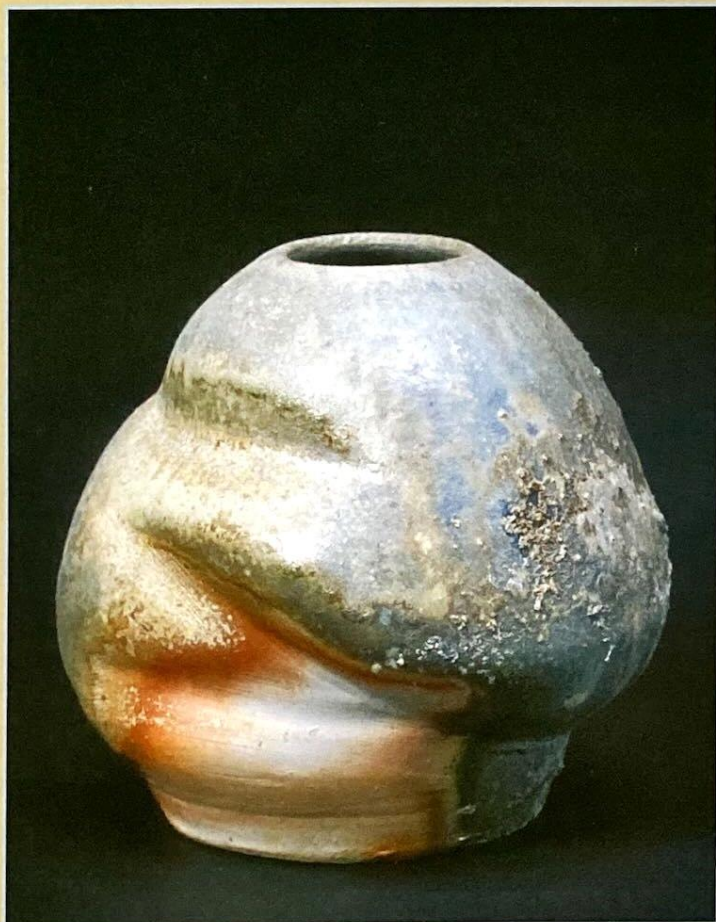


The
CRAFT
Factor



SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL VOL. 28.2
CANADA/US \$6.95 SPRING 2004



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 Crafts Federation.

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FRONT COVER

Don Hefner, Seal, 2002
recycled aluminum, steel wire and mesh.
20 x 88.5 x 36 cm
Collection of Marie Lannoo and Daniel Shapiro
Photograph by Johann Wessels

INSIDE FRONT COVER

Charley Farrero, Chauchoute, 2003
high fire stoneware, thrown and altered vessel, fired for five days with wood to 1300 c in anagama kiln.
18 x 18 cm

BACK COVER

Kazuma Nakano, Vases, 2003
clay, slip, glaze, various sizes
(Wabi Sabi exhibition)
Photograph by Armin Badzak

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The assistance of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation, the City of Saskatoon and grant funding through the Government of Saskatchewan, Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, is gratefully appreciated.



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SASKATCHEWAN HANDCRAFT FESTIVAL

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July 16 & 17, 2004

WATERFRONT

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Saturday, August 21, 2004

WINTERGREEN

Regina, SK

November 19, 20 & 21, 2004

All measurements are in centimetres, height precedes width, precedes depth/diameter.

As I Like It!

Donovan Chester Profile

Traditions Handcraft Gallery

Fall, 2003

Photography by Gary Robins

by Anne McLellan



Plate, 2003; raku fired clay; wheel thrown.

Don Chester has had a quiet influence on the Saskatchewan arts scene as a teacher, an advisor, and a friend to many Saskatchewan artists. As an artist who works both in painting and clay, his work has evolved continuously.

Don is from Carievale, Saskatchewan. He studied at the University of Saskatchewan's Regina Campus in the College of Education and the College of Arts, Department of Visual Arts. He has taught for the Department of Visual Arts and was instructor and Head of the Extension Department's ceramics studio from 1975-1987.

Don has been involved with both the Saskatchewan Craft Council and Rosemont Art Gallery for many years. He has exhibited his paintings and clay work in solo and group exhibitions including many Dimensions exhibits. His work is in public and private collections, including the Saskatchewan Arts Board and the Canada Council Art Bank.

Don's first love is painting. His interest in colour began in art school where he used an impasto technique to create abstract expressionist canvasses using not only paintbrushes but also brooms and other household implements to explore colour and surface textures.

In the 60's and 70's there was an active downtown painting school. Don shared a studio with Ken Peters. One of his main influences in painting was his friend Terry Fenton with whom he has had a continuous dialogue about his work.

In 1973 Don was hired to teach summer school at Emma Lake. There he met clay artist William Wiley who was giving a workshop. This had a profound affect on Don. While not leaving painting behind, Don put more energy into his clay work.

In 1975 Don became an instructor at the Extension Department. Many potters met Don when we took classes at the Extension Department, which was the hub of Saskatchewan ceramics for many years. Don's skill and knowledge were always greatly appreciated. Most of us remember the beautifully thrown porcelain ginger jars and delicately hand-built goblets Don made, with celadon and ash glazes. When the Extension studio shut down Don built a studio in the Cathedral area of Regina.



V Jar, 2003; raku fired clay, hand built

These days people are most familiar with Don's raku works. What is unique about raku is that the pots are taken from the kiln with metal tongs while red-hot, then put in sawdust or other combustible materials and smoked. This process brings out the metallic lusters in the glaze.

Raku has been a medium that Don has explored for many years. In art school Don took a directed study with Jack Sures. Raku is a Japanese firing technique with a great tradition and history. Don holds that in high regard. His forms over the last few years have explored raku as a medium that uses fire and sawdust as a paintbrush.

In his exhibition at Traditions Handcraft Gallery in Regina, *As I Like It*, Don presented a body of work that is a testimony to his continual evolution as an artist. His first love of painting and his work with clay are brought together in these pieces that were mostly created in molds he has designed and built.

The cleanness of the forms shows his superb skill as a craftsman. On first observation the pieces seem to have a sameness in their metallic colour but seen in different lights or from different angles, much more is revealed to the viewer.

Some of the pieces are what his clients have come to expect from Don. A long rectangular cradle tray sits in a wooden stand. The gold and yellow patinas in the tray play off the deep colours of the wood.

The 25 inch Bowl has a raw edge that draws the viewer in, while its size creates a canvas of colour and texture on the inner circle and outer edge that makes it no longer just a bowl.

16 inch round is truly a gem. It has a Wizard of Oz quality. If you're in the right place, you'll spot Dorothy's ruby red slippers. When discussing this piece, Don talked about interference colours, which are affected by the light.

In *Large Cut Bowl*, the round shape is cut away at the edge creating a wonderful line.

One of the common threads among these pieces is the V-shape. Perhaps this is inspired by classic eastern ceramic forms. Therefore we have *medium V bowls*, pieces with very formal shapes but edges that look almost torn, which loosens them up visually.



Medusa Galactica, 2003; raku fired clay, steel; wheel thrown.

The works which are most challenging to the viewer are the *V Jars* and two larger pieces, *Medusa* and *Medusa Galactica*, sculptural works in which Don has incorporated metal legs.

Medusa is a latticework bowl, which combines strength and fragility. There is an obvious connection between metal and clay, especially raku which has a metallic quality in some of the patinas. The metal legs on the piece have a patina on them, which creates a real sense of belonging with the latticework piece.

Medusa Galactica catches your attention right away. It is a large bowl with paper clay slip on the interior and exterior. This piece is reminiscent of a large sea creature. It appears to be floating. Don admits that working with metal presents many new challenges for him. One only wishes that this piece had been given more room in order to view it from all sides to give it the presence it deserves.

The *V Jars* are Don's newest work but it's been a six-year journey while he worked out the technical difficulties of such pieces. There are several low *V Jars* and tall *V Jars* in the

exhibition. These jars have solid forms, like cuttings in a rock face. At every angle from which these are viewed, new colours come out in the patinas, and different shadows appear. Don commented that maybe these don't have to be jars, maybe just pure form.

Don's excitement in the raku process comes from the magic of throwing the sawdust and the spontaneity of the results. One can see in these works that Don has been able to bring his love of painting into his clay work with new sculptural elements.

What will these pieces evolve into? Don said he would like to try even larger works.

Anne McLellan is a ceramic artist and educator from Regina. She is a long-standing member of the Saskatchewan Craft Council.

The Grand Tour

A PERIPATETIC EDUCATION IN DESIGN

by Cathryn Miller

During the seventeenth century in England, the few students who could afford higher education were kept pretty much at home. Sons of the nobility or wealthy merchant families might extend their schooling to include several years at Oxford or Cambridge but after that they were expected to return to their families and, with the exception of a rare trip to London, to stay there. The beginning of the eighteenth century saw a change. The English were feeling a new sense of power and importance, but felt they lacked a cultural history like that enjoyed by citizens of France and Italy. As early as 1720 it became a commonly held opinion among the upper classes that unless a young man had spent at least two years abroad in those countries, (some spent as long as eight), his manners and education were deficient for his social position. The wealthy of Germany felt the same way. Thus began the concept of "The Grand Tour." The Russians and Scandinavians followed, and soon Paris, Rome, Florence and Venice were awash in late-adolescent males (and their tutors) attempting to absorb the nuances and subtleties of Continental culture. They were the first tourists, and to this day airports and train stations in Europe are full of people following in their footsteps.

You may not have the time or the money to spend a few years soaking up culture in the art capitals of Europe, learning about design and form from the best of the master craftsmen and artists of earlier times. You probably can't afford to hire a personal tutor. A design workshop may not be available, nor enough free time to spend a year or two in art school. There is, however, an alternative. You can do your own version of a Grand Tour right in Western Canada, if only in bits and pieces. Most of us travel, to visit friends and attend family functions, or just to have a holiday. It's easy to make this an educational opportunity as well.

Every major city in Western Canada has art and craft galleries and museums, as do a number of smaller centres. In the public galleries there are often free talks by artists and/or curatorial staff, or information handouts, which give insight into the work on display: the who, what, when, where, and even why and how. To get a good overview of contemporary (and historical) art, don't confine yourself to looking at 'crafts' or at least not just your own medium. Look at the work of painters, graphic artists, sculptors, photographers.... Go to anthropological and historical

museums to learn what has been done in the past. The principles of good design are common to all media, and you may learn more from studying pieces without the distraction of trying to analyze their technique. Get inspiration from someone's use of colour, or their handling of form in a medium other than your own. Look at the buildings themselves wherever you visit. Architecture can teach a lot about composition, form, and decoration.

Many craftspeople work in isolation, so another benefit of travelling can be meeting other craftspeople. During the summer months, many artists and artisans open their studios to the public and are pleased to talk about what they do (and why and how) with visitors. (Consider taking photographs of your work along to share. It is sometimes easier to have a serious conversation about your work/their work, goals, and objectives, if they can see what you have been doing).

Your trip can be planned ahead. You might schedule three days in Vancouver, and visit the Vancouver Art Gallery, The Museum of Anthropology at U.B.C., and Granville Island - home to the Emily Carr College of Art and Design and a number of craft galleries and studios. Or you could spend a couple of days in Winnipeg, see the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Manitoba Crafts Council's Craftspace, and take a walk around the art and craft galleries in the area northwest of Portage and Main. Or just go for an afternoon to the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery to see an exhibition. All four western provinces provide tourist information on request, and their respective Craft Councils can also be helpful.

You can rely on serendipity. On a trip across western Canada stop in smaller communities and check with local tourist information. They can direct you to places of interest that aren't included in the tourism packages that the province sends out. Don't overlook farmers' markets and art/craft sales. Or simply drive into the older section of town. This is where small galleries, craft shops, and studios often cluster because of lower rents. There are thriving cultural communities in many smaller centres, especially in the interior of British Columbia: Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, and the surrounding area have much to offer.

If you can't get out of your own community, make a point of regularly visiting local galleries. Or if the town you live in is too small, or it's just too cold to go outside, do a virtual Grand Tour on the Web. All major galleries, and many individual artists and craftspeople, have websites which provide both images and text.

Finally, don't forget the benefits of armchair travel. There are thousands of books and periodicals available on design theory, composition, colour theory, and so on. Make use of your public library, including the inter-library loan service. Look at the Fine Art section as well as Crafts. And when you have the chance, check out used book stores and book sales. They are a good source of cheap reference materials that may not be available through the library system.

If you really want to develop your design skills, combine travel, Internet research, and reading.

"Book learning encourages craftsmen to be inventive in their work; and certainly, whatever their natural gifts, their judgement will be faulty unless it is backed up by sound learning and theory."

Giorgio Vasari, painter and architect
Lives of the Artists, 1568
(trans. George Bull, 1965)

The information from books can help you understand and appreciate what you see on your Grand Tour, be it real or virtual.

Cathryn Miller is a designer, bookbinder, and papermaker. She has studied Fine and Commercial Art, and has acquired other skills through observation and reading.

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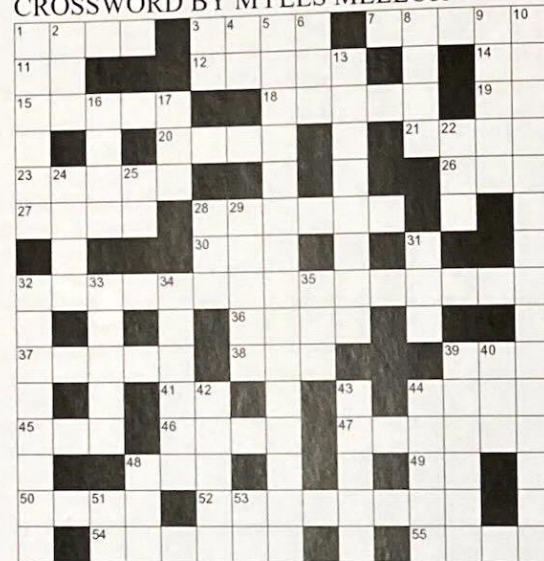


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CROSSWORD BY MYLES MELLOR



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SEX POTS

EROTICISM IN CERAMICS

Review by Paula Gustafson

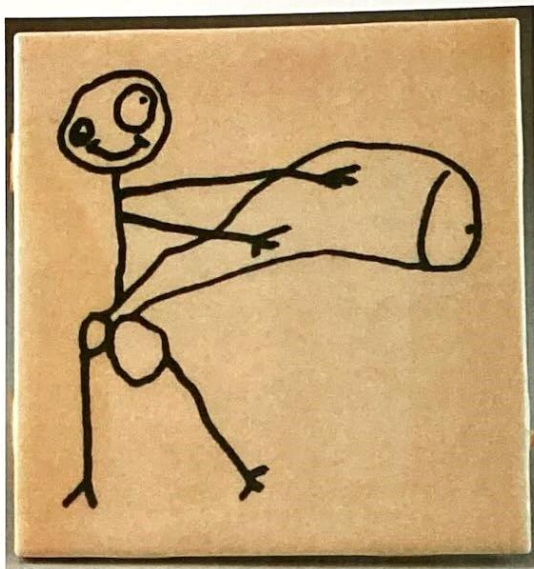
Paul Mathieu
Rutgers University Press, 2003
224 pp., 300+ colour illustrations
\$74.25 CDN ISBN 0-8135-3293-0



Venereal Disease Vessel
Moche Culture (Puru)
(Museo Arqueológico Rafael Larco Herrera, Lima, Peru)

Despite its catchy title and the unabashedly delicious photographs of sexy ceramics on every page, *Sex Pots: Eroticism in Ceramics* is a serious book. Its author, ceramic artist Paul Mathieu, is a serious thinker. Currently head of ceramics at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Mathieu has lectured at every important ceramics conference here and abroad during the past dozen or more years. His ideas and theories—his inquiries into the nature and culture of ceramics—invariably leave us gasping for air, dumbfoundedly realizing he is answering questions we hadn't yet had the perspicacity to consider.

In *Sex Pots*, Mathieu introduces the subject of erotic ceramics by saying he wishes he did not have to write this book, "but if ignorance, prejudice and discrimination are slowly disappearing from our understanding of sexuality, this is not the case yet for ceramics." Moreover, in the hegemony of artistic practice, "where the focus tends to be on the eye over the hand (touch being an unbreakable taboo in art experience)... ceramics, it often seems, is quite simply an invisible practice." Mathieu argues that this ghettoization (which he extends to crafts in general) ignores ceramics as a seminal component in the development of art, culture, and civilization.



Jeremy Drummond, *Penis Boy*, 1999
bathroom tile, 12 x 12 cm

He contends that clay is hardwired into the human consciousness. "Clay comes from the earth; it is alive and fertile. Clay is like flesh, and most mythologies use clay as origin in creation myths. Clay is also common, basic, cheap and dirty. At the scatological level, it is like excrement," he writes. "Equally important, ceramic vessels in their various forms, in their morphology, make countless references to the human body, to particular body parts, and by extension to sexual organs and sexual acts. Yet, most tellingly, it is the actual experience we have of these objects, not only through touch and direct physical contact, but also through the operative workings of the objects (to contain, to preserve, to pour, to spill, to prepare and dispense food, etc., and also to dispose of the body's unwanted residues), that reaffirms ceramics' exceptional relationship to sexuality."

Sexually-charged clay objects have been made and used from the Neolithic to the present day. *Sex Pots* devotes two chapters (one by Mathieu, another by J. Paul Getty Museum curator Catherine Hess) to discussing the possible uses and meanings of explicitly sexual ceramic artifacts. Mathieu focuses on Greek, Roman, pre-Columbian, and Chinese fertility figures, visual analogs of birth myths, representations of sexual acts between humans and other beings, and downright pornographic and scatological items. Hess's essay examines the context and origins of naughty pictures on Renaissance majolica.

The subsequent five chapters refer to aspects of contemporary ceramic art practice, roughly divided into categories of gender, desire, narration, bodily functions, and organic formalism. The chapter titled "Touching Bodies" begins with the following summation: "The eye separates us from the world, while the other senses unite us with reality. This is the fundamental conceptual difference between images (visual art) and craft (certain types of objects), where touch and direct physical contact is necessary not only for making, but likewise for a complete intellectual experience. Touch and vision are separated by the hierarchies of Western culture, its histories and institutions, including of course, the art world."



Emese Kadar, *Female Circumcision*, 2000
45 x 10 x 8 cm

Chapter Seven, "Growing Things," opens with a quote—"It is fearfully exciting when you do get it centred and the stuff begins to come up between your fingers"—from a 1914 letter written by painter and critic Roger Fry to fellow Bloomsbury Group artist Duncan Grant. Mathieu writes, "Roger Fry's letter conveys with efficiency the eroticism of the experience, with the wet, slippery, malleable clay progressively raising under the touch and pressure of the hands and fingers, moving in an up-and-down masturbatory gesture. Anyone who has attempted to centre clay on a potter's wheel, even professionals who do it hundreds of times a day, can directly relate to the particularly sexual nature of the experience."

What potters do once they've centred the clay or moulded the sculpture is documented on *Sexpots*'s lavishly illustrated pages. Hundreds of full-colour and often full-page photographs display subtle and seductive ceramics exemplifying one or more of Mathieu's enquiries. From ancient Moche stirrup vessels depicting anal penetration to the penis drawing and handprint on Attila Richard Lukacs's and Danny Kostyshin's 1998 *Masturbation Plate*; from Mariko Paterson's crudely modelled *Black Poodle Licking Itself* to Leopold L. Foulem's hilarious *Jewish Banana*; to the refined, squishy forms of Meg Ida's *Erotic Footisbism*, *Lotus Shoes*: every image proposes a concept worth examining. Are pots gendered? Is clay genitalia erotica or pornography? Does the answer change if the object is made of unglazed earthenware or smooth porcelain? Are ceramic objects art? If so, what kind of art? If not, what are they?

The physical and metaphorical content of a ceramic object (its interior void, its exterior skin), combined with other factors, such as applied imagery (which may complement or contravene the form of the piece), turn interpretation or meaning into a complex if not impossible task. Mathieu has performed an invaluable act in bringing together in *Sexpots* a wealth of material that will provoke both scholarly and kitchen-table discussions for years to come.

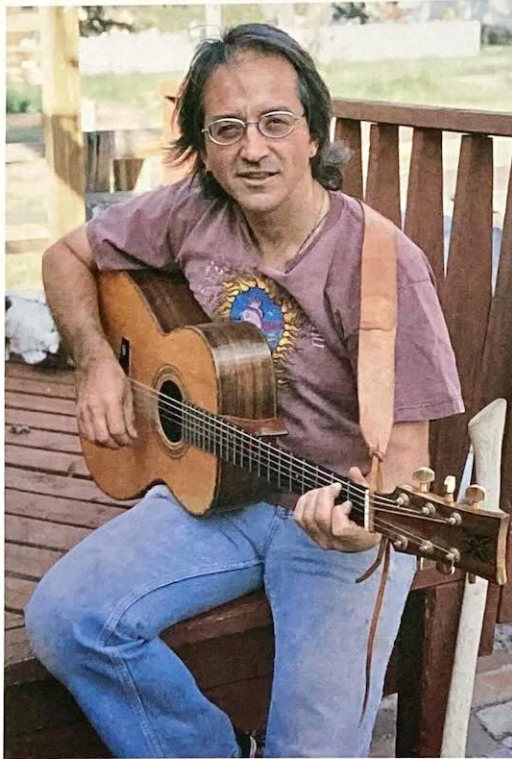
Paula Gustafson is the editor of Artichoke magazine. She has written extensively about historical and contemporary crafts in Canada.

[Counterpointing the writing of this review, my computer screen incessantly flashed the arrival of email messages touting medications and methods for penis enlargement, enhanced orgasms, and other libidinous pleasures. I'm told the Internet is by far the largest purveyor of sexual devices and services. Why then should we be surprised to learn that, throughout the centuries, sex toys have been among the commonest, most readily available consumer items?]

A Free Man in Tugaske

David Freeman

by Puck Janes



David Freeman
Photograph by Puck Janes

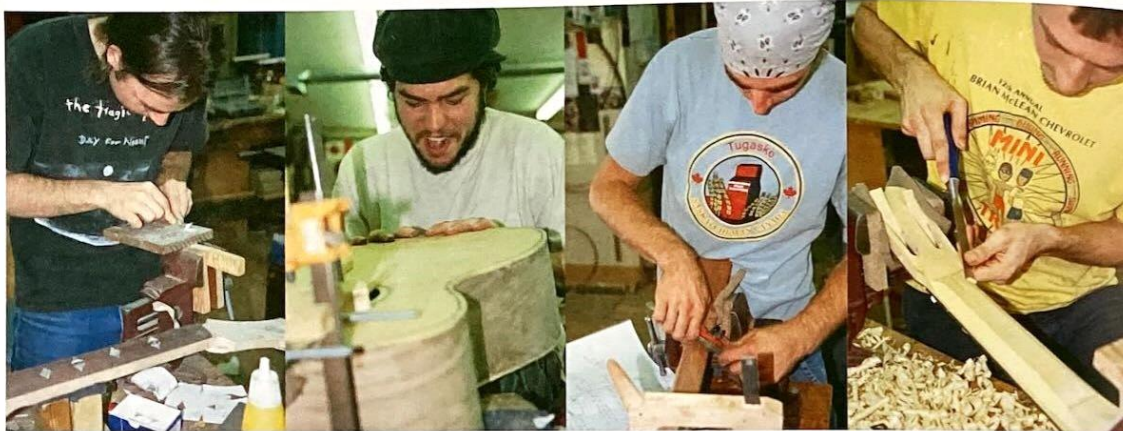
Come to Tugaske, Saskatchewan, population 100, and learn to make a guitar! David Freeman, owner of Timeless Instruments, has trained students from 18 countries in the design and craft of guitar-making for over 17 years in his school in Tugaske. Students are required to bring a notebook and a camera. Only 20% have woodworking experience and most are musicians. When they leave, seven weeks later, they have designed and built their own guitars, lived in an incredibly picturesque town, driven on some of the worst roads in Saskatchewan, and had one of the most rewarding experiences in their lifetime.

Their teacher is luthier David Freeman. A luthier is a maker of stringed instruments and at Timeless Instruments David custom builds acoustic guitars, harps, bouzoukis, and mandolins as well as drums and percussion instruments. He sells lutherie supplies and kits for people to make their own instruments. David runs a training program for adults who want to learn to make their own classical, steel-string, or flamenco guitar. For those who want more, David offers a follow-up "self-train" program. His motivation: "I want to teach people how to do this with a minimum amount of tools and cost." The result—his students have gone on to become luthiers in their own right, operating their own shops. And perhaps, a more important reason for the majority, is found in a statement from recent graduate Frank Hauser, "I've been working since I was 18; I'm 57 now and this is the funnest thing I've ever done."

David Freeman picked up his first guitar in 1970; he apprenticed with a woodcarver in Nova Scotia, and an antique furniture restorer in Tugaske. By 1978 David was doing serious instrument repairs. He built his first guitar in 1980 at a school in Vermont; five days after returning home he started Timeless Instruments, three weeks later, his first son was born. In 1986 he started the school. "There was no other school in Canada where you could learn guitar-making at that time." Money was an issue so he started farming. Says David, "I bought land in 1982 and started farming so I could raise my family and make guitars in the winter. By 1989, I was building guitars so I could farm." It took seven years to establish the school and since 1993 it has been relatively full.



Lap Harp, 1995
American black walnut, sitka spruce soundboard with peizo pickup, lacquered.



Brandon O'Flaherty
Photographs by Puck Janes

Zac Caldwell

Clayton Jackson

Douglas Scott

David teaches four seven-week acoustic guitar construction courses during the year, two in spring and two in fall. A maximum of seven students are admitted per session. They learn theory, design, parts, assembly, inlay, finishing and set-up. Students enroll in David's course with the expectation that each student will design and build their own guitar, learning to choose which materials to work with and why. In other courses, Frank Hauser says, "you build their guitar." Frank showed off his creation, a steel-string guitar with a Morado fingerboard, Rosewood headstock, and Honduran Mahogany sides, back and neck. The top is Sitka Spruce, a tight grained wood with silking and vertical grain to give bright tone. "You get to build your own truss rod. Steel strings put between 150 and 180 pounds of pull and the neck wants to bend," Hauser states with authority.

The school is a quiet workspace where not a lot of electric sanders and saws are in use. The mornings are for instruction and note taking, the afternoons are for working and impromptu lessons as needed. Says David, "I need to communicate in plain English, otherwise there aren't a lot of restrictions." Students put in long hours working with their hands. It is an immersion environment and most students live and eat across the street in the Student Residence house. The nightlife in Tugaska is minimal, the one hotel is up for sale and students tend to work on their projects during the evenings. Some students come to the school with a limited knowledge of woodworking yet their finished guitars look and sound like works of art by real craftspeople.



Shaman Tree Guitar, 2001 (Timeless Instruments model GM-03)
Bearclaw sitka spruce (top), flamed maple (backside), cocobola (fingerboard) with & mother of pearl, abalone, gold pearl, sterling silver, coloured wood veneer, elk antler used in the inlay.



Irish Bouzouki, 2000
Padauk (back & sides), sitka spruce (top), mahogany (neck), East Indian rosewood (fingerboard) with lightning infinity in abalone and MOP inlay, Hawaii koa head plate with stylized lightning T I inlay, quilted maple binding, headway pickup system, truoil finish.



FROM LEFT: Clinton Garrison, Frank Hauser, Zac Caldwell, Douglas Scott, Brandon O'Flaherty, Clayton Jackson, David Freeman
Photographs by Puck Jones

This year's spring graduates had more woodworking in their backgrounds. Clinton Garrison works in a guitar-making factory in St. John's, Newfoundland. He got his job when the owner found out he was planning to take David's course. Classmate Brandon O'Flaherty wants to make guitars because of the challenge they offer. His father and uncle own a cabinetry shop in Montreal. "My Dad and Uncle think this is great. I'll make guitars in the shop." Doug Scott will be graduating from the University of Victoria with a degree in music, but he grew up with his Dad's woodworking shop in the basement and knew what he needed to do to 'complete' his education. Zac Caldwell and his buddy drove up from Texas for an adventure. And Frank might be back: he wants his wife to take the course. Two former students, from New Jersey and Vancouver return regularly, they bought homes in Tugaske.

As well as teaching in Tugaske, David has taught guitar making in New Zealand and mandolin making in Wells, B.C. Former student and ex-chair maker, Paddy Burgin set up shop in Wellington, New Zealand, and he partnered with David to teach lutherie there. David will return in January 2005 for his second course down under.

January is usually David's busiest month of the year when he is doing repairs and cutting and selling stock through his mail order lutherie supply business. He spends hundreds of dollars at the post office and on advertising, and keeps a close eye on his website: www.timelessinstruments.com. Part of his business that has remained consistent over time are his folk festival summers. David had booths at four folk festivals last year. He sells guitars and other stringed instruments, as well as drums, whistles, tipplers, bones, and shakers. The latter are all made from top quality woods using his off cuts. "Folk festivals are a great holiday, great promotion and I attract a student or two almost every year."

David's success has been hard won. In a town where serviced lots sell for \$100 and the local Co-op manager offered a free tank of gas to any member of the legislature willing to drive the potholed highway #42 into town, active members of the community like David make all the difference. His future plans include, among other things, a recording studio. He manages to venture into Saskatoon and Regina regularly. After all he is the current Chair of the Saskatchewan Craft Council's Board of Directors.

Puck Jones is a Saskatoon potter. She enjoyed her trip to Tugaske.

The Conundrum of Wabi Sabi

San Toge Ka - Three Potters

Saskatchewan Craft Council Gallery, January 16 - March 14, 2004

Photography by Armin Badzak

by Sandra Ledingham



Yu Kobayashi, Square House Box, 2003
clay, glaze. 7.6 x 8.9 cm

'Approaching Wabi Sabi - An Exhibition of Contemporary Japanese Ceramics' is the title of the show which opened October 2- December 29 at the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery (MJM&AG) and tours Canada until February 5, 2005.

I had a chance to view the exhibition, meet the three artists—Yu Kobayashi, Kazuma Nakano and Robert Froese—listen to their slide talk and experience a tea ceremony. Following are some reflections on this experience.

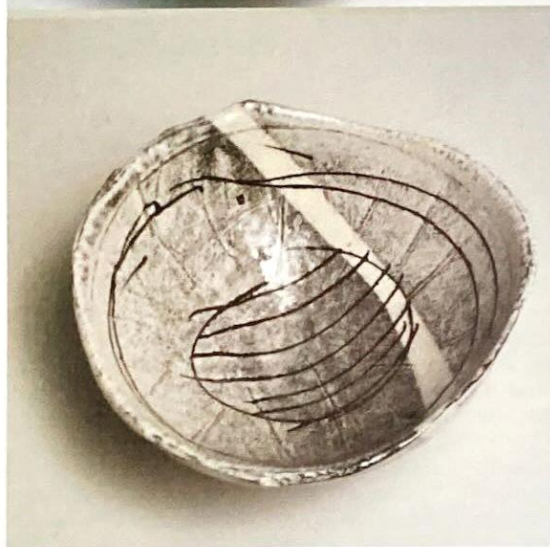
Residing momentarily in the presence of the three artists, their thoughts and their work, revealed an immediate sense of *Wabi Sabi*.

Wabi Sabi can mean: unpretentious/stores nobility/richness of spirit/clarity, purity, tranquility/acceptance of being/a way of life/deep perception of nature, embracing natural materials/revering chance/revering imperfection and is said to be quite intangible yet many say it can be felt.

Heather Smith, the curator of the MJM&AG and originator of this exhibition, in her catalogue

essay discloses that defining *Wabi Sabi* became somewhat of a mania for her while researching this show. She says that to comprehend an aesthetic idea rooted in cultural meaning with only the vaguest understanding of a culture became a frustrating experience but a fitting conundrum.

When I asked all three artists if they felt their work displayed *Wabi Sabi*, they said they had not consciously thought about it until Heather told them she would develop this exhibition around the concept of *Wabi Sabi*. In focusing on this philosophical/aesthetic concept, Smith has conceived a perceptive way to help the viewing public 'enter' the work. We, in the west, process the world from the reference point of perfection = efficiency = the best. Since the industrial revolution of the turn of the 1800s, we have come to admire all that seems without trace of error or chance or serendipity. Machines have so defined our culture that the concept of honouring the 'mishap' or acknowledging we are not in total control, makes us anxious.



TOP
Kazuma Nakano, *Onibe Cup*, 2003
clay, ash glaze
12 x 7 cm

BELOW
Robert Froese, *hachi (bowl)*, 2003
clay, slip, glaze
15.2 x 6.9 cm

OPPOSITE PAGE
Yu Kobayashi, *Sitting Figure*, 2003
clay, slip
11.4 x 12.7 x 7.6 cm

What we find in this exhibition of 188 pieces is subtle expressiveness and wonderful attention to detail. Mostly they are not pots or objects we would revere. Some are chunky and heavy, and some are irregularly shaped and layered with odd colours. Some are unembellished or slightly wonky. Some are subtle and quiet.

When I asked Yu Kobayashi about her small, rotund, near headless figures of women, smiling with warmth and playfulness she explained that since commencing living in Africa part time her concept of female beauty has changed and she has come to appreciate the beauty of largeness. In Yu's pots we see this same 'largeness.' The content of her work is unmistakably feminine: dwellings, handbags, nesting eggs, and within lies some of their power. Yu's passion for living on the ocean is conveyed in her figurative diving and swimming series. When asked about *Wabi Sabi*, struggling for English words Yu said: "art should be close to daily life." Herein lies a clue to understanding *Wabi Sabi*.

Kazuma Nakano's pots also express his concerns: the tension created within an interrupted form, and surfaces that engage 'time' as an aesthetic tool. His greatest desire is to create surfaces that alter as they are used, as the elements interact with them, and as the kiln's fire affects them. Dull slips and glimpses of glaze through them reveal each other and the slips wear with use. His interest is in the surprise and in the feeling of accepting all changes that occur. This work encapsulates for me, *Wabi Sabi*. Each object is a riveting abstract painting—layered with subtle, always subtle, gouges, pricks, scratches, and coloured additions. Multi colours—unexpected colours, a bright blue rim under a lid or a cache of orange inside a carved foot, unpredictable surprises, some of which are bursts of glassy melt from within the clay walls themselves.





FROM LEFT Yu Kobayashi, Kazuma Nakano, Robert Froese

Unlike the boldness of Nakano's work, the work of Robert Froese is a study in the understated, the quiet and the subtle. Monochromatic slip and glaze thrown pots are loosened by abstracted brush strokes or 'scrafitto' marks. Froese's aesthetic speaks more so to the technically refined pot. Moving from a North American aesthetic to an Eastern aesthetic is no easy feat. I asked Robert if he did not have to undo or unlearn some of the perfection we struggle to embrace. Because he has moved back and forth frequently from Canada to Japan, the two aesthetics have become superimposed. The ethereal nature of the word *Wabi Sabi* is revealed in the demeanor of this artist and after all this is the pivotal departure point of all work.

CHA NO YU (the tea ceremony) is influenced by the spirit of Zen Buddhism and is associated with the aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi*. Sakiko Kanetsuki, a tea master by family lineage, told us of the calming significance of a ceremony of tea with her mother in the early mornings before departing for school. In a secluded gallery space within the Moose Jaw Art Gallery, Kanetsuki (meaning 'deep thinking') discussed the importance of ambiance and all detail associated with the tea ceremony. She spoke of the spirit that may move the master to perform a ceremony: a change of season or a personal event with the location perhaps outside under a cherry blossom tree.

This ceremonial space in the gallery was a collaborative effort between the three artists. The moon was a sliver and Yu's desire was to explore abandoned Saskatchewan farms to select art objects to define the space. Her two sculptures entitled *Trembling Moon* and *Swinging Sleep* arrest the viewer upon entering this space. These pivotal 'found objects' consisting of wagon wheel remnants are echoed on the

wall by simple shadows. Vessels by Kazuma and Robert are found on a low table: two square plates, two cylinders, two tea bowls, hand carved bamboo Yoji (forks), green powdered Maccha, a whisk and Azuki bean cakes.

The tea master after whisking the green powder and hot water in a single bowl, turns the bowl in her hand to the right to select her preferred side, reflects on it, turns it then two more times stopping each time at the selected side to expose it to each of her two guests. The tea master sets the bowl in front of the first guest exposing the chosen side to her. The guest in turn picks up the bowl and also turns it three times to the right, this time seeking her own preferred side and thus exposing it to the second guest and the tea master. Reflecting on the beauty of the bowl, the guests, concepts of spirit and heart, Sakiko says are all part of this ritual and an appreciation of *Wabi Sabi*.

While sitting in the total quiet of the gallery with Kazuma looking over the exhibition and discussing topics related to clay, lifestyle and culture *Wabi Sabi* revealed itself. I left the Moose Jaw Gallery into the park in fall: the river was running, the birds were singing and the sun was reflecting off coloured leaves. In the morning I had come from swimming outdoors. There was an air of mystic and extreme well being. It was, after all, October in Saskatchewan!

Sandra Ledingham acted as Program Head and taught in the Ceramics Program at Woodland Campus SIASST since its inception in 1986 to 2002. Currently she maintains her studio in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

The Great Saskatchewan Scarf Show

Saskatchewan Craft Council Gallery

September 26 - November 16, 2003

by Cathryn Miller



The Great Saskatchewan Scarf Show in the Saskatchewan Craft Council Gallery

In the Summer 2001 issue of *The Craft Factor*, Dr. Sandra Flood commented that work in a previous Saskatchewan Weavers and Spinners Guild show failed to meet exhibition standards. She said "This showed in the plethora of small, mainly rather ordinary scarves." I have heard this may have been one reason for the focus of this show. Whatever the motivation, it was a good idea.

The general public may be unaware that every scarf presents a technical challenge. The narrow width and long exposed selvages demand a high level of proficiency. Errors that might be unnoticeable in a larger piece are instantly evident in a scarf. Further difficulties are created by the use of finer threads, less forgiving materials, and complex patterns. It was a pleasure to review *The Great Saskatchewan Scarf Show*. Rarely does one see such an exhibition of skill in spinning, dyeing, knitting, felting, and weaving, and rarely so well displayed.

The star of the show was undoubtedly Sue Turtle. Her four works were well-designed and beautifully produced, displaying a mastery of spinning, dyeing, knitting, and weaving. Emelie Hunt and Gwen Klypak also deserve special mention. I particularly liked Hunt's piece *The Pocket* with its stamped design interrupted by bands of a different weave from the rest of the scarf. For technical control of fine silk warps it would be hard not to acknowledge *Autumn Frost* by Alison Philips and *Silk Scarf* by Sheila Devine, and Heather Menzies' *Trace* was an excellent example of subtle and sophisticated design. In fact, most of the pieces in the show were admirable.



Emelie Hunt, *The Pocket*, 2003; silk; twill and M's & O's weave structures. 20.5 x 152 cm. Collection of Eileen Hogblom



Sue Turtle, *Space Dyed Silk Scarf*, 2003
2 ply #6 fine silk cord warp painted & dyed, cotton/rayon blend weft, 4 shaft twill & basket weave. 17.5 x 182 cm



Emelie Hunt, *Indigo Ikat*, 2003
silk; indigo ikat dyeing, twill weave. 25 x 152 cm



Alice Silversides, *Red Shetland Scarf*, 2003
Shetland fleece; hand spun, hand dyed, knitted. 20 x 120 cm

A few scarves used unusual materials or combined materials in unexpected ways. June Jacobs' felted pieces (I particularly liked *Ribbons and Bows*) took a material that is usually relegated to the workaday world of functional items such as boot liners and transformed it into something elegant. And *Midnight Rainbow* by Geraldine M. Rooke, with diamonds of glass beads woven into the actual structure, delighted the eye with its changing qualities of reflection and refraction.

There were some disappointments. I was surprised that juror Anita Mayer included works whose poor technique, poor design, (or both) failed to meet the high standard reached by the rest of the show. I also felt that the subtitle of the exhibition was ill-advised. *Stretching the Limits* led me to expect more than the show provided. It quickly became evident that, with the exception of a few pieces, the limits referred to were personal rather than

functional or abstract boundaries or definitions. And it might have been a more interesting exhibition if fewer pieces had used the same techniques or there had been more variation in materials.

The Great Saskatchewan Scarf Show was well worth seeing, and some of the statements that accompanied the works were charming. I particularly enjoyed Alice Silversides': "I have knitted for 70 years. I have woven and spun for 20 years. I have dyed for 15 years." Let's hope that is an inspiration to other Guild members to keep on learning and improving.

Cathryn Miller is a former weaver with over twenty-five years of experience. She has won many awards, including The Premier's Prize. None of them were for scarves.

CRAFT MATTERS

by Jack Anderson
Photographs courtesy of the Artists



Zane Wilcox, *untitled*, 2004
clay, shino glaze; wheel thrown, altered, cone 10 reduction.

According to the Canadian Crafts Federation's just-released summary report of September 2003 which both profiles craft in Canada and offers strategies for sustainability and future development, the full time craft professional in Canada had an average pre-tax income in 2001 of \$17,300, which is—as the report points out—less than \$10 per hour. While this is a troubling statistic, it undoubtedly comes as little surprise to the many artisans producing or trying to market craft in Saskatchewan. Whatever the root cause of this economic insult (an inequity which, we can only surmise, generally applies to any and all creative arts practitioners), it is clear that in order to close that income gap—in order to sustain not only a critically recognized practice but an economically viable career—governments, institutions and craft artisans themselves must re-think their definitions and re-tool extant programs, and develop new strategies that will lead to sustainability—because, despite Saskatchewan's enviable reputation nationally in terms of the quality of our fine crafts and applied arts, we can see by the statistics that something is wrong.

Governments, granting agencies and craft artists have looked closely at business models as a way of achieving economic viability for the crafts. But marketing plans are only one part of the answer, the other being the viability—or shall we say the continued marketability—of the craft object itself. Indeed, all successful businesses as well as many successful entrepreneurial craft artisans are alert to that need, providing for on-going marketability of their product through what the business sector terms research and development.

In this regard, continuing training and education must be seen as a crucial factor. But what educational or training opportunities are available for craft artisans? What could we be doing that we are not doing? Surely a craft practice driven by marketing alone fails to acknowledge the role education—professional development—plays in ensuring the on-going development of product and, it is hoped, the consequent expansion of the craft artisan's market. Certainly to compete individually within the craft marketplace or even to have fine crafts compete in the global advertising-saturated marketplace, one must be continually producing, for example, a better pot. As glass artist Lee Brady understands it, the marketing of craft in this province "would be easier if the quality of work and the innovation of design were at a higher level."



Lee Brady, *Lavatera Twist*, 2003
fused glass, kiln textured & kiln formed. 23 x 41(d) cm

When it comes to training for fine crafts and the applied arts that results in some form of recognized certification, Saskatchewan has a less than enviable record. Many involved with craft and applied arts in this province had high hopes in 1986 when the Northern Institute of Technology in Prince Albert (later known as SIAST Woodlands Campus) began development of formal training programs in ceramics, weaving and photography (later to become Media Arts which included video, computers and photography). Sandra Ledingham, the first hired to help develop the ceramics program, states that "we grew from no interest to national if not international awareness of us." But by 1999 the weaving program was shut down and by 2002 ceramics had also become a thing of the past.

Ledingham intimates that it was politics that put these programs at the Woodlands Campus but then also shut them down. But why cut programs that, according to Zane Wilcox, the last official graduate of the SIAST Woodlands ceramics program, "seemed to offer everything we needed... technical training was nicely balanced by design and aesthetics?" The recommendations in the 1997 Cultural Industries Development Strategy Report presented shortly before the demise of these programs to the then Saskatchewan Minister of Municipal Government said there is a need for development of a wider variety of courses in technical and design skills, and singled out SIAST Woodlands for development.

In the past funding issues have revolved around the distinction between art and craft. While both universities and colleges—who are directly funded in part from public coffers—"want lots of demand" for their courses, SIAST focused on "short courses, to get 'em in and get 'em out, wanted industry funding bursaries, scholarships and sponsored seats." In other words, Ledingham sees an inequity in the manner and degree to which long-term 'fine art' programs are funded in this province as compared to shorter applied arts courses which government clearly wanted to be partially funded by industry.



Mel Bolen, #2 Anagama Wood Fired Stoneware, 2003
(with industrial ceramic legs). 42 x 30 x 18 cm

However, we have only to look to Alberta to see that this kind of imbalance is not always the case. Like all other art colleges in Canada, ACAD (the Alberta College of Art and Design) in Calgary, which formerly offered only certificate programs, now also offers a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) Degree in the 'fine arts' (drawing, printmaking, painting and sculpture), and in 'applied arts' (ceramics, fiber, glass, jewellery and metals, and photographic arts). They also offer numerous non-credit courses, as well as intensive workshops intended for personal or professional development, in glass and glass-blowing, woodworking, bookbinding, design, fashion design, jewellery, papermaking and fiber (pew!). The difference between ACAD's non-credit programs and their degree programs is quite clearly a question of content: non-credit programs (and trades-oriented certification programs elsewhere) emphasize technical skills development while art college degree programs in the applied arts augment that by locating technical education within craft-specific aesthetic and historical frameworks.

In this regard, Ruth Chambers, who teaches ceramics in the Visual Art Department at the University of Regina, states that while "the programs at SIAST Woodlands were a huge loss" for Saskatchewan and that the need for those kinds of professional development programs still exists here, there may not be "the critical mass around clay in Saskatchewan to keep programs like that going." The ceramics program at the University of Regina, she offers, "fulfills a different need on the prairies" that is broader in scope than either SIAST Woodlands or Alberta College of Art and Design. She suggests that the University of Regina's ceramic department locates clay more extensively and critically "within the broader scheme of the visual arts as a whole" with emphasis on the intellectual frameworks of aesthetic theory, art history and theory, and cultural history and theory.

Clearly some kind of non-hierarchical cultural vision and the political will to manifest it has allowed parallel fine arts and fine crafts programs to operate harmoniously under one roof at the Alberta College of Art and Design. And while its programs and facilities undoubtedly seem luxurious to those in the craft sector in Saskatchewan, it is understandable that this is possible in Calgary because Alberta has enough public money to support an array of classes this large, to support and keep the professional faculty needed to teach them, and needs-built facilities that can accommodate specialized fine crafts practices, and a population sophisticated enough to take advantage of them. Indeed, there is not only extensive government support for these kinds of applied arts cultural industries programs in Alberta but a thriving and sophisticated marketplace that demands they exist. As woodworker Jamie Russell suggests, Saskatchewan does not have a thriving market for high-end craft, certainly in his discipline, because "there is not the population, the money nor the collectors here to drive it."



Sandra Ledingham, *Traces*, 2003
adobe clay, low fire clay, glazes; background by Linda Charter
Exhibited in The Little Gallery, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Photographs by Ham Greenwood

Certainly Saskatchewan has nothing to compare to Alberta in terms of a formal curriculum-based applied arts education, and what little we did have is now defunct. However numerous informal professional development opportunities have long been available and new ones are springing up—perhaps, as potter Mel Bolen suggests, "to fill the void created by the loss of institutional certificate programs in this province." While we can find the occasional craft professional setting up mutually beneficial instructional classes they run out of their own studios, this is the exception rather than the rule. And if we look hopefully to the artisanal one-on-one apprenticeship model that has historically been responsible for maintaining and transmitting craft knowledge, it would be difficult to find examples of that kind of relationship at work in this province. According to furniture designer Jamie Russell, who himself received

his early training during participation in a formal apprenticeship program in San Francisco in the 1970s, this model is unworkable in Saskatchewan because there is an insufficient market in this province for most high-level craft work. "In the furniture business" he says, "no one is doing so much work that he or she would need an apprentice-employee."

Similar to traditional apprenticeships in that they function on a one-to-one basis are the relatively new mentoring relationships that have been developed in this province by the Saskatchewan Craft Council and CARFAC SASK. Slightly different than the apprenticeship model, these programs are based on adjudicated grants and find the mentor rewarded financially by the mentee for sharing their technical, aesthetic and business knowledge.

As these programs are relatively small in scope, Mel

Bohlen further suggests that the most prevalent if not the most successful informal training opportunities in this province at this point in time arguably come in the form of workshops. Numerous offered in various craft disciplines throughout the province, workshops take various shapes from those offered by individual craft artisans, like fabric artist Martha Cole, who runs various specialty workshops out of her studio, to those offered by local or provincial guilds.

Workshops often run under the direction of an artist-in-residence program can be found at the University of Saskatchewan's Bruno Ursuline Campus which year round offers a small variety of targeted events—specializing variously in fibre, wood carving, ceramics and even drawing. With what sounds like some programming savvy aimed at prompting community support, they balance off professional level workshops by offering leisure-level community outreach classes aimed at the local constituency. However, Bruno, which was attempting to broaden its programming, is walking a tightrope with imminent closure. According to recently published newspaper reports, winter weather and a relatively isolated location conspire to keep the numbers at this campus lower than necessary to keep the doors open.

On the larger provincial scale, the revived University of Saskatchewan's Kenderdine Campus summer program at Emma Lake offers both fine arts and fine crafts workshops for amateur and professional alike, organized often around special interest themes. (Similarly the six week Visual Arts Summer School at Red Deer College in Alberta offers numerous one week sessions in various areas specifically directed at skills development). Although these include many personal interest courses in the visual arts and are run on a cost-recovery basis, Emma Lake also brings in internationally renowned instructors to its craft-based collaborations programs. This particular strategy not only guarantees large numbers of participants eager to work with high caliber workshop leaders, but engages the participants in higher level discourse and skills building. Jamie Russell, coordinator of the innovatively designed collaboration at Emma Lake, suggests that its ever-increasing success can be measured not only by the high enrollments of international participants but by results. "We ended with a surplus in 2002, raised at a session-end auction in which the pieces made by the

participants were sold off and the money raised will be used to subsidize participants to the '04 Collaboration." In addition, this program received a \$10,000 grant from SaskCulture Inc. (Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation), aimed specifically at getting young people to the 2004 conference.

While Kate Hobin of the Extension Division of the University of Saskatchewan, who also directs the Kenderdine Campus summer program at Emma Lake, suggests that "there is lots of support for craft and design" in Saskatchewan—we can only look to SCC *Wintergreen* market, *Dimensions* exhibition as proof for that. One of the challenges facing craft is developing new ways to draw in younger practitioners. The numbers are stagnant: every year for the past 15 years, an average 340 to 370 people have maintained active memberships in the Saskatchewan Craft Council. Zane Wilcox suggests that because of the lack of facilities and programs, "there are fewer people entering" clay in this province than ever before. Clearly the consequences of fewer educational opportunities for young artisans are that they often leave the province for their education. More worryingly, they often do not return. Attracting and keeping younger artisans here by directly or indirectly subsidizing educational opportunities available to them, is one thoughtful and perhaps necessary solution.

The SCC's membership figures may also be a consequence of demographics relative to age, to geographic choices, etc. It may be read as a reduced interest in the 1960's ethic of the hand-made. Indeed, the rise of logo-centric commodity-based results-oriented business culture in the eighties—which still holds sway over governments, taxpayers and funding agencies—is dominant within North American culture today. Martha Cole even goes so far as to pessimistically suggest that "maybe craft is now anachronistic."

In response to this, many craft practitioners have put forward the suggestion that educating the public toward an understanding and appreciation of craft as both an aesthetic and economic pursuit is an alternate way of addressing the problem of sustainability—that public relations are as important as professional development. Looking at various forms of public advocacy for fine craft in the province though, Martha Cole suggests that "there is no public craft museum here like the Gardiner in Toronto that looks both at the past excellence of the various fine crafts traditions—the history of craft—and the cutting edge of new craft practice." One provincial government cultural bureaucrat who wishes to remain anonymous suggests that the Saskatchewan Craft Council should consider earmarking some of its existing resources and space or even seek new funding and space in order to setup a museum wing of its operations aimed not at marketing but at public advocacy. Currently, the Craft Council provides one avenue of public education through fine craft exhibitions in its Saskatoon Gallery.



Jamie Russell, *Sex and Travel*, 2003
walnut, curley big-leaf maple. 61 x x 50 x 66 cm
Photograph by Trent Watts

This possibility forces us to ask: where does craft and the applied arts in Saskatchewan go from here, specifically in terms of professional development? One bright light on the horizon is SPAAD—the Saskatchewan Program in Applied Arts and Design—a program anticipated to be in place by 2004 that will focus its programming at least initially on entry level technical instruction in Drawing, Painting, Design, Ceramic Arts, and Printmaking. (It is anticipated that Fibre Arts and Glass Arts will be added to the mix as they are developed). Managed and developed by Kate Hobin the program will offer both certificate and non-certificate routes through a formalized course-based curriculum, as well as through workshops held at various U of S campuses throughout the province. This program will be partnered with the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension Fine Arts Certification Program and will allow for the transfer of credits between the two institutions. Hobin sees this kind of institutional reciprocity as a partial solution to the problem of applied arts education in this province.

On another front, the whole craft community in this province needs to acknowledge a growing demand for professional development in traditional aboriginal practices, given the growing population of that community. Carol Greyeyes, Indigenous Arts Advisor at the Saskatchewan Arts Board, speaks to the need to develop initiatives aimed specifically at sustaining the skills of "the aboriginal community of carvers, of beaders, of birch-bark biters and so on" and marketing their products. Certainly some steps have already been taken "that are modeled in part on professional development practices and programs originated by the

Saskatchewan Craft Council and in part on the traditional systems of cultural transmission historically active in aboriginal societies." But these programs are still in their infancy. It is anticipated that future programs will ultimately include "the development of an aboriginal craft association or co-op, a program of artists residencies, and a system of mentorships." With regard to these initiatives, Doug Townsend, Visual and Media Arts Consultant at the Saskatchewan Arts Board, offers that "the current re-establishment of aboriginal craft practice is the most interesting development going on in craft in this province right now."

The roller-coaster history of publicly funded support for professional development in the applied arts in this province is perhaps symptomatic of a current lack of respect for craft generally, a hierarchical social situation surprising for a province governed for the last ten years by democratic socialist principles. Relying on the status quo will simply not advance sustainability. A re-thinking is necessary if we are to develop new models for professional development that build on our knowledge of past successes and circumvent our failures and acknowledge and accept current social conditions and cultural realities.

In the final analysis, both craft people and government need to understand that the sustainability of craft as an individual practice and as a cultural industry are tied to sustainable professional development programs—whatever form they take.

Jack Anderson is a practicing artist and art critic from Regina, Saskatchewan.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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Puzzle on page 8

The Accidental Artist

Don Hefner Profile

by Sheila Robertson

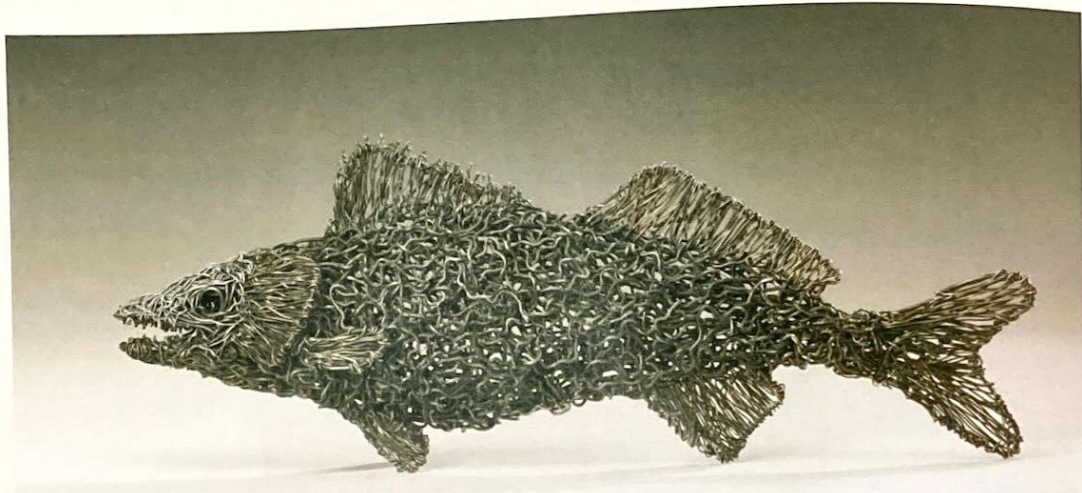


Don Hefner working in his Saskatoon studio.

Grasshoppers as big as sparrows. Heaps of them. It sounds like a tall tale from the Dirty Thirties, but it's a true picture of Don Hefner's workshop. Pliers in hand, the Saskatoon sculptor is working on his latest project, wrestling wire into tightly twisted loops to form quirky little grasshopper imitations. He has been commissioned to make 250 of them for a conference.

"It's just by word of mouth, since I don't have a web site or anything," he notes. "I've already done grasshoppers for all 40 agricultural representatives in the province."

Hefner specializes in wildlife sculptures. He makes larger-than-life grasshoppers, dragonflies and other insects, and life-size birds, fish and animals. Prairie imagery prevails. The deer and the antelope play in his studio, along with bison, jackrabbits and coyotes. He has also made seals, Arctic foxes, and large, majestic herons and whooping cranes. Just for fun, he sometimes shifts from fauna to flora, creating sprays of barbed-wire wheat, painted yellow, and giant sunflowers and cacti.



Wiry Wally, 1997
recycled iron tie and stove pipe wire. 15.2 x 43.1 x 5.1 cm. Collection of Jason Schoonover

The sunflowers remind him of his childhood in Nebraska. He grew up on a farm near Lincoln, surrounded by fields of sunflowers turning their heads to follow the path of the sun.

It is a paradox that he is able to evoke, with rigid metal, creatures that seem capable of moving and breathing. Equally puzzling is the fact that his figures, while utterly lifelike, are not highly realistic. There's an endearing goofiness to Hefner's figures that makes viewers chuckle.

As he builds a sculpture, he thinks about the growth process in nature, the unfurling of cells according to the genetic map. "The skeletal structure develops before the muscles. It's all in sequence."

He referred to this in the artist's statement he prepared for *Artists by Artists*, a 2001 Mendel Art Gallery project that involved his being mentored by noted Saskatoon-area sculptor Douglas Bentham. "While fashioning structures and forms in my work," he wrote, "I often reflect on the numerous biological mechanisms and nutrients involved in sustaining life."

Environmental themes are implicit in Hefner's work, and sometimes they are overt. He once made a collage by layering pinecones and sticks with such human effluvia as the sole of a shoe, a matchbook, and bottle caps. He uses recycled materials not only because they're cheap and plentiful, but also as a protest against a throwaway society that has treated Mother Nature as a massive garbage dump.

Hefner runs his hands along the underside of a work in progress, the emerging form of a young coyote. "When I'm working on an animal like this, I'm thinking about how the ribs expand with each breath," he says. "I see a little abdomen here, panting up and down."

He has studied coyotes and he knows their habits. Saskatoon curator and collector Norman Zepp, who owns one of Hefner's coyotes, says this insight enables the artist to capture "their essence, their coyoteness."

"What's remarkable is the energy and intensity behind it," Zepp says of Hefner's work. "There's a reservoir of energy in this man, and it gives the art an edge. He has an ability to grasp the basic structure of a creature, no matter how he resolves the work. He captures the basic gestures to suggest a coyote, a fish or a rabbit, no matter how he treats the surface, or whether it's naturally coloured."

Surrounded by his metal menagerie, Hefner often works long hours in his west-side studio, the radio or television blaring to compensate for his deafness. Visitors know they should just walk in, without bothering to knock. He enjoys the company, but he keeps working while he visits. He likes being busy, and he's proud that his works are in demand. In addition to touching a chord with the general public, Hefner's sculptures have found favour with other artists. Among those who collect his works are Bentham, Marie Lannoo, Vic Cicansky and Joe Fafard. In addition, actor James Earl Jones purchased one of Hefner's fish sculptures a few years ago at a West Coast art gallery.

Hefner figures he has made more than 700 pieces in the past eight years. Currently, he has a major exhibition being circulated by the Mendel Art Gallery; the year-long tour of Saskatchewan concludes at the Moose Jaw Art Museum March 10.



Prairie Prancer, 1997
recycled barbed wire. 82.5 x 74 x 35 cm. Collection of Neil Richards

Although still recovering from having a brain tumour removed more than a year ago, all in all Hefner is happy—happier, perhaps, than he's ever been in his life. He's been doing art workshops in schools. His work has been the subject of a CBC-TV feature and numerous newspaper articles. He contributes many sculptures to fundraisers each year. His personal goal is to donate \$50,000 worth of artwork or volunteer labour to charitable organizations.

"Right now I'm at \$22,500," he says proudly.

It is as though all the experiences and all the challenges he has encountered in his 64 years have been preparing him for this place and this work.

Although Hefner has little formal art training, he is highly educated. He studied geology, biology and education while completing 11 years of studies at eight universities. His eclectic interests include dinosaurs: among the large-scale sculptures he has created is a toothy, seven-foot-tall tyrannosaurus rex. He made it from bits and pieces of cast-off farm machinery, such as the old disk blades that make up its vertebrae.

Farmers have fun identifying the original purposes of the component parts of his sculptures, Hefner said. They pick out sections of old mowers, threshing machines, binders, horseshoes, pitchforks. He enjoys the challenge of figuring out working parts for many of his creations.

Hefner moved to Saskatoon from the United States more than 35 years ago to take a job at the University of Saskatchewan. He has been an educator, a research assistant in continuing medical education, and a carpenter.

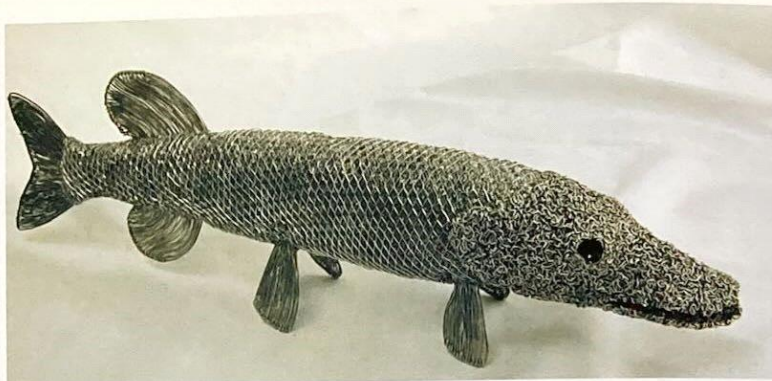
"I'm really a jack of all trades," he says with a grin. As a designer and contractor in construction, he's been involved in building diverse projects, including shelters for bus passengers and a dental clinic.

He finds opportunities to apply his expertise in his art, as well. For example, he uses metal upholstery rings, called hog rings, to hold the wire infrastructures of his sculptures in place. To quick rust the rings so they blend with the rusted wire, he draws on his knowledge of chemistry and dips them in hydrogen peroxide.

It's rough work manhandling barbed wire into elegant shapes. The muscles in his shoulders are perpetually strained. But somehow he wouldn't be satisfied with a more malleable material. He says it's appropriate that barbed wire should be his primary artistic medium.

Hefner (whose recent study of genealogy suggests he's distantly related to the Hefner of Playboy fame), spent most of his youth in a series of foster homes in rural Nebraska. He helped his foster parents with all sorts of chores, including repairing fences. He got so good at it that even the neighbours would call him for help when a fence was down and their cows had gotten out.

"It was poor, rusty barbed wire, and it was always breaking," Hefner says. "Now, working with this material and making art out of it is big-time déjà vu for me."



Silver Striker Pike, 2003
coloured aluminum wire and mesh. 15.0 x 55.2 x 8.5 cm. Collection of the artist

He recalls having a little shed strewn with bits and pieces of machinery. "I used to look at all these parts, and think about what they suggested to me in the animal world."

Hefner's mother, who'd abandoned him when he was three, occasionally sent him money she made from her paintings. "She painted all her life, with a spatula. She'd do portraits in a mall, in Michigan, where she'd married a test pilot in the air force. She'd get \$100 for a painting, and send it to me."

As a youngster, he was fascinated with the natural world; science books were his favourite reading material. With help from sympathetic teachers, he did well in school, despite having a chaotic home life. He ended up being passed from home to home, never appreciated for himself but only for his hard work and eagerness to please. At times, this essential innocence made him a target for cruelty.

Remarkably, negative experiences in his youth neither killed his spirit nor made him vindictive. In the same way that he transforms junk into art, he has a way of turning around daunting circumstances.

He was 19 before he discovered he was profoundly deaf. Working with landscaping equipment, he "nearly killed a guy by lowering a rock on him. They'd screamed at me, but I couldn't hear." The specialist he saw attributed the deafness to childhood illnesses, and marvelled that Hefner had compensated so well by lip-reading.

Due to his impairment, he was eligible for a scholarship to attend the University of Northern Colorado. This was 1958, the year after the former U.S.S.R. launched its Sputnik 1 satellite. The United States sent up Explorer 1 just four months later. In connection with the Space Race, the U.S. government made loans available to students entering science and education. Hefner took advantage of these opportunities. Within a few years, he was married, employed as a science teacher and working on a second degree. By the time he packed up a U-Haul to move to Canada in 1967, the family included three children.

That marriage later dissolved. Hefner's second wife, considerably younger than he, was a high-school dropout. "I encouraged her to do anything she wanted to," he says. She became interested in art and he helped her get a fine arts degree. When she took a class in sculpture, he became her assistant.

"Her professor wanted her to weld something. We went out to a farm near the city and took apart old binders, and we both learned to weld together."

The first piece he made by himself was a scrap-metal crown. That was eight years ago, and he just kept on, initially in an effort to "use up the two or three tons of material" his wife left behind when she moved out. "I got custody of her art career, and her art history books," Hefner jokes.

"I never set out to be an artist—it's a career that happened by accident," he says. Before he started making and selling art, he'd never even visited the Mendel Art Gallery... and now that civic gallery is touring his exhibition.

Underpinning everything he does is his respect for the material itself, the rusted but enduring emblems of farm life. "I like recycled barbed wire and farm machinery," he says. "I don't want it to get melted up for rebar. My heritage is farming."

Sheila Robertson is a Saskatoon writer, editor, and educator. She is a frequent contributor to The Craft Factor.

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Puck Janes
CERAMICS



TOP/DETAIL
30 Years Together, 2004
clay, slip, glazes
18 x 73 x 4 cm
(7 x 29 x 1.5 inches)
Collection of
Pam Hanna & Garth Harrison

LEFT
Summer Fields, 2004
(two sections)
clay, slip, glazes
44 x 30 x 5 cm
(17.5 x 12 x 2 inches)

Puck Janes is a ceramic artist working out of her studio in Saskatoon. Her vibrant sculptural wall pieces are noted for their unusual glazes that crawl, peel and sparkle with the colour and texture of the prairie. Prices range from \$50 to \$600.

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Photography by Zach Hauser

Craftspeople are invited to submit professional quality photographs, transparencies, slides or digital images illustrating their commissions or favourite works for private and public use or installation. Those works chosen for publication will be featured in upcoming issues of *The Craft Factor*. For more information, contact: Gale Alaie, Editor, *The Craft Factor*, SCC, 813 Broadway Avenue, Saskatoon, SK CANADA S7N 1B5 P/306.653.3616 ext. 23; F/306.244.2711; Email: scc.editor@shaw.ca



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