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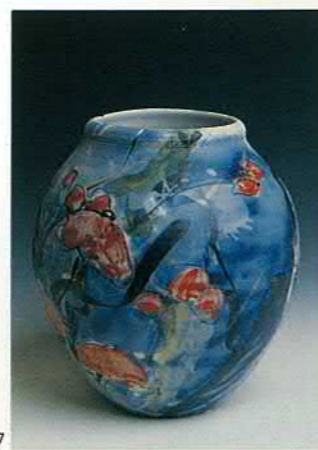
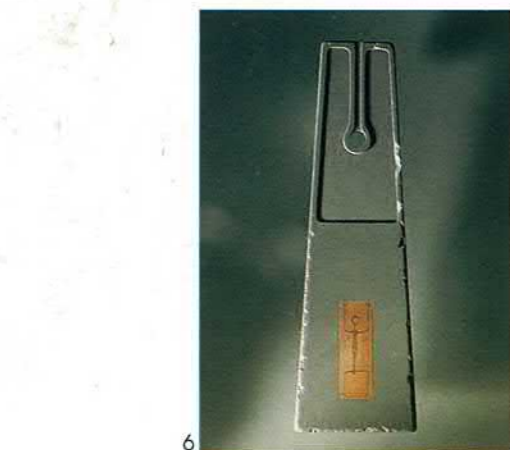
The Crafts Council of New Zealand has selected eight exquisite works from the **INDEX OF NEW ZEALAND CRAFT WORKERS** for the first set of coloured notecards and envelopes now available in packs of eight. Size 150mm x 105mm folded.



1: **Malcolm Harrison**. *Winged Mermaids*. Height 42cm. Photograph: Anne Nicholas.
 2: **Suzy Pennington**. *Fragments of Time*. Ripped, stitched and dyed canvas and applied fabric. 156x116cm. Photograph: Julia Brooke-White.



3: **Mark Piercey**. Bowl. Spalted European Beech. 10x18cm. Photograph: Simon White.
 4: **Ann Robinson**. Ice bowl. Glass. 25x38cm. Photograph: Ray Foster.
 5: **Merilyn Wiseman**. Wood-fired box. Clay. 17x17cm. Photograph: Howard Williams.
 6: **John Edgar**. Tablet. Argillite, copper and silver. Height 20cm. Photograph: M. Savidan.
 7: **Royce McGlashen**. *Poppyfields*. Porcelain, sulphates and low temperature colours. 24x21cm. Photograph: Geoffrey C. Wood.
 8: **Paul Annear**. Earrings in jade, sodalite and carnelian. 4cm across. Photograph: Haru Sameshima.



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Crafts Council Magazine 32 Winter 1990



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- Cover: Rob Levin: Hamburger Cup #2. 1986. 15" high. Photo: Dan Bailey.
- Editor: Alan Loney

Praises from afar

Accolades to Alan Brown! His article *Light - our common medium* says it all. It should be waved under the noses of all who teach art, craft, anywhere. And it should be hung in our classrooms to remind us of our place and purpose.

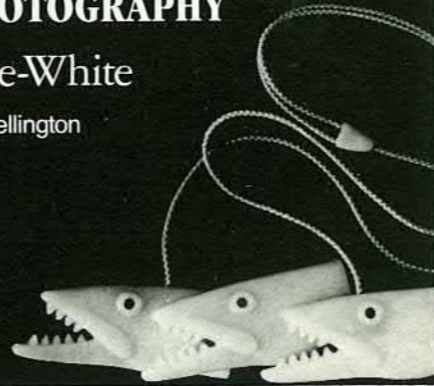
Thank you Alan - and thanks to NZ Crafts for printing it.

Louisa Simons
United Kingdom

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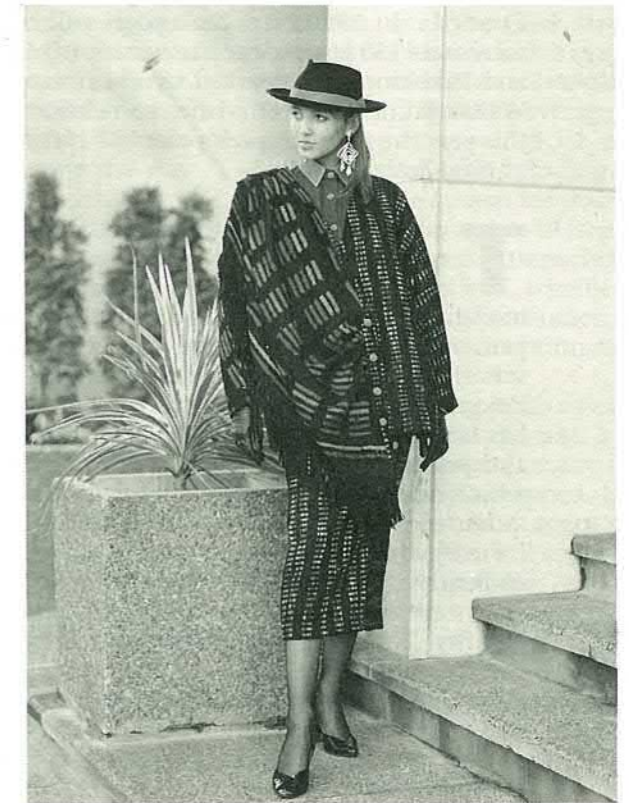
□ Rick Rudd and Bryce Smith and the general efforts of the NZ Society of Potters have been successful in getting the recent high ACC levy of \$2.95 per \$100 of earnings down to \$1.30. Dr Michael Cullen, Associate Minister of Labour, said in his letter to the Society, that the "case had merit and accordingly I recommended to the Government that the levy rate for Pottery (hand-crafted) be amended". The levy class and rate for the industrial description "Pottery (hand-crafted) manufacture, selling" is now class 36, and, as mentioned above, \$1.30 per \$100 of earnings. This is the second time the Society of Potters has been obliged to undertake this exercise, and the successful outcome is a tribute to the Society's energy and competence. Potters everywhere will welcome this news.

□ Compendium Gallery is planning its inaugural NATIONAL BOOKBINDING AND CALLIGRAPHY EXHIBITION from 29 July to 11 August, which aims to focus and redefine public and media attention on new work in these areas. Increased awareness and appreciation is being shown to some extent, but it is important, says Compendium's director Pamela Elliott, that this interest be sustained and developed. She says she is keen to encourage work with design values appropriate to New Zealand in the 1990s, while also insisting on craft of the highest standard. The Gallery will select from work submitted, and all work is to be for sale. Enquiries should be made to: Compendium Gallery, 49 Victoria Road, Devonport, Auckland 9, (09) 451-577.

□ We are sad to report that Theo Moorman, who came to New Zealand and exhibited here in 1981, has died, aged 82. Born in Leeds in 1907, she studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London with Walter Taylor who had been an apprentice of William Morris. As a weaver her work was abstract, but its motifs were taken as much from natural forms as from art and architecture. Many of her most important commissions were for religious buildings, in particular for Manchester, Gloucester and Wakefield cathedrals. She was well known as an inspiring teacher, mainly in the United States, and in 1975 published *Weaving as an Art Form*, which blended technical exposition with autobiography. She was awarded the MBE in 1977.

□ Two Wellington women, spinner and weaver Robyn Parker and designer Helen Barber, have been announced winners of the 1990 CRAFT IN WOOL AWARD FOR DESIGN IN FASHION sponsored by the New Zealand Wool Board.

Robyn Parker has been weaving for twelve years. She is a past runner up in the Award, while Helen Barber is a graduate of Wellington Polytechnic and a frequent finalist in the Benson and Hedges' Fashion Awards. They have



worked together over the last two years, and their mutual love of bright colours is often a feature of their work.

The Craft in Wool Award for Design in Fashion, which carries a \$5000 prize, is run by the New Zealand Wool Board to encourage and promote excellence in fashion garments designed and made in handwoven wool fabric.

The 1990 judging panel comprised designer, Rosaria Hall from Christchurch; Beverley Erikson, a Wellington based designer and weaver who has been working with wool for the last 15 years; and Shona Jennings, the Auckland based editor of MORE Fashion and one of this year's Benson and Hedges' Fashion Award judges.

An entry from Dianne Baker and Joyce Tam, also from Wellington, won the judges' praise and was highly commended. Their entry, a three piece man's suit (jacket, trousers and vest) with a co-ordinated shirt, was 100 percent wool.

The Craft in Wool Award is jointly administered by the Crafts Council of New Zealand and the New Zealand Spinning, Weaving and Woolcrafts Society. A selection of the Award entries was exhibited at the Crafts Council Gallery in Wellington from May 3rd - 26th.

"In 1990, it will be 25 years since the foundation of the NZ Chapter of the Worlds Crafts Council... In 1990 New Zealanders will commemorate 150 years of the partnership of Maori and Pakeha people marked by the Treaty of Waitangi... The CCNZ wishes to celebrate in this year the unique development of 150 years of New Zealand crafts."

To be honest, there have been times in recent weeks when I've regretted writing those words to the 1990 Commission 14 months ago. Moments trying to find the best path through the undergrowth of process - consultation, negotiation, evaluation, implementation - when the wide swing of a machete blade has had its appeal. It's time to remind myself - and perhaps you too - of what *Mau Mahara*, which will be the largest exhibition ever mounted by the Crafts Council, is about.

Firstly, we want to take to the widest possible audience of New Zealanders an exhibition that shows craft as a vital source of our cultural identity. The way we are doing this is by focussing on the stories that craft objects can tell about how objects are used to hold meanings and memories.

Now that the exhibition selection is complete, and the stories are being gathered up, we are finding that our approach is yielding a rich and wide-ranging insight on life in New Zealand over the past 150 years.

Equally as exciting has been the process of compiling a chronology of "significant events" for crafts that will be part of the *Mau Mahara* publication. The allied craft guilds, the cultural, educational and social organisations and individuals we have consulted for our "timeline" have produced their major facts and figures which, when massed together, present a unique

and fascinating "quick" history. In the process of collecting such information, of course, both they and we have found much more than can be used in the limited pages of our exhibition book. Ten more publishing projects beckon! But this is exactly what we would wish to be happening, as it describes another, but equally important goal for our 1990 project. That is, that our 1990 project supports the craft community's efforts to build an understanding of its history and role in the development of New Zealand.

One of my favourite stories so far is that of Silvio Reardon who describes the way in which he learnt to make his supplejack crayfish pots. With moving simplicity, Silvio evokes both a sense of loss for a passing age, but also the pragmatic "I'll use what comes to hand and take things as they come" values that he shares with many other New Zealanders.

I think of my last visit to my family in Palmerston North. My brother shows me what he has been making. Cages of wire twisted and bent and fashioned that he'll take with him on his next trip up the coast fishing. Hinaki. He waves a dismissive hand at his first try, now rusting in the ruins of a late autumn vegetable patch. The latest effort, his third, we agree is a finer work, more durable. I try and tell him what we've been up to, about Cliff Whiting's hinaki in *Mau Mahara*. He gets interested in the story of regained skills, in the use of native material. He agrees, in older bro fashion, that the hinaki might be worth a trip down to Wellington, even to an art gallery.

And I look forward to showing him around.

Margaret Belich
Executive Director
Crafts Council of New Zealand

Sidestepping in the minefield

Importing and exporting craft in and out of New Zealand has provided many people with many surprises in recent times. Ann Porter, who was Co-ordinator of the 2nd NZ Crafts Biennale, reflects on the lessons learnt in that exercise...

It is a minefield. The rules and regulations, the exceptions, the anomalies, all conspire to create a bureaucratic nightmare. It will seem at times that Customs Department Officials are poised every inch along the way ready to frustrate any attempts at clarification or simplicity by thrusting mountainous quantities of paperwork into aching arms, demanding cheques of horrific proportions, and talking in foreign tongues of weird-sounding codes and clauses you can never hope to have heard of.

Perhaps exporting butter, milk, beef, or importing oil, rubber or steel is a comparatively simple process with the rules and regulations readily understood by all involved, but craft is another matter. It has no categories, no identification of its own, and my experience during the 2nd New Zealand Craft Biennale convinces me that the single best piece of advice I can give anyone contemplating importing and exporting craft must be GET YOURSELF A CUSTOMS AGENT.

Everyone involved with that exhibition will be aware that we were ill-prepared for the unexpected high level of interest shown by overseas artists. Following the judges' selection we were faced with importing a large number of individual works from different countries, and in a multitude of disciplines and materials. Compounding the problem was the time factor. Artists had to be advised, work packed and despatched to New Zealand, cleared through customs, priced, catalogued, photographed and displayed for exhibition in little over a month. A few preparatory phone calls, a brief foray into the codes and I was convinced, this was no place for the neophyte. To my everlasting gratitude the Crafts Council agreed to engage a firm of brokers. What it cost in fees was undoubtedly saved in efficiency, time and a certain degree of retained sanity on the part of the co-ordinator.

While well aware that the experience of the Biennale is not going to be

a common one, the rules stay the same, and the lessons learnt may well be of assistance in the individual situation. Bear in mind the average busy customs department official is not going to spend hours finding your way around the system for you; even if you employ an agent, he/she may never have exported or imported craft before, and it is as well, whether you go it alone or engage assistance, to be as armed with as much information as possible.

One of the major pitfalls of exporting and importing is the cost. It is an expensive business with many unexpected 'bombsHELLS' dropped. If you employ an agent, the agent's fee, quotable in advance, will cover clearance documentation fees and handling charges; but will not cover licences, duty, insurance, storage, freight or local taxes. An agent should, however, be able to provide a fairly accurate idea of the costs involved.

Licences and Duty

Most goods arriving in New Zealand will require an import licence and duty will be payable.

There are however, three areas of exception that apply to craft.

1. If a work is recognised as an 'Original Work of Art' it may arrive duty free and does not require an import licence. However, it is entirely up to the Customs Department as to what constitutes a 'Work of Art'. While historians, critics, artists and craftpersons alike struggle with the endless Art/Craft debate, the Customs Officer seems to suffer no such dilemma. In my experience, if it is a painting (even better in a frame) it is art; anything else is not! However, there have been isolated victories and it is worth giving it a try.
2. Under new CER agreements generally most goods of Australian origin are licence and duty exempt. The exception in the craft area is jewellery.



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3. Ceramic ornaments exceeding the value of NZ\$100 from anywhere in the world enjoy a similar privilege. This category does not include tableware.

Duty is payable as a percent of the stated value of the work, and the percentage changes from category to category. The same materials may well be used in two items but one will attract duty, the other not, e.g. spoons made of precious metals came duty free into New Zealand for the Biennale because they came under the codes relating to 'cutlery', while jewellery of the same material did not.

Goods being exported under the value of NZ\$1000 do not require an export entry, but it is most advisable to complete one. It is a vital record to prove the goods have left New Zealand in case of loss, breakage, or proof required by the Inland Revenue Department.

Local Taxes

All goods arriving in New Zealand are subject to GST charges. This tax is payable to the Customs Department before they will release the goods. You will also be charged GST on freight charges incurred during transit, even though all freight may well have been prepaid by the sender. One of the major difficulties is New Zealand work returning to New Zealand, often after an overseas exhibition. It is also liable to GST charges even if it is your work returning to you and not a buyer in sight. The outraged artist who is registered for GST, and paying good money to get their own piece back, at least has the satisfaction of knowing they can claim on their next return. The unregistered artist is in a more difficult position, and the options are fairly limited: either ensure the exhibition is a registered one, or fall upon the cus-

toms officer's shoulder crying poverty and mortgage - it has worked.

Work for export is of course exempt GST, but will be liable for the local taxes when it reaches its destination. Most countries have equally pernicious revenue collecting methods and you need to be aware of them. Your customs agent can advise you of the charges you will be liable for but there seems little in practical terms you can do to avoid them. After the Biennale, unsold work was sent back freight forward to the exhibitors, and in two cases the accumulated charges incurred in taxes, storage and internal freight within their own country were astronomical and far in excess of the stated value of the work.

The importance of packaging, accompanying information and valuation cannot be over-emphasized. Time put into this area is well worth the effort.

Packaging

Obviously, all work should be packaged with due consideration to its fragility, the distance it has to travel, and the amount of handling it will receive. The assumption must be made, whether exporting or importing, that the work will be subject to inspection by Customs. In New Zealand 20% of work is opened, and Customs Departments are not liable for any damage incurred. Provide detailed handling instructions, and emphasise the breakable nature of the contents. If you don't want fingermarks all over your work, include a pair of cotton gloves and state what they are for. One sterling silver exhibit arrived for the Biennale complete with gloves and a small jar of polish.

Description of Work

Accurate and full descriptions are vital for a number of reasons. They lessen the possibility of the package being opened, and, along with valuation, play a large part in ascertaining the necessity of import licences and the amount of duty payable. We provided photographs for all the work imported for the Biennale and this, along with our agent being fully informed on the contents of each package, meant very little work was opened. The Customs Department consulted with the agent.

Consider Agricultural requirements. Nothing will attract the Department's eye faster than descriptions such as 'basket made from seed pod and branches' or 'cloak made from feathers'. Specify in detail the materials used and the treatments they have undergone. If the feathers have been boiled for six hours in dye say so.

Get your agent to help you with the labelling of goods; some attract horrendous duty and there is always the possibility of a quite legal way around it. For example the clothing industry is protected in New Zealand. A raffia cloak exhibited in the Biennale was unfortunately exported from the United States by the artist as a 'cape'. As such we were required to pay 59% duty which came to over NZ\$1000. The piece was not intended to be worn, and if imported as a 'raffia wall hanging' it may well have not had any import duty payable on it. The anomalies in this area are almost beyond comprehension, and it is well to be aware of them before embarking on a very costly exercise.

Valuation

Again, the value you place on your work will determine the amount of duty payable. Be realistic and honest. The materials used have a quantifi-

able value which the customs Department can readily assess and adjust if deemed inappropriate (always upwards). The value placed on artistic input is more difficult for them to ascertain. However, the higher the price you put on it, the higher the duty you will pay.

The specifics over, there remain two general pieces of advice. Allow plenty of time for Customs clearances (minimum two weeks), and where possible engage a freight company and send your work by air. The obvious advantage of speed is in less handling, in addition the freight

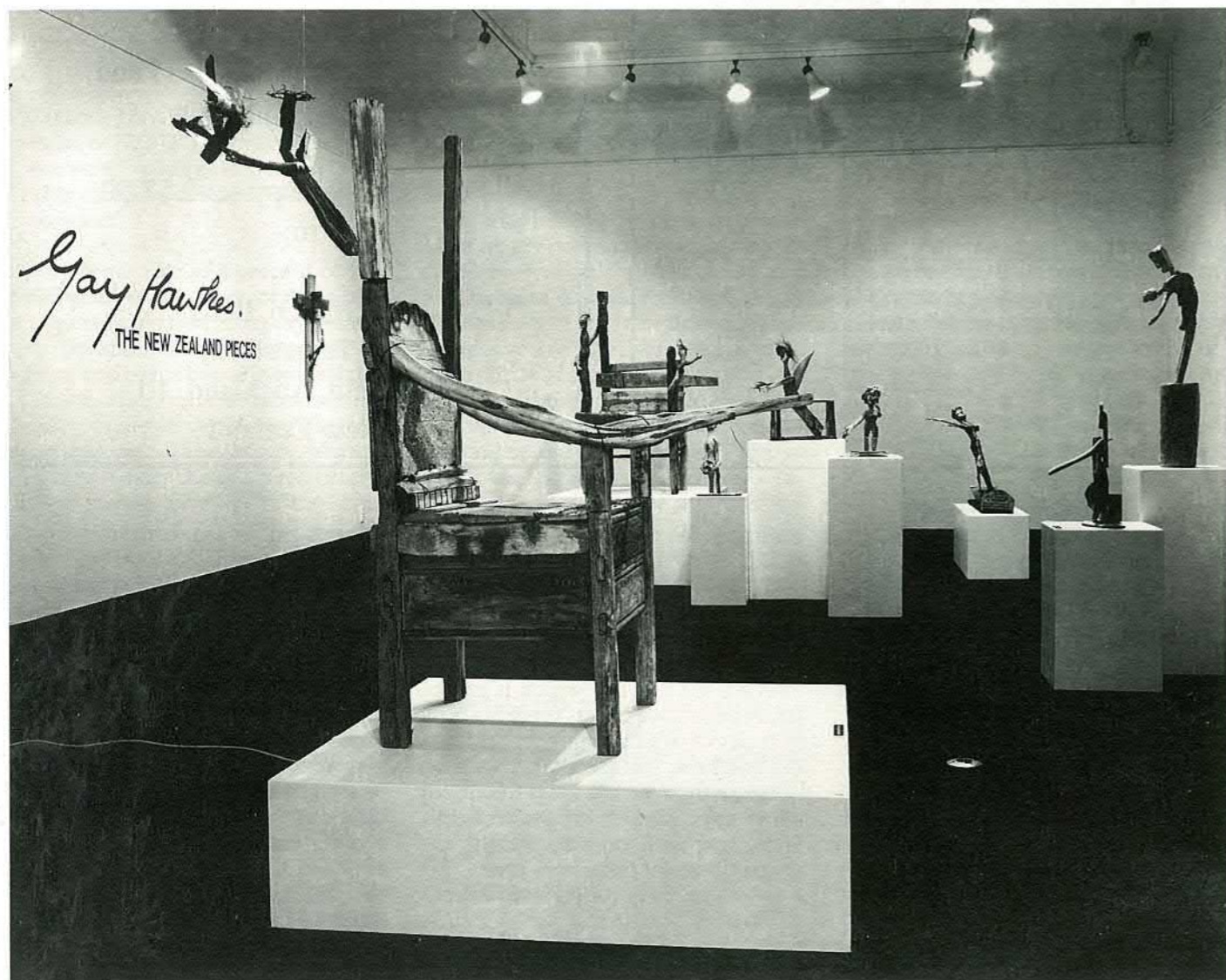
company has the ability to almost instantly track the location of the work; both these factors reduce the possibility of loss or damage. It is costly, but often in relation to the value of the work it is still acceptable. The alternatives are sea freight, (which is exorbitantly expensive unless there is a large quantity of work being sent), and New Zealand Post, surface mail. This latter is the method we use most frequently when exporting from Masterworks. There is a limit on size, weight and insurable value; but where time is not a factor, we have found it a perfectly satisfactory system for sending small work. It is vital to ask for and retain proof of postage. If breakage does occur it is important that the recipient of the goods is aware that they must keep

all packaging and make the initial complaint through their local Post Office.

It all sounds very complicated and frustrating, and it is often more complicated and frustrating than it sounds. However, for the craft community in New Zealand it is very desirable that locally produced work has overseas exposure, and conversely that overseas work of international quality can be seen here. It is to be hoped that exhibitions such as the Biennale will give the crafts movement a credibility at Ministerial level. This may lead to the clarification of anomalies in regulations which contribute to the present situation, and hopefully, facilitate a circumstance in which an interchange of work can more easily (and less expensively) take place.

PAULA SAVAGE

The New Zealand Pieces of Gay Hawkes



This article was reproduced with the kind permission of *The NZ Listener*

Gay Hawkes. General view of show at the Bath-House, Rotorua. 1990.

Found objects provide the raw materials for Australian artist Gay Hawkes' assemblage furniture and small scale figurative sculptures. Disintegrating flotsams, driftwood, weathered timber, broken baubles - the discarded detritus of human endeavour - carved, assembled and sometimes painted, assume a new significance through her work.

Gay Hawkes' sculptural furniture emerges from an indigenous Australian tradition of colonial or "bush" craftsmanship, and, to a lesser degree, contemporary assemblage practices. Beginning with a passion for the simple

The radical design of the work, deceptive in its gaunt simplicity, challenges conventional expectations of furniture. Gay Hawkes insists her sculpture is intended for everyday use. Deceptively fragile, meticulously crafted and assembled with sturdy joinery techniques, the furniture is functional, both physically comfortable and mentally challenging.

An exhibition of Gay Hawkes' work was displayed at the Bath-House, Rotorua's Art and History Museum, before touring to the Sergeant Art Gallery Wanganui, the Govett-Brewster Gallery New Plymouth, the

Programme in conjunction with the Bath-House, Rotorua. Gay Hawkes beachcombed remote North Island beaches during her visit. The gathering of the materials is an important part of her creative process.

As sculpture Gay Hawkes' work is confronting and particularly articulate. As an artist her aesthetic is responsive to historical and contemporary events in Australian social, cultural and political history, with concerns that are consistently addressed in her work. The furniture has the raw presence of the harsh and splendid Australian landscape and underscores



DAVID COOK



DAVID COOK

and unpretentious "bush" carpentry of pioneer outback settlers who, in an alien and harsh environment, were forced to improvise from materials on hand - packing cases, slabs, branches - the artist pursues a belief that her furniture can embody concepts and express an intense relationship with the materials and their environment. In creating objects she acknowledges dissatisfaction with other media, even words, to express her view of the world.

Dowse Art Museum Lower Hutt, and the Gow Langsford Gallery Auckland.

The 'New Zealand Pieces' comprise a dresser, four chairs, and 17 sculptural figures created by the artist in open access workshops at Wairiki Polytechnic, Rotorua, in December 1989, and at the Wanganui Wood Symposium, January 1990. The artist was brought to New Zealand by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Waewae Tapu: Distinguished Visitors

1. Gay Hawkes. Rangitoto. 1989.
2. Gay Hawkes. Angel on the Birdsville Track. 1990.



DAVID COOK

1 Gay Hawkes. Whakarewarewa. 1989.
2 Gay Hawkes. Crucifix. 1990.

the paradox of colonization and a people's tenuous yet enduring hold on the land.

Working in New Zealand as a visiting artist, Gay Hawkes has created furniture that lacks the more complex connotations and historic dimensions of her Australian work, although the elements used carry reminiscences of our antipodean past. The work can be seen more as a 'memento mori' of a place or an event in much the same way as Aboriginal art. The chair *Rangitoto* assembled from flotsam gathered by the artist on a visit to Rangitoto Island is an embodiment of her experience of that place and is comparative to pure landscape art.

Another throne-like assemblage chair *Gonville, Fitzroy Crossing* is decorated with narrative images from media coverage of the recent Papadopoulos affair in Wellington. The left armrest of the chair is a menacing arm, outsized fingers in a stranglehold in the throat of Mr Papadopoulos, and on the opposite armrest two carved spectator figures observe the drama.



DAVID COOK

The narrative identity and characterisation of the miniature sculptured figures may be interpreted as Gay Hawkes' reactions, both positive and negative, to her experience of New Zealand. These figures have the totemic quality of tribal art. A series of politically oriented figures titled *Europe, December, 1989* which have reference to the Romanian revolution - lack the spontaneity and visual excitement of the more autobiographical works.

Gay Hawkes intuitively assembles wood fragments in a highly individual and personal way to create sculptural furniture and figurative sculptures that have an intellectual content, a layering of meaning and significance that is a synthesis of her own philosophical and spiritual perceptions of the world.

In Australia Gay Hawkes has achieved a high measure of critical acclaim. In *The New Zealand Pieces* the artist explores images and ideas to create works that have an evocative power and poignancy outside the boundaries of furniture making traditions in New Zealand.

The Australian Pieces



EVAN CLARK

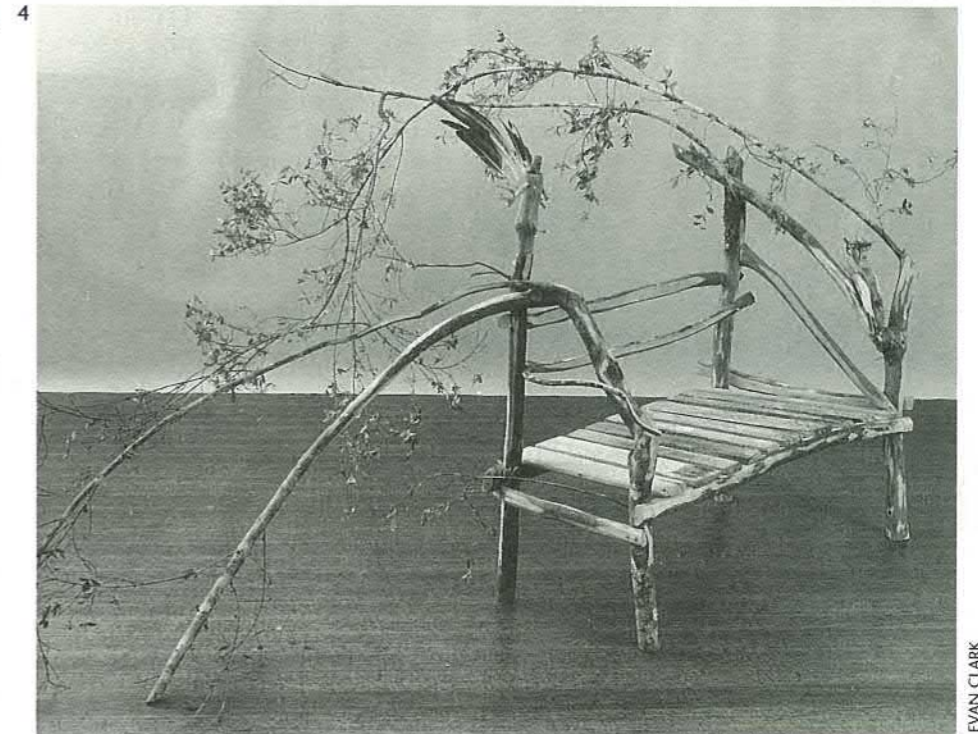


EVAN CLARK



EVAN CLARK

The QEII Arts Council's Waewae Tapu (Distinguished Visitors) Programme was introduced in 1988 through the support of the Minister for the Arts and the New Zealand Lottery Board. It recognises the need to bring visiting experts to New Zealand to conduct classes, workshops and seminars which will enhance the professional development of people working in the arts. The Programme complements the Arts Council's support for national training schools and its professional Development Programmes, which are intended to give New Zealand artists the opportunity to extend their potential and benefit their work through programmes of individual study, both in New Zealand and overseas. Enquiries about the scheme should be sent to: The Manager, Waewae Tapu Scheme, QEII Arts Council, P O Box 3806, Wellington.



EVAN CLARK

1 Gay Hawkes. Sons of Gwalia I. (Gwalia is a ghost town in Western Australia on goldfields, where the artist's parents lived when they married.)
2 Gay Hawkes. Fingal Chair. April 1989.
3 Gay Hawkes. Sons of Gwalia II. 1988.
4 Gay Hawkes. Kjaerlighet i Arvet. March 1989. From rainforest in south-west Tasmania.

The Book Arts Society

The Book Arts Society
 P O Box 958
 Wellington
 Founded 1989
 President: Alan Loney
 Secretary: Ted White
 Membership: 70 Ordinary
 3 Institutional
 Anyone can be a member
 Fees: Individuals \$25
 Institutions \$50
 Publishes a quarterly newsletter

The Book Arts Society was, in an informal way, first discussed among a number of people during May and June of 1989, and the first meeting, of four people, was held on 13 July. From the beginning, the purpose of the proposed Society was clearly formulated: To ensure that the traditional book arts, their practice and their appreciation, became important in the creative life of New Zealand. We knew that with the decline in commercial handcraft skills in the book arts went a rise in the non-commercial interest in those arts. More and more people have in recent years wanted to make handmade paper, to learn calligraphy, to practice bookbinding and so on. The pattern has been the same in this country as it has been in Britain and, more particularly, in the United States.

In New Zealand, many people appreciate the work produced by means of the arts and crafts of the book, but that appreciation has long been a matter of a few individuals with a private interest, or of a few library departments with special collections where staff have always shown an interest. The trouble with this interest, however ready it is to provide book workers with warm fuzzies and a few orders for books, is that the field has never had a brief to stimulate activity in the book arts, or to make the values that attach to them widely and vigorously discussed. Out-

side of a few showings of New Zealand printing and the occasional article in journals like *The Turnbull Library Record*, the traditional arts and crafts of the book in New Zealand are generally unremarked and unrecorded.

It is the determination of the Book Arts Society that that situation shall change. In January 1990, the Society announced its existence publicly by mounting the exhibition, *Art of the Book*, at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Gallery from 8 to 22 January, and Mr J E Traue, Chief Librarian of the Alexander Turnbull Library, gave the opening speech. We were very fortunate in this exercise to have received financial assistance from several companies in the book and book production field, as well as from the QEII Arts Council. Over the two weeks of the show, almost 1900 people visited the Gallery, and, aside from looking at the books on display, saw demonstrations of the book arts given by Adrienne Rewi (papermaking), Paula Newton (marbling), Dennis Stoneham and Michael Lund (bookbinding), MaryRose Leversedge and John Wilkins (calligraphy), and Alan Loney (handprinting). These five activities formed the basis of the exhibition, and, to round things off, equipment and materials associated with these activities were also on display.

To clarify the scope of the Society's activities and interest, our definition of "book arts" is: The traditional arts and crafts of the book. The term includes the following: typography, fine letterpress printing, hand bookbinding, hand papermaking, marbling, calligraphy, paste paper decorating, box making, book illustration, book collecting, bibliography, and the histories of these in and beyond New Zealand. Central to all these is the development and appreciation of design.

At the first meeting of the Society on 13 July 1989, present were Bill Wieben, John Quilter, Tony Arthur, and myself. By the time of the next meeting, Fay McAlpine, Roderick Cave and

Penny Griffith had joined the team, and Ted White was successfully approached to complete the eight-person Board we felt we needed soon after. In March this year, Penny Griffith had sadly to resign from the Board, her job having taken her to Nelson, and Moira Long has become the new Board member.

What we do as a Society for the rest of the year in large measure depends on how many members we get, or to put it another way, on how much money we can raise. With our first Newsletter we have begun our quarterly review of the book arts, which is free to members. There, we report on providing the Department of Internal Affairs with a press and a printer to help celebrate its 150th birthday. In June the Society will put on printing, bookbinding and calligraphy displays and demonstrations at the Booksellers Conference in Auckland's Aotea Centre. The production of *Art of the Book* exhibition catalogue is under way and can be ordered from the Society. Further plans are afoot to design and produce a BAS bookplate which members can buy from the Society; book arts workshops will be organised for later in the year; and details are being worked out for an annual Book Arts Awards exhibition.

We feel that the interest shown in the Society to date is very heartening. We have a strong base on which to build for the future, and we look forward to a very busy year ahead.

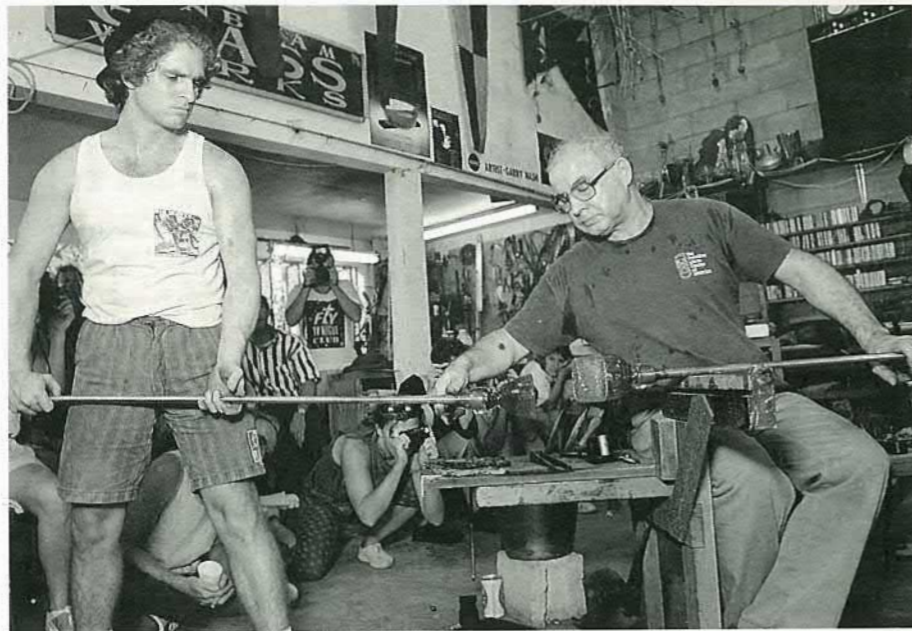
A hot time with hot glass



Lino Tagliapietra.

At the end of his last visit to New Zealand, eighteen or so months ago, American master glassblower Richard Marquis commented that the standard of glassblowing in New Zealand was reaching the point where he felt we would benefit from a workshop with Lino Tagliapietra. Sure, we all thought, perhaps we could hold it on the moon!

Dante Marioni (left) and Lino Tagliapietra.



SALLY TAGG / THE LISTENER

Maestro Lino Tagliapietra is arguably the greatest glassblower alive today. At 56 years of age he is taking life a little slower and has virtually given up taking workshops. Even worse, Lino was born on the glassblowing island of Murano, Venice, in 1934, and until 1982 rarely ever left the area. With of course no cars in Venice, both Lino and his wife Lina suffer anxiety attacks at the mere thought of being driven across town. How do you convince such a person to travel on an aircraft to the opposite end of the world?

This was not the worst of it. To be able to make anything other than very basic work the maestro would need two other master glassblowers and several skilled assistants, over one hundred kgs of baggage and equipment, and the full resources of the

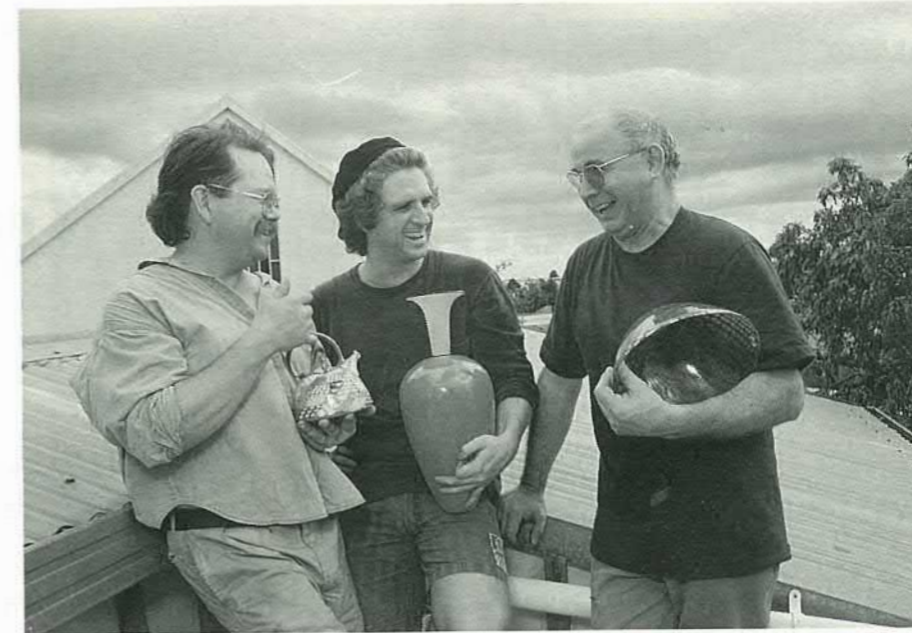
Sunbeam Glassworks in Ponsonby, Auckland. A special kiln - half-scale replica of a seventeenth century oven - would have to be built also. The whole thing was starting to look like one of those 'what-if' fantasies that grow out of all proportion very late at night around a table, over a bottle or two.

Endless phone calls and letters between Dick Marquis in Seattle Washington USA, and our small group followed. A plan was hatched: the University in Canberra Australia would take part in the venture; there would be two venues and the travel costs would be split between the two groups. Some scouting around turned up two sources of possible funding to assist with the venture. Things were starting to look promising. The QEII Arts Council and the 1990 Commission

agreed to help with the financing. The decision was made to go-for-it.

Of course something had to go wrong. No sooner had we finished with the self-congratulations and marvelling-at-our-own-cleverness than we received word from Canberra that they were pulling out of the whole thing. The cost and general logistics of the venture were beyond their means. In an effort to save things an urgent message was sent to Dick Marquis.

A large-scale recruiting drive was launched. Glass workers were urged to go through address books, filing cabinets, old letters etc to come up with addresses of anyone who may be interested in coming to the workshop. If we could attract enough participants we hoped to be able to carry on with the workshop on our own. Altogether nearly two hundred invitations were



SALLY TAGG / THE LISTENER

Richard Marquis, Dante Marioni and Lino Tagliapietra out of the heat and into the open air with finished works.

sent out both in New Zealand and overseas.

By now it had been decided that the line-up of guests would be: Lino Tagliapietra, Richard Marquis, and Dante Marioni — all world class glass workers, any one of whom would have drawn a large audience.

Such a lure proved too much for around forty glass workers. Sixteen of the participants made the journey from Australia, some from as far away as Perth. One student from Tokyo University even made the trip. The workshop finally got under way on the 19 February 1990, after almost one and a half years of planning.

Richard Marquis and Dante Marioni arrived two days before the start of the workshop to set things up. This in the glassblowing world means moving any piece of equipment that weighs less than two tonnes and is not bolted to the floor. After this manoeuvre was complete things started to happen very quickly.

The usual day or so spent feeling out the glass and general layout of an unfamiliar workshop was bypassed completely. By the end of the first hour even the most ardent cynic was spellbound. The first two days of demonstrations covered early glass from various centres dating from the fourteenth century AD. Beautiful, intricate, exact.

The co-ordination and timing between three such masters of the medium was a joy to behold. Even the visitors and media representatives were taken by this mysterious dance we call glassblowing. The precise amounts of glass were delivered to the exact places needed with almost no communication between workers at all. A slight nod, an indecipherable muttering in Italian, and off the pipe would fall another masterpiece. The whole thing was very humbling.

After several days everyone was well into the spirit of the thing. For many their first words learnt in Italian were names of glassblowing techniques like; Zanfrico, Retticello, Vetre De Trina, Filligrana, Lattichino.

Richard Marquis and Dante Marioni made some of their own work later in the week. These demonstrations were greeted with as much enthusiasm as the earlier demonstrations. Richard Marquis is a very highly respected master in America. He spent two years

working in Italy on a Fullbright Scholarship twenty years ago, and was professor of glass at the University of California for several years. He has work in scores of museums around the world.

Dante Marioni is considered by many to be the most promising young glassblower to emerge in recent times. His father, the well-known glass artist Paul Marioni, made it possible for Dante to get an early start, and at twenty-five Dante has been blowing for just on ten years. All this is of no use of course without the talent he so obviously has. Dante has proved he will be a force to be reckoned with in the coming years.

And so passed the week. New friends were made, old acquaintances renewed, and dare I say it, a few old rivals reconciled.

This workshop will always remain one of the highlights of my glassblowing career and I am pleased and proud to have been involved as a host, and participant.

Richard Marquis (left) with Dante Marioni doing a lot of concentrating.



SALLY TAGG / THE LISTENER

The Commonwealth Quilt



The Commonwealth Quilt. 1990.

A wonderful tradition was initiated during the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in 1986 - a quilt representing friendship, and made by women, was created to present to the host city of the next Games. With the precedent set it was the turn of the Auckland 1990 Festival Committee to respond accordingly; to facilitate the making of a quilt that would be sent to Victoria, Canada, in honour of the 1994 Commonwealth Games.

Commonwealth Quilt, designed and made in Auckland, is the vision of artist Carole Shepherd, who was first approached in 1987 to submit ideas for the project.

Originally there were suggestions that the work be Maori, or perhaps that there be two different quilts. Joan Caulfield, a member of the Northern Regional Arts Council, was invited to co-ordinate the project, and she played a major role in determining that there be one quilt representing the whole country. It was decided that the work was to reflect where Auckland, and in fact New Zealand, was at that stage of its history, and to identify its place in the Pacific.

ALBERT MCCABE



The Commonwealth Quilt. Detail showing borders, patterns, flying geese and interior.

ALBERT MCCABE

Another decision taken well into the project, a decision which was to create a lot of work, was to make a duplicate quilt. The purpose of this second quilt, which is still in progress, is to show the effort and collaborative aspects of the process to the women here in New Zealand, and it will be displayed in a public space.

Carole Shepherd's credentials were good. As a highly respected mixed-media artist and teacher she had worked with fabric and fibre, and was even a dab hand with needle and sewing machine as well as paint brushes and chisels. She had worked collaboratively with women before, and she understood well the consultation process and its political implications, and she identified with the theme.

Of utmost importance for Carole was to consult first with the tangata whenua, and to work with a Maori artist, which is where Toi Maihi came in. Toi was invited to design the Maori element of the quilt.

The Pacific Island Woman's Association was also invited to be part of the project and Luseane Kolo'i became the co-ordinator of the Pacific Island contribution to the quilt. She in turn enlisted the help of other women, and Tai'i Turepu Carpentier, the Convenor for the Visual Arts Committee for the South Pacific Arts Council, took responsibility for another portion of the quilt.

Carole met with Toi and Luseane early in 1989 to discuss the format of the work. They would be working with several different women's groups towards an immovable deadline. Monthly meetings where information and food were shared became an integral part of the process even though some of the women had difficulty in attending.

The Auckland Patchwork and Quilters Guild and the Embroiderers Guild were also invited to participate, and both groups agreed to be part of the project. For them, as for other people involved, it was a major learning experience, and they expressed pleasure at having the opportunity to work on a major project designed by an artist.

The accompanying works on show at the Fisher Gallery, where the quilt was first displayed, reflected not just the calibre of the artists involved in the project, but also their diversity. Harnessing this talent, and focussing on it, takes skill beyond artistic ability alone. Documentation of Judy Chicago's massive collaborative projects in the United States suggests that the collaborative journey is not to be undertaken lightly.

Carole pays tribute to the hard work and dedication of the women involved, not only to meet the deadline, but to take responsibility, to rework some areas, to set high standards, and to produce exceptional work. From the start, although the design was distinctively Carole's, she let go a good deal of the control. There were no compromises to be made in the structure of the work, but she left the decisions like design, colour and materials to Toi, Luseane and Tai'i regarding their respective components.

The design features a central panel representing the land, sea, sky and conservation of our natural heritage. The realism of the carefully chosen elements (not a sheep or kiwi in sight!) is visually balanced by the abstract background representing water as the life force and the rich borders representing the cultural mix of the country.

The bush and shore elements are graphically illustrated. The native clematis flower is a healing plant and grows on the 'roof of the world', while the flax flower represents strength of the people and the land. The Great Barrier Island lizard is almost extinct, and in contrast to the fern leaf which is universal, basic rather than spectacular, and is able to grow in a variety of environments. Paua is a food source, and the rock which Maori inscribed in pre-European times represents civilisation before colonisation. Each of these elements is meticulously embroidered and quilted, and the selected fabrics give strength to the images. Delegation of tasks by no means diminished the standards. The work is exquisite in its detailing, as in the minute red French knots on the muted green fern leaf, and the delicate fine stitching of the clematis flower.

But it is the sparkling minutiae of the red flax flower, the shimmering paua shell, the solid rock, and the scattering of tiny shells stitched to the intersection of quilting lines that gave Carole credibility regarding her knowledge and ability to sew, for these were a direct contribution by her.

Above and below the centre panel are borders of pieced triangles that represent the migration of peoples. This flying geese pattern, a repetitive triangular motif, is a strong design element in itself and one that Carole has used in previous works. The idea was to give a finish and lushness to the piece without intruding on the central image, and at the same time, making design connections with the rest of the work. The fabrics chosen for this component are from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, China, India and many countries of Europe and Asia, and symbolise migration to New Zealand over the past 150 years.



CAROLE SHEPHEARD

Pat Britton from the Auckland Patchworks and Quilters Guild doing final finishing on the Quilt. She possibly did more than anyone on this project and, says Carole Shepheard, was a joy to work with - committed and supportive.

On either side of the central panel are the contributions by the Maori and Pacific Island groups. Originally the brief was for single strips on both sides. When Toi was presented with the brief however, two themes immediately sprang to mind. "The first was ARAMOANA, Paths of the Sea, an abstraction of the movement of the sea that both unites and divides the nations of the Pacific. The second was PURAPURA WHETU, the stylized pattern indicating stars scattered like seed across the universe, for the stars were a major navigational aid of all seafarers."

Toi's dilemma was in having to choose only one of these options, and she was delighted when Carole decided that single strips looked meagre and needed to be doubled up. As a result Toi's designs gave strength to the outer edges of the quilt. While Toi developed the themes she decided to add a slow, secondary wave pattern to the aramoana design, to indicate the undercurrents below the surface level. Those currents are not just physical ones, but are social ones as well.

Taking further liberties to emphasise the contemporary nature of the work 'sun and moon path' were added to the purapura whetu pattern, more commonly used in tukutuku panels, with the stars becoming irregular in colour, size, spacing "to suggest their distribution throughout the uni-



JOAN CAULFIELD

The "team" - left to right: Carole Shepheard, Luseane Kolo, Toi Maihi, Tai'i Carpentier.

verse". This was because she wanted the visual impression of them stretching "from here to infinity".

Work on these panels was done by a group that included members of Toi's family, Christine Coley, a Craft Design student who was working with Toi during this time, and people at the Papakura Marae, where the work was being done. But she consulted further afield, especially as piecing was new to her, and as she originally thought that her job was just to design the panels. Toi admits to a moment of shock when Joan Caulfield asked her to produce the prototype strip for people to copy and rang quilter Malcolm Harrison for technical assistance. Toi then learnt the techniques of patchwork on the job, and the panels progressed well, and to schedule.

The placing of these chintz panels, the fabric chosen to be in keeping with the entire panel, was to symbolise the tangata whenua embracing all the peoples represented within the work.

The traditions of Fiji, Niue, Cook Islands, Samoa, and Tonga are represented in the double panels alongside the centre panel, and the patterns reflect the environment. The processes involved in tapa, weaving and tivaevae are complex and great care was taken to use only the finest of materials, many of which were brought especially to New Zealand.

The Cook Island women represented the people who weave with rito, the very young coconut leaves, and they brought the finest of pearl shells, coconut shell and rito from Rarotonga. Many worked at night yet they conscientiously met the deadline. This same group, led by Tai'i Turepu Carpentier, also worked on the tivaevae, the quilting tradition introduced by the missionaries and taken on and developed as a characteristically Cook Island craft. Examples of tivaevae manu - plain appliquéd work - and tivaevae tatura - embroidered panels are included in the quilt. Only the tivaevae taorei, panels made up of little squares of cotton fabric, are missing from this quilt but will be included in the second quilt.

The tapa traditions, stripping the mulberry bark, soaking the bark, beating it, stencil-making with coconut ribs, and dyeing, have been created by the Tongan women and represent the traditions of all the Pacific cultures, as does the weaving. For the weaving, which was undertaken lo-

- 1 Embroiderers from the Auckland Embroiderers Guild stitching the French knots on the fern leaf.
- 2 Detail of the Pacific Island Design - tivaevae and rito.



CAROLE SHEPHEARD



CAROLE SHEPHEARD



CAROLE SHEPHEARD

Detail of Maori design.

cally, white strips of pandanas were produced in time-honoured traditional ways that included removing thorns, boiling and soaking in the sea, splitting through their layers, and drying. The brown strips were left, covered, to darken in the shade and then to dry in the shade.

Preparing the individual panels was one task, but the job of assembling the components had its own set of problems, especially as adjustments had to be made where sizes were not adhered to exactly. This was when time constraints showed up most.

A tan border stitched with fluid wavy lines to echo those of the water in the central panel - the stitching being a decision taken by the quilters - encompasses the whole work, much as border does on a Maori cloak. The serrated edge relates to the finish of woven mats in both Maori and Pacific Island work. The juxtaposition of materials and techniques is as important as the individual elements and is equally well handled. Tapa, rito and pandanas weaving, shells, strong linear geometric elements, finely wrapped loose tendrils, intricate embroidery, crisp piecing of fabrics and flowing painterly effects have been integrated with skill.

A final touch that gives greater strength to the collaborative process and identifies the otherwise anonymous contributors is the backing of the quilt. Each of the contributors was given a handprint which they signed, stitched and completed in their own style, and the backing is a collage of these "signatures".

In talking to Carole Shephard I asked her how she found the project and the process, what were her reservations and what her feelings were about the results.

"When do we ever have enough time for large projects?" was her first reaction, and she talked of having some concerns about how to fit the disparate elements together without the work looking contrived. Carole feels that additional work might give the work more richness, and she still has this on her agenda.

The reality of the actual work didn't always match the ideas on paper and in Carole's head, with the sometimes unexpected emphases given to the individual panels. For instance dominant elements like the brightly coloured tivaevae had to have an equivalent value to the more muted tones of the weaving and stitching, so the device of using the same brightly coloured threads in other areas was used.

Technical supervision was sporadic, which meant that the work was not always of a consistent standard. No compromises however, were to be made here, so it meant that some stitching needed to be reworked. To everyone's credit, this challenge was never avoided.

Carole acknowledges that it might have helped the individual groups if they had been able to see what others were doing, as they couldn't always visualise the overall work. Scheduled meetings for everyone were unhappily thwarted by strikes. Toi also talked about this aspect of communication. Although she had met with Carole she would have liked everyone involved to have met at the beginning of the project to get a real overview.

Yet Carole's conclusion is that within the parameters that were set the work went far beyond anything she could have hoped for. On the other hand, she did express some regret that the consciousness of doing "women's work" - in this case stitching - and feminist issues, were not raised. But Carole maintains however, that the dialogue that did take place was important, and the process of getting to know each other was an essential ingredient, as was some financial recognition to all the groups and their leaders.

The Commonwealth Quilt could have ended up being politically correct but totally chaotic visually. However the work is a tribute both to the inspirational design, meticulous attention to detail and cultural sensitivity of Carole Shephard, and to the women who worked with her. As a statement about who and where we are it speaks volumes, and as a work of art it is a piece of magic that will enhance the lives of all who see it.

Rob Levin, glass artist at Wanganui

Rob Levin is an environmentalist, a family man and a glass artist as well. I met Rob during a visit to North Carolina. During the Fulbright Scholarship to investigate Craft Education in the USA, I gave special attention to the teaching of glass art and glass blowing. Apart from Mel Simpson's work and his furnace at Elam, no glass art teaching was being done in an educational institute in New Zealand, and it was the intention of Wanganui Regional Community College to specialise in glass. Where better to visit than the heartland of the American glass art scene - North Carolina and Penland. Penland Craft School, nestled into the trees of North Carolina, is surrounded and supported by many of the world's major glass artists. Harvey Littleton, the 'father' of studio glass, lives not far from the School, and Blue Ridge Parkway, the scenic drive which runs along the ridge through the mountain forests, is a great starting place if one is visiting local glass artists.

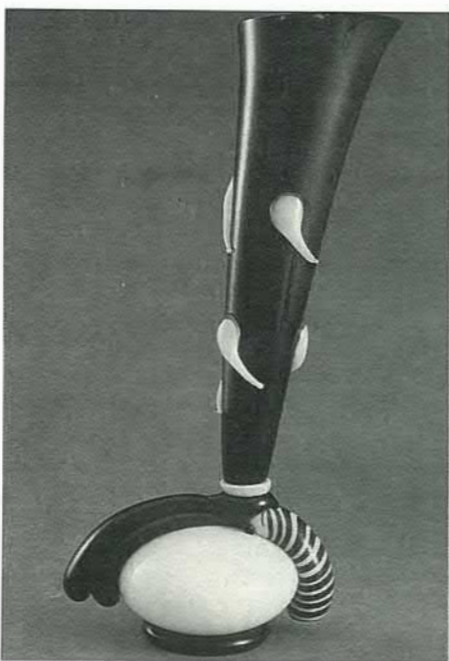
This setting is the home of Rob Levin. His natural timber home and studio, reflect a sensitivity to the environment, and seem an extension of this artist and his family. The twin daughters chattered around as Rob concentrated on getting his daily quota done before we went into the house to spend time with his photographer wife Wanda.

Rob was invited to New Zealand to participate in the Wanganui Summer School of the Arts for a number of reasons. He relates quickly to new people, he uses colour and form in a personal way, his work is innovative, and involves a high degree of skill and lots of fun.

Rob's work accentuated the use of opaque colour, thereby reducing reliance on the seductive quality of transparent glass. His work concentrates more on form and sculptural relationships. Colour, similarly, must stand on its own and relate in very direct terms to the other elements of his work. The



JOHN SCOTT



COURTESY ROB LEVIN

1 Rob Levin.
2 Rob Levin. Motion Vessel #27. 16" high. 1987.

attraction is in the references to the technological environment of the 20th Century rather than the traditional vessel forms, although they feature strongly. The strong use of colour, particularly reds and oranges, has now diminished in his work not through lack of interest so much as in response to health concerns resulting from reaction to the chemistry of such colours. Rob's concerns for health are not just personal protection, but reflect his broad understanding and knowledge of world health and environmental issues.

Born in 1948, in Maryland, Robert Levin graduated B.F.A. from Denison University, Ohio, before completing his M.F.A. at the University of Southern Illinois in 1974. Originally trained as ceramist Rob moved naturally to glass, before setting up his present studio in 1980.

The following interview, in which Rob Levin talks to John Scott, reflects discussions spread over some weeks along with postscripts sent by Levin after he had given further thought to the questions put to him.

John Rob, could we follow on from what we were talking about before - your development from ceramics into glass.

Rob I got involved in clay I guess from two different directions - one was a functional approach. It dealt very much in vessels; especially jars - lidded jars had their attraction and I was very much interested in the texture of clay and felt a real affinity with that material. And then on the other side of that, with clay, was this much more sculptural approach which is basically what you call 'funky' stuff, humorous pieces, usually having to do with machines, and they were all usually finished with brightly coloured glazes and lustres and stuff like that with little metallic parts on them. So there are really two sides to what I was doing and on the sculptural pieces there is usually at least one or two elements that were

very droopy and gooey, kind of squishy looking. Those kind of things are possible to do in clay, but you have to make the clay look like something else, so when I went down to Penland in 1971, I went down there to take a pottery course, just to get another perspective.

Well that is where I saw glass blowing for the first time and it looked very intriguing. I decided to try it and burnt my hand and did all the stuff you do to yourself, but there was something about it. I think it was the liquidness of it which attracted me and that it seemed real appropriate for the 'gooey' kind of drifty forms that I wanted to do, that I was trying to do in clay. I got into Graduate School on the strength of my clay work and when I got to graduate School, there was glass. We all kind of worked on getting this glassblowing set up, so I blew glass and worked in clay for two years there and it really came down to a decision after I finished Graduate School as to which direction I was going to go.

Well, I was offered a job as an artist-in-residence in one of the schools in Michigan, and that would have involved setting up a pottery studio and working with the community and working at schools, and that was a salaried position. The other thing that I was offered was an unofficial teaching assistantship in Iowa, working with Fritz Drysbach, who is one of my heroes in the glass studio, and who used glass in a way that I felt a real affinity with, which is that very fluid kind of approach. Also he had gotten into using a lot of colours that he was making himself. Some of the commercial colours were available then, but he

wasn't using those and I was real intrigued as to how you make your own stuff. So Wanda and I talked about what would work, and we decided, even though economically it would be harder, to go to Iowa and work with Fritz, so that sort of solidified the whole glass thing for me - we were definitely on the path from that point.

John How did you make the transition from working in a University setting, working with somebody else, to setting up and establishing your own studio?

Rob It was a really smooth transition in some ways because what happened was I went down after the year working with Fritz, to Penland, and taught there for the Fall and then the Spring. One of the arrangements that came with taking the job was that in between the fall and spring session there was three months where whoever the instructor was would get a studio to work in. So basically the school studio became my studio for three and a half months during the winter so that was my first experience with kind of running things for myself outside of a teaching situation, and there are things about it that worked real well and some things I had to figure out. But basically that was my first taste of it and then of course Penland has a resident craftsman programme, and at that time I was teaching there Richard Ritter was in the residence studio. Richard and I were friends, and it turned out that he was leaving late spring early summer to move up to Michigan, and so it just worked out that when he moved out of there and I was finishing my teaching, that place was open.

It was all very similar to running your own shop without the headaches

of building; you know putting the building together and doing the wiring and all that stuff, so I did that for four years at Penland in what I guess you could say was a subsidised situation. The whole programme is set up to help people get their feet on the ground in terms of making their work and finding a market for it and just kind of establishing themselves. Then you move on and somebody else comes in.

John So that scheme is available to aspiring craftspeople or artists for how long?

Rob Well when I was there it was very much open-ended, but now, I think it is set up as a two year programme with a third year option, and the only qualification for the option that I can see is that somebody who is there is working and not just goofing off. I found it to be a wonderful programme and it made me feel very loyal or attached to the school.

John There are probably two significant characteristics of your work that stand out for me and one of them is the use of opaque glass in particular, and opaque colours, which seems to get away from that sort of very seductive side of glass and just deals with it in terms of the pure colour, and the other is the sculptural nature of your work in contrast to those who produce highly functional domestic glass.

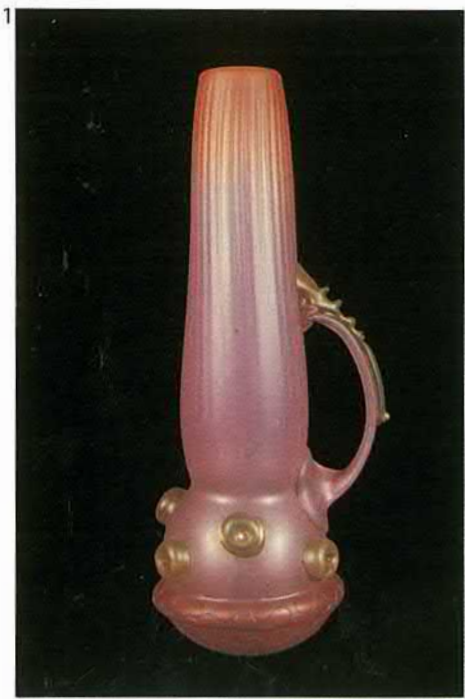
Would you like to comment on why you have chosen those directions and how your work has developed because of them?

Rob Well we could talk for a couple of hours on that, but I think one thing with the opacity is that I was always interested in form. Before I even got into working with clay, I was making sculpture in wood and welded pieces and stuff like that, and then I got in-



Rob Levin. Motion Vessel #14. 7 1/2" high. 1983.

COURTESY ROB LEVIN



COURTESY ROB LEVIN



COURTESY ROB LEVIN



COURTESY ROB LEVIN

involved in clay and there was a sculptural aspect to that like I said before, and I think when I got into glass the overall shape, outside shape of pieces, was of much more interest to me than the transparency, the way the light came through. I was more interested in how light kind of bounced off. Then along with that (I think this came partially out of working with Fritz) there was a real interest on my part with playing with colour. This didn't strike me until later, but I think there was a kind of an intuitive sense about colour being its own language, and that is a quality that is hard to define, because this language that I am talking in now is not *that* language, so you are dealing with a much more directly visual input. The light rays hitting the retina make some little synapse active

there and it goes to the brain, but it doesn't necessarily go through the verbal interpretation centre. That was really interesting to me. When I was a teaching assistant with Fritz at Pilchuck one of the things we did for at least one month (probably longer) was almost every day we would melt colours and just do tests; and because of the work that he was doing, we were using opaque glass, actually opal glass. It wasn't totally opaque glass but it was a very rich opal glass that had a certain kind of depth to it, but that really wasn't transparent. The colour possibilities seemed well pretty much unlimited, especially in the warmer ranges of colours, which generally most people weren't doing too much with at that time. You know this was the mid 70s, so I think that's part of where the use

of the opaque glass and of the colours comes in. Now the other thing is just with the particular types of forms and things that I like to deal with. Glass really made sense for those kind of pieces because they were generally playful forms and playful or whimsical images. It's just a little funkier, more fun.

And then why I use those forms, is that part of the question? It's a little harder to articulate. I think part of it is that I have had periods of time, where I have tried to work in very tight ways; really straight sided vessels and in very precise ways. But I keep finding that the appeal of glass for me goes back to the liquidness of it, so the pieces that I like the most when they come out of the annealing are the ones that have a little bit of flow to them and maybe

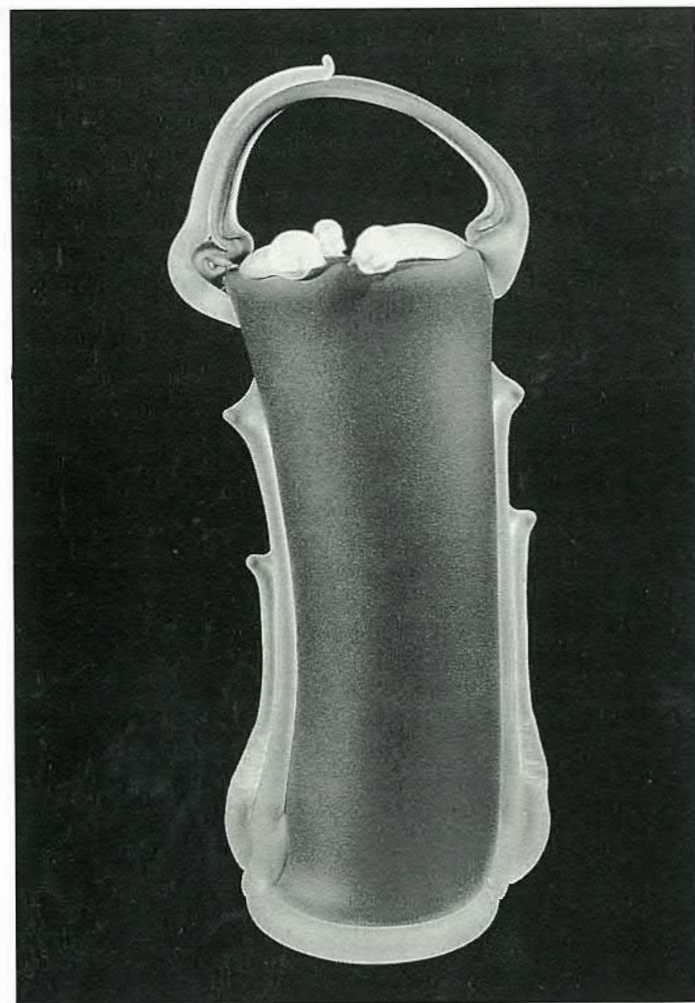
- 1 Rob Levin. Bottle form, blown, sand-blasted, painted. 15" high. 1989.
- 2 Rob Levin & Ken Carder. Trout Goblet #9. Blown glass. 17" high. 1988.
- 3 Rob Levin. Basket Forms. Blown, sand-blasted. 15", 13" high. 1989.
- 4 Rob Levin. Odd Creature #2. 8 1/2" x 19 1/2". 1989.
- 5 (Facing page) Rob Levin. Dr Suess Goblets. 13", 14" high. 1987.



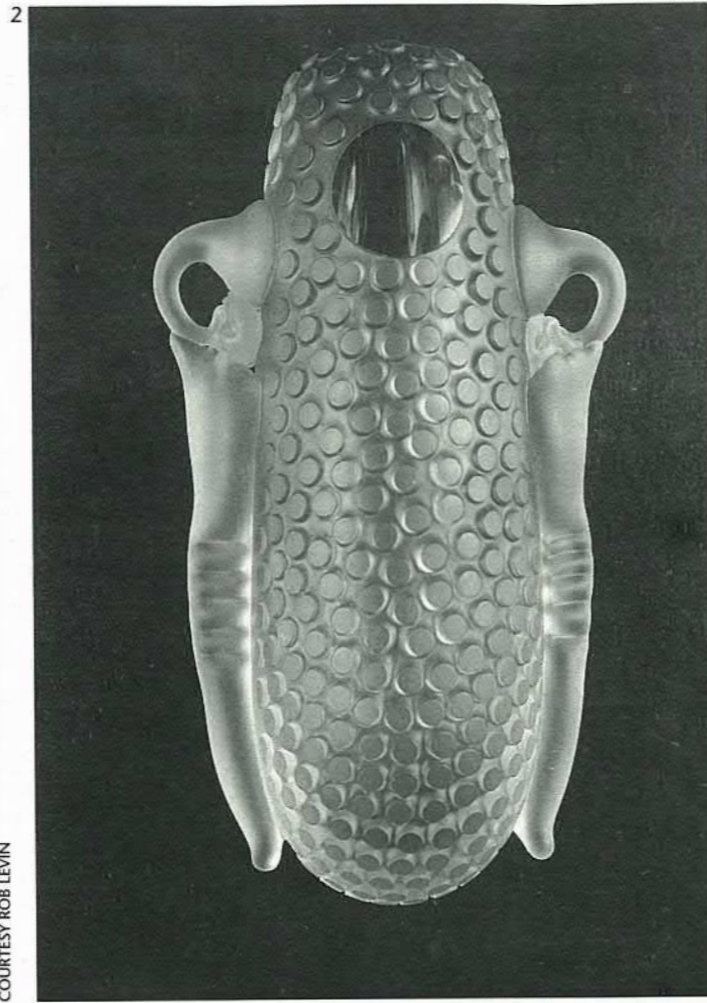
COURTESY ROB LEVIN



COURTESY ROB LEVIN



1 Rob Levin. Basket Form. Blown, sand-blasted. 13" high. 1989.
2 Rob Levin. Mezuzah. 7" high. 1989.



COURTESY ROB LEVIN

COURTESY ROB LEVIN

bend a little bit. You know, pieces that were made to look like they were moving along or sort of falling over or being blown in the wind or something like that, to try and capture some of the flow of the hot material in the finished piece. And then also there is something just a little more light and maybe even a little elegant in pieces that have some movement to them. I don't know where the dividing line is between something that is lyrical and something that is whimsical - that is an interesting question.

John It is quite noticeable, looking at your work that even though some of the items that you make have a functional application such as a goblet, you seem to use that as a way of communicating this sort of humour, this way of looking at things, of having a bit of fun with the images. Is that something you do consciously, or is that just what you tend to find interests you or excites you?

Rob Yes it's a combination of both, but then also I am real aware of two sides of me. One is that I do tend to be silly. I feel like I have a pretty good sense of humour and I like to laugh and make jokes and stuff. But the other side of me is that I often tend to take things, certain things about the world around me, very seriously. The work is

an outlet for both my sense of humour and also a way of dealing with the part of me that sometimes doesn't have a sense of humour.

What is interesting to me about all this is that there is something innate about the material that allows that; and it has to do with that liquid quality of material. It's that there is this mystery there. Now you can't quite put your finger on just what it is, and in the teaching I have done, like here in New Zealand, that is one thing that I have tried to periodically bring up to the students. Sometimes I think they just end up scratching their heads, but I think that it is important to be aware of that element of mystery, and no matter what your art work is, no matter what your medium is, because that is where art work, the material, and the other side, which is the spiritual aspect, come together.

Once you start talking about mystery and mysterious elements of life, it's not too difficult to step from there to start talking about spiritual things. Of course in some ways that is a real bizarre thing for me to say, as people only know me through some of my work, and I make these things that are kind of goofy looking. That fact in itself is interesting too because when

someone puts something of themselves into their work, that is not necessarily what it is going to look like to someone else and that aspect interests me; of communicating something of yourself through the work to someone viewing it. It is not necessarily what you think it should be and it is not necessarily what they end up seeing, but as long as there is a connection made, then that means that the piece, the work, is successful. That can happen with anything from a well-made coffee mug to a piece of glass sculpture or bronze or whatever, if there is something of the person in there.

John Just picking up on that, you made a mention of a well-made coffee mug or a well-made piece of sculpture and it sort of raises that debate again about art and craft. Glass tends to be seen as being one of the craft areas. The way you have been describing it sounds very much that to you it is your art medium; but you are a very highly skilled craftsman. I wonder at times (particularly having seen some of your other work which has been very sculptural, the way you have pulled glass over logs and burnt them, and use large timbers to construct sculptural pieces) if you find the dimension of a craft medium, glass, limiting in its ability to allow you to express that spiritual and mysterious side of your personality.

Rob Not at this point, I don't find it limiting because I don't feel I have reached any limits with it. I feel like in the end the limits that you run up against are usually of your own making. One thing that interests me about glass is it does seem very open-ended in terms of what you can do with it and you can see that in the work that is being done around the world today. People are doing all kinds of amazing things that are pushing limits, but you know that everybody has their own definition for what is art and what is craft. I make no bones about feeling a very strong affinity for this material and I don't know whether that defines me as one category or another, but I also think that one of the biggest battles that an artist or craftsman, object maker, fights, is the battle about self-definition, and again that gets into a longer debate.

John I know you have been here for just over a week and it's a bit like dumping you in at the deep end to ask you this question, but, having had the opportunity to spend some time at the Summer School and to meet with some people from the wood symposium, to work with a few in New Zealand glass, and having talked with various people who know something about it, what sort of observations have you made about the art and craft scene that

you have seen or picked up in New Zealand?

Rob About the glass scene in New Zealand - It seems to me that glass and crafts in general reflect the larger society that they are part of. New Zealand seems to be a pretty conservative country, at least aesthetically, and I see most of the work coming out of the context, and there's really no glass making tradition here - no historical context like you have with wood. Economically, most glassblowers are forced to deal with that reality, and also with the fact that much of New Zealand's craft economy is based on creating work for a tourist market. What this means is that the glass artists are often forced to make only what they know will sell. It's really hard to experiment or try to 'push the limits' when you're worried about paying your gas bill each month. I deal with this same issue in my studio, but the difference in the United States is that we have a collector's market that is very interested in experimental work, and they have the affluence to afford it. There has also been a great deal of effort made to educate people about glass both in the market place and in College programmes. Something that might be helpful here in New Zealand would be to establish one or two more full time glass programmes at the tertiary level, say in Dunedin where they already have a strong sculpture programme. Also, from my own experience, I know that freeing up grant money for individual artists is a great way to promote experimentation and growth.

John If you are asked to come back and work again with New Zealand artists and craftspeople in glass, how would you get them participating, how would you approach it? What would be the sorts of things you would be wanting? What messages would you be wanting to get across?

Rob Glassworkers in general (not just in New Zealand) tend to fall into fairly tight ways of working, regardless of skill level. Many people, I've found out, want to break through the parameters they've set for themselves but aren't able to devote the time or justify it from a cost effective basis, especially if they are running their own studios. Somehow, since I teach as well as run my own studio, I have evolved some ways to help people loosen up so ideas can flow a little easier. Some of this involves some glassworking techniques and what I guess you'd call 'tricks' (every glassblower has some of these!) but more importantly I think it's a question of attitude. When you think about it, that's where everything else comes from, isn't it? I think the best

artwork in general is that which contains some of the idiosyncrasies of the maker, and with a material like glass, those things can be conveyed through the hand. So it's a way of touching the material as well as a way of thinking and seeing. Anyway, somehow I guess I've been successful at dealing with these kinds of questions when I work with people - at least that's the feedback I've been getting from students.

John Let's finish with one last question. Being asked to come and visit another country has an interest in itself, if you like travelling, but when you were asked to come and teach in New Zealand, what was it in particular that attracted you to the prospect of coming and working here?

Rob Frankly one thing was that I had never travelled outside the United States before, so that sounded great, and another thing was that my parents had visited here and spent at least a month, maybe more travelling around and they loved it and just had wonderful things to say about the country and the people who live here so neither of those things has a whole lot to do with glass. I have enjoyed the teaching that I have done. I have always taught a little bit, and I thought it would be interesting to try it somewhere else and see what it was like, and see what my colleagues in other media would be like and things like that, but basically I will always jump at the chance for a free trip - that's what it comes down to.

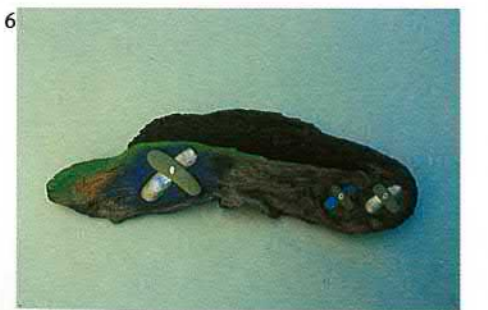
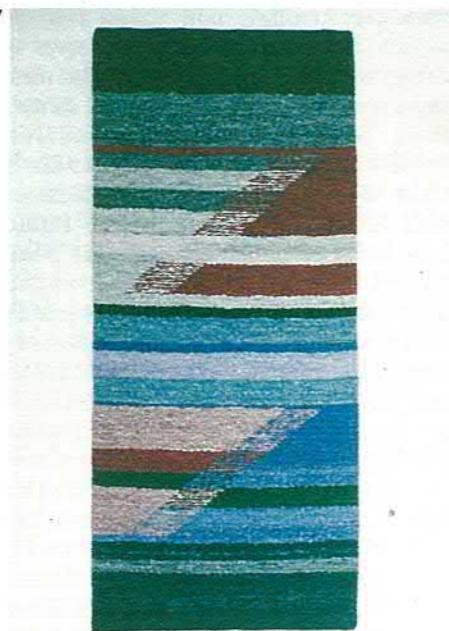
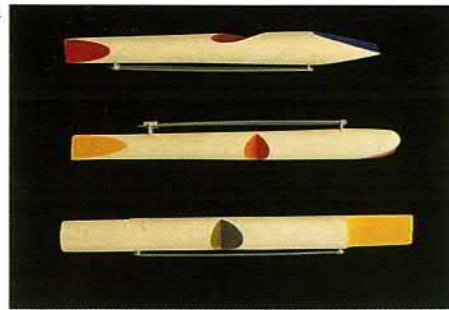
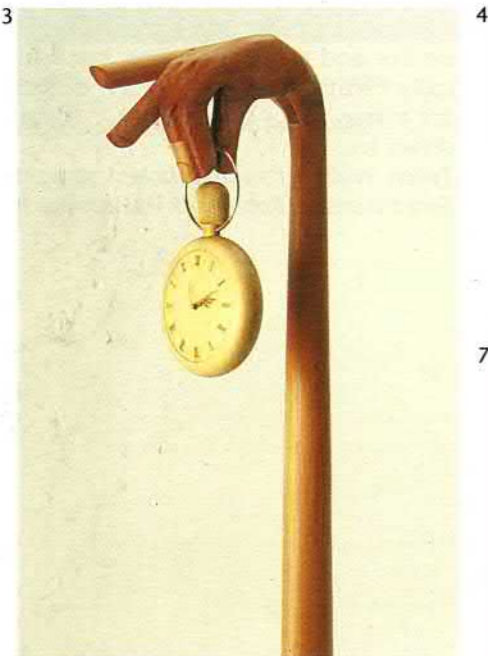
John Well that's a pretty honest, straightforward answer Rob, thank you very much.

RECENT WORK

In this section, the works 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.

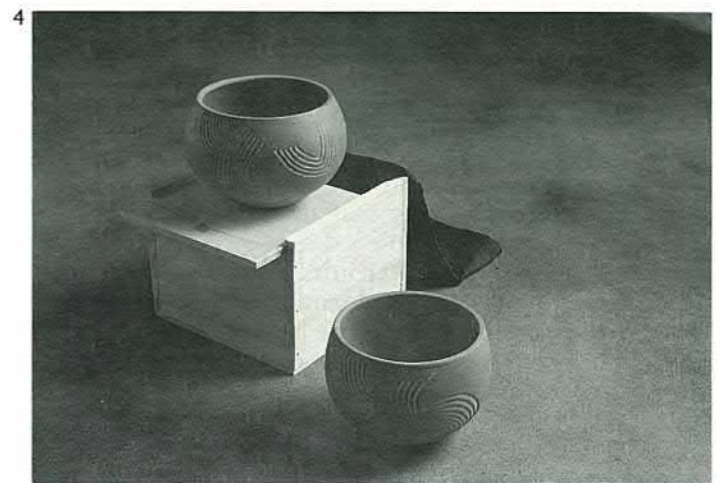
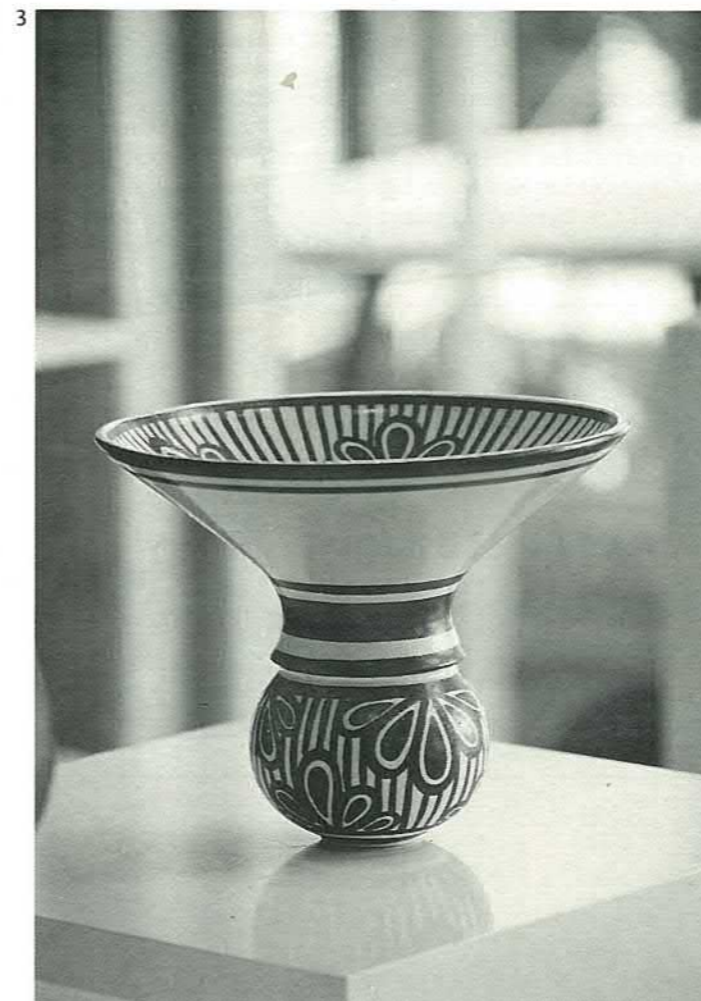
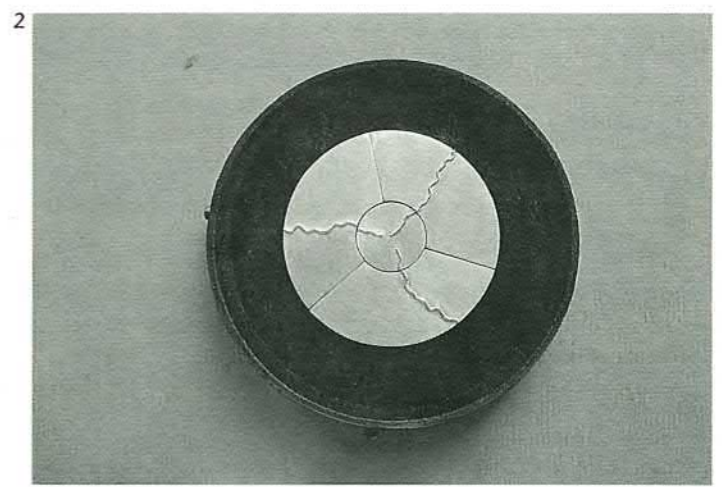
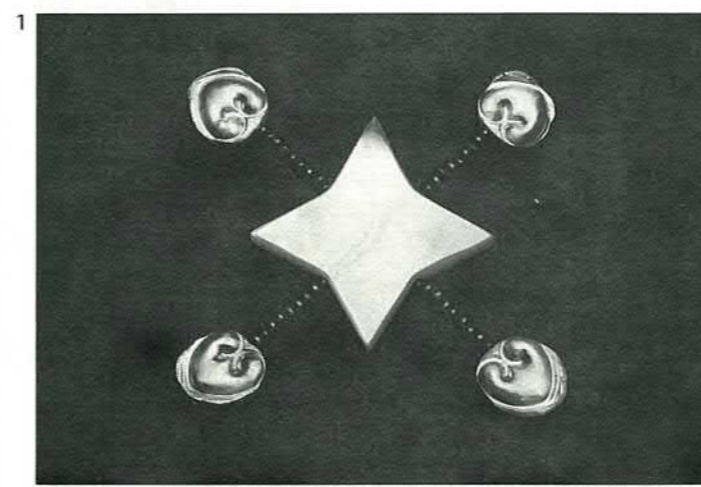
Slides, with full descriptions of the work, measurements in millimetres, date of the work, and the name of the photographer, should be sent to -

Resource Centre
Crafts Council of New Zealand Inc
PO Box 498
Wellington



- 1 Vic Matthews. Writing Desk in Ash, 1990.
- 2 Warwick Freeman. 4 Star Brooch, paua, M.O.P. oxidised silver. 50 mm x 50 mm.
- 3 Garry Arthur. Detail of a tail clock for Christchurch High School in red beech and silver pine.
- 4 Stephen Mulqueen. Brooches, silver birch, painted, silver pins.
- 5 Jo Cornwall. *And Dance by the Light of the Moon*. 184 x 220 quilted.
- 6 Elena Gee. Brooch and earring set in container. Beach pebbles, titanium, silver, driftwood paint. Container 30 cm long.
- 7 Maureen Kelly. Flat weave wall rug, 100% white and coloured fleeces, hand-dyed, handwashed, handcarded, handspun, handwoven 7' x 38".
- 8 Erlanda McLeay. Ceramic Sculpture.

RECENT WORK



- 1 Warwick Freeman. *Pacific Star*, M.O.P. oxidised silver 50 mm x 50 mm.
- 2 Blair Smith. Sterling silver, yellow gold (18ct) shukado brooch, approx 100 mm.
- 3 Anneke Borren. Flaired vase 25 cm high, stone ware, coloured brush work (oxides) on white glaze.
- 4 Anneke Borren and Owen Mapp. Drinking bowl/cup 8 cm high, high fired terracotta, hand carved in presentation box and silk liner.

Jewellery in Australia

by Graham Price

Jewellery Australia Now, ed. Bob Thompson. Craft Australia Series Publication. Crafts Council of Australia, 100 George Street, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia. ISBN 0311-046X.

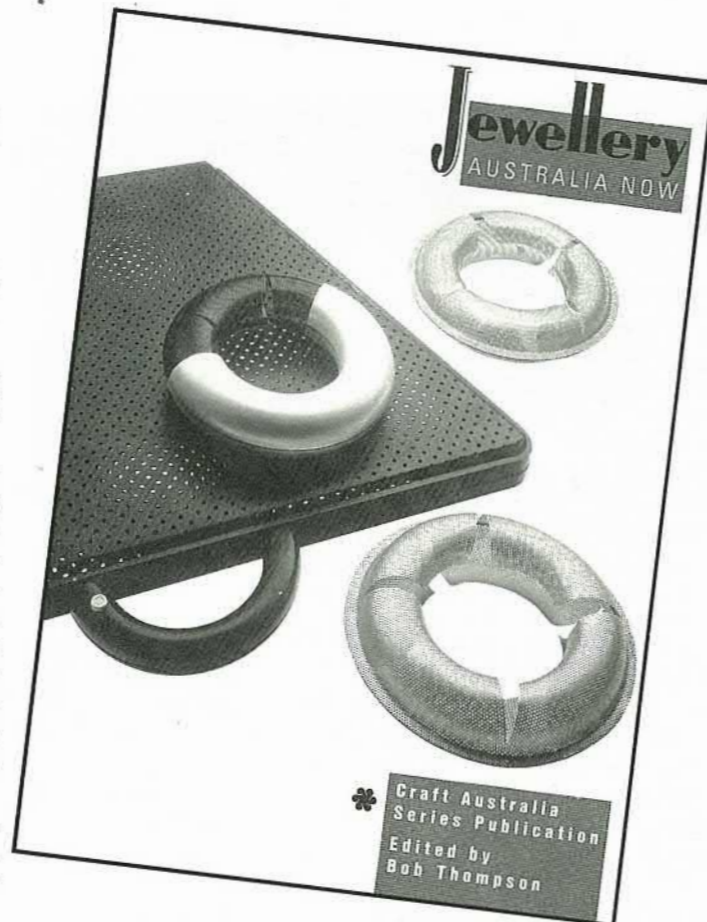
This publication speaks well of itself. "The first monograph in a series of critical writing about contemporary crafts in Australia. It documents the work and professional outlook of several established and emerging jewellers, surveys in words and pictures a large national sample of recent work and offers students, teachers, practitioners and the general reader a stimulating commentary on the nature of jewellery."

I find the blurb both accurate and modest. Of the thirty-seven jewellers pictured, approximately one third are emerging jewellers not attended to in Patricia Anderson's *Contemporary Jewellery - The Australian Experience 1977 - 1987*. It may seem unfair to compare a book with a 100-page monograph but the two publications are very complimentary, each extending the other and offering a wide view of contemporary Australian jewellery. Photographically and in terms of judicious scale and layout, *Jewellery Australia Now* is a pleasure. It is a relief that Crafts Councils have taken a lead in avoiding the awkward juxtapositions that were once the norm.

The major focus of this issue has been the encouragement and recognition of the value of quality critical writing about jewellery. Several contributors bemoan its rarity while others are content to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Bruce Metcalf's article 'On the Nature of Jewellery' is a thorough and interesting excursion through the functions of jewellery. It reads as an illustrated introductory lecture which unfortunately lacks the accompanying slides. The pictorial references are given at the end of the article and remain enlightening only if one has a clear visual memory of the last reading of Angela Fisher's *Africa Adorned*. Surely there are Australian jeweller/teachers/writers capable of giving a succinct account of the nature of jewellery that connects more strongly with a contemporary Australian setting. While acknowledging the international culture and anthropological generalisations I would have expected the lead article in a monograph subtitled 'Australia Now' to reflect the title more directly.

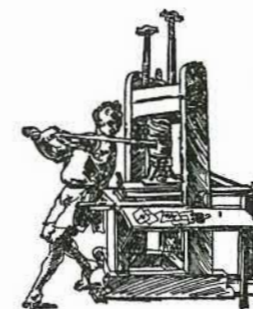
In contrast, the remaining eight articles are firmly connected with the monograph's intent. A poetic and sensitively interpreted review is given by Anne Brennan of the work of Rowena Gough. The photographs are well integrated with the text and enhance the reading of the work. It is a pity that the review of Ann Brennan's exhibition *Zero at the Bone* is not handled as deftly by Nola Anderson. The essay covers the scope and intent of the exhibition but suffers from a lack of visual documentation. A challenge of responding to Anne Brennan's work was given in Patricia Anderson's book: "... [Brennan's jewellery] must be able to



answer the questions it raises - by itself, unaided by rhetoric and support material." Having identified the semantic links between text, photographic image and object in the exhibition; the article fails to document this experience. A single example may have countered the stand that the jewellery objects work in isolation. The articles in the monograph demonstrate that the contexts of manufacture, partnership, exhibition, wearer and publication all form their meanings around our seeing. The words that are used to clothe objects can cherish, clarify perception and connect us with those objects and each other. They can also confuse, as Adam Geczy's descriptions do. His writing is full of self-conscious polarities - 'solipsistic flirtations', 'tool shed stuff, occupational accoutrements.' While in harmony with the 'fraught duality' of his subject matter, his style distracts from, rather than enhances perception.

Anne Griffith's review of Melbourne City Council's study of inner city manufacturing/retailing patterns is a useful balance to such excesses, as is the strictly prosaic announcement of the establishment of the Gold and Silversmiths' Guild of Australia. Anna Burch, writing on Barbara Heath and Sheridan Kennedy's 1987 exhibition, provides a lucid, informative journey through observations on concept, personal style, the inter-relationships of material and idea, and the relationship of the objects to contemporary social issues without becoming proselytizing or lamely descriptive. In David Walker's overview of Australian jewellery in the eighties he comments "the dearth of significant commentary on contemporary jewellery is one of the major factors holding back (its) continued development...".

A collection of critical analyses has been offered here, and as the first in a series the monograph promises more. I would like the influence of this writing to be evaluated. I celebrate that a forum has been established for Australian writers to practise their craft. I believe that those interested in the communicative function of their art will celebrate the involvement of a creditable audience. "The glimpses of a real critical eye" brings a maturity to the relationship of maker and audience. A close reading of this publication has enriched my teaching and stimulated students to a fruitful search for articles referenced.



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Notes on contributors

GAYNOR CARDEW was cartoonist-in-residence at the Wanganui Regional Community College Summer School in January this year. Her visit was sponsored by both the Wanganui College and the Australia/New Zealand Foundation.

SUE CURNOW is a quiltmaker and tutor who lives in Auckland. She has written about quilts and other textiles for *Pacific Quilts* (previously *Quiltalk*), *The New Zealand Herald*, and *N.Z. Crafts*. Her first article for this magazine, entitled "The Honourable Art of Quiltmaking", appeared in the Spring 1989 issue.

MATTHEW KANGAS has written widely about fine arts and crafts, winning the 1989 Manufacturers Hanover/Art World award for distinguished art criticism. He is chief art critic for *The Seattle Weekly* and is currently the third Renwick Fellow in American Crafts at the National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC.

GARRY NASH is a partner in the now famous Sunbeam Glassworks in Auckland, and has for some time been an active officer in the NZ Society of Artists in Glass.

ANN PORTER is a partner in the Masterworks craft gallery in Auckland, and was the Co-ordinator for the 2nd Crafts Biennale in 1989. This is her first article for this magazine.

GRAHAM PRICE teaches art at Dunedin Teachers College, is a jeweller, and he's written on the work of John Edgar in *NZ Crafts*.

PAULA SAVAGE has just taken up a new position as director of the Wellington City Art Gallery. She has previously directed The Bath-House, Rotorua's Art and History Museum. This is her first writing for *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 published several times for this magazine.

JOHN SCOTT is a major figure in both the craft and craft education fields generally. President of the Crafts Council of New Zealand and director of Wanganui Regional Community College, his writing has frequently appeared in these pages.

The state of quilting in America



An antique Amish quilt in the foyer of the Esprit Corporation's offices. Others are distributed throughout the building.

SUE CURNOW

A grant from the QEII Arts Council enabled Sue Curnow to spend 3 1/2 months travelling, researching, and attending the Road to California Quilters Conference in September last year. Here, she says, she was able to indulge in her passion for quilts and quilting in the land which, while not the birthplace - or even the cradle - of quilting, was at least the place where quilts learned to talk.

A hot, arid spot on the Mexican border seems an unlikely place for such a craft to flourish, yet here, as elsewhere in the United States, quilting is not only alive, but also making headlines - admittedly, often of the 'What would Granny say' variety. The AIDS Quilt, for instance, the subject of a film, *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt*, consists of approximately 1,000 huge pieced, embroidered, appliquéd patches, testimonials to the friends, relatives, and lovers of those who made them. Recent research into and study of Afro-American quilts is leading to discoveries and speculation regarding the role of black seamstresses in white households, and the origin of some types of design. Proponents of Afro-American culture make much of such 'other' stylistic tendencies as violently opposing colours and 'wonky' construction.

San Diego itself, with a population similar to that of Auckland, has fourteen Quilters' Guilds (Auckland has one). In San Francisco, several corporations have collections of antique quilts - most notably, the Esprit Corporation's 200 marvellous antique Amish quilts. These are distributed throughout the warmly-timbered office complex, for the pleasure of employees and visitors.

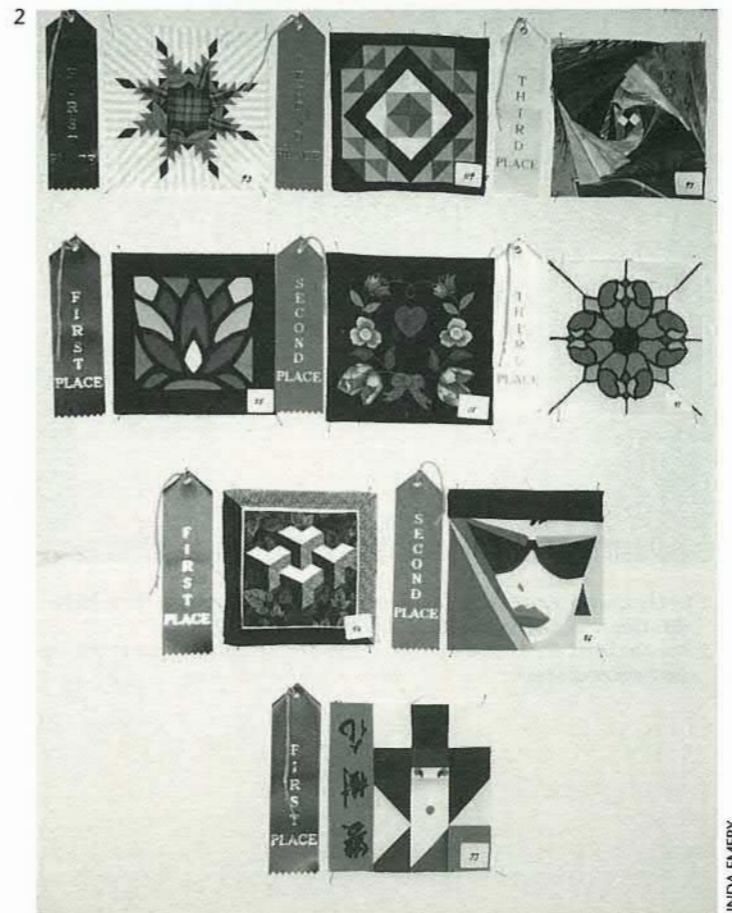
Most public art galleries or museums throughout the United States have collections of old quilts, usually kept in storage; appointments may be made to view them, under supervision. Of course, this makes good sense, given the fragile nature of textiles, but anyone travelling there should be aware of the need to plan ahead. Some museums and galleries have a particular focus on quilts. For instance, the Textile Curator of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Sandi Fox, has been instrumental in establishing a Centre for Quilt Research within the museum. This has been in operation since 1988, with a large and growing documented collection of historical quilts and related artifacts, and educational and research facilities. There are Quilt Museums in San Jose, California, and Lowell, Massachusetts (to mention only two) which continuously feature exhibits of both historical and contemporary work.

Increasingly, museums and collector/researchers are collaborating on special exhibits, frequently with a regional focus. For example, a five-year effort by the California Heritage Quilt Project resulted in "Ho For California", an exhibition of quilts made in or brought to California before 1945. This massive undertaking necessitated travelling throughout the state, documenting 3,300 quilts, and collecting relevant memorabilia. The most beautiful of these works are in the exhibit, which was presented by the Fresno Art Museum, and will tour this year to other parts of the state. An accompanying book, illustrating these and many of the other documented quilts, has been written by well-known Californian quiltmaker and lecturer, Jean Ray Laury. The quilts themselves speak of adventure, courage, heartache; birth, marriage, death; fund-raising, politics. Fabrics include printed flour bags, silk cigar and political ribbons, and a variety of early American and European cottons. Writing features strongly in many quilts - documenting a journey, expressing hopes, vowing love, stating friendship, imploring remembrance.

The human side of history - about women and children, about food and love, starvation and loss, community and sharing, loneliness and deprivation - is not told in history books. These truths are told through whatever survives of domestic life, and quilts are proving to be a fertile ground for research into these matters. It's too easy to sentimentalise quilts, or to dismiss them as the work of idle hands. Studying and researching them is like studying Art history; finding out what makes them look a certain way reveals

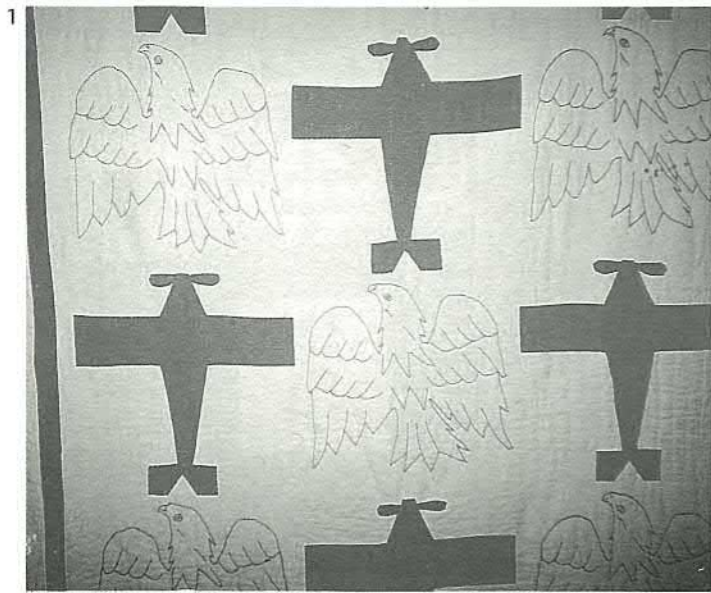


SUE CURNOW



LINDA EMERY

1 Detail of Road to California participants quilt of 1988. Each year everyone contributes one 6-inch block, and a new quilt is made.
2 Block winners. Blocks by 1989 Road to California Conferencees to be contributed to the next year's quilt.



SUE CURNOW



LINDA EMERY

1 Detail of Lone Eagle quilt, family name of which is Lindy's Plane 1930-40. This quilt was in the Ho for California show.
2 The Machado Quilt, made in San Diego c1850. Shown here at the Ho for California show.

much about the social, economic, political, religious, and other aspects of the times.

Another regional exhibit, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, of 19th century appliqué quilts from the Delaware Valley, provides an extraordinary insight into the life and times of pre- and post-industrialised Pennsylvania. Increasingly, at this time, women were encouraged to provide calm, stable, harmonious homes, to counteract the evils brought about by the rapid erosion of economic and moral standards amongst much of the population. Needlework was perceived as teaching the virtues of patience and grace; equally, of course, it was, until the advent of the sewing machine, an essential skill. Signature quilts, as fund-raising projects for charitable work, and friendship quilts, as parting gifts for families leaving to find work elsewhere (California, perhaps), became popular at this time. The technique of appliqué was especially popular in this region, amongst both English and German settlers. Many of the designs relate to those of ornamental paper cutting, which in turn relate to the rich cultural and religious symbolism, based on natural images, originating in Germany.

Quiltmaking in America was, and is, a culturally-charged activity. There is such a profound certainty of its vital part in their heritage that amongst quiltmakers of our own time there is a clear acceptance of the value of 'doing' traditional patterns, utilising modern fabrics and techniques. A visit to an exhibition of recent work by Guild members - such as the 1989 San Diego Quilt Show - very quickly confirms this. So, incidentally, does conversation with the many people, in many fields, who belong to a neighbourhood group, or who surprise a visitor by bringing half a dozen family quilts.

Those who challenge, or seek to expand, the boundaries, are, as here in New Zealand, relatively few, and frequently defensive about the labels used to describe their work. San Diego-based New York 'fibre artist' Deborah Felix, for instance, is adamantly neither a craftsperson nor a quilter, despite the use, in her art, of materials and techniques appropriate to these descriptions. Yet surely they are contributors to the on-going saga of textile production and consumption, women who are speaking in their own time of their own society's concerns. And while, in our own time, there is a more indulgent attitude toward self-consciousness and, overt self-expression, in any medium, quiltmaking has always provided a legitimate means of expressing feelings - frequently, as now, with words as well as pictures.

Indeed, textiles generally world-wide, have long provided a vehicle for statement and communication. From the Bayeux tapestry to the AIDS Quilt; from the appliquéd banners of Dahomey to the Tivaevae of Eastern Polynesia; and from the Arpilleras of Chile to Hmong story-blankets. Living in South-Western California, one can hardly help being - as I was - constantly aware of, and curious about, the rich textile heritage of Central and South America. Mexican and Guatemalan weaving and embroidery, Chilean and Columbian appliqué: so much to discover, such a wealth of vital, living, growing textile endeavour. A vivid example of this was an exhibition of sixty colourful and moving works of folk-art, presented by the Latin American Cultural Centre at the University of California, San Diego. Arpilleras (r-p-ye-r-as) are small appliquéd pictures worked on burlap (hessian). They depict such subjects as forced unemployment, lack of food and shelter, and other adversities faced by the majority of Chile's population since the military coup of 1973, and also show the efforts being

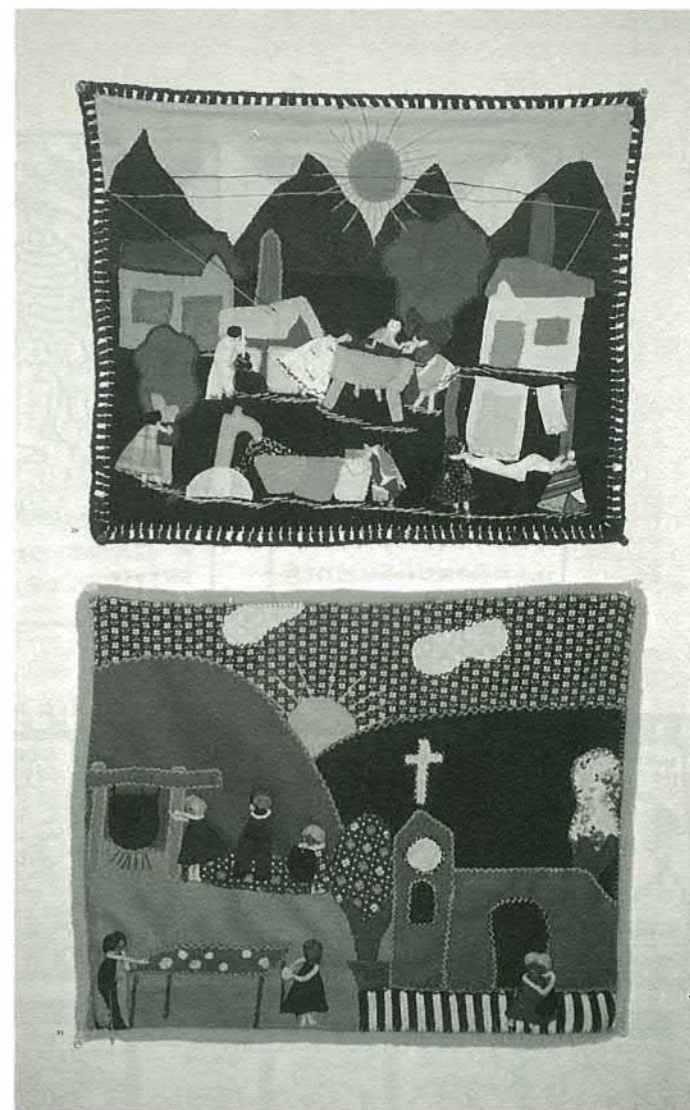
made by the people to restore democracy, and to cope with the terrible violations of their rights. These appliqué, with their powerful images, worked in bright cloth and other materials, are both a means of survival for those who make them (in craft-workshops organised by the Catholic Church), and a way of conveying their painful message to other parts of the world.

It is to be hoped that quiltmaking will continue to grow, too, while maintaining a healthy respect for the past. Quilters conferences, symposia, and the like, play an important role here. I was privileged to attend the fourth annual Road to California Quilters Conference in September. Organizer Brenda Werbelow's stated aim is to make this the "Quilters' university, (with) the very best instructors...(and) outstanding class content. I want all the participants to learn and expand their horizons within the field of quilting". This three days-and-nights event was charged with intensity: a non-stop schedule of workshops, lectures, slideshows, exhibits, ensured the total involvement of the 250 participants. Well-known tutors such as Harriet Hargrave, Judith Montano and Elly Sienkiewicz conducted workshops in colour illusion and theory, fabric printing and dyeing, geometric and free-form design, various old and new piecing, appliqué, and quilting techniques, challenging new approaches to familiar themes. A lunchtime fashion parade - the Fairfield Fashion Show - showed an appreciative audience a range of pieced and appliquéd clothing which defies verbal description. Now there's wearable art!

What struck me most about the content of this conference was, first there's a growing interest in dyeing, printing, or otherwise creating one's own cloth for quilts. Image-producing techniques which have hitherto been used more in other media, such as photography, screen and block printing, marbling and other sophisticated dyeing techniques, are giving current quiltmakers more scope for innovation and exploration of ideas. These quiltmakers are responding to their own time, just as others in the past.

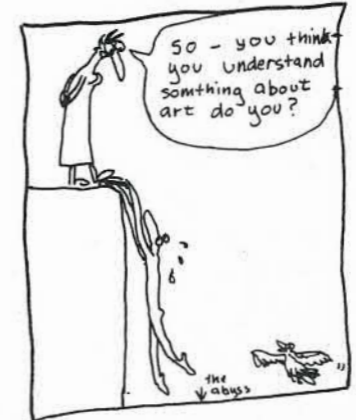
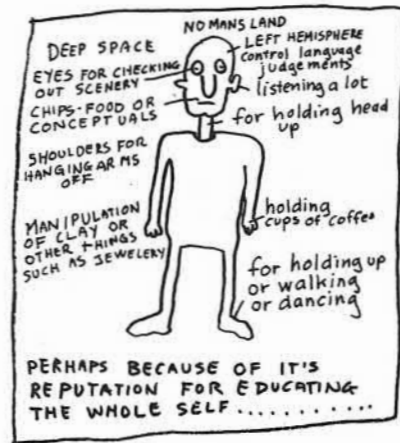
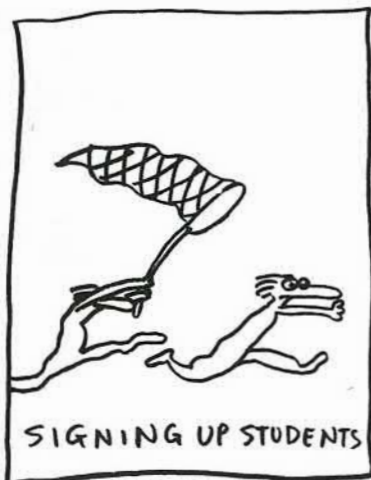
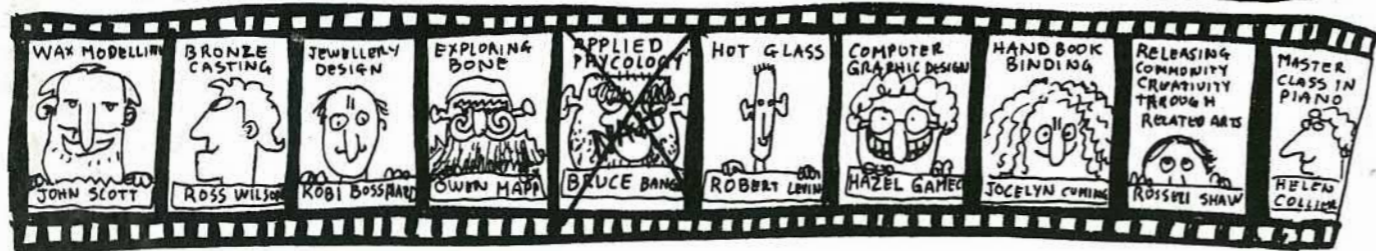
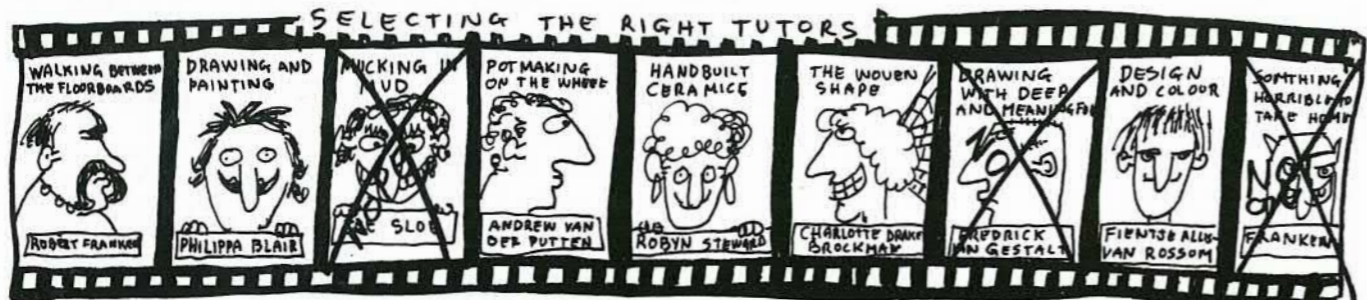
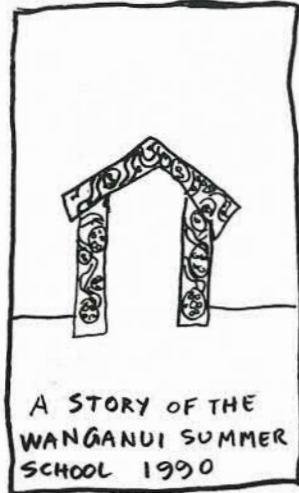
Secondly, I was particularly impressed, and encouraged, by the highly developed technical skills of both tutors and participants: 'creativity' does not necessitate getting rough with the materials among American quiltmakers. On the contrary, Jean Ray Laury's screen printed traditional motifs are meticulously executed, in every detail. Jan Myers Newberry's hand-dyed cottons are skilfully and elegantly manipulated in shimmering designs, and many more examples abound.

Thirdly, with very few exceptions, quiltmaking in America is considered to be a genre on its own - not 'lumped in' with all the fibre arts. This is an important aspect of its revitalisation in my view. Although certain attempts have been made to produce collaborative efforts between artists and quiltmakers, these must be seen as experimental. In many ways, the assumption that a quilt designed by an artist is 'better' than one designed by a quiltmaker is harmful - even insulting - to the perception and reputation of quiltmakers. Several art galleries on the East Coast are now specialising in the work of contemporary quiltmakers, whose work is based on their own ideas, not on other forms of art or even other quilts. Certain New Zealanders are also working in this way, and achieving recognition here and elsewhere. The 1990s will be an exciting time for those of us who enjoy, admire, and create quilts, of every sort.



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Critics talk back

This article was published in a recent issue of *The Crafts Report* (January 1990), and is here reproduced with that publication's kind permission.

The recent discussion in New Zealand concerning the perimeters of 'art' and 'craft' as useful critical terms has not yet focused on the question of criticism in the crafts as a way of pushing the discussion further ahead. If some craftspeople are, and many say they are, bored by the discussion to date, maybe that's because the 'debate' not only keeps going over old ground, but also fails to get into anything like a dialogue, in which we can actually come to grips with each other's statements. In the following article, the call is for more words, more debate, more discussion, more dialogue, and more real connection between the critical languages of art and art history and the critical languages of crafts and craft history.

Editor.

Interviews with Bob Barnard, Karen Chambers, Nancy Corwin, Donald Kuspit, and John Perrault. Five art critics were asked to comment on the value of craft criticism: Does the language of fine art criticism apply to crafts? Are crafts losing out in art history because there is no written history or specific language? Can criticism affect the perception of an object's worth, encouraging buyers to pay more?

As the comments of the five critics below attest, the issue or "problem" of crafts criticism today is a two way street. With the fine arts world also in flux, not to say disarray, the moment is ripe for both crafts' acceptance and influence. The achievements of craft artists have attracted the interest of increasing numbers of fine art critics. Add to this the more seasoned observers of the scene who only write about crafts or those, like myself, who have always written about both, and the

combination really reveals as unprecedented but still insufficient amount of professional media, journalistic, and critical coverage about the nation's oldest, most continuous artforms.

With the 20th century drawing to a close, we must guard against a reimposition of traditionally exclusive hierarchies, as Donald Kuspit points out, especially in the very century where most categories came tumbling down, thanks to the avant-garde, and remember that the crafts have much to offer the contemporary art world.

At the same time, significant written commentary has lagged behind in the crafts because, for example, those art historians to whom the job should have fallen, decorative arts curators, have written about dead artists.

They are catching up gradually but much remains to be done to codify, preserve, appreciate, and evaluate what is more and more being seen as one of the most important national artistic developments of our century: American crafts.

Perhaps because of the camaraderie common to craftspeople, they have given lip service to the need for criticism (read recognition) but have been hurt or reluctant to endorse the often harsh comments or negative judgements which are a necessary part of the winnowing-out or wheat-from-the-chaff job critics invariably do.

NANCY CORWIN, of Washington, DC, wrote her Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA, in 1976 on Northern Renaissance artists, some of whom were tapestry designers and, as the nation's pre-eminent fibre art critic, she is uniquely equipped to relate current contemporary fibre practice to both art-historical precedents and the history of design. Staying on in D.C. after winning one of the first two James Renwick fellowships in American crafts at the National Museum of American Art, she is completing a history of the American fibre art movement and writes on other craft media as well.

When I asked her if the crafts were losing out in art history because there is no written history or specific lan-

guage, she responded animatedly.

"Definitely, but because it's a new field, only about 100 years old, there's a chance to do this kind of history that utilizes both old and new methods or approaches. There's the possibility of using older traditions and drawing from contemporary art and literary theory as well as anthropology and material culture.

"But, I've never understood this talk about crafts lacking language. I don't think we need a specific language. A partly different language will evolve. There's enough language already out there in art criticism in general so if people will use it with a poet's sense, then I think we'll come up with good writing.

"I think that genuine and perceptive writing can enhance appreciation better than a deliberately self-consciously complicated language.

"You still have to talk about shiny or matte glazes, twill weave or brocade, cloisonne and casting, but I don't feel that there's a need to self-consciously invent new terminology."

Though he also has a background in art history, JOHN PERREAULT addresses contemporary issues as an independent art critic and exhibitions curator. Chief art critic for the *Village Voice* from 1966 to 1974, Perreault is an ardent advocate of the crafts as an antidote to what he sees as the excessive hype and frequent vacuity of the New York art world. He contributed "Crafts Is Art" to the massive *Eloquent Object* (1987) and has also written about Beatrice Wood, George Ohr, Viola Frey, Edward Moulthrop, and Elsa Rady, among many others. Perreault is concerned that craftspeople are "too thin-skinned about negative criticism". He got to the root of the problem when I asked him about the fickle reception of craftspeople to serious criticism in general. "The problem with the reception issue is that readers of crafts criticism have been conditioned to expect a market profile fancied up a bit with technical or biographical information but what they really want to read is 'what's hot.'

"The crafts are more up front about

marketing since, as everybody knows, almost every article written will result in career enhancement and marketability. That's not the only motivation for criticism.

"Another reason is more important. A serious critical examination means that you're at the beginning stage of being included in art history.

"Plain puffery is more transparent in the crafts. One of the reasons I find the crafts world so fascinating is that craftspeople are more passionate about their reactions to negative writing. I find in this more of a sense of what it means to be an artist."

Passionate, lively, controversial, and negative are words that describe ROB BARNARD of Timberville, Virginia, ceramics editor for *New Art Examiner*. A Japanese-trained potter represented in Washington, DC by the Anton Gallery, Barnard is a vivid critic of both the New York City scene and purely market-motivated craftsmen. The very mention of *The Crafts Report* brought forth an impassioned torrent of words.

"I don't think a craftspeople who approaches what they do entirely from business concerns should be confused with an artist who puts intellectual and philosophical concerns in the forefront of their work. If your goal is to make money, criticism is irrelevant. On the other hand, if you are an artist and what you trade in is ideas, then criticism is extremely important."

As to the reader's responsibility with regards to criticism, Barnard is equally adamant: "People interested in the crafts should be more active and question others about their points of view. No one has a corner on any particular truth. Crafts critics have to be sincere and rigorous so that as a collective group we can have a voice in the larger culture."

Pulling a switch on the familiar fine arts vs. crafts dichotomy, Barnard suggests that some ceramic arts don't 'belong to the crafts'. Pottery is closer to baskets than sculpture. Once you sort out these categories, you have a clearer notion of what artists are trying to say. If you are expecting the same gut-punch from a pot as from a sculpture, you're going to be disappointed.

Again, in a refreshing about face among critics, Barnard stresses that he has "reservations in the crafts field about the tendency of artists to seek fine art status by abandoning their own basic nature."

Along with Rob Barnard, KAREN CHAMBERS of New York City is probably the best of the critics writing from deep inside the crafts world. Equally

comfortable in the contemporary art scene, however, she has an acute vantage point from which to judge the question of a specialized language for the crafts. Editor of the leading American glass magazine, *New Work*, from 1983 to 1986, Chambers is also U.S. correspondent for *GlassWork* (Kyoto, Japan) and author of *Dale Chihuly: Colour, Glass, and Form* (1986) as well as the forthcoming *Illusionism*, a study of crafts, decorative arts, architecture, and design due to be published in Great Britain late this year.

Chambers argues, "there is a need for a specialized language for the crafts. Given their history, their relationship to design and decorative arts, there are special needs that are not addressed by painting and sculpture or design criticism. Contemporary crafts fit in between those areas."

The evolution of crafts criticism still faces many obstacles both from readers, and from newspaper and magazine editors. Although one prominent crafts critic, Patricia Malacher, the other first year Renwick Fellow, has long contributed to *The New York Times*, Chambers points out that "the crafts is covered in *The New York Times* in the Home Section. The writers for the Home Section are told not to criticise. They are reporters. Anything that smacks of criticism is edited out."

Even though she is "pessimistic" about "diminishing readership" in every area of art criticism, Chambers is still very idealistic about criticism's role in our lives. "The real purpose of criticism is a dialogue between the viewer and the maker, and the object. It is an educational vehicle. And I would hope it would have no direct impact on the marketplace. It certainly should not be a tool. There should be an airing of opinions but with a very clear idea that nothing is the last word."

Moving from insider to outsider, critic and philosopher DONALD KUSPIT rehearses views long held in the art world even though he has been a sympathetic and insightful observer of the crafts. His major theoretical statement, "Art Without Craft/Craft Without Art," appeared in 1979 and he has written generous opinions of ceramic sculptors Robert Arneson and Stephen DeStaebl, among others. His latest book, *The New Subjectivism* (UMI Press), is a collection of recent *Artforum* reviews and other essays.

Speaking from his Chelsea loft, Kuspit cautioned "there has always been an implicit prejudice against crafts based on the hierarchical distinction between high and low art. However

this distinction has certainly collapsed in the 20th century and it is unfortunate that the craft arts have not taken advantage of this situation.

"That is, I believe that many craft artists are reluctant to submit to critical attention. This two-way street of negation of craft criticism has to be deliberately overcome by both the craft and general art worlds."

Expanding on other comments about the "special language" issue, Kuspit echoed Corwin's comment about technical language being the only difference. He posited "many languages of criticism" which could be applied to the crafts, such as psychoanalysis.

"It seems to me that if craft wants to be taken seriously, and move from artifact to art, it has to be willing to submit to various critical languages that are brought to bear on other art. These are often contradictory but if craft doesn't submit to any one of them, it will not be a subject of significant discussion and lose whatever artistic/aesthetic significance it might acquire."

With this much food for thought, I am sure *The Crafts Report* readers will want to respond with ideas and challenges of their own. As Karen Chambers urged, a multiplicity of viewpoint is crucial because, "One person shouldn't have that kind of dictatorial power." However, she also stresses that criticism is written "to fill some kind of personal need" and this is where criticism and craft may meet with open arms. Verbal expression is just as personal and creative as artistic expression and the freedom of independent opinion must be granted the critic by the reader and artist too.

A window of opportunity exists at this time which could enrich our culture immeasurably in the coming century. It is the free and spirited interplay of critical opinion, and American craft. Whatever its relation to the marketplace - sadly, often beyond the critic's control - criticism in its essence as description, analysis, and evaluation is coming of age within the crafts.

Like John Perreault and Rob Barnard, I sense a turning of interest lately toward functional crafts on the part of the critics, yet the modes of discourse - how to talk about them - are far from clear. As the contributors above have demonstrated, the interest in both functional and nonfunctional crafts is there. Now, craft artists must guarantee that they present their best work possible in the new but rocky period of advanced judgement, scrutiny and praise.

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.

Tapestry in America - An Overview from Slightly Outside by Archie Brennan. "... there is nevertheless a wish to try to identify emerging national and regional characteristics in tapestry that can be said to be 'American'". Mr Brennan retraces the development in Tapestry in North America over the last 15 years.
Fibrearts Jan/Feb 1990, pp 30-33.

Faience Ornaments by Robert K Lui. Discovered almost 7,000 years ago, exquisite samples of this unique self-glazing siliceous ceramic jewellery are shown here.
Ornament Winter 1989, pp 16-17

The Magic Potency of Berber Jewellery by James Jereb. A background on Berber folk necklaces. Some of the most dramatic jewellery in the world that projects a powerful statement about the unique creativity of Berber women.
Ornament Winter 1989, pp 16-17

Wearable Tapestry - Helen Bane's needlewoven necklaces are miniature tapestries that incorporate beads, coins and precious fibres, and the technique isn't difficult to learn.
Threads Magazine Feb/Mar 1990, pp 30-35

Dyeing Fleece Wool In A Microwave Oven by Sally McLean. How to dye skeins of wool and knitted garments in a large microwave oven with a plastic bucket dye bath.
The Webb March 1990, pp 28/29

Out Of The Moving Waves - some notes on Chinese Papermaking by James Rumford. A brief summary of some exciting ancient techniques.
Hand Papermaking Winter 1989, pp 6-9

A Basket Is by Patricia Malarcher. The new basketry still reaching for its outer limits. Contemporary crafts people add a new and vital chapter to the history of basket making with no limits on concept or execution.
American Craft Feb/Mar 1990, pp 40-45

Synergistic Games - The confidential exploits of self-deception is the title of one of Louis Mueller's recent six-foot-high wall pieces. This paradoxical attitude perhaps describes Mueller's on-going body of work, which is at once furniture and sculpture, wallmounts and bodymounts, sleekly industrial and disarmingly vernacular. Addison Parks explores the momentum and possibilities in Mueller's work.
Metalsmith Winter 1990, pp 14-17

Safety Data Information - Compiled by Batik Oetoro this is an important safety guide for craftspeople handling manufactured dyes.
Craft Dyers' March 1990, pp 14-15

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