. *Off in All Directions* and the other sculptures were meant to be freestanding but were walled in by other works.

Part of the reason the main show did not have enough room was that the back of the gallery held an installation of 44 bowls that Hosaluk had turned and sent to people around the world who have influenced him in some way. These people were asked to decorate the bowls and return them. Though the concept for the series was wonderful and a number of the resulting works had merit, the installation unfortunately pulled the focus away from the main show, resulting in some clutter and confusion. Indeed, some viewers did not realize that the bowls were intended to be taken together as a unified piece.

Editing, combined with a less cumbersome display, would have helped all of the works. Although the show was easier to assimilate after a few visits, less would have given us more by allowing the necessary space and the pauses for reflection.

That Hosaluk is a good craftsman is evident from his many awards, his reputation, and his extensive resume. The success of this exhibition

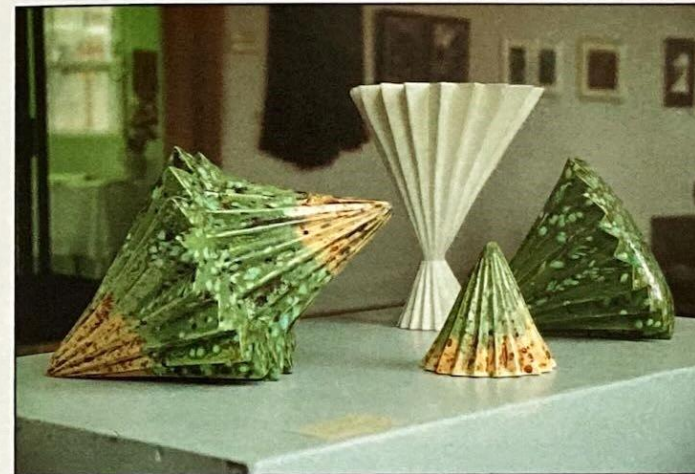
is that it shows Hosaluk not only as a craftsman but also as an intriguing and original artist.

Being introduced to the world of woodturning with such a wild body of work was exciting, and I found it fascinating to glimpse the various styles of the artist. In our interview, Hosaluk mentioned that viewers of his exhibition think there are five different artists showing work and, yes, that is the feeling one gets.

Hosaluk says that he prefers group shows and hesitates to consider another solo one. But for the sake of both his artistic development and his appreciative audience, I hope he reconsiders. □

BELOW TOP Untitled porcelain vessels, two groups of two, by Dianne Young.

BELOW BOTTOM Installation view of the SIAST Applied Arts Faculty and Graduate Student Exhibition at The Little Gallery. Foreground pedestals, l to r: *Zebra Bowl* by Jennifer Miller, Woollen blanket by Annabel Taylor, *Majolica* by Lois Cook, and Green peppers and red shoes by Olive Gilmeich. Photos: SIAST Audio-Visual Program.



A Sense of Community

By JOHN FLOCH

SIAST Applied Arts Faculty and Graduate Exhibition
The Little Gallery, Prince Albert
March 26 to April 19, 1993

The SIAST Applied Arts Faculty and Graduate Exhibition at The Little Gallery in Prince Albert presented an overview of work by 23 faculty members and graduates in the program

areas of weaving, ceramics, and photography. When works by such a large number of participants are brought together like this, the resulting show is often cluttered and unfocused. The works in this show, however, were bound together by multiple threads, both technical and aesthetic, providing concrete evidence of the ongoing lively exchange of knowledge between students and instructors at the college. Each time I visited the gallery, I came away more delighted and impressed by the strength of the work.

As I entered to view the works for the first time, I was immediately attracted by the tactile beauty of the fibre works. Gwen Klypak's red kimono, for example, is a sensual delight. The elegance of the design is enhanced not only by the vertical accents woven of black and gold metallic threads but, more subtly, by the artist's willingness to let the texture of the cotton fabric speak for itself.

Showing a similar sensitivity to materials, weaver Annabel Taylor has created hard and soft pieces totally suited to their function. Taylor's blankets, twill woven in dusty earth tones with fringed ends, have a softness that invites one to wrap them cosily about one's body. *Segue*, in contrast, is a six-piece cotton tapestry woven so tight as to feel like canvas. Drawing upon the same subdued palette used in the blankets, Taylor divides each of the six narrow vertical banners horizontally with dark and light bands overlaid with angular motifs such as triangles, diamonds, and zig-zags. In addition, two of the banners are inhabited by small blocky human figures whose colours and forms are completely harmonious with their desert-like environment.

Patricia Sinclair's woven shawls remind the viewer that things are not always what they seem. While looking at the shawls from a distance, I thought they would feel rough;

but when I actually touched one, I was amazed at its softness. Further, Sinclair's fabrics have a subtle three-dimensional quality that contributes greatly to the overall richness of the finished works. In her blue-fringed *Mixed Fibre Shawl*, Sinclair plays with the overlapping of vibrantly coloured fibres, a blue background contrasting with horizontal lines moving from light green to royal blue to bright orange, with a mossy green backing all of this, small tufts of a light soft fibre breaking through everywhere.

Another thread linking a number of the works is the influence of First Nations art. Jackie Guedo's hand-formed, pit-fired group of bison and her drawing *All that Remains* both convey a respect for nature that is an essential part of the First Nations worldview. The bison group also reminds us of the importance of the community in the development of the individual, a theme shared by the exhibition as a whole. Nearby, Carolyn Ohrm's simple earthenware vessels resonate

with their maker's obvious affinity for the work of the potters of the American southwest such as Lucy Lewis of Acoma pueblo. Finally, Rich Miller's black and white photographs of pow-wow dancers both record and celebrate the continuing vitality of First Nations traditions, again emphasizing the importance of a shared way of life.

Other works in the exhibition are connected by threads that are formal rather than thematic in nature. The verticality and tonal range of Cecille Miller's *Gotham City Trio* and *Birds on a Wire*, for example, connects them with Sandra Ledingham's *Maelstrom II*, also included in the exhibition. Ledingham has been a ceramics instructor at SIAST since 1987 and her skill and knowledge of clay has clearly proven to be a valuable asset to her students. However, whereas the upward movement of *Maelstrom II* conveys a sense of spiritual yearning, with a slight opening at the top hinting at the mysteries of inner being, Cecille's work is more concerned with external surfaces and the effects produced by the urban environment. Of Cecille's two pieces, *Birds on a Wire* is the most mysterious and intriguing, the contemporary references taking on a mythological aura.

Providing a delightful contrast to the more contemplative work of some of the other exhibitors, instructor Charley Ferrero's stoneware dinner set entitled *No More Dishes* and Jennifer Miller's funky *Zebra Bowl* showed that it is possible to take a more playful approach to the creation of art. In Ferrero's piece, a series of plates beautifully decorated with tenmoku and other glazes have been arranged and glued together to form one piece. I couldn't help but smile as I thought of the potter's frustration when pieces are fused together in that last kiln before a sale and he or she has to scramble to meet set production goals, or of the homemaker's frustration when presented with another endless pile of dishes to be washed.

More enigmatic are Dianne Young's two groups of handbuilt and slipcast porcelain pieces that completely ignore functional considerations in favour of letting the forms find their own reason for being. The first group includes two contrasting pleated vessels. The one is glazed on the interior using a beautiful technique of creating depth through the overlap of colour, with a contrasting white matte glaze on the exterior, while the other is glazed a mottled green on the outside with the white matte glaze on the inside. The second group of two are both glazed in green and yellow tones that give them a strange, other-worldly feel, as though they have fallen to earth from



ABOVE Installation view of the SIAST Applied Arts Faculty and Graduate Exhibition at The Little Gallery. Photo: SIAST Audio-Visual Program.

outer space.

Although I personally feel more of a kinship with the fibre and ceramic artists, who produce three-dimensional objects that appeal directly to our tactile sense, I was nonetheless impressed by the evocative work of photographers Patrick Piprell and David Nelson. Piprell's *Photograph #1*, a black and white negative image of a figure silhouetted against a beautiful lake-side sunset, instantly transported me to a tropical paradise, craving a pina colada and a Bob Marley tune, while Nelson's use of the colour of motion in *Light Show* took me back to my first encounter with Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*.

Taken as a whole, the works in this show provide convincing proof of the importance of the SIAST Applied Arts classes currently being offered throughout the province. The sense of community I felt among the works was reinforced by Grace Eiko Thomson, curator of The Little Gallery, who spoke to me of the supportive relationship that has developed between the city of Prince Albert and the SIAST Applied Arts Program. Woodland Campus, which began in 1985 when Annabel Taylor, the original and present coordinator of the weaving program, brought committees together for all three programs to begin the arduous task of establishing the curricula. As with so many things, the value of this initial hard work has become increasingly evident with the passage of time. The Program's success is evident in the impressive number of graduates who, despite the financial and other difficulties involved, continue to work at their chosen craft long after graduation.

I end with the work of Ron Froese, a 1991 ceramics graduate. Froese's stoneware *Beanpot* and *Storage Jar* are solid works that express a joyful acceptance of the maker's chosen role as a functional potter, digging clays, finding glaze materials, building kilns, and producing works for everyday use. Too often we feel that we must reach for something outside of what we're good at, trying to conform to some perception of art and craft that is foreign to our true feelings. However, by losing touch with our own experience in this way, we inevitably lose that which makes us unique and gives deeper meaning to our work. □

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20th ANNIVERSARY

[continued from page 22] an increase of 3.4 percent over the decade. During the same period, funding requests increased from 3,112 to 4,108, or 32 percent.

"In a 1989 study of professional artists' incomes, it was revealed that fully one-quarter to one-third of artists have earnings below the poverty line," Gotlieb stated in a November 1990 speech to 500 Toronto business leaders. "Do you know how much the average professional dancer earns? \$13,000 a year. Do you know how much the average professional actor earns? 15,000 a year." Although it's somewhat like comparing apples and oranges, the average value of a Canada Council grant awarded in 1990-91 to an individual dancer was \$9,241. To an actor, the average grant was \$8,778. The average visual arts grant was \$10,101.

Of the twelve craft artists who received Arts Awards grants in 1990-91, five were "B" grants worth about \$17,500, five were project grants of about \$4,500, and one was a travel grant which has a \$2,800 ceiling. Seven of the eighteen grants awarded to craft artists since 1991 were travel grants.

At its 1992-93 level of \$107 million, the Canada Council costs each taxpayer about \$4 per year—the price of one fast-food meal. Cutting \$8.7 million from the Council's budget during the next two years will reduce per capita support by 32 cents.

The federal government spends \$2.4 billion annually on the National Gallery, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and other national cultural institutions. Less than 1 percent of that amount goes to individual artists. Less than 5 percent of that 1 percent goes to visual artists. Less than 3.1 percent of that 5 percent goes to craft artists. Lotto 649 gives better odds.

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The Funding Lottery: It's All in the Game

BY PAULA GUSTAFSON

When the chances of "winning" a Canada Council grant are thought to be slim, few artists bother to apply. A low number of applications in any year increases the odds for those who do submit requests for funding. When there is an abundance of applications, the competition gets tougher. But there's no way of determining ahead of time whether an applicant's chances are high or low. So what's an artist to do? Send in your application anyway. You can't win the awards game if you don't apply—and the Canada Council will never be able to justify a future increase in government allocations for the arts if it can't prove that Canadian artists need money.

You've read the bad news—Canada Council funding cut by \$8.7 million for the next two years. Maybe you were one of the 200,000 people who signed the 13 x 13 metre petition that hung on the west wall of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa last February. Or maybe you participated in one of the dozens of nationwide rallies protesting the federal government's decision to slash Canada Council annual funding to \$99 million next year. But as a craft artist, how will the cuts affect on your chances of getting a Canada Council grant?

In mid-March, when Council director Paule Leduc announced which granting programs would be most affected by the government cuts, she emphasized that the Council's decisions were based on "protecting programs which are the Council's essential activities." The \$8.7 million represents about eight percent of the Council's annual funding. Visual arts grants to individuals will be cut by only five percent. Compared to the fate of the National Book Festival, the composer-in-residence program, or new opera production, all of which were killed, the five percent reduction in visual arts funding might seem like a small victory—if it weren't for the fact that grants to individual visual artists amount to less than a five percent slice of the Canada Council pie. If Art Bank purchases are factored into the equation, the percentage of Canada Council money for visual artists rises to just above six percent.

Shaving a five percent sliver off the already minimal visual arts slice will deny funding to at least 18 visual artists annually, at a time when overall numbers of grant recipients slipped from a ten-year average of 424 to a 1990-91 low of 387. The Council's head of research, John Alfred Ruston, advises that 1991-92 recipient figures were again at the 424 level, but with budget cuts, the average cannot be maintained.

A total of 12 artists working in craft media were funded under the Council's Arts Awards program in 1990-91, accounting for 3.1 percent of all visual arts grants to individuals. From 1991 to date 18 craft artists have been awarded Canada Council grants, the overwhelming majority for work in ceramics and textiles.

The Chalmers Crafts Fund established in 1985-86 was designed to support groups of

professional craftspeople, non-profit crafts organizations, and individuals engaged in research. The Canada Council administers the Chalmers Fund and includes Chalmers grants in its statistical base. The \$45,000-50,000 available annually from the endowment fund has an impact on the broader crafts community, not on individual creative works.

Similarly, the \$17,000 spent by the Art Bank to purchase 17 craft-art pieces in 1990-91 were for completed works, not creative development.

Depending on the applicant's ingenuity, crafts sometimes qualify under the Council's Explorations program. One craft artist received a \$9,000 Explorations grant in 1990-91. Two received grants in the previous year.

"I believe that with the \$8.7 million cut the viability of artistic life and expression in Canada is being dealt a serious blow," Council chairman Allan Gotlieb said at the March 12, 1993, news conference outlining the Council's austerity measures. He warned that "the government must realize the severe impact of its action and the effect it will have on the country as a whole."

Despite political assurances about cultural integrity throughout the Canada-U.S. Free Trade negotiations and the National Unity talks, this latest funding cut raises the total of unfulfilled government cultural commitments to \$130 million during the past decade. Examples of the Tories arts policy include \$280,000 stripped from the Council's base funding in the 1991 federal "restraint" budget, and the \$150,000 the Council "lost" in November 1990, used to help finance Canada's contribution to the Gulf War.

Although government officials assert that parliamentary funding to the Council rose 2.8 percent annually between 1981 and 1991, the Consumer Price Index rose 4.6 percent over the same period. The result, Gotlieb noted, is that "Ottawa's funding for ongoing programs of support to artists has diminished since 1986-87."

The chances of a visual artist successfully applying for a grant in 1986-87 averaged 26.3 percent. Today the odds are less than 20 percent—and around 15 percent for craft artists.

In any given year the Canada Council earmarks approximately one-quarter of its funding for individual artists, musicians, writers, and dancers (approximately \$21 million in 1990-91). Three quarters of the Council's grants go to organizations, galleries, and professional companies.

The number of grants to all individual applicants increased from 991 in 1980-81 to 1,025 in 1990-91. [continued on page 21]

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