

THE CRAFT FACTOR



THE MAGAZINE OF THE SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL



SPRING/SUMMER 1988

VOL 23.1

\$10.00

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery

Schedule
Open 1 - 5 pm daily

IN THE GALLERY

"CRAFT ON STREAM"

Crafted objects pertinent to outdoor activities
curated by
Leslie Potter and Tom Evans
May 1 - June 14, 1998

"PASSAGE TO THE MILLENNIUM"

Diane Orchard
- Mixed media
(1/2 show)
&
"BIOMORPHS"
Lorelie Sarauer
- Clay & mixed media
(1/2 show)
June 19 - July 19, 1998
Public Reception: June 19, 7 - 9 pm
Artists' Talk: June 20, 2 pm

"DIMENSIONS '98"

SCC's Annual Open Juried
Exhibition of Saskatchewan Craft
July 24 - August 30, 1998
Public Reception: August 21, 7 - 9 pm

TOURING EXHIBITIONS

"DIMENSIONS '98"

SCC's Annual Open Juried
Exhibition of Saskatchewan Craft
Jurors: Dawn MacNutt & Lee Brady

MacKenzie Art Gallery
T.C. Douglas Building, Regina, SK
May 29 - July 1, 1998

Saskatchewan Handcraft Festival
Alex Dillabough Centre
Battleford, SK
July 17, 18 & 19, 1998

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery
Saskatoon, SK
July 24 - August 30, 1998

Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre
Yorkton, SK
October 1 - November 20, 1998

BARR Colony Heritage Centre,
Lloydminster, SK
December 3, 1998 - January 17, 1999

Swift Current National Exhibition
Centre, Swift Current, SK
January 30 - March 7, 1999

TOURING EXHIBITIONS

(Partial Listings)

"JUST FOR LAUGHS"

A Mixed Media Exhibition
of comedy, satire, sarcasm, parody

Shaunavon Arts Council
Grand Coteau Centre
June 1 - 23, 1998

Morse & District Arts Council
Morse Museum
July 1 - 23, 1998

Prince Albert Council for the Arts
Foyer Gallery, Prince Albert Arts Centre
September 1 - 23, 1998

"COLLEAGUES IN CRAFT"

- A Mentor-Student Project
Mixed Media

Eston Arts Council
Prairie West Historical Centre
June 1 - 23, 1998

Yorkton Arts Council
Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre
July 1 - August 23, 1998

Station Arts Centre, Rosthern
September 1 - 23, 1998



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

SPRING/SUMMER 1998

VOLUME 23.1

CONTENTS

- 2 **Saskatchewan Craft Gallery Schedule**
- 4 **Bush Art**
ALLAN CASEY profiles multimedia artist partners Kim Ennis & Bris Flanagan who make art and operate an artist-retreat studio at Ness Creek, Saskatchewan.
- 10 **The Virtual Keeping House**
ALLISON MURI documents the development of a First Nations' Gallery—a Web Site Project by the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College—designed as a virtual gallery as a blueprint for the real.
- 15 **Gardener at Work & Play**
GRANT MCCONNELL reviews "Folly Garden," an exhibition of mixed media works by Regina artist, Lorne Beug • Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK.
- 19 **To Articulate Historical Linkages**
GREG BEATTY reviews "ouvrez les guillemets ..." an exhibition of ceramics by Regina artist, Jeannie Mah. • Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, SK.
- 20 **A Beginning and Not an End . . .**
ZACH DIETRICH takes a look at the SCC mentorship project as well as the pieces in this touring mentor/student exhibition, "Colleagues in Craft." • Moose Jaw Art Museum, Moose Jaw, SK.
- 23 **Feathers & Funk**
SHEILA ROBERTSON reviews "Dance on a Cloud: Exploring our Fascination with Birds," fibre art by Wendy Black-Kostuk; and "Funky Stuff," clay works by Barbara Goretzky. • Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK.
- 27 **Commissions**
THE CRAFT FACTOR presents *Windbells*, a Broadway & Main sculpture in Saskatoon by visual artist and SCC Exhibitions Coordinator, Leslie Potter.

FRONT COVER Top: *Journey Through Eternity* 1998; Pieced and appliqued silk, pleated ramie, draped polyester, georgette, polyester cord, cotton backing; 25 1/2 x 48 x 5 in.; by Wendy Black-Kostuk. Bottom: *Lady Slippers* 1997; Hand built, paper clay and slip; 25.4 x 10 x 10 cm each; by Barbara Goretzky. From the two 1/2 shows exhibitions "Dance on a Cloud: Exploring our Fascination with Birds" by Wendy Black-Kostuk and "Funky Stuff" by Barbara Goretzky.

BACK COVER *Hothouse* 1995; Copper, leaded glass, ceramic; 16 x 24 x 27 in.; by Lorne Beug. From the exhibition "Folly Garden."



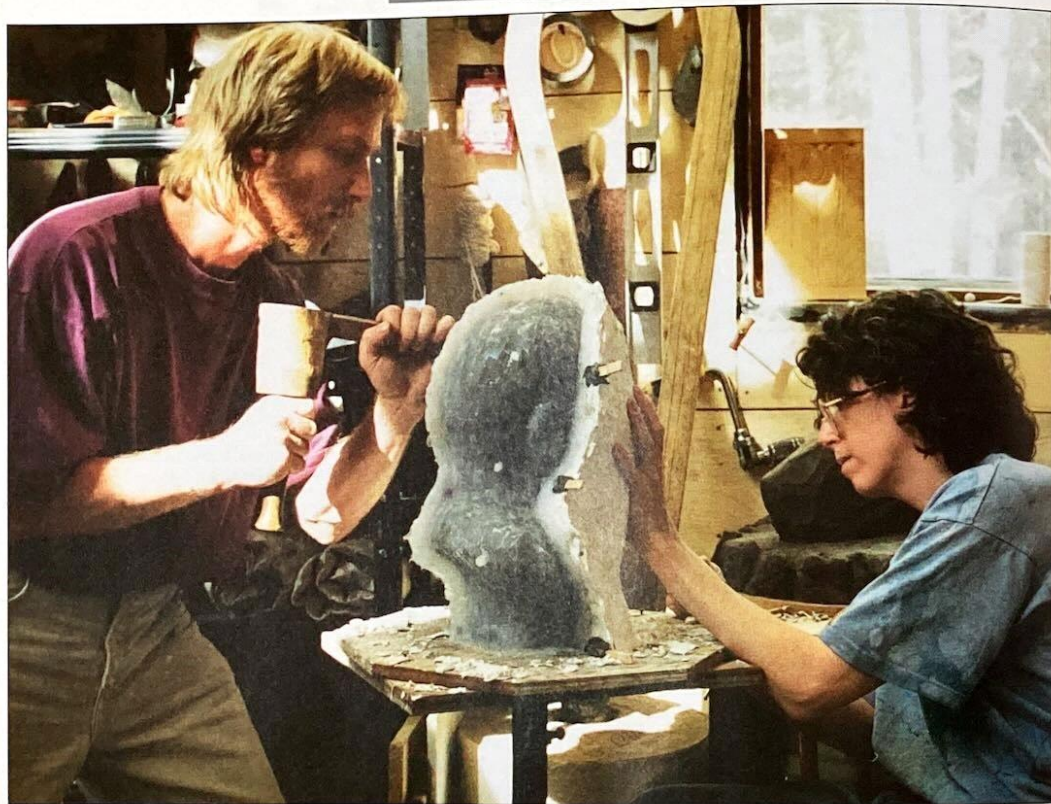
SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL

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



Bush Art

BY ALLAN CASEY



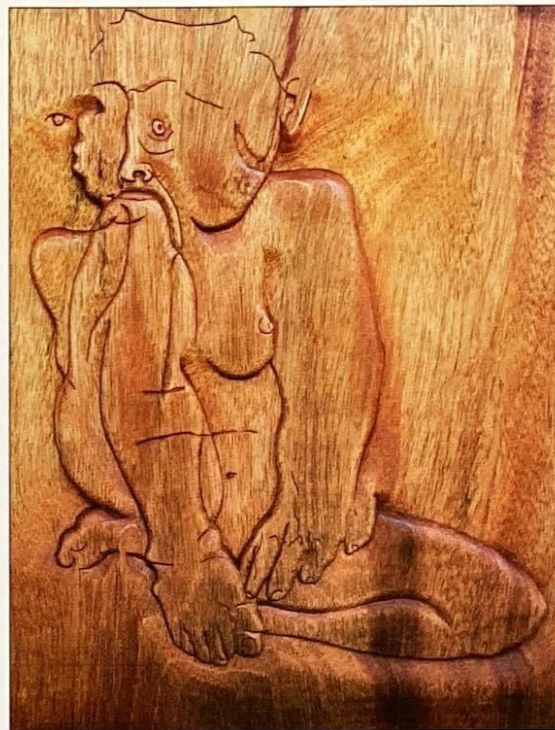
ABOVE Kim Ennis (left) and Bris Flanagan (right) in their studio working on a bust of Alex Pakanski, an early settler of the Ness area. Photo by Allan Casey.

Ennis first moved to Ness Creek in 1984, eventually building himself a splendid eight-sided log cabin, trying to live off the land and make art. Flanagan, who grew up in rural settings all over North America, first came here in 1995 to teach a carving workshop. . . . Just three years into their artistic partnership—call it a double-apprenticeship, perhaps—Ennis the sculptor and Flanagan the wood carver have evolved much in proximity to one another.

Kim Ennis and Bris Flanagan live in the bush at the end of a long, inviting road. On this warm March morning—which in a few hours promises to melt into an axle-deep March afternoon—it seems wiser to leave the car where the grid ends and walk in. Kim has previously offered to come out for me in his four-wheel-drive. But, in paying a visit to a sculptor who explores something called "the angel path" in his work, it seemed germane to actually walk one. The

old road to Ness Creek Studio, originally built by settlers to these now-abandoned homesteads along the west side of Prince Albert National Park, cuts a serene route through an aspen-spruce parkland mix. The road, peppered with tracks of deer, wolf, hare and smaller creatures, is equally good preparation for the art of woodworker and carver, Bris Flanagan. She works in many modes, but it's animal forms—a whole Noah's ark of them—she keeps returning to in her carving.

Ness Creek has been put on the map in recent years by the summer music festival that bears its name. But Ennis, Flanagan and their baby girl are three of only eight full-time residents of the area, about 18-km northeast of Big River. Ennis first moved to Ness Creek in 1984, eventually building himself a splendid eight-sided log cabin, trying to live off the land and make art. Flanagan, who grew up in rural settings all over North America, first came here in 1995 to teach a carving work-



shop. She ended up moving into Ennis's recently-completed Ness Creek Studio. Since then, the two artists have begun working together, not just to run a busy studio with a growing reputation, but in making art itself. They now participate together on commissions, comfortably blurring the line between them as individual artisans when it suits them.

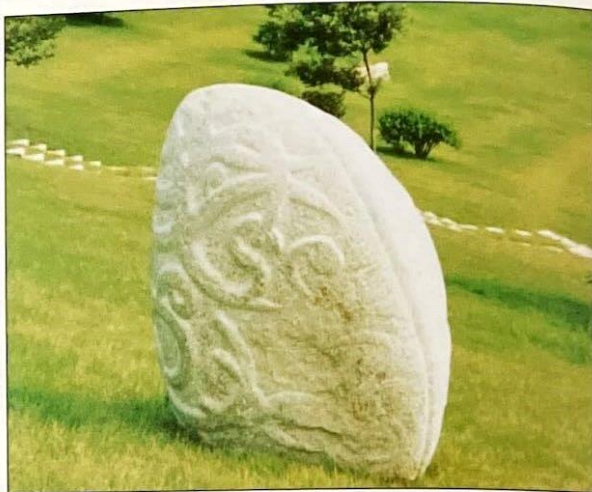
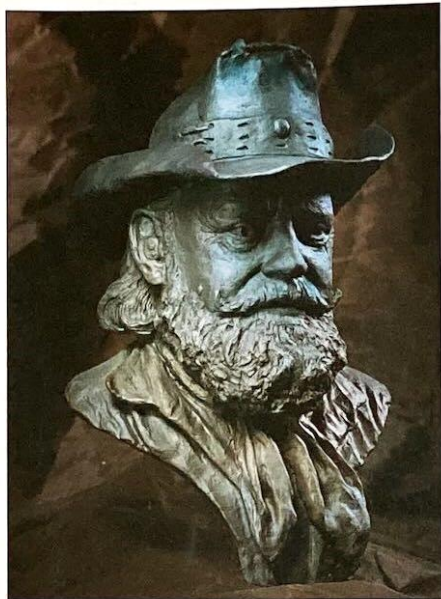
Rounding the last bend into their place, I hear the sound of sled runners. Ennis is hauling water and Flanagan is pulling their daughter Caragana up the hill to work—not that they would describe it that way. The studio is also their home, and *work* is just a handy word for something more like passion. "We work every day," says Flanagan. "We rarely take a day off, and when we do, we can't really think of what else we'd like to do but this." By *this* she refers to the artists' home-studio (to which you might as well add showroom-office) and its many works in progress, especially the over-life-size seated wolf, a commission for the town of Spiritwood, that commands the view. There is a sturdy floor of on-edge two-by-fours for moving big pieces around, and

...there are distinct themes that emerge in his (Ennis's) wood pieces. Prime among them is something he calls the angel path. Pathways—sinuous, snaking, mazed, hieroglyphic—appear frequently and have obvious symbolic meanings related to earthly existence: the journey and riddle of life, choices, serendipity, human history, travel.



ABOVE *Angel Path #2* 1996; stained Douglas Fir; 0.5 x 0.5 x 3.6 metres; hand carved during Special Focus Residency at the Banff Centre; by Kim Ennis.

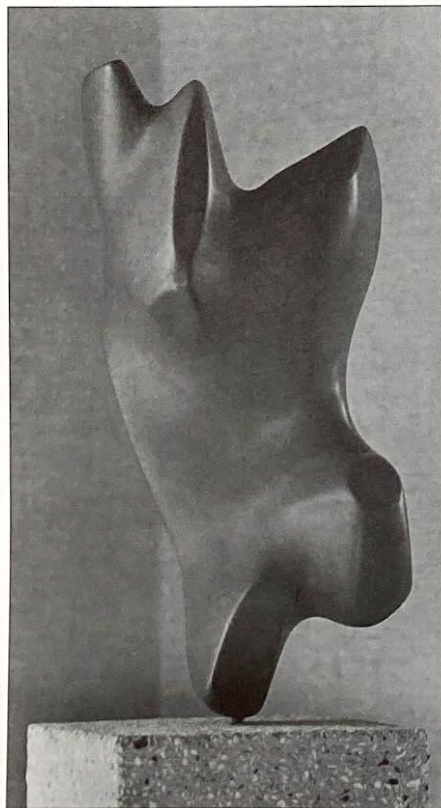
ABOVE LEFT *Seeded Figure* 1996; mahogany; 2 x 25 x 35 cm; Relief from blind contour drawing; by Kim Ennis. Photos courtesy of the artist.



TOP LEFT **Old Hat** 1991; bronze; lifesize; by Kim Ennis. Located at 3rd & Main, Big River, SK.

BOTTOM LEFT **Dancer** 1986; African Wonderstone; 16 x 13 x 35 cm; by Kim Ennis. In the collection of Grant and Bev Kernan.

TOP RIGHT **Seed #3** 1995; granite, carved by hand during artist camp at Kasama Granite Symposium in Kasama, Japan; 1 x 0.8 x 1.5 metres; by Kim Ennis. Photo courtesy of the artist.

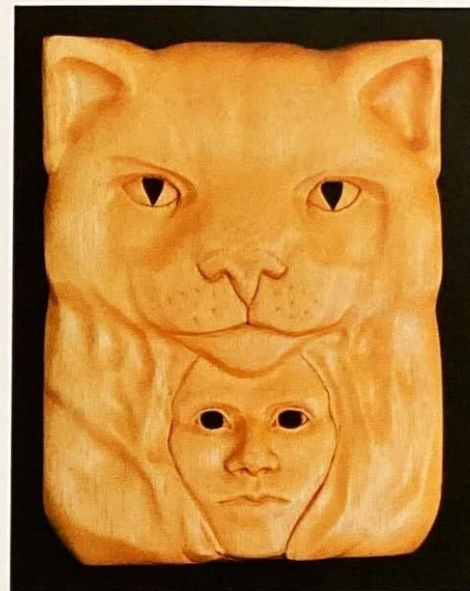


big double doors at the end of the building for moving them out to market. There's a sleeping loft high in the bow-roofed building, and a smallish living space at the back, but most of the elbow room is for making art. The light is generous, beaming in from a shoulder-high row of windows the length of the studio, and a clerestory far above.

The studio has recently been tidied up, the walls clad in new spruce boards harvested from the local forest, and a peg found for every stray tool. That was to make room for the Spiritwood wolf, a large, time-consuming project which demanded extra efficiency. The wolf is an example of the team approach Ennis and Flanagan have adopted. Though both were mature working artists when they met, they've found a rhythm creating together, and crossing over into each other's media. "It's not something we planned. We just sort of drifted into it," says Ennis. "If I don't have a sale or commission, then Bris does. If a customer comes in and they don't like my work, they might like Bris's." Ennis and Flanagan seem unaware of conventional wisdom that says artists—especially ones who live together—don't create well in twos. Rather, they say they just gravitate naturally to the task each does well—for example, Ennis is adept at texturing, while animal shapes are Flanagan's forté—and somehow a piece gets done.

If the work of Ennis and Flanagan has an obvious overlap, it is wood carving, something each artist chanced upon quite differently. In 1994, Flanagan finished the woodworking program at Selkirk College in Nelson, and fine, traditional joinery still features prominently in her work—mirrors, writing desks, musical shakers, cabinetry. But her self-taught career in carving dates back to 1986 when she decided on a whim to make some shavings. For tools, she had an Exacto knife and one small gouge. Looking for stock, she walked into a consumer lumber store and asked what wood they had that might carve well. By some fantastic retail fluke, the store had a piece of Malaysian *Jelutong* and a salesman who knew enough to suggest it.

Though she was already an accomplished woodcarver by the time she enrolled in Selkirk, Flanagan found the world of traditional woodwork did



Though she was already an accomplished woodcarver by the time she enrolled in Selkirk, Flanagan found the world of traditional woodwork did not always welcome her free-form carving. But with the encouragement of a program instructor, Flanagan stuck with it. Her work marries the hard lines of traditional cabinetry with totems and other natural forms.

not always welcome her free-form carving. But with the encouragement of a program instructor, Flanagan stuck with it. Her work marries the hard lines of traditional cabinetry with totems and other natural forms. *Gentle Winged Piece*, a handsome raised mahogany cabinet, sits high on side panels of carved grasses. The natural forms were boldly pierced through *after* the panels were set in their frames. Similarly, a writing box rides on bed table with carved three birches supporting each side. For Flanagan, the fine woodwork is not too precious to carve. "I don't mind going into a finished piece of furniture. I guess I have a boldness about it. I'm not afraid."

Unlike Ennis, Flanagan explores no overt literary themes in her work beyond pure totemism. The animals that feature in her carving ignore boundaries. In a carved panel entitled *Circle Dance*, dolphins are entwined in the limbs of an octopus; cat and wolf co-exist in a single mask; Flanagan switches from giant pandas to lynx with impunity. As she has written: "Animal spirits will speak, act as soul carriers, guides that help us to re-know that all life is interconnected, interdependent, sacred."

Kim Ennis has always been happiest making things with his hands, art in particular; trying to earn a living at it could be discouraging. There came a time in his early 20s when he all but gave up his dream of making it as an artist.



ABOVE
Gentle Winged Piece 1993; mahogany; handcarved door, pierced and carved sides; 44 x 68 x 180 cm; by Bris Flanagan. Photo by Profile Photography, Nelson, BC.

ABOVE LEFT
Cat Woman Mask 1991; *Jelutong*; handcarved; 5 x 25 x 30 cm; by Bris Flanagan. Photo by Profile Photography, Nelson, BC.

THE GALLERY SHOP

In 1997, The Gallery Shop at the Mendel introduced a new feature - Artist

of the Month. Each month, a different artist from Saskatchewan is highlighted in The Gallery Shop, with the aim of raising the profile of both The Gallery Shop and those whose work we display and sell.

In May:

Yvonne Kydd

In June:

Pam Maclean
Belcher

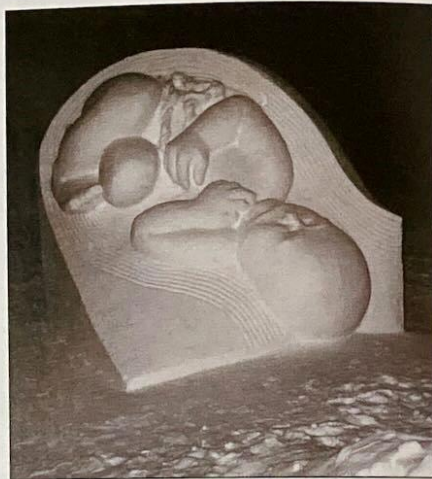
In July:

Tim Brown

If you are interested in our Artist of the Month program, contact Adele Suveges (975-8057) or Shari Fisher (975-7616) during regular business hours.

mendel art gallery
950 spadina crescent east, saskatoon

Snow Sculpting



ABOVE *The Teacher*, placed 2nd in the Prairie Sculptors' Snow Carving Competition at the Big River Winter Carnival in 1997; by Bris Flanagan and Kim Ennis. Photo by Gordon Olson.

A side-line for both artists is snow sculpture. In a typical adjudicated snow carving event, competitors are assigned a snow monolith on a Friday, and the judges arrive by Sunday. There's too little time, and too much carving, for one person. "Snow sculpture is a team job," says Ennis. "Each person needs to know exactly what comes next, and how it all fits together." His partner agrees: "It's large and it's fast, and I find it very exciting to work with Kim."

Both artists take snow carving seriously as an art form. Ennis, who competed for Canada in snow carving at the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer in 1994, says a weekend snow competition is little different than a formal sculpture symposium—except you get less time, and the material is less permanent than stone or wood. Though the carving goes quickly, preparation can take days. For a piece entitled *The Teacher*, which they carved for the Big River Winter Carnival in 1997, Ennis and Flanagan went through several preliminary drawings, clay models, two practise blocks of snow at home, and used a grid to carve the piece on-site. The result, a growing baby snug in the womb, was a bit of autobiography: Flanagan was nearly eight months pregnant at the time.

...both artists hope to offer basic instruction from Ness Creek Studio to interested people. And setting up some type of apprenticeship—the kind that has nurtured them both—is the ultimate goal. Says Ennis: "I used to think 'paying your dues' meant buying your way in somehow. But after working in Bill Epp's studio for a long time, I finally understood. It meant that if you had the benefit of working with people older and more experienced than you, then it was your responsibility to do the same for people younger or less experienced. I would like to be able to offer that here."

Then he got to know the late Bill Epp, an event that turned his creative life around. At one point when they were getting to know one another, Epp asked Ennis if he was an artist, to which Ennis promptly replied an emphatic "no." He was done with all that. "Well, Bill had other ideas about me," recalls Ennis, who would eventually go on to be a founding member of the Prairie Sculptors' Association. Epp put him to work in his studio, the beginning of a long and fruitful apprenticeship. "If I was feeling lost or at loose ends in my life, Bill would give me a job to do and a place to stay," recalls Ennis, who credits Epp not only with jump-starting his own career, but that of most of the sculptors working in the province today. In Epp's studio, there was always commission work to do, and Epp cultivated many apprentices to help him do it. In return, he offered them space, affordable materials, and—most importantly—the encouragement to do their own work.

These days, Epp's influence—that approachable mix of folksy portraiture and universal resonances—is echoed in Ennis's work. *Old Hat*, a bronze bust of Big River character Bill Donald that keeps watch in the town's Third and Main cafe, may be Ennis's best-known work—it's certainly a salute to his former teacher. And Ennis's reputation as a stone carver has taken him all the way to the Kasama Sculpture Park in Japan, where he completed a two-ton granite piece in 1995.

And yet, Ennis did not begin to carve wood in earnest until he met Flanagan just a few years ago. For Ennis, the necessity of



ABOVE *Rattles* 1996/97; clay; 4 x 4 x 8 cm (smallest), 7 x 7 x 16 cm (largest); made by Bris Flanagan and Kim Ennis of Ness Creek Studio. Display as seen in the SCC exhibition, June-July 1997, "Music in Your Ear."

earning a living, either outside of art together, or by doing commissioned pieces, has kept him from developing what he calls "a real body of work . . . of following an idea through to its logical conclusion." Despite these apparent distractions, there are distinct themes that emerge in his wood pieces. Prime among them is something he calls the *angel path*. Pathways—sinuous, snaking, mazed, hieroglyphic—appear frequently and have obvious symbolic meanings related to earthly existence: the journey and riddle of life, choices, serendipity, human history, travel. But for Ennis, who sees his artistic role as unconscious and shamanistic, pathways are also transcendent, non-linear routes between worlds, a place where—like the black-hole singularities of Einstein's mathematics—our logic breaks down. Similarly, Ennis's idea of the angel path is a non-linear shortcut between worlds.

Angle Path #2, a Douglas fir pillar Ennis carved at a Banff Centre for the Arts symposium in 1996, is the largest piece in a loosely-connected series. Standing now at the entrance to Ness Creek Studio, it records one angelic journey as a writhing white pathway on a background of blue-black and green. The same sinuous form is recorded on a much smaller shaft of green hazelnut wood, a walking stick by Ennis that was part of Saskatchewan Craft Council's "Dimensions 97." Really too tall and heavy to be used for walking, the sheer heft of *Angel Path #3* belies its shamanistic, ceremonial intent. Ennis cut the "path" into the green, reptilian bark with a tiny gouge, a pattern that is chaotic on a small scale, yet delicately balanced as a whole. *Map of the World*, a very different installment of the Angel Path series, is a maze Ennis carved for an invitational exhibition

of work in memory of Bill Epp. Here the forms, cut into an imposing, concave maple slab, are rigidly rectangular. Yet there is a tactile playfulness too. Like a child's maze, you can solve the "puzzle" by running a fingertip around the well-sanded grooves until you find the exit.

Just three years into their artistic partnership—call it a double-apprenticeship, perhaps—Ennis the sculptor and Flanagan the wood carver have evolved much in proximity to one another. "And we continue to learn from each other," Ennis says. For two self-taught artists, peer learning is the best learning; doing is better than talking. As Flanagan says about wood carving: "I wouldn't advise anyone to take art as a first step. I would encourage them to pick up a chisel and try it." To that end, both artists hope to offer basic instruction from Ness Creek Studio to interested people. And setting up some type of apprenticeship—the kind that has nurtured them both—is the ultimate goal. Says Ennis: "I used to think 'paying your dues' meant buying your way in somehow. But after working in Bill Epp's studio for a long time, I finally understood. It meant that if you had the benefit of working with people older and more experienced than you, then it was your responsibility to do the same for people younger or less experienced. I would like to be able to offer that here." □

Allan Casey is a Saskatoon-based freelancer whose writing can be seen in numerous national magazines. He is a recent winner of the Saskatchewan Gold Award presented by the Western Magazine Awards Foundation

Artists interested in work or study at Ness Creek Studio can find information at <http://www.net-big-river.sk.ca>.

The Virtual Keeping House

- A First Nations Gallery

BY ALLISON MURI

"To govern ourselves means to govern our stories and our ways of telling stories. It means that the rhythm of the drumbeat and the language of smoke signals can be transformed to the airwaves and modems of our times."

-Marjorie Beaucage, Runner for the Aboriginal Film and Video Art Alliance, 1993-1995

There are many who see the Web as a kind of smoke: it is shadowy, mysterious and ethereal, and burgeoning references to the binary of so-called *virtual* and *real* in our society attest to this discomfort with images displayed on the screen of a computer. In the visual arts, additional concern has occasionally been expressed with regard to the loss of the *aura* of the original, as Walter Benjamin expressed it (with reference to film) in his pivotal article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Technology creates an illusory reality, he argued, and his argument has reappeared with the arrival of the Web. The Web, however, is also a strong signal of communication increasingly made use of by special interest groups that previously had few options for publishing or exhibiting their work.

The above quotation of Majorie Beaucage appears on the website for the Banff Aboriginal Arts Program, which plans to "document and celebrate Aboriginal Arts programming at The Banff Centre for the Arts." This is one of innumerable websites devoted to native arts, including painting, photography, and multimedia works as well as more traditional beadwork or leather work. "Guujaaw, carver on Haida Gwaii" is a story told with photos of a totem pole being carved at Skidegate, Haida Gwaii, from preparation of the log, to the carvers' toolkit, to the raised pole itself. "Distant Relations: Chicano, Irish and Mexican Art. Critical Writing" is an exhibit that becomes a computer-mediated dialogue between geographically distant writers and artists whose cultures share in common such themes as discrimination, exile, hybridity and multiculturalism.

The remarkable aspect of this new means of publishing and exhibiting is that it enables a continuing dialogue between artists, and between artists and their pub-



ABOVE *Baby Mossbag*; beaded; leather wrapping; as seen on the Virtual Keeping House web site. Photo taken by Web Site project students - 35 mm slide film, digitized. See next page, for more information on this traditional baby carrier.

lic, that traditional publishing genres and art galleries, with an eye to the bottom line of physical and spatial limitations, can rarely address. A case in point: the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre has a large permanent collection of art, and the blueprints for an actual museum and cultural centre—a "keeping house" in which to display and repatriate Aboriginal art. The building of this centre, however, may take years to realize. The Virtual Keeping

House (<http://www.sicc.sk.ca/keepinghouse>) is a project that looks forward to the realization of the physical building by promoting and displaying some of the best pieces of the collection.

Jim Bruce, Library Director of SICC, and motivating force behind Saskatchewan's first virtual art gallery of Aboriginal art, says that probably only one piece out of all the centre's holdings has been previously exhibited. "One of the possibilities and potentials of Internet display is that you're not limited by the 'Aboriginal show,'" he comments. Bruce contradicts the prevalent view of Web-based publishing as transitory and unstable, suggesting that the value of this gallery is its permanence: "As long as it proves useful," he comments, "it stays. A journal like *American Indian Art Magazine* is only 'there' as long as it's in front of you sitting on your desk. Then it gets thrown out, misplaced. The virtual gallery is always available via a computer networked to the Internet."

The first phase of the Virtual Keeping House was completed last summer by four students hired by SICC with funds from Industry Canada's Schoolnet project: project coordinator, Cathy Wheaton, a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band; Carol Flett, a Cree/Saulteaux from Kawacatoose reserve; Tim Isnana (Mypia Snaya Hdnajin), a Dakota Sioux from the Standing Buffalo Reserve; and Johnna Martin, a Mohawk from the Six Nations Reserve in Southern Ontario. The collection includes works by three groups of Cree-speaking people in Saskatchewan (Plains, Swampy, and Woodlands); the Dene of northern Saskatchewan, the Saulteaux (Plains Ojibwe) and the Souian tribes of the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota. A significant aspect of the collection is that it not only shows the works but it also details the process of creating some of the pieces: Wheaton and Flett took care

to include the details of beadwork design and construction of footwear, for example, so the skills are not lost and in fact are disseminated to those who have no access to skilled teachers of traditional crafts. This is not only a gallery, Wheaton emphasizes, it is a publication far more complete and more widely available than a small exhibition catalogue. "And we could do it," she says, "without begging someone to publish it for us."

... the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre has a large permanent collection of art, and the blueprints for an actual museum and cultural centre—a "keeping house" in which to display and repatriate Aboriginal art.

Wheaton explains that the site, which includes both *art* (paintings and drawings influenced by European art) and *artifacts* (art objects that are not only beautifully crafted, but also are functional and represent a way of life) creates a unique and useful space for Aboriginal arts. Through the summer she contacted each of the ten artists represented on the site, and in doing so discovered a pattern: over and over again she was told of the difficulty artists were having getting their work accepted to exhibits so that it could be seen. The fine arts community, Wheaton explains, tends to view Aboriginal art as folk art, on the

continued on page 14

Baby Mossbag

The mossbag is an adaptation of the traditional cradle board, but without the board. The cradle board is a board used to carry an infant, like the modern day infant carrier. The mossbag is attached to the cradle board. The mossbag is made of velvet, leather, or fabric with leather laces. The leather laces are laced across the bottom of the mossbag to the top to secure the child in place.

The snug wrapping soothes the infant. In the days before diapers, moss was placed inside the mossbag to absorb moisture in the diaper area, which is why it is called a mossbag. An infant inside a mossbag never experienced diaper rash because moss worked so well in absorbing the moisture. The mossbags were decorated with beaded designs.

BELOW Replica of introductory page on Virtual Keeping House's web site. Image: *Wolves in the Night* 1995; acrylic on canvas; by Clarence Kapay, Day Star Reservation, Saskatchewan.

The Virtual Keeping House A First Nations Gallery



... Enter the Gallery ...

Since being established in 1972, The Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre's (SICC) mission has been to strengthen and support the overall education, retention and revitalization of the Five First Nations Languages in Saskatchewan. For the past twenty-five years, this non-profit corporation delivered services to support First Nations education, art and cultures, as well as to broaden the cultural awareness of First Nations people. The Centre continues to work to achieve this mandate of providing quality and professional services to First Nations communities. The new era for the SICC is an introduction of a Keeping House that will display paintings and artifacts from our First Nations people. The Keeping House Project is a step towards the future for showcasing our First Nations creative talents.

Here is our introduction in other languages.

...Cree... ..Dene... ..Dakota... ..Saulteaux...



This Digital Collection was produced under contract to the SchoolNet Digital Collections program, Industry Canada.

THIS PAGE

Small Boy's War Shield; feathers, deer rawhide (wet) stretched over bent branch that has been bound into a circle; attached to branch with sinew; decorated with bear prints and zig zag design (likely a symbol of lightning). Frequently, these kinds of designs are inspired by visions. Used in traditional Pow Wow dance. Approximately 30 x 30 cm; by Richard Poofabitty. Photo taken by Web Site project students - 35 mm slide film, digitized.



A significant aspect of the collection is that it not only shows the works but it also details the process of creating some of the pieces: Wheaton and Flett took care to include the details of beadwork design and construction of footwear, for example, so the skills are not lost and in fact are disseminated to those who have no access to skilled teachers of traditional crafts.

To learn more about basket-making techniques, simply use your mouse...

Click Artifacts
Click Baskets
Click Birch

to come up with:

Birch Bark Basketry

Basketry has been a part of the material culture of Indian people long before Europeans appeared in North America. With few exceptions, the basket makers are women. The material, design and method of construction of the basket varies among the different peoples. Birch bark consists of two main layers. The outer paper layer consists of thin sheets of cork paper material. A soft yellowish film known as the cambium separates the outer and inner layers. This layer plays an important part in the decoration of birch bark articles. The bark is usually gathered when the sap begins to run in the spring and is removed by making an incision along the trunk of the tree. Heating and steaming the bark renders the bark pliable and easy to shape. The shape of the bark holds after it has cooled. The folds are pierced near the edge, and fastened together by basswood fiber or skinned, split spruce root. Pitch, made from the resin of the bark of the black spruce tree, and balsam gum are used to mend holes and seal the seams to make them waterproof. Sweetgrass is coiled together, tied with sinew and sewn to the rim of the basket. Another form of decoration includes quillwork.

Quillwork

Quillwork is an ancient art form that was practiced by Indian people long before the arrival of the Europeans. Archeological evidence suggests that the art form may have developed in the sixth century.

The quills come from the porcupine that inhabit the wooded areas of Northern Ontario and New Brunswick, and across Canada to the West Coast, extending down from the Rocky Mountains to Arizona. The porcupine is a slow moving animal and is primarily nocturnal. In the past, people who did not have access to the habitat of the porcupine obtained their quills in the different trade networks that existed among the different Indian groups.

The quill of the porcupine is a round hollow which terminates in a barbed point at one end. It is white for four-fifths of its length, and ends in a brownish gray tip. The length of the quill varies from one to four inches depending on the size of the animal and the area of the body from which the quill is obtained. Once the quills are gathered and prepared for use, the quills are dyed. The quills are dyed using natural dyes such as those found in plants, roots, moss, flowers, berries, the seeds of plants, branches and barks of trees.

Porcupine quills dye easily and hold their color for a long time.



ABOVE **Birch Bark Basket;** blue quill embroidery. Maker unknown, but likely a woman from a northern tribe, perhaps Cree or Dene. Photo taken by Web Site project students - 35 mm slide film, digitized.

Methods of Quillwork

There are four principal methods of quillwork. These include wrapping, braiding or plaiting, sewing and weaving. Wrapping is the simplest method of applying quills, and is used to cover long slender objects, such as pipe stems, fringes of garments, gun cases, and horse gear. The most popular technique consisted of tucking the quill under itself, then wrapping it around the item as often as the length of the quill permitted. The next quill is added by twisting its end together with the tip of the preceding quill with a half-turn; the new quill continued to be wrapped around the item concealing the tied off ends of both quills.

The plaiting process is somewhat more elaborate. Instead of single strands of quills, strips of quills are interwoven to make designs. In one-quill plaiting, a quill is passed back and forth between two taunt strands of sinew. The more difficult two-quill plaiting involved one quill on either side of the object with each strand weaving over and under each other, resulting in a small band of diamond shapes.

The sewing method involves the use of sinew or bark fiber. The quill is flattened and folded over or under the threads or thread, while being stitched into the hide at the same time. The three basic stitches used were the spot stitch, the back stitch, and the loop stitch. The different use of stitches and the number of quills used determined the type of design, ranging from geometrical to elaborate floral designs.

In the weaving method, a bow loom was used to produce woven quill work. The warp was vegetable fiber or sinew stretched through bark sheds, then fastened to each end of the bow-shaped loom. The end of the quill was inserted through the warp. A thread was tied to the first thread of the warp and was then laid across the warp. The quill was bent down over the thread, and the thread was then brought around and laid against the underside of the warp. Next the quill was bent across the back towards the upper side of the warp, and the thread was again laid across the warp. These steps were repeated until the desired length was achieved. Quillwork was used as decoration on birch bark vessels, clothing, footwear, and ceremonial objects.

margins of predominant issues and concerns. The works of Aboriginal artists, who are frequently self-taught and influenced by their own traditions, simply do not currently fit the niches of many existing galleries.

Since the site was released last fall, several Saskatchewan First Nations artists have come forward asking to have their artwork added to the virtual gallery. Although presently the works are not being sold through the Virtual Keeping House, Bruce sees an opportunity for a future cooperative of artists assisted by SICC in marketing their works. The percentage of the sale that traditionally goes to the *real* gallery to offset costs of maintaining the physical space could, in the *virtual* scenario, be reduced dramatically. Bruce suggested that one option for the artist could be to give reproduction rights to the centre in exchange for *space* in the gallery.

The presently prohibitive costs of shipping art works, and of renting, heating, and lighting a building would here be averted by the cost of camera equipment, generation of digital images (a process now offered relatively cheaply by certain film companies), a couple of computers and some server space. The artists are more than willing to gamble that some of the *aura* of the real works will not be lost in the transmission of the reproductions: it means, after all, that their work will be on exhibit, in Saskatchewan and in the rest of the world. It seems there are real benefits to virtuality. □

Allison Muri studied Fine Arts and English at the University of Saskatchewan and is a presently a doctoral student in the Department of English. Her area of study is the issue of authority in computer-mediated communications. Her most recent publication was *The Hysteria of the Broken Fether* (Fall 1997, Thistle-down Press).

WEBSITE ADDRESSES:

Banff Centre for the Arts Aboriginal Arts Program: http://www.banffcentre.ab.ca/Aboriginal_Arts/
 Distant Relations: <http://zonezero.com/magazine/distant/ingles.html>
 Guujaaw, carver on Haida Gwaii: <http://www.spruce-roots.org/PoleSite/Haida.html>
 The Virtual Keeping House: A First Nations Gallery: http://www.sicc.sk.ca/keeping_house/

The Virtual Keeping House
 A First Nations Gallery

... Artifacts Artists Search Home ...

... Table of Contents ...

Ornament

2 articles found.
 Now showing 1 to 2.



Dream Catcher
 Description: Dream catcher is beaded white, blue, red, and yellow with four tassels. Received from Roy Alexson.



Steer skull
 Description: Blue beaded eagle on skull.

ABOVE Sample of a Virtual Keeping House web site page. Photos taken by Web Site project students - 35 mm slide film, digitized.

BELOW *Harmony* 1994; soapstone and pipestone sculpture mounted on moose antler; approximately 30 x 30 x 20 cm; by Noah George. Photos taken by Web Site project students - 35 mm slide film, digitized.



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 CANADA



Exhibitions

Gardener at Work & Play

BY GRANT MCCONNELL

"Folly Garden"
Lorne Beug

March 6 - April 19, 1998

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK

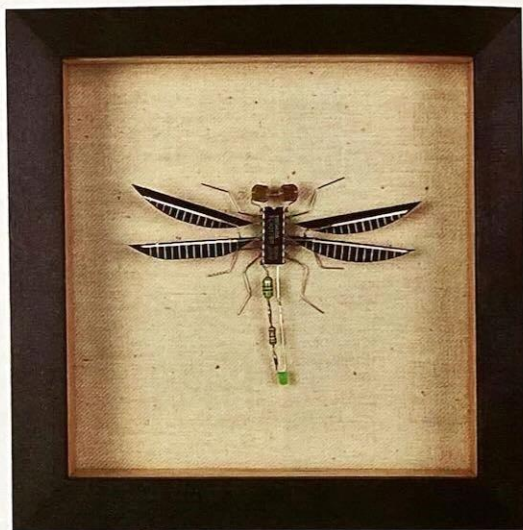
"Personally, I would rather have written *Alice in Wonderland* than the whole *Encyclopedia Britannica*."

- Stephen Leacock

Going to openings has become a bit of a chore. This phenomena has become more pronounced apparently among other friends and colleagues as well. The spontaneous fatigue that sets in about a half-hour before show-up time comes from more than just the week's accumulated stuff-o'-life. The steps into the gallery seem like geological formations to climb, the door starts to writhe like a pastiche of Rodin's *Gates of Hell*. (The same thing happens oddly when opening an art magazine, .digital paralysis of the index finger, eyes start to water, etc.) There is expectation and there is anxiety. Art awaits, and I'm not sure my 'thoughtful frown' muscles and lazy-person's essentials of contemporary discourse are quite up to it.

Walking into the Craft Council Gallery opening the other night took me back to a simpler time when, if asked if I liked Art, I would answer without hesitation or equivocation, yes. People were laughing. Drinking. Obviously wanting to touch the things that they had come to look at. Smiles came easily in the "Folly Garden." Lorne Beug had tended his *patch* very nicely over the past ten years, (the period of time from which the work in his most recent exhibition is drawn), and the rewards were many. From the spontaneous tickle to a more sustained enjoyment, this is a show well crafted to draw from us a child-like pleasure at sneaking glimpses of the adult world. It is evocative of more resonant interpretations too, though. The reference to *folly* in the architecture and landscaping of eighteenth century Europe is obvious. Mackenzie King's garden of pirated 'ruins' at Kingsmere is a fine example on this side of the ocean. Heady atmosphere and deep waters to boot.

The exhibition consists of 17 mixed media pieces ranging from faux biology to faux architecture. Wall-mounted 7 inch square frames house Beug's *Insex*, a stimulating little collection of ants and a wasp, (with whopping big genitalia if my Grade 10 science serves), composed of prefabricated jewellery bobbles mount-



ABOVE *Electronic Insect I (Solar Sailor)* 1996; 7" x 7" x 1 3/4"; Electronic components, wood, cloth, plexiglass; by Lorne Beug.

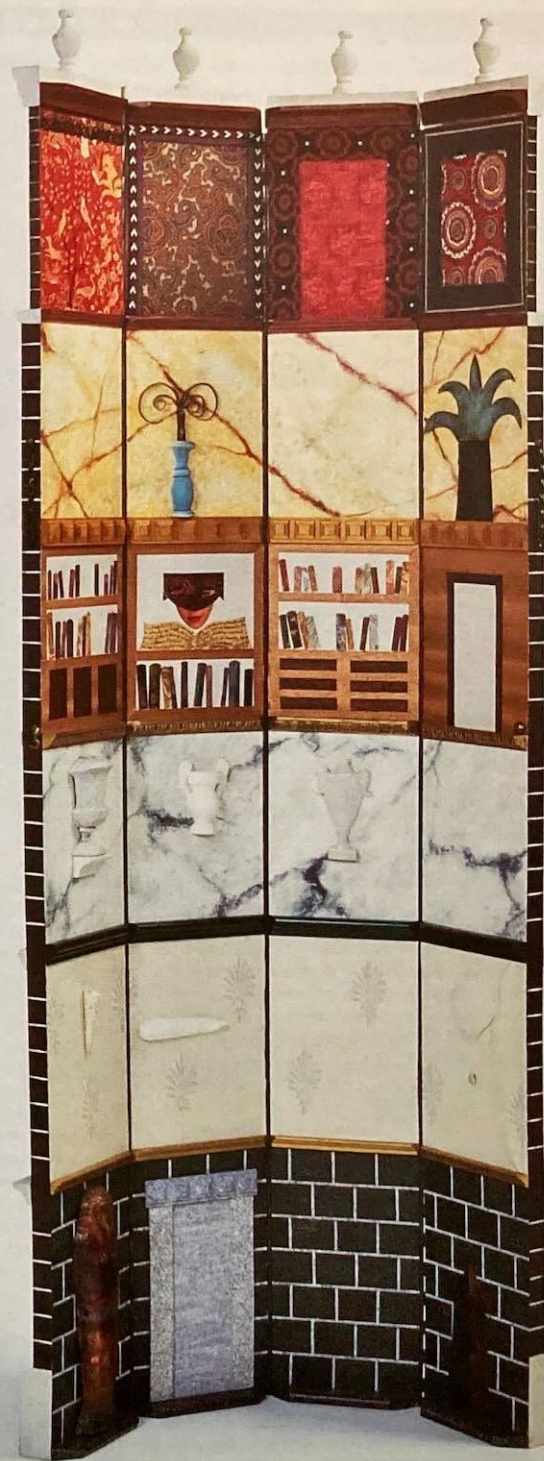
ed against the suggestive flesh-tones of silk and tinted photocopy grounds. The *Electronic Insect* series is presented similarly, but as its name suggests, transistors, conducting coils and chips make up the bug-bodies.

Nine larger format works of the one-to-three-breadbox size complete the show. Towers of plaster miniatures, from putti to Nefertiti, look back from their wedding cake-like tiers. Artfully constructed display boxes presenting archeological bounty invite the touch. There is an irreligious grotto... and a three sided *hobbyhouse* made of copper and stained glass—presumably for the growing of fruits and flowers—also altered by the imagination. We also find a cathedral, the *Gilded Cage*, with a Westminster style tile floor inviting the befoulment by some winged fancy. There is an extensive range of materials and imagery, and yet all creations do seem to have sprung from the same garden.

The 'art history' pieces are the most satisfying in terms of their immediate promise and lingering effect. The view to history and prehistory seems to be a natural for Beug. Dinosaurs, geological strata and architectural facades have all had their components creatively shuffled previously in his mixed media and collage works. What I like about Beug's invention in the "Folly Garden" is that he dispenses with the ponderous encoding of what passes for communication in the visual arts, crediting the viewer with an ability to interpret and evaluate on their own terms. The artist proposes that approaching art and history from the patio dance floor of merriment and folly might deliver at least as valid (and definitely a more accessible) an experience for the viewer.

THIS PAGE RIGHT *Freston Tower Study* 1990 (view of "inside"); 8 1/2" x 8 1/2" x 46"; Hinged wood panels, acrylic, mixed media; by Lorne Beug.

BELOW *Freston Tower Study* 1990 (view of "outside").



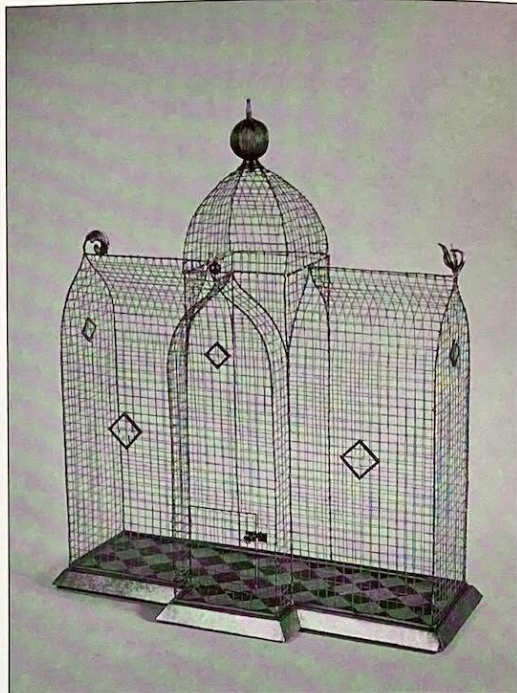
Freston Tower Study 1990, recalls the cutaway doll houses of youth, but here they've gone decidedly upscale for the 90's. Four hinged, cupped panels rise six floors, or about four feet if measured outside of the Folly Garden. The exterior of this *tres elegant* brownstone apartment block comes complete with cornice-work and copper-clad door. But inside the tower our thoughts turn to Manhattan money and the trophy collecting of the conspicuously consumptive. On the lobby level, a designer-procured mummy casing echoes a metallic obelisk across the room. Overscale marble walls play against Belgian tapestry wall coverings. Chipped, (read genuine fake) classical vases look back from the walls, as does a leatherbound Gatsby library. Half the fun of looking *in* on the scaled-down lives of the rich and famous here is that you can almost imagine their pip-squeak voices shouting for a third martini. The elements of the work are nicely integrated and finely crafted. Very tasteful. This collector's smorg is found elsewhere as well. In *Egyptian Study*, Nefertiti's complexion has a kind of disco-ball spackle treatment, and the accompanying lion's ring door-knocker boasts a Home Depot cheap brass patina. *Monument to Art History* invites a styro-foam wedding cake comparison, but the tiers run an absurdist's gamut of Chinese lanterns, Gothic arches and a crowning ring of cupids.

Hothouse and *Gilded Cage* engage a narrower range of visual metaphors, and the result is more allusive and openly playful. I found the *folly* of the exhibition's title most obvious here. In *Hot House's* three-sided architecture (see back cover), we can get seriously foolish and ask if any real utility is proposed. The copper repousse and leaded stained glass construction with strange cupolas and tree-trunk columns suggest the growing of whim and wit as its most appropriate function. Like a three-legged milking stool, it almost invites the one supporting the weight of rational purpose to be knocked out from under it.

Gilded Cage has an 'Emperor's New Clothes' thing about it. A shallow, top-heavy cathedral is constructed of thin wire with clear cut-glass windows. The floor is a black-and-white tile, visually quoting Westminster Abbey. Stark contrast comes with the way it's mounted on naked galvanized steel. The door latch is lovingly crafted from brass. The austerity and pseudo-religiosity of the piece would be oppressive in less skilled hands, but with Beug we can join in on the fun—and make our own, besides.

The *Electronic Insect* series is so successfully crafted as to be almost plausible. From across the room they are insects, and only on closer examination do you realize it's the new biology you're seeing. Contact clips are united with micro-chips and transistors to create one deadly looking *Data Stinger*. All sorts of refined-technology warning flags here if you'd like to go down that road, but the easy manipulation of materials and modest scale don't make a job of it. Other pieces in this series flash back 'Toshiba' and various parts codes, like our (human) species might flash back 'Hugo Boss.'

None of the lightness of air in the gallery or the joy in viewing the work should in any way suggest an easy, (read unconsidered), approach to the artist's craft. Beug has composed, assembled and finished these works to satisfy the initial promise that they offer. Often mixed media assemblage leaves the viewer wishing the apprentice had spent more time with the sorcerer. The magic just isn't there, owing to poor workmanship or unresolved associations between elements. Beug's edges are clean where they need to be, cabinet work finely joined, stained glass neatly leaded, (though not obsessively, something which can drag down even the most beautiful design), .. even the ceramic tile floor of the *Hotthouse* looks as though the Sears Home Improvement work crew did the job. A professional is at work here.



ABOVE *Gilded Cage* 1995; 10" x 24" x 28"; Metal, glass; by Lorne Beug.

About the only serious problem I had with the show might be my own problem and not the artist's. When I think *folly*, I picture the washy crinolines and silks of a Rococo painting, in all of its impermanence and wandering fancy. It might be the flashback to a nightmarish two years in Industrial Arts class, but the machined look and proper building practices of the "Folly Garden" occasionally detract from the place I'd like to drift to, i.e. no place in particular, or a world without edges. Fortunately, Beug has an easy touch with the materials and a content strong enough to carry much of its own weight.

"Folly Garden" serves as a reminder that in art we might still find something to sustain the eye and the mind while allowing for our more fugitive sensibilities. It is an intelligent and sensitive call to sensual delight and play. Given the times we live in and the dour skepticism which has the art world in its grasp, it is that much more satisfying. I'd rather spend a day in a garden like this with a copy of *Alice in Wonderland* . . .

Grant McConnell is an artist and educator, based in Saskatoon. His most recent exhibition, "Before the River," was seen at Bugera/Kmet Galleries in Edmonton, April/May, 1998.

To Articulate Historical Linkages

BY GREG BEATTY

Jeannie Mah

"ouvrez les guillemets ..."

Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, SK
September 27- November 12, 1997

Thanks to the proliferation of communications media, we live in an incredibly fast-paced world. Inevitably, this impacts on art practice. Whereas artists were once content to spend years exploring a particular subject matter, they are now much more inclined to make rapid thematic shifts. While this willingness to experiment is admirable, it may, on occasion, lead to the creation of work that is not fully resolved. For fifteen years now, Jeannie Mah has been influenced by two antecedents to contemporary ceramic practice—Kamare ware from 14th century BC Crete, and 18th century French porcelain from Sèvres. But by continuously varying the context in which her vessels are presented, she manages to keep her work fresh and innovative.

"I first saw the Kamare ware cup at the Heraklion Museum in Crete in 1982," she recalls. "Installed next to a large and exuberant Minoan pot, it was small and quiet. The first day, I didn't even have a sketchbook with me. I had to draw on my ticket stub. Years later, I had a friend photograph it for me." The inexact way in which Mah absorbed the cup's influence dissuaded her from replicating it in detail. Instead, she offers a loose translation, focussing on its squat shape, backward "c" decoration and metallic black appearance.

Mah encountered Sèvres porcelain during a 1989 day trip to the factory's museum while studying French in Paris for a year. "I was dreading it," she laughs. "All that fussy porcelain. I thought I'd hate it. After lingering downstairs examining historical ceramics in the tradition of Rouen Medieval and Palissy, I made my way to the Sèvres collection. The first thing I saw was a Chinese pitcher pandering to 18th century French tastes—very maladroit, and rather misunderstood, but I loved it. It was amusing, and didn't take itself too seriously."

In her 1991 Dunlop vitrine exhibition "Chiaroscuro" (see *The Craft Factor* Vol. 16, No. 3), Mah established a binary dialogue between her Minoan and French-inspired vessels, using principles in the burgeoning discipline of material culture to explore political and socio-economic conditions in the originating civilizations. Here, she deepens her inquiry, drawing on the structure of the classical French essay—introduction, hypothesis,

antithesis, synthesis, conclusion—to articulate the historical linkages between her work and that of Minoan and French ceramics. In the introduction to her dissertation, for example, she places one of her Minoan cups on a shelf featuring a photograph of the original Kamare ware cup.

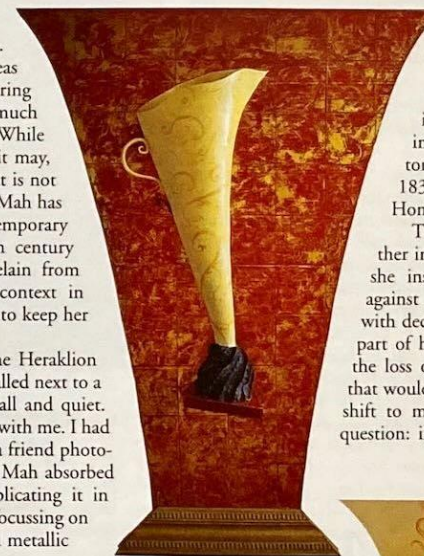
As we enter the main part of the gallery, we encounter five lithe vessels mounted on cup-shaped wood panels. Compared to the Minoan cups, with their lack of adornment and compact handles, the French vessels are elegant and refined, reflecting the disparity in wealth and technical expertise between the two societies. This distinction is compounded by the fact the Minoan cups were utilitarian in nature, while the French vessels were intended to function as ceremonial objects. (Under Louis XIV, Sèvres enjoyed a royal monopoly. It was the only factory entitled to decorate with gold and make figurines and flowers. The King, in turn, would gift the porcelain to favoured courtiers).

Eventually, the commodity fetish for Sèvres porcelain—itsself a product of an elitist class structure which spawned the perverse-

ly decadent Baroque and Rococo forms of art, architecture and design—began to seep down to the emerging French bourgeoisie.

Mah demonstrates this by inserting painted reproductions of invoices from French porcelain factories on her backdrops, including a 1832 order for three vases by writer Honore de Balzac.

This development is examined further in the antithesis of her essay, where she installs three daffodil yellow cups against *faux* reddish-gold tile backdrops with decorative moulding. Implicit in this part of her installation, which emphasizes the loss of quality and heightened artifice that would have inevitably accompanied the shift to mass production, is the unspoken question: if pre-revolutionary ceramic forms



ABOVE *Antithèse* 1997; ceramic, porcelain cone 8, MDF board, acrylic paint, gouache, gesso, oragami paper; 30 x 25 x 10 inches; by Jeannie Mah. Photo by Patricia Holdsworth.



RIGHT *Synthès* 1997; Ceramic, porcelain - cone 1, MDF board, acrylic paint, gouache, gesso, oragami paper; 30 x 25 x 10 inches; by Jeannie Mah. Photo by Patricia Holdsworth.

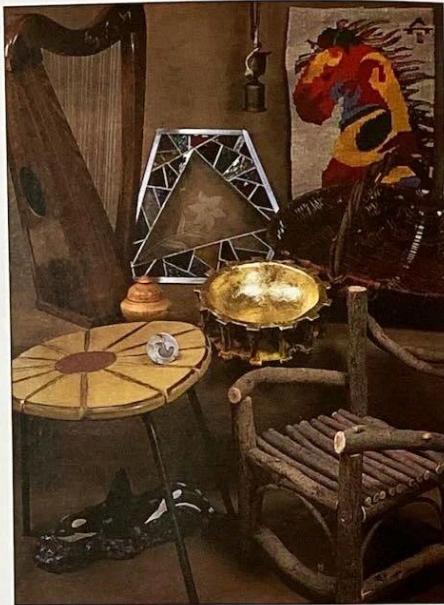
were still popular in 19th century France, when democratic values were supposedly in ascendance, then had the ideology that initially inspired them really changed? Mah's arrangement of the three vessels in a hierarchical triangle suggests not.

Like her hypothesis, Mah's synthesis consists of five elongated vessels set against painted wood backdrops. Offering a range of geographically-specific variations on a single design, the vessels are adorned with line and incised drawings of Minoan and French cups. Through this symbiosis, which recalls the practice of issuing commemorative plates, Mah establishes an intertextual relationship between herself and previous generations of ceramists.

In the exhibition's conclusion, Mah presents two tableaux evoking domestic and museum aspects of ceramic practice. The former consists of a shelf supporting a TV and four interior-lit vessels. Playing on the TV is a video of Mah interacting with an over-sized Minoan cup (which ultimately proves to be made of light-weight metal). By holding it in her hands, she realizes the audience's own frustrated kinesthetic desire. Through her various actions—she places the cup on her head, holds it in front of her and hides behind it—she highlights key aspects of her creative process, from the original conception to execution (birth) to her ultimate effacement by the finished product. The museum component of her installation, in contrast, juxtaposes industrial and artisan-produced cups with one of her own exotic Minoan vessels. Again, this emphasizes that while objects may exist independently in time and space, the connection they enjoy with their historical antecedents preclude their creator from claiming complete autonomy for them.

In reviewing "ouvrez les guillemets ...", I have respected Mah's mild conceit of employing the classical French essay as a structural base. But one should not lose sight of the inherent sensuality of her delicate vessels. Occasionally installed at a rakish angle, they seem almost to be floating in air, as if resisting her attempt to confine them to a dialectical argument. Regardless of how one approaches Mah's work, one is sure to find something to delight both the mind and eye. □

A Beginning and Not an End . . .



- Commentary on the SCC Mentorship Project

BY ZACH DIETRICH

"Colleagues in Craft" - A Mentor Student Project

Touring Exhibition of the Saskatchewan Craft Council
Moose Jaw Art Museum
Moose Jaw, SK
January 1 - February 28, 1998

As the title suggests, this is not the usual traveling Saskatchewan Craft Council exhibit. This exhibition of craft work was the culmination of a minimum of forty hours of apprenticeship by a young student to a well established crafts-person. In total, there were twelve students to twelve crafts-people.

This apprenticeship program came about through the joint application to the Saskatchewan Arts Board for funding by the Saskatchewan Craft Council and the Saskatchewan Society for

Greg Beatty is a Regina visual arts critic and frequent contributor to *The Craft Factor*.

Culture enhances quality of life for Saskatchewan people while making significant contributions to its economic well-being. In 1991-92 culture contributed more than \$420 million to Saskatchewan's economy.



(Source: Statistics Canada)

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While contributing to Saskatchewan's quality of life, culture also means business. The strongest impacts are in manufacturing, tourism, hospitality, transportation and promotion.

(Source: SCCO's Economic Impact Study)



SASKATCHEWAN COUNCIL OF CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS



ABOVE Mentor, Wilmer Senft (left) shows student, Kelly Forness (right) woodworking techniques.
OPPOSITE PAGE Works by students participating in the Mentorship Project.

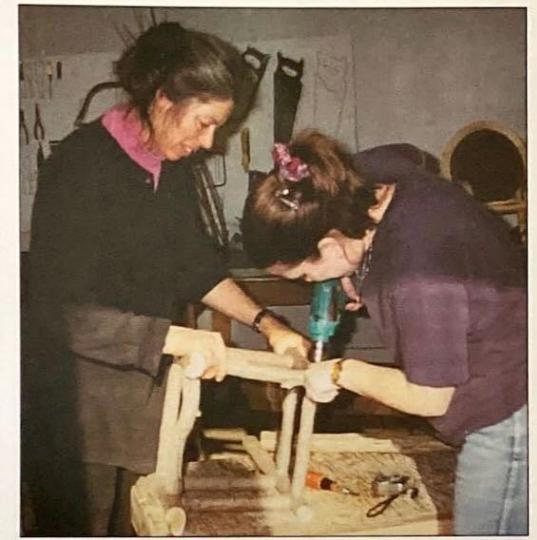
Education through Art (SSEA). The Saskatchewan Arts Board saw the merit in this type of education and granted a sum of twenty five thousand dollars. This money was allocated to the mentors, administration expenses, production of a full colour catalogue and exhibition costs.

The Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC) is touring the exhibition to fourteen towns throughout the province. In actual fact, it was the most popular show picked by the OSAC members, and is touring for one and a half years (May, 1997 - January, 1999).

Ivan Olynyk, formerly the education coordinator for the SCC, was the project coordinator. Much of the success of the program was due to his involvement. Ivan and the education committee sent out a call for potential mentors to our general membership. Selection followed, with the goal being a broad spectrum of crafts with some aboriginal participation. The students were recruited by several means: SSEA contacts, mentors' suggestions, and SCC recommendation.

As established craftspeople, we recognize the importance of apprenticeship in learning our profession. Many of us have been taught various aspects of our skills through this ancient method. Apprenticeship enables the student to learn design, tool use, safety, studio and equipment maintenance, marketing, as well as exhibiting. Most young people have little exposure to quality craft in their education. A "one on one" experience like this one would be rare.

We must not underestimate the necessity of this type of project. Our future as craftspeople may depend upon it. It is timely. In the SCC's almost twenty-five years of existence as an organization, this is the first such attempt. We who have survived the marketing wars of the past Christmas season have made two observations. There was an absolute deluge of poor quality, glue-



ABOVE Mentor, Elizabeth Cline (left) shows student, Heather Konopelski (right) techniques in working with willow.

gun assemblages masquerading as craft confronting the public. Secondly, the inescapable fact—shockingly apparent at Wintergreen, SCC's annual winter market in Regina—is the advancing age of the craftspeople. Education of the public, and particularly young people, is paramount. We need the public to understand and appreciate quality craft. In turn, let's entice the young to pick up the tools by offering them more apprenticeships. This program should become a priority with the SCC. Funding from the SAB, Manpower, Social Services and other government sources should be actively pursued.

In my mind, this apprenticeship project consisted of two parts. One was the actual forty hours spent with the mentor by the student. The second part consists of the exhibition which includes a work from both mentor and student. The exhibition is an effective tool for public education.

This show arrived in Moose Jaw in early January and left at the end of February, 1998. I talked with the Moose Jaw Art Museum's education coordinator, Wendy Parsons, about the show's impact upon the public. She gave many school tours of the exhibit and the reactions of the students were very gratifying. Overwhelmingly, they suggest that they could be the "mentee" and thus be able to make a work of high quality craft suitable for exhibition. The dawning of this possibility among youth throughout the fourteen tour stops is priceless. So the benefits to us, as craftspeople (and to the SCC as an organization) involved in representing high quality craft in a project like this, are too profound to ignore.

A Comment on the Pieces in the Show

The quality of the pieces in the show is surprisingly high, considering the relatively short apprenticeship period. I must confess to some disappointment as five of the participants works were not on display while at the Moose Jaw venue.

- Two of the more impressive works, the musical instruments, a guitar by Dave Freeman and a harp by his student Brandi Rolfe, were not on tour. They were considered fragile. Could some solution not have been found?
- Sandy Ledingham's abstracted cup was broken somewhere on tour and was not on display. Her student, Addie Suchorab, however, entered a wonderful ceramic bowl in the style of the Roman Coliseum, with a gold leaf interior and exterior columns imitating aged metal. The accompanying photograph of the Coliseum and her description of her impressions of it tie in well.
- The other ceramic pieces, Sue Robertson's cat and her student, Laura Stevens' Orca whale, which was broken, were also not on display. A notable omission was wheel thrown pottery. With the large number of potters in this province, perhaps in the future this could be a consideration.
- D. Lynne Bowland's fused glass, *Sheep: Outstanding In Their Field* lends humour to the show. Her student, Tricia Strunk displays several stained glass techniques.
- Elizabeth Cline displays a peeled willow, cranberry twig book shelf, and her student, Heather Konopelski made a child's willow chair.
- Also working with willow was Dennis Tkachuk, whose beautiful, large basket is a show stealer. His student, Howard Hurley, is seriously considering basket weaving as part of his future.
- Fabric is represented with a fine weaving by Madelaine Walker. Her student Tobie Allman (as well as Addie Suchorab, in ceramics,) had the added advantage of working at the Woodland SIAST campus in Prince Albert.
- Wilmer Senft and his student Kelly Forness both contributed wood lathed covered jars, in maple and ash.
- Doug Taylor and Jason Purdy, also working in wood and metal, created three trophy fish lures and a sturdy, flower chair.

- In metal, Rick Dixon showed his student Lee Pepler the forging of hot iron (black smithing.)
- Patti Sopatyk successfully taught Mike Tessier traditional metal jewelry making techniques.
- I was particularly pleased to see Sally Milne pass on her birch bark biting expertise to Honey Ratt. It is gratifying to see that this traditional native art form is represented in our project.

Final Thoughts

This project serves as an educational tool not only for the mentor and student, but also for the general public. Through the years, education has been a high priority with our membership. Yet it always is the first area to suffer from funding cuts. Are we cutting our own throats? I hope that this is a beginning and not an end. □

Zach Dietrich is a potter who lives in Moose Jaw. He was a founding member of the Saskatchewan Craft Council, and has been on the Board of Directors at various times, the most recent being 1994-96 as Marketing Chairperson.

Editor's Note: Since the submission of this article, all pieces (with exception of musical instruments) are touring with the show.

25th Annual
1998

Saskatchewan Handcraft Festival

Friday, July 17
1:00 PM TO 8:00 PM

Saturday, July 18
10:00 AM TO 6:00 PM

Sunday, July 19
11:00 AM TO 4:00 PM

Craft Market:
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Seniors' Sunday: \$1.75

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THE TELEGRAPH

LOTTERIES



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of the Prince Albert National Park

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Feathers & Funk

BY SHEILA ROBERTSON

"Dance on a Cloud: Exploring our
Fascination with Birds"

Wendy Black-Kostuk

&

"Funky Stuff"

Barbara Goretzky

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK

January 16 to March 1, 1998

"The beauty of the object derives from the quality of work that went into it, from the attention that went into it," says Carla Needleman in her 1979 book, *The Work of Craft*.

Needleman describes handmade objects as "not quite miraculous, not quite accidental," falling somewhere between God's Creation and the human world. A craft, she maintains, "is not its objects; a craft is how I am making them."

This is as good an explanation as I have seen for the relationship between an artist's work and the spirit in which it was made. That link between how the artist is and how the handmade object evolves came to mind when I was viewing the recent exhibition of separate bodies of work by Wendy Black-Kostuk and Barbara Goretzky. It was clear the two have disparate approaches to creativity.

With a few exceptions, this prevented the kind of synergy that sometimes happens in group exhibitions, where themes or links percolate amongst the works.

Black-Kostuk's fibre work appeared meticulous, precise, multilayered. She used vivid colors and sumptuous textures, ranging from fluffy feathers to velvets, metallics and leathers, to explore her theme—the wonders of the world of birds.

Her approach was often spiritual and meditative, as in the *Bird Spirit Tree Totem*, a medley of purples and greens in velvety textures. This wallwork suggested a bird hovering over a long, basket-like nest. An imaginative touch was the weaving through it of long, knotted lacing in metallic pewter.

Others of her pieces were dramatic and celebratory. *Miracles to Achieve*, a shield-like wall piece, expressed the moment of transformation, when a sooty pyre explodes into gold and crimson and magenta feathers, soaring up: the phoenix. The elongated ovals cut from leather, which were the key elements of this collage, were perfectly suited to the theme. They simultaneously evoked tongues of flame and the feathers of a mythical bird.

While deliciously decorative, some of Black-Kostuk's work suffered from a static appearance. *Miracles to Achieve* excelled because it is so dynamic. It exemplified the metamorphosis of the creature through the balancing of neutral tones with bright colors and metallic gold.

Black-Kostuk has a degree in interior design from the University of Manitoba, but working with fibre is her first love. For more than a decade, she has been using antique kimonos and

obis imported from Japan. Her bird series emerged from the desire to make use of some small scraps of wonderful materials. She said the feather shape seemed like a useful way of doing this.

Her exotic evening dress, *Fancy Bird Dress*, featured appliqued and embroidered feather and floral shapes in hot pink, black and gold, over streamlined beige silk. It was a knock-out, a one-of-a-kind garment.

BELOW *Fancy Bird Dress* 1994; Silk applique on silk, satin stitch, silk lining, trims of various contents; Size 8, full length 52 inches; by Wendy Black-Kostuk.



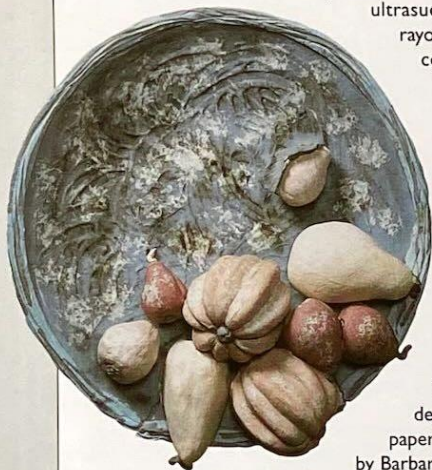


The sheer number and color and range of Black-Kostuk's output was almost overwhelming. Her 27 works included numerous wall-pieces, two garments, and even a fanciful, soft sculpture leather hen. Its lacy, draped wings were fashioned from recycled, knitted leather.

Goretzky, on the other hand, was not striving for tour-de-force creations. Her handbuilt sculptures, made of a clay base mixed with paper for texture and body, were experimental and rather austere. She was trying new things in terms of color, form and subject matter. The 15 works, including small sculptures and vessels, were relatively small, and their muted pastel colours reflected the application of clay slips, rather than glazes.

There was little here that was as memorable as her popular raku floral work, with its cartoon-like sharp edges and its

LEFT **Bird Spirit Tree Totem** September 1997; Wool, wool & cotton velvets, wool frieze, printed cotton velvets, ultrasuede lacing, rayon cord, batik cotton velvet; 33 X 11 1/2 X 3/4 in.; by Wendy Black-Kostuk.



LEFT **Fruit Bowl** 1997; 40.6 cm diameter x 12.7 cm depth; handbuilt, paper clay and slip; by Barbara Goretzky.

delicious contrasts between dark and light areas. Yet she deserves credit for working without a net, in an effort to expand her repertoire.

Goretzky had a few bird-themed works, which provided some common ground with Black-Kostuk's show, but her style was quite different—wry, witty and sardonic. Take, for example, her little birdhouse wallwork entitled *Love Birds*. It bore the remains of a feathered couple who evidently flew off-course and ended up mounting themselves on either side of the entrance to their home. Another quirky sculpture depicted a plump "early bird" clearly savouring the worm.

In addition to birds, images of pears and noses recurred in Goretzky's show. The pear, she said in an interview, is simply a shape she likes. I enjoyed the way the two pale green pears appeared to prop each other up on a miniature shelf. Another deft little work was a small sculpture, *The Green Chair*, in which a tiny pear teetered at the edge of a rustic-looking chair.

The nose images interjected themselves in wallworks personifying the nosy neighbor and then peeping Tom, as well as on a charming platter called *A Bed of Noses*. The sniff-

fer and the sniffed were utterly merged here, in generous noses framed in petals.

The nose image came about accidentally one day when Goretzky was making a pinchpot and happened to stick both thumbs into the oblong of clay. She immediately liked the nostril shapes: "I thought it looked like one of my relatives," she quipped.

The most gently humorous of Goretzky's pieces depicted three lavishly finned fish in a boat. Instead of being the catch of the day, they had commandeered the craft. They looked quite content, not at all like fish out of water.

The pair of works that left me hungering for more areas of interface in the creations of these two artists was Black-Kostuk's stylized window treatment, *Journey Through Eternity*; and Goretzky's flower-filled clay shoes, *Lady Slippers*. (See front cover.)

Together, they summoned up an ethereal feminine presence. Black-Kostuk's fibre work was predominantly white and cream, arranged in veils of translucent and opaque cloth, bearing a pastel applied image of a bird. While the piece implied a garment, it was actually an elaborate drapery, designed as a tribute to the life of Princess Diana.

The attention to detail here was extraordinary, particularly in the rows of rippled pleats which the artist twisted before sewing them in place.

Although they had the same whimsical air as her other work, Goretzky's flowery shoes were more elaborately crafted and colourful. Here, at least, the co-exhibitors were on the same wavelength, poised, as Needleman expressed it, somewhere between miracle and accident. □

A Saskatoon freelancer, Sheila Robertson has covered arts and craft in the province for over 16 years.

BELOW **Love Birds** 1997, Hand built, paper clay and slip; 40.6 x 15.2 x 12.7 cm, by Barbara Goretzky.



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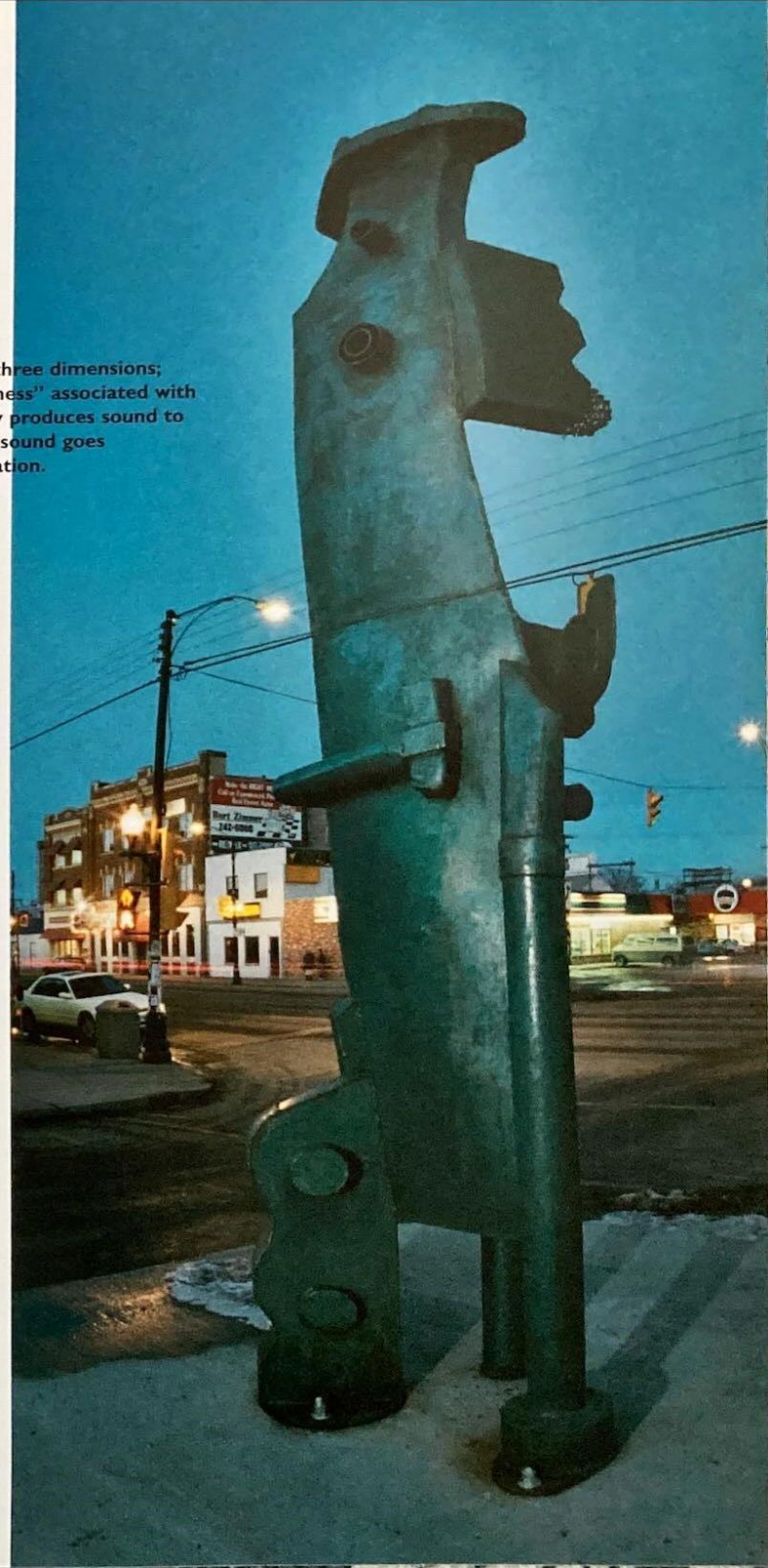
RIGHT
Windbells 1997
BY LESLIE POTTER

In the world of sound we deal with three dimensions; there is a certain "roundness" and "fullness" associated with sound because of this. *Windbells* gently produces sound to remind us that, like sculpture, sound goes beyond a linear appreciation.

- from Artist Statement

11 feet high;
welded steel / oil paint;
Installed September 1997 for the
City of Saskatoon (lease agreement).
Located on the corner of Broadway
Avenue & Main Street, Saskatoon.
(Note the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery
building extreme left)

Craftspeople are invited to submit professional quality photographs (8" x 10" glossy prints: black & white or coloured) illustrating their commissions for private and public installation. Include identification: title; dimensions; materials/techniques; client; date installed; exact location on site; gallery, agent, interior designer or architect involved. Those works chosen for publication will be featured on the Commissions Page in upcoming issues of *The Craft Factor*. For more information, contact: Leslie Millikin, Editor, *The Craft Factor*, SCC, 813 Broadway Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7N 1B5, (306) 653-3616; fax 244-2711.



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