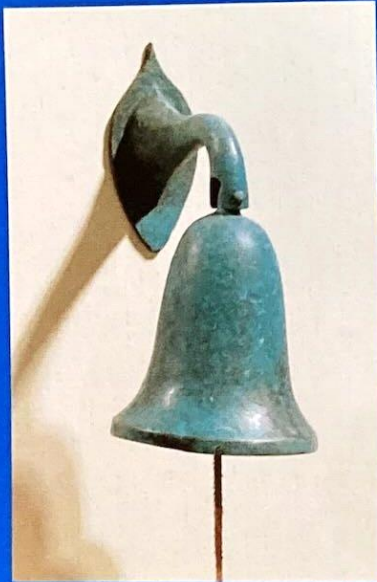


The
CRAFT
Factor



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The CRAFT Factor



The Magazine of the
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VOL 26.2 Winter Issue

The Saskatchewan Craft Council (SCC) is a registered charity. It was established 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 Craft Federation.

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BACK COVER: Edward Gibney; *Archetype*, 2001; Indiana limestone, wood. 136 x 32 x 32 cm.

The assistance of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation and the City of Saskatoon is gratefully acknowledged.



emma '02 AUCTION

This summer the SCC will host the 4th biannual Emma Lake Collaboration. This is an invitational, hands on workshop for 100 creative people from around the world. All work produced in this five day creative whirlwind will be auctioned to fund the next workshop in 2004. Any surplus will be shared between the SCC and the proposed permanent wood studio at Emma Lake. Viewing and registration will start at noon August 5th. The auction will start at 2 pm.

The Emma Lake Collaboration is recognized as one of the most influential events in the craft and art worlds. This will be an unparalleled opportunity to purchase work on the cutting edge of creativity. Due to a limited parking area we ask that auction clients car pool as much as possible.



Knockers & Knobs, Prairie Sculptors' Association opening reception, September 14, 2001, in the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery.

Letters From Our Readers

I am writing to respond to the review of the Saskatchewan Weavers and Spinners Guild show, *Prairie Inspirations*, by Sandra Flood in the Volume 26.1 *The Craft Factor*. I have a lot of respect for Sandra's credentials, she possesses high standards of excellence and her knowledge of craft history is extensive. I do take issue with the critical tone of this review—a lecture in craft history and her unmet expectations.

This show was juried by a group of very experienced weavers and spinners. While Sandra comments of pieces which she says failed to meet Saskatchewan Craft Council standards, she did not specify or elaborate on the "few pieces" which did seem to please her.

Sandra asks where all the experienced weavers are. Experienced weavers are in this show, many with decades of experience. Our show, *Prairie Inspirations*, was one of the best attended at the Craft Council Gallery last year. It is also traveling around the province on an OSAC (Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils) sponsored tour. Because of the length of the 15-month tour, many people chose to make smaller, more portable pieces such as scarves. These scarves were wonderful representations of the prairie. They possess subtle interpretations of grain fields and prairie skies. What better representation of Saskatchewan fiber than that of a scarf?

Madeline Walker's article, also in Volume 26.1 of *The Craft Factor*, on the developmental process of this project states that a "group exhibition provides an opportunity for members to learn and gain experience." I believe this is a very suitable and supportive role for the Craft Council to encourage, and surely the Saskatchewan Craft Council supports all levels of talent, not only "the very best."

I am very proud to be associated with this show. Perhaps in future, Sandra could offer criticism that is constructive, specific, and helpful.

Shelley Hamilton

Dear Editor,

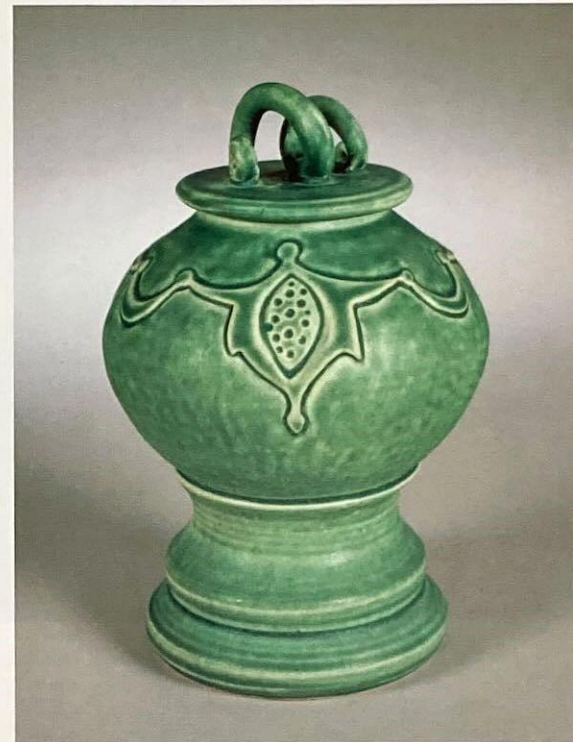
I was disappointed to see archival photographs of Alberta craftspeople accompanying the review of my book *Canadian Craft and Museum Practice 1900-1950*. In a Saskatchewan craft journal I would expect to see archival photographs of Saskatchewan craftspeople. The archives of the Saskatoon Arts and Crafts Society at the Saskatchewan Archives Board, University of Saskatchewan, contain photographs, some of which appear with an article on the Society in the Fall 2001 issue of *Saskatchewan History* journal. The Western Development Museum has photographs of work, and there are other sources. Saskatchewan has a long and interesting history of craft practice, we should be celebrating it.

Yours sincerely,
Sandra Flood, Ph.D.

Quint-Essence

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, April 27, 2001 to June 10, 2001.

by Sheila Robertson



Paula Cooley, *Escutcheon Jar*, 2001, stoneware, glaze, 20 x 16 x 16 cm.
Collection of Georgia Bell Woodard and Milton Woodard

Contemporary craft organizations, including the Saskatchewan Craft Council, have their roots in the guild systems of medieval Europe. In about the 10th century, with feudalism waning and a middle class on the rise, a focus on revitalized urban centres led to specialized occupations such as silversmithing and glassmaking. The craftsmen—for at that time they all were men—formed guilds to regulate their specialties. As Gerald L. Gutek notes in *A History of the Western Educational Experience* (Waveland Press, Inc. 1995,) the guilds controlled production monopolies as well as the acceptance of new members, working conditions, wages and quality standards.

Boys spent most of their childhood and adolescence apprenticed to masters, learning both a craft and the details of operating a workshop. With luck and skill, they progressed to become journeymen, who travelled about and were paid to work with a number of master craftsmen. At the end of this internship, having proved their expertise by creating masterpieces of their own, the journeymen earned full membership in the guild, and were entitled to establish their own master workshops.

The process is less rigid now, but craftspeople are still drawn to study with the masters. In Saskatchewan, one of these training grounds is in Prince Albert, at the Woodlands campus of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. There, Sandra Ledingham, head of the applied arts department, teaches ceramics along with Charley Farrero.

Five of their former students, recent graduates of the Ceramic Diploma Program, joined forces last spring for an exhibition which they asked Ledingham to curate. It must have been a satisfying experience for the teacher to choose from the submitted body of work, making note of the lessons learned and elaborated upon as well as the new directions explored.

The show's clever title, *Quint-Essence*, expresses both the artists' efforts to reveal the essential qualities of clay, and the desire to represent in a meaningful way the practices of five different people. The exhibition was at the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery from April 27 - June 10, 2001.



Bonnie Bailey, *Titania*, 2001; stoneware, glaze, oxides; 11 x 32 cm.

The participants were: Paula Cooley, of Saskatoon; Teresa Gagne, of Ruddell; Mark Listoe, of Prince Albert; Bonnie Bailey, of Choiceland; and Puck Janes, of Saskatoon. This was an important show for them, a rite of passage not unlike that which once determined whether one was ready to be declared a master craftsman and a member of a guild.

Without checking the name plates, it would have been difficult to ascertain which works were Cooley's. She was showing a varied range of wheel-thrown and handbuilt pieces. Among her elegant, highly accomplished wheel works were *Saltea*, a miniature teapot fired in a salt kiln to create an understated, speckled beige surface. Its shape was unusual, flaring from a narrow neck to suggest a bell-like form, finished with a little curl of a handle, a tiny spout and a lid with a top-knot. I imagined how splendid *Saltea* would look, posed on an old wooden table, as the cover shot for one of those new, strip-your-life-to-the-basics magazines.

What a contrast between this piece and Cooley's vibrant, shiny orange *Ewer for Parmigianino*. The latter was a lusty cry for colours, flavours, accessories, fun. In other words, not less but more. It is one of her series of handbuilt pieces resembling lively figures with long necks and jutting hips. The artist likes the effect of contrasting interiors: in this case the handle and neck were silvery grey.

Another striking ewer was *Corvus Corax*, the raven of the title suggested in the curves of the dark surface and the pointed "beak." While the exterior was matte, the throat and interior of the work revealed a gleaming pewter glaze.

All Gagne's works were handbuilt, and she contributed one of the more memorable works in this exhibition. *Out of the Depths* was a sauceboat formed from thinly rolled sections of clay. This delightful earthenware piece looked distinctly reptilian, with its dry, rough surface mottled in shades of rust, green and apricot. It suggested a quirky, stocky creature with curled toes and a curved-up tail.

In addition to her handbuilt platters, made from clay mixed with paper and decorated with ancient symbols such as the spiral, Gagne was showing *Stone Poem*. This conceptual work was made in collaboration with a fellow Ruddell resident, poet Barbara Klar. Nestled in a mound of sand were clay stones engraved with words such as joy, choose, lovely, dance. Visitors could create phrases with the words, and the piece attracted a lot of attention. An interactive work in a gallery is always a welcome diversion.

Listoe's works, whether wheel-thrown or handbuilt, were characterized by symmetry and attention to detail. He was represented by several large platters plus assorted urns, vases and bottles. A stolid presence, with its hulking shoulders and broad lip, was his large, unglazed urn, handbuilt from stoneware.



Puck Janes, *Fence Before Summer Fields*, 2001, clay, slip, glazes, wood, 28 x 36 x 3 cm. (with frame)

Of particular interest to me was Listoe's impulse to divide works into triads or quadrants, as with his small *Lidded Urn*. By sectioning the round form, he created four petals, and dimpled in the vessel at their points. The petal motif was repeated on the lid. All the petal surfaces were finished in a shiny, lava-like glaze in charcoal-blue, interrupting the smooth, unglazed beige-gold surface of the piece.

Bailey was showing a series of vessels inspired by women of myth. A large, cream-coloured wheel-thrown stoneware bowl dubbed *Titania*, for the legendary fairy queen, featured a carved wreath of leaves along the lip, brushed airily with green glaze. A pale stoneware vessel with a half-moon attached to the lid honoured *Diana*, goddess of the hunt and the moon.

Hubris was a small but evocative piece by Bailey. The stem of the dark, porcelain goblet was a female form resplendent in turquoise glaze. The stylized, stooped figure, her arms reaching back to support the vessel, suggested the strength and pride experienced by women fulfilling many responsibilities.

Janes' work explored three tracks. She was showing some small, subtle pieces, including a series of handbuilt whiskey cups created by imprinting thin layers of porcelain with scroll and leaf images. The motifs were taken from old wallpaper, translated into a plaster mold. The small vessels were displayed in a wall-mounted shelf.

The second group included imaginative decorations attached to rods and marble bases for display in a garden. These sculptural works included spiky sea urchins, fish and furiously sprouting vegetable forms.

Finally, Janes was displaying charming framed wallworks, clay landscapes with puffy, raised clouds, glittering cobalt skies and sloughs, and tactile furrows. She called the six works her *Prairie Land Series*.

This was a diverse and engaging exhibition by five accomplished clay artists, all worthy members of the guild.

Sheila Robertson is a Saskatoon freelance writer and editor.

Thinking About Ceramics

by Greg Beatty



Above: Teresa Gagno, *Oil & Vinegar Set*, 2001; left: stoneware, glaze; 9 x 9 x 6 cm, right: 10.5 x 9 x 6 cm, centre: *Clare*, 2001; paperclay, glaze; 12 x 10.5 x 6 cm. Below: left to right; Mark Linton, *Bud Vase*, 1999; stoneware, underglaze, glaze; 23 x 10 cm. *Bottle*, 1999; stoneware, underglaze, glaze; 24 x 9.5 cm. *Salt Glaze Vase*, 1999; stoneware, underglaze, glaze; 22 x 9.5 cm.

In comparison to artistic media like paint, graphite, metal and even stone, clay is a poor cousin. Tainted by its association with dirt or soil, so that metaphorically it evokes the notion of excrement, clay, in the person of long-suffering ceramists, has had to battle hard to win respectability in the minds of curators, critics, arts bureaucrats and collectors alike. In Saskatchewan, at least, I am tempted to say that the battle has been fought and won. Gallery exhibitions of clay are common here, and some of the province's most noteworthy artists such as Joe Fafard, Vic Cicansky and Lorne Beug have worked, and continue to work, in the medium. Still, the recognition accorded ceramics is not absolute. And I imagine virtually every member of that slip-stained fraternity has an anecdote to tell about an instance when their discipline was disparaged.

However much we might be loath to admit it, humanity, as a species, is strongly hierarchical. As such, we have an unfortunate tendency to rely on signifiers of status rather than our own judgment in assessing merit. In an art context, a well-documented history is extremely important in establishing credibility. Each of the above-noted "fine art" media has such a history. A history that is taught at the university level. Ironically, despite its millennia-old role in the domestic, ceremonial and aesthetic spheres of human life, clay has not traditionally been regarded, in North America anyway, as being worthy of the same academic scrutiny. But that will change in January 2002, when the University of Regina's Fine Arts Department introduces *Thinking About Ceramics*—an introductory course on ceramic history taught by Dr. Gail Chin.

According to acting Department Head (and practicing ceramist) Ruth Chambers, the University of Regina is the perfect venue for such a course. Ceramics has been integral to its Fine Arts program since 1965; but Jack Sures, Joe Fafard, Vic Cicansky, Marilyn Levine, and David Gilhooly have served on faculty, it's one of only four Canadian universities (along with NSCAD, Waterloo and Concordia) to offer a graduate degree in ceramics. Certainly, the University of Regina's commitment to ceramics has waxed and waned over the years. But with two full-time instructors currently on staff (Chambers and Rory MacDonald), and fifteen undergrad ceramic majors and two grad students, the program is at a high ebb. Like other academic institutions, the University of Regina is facing budget pressures due to inadequate government funding. "The university wants to build on its strengths," says Chambers. "And ceramics (because of its distinguished history and well-equipped facility) already was a strength."

Thinking About Ceramics evolved from conversations between Chin and Chambers. "Each year," notes Chambers, "we try to offer a range of art history courses outside of our core courses so students can [pursue special interests]. Like textiles, ceramics

has been left out of dominant art history. In some places that might make sense, because you can't cover everything. But in Regina, ceramics does have an important history, with links to a host of contemporary theoretical issues." Living in Saskatchewan, Chambers is perhaps somewhat spoiled in terms of the respect accorded ceramics. When she exhibits outside the province, she says, "it's not so much that people turn up their noses at ceramics, but there isn't the type of rich discourse that exists here." And it's this discourse, she feels, that promotes aesthetic excellence.

Unlike Chambers, Chin is not a practicing artist, although she did study ceramics at UBC. Her passion for clay was ignited when she travelled to Japan from 1982-89 to teach English, where she began to collect Mingei. She was motivated to develop *Thinking About Ceramics*, in part, to correct a perceived deficiency in the education of University of Regina ceramics students "Many want to go on to graduate school," Chin observes. "But if they don't have a background in history and theory they have a very difficult time getting accepted. Our department is heavily studio orientated. Yet we do offer courses in the history and theory of painting. This course is along those lines, and is intended to appeal to both our studio and art history students."

For Regina ceramist Jeannie Mah, who has earned international acclaim for her delicate porcelain vessels which reference ancient Minoan Kamares ware and 18th century French Sevres porcelain, the value of such a course is clear. "As a student," she recalls, "I did not have the good fortune to study ceramic history. Instead, I came upon it haphazardly. A formal survey of ceramic history would've helped me to clarify my intention to myself. To understand our discipline's deep and overlapping roots, to critically examine why an object continues to appeal, to study form in search of content and context—all this nourishes our curiosity and strengthens our rigour in the studio."

In the course outline, *Thinking About Ceramics* is described as "a lecture seminar about different ceramic traditions around the world." Listed as a prerequisite is Art History 100. Because of the broad scope of ceramic practice throughout history, Chin does not envision offering a general survey. Rather, she will focus on select topics. "We'll start out in Neolithic times," she says. "Then we'll look at developments in Asia, because that's my particular area of interest. One week we might do Jomon pottery from Japan (which as the world's earliest ceramic culture, dates back to 10,000 BC), then look at Chinese earthenwares and yellowwares." Materials, technique, socio-cultural significance of the object and status of the artisan within the originating society are some of the issues she will discuss. "I also intend to ask basic philosophical questions, such as 'is a potter an artist?' that students need to deal with if they are to become 'artists of the craft.'"

Employing a series of mini-timelines, Chin intends to trace the evolution of ceramics in Asia and other geographic regions such as the Middle East, Africa, North and South America and Europe. Stoneware, for instance, marked the halfway point between low-fire earthenware and high-fire porcelain, which the Chinese enjoyed a monopoly in until the 17th century. For most societies, ceramic objects, with their dual utilitarian and aesthetic identities, were important vehicles of cultural expression and transmission (via trade). Often overlooked in this regard is the pottery of South American indigenous cultures. "When I was at the Gardner Museum (in Boston) in May," Chin says, "they had a marvellous selection of pre-Colombian pieces. I was impressed by their sculptural quality. They had great technique. It's wonderful stuff, and I'd never really known about it."

In teaching the course, Chin will invite the participation of guest-lecturers. "I intend to bring in Ruth to do the Arts and Crafts Movement in 19th century England," she says. "And Rory would be [ideal] to address the use of clay in contemporary art." Similarly, Jack Sures will be asked to lecture on Saskatchewan's ceramic tradition, which includes brushes with Folk and Funk art. When examining the contemporary era, Chin will highlight the historical linkages that often exist. As one example, she cites Bernard Leach (1887-1979) who adhered to the Japanese-inspired dictum that "modest and useful" functional ware was "the unconscious foundation of all real art and beauty." Greg Payce is another ceramist who draws inspiration from the past—specifically, ancient Greece. "My intention," Chin says, "is to show students how they can use the past to create a contemporary moment."

No article on clay would be complete, of course, without mentioning the age-old divide between function and form. In

Chin's mind, the two traditions are interwoven. "Most societies that had functional ware," she says, "also had some sort of sculpture. In ceramics, I don't think you can separate craft and art. Rather, the two are integral to one another." Prior to the modern period, she adds, ceramists generally didn't distinguish between their 'craft' and 'art' practices. Indeed, in Japan and China, artisans rarely even identified themselves. Instead, their pots and other production were "signed" with a period or geographic stamp. The term "artist", conversely, "arose during the Renaissance. Initially, it applied to painting and metal sculpture. It didn't really (attach to) people who worked in clay until the 20th century."

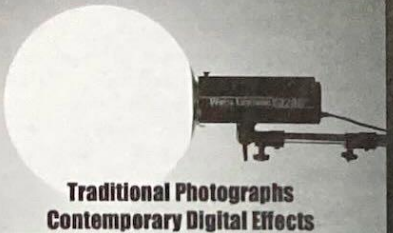
Chin's course holds obvious appeal for ceramics students. Art history majors, however, steeped as they are in the critical- and market-sanctified lore of painting and sculpture, may be a tougher sell. Still, as she notes, the British are prodigious scholars of ceramic history. And students who do enrol in the class will enhance their employment opportunities with galleries, museums and auction houses. "I'm hoping," Chin concludes, "to make this a regular part of the art history program. Students may not come away knowing as much about clay as they do painting, but they'll know something."

O. Watson, *Bernard Leach Potter and Artist*, exh. cat. (London Craftcouncil, 1992), 17. As cited in M. Bismanis, *Marilyn Levine: A Retrospective*, (MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1998), 13.

(London Craftcouncil, 1992), 17. As cited in M. Bismanis, *Marilyn Levine: A Retrospective*, (MacKenzie Art Gallery)

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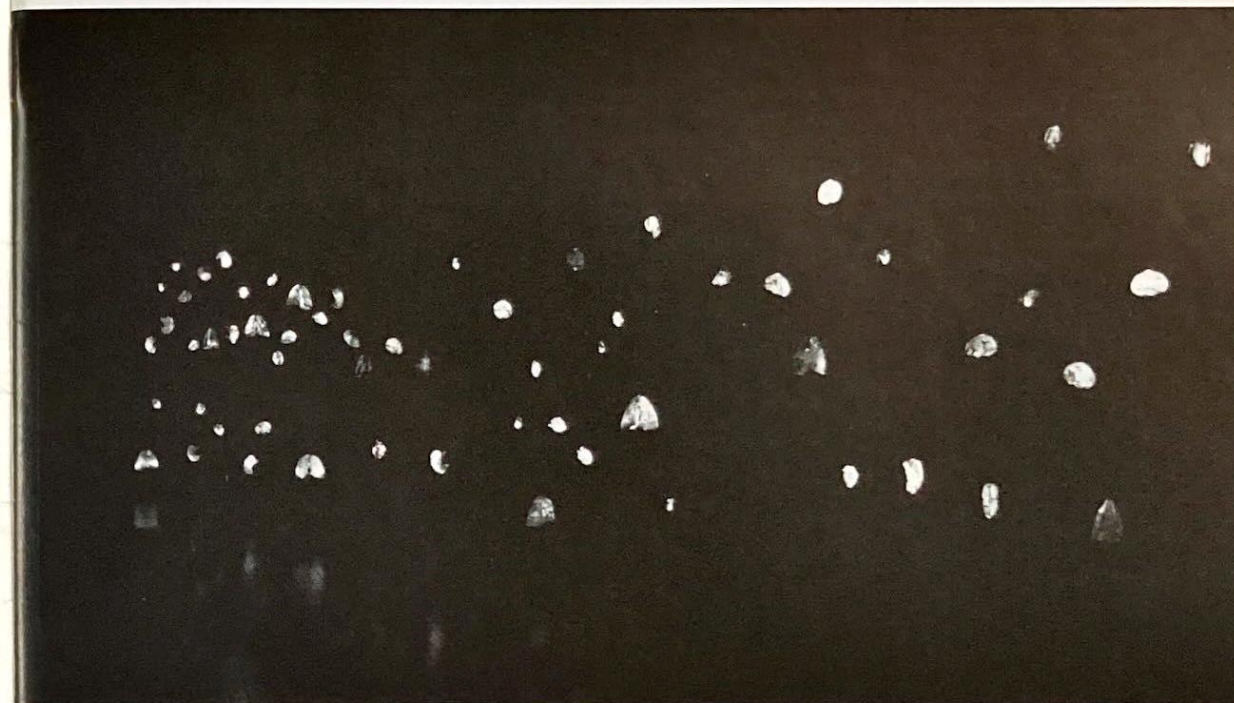
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Ruth Chambers: Beneath the Skin

Art Gallery of Calgary, June 1 to July 15, 2001

Curator: Kay Burns

Review by Amy Gogarty



Installation Shot, 2001, porcelain, electrical lighting; variable dimensions. Photo: Rebecca Rawley

Walking through the curtained barrier to Ruth Chamber's *Beneath the Skin*, viewers confront a velvety blackness traversed by a loose tracing of some eighty glowing forms. Closer inspection reveals these forms to be life-sized porcelain castings of human organs: stomachs, hearts, brains, uteruses and lungs, each suspended on its own electrical wire. Tiny lights enhanced with coloured gels glow eerily through the translucent membranes, revealing patterns of words, plant forms and decorative details. Depending on one's perception of the forms as buoyant colour or disembodied fragments, the effect is either fairy-like or ghoulish.

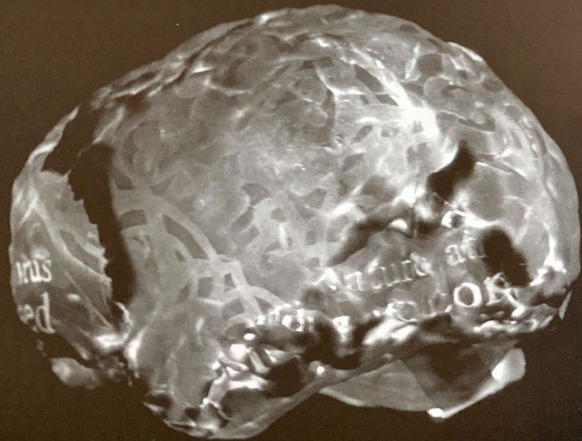
The coloured lights both warm and enflame their fragile casings. For Chambers, the illumination connotes the vitality with which we endow different organs, and it relates the models to modern medical imaging. In our day, popular culture associates the stomach with nervous anxiety, the heart with emotion, the

womb with female hysteria and the brain with male rationality or consciousness. In other cultures at other times, associations have differed. For example, the Greeks thought of the mind as female on account of its darkness, interiority and capacity to "take in" sense impressions, while feeling and consciousness were more commonly located in the heart, liver or lungs. Leaves and plant forms pattern these lungs, suggesting trees and other organisms that rely on respiration for sustenance. Words and images relating to desire (the uterus), cognitive processes (the brain) and other vital activities etch each organ's internal surface. Inspecting these opens a quiet space to reflect on our anxieties about our visceral selves. The embellishments suggest homeopathic or healing responses that counter more familiar but impersonal medical images of these organs. An audio track produced in collaboration with Charlie Fox and Michele Sereda floods the space with intermittent hissings, groans and similarly evocative sounds, provoking empathy for the vulnerable forms.

For a number of years, Chambers, who teaches at the University of Regina, has addressed crossovers between art and science. As a founding member of the collective Petri's Quadrille, she has collaborated with scientists and artists to explore concepts ordinarily encountered in physics, chemistry or mathematics. This sustained interest brings a level of clarity and intensity to her explorations of the physical body, its internal mechanisms and kinship with other organisms. Her engagement with the "stuff" of science reminds us of the degree to which ceramics itself engages science and technology. Her use of porcelain here is telling, as her previous installations often employed unfired paper clay. While unfired clay suggests nature, pre-industrial technology, formlessness and the female body, porcelain carries very different associations of culture, advanced technology and the precision of (largely male) medical science. These associations govern our response to the articulation and realism of the display.

As we enter a brave new world of biotechnology, traditional boundaries between organisms are dissolving with profound consequences. What was science fiction but a few years ago—organisms sustained independently of their bodies—now transpires in secluded laboratories. Animals are not infrequently cloned, suggesting options for humans despite ethical dilemmas and tragic prospects. Chambers forces us to pause and contemplate embodiment, consciousness and shared structures that link us to a global ecology. With disarming directness, she places viewers in the position of lab technician, mad scientist and Mother Nature herself.

Amy Gogarty is a freelance visual art critic from Calgary, Alberta.



Detail Installation Shot, 2001, porcelain, eternal lighting; 14 x 18 x 12 cm. Photo: Ed Jones Right: Detail Installation Shot, 2001, porcelain, eternal lighting. Photo: Rebecca Rowley

Fe2 - Ferrous Entomology Part Two

Michael Jozsa
Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, June 15 - July 22, 2001
Review by Pat Doig



Puppet Hatcher, 2001; plastic mixing bowls, garbage cans, toys, aluminum boat parts, flour sifter, steel lamp shade, tea pot lid, velvet, funfur, assorted hardware; 170 x 177 x 104 cm.

It was four years ago that I had the pleasure of reviewing *Part One* of Michael Jozsa's "Ferrous Entomology." I was curious to see what, if any, major difference four years might have had on this second exhibit of metal insect-sculptures extraordinaire.

It was immediately apparent. The bugs on this side of the millennium had obviously mutated. Not only that, they were still doing it in the gallery.

Gone for the most part were the "formidable and feisty" seriously industrialized monsters of the first exhibit. I was now looking at a different breed. Dare I say, these new insects and arachnids appeared very cool, even funky, less intimidating than their predecessors despite the increased size. These were possibly the party animals of the insect world and I had just wandered into their bar.

As Jozsa once expressed his fear of insects and arachnophobia as a main motive for his exploration of them, one might assume from these new funkier hybrid images, perhaps this fear has been dispelled. The artist was having fun, evident, even in the names: *Puppet Hatcher*, *Slag-Naught* and *Sacbutt*.

But, perhaps these new cheekier hybrids are only wolf bugs in sheep's clothing (read that fun fur), responding to a generation of humans lulled into complacency. Should we still feel uneasy? They are, after all, still predators. *Kings Crouch*, mother of all tuffets, for example, invites one to sit a spell. But don't be fooled. Assembled from innocuous objects like steel chairs, bicycle parts and spotted velvet fun fur, it may be only after you park yourself that it hits you—the chair structure, like a Venus fly trap, is one that may envelop, indeed impale you forever. Chair legs and finials



Hondaaurora, 2000; steel bicycle, motorcycle parts, aluminum gas pump nozzle, lamp shade, wood antler, electrical light fixture; 96.5 x 66 x 60 cm.

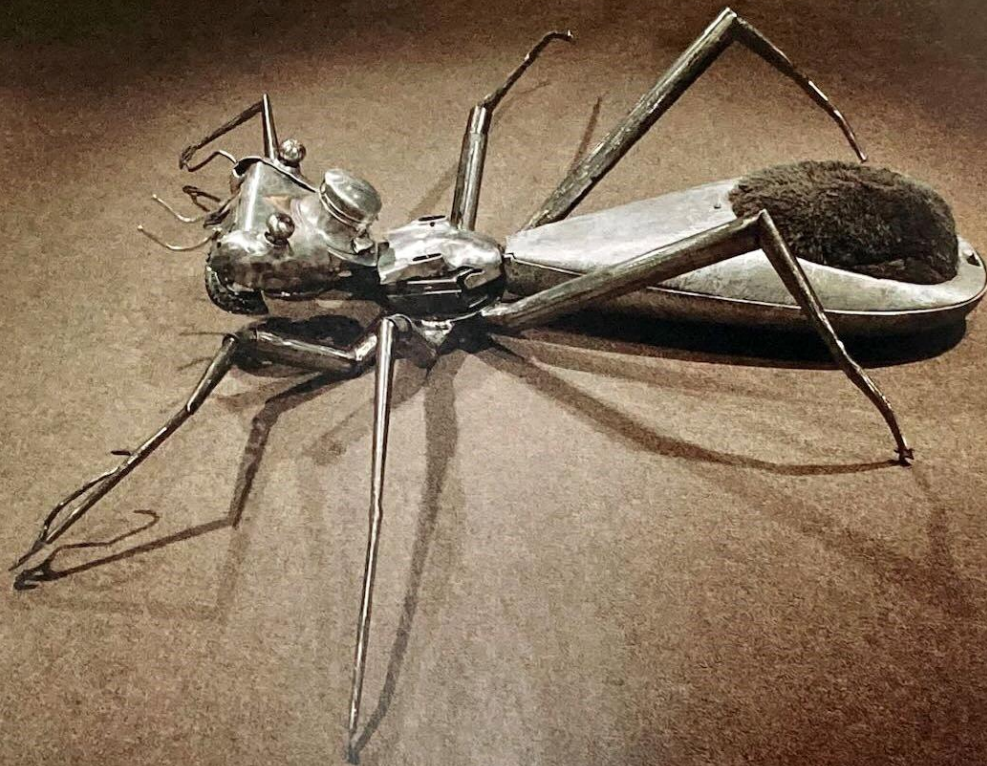
upon closer inspection stand revealed as the sharpened telescopic legs of the spider body cushion you are leaning against, but by that time it may be too late. Little Miss Muffet could be toast.

Similarly, Jozsa's sizable and fictitious *Uneasy Chair* (177.8 x 215.9 x 35.6 cm.) makes you smile. I immediately thought of Easy Rider. It was a biker's dream, a hybrid surely of the motorcyclopidis family. Door knob eyes, street-lamp body and a strategically-placed "made in Canada" Hoover vacuum head boasting "It beats and sweeps and cleans," along with its inviting fun fur seat, contributed to its biker demeanour. I hoped whatever rode this beast wouldn't come strolling around the corner, especially in a gang.

Perhaps one of the more thought provoking pieces of the exhibit was Jozsa's *Krysalis*, suspended in mid-air, hanging from

the gallery ceiling. Constructed from handmade, leaf-embedded paper, steel oil drum, safety light, wax and resin, its softly-lit interior beckoned one to peak inside the hollow core. Was this a just recently vacated cocoon or the remains of a molting growing process? Was the former, now larger inhabitant lying in wait? If the skeletal imprint of the head at the bottom of the structure was any indication, it wasn't a beast you wanted crawling across your living-room floor.

As the creation of these fictitious, welded and riveted insects and arachnids demonstrates, Jozsa has aptly proven his resourcefulness in drawing from and recycling the clutter of the environment for his art. By doing so, he is creating thought-provoking art and an appreciation for it, while teaching the rest of us to respect the earth and all its inhabitants. There is a parallel in



Uncasy Chair, 2001; steel bicycle, table & chair parts, door knobs, aluminum vacuum, street lamp; 178 x 216 x 36 cm.

the insect world. Insects, likewise resourceful, will however, never be on the endangered list for that very reason. Insects are superbly proficient at adapting to changing circumstances, thriving without creating clutter and unsustainable landfills. Surviving even today, in the much-touted globalized, technological world, bugs, no doubt, will continue to invade more than your computer. But however distasteful, even harmful as many of them are, we still rely on them. Indeed without them, at least a third of the world's food supply would not exist.

But Jozsa, intentionally or not, throws a wrench into the above scenario when he alludes to the fact that he is creating 'temporary' harmony from the chaos and clutter. Up until now his welded and riveted insects were physically indestructible. Now however, the juxtaposition of cloth material and electrical lighting alongside metal parts renders Jozsa's new sculptures vulnerable to the elements and their eventual demise. They are more temporary by their design, only as strong as their weakest point. The use of a gold velvet pillow strategically placed, perhaps giving rise to the name Sacbutt, along with a sandwiched, more vulnerable inner body of purple fabric, contrasts with the use of an aluminum

mix-master, steel bicycle parts and assorted hardware. Metal legs are welded to the body. Sacbutt may never survive an attack or even as a sculpture in an outdoor setting exposed to the elements.

On the other hand, temporary harmony may allude to these seemingly playful insects not remaining playful for long. Will their bad-side manners re-emerge in their next metamorphosis or even before, wreaking havoc on community and humanity?

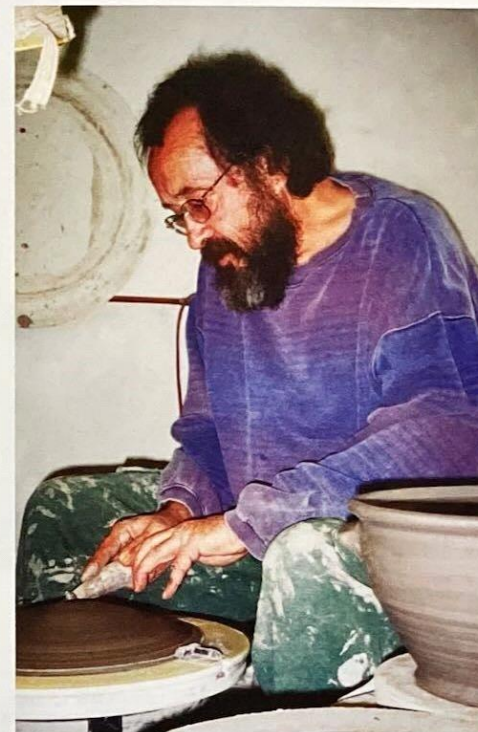
But as insects date back four hundred million years and humans only one million, it is likely us, the humans, that may be temporary, if we continue to abuse the planet.

It's possible Jozsa is having a little fun with us, while holding a mirror up to society. On the other hand, it may be that he just likes to create fictitious creatures. He does it well.

Pat Doig lives in the townsite of Shields at Blackstrap Lake, outside of Saskatoon. She has worked in recycled metals since the mid-80s and is a periodic contributor to The Craft Factor.

Stephen Girard: In Search of the Elusive

by Harriet Richards



Stephen Girard, 2001; in his studio, Eastend, SK. Photo: Harriet Richards

Stephen Girard is one of several studio potters in Saskatchewan who make a living solely from their art, but he is one of a special few who has virtually complete control over the raw materials used in his work. His love of the natural clays and passion for every aspect of the transforming processes required in ceramics, is perhaps more important to him than the ultimate result of "making beautiful things."

Since 1998 his studio has been in Eastend, a ranching town nestled in the Frenchman River Valley, located in the southwest corner of the province at the rugged eastern end of the Cypress Hills. The Frenchman River, which winds throughout town and valley, was once known as the White Mud River in reference to the enormous clay deposits found here, and later mined commercially. It is this clay which ultimately convinced Girard to return to Eastend, the town in which he'd grown up, but had left in 1964.

The surrounding hills, rich in fossil deposits, reveal wide striations of white clay, and there are several abandoned digs as well as commercially unviable sites waiting to be investigated. The discovery in 1994 of the now famous T. Rex, "Scotty," brings 10,000 tourists a year to Eastend, and tourists love pottery.

Girard has heard some clay artists state that making cups (of these, alone, he turns out 200 a month) is 'a cop-out', but he says he only has to think of all the beautiful women drinking from them to make it worthwhile. Also, in his experience, those rhythms which accompany production work allow his designs to develop naturally, and to become more fluid and attractive. He is influenced by Asian ceramics, especially of the Sung Dynasty, and in philosophy very much by Japanese artist Soetsu Yanagi (1889-1961) who was responsible in part for folk art being recognised as great art. During a time when the Industrial Revolution was wiping out studio potters in Britain, Yanagi was the philosophical driving force behind other potters he admires: Bernard Leach, Michael Cardew, and Shoji Hamada.

Stephen Girard's career in ceramics began in 1971 when he studied with Mel Bolen, who allowed him and a few others studio space, and with Marilyn Levine, who specialized in glazes. He had a studio in Calgary in the mid-'80's, and has worked as school teacher, carpenter, and bricklayer, but it wasn't until 1996 while studying with Jack Sures in Regina that he became convinced it was possible to make a living as a potter. Unfortunately, the next year a malignant tumour was discovered in Girard's left arm. After bone replacement surgery, radiology, and more surgeries, including a tendon transfer which finally allowed his thumb and fingers to function, he was able to resume work.



Stephen Girard, 2001; Clay dig, east of Raven's Crag, Frenchman River Valley, West of Eastend, SK. Photo: Harriet Richards

In 1991, seven years before moving to Eastend, he had settled and kept a studio in Francis, southeast of Regina. During this time, as craftspeople do, he attended several sales and shows throughout the year, each of them involving two or three days plus time spent packing and unpacking. He was already digging the Eastend clay and hauling big loads three hundred miles, a trip generally made twice a year. The long distances meant he couldn't do a lot of exploring, and travelling to so many markets meant days away from the studio. It only made sense to return to his home town and be close to the hills he loves and which provide what he considers to be the other half of his art.

Girard arrived at Eastend in April 1998, and began renovations to the building he shares with two other businesses, and within six months had "White Mud Studio" up and running. Approximately 80% of everything he now produces is sold at Alley Katz, the coffee bar and gift shop next door. There is a large window between the shop and Girard's studio, inviting anyone to watch him at work, and there have been times when so many visitors want to hear about the clay process, he has scheduled tours. The studio seems to be always open to neighbours, who drop by regularly.

He has made training others a special focus, and has worked with, and at times collaborated with, several people from the area.

Classes for kids eventually were given at no charge, because he didn't want to exclude anyone, and he's had up to fifteen kids coming after school. Studio time and clay are always free to them, "but most don't stay with it long, they're scared of the hard work."

Girard creates functional kitchenware, and as a craftsman strives for these to be "pleasing to use and handle, pleasing and enjoyable in the hands and in the house." He sees his real distinction as being the potter who makes his clay from the hills. There is a luxury in the relative remoteness of where he lives, the wide stretches of ranch land and hills filled with wildlife, of taking an afternoon to roam and explore, at the same time searching for interesting dig sites as he goes. He always has a bucket with him, sometimes taking a sample in the field to bring back and test. If it's good, depending on the deposit, he returns with either pick and shovel or a front-end loader.

At the side of his studio are five heaps of various clays from different sites, which are numbered in the manner of commercial companies, including the year mined. These are all stoneware clays except one, ball clay, which adds plasticity. Ball clay is associated with lignite coal and appears dark, but fires white, and the lighter clays which have slight amounts of iron oxide, fire into colours. The white kaolin—from the Chinese gaojing, or high



Left: Planter, 2001; clay, glaze; 38 x 81 cm. Right: Quish Dish, 2001; clay, glaze; 30 cm. (d) Vase, 2001; clay, glaze; 10 x 15 cm. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

hill—is very pure, 75% silicon, 15% alumina, and is used for refractories (materials resistant to heat) in the building of kilns, or with the addition of feldspar and ball clay, becomes porcelain. These raw clays are liquified, blended into one and passed through screens. Commercial clays are put through a hammermill, a more efficient and consistent process when dealing with 300,000 tonnes a year, but their mix includes large iron oxide nodules and are fired at cone 09 or 10. By contrast, Girard's screening is a gentle process, and leaves a clay which can be fired at porcelain temperatures, cone 11 flat or cone 12 half down. Several wire-bottomed frames sit outside the studio, where the liquid blends dry in the sun, and are afterwards brought in to be passed through a pug mill. The pugs (cylinders of malleable clay) are stored in old freezers where they can keep moist for years.

Ceramic glazes have the same constituent materials as does clay, but are proportioned differently in order to be vitrified, or fired as glass. Most of Girard's glaze ingredients are also from the hills, and he collects fly ash (pumicite), kaolin, ball clay, and iron oxide, all of which comprise 75% of glaze formulas. Unavailable, or too difficult to collect himself, are cobalt, manganese, feldspar, nickel, and soda ash.



Some of Stephen Girard's experimentation is aimed at finding different blends which will allow large, bulbous forms on the wheel and won't shrink so much as to cause glaze-fit problems. His other fascination is creating refractories. He built his own kiln in Francis, and has since helped with a few others. He constructed his present kiln in the Eastend studio using mostly his own research with a castable refractory, but after initial use two walls burned out and turned to glass. Meanwhile he discovered a higher temperature clay and replaced the walls with his own bricks.

He hopes to do more research into refractories, which he considers to be an important part of the ceramic process, and cheaply-built kilns allow more artistic experimentation without relying on huge grants. Inspired in part by internationally-renowned architect Nader Khalili, innovator of the Geltaftan Earth-and-Fire System known as Ceramic Houses, Girard has been coming up with some big ideas. He envisions large outdoor sculptures, now called 'pyromorphs', which would "reflect the forms and colours of the hills so they sit there easily". A large kiln for each piece would be built on site from his own refractory material using kaolin, wood chips, etc., and fired on site.

In January 2000, the bone in Girard's left arm developed a serious infection which has gradually restricted his work, and he will undergo more surgery. Partly because of his arm, and partly tired of working alone, he began a search for a studio partner. At the time of writing, it looks as if he may have found one. In the healing months, he will take private lessons from Kathy Sung, a Regina teacher of bamboo brushwork and Chinese calligraphy, and there work on unglazed pots and rice paper.

By gathering and developing his own materials, Girard is following in the steps of Michael Cardew, who believed that without doing this, "the pots won't be as good as they have the right to be." Finding his clay close to its source is a necessary part of his fulfilment and maturity as an artist, and he says that if he were a painter or weaver the philosophy would be the same—as much as possible find and make his own dyes and materials. Experimentation, especially with the clay formula, is integral to the work Stephen Girard produces and to its individual character, and allows for those happy accidents which come only through mistakes. He says it is "a more treacherous path to follow," but it is the only path which he knows will reveal the elusive in his art.

Harriet Richards is a freelance writer and author.

Cineramics: Jeannie Mah and Greg Payce

Art Gallery of Calgary, June 1 to July 15, 2001

Curator: Mary-Beth Laviolette

Review by Amy Gogarty

The arts of cinema and ceramics appear to have little in common. Utilizing relatively new technology, cinema consists of mechanically projected illusions. It unfolds in time and is luminous, spectral and dematerialized. In contrast, ceramic objects are patently material, produced through the interplay of ancient technologies and raw earth. Cinema is linked with drama, entertainment and public display; ceramics with domesticity, intimacy and daily use. Yet an exhibition in Calgary curated by Mary-Beth Laviolette, *Cineramics*, brings together recent work by Jeannie Mah and Greg Payce to bridge those two arts. The artists themselves embody the connection in that both have been interested in cinema for several decades. Just as the title splices two separate words to form a montage or "third meaning," each artist's work manifests differing perspectives on visually, as represented by cinema, and on ceramics itself.

The connection to cinema is most easily read in Mah's work, which is hardly surprising, as she has acknowledged her debt to French "new wave" cinema, cinema history and cinematic language throughout much of her career. Mah presents three separate yet thematically linked tableaux or narratives based on personal and family memory. Shelves shaped like open books support between five and eleven paper-thin porcelain cups imprinted with photo-based images. The cups take one of two shapes: slender cones whose rims are pulled upward to form sail-like extensions, and low basins. The images are rendered with a technique that exploits properties of certain older types of photocopy machines. Ink from these machines can be directly transferred to the unfired clay to produce grainy, sepia-toned images. The images are lightly tinted with underglazes, which high-fire to a luminescent skin, recalling colourization of older black and white films. Read in the context of the library shelves that support them, the tableaux propose we understand history as much through the mediation of printed words and cinematic *mise-en-scène* as through personal experience.

Mah's purview takes in a wide sweep of cultural history: the revolutionary events of the French Commune, established in Paris for several months in 1871, through the Communist revolution in China, which impacted her own family history. The terrifying events of the commune form a backdrop to *Revolution + Luce. Jardin de Luxembourg de 1871 jusqu'à nos jours*. The now peaceful Luxembourg Gardens and Père Lachaise Cemetery once witnessed the execution of thousands of communards who had taken up arms against the repressive French State. During the final week in May, some 25-30,000 citizens were massacred by government troops, with thousands of others—including the painter Gustave Courbet—sentenced to harsh prison terms or

overseas exile. British filmmaker Ken McMullen, whose political sympathies Mah shares, provoked her identification with these events with his film *Ghost Dance* (1983). The formality of her arrangement ironically echoes the authority of a regime dedicated to imposing order, efficiency and rationality on the post-revolutionary reality of an unruly populace. Symmetrically placed cups frame a central pot inscribed with a replica of the plaque commemorating the Communards in *Père Lachaise*. Two cups are imprinted with images photographed through one of the balustrades in the park. Flat pattern and contrasting light and shadow meld foreground and background as in a mosaic. Decorative urns such as those seen in Eugene Atget's elegiac photographs of Versailles and St. Cloud mark the adjacent cups, and mirrored views of Mah walking down a tree-lined allée invoke Renaissance perspective to frame the work. Following McMullen's imperative that "Location is text," Mah creates a resonant impression of the luxuriant park, its tragic history and her sense of herself as a witness to events the world would prefer to forget. In this, she resurrects a role ceramics has traditionally played as funeral urn, commemorative cup and receptacle of personal memory and sentiment.

Referring to film theorists Sergei Eisenstein and Christian Metz, Mah asserts viewers confronted with a series of images attempt to forge connections and construct narratives. The juxtaposition of images in film produces a montage or third meaning, a process seen alternately as manipulative or expressive. *Revolution + Family: From Mao's House to Our House* ironically questions the political and cultural reality of events apprehended mainly through popular images. Images on five cups thread several histories together: the Mah family's emigration from China, their eventual return as tourists in the 1970s, her learning about the Cultural Revolution through Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 film *La Chinoise* and Andy Warhol's pop culture icons of *Mao Tse Tung*. On either end of the assembly, Warhol's famous image of Mao dwarfs the tiny figure of a smartly dressed Mah playing tourist at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The tourist theme continues with the central image of Mah standing beneath another Warhol image of Mao and his politburo in the Musée d'art moderne in St. Etienne, France. Again, she is dwarfed, out of place and ironically positioned by the authority of both the famous artist and the famous Chinese leader. A florid pattern physically embossed into the pale blue or yellow ivory porcelain simulates the pressed and carved celadons of the Song Dynasty. Images of Mah's father and brothers posed comfortably in front of the family store in Regina and awkwardly with fellow tourists beside Mao's house in Beijing complete the double fold of insider and outsider, native and tourist that structures the work.

Al Barelli, 2001, with Greg Payce, 132 x 66 x 242 cm. Photo: Marc Hutchinson





Above: Jeannie Mab, *Révolution + Luxe Jardin de Luxembourg de 1871 jusqu'à nos jours*, 2001; Jeannie Mab strolling down tree-lined allé in *Jardin de Luxembourg*. Porcelain vessel with phototransfer, shelf. 163 x 54 x 24 cm. Right: Jeannie Mab, *Revolution + Family*, 2001: *From Mao's House to Our House*, 2001. Porcelain vessels with phototransfer, shelf. Overall dimensions 127 x 46 x 21 cm.

Cinematic references are less obvious in Greg Payce's sculptural vessels, yet the artist also confesses a love affair with photography, cinema and minimalist soundtracks from Peter Greenaway films. Payce's new work continues his investigation of multiple vessels whose contiguous silhouettes form figural images. It departs, however, from his earlier use of densely layered decoration, as most of these pots are sheathed smoothly in red, black or pastel terra sigillata. Reviewing his earlier work, Joan McNeil situated it in terms of eclectic Victorian historicism. However, a more Baroque sensibility distinguishes these new forms. The emotional and intellectual appeal of Baroque sculpture and architecture lies in its thrilling deployment of dramatic and eccentric form and its interplay of mass and volume. One thinks of Boromini's dome of S. Ivo, in Rome, whose geometry resists simple resolution, or the massive columns of Bernini's colonnade at St. Peter's. In our century, such sensibility has been misdirected to fascist hyperbole and authoritarianism, numbing us to virtuoso display. Payce's vessels, however, maintain affinities to the human through their figural reference, scale, empathy and tactile qualities associated with functional pottery itself.

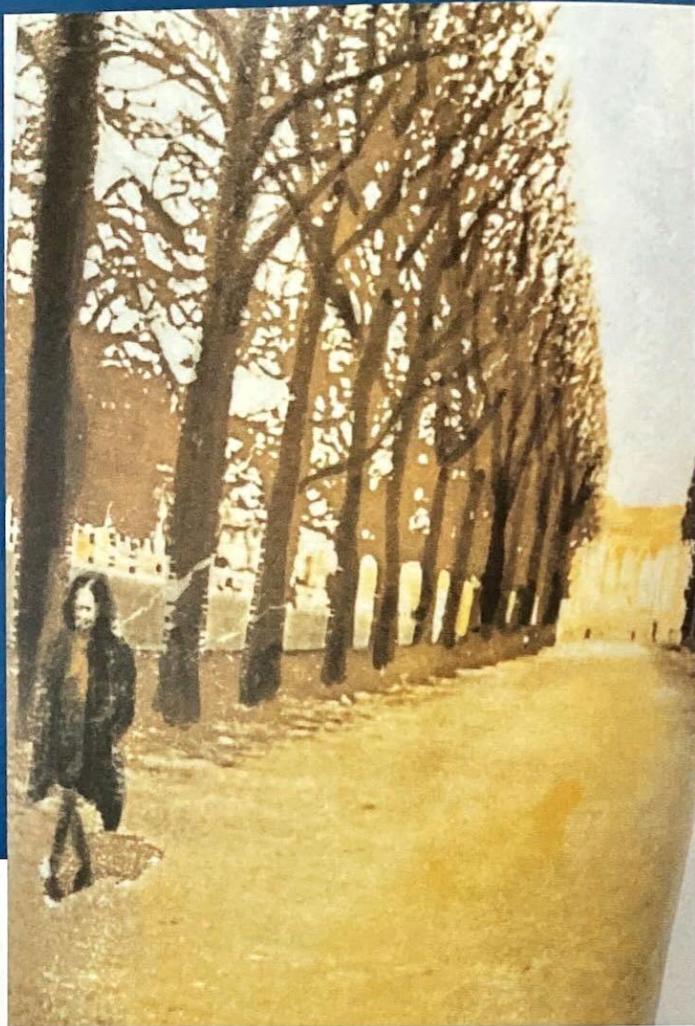
Payce combines a craftsman's respect for traditions, skills and technologies with a visionary's ability to think and create with metaphor. Rather than further tangle the art/craft debate, which he finds specious, Payce prefers to argue an expanded definition of craft's plastic possibilities and multiple frames of reference. Most of these works recall familiar forms. The cups in *Tumblers* could be used for drinking, the colossal *Al Barelli* derives from pharmaceutical wares and many of his pots do double duty as vases or storage jars. What is unique to these pots is that their seemingly neutral profiles combine to create figural images, which are only apparent when the pots are aligned. To produce these strictly articulated profiles requires a unique and systematic approach to hand-throwing clay cylinders, forming them against a series of metal templates and calculating shrinkage precisely. The two columns comprising the giant *Al Barelli*, which enclose a

larger-than-life-sized figure, were thrown and fired in sections small enough to fit into his kiln. The sections are joined together by means of interlocking socles, such as those that enabled 17th c. Dutch pyramidal tulip vases to reach such astonishing heights and complexity. The integrity of the forms, sheer sensuousness of the surfaces and intellectual delight afforded viewers moving around the arrangements to experience the interplay of their meaningful profiles raise the works far above simple technique.

Payce invokes the figure as an absence through his arrangements. While the technical achievement and imposing scale of *Al Barelli* make it impossible to ignore, the more modestly scaled table pieces reward close viewing. *Wane* consists of ten three-foot tall vases enclosing male figures. Alternate pots, slipped fleshy beige, red and brown, establish the figures' backs, while intervening ones, black and spattered with shiny bronze flecks, delineate the more aggressive, overtly sexualized fronts. As the series progresses left to right, the figures age visibly: flesh sags, bellies pot and shoulders stoop. *Kiss* reverses the strategy by using the pot itself as figure. At first, the intervening space puzzles, unreadable if pleurably organic and abstract. Once it is recognized the profiles of the pots form male and female figures in various states of reception, conundrums multiply. Each pot superimposes a male and female figure, with females slipped red and males black. Eager males court reluctant females, shameless hussies buss shy boys, men face men and women women to suggest a dancing profusion of flirting figures. Carrying forward the Rococo tradition of representing the entire human comedy in the form of table decor, playful innuendoes inject eroticism and mischievous surprise into an otherwise orderly work.

Payce's interest in the apparatuses of cinema appears more in his configurations than in specific imagery. Magic Lanterns, zoetropes and proto-cinematic photography by Eadweard Muybridge and others inspire his evolutionary imagery. SSSSSSS, an eye-dazzling concoction of multi-lobed, striped and dotted vessels calls to mind Marcel Duchamp's 1935 *Rotoreliefs*. These peculiar works of Duchamp's consisted of spirals and innocuous





Jeannie Mah, (detail) *Révolution + Luxe, Jardin de Luxembourg de 1871 jusqu'à nos jours*, 2001; Jeannie Mah strolling down tree-lined allé in Jardin de Luxembourg; porcelain vessel with phototransfer; 163 x 54 x 24 cm.

designs printed on cardboard disks, which could be spun on record players. At turntable speeds, the spinning disks created unsettling illusions of tumescence and detumescence, with obvious comic and sexual implications. The spaces between vessels in *SSSSSS* resemble snakes, whose colourful skins are replicated on the pots and whose "soundtracks" are onomatopoeically reproduced in the title. The aggressive curves and dynamic patterning of the vessels create a distinct impression of sidewinders moving. With a magical simplicity, Payce creates a multi-media presentation replete with the illusion of image, sound and action.

While ties to cinema comprise but one way to engage the works of these two important ceramists, exploration does open perspectives that might remain unexamined by a more casual or

formal reading. One wishes but a few of these associations were spelled out for viewers with a posted curator's statement or other introduction to the show. While Mah's work is referenced through titles, artist statement and text panel discussing the French Commune, Payce's work is presented without further comment. Ceramics is demanding and finally achieving acceptance in the competitive world of public exhibition, which calls for more critical dialogue, context and open discussion of work on view. Public galleries serve important educational roles, and the opportunity for the public to see such accomplished, aesthetically pleasing yet challenging work begs for more comprehensive support.

Amy Gogarty is a freelance visual art critic from Calgary, Alberta.



Above: Greg Payce, *Wane*, 2000; earthenware clay, terra sigillata slip, glaze; 345 x 30 x 92 cm.
Greg Payce, *SSSSSS*, 2000; earthenware clay, terra sigillata slip, glaze; 122 x 19 x 41 cm. Photos: Marc Hutchinson

The Beauty of Practicality: The New Prairie Pots of Martin Tagseth

by Puck Janes

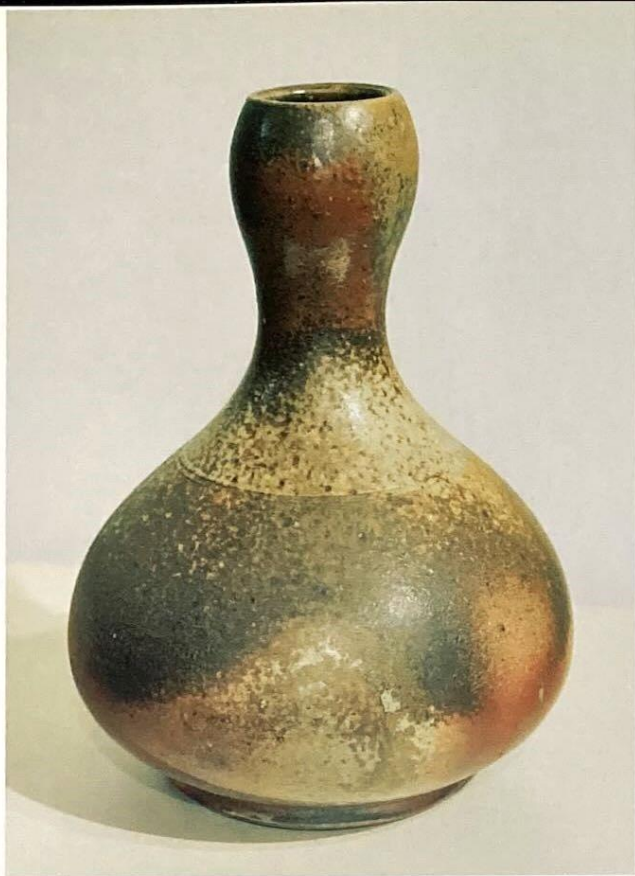


"Work done by the heart and hand is ultimately worship of life itself," writes Dr. Soetsu Yanagi in *The Unknown Craftsmen*. Add to this the surprises that a wood-fired kiln produces, an experimental mind, and a desire to create objects to enrich another's domestic space and you have the pottery of Martin Tagseth. Tagseth, who is originally from Lake Lenore, and wants to return to his family home there, had 34 pieces in *The New Prairie Pots*, his first Saskatchewan show after participating in exhibitions in Korea, Alberta, Manitoba, Ohio, Alaska, Poland, Illinois, Arizona and Nova Scotia.

A luscious form repeated throughout the show was the gourd bottle shape of an oval over a circle. These bulbous pots could also be found with their narrowing tops sealed with fitted lids. The lids had lovely thrown knobs which were either coned, angled or rounded, like large olive pits or the bishop and pawn from an elaborate chess set. These simple forms had beautiful silhouettes that invited the viewer for a closer look which turned up surprises. The changes appeared subtle but some of the thrown pieces had their bottoms cut off, their form arched or oveled, and a flat clay slab added to create new bases. Others were side paddled or had darts removed from their sides creating an elliptical base which curved up to a round shoulder. One gourd form sat on a separate thrown base decorated with a carved relief design over cut and curved feet. Tagseth wanted to elevate the utilitarian piece into the realm of 'higher art' with the use of a pedestal-type presentation.

Left: detail *Untitled* (no. 23.c), 2001; clay, salt glaze. Approx. 15 x 10 cm.
Below: *Untitled* (no. 23 a, b, c, d, e, f), clay, salt glaze. Varied dimensions.
Right: *Untitled*, 2001; clay, salt glaze. Approx. 36 x 20 cm.





Untitled, 2001 (no. 20), clay, salt glaze. Approx. 28 x 18 cm.

Most striking about the show, *The New Prairie Pots* was the variation, depth, and richness of colour achieved through firing with wood. Wood-firing is the labour-intensive process in which wood is used as fuel to fire pottery kilns that have been specifically designed for this purpose. As the kiln fires, stoked with a new 'charge' of wood every few minutes, long flames and wood ash travel through the kiln touching the pottery. Wood ash contains a small percentage of silica or glass. Over time, this ash accumulates on the pottery, melts and forms a natural ash glaze. Different clays, slips and glazes are enhanced by the heat, ash and volatile salts in the kiln atmosphere to create a range of wonderful spotting, blushing, flashing and melting as witnessed on Tagseth's pots.

All but one salt-fired piece were fired over a number of days in a wood-burning kiln that Tagseth helped design and build at the University of Manitoba where he is acting Head of Ceramics. He used five different clays and as many kinds of slips and glazes in this show, wanting to test the materials and to have more to

show his students. Tagseth lamented that many contemporary ceramics students will go through their whole educational process only ever heating their work in electronically controlled kilns.

Twenty years ago there were only 85 documented wood kilns in the U.S. Since then, there has been a resurgence in wood-firing. Many of these wood-firers find themselves in the role of educator because an appreciation of the method and work is required. The pots are not true blue and the imperfect, one-of-a-kind nature is emphasized. For the most part, experienced potters buy Tagseth's work—potters who know that every unreproducible "gift" from the kiln proves that lotteries exist in many forms. Tagseth's pots sold for between \$50 and \$350, not bad when you win the lottery with each piece.

Puck Janes is a Saskatoon potter and graduate of the SLAST Ceramics Program.

The Textile Museum of Canada

by Greg Beatty



Silver, Gold and Silk: the 25th Anniversary Exhibition. Photo: Rachael Ashe

As agents of academic authority, museums of all types (art, natural history, ethnography) have been subjected to intense scrutiny by artists in this Postmodern period. Their concerns are many and varied, from the exclusiveness of many museum collections, which tends to reinforce dominant ideology; to the denial of contemporary relevance that occurs when marginalized cultures are celebrated primarily for past accomplishments (i.e. museum as mausoleum). Still, the museum does perform a valuable function in Western society, both as a storehouse of historically significant artifacts, and as an arbiter of excellence that confers legitimacy on diverse creative disciplines.

Founded in 1975, the Textile Museum of Canada (formerly the Museum For Textiles) occupies a hybrid museum/gallery space, offering both historic and modern textile exhibits. According to Exhibitions Manager and Contemporary Gallery curator Sarah Quinton, the museum originated with Toronto collectors Max Allen and Simon Waegemackers. "They began collecting textiles as a personal passion," she reports. "Then at some point, they looked at what they'd done and said, 'We should go public with this.' So they opened a small room in Toronto's Mirvish Village." Fourteen years later, Allen and Waegemackers secured the museum's current location at 55 Centre Avenue in downtown Toronto. It boasts 15,000 square feet of exhibition space, and also features the H.N. Pullar Memorial Library with over 3000 books and periodicals, a conservation lab, lecture theatre and gift shop/book store operated by volunteers.

The museum's mandate, as identified on its website (www.museumfortextiles.on.ca) as providing "the opportunity to experience the traditions, skills and creative genius that make the textile arts such an important visual expression of contemporary and historical concerns." It does this through exhibits of "artistic, historic and cultural importance," along with "research, publications and educational outreach programs."

"We have between 9-10,000 artifacts," says Quinton. "While we do display contemporary textiles, the collection is limited to ethnographic and historic textiles." Included are carpets, quilts, garments and ceremonial objects from over 35 countries. With a limited acquisitions budget, the museum relies "almost exclusively" on donations. Quinton admits the curatorial staff finds this frustrating as "we're always in reaction mode. It's very difficult to be proactive when you're reliant on donations. Not to say that we aren't appreciative of the extraordinary treasures that come into our care." Still, the museum does have certain standards that necessitate it, on occasion, having to decline a donation. "It's very tough," says Quinton, "because often people have a sentimental attachment to what they're offering, like a family heirloom. But it's not something we feel we can either look after properly, or fit into the collection."

In describing the collection, Quinton notes that "it's very idiosyncratic, even eccentric. We're strong in our African [such as indigo cottons] and Indonesian [especially 19th-century Japanese batiks] sections. And we have lots of Chinese silk embroidery."



Man's semi formal winter court robe (ju-fu), late 19th century. Silk tapestry weave (kezi). Photo: Ron Wood

She credits this to the rise of international travel in the 1960s. When Canadians who later became donors visited those countries, they often purchased textiles as mementoes. The collection is categorized by geographic region, and also includes ancient Coptic and pre-Columbian textiles and Indian and Burmese temple hangings. Currently, the museum is seeking to broaden its Canadian section (hence, the name change to reflect a national mandate). Also in need of shoring up is the First Nations section. Aboriginal textiles such as hooked rugs and blankets were generally overlooked by collectors before, and now prices have risen dramatically.

With its exhibitions, the museum strives to make textiles accessible to patrons. "In the early days," says Quinton, "we even had a hands-on policy. But since moving to our new facility, we've recognized the need to work within museum standards." Quinton's revelation touches on the craft/art divide that once marginalized textile practitioners. "I don't design all the exhibitions," she observes, "but those I do are relatively sparsely hung," so that they look like art shows. Through her use of glass

display cases and wall-mounted installations, she "offers viewers an aesthetic experience as much as an historic, social or political one." Because new stresses are put on cloth when it's hung, the maximum display period is six months. This is followed by a mandatory rest period. A conservator is on staff—rather than repair damaged or worn artifacts, which would jeopardize their integrity, she seeks to "stabilize and conserve" them, through proper care and storage. Motion-sensitive lighting, for instance, is employed in the galleries, and humidity/temperature controls are rigorously maintained.

Perhaps the most important criteria for inclusion in the collection is that, when made, the artifact must have been intended for personal use and not trade or export. Like clay, textiles offer a blend of function and form that make them very evocative of the originating civilization. By assessing factors like material, technique and decoration, scholars can divine information on the level of political, economic and socio-cultural development. Through its programming, the museum is eager to explore linkages between different textile practices. "I'm working



Young Woman's Kimono.
(furisode), 1910's; silk crepe,
painted, embroidered details.

Photo: Courtesy of the Textile
Museum of Canada

on a show now called *Red with Marjke Kerkhoven*," reveals Quinton, "that integrates historic and contemporary works to trace the colour red. We look first at all the natural dyes, then at the advent of chemical dyes, and what that did to traditional ways.

When I spoke with Quinton, she was in Regina to install *Wildlife: A Field Guide to the Post-Natural* at the Dunlop Gallery. She recalled that when the national museum moved into its new space in 1989, "a group of artists got together and proposed to Max and Simon that they have a gallery devoted to contemporary textile exhibitions. It was deemed a good idea as a lot of our visitorship is artists—not just textile artists, but painters, sculptors and designers." Quinton joined the museum in 1994. Prior to then, she had practiced as a textile artist. "In the late '70s, I completed a three-year diploma program in weaving at Sheridan College. Then I went to NSCAD, and eventually did my masters at Temple University in Philadelphia." Like many female artists of her generation, Quinton was motivated to study textiles, in part, to counter longstanding patriarchal prejudice against women's creative endeavours. "But I learned about cloth growing up. My mother ran a custom dress-making business, and my sister and I both sewed. We made our own clothes, and doll clothes." Now, she is immersed in a project where she uses a straight-stitch sewing machine to execute small drawings that depict "processes of making things from cloth."

When distinguishing between historic and contemporary textiles, notes Quinton, "we don't do it datewise. There are things made today that are made in a highly traditional manner. One of the responsibilities of having a public collection is the obligation to expose people to the work. There are other institutions that collect contemporary textiles. So until we grow enough that we can house, manage and exhibit them responsibly, (we have to restrict ourselves)." Some contemporary exhibitions originate in-house, while others are the product of a curatorial advisory committee. *Wildlife*, for instance, was guest-curated by Lisa Gabrielle Mark. It included work by five artists—Lois Anderson, Nina Katchadourian, Jake Moore, Warren Quigley and Louise

Weaver—who employed textiles to examine humanity's impact on the environment. Companion exhibits to *Wildlife* were *Comfort Zones: textiles in the Canadian landscape* (curated by Kerkhoven and Quinton) and *On Growth and Form: textiles and the engineering of nature* (guest-curated by Philip Beesley, Rachel MacHenry and Evelyn Michaloski). The former juxtaposed work by artists such as Joyce Wieland and Emily Carr with textiles like a Metis cienteure fléchée woven sash and a Hudson's Bay Company blanket to explore Canadian identity, while the latter addressed new textiles developed by science for use in medicine and architecture.

Globally, Quinton identifies Japan as having a vibrant contemporary textile scene. But she feels Canada stacks up well. "Our strength, at this point, is the number of fine artists—sculptors in particular—who are looking to textiles as a form of expression. They don't have formal training or education in textiles, but they're coming to textiles because of the conceptual richness they offer." Currently, Quinton is compiling a registry of textile artists to assist her in curatorial planning, and would welcome receiving C.V.'s from *The Craft Factor* readers. While attracted to textiles with an "arty" edge, Quinton is also keen to "examine the work of traditional contemporary quiltmakers and weavers. I'm fascinated by the drive people have to make objects by hand in the 21st century."

When exhibitions like *Wildlife* tour, Quinton reports that art galleries are generally receptive to hosting them. Often, they lack the knowledge-base to mount such shows on their own. As Canada's lone institution devoted to the collection and exhibition of textiles, the museum performs a valuable advocacy role. "We have a lot of people who come in unwillingly," laughs Quinton. "They get dragged by their partner or whatever. Once they arrive, they go 'Wow, this is a pleasant surprise! I thought it was going to be like a fabric store or upholstery market.' But, of course, it's not like that at all."

Greg Beatty is a freelance writer from Regina, Saskatchewan.

Manitou Winds are Blowing East for D. Lynne Bowland

by Steven Ross Smith

Piranhas in My Garden (shown on the front inside cover) is a large fused-glass bowl, made and embellished by Saskatchewan glass artist D. Lynne Bowland. The title itself is a clue to the personality of its creator, who seems to embody surprising juxtapositions. She's a pragmatist and dreamer, who adds a dash of humour to bind dichotomies.

The bowl itself, a shallow vessel fourteen inches in diameter with a flared rim edged in metallic green-gold, also works with contrasts. The graceful bowl is primarily clear glass, suggesting water, while dark green glass ribbons drift through this water hinting at foliage, or perhaps lattice. Metallic flecks and blobs—dichroic chips—in blue, green, and silver, tickle the light and brighten the surface. Through all this luminous grace swim five rust-orange, toothy fishes, looking like a cross between pac-men and the carnivorous vertebrates the title names. Bowland says that the fish represent brutish weeds, the only thing she could grow in her sandy-soiled garden near Bradwell. Like many intrepid Saskatchewan gardeners, she has found a way to make the most out of adversity. The wry humour in this piece does not distract from its artistry.



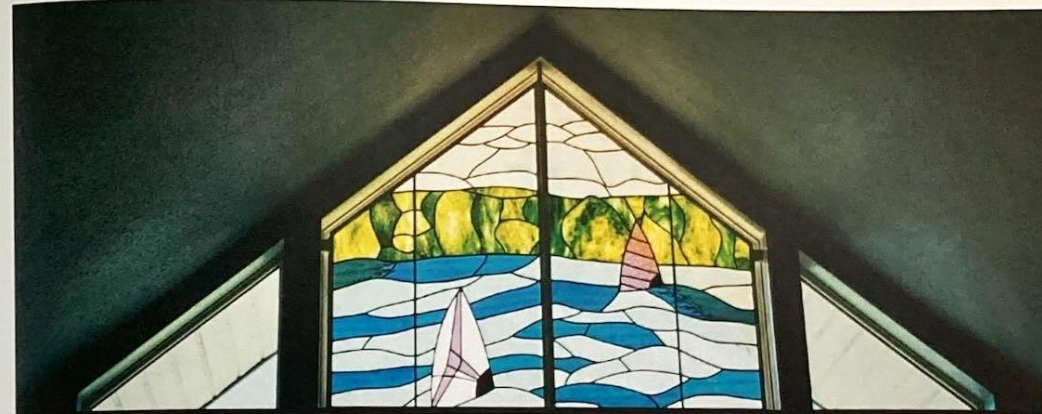
Lynne in Beach Hut Gallery, Manitou Beach, Saskatchewan. Photo: Courtesy of Bowland

she found peer and social support and workshops to develop her skills. In 1989 she completed her commerce degree, while also working with glass.

Bowland continues with fusing work today making large bowls. She prefers doing glass fusing in winter, she says, "because it keeps my studio warm. Who says that weather doesn't inspire art in this province?"

Bowland's works captivate those who see them. For example, *Agony In Three Parts*, a three-panel screen, won the People's Choice Award at Dimensions '95, in Battleford. It features a geometric pattern of black, red, clear, textured, and bevelled glass, with a lead overlay. At the same show, this piece was also selected by a jury of peers to receive the Elizabeth Swift Award for Best in Glass. And there have been many customers for her bead jewellery, and for her most constant 'production work', the very saleable small glass birds. She has made hundreds of these.

Her most prestigious commission was the design and creation of nine plates which were given as individual player awards for the 1999 World Junior Girls Volleyball Tournament, whose finals were held in Saskatchewan. Different colours were made from fused glass which was partially sand-blasted and featured the tournament logo. Lynne was commissioned to create the window over the entrance to Manitou Mineral Baths. The window is a large, six foot by six foot, two-panel leaded piece featuring clear, textured, and coloured glass, and entitled *Manitou Winds*, with a



Manitou Winds, 2000; 183 x 183 cm. Installed at Mineral Baths, East Beach, Manitou, SK. Photo: Courtesy of Bowland.

water and sailboat motif. Bowland has also had several commissions for work placed in restaurants and private residences. Like most artists, Bowland is a one-woman enterprise, working seven days a week—creating her work, crating, packing, shipping, delivering, billing, and keeping track of the many outlets selling her pieces. At one time she was selling through about twenty galleries, primarily in Saskatchewan and Alberta, but she has reduced this list.

To satisfy another aspect of her entrepreneurial drive, Bowland is the proprietor of the Beach Hut Gallery in Manitou Beach, which shows contemporary works by thirty western Canadian female artists. These include Naomi Hunter's jewellery, Daryl Eberhardt's metal garden art, and work by Saskatoon artists Puck Janes, Paula Cooley and Michelle Harris. Bowland shows and sells women's crafts exclusively. She says that "men who are crafts people are taken seriously, while women who are crafts people tend to be considered hobbyists. Work done by women is generally priced lower than men's work." Nonetheless, Bowland acknowledges that most crafts people in Saskatchewan, regardless of gender, make only a marginal living. She applies this to herself, yet she is successful by most measures. Her work sells, wins awards and commissions, and she has the respect of her peers in the world of glass and other crafts. Peers include Saskatchewan's premiere glass artist Lee Brady and Walter Julian, a relative newcomer to glass art who claims Lynne Bowland as a mentor and inspiration. Brady says of her, "Lynne has proved herself to be prolific in her creative output, establishing a place for glass art in many galleries in western Canada."

Despite her attachments here and her belief that "Saskatchewan has the highest quality crafts anywhere in North America," Bowland's restless nature is in part behind her exit from Saskatchewan in September this past year. She's moved to Lord's Cove, on Deer Island in New Brunswick. This island is a busy American and Canadian tourist stop, five hundred metres off the coast of Maine, facing the Bay of Fundy, and not too far from Saint John and Fredericton. Lynne hopes to sell her work in this

active east coast tourist market, and has thoughts of eventually opening a craft store there. She acknowledges that being away from Saskatchewan, this place she's called home for more than twenty years, and living on an island will change things. She suggests that "perhaps water will be an influence in the east." This is an odd idea, as her pieces created in dry old Saskatchewan feature boats, fish, and herons. Perhaps in the east she will 'discover' wolf willow, tractors and coyotes. For Bowland, it seems that anything is possible, and whatever emerges, we should not be surprised.

Just before departing the province, Bowland created some large fused pieces for a show of her work, *Refraction: Diffraction: Deflection* at Regina's Traditions Gallery, which ran through June and early July, 2001. This show featured big architectural screens and her large fused bowls. Bowland's work will continue to be seen in Saskatchewan, as she maintains her links with outlets such as the Pacific Gallery in Saskatoon and Handwave Gallery in Meacham. And Bowland herself will be visible as she plans to return for part of the summers to her store and to the cabin she is keeping at Manitou.

D. Lynne Bowland's images, be they sandy or wet, representative or metaphoric, bear witness to her earnest beliefs, commitment to her art, and her mercurial personality. Her work and activity will most likely continue to actualize ingrained traits—elegance and activism, and determined energy. But Bowland always keeps her sense of humour as a fallback, a fusion of wry wit and joy, to propel her forward. She says "I attempt to make the work fun. Staying serious for more than thirty seconds isn't in my nature." Indeed, whimsy, it seems, will occur in her and her work, in tandem with restlessness, entrepreneurship, and feminism, all directed towards getting much more than weeds from her garden.

Steven Ross Smith is a poet and freelance writer living in Saskatoon.

Salt Of The Earth: Recent Work by Mel Bolen

Darrell Bell Gallery, Saskatoon, November 4 - 17, 2001

By Grant McConnell

We move through a room in which slim elegance and grace interact with the unapologetically fat. The language flows, the dialogue ranges from brutal honesty to the scintillating suggestion. There is bone and there is flesh here, drawn into a turgid dance. The form of this surrounding is stimulating. This is the work of Mel Bolen in *Salt of the Earth*.

Mel Bolen's works in *Salt of the Earth* serve as a reminder of just how important it is that any artistic endeavour result in an integrated unity. The pieces range in size and scale from the hand-held to the put-your-back-into-it. Thankfully, there is a supple hand at work in shifting between divergent scales. Larger works appear to have been punched into shape where need be, so as to preserve their innate physicality. Finer fingers work a graceful bead around the circumference of the smaller ones.

The heritage of this work is apparent from the outset. Amphora and Krater reflect back their archaic origins with a new face. The invention that the artist brings to this inherited form only enhances their refinement.

The glazes serve as an easy contribution to the sensual experience of viewing and handling the work. Even the departures in form, such as bone leg tripods, are handled with a classical restraint. But don't worry. There is a sense of humour at work here too, and any classicism doesn't hang heavy on this clay.

Bolen's work is remarkably animated. Matte finishes give way to gloss in turmoil (a result of the salt glaze firing) and a play of light ensues. Many works have an almost sneaky asymmetry. On first glance they appear to carry duplicate halves. A few moments of consideration bring with them recognition of an uneven taper, the flaring ellipse of a lip or base. Always we are left with the sense that these departures are purposeful and the aesthetic engagement that they generate compelling.

Getting right to the objects of our growing affection, we find works such as *Pat* and *Princess*, each one a kind of merging between amphora and stalactite, maybe a Modigliani breast. *Pat* stands a little over two feet high on its bleached bone legs. These three legs set us in motion as we move through their easy curve spiraling upward. They enter the clay body of the piece with assurance, no sloppy synthesis here. The appeal of the work with its Tuscan weight and modest refinement is one of actively emerging form, making itself before our eyes. The green, grey and tan of the surface seem to shift as we circle the work.

With *Princess* there is also the essential yet playful tripod support of bone curving straight out from the body of the

vessel. There is something strangely illogical about the look achieved though, seemingly organic in form rather than engineered. The surface has the look of a well-worn face, duffle grey and pitted. We are reminded that a blemish is a beautiful thing, as smooth skin runs to salt burns that flare across the surface. Slight passages of oxide red pulsate below the surface.

Bolen seems to work with the elements of salt and clay. We are rewarded by this welcoming acceptance of a natural evolution to clay form. Salt-fired works have a notoriously high failure rate, and these pieces which made it to public exhibition exude success in the collaboration between human and inanimate nature. For all of their physical presence, works in this show don't appear to have been pushed into shape. There is effortlessness about their look and feel.

The slunk-down body of *Ranchita* is a singularly compelling work. The Cat-in-the-Hat top widens on the downward journey into a full belly that has the appearance of having been punched in. The substance of the clay pulls back like a marsupial recess. The surface gloss seems sweated from the form as it tries to regain its composure. Tawny and salmon tones are variegated and translucent, pitted and broken in places. A crude footing supports the work. *Ranchita* straightens itself and regains its dignity. Again, all of this happens within a form that is ostensibly sitting still.

The simpler of the vessels in this exhibition are also intriguing, as Bolen maneuvers us through slumping and gesturing forms. *Concha* renders back that beautiful informality of a ballerina in rehearsal with baggy socks gathered around her ankles. A large-bodied piece, the rust interior spills out over a lip that has three integrated supports. Yellow glaze runs to a cool red and magenta in the gallery room light. The taper at the base turns on itself to produce this appealing sock-limb image. Very sensitive, without contradicting the substantive clay matter from which these delights are derived.

For works that come from the same studio, the same hand, there is a feeling that you've experienced some of the exhilaration that comes from travel or discovery after leaving the show. *Salt of the Earth* is articulate and expansive. The artist knows his craft and celebrates the fullness of its potential in extremely engaging form. The simple pleasures grow on you, and the sophistication doesn't intimidate. You want to live with work like this.

Grant McConnell is an artist and educator based in Saskatoon.



Shayner, 2001; clay, terra sigillata, glaze, bone. 90 x 31 cm. Collection of Charlotte Rochon

The Process

by Mel Bolen

The process of salt vapor glazing is a dramatic pyrotechnic dance of fire, salt and air. I don't have a standard method of firing my salt kiln; intuition takes over every time. The pieces fired in this kiln are one of a kind and so are the firings. Usually, firings are done late at night, so you are alone, uninterrupted, and have time to think and savor the fire. The dragon belches flame, smoke and steam, the wood crackles and roars, the molten salt hisses and pops.

Besides the form and surface of the vessel, specific placement in the kiln is critical as well. Sometimes pieces are arranged neatly side by side, or they are tumble stacked helter-skelter on top of one another to develop incredible patinas, shadows and gradations around the sheltered areas.

The propane fueled kiln is slowly brought to red heat over a 24 hour cycle, then to white heat (2350° F) in the next 12 hours. This is when the fireworks begin. Every half hour for the next three hours charges of damp salt accompanied by thin splits of dry pine are thrown into the fire boxes. The salt melts and vaporizes to sodium gas & steam.

The long flame of wood (gas is short) carries the sodium vapours throughout the kiln, in and around the vessels. As the surface silica of the vessels melt, stippled and mottled areas appear, some clay melts enough to run. Fly-ash and smoke from the long-grained pine snapping is caught by the now sticky surfaces of slips, terra sigillata and glaze. Clay test rings are drawn from the kiln and squelched in water to determine what degree of glazing has occurred.

Opening the kiln 48 - 60 hours later is always a nervous time. First contact is with a flashlight peering through the narrow opening after the first few bricks are removed from the door. The glint of a surface, the edge of a lip—surprises and disappointments. As the pieces are unloaded I try to make some sense of cause and effect from location in the kiln, how one piece shielded another and where the salt was heaviest. A lot can be learned from these little exercises.

The only consistent factor is the rollercoaster of emotion. First impressions are rarely lasting except for the odd exceptional piece. Most of the time, salted pieces are quiet and subtle, slow to reveal themselves. They change with their surroundings, the light or, when they hold flowers. Some pieces seem to take years to fully bare all.

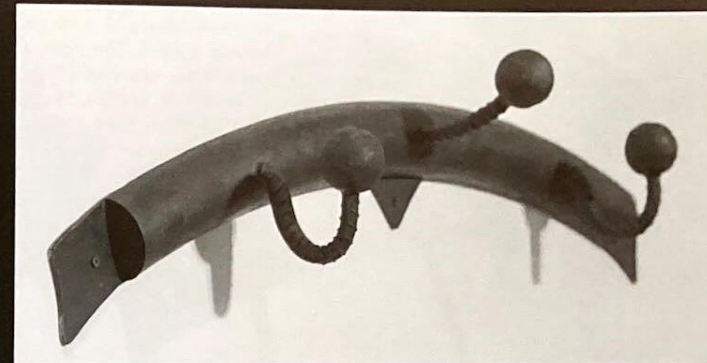
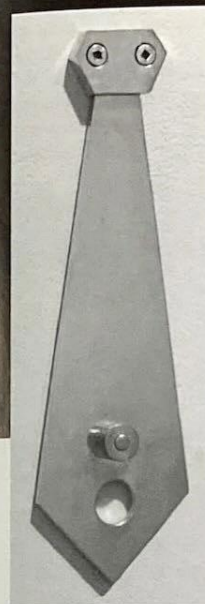


Steve, 2001; clay, terra sigillata, glaze; 49 x 37 cm.



Ranchita, 2001; clay, terra sigillata, glaze; 61 x 37 cm.

Knockers & Knobs: Prairie Sculptors' Association by Sheila Robertson



Left: Bryan Lane, *Entitie*, 2001; brass, 21 x 6.5 x 1 cm. Right: Leslie Potter, *Coat Rack*, 2001; welded steel, 23 x 90 x 18 cm.

Knockers and Knobs, an exhibition at the Saskatchewan Craft Gallery, September 14 - October 21, 2001, for which well-known Saskatoon woodturner Michael Hosaluk served as juror, brought together recent creations by members of the Prairie Sculptors' Association. All the works were loosely based on the theme of entryway art. While they were at it, the group of local sculptors, generally a high-spirited lot, let fly with the double-entendres. There were all sorts of interpretations based on knockers (breasts) and knobs (penises).

Let's begin with the cute and innocuous ones, including a pair of small, animal-theme door knockers cast in bronze by Sarah Afseth. I could easily picture the first, entitled simply *Bat Knocker*, at the entrance to a spooky-looking Victorian mansion, especially on a certain evening in late October. It depicted a little bat hanging upside-down, its head serving as the knocker on the bat-shaped backing. The patination or surface colour was especially interesting in this work: potassium sulphide and cupric nitrate yielded coppery highlights on the bat's body and turquoise highlights on the backing.

Afseth's second piece was a charming, brownish hound-dog with a long, flowing tail. To operate the knocker, one had to grip the tail. This served to tap the critter's back leg and foot against its ear. I could imagine this innovative little piece, called *Scratch*, at the office door of a veterinarian.

A number of other artists offered different representational images as knockers. Usually, gallery exhibits are to be seen, not touched. For once, it was acceptable for gallery visitors to manipulate the displays and try out the sounds of the different pieces. For instance, Jim Jensen's bronze *Hammer Door Knocker*, a collaborative effort with Laura Jensen, produced a sharp little tap. His *Let Me In*, a bronze knocker in the form of a fist, was made with Deb Jensen, and it yielded a much deeper sound.

Bryan Lane's brass knocker, fashioned in the shape of a necktie, had the punny title of *Entitie*. This piece, like many of Lane's sculptures over the years, revealed a fascination for smooth, reflective metal surfaces.

Although Sarah Afseth's *Nipple Knocker*, in cast bronze, was beautifully sculpted, the image was daring and vaguely troubling: a hand curved over a breast, the forefinger poised to tap directly at the nipple. I wouldn't even try to suggest a business to correspond with this work.

The sculptor's husband, Laurie Afseth, was showing a number of works that seemed to fall into the "knobs" category, including drawer pulls in cast pewter, in the shape of pine cones. He also collaborated with Trent Watts to create a bell called *La Sonnete*. This attractive, bright turquoise piece had a clear, pure ring, (shown on the inside front cover).

Leslie Potter was showing several utilitarian welded steel sculptures, including a key rack made from a modified rake and a



Sarah Afshar, *Scratch*, 2001; cast bronze, ferric nitrate patina. 16 x 9 x 5.5 cm



Manjari Sharma, *A Door, Beyond*, 2001; wood, clay, paper, sawdust, sand, nails, bells. 91 x 61 x 12.7 cm.

substantial coat rack. By contrast, Ian Jones' cast bronze coathooks, in the form of a ram and some gargoyle-like creatures, appeared small and delicate.

Alicia Popoff took a different tack on entryway art, creating a sculptural painting of cardboard, paper, cloth and acrylic paint to house a doorbell. This work, *Cymbalum 1 and 2*, (shown on the inside front cover), added yet another interactive note to the exhibition. The working doorbell buzzer had been installed in the side of a pillar a little distance from the sculpture. Since it was inconspicuous and unlabelled, some viewers undoubtedly failed to make the connection.

An *Untitled* representational sculpture by Elizabeth Yonza consisted of a hand, carved in alabaster, holding an actual metal key. The work was a model of simplicity and delicacy. The key holder, literally the keeper of the key, also cleverly represented the key's owner.

A Door Beyond was the title of Manjari Sharma's shrine-like door honouring Surya, the Sun god of India's mythology. This piece, made of wood, clay, paper, sawdust and sand, was decorated with tiny bells.

In an artist's statement, Sharma, who studied in India, described some of the symbolism of the piece. For instance, four wavy lines beneath a painted image of the sun referred to the four directions, while elephant figures represented the strength of the sun.

Ovarian Knocker was another symbolic sculpture, by Theresa E. Wright. In grey and pink alabaster, she carved a representation of the fruit-like vessel of the ovary, studded with "seeds," the follicles.

Archetype, by Edward Gibney, was an intriguing composition consisting of a pair of miniature, intersecting archways of limestone, poised on wooden poles. This decorative piece appeared like an authentic architectural artifact.

I found it difficult to understand why Doug Hunter's conceptual work, *Knock, Knock*, was included in the show. The implied violence of the piece struck an unpleasant chord. In itself, that would not be enough to disclaim it, but there were other problems, including its overly facile appearance. It consisted, after all, merely of a mahogany bi-fold door, with a large axe thrust through one panel. This tableau did not take much imagination, artistry or—surely a necessity in this particular gallery space—craftsmanship.

The key feature of Hunter's frankly sexual *Bed Knobs* was a mortar-and-pestle type of element. The granite pestle, wedged between the wooden headboard and footboard of a bed, was a shaft carved at either end to resemble a phallus. The detailing of the stonework contrasted oddly with the bed installation, which had been crudely reassembled into a container. Viewed in combination with the axe-in-the-door work, this priapic installation appeared both perplexing and chilling. On its own, it was unresolved.

Depending on the viewer's sensibilities and sense of humour, some of these sculptures may have been perceived as cute or amusing; a couple might have been deemed puerile at best and offensive at worst.

Sheila Robertson is a freelance writer and editor from Saskatoon.

CanIRON III: A Demonstrator's View

by John Little



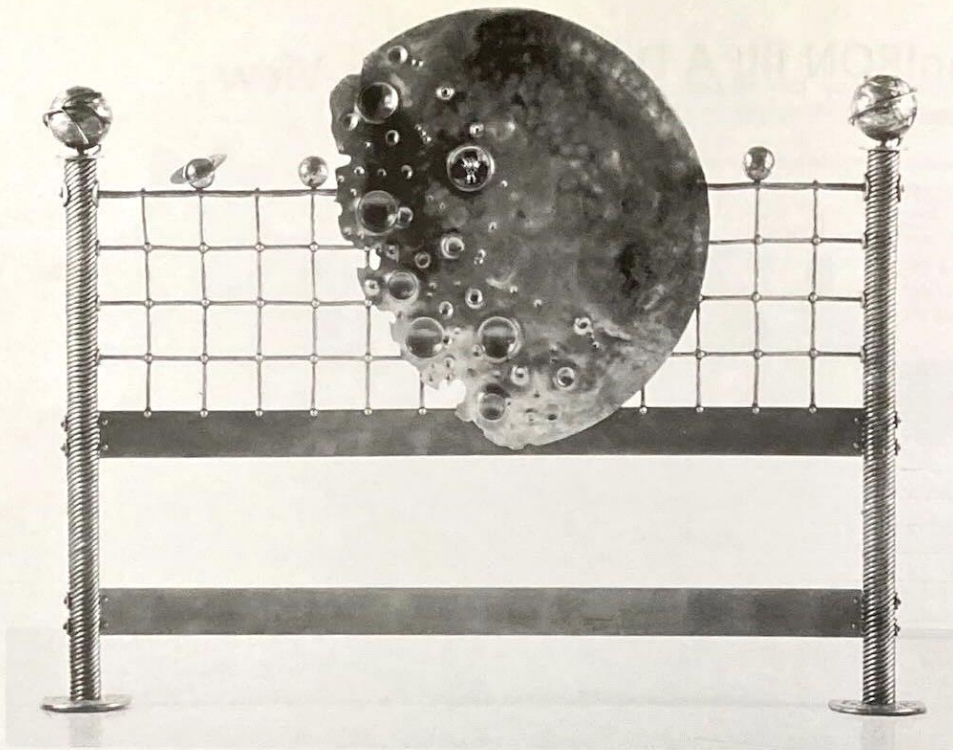
CanIRON III Demonstrators: back left to right: John Little, Tom Traszak, Murray Stachura, Robin Boone, Mike Boone, Shona Johnson, Peter Hill, Jim Jensen, Dorothy Stiegler, Mary Patrick, Josh Hill(baby), Nancy Little, Mark Pearce, Bill Plant, Bob Patrick, Jim Gerlinsky, Al Bakke, John Newman; Absent from photo: Charlie Sutton, Murray Lowe, Duff MacDonald, Tom Clark, Bryan Ryan.

It is generally believed that blacksmithing began over four thousand years ago. Whatever possessed that first human being to heat up a rock and attempt to forge it into some new shape? He had no anvil, no hammer, and no tongs. Why did he chose that specific rock? In a thousand years, his successors would learn how to smelt iron from iron ore. But, in his time, this was the only source: sky iron. Meteorites. Imagine the effort required. With only wood and charcoal for fuel, he laboured over this obstinate material. In time, this enterprise would produce cathedrals, plowshares and weapons of war, but he could not know this. All forged iron objects were in the future.

The history of ironwork is now vast and fills us with awe and inspiration. Over the past centuries, our trade has been dominated by the practical work of the farriers, cutlers, general blacksmiths,

and shipsmiths. In recent history, technological advances made much of the traditional work of the blacksmith obsolete and the sound of ringing anvil was suddenly a rare event. For nearly four thousand years the trade of the blacksmith had been central to the advancement of almost every civilization on the planet. It took only a few decades at the beginning of the past century to put this noble trade at mortal risk, especially in North America. The trade lay dormant for another few decades, kept alive by the few remaining smiths who found enough work to keep their shop doors open. Then, an almost magical thing happened.

For some very complex sociological reason, a number of people all over North America independently discovered a personal need for self-reliance and the making of objects. It was part of the craft and 'back to the land' movements of the early



CanIRON III Committee & Central Forge, **Celestial Dream**, 2001; steel, Queen size.

1970s. The German word for this type of historical event is 'Zeitgeist' or 'spirit of the times.' For those of us who were there, it was an unbelievably exciting time of passion and self-discovery. Thirty years later, most of those ground-breaking individuals are still working at their forges and have no plans to put their hammers down in the foreseeable future. The interest in this ancient craft continues to grow all over the world.

It is truly fascinating that so many of us, living in a world of explosive technological change, choose to stand at an anvil with hammer in hand. We are hungry. Our technological age offers us tremendous convenience, speed, and physical comfort but very little to satisfy our basic human need to struggle with the materials of our environment.

This is arguably the best time in history to be a blacksmith. Demand is increasing exponentially for decorative and sculptural ironwork that exploits every ancient and modern technique. Some of the options for the modern smith include the reproduction of historical work, flamboyant modern design of decorative ironwork, pure sculpture, knifemaking, and even industrial smithing. There is a smith out there making enormous percussion instruments that are used with symphony orchestras. A blacksmith forged the armature for the ancient bones of Tyrannosaurus Rex at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. A team of French blacksmiths forged the new armature for the restoration

of the Statue of Liberty. We are at a new beginning. Again we must ask: what is the vision, what is in the mind's eye? We are not constrained by the need for the purely functional and practical. In this wonderful era we are only constrained by our imagination or lack of it.

A gathering of blacksmiths is always a special thing. Not many can articulate exactly what it is that makes us so passionate about this material and the process of heating and forging it. But the passion is absolute and all consuming. In North Battleford, Saskatchewan, in early summer 2001, smiths from the United States, Scotland, and Canada came together to share ideas, techniques, and the joy of the trade. Canada's premier blacksmithing event, CanIRON III, was held at the Western Development Museum complex with an excellent gallery show of ironwork at the Chapel Gallery. Blacksmithing is clearly alive and well on the prairies of Canada!

The demonstration facility was absolutely superb. Each demonstrator or team of demonstrators had a dedicated workspace with full tooling including power forging hammers. The coal was the best quality and the support staff looked after every conceivable detail, from specialized tooling to drawing boards and lots of drinking water. Especially appreciated were the wireless microphones which meant that demonstrators didn't have to shout above the general din of smithing all day long.



Top left: Bill Carrell, **Hybrid Sunflower**, 2001; forged and fabricated steel, 36 x 20 cm. Collection of Bev Orr and Craig Campbell. Top right: Myron Hanson, design by John Yust; **Paul Hubler, Memorial**, 2001; forged steel. Below left: Richard Hamilton, **Turtle**, 2001; mild steel, shell-gourd (dried, lacquered), 26 x 17 cm. Collection of Bev Orr and Craig Campbell. Below right: Twila L. Austin, **sculpture di faccia-collare**, 2001; silver, semi-precious gem stones, 30 x 30 x 7.5 cm.

As invited demonstrators from Nova Scotia, Nancy and I concentrated on explaining various modern and eclectic approaches to the design of ironwork. Various forgings were made to illustrate the techniques involved. We also presented a slide show retrospective of our work over the past thirty years. Tom Troszak brought four of his magnificent 125 pound Bullhammers all the way from North Carolina. He generously made a special tool-holder (to my specifications) for the bottom die of the hammer we used. This made it possible for us to bring along several of the tools we use at home to do free-hand forgings on his hammer. The Bullhammer was absolutely spectacular.

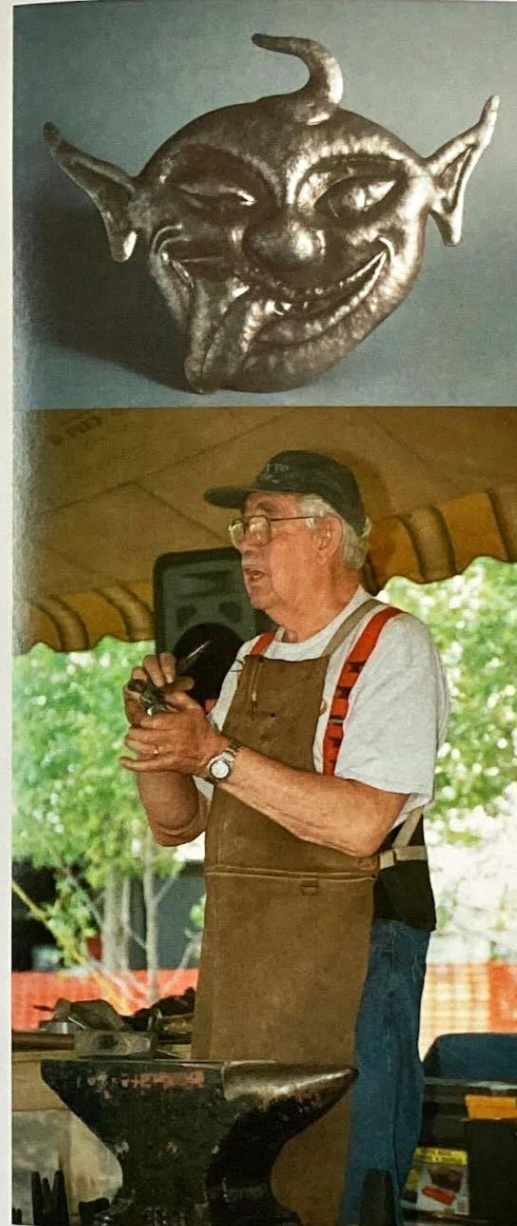
Unfortunately, Nancy and I didn't get a chance to visit many of the other demonstration sites. That was the only bad thing about the event, but unavoidable... we were busy. We did get to see

the final results of everyone's efforts, however, at the auction on the final day. Several of the demonstrators had opted to produce one major piece from beginning to end in only three days. We were particularly struck with the large gate made by Mike and Robin Boone of Colorado and the exquisite wind sculpture by Pete Hill and Shona Johnson from Edinburgh, Scotland. There were far too many pieces to mention here. Suffice it to say the auction was lively and raised needed funds to support this great event and create seed monies for the next CanIRON event, CanIRON IV in Hamilton, Ontario in 2003. A word of caution: CanIRON III is a hard act to follow!

John Little is a blacksmith from East Dover, Nova Scotia

CanIRON III: The 2001 Conference

by Jesse Ellingson



CanIRON III, the third Biennial Canadian Blacksmith Conference was held this past year in North Battleford, Saskatchewan and was a wonderful time of learning and fellowship among blacksmiths. A great venue, superb demonstrators and exceptional hospitality combined to make this 'Iron Odyssey' a truly wonderful event for those of us lucky enough to attend.

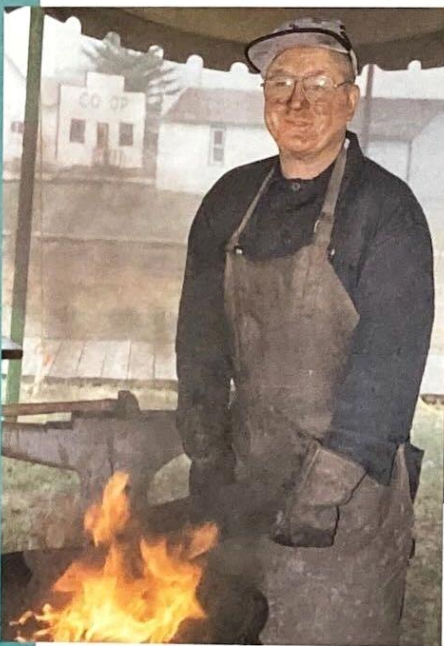
You can understand why they call Saskatchewan the 'Land of Living Skies' as the rolling farmland opens up in front of you and the sky becomes the dominant feature. One often thinks of this province as all flat prairie land but actually of its quarter million square mile area, one half is forest, one third is farmland, and one eighth is covered in fresh water. Where the Battle River meets the North Saskatchewan River lies the city of North Battleford, one of the earliest communities in the province: the first fur trading post was established here in 1785. The city sits on a plateau above the lush river valley and is home to one of the province's four Western Development Museums which provided a backdrop for CanIRON III. The museum is set up as a heritage farm and village which provides a social and economic history for the province with one of the highlights being a fantastic collection of preserved farm equipment. The CanIRON demonstration areas were set up on the grounds of the museum village; participants were able to walk between these and the large exhibition building which housed the dinner hall, the 'Instant Gallery' and other exhibition areas.

The Chapel Gallery, North Battleford's public gallery, presented the CanIRON exhibit 'Iron Odyssey' and was the location of the weekend's first event, a wine and cheese reception to welcome the CanIRON participants. Old and new acquaintances mingled in the exhibit hall and on the outdoor patio with its incredible view over the river valley.

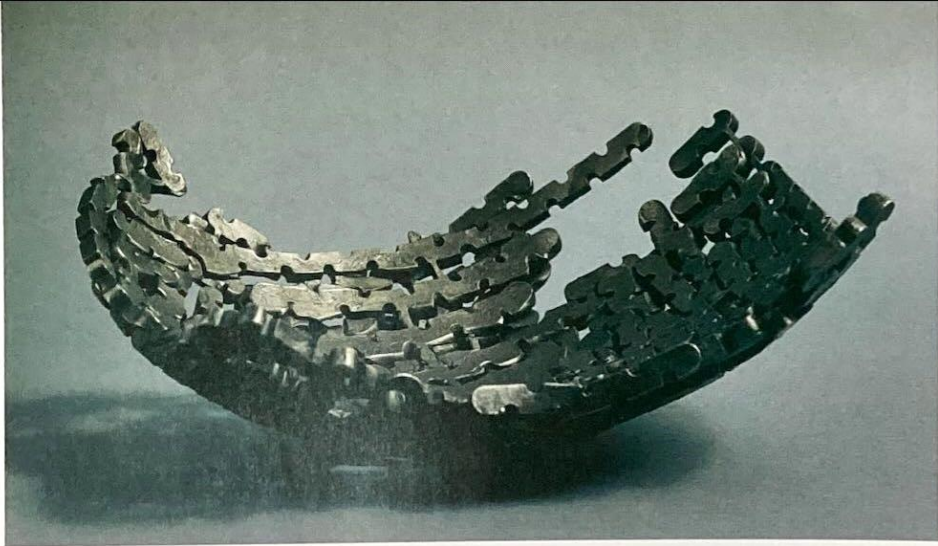
The next morning the nine demonstration areas filled up with activity. Demonstrators from far and wide came to CanIRON III; in just two and a half days it was impossible to see everything. Mike Boone from Colorado produced a full-sized gate over the weekend to demonstrate how to take your ideas from design to finished product by using several forging techniques, plus traditional joinery and assembly. Robin Boone presented an interesting seminar on how to develop an idea to produce a completed design.

Shona Johnson and Pete Hill traveled from Edinburgh, Scotland with their small son Josh (or Baby Josh as he became known to his North American extended blacksmith family), to demonstrate the various techniques that they use to produce a large, elegant, free-standing 'windvane sculpture.' They also presented an exciting slide show of work by their company,

Above: Galen Kennel, *Katiler's Secret*, 2001; forged steel.
Below: Charlie Sutton, Ontario, Canada.



Top left: John & Nancy Little, Nova Scotia, Canada. Right: Mike Boone, Colorado, U.S.A.
Lower left: William Plant, Saskatchewan, Canada. Right: Shona Johnson & Pete Hill, Edinburgh, Scotland. Photos: Dan Wanbella



Daryl Richardson, *Borg Bowl*, 2001; steel, 9 x 25 x 20 cm.

Ratho Byres Forge, and by other British smiths. The majority of the slides showed impressive architectural pieces that use traditional techniques in some non-traditional designs.

Bob Patrick of Arkansas brought many years of teaching experience with him to illustrate the fine points of forge welding by producing an ornate door knocker during the weekend.

Dorothy Stiegler from California demonstrated some of her trademark floral pieces and forged several interesting pieces out of bronze. She has also been experimenting with applications of glass enamel on her forged pieces and she shared this process with the eager participants who crowded her tent.

John and Nancy Little from East Dover, Nova Scotia made decorative elements that were combined to make an elaborate railing as a way of illustrating their approach to modern sculptural design. An exquisite little dragon bottle opener that they produced during their demonstration was extremely popular.

Decorative scrolls and animal heads were the main focus of Mark Pearce from Calgary, Alberta during the three day event. It's marvelous how a giant of a man like Mark can so deftly turn out a delicate little swan or a graceful horse's head.

Jim Jensen from Mont Nebo, Saskatchewan had set up a portable foundry at his station and demonstrated the process of casting bronze in sand molds. Along with many small pieces, Jim was casting parts for a life-size blacksmith.

Saskatchewan smith Bill Plant was the only demonstrator whose tent, located next to the museum's old blacksmith shop, was accessible to the general public; he provided his audience with interesting demonstrations in tool-making.

The Ontario Artist Blacksmith Association provided a number of representatives to demonstrate in their tent, Murray Lowe, Duff MacDonald, John Newman and Charlie Sutton who has designed a terrific Beginner Blacksmith Workshop available as a small booklet, as well as a book titled 'Under The Spreading Chestnut Tree.' Several slide shows, a presentation from Parks

Canada on historic restorations and blacksmithing artifacts, plus a basket-making workshop by Mary Patrick were among the offerings provided to participants.

The final event of the weekend was the auction where pieces donated by registrants and pieces produced during demonstrations were sold to the highest bidders. The general public was invited to this event and the large attendance made for some lively bidding.

Over 250 people attended CanIRON III and meal times in the museum hall provided opportunities to meet new people or reconnect with old friends. Blacksmiths are a magnanimous bunch, willing to share techniques and ideas and especially with novices. One of the registrants, a banker/hobby smith from Vancouver, lives in an apartment; because he doesn't have a shop he practices what he calls 'Guerilla Blacksmithing' by hauling his forge and tools out to some abandoned lot or industrial area. It is this kind of love for the craft that unites us all.

A terrific conference doesn't happen without a lot of hard work by a lot of people; the organizers of this event can be proud of the weekend they put on. Cheerful caterers dished out delicious food. Volunteers and museum staff were friendly and helpful; the participants were left with a great impression of Saskatchewan hospitality.

While the organization and planning of CanIRON IV is now underway, it is with a touch of sadness that we say farewell to our new friends in Saskatchewan but look forward to meeting many more in Hamilton, Ontario in 2003. All of the people and organizations involved with CanIRON III including the CanIRON III organizing committee, the Saskatchewan Craft Council, the Western Development Museum and the many weekend volunteers are to be congratulated for producing an outstanding weekend event that will be remembered fondly by all those who attended.

Jesse Ellingson is a member of the Kootenay Blacksmiths' Association



Dining Set by Arthur Perlett

Table 42 inches (106.6 cm) round with one 12 inch (30.5) leaf and four chairs. Materials: cherry and jarrah wood and leather upholstery. mortise and tenon construction with bent laminated features; oil and lacquer finish. Commissioned by Al and Carol Snell, Regina, Saskatchewan.



The sculpture *Legacy of the Plain* was commissioned by Canpotex Limited. It is 42.5 by 109 cm. A bronze high relief modeled by sculptor James S. Korpan. The piece was cast, chased, and patinated, at the Nisse Foundry in Mount Nebo, Saskatchewan in April, 2001, using both lost wax and sand casting methods. The work was done by Jim Jensen, of the foundry, and by Korpan. The piece was installed upon a North American walnut base designed by Saskatchewan wood designer/artist Jamie Russell and by Korpan.

Legacy of the Plain depicts a section of the prairie. This plain is dominated by a bison skull, from which the pathways of nutrients, the potash, mined from beneath the surface of the prairie, flows toward a buffalo jump. This flow, past the continents of the world, symbolizes the harvest of potash from the prairie in the same manner as the ancient people of the plains harvested the bison.

Invitation

Craftspeople are invited to submit professional quality photographs, transparencies, or slides illustrating their commissions for private and public use or installation. Include identification; title; dimensions; materials/techniques; client; date completed or 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: Editor, *The Craft Factor*, SCC, 813 Broadway Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7N 1B5 Phone: 306-653-3616; Fax: 306-244-2711; Email: sc.editor@shaw.ca

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c o m m i s s i o n

Artichoke

WRITINGS ABOUT THE VISUAL ARTS

ARTICHOKE MAGAZINE CELEBRATES CANADIAN CRAFTS

Full-colour Special Editions of Artichoke magazine, showcasing Canada's craft art and artists, will be launched by Artichoke Publishing in February 2002.

"It's been far too many years since Canada had its own crafts magazine," Artichoke editor Paula Gustafson said. "Even though crafts are a billion dollar industry nationwide-\$13.8 billion annually in the U.S.-there's no nationally-distributed publication that features Canadian-made crafts. Memberships in provincial craft organizations or subscriptions to U.S. or Australian magazines are, until now, the only way we could see what our own craft artists are producing."

Thanks to generous support from Canadian Heritage's Canadian Magazine Fund, Canadian crafts will now be celebrated on the pages of Western Canada's award-winning visual arts magazine.

The first Special Edition of Artichoke, now in production, will include Monique Westra's review of Greg Payce's and Jeannie Mah's recent Cineramics exhibition at the Art Gallery of Calgary and craft historian Sandra Alfoldy's insightful analysis of U.S. influences on professional Canadian craft practice 1964 - 1974.

Also scheduled are articles about the "poxed and piteous" embroidered child-figures in Catherine Heard's Efflorescence installation, Rachele Chinner's sinuous ceramics, Polly Faminow's paper maché sculptures, Doug Taylor's witty public art whirligigs, and much, much more.

The Special Editions will be available for \$7.50 each at more than 100 newsstands across Canada, or they can be mail-ordered for \$10 (postage included) from Artichoke Publishing, 208 - 901 Jervis Street, Vancouver BC V6E 2B6. Artichoke subscribers will receive the Special Editions in addition to their regular issues of Artichoke-a total of 4 magazines for just \$20 a year.

"Unlike other visual arts magazines which studiously ignore craft-based art, each issue of Artichoke magazine includes a review of a craft exhibition, a profile about a craft artist, or an essay about contemporary crafts," Gustafson said. "For example, Paul Mathieu's provocative *Toward a Unified Theory of Crafts*, published in Artichoke's Spring 2001 issue, was vigorously discussed at the 1000 Miles Apart ceramic conference at ACAD in September. The Special Editions will feature that kind of thoughtful commentary about crafts-and luscious colour photography."



Information about Artichoke magazine and its Special Editions is available at www.artichoke.ca.

Saskatchewan Craft Gallery

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

Open 1 - 5 pm daily

BETWEEN FROZEN SKY AND BURNING WATERS • Ed Pas LA SOIRÉE DES MASQUES • Sylvie Lavallée

March 1 - April 14, 2002

RECEPTION: Friday, March 1, 7 - 9pm

DIMENSIONS 2002 JURYING

Jurors: John Chalke, Calgary, AB & Don Kondra, Saskatoon, SK
Gallery Closed - April 14 - 23, 2002

PUBLIC CRITIQUE: Saturday, April 20, 10 am - noon

GALLERY CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS

April 24 - May 6, 2002

ENOUGH ON OUR PLATE & PUT A LID ON IT

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THE SMALL OBJECT SHOW

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SMALL OBJECTS SHOW

July 26 - September 8, 2002

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