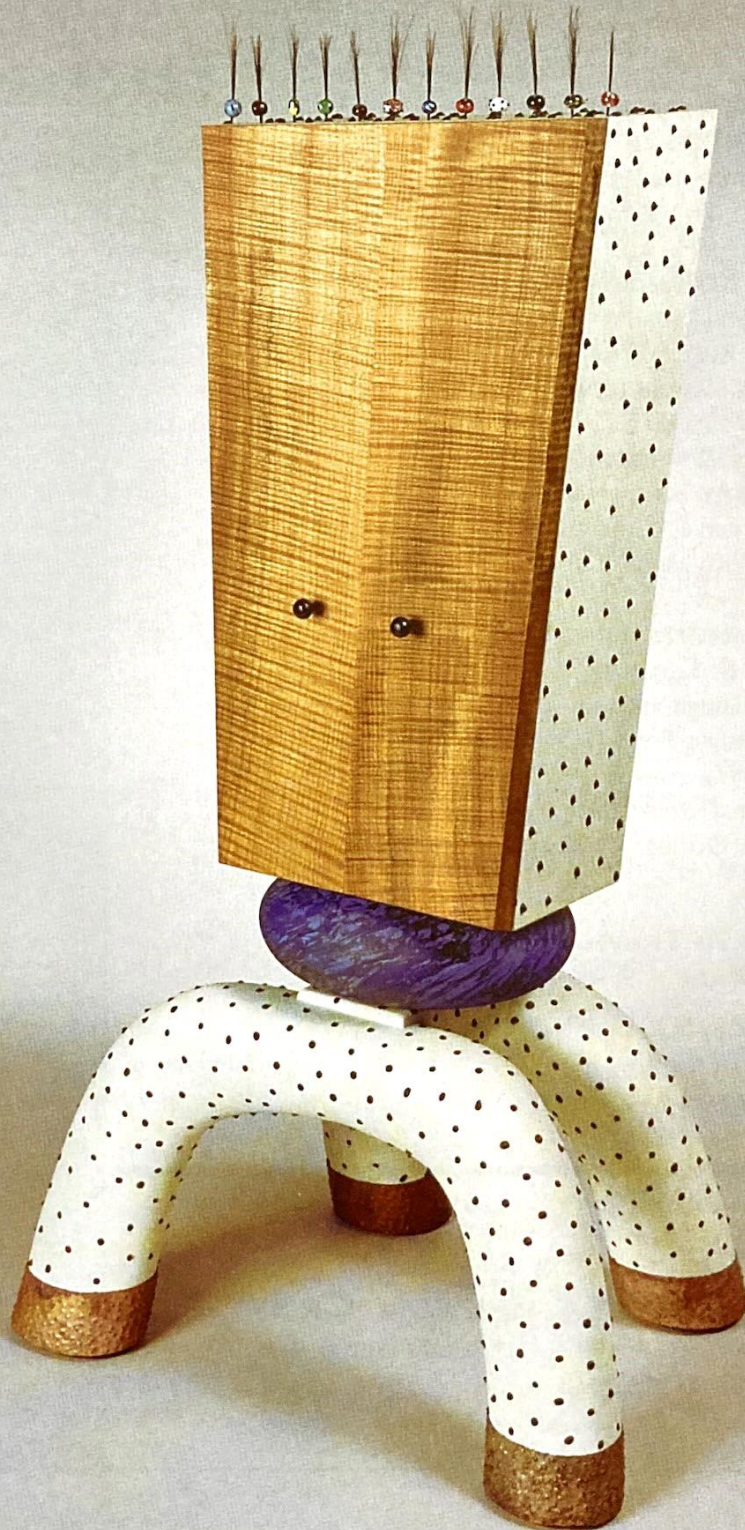


THE CRAFT FACTOR



THE MAGAZINE OF THE SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL



FALL 1998

VOL 23.2

\$10.00

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery

Schedule
Open 1 - 5 pm daily

IN THE GALLERY

"BEYOND BEDCOVERS: ART QUILTS"

by Dianne Douglas
- Quilts (1/2 show)
&

"ad libitum"

by Lynn Parsons
- Hooked Rugs (1/2 show)
September 4 - October 11, 1998

"EDGES & IMAGES: CONTEMPORARY KNIFEMAKING"

by Gary Greer & Grant Irons
- Handmade Knives (1/2 show)
&

"MOMENTS OF FORM & COLOUR"

by Alamgir Huq
- Hand Pulled Etching Prints (1/2 show)
October 16 - November 22, 1998
Public Reception: October 16, 7-9 pm
Artists' Talk: October 17, 2 pm

"DARE TO TRAVEL: WEAR - WARE - WHERE"

Touring exhibition selected by SCC Exhibitions Committee
Works that can 'withstand' travel
November 27, 1998 - January 10, 1999

TOURING EXHIBITIONS

"DIMENSIONS '98"

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

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

"COLLEAGUES IN CRAFT"

- A Mentor-Student Project
Mixed Media

Humboldt Museum
October 1 - 23, 1998

Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place
University of Saskatchewan Campus, Saskatoon
November 1 - 23, 1998



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



The Saskatchewan Craft Council (SCC) is a non-profit organization formed in 1979 to nurture and promote the craft community. Craftspeople, supporters of crafts, and the general public are served by the many and varied programs of the SCC including gallery and touring craft exhibitions, craft markets, workshops, conferences, and publications. The SCC is an affiliated member of the Canadian Crafts Council.

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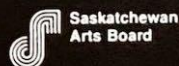
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The Craft Factor

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FRONT COVER *Tanya Harding's Poodle*; freestanding, painted, stained, marbled, patinated cabinet; Curly Maple, Basswood, copper, glass beads, found objects; by Tom Ray, Mark Orr, Dan Newman, Tanya Norman, Del Stubbs, Mary Thouin-Stubbs, Mark Sfirri, Michael Hosaluk, Ted Crossfield, Lynn Bowland, Andrew Curle; made at "Breaking Barriers," Emma Lake Wood Conference, 1998.

BACK COVER *Speckled Catfish*, 1998; bronze; 19cm x 56cm x 19cm; by Ian Jones. From the exhibition "Craft on Stream," Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, May 1 - June 14, 1998.

A Crucible of Invention

"Breaking Barriers"
8th Biennial Woodturning & Furniture Symposium
Emma Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada

It is a dramatic scene that the TV presented again and again in the decades following World War II as a wordless testament to our prosperity—a dark industrial space becomes increasingly bright as the lip of a gigantic cauldron tilts to pour its white hot contents into waiting molds below. As the flow increases, the air fills with streamers of luminescent spatters while the hot overflow runs out, puddles, and cools on the floor nearby. We become aware of humans nearby tending to the activity, but they are dwarfed and made insignificant by the, immensity of the pour. The scene is at once mechanical and organic as the liquid and its light spew into the cavern.

Describing the 'Emma Lake Experience' and its potential effect on the woodworking field is similar to trying to describe the original Woodstock music festival and its impact. If you weren't there, you missed an interesting time—and the best that you can do is speak with someone who was there, look at some pictures, and buy the soundtrack. The metaphor of the foundry, like others that I will use, is an attempt to provide a more fully sensorial image of the event than descriptions of names, places, and products could ever do. The Emma Lake Experience was a crucible of invention and innovation—a compressed moment of incandescence—with a release of energy, insight, and connections that will most certainly have influence throughout the fields of turning and furniture, and even metals.

For those not familiar with the event at Emma Lake, it is a conference like no other. Sponsored by the Saskatchewan Craft Council and brought to fruition by a handful of dedicated area artisans coordinated by Michael Hosaluk, the event is five days of 'making stuff' with 24-hour access to shops and material. The only qualifier is that the products of these efforts are auctioned off on the last day in order to provide funds to do it all again sometime and to assist the Council in its regional efforts in supporting makers and associated events.

Canada, and especially Saskatchewan, should be pleased and proud with the high number of regional artisans in this company. The organizers clearly understood that in addition to focusing international attention on the province, the conference had the potential to charge the local scene with added vitality, to bring some of the latest thinking and techniques to area artisans,

BY STEVE LOAR



ABOVE *Green Wood Infinity Vessel*; Birch wood, Elder twigs, rawhide, watercolours, nail polish, glass, wire, butterfly, by Melvyn Firmager, Anita Rocamora.

and to directly connect them with makers from around the world. But it is too easy to slip into the mode of thinking that suggests that the high profile professionals and academics are the bearers of gifts to the locals. It became apparent to all that the Saskatchewan Craft Council and the region are highly active, and have appar-

ently created a sense of community among the makers of craft and art that is to be envied by many. The sheer scope of the generosity, which allows the shop facilities to be created at the Kenderdine campus, is not only unprecedented in my experience, but would be simply impossible in most areas of the world. The out-of-towners as well as the locals each brought their stereotypes to Emma Lake. It was through the magic of mingling, conversing, and working together that these prejudices were quickly dismantled and replaced with respect, collegiality, and new working relationships and friendships.

Attendees to this year's conference, dubbed "Breaking Barriers," were primarily invited from the last event's roster and from references that they made. Much of the success of the '96 and the '98 events can be attributed to individuals not only coming with creativity and manual expertise—but with a certain mind-set. They came with an enthusiasm about the potential interaction and collaboration which the event promised. Not every individual was able to throw him or herself into the collaborative mix and many acknowledged the sometimes harrowing demands of working in an exposed public arena. On the whole, though, the group responded to the promise of Emma Lake much like the students of the legendary (but true!) research into the effects of expectations. In those studies, one group of students was told that it was the smart group and went on to diligently get 'A's' while the other group was told that they were dummies and proceeded to be troublesome and to perform poorly academically. For "Breaking Barriers" people came from all over the world to partake of an experience that had already acquired a certain legendary aura—and received personal reward



in proportion to their willingness to engage in the process. They expected it to be fluid, dynamic, and breathtaking—and it was.

As a college teacher, I was struck by an observation made by several of the participants who had apparently not gone to college. They likened "Breaking Barriers" to what they thought college, especially art school, would be like. How I wish. Where the conference is open ended, group oriented, social, and full of a supportive "go for it!" attitude, no matter how wild the idea—college is more typically about an individual's steady movement along a determined path and their arrival with finished goods of acceptable quality at the end of an 11 or 15 week production schedule. College is much more about investigation within parameters and the successful answer than the high risk "let's try it!" atmosphere of Emma Lake. Where colleges do use teams, they tend to be controlled events

moving toward rather predictable outcomes—not the uncontrolled or unpredictable hothouse of interchange that was "Breaking Barriers." The Emma Lake experience is as close to the style of learning espoused in Carl Roger's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* as I have seen—where the student investigates, associates, challenges, and learns, rather than submitting to public education's pervasive infatuation with testing. There was no test at the end of "Breaking Barriers"; amazingly, even the auction prices were not generally seen as any particular gauge of 'success' or 'worth'. We each knew what went into the making of the pieces and we knew what we got out of them. With a number of North America's premiere furniture/craft teachers in attendance, one can hope this sense of adventure, risk, and unpredictable outcomes might get translated to appropriate teaching situations, and not be reserved only for the select conference participant.

ABOVE

Emma Lake Quilt Block; various materials; by Don MacDougall, Marigold Cribb, Sarah McCollum, Tanya Norman, Clay Foster, Ian Jones, Sarah Afseth, John Kingsley, Douglas Finkel, Meryll Saylan, Fabrice Micham, Sandra Ledingham, Niel Stoutenburg, Trent Watts, Dave Dunkley, Michael Hosaluk, Andy Buck, Debbie Gola, Paul Sasso, Gord Peteran, Anita Rocamora, and other unidentified participants.



TOP PHOTO Participants at work and in conversation in the Emma Lake shop. LEFT TO RIGHT FOREGROUND: Jamie Russell, Jason Russell, John Kingsley, Chelsey Kingsley, Don Kondra, LEFT TO RIGHT BACKGROUND: Rollin Patrick, Jean Peterson, Tanya Norman, Doug Taylor. Photo by Steve Loar.

PHOTO SECOND FROM TOP *H.M.S. Meat 'n Donuts*, malt-fired air boat various materials; by Don Fortescue, Peter Pierobon, Jack Larimore, Michael Hosaluk, Paul Sasso, Andy Buck, Kim Kelzer, Jo Stone, Ted Crossfield, Heather Cline, Gordon Peteran.

The metaphor of the foundry, like others that I will use, is an attempt to provide a more fully sensorial image of the event than descriptions of names, places, and products could ever do. The Emma Lake Experience was a crucible of invention and innovation—a compressed moment of incandescence—with a release of energy, insight, and connections that will most certainly have influence throughout the fields of turning and furniture, and even metals.

Another way we might think about the “Breaking Barriers” conference would be to compare it to an atomic reaction. A common method of graphically explaining this process is to drop a Ping-Pong ball into a room or a chamber which is covered wall to wall with a carpet of mouse traps—each one loaded with its own payload of a Ping-Pong ball. As the initial ball drops, it sets off a frantic interplay of cause-and-effect that builds randomly and exponentially until it is spent in a matter of seconds. Emma Lake is a craft equivalent of those seconds; a spontaneous and open reaction that releases vast amounts of energy in unpredictable ways. Much like the crucible, where energy can be channeled into products of wondrous or terrible things, a few at the conference spent themselves in sheer brilliance and heat, while others failed to make connections. Most participants left the conference though, having not only had a positive experience and made friends, but with an understanding of new terminology, new skills, and a new network of associates who could produce custom

parts in other media. It was exhilarating to have custom parts made for a project and at the same time draw a new ‘initiate’ into your area of expertise—but the greater effect will come as those associations are strengthened through use, and our work becomes richer for the interplay of the various media.

The last day’s auction gave some evidence of the amount of feverish activity that took place in a short amount of time. Large amounts of creativity, compromise, risk, conversation, and dexterity were brought to bear on the creation of a whole range of objects. In a world of polished precision goods, a few of these objects didn’t warrant a second look, let alone a purchase price.... maybe better as candidates for a landfill. A few others seemed brilliantly conceived but cobbled together. Some had great parts but lacked a unifying theme or effect. Some lay incomplete. *Many*, though, shone. And they shone as the result of two main conditions that surrounded their creation. The first was an atmosphere that valued fine execution but acknowledged that the acts of ideation and creation were more important than finesse. The second reason was the temperament with which the participants came. They came knowing that the event was about process in its broadest definition. As a consequence, their creations were shielded from many of life’s ‘serious’ expectations and the ramifications of profit margin and career positioning. The unexpected result of this was the massive ongoing application of gut intuition and an explosion of whimsy, humor, and wit.

A final way that we might think of the conference would be to consider the qualities and intentions of a doodle or a sketch. Whether it gets translated into a more refined drawing or into other media, a sketch often contains verve that our finished works lack. While sometimes fragmentary, incomplete, or poorly proportioned, a sketch many times speaks in a clearer voice of the things that interest us than do our cooked out finished wares. In their own way, sketches—not the finished work—is the more perfect rendition of our interests and hopes. With the sketch, everything is possible—with the finished work we’ve done our best to work within what we believe to be the limitations of our tools, our skills, and our time. An unexpected aspect of the conference was the widespread interest in quiet manual tools and methods, marks of the maker, and the large number of individuals with sophisticated aesthetic sensibilities eagerly exploring ‘primitive art.’ Like a sketch, the individual pieces created at Emma Lake

and even the event itself, tended to lack the refined calculated controlled qualities that so many of us strive for in what we make. We know that ‘finely crafted’ most frequently speaks of control and refinement, and that much of the marketplace demands it. The Emma Lake experience suggests that not only is there a great pent up interest in our need to be more whimsical, but that its more organic nature may actually engender greater potency in what we have to offer society. It may also be the medicine that we need as makers. It all suggests a reassessment of what we make and why we make it. The effects of these investigations and considerations could have far reaching effects.

At its expanded five days, the Emma Lake conference was just the right size and just the right length of time. More people or more time and it would very likely have begun to implode and get ugly. As it was, peoples’ tolerance for a variety of attitudes, reactions, and living and making styles stayed intact. The group reveled in the rustic lifestyle, seeing it as ‘idyllic’ and accepting its inherent studio limitations. Short of having computers present, it was the best example of ‘high tech/high touch’ that I have seen. I was struck by how civil the whole event was.

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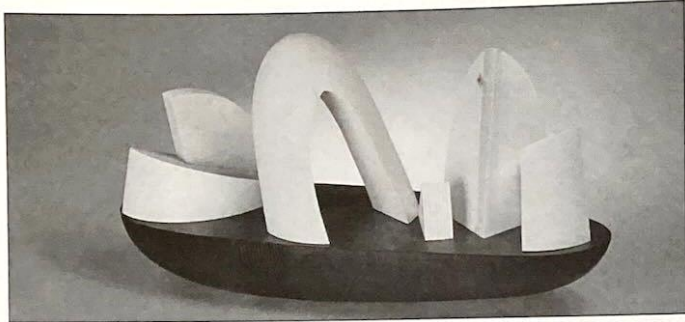


ABOVE RIGHT
Lamp;
wood, spun metal; by
Kim Kelzer,
Michael Hosaluk,
Andy Buck,
Rollin Patrick;
Lynne Hull,
Jack Larimore.

RIGHT
Untitled;
three-legged table;
Poplar, spun copper;
by Lynne Hull,
Trent Watts,
Betty Scarpino,
John Jordan,
Clay Foster,
Bonnie Klein,
David Sengel,
Tod Hoyer,
Hayley Smith.



A CRUCIBLE OF INVENTION

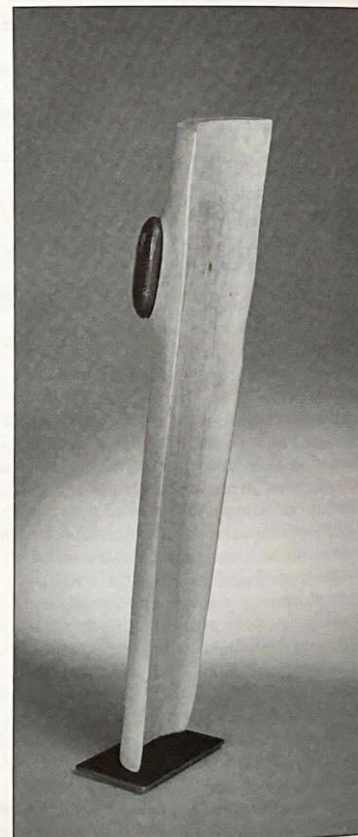
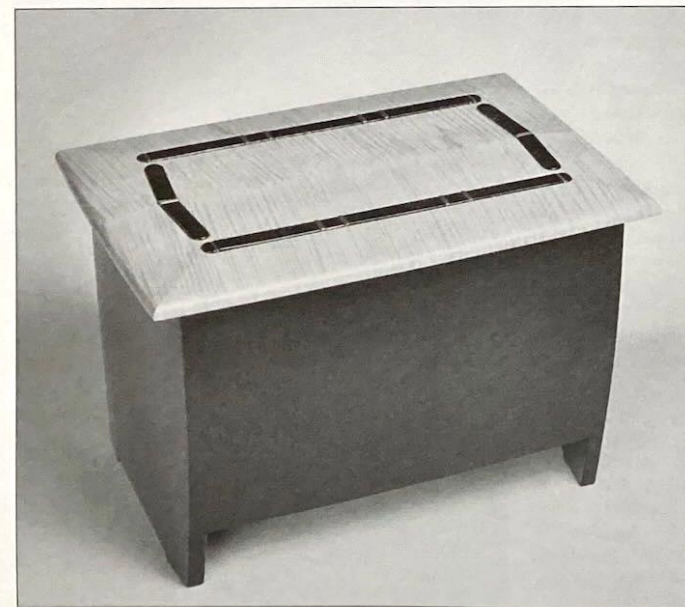


UPPER LEFT
Urban Arc; sculpture: turned, painted and bleached; by Connie Mississippi, Jason Russell,

MIDDLE LEFT
Zen of a Bench; stool: carved, turned legs, birch, stones; by Bonnie Klein, Rollin Patrick.

BOTTOM LEFT *Inlayed Chest*; cover: wood inlay; chest: polychromed furniture plywood Fiddleback maple (cover), black palm & mahogany, (inlay), plywood, acrylic paint (chest); by Mary Thouin-Stubbs (inlay & inlay design); Michael Hosaluk, Jo Stone, (cover); John Kingsley, Chelsey Kingsley, Doug Taylor (chest).

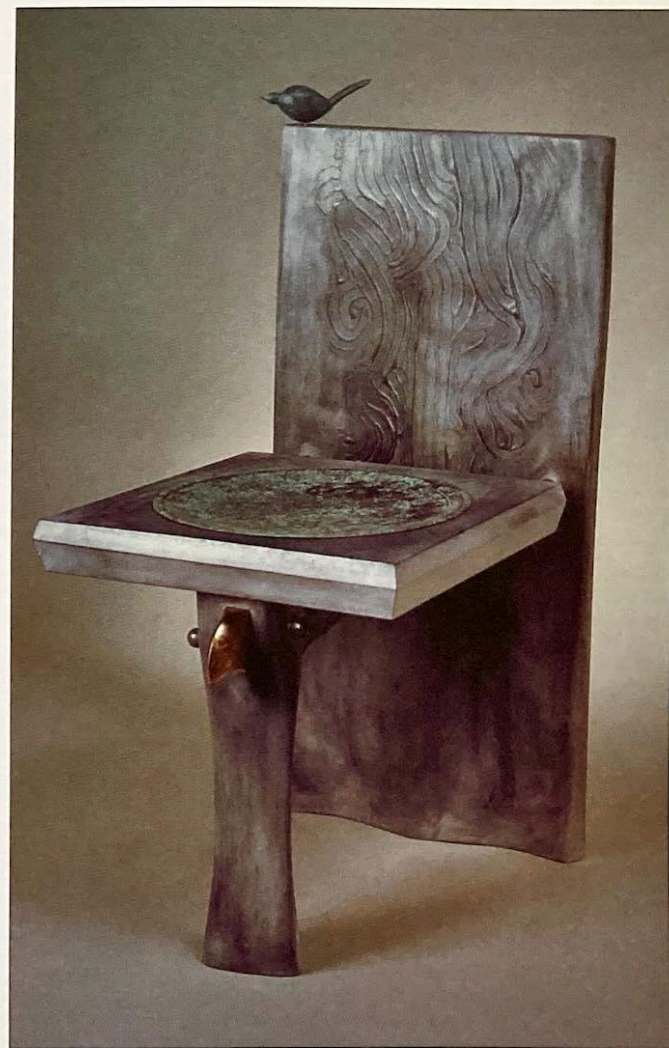
BOTTOM RIGHT
Untitled; sculpture: carved wood & raised brass; birch, brass; by Michael Peterson, Greg Wilbur, Bob Sondag.



A CRUCIBLE OF INVENTION

continued from page 7

In a season when many are considering end-days scenarios, if a group of creative individuals were given five or six days until the end of all civilization, somehow caught separated from the bonds of family and familiar place—how might they choose to use their time? I'd like to think that they would feverishly pursue the creation of a body of work not unlike that seen at the end of "Breaking Barriers." Like the 'sketch' mentioned above, their work would not be polished and would not likely be examples of the refined brilliance that the society as whole could offer as a testament to its greatness. What it *would* be though, is evidence of the group's creative energies, their sense of humanity, their willingness to tolerate and even celebrate differences, their willingness to include rather exclude, and the bonding agents of laughter and wit. It would be a collaborative statement about the skills, the thinking, and the motivations valued by a group of creatives, as representative of a much larger group. It would celebrate what was possible at that one moment, in that place, under those conditions, using the materials and tools at hand. It would be a document of art history as surely as any book written, and a far more accurate expression of the unspoken motivations of a culture at a specific moment in time.



ABOVE

LEFT *Bowl-Cup*; marbled basswood, dye; by Dave Wahl, Mary Thouin-Stubbs.
RIGHT *Marbled Vase*; marbled curly maple, dye; by Dave Wahl & MaryThouin-Stubbs.

RIGHT

El Don's Throne; chair carved and painted with metal seat, pine, copper, metal, curly maple, dowel, birch wedges; by Del Stubbs, Wes Pound, Dave Dunkley, Meryll Saylan, Ian Jones, Jamie Russell, Robert Sondag, Heather Cline, Lynne Hull, Niel Stoutenburg, Don Kondra.

BELOW *Guardian Spirit of Kenderdine*; mask: wood, mulberry hair, copper, tobacco can, cloth; by Clay Foster, Tanya Norman.
 RIGHT *A One Orange Plate*; sculpture: cut & carved wood, turned plastic bowl, airbrushed, wooden ball (found), plastic, paint, copper leaf; by D. Lowell Zercher, Andrew Curle, Grant Kernan.



The effects of the 1998 Emma Lake "Breaking Barriers" conference will powerfully resonate for a long time, affecting the ways in which the participants think, interact, create, teach, and live. It will have a deep impact.

Steve Loar lives in Warsaw, New York, USA. He is an Associate Professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology where he teaches design. Loar teaches frequently at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, as well as at national and regional conferences. He is a frequent commentator on the contemporary turning field, and his work is collected internationally.

**Postscript
from the Editor**

As noted by Steve Loar, participants left the conference deeply impacted by the experience. It is likely, then, that as they began the next phase of their lives, their expectations were that 'the Emma Lake high' could only continue. This was not to be. On August 4, 1998, the day after "Breaking Barriers," four of the conference participants were involved in a serious car accident which sent them to hospital. After surgery for one, and physical therapy for the others, they have all returned to their respective homes.

To offset medical and other expenses incurred as a result of the accident, an "Emma Lake Relief Fund" was set up by fellow "Breaking Barriers" participants. The total amount of the fund, as of mid-September, was \$30,000. This includes monetary donations and donations of works which were sold at the Wood Art Collectors' conference in San Francisco on September 13. The sale was held at the estate of Ron and Anita Wornick as a silent auction which raised \$25,700 (US). The organizers thank individuals for their donations.

The organizers also wish to ensure other "Breaking Barriers" participants that the individuals involved in the accident are going to be okay. It is anticipated that they will return, with a renewed vigour, to the next biennial symposium.



Apologies to any participant whose name may have been missed in the artist credits. To the best of the organizers' knowledge, names of all persons who worked on the pieces have been included. If additional participants are known, please inform the SCC.

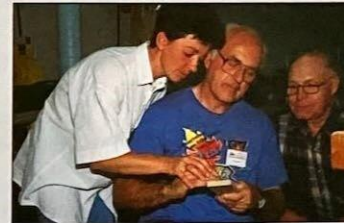
"Breaking Barriers" was funded, in part, by the Jean A. Chalmers Fund for the Crafts, Canada Council.



Two Days in P.A.

- the Piggyback Conference to Emma Lake

BY TERRY MARTIN



ABOVE Romanian woodworker, Zina Burlioiu (left) showing Barry Bell (middle) how to chip carve.

As the woodturning phenomenon expands, the frequency and quality of workshops and seminars grows. Over recent years, the 'piggyback' conference has developed whereby local groups invite well-known turners, who are in the vicinity for larger events, to come and demonstrate at their local clubs.

This year, the local woodturning group in Prince Albert invited four international turners who were in Saskatchewan for the Emma Lake event to demonstrate on the 25th and 26th of July. While Emma Lake has grown into much more than just a woodturners' event, it still attracts some of the biggest and brightest names in woodturning. The Prince Albert group chose wisely and invited a balanced and harmonious foursome.

Betty Scarpino, from the USA, is well-known for her recut disc forms and her ability to demonstrate surface finishing techniques in an engaging and accessible manner. British turner, Melvyn Firmager, is known for his elegant hollow forms and his range of specialized tools and hollowing techniques. Ernie Newman, from Australia, is a trade teacher who has developed a fine line in entertaining turning—showing the history of woodturning from 1600 BC to the present. French woodturner, Jean-Francois Escoulon, has become a "must-see" demonstrator, sharing his techniques of eccentric turning using his specialized chuck and years of expertise as a classical turner.

The Prince Albert group not only chose a well-balanced group of demonstrators, but they arranged the weekend to perfection—a model of how to run such a workshop. The venue was spacious and they placed the demonstrators at the four corners of the square workshop, giving free and open access at all times. There were just enough participants for meaningful interaction, but few enough to allow personal exchange and the occasional one-on-one tuition.

While Betty Scarpino showed how, for example, to bleach wood, a dozen participants would gather closely and ask advice. There was time to discuss, debate and speculate. In the next corner, twenty others watched Melvyn Firmager explain the importance of "hanging loose" while hollowing to avoid stress on both mind and limbs. Opposite him, Ernie Newman was pouring out a veritable avalanche of information, jokes, quotes and ideas while turning with astounding dexterity and giving technical advice cleverly larded with humor. Jean-Francois, in his quiet and gentle voice, gave a virtuoso performance of eccentric turning and then spent much time with individuals improving their spindle techniques. An unexpected bonus was the chance to learn traditional chip carving from Zina Burlioiu from Romania. She sat quietly in the center of the shop and made her remarkable spoons, while giving basic lessons to anyone who sat beside her.

It was one of the best workshops of its kind and appreciation is owed to the organizers for its smoothness, technical support and conviviality. It is not hard to imagine it becoming a regular event on the Canadian turning calendar; and, as Emma Lake becomes more broadly based, Prince Albert may provide the turning-specific focus that many turners crave.

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 October:
Marie Korpan

In November:
Jamie Russell

In December:
traditional
Christmas
ornaments by
Dawn Sawatzky and
various artisans

ARTIST
OF THE
MONTH

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.

Pushing the Limits in Pewter

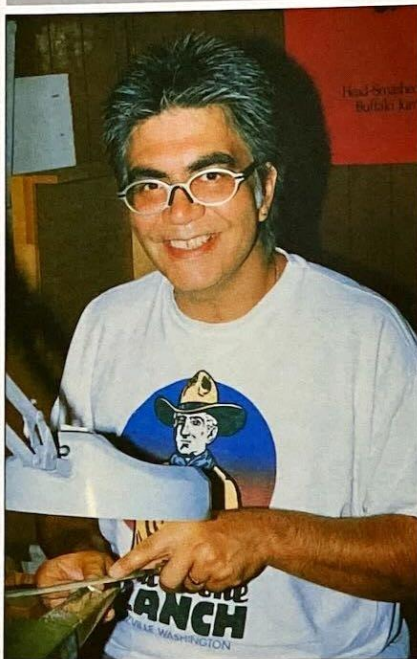
Jewelry is miniature sculpture," says Manitoba craftsman, Ned Birch. And sculpting in pewter is what Ned Birch—one of a handful of Canadian pewter-smiths—has been doing for the last 15 years.

Trained as a goldsmith by apprenticing with Bozarth Casey in Toronto, Birch worked his way into the fashion jewelry industry, designing for Coro, running a factory and selling his first designs to Holt Renfrew. Inspiration came from pop culture and surreal and cubist art. Not having a fine arts background, exposure to Dali, Picasso and Matisse brought forth a flowering of understanding—which was to be expressed by way of sculpture, in miniature, in pewter.

But why pewter? Ned explains, "Gold went to \$800 an ounce at one point; so partly, my choice was pure economics." Pewter has properties quite different from other metals. A metal alloy whose principal element is tin, it melts at very low temperatures—unlike gold which requires temperatures of 1750° Fahrenheit or higher.

Many changes have occurred for Birch in the past two years. One is that, for the first year in many, he has not participated in craft sales—a big decision to make when one has used craft shows as one's main marketing strategy. A member of the Saskatchewan Craft Council and resident of Brandon, Manitoba, Birch saw his market being on both sides of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. Veteran of more than 40 shows in Saskatchewan, Birch sees the proliferation of markets diminishing the goals of established craft organizations. "Something is happening out there. So many of my friends are still doing their crafts after 20 years, getting better and better, growing as artists. But they are dropping out of the craft sales," he protests. "There are more and more people, who after only a brief knowledge of a craft, rent a table to sell a poor quality item."

BY ELAINE ROUNDS



ABOVE Ned Birch at work in his studio, filing a piece of his *Crée* Jewelry. Photo courtesy of the artist.

...Crée Jewelry, Birch's 'signature' line of always-evolving production pieces, is sold in galleries and shops across the country. ...Crée echoes Birch's earlier post-modern influences; but more specifically, it reflects his Métis background and ideas that were developing at about the same time he and his family moved from Toronto back to the prairies in 1987.

There are no easy answers as to why this is happening. Partly due to this uncertainty, Ned and his wife/partner, Lisa, made another major change in their lives by opening Birches Gallery in August of 1997. As part of the growing development and beautification of downtown Brandon, the gallery is within walking distance of other trendy shops and the sidewalk patio scene on Rosser Avenue and Tenth Street. The gallery features *Crée* jewelry, Birch's 'signature' line of always-evolving production pieces which is also sold in galleries and shops across the country.

In addition to the *Crée* line, the Gallery showcases the work of fifteen jewelry/metal artists from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. The atmosphere is one of intimacy; and a small mezzanine features prairie artists in month long exhibits. Ned and Lisa know most of the artists personally and can communicate their knowledge of the artists and their work to the public. Many Saskatchewan artists are represented: Charley Farerro, Patti and Wendy Sopatyk, Sandy Kuntz, and Lavon Nobert are but a few examples of Saskatchewan craftspeople whose work can be found at Birches. Ned credits Lisa with the organizational, marketing and bookkeeping skills. They are a team and he values her critical eye and background in fashion design.

The signature, *Crée*, echoes Birch's earlier post-modern influences; but more specifically, it reflects his Métis background and ideas that were developing at about the same time he and his family moved from Toronto back to the prairies in 1987. He credits the arrival of children as the reason he began to examine and value his heritage. While exploring his roots, Birch began to discover relationships between all indigenous cultures and became aware of recurring symbols, as in the Medicine Wheel, as having the same stone arrangements as Stonehenge, for example. Intrigued by these similarities, he began expressing these ideas in

his work. Eventually, he designed the *Lifestream Bracelet*, which combines images from a Maori war canoe, Greek columns and Navajo pottery. Archetypal symbols from Celtic and Ukrainian cultures appear in Birch's work as well.

A member of the Saskatchewan Craft Council and resident of Brandon, Manitoba, Birch saw his market being on both sides of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

"Good three dimensional design is the foundation," says Birch of his approach to his craft. Admiring Danish designer George Jensen, a silversmith, Birch speaks of an artist's view of a master's work, often questioning one's ability to acquire the same level of achievement. But technique is developed gradually and it is in working a material over and over that one acquires the skill originally thought improbable. "I know more about pewter than ever," he says referring to his many years in working with the material. "The flame I use is very, very tiny and only 600° F. I like pushing the limits." It's precise and discriminating work.

Birch feels that design and finishing details are the most important aspects of his work. He explains: "A lot of thought goes into each design. Up to ten years dreaming and thinking may take place before

a design becomes a drawing on paper." Some designs are drawn larger than the actual piece to work out precise lines and angles. Photocopies are made to play with the size before 'mapping' the design on to the metal. Sometimes brass is used because it holds the design better. From a rubber mold the artist proofs are made; at which time the design may require refinements before being finalized. After casting, a ten-step finishing process begins, one of which includes lots of polishing.

The prototype of a production piece may represent 60-150 hours of work. *Nordic Bear*, a smooth, very shiny design he repeats in his various jewelry pieces, is produced with anvil and hammer—the hammer verified on the back. Birch has a collection of all his originals and does not sell copyrights.

... Birch began to discover relationships between all indigenous cultures and became aware of recurring symbols, as in the Medicine Wheel, as having the same stone arrangements as Stonehenge, for example.

His current one-of-a-kind pieces combine amber with pewter in rings and pendants. Amber, a yellowish brown substance, is formed from the resins of pine trees that grew in Northern Europe millions of years ago. Lumps of amber may contain insects or air bubbles. There is excitement in Birch's voice when he speaks of this new work. Yet, a kind of coal so hard and uniform that it can be carved and polished to look like black glass, is another material Birch has plans to use in the future. In his opinion, amber and jet in combination with pewter is a marriage of economics and aesthetics.

Birch recently began employment as a part-time carver of monuments. He describes the skills needed in jewelry making which easily transfer to carving gravestones: he uses an X-acto knife to cut a rubber stencil, the design is then sandblasted to produce texture on the originally polished surface. An understanding of—and ability to see—positive-negative design is required.

Working from a basement studio in the family home and having children, ages 16, 13 and 10, influences lifestyle decisions. His son, Nathan, with his own artistic talent, works in the gallery. Birch describes himself as believing in matriarchal ideology and credits his sister, a midwife, and Lisa with influencing his belief system. "Pewter has never been used for weaponry or money," he explains. "It's always been used for functional domestic and liturgical items."

Ned Birch is a contemporary Canadian craftsman whose work is based in history and steeped in personal heritage. As long as he continues to sculpt in miniature, he will be pushing the limits in pewter.

Elaine Rounds is a weaver from Brandon, Manitoba, whose collaborative work with two other artists, has been included in *Fibre Art Design*, a publication featuring international fibre work. In the fall of 1997, this 'trio' exhibited at Birches Gallery, and in March, 1998, won the YWCA Women of Distinction award. They have a group show slated for August 1999 in Estevan, Saskatchewan.



TOP RIGHT *Bear Face Bear Brooch*, 1994; pewter and epoxy enamel; 5 cm x 4 cm; by Ned Birch. Photo courtesy of the artist.

TOP LEFT *Nordic Bear Earrings*, 1998; pewter; 1 cm x 2 cm; by Ned Birch. Photo courtesy of the artist.

BOTTOM *Lifestream Bracelet*, 1995; pewter, 2 cm in width; by Ned Birch. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Exhibitions

Odyssey

BY STEPHANIE BOWMAN

Lorelie Sarauer
"Biomorphs"

&

Diane C. Orchard
"Passage to the Millennium"

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK
June 19 - July 19, 1998

When I was a child I had a very strict bedtime. The only exception to the rule was if a Jacques Cousteau special was on T.V. Along with the thrill of staying up into the unknown of the evenings, was the greater thrill of being taken into the unknown of the deep. Cousteau always accompanied our awe. His odyssey was always ours. His discoveries were also ours. The exhibitions, "Biomorphs" and "Passage to the Millennium" were an odyssey equal to the power and beauty of any journey the Calypso had taken. Lorelie Sarauer created objects for "Biomorphs." Diane Orchard created the works for "Passage to the Millennium." These two women have made objects that mark the way to a world not yet seen. They share their discoveries with the same honesty and openness that Cousteau did.

The gallery space itself was transformed. It felt like one was passing through a portal into another world. Upon entering the gallery you were drawn down into a 'tunnel' made up of Diane Orchard's works. There were two panels on each side (80 x 28 x 1.5 inches) suspended from the ceiling. Through the sides of the 'tunnel' between the panels you could see the numerous creations of Lorelie's dancing and moving along the wall. The lighting in the gallery was very subdued and it facilitated the otherworldly ungallery-like space and mood. You were to consider these works as you might consider the movements of a moray eel passing by the portal window.

OPPOSITE PAGE - DOOR ON LEFT *Seamless Ubiquity* 1998; mixed media with plastic, tissue paper, video and cassette tape, gold leaf, paint, Plexiglass in recycled door; 80 x 28 x 1.5 inches; by Diane C. Orchard.

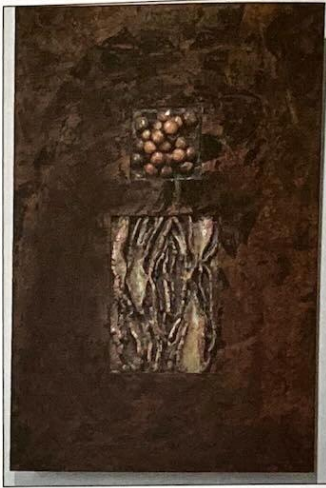
ON WALL *Symbiosis*, 1998; 44 small pieces: clay, beeswax, oxides, steel; by Lorelie Sarauer.

DOOR ON RIGHT *Site #2*, 1998; mixed media with plastic, tissue paper, gold leaf, acrylic paint, Plexiglass in recycled door; 80 x 28 x 1.5 inches; by Diane C. Orchard.

Diane's works push and pull, back and forth, from side to side as you peer through the door size frames that have trapped within their perimeter, between two panes of glass, the debris of our present day world. The debris consists of plastic, old patterns, cassette tape ribbons, SONY labels, Suzy Sheir logos and Gap bags. The view from the front of the panel is different from the view of the back. Each of these four panels is intended to depict a landscape. But as you twist and turn down the tunnel you are blown towards the exit only to be blocked by the smallest work of the total group of five. This work, *Tell Me What I Want*, is different not only in scale but in understated complexity. The piece consists of the Versace designer logo used repeatedly. The final work looks like an ancient bas-relief from another time. But just as those tympanums were telling tales of the people of their times so is this work. This piece "epitomized the affluent hedonistic good life"¹. Diane's concern with the way in which we abuse the landscape, how landscape is understood within the long tradition of landscape painting in Saskatchewan and the question of beauty in art come together in this piece in an original and refined manner. Diane's desire to add her voice to the issue of excesses and indulgences in our consumer society present us an imagined landscape as yet unseen but not unimaginable given the reality of our inorganic existence.

There is a power and responsibility in art. To follow Estella Conwill Majozo words, "To search for the good and make it matter. This is the real challenge for the artist. Not simply to transform ideas or revelations into matter, but to make those revelations actually matter (Lacy, 1995)." Lorelie's works matter. When I urged friends to see this exhibition I knew it was because it would awaken and inspire within them the desire to make something. In that inspiration new life and new hope would be born out of their process of making; and for that reason alone Lorelie's work matters. Her work is not necessarily about the power of creativity—but that exists at the essence of the way in which she approaches her chosen materials and transforms them.

Her work obviously is about the juxtaposition of manmade and organic materials. In the work *Origin* her steel frame encloses and encroaches upon her biological forms. Pods and columns and stems and leaf-like folds are formed from clay. They move and turn symbiotically within the geometric framing devices. All of her clay has been worked over with oxides and wax. This has created an interesting form and surface. The light interacts in interesting ways as the surface moves from porous to reflected. The free form objects that make up the main piece in the show, "Biomorphs" have taken their origins from the rusting discards of the just born industrial age. Many of these objects are now defunct and discarded in our post industrial age. These objects might be old bolts, old screws, old farm implements. Lorelie has considered each rusting object and allowed a new form to grow from it. Sometimes you can see an obvious connection and other times you are surprised and delighted by what Lorelie's imaginative eyes and hands have made. I think that this is where the beauty and intrigue of Lorelie's work lies. Here is the inspiration for us all to go out and see the old world in a new way. She does not require control of the materials, only conversation. Her illogical narrative is absolutely logical in its finished form. "Our civ-



LEFT
Tell Me What I Want, 1998;
recycled frame, tis-
sue paper and plas-
tic materials, lexan,
paint; 34 x 30 in.; by
Diane C. Orchard.
(BACKGROUND)
*Heads & Tails 1, 2, &
3*; mixed media
by Lorelie Sarauer.

RIGHT
Origin, 1998; steel,
earthenware,
oxides, waxes; by
Lorelie Sarauer.

ilization finds itself in a double bind. Trying to redefine the meaning of progress at a time when the actual state of the planet and our bio-region's ecology is being threatened (Grande, 1998)³. In Lorelie's works we find a synthesis. The new objects seem so comfortable with their inorganic and organic parts. I am encouraged by their presence. In the encouragement I can find new possibilities.

In the ocean, where we began looking at this exhibition, we find a world that still can defy our total engagement with it. You must be prepared to enter its depths. But it is here that we can look and see the power of creation, and the myriad life forms that are not perpetually punctuated by the presence of our technological age. The pieces that make up "Biomorphs" and "Passage to the Millennium" conserve for us the possibility of potential. John Berger writes in *Keeping a Rendezvous* "that art has judged the judges, pleaded revenge to the innocent and shown to the future what the past suffered, so that it has never been forgotten." The works created by Sarauer and Orchard carry us to see what must be seen about how we live and what must be changed so that we can continue to do so. Diane Orchard challenges us to consider our potential for change in how we allow ourselves to be manipulated by the morals of a consumer culture. Lorelie Sarauer conserves for us the beauty and power of the created object. They have presented us with their discoveries because of their willingness to go into the deep. They have prepared us to go there as well.

Stephanie Bowman is a ceramics mixed media sculptor. She is currently working toward an MFA at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

¹ Diane Orchard, artist's statement. Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, June 1998.

² Taylor, Pamela. "It All Started with the Trash". *Art Education*, March 1997.

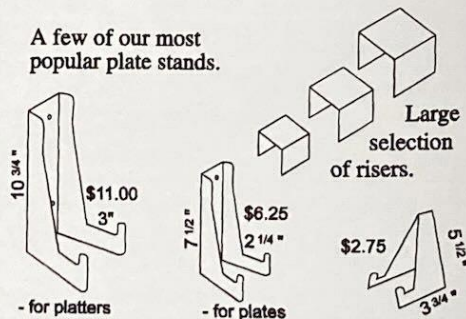
³ Grande, John. "Lost Sense: Catherine Widgery". *Sculpture*, July August 1998.

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Impressive

... but Unresolved

BY DON KONDRA

"Craft on Stream"

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, Saskatoon, SK
May 1 - June 14, 1998

"Craft on Stream" was curated by Les Potter, the Saskatchewan Craft Council Exhibitions Coordinator, and Tom Evans, a lifelong canoe and outdoor enthusiast who has recently retired to a life of canoe making. Both gentlemen brought something special to the process of assembling a show covering a wide range of makers interested in the outdoors.

I grew up across the street from a lake in Ontario and have enjoyed the outdoors all my life and, as a maker of furniture, I am very interested in the process of *making*. When I read show reviews I am usually disappointed that all of the pieces cannot be discussed. This will be one of *those* reviews. With 28 pieces and/or displays there simply is not enough room to go into too much detail.

If you were thinking this would be a show you would be sorry to miss, you would be right. From the moment of walking in the door—through my second and third visit, even—I was impressed with the diversity of the work presented. It is not every day you see four canoes hanging in the gallery. The only thing missing was the campfire in front of Ric Driediger's tent—but he did enter a stove. (See tent photo.)

The "crafted objects pertinent to outdoor activities"—as was the description of the show—ranged from Fay Brewer's *Child's*

TOP PHOTO RIGHT BACKGROUND *Canoe (In Progress)*: 60.96 x 86.36 x 43.18; wood 1998; by Tom Evans. LEFT BACKGROUND *Canoe*, 60.96 x 86.36 x 43.18; wood, canvas 1998; by Tom Evans. ON WALL *Paddle*: 137.16 cm x 22.86 cm x 3.81 cm; mixed woods, 1998; by Tom Evans. *Push Pole*: 335.28 cm x 3.81 cm; fir, steel, 1998; by Tom Evans. FOREGROUND *Canoe*, cedar, ash, fibreglass, eopxy, 5 metres long; by Theresa Driediger (Horizons Unlimited).

PHOTO ABOVE RIGHT (INSET) *Tent*: cotton, nylon; by Ric Driediger (Horizons Unlimited). Contents of tent: stove, 19 x 38 x 28; by Ric Driediger (Horizons Unlimited). *Rattlin' Stick*: 137cm high; Birch, steelshot, glass beads, 1998; by Kim Ennis. *Fringed, Doublesoled, Camp Moccasins*: 6.35cm x 21.59cm x 25.4cm; Cow & bull hide, 1972; and *Doublesoled, Sheepskin Lined, Frontier Moccasins*: 40.64cm x 25.4cm x 30.48cm; Cow & bull hide, 3/8" shearling, 1972; both pairs by David Orban.

Parka to Tom Stevenson and Stuart Searle's *First Nation's Replicas* of historical hunting and fishing equipment.

Ken Kinakin, Grant Irons and Gary Greer submitted an impressive array of handmade knives. I am constantly amazed by the variety and intricacy these knifemakers bring to their work. After all, how many ways are there to make a knife? Keep tuned, I'm sure they are going to show us.



Detail of image on fishing rod as part of *Walleye World* which consists of 3 display cases, text & fishing rod; 3 Cases: 66 cm x 48 cm x 6 cm each, 214 cm (fishing rod); Graphite, composite plastics, 1998; by Zane Hrynewich.

I was quite impressed with Zane Hrynewich's display of state-of-the-art fishing rods. The finishing touch is how he weaves scenes such as a float plane landing into the wrapping on the rod's eyelets. I'm sure the fish don't care—but this attention to detail makes this kind of rod much more than just a tool.

My favourite piece in the show was Ian Jones' *Speckled Catfish* (see back cover). The patinaed catfish suggests a prehistoric creature which perfectly complements the process of casting and I felt the base was one of the more resolved solutions of how to mount a piece. There is a sense of tension in the piece that makes you feel the fish had just flicked its tail and was gliding through the water.

Not all of the pieces were so "resolved". And several were not functional. Puck Jones and Dave Halstead's *Cool Curving World* even required a liberal application of caulking to stand upright. Isaiah Robert's *Birch Bark Canoe* would begin to sink if placed in the water. The reproduction stopped short of completion. The omission of the 'pitching' was disappointing. Even if partially done it would have more accurately represented the finished product without obscuring the construction details.

According to various sources such as the gallery attendants, this was one of the most well received and successful shows in the Gallery's history—but, as discussed above, some of the pieces raise questions about the standards applied to gallery shows. A number of pieces would not have made a Saskatchewan Craft Council market—let alone a Dimensions show. I believe the Gallery's mandate is to promote innovation and experimentation in new work, but I am not sure if I can accept work that is not resolved. I do not raise this issue to point fingers but to ask members to think about what they want their Gallery to do for them and to possibly get involved.

In closing, it should be noted that "Craft on Stream" exposed new people to the gallery. This was a result of the number of new exhibitors participating; and whose family and friends came to the opening or came to see the show at other times. Word on the street was "to pop in to the Gallery to see the 'canoes and stuff'." Overall, it was a great show.

Don Kondra is a furniture maker, and former Premier's Prize winner, who works from his studio outside of Saskatoon. He served a recent 2-year term as Exhibitions Chair on the Saskatchewan Craft Council Board of Directors.

RAISING THE REGISTER

Dear Readers:

It's easy to feel out of touch with the Craft Council (SCC) and other craftspeople when shows/sales are the only time we communicate with one another. But the SCC body and its membership are important to sustaining the morale and future for all of us.

When recently I was asked to become actively involved with the SCC, I wondered, "What can I contribute?" It took a while, but I finally realized that not only was 30 years in clay (20 of them in this province) a valuable base of experience, but that my own questions of how to improve my own work, how to market more effectively, how to make the SCC really work for me—were probably the same questions everyone is asking him/herself.

Well, if I could voice the questions for myself—couldn't I help raise the register of your voice? Couldn't I do something to help you be heard?

So, I accepted the position on the Board—the Communications Committee. I'm grateful for the insights of fellow craftspeople, David Goldsmith, and for the experience, commitment, and integrity that our Communications Coordinator, Leslie Millikin, brings to her role as editor of *The Craft Factor* and the *Bulletin*. Leslie does a superb job in keeping us up-to-date with SCC and general craft news as well as highlighting the talents we find among the membership.

But how about creating a two way street and opening up new avenues for all of us? How about a regular forum through which we can all exchange ideas—whether they're tips to other craftspeople, compliments on jobs well done, concerns about matters that might have been handled differently. What do you say? Mail it (813 Broadway Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7N 1B5), fax it (306 244-2711) or e-mail it (saskcraftcouncil.editor.tcf@home.com). It will be published as a Letter to the Editor. Maybe I'll even write a letter or two myself. I had no idea, previously, what was entailed in directing on a Board that was working for me. Do you? Let us hear from you. Keep us working for your membership dues.

- Don Parker, Chair, Communications Committee

Kitsch & Kaboodle

BY SHEILA ROBERTSON

"Oh What a Tasty Dish..."

Heather M. Cline

Art Gallery of Swift Current

Swift Current, SK

April 11 - May 16, 1998

Consider the word *dish*. Simple and familiar as it is, it has a wealth of connotations. It not only means a container for food, but possibly the food itself, as in 'a chicken dish.' In colloquial expressions, it can signify an attractive woman, and the act of 'dishing out' select bits of gossip.

Heather M. Cline was playing on all the references when she named her recent exhibition, "Oh What a Tasty Dish...". Her mixed-media works range from paper collages to more three-dimensional wallworks verging on dioramas or stage sets. Most of the pieces have long names incorporating the show's title. Significantly, they feature bits of broken crockery and other housewares, as well as many other found objects.

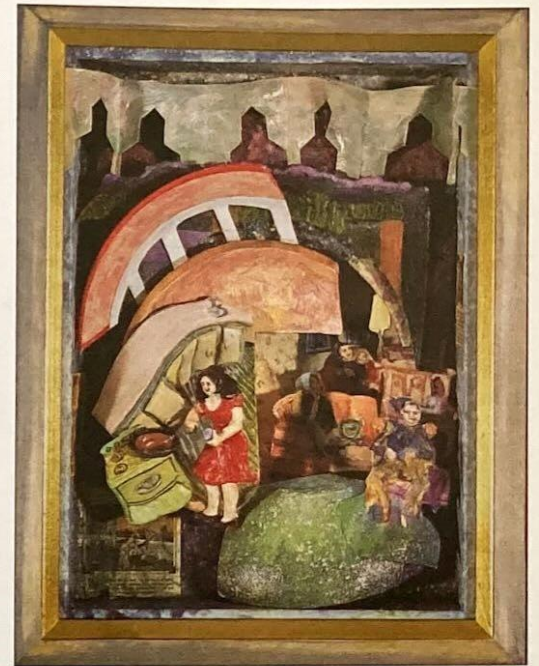
Self-portraiture is an important part of this series. The protagonist in these densely layered and intricate little pieces is a young woman with long, dark hair and bright red boots—Cline. So, in a sense the Saskatoon artist herself is the dish. Like a diva, in the manner of Barbra Streisand or Madonna, she plays with her own image and presents herself in vastly different ways.

She is also clearly enjoying dishing up narratives. Her work has something of the flavour of good friends getting together to catch each other up on juicy gossip. It is intimate, irreverent, funny, dark and thought provoking. There is a story behind everything: memories from her childhood in Sutherland, a Saskatoon suburb; echoes of family life; recreated events from the lives of friends and neighbors. In a letter to readers/viewers in her exhibition catalogue, she notes this is "a body of work dedicated to the documentation of happenstance, gossip and everyday drama."

Cline, who has been exhibiting six years, likes her work to operate on several levels simultaneously. This body of work, her first major show in a public gallery, reflects concerns about family, personal identity, and the sometimes uncomfortable, sometimes seductive nature of domesticity.

Although she was born in 1970, Cline has an affinity for culture and artifacts of the hearth-and-home-centred 1950s. Her works reflect the kitchen, the backyard, the living room and other places people gather. To emphasize this, the exhibition was divided into distinct rooms, featuring '50s-era lamps and furniture amidst the artworks.

The series explores some of the themes Margaret Atwood examined in her book, *The Edible Woman*. Cline, who studied art and history at the University of Saskatchewan, takes issue with the way women are represented in our culture, as consumables. Yet the irony is fairly gentle, and it is countered with acknowledgment of the positive, nurturing aspects of food preparation, a realm



ABOVE "Oh What a Tasty Dish... Prodigal Daughter" 1997; acrylic/construction; 13.5 x 10.5 x 3.5 inches; by Heather M. Cline. Photo courtesy of the artist.

which so often falls to women.

"It's the ultimate joke, to take a wicker basket my mother was going to throw out, and make it into this precious artwork," Cline explained in an interview. "This series is really terribly cheesy."

The artist admitted she gets as much inspiration from second-hand stores as she does from galleries and museums. Yet her works aren't all kitsch and kaboodle. "I'm interested in being a contemporary artist, and reflecting the materials that are part of our culture," she said.

"I try to craft each piece really well, especially when I'm incorporating found objects. I want to integrate them into the formal space."

Her work profits from a certain tension between the artmaking process and the product. Until recently, she was employed as a framer at an art supply store, and she acknowledged this had a big impact on her artmaking. She has had access to the latest in materials, and her works make use of paints, metal and paper collage. Her detailed figurative forms are molded or cast in substances ranging from gels to hot glue.

Elaborate, self-made frames, often deep shadow boxes, are as integral to her work as is a stage set to a theatrical production. "When you work as a framer, you see how utterly important presentation is to the artwork," she said. "As an artist, I like to be in control of that step."

When using everyday objects like bread baskets and fragments of serving trays, the artist finds it vital to distance her work from the viewer. Elaborate frames and glass lend a certain authority. They help elevate the components from the kitchen counter to the gallery wall.

A key work, which reflects her interest in process, is *Relish the Production*. It's the fruit of a rather complicated family saga, in which the artist unwillingly becomes involved in a harvest food preservation frenzy.

Like a family, a garden is a nurturing place, a place to grow. However, it also has weeds and, if neglected, it produces guilt along with vegetables. Cline's garden, largely envisioned and maintained by her parents "became a monster," she said. "My father had planted all these cucumbers, and I decided the only thing to do was make relish, like my mother always did."

"I undertook the project as a battle, thinking of beautiful summer afternoons of my youth spent with a grinder in front of a dishpan full of cucumbers," she writes in the exhibition catalogue, which also includes the family recipe for Hot Dog Relish. To her chagrin, she discovered "I kind of liked it. I found I could watch TV and grind the cucumbers."

The piece has a charmingly manic quality, from its overgrown backyard garden featuring little phallic cucumbers popping up everywhere, to the shiny pieces of an actual vegetable grater, to an assembly-line type row of tiny jars of relish arranged along the bottom of the work. Cline used broken glass mixed with acrylic gels to create the jars.

Prodigal Daughter features paper cutouts along the horizon, suggesting a parade of grain elevators. In the foreground, the woman in the red dress, the prodigal, busies herself at the stove. Surrealistically, the kitchen cabinets wrap around her to dangle in the air. Beyond them, a curved fragment of a dish creates a fitting backdrop.

The mixed-media pieces are so layered and complex that the simpler collaged works present an appealing change of pace. They benefit from more white space, both within the compositions and around them. Silhouettes of the artist's head, white in the middle and outlined in black, are used effectively in *Mall Stalked*, a collage based upon a disturbing experience Cline once had on a shopping trip.

There are a great many sculptural elements in this exhibition, but the only truly sculptural work is a decorated vase entitled *Self-portrait as an Ornament*. It was set apart from the other works, displayed on a vintage, pink-speckled Formica kitchen set. From the back, it appears to be an abstract steel sculpture, but on the front, in painted relief, is an image of the artist in a frilly pink dress, her hem hiked up to display incongruous purple tights and red boots. Beside her is a bookshelf displaying two clocks showing different times: perhaps a code for feeling out-of-step.

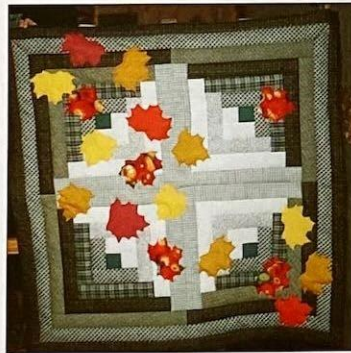
This thought-provoking work hints at the pressure to conform to society's expectations. In a companion wallwork, *While the Other Contestants Watched She Found the Last Hoop Rather Daunting*, Cline depicts herself preparing to jump through a ring of fire, evidently as part of a beauty pageant. She and the other contestants, swathed in white tulle, are wearing bathing suits in this rather nightmarish scene. The backdrop is a plate collaged with photographic images of little girls.

Although the works in this exhibition varied dramatically, they were unified by color, texture, the dish motif, and the artist's use of the figure, particularly self-portraiture.

It will be interesting to see where the process-product controversy takes Cline, now that she is focusing on her artwork full-time. Given her attraction to theatre, and her work's affinity with stage sets, it's possible she'll eventually gravitate to that corner of the arts.

Saskatoon writer and editor, Sheila Robertson, focuses on the visual arts.

Wholesome, Warm, Comforting



BY SUZANNE STEWART

Bruce Reitler & Candice Sotropa
"Hands On"

Joe Moran Gallery, Regina, SK
June 21 to August 5, 1998

When approached with the idea of exhibiting his work at the Joe Moran Gallery in Regina, well-known Saskatchewan potter Bruce Reitler suggested that the exhibition be a collaborative one. Reitler, whose pottery has been unfailingly popular in craft stores and shows around the province for nearly 20 years, undoubtedly could have mounted an accomplished exhibition on his own. However, his suggestion that it be a collaborative one, with quilter Candice Sotropa, proved to be a

remarkably satisfying choice. Aesthetically, the choice was a visually creative idea, for Reitler's functional pottery vessels draw attention to volume, interior spaces and rounded shapes, while Sotropa's quilts, which incorporate geometric designs and patterned fabrics, are visually flat. And for personal reasons, the idea was an important one, for it provided Reitler with an opportunity to present the work of a friend, fellow resident of Pangman, Saskatchewan, and a relatively new artist who, as Reitler is quick to point out, approaches her work with the same dedication to craftsmanship that he applies to his own.

Titled "Hands On," the exhibition consists of eleven quilts and five pieces (or sets) of pottery, all of which are made largely by hand. Sotropa uses a machine to piece together the fabrics in the top layer of her quilts, but she stitches together the three separate parts of the quilt—the top, batting and back—entirely by hand. Reitler's pottery, which is distinguished among the work of Saskatchewan potters for its technical precision, demonstrates a remarkable evenness and uniformity, and reflects the way in which he, too, carefully handles the clay with his hands. "Hands On" also reminds us that the art of making pottery and quilts is as much about process as it is about product; and that process, as Sotropa and Reitler acknowledge, is both technically demanding and immensely time consuming. Both artists, however, embrace the technical challenges associated with highly-skilled craftsmanship, and admit that they are unquestionably motivated by the pure "joy of making."

Sotropa describes herself as a self-taught artist who began making quilts in 1988. While she relies on books, and her own understanding of sewing techniques, she also explains that as a child she watched with great interest as her grandmother made quilts. Her husband, a painter, has also been influential, particularly in the direction of Sotropa's recent works, which have incorporated creative, non-traditional quilting designs. The eleven quilts in this exhibition are both traditional and contemporary; they demonstrate Sotropa's ability both to preserve and to push beyond the traditional limitations associated with her craft.

Among the first group of quilts, *Falling Leaves* and *Garden Sampler* are rural in theme, and the subjects and patterns in these works remind us of early North American quilts. *Falling Leaves* is composed of four blocks, each consisting of the traditional log cabin pattern. The orange, gold, red, green and white colours and small vegetable designs on the fabrics give the quilt an unmistakably rural quality. The falling leaves, applied in a diagonal pattern across the quilt, provide a satisfying contrast to the highly structured grid pattern in the pieced fabrics underneath. While the organic shapes of the leaves provide a further contrast to the overall grid structure, they have a subtle rigidity of their own, for each one is exactly the same size, and the placement of each leaf reflects the precision of a deliberate design rather than the natural randomness of falling leaves.

Garden Sampler, a display of twelve traditional patterns, is a wonderful example of the way that geometric shapes in traditional designs interlock, expand in vertical and horizontal directions, and take the eye along the shared edges and lines of the pieced fabrics. Deliberately mismatched, the fabrics are pieced together in twelve different patterns that accentuate contrasting colours, values and designs; each piece of fabric not only reads as an individual part of the block, but also contributes to an elaborate overall design. Small in size, these square quilts also demonstrate the functional element of quilt making, for each can serve as a lap or throw quilt.

In a second group, *Amish Lily* demonstrates the advanced level of stitching that Sotropa achieves in her work. The quilt consists of four colourful lilies, in the simple designs and solid colours typical of Amish quilts. In between the lilies, Sotropa stitches grey floral patterns on the quilt's solid grey fabric. These subtle and beautifully stitched patterns of multiple rounded floral shapes, that appear to be bursting open in the spring sun, provide a pleasing contrast to the bold, geometric Amish lilies.

Sotropa's largest work, *Celtic Canadian*, is an example of the artist's most recent interest in modifying traditional quilting patterns, and in adopting unique and creative uses of line. Perhaps the most accomplished quilt in the exhibition, it is dominated by a large thistle flower in full bloom. Like some of her other works, she uses both a geometric pattern, most notably in the diamond-shaped pattern of stitches across the quilt's front, as well as in the head of the thistle, and a freer use of line in the curvaceous stem of the flower, the twisting leaves, and the Celtic knot pattern that forms a rounded linear border around the edge of the quilt. However, in this work, Sotropa goes beyond the more balanced geometric-organic contrasts in some of her other quilts, for a single curvaceous flower, rather than block patterns, dominates the work, and is echoed in the

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP *Tidal Flow*; stoneware; glaze; by Bruce Reitler. Photo courtesy of the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM *Falling Leaves*; log cabin pattern; batten; applique; by Candice Sotropa. Photo courtesy of the artist.

THIS PAGE RIGHT *Celtic Canadian*; includes Celtic Knot pattern; batten; by Candice Sotropa. Photo courtesy of the artist.

THIS PAGE BELOW *Salad Set*; stoneware; slip; by Bruce Reitler. Photo courtesy of the artist.



rounded linearity of the Celtic knot border. Her use of fluid, non-geometric lines and patterns reaches a striking culmination in this work—a work that evidently reflects her interest in incorporating elements from contemporary art, for her husband was influential in the creation of this quilt's design.

By positioning Sotropa's quilts and Reitler's pottery around the gallery according to similarities in colour, curator Jo-ann Henderson creates an almost seamless visual transition between the works, and provides a provoking starting point for thinking about the links between pottery and quilting: both traditions, for example, are thousands of years old; the finished works, in each case, have a domestic function; the creation of both pottery and quilting, as Reitler points out, requires utmost attention to line; and both traditions now straddle the worlds of both art and craft.

Reitler, who has been making and selling his pottery in Saskatchewan since 1979, is unequivocal about his approach to his work. His pottery, unlike much contemporary art, he says, is based on very traditional techniques. Not interested in the contemporary emphasis on originality, effects that are shocking or fleeting, or alterations to the conventional ceramic shape, Reitler, who is attracted to the universal qualities of pottery pieces—such as a "true, soothing line"—creates "functional pottery," he says, "that lasts forever." With meticulous attention to the details of a well-crafted and perfectly-proportioned vessel, Reitler produces drinking utensils that are light and comfortable to hold, pitchers that pour efficiently and whose lids fit exactly, and bowls whose weight, shape and depth are satisfyingly functional. With remarkable sensitivity to the human dimension associated with artistic creation, Reitler also insists that his art has a place in people's everyday lives. In opposition to a world that is unforgivingly "harsh," his pottery, he explains, is "wholesome, warm and comforting." "I aim to satisfy the people who purchase my ware" he says. His functional pieces, he adds, evoke the "good feelings" that we associate with social gatherings where food and drink are present.

The exhibition includes five of Reitler's stoneware pieces: three are sets of pottery (one, a set of goblets, was sold before I saw the exhibition), and two are less functional, vase-like pieces. *Beverage Set*, which consists of six cups and a pitcher, is characterized by its elegance and uniformity. The cups, exceptionally graceful in shape, are tall, thin, and elongated in appearance through the lack of handles, and each is exactly the same size and shape. They fit comfortably into the hand, where the fingers touch the gentle horizontal ridges on the cup's surface. The uniformly thin wall and gently curving lip create a perfectly-proportioned drinking vessel. The jug, a more rounded container, has a pronounced lip, for pouring, and a lid that fits snugly and almost invisibly within the uppermost part of the container's walls. *Salad Set* consists of seven pieces as well: one large and six small bowls. Again, the uniform walls and lightness of the bowls, the deep interiors, and the identical features among each piece in the set, create a satisfyingly functional pottery set. Predominantly white, each bowl is also distinguished by two pronounced, calligraphic strokes of blue colour across the interior and over the edge of the bowl—the characteristic brush and slip decoration that is seen on many of Reitler's works.

Tidal Flow (see page 20) and *Receding Tides* are vase-like vessels of similar size and shape, and both evoke intriguing associations with water and fluctuation rather than sturdiness and function. The first vessel is slightly bulging and irregular in shape: its roundness suggests that the container is pregnant with the water of an incoming tide. The exterior of the piece is covered in a shiny

blue glaze, the shine and colour of which evoke the appearance of water itself. The slightly bumpy surface of the clay underneath, as well as the container's irregular shape, remind us that this work refers to the ruggedness of nature, and is clearly less deliberately refined than Reitler's domestic vessels. *Receding Tides*, in contrast, is a heavier, chunkier, more earthbound piece. More symmetrical in shape, it is distinguished from the first piece by its pronounced lip, and a rich brown glaze highlighted with areas of white, rust, and darker brown. A highly textured work, it is characterized by interesting barnacle-like pieces of clay which are attached to the exterior of the vessel. Set against the brown, these bumpy white protrusions evoke the rugged texture of the bottom of a body of water when tides have receded, and the thickness and heaviness of the walls make it work of, and about, the earth. As the last work in the exhibition, it is a satisfying reminder of the associations of Reitler's own creative process with the earth—a process that begins with the earth's clay.

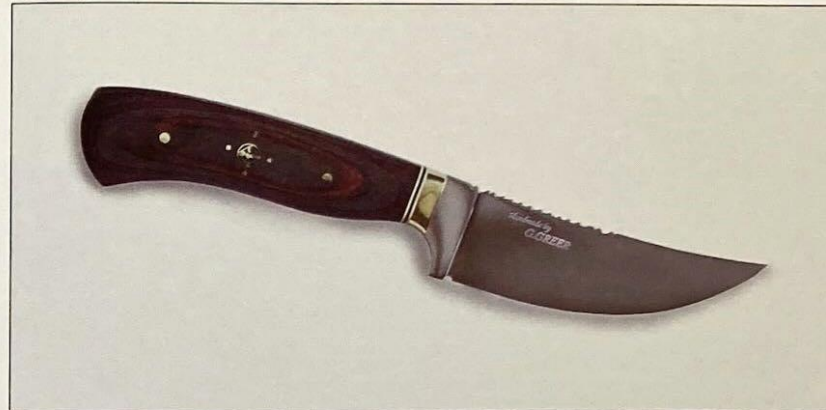
What this exhibition lacks, perhaps, is a more satisfying balance between the representations of pottery and quilting. As well, short descriptions of each of the pieces, including dates, might have provided visitors with a more informative experience of the works on display. Otherwise, "Hands On" is a most thought-provoking and visually stimulating collaborative exhibition of pottery and quilting.

Suzanne Stewart is a freelance writer from Regina.

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**GARY GREER**

Working Man, 1998;
Blade is 440-C stainless steel. Handle slabs are stabilized winewood, with a brass guard. A multi-layered mosaic centre pin accents handle. Knife is 23 cm in length. Commissioned by professional northern guide, Kirt Stein; August, 1998.

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