THE CRAFT FACTOR

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

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The Craft Factor

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FRONT COVER *Crazy Patch Tranquility (1995)* Cradle: diamond willow, apple wood, clear semi-gloss lacquer, resin fill; band-sawn apple wood boards, diamond willow peeled and sanded, all joints dowelled and resin-filled, spindle ends individually carved; 80x80x40; byCalvin Isaacson. Quilt: cotton fabric, embroidery cotton, low-loft fibre filling; machine pieced, hand quilted, embroidered; 47 x 59 cm; by Ruth Sirota.

BACK COVER *7-Course Lute 1995* Honduras rosewood, santos rosewood, beech, maple, sitka spruce, pear, box wood, gut, bone; traditional methods of construction; 70 x 300.5 x 210; by Randy Letkeman.

A Marvel of Colour

BY KRISTINA KOMENDANT

Colour, Line, Movement. These three words aptly describe marbling. Whether looking at a sheet of marbled paper, fabric, a ceramic tile or piece of wood, the questions which usually arise are: what is this? and how is this done?

From Where did it Come?

Marbling is an ancient technique of decorating paper and, more recently, fabric, wood, leather and ceramic tile. It is a symphony of colours pulled and teased into a myriad of patterns. The ancient Japanese called it *Suminagashi.* Inks were floated on water and then blown and fanned to create interesting patterns. In 15th Century Persia and Turkey, the art of floating colours was called *Ebru* or "cloud art". The main difference between these two methods was the Japanese used water as their medium in the trays, while the Turkish and Persians used a gelatinous medium. This thickened gel, called "size", allowed paints or inks to remain on the surface longer allowing for more control over colour movement; therefore, combed patterns and flowing designs were possible. It is from this Turkish method that the Western technique of marbling arose.

A Colourful History

Marbling has always been shrouded in secrecy and mystery because only a few artisans knew how to create these fascinating designs. The Turks and Persians used marbled papers often to prevent forgery in official documents. Any erasure or other tampering of the information within the document would be immediately detected because the pattern would be disrupted. In the U.S., Benjamin Franklin bound his almanacs with marbled papers. He convinced Congress in 1776 to have the ends of the $20 bill marbled to prevent forgery as well. Many ledger books of that time period had the page edges marbled—again to indicate theft or alterations within the bookkeeping.

Knowledge of the craft eventually spread slowly from Turkey and Persia into Europe. Venice, Italy became the birthplace of marbled papers within the European movement. Books were bound with these marbled papers and gained popularity because of their brilliant colours and interesting patterns. As the demand grew, masters of the craft organized guilds and workshops where apprentices were employed to help with the production. Masters, however, were careful not to divulge all of the steps to the apprentices so as to prevent them from establishing themselves as future competitors. Much of the production work would therefore take place behind screens or wooden dividers where an apprentice would perform only one step of the many involved in this technique.

Marbled papers eventually made their way to England via Holland and Germany. To alleviate the high cost of duties imposed on marbled merchandise, papers from Holland and Germany were used as wrapping paper for toys exported to England. The papers upon arrival were carefully unwrapped, pressed and then used for book covers as well as endpapers. In 18th Century France, Denis Diderot published information for the very first time about the art of marbling. Charles Woolnough, a self-taught English marbler, followed Diderot with *The Art of Marbling,* a textbook which described in detail all phases of this process. Unfortunately, with information now readily available about the mysterious art of marbling, the demand started to decline. Book production became more mechanized; and the need for papermakers, handbinders, as well as marblers, started to diminish. Marbling faded almost into obscurity.

In the 20th Century, marbling has made a reappearance with renewed interest in craft, the book arts, and calligraphy. In graphic design, marbled papers are used widely as design additions to various printed materials. Textile artists are exploring and expanding marbling on fabric as art, wearable art, and tapestries for interior design needs. Potters, painters, woodworkers, and glass workers are also experimenting with the marbling technique. Last but not least, the hand bookbinders are once again revelling with its reappearance in the production of limited edition books.

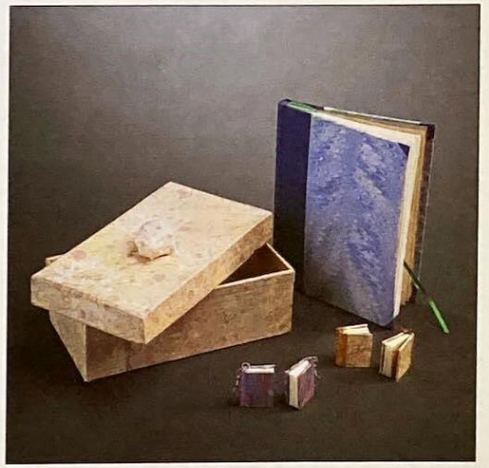
A Temperamental Technique

The technique of marbling is temperamental for a number of reasons. It is an aqueous art form and therefore the quality of water is critical in determining the performance of all the materials. The preparation of the gelatinous "size", the proper mixing of watercolour pigments along with oxgall as well as the alumed papers, must all work in harmony. At times, one feels as though they are a chemist—for it is a delicate balance of properly prepared materials which gives the magnificence of colour, line, and movement.

What are the Special Ingredients?

Marbling can be done with a variety of materials, but it is the watercolour marbling pigments and carragheenan size which allows for the most sophisticated and widest range of image and pattern making possible. Watercolour pigments on this medium can be combed many times over and still maintain distinct and separate lines. It is only with this marbling technique that this phenomenal definition of line is possible. Carragheenan, otherwise known as " Irish Moss", a red seaweed, is the size of choice amongst marblers. It is the insoluble gum surrounding the seaweed which, when boiled, strained, then dried into a powder form and rehydrated with water, forms a transparent gelatinous medium whereupon watercolour pigments can be applied. Irish Moss can be obtained from many ocean coastlines, but it is the seaweed from Scotland which is revered to be the best source. Pollution to many waters around the world is influencing the availability of carragheenan and the high price is an indication of this.

Watercolour pigments specially formulated for marbling are available through marbling suppliers. These are the best colour pigments to work with because their reliability has been demonstrated in comparison with other watercolour pigments and gouaches obtained from art supply shops. Watercolour pigments must be mixed with oxgall, which is bile from the gall bladder of a cow. Oxgall is, firstly, a surfactant which allows the pigments to resist the surface tension of the size and therefore float. Secondly, because oxgall is fatty in nature it can surround each droplet of colour so that it will not blend with the addition of a second or third colour. Each droplet of colour therefore remains distinct, and regardless of the number of combing passes made the definition of line remains distinct. True marbling oxgall is deep yellow in colour and has a very strong odour.



Paper, fabric, wood or clay (bisque fired), must all be mordanted first if they are to receive the marbled colours. For marblers, the mordant is aluminum. It can be in the following forms: aluminum sulfate, potassium aluminum sulfate and ammonium aluminum sulfate. A mixture of one of these mordants and water is applied to paper with a sponge; while fabric, as well as three dimensional objects, must be thoroughly soaked in the mordant/water solution before marbling. Various papers are able to receive the marbled patterns. They should be strong enough to get wet twice: once in the marbling tray and afterwards when rinsed. Handmade papers, art papers and many commercial grade papers will work successfully.

How are these Patterns Made?

Once all of the marbling materials have been prepared, the pattern-making can begin. A tray made of wood, plastic or stainless steel, 20" x 30" in size and at least 2" deep, is commonly used. The carragheenan is often poured into the marbling tray overnight to allow air bubbles to rise to the surface as well as to become acclimatized to

OPPOSITE PAGE Marbled paper illustrating Cascade and Non-pareil patterns, by Pegi de Angelis, Australia; 10 x 6.25 cm. Reprinted with permission of originating (Vol. 5, No. 2) magazine, *Ink & Gall,* Box 1469, Taos, New Mexico 87571.
TOP A marbler's tools and materials: tray, oxgall, carragheenan (in seawood form & powder form), marbling rakes/combs/whisks/eyedropper, marbling pigments (watercolours).
BOTTOM Marbled Stone-patterned box, 8.9x15.9 x 5.1 cm; Half-bound book with Non-Pareil marbling pattern, 12.5x15 cm; Quarter bound book earrings with Zebra and Stone marbling patterns, 2.5 x 2.19 cm; all by Tracy Frazer, Bowen Island, B.C.

the room temperature. Room temperatures of 15 to 20 degrees Celsius are ideal. A lid to cover the tray usually protects the carragheenan from dust and any other particles present in the room prior to use. Before applying watercolour pigments, the surface of the carragheenan must be skimmed with a skim board or strip of newspaper. When pulled across the surface of the gel, air bubbles as well as the microscopic skin that constantly forms on the surface are removed. With the size cleaned and ready to go, marbling pigments can be applied. Eyedroppers, whisks (made from broom straw) and brushes are used. Whisks apply colour quickly, randomly, and evenly over the entire tray. Eyedroppers and brushes are used to apply colour droplets in a more controlled fashion when specific image or pattern making is desired. Once the colour palette is complete, the droplets are teased and pulled into patterns. A stylus such as a knitting needle, a bamboo skewer, or a piece of broom straw can be used to swirl the colours into interesting "freestyle" patterns. For more specific patterns, a variety of rakes and combs are used, enabling the marbler to pull the colour into very fine lines.

Many specific marbled patterns known to marblers today have been passed down from craftsmen who invented them in their own country—Italian Hair Vein, French Curl, Old Dutch and Spanish. Once the marbler has finished with the pattern-making, a previously mordanted paper can now be placed onto the tray. The paper is carefully lowered with one hand at one corner and gently lowered in a rolling fashion towards the opposite corner with the other hand. It is critical that the hands remain steady and move rhythmically in a flowing fashion, for any hesitation—or even hurry—while lowering the paper, will cause hesitation marks and will appear as white streaks or white spots on the patterned side. Once the entire sheet of paper has made contact with the surface of the tray, it can be lifted up at one end after a minute or so. It is then placed onto a rinse board and carefully rinsed with water. Like a snowflake or fingerprint, each marbled paper is one-of-a-kind. The tray is skimmed off with a strip of newspaper and the process starts again. The sky is the limit with the marbling technique as far as art and craft is concerned.

Tracy Frazer from Bowen Island, B.C., specializes in handbound books as well as handbound book earrings. The latter are extremely popular at teacher and librarian conventions. The earrings are quarter bound with leather or bookcloth backs and marbled paper sides of the Stone and Zebra patterns. Frazer's handbound book is half-bound with book cloth for the back and corners. Its marbled paper sides are of the Non-Pareil pattern, which translates to English as *without equal.*

Pegi de Angelis lives in Perth, Australia, and is an avid marbler. Her paper sample shows a fine example of shadow marbling where one pattern is printed on the paper, allowed to dry, then re-mordanted and printed again with another pattern. Through the bright palette, one can see the Cascade pattern as the first one and the Non-Pareil over top as the second. Both patterns have been successfully executed.

The marvel of marbling is not as mysterious as it once was. But with more literature available today about its beauty and process, it is unlikely to disappear. Many artists and craftspeople all around the world are getting caught up in these wonderful swirls of colour and are producing works which truly express the magic of colour, line and movement.

Kristina Komendant is a calligrapher and marbler who resides in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan. She operates a calligraphy and design business—Kalligraphia by Kristina—from her studio in Saskatoon.

Look at Us Now

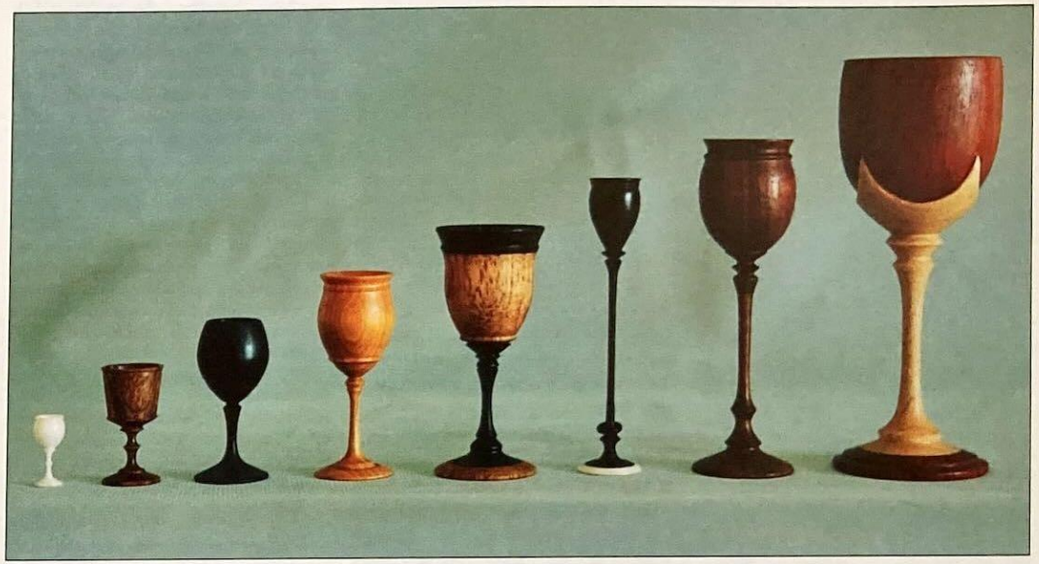
In the autumn of this year, renovations to the front of the SCC building were completed. This included paint, new awnings, and sign.

In keeping with the era in which the building was erected, the colours, style, and lettering were chosen to match that of the orginal tenant, the Royal Bank of Canada.

Preserving the original look was a condition upon which the SCC was awarded a $5000 Heritage Facade Grant from the City of Saskatoon.

With the new sign in place, our visibility has increased significantly. And Gallery attendance seems to reflect this new awareness...

Exquisite Miniatures



ABOVE Woodturned goblets ranging in size from 1.25 cm to 7.5 cm by Wilmer Senft. Photo courtesy of the artist.

"I've always like working small . . . it's a challenge—something different. I like to scale everything down and still have the detail you would find on a larger piece. My ambition is to make things as small as possible and as perfect as possible."

BY KATHY WASIAK

Talent, they say, is a gift. But the development of that talent is a very personal process.

Wilmer Senft, a quiet, soft-spoken, retired farmer now living in Swift Current, is a perfect example of this phenomenon.

About 10 years ago Wilmer took up wood turning. "I started with a Sears bargain basement wood lathe and an old broom handle," he recalled. Wilmer and his lathe work have come a long way from that humble beginning.

"I call it my hobby out of control," he said grinning shyly.

Wilmer is gaining quite a reputation for himself as a creator of exquisite miniatures. "I've always like working small," he explained. "It's a challenge—something different. I like to scale everything down and still have the detail you would find on a larger piece. My ambition is to make things as small as possible and as perfect as possible."

A stickler for detail, Wilmer said he is getting fussier about his creations the more experienced he becomes. "My pieces used to be lot huskier than they are now," he said with a smile. He recalled when he was juried into the Saskatchewan Craft Council. "Michael Hosaluk looked at my work and said you're in, but you could finish the bottoms better." Wilmer laughed, "At that time, when I cut it off the lathe I thought I was done."

Wilmer took Michael's advice to heart and has continuously refined his work (top and bottom) so that now he creates goblets with stems the thickness of a needle. The pieces are also becoming smaller and smaller. His tiniest pieces are doll house thimbles, which are only 3 mm long and 2 mm wide. They come complete with decorative accents on the outside. However, a magnifying glass is a must in order to see the designs. "The trouble is they take almost as long to make as the regular sized thimbles," complained Wilmer. Amazingly, he uses a regular General 160 Lathe to make even his smallest pieces.

In 1992, Wilmer and his wife Lillie retired from the family farm near Hodgeville, handing it over to their daughter Janet, and moved into Swift Current. Unlike many farmers who consider retirement a problem, Wilmer has found that, "There aren't enough hours in the day!" He credits his easy transition, in large part, to his interest in lathe work.

However, the move into the city did bring many changes. His workshop is now much smaller than the one he was used to on the farm. But, looking on the bright side Wilmer said, "I don't have to walk very far to reach any tool in the room."

Careful thought went into the planning of Wilmer's basement workshop. He has made very efficient use of the space available. The spotlessly clean and tidy workshop is well lit by state-of-the-art full spectrum fluorescent lights. "Good lighting is really important," he said. Rows of chisels in different sizes and shapes hang along one wall. The other walls are covered with shelves holding carefully labelled boxes of wood. "I never throw any wood out. No matter how small."

Wilmer has made one rule for himself that makes his compact workshop easier to live in. "No matter how late it is or how tired I am, I always clean up, sweep, and put everything away," he said. "That way the next time I come down to work I'm not faced with a mess."

One intriguing aspect of the workshop is a small door high up on the wall. With a grin Wilmer said, "It goes out into the attached garage. Lillie and I pass all kinds of stuff through it." The stuff includes larger pieces of wood, which are stored in the garage, dust bags, and just about anything else that needs to get from the workshop to the outside world. "With that door, I don't have to haul everything through the house," he said.

Wilmer has also devised an amazing dust collection system. "The two horsepower motor is housed in a separate room in the attached garage," he explained. "A system of PCV pipes and wooden shut-off valves means maximum sucking power aimed directly the tool I'm using."

"It's great," Lillie said. "Dust is really not a problem." However, she did admit that although the workshop looks great, Wilmer's mother warned her not to marry a handy man because jobs around the house never get done. Wilmer jumped to his own defence saying, "The important ones do."

Creating tiny covered containers and fine stemmed vases takes special tools—tools that cannot be purchased anywhere. The resourceful Wilmer solves the problem by making the tools he needs. "Any time I need a tool I don't have I just stop and make it. Sometimes making the tools is almost as much fun as making the piece," he said. In addition to making hand tools, Wilmer has adapted motorized tools to suit his purpose. A prime example is the variable speed sharpener. "You won't find anything like that in a store!"

Wilmer is busy in his workshop all year round—some days for only about four hours, other days up to 12. "Never a week goes by that I don't go downstairs," he said. Lillie nodded, "When we come home from holidays, he's down there pretty fast."

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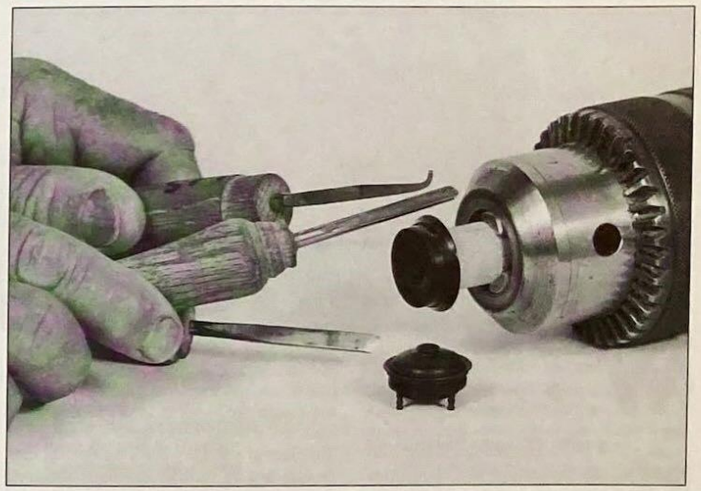
As a wood lathe artist, Wilmer is primarily self-taught. However, he has taken advantage of workshops presented by some of the best lathe artists in the world. "Going to a workshop really fine tunes you," he said. A member of the Canadian and American Woodturners, Wilmer avidly reads their publications. He has also found that being a member of the Saskatchewan Craft Council has been advantageous. "It's great to share with other craftspeople. Over the years I've made lots of contacts and friends through my involvement with the Council."

Sharing his time and talent is also something Wilmer enjoys. "I teach one or two lathe workshops a year for the Regional College and often guys come by the house to get a few pointers." Wilmer does not mind the intrusion. He shrugged, "I've got no secrets."

Where do you get your ideas?' is a question often asked of craftspeople. Shyly, Wilmer taps his own head. "I seldom draw up a blue print," he said. "Everything just evolves on the lathe. I just do the proportions as I go." He mused, "I'm lucky, I have an eye for shape." He also bases pieces on classical shapes and admits to sometimes wandering through the crystal section of stores. "Places like that are good sources of possible different or unusual shapes."



TOP Wilmer Senft at work on his lathe. **BOTTOM** Illustration of actual size of Senft's work (turned pot with a diameter about the size of a quarter) in comparison with his hand and lathe. Photos courtesy of the artist.

Wilmer enjoys experimenting with different materials. He uses both local and exotic woods. "I like to work with local wood. When I look at a dead tree, it isn't ugly—it's full of goblets and vases...beautiful!" he said enthusiastically. "I'm intrigued by the variety of woods available here. I've even worked with pear wood grown in Swift Current." Wilmer has found that the local woods, especially caragana, are popular among shoppers at the craft sales he attends.

The exotic woods also hold a fascination. "The exotics are more dense than the local woods so there is less chance of breaking."

He has also experimented with buffalo bone, deer antler, brass and alabaster, using the same lathe and tools used for working with wood. "I use the stones for one-of-a-kind pieces, not production work, because I have to be so careful and they take too much time." Some of his interesting pieces combine several different materials.

Wilmer got involved with competitions fairly shortly after starting his wood turning. He laughed, "In 1986 I entered Dimensions for the first time and priced my vase at $8. I was really surprised when it sold right away." Lillie smiled, "We really didn't know what we were doing."

A more experienced and wiser Wilmer still enjoys entering competitions. "I like throwing my pieces into the ring and seeing how they do." So far they are doing very well. The china cabinet in the Senfts' living room holds many of Wilmer's awards, photos, and award winning pieces, along with some his favourite creations.

In 1988, Wilmer was one of four Canadians whose work was accepted into the International Turned Objects Show held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Wilmer recalled, "We went to the symposium, held in conjunction with the exhibition, where I demonstrated and attended seminars." Wilmer mused, "My work is much better now than it was then."

Pointing to a large ribbon received for an Honourable Mention at the Durham Wood Show, in Ontario, Wilmer said, "I was told that if there had been a class specifically for lathe work I'd have won first."

Also on display is an official looking certificate that marks Wilmer's standing as an Artisan with the International Guild of Miniature Artisans Association. "Having seen my work they suggested that I apply for the Fellow standing immediately," he said, obviously pleased.

In addition to competitions, Wilmer and Lillie enjoy entering craft sales, both in this province and a little further afield. "We enjoy the company of other craftspeople," he said. "When it stops being fun, we'll stop going. But I don't know when that might be."

An offshoot of enjoying the company of other craftspeople has been collaborating with others. Wilmer is delighted to show off a beautiful tiny covered container delicately decorated with scrimshaw. "David Goldsmith and I received an Honour Award for this at Dimensions 1993," he said, carefully replacing the piece to its special place in the china cabinet.

Looking ahead to the long winter to come, Wilmer has no shortage of plans. "I want to make enough product to attend a few more craft sales," he said. "I have some new ideas rattling around and my kids want me to make them some tools." In his dust-free finishing room, also in the basement, he points to a couple of experiments. "I think I'm going to try some carving and inlaying this year, too."

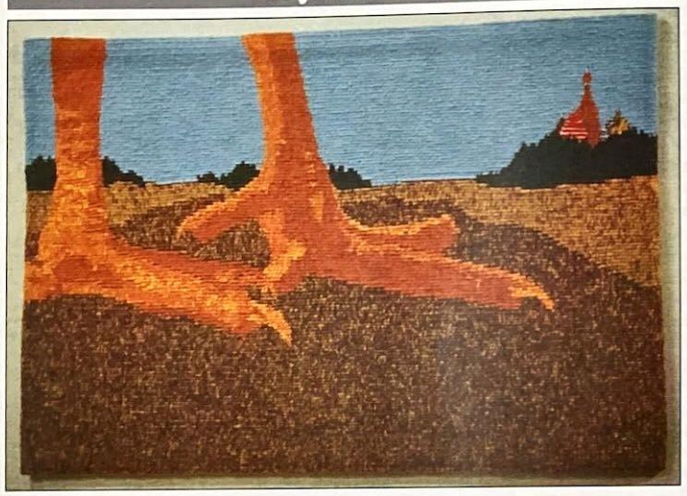
Looking back over his experiences Wilmer sits quietly shaking his head. "If 10 years ago someone had told me that I'd be entering craft competitions, putting my work in exhibitions, and travelling all over with my wood turning — I'd have said they were crazy!"

He smiled, "You just never know."

Kathy Wasiak is a freelance writer from Swift Current, Saskatchewan.

Suited to Purpose

BY JAMIE RUSSELL



When our editor asked me to write an article on quality and commitment, I was flattered—thinking it was based on the sterling quality of my work. I've since realized it's more likely based on my reputation as a shoot-from-the-hip curmudgeon.

The original concept for the article was a discussion of how I warranted my work. Since this can be summed up in one sentence and a referral to the Saskatchewan Craft Council's Standards Guidelines, I decided to editorialize a bit about different levels of workmanship and to consult people in various media for examples of their own and their clients' responsibilities for the work. Since furniture is my primary medium, many of the examples used in this discussion will originate in wood.

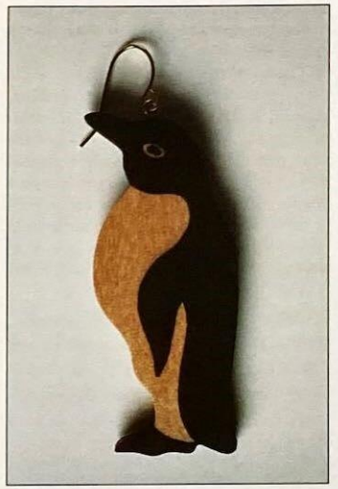
My first step in organizing my thoughts was to consult one of the SCC's legal advisors, Barry Singer, on a maker's responsibility. He summed it up nicely with the phrase "suited to purpose". This means that if a piece is or appears to be functional, the buyer has a right to expect it to function adequately. If it is in fact decorative or has limits on its function, the seller must make sure the buyer is aware of this. For instance, if a clay vessel has a toxic glaze or if a piece of jewellery has a finish that may be damaged by normal cleaning procedures, the seller should make sure the buyer knows there are limitations. This is just plain common sense and all of the craftspeople questioned expressed this principle.

"Suited to purpose"... This means that if a piece is or appears to be functional, the buyer has a right to expect it to function adequately. If it is in fact decorative or has limits on its function, the seller must make sure the buyer is aware of this.

There are, however, grey areas. In these cases, I tend to decide in the client's favour for the sake of customer relations. For instance, I build a dining room chair that is light and poised (and, I believe) properly engineered and strong. A few years ago, I sold one of these sets to a household of large people living with uneven, v-jointed hardwood floors. The chairs' front legs tended to catch in these irregularities while being skidded into place at the table, basically placing the person's entire weight on the end of an 18" lever bearing on a small surface. The chairs broke. This was a situation at the outer limits of what the client can rightfully expect of the chair.

Yet, I felt—and still would feel—obliged to repair and reinforce these joints for free, in an aesthetically-pleasing and structurally-correct manner. And this is what I did. Had the break occurred while the chair was being used as a weapon in a brawl or a gymnasium by a child (or some similar such misadventure) I would have seen it as the client's responsibility. I feel this kind of service is part of the perception that crafted articles are better than manufactured ones of similar function. Ideally, our work is better to look at, better to touch, and more durable than its commercial counterpart.

This perception—combined with the personalization of an individually made piece—is our most valuable marketing tool. Each time we make something, we decide to what extent it will fulfil these desirable characteristics. For this discussion I will break work down into three categories: 1) low price, high quantity production work; 2) high end production work and bread and butter commissioned work; and, 3) gallery quality work.



OPPOSITE PAGE *Pillars for Baba Yaga* Tapestry wool weft on polyester/cotton warp, metal thread embroidery; 60 x 89 cm; by Kathryn Miller.
BELOW Animal pins by Fiona Anderson.
BELOW LEFT Penguin earrings by Fiona Anderson.

1) Low Price, High Quantity Production Work

The term *production work* is often regarded negatively. It seems to imply lesser quality and unimaginative design. None of the people questioned agreed with this evaluation, all felt that the "under $50.00 item" was achievable through simpler processes and less expensive materials without sacrificing originality or quality. Thanks to the sheer quantity of this work produced, it is probably the public's most common—and often their first—experience with handmade objects. This makes it even more important that it fulfils their expectations. The coffee mug that causes dribbles to run down the chin, or the costume jewellery that catches on clothes or flesh, hurts the whole craft community by not being "suited to purpose." On the other hand, the child with the five dollar pinky ring that sits comfortably and prettily on her finger is likely to cherish her handcrafted experience long after she outgrows or loses the ring. And if the experience was personalized by talking with the maker of the ring, she may likely become a lifelong craft buyer.

With the Clara Baldwin Award for Excellence in Functional and Production Ware having been added to the Dimensions prize list a few years ago, production work seems to have been given more credibility. I would like to see production-oriented criteria like innovative "make-ability" and value added to the jurors' charge for making this award. I maintain that an original and well-finished salad lifter, having been made in minutes, is more deserving of this award than a jewellery box that is hand dovetailed, exquisitely finished, and priced accordingly.

2) High-end Production Work and Bread & Butter Commissioned Work

The majority of my own work falls in the second category. *High-end production* suggests fairly demanding pieces. I do this in batches, using the same basic design many times. Such work hones my skills and helps develop new ones. It also nurtures my work ethic. If I find myself without commissions or inspiration for a major spec piece, I don't suffer through downtime. I always have material on hand and a market waiting for this work. It is not creatively stagnant either. I am constantly refining my forms to make the work more attractive, as well as to improve function and production processes, so that I can maintain affordability.

Bread and butter commissions refers to work ordered by people based on previously seen pieces or made for an established function, like a chair. Since this is the market where I compete most directly with commercial furniture, the three desirable characteristics (beauty, function and durability) are very important. The design should be flavoured with both the client's and my own personal touches. I stick to techniques with which I'm comfortable and competent, and I aim for materials and finish of commercial quality or better. These things add up to pride and pleasure of ownership. And presumably, these are what contributed to the client's decision to select my work instead of store-bought work.

3) Gallery Quality Work

Gallery quality is a term I became acquainted with early in my craft career. To me, it means "original work of outstanding design and workmanship using the best materials possible." Stretching my abilities for these pieces is my most rewarding creative experience. If the piece is commissioned, it is also the client's best value. The challenge to do our best is the reason many of us are craftspeople.

Taking an aesthetic or technical facet to its limit can interfere with function. My favourite response to detractors of this idea is to quote my idol, Judy Kensley McKie. Her response to a comment on one of her delicate tables with a free-floating glass top was simply, "It's that kind of table." Its purpose is to combine aesthetic and technical ability to create beauty. If it sacrifices function in terms of strength, stability, or some kind of retaining device for the top, so be it. The

purchaser should be aware of the limitations and provide an appropriate environment for the piece.

I have a couple of complaints about work that attempts gallery quality and falls short. The most common examples are cases of secondary media like hand-embellished fabric shown as upholstery on poorly refinished used furniture or metal furniture with seats of badly-sanded wood slathered in ugly stain and murky varnish. One can equate these secondary media to the frame on a painting. A capital "A" art gallery would not hang a show of poorly framed pieces.

My second complaint is that such work—and work where even the primary medium is terrible—is seen in the Saskatchewan Craft Council Gallery, the only publicly funded capital "C" craft gallery in the province. Our organization went through an exhaustive process to establish standards of workmanship for our markets. Since our gallery shows the cream of Saskatchewan craft, one would presume the work shown there should meet or exceed these standards. Instead, we regularly insult our working craftspeople by showing, especially in curated shows, shoddy work. Things like experimentation, originality, political statement, and aesthetic merit are all valuable in a piece. But unless they are backed by at least good—and preferably excellent—workmanship, the work doesn't belong in our gallery.

Now that I have expressed my opinions on these subjects, I'll turn the page over to my interviewees. People from various media were asked for their opinions on the maker's and client's responsibilities, function, differences in quality (e.g. production versus high-end), and to give examples from their own experiences and observations.

Now that I have expressed my opinions, I'll turn the page over to my interviewees. People from various media were asked for their opinions on the maker's and client's responsibilities, function, differences in quality (e.g. production versus high-end), and to give examples from their own experiences and observations. Weaver/garment maker Cathryn Miller gave the most complete answers and also gave her policy on warranty which can be transferred to other media. Since she clearly expressed many of the things the other respondents did, I have used her response intact (all the others have been paraphrased and edited to avoid repetition):

"In terms of workmanship, quality of materials and finishes, I make no distinction between one-of-a-kind and production pieces. One-of-a-kind works may include more expensive materials (though not "better") and more time-consuming processes. Design costs are, of course, higher because the design is only used once.

My responsibilities as a maker are to produce work which functions as it is supposed to (e.g. clothing is wearable, tapestries are hangable) and has a reasonable life expectancy (1 to 5 years for clothing—depending on frequency of wear; 5 to 10 years for afghans, blankets etc., and 25 to 50 years minimum for tapestries). Given that I have customers still wearing jackets more than 10 years after purchase, I think I am meeting that goal.

All the projected life expectancies are, of course, dependent on the responsible behaviour of the customer: jackets should not be machine washed, tapestries should not be hung in direct sunlight or exposed to large amounts of tobacco smoke. I give customers proper care instructions and it is their responsibility to follow them.

If there is a failure in materials or workmanship, I will correct it for free, within a reasonable time of purchase, (e.g. one year, it should show up by then). I do not accept return of items because the customer has changed their mind. If an item is purchased as a gift, returns are accepted if this has been discussed at the time of sale; if a piece is returned unused within a reasonable time (also decided at time of purchase) and is accompanied by bill of sale. (Because I sell through retail outlets as well as directly, I don't accept ANY return without the sales receipt.)

The customer's responsibility is to properly use and care for the item, as per instructions. In some cases, if a piece becomes damaged through negligence or third party abuse (e.g. bad dry cleaner) I will attempt a repair where possible, but a customer will be billed for that work.

When doing commissioned work, I require a 25% non-refundable deposit to cover design and material costs. This is mostly to weed out the non-serious enquiries, but has afforded me some protection in cases where I end up stuck with such a piece. (Mostly, I try to avoid commissions because they are usually major headaches.) It is my responsibility to deliver by agreed deadlines. It is the customer's responsibility to pay promptly on the agreed schedule. I do occasionally agree to time payments delivering only when fully paid."

- Cathryn Miller

Fiona Anderson works in mixed media, mostly on small scaled production pieces, frequently collaborating with her husband Pat Kutryk. I've always envied her ability to make tasteful and amusing pieces by using simple lines and techniques. She maintains high standards even on her smallest, least expensive ornaments. Her abuse horror story was of the drum used as a seat, which damaged its top irreparably. She did replace the top, even though it cost the client almost as much money and herself as much time as simply replacing the drum.

Glassworker, Brenda Barnes, has found that, given the fragility of her medium, damage is usually the result of accidents after purchase. If a repair is possible she charges for it. She cited sloppy soldering, and large panels which are dependent on a single solder joint, as maker's faults. She stressed the importance of displaying work in spotless showroom condition both as an example of how it should be maintained and to improve its marketability.

The quality of the finished piece must be evident whether the retail price is two dollars or twenty thousand dollars.

Potter, Mel Bolen, felt that to give feedback was a client's responsibility. For example, a certain style of plate that he made developed problems with the glaze cracking after a few months of use and numerous dishwasher cycles. When the client pointed this out to him, Bolen was glad to replace the plates and redesign them to prevent the problem reoccuring.

Mel also felt that an important purpose in making was the pleasure it gives the maker. This reaches its peak in one-of-a-kind pieces, both in his own growth and the value the client receives. Since few of us can maintain maximum creative flow all the time, it is critical to transfer this joy to our day-to-day work. If we continue to enjoy the process, it will constantly evolve and improve. If it becomes another-boring-day-at-the-office, sloppiness creeps in, our standards slip, we're not happy and neither are the clients. Bolen equates his work to gardening. As long as he would want to consume and enjoy the products himself, then the job is being done right.

I've really enjoyed preparing this article. The thing that impressed me most was the makers' consistent commitment to, and understanding of, suiting the work to its purpose. Virtually all the contributors' experience and feelings were parallel. I trust they have struck sympathetic chords in the readers.

Jamie Russell is a furniture designer/maker from Vanscoy, Saskatchewan, and an active member of the SCC.

When the Dyebug Has Bitten

A Tribute to Kate Waterhouse

ABOVE Kate Waterhouse and Barry Lipton (second chairperson of the Saskatchewan Craft Council) on field trip to identify dyeplant materials in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Photo by Elly Danica, 1976.

Saskatchewan craftspeople first met Kate at the Summer School of the Arts, which ran for many years in what is now the Echo Valley Center. We'd find her stirring strange brews in a large enamel kettle, hanging clumps of beautifully dyed fleece on makeshift clothes lines in the weaving studio, or hunched over a spinning wheel with several students on the floor around her. She organized field trips around the grounds, situated in the Qu'Appelle Valley, to show us what native prairie plants she'd discovered that yielded dyes. She encouraged all of us in further exploration—always.

BY ELLY DANICA

Kate Waterhouse was born Maria Bailey, March 12, 1899, in McGregor, Manitoba. Her mother passed away while Kate was very small so she was raised by a much loved grandmother in Winnipeg. Her grandmother, a formidable influence on Kate's life always, made a living as a midwife, and operated a large boarding house. Kate attributed her skill at handwork to lessons she learned from her grandmother and aunts. These skills were meant to contribute to housekeeping, and in that sense she used them well during the difficult years of pioneer farming in the twenties and thirties in Saskatchewan.

Kate often spoke of handwork projects she and her daughter, Dorothy, did even during the "dirty thirties" when scraps of fabrics had immense value and could rarely be spared for "fun" when they were essential to renew clothing there was no money to replace. Kate and Dorothy had the idea that a marionette theatre would help pass the long winter months. They researched and made a series of intricate articulated puppets, built a theatre and wrote scripts for the characters they created.

Kate's career as a craftswoman, although

it had a long history, did not have a chance to blossom until she was in her sixties. The loss of her husband, George, meant that she now had time to do things for herself. Kate began to explore various new interests, beginning with rocks. She used to laugh about her "rock hound" days but with considerable pride displayed a map of Canada in the entrance hallway of her home, made from stone native to each of the provinces.

A trip to Oregon and the opportunity to attend a weaving workshop renewed her love of fibre and from then there was no looking back.

Saskatchewan craftspeople first met Kate at the Summer School of the Arts, which ran for many years in what is now the Echo Valley Center. We'd find her stirring strange brews in a large enamel kettle, hanging clumps of beautifully dyed fleece on makeshift clothes lines in the weaving studio or hunched over a spinning wheel with several students on the floor around her. She organized field trips around the grounds, situated in the Qu'Appelle Valley, to show us what native prairie plants she'd discovered that yielded dyes. She encouraged all of us in further exploration, always.

I suspect Kate came to vegetable dyeing first out of necessity. While it was possible in the '70's to find yarn for weaving projects, it was difficult to obtain and costly—while a whole fleece could be had for under $5. And I mean a whole fleece, manure and all!

When visiting her home in Craik there was always at least one dye kettle on the stove, and Kate hovering over it, excited by the colour as it boiled out of the vegetable matter and intensely curious about what colour this "liquor" would yield on the wool. As she says with delight in her book, "when the dyebug has bitten, she ...who looks in the dyepot where there is colour...is lost".

Kate's kitchen was crowded with her work: two looms, a spinning wheel, a table covered with recipes and articles clipped from newspapers and magazines, and various recycling projects took up every inch of space. She explored and experimented continuously and was always generous in sharing what she'd discovered. It was natural for her friends to ask her to write a book. Kate found this a daunting task in her mid seventies, but agreed because she knew her friends, especially Margreet van Walsem and Ann Mills, would help and encourage her. She was very proud of *Saskatchewan Dyes: A Personal Adventure with Plants and Colours.*

For Kate's many friends, no trip between Saskatoon and Regina was complete without a stop at her home in Craik. Kate would put the tea kettle on to boil, fetch treats from the freezer and settle down for as long a talk as possible. Her interests were not confined to textile arts, she wanted to catch up on what was happening in the craft community; but once all the Craft Council and Arts Board news, and news of her friends had been given, she wanted to talk politics. Oh, how she could talk politics! She was a dyed-in-the-wool CCF'er and it was with great dismay she saw the rebirth of Toryism in Saskatchewan, saying "you'll see why there's been no Tory government for almost fifty years, you'll see". Kate remembered the last Tory scandals, so of course she was right.

During the long winter months, as well as working on her craft projects, spinning some of the mounds of wool she'd dyed throughout the summer, Kate planned her garden. It is the garden, and all she taught concerning it, which gives the best metaphor for her life.

Kate had a passion for life that she planted in all who had the privilege of knowing her. To keep faith with her, we must carefully tend the seeds she planted in our souls and see that they have every chance to bear flowers and fruit which will honour her contributions and generosity.

Kate taught that life was in the small things, especially in the garden. She gave life lessons in everything she did, bringing me tree seedlings she'd spouted in styrofoam coffee cups the year I broke my wrist and could not make the usual summer pilgrimage to her garden. And when I did visit her garden in spring or fall she sent me home with all manner of things: rose bushes, a plum sucker she had me dig all the way to China for, daisies, iris, columbine, kitchen herbs and dye plants. My garden was a constant joke to her, for as she reminded me often with a chuckle: you need two things for a garden, good soil and water—and you don't have either one. So every year she gave me plants and trees to start, and every year I lost most of them, but in the process I learned to garden.

I don't think for a moment that life was easy for Kate. She said she did not "own" her hands, and the labour of her hands, until was over sixty. Her beautiful hands which were so rarely still, worked hard to make beauty blossom out of everything she touched. She wasted nothing, recycled everything and recycled it again. She took care, took pains, with everything she did, whether it was making tiny jars of her favourite Nanking Cherry jam, or trying as many muffin recipes as she could find.

Kate enjoyed fine food, and once for a treat we went to the Hotel Saskatchewan for brunch. We were seated in the middle of the dining room on a very busy Sunday, and Kate, with a twinkle of mischief in her steel blue eyes I should have noted more carefully said: "Is Lady Astor here yet?" I couldn't figure this out, what could she mean? So she repeated it more loudly, as though I didn't hear her the first time, and still I didn't get the point of her question. Finally, her laughter made me realize she was joking, and I twigged to the fact that this was her way of referring to the elegance of the dining room, (fit for royalty and high flyers) so I said, "no, but she's expected any moment." Kate said, "well, I thought so." And we laughed and laughed. Kate who was in her mid eighties at this time, said she had never before been in a CPR hotel, and she was amazed by the splendour and ostentation of it, but not at all cowed.

The Irish have always known how to flourish in spite of great hardship and Kate had a pride in her ability to keep going, no matter what life threw at her along the way. "The Irish in her" gave her a stubbornness in the sense of intense determination, perhaps best seen in her dyeplant project. "The Irish in her" gave her too a wicked sense of humour, and when I think of her, it is of the laughter we shared around her kitchen table—political jokes being by far her favourite sport.

Kate had a passion for life that she planted in all who had the privilege of knowing her. To keep faith with her, we must carefully tend the seeds she planted in our souls and see that they have every chance to bear flowers and fruit which will honour her contributions and generosity. And more than this—we must pass on what she gave each of us so that such a beautiful life spirit can flourish in all those we know and touch with the gifts Kate gave us. She loved life and did what she could to encourage growth and bring forth the beauty she knew was within each person, each seedling. She was a gentle, loving, generous soul, and the task she leaves us is this: pass it on...pass it on.

Kate Waterhouse died at the age of 96 on June 2, 1995. She was one of two SCC Honourary members.

Elly Danica is an author, textile artist, and painter who lives in rural Saskatchewan.

Exhibitions

ABOVE *Glowing Embers (1995)* Quilt: commercial & hand dyed cotton fabrics, themolam batt, metallic thread, machine pieced, machine quilted, colorwash technique with solid overlay; by Zelma Hurd. Screen: North Saskatchewan birch, wooden hinges; oil stain with urethane varnish; 80 x 130 x 3.5; by Al Bechtold.

A Collaboration Aptly Named

BY JANET MACKENZIE

"Wood 'n Warmth"
Saskatoon Quilters' Guild &
Saskatchewan Woodworkers' Guild
Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK
November 3 to December 12, 1995

Recently, I was pleased to attend "Wood 'n Warmth", an exhibition of wood and quilt craft on display at the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery. Juried by Mr. Les Potter, Saskatchewan Craft Council Exhibitions/Gallery Coordinator, this was the first SCC presentation of the work of two craft guilds together and the first collaboration of the Saskatoon Quilters' Guild and the Saskatchewan Woodworkers' Guild.

As a newcomer to Saskatchewan, I was delighted by the quality in design and execution, and the variety of media and technique. About a year and a half ago, a committee of three representatives from each guild planned the exhibition. The quilters attended a woodworkers' meeting to explain such aspects as techniques and the length of time needed from conception to finished work; and in turn, the woodworkers presented their craft. The nurturing environment of the craft guild provides a perfect venue for cross-disciplinary exploration. Members were encouraged to meet, gain a better understanding of each other's craft, and to collaborate in producing new pieces. Finally, they were challenged to present their works to the juror for evaluation and constructive criticism—a potential risk well worth taking, as confirmed by the high quality of design and workmanship.

It was agreed that each participating member would have at least one piece selected for exhibition. Mr. Potter suggested that his job as juror would have been more meaningful had more than one item been submitted by each member. In all, forty pieces were chosen, seven of which are collaborations between quilters and woodworkers. The exhibition was spacious and well lit, with three dimensional objects appropriately placed for viewing from more than one perspective. Some pieces which were not collaborations were displayed together, demonstrating how quilted textiles and wooden objects complement each other.

"Wood 'n Warmth" encompassed the range of skill in design, technique and execution which is central to the craft guild, where novice and artisan alike learn and gain confidence from the interchange of ideas and experiences among the members. From furniture to trinket box, quilt rack to lute, from bed covering to clothing, and jewellery to wall hangings—the variety of creative expression was delightful.

A collaborative work, *Dreaming Summer in a Rocking Chair*, was a large and comfortable walnut rocking chair draped with a lovely quilt in greens. Dave Dunkley hand carved and turned the chair in wonderful flowing lines with intimate details: concavities at the top of the tall slatted chair back, maple laminated rockers, and ebony dowelling. All was integrated by a glowing finish. The texture of Margaret Cloak's machine pieced textile complemented the chair beautifully. Bordered in greens and set off by a framework of thin strips, the centre of the quilt was comprised of blocks containing birds and fish in contrasting colour pairs such as purple and pink, vermilion and cream. Hand quilted patterns in dark thread included triangles and double rows of opposed scallops. A pale yellow backing showed attractively in the draping of the quilt across the chair.

A rock maple *Deacon's Bench* with central bird's eye maple panels, by Dan Campbell and Roddy Edwards, was nicely finished in hand-rubbed Scandinavian oil. Emil Brehm's *Blanket Chest* of red oak had a sliding box drawer within. *Doug's Oak & Leather Stool*, a folding stool by Doug MacDonald, displayed a carved scene of three mallards and burned-in detail on the wing tips and feet.

Don Kondra's *Sue*, a small, single-pedestal, round-topped table in Saskatchewan birch, featured his well known and marvellous crackle and coloured lacquer technique. Hand turned and joined with mortise and tenon, the black-over-gold colour scheme enhanced its very rich, nubbly texture. Four downturned feet gave stability and style. The pleasing texture of this and other woodwork in the exhibit echoed the quilting of the textiles.

In the gallery window was *Crazy Patch Tranquility*, a collaboration by Ruth Sirota and Calvin Isaacson. This lovely diamond willow doll's cradle with quilt, pillow, and pad was a striking marriage of wood and quilting. The rich blues and reds of the quilt, embroidered at the seams, brought out the reds in the willow. The cradle was suspended on its frame by carved pegs. A spray lacquered finish was well done.

Several quilt racks supported quilts. Folded on Steve Fosty's red oak stand was *Woodland Christmas*, a very precisely machine pieced quilt by Debbie Baumann. This very crisp work alternated green trees with red blocks on a pale ground, all bordered in green.

Heart Warmth, a quilt rack with large quilt by Ron E. Ehlert and Dianne Olfert, featured a variety of blocks in autumn colours on a pale ground. Greyish strips outlining the squares were quilted in small triangles and squares, patterns repeated in the border with tiny brown triangles quilted in scallops. On the reverse, a golden fabric was charming. Ehlert's oiled oak stand, with cut out heart motifs at either end, was well assembled and finished.

My favourite quilt rack was the work of Trent Watts, president of the Woodworkers' Guild. This elegant gracile rack featured thin hand turned spindles and knobs, slim everted quilt arms, outturned feet, and mortises and tenons detailed with fine colour contrast. The stand, of tropical grandadillo, was richly coloured and finished in a handsome french polish which melded with the autumn colours of the quilt draped over one bar. Linda Landine's small quilt, *Cinnamon Hearts*, was comprised of heart motifs in rich reds and oranges, in a creamy ground. The surrounding border of irregularly spaced light squares on rust united the whole into a warm and satisfying piece.

And there were animals: Bob Gander's *Mergraine Headache*, a hand carved diamond willow merganser, rode a subtle cherry wood grain wave. Beautifully conceived and carved, Gordon Bowman's golden, finely-finished butternut figure, *Untitled*, presented the elemental waterfowl at rest. *Polar Bear*, hand carved in basswood by Ron Davidson, contrasted a smooth ursine shape against sharp-cut facial details. One could almost see the bulky shifting of the coat as the bear plodded across the grey marble ice, sniffing the air. Scrimshaw loons, by David Goldsmith, in mammoth ivory adorned the top of a traditional *Nantucket Lightship Basket Purse*, of cane with rosewood details by David Fotheringham. Such variety of concept—both representational and abstract—with the thoughtful integration of design elements, was typical of this exhibition.

Other exhibits included a *7 - Course Lute* intricately fitted in many woods by Randy Letkeman and a handsome umbrella stand in cane woven over walnut staves by Dave Fotheringham.

My favourite work was the fire screen, *Glowing Embers*, by Zelma Hurd and Al Bechtold. Bechtold's curving screen of greenish-grey, oil-stained, north Saskatchewan birch had double action wooden hinges for flat storage. The triptych within the frame made use of commercial and hand-dyed cotton fabrics quilted in a waving pattern of iridescent thread. Gliding up from an orangey-magenta margin, a line of flying geese dissolved into mauve and blue elements over a large triangular area, and broke out into a columnar sky of reds, browns, and dark blues. The whole piece seemed to me to be lit from within.

Kelora Goethe's *Country Bride*, made of 100% cotton fabric with polyester batting, required many hours of work. This lovely, peaceful, queen sized quilt of pale ivory had a centre of alternating hand appliqued tail-to-tail doves and hearts in pinks, blues, and greens. The whole piece was hand quilted with pale thread in complex intersecting arches and finger-like patterns. Large scalloped edges added a richness and elegance to a quiet and beautiful quilt.

Sandy Parson's *Stepping Back*, was machine pieced and hand quilted in the courthouse steps pattern. Bordered in dark red with red binding, the overall predominance of rich red and pale pink colours created an irresistible feeling of warmth. The striking border of this work made me think of it more as carpet than quilt.

Of the quilted hangings, one of my favourites was Sharon Afseth's *Saskatoon Berry Pie*. Complex multilayers of log cabin blocks in purples and blues, all edged in a large zigzag border, were machine quilted in a trefoil pattern. *A Blazing Trail*, by Lynn Underwood was colourful and kinetic. The hand quilted scrolls of the rich red, purple, and gold border reflected centre blocks of spikey spirals which graded from dark reds through bluey-brown to orange, rusts, and pink.

Barbara Dawson's *Searching for the Brightest Star* employed three-point perspective in its window-framed vista of the heavens. Machine pieced blues and machine quilted straight lines effectively homed in on the brightest star, creating an innovative and well integrated work. The whimsical *To Rachelle With Love* was Marlene Epp's child's reversible quilt in purple. Machine pieced and hand quilted in lozenge shapes, small animals were highlighted. Shan Cochrane's *Autumn Forest* was a wonderful study in burnt oranges: small trees under tiny triangular brown and ochre leaves in a wide machine quilted border. The machine pieced black hanging, *Almost Amish*, by Shirley A. Collins, presented a central square of nine blocks framed by small colourful squares like marquee lights. Each block was hand quilted in a different motif.

This was an entirely successful collaboration between two disparate craft guilds. The quality of craft offered to the community at large should provide lots of encouragement to other guilds to get together and dream. Varying abilities in solving finishing problems with end grain, infilling, adhesive remains, matching quilt blocks, and quilt tensioning were practically unnoticeable in the overall excellence of design and competence. The satisfaction derived from stimulation and growth within craft guilds such as these should inspire us all. Congratulations on this aptly named exhibition.

Janet MacKenzie is a Saskatoon freelance writer with a background in the arts, anthropology, and crafts.

OPPOSITE PAGE *Polar Bear (1993)* Bass wood, marble, hand carved, cut & polished marble; 15 x 13 x 29 cm; by Ron Davidson.
BELOW *Midsummer Path (1995)* cotton, viscose, polyester and metallic threads, fabric paint; painted warp, handwoven, embroidered; 37 x 36 x 4 cm by Jane A. Evans.

Changing Direction

BY MYRNA GENT

Melvyn Malkin
"Trial by Fire"
Jane A. Evans
"Peaceful Places"
Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK
September 22 to October 31, 1995

During the later part of September and all of October, the SCC Gallery contained two shows: "Trial by Fire" by Melvyn Malkin and "Peaceful Places" by Jane A. Evans. Although these two titles suggest great disparity, the ceramic raku and textile art worked well together in the shared space. Evans' warp painted, woven and embroidered pieces were wall mounted, while Malkin's glitzy slabs were displayed on pedestals. Both of these master artisans are better known for other types of work.

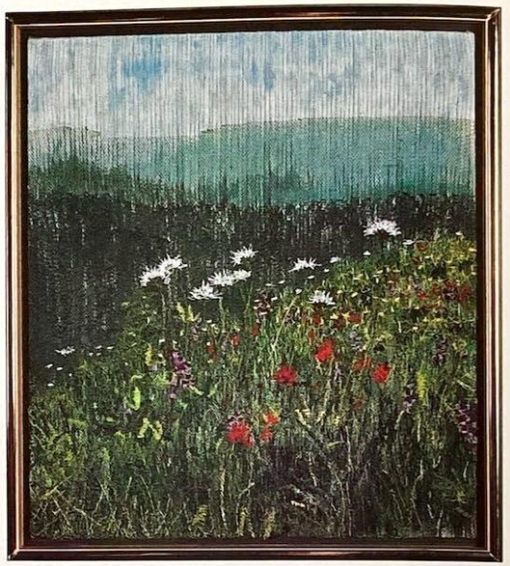
Malkin, locally well known as an architect, became interested in raku almost by accident. He started buying equipment and continued to do so, without having a place to put it. After a few years, he built a studio at the family cottage and began to experiment with clay. Some of his earliest pieces were large handbuilt sculptural vases. He has never used the wheel. Malkin has his raku pit ten feet from his kiln; his is the danger zone for here most of the breakage occurs, often from wind. In the beginning, his breakage was very high but through trial and error he stated it is down to 12%.

During the last few years Malkin worked in three main forms: sheep, fruit, and slabs, all of which were displayed in the show. The apple and pear shapes were originally left undecorated, but lately he has been adding designs to them. His love of drawing and the elements of design were apparent in his slab plates. Many used repetition of one or two shapes throughout: for example, chevrons gradually changing to triangles, often suggesting a Persian carpet with elaborate centres surrounded by simple borders.

Malkin went through a phase where he used coiled borders with applied metallic glazes; this he referred to as his Rococo period. He still occasionally uses coiling but usually in a more understated manner: for example, narrow bands of coiling joining the border to the main body.

Some of the newer works had drawing incised into the wet clay. These were my favourite works. In a few of them, he added colour to the elements, using either mason's tints or commercial glazes on a black matte ground. They aren't as glitzy as many of the works, and while Malkin commented that "everyone likes glitz"—a little goes a long way. He stated that he "enjoys the spontaneity of this technique." It is obvious that he has fun with these works.

Malkin is highly productive and chooses not to name the pieces.



Rather, he had his own system, which the uninitiated found confusing, e.g., 4.23.9.95. To Malkin, this indicated the number made (4), the day (23), the month (9) and the year (95). I did not include the specific numbers of individual works because most of us would not remember them. Only two works had titles: a flock of capricious and dapper sheep, *Formal Attire*, which was displayed on a long shelf; and a raku slab framed with wood, called *Wall Piece*. It was interesting to note how this niche gave the slab more status.

Evans' is best known for her pattern weaving. Her last show at the Gallery was called "A Joy Forever." As this 1991 show was an exhibition of freeform rag rugs, it was hard to recognize her newer work as that of the same craftsperson! In fact, the weaving technique was the same only scaled down considerably. The rugs, which were from an adaptation of her exploration and research in Latvian threading techniques, used simple shapes suitable for rugs. The new work used this technique with split thread after painting the warp as a ground on which she machine and hand embroidered. It was a difficult decision for Evans, and she stated, "I finally gave myself permission to embroider on the surface"—this, after 23 years of weaving.

One might ask why she continued to weave the ground. Each work took her at least one month to complete and she could save considerable time if she purchased her cloth. However, Evans felt that what she gained in the bleeding look of the warp painting she used to good effect for distance as in *Mountain Meadow*, or to blur the edges as in *Poplar Glade in June*, or to create a light and shadow effect of leaves as in *Willow Garlands*. I have to agree with her—the warp painting adds a great deal to the finished work.

Each work was an experiment incorporating or featuring a new technique, as in bringing hidden coloured warped threads to the surface. This was done extensively in *Willow Garland*. The fine lines achieved by the machine stitching suggested ink drawing but with greater depth. This could be seen particularly well in the ferns or the lichen and moss in *Birches Along a Portage* which almost invited you to touch them. All of these techniques were balanced beautifully in her most recent work *Midsummer Path*. My personal favourite work was *Mountain Meadow*, a misty blue-green background with an accent of wild flowers. In this piece, the warp painting gave the effect of distance beautifully.

Evans' subject matter was nature, with trees having an important representation. Her style in most of the works was realistic landscape, but *Sunlit Fronds* was very near an abstract, probably by accident. The works were intimate, small in size and all had simple wooden frames, many with beige linen mats. The one element that continued from her earlier works was the abundant use of "young" green in her palette.

As an educational component, Evans had a display that showed the fibres she used, a small sample of the woven fabric and photographs of her loom in the process of warp painting, and the work in progress.

Evans won five awards this past year for her new textile art. She believes she was the only person using this combination of techniques. It must be satisfying after 25 years to be "discovered" in a new field, for she won three of these awards at the Embroiderers' Association of Canada Conference in Edmonton. Evans also had one long-time wish answered this fall. Years ago, when she was a representative to the Canadian Craft Council, she was shown slides of the provincial nominees to the prestigious Saidye Bronfman Award, she hoped that some day her work would be good enough to be submitted. That dream came true—not by wishing, but through years of hard work. She was one of two Saskatchewan nominees for the 1996 Bronfman Award.

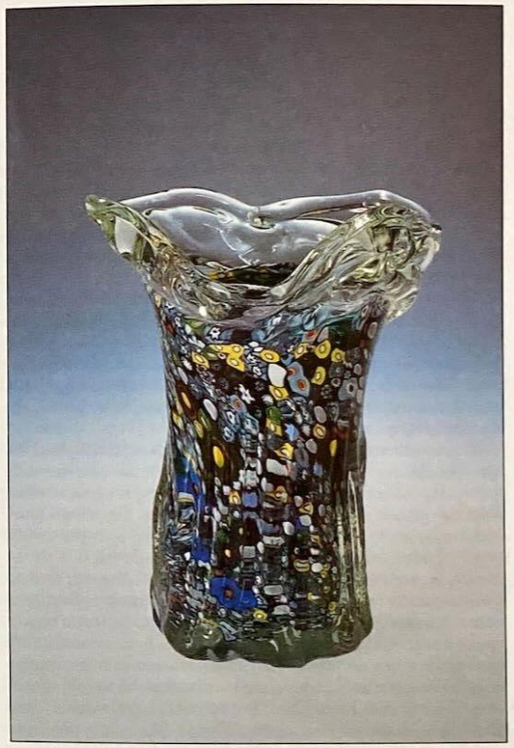
It was interesting to see the changes in direction both Evans and Malkin have taken during the past few years. I hope to see more of Evans' peaceful places, and—while we discourage our children against it—I think Malkin should be encouraged to continue to play with fire.

Myrna Gent is a Saskatoon-based weaver and a regular contributor to the *The Craft Factor*.

Made in Canada

BY CHAE DENISE LEISTER

"Fifth Annual Canadian Glass Show"
Rowles & Parham Design Galleries
in association with Smashing Glass Inc.
Royal LePage Building, Mezzanine Level
Edmonton, AB
September 14 to November 30, 1995



The original idea for the "Annual Canadian Glass Show," as conceptualized by curator, Carol Jane Campbell, was to create a show space where glass art of all kinds could be exhibited. And in doing so, the public could be educated as to the immense diversity of the glass art medium. Campbell, who is also the designer, plinth painter, and production person, curates not according to the artistic merit of each artist, but to the technical correctness of the work—as she believes that one cannot outguess the buying public.

The greatest strength of this year's show was that it provided a retail setting atmosphere within a gallery setting to help the artists market all of their pieces, including production, functional, non-functional and their best artistic endeavours. Campbell specifically asked for the artists to submit six to seven pieces in a range of their work. She was looking for a strong grouping from each artist. Unfortunately—and this is the weakness—some artists sent only one specific type. This tended to place modest work with the exceptional, which resulted in some artists' pieces getting lost amongst the great diversity of the show. Due to the number of artists which submitted and the quantity of artwork involved, this kind of exhibition required a strong representation of all the artists' talents.

Jeff Holmwood submitted an extensive grouping of different works. For sheer beauty, his *Murrini Vase* stole the show. However, the beauty of the piece is equally balanced by his sculptural form and technical difficulty. Hundreds of sections of murrini cane are picked up with the hot glass. They are then covered in a clear layer of glass in order to give them depth. Sound easy? It isn't. It is extremely delicate and time-consuming work and the results are magnificent. Jeff was trained at the Alberta College of Art and has worked at both the Pilchuk Glass School and the Red Deer College. Although Jeff is a relatively new glass artist, he continually pushes his exploration of the possibilities of glass art to the maximum. For instance, his *Garden Series* seems to be the opposite of the *Murrini Vase*: that is, instead of technically precise detail in blowing, he does absolutely everything to the glass except blow it, and produces an organic sculpture that defies the glass it is made with. His goblets are simply fun. With a rainbow of colours and five jack marks he creates interactive glasses which "glug, glug" as you drink.

OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT *3.1.9.95* clay, raku fired; 34.5 x 36 x 7 cm; by Melvyn Malkin.
OPPOSITE PAGE RIGHT *Mountain Meadow (1993)* viscose, cotton and polyester threads, fabric paint; painted warp, handwoven, embroidered; 30 x 27 x 3 cm; by Jane A. Evans.
LEFT *Murrini Vase* (1995) Hand blown glass using hundreds of murrini pieces; 36 x 36 x 43 cm; by Jeff Holmwood. Photo by Newbery Studios, Edmonton.
ABOVE *Black Tropical Fish* (1995) Plate fused and slumped; dichroic glass; 26.25 cm in diameter; by Lynne Bowland. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Mark Gibeau, another Calgary artist who also attended the ACA, has been exploring native images in his Origins Series. He has spent some years researching and photographing the indigenous drawing and cave paintings in various locations throughout Alberta. In his *Prairie Boulders*, he uses vessel shapes with images derived from these petroglyphs. These images are first laid out on

ABOVE *Woozles, Wizzles and Heffalumps* (1995) Hand blown glass. Sizes are from approximately 7.6 x 7.6 x 25 cm to 12.7 x 12.7 x 50.8 cm; by Ted Jolda. Photo by Newbery Studios, Edmonton.
OPPOSITE PAGE TOP *Perogie Sharks* Porcelain clay; fired to cone 6, stains and glazes used for decoration; 23 x 12 x 6 cm; by Sandy Dumba. Photo by Available Light, Regina.
OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM *Burp* Porcelain clay; by Sandy Dumba. Photo by Available Light, Regina.

the marvering table somewhat like a painting, but with the use of powdered glass. This is picked up with hot glass in a complex process involving a team of workers. Mark, who now operates his own glass studio in Strathmore, 30 miles east of Calgary, has expanded his native images in his new solid glass wall pieces. They are organically shaped, with the colour and image of the central part of the piece and a clear glass area surrounding it. Although the solid glass work requires very precise techniques, I still like the boulder series better—as the new work feels uncomfortably solid and compressed and lacks the mystery and the depth of the boulders.

The most distant entries were from Renato Foti from Toronto and Caroline Theriault from Quebec. Caroline's chicken feet goblets were in perfect timing for the Thanksgiving holidays. These pieces showed a spontaneousness and playfulness that contributed greatly to the range of goblets available. Caroline was educated at the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi; and from 1989 to 1995, she attended various workshops including a session in Brussels, Belgium. Where Caroline's goblets were imaginative, Jeff Burnette's were classical. Using an intense cobalt blue for the cup and iris gelb for the stem, Jeff has created a functional piece that, in its simple elegance, stands as an example of a functional piece being a true work of art.

Renato Foti graduated from the University of Western Ontario, B.F.A. program. His contribution was a series of works comprised of images derived from the archaeological world. And these images are complete with historical stories of their origin. It takes a bit of reading before one realizes that the stories are part of the artwork and come solely from the imagination of the artist. His one piece, entitled *Animal Man*, is a glass relic found in the City of Akhataton. Apparently English words were inscribed on the piece, which was later proven to precede Java Man. Obviously impossible. Or is it? I had to think twice before it became that obvious. The work is thought provoking and his method of working with mixed media cast glass completes the feeling of antiquity almost as if it were not glass but really an artifact.

An excellent example of a successful collaboration between a glass artist and an artist of another medium was illustrated by Malcolm Macfayden from Vancouver, who has studied under many different B.C. glass artists and is now resident glass artist at Andrighetti Glassworks, and Iain Bruce also from Vancouver. The two of them created a series of suspended vessels entitled *Ring Vases*. The vases are hand blown and suspended in wooden rings. Iain Bruce, a wood-worker and Senior Craftsman from Bearpause Studio, created the rings from Padauk and Zebrawood. It was a good example of collaboration, as each artist is proficient in his own medium; and therefore, the work was balanced. It is unfortunate that often glass artists unsuccessfully attempt to work with other materials, which only detracts from the finished products.

I could not fail to mention the work of Ted Jolda from Warthog Glass in Qualicum Beach, Vancouver Island. The sheer imagination and creativity of his *Woozles, Wizzles, and Heffalumps* is enough to make you want to take one home. These vessel creatures are based on the Winnie the Pooh stories. Jolda has hand blown, manipulated, pulled, tweezed and cut to give birth to his rendition of Winnie the Pooh's fantasies.

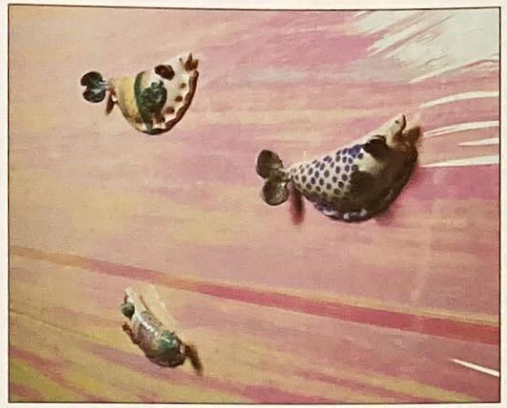
There were many, many pieces in this show that delighted the eye—for different and opposite reasons. As a critic who normally focuses on the other mediums, it was rewarding to view so much excellent glass art in one exhibition. There has always been controversy about whether glass art can be judged purely as a work of art or whether it has to be judged differently because of the technique involved. I believe it is important to realize that the best work in glass (as in any other medium) is a combination of technical skills, sculptural form, and artistic interpretation. It is also important to realize that in a successful piece these qualities are inseparable and together they distinguish that piece. Therefore, it is necessary to understand art and to also understand technique to fully appreciate glass art. Exhibitions like the "Fifth Annual Canadian Glass Show" provide an excellent opportunity to educate the public, to increase awareness and appreciation of individual artists' work, as well as to sell it. It is vital, therefore, that glass art shows be supported by the artists and the art community as a whole. It is important that exhibitions such as this one continue.

Chae Denise Leister was raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where she interacted with the art communities in Saskatoon, Emma Lake, and Regina. After serving on the Edmonton Art Gallery Board, working in various curatorial and administrative capacities in Alberta and B.C., she has returned to Edmonton to work as a corporate art consultant and freelance writer.

A Whimsical Side of Marine Life

BY GREG BEATTY

Sandy Dumba
"Fish Fantasia"
Joe Moran Gallery
Regina, SK
October 1 to November 8, 1995



Because Regina is situated in a landlocked province with a paucity of nearby lakes and rivers, fish would seem to be an odd choice of subject matter for local artists. Yet wildlife artist Jack Cowin is known internationally for his pen and ink drawings of game fish, while ceramicist James Slingerland has also made fish a thematic constant in his practice. In Sandy Dumba's ceramic exhibition Fish Fantasia, we are presented with a third example of a Regina artist who is captivated with fish.

Dumba traces her interest in fish to several different sources. As a child, she remembers going fishing in northern Saskatchewan. She appreciated this experience for the opportunity it gave her to commune with nature. She has also gone scuba diving off the coast of Cuba, where she was able to observe tropical fish in their natural coral reef habitat. Finally, she has maintained an aquarium in her home for several years.

"I chose the theme of fish because of the serene tranquillity that they radiate," says Dumba. "The variable colours, shapes and sizes of fish create a whimsical expression that only nature can embellish. To the extent that one's imagination is not restricted by aesthetic constraints when working with clay, it possesses a similar freedom. Using your hands to create an object is very calming and expresses deep emotion."

In "Fish Fantasia", Dumba presented a selection of plates, pitchers, teapots, bowls and freestanding sculptures, all incorporating an aquatic element. For the most part, she focused on tropical aquarium fish as opposed to those species indigenous to Saskatchewan.

A common species depicted in this exhibition was the Blowfish. Dumba begins by throwing her porcelain clay on a wheel to create a vessel-like form. While the clay is still moist she models it with her fingers to give each Blowfish the distinctive characteristics of its species: most notably, a puckered mouth and puffy cheeks. When the clay is leather hard she adds more detailed features, such as bulging eyes and rippling fins, which she attaches to the sculpture with a clay slip adhesive.

After firing each piece in an electric kiln, Dumba applies a glaze which heightens the natural whiteness of the porcelain clay. It is at this point that Dumba departs from conventional ceramic practice. In essence, she uses the glazed clay surface as a canvas, applying watercolour paint with the aid of a brush. In an interview, she explained that this is a very delicate process. Once the brush contacts the glazed surface, the paint adheres quickly. So she cannot afford an erroneous brushstroke. To assist her in this regard, she works out a preliminary design strategy on paper. But while difficult, the technique does enable her to achieve a sufficiently vibrant palette to capture the brilliant colouration of tropical fish.

While Dumba resists working in a naturalistic style, she does take special care in fashioning the pectoral, dorsal and tail fins of her piscine creations. The delicacy of her technique creates a rippling effect which suggests the notion of movement through water. She is aided in this illusion by the shrinkage of twelve to fifteen percent which occurs in the clay during firing. This shrinkage creates random undulations in the sculptural surface which reflect the sinuous flexibility and muscular energy of a fish's swimming motion.

Although this exhibition focused on aquarium life, there were a handful of pieces in which Dumba escaped the glassy confines of this climate-controlled environment. *Sea Pitcher*, for example, contains several images of painted fish set against a murky blue background.

In addition to the imagery, the artist has attached two ceramic figurines of a mottled green turtle and red lobster to the pitcher. The overall effect is to suggest a continental shelf or ocean floor—both fertile habitats for aquatic life.

The majority of the work in "Fish Fantasia" was composed of functional objects adorned with painted images. But there was some diversity evident, which reflects Dumba's desire to avoid falling into the trap of creative stagnation which often plagues production potters. "I focus my energies toward making the best ceramic sculptures I am capable of," she notes. "I feel my art is constantly evolving as I develop new glazes, working techniques and designs. In this way, an artistic side is added to the functional work I do by creating a visually strong image."

Departures for Dumba in this exhibition included several vessels and plates where she employs a slip carving technique to incise fish imagery on the clay surface. Generally executed in a black-on-white or white-on-black design scheme, these works contrasted with the painted ceramics by privileging line over colour. Another variation involves dispensing with paint as an imaging medium and using a mould to create fish-shaped plates. Paint is then used to highlight specific details of fish anatomy such as gills, fins and eyes. White *Crackle Fish Plate*, for example, depicts a side view of a trophy fish. In firing the plate, Dumba employed a special glaze that caused a crackled effect similar to the overlapping pattern of fish scales. Unfortunately, this piece was marred somewhat by the presence of a reddish-brown stain beneath the fish's mouth.

In addition to her bold palette, Dumba also delights viewers with her playful sense of humour. In *Cone Fish*, she presents a fantastical speckled grey fish whose dominant feature is a trio of spikes atop its head. The spikes are actually ceramic cones that are used by potters to gauge kiln temperature. Numbered nine through eleven, the cones become progressively less intact as one moves down the temperature gradient. Because this piece was fired in the oxygen-deprived environment of a gas reduction kiln, it lacks the tonal intensity of its brethren. In another part of the gallery, Dumba presents seven wall-mounted *Perogie Sharks*. The ceramic skin of each shark has been folded into a crescent-shape and sealed with a series of thumbprints to resemble a perogie. In installing the sharks, Dumba elected to cover the wall with an iridescent plastic film that combined with the gallery lights to create a shimmering pinkish-blue background. In addition to accentuating each shark's creamy colouration, the background reminds viewers of the ethereal beauty of a coral reef.

While Dumba's propensity for humour does add pleasure to the viewing experience, it limits the intellectual weight of her work. In *Burp*, she presents a relatively large-scale sculpture of a Blowfish. Peering into its gaping mouth, one finds a frog perched in its gullet. But instead of being traumatized at the prospect of becoming a meal for a fish, the frog appears to be resting comfortably. As anyone who has ever witnessed the savagery that occurs between fish and other animals in close proximity on the food chain will realize, this vision of predation is idealized in the extreme. There are no gnashing teeth, bloody entrails or crushed bones here.

In effect, Dumba's sculptures function as cartoon creations that are devoid of ideological content. At a time when coastal fisheries are being devastated by rapacious factory trawlers, and the survival of freshwater fish is imperilled by industrial and chemical pollution, it is difficult to be sanguine about our aquatic kin. It might even be argued that our current fascination with exotic tropical fish is deserving of criticism, as to indulge this interest we remove these species from their natural habitat and confine them to small tanks (some equipped with "Regina water", no less), where they live out their days amidst a menagerie of plastic deep sea divers, miniature shipwrecks and other aquarium accessories.

Within the context of contemporary wildlife art, such environmental issues are of vital concern. Of course, it was not Dumba's intention that "Fish Fantasia" function in this realm. Still, it would be interesting to see her experiment with a more naturalistic treatment of her subject matter that would give her the necessary credibility to participate in this critical debate.

Greg Beatty is a freelance visual arts critic from Regina.

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery

Schedule

IN THE GALLERY

"Just for Laughs"
Multi-Media Show Depicting
Comedy, Satire, Sarcasm, Parody
December 15, 1995, to January 23, 1996
Opening Reception: Friday, December 15, 7 to 9 PM

"Celebration"
Clay Studio Three - 25th Anniversary
January 26 to March 5, 1996
Opening Reception: January 26, 7-9 PM

Noelle Lucus
An exhibition of sculpture
March 8 to April 16, 1996

SCC TOURING EXHIBITIONS
(Partial Listings)

"Dimensions '95"
Annual open juried exhibition of Saskatchewan craft
40 works by 36 craftspeople
Jurors: Sandra Flood and Lloyd E. Herman
Organized by the Saskatchewan Craft Council

Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre, Yorkton, SK
December 8, 1995, to January 29, 1996

"Made for a Cause"
Curated by Sandra Flood
Organized by the Saskatchewan Craft Council
Estevan National Exhibition Centre, Estevan, SK
November 25, 1995, to January 3, 1996

JOINT SCC/OSAC TOURING EXHIBITION

"Craft Council Highlights III"
Includes the work of
Wayne Cameron (wood),
masks by Manjari Sharma,
rug hooking by Delories Norman,
and pottery by Anne McLellan

Shellbrook Wapiti Library, Shellbrook, SK
January 1 to 23, 1996

Turtleford Town Office, Turtleford, SK
February 1 to 23, 1996

Biggar Museum and Gallery, Biggar, SK
March 1 to 23, 1996

Jasper Cultural Centre, Maple Creek, SK
April 1 to 23, 1996

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