NEW ZEALAND

crafts

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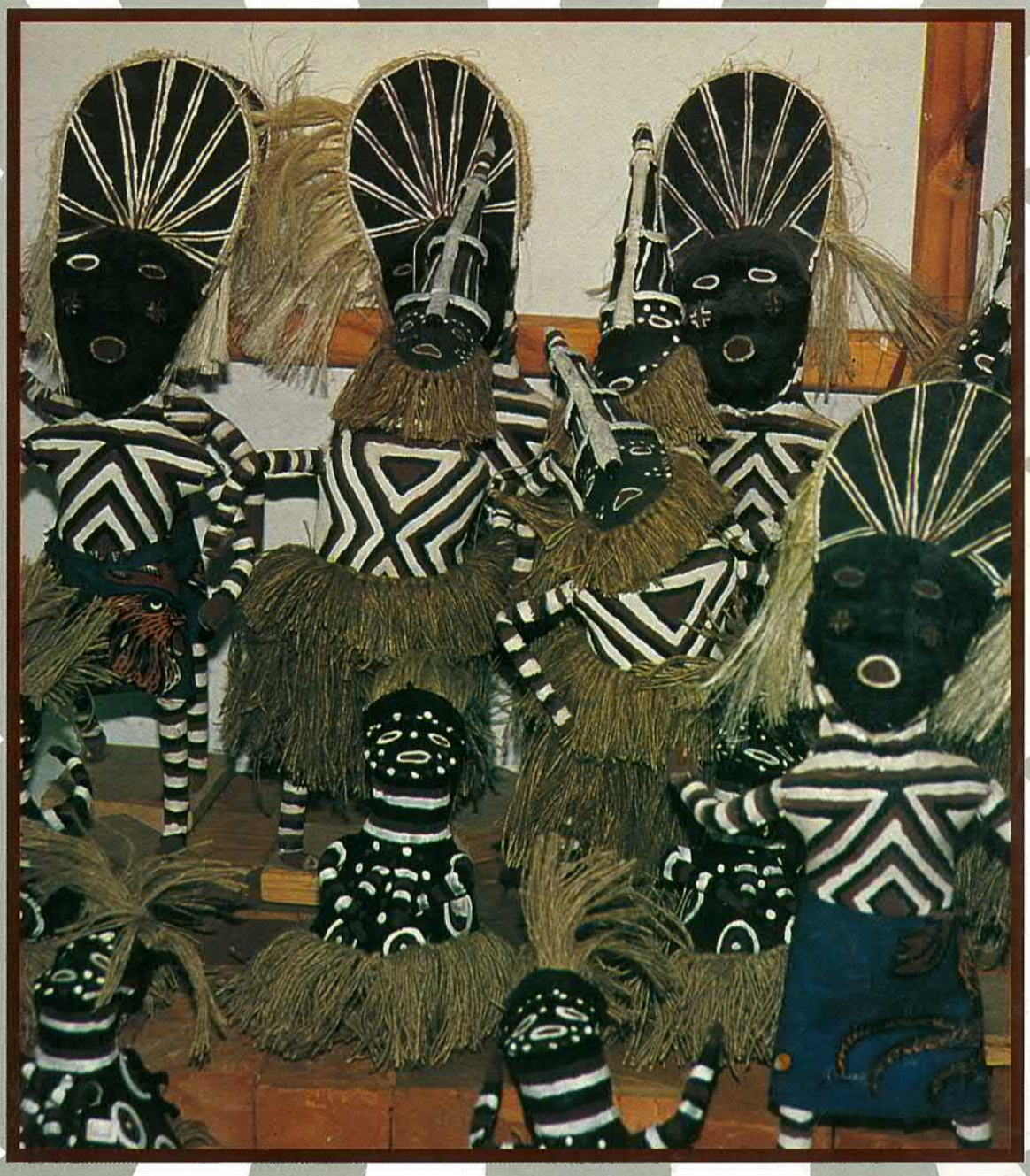

Contemporary craft in Zimbabwe

James Mack leaves the Dowse

Exposing your craft to the risk of sale

Salon des Refusés: But is it craft?

NEW ZEALAND crafts

Crafts Council Magazine 26 Spring 1988

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Editor : Alan Loney

LETTERS

World Crafts Council Conference

I wish to write about the World Crafts Council Conference held in May in Sydney, particularly from the perspective of one who had attended previous WCC Conferences in Canada 1974, Mexico 1976, Japan 1978, and Austria 1980.

I feel it is essential that such a Conference be held on the campus of a university or similar institution. So much of the value of a craft conference is in the casual and impromptu meetings and conversations one has when everyone is housed on the same campus. This was brought home to me when I went on to attend the International Tapestry Symposium held in Melbourne at Ormond College, a residential College of Melbourne University. This symposium was a highly successful one with an excitement and cohesion lacking in Sydney.

The Sydney Conference only came alive for me when Jennifer Isaacs spoke to us about her work amongst the Aboriginals, and organised our chance to meet them when they were setting up their installation for the Sydney Bicentennial in the Pier Complex on the Waterfront. One felt immediately that here were a people with a philosophy deeply rooted in their land. Not the wretched primitive we are sometimes led to believe they are, but a people with a spirituality in some ways more sophisticated than our own and certainly in tune with survival on this planet of ours.

When I think of how the Mexican President entertained all the delegates at his Palace in the centre of Mexico City in 1976 it makes me realise how inadequately we in the Western world value our crafts. In Mexico we were treated as first class tourists. It took 22 buses to take all the delegates the two hour journey to the Palace from the Conference site. What a feast of rich and valuable experiences we were treated to! First a viewing of the President's own priceless craft collection in the cellar museum in the Palace, then a first class exhibition of exquisite dancing by dance troupes representative of various areas of Mexico. Finally after being given some tasty Mexican fare we were farewelled and each handed an original painting or artifact. All 1200 of us!

I realise it is unfair to compare Sydney in 1988 with Mexico in 1976 and nothing personal is intended, as those organising did the best they could with the facilities and money available. But I think the comparison serves to highlight the disparity between the value the Mexican put on craft and that which the Australian did.

Vivienne Mountfort
Life member, Craft Council of N.Z.
Fibre artist

The magazine

Congratulations on the new, improved magazine. I wish you every success.

Pamela Elliott
Director, Compendium Gallery
Auckland

I'd like to thank you for the first issue of *NZ Crafts* under your editorship. One most heartening sign was that my copy was received here a whole week before the copy deadline for the next issue. I can't remember last time that happened. I do think it is important for people to have a chance to respond.

Paul Annear
Auckland

It's a year since I gave away my involvement with the CCNZ executive and I have now more or less dealt with the withdrawal symptoms. I don't think though that I shall ever be free of the recurring thought that I should be involving myself in issues that I feel strongly about. It was this that first prompted me to stand for the executive and it returns every time a copy of *NZ Crafts* lands in our letter box. My family has long become used to my alternate cheers and curses as I work my way through the latest issue.

Sometimes a letter is published which deserves a response from somebody at the Council but because of lack of knowledge through changes of staff (or perhaps the perennial lack of time) there is none. I therefore take upon myself the task of thanking Ewanna Becky Greene for her positive and sensible suggestions about marketing the CCNZ and crafts in general. In fact *NZ Crafts* was available on all Air New Zealand international flights from about 1984 to 1987, at which point our desperate budget situation forced us to withdraw it because we could no longer afford to supply it for the something like half-cost price that was all Air NZ were prepared to pay for it. More than one marketing plan has been prepared and then shelved again because of cost constraints. In early 1986 I proposed a *NZ Crafts* Annual similar to the successful Craft Australia Yearbook as a valuable promotional tool but again lack of financial and human resources has so far prevented its implementation. The executive and staff have never lacked ideas; it's the means to achieve them that is always the problem. The value of letters by Ewanna Becky Greene and others urging such strategies is that they provide further incentive to fight for the funding, so I hope they keep writing.

Also in issue 25 I enjoyed enormously Jane Hackett's talk with Lani Morris (Welcome back Lani!). I felt elated for Jane because it's great to read about deserved success and in this case to feel just a little bit part of it. Jane's final comment cut me like a knife though. I suppose if the Crafts Council takes a lot of credit for the establishment of the Craft Design courses then it must also field the criticism for their shortcomings. But to blame the Council for the lack of a diploma course at Wanganui is just too much even if it is said through ignorance.

There is a big story to be told about the Crafts Council's campaign to establish these courses and I hope that the long proposed history of CCNZ is soon undertaken so that this weighty chapter can be written while the memories and the passions are still not faded. For the information of Jane Hackett and others, CCNZ policy regarding diploma courses was emphatically that they should be able to be run by any of the polytechs which were already running Craft Design courses and which could prove themselves able to offer the facilities and teaching resources appropriate for such an advanced course. Our concern had always been that the students should get the best opportunity possible and in this case, wherever possible. This was contrary to the wishes of Dr Ray Thorburn and others at the Education Department who consistently favoured a single diploma course, probably to be sited in Auckland. We argued further that the number of student places in diploma courses should not be tied to the amount of Government funding available, thus freeing committed polytechs to seek independent funding if that were the only limiting factor. Institutes such as Nelson Polytech had already indicated that they would run their own diploma courses even if they were denied Government funding. The Department later put an absolute veto on any such initiative.

The ultimate decision to establish four regionally sited diploma courses must therefore be seen as at least partial success for the CCNZ and its lobbying. It's no secret that the approval for the courses was recommended to the Department by a committee of three appointed by the Department's Craft Education Advisory Committee. This committee which inspected each of the applying polytechs was comprised of a representative from the Crafts Council, Kate Coolahan; one from the QE II Arts Council, Edith Ryan; and one from the Education Department, Ray Thorburn. It's not exaggerating to say that the Crafts Council executive was astonished to learn that Wanganui Community College was not among those approved. However the committee's findings were not disclosed to CCNZ and I myself remain as ignorant as Jane Hackett regarding its reasoning. When I think of the incredibly wearying work that was done by Carin Wilson, Campbell Hegan, Carole Shepheard et al on behalf of craft students and in the face of repeated, sometimes disgraceful politicking by Departmental officials, you must forgive me if I sound hurt, for indeed I am.

Colin Slade
Chairmaker
Banks Peninsula

The AGM

Having just come home from the AGM I wish to express my appreciation of the weekend's activities. It has left me with a feeling of optimism for the future of the Crafts Council in New Zealand. In fact I have come away feeling elated and inspired.

Under John Scott's masterly leadership many issues were discussed and clarified. It was a stroke of genius to have the representatives from the allied organisations present. They gave the proceedings a base of reality as one could almost feel the craftspeople they represented breathing down their necks and insisting on a truthful representation. This was not a disadvantage but an incentive for worthwhile decisions to be made.

Richard Ballantyne, in his keynote speech, urged us to be prepared to change in this highly competitive world of the eighties and the years leading up to the 21st century. He reminded us that no one owes us a living making the craft object of our choice. We have to get out there and create our market; be competitive, and ever watchful of the quality of our product and willing to change as the market changes.

It was fascinating hearing of the various activities of the different craft disciplines. From the 6000-strong weavers and spinners to the one-man iron smith it was a story of commitment and enthusiasm. The message came across clear and bold, united we stand divided we fall. The Crafts Council is now the voice of the craftspeople of N.Z. and it is to the Crafts Council that the money is allocated and from whom consultation is sought.

I felt confident that our interests are in good hands and that the Executive and the staff are mindful of our concerns. They haven't an easy task dealing with so many disparate groups who each think they deserve prime consideration.

Cassandra Fusco initiated an interesting exercise on Sunday morning when she got each group recording the history of their particular craft. After the spokesperson for each group had presented their findings we realised that craftspeople are articulate and are quite capable of recording their own history and should set about doing it before too many more years have passed. We are grateful to Cassandra, who is the Art and Craft History tutor at the Christchurch Polytechnic, for reminding us of the necessity for this work to be done and giving us such an enthusiastic introduction to the task.

I think we should all be grateful to the Christchurch Committee and the staff of the Craft Design Course at the Polytechnic for enabling the weekend to run so smoothly. Obviously they had put much planning and thought into the event to enable it to be so enjoyable. There you are, I am mentioning joy, and that says a lot, when you can use the word joy when describing an AGM!

Vivienne Mountfort

Attitudes in craft

Congratulations on a revitalized magazine. I would like, however, to respond to some recent articles with a concern for the underlying attitudes they point to.

I have read statements lately, in this magazine and other publications, by reviewers and craftspeople whose skills I respect but whose sageness I find doubtful. A distrust of craftworkers who do not overtly employ the fundamental traditions and early technologies of their craft, and a dislike of works produced out of a need for self-expression and uniqueness are attitudes too often encountered. They are not helpful and they are not new. I heard them very clearly in my early days of working with clay when I found the idea of digging the stuff, constructing my own Leach-type kick wheel, and building my own belching brick kiln just too colonial to even consider. I do not want or need to know kiln dynamics, in much the same way that my enjoyment of travel does not make me feel compelled to know about the internal combustion engine. Those who need to know these things and do know them are lucky and richer in many ways than others. However those of us who don't need to know these things are no less worthy.

Barry Brickell writes (ASP newsletter, October 1988): 'Claywork or any other kind of work which is wilful self-expression with an effect is a recipe for violence'. I find it truly distressing to read a statement as absurd as this from a man as thoughtful as that. Violence is more often the result of alienation and that comes from one person or group asserting their philosophy or politics over another. There is room within the craft spectrum for every imaginable approach and I think that those who seem to be so terribly threatened by modern approaches to craft should rest easy in the knowledge that in the end tastefulness will prevail — it just does.

There is a place for those who create the artistic follies and awkward oddities of their age. In retrospect these ornaments often serve to humanise and identify their times, and this is as valid as creating works resonant with tradition, which give continuity to all epochs and eras. So, in a hundred years the little spiky, colourful pots we all know won't last are going to have a significance that is specific to the 1980s. The pots echoing the timeless, divine beauty of nature will be there too. They are able to co-exist and in fact in some ways need each other to define each other.

Other statements I have found very worrying were made by Jens Hansen by way of Peter Gibbs (*NZ Crafts*, Spring 1988). There were in fact several provocative remarks in the final paragraph of the profile on the jeweller — all worrying and characterised by phrases such as 'distasteful', 'newness', 'Hollywood', 'new tricks', 'suspect'. People who continually create new work are not suspect, they are quite simply people who are continually creating new work. There really is no need for judgement. Judge the work certainly if you need to but the exploratory nature of some people's approach to craft does not need judgement — it is just another path and one that can enrich the pool of possibilities just as much as tradition and classicism. I think in fact there are many good reasons for continually creating new work but that's another argument.

What worries me most about attitudes such as those expressed by individuals whose authority in their fields is without question, and whose spheres of influence are possibly immense, is that they are not messages of enlightenment, they are just words of discouragement. Young enthusiasm is not fed by such expressions, it never was.

Christine Thacker
Auckland

In brief

Apologies first, promised and otherwise. To Rena Jarosewitsch for the misspelling of her name in issue 24 page 15. In July this year, Rena attended a master class by the great Johannes Schreiter at the Pilchuck Glass School in the United States. Rena's 1988 commissions have included a memorial stained glass window, St Mary's Church, Irwell, Canterbury; stained glass windows at the new Housing Corporation building in Taranaki Street, Wellington. Further apologies are owing to Michael Chittenden, who took all the photographs of Suzy Pennington's tapestries; to Patti Meads who was insupportably omitted from the *Notes on contributors* for her helpful piece on FAENZA; and to Helen Mitchell who photographed Jane Hackett's award-winning garment shown on page 12. If there is to be any blame attached to the fact that I have not tendered my resignation from this here editorial post for the above list of crimes I beg readers to lay it at the feet of the Honourable Minister for Finance — I need the money!¶The Wellington Shakespeare Society still needs more assistance for its GLOBE THEATRE PROJECT. The project is providing the stage hangings at the rear of the reconstructed Globe Theatre in London. Raymond Boyce's designs for these curtains have been accepted by the Globe Academic Committee and the curtains themselves will be made by New Zealand craftspeople selected and organised by the Embroiderers Guild. Two main things are needed right now. The first is donations of funds; the second is the use of a space in Wellington for between 12 and 18 months where the main work will be done. Enquiries about both matters should be directed to Project Manager Dawn Sanders phone (04) 768-369, or write to 12 Cargill Street, Karori, Wellington 5.¶Craftspeople are reminded that the old (in relative terms of course) Crafts Loans Scheme has been replaced by the CRAFT VENTURE CAPITAL SCHEME. The objective of the scheme is to 'assist craftspeople who are not able, because of the nature of their work and the market for crafts to borrow . . . at current interest rates. . .', for the purpose of creating an appropriate working and/or training environment. Write to: QE II Arts Council, Box 3806, Wellington for further information.¶In this column in the last issue I reported that Colin Underwood of Whangarei received a merit award in the 1988 Norsewear Art Awards. Well, he didn't. But COLIN UNDERDOWN did, and apologies are here extended to Colin for the error.¶Last month saw the Crafts Council Gallery's SHOWCASE V opened by Lesleigh Salinger, Director of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts. This annual show features works in all craft media, and, with all works being for sale, prices being very reasonable, and the overall standard being very high, the Gallery runs the grave risk of being economically viable.¶For those who want New Zealand-made acid-free board to protect their works, or acid-free made up boxes to enclose them, it is not well enough known that such things can be had from Dykeshire NZ Ltd, P O Box 79, Paraparaumu (058) 87-038.¶In Christchurch a new craft gallery has opened: CAVE ROCK GALLERY, sited next to the Ginko Print Workshop and Gallery at the Arts Centre. Showings to date and until the end of the year are: Royce McGlashan, Kobi Bosshard and Fluxus, Lloyd Park (photographer), David Brokenshire, the Canterbury Guild of Lacemakers, and Campbell Hegan. Looks good.¶THE NEW ZEALAND CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY is quickly establishing its programme — black & white prints and colour transparency assemblages by 7 contemporary French photographers — 1950s photos from *China of the Chinese* by the late Brian Brake, the Centre's first chairperson — photos and seminar by West German Jenner Zimmermann — a PhotoForum seminar which brought together leading Australasian photographers, educators, curators and their critics — and next up until February 10 is *Creation* by the late Ernst Haas, a portfolio that was 11 years in the making. Haas had a few things to say about the nature of nature and the art of art and my favourite is: 'Nothing is complete, and if it was it wouldn't interest me'. Anyway, get on the Centre's mailing list: The New Zealand Centre for Photography, 27 Hanson Street, Newtown, Wellington, P O Box 3919, (04) 895-101.¶THE L'ETACQ COLLEGE OF FINE WOODWORK TECHNIQUES AND DESIGN will again be offering a range of courses in furniture making and carving in 1989. This year, apart from college principal Remi Couriard, class tutors have included Colin Slade for chair making, Darrin Bird on industrial design, Jock Fryer on the history of furniture and Jackie Margaret on furniture design and techniques. The College runs courses for 4 diplomas, all registered with the Department of Education, in fine furniture, advanced fine furniture, commercial furniture and carving. Remi Couriard served his apprenticeship in Jersey, Channel Islands and later graduated from City and Guilds of London. He came to New Zealand in 1971, and set up the L'Etacq College and Studio after a QE II Arts Council assisted study tour of England, France and the United States in 1985. Enquiries for next year's courses should be sent to L'Etacq College, 20 Buchan Street, Sydenham, Christchurch, P O Box 7192, (03) 667-946.¶The Wellington City Council's innovative ARTS BONUS SCHEME was initiated in 1983, implemented in 1985 and is the only scheme of its kind in New Zealand. The scheme allows property developers an increase of 5% in floor space for every 1% of total building expenditure used for the commissioning of public artworks. Major commissions to date include the impressive neon work Whipping the Wind 1988 by Paul Hartigan on the Landcorp building in Lambton Quay; Phillip Trusttum's Northern Lights in glass that adorns the Unisys Building on The Terrace, and Dennis O'Connor's Mote Park, carved out of Oamaru stone, which is due to be installed in the entrance to the Sun Alliance building on The Terrace. In its advisory role for the scheme the Wellington City Art Gallery houses a file for Artists for Public Art Commissions. This file is not only used as a reference for the scheme but is available to any party wishing to commission public art work. Should you wish to be included in the file please send a resume with images to: The Curator, Wellington City Art Gallery, P O Box 1992, Wellington.¶The Crafts Council ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and a weekend of workshops/discussion groups was held in Christchurch on 29 and 30 October. Major topics to emerge from the meetings were: (1) the future of the Crafts Council in relation to allied organisations — here the question of affiliation of individual craft guilds and societies was raised, and the allied organisations have asked the Crafts Council to report on the various ways in which affiliation might work; (2) the new Index selection process in which allied organisation involvement, consumer choice, craftspeople's accepted standards, and the inclusion of all crafts were generally well received; and (3) a workshop on craft histories run by Cassandra Fusco demonstrated the urgency of saving our history. It was strongly recommended to the Crafts Council that they lobby the relevant authorities for a national crafts museum.¶And finally, news of a special exhibition, *People of the Cedar*, now running at the NATIONAL MUSEUM until December 4. The exhibition is presented by the Department of External Affairs of Canada, and will be toured by NZAGDC to Southland, Canterbury, Rotorua, Hastings, Auckland and Waikato. The featured work is made by Indians of the northwest coast of America, the People of the Cedar. The cedar is a versatile wood it seems. It is durable, soft enough to carve, easily split into long even planks and its fibrous bark can be woven. Large houses and canoes, boxes, cooking vessels, bowls, paintings, masks, totems, clothing, mats, baskets and rugs have all been made from the cedar.

Notes on contributors

MURRAY CLAYTON, who graduated in architecture at University of Auckland, has been a full-time, primarily domestic, potter for about 9 years. He is currently a partner in The Potters Shop, Wellington.

LOUISE GUERIN is a freelance writer, photographer and artist. She has worked for the *Listener*, and has a particular interest in writing about the personal motivations of craftspeople whose work she admires.

WENDY LAURENSON is a freelance writer in Kerikeri, with a special interest in the New Zealand craft scene. She has written several articles for *NZ Crafts*.

REX LINGWOOD is a Canadian leather artist who has now visited this country twice, giving lectures, workshops, and a master class in leatherworking. He has published in several magazines on his subject, and his book *Leather in Three Dimensions* (Van Nostrand Rheinold, Toronto 1980) is the standard work in the field.

LANI MORRIS has a Diploma in Journalism from the University of Canterbury. She was for two years a producer of *Insight* radio documentaries, and has written for *NZ Crafts* and the *Listener*. She is a textile artist and a teacher of life/work skills in Wellington.

JUSTINE OLSEN is the curator for applied arts at the Auckland Institute and Museum, and this is her first appearance in *NZ Crafts*.

HELEN SCHAMROTH is a textile and mixed-media artist living in Auckland. She currently writes a regular column in the *New Zealand Herald*, and has previously published in *NZ Crafts*.

JOHN SCOTT is a major figure in both the craft and craft education fields generally. President of the New Zealand Crafts Council and director of Wanganui Regional Community College, he has written many times for this magazine.

COLIN SLADE is a chair and furniture maker living at Akaroa. He is a past-president of the Crafts Council of New Zealand and has written for *NZ Crafts* several times.

CARIN WILSON is a furniture and chair maker living in Auckland. He is a past-president of the Crafts Council of New Zealand and has written for *NZ Crafts* several times.

EDITORIAL

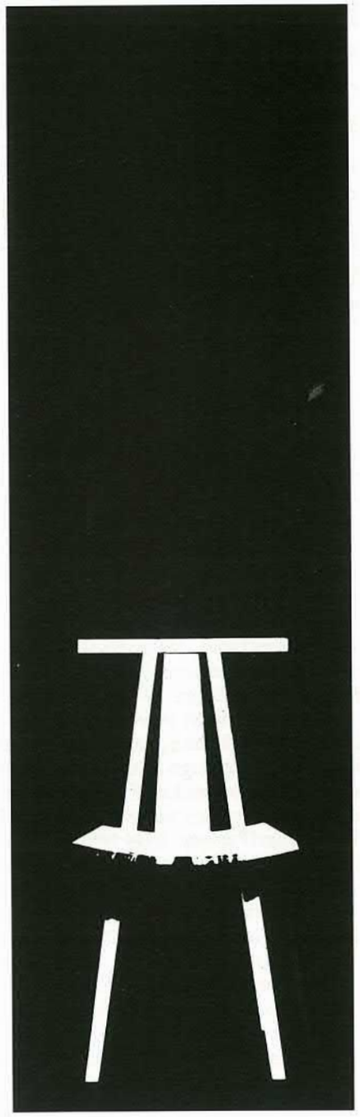
Craft in New Zealand is clearly of age. International judges and selectors for our awards, competitions and exhibitions have been for some time telling us that our work can be assessed on equal terms with the craft of their own countries. There has been a steady stream of overseas craftspeople coming to this country for many years now — whether they have been invited, are here on scholarships, are simply travelling, or have emigrated. Similarly, New Zealanders have visited, emigrated, studied, travelled and exhibited overseas. Some of our current locals were not born here. Some overseas practitioners were born here. Most craft literature available, in bookshops and libraries, is written by, about, and published by overseas people, companies and institutions; but more and more of those publications include work by New Zealanders. And the flow of national exhibitions of New Zealand art and craft going to other countries is definitely on the increase. In other words, New Zealand craft is part of the normal network of the international exchange of ideas and products. To confuse this with the mere importation of an 'international style' at the expense of indigenous activity, is a mistake.

It is entirely possible to view overseas and local work with equal respect and interest. The question of what work we may have a special affection for is a separate issue. In a pluralistic world, it is not only the number of things and ideas that multiply, but also the number of possible comparisons and connections between them. In our critical writings, whether on art, craft or literature, a growing number of such contrasts have made themselves felt: overseas/indigenous; male/female; Maori/Pakeha; European/Pacific; British/American; art/craft; amateur/professional; functional/non-functional; complex/simple; national/regional; gallery/marketplace; politicised/non-politicised; utilitarian/non-utilitarian, and the list goes on. It is hard to find writing that doesn't come down heavily in favour of one side of these axes at the deliberate expense of the other, or in favour of one set of axes at the expense of others. For instance, a writer may decide that the only issue in a particular work is whether the art/craft matter has been properly handled, when another reading may show that both Maori/Pakeha and national/regional matters might also be involved. This is not a problem for writers only — readers and craftworkers also have responded in this way to particular works, or to writing about those works.

The task and challenge for craft writing now is to shake free of this tendency to erect monopolies of value, and instead to articulate the ways in which these sorts of equations interact within whatever work comes to its notice — whatever its origins, and with due respect to those origins. As the not-quite-brand-new editor of *NZ Crafts*, I have to say that the magazine has more roles to perform than the work of criticism alone. There are educational, legal, financial, marketing, collecting, conservation, curating, exhibiting, funding, sponsoring and other matters to attend to, all of which have their basis in Crafts Council policy and membership concern. These are crucial matters, affecting all craftspeople, whatever their special activity or interests may be. Along with that, what is also crucial is *how* we write about what craftspeople do. It is indeed how we do that, rather than if we do it, that will decide whether we have been of any use. Watch these pages.

Alan Loney

Alan Loney, editor



THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE **SHOW** DOWN

JUSTINE OLSEN

New Zealand Contemporary Furniture exhibition organised by Auckland Museum and supported by QEII Arts Council and NZ Home and Building magazine. Auckland Museum, 3-18 September 1988. Selector: George R. Ingham, senior lecturer and Head of the Wood Workshop at the Canberra School of Art, Australia.

The selection process was designed to create an exhibition which illustrated for the first time the range and high quality of New Zealand contemporary furniture. As a newly established exhibition, it was intended to attract as many diverse entries as possible. This was achieved. There were 75 exhibition entries from designers and makers whose works ranged from the handmade piece to the industrial prototype.

George Ingham provided the Museum with a selection based on a sound knowledge of design and its functional application to furniture. The works, he said, could be seen in an international exhibition. Twenty four works were selected, approximately a third of the entries. The selection resulted in the rejection of some works by leaders in the field. George Ingham applied his criteria to all works with no knowledge of the artists involved.

The reaction to the selection, that of an independent exhibition, was not surprising. During the selection George had mentioned the need for the public to view both the selected and unselected works. However, the manner in which the Salon des Refusés was put together was questionable. New works were added, and some rejected pieces showed evidence of alteration. The visiting public were not informed of these facts: a misdemeanour if the organisers were serious about their original intention. The reason given for the exhibition was stated quite firmly by the leading exhibitors — the need for exposure of the unselected work.

A strong factor in Auckland Museum's involvement was that we saw the exhibition as a learning exercise for the exhibitors, given that the furniture design field is still relatively young in New Zealand. For this reason we made George Ingham available to the entrants to discuss and offer constructive criticism of works both selected and rejected. This was met at times with strong defensive arguments, otherwise appreciation. It is worth noting that some of those leaders in the field whose works were rejected did not come forward. A symposium at Carrington Polytechnic the day after the official opening of the exhibition was held for entrants to meet informally and hear George Ingham talk about his own work and that carried out by students of the Canberra School of Art. A tool tuning demonstration by George ended a very enlightening day for the exhibitors.

Editor's note

The Salon des Refusés was set up on instruction from Emperor Napoleon III for works rejected for the Paris Salon exhibitions, and the first opened to the public on May 15, 1863. According to Degas' biographer Roy McMullen, the Salon des Refusés 'quickly became an attraction for crowds of merry philistines, a target for wittily abusive critics, a theme for a comic opera at the Theatre des Varietes, and, in spite of the mockery, an excellent thing for the anti-academic cause'. (*Degas: His Life, Times, and Work*, by Roy McMullen, pub. Houghton Mifflin 1984, p108.)

COLIN SLADE

If it's craft it's art

Lecture presented to The Auckland Institute & Museum in association with the New Zealand Contemporary Furniture Exhibition Monday September 5th 1988

Why is furniture no longer considered a precious family possession? It's an important question because the answers to it tell us a lot about our society and how it has developed over the centuries.

There are two fundamental threads to the answer and I'll introduce the first with a small personal memory. On a grey December afternoon back in 1965, I stood in the office-cum-studio of Frank Hudson, master carver and furniture factory boss of High Wycombe, England. The desk in its centre was unusable, covered to some depth as it was by books on furniture, architectural design etc., rolled up drawings squashed as flat as the books, and the whole shambles covered with a generous shower of wood chips.

At one side of the room stood a large bench which too was covered with similar strata of material, and in its centre was the source of the wood chips. It was an architectural carving that Frank had been working on before my father and I had entered. I don't remember the detail, but I do remember an abundance of flora carved in the mixture of robustness and voluptuousness that was Frank's own style, and that the wood was lime. I was there to become indentured as an apprentice at Frank's firm and the man himself was giving me the first of countless homilies I was to hear from him over the next five years. 'Furniture,' Frank was saying, with the tremendous conviction that he customarily employed in such speeches, 'is one of the Fine Arts and don't you forget it!' Well, with Frank's work and his studio being immersed in the refined world of 18th Century furniture design, it was hard to disagree.

In the so called Golden Age of English furniture, when the work of people such as Adam, Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton was sought after by the aristocracy and the rich and powerful merchants, you could have been forgiven for believing that furniture and the other decorative arts did indeed rank alongside painting and sculpture. This was however not the case and hadn't been since the Renaissance, the new age of art and the beginning of modern science, which saw instead the elevation of painting and sculpture away from the other artistic disciplines. Thus began what we now call the Fine Arts. It has to be understood that this movement was born out of the rise of a new merchant class which was to become a powerful patron of the arts, ending the monopoly control over art previously held by the church. It was to provide a new freedom and a much better income for favoured painters and sculptors. Of great significance is the fact that this distinction between the Fine Arts and the rest is purely a Western idea which has no basis in other civilisations.

This hierarchical view of art has endured for 400 odd years and it prevails throughout the Western world including here in New Zealand. It's surprising that this is the case given our supposed egalitarian society, but perhaps it tells us more about ourselves and our art than we realise. Although in old languages the words 'craft' and 'art' were interchangeable (they both meant skill in the making), we have now come to apply the term craft to distinguish those art objects which owe their existence to the demands of function as much as they provide a vehicle for artistic expression. In primitive societies this meant almost any object that was made to satisfy human need. All over the world even the most mundane crafts allowed scope for individual, tribal or regional expression which, when fused with the varying and ever-present demands of function, resulted in an endlessly rich variety of solutions to universal practical problems. But it is precisely the crafts' concern with function which is what makes the fine arts fraternity look down on them. This snobbery wouldn't matter so much if that's all it were and if it were confined within the fine arts. Unfortunately it is not.

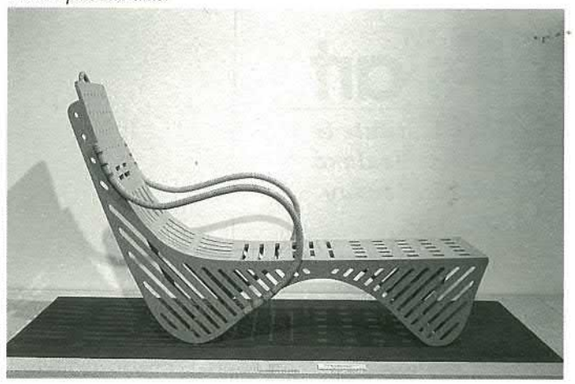
Because this hierarchy, like most, has a lot to do with power and money, it's important for the maintenance of the status quo that everyone involved, artist, patron, dealer and critic alike, is kept assured of the superiority (and therefore greater investment value) of painting and sculpture over the other arts disciplines. Consciously or unconsciously (hopefully the latter), all are engaged in this process.

The results are a relative lack of craft exhibitions in art galleries, a lack of interest on the part of art critics when they do occur, and regular sniping intentionally or not by critics and other commentators when they do get a mention. For example: a couple of weeks ago, Roger Price introduced a Kaleidoscope TV programme about an exhibition of screens. He began by describing a screen in The Auckland Institute and Museum's collection in words to this effect: 'The wonderful decoration on this piece lifts it from being mere furniture into the realm of art'. In other words, he seemed to be saying that if it were not *decorated* it would not be worthy of consideration as art. This is not intended as a criticism of Roger Price, who is very supportive of the crafts in fact. His comment was entirely innocent, but I mention it as an example of how ingrained in all of us this perception of everything being inferior to painting has become.

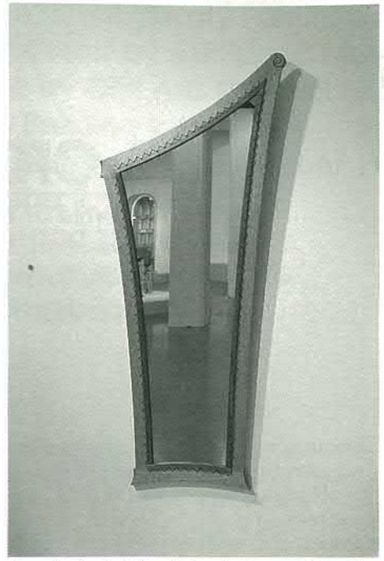
In the same week's issue of the *Listener* Garth Cartwright made a more considered attack on the craft of furniture. In an otherwise plausible interview with a visiting Italian designer, Marco Vanini, Cartwright makes passing refer-

Diana Firth, designer. Made by Brian Heighton. Chaise Longue. Pressed pine and cane.

All photographs in this article are reproduced by courtesy of the Auckland Institute and Museum.



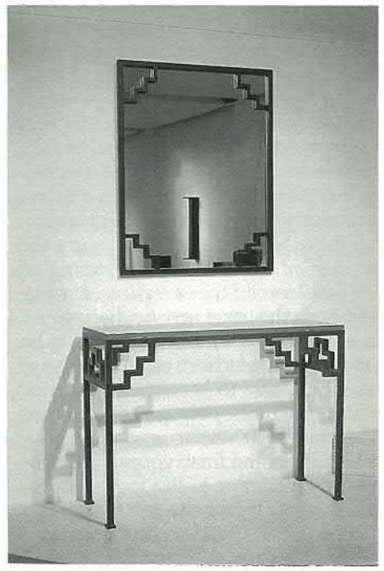
Kevin Carrvcan. Chair. Steel and leather.



Dave Putland. Mirror 'Canoe'. Tawa and Kawaka.

Roman Novak. Lounge 'Stereo Lounge'. Steel, nylon, cotton.

Peter Sullivan. Console table and mirror. Steel and glass.



Roland Seibertz/Akzenta Design. Lecture hall furniture for University of Auckland. Aluminium castings, NZ Matai, and nylatron.

Jürgen Thiele. Display Cabinet, 'Homage to NZ'. Corrugated iron, NZ pine, glass.

ence to the *Artiture* Exhibition held recently in Auckland. 'Some of the work,' he says almost patronisingly, 'was of beautiful and imaginative design. But I'm unsure about the elevation of craft to an art platform.' He goes on to deliver the classic and well used put-down for craft artists: 'Those involved should remember the old Bauhaus maxim that it is harder to design a first rate teapot than it is to paint a second rate picture'. What was originally intended as constructive advice in the Bauhaus is here used to pass on a much more negative message. He seems to be saying that furniture, no matter how well designed and executed, has no place in an art gallery.

The demands of designing *and making* a first rate teapot or armchair are little different from those involved in designing *and making* a first rate picture. Success or otherwise in the language of forms can be measured in similar terms, so why are critics unable to cope with the idea?

Of course this artificial barrier which is maintained between painting and sculpture on the one hand and the rest of the crafts on the other has been in place for a very long time and it is not easily going to be destroyed. Its destruction is the overriding mission of Crafts Councils in the Western World — including the Crafts Council of New Zealand of which, until recently, I had the privilege of being President. The rate of success in this mission is difficult to determine.

It is true that in recent years a few craft artists in New Zealand have more or less attained fine arts respectability. But equally it must be said that their work has shifted a long way from the concerns of function which formed its basis, and the conclusions are inescapable.

The situation can be summed up by quoting Helen Giambruni, editor of *Crafts International*, who in her review of the opening exhibition at the new American Crafts Museum two years ago had this to say: 'For some thirty years now the crafts world has been working away at lowering this wall between the crafts and the fine arts, brick by resistant brick. The point of all this effort was not to permit a lucky few to leap over to the other side leaving the wall still intact behind them, but to level an arbitrary and logically indefensible barrier and open the field to all work that has something to say and says it in the language of forms, from personal conviction and a profound involvement with the materials of making.' She went on to state that 'the issue of function is irrelevant to the question of whether a work is or is not art.'

But still the view prevails. So how does it affect furniture? Well, probably worse than most crafts. Because furniture more than most is forced to remain largely true to its practical function. For while few houses have trouble accommodating a small collection of sculptural ceramics, equally few would have space for a collection of furniture whose purpose was not utilitarian. I'm not against the idea of furniture as pure sculpture, but I would not want to see the majority of crafted furniture forced to go that way in order to survive as an art form.

The discrimination against craft and particularly furniture has obviously had a greater effect in New Zealand because of its isolation, among other reasons. Internationally this pressure has tended to force those people who have been interested in furniture to experiment with more outrageous forms which make exciting statements but which concede little to function. Rietveld's zig-zag chair and his red-blue chair are typical examples. It's my belief that the challenge of combining personal statement with practical function is only now being got to grips with. But the existence of overseas arts schools that teach furniture, is a tendency not yet reflected in New Zealand.

The newly established Craft Design courses at New Zealand polytechnics which the Crafts Council worked long and hard for, have still some way to go in this respect, preoccupied as they are with introducing students to a variety of media rather than to specific craft disciplines. I believe that a course dealing with furniture as a discipline (much as George Ingham runs at Canberra School of Art) would be more productive.

If one couples the decline in the growth of craft furniture internationally over the last couple of centuries with the fact that New Zealand had no tradition of furniture design or construction before the arrival of the Europeans, it's not hard to see why until ten or fifteen years ago there was almost no art furniture movement in this country. There was however a thriving furniture industry from quite early on in that settlement, so how did the craft fare in that quarter? Again the relevant history begins in Europe.

The industrialisation of furniture-making has been going on for longer than we might think. It's not generally realised that businesses such as Chippendales' employed hundreds of cabinetmakers, even in those times. The industrial revolution and the vast increase in affluence that came as the colonisation by European powers continued, contributed both to the growth of the furniture industry in Europe, and to an accompanying decline in standards of workmanship, not to mention design. The vision of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement was a protest against this trend; but while both this movement and the later Bauhaus movement had a marked effect on the visual language of furniture design, they nevertheless failed to come to grips with the problem that furniture was

becoming what we now term a consumer product.

A consumer product is something which is used up and replaced rather than something that endures and is treasured. Consumerism has been developed particularly in recent times under the guise of providing low cost and ostensibly well-designed products for all; especially for low-income families, its champions would claim. The fact is that consumerism is the tool of capitalism more than it is a boon to the consumer.

I don't intend to start a debate on the pros and cons of capitalism (and there are plenty of both). I am not about to condemn the free entrepreneurs (I am one myself!), nor do I criticise the profit-making motive. Indeed as the government persists in telling us at present, you must make a profit in order to provide the service. However when the service or product becomes subservient to the object of profit, then the product's quality must suffer.

When the industrialists realised, as they did long ago, that reducing the quality and therefore durability of the product actually resulted in more sales than less, then the growth of consumerism was assured. And you don't need a degree in business studies to know that this is where the real money is made. Just as I won't debate capitalism I'm not going to enter into the rights and wrongs of consumerism. There are many industries where the philosophy is entirely appropriate. Indeed it's always amused me that New Zealand's greatest individual fortune has been made out of the manufacture of toilet tissue, and you can't get more consumerist than that! However, when the philosophy involved in the manufacture and marketing of toilet paper is applied to what was once the noble craft of furniture making then I tend to come out fighting.

Consumerism affects the New Zealand furniture industry in two ways, both of which have to do with the notion of 'planned obsolescence': fashion and durability. I don't want to hear another manufacturer say, 'But there's no point in making furniture to last more than a limited time because the market doesn't want it. After ten or fifteen years the consumer is ready for a change. We are only responding to market forces.' There's a word that I would like to use for this attitude but I'll call it hypocrisy for now!

The science of marketing, which works by creating (identifying) a need and then satisfying it, has much to answer for in this hypocrisy. To be fair to it, it is not an exact science. Marketing research is concerned with averages not individuals, with mass markets or readily identifiable specialised ones. Its results invariably claim an error factor of 3% or so which sounds insignificant. But when you stand for three days on an exhibition display stand as I have, and watch something like 3% of the population of Christchurch going through our annual Alternative Furniture Show, those 8000 people don't look at all insignificant. It would I suggest be useful for the market researchers to consult the thousands of visitors to this exhibition on their opinions about furniture.

In tandem with the inexact science of marketing goes the new 'art' of Industrial Design. Industrial designers are sensitive people trained in the language of art and design who are employed in the service of industry, as the name implies. But too often they use their design language to clothe an inferior product with a veneer which implies substance and which shouts desirability. A criticism often levelled at the New Zealand furniture industry is that very few qualified designers are employed in it. But even if there were more designers employed, I frankly doubt that the product would change that much. For as long as the economics of profit-led consumer marketing prevail, then quality will always be implied rather than actually present, and appearance will be novel or slick rather than of enduring aesthetic value. It is left only to the advertising agencies to complete the deception by the use of clever graphics (they also employ artists) and the misuse of words and phrases such as 'craftsmanship', 'design', 'timeless', 'antiques of the future', 'heirlooms', 'the warmth of natural wood' — the list goes on and on and the abuse will no doubt continue until the language is wrung dry. I like words to mean what they say. I also believe that furniture should *be* what it seems.

Materials are important. The significance of wood as a material is very relevant to the question of why furniture is no longer a treasured possession. It's not just that it is the traditional material, that it is easily obtained and easily worked. It's not only that it ages gracefully. But when people are talking about the warmth of wood they are not talking only about its colour and texture. When the clients in Blenheim to whom I recently delivered a table and chairs were saying nice things about it, I could tell by experience that they weren't just being polite or expressing ordinary pleasure over a new purchase. I believe they were responding to a spiritual and aesthetic impulse which had to do with the fact that the material came from a tree growing on this land, which was planted by a previous generation and that it grew alongside later generations, and that it tells its own life story. I believe that there are some absolute truths about our spiritual dependence on and relationship to this planet and the things growing on it, and that the combination in a sensitive work of craft, of natural material skilfully worked by human hand, provides the medium for these truths to make their intangible existence felt. Why else are we irresistibly drawn to touch and to stroke such objects?

Whatever the material however, honesty and sensitivity in its use are important and particularly, the effects of age and wear on it have to be considered. This aspect of durability (graceful ageing if you like) is of little concern to the consumer driven industrialists. They are only concerned with the product's appearance while it is young. And this is one of the central reasons why furniture is no longer treasured even if it were well enough made.

To sum up then, on the one hand is the art world which refuses to admit the craft of furniture as a discipline worthy of respect, and on the other hand is the industry with too few examples of fine art furniture to be inspired by, and a strong consumer profit motive to deter it from being so inspired. It's a wonder that there is any furniture of individual merit being produced in this country, and the fact that there is is a credit to the perseverance and dedication of the small band of people in that movement.

So what is to be done to help that movement to grow in performance and in influence? First and foremost the people that held sway during the Renaissance are the same people who hold the cards now — the successful merchants, the toilet paper magnates, the property developers and so on. The question has to be asked: 'Why, if there are so many people who can afford finely made furniture in New Zealand, do so few of them actually buy it?' The answer to that has a lot to do with marketing but is also very relevant to the Fine Arts clique. It's all very well to mount exhibitions of international standard such as this, but the collectors still have to be convinced as to the artistic merit and the investment potential of this sort of work. That requires knowledgeable critics, dealers and buyers. Clearly, there's a lot of work to be done yet.

CARIN WILSON

But is it craft?

Safe. Do you know safe? Beware. It's not usually recognised as part of the regular craft lingo, but I'm starting a campaign to have it included. It's a seemingly innocuous force that hangs in the air around places where artist/craftspeople work, meet and play. It waits patiently for the chance to swoop and discredit errant tendencies towards liberal expressionism in the hallowed halls of the craft ethic. Vigilant it is too — ready to go on the attack against any hint of a drift toward stray leftish inclinations in the genre.

If you think this is fanciful, you're right. But I'm right too. Take a moment at the next conference or workshop you visit to watch the conversations and observe how entrenched people become in their positions on what is and isn't current in the ratings.

Safe is dangerous, because it has plenty of ammunition to work with: economic reality, tradition and general acceptance — all perfectly credible influences. It is insidious too because it pretends not to exist, coming from the most unexpected sources and cleverly disguising itself with a screen of elegant postures and intellectual footwork that's not always easy to interpret. Until you've given it up, that is. Then — whew, as with all new discoveries, whole new visions open up.

Safe is the enemy of creativity and every artist knows it, but it's damn persistent. The evidence is, it clings strongest to those disciplines where a well-entrenched tradition and highly developed skills-base is challenged by artists who are only loosely hooked to working within the craft idiom.

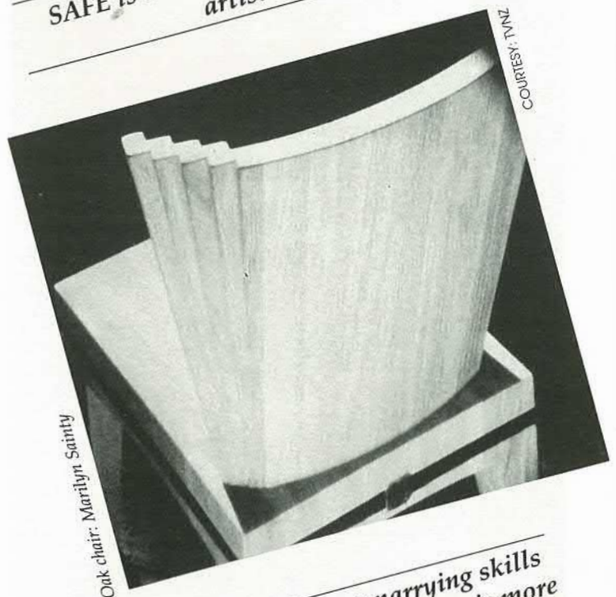
Safe has some interesting mutations in the craft dialect. There's *getting safe*, which just might be part of the reason that the craft index has appeal. Real secure ground, that. Once you're in there it's superannuation city unless the selection committee members are prepared to challenge the findings of their peers, and there's not much chance of that.

Playing safe is what's happening when you see some artists growing stale and stretching out the same old success formula to the nth degree while blindfolded and handcuffed. Who's going to be brave enough to put an end to that play when the work just keeps on selling and you're eating square meals every day?

Doing safe is the real danger. That's where some globally influential stylistic steamroller like 'international style' comes along and totals budding pockets of local expression. In this global village it's almost as if one day it's given form and a name, and within a week it's the next big thing showing up on drawing blocks all over the world. Soon its clones are being realised in an energy explosion that Fibonacci would take delight in. It's straight out cultural mimicry, and the terror of this beast is that the broadcast media of this age whip it along with great gusto.

But in the crafts *safe* is packaged in a rather more subtle manner. It comes dressed up as part of the furniture (to coin

SAFE is the enemy of creativity and every artist knows it.



COURTESY: TVNZ

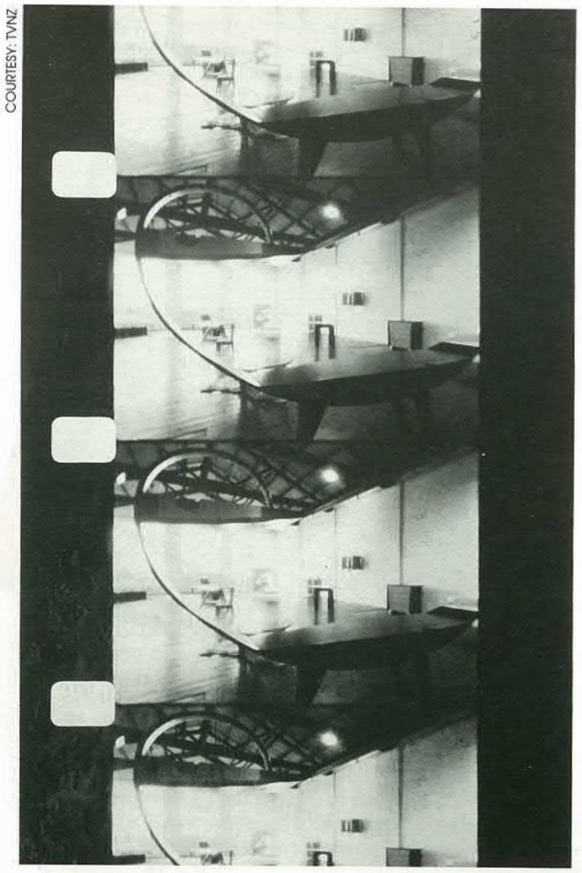
Oak chair: Marilyn Sainty

It's time to acknowledge that marrying skills to a confident and articulate creativity is more important than simply having the skills.

COURTESY: TVNZ

Table: Remi Couriard

Forget the method and tie it together with string if that works for you. Make it, show it. Loosen up, improvise.



COURTESY: TVNZ

Desk: Dave Bryant

What are exhibitions for? Does the spectre of rejection encourage us to play safe and enter work that is sure to be accepted? A little simple homework will always reveal something about the selector and give you a better than even chance if you're really desperate to be included.

a phrase), manifesting itself as earnest philosophical persuasion, couched in the sincerest of expressions about good craftsmanship and the noble traditions of handwork. It's a two edged sword. On the one hand it gives direction and inspiration, encouraging high standards and well founded ideals. On the other, it can lead to a certain uniformity of response and a near-religious observance of well-rehearsed gestures that reduce original expression to a dreary procession of set moves. The results are no more than interpretive copies that do no credit to their creators and are hardly complimentary of their origins.

This is method asserting dominance over creativity, and if you need evidence of the way it creeps steadily into the cultural fabric it can be seen in abundance in the practices of the crafts in Asia. There the method IS craft; and generations of instruction with emphasis on how-to-do-it have led to a steady dilution of the input of thought in the process. The odd free spirit who has been able to hold on to the creative inspiration and marry it to the traditional metier is the star of the Asian craft hierarchy.

Though the circumstances are different, in New Zealand it's in this territory that a whole cupboard full of ghosts is waiting to break loose. We work at keeping them subdued with praiseworthy reassurances about craft uniting the head, hand and heart. We busy ourselves with being constructive and setting up structures to cope rather than confronting the issues. We have allowed ourselves to be sidetracked. Now it's time to acknowledge that marrying skills to a confident and articulate creativity is more important than simply having the skills.

Within our tenuous framework we have only a fragile grasp of what it is that realises good work and we're inclined to rely on our emotional response a great deal more than we should. The attempts at resolving the art/craft debate stem more from a need for reassurance than from a well founded confidence in the work. There's too much looking for answers still going on, and this near compulsive need we have for external approbation has to be laid to rest.

I'd argue that the condition calls for a full-on, no-limits, go-get-em overdose of indulgent creativity. Forget the method and tie it together with string if that works for you. Let's get some balance back into a process that is clearly out of sync at present. Make it, show it. Loosen up, improvise.

B-B-B-B-but what about our standards?

How about: Individual integrity is the perfect monitor of quality. Or: Selection is for artists who don't know enough about what they're doing?

What I'm talking about here is the difference between South Island garage music and Frankie Goes to Hollywood taking fourteen months to make a single. If this means nothing to you don't worry but go look it up sometime. Which one gets your vote for creativity?

Safe is the closest I can get in one word to summing up the 'New Zealand Contemporary Furniture Exhibition' at Auckland Museum recently. A milestone for furnituremakers, it was set up to give 'designers and furnituremakers in all disciplines, working in all media' a chance to exhibit together in a national show, at an institution whose very involvement would lend much-valued credibility. Determination, enthusiasm and a certain amount of unbridled optimism are essential to get a show like this together. The promise was that it would 'be the premier showcase for new furniture designed and made in New Zealand'. It may not have delivered on that promise and the debate about that will dribble on for yonks.

Safe showed itself in the exhibition in several different guises. It was consistent, skilful, and even self congratulatory, and firmly reinforced the territorial right staked by woodworkers in the domain of furniture. There was some very fine work presented in a subtle, and monochromatic display where agility of craftsmanship dominated. An ill-informed visitor to the exhibition could be forgiven for assuming that this is what the furniture of today is about.

Is it? Is the compulsion to skill so insistent that it has displaced creativity? Four chairs in the exhibition have the names of different makers on them, yet they might easily have come off the same drawing board. Comfortable and well-made, they are indeed functional pieces of furniture. But they are unlikely to have challenged the perceptions of visitors or sent them away to reconsider the way furniture serves them in their lives. Several other exhibits reflected the same predilection for highlighting dexterity with the material, focussing on construction and finish before intellectual content.

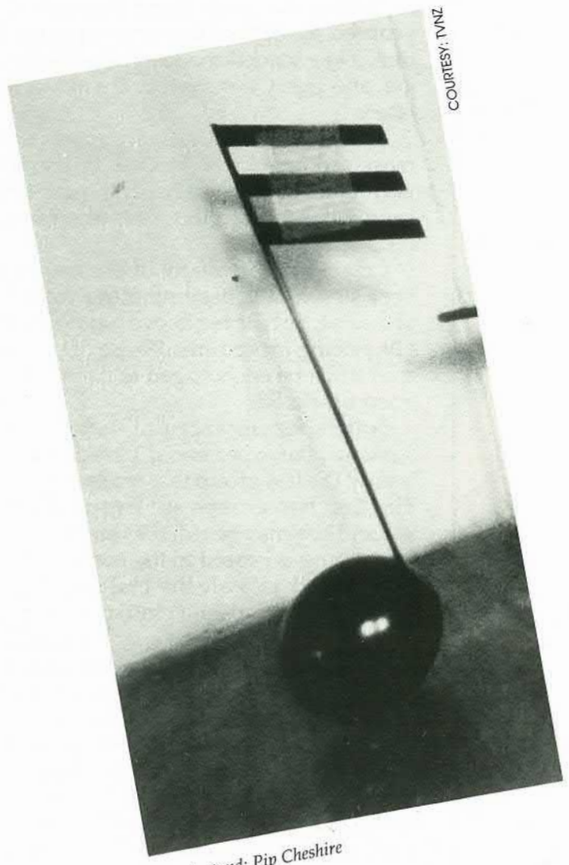
The simple explanation is that the exhibition quite properly reflected the viewpoint of its invited selector. Two thirds of the entries failed to reach the standard set for inclusion. No problem with that, we all know and honour the process. It has been *de rigeur* in craft circles for some time, and has helped lift the general standard of work shown at exhibitions throughout the country. But two-thirds is a high attrition rate. The way the entries had been sorted looked like a firm endorsement of one approach to creativity over another. The rejectees (myself included) got together. Mutter mutter. All that work and no show. Mutter mutter. 24 hours later another exhibition was set up, The Salon des Refusés. Two shows for the effort to organise one. Everybody wins.

It's interesting to briefly note the contrast. The alternative show was I believe more colourful and stretched the regular perceptions about furniture to a greater extent. There was more humour about it, and a greater inclination to play with ideas at the risk of functionality. Method and resolution gave way to inspiration and innovation. The deft touch of the craftsman-maker was missing from some of the pieces, particularly those that were collaborations between designer and maker. Much more liberal and experimental uses of materials was evident. There was less attention to practicality. It wasn't all great work, nor was it all superbly executed. So how was it to be understood?

The starting points for the work in each group are often very different from those in the other. One could only guess at whether the stimulus for one would be understood by the other. So which is craft? Which is art? Are they both both? Who really cares? What are exhibitions for? Do we approach them as tests of skill or artistry? Does the spectre of rejection encourage us to play safe and enter work that is sure to be accepted? A little simple homework will always reveal something about the selector and give you a better than even chance if you're really desperate to be included. Is the process still serving us, or are we now serving the process?

The audience, I believe, was immeasurably better off for the opportunity to see both shows, and to compare them. The debate that was generated stimulated enormous interest and a much better understanding of what the artists are trying to achieve with their work. Respect for all of the work, whether accepted or rejected, was uniformly high in the public eye.

Exhibitions are about the will to Art. They provide artists with the opportunity to extend themselves and give the world a chance to respond. They are not about applauding the discerning eye of the selector or balancing the content of a show. If they fail to stimulate energetic and lively debate they fail the artist and fail the vital contribution of art in the society. The audience needs to be drawn into the purpose of it all and go away moved in some way, however small. These things are seldom, if ever, achieved by playing safe.



COURTESY: TVNZ

Music stand: Pip Cheshire

SOAPBOX

While recognising and striving towards excellence in the formation of our products there exists one area where we all flounder: *pricing*.

During the 1960s New Zealand craftspeople emerged and multiplied. They yearned for self-sufficiency, to get back to nature, and were against industrialisation. They valued modesty, simplicity and honesty. In total they did a remarkable job, and many deserve our thanks in that they paved the way for those who came later.

Today, industrialisation, imports and other factors provide the marketplace with mass-produced, stereotyped, utilitarian products at very cheap prices. There is no way an individual craftsperson can compete with those prices. In fact, many craft products do not reflect their true manufacturing costs, and are priced well below their real value.

I maintain that many of our products are priced irrationally, and that this has been so since the beginning. We cannot change this pattern of behaviour overnight of course, but we can move more quickly to become more realistic and balanced in our pricing procedures. Those of us who are supported from areas other than their craft must be encouraged to conform, in the same manner as they learn to make a good fitting lid.

Potters for instance can usefully be divided into three groups: the proficient amateur, the experienced part-timer, and the professional full-timer. I maintain it is only the last group that realise the full costs involved in producing a pot for sale. The first two groups are frequently guilty of keeping products below a realistic value. They may be aided by such things as fund-raising 'art and craft' shows where everything is geared to the inexpensive 'bargain'. Many start off this way, and are encouraged to visit the craft shop down the road which accepts a low-priced product. The budding craftsperson then pushes up the prices a bit until the shop says 'stop'. It seems that many who start off this way do in fact stop at this point, and thus create an arbitrary low-level price structure.

I claim a novice should: 1) visit at least 3 high quality craft shops/galleries noting quality and retail prices of various products, preferably made by people totally committed to their craft. 2) They should then go home, take a good look at their own work, and see how the quality compares. If the quality is not good, the novice should not sell the work, but work harder to improve quality. If the quality comparison seems okay, take the product to market wearing a price just above midstream on your comparison scale. 3) Having established your work in the marketplace above mid-point, continue striving for perfection, and start moving prices and quality upwards, and at least annually with price.

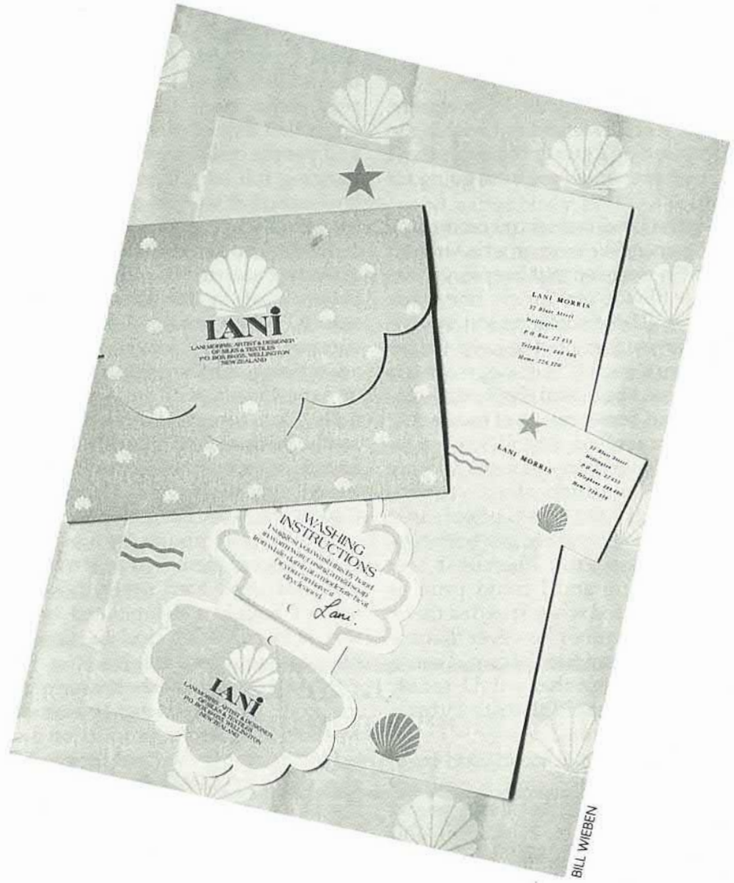
It is my general speculation that a full-timer is worth at least $250 for an 8-hour day for labour only. This figure is then of course loaded for time spent on necessary unproductive tasks and workshop overheads. For everyone however, the big question must be answered — *How much am I worth?* No two people will agree on this one. But if the hobbyists and part-time craftspeople priced their goods more realistically, then both they and the full-time professionals would benefit. The former would earn more, and the latter would not have to be defensive about their prices. A price war between craftspeople is something we can all do without.

Murray Clayton.

Murray Clayton

LANI MORRIS

Exposing your craftwork to the risk of sale



I've had some good advice over the years that I've earned my living from craft. The best was from an adviser at the Small Business Agency quoting a businessman who'd said to him, 'Well, you could always expose your product to the risk of sale'.

It made me laugh then, and it still does. It also made a point that I'm still coming to terms with. As an artist/craftsperson I'm more involved with expressing my self: my ideas, feelings, experiences, beliefs and values. This is private work, and it still shocks me a little when I have to expose it to the public. I think this is one of the main difficulties craftspeople have in being businesspeople. We are not selling widgets (with or without souls) we are selling bits of ourselves. Many of the successful strategies of business marketing can feel strange even to a fairly showy person like me, and even in these challenging days when everyone is required to 'sell' their product.

If your values include quietness, an awareness of place, and a reverence for things, then it can be hard to even begin the process of selling your craft, selling yourself. And we can all add to this the national prohibition against skiting and showing off.

However, we need to eat and so do our families. And if we want to earn a living from craft we need to resolve what often feels like a conflict between art and business: the need to be well paid for our skills, time, and energy, and the need to express ourselves.

My main interest in writing this article is hopefully to help other and younger craftspeople come to terms with these issues sooner than I did, and to do so more consciously and with more information.

It is your own life you're making decisions about and I haven't discovered a lot of freedom and satisfaction in inescapable poverty and hard work. And even if we choose that poverty for ourselves, do we have the right to choose it for our families now or in the future? What's charming at twenty, and challenging at thirty, can begin to seem harsh at forty in my experience.

This does not mean that a craftsperson has to throw away their values and accept those of another group. Nor does it mean giving up being a craftsperson. It does mean being aware of the issues and making informed choices.

One thing is to be aware of the role of physical energy in our work. I had plenty when I started twenty years ago. At forty I've begun to get tired of standing for four to five hours a day. Another factor is creative energy. It needs replenishing. I didn't make provision for this in my career plan. I didn't have a career plan. I now think it's important for all of us to have an idea where we're going, what we want from life and how we are going to achieve it.

So, looking back I think I've always been lucky in that I always did want to make money from my craft. I chose tie-dyeing because it was fast and that suited my impatient temperament, but also because I could make lots of scarves this way and thus make some money. Being the daughter of a solo parent I also wanted a job I could do at home when and if I had children and with which I could support us if necessary on my own. This approach enabled me to come to terms with running my craft as a business with only a minimum of delay and resistance. I remember when I got my first professionally made packaging and someone said 'Oh, are you going into business?' I've been in business for twelve years, I said.

I started dyeing over twenty years ago. After a couple of years as a hobbyist I decided to try it full-time and began to learn about business. I did have some aptitude, I actually did want to make money. Nonetheless I learnt very slowly and almost resentfully. The resentment was often to do with pride. I knew nothing about business and felt

scared of getting it wrong in the 'business world'. I imagined this world to be peopled with greedy, hard-hearted men who ruthlessly pursued the making of money, who had no sensitivity, were hostile to artists, and who would force me to change and become like them. Where this Hydra came from I'm not quite sure, but I know I'm not alone in my prejudice.

It was very difficult to overcome because fear, pride and not wishing to be despised by a group of people that I despised prevented me from going for help.

My first label was forced on me by a very businesslike woman who worked for me. She insisted that people wanted to know how to *care* for my fine product even if I for some reason known only to myself wanted to keep the information a secret. She suggested too that it would be useful if potential customers had some means of contacting me. She organised a hand-written label with washing instructions and my Post Office Box number on it. We photocopied this onto sheets of coloured cardboard and cut them out with scissors. This was great because it cost almost nothing and I could print as many as I needed when I needed them. I was still convinced however that no-one from the commercial world could capture an image that would satisfy me, and that it would all cost a fortune, and what if it was all *wrong*?

I finally did let a friend, and businessman, lead me to a graphic designer who listened so well that she bypassed my first half hour's ramblings and picked up on what I said as I left the room — 'I guess I do like pink and I do love this scallop shell on my pink leather bag'. An artist and a professional, she designed a scallop shell swing tag using pink and white. I later found out to my pleasure that the scallop is a symbol of pilgrimage. And I saw for the first time that I could be as free and creative in business as I was in my craft. I could experiment, and *promote the values I cared about*.

I then went to a graphic design company who did finished art work for me and designed an envelope in which to package my scarves. Now I had a letterhead, wrapping paper, a swing tag with washing instructions and an envelope for packaging. I loved them and it made me proud to take them to shops. It did cost a lot, but that was seven years ago and I'm just now coming to the end of the letterhead and the wrapping paper. My sales doubled because my scarves were now beautifully presented and functionally protected.

During this time I went to the Small Business Agency and was encouraged to go to an accountant who's been most supportive over the years. At the Small Business Agency I found people I could ring for help when I had a problem. It was then I first heard 'You could always expose your product to the risk of sale'. It encouraged me to have a display stand made for my scarves. It wasn't all that elegant, but it worked and people could now see the scarves hanging full length and could easily try them on. It worked a treat and sales increased.

By this time I viewed my scarves as a product and decided to add one dollar per scarf for development and research, which meant I had money coming in to pay for the packaging, advertising, a selling trip to Australia or experiments with new fabrics. Finally, I was running a moderately successful business and enjoying it. I made friends in the business community and joined the Wellington Chamber of Commerce. Some business people even supported me through the hard times and without them I wouldn't have survived. And hard times did come when I bought a delapidated house, was solo parenting and the interest rates rose to record heights.

Now I began to see the limitations of my craft as a business. It was like working in a factory, production limited by my energy, with no time to find new shops or to experiment — and all this in a depressed economy. I didn't like it, and I don't want to be living like this when I'm sixty. At this point I could have chosen to mass produce and I had many excellent ideas but realised I didn't want the lifestyle I saw going with it. I accepted that I am an artist, a person with real skills for self expression and something to say. I saw how impossible it was to express this under the constant pressure of paying the bills, which left me broke, or not paying for months, which always made me feel irresponsible and dishonorable.

Firstly I rented an office in town and began to work with the wide range of skills I have. Having learnt the fine art of beautiful packaging I created a beautiful office. I love working in it and people like to come to it. I also know that I like to look good myself. Years of wearing old clothes and being covered in dye are over. I somehow can keep the dye off my hands most times. I read *Dress for Success* which is somewhat outdated, but has a thought-provoking piece about artists. It pointed out that artists are among the worst dressed people you can meet. All their sense of beauty goes into their work. The author pointed out that the rest of the world is shy and needs reassurance when faced with an artist. He suggests we either dress to fit their preconceptions, that is 'artistically' . . . strong colours, and bold patterns, or else that we look immensely wealthy . . . especially when selling. He argues this because a retailer is hoping to make money from selling your product. If you're obviously rich then you're obviously doing well and this reassures them. Well, I slip it in as a thought worth considering. I've tried it and certainly I feel better. And, as a friend says, 'If you're going to a foreign country it doesn't hurt to respect the people by learning a bit about the language and the customs'.

I also understand a bit more about money now. I've just sold my house and invested the money. I've finally accepted that I'd rather hand this over to someone else and pay them. I want to be businesslike, but don't any longer want to be a businesswoman. I prefer to use my business skills as tools of support that enable me to have a life in which I can be an artist who's well paid and lives well but no longer under pressure.

If I was to summarize what I've learnt over the past twenty years I'd say this: First, be honest with yourself. It's okay to admit that you don't know about something. I once saw a businesswoman deal brilliantly with personal and possibly justified criticism. She just asked her critic to teach her what to do to change things and made an appointment to see them the next week. Second, be honest with the people you deal with. It's rare for anyone in my experience not to respect honesty. Third, face your prejudice. Business is full of highly principled people I've found, and the art world can be much meaner and bitchier. Fourth, be clear about why you are a craftsperson and whether it's satisfying you, and if not why not. Give up and cry when it's all too hard and then go to others for advice and help. We don't have to do it all on our own.

Remember it's your skills, family, assets, time, energy and LIFE that's involved in every decision you make. We can choose to value ourselves, our ideals, our perception, our loves and to express them beautifully, powerfully and clearly to the rest of the world. We can choose how we do this and find the balance that suits us between the needs and demands of our art and those of making a living.

JOHN SCOTT

Contemporary crafts in Zimbabwe

One of the final duties of the World Crafts Council Conference held in Sydney in May, was to decide the venue for the conference in 1990. While there was talk that it would be held in New Zealand, the inability to commit funds we didn't have precluded that. It fell instead to Zimbabwe. Being relatively inaccessible and expensive, the likelihood of my getting there and following up on some of the concerns highlighted in Sydney seemed pretty remote. My interest in Zimbabwe, indeed in southern Africa in general, owes much to my primary school studies of Livingston and Stanley, a passion for African imagery fostered by Picasso, and perhaps the escapism of Wilbur Smith's novels!

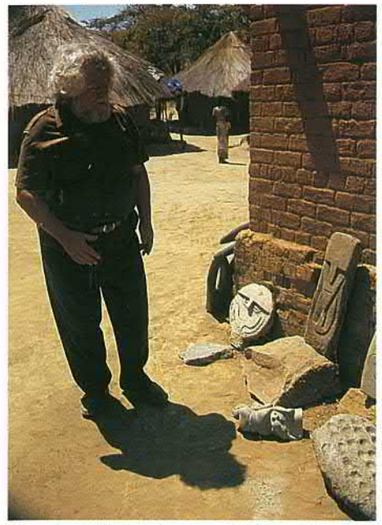
Out of the blue came the opportunity to accompany Darcy Nicholas, Director of the Central Regional Arts Council, to Harare. Darcy had been one of the four Maori artists exhibiting at the National Gallery in 1987 and his invitation was to follow up on that very successful exhibition. That invitation extended to include me as part of the international panel of seven responsible for selecting and judging the Baringa-Nedlaw art exhibition at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe. This was a unique opportunity to spend time with some of the best contemporary Zimbabwean arts and crafts.

Staying with Chris Laidlaw, the New Zealand High Commissioner, and his wife Helen Kedgley, an established New Zealand artist, was invaluable in that their personal knowledge and interest in the arts and crafts in Zimbabwe and Zambia opened doors and created contacts. The Director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Cyril Rogers, is also a New Zealander who, in a country where tribal affiliation is highly significant, was pleased to have some of 'his tribe' around him. While being able to travel a good deal, and meet the 'right' people, these observations need to be seen within the limiting boundaries of a personal experience.

I took with me the 'unfocused' impressions brought home from the World Crafts Council Conference in Sydney. [Scott, *NZ Crafts* No. 25: Spring 1988]. The impact of colonialism, technology and economic reality affects all craftspeople. The crafts of most third world or developing countries have been subjected to the ravages of the advancing technology of industrial countries. Colonialism has always been an attempt to open new markets for the expanding production of developed or so-called first world countries, while at the same time providing the source of raw materials for the consumers at home. The colonies' capacity to produce for the 'home' consumer market also had strong influences on the economy of that colony, creating wealth which in turn allowed the purchase of goods hitherto inaccessible or even unknown. The indigenous people in many cases quickly adapted consumables to suit these new markets if a demand was created. The porcelain and ceramics of China and the silks and jewellery of India were influenced enormously by Western taste, even to the point where traditional techniques and designs declined and were forgotten. In some ways the economic advantage of such a relationship could be seen as benefiting the colonial economy.

The New Zealand Maori arts and crafts were never subjected to the economic pressures of colonial markets. My impression was that African arts and crafts also had been preserved by the lack of a functional relationship with the expectations of European markets. For example, the low fired, often crudely made (but at times exquisite) ceramic domestic ware did not appeal to the western aesthetic, it travelled badly, and was not easily adapted to everyday Western use. It remains much the same today.

I was therefore eager to discover how traditional arts and crafts had survived, how they were being developed,



Tom Blomefield in Tengenenge Village with some pieces of first stone carvings done in the 1960s

Stone sculpture — Serpentine

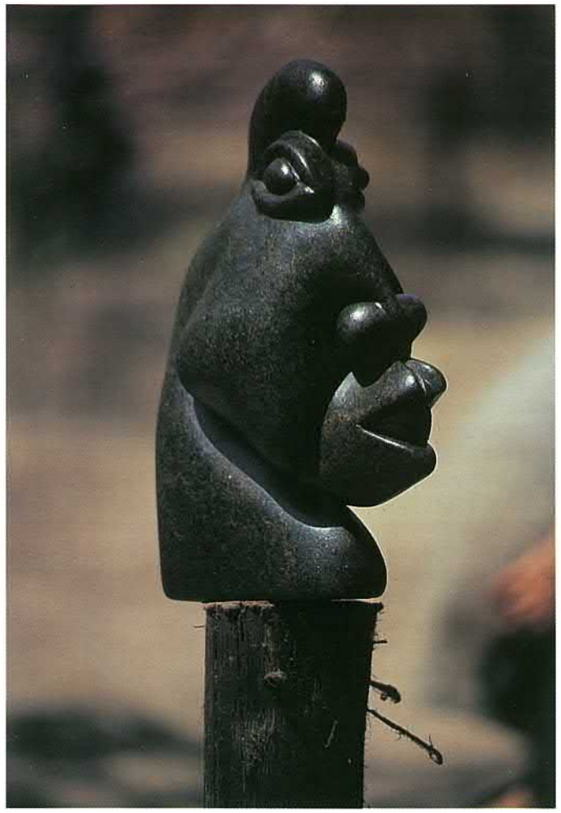
All photographs for this article are by JOHN SCOTT

Musical instruments

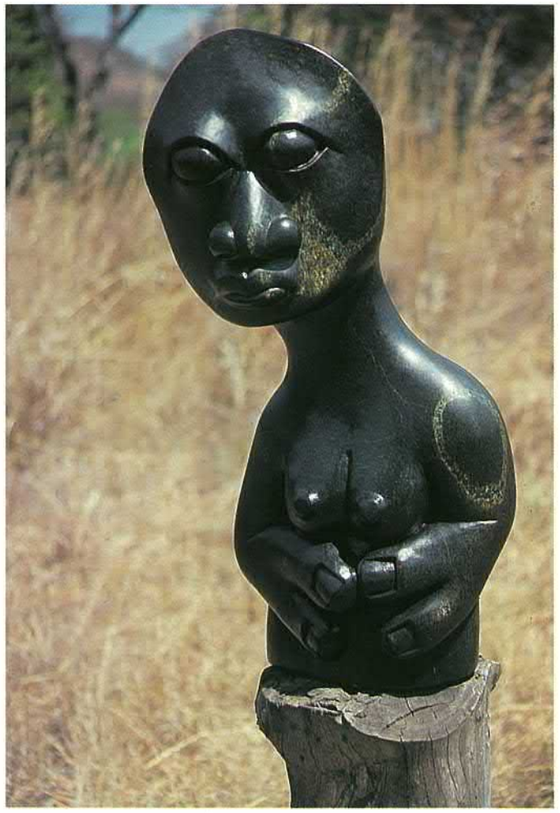
Woven bowls — make from fine roots; Western provinces, Zambia

Ceramic Sculpture — from Mazilikazi — Bulawayo

Woman turning into Rhino by Bernard Matemera



Sculpture from Tengenenge by D Mushio



Sculpture from Tengenenge by Bernard Matemera

Baskets — Zambia Zintu Museum

Delivering the goods — Lusaka, Zambia

and how a growing tourist market had affected contemporary art work. Zimbabwe is but one of the African countries defined on maps by often arbitrary political strokes of a pen. It is situated in south central Africa between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers and has benefited more than some countries from the ways in which geographical divisions were made. It has some of the richest farmland in Africa, a relatively mild climate and a relatively stable if not burgeoning economy. Unlike many of the surrounding countries, Zimbabwe has survived the war of independence and retained much of the white population responsible for the establishment and management of the economy. There is even evidence of white landowners and businessmen returning to Zimbabwe, and this growing confidence has also resulted in an expanding tourism trade. Many major airlines fly into Harare before taking domestic African airlines to their destination. This growing overseas traffic is having an effect on the viability of pursuing craft for craft's sake.

But first things first. It's important to establish a clear picture of the cultural base of Zimbabwe. Henry Ellert in his book *The Material Culture of Zimbabwe* is at pains to acknowledge the depth of the culture. 'The technology appropriate for the manufacturing of tools, implements, weapons, vessels, musical instruments and ornaments of all kinds, demonstrates ingenuity and originality, a sophistication and understanding of the natural environment and above all a quality of life in which cultural values were fully appreciated.' He also notes that the fine examples are diminishing in number, no doubt as a result of the influence of imports and manufactured goods. As in many indigenous cultures, arts and crafts were expressions of a functional relationship between the needs of a society and the method of realising or expressing those needs. The society and culture of Zimbabwe 'has its roots stretching back a thousand years to the time the Shona-speaking people settled on the plateau region of modern day Zimbabwe.' (Ellert)

The heritage of these roots is found in the stone walled settlements such as Great Zimbabwe, from which the country gets its name. It's ironic that white explorers, politicians and historians had great difficulty in accepting until relatively recently that these were the work of the black African and not some 'prehistoric white race'. There is still debate over the origins and significance of these monumental structures, but they do establish the existence of a strong culture, powerful and wealthy. Intercontinental trade goods imported by the rulers of Zimbabwe included fine cloth, beads, porcelain and silks, along with other luxury goods in return for gold and ivory.

Colonialism in Zimbabwe introduced a monetary system when the British South African company levied a tax on huts to force the Shona people into the European economy. The Shona were reluctant to become involved in economic development or work for wages. As they were self sufficient, so the functional nature of their crafts was preserved until the early 20th century. The functionalism extended to elaborate decoration of doors, house beams, body adornment, weapons and tools. Unfortunately much of this decorative art and craft has been lost in the change to an economy which now requires time to work for money.

The luxury of pursuing a craft or art without a traditional function is a fairly new phenomenon in Zimbabwean art. Such a pursuit requires a consumer who has discretionary funds and is prepared to acquire an artifact or object to meet some need which may be quite remote from an artist's intent. Add to this the reality of constraints on resources, and we have the context in which contemporary arts and crafts in Zimbabwe are developing. It is increasingly difficult to get traditional materials. Ivory is largely protected, and the roots from the *mukenge* tree for making baskets in the western provinces of Zambia are becoming harder to get, and require an enormous amount of travel to locate them. To make matters worse, contemporary tools and materials such as carving chisels and paints are either unobtainable or very expensive.

The arts and crafts of Zimbabwe (and Zambia if I may include them on the strength of a four day whistle stop in Lusaka) seem to lack an image of themselves. Ask almost anyone what African art means to them and you'll probably get a similar range of imagery: masks, carved figures, elaborate body adornment, domestic pottery, painted huts, bright cloth and baskets. But these are largely generic objects relevant to most cultures, so what is it that creates that African image. The association with the raw materials and the environment is certainly a pervading characteristic. The arts of Zimbabwe have until recently been restricted to creating and decorating functional utilitarian objects. Much of what is currently to be found either reflects that or has been fashioned to conform to some other culture's expectation. Numerous roadside stalls sell animals carved, with varying degrees of expertise, from soapstone or wood. Some of these roadside crafters are highly skilled in rendering the animal form and in their carving ability generally, and this is made even more remarkable

Mazilikazi craft workshop — commercial enterprise section of a craft school

by the primitive tools many have to work with. I am therefore reluctant to dismiss the craftsmanship and skill involved, but the expanding tourist market is producing crafts closely resembling our plastic tikis or polyester model sheep! However, crafts which do reflect a heritage of skills and a traditional context, however functional, are still being produced for a more discerning consumer market.

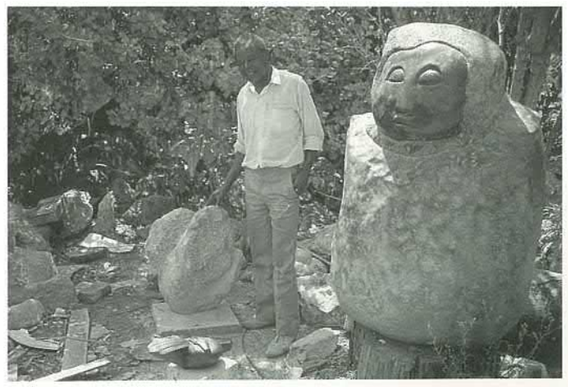
I took a particular interest in the elegant basketry which continues to be produced much as it was hundreds of years ago. Baskets reflect the local environment in both materials used and decoration. In one area near Bulawayo, electrical storms regularly kill many people every year as lightning streaks across the wet rocky landscape upon which the small huts are built. Baskets from this area are decorated with a pattern which reflects a preoccupation with lightning bolts.

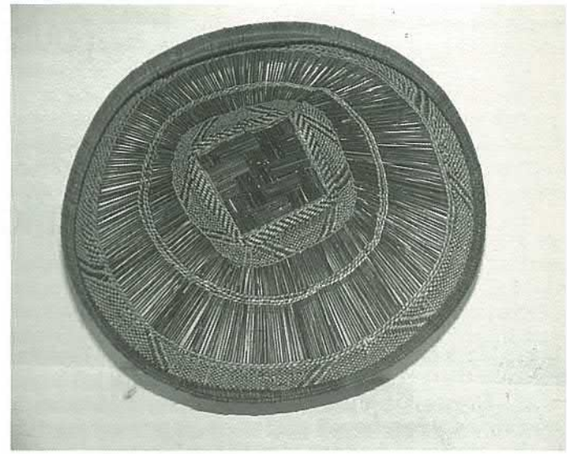
The square based baskets of the Wange and Victoria Falls area of Matabeleland are readily identifiable, and are in distinct contrast to the wound grass baskets of Botswana, Barundi and the area around Bulawayo. The traditional patterns and uses have now been modified and compromised to meet an expanding market. The Afro-art organisation started in the 1960s in Sweden, grew out of a scheme put in place by some resourceful Swedish teachers. In their mission school they set up training programmes so that African women could produce a saleable commodity which would in time give them some economic independence. The crafts which had largely been put aside were revived and the skills almost lost were retaught. The woven baskets so tight and fine that they could carry beer, once replaced by plastic or glass containers, have been revived and are sold as collectable craft through shops set up in European cities. Crafts as we know them are therefore in their infancy. The design, skills, and materials are traditional but are being modified by demand rather than other artistic influences.

Along with the simultaneous demise, revival and redirection of traditional crafts, has been the emergence of a distinctive Zimbabwean art. The story of the development of Shona stone carving in Zimbabwe is highly significant in itself, as it reflects both the change in approach to art referred to earlier (art for art's sake) and the growth and development of an art which reflects a multi-racial and acculturated rather than traditional African society.

While there is some evidence of early stone carving, this recent development has few reference points with traditional concerns. The carved soapstone birds found at Great

Local carver at work — Harare





Basket — Zambia Zintu Museum

Zimbabwe appear as the only isolated link with any stone carving tradition. The Shona sculpture movement began with Mr Frank McEwen in the 1960s when as Director of the National Gallery he encouraged local carvers and artists to overcome the difficulties associated with acquiring tools, to abandon wood carving, move the rock, and express themselves in stone.

The expansion of this activity since then has been remarkable. 'This society in which western cultural norms predominate, accepts that the creation of objects can be justified in terms of their aesthetic significance and their objecthood. The objects need not be related for the utilitarian, magico-religious or sociological reasons which motivated much traditional African art.' (Marion Arnold, *Zimbabwean Stone Sculpture*, 1986). This statement is charged with significance. While we can lament the negative effects of colonialism, technological influence and economic pressures, the unlocking of individual talent and creative ability through severing ties with traditional concerns can be seen in a positive light. The guidance of Zimbabwean sculpture was not solely the responsibility of McEwen. Mr Tom Blomefield, a tobacco farmer concerned for his workers when sanctions threatened their employment, established the Tengenenge Sculpture Community. Since 1966 several hundred aspiring and many now established sculptors have worked there. Today the community has over 60 families involved in carving and quarrying the stone. It was a delight to walk through the bush surrounded by hundreds of examples of stone carving sitting on tree stumps melding into the landscape.

With the support of the National Gallery, this development continues as a bright spot in emerging Zimbabwean art. The confidence and identity this development has created has energised the potential development of a national art school linked to the gallery. The gallery shop sells the work to visitors and provides a service to the local diplomatic core, establishing a standard which helps educate public and consumers.

The inevitability of change is everywhere evident in Zimbabwe, but it is encouraging to note that one change has been the development of a 'new art form' that is almost entirely cultural-specific. It has also permitted the emergence of contemporary arts and crafts which need not lament their rise at the expense of traditional forms.

LOUISE GUERIN

James Mack : from the Dowse to the National Museum

James Mack has switched museums but will still be doing basically the same job in his new location. He has left Lower Hutt's Dowse Art Museum for the National Museum in Wellington, where he will continue in his primary function — the enticing of the general public inside museum walls to interact with the artifacts therein — refusing in the process to be constrained by definitions used elsewhere as self-censoring boundaries.

As he puts it: 'I am going to be in charge of the public services at the National Museum — the downstairs part of where everybody thinks I am going [the National Art Gallery]. Why should there be any difference? Why should the thing upstairs be called art and the thing downstairs be called I don't know what? There is absolutely not a difference. That's why the Dowse Art Gallery had its name changed. I didn't do it to be flippant or smart. It became the Dowse Art Museum after a whole lot of advocacy and a whole lot of persuasion to make people who walked through the portals know that anything they see, from any period of time, from any culture, was going to have the two concepts upon it — art and museum. They aren't different at all.

'The primal forces that create objects are essentially the same anywhere, even though there are different mores within the culture meaning that different things happen. The primal creative act is essentially the same.'

He is excited to be moving to a new area of his field 'that is washed by the Pacific Ocean. If I do not put my feet in that ocean every now and again, I am a lost soul. The opportunity to work with Maori and Pacific Island people, to find a way they want to take the exposure of the objects of their culture, both historical and contemporary, into a museum space, must be just about the most exciting job that anybody who feels that way could get in their whole life.

'I'm going to be able to participate in making the National Museum feel a little bit more like it did, heart and soul, for Te Maori.'

The magic ingredient?

'People. I mean, god, all this time the most important thing that's been left out is actually having people there.'

Mack talks about what he calls the fission forces which are creative acts which happen between people across space and time. 'This is why we can stand in front of something that has been touched by the hand of a human being and feel their presence. We have constantly reminded people that the things they are seeing were created by human beings like them. It doesn't happen overnight — it means they work bloody hard. A whole lot of people think inspiration just drips out. It bloody doesn't. The artist slaves to get things refined in their own head and then has to go into another refining process to get them to an audience. Any artist who tells you that they do it for themselves is lying. It's communication and you can't communicate with yourself.

'I have a one liner which says: masturbation is all very well and extremely enjoyable, but if you want to do it in public, you've got to make sure you're bloody good at it.'

Advocacy for artists is his own creative goal. Mack, of course sees it slightly less formally: 'I am the cattle prodder and the electric shock — it doesn't happen easily. It doesn't have to be violent, but some things have got to be really tough. I have learnt a lot about the business of massaging souls, but if somebody isn't living up to their own expectations, their own intentions, I get into real trouble with them. I try and lift them out of that and if I can't, I cancel exhibitions. 'One of the things that happens in my job is that you have people high one minute and low the next. Some time in there you have got to be a bolsterer. You have got to get in and see if you can start doing some propping back up again. Sometimes you lose people by the way.'

One thing Mack has gained along the way is an extremely creative wardrobe. The day of this interview he is wearing a jersey knitted by Kate Wells and a Hamish Campbell bracelet. It is part of his policy of putting his money where his mouth is — he buys work he admires for himself. He even bothers to wear specially tie-dyed socks. The clothes are another way of saying that his approach is wholehearted. The museum experience as he understands it is total: 'It's making contact and doing it with your feet as much as with your eyes — it's doing it with your whole being. It is absolutely sexual. I joke about having visugasms; I chortle about all those kinds of things; but when that business in space between an artist and me happens, it is as good as any orgasm I have ever had in my life.'

It works on a spiritual level as well, an aspect 'which gets itself into real trouble because of the God thing. I am best described as a pantheist. I observe my gods in natural forces.'

Mack goes further and describes the Dowse in terms of its being a thermometer for the mental health of the community, and sees himself as a health professional 'as much as the district nurse, the local GP and the community service workers. It is the only place in which people can observe the spiritual, soaring flight of their kind. You can't see it on the street. That is, if we do it properly; and it's the reason why, for instance, we did a photographic exhibition about gangs. Scared the hell out of the city council, but it brought those people inside. How dare I deny any edge of the community access to this space and to the greatness of their genetic memory?

As has been well documented, Mack's policy at the Dowse has been to collect the best, in materials traditionally associated with crafts. In his view, during the early 1980s New Zealand's fine art 'suddenly stopped telling me this is the land I live in. The insidious influences of the international style started acting as a clobbering machine on the clever people. The thing that came out the other end was just polite. I believe, for instance, that contemporary Maori society understands contemporary Maori art better than contemporary European society understands contemporary European art. I don't think we're doing it as well because we're not pursuing the language arts as well as Maoridom are. Because they are, through kohanga reo, the genetic memory banks are getting stimulated so there are wonderful things happening in terms of weaving and carving. The great things that are happening in houses and sleeping houses and dining rooms around the place are all totally embraced by their communities. The things that are happening in our world don't get that kind of cuddling. Because they don't get cuddled, they don't warmly grow.'

There are exceptions. Photographer Fiona Clarke 'is doing it because she's getting to the real pulse of the community at lots of levels and is capable of manifesting that information in a way that both Maori and Pakeha understand'. She was specially commissioned to take part in the Dowse's December exhibition about AIDS — another community health project. Mack planned it 'to ensure that it is observed that our function in terms of education isn't just pavlova or the whipped cream on top. If you can't look at something like that problem, how can you dare look at some of the other things. Why should it always be safe? Why should it always be nice?'

Mack cites the work of potter Chester Nealie as another example of where the message is getting across. 'You look out his window and there are all these things happening in the mud flats and then you see they're there, in his pots. The entire relationship that he has with that bit of land manifests itself in every single pot he does, on top of which, he has the added charm of being funny.'

Contemporary jewellery is another area Mack can respond to. 'I knew hardly anything about adornment or jewellery until I saw some stuff which told me *This Is Made In New Zealand*. Not a stamp; not a label; but it said to me: 'I know you. You know me. Let's get together.' And we did. And I got to find out what those people do and how, and discovered people who were *artists* as much as anybody I had ever encountered before.'

As Mack is involved in the processes by which people become artists, his concern extends to what is currently happening in New Zealand schools. 'I am really scared that there is going to be a whole generation of young New Zealanders who are going to be arid in the realm of creative expression. *Tomorrow's Schools* and the Picot Report are doing all those devolution things, some of which I think are really good, until you get to the thing which says that the board stores, where bulk materials are purchased, primarily for the art experience, are about to close.'

He foresees higher costs for art materials 'and what is going to happen is that teachers aren't going to do art any more because the school system can't afford to buy the basic materials. I'm not saying every single art experience has to have paper, but they are the only times children can be individuals in the fullest, truest sense of the word and they are going to be inhibited by this restriction on access to materials. Schools are going to say "libraries are more important"; "computer training is more important"; and I have to be scared. I hope I'm wrong, but there may well be an entire generation, even two generations, who only get their visual stimulus from television.

'I quote I do not know who, but I believe implicitly that beyond eating, sleeping and reproducing their own kind, either pleasurably or just for the sake of conception, human beings' next most important basic, absolutely genetically, hereditarily inbuilt function, is in fact striving to do that thing which is individual, and they've got to be helped to do this. The Picot Report removes all the support mechanisms.

'If you remove that opportunity from the education processes it has an awful trickle up effect. Not only do they not know the art experience, they then do not understand the rare beasts who are involved in it. The whole process, when it works, generates a fulsomeness out of which people discover a love for the arts.'

Mack has had his own struggles through being an individual in the arts world, but shrugs and says he does not worry if his actions get up the noses of others. 'But you have to know that the question scares me. You have to know I lead a bloody lonely life. Artists, even though they will be pissed off that I say it, use me abominably. Any time they want help to get into the systems to get money, to get all those kinds of things, I love them. Their work is my life. But they don't come back afterwards and even rub your elbow and say "tah". And that's hard. But it is the nature of the beast because unless we have those constant tangles, which the art world should be ashamed of sometimes, the creative spirit of everybody turns into a wet thud.'

But, having made his point, he does not dwell on the negative and notes instead that we are sitting in an office along with a Richard Marquis pot, an Erenora Puketapu-Hetet gourd and three Richard Parker pots. 'The thing about art museums that is entrenched in the human mind is a belief that when you go you've got to like everything you see. It infuriates me. I purposefully orchestrate shows so people leave the door asking a question. Even if the question is "what the bloody hell did they exhibit that stuff for?", I have to be on a little bit of a winning streak in terms of education processes.

'Counter to that, the very best compliment that can be paid is being told by somebody that they have been to an exhibition several times. I mean somebody's only got to tell me twice and I am glowing. If they tell me three or four or more times, I'm off the floor.

'One of the things people forget when they see me being ebullient and pricky and all those other kinds of things is that I am also very fragile — like anybody. But I've got to be big, bold and strong and I've got to move.

'If you don't get affected by the object, somehow, as a museum person, I have failed. It's to do with raising more questions than you give answers for, so that when people get into the presence of artifacts they are moved somehow.'

James Mack certainly has a lot to answer for.

REX LINGWOOD

Reflections on the crafts

Origins, attitudes, current directions

This article developed out of a slide lecture I was asked to give on national identities in leatherwork for the Association of New Zealand Leatherworkers conference in Palmerston North in June 1988. It quickly became apparent that apart from indigenous peoples, national identities, both in leatherwork and in the other crafts, are not readily detectable in western industrial and post-industrial cultures. The number of styles, approaches and sources in any one country are incredibly diverse, but this diversity is found throughout western culture. When I began to turn the lecture into an article, my interest shifted to the reasons why people in the crafts chose the source material they do, and to what this tells us about the contemporary crafts movement — its attitudes and its place in our culture.

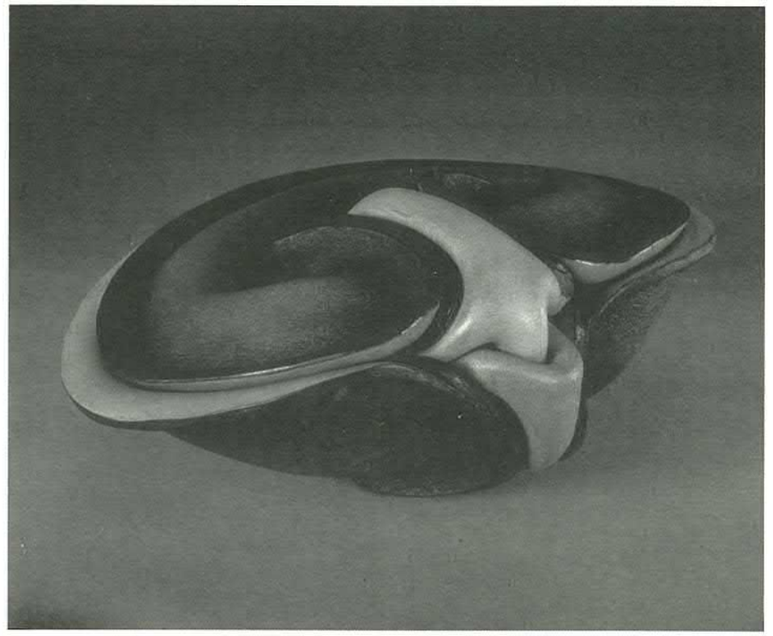
The lack of distinct national identities in contemporary crafts reflects the trans-national nature of western industrial and post-industrial culture, and the fact that the rebirth of the crafts took place throughout this culture rather than developing along national lines. The interest in and the development of the crafts was in large measure a reaction to the excesses and shortcomings of industrial and post-industrial culture in the most successful and advanced economies. It was a reaction to the damage that has been done and continues to be done to the environment, and to our physical and psychological well-being by the products and by-products, and the physical and organizational structures of our society. It was also a reaction against the narrowly focused materialism that condones this destructive behavior by measuring worth largely in terms of short-term monetary profit.

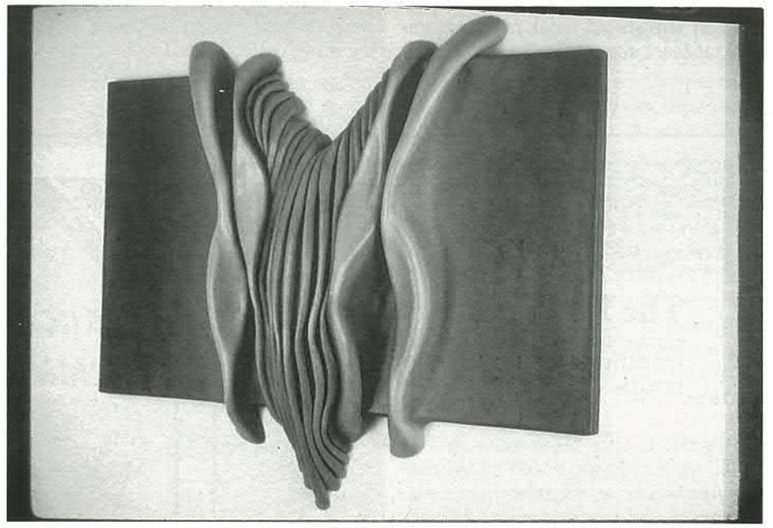
In the years of its most rapid expansion, the crafts movement rejected the values of the dominant industrial culture, and as far as possible craftspeople attempted to opt out of it. As an answer to the evils of industrial culture the crafts chose pre-industrial societies as models. The attitude was: since bigger turned out not to be better, then small must be beautiful; since machine mass production was dehumanizing and its products often inferior, then hand work must be superior.

Making things by hand felt good. It gave the individual a sense of purpose and a feeling of control. As a consequence, craftspeople advanced it as a solution to the problems of the dominant culture. Such thinking is both radical and reactionary. It was also flawed. It was a solution typical of the mind set of western industrial culture. It looked to the method of production for the root of the problem and proposed a change in technology as the solution. Means of production are not necessarily good or evil in themselves, although their potential for abuse certainly varies. But it is the way in which they are used, and the consideration for the value and quality of the product that determines whether a production method makes a positive contribution.

In the crafts, the handmade object was elevated to the status of talisman, a repository of the important values lost or diminished in industrial culture. To the initiated it conveyed quite specific ideas about the value of the individual and individual responsibility to the community. The process of hand work acquired the status of a quasi-religious rite.

Contemporary craftspeople have scoured pre-industrial cultures, both western and non-western, for source material with the result that one of the dominant characteristics of the crafts in the industrial west is a voracious eclecticism in both images and technique. No special attention is paid to particular national pre-industrial sources either historic or contemporary, although they are not necessarily ignored. Material is borrowed freely from any culture that strikes a chord with the maker. This chord ranges from the dignity and the control over one's life embodied in a simple but useful object made from available materials, to a search for alternative spiritual powers as represented by objects and images associated with shamanism or magic, and to specific styles and techniques. It is quite natural that we should turn to pre-industrial cultures for source material: craft work was the way they produced goods. These cultures also appear to embody a more holistic view of the world possessing values and spiritual power not recognized in our own. The way we go about it, however, betrays our origins — industrial and post-industrial cultures seek raw material on a global scale and show little concern for the place of origin. The approach in the crafts has been much the same only the raw materials are images and hand working techniques. Images are selected on the basis of how well they will convey our own preconceived notions about these cultures. Rarely do we trouble to understand the full context in which these images operate. They are used because they are already part of our visual language, not because they have things to offer that will enrich it. Furthermore, we only have access to this source material because we are from the developed world with all of the wealth, plunder and communications technology it provides.





Two works in leather by Rex Lingwood

Through the use of both contemporary and historical pre-industrial sources we have developed a strong mythology surrounding the process of hand work. We tend to regard handmade objects as inately superior to their industrial counterparts; by producing them the craftsman provides a positive alternative to industrially produced objects. In fact what craftspeople produce are styles of work which, when the work is good, communicate particular sets of values. Examples of this range from the earthy almost peasant simplicity and aesthetic functionalism of Bernard Leach in the early years of the crafts revival to the loose elegance of the recent work of Canadian potter Jan Phalen, or the direct understated simplicity of the bags and cases of English leatherworkers Val Michael and Neil MacGregor. This work is very much bound up with hand work but what distinguishes it (aside from the talent of these practitioners) is using the process to do what it does best. It is this attitude towards working that is significant — not the process itself. We only have to look at the down side of craft work to see the truth of this. Quantities of forgettable laced and stamped leather bags and poorly designed and indifferently executed ceramics trafficked on the myth of the superiority of the handmade; and such work was sustained by this myth until the mid 1970s, by which time many of the people producing it began to fall by the wayside.

Since that time it has been increasingly difficult for craftspeople producing good work to survive, even in the more efficient production oriented branches of the crafts. The people who remain have to work far harder and more efficiently to maintain their standard of living at a time in their lives when they expected to be leaving genteel poverty behind them. The result is that a great many craftspeople are leaving the field and fewer are trying to enter it. In Canada, at least, this has led to a decline in the teaching of crafts.

The reasons for this decline in the number of craftspeople range from the change in economic conditions (our society is not as rich as it was) to the level of sophistication of the audience (they will not accept humdrum work simply because it is handmade). Also the ideological position of the audience has shifted and the outright rejection of industrial and post-industrial culture is no longer fashionable. This leaves the production crafts in an especially vulnerable position. By rejecting industrial culture without realistically considering our place within it and our dependence on it, we have not developed strategies that will allow us to survive and prosper. By stressing the value of hand working as an end in

itself rather than focusing on the product, we have failed to recognize that the values that inform our work and the visual skills we possess can be applied to other more economically viable production processes. Post-industrial technologies are now making the translation of our visual ideas to other production methods far easier, and there is a demand for the visual qualities favoured in the crafts. Unfortunately, craftspeople are ideologically predisposed to ignore or reject such alternatives. Those in production crafts have a choice: reject the myth of the intrinsic value of hand work for a more realistic approach to evaluating production methods (although their increasing economic marginality will make finding capital to make changes difficult) and make a continuing contribution to our society's visual environment, or remain a short-lived, faddish, symbolic protest movement.

On the one-off, art object, side of crafts the future is somewhat brighter because there is always a market for the unique and the precious. Here the fixation with hand work is an advantage, at least economically, because it tends to focus the maker's attention on technical prowess rather than on expressive or intellectual content. The result is far more decorative work than that of our counterparts in painting and sculpture. While this delight in technical visual effects for their own sake appeals to a broad sector of the art market, it rarely attempts to challenge the viewer. This trend has been particularly evident in what has come to be called 'art glass', where the particular seductiveness of the material and the process combine to leave the maker bereft of further ambition. I am not advocating that we should once again become prisoners of the anti-decorative ideology that permeated much late modernist work and criticism in the arts, but decorative content does not mean that other content has to be sacrificed. In the postmodern period there has been a healthy resurgence of interest in decorative values; but in the crafts this has too often been taken as an excuse to explore the beautiful but vacuous.

In the crafts in the past few years the problems of economic viability and the increase in technical and/or decorative display have been accompanied by another trend; the shift away from pre-industrial source material. The most prominent source in this shift is Art Deco. What has turned our heads is a movement which celebrates urban industrial culture. Art Deco comes from a period of considerable optimism about our ability to solve problems through technology. These slick decorative urban images are in fact a denial of the problems that we know are created by industrial and post-industrial culture. It is more than a little odd that a movement that has glorified hand work and rejected industrial culture should be entranced by images that glorify it. Perhaps this represents the passing of the crafts' nostalgia for a pre-industrial arcadia which, for all its faults, at least had the virtue of looking critically at our society. Have we, perhaps, acquired a firmer grip on reality? Do we see our new role for precisely what it is becoming: that of uncritical panderers providing bobbles to the rich and powerful? Or are we yet again immersing ourselves in the process, substituting the mythic value of hand work for what the object has to say.

WENDY LAURENSON

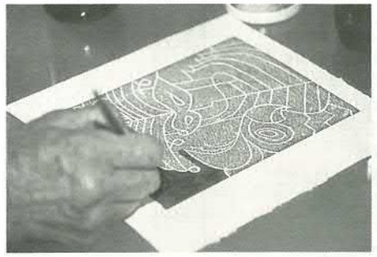
Auriel Shearer— Printmaker

In her Kerikeri printmaking studio, Auriel Shearer carves sections out of woodblocks, sticks pieces on, and tries out different colours. After nearly 20 years of playing around, Auriel feels she is just starting to get somewhere with her printmaking.

Someone else thinks so too. Auriel won the printmaking section of the 1988 New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Award sponsored by the BNZ and she won it with a printmaking style not often seen in New Zealand. The technique was strongly influenced by her Japanese-based training and uses a dye resist process developed by Tajima Hiroyuki in the 1930s. It combines a technique used in old hand-painted prints with a more creative use of oil pigments and dyes.

After centuries of woodblock printmaking tradition in Japan, the twentieth century brought new scope and innovation as artists began to do all stages of printmaking themselves — designing the image, carving the blocks and doing their own printing. This provided more individual options to the way colour was applied, the way the print was pressed, and the way the paper was used. In other words, the technique in modern prints has become creative rather than technical. And that's what Auriel Shearer enjoys: 'The possibilities are endless'.

She discovered those possibilities in Japan in the 1960s. Auriel trained originally as an art and craft specialist at Dunedin Training College. When she married and had a young family, she moved to South East Asia where her husband Keith was working in the oil industry. In 1962, they shifted to Japan, and in the 9 years that they lived there her interest in art was rekindled. 'There was so much art and craft everywhere — porcelain, doll making, ikebana, printmaking, and hundreds of galleries. I went to painting classes at the home of Francois Masami Nakayama, once a week for 5 years with 8 or 9 others. He trained in France and Japan and was well known for his printmaking and etching as well as his painting. His studio and his guidance were a real inspiration.'



Auriel also attended lessons by painter Keikoh Honjo, and Father Gaston Petit, who is internationally acclaimed for his printmaking knowledge and production of limited edition printing of lithographs, etchings, and mixed media. At the end of her time in Japan, Auriel concentrated more on printmaking than painting, and despite bursts at painting in both Singapore (their next base), and back in New Zealand, it is still printmaking that is her passion. 'In painting, it was exploring colour that was important, and making colour move. But I've gone beyond that now. In the wood prints, I can use texture as well as colour.'

Her works begin on plywood blocks — wood because it is easy to cut and has a life of its own, unlike plastic or customwood; and plywood because it is available and light. Auriel will use any wood but finds rimu makes a particularly clean cut.

To get texture Auriel will either carve lines or parts of the block out or add relief to the surface by sticking things on. 'I add things like Japanese paper, or string, or crinkly paper for panels, or curtain net, or gauze, or handmade paper, kids letter-blocks, or PVA glue. Or I tear paper so that the print will be a reverse of that tear. You can manipulate the effects.'

As with other printmaking techniques oil-based pigment is the base of the wood print. Extra oil and turps are added to the pigment before printing to make the paint easier to spread and, most importantly, to enhance the dye resistance. The oil is then hand rolled over the wood print to provide the base colour or colours.

There the similarity with other printmaking procedures ends. Auriel uses no printing press or roller. Instead the colour is hand pressed onto the paper with a Japanese traditional hand baren. 'By doing it completely by hand I really get in it. The pressure of the hand on the oil affects the absorption of the dye. The way you rub, and the evenness, or lack of it, produces unique effects. And by off-setting it slightly, you can get an extra dimension.'

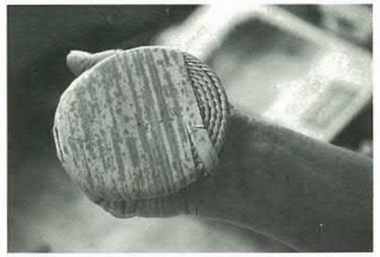
The paper is placed over the wood-

block, and the small padded buffer is rubbed over the surface to print the image onto the paper. Auriel's paper is French made Arches Rives used because it is absorbent and unsized. She saves her discarded sheets of paper, pulping them to make new sheets to reuse on collages or to add texture to her woodblocks. She says she may one day make her own paper.

Once the oil base is on the paper, the rest of the process is hand brush work with commercial procion dyes. Auriel buys these in powder form, but often mixes them herself to get the colours she wants. The resultant dye is then boiled for 5-10 minutes with salt to make it colour fast. To get the required reaction between the oil base and the dyes, the dyes must be applied before the oil base is dry. The hand-painted dye penetrates the paper only in the areas not block printed with oil pigment, so the result is a three dimensional texture.

And the variations don't end there. After the dye painting, another colour from the block can be overlaid on the print, or a different block can be overlaid on all or part of the work. Because of the number of variables, making an edition can be difficult. 'I'm always careful to make an edition as identical as is possible with hand work. This can be difficult if I do a few, then take a break before finishing an edition, because the dye colour can change in that time. It's a good discipline repeating the work and I get a certain amount of satisfaction from seeing them all the same in front of me. But I only do editions of 10-15 prints. I'm more interested in doing new things.'

Auriel's inspiration for new things is a bit of a mystery to her, and she likes it that way. 'I don't know where it comes from really, and I don't go out of my way to analyse it. I just go with it. The subject matter fluctuates between



Japanese hand baren for pressing the paper on to the inked woodblock

things strong and bright, and things more subtle. It can be triggered by the landscape or effects of light or colour, or by something inside you. All your experiences of life somehow come together. It's something to do with making order out of the chaos. My art and design training, and my time in Japan, have probably influenced me a lot in my choice of shapes, textures, colour, and image.'

For woodblocks that involve cutting, Auriel says her approach, by necessity, is more calculated. Before cutting she usually has some sort of plan or sketch to work from. But the woodblocks that are built up and added to rather than cut, are done more spontaneously by manipulating various shapes and materials on the block itself. Auriel works primarily for herself rather than to sell. But she has had numerous exhibitions, both solo and mixed, in the Alpha Gallery in Singapore, the Bett Duncan Gallery in Wellington, the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in Wellington, and the Kitchener Gallery in Auckland. Currently she has work in Portfolio in Auckland, and Origin in Kerikeri.

Auriel's location in Kerikeri has merits as well as drawbacks. Her home and studio look out over the Bay of Islands with its constantly changing mood and light. 'It's good because you don't get too influenced by other people, and because you just get on and do your work. But sometimes I need to get away and meet other people involved in printmaking, and to see their work — to get that outside stimulation.' Most of her stimulation however comes from the work itself. 'I want to get more loose, more spontaneous, and more free. Colour is one way of doing it, plus I can use broader cutting tools. At the moment I am involved with the carnival theme with really rich colours. I want to work on a larger scale but I don't want to lose the traditional print quality. In Japan, prints were traditionally kept in drawers and brought out to show friends. They are an intimate thing. Somehow the small size reinforces that. But I'll keep exploring. I've got so much to do yet. I'm only just starting.'

Auriel thinks woodblock printmaking will be her medium for some time yet. It offers her all the possibilities she wants and it fits well into the available time and space in her life. Whether it is an art or a craft doesn't really interest her. 'If a craft is a learned skill and art comes from within, then it's a combination of both. If the definition is to do with end use, that is, craft produces something with a practical use, and art produces something more ethereal, then printmaking is art. I know there is a continuing debate over definition, but I don't delve into it. I don't think it matters much. So much is still unknown about the creative urge. It's almost impossible to put into words. It's better not to try to define it. Just use and enjoy it.'

Auriel does. 'In the creative process there's a stage when you come across a magical quality. It can't be planned or analysed, it just happens. It's that indefinable magic that I want to capture in my printmaking.'

ALAN LONEY

ART IN WOOL

Each year the New Zealand Wool Board presents an award for excellence in handcrafts in wool. Administered jointly by the Crafts Council of New Zealand and the New Zealand Spinning, Weaving and Woolcrafts Society, the award is presented in alternate years for *Design in Fashion* and *Art in Wool*.

The Art in Wool Award winners will be selected by a panel of 3 judges: interior designer Clare Athfield, textile artist Kate Wells, and textile artist and educator Kelly Thompson. In assessing submissions the judges will be looking for originality of design, creative use of colour, suitability of materials, technique, construction and professional finish.

Nola Fournier, National President of the New Zealand Spinning, Weaving and Woolcrafts Society, is very clear about the value of the Award. She says, 'Art in Wool is essentially a design award. Techniques have been well learned generally, but not always used as a tool for creative expression. In any successful work, design and mastery of technique work in harmony. It is vital for the development of the craft that this balance is recognised and understood'.

The Award winner will receive a cash prize of $3000, and the winning piece, along with other works selected by the judges, will be exhibited at the Dunedin Art Gallery for two weeks at the time of the 1989 National Woolcrafts Festival. Some of those pieces will then go on show at the Crafts Council Gallery in Wellington. Nola Fournier hopes, as a spinoff from the exhibition, that the attention of architects and interior designers is drawn to the value of the woven piece as a means of complimenting and enhancing their own creative work.

The New Zealand Wool Board, sponsors of the award, echoes Nola Fournier's sentiments. Sarah Patterson, product communications co-ordinator for the Wool Board, says, 'Through its work, the woolcrafts community promotes New Zealand's "national fibre" both nationally and internationally. The New Zealand Wool Board recognises the importance of the woolcraft community with its annual sponsorship of this Award.'

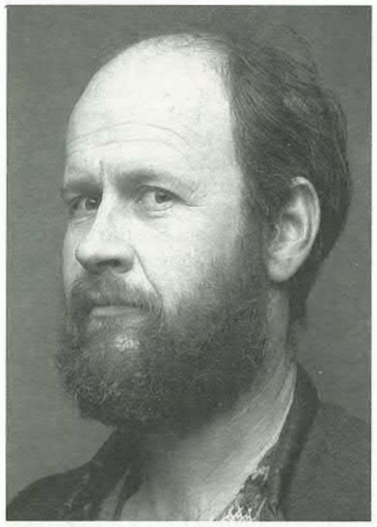
Clearly expectations are high in anticipation of the event. New Zealand craftspeople in all disciplines have shown themselves equal to standards observable overseas, and the woolcrafts are no exception to this state of affairs. As Sarah Patterson puts it, 'The demands for achieving excellence on the craftsperson may be high, but the New Zealand Wool Board firmly believes New Zealand has a crafts community to be proud of — people who are already masters of their craft and people who have the potential to reach standards of excellence in the design of woolcraft'.

Send for entry forms to:

The New Zealand Wool Board
Art in Wool Award 1989
Crafts Council of New Zealand
P O Box 498
Wellington.

HELEN SCHAMROTH

Paul Annear— jade carver



The photographs for this article are all by HARU SAMESHIMA

Paul Annear has been carving jade for only the past two and a half years, yet in that time he has developed a recognisable style and a high degree of proficiency. Inclusion in a prestigious exhibition like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsored *Bone.Stone.Shell* exhibition, at present travelling overseas, is probably the most tangible acknowledgement of his achievements and regard in which his work is held. Works of his have also been purchased for the collections of the Auckland Museum, Carrington Polytechnic and the Dowse Museum.

This recognition has a good deal to do with the years of groundwork he has put in as a jeweller working in silver, and as a painter. Paul's comment that being an overnight success means that no one mentions the years of hard work leading up to it, is a telling one.

Paul lived in Anawhata on Auckland's west coast for about ten years, but these days he lives in Mt Eden, where he owns a house from which he works. Stepping into his home is stepping into the chaos of a person living alone, a person totally absorbed with the process of his craft. The everyday clutter, the started renovations, work in progress and earlier works he has kept, all seem to merge.

In the midst of all this Paul sits quietly, sanding and polishing jade. It is a contemplative process which suits him perfectly, for he is a quietly spoken, contemplative man. He is modest, though less about his recent achievements than about earlier work and academic qualifications — a BA in anthropology and psychology in 1973 — but he dismisses his degree as unimportant.

He wryly describes much of his work as 'mindless tedium', an aspect he enjoys. The simple labour intensive repetitive process follows the necessary cutting, drilling and sawing he carries out in the workshop downstairs. Down here too, he stores his supplies of material. One day perhaps it will be completed as a studio.

The simplicity of the way Paul works, and the subsequent emergence of an object of beauty which suddenly comes alive, are what his life is about, a choice he has consciously made. It is a life style that gives him time to think, time to define what he believes culture is, time to think about human creative endeavour in the context of this culture. Issues such as these have a direct bearing on the pieces he creates. Recently he wrote that the work expresses 'various ideas and feelings that have demanded to be actualised over the years'. The ideas and feelings are firmly rooted in New Zealand — his family has lived here for several generations — but the influences are more diverse.

Making things has been part of his life since childhood, and although he no longer suffers the frustrations of attempting the impossible as he once used to, maturity hasn't dulled his aims. Rather, he has acquired an awareness of the technical limitations of his medium. These days he is very much in tune with it.

Self-taught, like so many jewellers of his generation, Paul acknowledges particularly the inspiration of Chinese jade as well as of Maori work. In 1976 he read Theo Schoon's book *Jade Country* which introduced him to some of the possibilities of working with jade, and four years ago John Edgar's 'stunningly simple jade work' further triggered his interest. On a trip to the South Island two and a half years ago he began collecting jade — and began a new era in his life.

The qualities of jade — its hardness (harder than tool steel), its beauty and its toughness (unlike the more brittle jasper and carnellian) — are determining factors when Paul creates his designs, and his work is often a response to the material. This is in direct contrast to, but also complementary to, the times when he sketches, sometimes in considerable detail. The magic for Paul lies in transforming grey, uninteresting, unworked jade, making something from it, and seeing it come to life.

The works have evolved into uncomplicated curvilinear forms, discoid shapes and forms of simple zoomorphic origins. While he might start with designing details he is reaching to find what is basic, what is irreducible. The example of the bird arrow motif is a case in point. Paul first drew birds as distinct from the arrows. They were two separate elements. These were fashioned into bangles and necklaces. From this he simplified the shapes to the effect of winged flight, the linear arrow motif acting as a link. He wants to reduce it even further. At what point does he lose control of the concept?

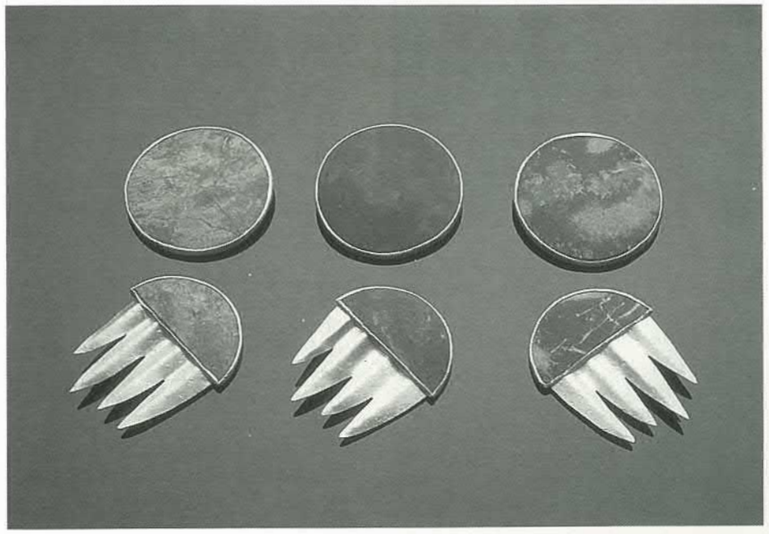
The bangles Paul makes are an interesting aspect of his work. Not all of them are necessarily wearable — rather they function as visual objects. 'Bangle' seems an easily recognisable descriptive label he uses to describe a series of circular and cylindrical forms. It seems of little consequence that the aperture might be too tight to fit over a hand, or that a hollow cylindrical shape would imprison the arm. By simplifying the imagery Paul has in fact driven the function out, leaving a form, a shape to be admired, sculpture rather than jewellery.

For some time now Paul has made only pieces that are personally satisfying. Gone are the days of dissatisfaction with making work specifically to sell like he did during a stint of selling silver jewellery at Cook Street Market some years ago. When he stopped compromising he had to live with the disillusionment of making things that people didn't want to buy. It was a difficult transition time. In order to work with integrity, to create pieces that were meaningful to him, Paul found that it suited him to take on jobs unrelated to jewellery-making, and at times the dole. Some of these jobs such as working in the art departments of film studios had a certain appeal. Paul enjoyed the illusionary quality of the films, seeing a different kind of reality being created. The similarity to his approach to art was not lost on him.

The first works Paul made in jade were in the form of adzes. These are important forms for him, symbolising 'the beginning of culture, and are evocative of youth, movement, vigour, vitality and warnings of dire consequences, of beauty and danger'. Complexity in design is not one of his aims, and the adze form is in keeping with this approach. The adze is a recurring theme in his work, and as with the zoomorphic and discoid forms, he enjoys repeating the form, and with each repetition he pares it down in order to capture the fundamental core of the object.

Paul talks about the characteristics of a Maori adze in basalt to illustrate his point of connection with the form: 'The sharp end is the polished working end opposite the blunter end which is marked from chipping and hammering. The corner of the blade end is broken from use ...'. The appeal for Paul is in the shininess, seeing how the object is made, and more particularly seeing how it breaks from use.

The simplicity he strives for is particularly evident in the necklaces made of cone-shaped beads. They are constructed from beautifully formed beads

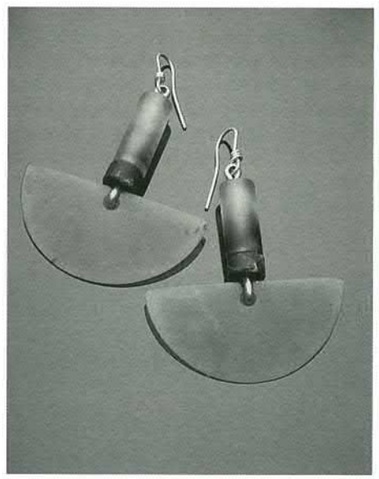


Above: *Bangle (jade) and adze pendant (jade). Bangle 140mm diameter.*

Left: *Brooches in (left to right) chrysacola, jasper, lapis lazuli, and sterling silver. Round brooches 50mm diameter.*

***Above**: Bangle (jade) and bangle (sterling silver). Silver bangle 80mm long.*

***Right**: Earrings (jade, sodalite, carnellian) approx. 40mm across.*



strung together, without elaboration, and without complication. Equally uncomplicated are his brooches and earrings, which are simply assembled into strong graphic shapes.

In old cultures there is a homogeneity between styles of craft, with an overall style emerging. Paul doesn't feel that there is a real New Zealand style of jade carving yet outside of traditional Maori culture. There is no doubt, however, that he is a strong exponent of the medium and the work of his peers offers inspiration and encouragement, which he is quick to acknowledge.

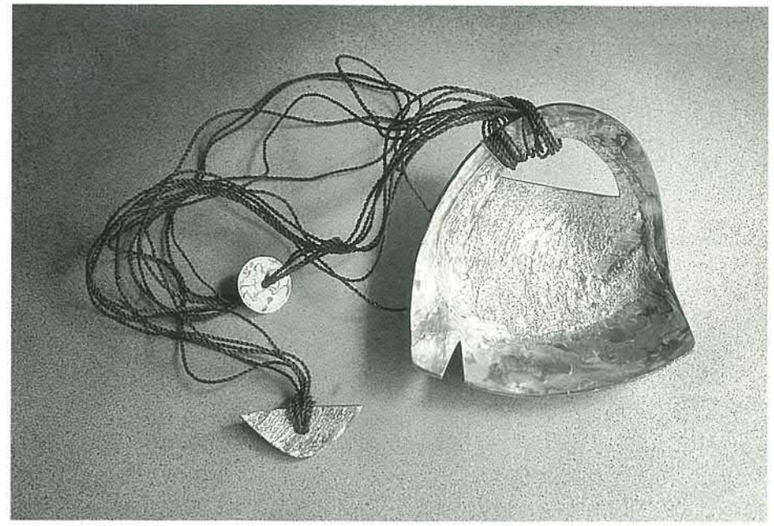
Compared with the tension created by the angularity of, for instance, Michael Couper's jade also shown in the *Bone.Stone.Shell* exhibition, and the stark formality of John Edgar's work, Paul's is a softer approach. This approach is exemplified in the freedom of recent round jade pieces which have evolved from strictly circular forms. Paul feels less like imposing rigid geometry on the material. Earlier works now seem too tight for him. His work becomes more flowing and less laboured as a result. It seems a very satisfactory approach, as he retains a subtlety and low-key resolution to his work, part of his distinctive style.

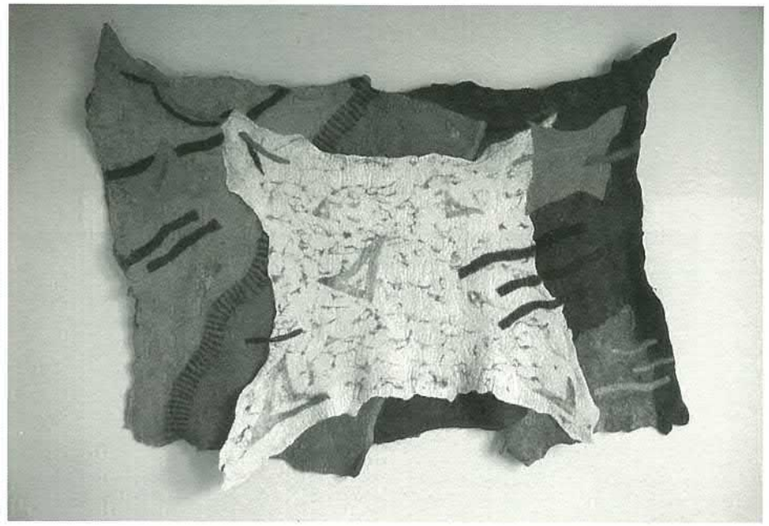
RECENT WORKS

In this section, the works shown are selected from slides sent in to the Craft Council's Resource File. The file is open to all craftspeople and it acts as a visual resource for Council staff, researchers, and by intending commissioners of craft.

Slides, with full descriptions, measurements, date, and the name of the photographer, should be sent to —

Resource Centre
Crafts Council of New Zealand
P O Box 498
Wellington

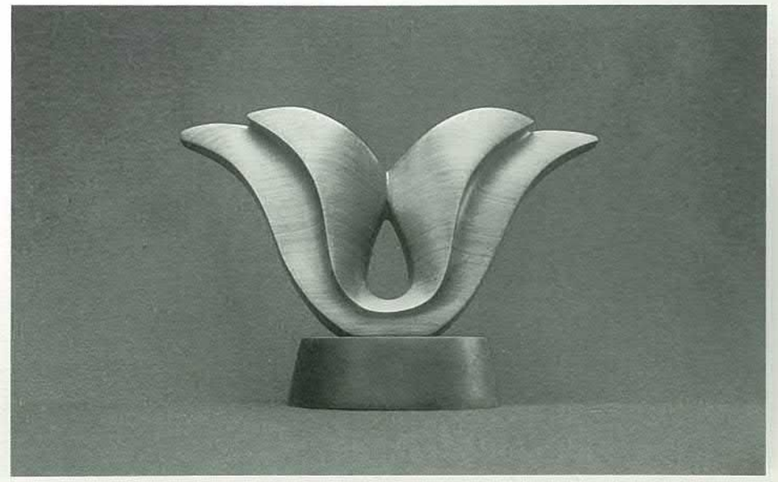




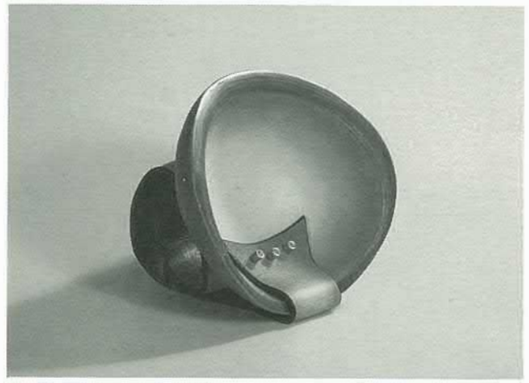
***Above**: Alan Preston: Breastplate*

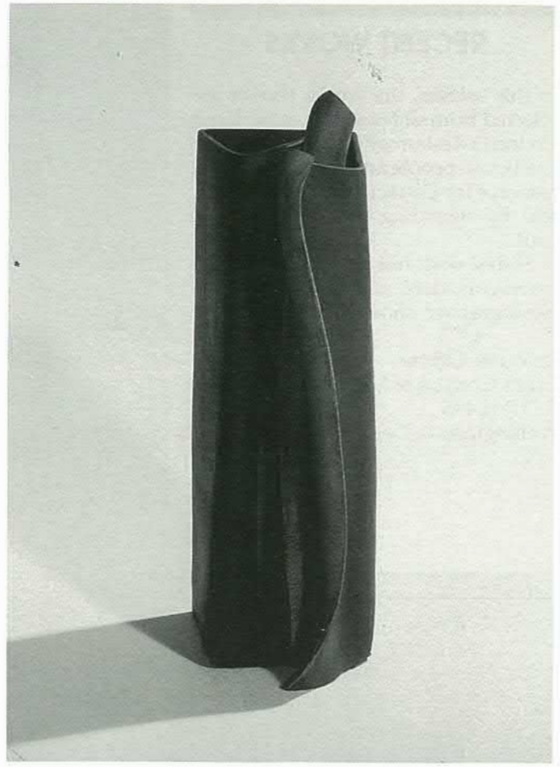
***Left**: Jocelyn Reyners: Double Happy. Felt wallpiece. 100% wool. 1988. 1.6 x 1.1m*

***Below**: Andrew Craig. Fashion Flight. Totara.*



RECENT WORKS





***Above right**: James Bowman: Vessel, boiled leather*

***Above**: James Bowman: Bowl sculpture*

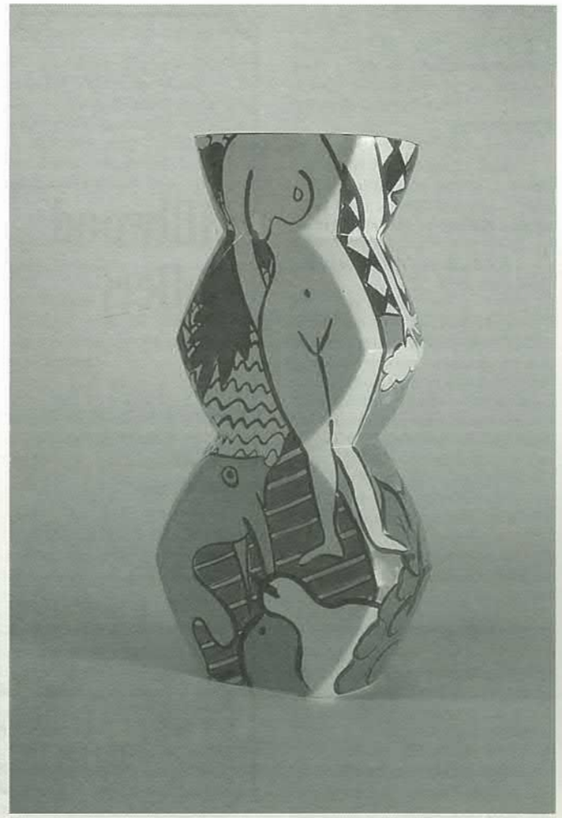
***Right**: Paul Dibble and Fran McIntosh. Bowl*

RECENT WORKS

***Left:** Manos Nathan (Te Roroa o Ngatiwhatua). Ceramic Form.*

***Below Left:** Leo Cappel: Bowed zither*

***Below**: Paul Dibble and Fran McIntosh*



RESOURCE CENTRE

CATALOGUE OF SLIDE SETS

The following slide sets are available for hire for a period of two weeks at a cost of $7.70 for members, $10 for non-members.

Basketry

82 *Some Australian Baskets*. 1982. 22 slides. Shows the diversity of contemporary Australian baskets

83 *Floating Forest — An Environmental Sculpture 1982*. 41 slides. A visit to Arnhem Land influenced US basket maker Doug Fuchs to create a monumental basketry environment which he entitled The Floating Forest. He says "I wanted to be surrounded by the textural density of the materials".

113 *Woven Basketry*. Fuchs (no notes). 16 slides

125 *Basketry*. A selection of N.Z. basket makers. 24 slides

128 *Baskets*. 1987. 24 slides. Jan van der Klundert

Ceramics

1 *Joan Campbell At Work*. (no date) 30 slides. Australian potter Joan Campbell makes raku pots. Her workplace and work is shown

6 *NZ Society Of Potters National Exhibition 1978*. 32 slides

9 *Peter Voulkos: A Retrospective 1948-78*. 81 slides. Peter Voulkos has produced a "massive body of work that was to start a whole new ceramics movement in this country. He became the acknowledged leader of the American revolution in clay." (2 Sets)

15 *Japanese Ceramics*. (no date). 49 slides. Historical works

21 *Contemporary Japanese Ceramics 1977*. 66 Slides

22 *Shimaoka and His Technique 1972*. 30 slides

29 *Ceramic Defects 1972*. 60 slides. Slides illustrate some of the technical problems commonly encountered with stoneware

30 *The Raku Process 1974*. 45 slides. Paul Soldner demonstrates the raku process

32 *Three Ceramists: Gronberg, Leedy, Williams*. (no date). 21 slides (No notes)

36 *16 New Zealand Potters*. 24 slides

41 *Glaze Testing for the Beginner*. 24 slides

51 *The Bowl: Ceramics I 1980*. 24 slides. Selected ceramics from the 1980 Bowl competition

52 *The Bowl: Ceramics II 1980*. 24 slides. Selected ceramics from the 1980 Bowl competition

60 *Third Mayfair Ceramic Award 1980*. 48 slides. The Mayfair Ceramic Award is a biennial acquisitive Australian award

62 *Recent Ceramics Part I and II 1979*. 48 slides. Selected Australian ceramics from a touring exhibition

71 *Fletcher Brownbuilt 1982*. 92 slides

73 *Fletcher Brownbuilt 1983*. 105 slides

74 *Ceramics II: Domestic Pottery 1983*. 18 slides. Contemporary British domestic pottery

86 *25th NZ Society of Potters Annual Exhibition 1983*. 32 slides

87 *Elsa Rady 1983*. 20 slides. Elsa Rady is a US porcelain potter who toured New Zealand in 1983

90 *Fletcher Brownbuilt Pottery Award 1984*. 75 slides

95 *Fletcher Brownbuilt Pottery Award 1985*. 52 slides

104 *Spheres Exhibition*. 74 slides. An invited exhibition from members of the New Zealand Society of Potters. Southland Museum and Art Gallery, Invercargill, 8-23 November 1986

106 *Fletcher Brownbuilt Pottery Award 1986*. 108 slides

107 *Fletcher Challenge Pottery Award 1987*. 125 slides

116 *James Johnson — American Ceramist*. 20 slides

121 *'Index of New Zealand Craftworkers' — Ceramics*. 24 slides. August, 1988

Fabric and Fibre

2 *Magdalena Abakanowicz in Australia 1976*. 30 slides

3 *Embroidered Clothes by Heather Joynes 1976*. 30 slides. "I have tried to create garments that have embroidery as an integral part of the design, in simple styles".

7 *Forms in Fibre 1977*. 19 slides

8 *Sculpture in Fibre 1982*. 42 slides. Record of a US exhibition that set out to document forms created entirely without looms.

10 *Women Artists; Fibre 1978*. 33 slides. Work by selected US weavers and fibre artists

11 *Fabrication '72: 1972*. 54 slides. Fabrication '72 was an invited exhibition of 35 weavers and fibre artists. All artists were invited to consider a space 18"x18"x10".

12 *Double Weave: Applied 1979*. 57 slides. Work by contemporary craftspeople

13 *Weaving: Coverlets*. (no date). 50 slides. No notes for these US slides

14 *Wallhangings*. (no date). 50 slides. No notes for these US slides

16 *Handweaving Unlimited 1977*. 27 slides

17 *Fibreworks — An exhibition held at the Cleveland Museum of Art*. (no date). 77 slides. International Exhibition

20 *Betty Beaumont 3D Fibre Workshop*. (no date). 40 slides. No notes. (pre November 1975)

23 *Fabrics to Finery: Handcrafted Clothes By Dawn De Vere & Pat Grummet*. (no date). 32 slides. De Vere and Grummet are Australian fabric and fibre artists

24 *Cloth Art 1975*. 24 slides. Cloth Art was an exhibition comprising patchwork, machine embroidery and applique by Dawn Fitzpatrick and Lee McGroman held in Sydney 1975.

38 *Batik Artist — Noel Dyrenforth 1978*. 24 slides. Dyrenforth is a leading UK batikist. These slides record his 1978 exhibition in Australia.

39 *New Directions In Fibre*. (no date). 24 slides. Shows how Australian craftspeople are re-defining what fibres mean to them through exploration of materials, techniques and expressions

46 *Heather Dorrough At The Bonython 1976*. 48 slides. Slides show machine embroideries which investigate the possibility of textiles being wearable and able to be displayed as art works.

57 *Soga Discharge Dyeing*. (no date). 22 slides. Soga is a dark brown dye which can be discharged in successively lighter shades black to white. Indonesian technique.

58 *Dyeing With Napthol Dyes*. (no date). 42 slides. Napthol dyes are cold water azoic dyes. They have the potential for use in a variety of crafts. This kit is directed to a wide range of craftspeople.

59 *9th Lausanne Tapestry Biennial 1979*. 24 slides

61 *NZ Academy of Fine Arts Fabric & Fibre Exhibition 1981*. 27 slides. A selection of work entered in this exhibition.

65 *Lois Morrison: American Fabric and Fibre Artists 1982*. 24 slides. Documents her New Zealand exhibition. Shows soft sculpture, applique banners and trapunto work.

66 *Skin Sculpture 1982*. 27 slides. A selection of works from an Australasian show of jewellery and wearable art.

69 *Shared Fabrics Art Workshop 1982*. 24 slides. Documents a shared workshop with four batikists and one calligrapher/potter.

70 *10th Lausanne Tapestry Biennial 1981*. 23 slides

76 *Weaving III: Rugs 1983* 18 slides

77 *First Steps In Felting 1982*. 15 slides. How to create felt fabric from unspun fleece.

78 *Advance Techniques For Fabric Printer-Australia*. 24 slides

79 *The Wollombi Farm Series — Works On Fabric By Heather Dorrough: The House 1983*. 24 slides. "These embroideries are an attempt to convey my love for a particular place". Techniques used are machine embroidery, fabric dyeing, fabric applique, padding, quilting and trapunto.

84 *The Wollombi Farm Series — The Works On Fabric By Heather Dorrough: The Place 1983*. 24 slides. "I have attempted to illustrate some of the many aspects of this particular place". Techniques as for set 79.

93 *Heather Dorrough — Self Portrait 1982*. 48 slides. "A series of mid-life reflections, which erupted as a way of dealing with a dilemma, of working through, and analysing, personal thought processes and emotions."

99 *Craft Dyers Guild First Annual Exhibition*. 21 slides

105 *Small Tapestries: A Scottish Weavers Exhibition 1980*. 43 slides

108 *Australian Wearable Textiles*. 34 slides. Works selected in Australia for inclusion in a major exhibition of Commonwealth textiles shown during the Commonwealth Arts Festival Edinburgh. July — September 1986.

114 *13th Biennale Lausanne. 1987*. 51 slides

120 *'Index of New Zealand Craftworkers' — Textiles*. 24 slides. August, 1988.

124 *Quilts '82*. 24 slides. An exhibition of pieced fabric quilts.

Glass

35 *Mel Simpson Glass*. (no date). 20 slides. Blown glass by New Zealander Mel Simpson. No notes

43 *Images In Stained Glass 1978*. 30 slides. Works by Australian Cedar Prest.

47 *Contemporary Glass 1978*. 79 slides. Selection of contemporary American glass.

48 *New American Glass: Focus West Virginia 1977*. 79 slides

54 *Tony Keupfer of Inglewood: Handblown Glass 1980*. 18 slides

91 *Philips Studio Glass Award, 1984*. 31 slides

96 *Philips Studio Glass Award 1985*. 39 slides

102 *Philips Studio Glass Award 1986*. 46 slides

110 *Glass — Modern British Work*. 18 slides

118 *'Index of New Zealand Craftworkers' — Glass*. 24 slides. August, 1988.

Jewellery/Enamel

4 *Australian Jewellers*. (no date). 24 slides. Selection of current work

26 *Twentieth Century Jewellery From The Ptorzheim Museum*. (no date). 63 slides. Shows work from 1902 to 1976, but mostly work from the 1960's and 1970's. The Ptorzheim Museum, Germany, specialises entirely in jewellery.

27 *Looking At Jewellery*. (no date). 31 slides. Selected pieces by Australian jewellers

28A *William Harper: Recent Works in Enamel 1978*. 29 slides. Cloisonne by American enamelist William Harper

28B *Ellamarie and Jackson Woolley: Enamel and Plastic 1972*. 10 slides. Four slides of enamels, six slides of plastics

37 *Contemporary American Indian Jewellery*. (no date). 66 slides

45 *Stone Cutting and Setting*. (no date). 44 slides. Slides are concerned with some of the lesser known elements of lapidary. Cabouchon stones are covered but not traditional faceted stones.

56 *Objects to Human Scale — Parts I, II, III 1980*. 72 slides. Australian jewellery

85 *Robyn Gordon's Jewellery 1981*. 35 slides. Gordon's jewellery is made of plastic and aims 'to exploit a slice of 20th century technology to express something of my own environment".

100 *New Veneers: New Jewellery*. 21 slides

101 *1985 Compendium Gallery Exhibition of NZ Jewellery, Stone, Bone Carving & Metalsmithing*. 33 slides

103 *American Jewelry Now*. 57 slides. An exciting survey of contemporary handmade jewelry by 57 artists

115A *Bone Stone Shell*. 45 slides

115B *Bone Stone Shell*. 45 slides

117 *'Index of New Zealand Craftworkers' — Jewellery/Metal*. August, 1988. 24 slides

Knitting

25 *Knitted Images 1978*. 34 slides. Australian contemporary knitting

75 *Hand And Machine Knitting*. (no date). 18 slides. Contemporary British knitting.

81 *Brilliant Handknits 1982*. 24 slides. The knitting of Ruby Brillian who uses many Australian motifs in her knitting

Leather

68 *Leather 1982: America, Australia, Canada 1982*. 52 slides. A selection of slides assembled by Canadian leatherworker, Rex Lingwood

Maori craft

72 *Feathers and Fibre 1982*. 39 slides

123 *Contemporary Maori Art*. Several Media. 17 slides

Paper

42 *Handmade Paper*. (no date). 26 slides

Wood

40 *Woodpieces By Heintz Moritz*. (no date). 18 slides

44 *Queensland Woodcraftsmen 1978*. 30 slides. Slides show a wide range of wooden articles

49 *Young Americans: Wood 1977*. 23 slides

89 *Making A Chair — Pearl Dot Furniture Workshops*. 18 slides. A slide set demonstrating the main stages in the making of a plank-backed chair in ash wood

97 *Woodenworks — Five Contemporary Craftsmen*. 50 slides

109 *Fine Furniture Of Christopher Faulkner*. 35 slides

112 *Design For Living 1987*. 48 slides

119 *'Index Of New Zealand Craftworkers' — Wood*. August, 1988. 24 slides

General

5 *Contemporary Australian Craftsmen*. (no date). 48 slides

18 *Festival Of Crafts '78*. 138 slides. National exhibition organised by the Crafts Council

19 *Traditional Polish Crafts*. 20 slides

33 *Crafts Invitational 1979*. 29 slides. Held at the Govett-Brewster Gallery

34 *Australian Crafts: Pottery, Fibre*. (no date). 20 slides

50 *The Bowl 1980 — Mixed Media 1980*. 24 slides

53 *Penland Craft School Exhibition 1980*. (no notes). 35 slides

55 *NZ Academy of Fine Arts Craft Exhibition 1979*. 18 slides

63 *Lombard Award 1981*. 22 slides. A selection of works from the 1981 Lombard Award. The NZ Academy of Fine Arts invited selected craftspeople to participate in this national event.

64 *Crafts Conference 1982: Impromptu Exhibition*. 33 slides

88 *The Great New Zealand Box Show*. 74 slides

92 *Photographing Craftwork — A Course For Craftspeople*. 42 slides

94 *Winstone Ties That Bind Exhibition 1985*. 52 slides

98 *Furniture Designs From The School Of Art*. 40 slides

111 *Winstone Crafts Biennale*. 63 slides

112 *Design For Living, 1987*. 48 slides

122A *'Index Of New Zealand Craftworkers' — Mixed-Media*. August 1988. 24 slides

122B *'Index Of New Zealand Craftworkers' — Mixed-Media*. August 1988. 24 slides

126 *Kahurangi*. 24 slides. Treasures from New Zealand. A selection of exhibits

Articles

The following articles have appeared in journals recently received by the Resource Centre. These articles can be seen in the Resource Centre or copies can be obtained. Requests for copies should be accompanied by payment of 25c per page plus SAE.

The Bottom Line, by Susan Tyler. On press coverage for craftspeople. Although specific to English conditions and publications, Tyler's advice is easily transferable to New Zealand, and particularly for those craftspeople who are looking for techniques in the pursuit of a professional career in crafts.
Crafts, Sept/Oct 1988, pp 16-17.

An American Tradition — Charleston Sweet Grass Baskets. Columbia River Basketmakers. New England and Shaker Baskets. Three lovely articles on different sorts of basketmaking. In particular the work of Mary Foreman Jackson of Charleston, South Carolina, is stunning. American Negro, Indian and Shaker traditions are featured here.
Fibrearts, No. One, pp 41-48.

"Do-It-Yourself" Press, by Kathy Crump. Papermaker and printmaker Crump's story of how she came to need and acquire a homemade press for squeezing the water from newly formed handmade sheets of paper. Designed and built by Kathy's landscape architect husband Don, the press can be constructed from the drawings shown for a cost of around NZ$300 (or so they say).
Hand Papermaking, Summer 1988, pp 23-25.

Primitive Firings — three reports. Short reports of pit-firing by Barry Hayes, above-ground pit-firing by Wendy Dobson, and the anti-smoking black-fire kiln by Hedley Potts. Clear, precise, informative.
Pottery in Australia, August 1988, pp 30-35.

Pate de Verre: The French Connection, by Paul Hollister. A short history, with dashes of English and American thrown in, of the 'glass paste' tradition. Well, if you must be precise, '... crushed or powdered glass, usually coloured by metallic oxides, mixed into a thick paste with a bridging agent such as sodium silicate dissolved in water. The mixture is introduced into a mould of refractory material and fired until fused. The result is a glass that may resemble ceramic, alabaster, marble, stone, or even other glasses ...'
American Craft, Aug/Sept 1988, pp 40-47.

Natural Dyeing, by several authors. A roundup of information on the subject, with many recipes, some interesting history, lots of detailed information, and a bibliography.
Craft Dyers Guild, September 1988, pp 8-13.

Colorful Crochet, by Adriene Cruz. The writer says, 'I don't use a pattern, and I seldom measure. Nor do I check the gauge before I begin a design. I never know exactly what will develop. My only tools are my yarn, hooks, clippers, and finishing needles'. She calls her technique 'tapestry crochet', and although she discovers her designs in the process of working, this article is nevertheless a fascinating 'how to do it'.
Threads Magazine, Aug/Sept 1988, pp 64-67.

Shaker Rag Rugs, by Cheryl Anderson. Repeated launderings over many years, and continual exposure to ultra-violet light, have faded or disintegrated what remains of early Shaker textiles. Originally however these works were bold in colour and intricate in design. The author has researched and reproduced original Shaker designs, and here writes about some of her findings.
Threads Magazine, Aug/Sept 1988, pp 43-47.

Quilting Strip by Strip, by Judith Larzelere. 'How to make large expanses of uniform colour visually interesting' is how Judith Larzelere characterises the challenge in her banded fabric quilts. With a technique based originally on traditional Seminole strip piecing, she takes a 'color field' approach of a sort inspired by the paintings of such artists as Mark Rothko and Jules Olitzki.
Threads Magazine, Aug/Sept, 1988, pp 56-58.

Embroidery from Japan's Snow Country, by Hiroko Ogawa. 'Sashiko' (doing stitching) patterns look complicated but are actually lines of running stitches that never touch one another. Embroiderer Ogawa says the technique is 'easy to learn and offers many creative possibilities'. A 'how to' with small bibliography and slightly larger list of suppliers.
Threads Magazine, Aug/Sept 1988, pp 23-26.

2ND NEW ZEALAND CRAFTS BIENNALE

2nd New Zealand Crafts Biennale
September 1989

Sponsored by CHALLENGE PROPERTIES LTD
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Entry to the exhibition and competition is
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For a prospectus, please write to:
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