

# THE CRAFT FACTOR

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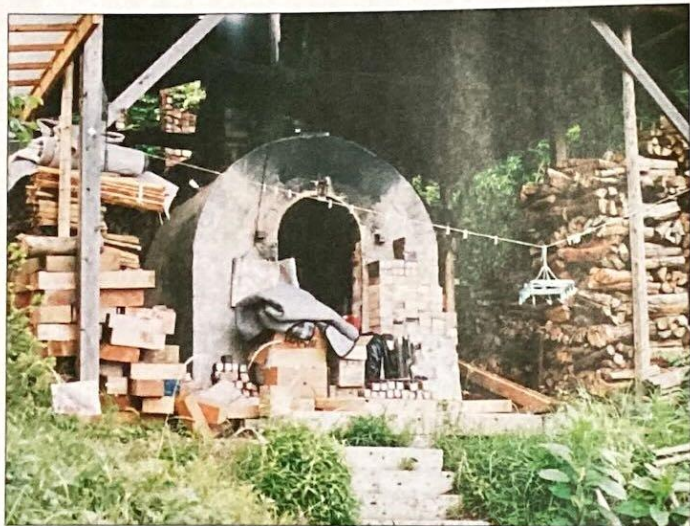


## The **Craft Factor**

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# The Welcome Warmth of the Rising Sun



Randy Woolsey has worked as a potter in Canada, he in fact received most of his training in pottery in Japan and has now been living in Kasama for over six years.

Despite being a foreign artist, Woolsey has been very much a part of the pottery revival in Kasama. When he constructed his first kiln nearly twenty years ago, it was only the seventh or eighth to be built in the town. Now about to turn fifty, Woolsey describes himself as a sporadic worker but notes that he has "had a good year, with my work going well. In the last year, things have really come together. To simply work is important, to take the hard way if that's what's necessary."

Doing things the hard way, if that's what's necessary, counts for Randy Woolsey. That is why he recently did some wood firing, though the process required looking after the kiln day and night for five days. Wood firing is an expensive process that not only involves intensive labour but also results in a lot of broken work. Until last year, Woolsey's work was getting much brighter (he was even using blues). More recently, however, Woolsey has been focusing on salt and natural ash glazes, firing his work in a modified two-chamber climbing kiln that he built himself. Over the past twenty or so years, Woolsey has become very experienced in kiln construction. Although most Japanese potters purchase gas or electric kilns, a number are interested in Woolsey's ongoing building projects and often bring their friends to see his setup.

Woolsey makes a full range of pottery forms, but his work that sells the best in Japan includes saké cups and tea bowls, water containers, and other special ceramic pieces for the tea ceremony, a ritual that lies at the heart of the Japanese culture. In the relatively homogeneous society of Japan, everyone is aware of the meaning of the tea ceremony and the significance of the ceremonial utensils. Woolsey says that he wants to continue to concentrate on traditional Japanese work for the next couple of years. "Things have evolved, both technically and aesthetically," he says with confidence. "I've evolved a palette of effects that are in many ways mine."

The gift-giving tradition is exceptionally active in Japan, and there are several times throughout the year when the Japanese

Randy Woolsey and Yoshimi Woolsey live in separate residences in the town of Kasama in the Ibaraki prefecture of Japan. Ibaraki, on the Pacific coast of the island of Honshu, is just two hours away from Tokyo on the express train. In contrast to Tokyo's cramped concrete, Kasama's combination of greenery, scenery, and spaciousness is literally a breath of fresh air.

Kasama, with over 175 kilns, is a town known for its pottery. Although the nearby town of Mashiko is more famous as a pottery centre, Kasama is quietly solidifying its own reputation. Work from the area is known as "Kasama ware," and the town is in the process of constructing a million dollar ceramic research centre that will focus on teaching and research into new clays and glazes. About 250 years ago, potters came to the Mashiko-Kasama area for the clay, but now the local potters obtain their materials from pottery supermarkets that carry clays from all over Japan.

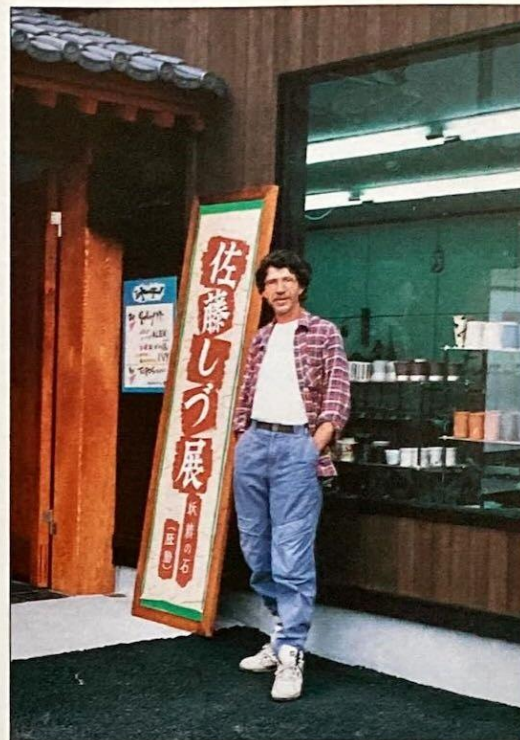
Several shops in Kasama sell Randy Woolsey's work on a regular basis. On the day I visited, Woolsey picked me up at the train station, and then we went by a shop in order to deliver some of his new work for a small solo exhibition. The shop has a space set aside to highlight the work of individual

By Susan Clark

potters like Woolsey, as well as a general display area for other one-of-a-kind works. In the back, there is also an area with numerous small dishes for everyday use.

I was pleasantly surprised when Woolsey picked me up in a classic Mercedes sedan and immediately took the car as an indication that he is able to make a good living as a potter in Japan. I later discovered that my reading of the situation was not quite accurate. Woolsey is making a comfortable living, but his Mercedes was not expensive. Costly annual safety inspections are mandatory for any vehicles over eight years old, so the Japanese regularly sell or give away their old cars and buy new. As a result, the market for used cars is very soft in Japan. In any case, it was delightful to see a craftsman displaying any sign of prosperity.

Originally from Cupar, Saskatchewan, where his mother and brother still live, Randy Woolsey first established ties with Japan twenty years ago when he and Yoshimi were newly married. The couple lived for many years in Ruddell, a small Prairie town where they made and marketed their crafts, and they have one son, Justin, who is now a college student in Vancouver. Although



have a social obligation to give gifts. Handmade ceramic works are considered appropriate for almost any occasion. A gift recipient would almost certainly recognize a ceramic piece from the Mashiko/Kasama area, which features many attractive pottery shops that cater to the gift-giving tradition.

Special custom-made wooden boxes are constructed for each major ceramic piece, and the artist then signs his or her name in calligraphy on the top of the box. Inside the box, the work is wrapped in a piece of fabric, with yellow-orange fabric being reserved for the most valuable pieces. The boxes are very attractive and make gift giving very easy, especially if you know that someone collects a certain potter's work or work from a certain co-op or region.

Randy Woolsey has earned wide respect among Japanese potters for his unique and recognizable work. His pottery is marketed as work by a foreigner, that much is evident just in the name of the artist displayed alongside the work. Woolsey signs the special wooden boxes built for his pieces with his Romanized signature and says that to do otherwise would be misleading.

It may seem ironic that Woolsey's best-selling work is designed for the Japanese tea

ritual, but the fact is, Woolsey has managed to situate himself, through good reputation and happenstance, in an enviable position in the broader ceramics market. The Japanese can not only be very wary but also sometimes very admiring of foreign wares, which can carry great cachet if they are exclusive and expensive.

Shops in Japan buy handmade pottery outright and then sell the work with about a hundred percent mark up. Woolsey's larger, one-of-a-kind pieces sell for about 60,000 yen each, or about \$800 Canadian. Woolsey is quick to point out, however, that things have changed considerably since Japan's thriving bubble economy burst a couple years ago, noting that his lower priced work now sells more quickly than his more expensive pieces. Every year, Kasama has a pottery festival during "Golden Week," a time during the spring when the Japanese traditionally make visits to their home towns. The festival, which this year attracted about 70,000 tourists and visitors, is just one of several big marketing opportunities for pottery retailers in the area.

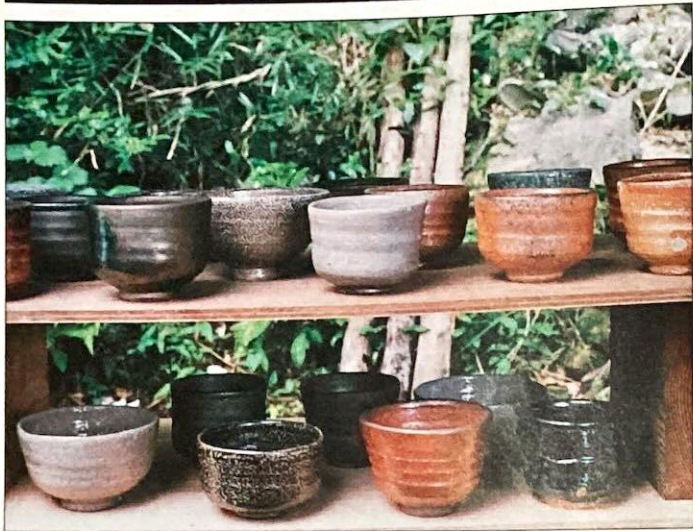
"I don't think I would have evolved the same or as quickly in Canada. There's more healthy competition, and pottery is big busi-



ness in Japan. It spurs development," says Woolsey. "With 170 other potters outside your doorstep, you're aware of the way your stuff looks in a shop."

Later, when discussing the difference in attitude to craft in North America as compared to Japan, Woolsey observes that people in Japan look at craftspeople as if they "were doing something valid" and support their activities by purchasing and displaying their work.

Although Randy and Yoshimi Woolsey have been divorced for several years now, they still maintain a very amicable relationship. Yoshimi lives a short drive away in her own house and also has her own car. Teaching English is her primary source of income. She gives private lessons twenty to thirty hours a week, and she also used to teach at a high school. Many Japanese like to study English, with housewives and business people being the most common adult students. Teaching English used to be a way for English-speaking foreigners to make good



LEFT A selection of Randy Woolsey's traditional tea bowls.  
 OPPOSITE *Untitled Table* (1994), mahogany, poplar, paint, by Garry Knox Bennett, Ted Crossfield, Michael Hosaluk, Merryll Saylan, Mark Sfirri, Doug Taylor. Produced at the 1994 Contemporary Woodturning and Furniture Design Conference in Saskatoon.

money easily, but competition in the larger cities like Tokyo is very fierce. In the smaller centres, it is easier to secure a position, and if you speak both Japanese and English, you can easily line up your own students and organize your English teaching work as a small business.

The cost of living in places like Mashiko and Kasama is dramatically less than the cost of living in the big cities. Yoshimi can afford to maintain a small but adequate studio in Kasama where she paints on canvas and on paper and does installation work. The studio is on an upper level of a small office building with windows that provide a marvellous view of the countryside.

"It's impossible to sell my work, but it's a way to express myself," says Yoshimi. "I have the freedom to do whatever I want to do." The pieces Yoshimi had on hand at her studio were large scale works on canvas in soft, warm, vivid pastel colours, with some floating shapes, very lyrical in their form, which Yoshimi explains as a focus on feeling. A heart shape provides an off-centre focal point in one of Yoshimi's works, which generally have a warmth uncharacteristic of most contemporary painting in Japan.

When she was in Saskatchewan, Yoshimi Woolsey made her living by silk painting, but she says that, although there is a market in Japan, she could not do two different things at the same time. Lack of a sufficiently large workspace with a water source is also a problem. Although Japanese people might buy silk scarves and silk-painted accessories, the real money is in hand-dyed kimonos, which can run into the thousands of dollars. Kimono decoration requires many

years of apprenticeship in a specialized workshop. It is particularly difficult for a woman to become a master, and there are only a few foreign men who have become successful.

Japan has a very active paper-making tradition, and Yoshimi herself has worked with paper, often referred to as *washi*, to make her art. As with pottery, certain areas of towns and villages in Japan are dedicated to paper making. The Japanese spend a lot on fine papers and related goods, including calligraphy tools and inks. Entire department stores are dedicated to paper products, including stationery, special cards, handmade papers, craft papers, albums and bound blank books, interior design papers, and related art supplies. In addition, the majority of Japanese homes have some sliding paper blinds or *shoji* instead of curtains. Although the paper on the *shoji* is usually changed once a year, keen traditionalists prefer to change the paper twice, using lighter paper in summer and heavier in winter.

Unlike her ex-husband, Yoshimi Woolsey is interested in returning to Canada in the near future. A recent graduate of the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at the University of Saskatchewan, Yoshimi would now like to work towards a Master's degree in Fine Art with a concentration on painting, and she is keen on Montréal as a destination. In Japan, just as in Canada, new art school graduates have difficulty getting gallery exposure. With the stiff competition to be represented by a commercial gallery, emerging Japanese artists who can afford it commonly choose to rent a gallery space and exhibit their own work for about a week at a time. In fact, so many artists now show

their own work in Japan that it has become extremely difficult for them to get noticed outside of a close circle of contacts. Yoshimi has exhibited in this way in the past and has another exhibition planned for this winter.

My visit with Yoshimi was short because she had to pack and get ready to fly to Canada the next day. She was accompanying a group of flower arrangers on a trip to Toronto and would be acting as an interpreter. Yoshimi herself practices flower arranging of the Sogetsu school and teaches classes as well. Flower arranging, or *Ikebana*, is an art studied by many Japanese women. Each school of flower arranging is distinguished by certain formal rules and practices. The Sogetsu school, with its sculptural approach to flower arranging, is considered a relatively modern *Ikebana* school.

Visitors from places like North America, Australia, New Zealand, and England frequently stay in Japan for a few years to experience another culture and make some money. Japan offers the foreigner many absolutely fabulous experiences. There are beautiful temples, shrines and palaces, exquisite crafts, gorgeous gardens and scenery, and nice polite people. The big cities offer world-class sports events, concerts, gallery exhibitions, and restaurants. On the negative side, the foreigner is always obviously a foreigner, the big cities are crowded and polluted, commuting is hellish, and eventually the rat race can get to you. Nonetheless, I have talked with many foreigners who have lived in Japan but who have since returned home, and they always remember their years here as an endless holiday, everything was so easy.

My visit with Randy Woolsey and Yoshimi Woolsey in Kasama was not unlike day trips I have taken around Saskatchewan to visit craftspeople and craft shops. The biggest difference that strikes me is the sense of play I feel here. The feeling is hard to describe, but I think it stems from living in a culture that values handmade objects and so enables many craftspeople to earn a comfortable living. □

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# Learning the Craft of Collaboration



BY MERRYL SAYLAN

I am not much of a risk taker in my everyday life. I don't like fast cars, and you won't find me diving into cold lake water. In my work as a woodturner, however, I have always tended to leap in without concern for rules or technical expertise. I have never worried about how to do something. But, then again, I have almost always worked alone.

The project was to be a series of articles, a kind of "how to" intended to improve the drawing and design skills and nourish the creativity of craftspeople, primarily woodturners, who have had little or no art training. My writing partner and I were both university-trained artists and we both had had teaching experience. I was ready to start work immediately, but my partner wanted to know just what collaboration meant before we started. What are the rules? Who does what?

In retrospect, I suppose our partnership was doomed from the start. The project turned out to be extremely difficult, causing confusion and disagreement, and when it

was over, I was unsure of the problems I had encountered: whether on a personal level I could not work collaboratively, or if it was the particular partnership in which I had become entangled. In need of some reflection, I decided to explore the subject further.

*Collaborate*: all of a sudden I seemed confronted by the term everywhere. I was scheduled to travel to Saskatoon to be one of the demonstrators at the 1994 Woodturning and Furniture Design Conference, organized by Michael Hosaluk, who had decided that the theme of the conference would be collaboration. *American Woodturner* had just published a series of articles on collaboration, and other articles appeared. It was like when you buy a car and all of a sudden you notice how many other people are driving the same make and model.

I wondered if collaboration was a new movement and was reminded of reading I had done in art school. Many historians feel that style and artistic view are part of a

complex interaction between artists and the society in which they live. In *Theories of Modern Art* (University of California Press, 1975), for instance, Herschel B. Chipp provides an example of how the social and cultural context in which we work affects our art and how our art, in turn, can alter the existing social and cultural context:

Gauguin's ideas, were elaborated upon and given widespread dissemination by a group of young painters who revered him as their master. Soon the essential conditions of a "school" were provided: a powerful and colourful personality as the master, several intellectually alert and devoted disciples, an organized group to formulate the theory, and an art school where the ideas and the style were propagated in the instruction.

In the 1950s, the artist also became the college professor. Statements made by the artist were given increasing legitimacy—a

**RIGHT** *Jardiniere* (1993), clay, 45 centimetres in diameter, by Zach Dietrich and Wendy Parsons.

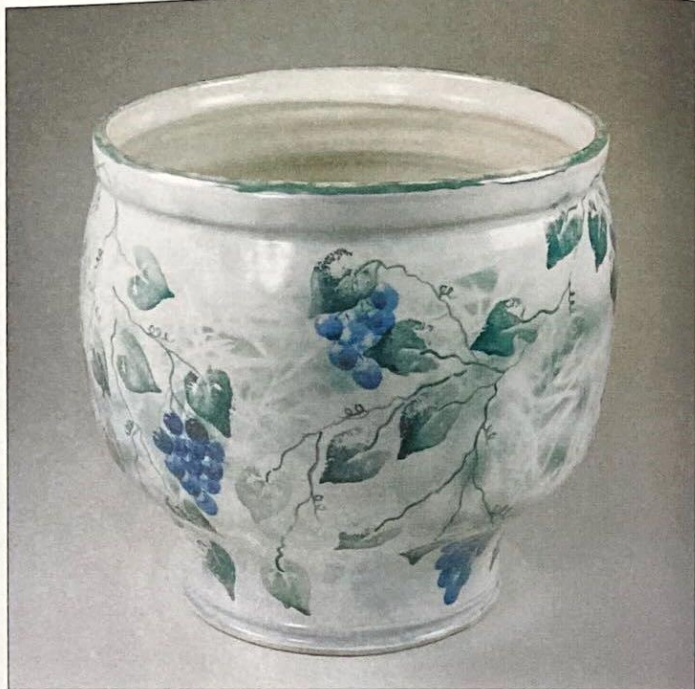
**OPPOSITE TOP** *Bugs & Thugs* (1988), wood, paint, 58 centimetres in diameter, by Robert Dodge (painted design) and Mark Sfirri (vessel design and production). Photo courtesy of Mark Sfirri.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM** *Bench* (1993), by Jane A. Evans (handpainted and woven linen), Don Kondra (bench design and construction; Saskatchewan birch), and Michael Hosaluk (painted designs).

process that was facilitated by the collection and publishing of such statements by art museums—and soon a large body of theory was produced that continues to be elaborated and revised to this day. The intellectual climate in North America in the mid-twentieth century supported the view that art is the free expression of the complex internal life of the sensitive artist/genius. The idea that art is personal and self-expressive has remained as a strong presence and persistent influence and, unfortunately, has led to a devaluation of more communal and traditional ways of working.

In the San Francisco *Chronicle Newspaper* (September 21, 1994), the art editor Kenneth Baker, in a piece entitled “Deflating the Myth of the Artist,” reviewed an exhibition of work by two artists, Drew Beattie and Daniel Davidson, who work collaboratively. In his review, Baker discusses the “notion that art is self-expression” and notes that viewers can hardly look at a work without wondering who is behind it. (I must admit that the idea of art as self-expression has always seemed sensible to me: I have always wanted people to see my work as a way for them to know me better.) Beattie and Davidson apparently sent work back and forth through the mail, adding and changing so that there is no way to know whose identity is expressed in the completed works. Baker says that the artists are part of a “post-Pop” movement that seeks deliberately to deflate the image of the self-sufficient “artist” and the myth of artistic temperament.

And, in the Summer 1994 issue of *The Craft Factor*, potter Susan Robertson reviewed “Collaborations,” an exhibition of ceramic pieces by Zach Dietrich and Wendy Parsons, a couple from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, who have produced a substantial body of collaborative work. Like Beattie and Davidson, Dietrich and Parsons work independently on the same pieces. In a short discussion of the expectations created by the title of the exhibition, Robertson informs us that she looked up the word



“collaborate” and discovered that the word means “to work, one with another; cooperate.” There is no doubt,” Robertson continues, “that living and working in the same environment would result in considerable daily interchange and definite cooperation; thus, in a broad sense, one could accept ‘collaboration.’”

Although there seemed to be some common threads in the articles I was reading, I must admit to some disappointment here: I had thought I was becoming involved in a singular activity only to find out I was part of a movement. During and after the conference in Saskatoon, I interviewed people, sent letters, and came up with a few variations on the way collaboration works.

Collaboration frequently involves two or more people with different skills working on a piece together. But, to echo Susan Robertson’s concerns, is such a division of labour a real collaboration or just a convenience? Is it different from an editor taking your work and cleaning it up or rearranging ideas? Is it different than when you job out work because you don’t have the tools or knowledge to do something? In an important way it is, because in what I would call “collaboration,” the final product results equally from everyone involved. Whereas a collaborator who is dissatisfied with a particular piece can, in the last instance, simply

refuse to either sign it or give permission for it to be shown or sold, the jobber’s opinion must give way to that of the designer/artist, who is the final authority on what will be produced and how it will look; in other words, if a jobber refuses to do the work, the designer/artist can always hire a different individual or firm. When someone works with you equally and independently and changes or adds to your work, their ideas and their hand change the nature of the piece, and the experience can have the benefit of expanding your thinking, your vision. Wendy Murayama told me that she gave her students a collaborative assignment and found it “very, very successful—[the assignment] gave students a ‘third eye,’ new insight into their work and the material.”

If we accept a slightly more flexible definition of collaboration, however, we begin to see that no work of art or craft is entirely unique and self-expressive. Woodturner Del Stubbs, for example, explains that, for him, collaboration has existed all along in terms of working with the personality of the material, with his clients, and with existing forms and traditions. In the Summer 1994 issue of *The Craft Factor*, Doug Haslam describes the working method of Ron David of Sidney, British Columbia, in similar terms, noting that David “doesn’t strive for originality” and that he prefers “to consider his

works as a series of collaborations between all the craftspeople who have influenced him.” This is not a matter of stealing ideas; rather, it is, in part, a process of acknowledging the existence of and tapping into what Peter Dormer in an article published in the ceramics magazine *contact* (Autumn 1994) calls “A Shared Symbolic Order”:

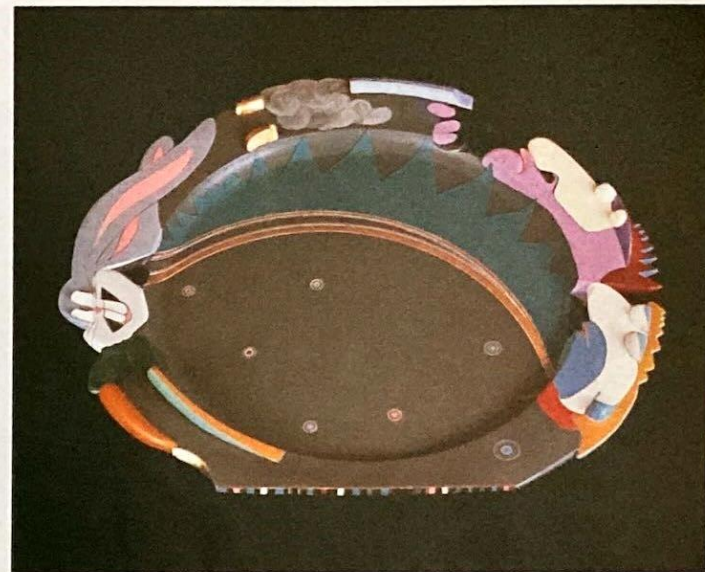
The notion of a shared symbolic order is easy to grasp: it refers simply to the fact that if a society shares an ideology or a religion or a set of aims then you can evolve a visual language that other people will recognise.... A shared symbolic order is a community of values: you and your neighbours, you and the nation, you and the world believe in “X” and so you can generate all kinds of images of X and everyone will understand the images and what the artist does with them.

Warning that “symbolic orders do not work if they are too private,” Dormer argues that craft should provide alternatives to the “self-indulgent” products of art and that craftspeople should cultivate a social role by maintaining traditional craft skills and by consciously exploiting the symbolic resources of their society. The social role of the craftspeople cannot, in Dormer’s view, be cultivated by craftspeople who are completely isolated in their private studios and thoughts. In other words, collaboration in craft may be more important than many people think.

In my experience, craftspeople who collaborate generally tend to emphasize the individual benefits of collaboration. Del Stubbs, for example, notes that, after many years of solitude working at his lathe, he has particularly enjoyed the social contact that has resulted from collaboration. Likewise, Michael Hosaluk of Saskatoon acknowledges that he has pursued collaborative projects of various kinds largely as a way of continuing relationships and building friendships with people he has met at conferences and other events.

At woodturning conferences, the kind of collaboration that takes place is similar in many ways to the technique of brainstorming, with its active energy, ideas tossed around, quick decisions, and intuitive problem-solving. “When the process works,” says Hosaluk, “it can set you reeling in many new directions.”

Both Michael Hosaluk and Mark Sfirri, whose collaborative work was exhibited in “The Mark and Mikey Show,” talk about the need for trust—trust in each other, trust in each other’s work. And I found this to be true. My experience collaborating with other



woodturners at the Contemporary Woodturning and Furniture Design Conference this summer was fruitful because I had great respect in the people at the conference: I trusted their ideas and what they might do to a piece. Perhaps collaboration is as simple as someone giving you the impetus, the idea, the shove, the solution, to push your work forward.

Do people work together primarily to produce works they could not have produced alone, to stimulate new ideas in their solo work, or simply to build a sense of community? Is the renewed interest in collaboration a cultural sign of our times? In talking to other artists and craftspeople, I

did not find anyone who thought of themselves as part of a “Post-Pop” movement, though if I had interviewed Beattie and Davidson they might have spoken about their work differently. In all, I came away with renewed energy and excitement about my work and lost any doubts I had had about working in collaboration. □

Merryl Saylan is well-known woodturner, demonstrator, and freelance writer from California. She has become a regular contributor to various woodworking magazines around the world and was a demonstrator at the 1994 Contemporary Woodturning and Furniture Design Conference in Saskatoon.

# Collaboration in Contemporary Woodturning

By MARK SFIRRI

My experience with collaboration dates back to 1986 when I was just getting back into woodworking after a long hiatus. The early eighties were a burgeoning time in the furniture and woodturning fields. Exploration of texture and colour was resulting in substantial aesthetic changes. Many galleries began specializing in one-of-a-kind wood objects. I was preparing for a solo show and wanted to start exploring colour in my new work. As time grew short, I realized that the experimentation required would take too long, so I contacted Robert Dodge, a painter whose work I admire, and asked if he would be interested in painting some pieces. He was, and the work we produced together marked the beginning of a collaborative relationship that lasted about six years.

The process was simple: I would design and make a piece and Robert would paint it. Robert treated each object as a three-dimensional canvas for his imagery and colours. We talked only briefly and in general terms about such things as the areas to be painted or a client's colour preference. We did a number of folding screens during that time that were very popular. I do not think I would have ever made the screens had it not been for Robert's insistence. I could see how a painter would like the idea, since a screen provides the opportunity for a large triptych, but I did not at first see how the project would be all that creative for a woodworker. Once I overcame my initial reluctance, however, I found the screens were a lot of fun to design and make.

Robert and I made a number of pieces over the years that were significant to my artistic development, but we didn't learn much about one another's specialty. Although the work would not have been done by either of us individually, our collaboration does not seem to have had any influence on our individual work since.

In 1991, I was ready to go in a new direction and work on my own. Less than one year later, Michael Hosaluk invited me



to the 1992 Woodturning Design and Technique Symposium in Saskatoon. I agreed to attend, and the experience greatly affected me and some of the other presenters. The main presenters—Richard Raffan, Giles Gilson, Del Stubbs, Michael Hosaluk and I—were all more or less woodturners (me being the more or less), but our work was diverse to say the least. Michael Hosaluk had designed the workshops to allow and encourage participation and collaboration, and this arrangement resulted in a conference with an unusual focus. Instead of each of us presenting our usual workshop material, we started to explore some of the ideas we discussed as part of our slide presentations. In all of my years since college, the conference in Saskatoon was probably the single largest creative jolt I have experienced.

Shortly after the conference, the five presenters started on work for an exhibition at Creations Gallery in Wilmington, Delaware. Since we live long distances apart, we had to ship the objects from one place to another, from one person to the next, without instructions. One of the interesting things about the show was seeing the finished work, since only the last person to

work on a piece knew what it looked like. Although the creative process was fragmented into little pieces of time spent by different people in different places, we managed to make about twenty collaborative pieces.

Shortly after that, Michael Hosaluk and I began work on "The Mark and Mikey Show" that was held at Sansar Gallery in Washington, DC, in late 1993. Mike and I met in my studio for a week to show each other what we do and how we do it. This arrangement enabled us both to make direct suggestions and joint decisions about our first collaborative pieces. What followed was several months of working on additional pieces and shipping them off to one another. One piece went back and forth four times before it was completed.

This summer the Saskatchewan Craft Council sponsored the Contemporary Woodturning and Furniture Design Conference. If the 1992 Conference was different from the norm, the 1994 conference was even more so. There was even less evidence of the traditional rotation format in order to allow for spontaneous collaborative projects. We did not even discuss the proposed projects until the first night of the



ABOVE LEFT *Folding Screen* (1989), mahogany, paint, by Robert Dodge (painted designs) and Mark Sfirri (screen design and construction). Photo courtesy of Mark Sfirri.



ABOVE RIGHT *Secrétaire* (1990), lacewood, purple heart, paint, 107 centimetres in height, by Robert Dodge (painted designs) and Mark Sfirri (desk design and construction). Photo courtesy of Mark Sfirri.

BELOW RIGHT *Untitled Table* (1994), by Don Kondra, Jamie Russell, and Mark Sfirri. Produced at the 1994 Contemporary Woodturning and Furniture Design Conference in Saskatoon.

OPPOSITE A selection of collaborative work by Michael Hosaluk and Mark Sfirri, from "The Mark & Mikey Show," Sansar Gallery, Washington, DC.

conference. It was a whirlwind from early in the morning until late at night. Merryl Saylan and Michael Hosaluk supervised a surface design area with a lot of participant involvement. Del Stubbs and I conducted some traditional ninety minute rotations involving turning techniques, but we also had a double session entitled "Del and Mark Winging It." Del started the session off by



saying that we were going to make something that neither of us had made before. This forced us to work together on something new in front of an audience. We made several goblet samples and one finished cherry martini glass using multi-axis centres for the turning. An amazing amount of high-quality collaborative work was produced at the conference, and the work was all donated to an auction to benefit the Saskatchewan Craft Council.

Collaboration is a way to look at what you do in a different light. How someone else chooses to carve, cut up, decorate, or finish your work can be eye opening. It can spark new directions for your own work, whether you are collaborating in the same field or not. Although collaborating requires trust to hand over your precious work, it can also provide a way to salvage rejects, i.e., someone else might see something interesting in what you consider a failure.

Friendships develop out of these creative partnerships, but collaboration is not without its complications. Unless the collaborators are geographically close, their shipping and phone bills are bound to increase. Business details such as arranging for photography, figuring the retail prices, deciding who gets what, and keeping track of where pieces are, go from being complicated but manageable to being just plain complicated, and deadlines have to allow for extra shipping time as well as two or more creative processes.

To document noncollaborative work, one ordinarily has one or two slides of the finished piece. With collaborative work, however, having a slide upon completion of each person's contribution offers a more complete history of the object. This is one more extension of the time required to complete a project and is unfortunately rarely done.

The issue of whose idea is whose needs to be addressed, but if you are afraid to share your ideas for fear of losing them, you are both limiting your own chances for development and hindering the growth of your field. The benefits of collaboration, in my experience, far outweigh the risks and inconveniences. □

Mark Sfirri is a professor of Woodwork and Design at Bucks County Community College, Pennsylvania, and a frequent contributor to various woodworking magazines.

Since 1983, the Saskatchewan Craft Council has sponsored a series of highly successful woodturning conferences in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The 1994 conference, entitled "Contemporary Woodturning and Furniture Design," took place at SIAST, Kelsey Institute, July 29 to August 1.



**ABOVE TOP LEFT** *Some Young Guys* (1993), maple, paint, by Michael Hosaluk (turning) and Mark Sfirri (cut out and paint). Photo courtesy of Mark Sfirri.

**ABOVE TOP RIGHT** *Clock* (1992), wood, paint, 51 centimetres in height, by Robert Dodge (painted designs) and Mark Sfirri (clock design and construction). Photo courtesy of Mark Sfirri.

**ABOVE BOTTOM** *Untitled Tressel Table* (1994), recycled fir, by Garry Knox Bennett. Produced at the 1994 Contemporary Woodturning and Furniture Design Conference, with the help of conference participants.

**OPPOSITE TOP** Two samples of Montana agate. Photo by Available Light, Regina.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Sterling silver ring in the Hopi style, with two layers of silver, decorated with representations of the rising, full, and setting sun (1991) and sterling silver ring with garnet stone (1983), by Bill Gottschall. Photo by Available Light, Regina.

## The Lure of Lapidary: Bill Gottschall

By JEAN FAHLMAN

"I have the right hobby in the wrong place," says Bill Gottschall, a lapidary and metalworker from Regina who spends countless hours each year locating and unearthing gem stones, quartz, crystal, and petrified wood. With the most useful types of rocks for lapidary being almost nonexistent in Saskatchewan, Gottschall and his wife Gwen "have covered the Pacific northwest gathering rocks." The Gottschalls took their first trip to gather materials in the early 1960s, driving to Washington and Oregon in a borrowed trailer, and travel has now become an integral part of their craft business.

Bill Gottschall's craft has two main components: first, he has to gather suitable materials; and second, he has to perform the actual lapidary and metal work. In his quest for materials, Gottschall has scraped through earth and sand, scaled mountainsides, and waded in cold-water streams. This summer he spent five days working in the Yellow Stone River in Montana looking for agate and petrified wood. Other trips have involved working a mountain in Butte, Montana, for quartz crystals, hunting in the Big Sandy Reserve and searching the Blue Forest in Wyoming for petrified wood, and travelling to Florida for coral and to Oregon for pink limb-cast rocks.

Gottschall's interest in rocks began with a boyhood interest in collecting Native artifacts. His interest in metal work, which has led to his work as a silversmith, was a progression from watching his father, who was a blacksmith. Gottschall has long been a serious craftsman, but he also worked for many years at SaskPower. After retiring in 1985, Gottschall made a decision to expand his basement shop to increase production and began marketing his work more intensively at craft sales. The resulting business is a partnership between Gottschall, who does the work of handling and shaping the rocks and metal, and his wife Gwen, who has a talent for special jewellery fittings, does the books for the business, and is a willing companion when it comes to the task of gathering raw materials.

"You wouldn't want to dig crystals for a living—the work is far too hard—but you start out having a hobby or craft and suddenly it has you. It becomes almost a vocation. The rock work is a major component of our lives," Gottschall explains. "With retirement, the important thing is not what you do but that you do it with great commitment. This [lapidary] has been a tremendous interest for us, and it represents a lifetime of learning. You can't retire and think you can just start up. It requires years of apprenticeship."

Equipped with electric tumblers, buffers, sanders, saws, and grinders, Gottschall's basement workshop is brimming with works in various stages of completion. Silver rings wait to be soldered and polished; garnets sit waiting to be shaped and set into jewellery; rows of agate slabs are ready to be turned into wind chimes or sun catchers; cut crystals await the final polishing; pails of cut metal pipes are ready to be assembled into wind chimes; pails of raw rocks are queued up for their turn in the tumbler; and containers of polished rocks abound. Gottschall has enough stock to open a rock store.

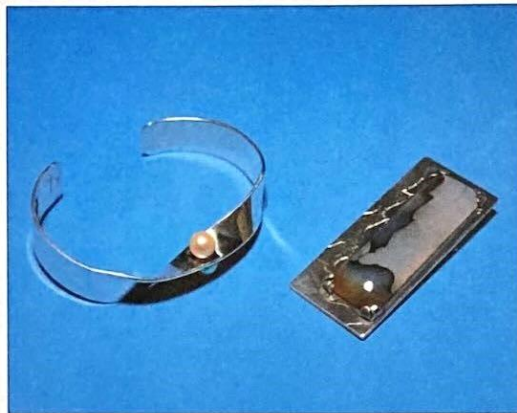
Even with his many trips to search for rocks, however, Gottschall still purchases samples to add to his collection of materials. "I buy the odd piece because it is so attractive, but mostly I want rocks I can use," says Gottschall. "When you are hunting rocks you have



to be selective, because not all pebbles will polish." In his basement work area, Gottschall displays some of the extraordinary pieces he has purchased or collected, including unusual pieces of limb-cast agate that originally formed inside hollow trees, glistening quartz formations, and petrified wood. Specialty items such as these can be used either as paper weights or simply as conversation pieces.

"There are a few fundamentals in life: artistry, creativity, and discipline," says Gottschall. "I think constantly of what I can do better, and when you work creatively you are looking for things that haven't been done before. I am not sure I am an artist who creates things from my mind. I create things I can do on a repetitive basis, but hopefully with some originality. I take the stone and reveal what is inside and that is part of the discovery. I suppose my work is close to Inuit stone art. Sometimes I don't do much with a naturally

**THE LURE OF LAPIDARY: BILL GOTTSCHALL**



**ABOVE TOP** A geode of Montana agate from Big Horn Canyon (left), a Dry Head agate nodule (centre), and a Turitella agate from Wamsutter, Wyoming. Photo by Available Light, Regina.  
**ABOVE BOTTOM** Sterling silver bracelet with two pearls (1991) and sterling silver pin with Montana agate stone (1991), by Bill Gottschall. Photo by Available Light, Regina.

beautiful piece. For instance, I wouldn't do much with a piece of petrified wood to change it."

Gottschall never tires of slicing rocks to discover the wonders inside. The material Gottschall likes best is agate, which is from the quartz family and is classified as a semiprecious stone. Each type of agate has a distinctive interior pattern. Dendritic agate, for example, which is the most commonly available form of agate, is distinguished by an interior complex of dendrites, black snowflake-like deposits that provide enigmatic images for viewers to interpret. It takes approximately two and a half hours of cutting, grinding, sanding, and buffing to finish each slice. The finished slices are used for personal items such as pendants and belt buckles or for larger household pieces such as wind chimes and sun catchers.

In addition to honing his lapidary skills through years of repetition and experimentation, Gottschall has also learned a great deal about the technical aspects of his craft by comparing notes with other lapidaries and now willingly shares his knowledge by talking with interested people at craft shows and by teaching classes in slice

work, which is his specialty. "Very few people are self-sufficient. They say I am self-taught," says Gottschall, "but people have shared generously with me, and now I pass along some of the techniques. Methods are passed from hobbyist to hobbyist. There are books to follow, but they are difficult sometimes to apply, so you experiment. The next piece is always the best piece—that is the hope."

The Gottschalls attended their first craft show in Yorkton in 1973, and after a twelve hour day in their booth they had total sales of only \$173. But it was a start, and the couple have since shown and sold Bill's work at major craft shows across Saskatchewan. The work currently includes silver jewellery, musical wind chimes made of metal and rock, suncatchers with rocks, a wide variety of jewellery settings with polished stones, and even polished stones, sometimes called "rubbing stones" or "fidget rocks," that are prized simply for their smooth, inviting surfaces and beautiful colours.

In addition to setting his sterling silver jewellery with gem stones, Gottschall stamps pieces with his registered trade mark and a pattern. Gottschall produces custom metal stamps by grinding punches down, and then, using several different points to complete a design, he pounds each pattern in by hand. The imprints mainly feature images from nature, including trees, leaves, wheat, and mushrooms. "I work in two mediums, metal and stone, and I sometimes feel I could go further by narrowing the direction," admits Gottschall. "But at the same time it is so interesting to explore the different directions."

"Unfortunately, rocks polish and grind much more quickly than they can be marketed. That's why we attend 10 to 12 markets a year trying to get the rocks into the hands of people who admire them," explains Gottschall. "People are curious about the materials and the process, and having worked in the field for many years, I like to share what I have learned with them. People come to craft shows to be entertained, to be educated, and to buy. I think people buy two things, the product and the background behind the product. You commit yourself to the market and working with people. You talk to them because you are interested and they are interested, but you are not compelling them to buy. It is always a compliment when people do buy your product, an affirmation, but I do this because I elect to do this, not because I *have* to do it for a living."

Although Gottschall continues to enjoy cutting and polishing precious stones, he says that he does foresee some changes in his work in the future. "In 1995," says Gottschall, "I see fewer markets and I will do finer articles. I want to upgrade the collection of extraordinary minerals. At my age, I can't carry on with the heavy product, so I have to lighten up." As Gottschall speaks, ninety pounds of rocks are tumbling in his basement shop. Sometimes the rubber-lined tumblers run full time for three months, soundlessly turning and turning the rocks to take off their rough edges.

In recent years, various concerns have emerged over the propriety of scavenging materials, making life more difficult for craftspeople like Gottschall. "What was regarded as public domain is now almost under lock and key in the States," observes Gottschall. "They do not favour mineral collectors going on public land to gather materials, but at the same time there is rising interest in natural substances like rocks which have formed an essential part of man's being since the very beginning. There are still wonderful places to gather rocks, and for people who like the outdoors, this hobby meets that need. It is delightful to be out there in the quiet with all that beauty surrounding you. Sometimes it is just Gwen and I hunting for material, but it is also nice to go out with a group of people interested in hunting materials. I am not built to be a hermit." □

Jean Fahlman is a freelance writer with a strong interest in craft and a past contributor to *The Craft Factor*. She lives in Griffin, Saskatchewan.

**MADE FOR A CAUSE**



Curated by SANDRA FLOOD

Organized and circulated by the SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL



# INTRODUCTION

It is our pleasure to introduce the Saskatchewan Craft Council (SCC) touring exhibition, "Made For a Cause." The theme for this exhibition was developed by the SCC's Exhibitions Committee from discussions dating back to 1991. Charley Ferrero, a member of the Exhibitions Committee at the time, recalls that the original intention of the exhibition was to "stimulate the craftspeople, getting them to reach beyond their normal frame of work, pushing them to focus on the political, sociological, and/or ecological realm."

The curator who selected the works for "Made for a Cause" is Sandra Flood, who is currently doing doctoral research into Canadian craft history and museum practice. This fall, Ms. Flood was awarded a doctoral scholarship from the Department of Art Gallery and Museum Studies at the University of Manchester, England.

We would like to thank Ms. Flood for her expertise and advice in helping to create "Made for a Cause." Curated exhibitions of contemporary crafts not only help audiences to see connections among the pieces on display but also enable them to make connections between contemporary and historical objects, and Ms. Flood has done a commendable piece of work in both respects.

We would also like to thank the various galleries who are hosting "Made for a Cause" in communities across Saskatchewan. Their participation will enable the Saskatchewan Craft Council to provide the widest possible exposure for the visually exciting and conceptually provocative work in "Made for a Cause" and thus to fulfil the Council's mandate to educate the general public about craft.

Of course, the exhibition would not have been possible without the artists themselves, and we thank them for allowing us to borrow and tour their work.

As well, we would like to thank our member volunteers, particularly the Exhibitions and Gallery Committees, without whom the exhibition would, again, not have been possible.

Finally, the Saskatchewan Craft Council gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Saskatchewan Arts Board and the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture, and Recreation.

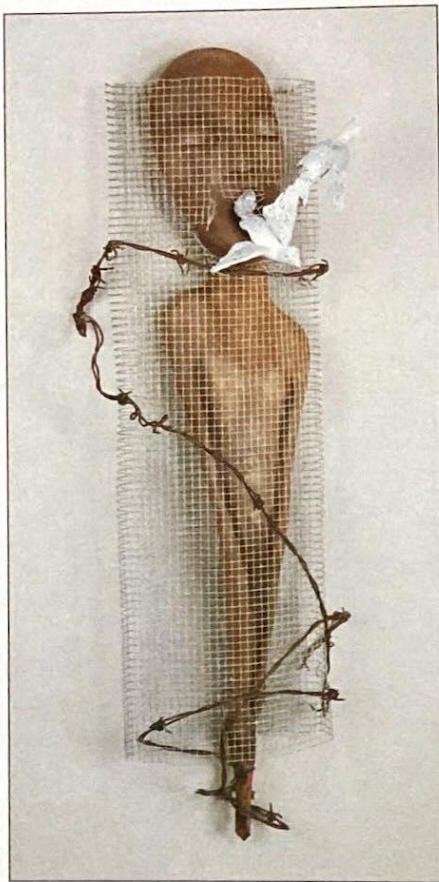
—Don Kondra, Exhibitions Chairperson,  
and Leslie Potter, Gallery/Exhibitions Coordinator

# MADE FOR A CAUSE

The Saskatchewan Craft Council Exhibition Committee's intent in proposing an exhibition called "Made for a Cause" was to encourage craftspeople to explore and express specific political, social, moral, or other concerns in their work. It may be thought a sign of late-twentieth-century angst that the cause is seen as a "cause for concern" rather than a "cause for celebration," and that for some of the exhibitors this is an integral source of much of their work. There is, however, a long history of handcrafted objects being made for a cause, objects which carry, implicitly or explicitly, social, political, or religious messages and commentaries.

To say blithely that there is a long history of handcrafted objects made for a cause is to state both the obvious and the obscure. Crafts as part of the "decorative arts" have on the whole been dismissed as merely functional and decorative. It is the "fine arts" which have been touted as the conceptual arts, the carriers of ideas. In fact, every object, whether painting or pot, is embedded in a web of concepts and conventions which determines for what it is used, where, how, and by whom. Primarily, but not necessarily only, through its decoration an object may carry another level of ideas. A garland of flowers, a pattern of oak leaves, or a king with crown and sceptre decorating a plate has nothing to do with the plate's function as a vessel to contain food, and although the exhortation "FEAR GOD, FAST AND PRAY" inscribed across a platter may bear some relationship to the platter's function, it resonates far beyond.

Some experts argue that in traditional cultures decoration on everyday objects was almost never without meaning.<sup>1</sup> Even today in traditional Australian Aboriginal creativity, "idle doodling, or the making of meaningless marks, is alien."<sup>2</sup> However, when we look at work from outside our immediate time and culture, the significance of much decoration, abstract or figurative, is partly or wholly lost to us. The loss of meaning and context in the decorative arts—those objects with roots in the European tradition—has been exacerbated by a history written in terms of formalist description and pseudo-scientific categorisation, weighted in favour of works attributed to a named (and acclaimed) artist or manufactory, and aimed at the limited interests of collectors. The objects and their



By SANDRA FLOOD

decoration have become detached from the social, economic, and political histories of their times.

Although the works in "Made for a Cause" arise from personal experience and through personal interpretation, the causes are, whether we agree with them or not, part of a contemporary public pool of ideas, aspects of which would be immediately recognisable to most people. Just as we can only understand contemporary works by reading them through the filter of current events, so the key to recognising historical works made for a cause lies in a questioning eye and research beyond the boundaries of craft per se. Placed in their original context, the pottery platters inscribed "FEAR GOD, FAST AND PRAY" and "BE NOT HY [sic] MINDED BUT FEAR GOD," made in or around London, England, between 1630 and 1670, become vibrant witness to an era of religious ferment when the Bible was translated into the common tongue, when the hegemony of the Catholic Church was ended and religious power moved from state, church, and priest to the household whether Royalist or Parliamentarian, and when the absolute supremacy of the king was finally broken by however limited a democracy expressed through a parliament—a situation found at that time in only one other country in Europe, the Dutch Republic. The majolica plates decorated with oak leaves or with a king also move from pure ornamentation to a more political stance when placed in their historical context. After the English Civil War, the beheading of Charles I and the redistribution of power and wealth during the Commonwealth, the decision to recall a Stuart king, Charles II, however restricted his powers, would have been a bitter political and religious reversal for many. Thus the gaily coloured majolica coronation dishes and cups depicting Charles II

would not have enjoyed the general sentimental popularity of mass-produced memorabilia for the coronation of Elizabeth II but instead would have indicated a serious political and ideological allegiance, a significant statement not to be seen adorning every buffet. The oak leaf patterned platters may have been a more discreet way of signalling royalist allegiance.

The makers of historical objects made for a cause ranged from professionals making for the market or by commission



TOP LEFT Cat. 25:  
*Water Child* (1994),  
by Monika Wildemann.  
BOTTOM RIGHT Cat. 7:  
*Clear-Cutting the  
Ocean* (1994), by  
Pat Doig.  
OPPOSITE Cat. 21:  
*Free at Last* (1994),  
by Anita Rocamora.

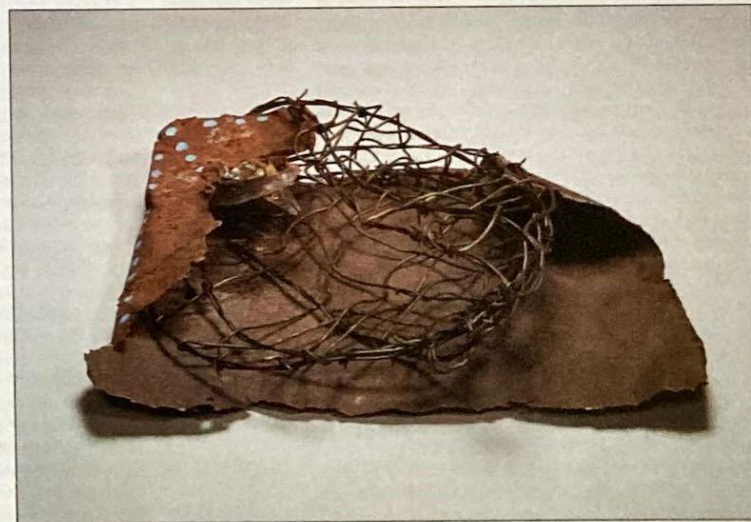
to amateurs making for the domestic economy, as a leisure activity, or specifically for a political or social cause. Professionals usually worked as members of a guild or religious community, in small-scale manufactories, including the early industrial manufactories where workers contributed to only part of the process yet were still involved in a highly-skilled handcraft. The work of professional craftspeople was controlled either by wealthy and powerful patrons—church, nobility, business conglomerates—who dictated subject and focus or by the marginally more populist demands of the marketplace. At both levels, professional work was firmly integrated into and understood by the society of the time. Amateur craftspeople included the nobility, the bourgeoisie, housewives, servants, and children. Amateur work also reflected the concerns of the times but allowed for a more personal selection from current motifs.

In contrast to historical works, contemporary crafts are the personal expression of self-employed, independent craftspeople working in a society and at a time when individual freedom of expression can apparently be taken to extraordinary lengths. In working independently, contemporary craftspeople mainly produce objects on a speculative basis for less identifiable buyers in a pluralistic society, competing against a barrage of images, some of which, such as photographs, cartoons, and advertisements, are seen as more appropriate

and direct ways of addressing social concerns. As a result, contemporary craft objects are often enigmatic, poetic projections of a concern, as in Lee Brady's *Balance of Eros and Speaking in Tongues*, which discuss society's polarisation of the male and the female.

In both historical and contemporary work, the expression of a cause appears in three forms. First, the cause may be embedded in the material itself or in the purpose for which the object was made. Second, the work may be produced because of an awareness or deeply felt response to an event, taking the form of a protest or commentary. Third, the work may carry a direct message, often using written words as an integral part of the object. Patron, purchaser, audience, and the dynamics of the times give each form variation.

The first form of expression is the most difficult to discern because the work may also appear to be about something other than its hidden message. Consider the richly-embroidered, bejewelled silk garments and accoutrements of church, royalty, and nobility in Europe between the fourth and twelfth centuries. The figure in the silk and the embroidery may indicate political or family allegiance or present biblical scenes, but the silk itself, before the Latin West had established its own silk-weaving workshops, was an imperial monopoly of the Byzantium emperors. Access to the luxurious and much-coveted silk could be denied, or granted in reward for military or naval support against aggressors. In this way, Byzantium created beneficial alliances with, at various times, the Italians, Bulgars, Russians, and German emperors. It is difficult to imagine a craft material, a textile, having the contemporary status of Middle East oil wells. In "Made for a Cause," the material carries the message in Monika Wildemann's decision to use only natural and recycled materials in her masks as well as in Michael Hosaluk's conversion of waste wood into objects of use and beauty, with the incorporation of cracks and other deformities of the wood into the design. Conservation and recycling of resources are part of a lively anxiety about



the environment, a cause unique to the twentieth century, expressed from various standpoints in at least ten works in the exhibition.

Other objects made for a specific cause contain in their form or decoration no indication of that cause. Consider the huge number of knitted garments, wool blankets, and pieced quilts made by Prairie women to be donated to or to raise money for various causes, particularly the Red Cross during both world wars. Two examples in the Western Development Museum collection are both "name quilts," pieced quilts on which for a small fee people could have their name or signature embroidered. Both quilts were then raffled: the first in 1916 raised over \$600 for the Red Cross war effort, while the second in 1925 raised funds "used to buy necessities in the district and to help pay the Minister's salary." In "Made for a Cause," Sandy Dumba's *An Evolving Dialogue and Communal Abode* are designed as urns to hold cremation ashes; unlike Etruscan and Classical Greek urns, however, Dumba's vessels have no decoration which indicates their use; the cause for which they have been made, that of overpopulation and responsible land use, is also unvoiced.

The second form of expression, that of a commentary or protest, seems to me to be the realm of the personal, private in both the tenor of response and the expectation of a limited audience. In historical works, the category of commentary or protest largely excludes work done by professionals on commission or for the market place, but includes many objects from the rich tradition of skilled amateur work. Rozsika Parker, arguing that a maker's choice of motifs is not casual fancy or fashion but driven by wider social concerns and agendas, notes that the selection of Biblical scenes for the pictorial embroidery, samplers, and stumpwork caskets popular with amateur craftswomen in seventeenth-century England reflects "the era's embroilment with issues of sex roles and power."<sup>3</sup> In the imagery of the period, there was a heavy emphasis on Biblical heroines. Esther, because she pleaded with her husband the Persian king on behalf of her Jewish compatriots became a symbol for persecuted minorities including the Royalists against the Commonwealth, the Puritans against James II, and the Jacobites against William and Mary and the Hanoverians. The representations of other Biblical heroines told of combat with men, triumphing over evil with men, and suffering under men. Parker suggests that, in selecting motifs, amateur embroiderers ignored heroines who tempted or destroyed men and more frequently depicted women who had power in marriage, such as Sarah or Esther.



ABOVE Cat. 2: "Fred Frog" series which includes *Garbage Ark* (1976), to the nuclear arsenal and international politics attacked in a series of teapots and sculptures by Richard Notkin, to feminist consciousness symbolically depicted in Judy Chicago's controversial collaborative work, *The Dinner Party*, which used ceramics and embroidery in erotic place settings designed to celebrate historical heroines.

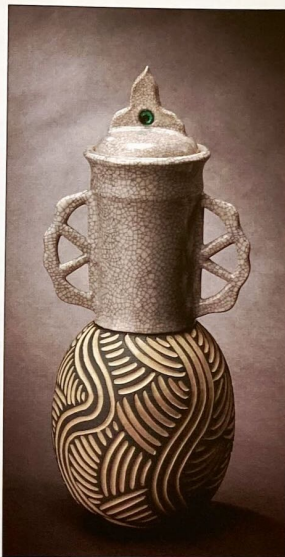
Much of the work in "Made for a Cause" likewise uses personal comment and poetic allusion. Charley Farrero's female torso, *American Dream*, ribbed and hung with car chrome and lights, opens a Pandora's box of gender roles, perception, and choice; Susan Andrews Grace's *Crucified Bags*, with its tipped garbage bin including a swaddled baby, leaves the moral stance of the artist and the viewer open. Together, the six works on gender-related issues in "Made for a Cause" indicate that the seventeenth century's embroilment with sex roles and power boils on unresolved in the twentieth century.

Kaia Sanelma Harris's tapestry *Bringing in the New World Order*, provoked by the 1991 Gulf War, appears to be one in a long tradition of tapestries depicting war, but unlike historical works, Harris's tapestry was not commissioned by a powerful patron (and the artist does not expect it to find a buyer), it does not convey the viewpoint

of the victor but that of a horrified and powerless onlooker, and it does not portray a hero. Thus, it too belongs in the category of comment and not in the third category, that of works carrying a direct message, sometimes with words as an integral part of the object, to which the historical tapestries belong.

The recording of contemporary events is not a neutral exercise, as the media presentation of the 1991 Gulf War (the last major involvement of a group of super powers) showed. And just as presentation of the Gulf War was carefully tailored by the dominant and "victorious" superpower to justify, sanitize, and conceal, so historical representations of events have their own built-in agenda emphasizing the prowess of the victors who are commissioning the works and the legality of their actions. The embroidery known as the *Bayeux Tapestry* made around 1070 depicts the events between the accession of Edward the Confessor to the English throne and the defeat of Harold at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, which justified the right of a Norman, William the Conqueror, to the English throne. Tapestry from the thirteenth century on was "a potent vehicle of propaganda, both because it was expensive and therefore impressive, and because of the opportunity it provided for political display in an age in which the pictorial image was rare."<sup>4</sup> Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, a patron of the Tournai tapestry workshop, on a visit to Paris in 1461 had hung on the facade of the Hotel d'Arrois where he stayed two tapestries, *The History of Gideon* (a patron saint of a chivalric order which he patronised) and *Alexander the Great*. It was recorded that Parisians queued night and day to view them. Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, owned a tapestry series commemorating great military campaigns of his reign as well as a set of twelve tapestries depicting crusades against the Sultan Khair-ed-Din Barbarossa, *The Conquest of Tunis*, woven between 1548-1553. The French Gobelin's Manufactory production of work exclusively for Louis XIV included a set of fourteen *L'Histoire du Roi*, including *The Entry of Louis XIV into Dunkirk* on its capture from the English in 1662.

Somewhat less costly and perhaps more bourgeois were the figured linen damasks depicting events such as battle victories and coronations produced in and around the Netherlands between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. An Irish example in the form of a very large table cloth commemorating the coronation of George II in 1727 features designs based on popular woodcut prints which had been published in a booklet explaining the order of the ceremony and the significance of the ritual. By the eighteenth century, the French were producing



ABOVE Cat. 8: *Communal Abode* (1994), by Sandy Dumba.

white pottery figures, "intended for the cottage rather than the mansion,"<sup>5</sup> many were imported to Canada. They included representations of the Duke of Wellington, John Wesley, William Wilberforce (whose efforts helped to make slavery illegal in British territories long before it became an issue in the American Civil War), Queen Victoria, Princess Louise at her marriage to the Marquis of Lorne, and, in the rather more classy Parian ware, Sir John A. MacDonal and wife Jane MacKenzie. These figures, however, were perhaps not so controversial as the small figures made around 1724 of the popularly-acclaimed English divane, Dr. Henry Sacheverell, whose politically-biased sermons earned him first suspension from preaching and finally impeachment by the government.

The messages conveyed by historical craft were not only visual but could also be carried, or reinforced, by words. From about 1830 to 1860, numerous small plates decorated with biblical texts and sayings of the great, using single colour print and with hand-printed dashes of colour, were made for the use and instruction of children. These are paralleled by the improving verses on samplers embroidered by young girls at home and school during the nineteenth century. Less frequently than in the twentieth century when the quilt has become a major

printed linen *toile* (yardage) decorated with vignettes such as *America Doing Homage to France*, which shows galleons amid islands of wonderfully exotic natives and flora, and *American Independence of 1776*, which depicts cherubs holding a map of the North American continent and angels blowing their trumpets while George Washington, accompanied by a reclining lady wearing a plumed crown, stands in a chariot drawn by spotted courtes and scrolls around. "Where Liberty Dwells There is My Country."

Market-driven historical craft for a cause such as the above fabrics reflected popular opinion and concerns and brought them into the domestic milieu. From the fifteenth century, increasingly at all levels of the market and through developing industrial techniques, tankards, bowls, teapots, jugs, chimney ornaments, and other domestic ware reflected the concerns of their times.

Typical are a range of wares, inspired by the Battle of Portobello, which include a glazed redware mug with spigged decoration in white of ships, naval figures, and lettering "Prince of Spain/Humbled/By/Admiral/Vernon," a moulded mug inscribed "The British Glory Revisited/Admiral Vernon/He took Portobello with six ships only Nov. 22: 1739," and a teapot in the form of a fully-rigged ship. From the 1840s to the 1900s, the Staffordshire potteries produced hundreds of brightly-enamelled,



ABOVE Cat 1: *The Thirst* (1994), by Madeleine Arkel.  
BELOW Cat 10: *American Dream* (1994), by Charley Farrow.

ground for social commentary do historical quilts reflect current concerns, but a cotton bedspread made about 1830 is embroidered, quilted, and applied with country mansions, farm activities, and the motto "THE BANNERS OF ENGLAND, SUCCESS TO THE FLEECE, THE PLOUGH AND THE PAIL, MAY TAXES GROW LESS AND TENANTS NEAR [sic] FAIL." Paralleling similar designs and sentiments on mass-produced pottery, the bedspread relates to a period of fluctuating grain prices, money crises, and Free Trade debate when farm labourers frequently starved and the landowners who comprised the bulk of the British parliament complained that they bore the tax burden of the country. A twentieth-century example of production craft made for a cause is the porcelain produced by the Russian State Porcelain Factory in the early 1920s. Ironically, although the porcelain featured Leninist motifs and slogans and other Soviet propaganda directed at the proletariat, only affluent Russians could afford to buy it.

Only three works in "Made for a Cause" use words to carry or reinforce the visual message. The words have moved to the title labels which in many cases become an essential key to the message. Although six of the exhibiting potters obtain a major part of their income from production ware, there are no plates, mugs, or jugs carrying their crusading or improving messages to the dinner table. The works in the exhibition are all *objets d'art*.

In contrast to the historical precedents, the works in "Made for a Cause" make no direct reference to political figures or to government or nationalist agendas. One could argue, however, that the making of handcrafted objects in the late twentieth century is, in itself, making for a cause, i.e., the cause of the individual designer/ maker's small-scale production of unique or limited-series objects as opposed to the anonymous, mass-produced industrial object where the designer is separated from the maker and both are isolated from the consumer. The Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth century, for example, steadfastly affirmed the dignity of handwork in the face of the Industrial

Revolution, arguing that good design and beautiful objects would raise the moral tone of society and, in philanthropic rural craft projects, the moral tone of the workers: "Beauty always has a refining influence and the power of producing it markedly increases the self-respect of the maker," said Barbara Russell, writing of the Langdale Linen industry in the late nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

In this brief essay, I have barely scraped the surface of a fascinating and powerful craft history that extends far beyond the European tradition and the limited period I have discussed, covering all media, levels of technical achievement, and intricacy of decoration. It is a history which, because it has not attracted notice, leaves craft open to limitation and misconception. First, a detailed examination of craft history shows

that the idea that craft is merely utilitarian and decorative, that it is not an active bearer of social, religious, moral, or political commentary and propaganda paralleling that of the fine arts, is completely untenable. Indeed, craft often deals with issues not dealt with by the elite arts. Second, an examination of craft history also shows that the involvement of craft in issues of concern is not novel. Although the specific concerns of contemporary craftspeople may be different than the concerns of their historical counterparts, the twenty Saskatchewan craftspeople in "Made for a Cause" nonetheless continue an ancient tradition of producing work that speaks to the concerns of its time. □



MADE FOR A CAUSE  
8

## LIST OF WORKS

All dimensions are in centimetres: height precedes width precedes depth.

### MADELEINE ARKELL

2344 MacKay St., Regina, SK S4N 2T1  
(306) 522-9949 / 525-8639

1. *The Thirst*, 1994 three white earthenware chalices; underglaze colour, glaze pencil, clear glaze; handbuilt from stencils; fired to cone 4; walnut shelf 34.5x101.5x 18.5

### LEE BRADY

Box 9136, Saskatoon, SK S7K 7E8  
(306) 382-0199

2. *Speaking in Tongues*, 1994 fused, sand-carved, painted, and metal-leafed glass; carved and metal-leafed clay; carved aluminum 142.44x44
3. *Balance of Eros*, 1994 sand-carved, metal-leafed, and painted glass; carved aluminum 110x41x5

### ANNEMARIE BUCHMANN-GERBER

47 Lindsay Dr., Saskatoon, SK S7H 3E2  
(306) 373-2540

4. *Women and Mares—The Estrogen Connection #4*, 1994 linen canvas, silk thread, acrylic paint, newspaper, fabric; painted, collaged, stitched 179x117

### HELEN COOKE

604-717 Victoria Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7N 2T5  
(306) 244-2781

5. *The Legacy*, 1994 carved and sprigged clay slabs; low-fired china enamels; fired to cone 1 61x42

### MARIGOLD CRIBB

RR #5, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3J8  
(306) 931-8071

6. *Revel in the Currents*, 1994 various papers, cardboard, canvas, glue, acrylic and cream paint; collage, paper engineering 32.4x91.5x61 (opened)

### PAT DOIG

Box 264, Dundurn, SK S0K 1K0  
(306) 665-1134

7. *Clear-Cutting the Ocean*, 1994 recycled metals 13x46x40

### SANDY DUMBA

223 Rogers Rd., Regina, SK S4S 7C5  
(306) 586-2416

8. *Communal Abode*, 1994 burial urn; porcelain, metallic glaze; handbuilt and thrown; cone 6 oxidation 43.5x27x15

### SANDY DUMBA (CONT.)

9. *An Enveloping Diggle*, 1994 burial urn; porcelain, green slip, ink, crackle glaze, glass; handbuilt and thrown; cone 6 oxidation 37x18x15

### CHARLEY FARROW

Box 145, Meacham, SK S0K 2V0  
(306) 676-2221

10. *American Dream*, 1994 stoneware, found objects, automobile paint 48x44x18
11. *Is That All There Is?*, 1992 stoneware, plastic, ground 50.5x31x31

### BARBARA GORETZKY

Box 670, Duck Lake, SK S0K 1J0  
(306) 467-2268

12. *Sea Garden*, 1994 clay, raku glazes, mason stains; slab built, raku fired 34.5x75x0.5

### SUSAN ANDREW'S GRACE

419 10th St. E., Saskatoon, SK S7N 0E1  
(306) 665-1797

13. *Crucified Bags: Girls Just Want to Have Fun*, 1994 mixed media 40x1024x47

### KAIJA SANNELMA HARRIS

814 14th St. E., Saskatoon, SK S7N 0P8  
(306) 652-5337

14. *Bringing in the New World Order*, 1991 cotton, wool, silk; tapestry with inlay design 154x171

### MICHAEL HOSALUK

RR #2, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3J5  
(306) 382-2380

15. *Family Wreath*, 1993 ash, maple, mixed media; turned, cut, carved, and painted; decorated by the Hosaluk family 10x34x36

16. *Bird Bowl*, 1994 turned, cut, carved, burned, and painted wood 15x18x18

### SANDRA LEDINGHAM

348 10th St. E., Prince Albert, SK S6V 0Z2  
(306) 763-7989

17. *There's a Bright Dawn*, 1994 low-fired earthenware, wood, gold leaf, paint, found objects; handbuilt, painted, shell constructed by Michael Montgomery 27.5x132x42.5

### CECILE MILLER

2028 1st Ave. E., Prince Albert, SK S6V 2B7  
(306) 922-6282

18. *Master of Perception*, 1994 earthenware, acrylics, gold leaf, sealant, flowers; handbuilt and wheel-thrown forms 47x20.5x4.5

### SUSAN ROBERTSON

Box 400, Outlook, SK S0K 2N0  
(306) 867-8010

19. *Food, Clothing, and Shelter: The Basic Necessities of Life*, 1994, three non-functional cookie jars entitled "Le Bistro," "5th Avenue," and "The Ritz"; porcelain, polychromatic oil paint, acrylic sealer; handbuilt; cone 6 33x19x21.5 (each)

### ANITA ROCAMORA

Box 128, Meacham, SK S0K 2W0  
(306) 376-2015

20. *Made in China*, 1994 earthenware, wire, wire mesh, mixed media, acrylics 25.4x25.5x8.5

21. *Free at Last*, 1994 earthenware, wire, wire mesh, acrylics 73.5x30.5x14

### JAMIE RUSSELL

Box 157, Vancouver, SK S0L 3J0  
(306) 934-0082

22. *Howling at the Demi Lune*, 1993 Saskatchewan birch, glass 71.1x40.6x91.4

### SHIRLEY SPIDLA

220 Isabella St. E., Saskatoon, SK S7J 0B3  
(306) 242-0190

23. *From the White Meadow*, 1994 wool, cotton, cotton, linen, and acrylic on cotton warp; tapestry 100x105

### BOB WHITTAKER

1922 Wiggins Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7J 1V3  
(306) 343-7976

24. *Shift's End*, 1994 glass, lead, stained glass with zinc and lead overlay 84x84x0.5

### MONIKA WILDEMANN

Box 149, Meacham, SK S0K 2V0  
(306) 664-6076

25. *Water Child*, 1994 recycled handmade paper, earth pigments, medicinal plants native to Saskatchewan, glass beads, sea shells 44x33x12

## ITINERARY

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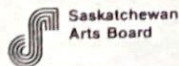
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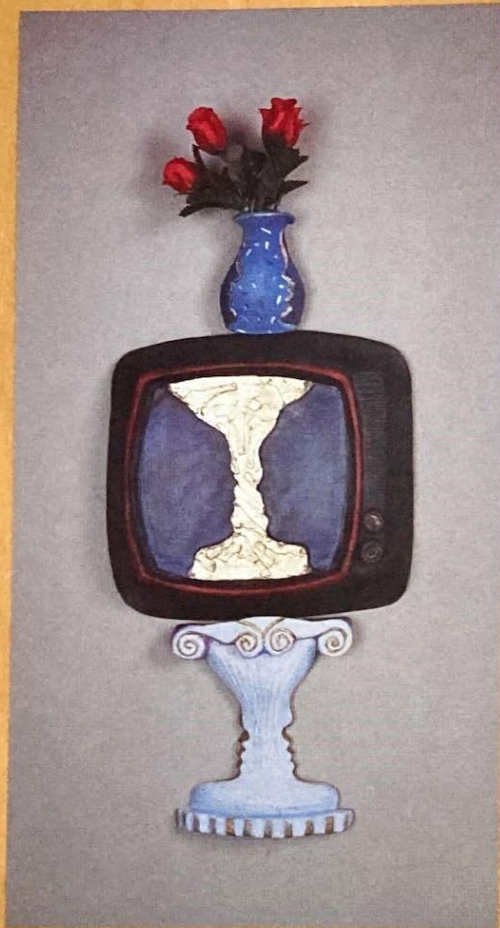
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# Craft, Commerce, & Community

By WILLIAM KORELUIK

**J**ohn Floch likes to credit his becoming a full-time craftsman to a mid-life crisis gone right. In the days when his distinctive raku pottery was initially gaining acceptance, being shown in craft fairs and galleries across Canada, Floch had to be content to make a living by working as the carpenter at Duck Mountain Provincial Park. Now, about a year after the plan to establish his own craft business was hatched, and after his first successful summer season—which has led him to expect healthy pre-Christmas sales this fall—Floch is beaming ear to ear.

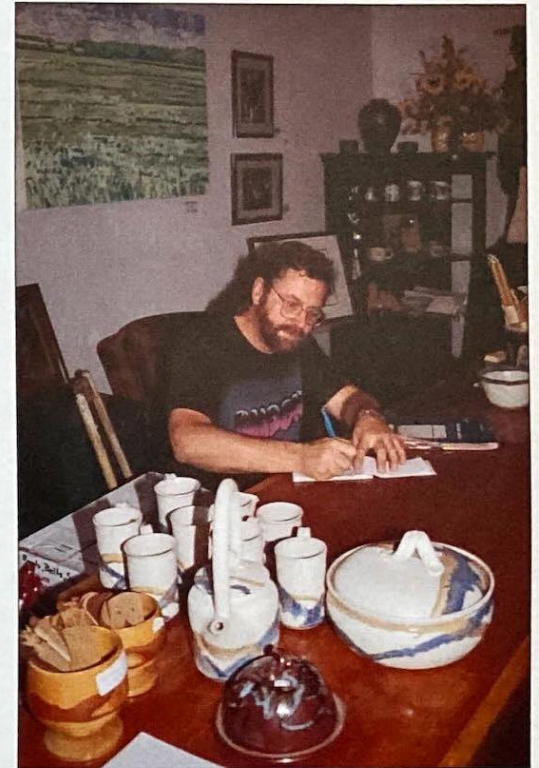
"When I signed the lease," says Floch, "it was with a clear belief in being able to pull it together. I've been around the park for so long now, I understand the rhythms of it, and I can rationally look at Imadgin as a business venture, not only as a pleasant dream."

Imadgin Art and Craft is Floch's creative solution to the problem of having to juggle his regular job as a carpenter with his vocation as a potter. An employee of Duck Mountain Provincial Park for the past seventeen years, Floch has been responsible for creating a number of prominent park structures and buildings, including the entry signs and stone flower beds. A craftsman for the past ten years, Floch first learned to make pots by taking a community college course and has been "serious" for about six years, concentrating on low-fire raku pottery.

Built on leased property at Madge Lake in the centre of Duck Mountain Provincial Park, Imadgin is a 24-foot wide octagonal structure that Floch designed and built with the help of family and friends and the support of the local community. In particular, Floch says that his wife Susan "has been an integral part of what's taking place here." Not only did Susan support her husband's plans from the start but she also now assists with the paperwork and "endless details" associated with running a retail craft business. "This is a way for us . . . to spend time together," says Floch, "which, in effect, re-confirms the reasons we are together. Without Susan, I could not have done this."

Attending the SIAST ceramics program in Prince Albert last year was also a significant factor in Floch's decision to establish a craft business. Floch says that he learned much not only from the business areas of the program, which provided insight into contracts, invoices, bills of lading, and so on, but also from the people he met there. "Rich and Cecile Miller, who had a craft shop in Waskesiu, were invaluable with my smooth entry into serious business," says Floch. In fact, the Millers not only shared invaluable accounting and bookkeeping tips with the new shop owner but also provided the shop itself with some second-hand fixtures.

In his new shop, Floch plans to provide both park visitors and local residents with a broad selection of high-quality art and craft. "Even with the inexpensive pieces, there is a quality we intend on maintaining. Having a wide range of work is an important feature. I'm really pleased with the amount of traffic we had this summer," says Floch, referring to the second guest book now being filled with names. "We're in a highly-visible spot and have benefited from the natural flow of visitors to the park. Sales have easily lived up to our hopes. The response makes us feel proud. A lot of people are



**John Floch:**

"When I signed the lease, it was with a clear belief in being able to pull it together. I've been around the park for so long now, I understand the rhythms of it, and I can rationally look at Imadgin as a business venture, not only as a pleasant dream." Photo by W. Koreluik.

pleasantly surprised this is not a tacky souvenir shop."

In coining the name "Imadgin," Floch says that he intended to combine the idea of human imagination with a clear sense of place (the shop is at Madge Lake). "As a carpenter," says Floch, "I've driven by this corner for 15 years, and often thought a place such as this would work here. The sense of place has always been here and Imadgin is melding into the environment we're a part of."

It is also more than coincidence that the name of the shop echoes the title of a song by the late John Lennon, a man whose music Floch greatly respects.



**John Floch:**

"People comment on the strength of feeling here. The quality of the work creates that feeling, along with the sense of space. It is a pleasant feeling. I don't want a static sense in here; I want there to always be changes, with new work always coming in." Photo by W. Koreluik.

With his contacts in the craft community, Floch has had no problems obtaining work to sell, though sometimes chance has also played a role in bringing seller and maker together. Take the case of Janet Strauss, a jeweller who saw Floch's sign in the course of driving to the local ice-cream stand and decided to drop in. "She showed me her jewellery," says Floch, "and we've had a wonderful relationship since then."

Currently dealing with 42 craftspeople and artists, Floch observes that being on the Manitoba border means that a number of Manitoba craftspeople are closer to Imadgin than are many Saskatchewan people, though he emphasizes that he is pleased to be able to carry work from both provinces. "People comment on the strength of feeling here," says Floch with pride. "The quality of the work creates that feeling, along with the sense of space. It is a pleasant feeling. I don't want a static sense in here; I want there to always be changes, with new work always coming in. We get craftspeople from Manitoba who get to see Saskatchewan crafts, and Saskatchewan people who don't expect to see work from Manitoba."

Imadgin currently includes oil paintings by Darrell Bell of Saskatoon, watercolours by a number of artists including Janet Strauss of Benito, Manitoba, and a strong selection of clay ranging from functional work by Chris Fraser and Anne McLellan of Regina to raku by Floch himself. In all, nine potters sell their work in the shop.

Imadgin also carries work by about five jewellers, including Winston Quan of Saskatoon, wooden fret work, metal weather vanes, weavings by Marg Rudy, and photographs.

In addition to being a venue for established craftspeople, Imadgin is also open to those who have not yet begun to retail their pieces but are ready to get their feet wet. Floch tells of the woman who visited Imadgin and told him all about her son's "stuff on birch bark." Any doubts Floch may have had concerning the mother's objectivity about her son's work vanished immediately when he saw it for himself. "They are really remarkable things," says Floch enthusiastically. "I've never seen anything like it. He was doing

purely original and interesting stuff. There was an immediate response to his work and the pieces sold the next day."

Floch's commitment to maintaining "Craft Council" standards, however, means that "most of the people we deal with are professionals. Craft is what they do for a living." Floch sees himself as providing an important service to full-time craftspeople, who often view the marketing process as a distraction from their creative work and are thankful to find someone who is willing to sell their work for them. "I've done a lot of craft shows where interacting with people is all important," says Floch. "This is like a full-time craft show, instead of merely being out for a weekend."

With his practical experience as a craft marketer and exhibitor, Floch anticipates that he will be able to avoid some of the tensions that typically arise between craftspeople and other retailers they deal with. "Our intent," he says, "is always to treat people with the respect one expects in a business relationship." In addition, Floch says that he is very concerned about displaying each work appropriately, emphasizing that he wants "the work to be seen clearly for what it is, as opposed to being a mumbo-jumbo of overlapping clutter."

Floch sees Imadgin both as a way to make a living and as a way to build a sense of community. "The physical space of the shop becomes a crossroads allowing us to interact with all kinds of people we might not have otherwise met," says Floch. Although he notes that he has sometimes "felt a certain amount of isolation" living away from the larger centres, Floch has found that, now that the shop has opened, craftspeople he never realized were in the area where he lives have started coming out of the woodwork.

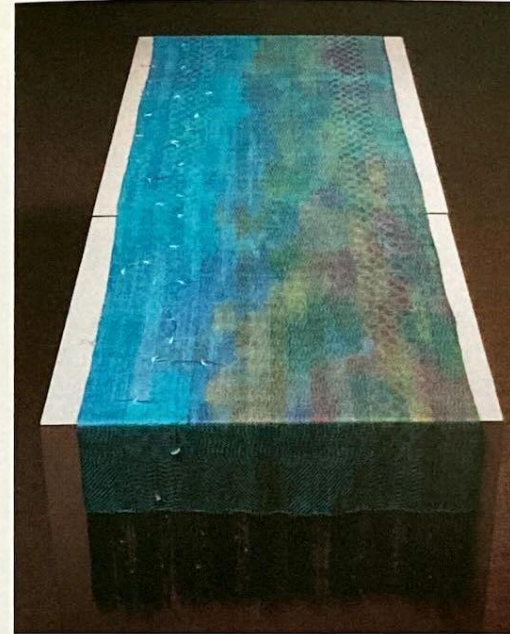
"I guess I've found a personal way, a self-generating way of earning a living while making a contribution to other craftspeople and artists whose work I believe in so strongly, [to] the community, and even [to] the government," says Floch. "If I do well, it not only benefits us, but also others."

In his initial proposal to the government for the lease of land in the park, Floch stated that he would, in future, provide facilities for workshops and classes. Floch says that he and Susan "hope to extend the existing building to make a teaching studio that won't be limited to clay." In addition, Floch would eventually like to feature specific artists and craftspeople from time to time. "All of this work has personality. That's what people are responding to," says Floch. "This fills a need people have. The strongest work has the strongest personality."

Reflecting on the place of craft in contemporary society, Floch observes that handmade objects give those not involved in making "a vicarious pleasure. They may not be able to make things themselves, but they can appreciate what has been put into something by someone else. They can understand the investment a person has made in creating his or her work." □

William Koreluik is a reporter/photographer for a chain of five community newspapers published in Canora and has written a number of articles for other publications. Most recently, Koreluik wrote "Back-Roads and Getaway Places in Canada" for *Reader's Digest*.

## Exhibitions



### Seasonal Variations

By JUDY HARALDSON

**Jane Kenyon**  
"Seasons in Silk"

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon  
June 17 to July 26, 1994

**S**ilk: the word conjures images of rich colours, shimmering lengths of luxurious cloth, sensuality, and enticement. Silk, the most noble of natural fibres, is renowned for its beauty but has a practical nature as well, feeling comfortable whether the environment is hot or cold. Silk yarns dye beautifully to jewel-like colours and can range in texture from classically smooth and shiny to a cottony matte finish. Jane Kenyon used all of the distinctive aspects of silk to advantage in the shawls she produced for her exhibition "Seasons in Silk."

Jane Kenyon grew up, got her education, and lived in Saskatoon until a couple of years ago, when her family moved to Bowen Island, British Columbia. While practising family medicine, Kenyon began taking classes and workshops in weaving, fibre arts, and textile design, and took landscape painting from various sources including the Mendel Art Gallery and Emma Lake Art Camp. After some years, she decided to use silk exclusively in her fibre art, concentrating her efforts to gain expertise and mastery of a wonderful and challenging medium. In 1990, Kenyon stopped practising medicine to focus on her children and her craft.

Over time, Kenyon's weavings and landscape paintings have influenced one another so that there is now an unmistakable resemblance between them. Duality appeals to the artist. She chooses silk because of its exotic, enticing beauty, as well as because of its practical strengths. She appreciates that craft can be functional but can cross into the realm of "fine art," while recognizing that painting is unlikely to make the reverse journey. She weaves shawls for their dual functions of protecting and adorning the human body as well as for their cultural and seasonal universality.

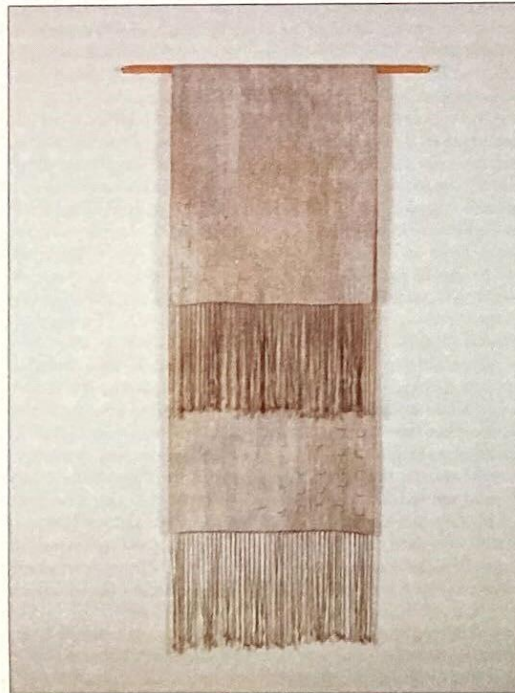
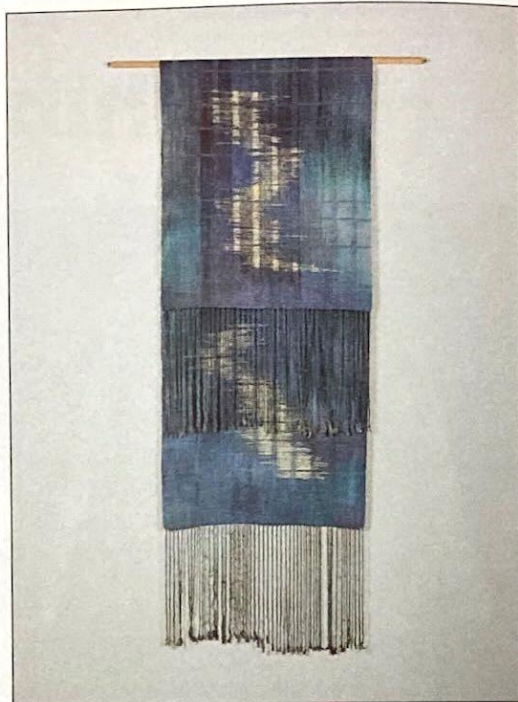
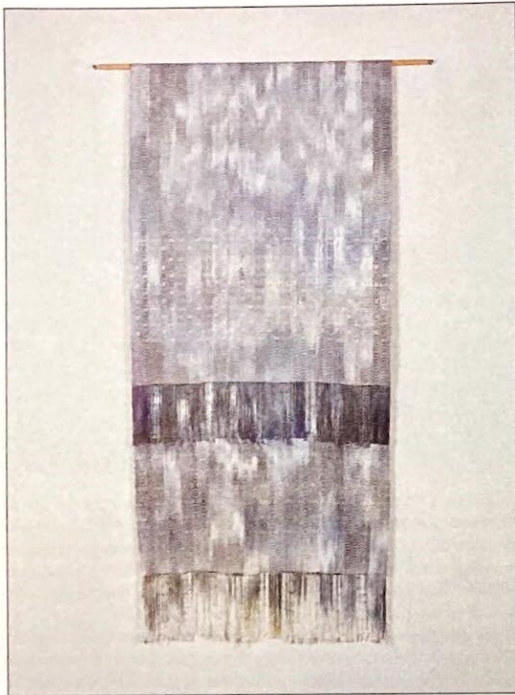
As she prepared work for her exhibition, Kenyon found that the discipline of creating pieces within the specific theme of the seasons in Saskatchewan effectively prevented her from scattering her energies on other interests, techniques, and projects. Inspiration for the shawls came from natural environments at Emma Lake, Waskesiu, and the banks of the South Saskatchewan River near her former home. Using her memories for subjects, photos for colours, design skills gained in landscape painting, and prizewinning weaving expertise, Kenyon produced a lovely show.

The painterly design of Kenyon's shawls results from the technique of warp painting followed by dyeing the weft yarn in a suitable solid colour. Before weaving starts, the lengthwise (warp) threads are measured and then stretched on a table where dyes are applied directly. The subtle blending of adjacent dyed areas, as well as slight shifts during threading the warp on the loom, produce a watercolour wash effect. Complex 8-harness twill structures adapted from weaving pattern books complete the designs. After weaving, the shawls are finished with beads and embroidery and the fringe threads are twisted into gorgeous silken cables. The finishing process is one of Kenyon's favourite activities.

Overall, I preferred Kenyon's wintery shawls, wherein subtle colours and expertly woven patterns combine to produce strong and beautiful designs. Kenyon says that she struggled with the winter designs, but the results prove the extra effort was worthwhile. The shawls depicting spring, summer, and fall are also very nicely dyed and woven, but not all made me stop and wish I could drape them around my shoulders.

My favourite shawl—*Blizzard (February)*—stood out right away on my first glance around the show. I love the way the shawl looks: it captures the seasonal theme perfectly. The white weft predominating over a warp painted in hues and values of blue evokes the

**ABOVE** *Spring Revival (May)* (1994), 100% silk, glass beads, Procion dyes, hand-painted warps, hand-dyed wefts, 8-harness twill, 205 centimetres in length, by Jane Kenyon.



**ABOVE LEFT** *Blizzard (February)* (1994), 100% silk, glass beads, Procion dyes, hand-painted warps, hand-dyed wefts, 8-harness twill, 213 centimetres in length, by Jane Kenyon.

**ABOVE RIGHT** *Mystical Radiance (November)* (1994), 100% silk, glass beads, Procion dyes, hand-painted warps, hand-dyed wefts, 8-harness twill, 223 centimetres in length, by Jane Kenyon.

**LEFT** *Lions and Lambs (March)* (1994), 100% silk, glass beads, Procion dyes, hand-painted warps, hand-dyed wefts, 8-harness twill, 217 centimetres in length, by Jane Kenyon.

**OPPOSITE TOP** *Wayne and Reg's Excellent Adventure* (1994), maple, tattoo ink, 20 centimetres in height, by Wayne Cameron and Reg Morrell.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM** *Having a Whale of a Time* (1994), curly maple, ebony, bloodwood, 15 centimetres in height, by Wayne Cameron.

swirling snows of a winter storm and the subtle shadows within snow drifts. Complicated reverse-twill weave patterns in the end borders are like snowflake crystals, while clear beads in the twisted parts of the fringe remind me of ice drops. *Blizzard (February)* has been purchased by the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

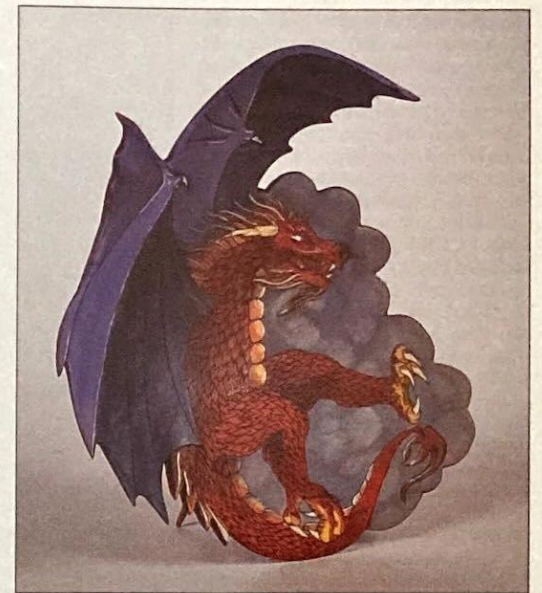
*Frost Magic (December)* features an exquisite design that has unfortunately been weakened by the fringe finishing. With the fine silk threads left untwisted and sequins glued on randomly, the fringe tends to tangle at the slightest touch. The main body of the shawl, however, is beautiful. A pastel blue, pink, and yellow warp with white weft woven in complex twill motifs produces a lovely hoarfrost pattern on the one side, while the opposite side is reminiscent of sundogs on an icy cold winter day.

Kenyon's frequent use of beads in her shawls, especially in the fringes, works much better in some pieces than in others. *Lions and Lambs (March)* and *Mystical Radiance (November)*, for example, do

not really benefit from the beads that have been sewn to the fabric. *Lions and Lambs (March)* is a wonderfully-subtle creation of matte silk bouclé dyed in greyed greens and blues. The design of the piece is structured by a sophisticated grid pattern of small twill blocks defined only by a slight predominance of the white weft. The problem here is that the blocks are accented in the corners by rather awkward, obtrusive beadwork. Embroidery might have been a better solution, as Kenyon may discover when she pursues a planned Master Embroidery course. In *Spring Revival (May)*, bird-shaped beads hang from thread loops in the sky area. Although part of me rather liked the effect, which I would describe as charming skirting the edge of cute, my practical side worried about disentangling the birds from my long hair if I wore the shawl. In contrast, the amber-coloured seed beads edging *Prairie Hopes and Dreams (August)* impart a special glow and richness to the piece. Other shawls have been neither helped nor hindered by the addition of beads.

Jane Kenyon exhibits a keen and sensitive control of colour in her work. Her dyeing and weaving skills are carrying her toward mastery of her craft. At Saskatoon Spinners and Weavers Guild meetings, I had always looked forward to seeing Kenyon's latest silk scarf creations. What a treat to have had a dozen to look at all in one place. □

Judy Haraldson is a Saskatoon-based weaver and a member of the Saskatoon Spinners and Weavers Guild.



## Dangerous Games

By WALLACE POLSON

Wayne Cameron

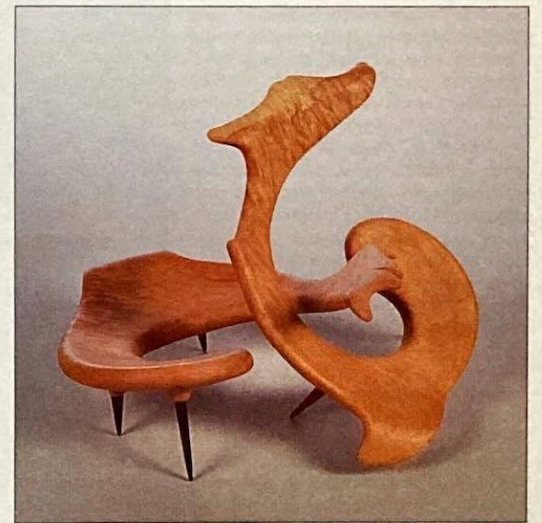
"Russian Roulette"

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon

June 17 to July 26, 1994

Immoderate, pre-emptive self-criticism functions as a defence strategy for a surprising number of creative people. By voicing strong reservations about their own work, these people are not merely hoping to disarm their critics but secretly would like to render criticism itself unnecessary. The problem with this strategy, however, is that it is not unlike the game of Russian roulette, which my old Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary describes as "an act of bravado consisting of spinning the cylinder of a revolver loaded with one cartridge, pointing the muzzle at one's own head, and pulling the trigger." In other words, fun and games do not always go together, even when we ourselves appear to control the field of play.

When Wayne Cameron chose the title "Russian Roulette" for his summer exhibition at the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, he intended it as a humorous comment on the personal and institutional pressures he experienced while struggling to produce sufficient new work for his first gallery exhibition. When I spoke to Cameron about his general working method and preparations for the show, he explained that he does not usually plan his pieces in detail before he begins working or even dash off a series of preliminary thumbnail sketches but instead prefers to move to the lathe as soon as he gets an idea and to let intuition and the wood be his guide. Although this may sound rather daring and experimental, it quickly became clear



that Cameron's precarious working method was less a product of conscious choice than the offspring of necessity and may in fact have been the main source of the difficulties he experienced.

Let me explain. A longtime employee of SaskPower, Wayne Cameron describes himself as primarily a self-taught woodturner. He initially took up woodturning as a hobby in 1984 and two years later began selling turned wooden paper towel holders, bowls, and other utilitarian pieces at selected craft sales in Saskatchewan. Not surprisingly, the combination of working full time and turning production items for the sales has meant that Cameron has had little time or energy to devote to producing speculative, one-of-a-kind pieces for submission to craft exhibitions.



## EXHIBITIONS

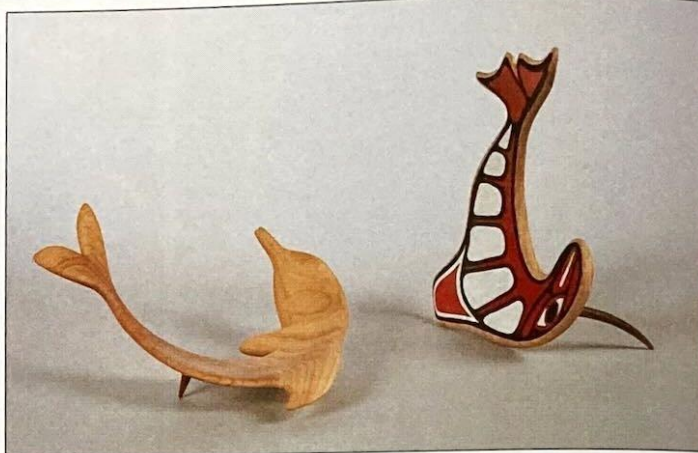
In fact, until this year, Cameron's one-of-a-kind work had only been submitted to "Dimensions," the Saskatchewan Craft Council's annual, open, juried exhibition of Saskatchewan craft. Open exhibitions like "Dimensions" offer emerging craftspeople like Cameron a unique opportunity to see how their work compares with the work of their peers, both amateur and professional. So how has Cameron fared? Very well indeed. In 1990, Cameron's *Platter 2* was included in the exhibition; in 1991, Cameron didn't enter, but in 1992, two of his turned pieces, *Under the Influence* and *Acid Rain*, were accepted, with *Acid Rain* winning the Premier's Prize for the Outstanding Entry. Energized by the recognition and praise his work had received, Cameron roared back in 1993 with three distinctive pieces: *Quilted Bowl*, *Box in Space*, and *Sun Box*. *Quilted Bowl* received an SCC Merit Award and a Purchase Award. If I had to guess, I would say that it was Cameron's consistent success at "Dimensions" that prompted the SCC's Gallery Committee to encourage him to apply for a half-gallery exhibition in the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery.

So when we survey the works in "Russian Roulette," what do we find? We find exactly what we would expect to find given Cameron's intensive experience as a production turner but relative lack of experience designing and producing one-of-a-kind pieces. Plainly stated, "Russian Roulette" reveals a technically-proficient woodturner who generally seems most confident when working with simplified vessel forms but who is clearly struggling to discover what he wants to convey with his non-utilitarian work.

The work in "Russian Roulette" falls into three groups. The first group is comprised of a series of simplified, almost silhouette-like representations of a variety of sharks, whales, and dolphins carved from turned maple and cherry bowls and supported by spiked legs of ebony, cocobolo, and various other types of wood; the second encompasses an eclectic selection of turned vessels; and the third includes two small collaborative pieces. In our conversation, Cameron himself repeatedly expressed strong reservations about the carved pieces that make up the first group. The idea for the carved pieces apparently came to Cameron after his exhibition proposal had been accepted, and he readily admits that he "really got caught short on time" and observes that, as a consequence, the new pieces "are all the same, pretty well" and that "there's lots [more] a person can do."

While a description of the conditions of production of an exhibition can help viewers to understand why certain works of craft have certain characteristics, such an understanding should not prevent viewers from holding craftspeople responsible for the quality of those works. If Cameron realized that he was producing works that were merely repetitive in a situation where mere repetition would not be considered a virtue, he should have done otherwise (or he should have been ready to defend his choice). But is Cameron's assessment of the carved pieces accurate? Or is he merely overstating his criticism in order to forestall criticism from others?

To be fair, we must first acknowledge that, *pace* Cameron, the eleven carved pieces are by no means precise copies of a single pattern. The specific characteristics of each marine animal are slightly different, having in part been determined by the unique thickness and curvature of each of the initial turned bowls. Sometimes Cameron has carved two creatures from a single bowl—in *Having a Whale of a Time* (1994), the two crescent-shaped whales



carved from a single bowl are displayed as a single piece—while other times he has only carved one. And although all of the carved pieces except one have thin, pointed supports, the supports do vary in length from one piece to the next so that, for example, some pieces are tilted toward the viewer while others have a more horizontal orientation. Finally, one of the pieces, *Haida Whale* (1994), has a stylized representation of a whale painted in black, red, and white acrylic on the front and back and is propped in a vertical position by a simple curved support that juts like narwhal horn from the back of the creature's head.

The main problem with the carved pieces is that the idea behind them is unfocused. Although Cameron has said that his new work was explicitly inspired by his concern for endangered species, the pieces themselves do not adequately convey any particular theme. Cameron says, for example, that he had intended in *Fresh Tuna* (1994) to place the carved dolphin in a net but did not do so because he did not want to use a factory-produced net and did not have time to learn how to weave a small net by hand. In fact, the inclusion of a carefully-selected, factory-produced net in the piece not only would have been entirely appropriate to Cameron's concerns about the "accidental" killing of dolphins by commercial fishermen but also would have introduced more variety into the exhibition without taking away from the handmade quality of the works. The entangling of a handmade work in a factory-produced net would also have prompted sensitive viewers to think about the place of creative handmade work in the context of the "jobless" modern economy. In short, Cameron would have done better to have followed his instincts and risked making his work more complex.

When production craftspeople like Cameron produce objects that are clearly intended to be looked at and contemplated rather than handled and used in the service of cookery, storage, bodily protection, adornment, or some other quotidian task, they need to keep in mind that their work is unlikely to hold the viewer's attention for long unless they have produced an emotionally and conceptually powerful arrangement of forms and/or have successfully attempted an elegant technical *tour de force*. Fabric artist Kaija Sanelma Harris, furniture maker Brian Gladwell, and glass artist Lee Brady are currently in the first rank of Saskatchewan craftspeople because they regularly do both—even when their work is intended for everyday use. Cameron himself won the Premier's Prize with a compelling work that combined a unified, symbolically-meaningful arrangement of forms with acceptable turning

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**ABOVE TOP** *It's a Honey of a Bowl* (1994), quilted maple, ebony, osage orange, 39 centimetres in diameter, by Wayne Cameron.

**ABOVE BOTTOM** *Just a Big Bowl* (1994), maple burl, African blackwood, 37 centimetres in diameter, by Wayne Cameron.

**OPPOSITE (L TO R)** *Joan's* (1994), wild cherry, bloodwood, 11.5 centimetres in height, and *Haida Whale* (1994), maple, walnut, acrylic paint, 21.5 centimetres in height, by Wayne Cameron.

and finishing. In his carved pieces, however, Cameron has not really given more than moderate attention to *either* content or finish.

A second problem with the carved animals is that, although the titles identify them as representations of existing species, Cameron did not do any research to find out what dolphins, whales, et al., actually look like. Of course, research takes time, but if Cameron wants to produce work that comments effectively on environmental issues, then he must convince us that he knows what he is talking about. The lack of accurate details in Cameron's carved pieces bespeaks an absence of genuine commitment and concern that actively undermines any intended environmental message.

As previously mentioned, Cameron seems most confident producing simple pieces that are more closely related to his production work, using forms and techniques that are firmly entrenched in traditional woodworking. In *Just Another Little Bowl* (1994), Cameron uses a wide-mouthed, small-footed bowl shape to display the distinctive figure of a block of maple burl, making effective use of a natural, bark-covered edge to accent the bowl's irregular lip.

*Just a Big Bowl* (1994) presents an extremely thick, pillow-like bowl turned from an irregular block of maple burl and supported by three stout legs of African blackwood. The considerable interest of the piece derives from the contrast between the light, smoothly-finished surfaces of the bowl shape and the numerous dark, natural indentations that fracture that shape. Of the remaining four vessels, *Just a Little Bowl* (1994), *Sunflower* (1994), and *It's a Honey of a Bowl* (1994) could perhaps best be described as promising but underdeveloped (again, Cameron needs to take the time to observe and analyse the structure of the plants and animals he is trying to depict), while the elegant *Box on a Wire* (1994), a small, acorn-shaped box perched atop a long, thinly-turned, vertical wooden "wire" seated in a small conical base, holds a certain interest as a successful solution to a technical problem but probably does not represent a viable avenue of future artistic exploration.

Although somewhat interesting in themselves, Cameron's collaborations with woodturner Michael Hosaluk and tattoo artist Reg Morrell bear only a tenuous relationship with Cameron's solo works. *Get the Crack Out of Here* is one of a series of basic turned bowls that Michael Hosaluk sent to his friends to decorate for inclusion in his 1993 solo exhibition, "Faces/Places." Although Cameron was free to do anything he wanted with the bowl he received, what he did was to carve, paint, and stitch the bowl in a clear imitation of Michael Hosaluk's style. What Cameron needs to learn from Hosaluk far more than any particular turning or finishing techniques is how to produce variations on a theme and how to recognize, collect, and nurture promising ideas.

In *Wayne and Reg's Excellent Adventure*, Cameron's collaboration with Reg Morrell, the small pointed legs that support the piece at the back provide the only clear evidence

of Cameron's participation. The shape of the main body of the piece was primarily dictated by Morrell's initial design for a winged, fire-breathing dragon (according to Cameron, it was only after Morrell had finished painting the dragon that the tattoo artist realized that a Merlinesque wizard would fit nicely on the back), while the tattoo ink that Morrell used to colour his designs almost completely obscures the grain and finish of the turned wooden support that was Cameron's main contribution. The painted drawings themselves are entirely typical of tattoo art and that is their chief weakness.

Certainly, collaboration between craftspeople can be a useful exercise in cooperation and no doubt is one of the ways techniques and ideas are developed and passed from person to person. The artistic success of a collaboration, however, demands that the work the makers produce together be substantially different than the work either would likely have produced alone. By this basic criterion, neither of the collaborations in "Russian Roulette" is really more than a curiosity. If Cameron and his collaborators want to improve, they will need to produce many more finished pieces

together and should consciously try to develop projects that will impose a more equitable division of conceptual and physical labour.

Wayne Cameron is a modest, thoughtful woodturner whose work shows a great deal of promise. Many of the problems he encountered in producing the work for his first show would likely have been avoided if he had followed his own advice and planned ahead, giving himself time to experiment with different techniques and combinations of forms and to develop his ideas more fully. Furthermore, as Cameron develops a more definite sense of what he wants to accomplish with his non-utilitarian work, he will no doubt find that he has far less to fear either from impertinent critics or from himself. *C'est la guerre? Non, c'est la vie!* □

Wallace Polsom is currently the Editor/Designer of two Saskatoon-based magazines: *The Craft Factor*, published by the Saskatchewan Craft Council, and *Blackflash*, an independent photography magazine.

## Pointing at The Chief

By LESLIE POTTER

### "Pointing at the Wind"

Organized by the Canadian Museum of Civilization  
Diefenbaker Centre, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon  
September 9 to November 13, 1994



### First Visit

As I entered the Diefenbaker Centre to examine "Pointing at the Wind," an exhibition of thirty-nine weather vanes from the collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, I was startled to find important materials and works occupying part of the Centre's reception area: the guest book and exhibition catalogues were by the inside front doors, about thirty feet away

from the formal exhibition area, and two display cases sat forlornly across from the information desk. Inside the main gallery, scrunched up against Diefenbaker memorabilia and Conservative Party placards, sat the bulk of the display.

The placards were located near overhead lights along with some of the weather vanes, which in turn were surrounded by Japanese dolls and Chinese jade. This was an unfortunate juxtaposition, because there were many dynamic pieces "pointing at the wind" up there at placard level. Alas, "Vote Conservative" definitely dominated the space.

Interestingly enough, up until this point, I had thought the pieces should be positioned above head height. But looking up at the weather vanes, I quickly became a victim of "gallery light blindness," which prevented me from getting a good look around. And when my visual impairment became compounded with "kink in the neck syndrome," I changed my opinion about displaying the weather vanes nearer to the ceiling than to the floor.

Suddenly, I was bombarded with the cacophonous sound effects created for the exhibition. The noises consisted of pig grunts, rooster crows, and cow moos, which together hammered against strains of Beethoven playing on the Museum's stereo system. This ruin of image and sound began to produce an undesirable schizophrenic reaction. What was one to do? Look for a place to start, a sanctuary! This immediately created another problem. I could find no "beginning place." So, amid the visual and auditory disorientation, and with a growing sense of dismay, I walked in a daze through the room and then left.

### Second Visit

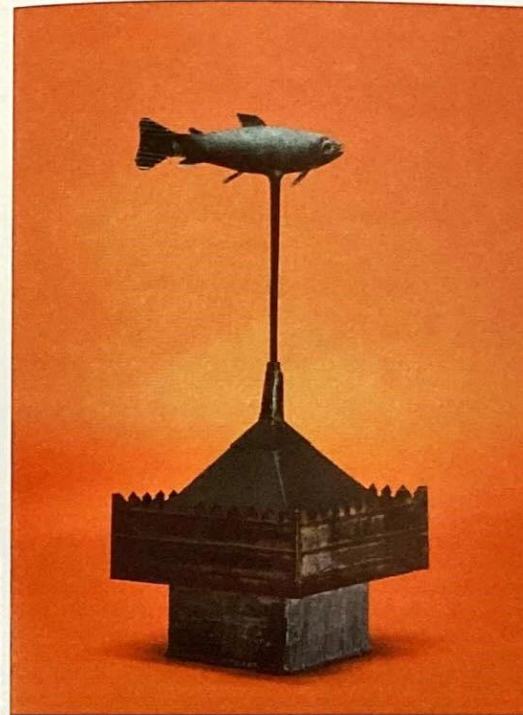
I returned to the Diefenbaker Centre about a week later to find that the aforementioned problems of presentation, although not minor, began to creep into the background once I started investigating the displays. The silhouette sketches placed below each piece along with the title/description cards made it easy to identify and understand what was being described. The section on techniques of fabrication was set up in a clear, concise manner and depicted the methods of hammering, carving and cutting in an interesting way.

One method of fabrication that was not dealt with, however, was casting, a commercial technique that had clearly been used to produce a few of the weather vanes in the exhibition. The *Cow* weather vane from Knowlton, Québec, provides an excellent example of commercial casting. The piece was probably functional, but it is not the kind of thing one would associate with a weather-vane because of its heavy form. Comprised of a hollow space surrounded by well-cast iron in the shape of a cow, which had been spray-painted gold, the piece stood completely inert, as if to say, "No wind is going to push me around."

In contrast to ungainly *Cow*, the *Steamship* by Randall Smith of Ingomar, Nova Scotia, is an elegant, well-constructed, flattened-out piece that would catch the wind like a kite. A harmonious combination of wood, plastic, wire, and string, the *Steamship* provided a real treat for eyes that were initially accosted by the aforementioned placards—would that more of the pieces had had the advantage of not being situated near memorabilia.

Another boat, a *Sloop* from La Have, Nova Scotia, built between 1920 and 1930 out of wood, sheet metal, wire, and iron, also makes quite an elegant weather-vane. The artist paid close attention to balance so that, like the real thing, the *Sloop* could easily ride out the gales that persist in that region.

I should add that some of the weathercocks were, like the *Cow*, three dimensional. Unlike the *Cow*, however, the weathercocks succeeded in a visual sense because their body shape and arrays of feathers were aerodynamically suited to their function.



ABOVE *Trout* (date unknown), copper, glass, iron, wood, paint, by M. Duranceau.

OPPOSITE *Weathercock on Wayside Cross* (early twentieth century), wood, sheet metal, iron, paint, by an unknown maker.

### Third Visit

As a visual artist, I consider the aesthetics of a thing more important than its intended function or the techniques involved in its construction. I regarded the weather-vanes as sculptures, so I was drawn to those pieces that made a strong statement about three-dimensional reality and were embellished with colours that complemented their forms.

One of my favourite weather-vanes was an unusual piece made by M. Duranceau from La Prairie, Québec. Intended to be mounted and displayed on a ventilator cap, Duranceau's weather vane is made of copper, glass, iron, and wood, and is simply called *Trout*. Successful in both its design and coloration, *Trout* combines a strong form with a beautiful sea-green and black patina, blending form and function into a true *objet d'art*.

The gilded-bronze replica of a weather vane from a Viking ship I found interesting because of its historical significance, the Vikings having been perhaps the first group to travel across the Atlantic from Europe to North America. Viking shipmasters, who needed to know the wind direction in order to navigate, typically attached bronze weather vanes at the bow or stern of their crafts.

*Weathercock on Wayside Cross* from Saint-Ours, Québec, was one of the better carved pieces in the show. Combining a wooden body with metal tail feathers and a metal comb, the artist has managed to produce a magnificent, universal symbol of the sun.

One piece that I completely overlooked in my previous two visits was the delightful *Barcelos Rooster*, a highly-stylized plaster rooster

that features intricate, swirling patterns painted in red, green, and blue on a yellow background. Although not itself a weather vane, the *Barcelos Rooster* was included in the exhibition in order to depict one of the many legends about roosters. The legend of the Barcelos Rooster, which originated in the village of Barcelos, Portugal, tells of an innocent pilgrim who was accused of a crime and was saved from execution by a miracle. After being sentenced to hang, the man asked his executioners if, as a last request, he could see the judge once more and his request was granted. As he was pleading his case before the judge, who happened to be dining with friends, the man pointed to a roasted bird on the table and said, "As sure as I am innocent, this cock will crow if I am hanged," and sure enough, the next morning, as the man was about to be executed, the bird, which had been left untouched, rose from the dead and crowed, and the man was saved and was able to resume his pilgrimage. As a physical object, the *Barcelos Rooster* is special because the shape, surface, and method of construction are unified in an unusual design.

*French Flag on Arrow* from the Baie-Saint-Paul area in Québec combines two popular motifs, the arrow and the banner, to form a powerful symbol of regional identity. Solidly constructed from metal sheets that have been folded together and soldered, *French Flag on Arrow* would doubtless be capable of cutting through any wind. The expressive surface, muted by weathering, displays a rustic red and mellow yellow patina on a field of greys and browns.

Another piece, the *Arrow* from the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia, is quite artistic in expression and makes an able, albeit simple, statement. Carved from a pine board and sporting a feather shaped like a fleur-de-lis, the *Arrow* provides us with another example of the beautiful effects produced by the wind and the rain, the original white finish of the piece having been gradually eroded to show bits of the natural wood beneath. The resulting patina is an effect that many artists would love to be able to duplicate!

Reflecting on my preferences in the exhibition, I soon realized that I was mainly attracted to the pieces that had actually been used, had survived the so-called ravages of time, and had not been tampered with since being collected. In the *Weathercock* from the Trépannier family of Saint-Adelphe, Québec, for example, we are able to see the dazzling effects of weathering, which has here produced a rich, brown, lustrous patina on top of copper that had originally been painted yellow. This bird, made of several copper sheets which have been hammered and soldered together, perches on a metal sphere symbolizing the earth.

In contrast, *Steeple Weathercock* from Trois-Pistoles, Québec, looks as though it has been refurbished to duplicate a weathered look. As a result, the patina does not breathe at all, and we are confronted with a dull, thick surface. This is especially unfortunate because the negative spaces formed between the wings and body and inside the tail and comb in fact produce a very pleasing overall form. According to the exhibition catalogue, an antique dealer mounted the bird on an unrelated carved ornament that, to my eye, clashes unpleasantly with the bird's shape. Perhaps the dealer had a hand in the refurbishing attempt as well?

Before I left the Diefenbaker Centre on my final visit, I took one last look at the whole exhibition and was again reminded of my initial reaction. Fortunately, however, the melange of ungainly museum display cases, harsh overhead lights, startling sound effects, Diefenbaker memorabilia, and ambient classical music had not been quite enough to prevent the unique, handmade weather vanes in "Pointing at the Wind" from eventually speaking to me. □

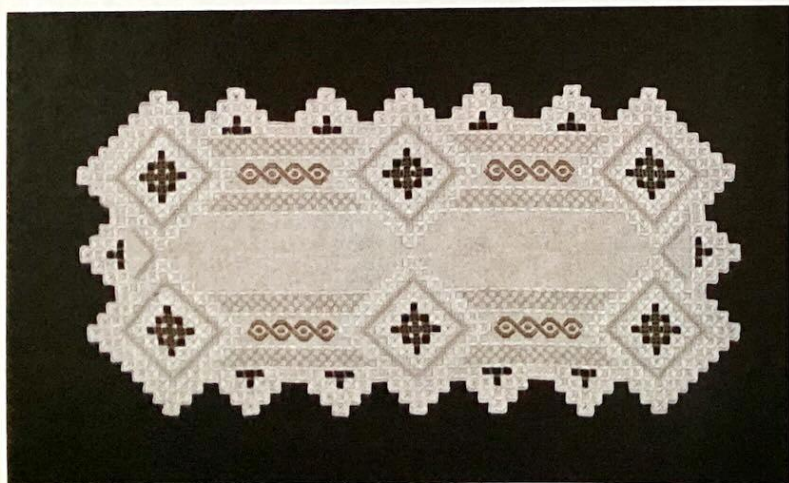
Leslie Potter is a Saskatoon-based visual artist and SCC Gallery/Exhibitions Coordinator. His carved stone sculpture, *Visionaries*, can currently be seen at the corner of 2nd Avenue and 21st Street in Saskatoon.



ABOVE Blouse (Hungarian) (1991), polyester fabric, satin thread, by Irene Takacs.

BELOW Runner (1992), unknown materials, 53 centimetres in length, by Elsie Hutchinson.

OPPOSITE Spring Thaw (1994), cotton, silk, various fibres, 30 centimetres in width, by Margot Lindsay.



## Hidden Magic

BY HOLLY HILDEBRAND

### "The Magic of the Needle"

Saskatchewan Embroiderers' Guild  
Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon  
September 9 to October 18, 1994

The title of the Saskatchewan Embroiderers' Guild exhibition, "The Magic of the Needle," conjured up for me visions of colour, texture, and pattern that made my imagination run wild. Long a fan of the contemporary embroidery of Jan Beane, Julia Caprara, and Mary Berd, I anticipated pieces of explosive self-expression, perhaps even political statements and insights on social or feminist issues, complemented by examples of the precise and delicate embroideries that one passes from generation to generation and that fill one with nostalgia.

Alas, on first entering the Gallery, I was disappointed by the exhibition's lack of visual impact. The grand, colourful textures I had dreamed of were absent. Upon closer observation, of course there were beautiful works: meticulously-stitched traditional hardanger runners, blackwork, and shadow quilting. The stitched landscapes by Margaret Kerr and Margot Lindsay did add a more contemporary flavour, but the predominantly monochromatic show still inspired a more quiet, contemplative view than I had expected.

In her talk to the embroiderers, the exhibition juror Annemarie Buchmann-Gerber touched on the historical roots and evolution of stitchery. She pointed out that, in the Victorian period, an emphasis on stitchery and other female "accomplishments" was part of a concerted effort to keep women occupied so that they would not become involved in politics, business, or other areas that most Victorians considered more suited to men. Indeed, the Victorians tended to equate a woman's lack knowledge of worldly affairs with innocence and purity, and given the elaborate stitching fashionable at the time, it is difficult to imagine that Victorian women who stitched regularly would have had time for any activities outside of household duties. On the positive side, however, the time spent doing embroidery did enable women both to socialize with one another and to engage in quiet introspection.

Buchmann-Gerber's comments further fuelled my curiosity about the works in the exhibition. Contemporary society is no longer locked into the Victorian mindset of function and formality, so why do the majority of the pieces in "The Magic of the Needle" adhere so closely to tradition?

The works in the exhibition certainly display the technical expertise and patience of their creators. But the fact that none



of the pieces were for sale and many were labelled "materials unknown" led me to wonder whether the embroidery stitches themselves were precious or if it was the time spent doing the stitches that was treasured for reasons of personal satisfaction. I also wondered if women involved in stitchery are generally obsessed with technical perfection. Certainly, the pursuit of perfection and the issue of time and its control are contemporary concerns, bringing to mind the debate about the importance of process versus product. Very few of the pieces in "The Magic of the Needle" have stitches layered over one another, as though each stitch is indeed precious in itself, or perhaps the comfort of doing repetitive stitches that have been done the same way for centuries is what gives each piece its importance.

Buchmann-Gerber touched on the issue of process versus product when she described how liberating it was for her the first time she boldly painted over many months' worth of embroidery. In a society where individuals spend years doing jobs they dislike simply to move on to other opportunities, it seems strange that artists and craftspeople, who frequently choose to pursue their creative interests in the face of significant personal, social, or economic obstacles, would be so reluctant to liberate themselves from merely comfortable practices and launch into exciting new areas.

The difficulty viewing "The Magic of the Needle" was the lack of detailed information to supplement the works. Guild and other group shows often bring viewers into the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery who might otherwise never think of attending. It is important when work by several craftspeople is displayed that it be contextualized in some way besides simply being identified as work by guild members. Unlike "Dimensions" or solo shows by established craftspeople, where pieces are chosen for specific qualities or themes, a guild exhibition like "The Magic of the Needle" should inform viewers about the age, experience, and formal training of each participant, explaining how each moved toward her present technical preference. In addition to the short introductory panel at the Gallery entrance, viewers would have benefited from the inclusion of information concerning the Saskatchewan Embroiderers' Guild's organizational objectives, a description of workshops the Guild has hosted, and perhaps information on how the workshops have influenced Guild members. A short biography of

each participant in the exhibition would have enabled viewers to understand the specific intentions of the makers, clarifying whether their works were inspired by internal or external factors and indicating how their work fits into the larger provincial embroidery scene. Viewing aids such as Janice Routley's binder explaining the inspiration and technical details of her piece, *West Coast Images* (1992), provide viewers with greater understanding and appreciation of the works and should routinely be included for every piece in a guild show.

By speaking with several members of the Saskatchewan Embroiderers' Guild myself, I was able to find answers to some of my initial questions about the pieces. For example, although the Guild has a total membership of about 200, Buchmann-Gerber had only 25 entries from which to select the 24 works for which the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery had allocated funding for artist's fees. The Gallery had also restricted the entries to a certain size and had stipulated that work made from prepackaged kits would not be accepted. For its part, the Embroiderers' Guild set the requirement that all the work that was entered had to have been produced by needle and thread only. Although the Embroiderers' Guild encompasses other forms of needlecraft such as tating, knitting, and crochet, they decided to focus on embroidery because it was the craft that the founding members of the Guild had originally wanted to preserve. In addition to being constrained by the formal entry rules, the number of entrants was also limited by the inexperience of the Guild members. Many of the members, particularly those from smaller guilds in more isolated areas, had never participated in a juried show and thus were reluctant to enter work for "The Magic of the Needle." It was also interesting to learn from members that embroiderers from certain areas of the province are interested in particular embroidery techniques. In the Outlook area, for example, hardanger is very popular because of the historical influence of the many Norwegian immigrants to the area. After seeing the work in the exhibition, many of the members I contacted said that they felt a new confidence in their skills.


When I spoke with Margaret Kerr, who had two pieces—*Solitude* (1988) and *At the End of the Day* (1992)—in the exhibition, she explained how she had done traditional embroidery on household linens when she was younger and then did not do any stitching

## EXHIBITIONS

for a long period of time. After the formation of the Embroiderers' Guild and her administrative involvement in the organization, however, Kerr attended two workshops with well-known British embroiderer Constance Howard, sponsored by the Prince Albert Embroiderers' Guild. Howard encouraged Kerr to paint, and that new approach, coupled with the idea of using only a few stitches and varying their sizes, set Kerr off on her current course, producing designs inspired by nature and by the artist's love of vibrant colour.

Providing information like this beside each craftsman's work is a simple and human touch that does much to enhance the viewer's appreciation of the work and understanding of the roles the Saskatchewan Craft Council and the provincial and regional guilds play in promoting and supporting craft education.

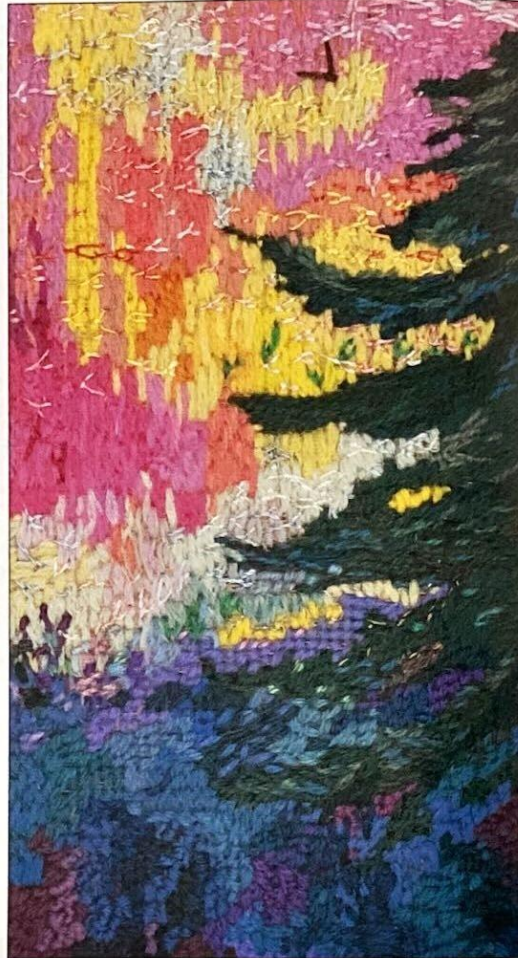
In contrast to Kerr, others in the Guild are not as interested in colour and instead focus more on particular techniques. As a viewer, I would have found it extremely helpful to have had information that explained those techniques, where they originated, and why they were important to the makers of the pieces. Craftspeople who are preserving traditional techniques and those who are reworking traditional processes as a means of personal expression together offer viewers new ways to understand the role of crafts in contemporary Canadian society, and this needs to be made clear to viewers.



**PHOTOS**

- 15 years experience with artist's portfolios
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CANADA S7L 0N2  
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**ABOVE** *At the End of the Day* (1992), wool, cotton, silk, and metal threads, 21 centimetres in height, by Margaret Kerr.

I appreciated the work embodied in each piece in "The Magic of the Needle" as well as each maker's careful preservation of tradition. Much of my appreciation, however, came from my personal interest in stitchery and the information I was able to glean by speaking with the participants. I was left wanting by the shortage of either original designs or innovative explorations of colour, but the lack of relevant information about the works was, without a doubt, the biggest disappointment. □

Holly Hildebrand is a North Battleford fabric artist and Assistant Curator at the Allen Sapp Gallery, where she develops and teaches educational programs related to her interests.

For more information about the Saskatchewan Embroiderers' Guild, please contact Amy Rowswell, Box 563, Cut Knife, SK S0M 0N0, ph. (306) 445-9702. For information about craft guilds in your area, contact the Saskatchewan Craft Council, 813 Broadway Avenue, Saskatoon, S7N 1B5, ph. (306) 653-3616, fax (306) 244-2711.

# Saskatchewan Craft Gallery

## Schedule

### IN THE GALLERY

(\* revised dates)

#### "MADE FOR A CAUSE"

Touring exhibition curated by Sandra Flood  
December 2, 1994, to January 15, 1995 \*  
Opening Reception: Friday, December 9, 7 to 9 PM

#### SUSAN CLARK

"One-of-a-Kind Garments"

An exhibition of hand-dyed textiles  
January 20 to March 5, 1995 \*

#### KAIJA SANELMA HARRIS

"Veiled Images"

An exhibition of woven quilts  
March 10 to April 18, 1995 \*

#### GALLERY CLOSED

"Dimensions '95" Jurying  
April 19 to 25, 1995

### SCC TOURING EXHIBITIONS

(partial listing)

#### "MADE FOR A CAUSE"

Curated by Sandra Flood  
Organized by the Saskatchewan Craft Council

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK  
December 2, 1994, to January 15, 1995

Biggar Museum & Gallery, Biggar, SK  
January 27 to March 1, 1995

### "MADE FOR A CAUSE" (CONT.)

Allie Griffin Art Gallery, Weyburn, SK  
March 13 to April 30, 1995

Little Gallery, Prince Albert, SK  
June 5 to July 3, 1995

### JOINT SCC/OSAC TOURING EXHIBITION

#### "CRAFT COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS II"

Includes furniture by Jamie Russell, tapestries by Annabel Taylor, quilts by Lynn Underwood, and clay works by Ardin Howard

Redvers Art Centre, Redvers, SK  
December 1 to 23, 1994

Wadena Public Library, Wadena, SK  
January 1 to 23, 1995

Melfort Leisure Centre, Melfort, SK  
February 1 to 23, 1995

Estevan National Exhibition Centre, Estevan, SK  
March 1 to 23, 1995

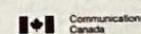
Allie Griffin Art Gallery, Weyburn, SK  
April 1 to 23, 1995

Biggar Museum & Gallery, Biggar, SK  
May 1 to 23, 1995



## SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL

813 Broadway Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7N 1B5 (306) 653-3616





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