

CRAFT

New Zealand

ISSUE 36

WINTER 1991

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IN THIS ISSUE:

STUDIO GLASS IN 1991

STUDENTS EXHIBIT

THE WOOD OF KAZU NAKAGAWA

KOHIA KO TAIKAKA ANAKE

Our
Stories
in
craft

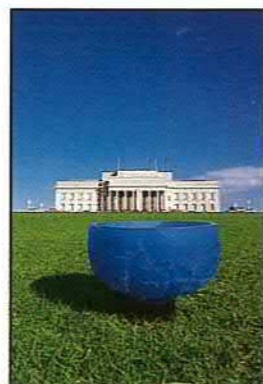
MAU MAHARA

*A fascinating look at the lives and memories of our people through 150 years of their crafts.
A unique and extraordinary craft event that will capture the hearts and imagination of every New Zealander.*



"He mokopuna na Taharakau", you might hear said to someone of that place kitted out for bad weather on a fine day, "Ah, you must descend from Taharakau."

Flax pakee (rain cape)



"When they work they're lovely. I probably had about half a dozen things work last year - but then I also had all those lovely failures."

Ann Robinson bowl



"You couldn't get boy dolls. So Grandma turned Stephen into a boy for me by making him boy clothes. Those clothes mean Grandma."

Doll Stephen's clothes

Touring Nationally:

Wellington	National Art Gallery's Shed 11	17 November 1990 - 27 January 1991
Auckland	Auckland Institute & Museum	23 February 1991 - 7 April 1991
Christchurch	Robert McDougall Art Gallery	4 May 1991 - 23 June 1991
Dunedin	Otago Museum	20 July 1991 - 1 September 1991



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FROM THE EDITOR

This issue introduces the final stage in our re-design. The new masthead on the front cover replaces one which has been there for a decade. The internal layout has undergone many changes in that time, and this one will certainly not be the last. Even the name has changed, from New Zealand Crafts to Craft NZ.

How permanent will that be? On one hand we gasp and are astounded by the creativity of our leading craftspeople. The push from the Polytech Craft Design Courses and the QEII Arts Council seems to be firmly towards using the craft media as vehicles for art. On that basis, perhaps "Craft" is not the best title for this magazine. Words like "Design" and "Art" may capture the mood better.

On the other hand, craft in the traditional sense is still alive and well in New Zealand. Using time-honoured materials and techniques, craftspeople produce beautiful objects which equal the best the world can offer.

Given such diverse interpretations, is there a name which captures what we all believe craft to be? Probably not, who can agree on what craft really is? To cover the infinite aspects of craft, we aim to spread the net wide. Craft is craft is craft, isn't it?

Feedback about the changes to Craft NZ has been filtering through. We've had some positive letters and some negative rumours. There were glitches last time, probably there'll be some this time. Let us know what you think. From a rural hideaway in Nelson, it's not always easy to keep abreast of everything in the craft world. If you know about a craft happening which you think is important, please tell us.

Our cover features the work of Malcolm Harrison - a consummate craftsman - an accomplished artist. Ann Packer caught up with his show at the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt. Her review is on page 15.

Did you know that when Edward, Prince of Wales, wore a Fair Isle jumper on a golf course in 1922, he started a fashion trend which still endures? That the padding in the calves of mid-nineteenth century men's long-johns was not to keep them warm but to make them look sexy? Have you seen the undershirt in which King Charles I was beheaded? Researcher Heather Nichololson found so much to fascinate her in a study trip to Britain last year that her report ran to fifty pages. She discusses historical knitting on page 28 of this issue.

More than any other craft medium, glass has been hit hard by the economic downturn.

Helen Schamroth surveyed glassworkers throughout the country. She asked them how they were surviving and what the future holds; where their inspiration comes from and what contribution overseas tutors could make. Her conclusions are on page 4.

The Craft Design Courses have an increasing influence on the course of craft. Edith Ryan, Manager of Crafts Programs for the QEII Arts Council has been centrally involved in the development of these courses. In our editorial, (next page) Edith Ryan puts her views.

The courses are still in their infancy. What can we tell of their success by looking at student work so soon, before recent graduates have had a taste of independence? Earlier this year, 1990 graduates exhibited their work at the Craft Council Gallery. Louise Guerin discusses the show on page 9.

Furniture making in New Zealand is dominated by European/American tradition, although shows like Artiture present other approaches. On Waiheke Island, New Zealand woodworker Kazu Nakagawa brings a Japanese aesthetic. Christine Thacker writes about Kazu Nakagawa on page 24.

I visited "Kohia Ko Taikaka Anake" at the National Art Gallery earlier this year and found it riveting. As a wide reaching survey of Maori art, it brought together work of many types and many regions. Bob Jahnke gives his impressions of this important event on page 32.

Who buys craft, why do they do it and where do they put it? In a new series, we examine New Zealand collectors of craft. Pat Baskett visited Wally and Adele Hirsh. See what she found on page 36.

This issue also covers the usual potpourri of news about events, people and places, reviews of exhibitions, and opinion.

In issue 37 we'll cover the conferences of quiltmakers, craft dyers and potters. The Fletcher Challenge Ceramics Award, Art in Wool and the national exhibitions of potters and craft dyers will be reviewed. The Globe Theatre Hangings and the touring exhibition of Sub-Antarctic Art will also be covered, as well as all our regular features.

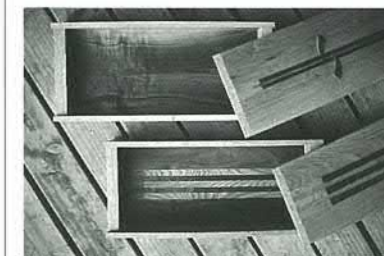
Happy reading.
Peter Gibbs, Editor.



Goblets by Peter Viesnik. See "Glass of '91", page 4.



Work by 1990 Carrington graduate Frances Jackson. See page 9 for a review of recent graduate's work and page 21 for a profile of Frances Jackson.



Kazu Nakagawa brings a Japanese aesthetic to New Zealand woodwork. Story by Christine Thacker, page 24.



"Kohia Ko Taikaka Anake" - "Strip away the sap wood, leave only the heart wood" Bob Jahnke surveys this important exhibition Maori art on page 32.



The Globe Theatre Hangings - next issue.

I'm sure there are craftspeople throughout New Zealand wondering about the efficacy of the Craft Design Courses. It will be the people who proved themselves to be craft artists, without the benefits of tertiary craft education, who are most assiduously assessing the courses which have now been in place for five years in eleven polytechnics throughout the country.

We do know quite categorically that New Zealand produced some international figures in every craft media, before these courses began. We have always said they made their names in a self-taught way, and we have all been hugely proud of them. However, recent research has revealed that the majority of these senior 'greats' have had tertiary art education abroad or in our fine art schools.

The visionaries who negotiated these courses with Russell Marshall's Education Department know full well that there were thousands of craftspeople, as technically skilled as any in the world, who were self-taught, but who would never make a national or international forum because they weren't intuitively design conscious. The market was sinking under a plethora of beautifully made works, many of which were displeasing to the aesthetic sense because they lacked visual harmony - or good design.

There was a national brief conceived by the Craft Design Advisory Committee to be interpreted as befitted the needs of each region. The priority goal for all, inherent in the course name, was the teaching of design.

I have visited each craft design team in the eleven polytechnics many times since the inception to discuss the course content, observe the students at work, and to be party to future plans. I can think of no course introduced by the Education Department that has been so successful in achieving the visionaries' objectives. Every phase of each course has been tweaked, modified and finely tuned. The tutor teams have worked tirelessly and inventively evaluating and making changes as student needs are revealed. It has become absolutely clear that the talented young within these courses, need four, if not five years of study. I have attended the graduate exhibitions, and been clean bowled by the freshness and originality of approaches and style, the confidence and sophistication displayed, and the risk-taking experimental nature of a great deal of the work. One doesn't see the well-crafted functional vessel, one sees wonderful body adornment, wonderful installations, wonderful wall pieces and sculptures. Most are mixed or multi-media, which have demanded careful design and mastery of

many skills. One holds one's breath for one knows the small New Zealand market will never sustain the 120 odd student artists who graduate each year.

The polytechnics are greatly concerned about this, and are devising courses, or negotiating to have some of their graduates enter a college of education to train as art teachers. Others will train as curators, art administrators, gallery personnel - directors, exhibition and education officers, conservators, consultants, critics, artists in industry and so on. We know for certain these graduates will enrich our nation, for one way or another they will ensure the cultural influences exerted on our people are expressed and encapsulated in art works which sustain our culture.

As the polytechnic courses have gathered momentum over these five years, the assiduous observers must surely be standing in awe, and perhaps be feeling a titch threatened.

I believe these Craft Design courses have already had a positive psychological effect on art in New Zealand. Those graduating see themselves as artists. They are unconsciously breaking down the craft/art fence. They are confidently asserting, by the works they create, that there is in fact no validity in that curious phenomena - perpetuated by certain galleries and academic rhetoric - that three dimensional work is not art.

These courses are indeed changing the shape of art in New Zealand. The fine art schools had better look back over their shoulders, for they face quite critical challenges.

There is a dreaded dark side to be monitored. It would be appalling if courses still in their infancy, but so startlingly successful, were compromised because of education cuts. It remains to be seen which polytechnics are really committed to these high cost courses. This is the first year of autonomous funding, and already it is clear some of the policies which were conceptually unique and ensured strong developmental individual performance are now at risk.

Much of the Arts Council craft budget is used to support these courses and it is with great pride we associate ourselves in partnership with the 11 polytechnics who are working so creatively to ensure our talented students are well grounded and inspired.

PLAGIARISM REVISITED

I was horrified to see a letter in your last issue accusing Libby Shallard and Judy Hewin of plagiarism.

The quilt in question was made as a commission for a private board room. What happened to it and the use that it was then put to later had nothing to do with the makers.

I quote from *Pacific Quilts* March 1990 page 11. "The quilt 'Nova' by Katie Pasquini, appealed to Peter and Rinny Gordon of Enzed Sewing Ltd, and Libby and Judy felt that part of this design used as a central theme, would form the basis of a stunning quilt."

This is hardly the statement that would be made by people intent on passing off someone else's work as their own!

What Helen Bissland has stolen is not someone's design - it is two people's professional reputations.

Helen Webber, Auckland

It has come to our attention that your magazine has published a letter from Helen Bissland of Stewart Island (Issue 35, Autumn 1991) which accuses us of plagiarism.

We would like to point out the following facts:

1. The quilt in question was made as a private commission in 1986 for Enzed Sewing Limited. It was made for the purpose of being a decorative piece of work to hang in their board room.

2. The owners of the quilt have never been under any illusions as to the original design source, and no attempt has ever been made by us personally to conceal this source.

3. An article was published in "Pacific Quilts" (March 1990) in which credit is clearly given to Katie Pasquini for the original design. What others have chosen to write in reviews and without reference to us personally is beyond our control.

Our reputation as quilt makers rests upon the quality of the work we produce, but the question of personal integrity is a much more fragile issue. We deeply regret that such an accusation should be given publicity without us first having had the opportunity to answer that accusation.

We ask that you also publish in your next issue that we ourselves have always been quite open about the source of the quilt design.

E. Shallard, J. D. Hewin, Auckland

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Glass artists face high operating costs. With harder economic times only the most dedicated and creative can survive. How are they coping? Helen Schamroth surveyed the industry to see.
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Simplicity and elegance - a Japanese aesthetic on Waiheke Island. Christine Thacker talks about this woodworker.
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Bob Jahnke looks at a comprehensive survey of contemporary Maori art at the National Art Gallery.

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Cover: "Nightswimmers" by Malcolm Harrison from his exhibition "Echoes and Reflections" at the Dowse Art Museum. Ann Packer reviews the show on page 15 of this issue. Photo: Tony Kellaway, courtesy Dowse Art Museum.

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Contributions of original articles, reviews, news of events or commissions, press releases and photographs are welcome and will be considered for publication. If in doubt, first contact the editor or publisher. Copy deadline for issue 36, April 22, 1991.

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GLASS OF '91

BY HELEN SCHAMROTH

The history of glass as a creative medium has been a short one in New Zealand. It is a medium dependent on a technology that has been lost at least twice in the five millennia or so of glass production.

Here in New Zealand we have in the past decade been enchanted by this wonderfully seductive medium which exploits the play of light more than any other. So who are the seducers? What levels have they reached since Reg Kempton started the first art glass studio in Havelock North?

There certainly aren't many glass artists and they are spread around the country from Invercargill to Northland, the main concentration being in Auckland. The New Zealand Society of Artists in Glass Inc, commonly known as SAG has a small mailing list in comparison with other crafts, and encompasses hot (blown), warm (slumped, fused, cast) and cold (flat) glass. In reply to a questionnaire I sent to glass artists around the country from this list I have had communication with 18 practising glass artists, a very high percentage of those questioned.

The numbers may be small, but they are a committed, tenacious lot. Everyone who replied has been working in glass earning a part or full living from it in 1990. Each plans to continue, although some may be changing direction and developing studio facilities at home in order to survive.

Glass has an exceptionally high profile in the craft galleries - for example Pieter Viesnik observes that it constitutes perhaps a quarter of the stock on display at the Crafts Council Gallery. This means that those who are working in glass have to be prolific because, comments Peter, it does sell.

And if we listen to those who sell glass the standards have to be high as humdrum work doesn't move off the shelves in these difficult economic times.

Regular outlets cited by artists include Gow Langsford, Masterworks, Design Design, Compendium Gallery, Textures Gallery and Heart and Soul in Auckland; Unique in Hamilton; the Crafts Council Gallery and Antipodes in Wellington; the Suter Gallery and Landmark in Nelson; Cave Rock Gallery and Courtyard Gallery in Christchurch; and Rumours in Dunedin, as well as studio door sales.

Small work - good quality vessels, goblets and vases - is the mainstay of glass sales at Compendium Gallery in Devonport, reports director Pamela Elliott. This is probably the case in many galleries. Sara Sadd at Masterworks in Parnell makes the interesting observation that not just inexpensive work sells. Outstanding pieces at high prices by, for instance, Ann Robinson and Garry Nash sell well too. It is quality that attracts the buyers, who are becoming more sophisticated in their tastes as they become more familiar with the medium.

It is well to remember that retail outlets would reflect what sells in hot glass, and in the developing area of warm glass. Cold glass remains the preserve of commissioned work, which is experiencing very lean times.

Developing good quality work of the exceptionally high standards that seem necessary for survival, has become essential. John Leggott comments that "glass in New Zealand has deteriorated to funk and fuming". On the other hand Garry Nash feels that standards have been improving, and that those who are working in glass are serious about it, and gaining the recognition.

There are further varying opinions concerning the standard that work here really reaches. Colin Reid, English glass artist-in-residence at Carrington Polytechnic is in a position to observe local work, and he maintains that while there are some people doing work of a high standard, there is a lot around that is mediocre. He also comments that for the small population of this country, the market is very good. This puts another perspective on the difficulties experienced by some artists in selling their work, but supports Peter Viesnik's view.

Colin maintains that major sculptural work needs an international market, which is what he personally relies on, rather than just the British market. Garry Nash also has a toe in the international market with his large sculptural pieces which make art statements in glass. As well, he produces vessels for more general local consumption. The sculptural works are only a small part of what he does, but nonetheless feature in his annual output.

Apart from maintaining supplies to retailers and surviving financially there is a very good reason for continuous production of hot glass - the expensive equipment necessary reacts unkindly to being shut down. It needs to be used every day, if not day and night, to be economical (just consider those gas and power bills), and stay in good working order.

That means that existing facilities cannot afford to be under-utilised, and emphasises why the facilities established for the Craft Design Courses at the polytechnics are such valuable resources. They should be the key to the development of the high standards demanded by the retailers and the public, as well as being fully used to justify their high cost. But are they?

Opinion really differs here. Many of the established glass artists are self-taught, although some, like Ann Robinson (Elam), Peter Raos (Elam) and Holly Sanford (University of California), do have art school backgrounds.

Formal training in glass has been the privilege of those who studied outside New Zealand, like Tony Kuepfer (Portland State University), Ola and Marie Høglund (Orrefors Glass School), Rena Jarosewitsch (Glasfachschule Rheinbach, West Germany), Kharen Hope (Dudley College of Technology, West Midlands) and Michel Androu (Chelsea Art School).



Above: Goblets by John Leggott, assisted by John Croucher.
Photo: John Leggott.
Right: Screen; Lynley Adams.

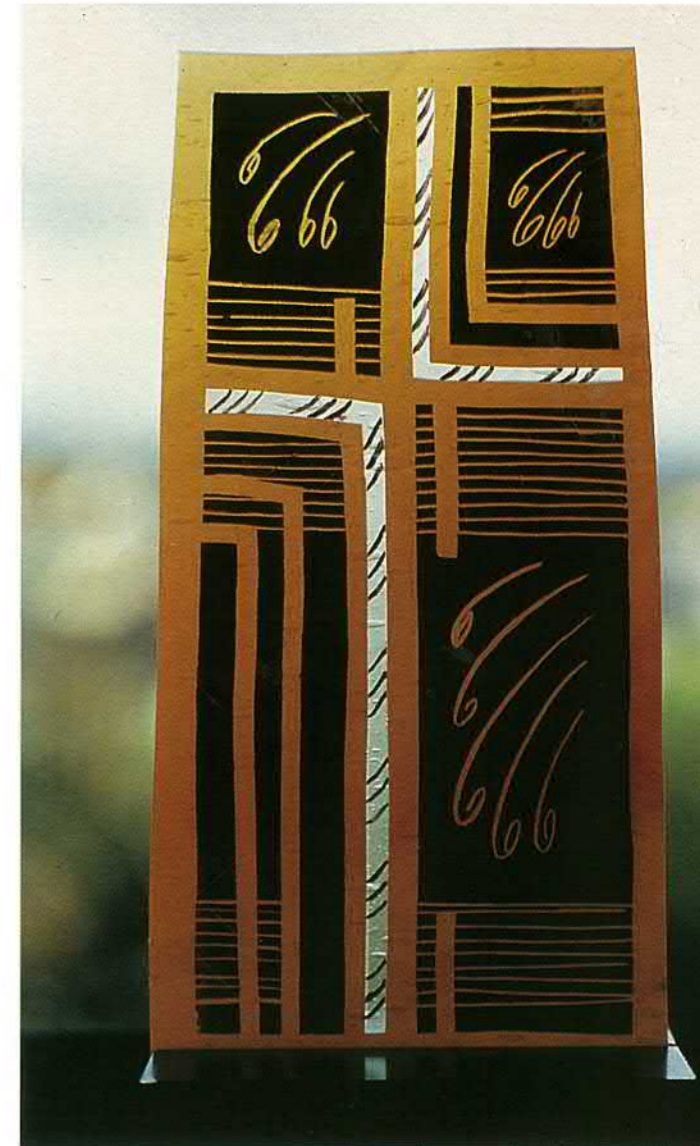
Some artists have succeeded without formal art training, so are sceptical of what the polytechnics are doing (there is very little other student activity in glass although there are hot glass facilities at Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland).

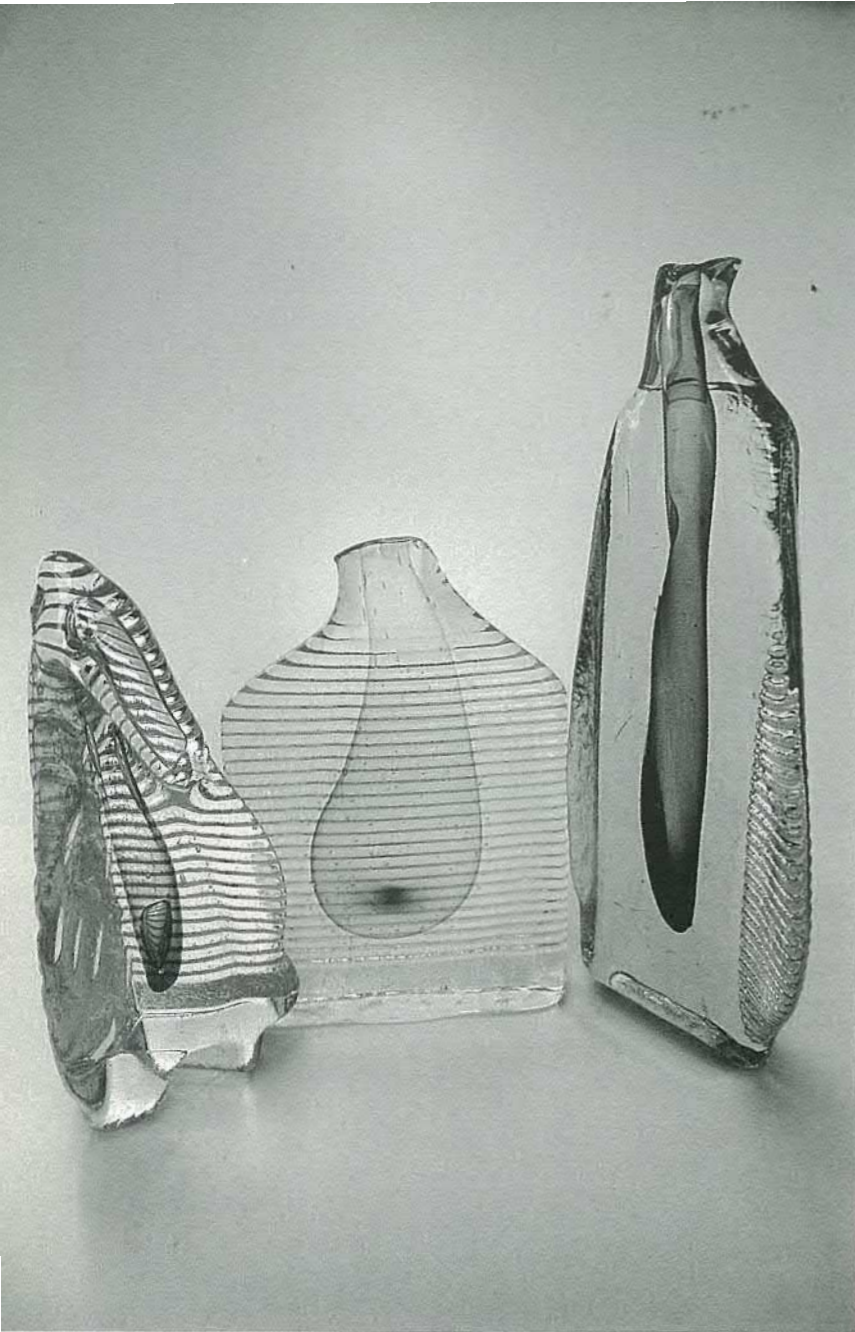
At one extreme John Leggott celebrates the fact that he had no art school training and learnt by doing. For him, as for others who have been self-taught, a good deal of inspiration and encouragement has come through overseas travel and workshops by international glass artists, both here in New Zealand and abroad. Many of the self-taught believe that the apprenticeship method is the most valuable.

There are hot glass facilities at Northland Polytechnic and Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic, as well as facilities for warm glass at other polytechnics. Given the amount of money spent there should be a return to the community in the form of well-educated talent emerging. There are those outside the institutions who are scornful of the pampered students who have no idea of the reality of surviving, who think the world owes them a living.

At the other end of the spectrum those involved with the education system express pleasure at the fact that students have this opportunity to learn and explore ideas without having to worry about how to pay their gas bills. Despite some students' laziness and lack of tenacity, often not experiencing any real struggle while studying, there is room for those with energy, motivation and creativity to do exceptionally well.

Ann Robinson comments that "the creative hard workers will fly" because they are getting design skills as well as technical training, and education is always use-





Above: Peter Raos, group of hot cast glass forms. Height, 250mm. Photo; Peter Raos.

ful, even if students don't become practitioners. They will certainly be educated consumers.

Tony Kuepfer, who established the glass studio at Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic, is clear that students are "coming out with greater design ability and imagination than those who had to battle on in an independent secular fashion".

Several people comment that what is coming out of the polytechnic courses is a lot of multi media work, in itself an exciting development. Holly Sanford is of the opinion that the future of glass will come from the Craft Design Courses.

Nonetheless, there are those within the system who have doubts. Criticism comes from those who have had experience of the courses. Alana Taeken-McCallum, who received a Diploma of Craft Design from Carrington Polytechnic a year ago, comments that coming out of the polytechnics is "a surplus of half-trained people who haven't reached their full potential because of lack of professionalism within the polytechnic courses" - a harsh

judgement. It belies the fact that she is making progress in the area of warm glass and exhibiting professionally.

Expecting to compress what used to take ten years of hard slog into a four year course may be unrealistic. Apprenticeship after the course could well combine the best of both worlds, and according to Garry Nash that is actually happening. A graduate of Wanganui RCP has just started working at Sunbeam Glass with him and Peter Viesnik, so he believes the system must be working.

All the same, Alana's sentiment coincides with Ola and Marie Hoglund's comment that "it will be a waste of money until they (the polytechnics) get educated teachers from overseas", and Peter Raos' view that he would like to have seen more money spent on recruiting the best people and less into buildings and equipment.

As an observer at Carrington Polytechnic with no axe to grind, Colin Reid agrees the students need more input. He feels they are not sufficiently aware of the possibilities of the materials and of what is going on overseas.

But why don't they know what is going on overseas? Apart from international literature, several of these artists claim to have travelled overseas in recent years and worked with people they admire, and the glass artists who have visited New Zealand have been exciting and stimulating.

Internationally acclaimed glass artists like Lino Tagliapietra, Dante Marioni, Richard Marquis, Billy Morris, Klaus Moje, Tony Hanning, Rob Levin, Mark Eckstrand, Johannes Schreiter and Joachim Klos have recently visited and shared technology, traditions, expertise, artists' visions and passion for the medium. Their input, although brief, has been invaluable.

It comes back to what is possible financially, and to value what is available, always improving this. It remains for glass artists to develop their uniqueness, and become appealing locally and internationally. Not because they do "international" work, and emulate the German glass artists, the Venetians or the Memphis school, but because they are saying something about themselves, and what it is to live in New Zealand.

Ann Robinson seems to be leading the way here. Of everyone who enthused about influential visiting artists, she remained the most silent. Her work has developed steadily over ten years, and she draws on a *paté de verre* technology that she has painstakingly developed through trial and error, reflecting her environment in the abstracted relief images on her cast vessels. If financial security is uncertain she nonetheless works on, and is at present building her new workshop at home and preparing work for Expo in Spain, where work reflecting New Zealand's uniqueness would definitely be a criterion.

John Croucher is completing a MPhil at Elam, writing a book about glass technology. He has teamed up with John Leggott, recently returned from overseas, for which he had a QEII Arts Council grant and a Fulbright scholarship. The pair, working at Elam School of Fine

Arts, are developing collaborative work which draws on Venetian traditions and post-Modern aesthetics, while adding their own personal stamp. Peter Raos is working on a MFA at Elam as well as working from his workshop at home. The research by these people will be of benefit to themselves, and hopefully the wider glass community.

Those who are self employed and teaching in glass will need a lot of confidence to meet the demands. Everyone has been affected by the crash of '87 and the economic downturn that followed. Their vision for the future of glass may well influence what actually happens.

The pessimists, believe the situation will not improve unless the economy rights itself and overseas teachers are brought in. A recurring concern is that glass objects appear to be expensive to the buying public, and that high prices are necessary because of the cost of production. Linley Adams comments that her work appears cheap in the USA and France even after freight and insurance have been added - here the public thinks it is expensive.

Without some solidarity between glass artists and the raising of public awareness, this attitude could become all pervasive. Phil Newbury reminds us that most glass objects sold by major retail stores are imported, and that is what most of the public is familiar with. To change that emphasis is worth striving for.

Fortunately for the survival of glass as an art form the pessimists are few in number. It may pay to listen to those who believe glass has great potential internationally, so long as New Zealanders meet current standards. These optimists believe that increased design awareness by practitioners, and development of one-off pieces to express artistic ideas, will give strength to glass art.



Above: Lyndsey Handy, Bird Series, fused glass, trapped lustres and enamels. Height 400mm. Photo; Ray Forster.

Glassworkers will need to be resourceful and run workshops economically. John Croucher sums it up by saying that "imagination is the bottom line, followed very closely by technical proficiency".

Those working in flat glass dream of another boom period so that commission work will again be sought. Some, like Michel Androu, acknowledge that flat glass still has a long way to go before it reaches the full potential of self expression rather than being derivative of other traditions.

Rena Jarosewitsch's vision is one of the more realistic, yet positive and creative: "...perhaps fewer craftspeople/artists working in the field due to the economic situation. The established glass artists will continue to work, perhaps be more confident with the type of work being produced (stronger identity) and artists from (traditionally) other fields will start using glass in different innovative ways which might open up collaborative efforts." It's a vision from which glass art could grow and thrive.



Right: Peter Viesnik, Looped stem goblets. Height 230mm. Photo; Peter Viesnik

MESSAGES FROM THE SPIRIT

LOUISE GUERIN



There's something about a craftsman's love affair with his or her material that creates its own magnetism. Not to deny the hours and hours of hard graft involved in production. They come into it too. But it is that extra reverence or wit that transforms. It's the hum of a determined finish and the message from the spirit of its creator that a truly successful piece will contain. Hard to specify, but easy to spot.

I had my own ideas of what a 1990 Craft Design graduates' exhibition might contain and so was in for certain surprises. The celebratory fine arts edge of self exploration seemed obvious after I had met it face to face: Mereana Taukiri Hall's lively paintings, for example, whose colour waves hit me as I opened the door. And Louise Purvis's *Flying Fox*, having its own private laughs as it raced on into its secret journey.

Marea Timoko's *Waka* - clay and crystal boats on stands of chunky crystal - I came back to again and again, as their aspects changed on different days in different lights. Something about the tiny scale of each vessel with its enormous ramifications enchanted me. These are truly soul ships. Crystal boats in world mythology can signify a transfer from one plane to another or a change of state to the inner plane. That's what looking at this fleet helped me to do, and where I related from. The almost clumsy solidity of the crystal supports made the boats seem like herrings, with the same simple ease for their water voyaging.



Marea herself says simply of her work: "This is my culture, this is my life, this is my learning. "It is where I have come from, where I am now, what I hope for and continue to strive for. "This is my work's future."

Of the waka she says "it all stems from Waitangi 1990. I was there every day. I've always wanted to combine glass and clay and the crystal came from when the waka were at Waitangi. Everybody was looking at the waka on the water and their stands were left up on the bank. I thought the stands were just as important." The patterns on the boats are Lapita inspired. "It all goes back to the great migration," she says.

Elizabeth Miria Spark's harakeke (flax) work has that same powerful combination of delicacy and sureness of touch. Her statement: "My work is a blend of traditional Maori techniques and contemporary design." Her inspiration is the wharenui and the importance of harakeke within. "I have been experimenting with dyed flax and muka in keta and wall hangings. The colours becoming foremost rather than me concentrating on a woven sequence to create a 'set' pattern."

Susan Jowsey has been exploring the world in miniature, obliquely facing enormous issues. There's still a slant that keeps the viewer at bay - limited accessibility and coded information in the meantime as the inner work goes on. As she puts it:

"Within my work I am hoping to convey a sense of accumulated experience -
or rather,
echoes of those experiences:
vulnerability,
isolation,
a lack of understanding."

Frances Jackson's complete mastery over her materials was a pleasure to behold. Impeccable finishing as well as fine, sweeping ideas for shapes. Her ideas encompass "surreal displacement. The head is the alternative to the bird in the cage. The bird has travelled the spiral and assumed the hat shape." (See people, page 21)

Wendy Griffin's *Inquisitum Arcanum Intribus Materius Magnificus* is as imposing as its name, containing as it does an enigmatic encyclopedia of names and references. It reeks of hours of dedicated application and is based on the elusive signs, promises and directions of alchemy. The pleasure is in letting the lines unfold.

Alison Bramwell's *The Power of Naming*, using another symbolic language, that of runes, continues to haunt, with its twisted spine of nails. Her explanation: "There is a pulse from the land running strong through the imagery that our distant ancestors (both European and Maori) created as a communication from the spirit.

Opposite page: "Kia Ora Digger and Kahu", by Elizabeth Miria Sparks. Photo; Sandy Common.

Left: "Flying Fox", by Louise Purvis. Photo; Sandy Common



Above:
"Inquisitum
Arcanum
Intribus
Materis
Magnificus",
by Wendy
Griffin.
Photo;
Sandy Connon

"This piece is about remnants, memories. It is a collection of symbol and media with talismatic intent.

"It is about ways of passing on a feeling. It is about the power of naming."

However, after all this initial excitement and after visiting the exhibition several times, a sense of the highly derivative feel of some of the work would not go away. The usual shortcomings of a group exhibition made this worse - not enough of anyone's work to develop a full perspective on each individual. Cathy Kenkel's workbooks, for example, made me want to see her actual work.

If I haven't commented on something it's because it and I have failed to form a relationship. Perhaps I'll meet the fully explored idea or its next phase some other time when the inspiration and skills have truly come together. Better not to pass judgement in the meantime.

Malcolm Harrison, who was artist in residence at Nelson Polytechnic for three months in 1989 and who has since revisited that course on a number of occasions was kind enough to come up with a second opinion.

"I think one must realize that this a students' work. I personally cannot see anything wrong with a slightly derivative feel to such work. It's like anyone: when you

first start you have heroes and you're finding your way. But later, that's got to stop. You find yourself. It's you then. But it takes time. After all, one doesn't expect a person to emerge from law school able to be a judge in a court."

Harrison is interested in promoting the personal development of students. "We can push the product far too much, instead of pushing the person. You need to help them get their feet on the ground; to help them realize that they have responsibilities and to help them see themselves as a creative vehicle. It's reaffirming that their ideas are just as valid as anyone else's and that the skills in the craft of the manufacturing of the article will come to them.

"They have put a lot into learning those skills, but that's not the most important thing. The key thing is getting to know themselves and coming to feel secure with themselves. Too many of them are too woolly woofers. They have brilliant ideas and then they'll back off. Or they're not assured that the idea is really good.

"It still falls back to getting their feet planted firmly on the ground.

"They have four years with everything pouring into them - it's going to

take a while afterwards to sort it through. It's going to be up to the individual. Quite honestly, some will make it, some won't. It'll just be like anything else. Some will go into other fields and some will struggle through and make a living. Some will be brilliant - who knows? It will be up to them...and luck."

For himself Harrison found working with students "incredibly stimulating. Being students they weren't so affected by their alter egos. They had nothing to lose. Later on people lose that spontaneity. It was a really easy, flowing situation. It loosened me up as well."

Perhaps in the end it comes down to this:

"From the age of six, I had a mania for drawing the forms of things. By the time I was 50, I had published an infinity of designs; but all that I produced before the age of 70 is not worth taking into account. At 73, I learned a little about the real structure of trees, birds, fishes and insects. In consequence, when I am 80, I shall have made still more progress; at 90, I shall penetrate the mystery of things; at 100, I shall certainly have reached a marvellous stage; and when I am 110, everything I do, be it a dot or a line, will be alive."

From *The Hokusai Sketchbooks*, editor James Michener, Charles E. Tuttle Co, Vermont & Tokyo 1958.

IN BRIEF

DANCING CATS TO MUNICH

Westport potter John Crawford is exhibiting at the Neue Keramik Gallery 615 in Munich. The invitation came after the owner of the gallery, Renate Wunderle, saw Crawford's work in New Zealand and viewed slides of his show "No Looking Back" (Suter Gallery, Nelson, 1989).

John and Anne Crawford went to Germany to help set up the 39 works, which include a 1.2 x 2 metre piece entitled "Pacific Mirror". The New Zealand ambassador to Germany travelled to Bonn to open the show on June 9.

Assisted by a short term study grant from the QEII Arts Council, the Crawford's will visit places of ceramic interest in Italy and the south of France.



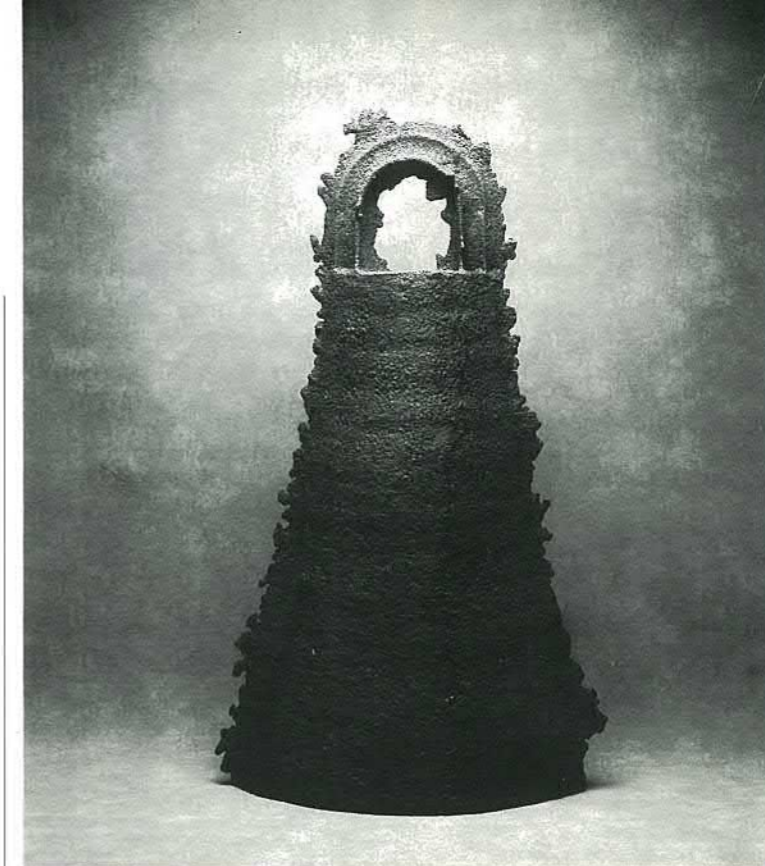
"Dancing Cats", terracotta with slips and enamel crayons.

CERAMICS TO POLAND

The international gaze will again focus on New Zealand when Moyra Elliott represents this country at the prestigious 5th International Triennial of Ceramics in Poland this year. The exhibition, entitled "Ceramic Material in Modern Art" runs from June 7 until August 15, 1991. The brief provided by the organisers who, among others, include the Polish Artists' Union, the City of Sopot Art Gallery (venue for the exhibition), the Polish Ministry of Fine Arts and the International Academy of Ceramics at Geneva, states that the primary aim of the exhibition is "the confrontation of the newest artistic investigations and achievements in the field of modern ceramics in different countries". It is a comprehensive prescription with a clear emphasis on innovation: Exhibitors are invited to forward one large or five small works in the category of industrial ceramics. The exhibited works will be for sale and there are a total of 16 prizes spread among three levels of merit.

The Triennial exhibition has been running for 15 years which corresponds with the time span of our own Fletcher Challenge international show. Participation in the Sopot show is by invitation, which in turn is by way of recommendation by an exhibitor in the previous exhibition. The exhibitor is selected rather than the work.

As a 1991 participant Moyra will be able to invite a further two individuals to contribute to the event in 1994. Her exhibition entry this year is a very big, multifired, ceramic bell which should have appeal for all who look (and listen).



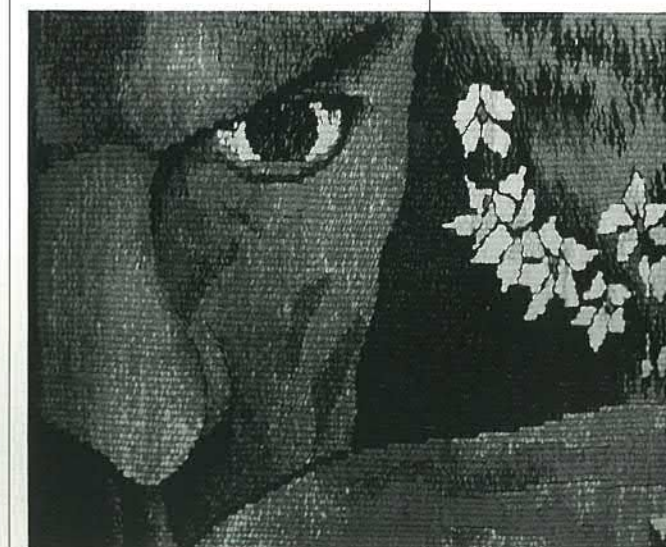
Multi-fired ceramic bell,
by Moyra Elliott

SMALL TAPESTRY

A tapestry woven by Marilyn Rea-Menzies has been accepted for the "Small Expressions '91" exhibition being held in conjunction with the Northwest Weavers' Conference in Eugene, Oregon. It will be exhibited at the Lane Community College Art gallery. Out of 93 entries, 54 pieces were selected from 9 countries, including the USA, by the juror Pat Spark. Final judging for the four best pieces will be held at the gallery in June. The exhibition runs from June 16 to July 5.

The tapestry by Marilyn Rea-Menzies measures 22cmx28cm, cotton warp with a wool linen and cotton weft. The piece is a portrait of a friend and is entitled "I Am".

"I Am", Tapestry,
by Marilyn Rea-Menzies



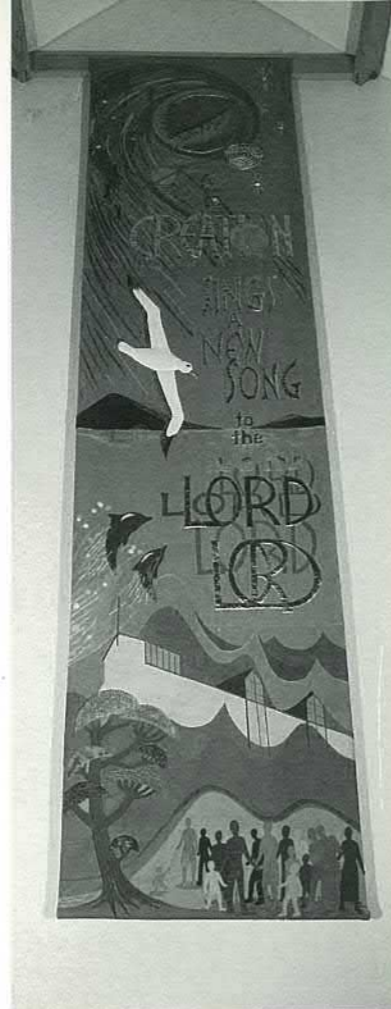
ARTEX

The traditional Kiwi craft shop continues to be challenged by a variety of alternative retailing operations. Artex - Art and Interior Expo appears this year in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington. Among the exhibitors is Tom Capey, a woodturner from Whangarei. Capey gained enough confidence from a twelve week course at Northland Polytech in 1987 to launch himself into a new career in wood. He was Northland's woodturner of the year for 1988.

He describes himself as "a dreamer and an experimenter, specialising in one-off pieces that can be classified as functional, decorative or sculptural".

He is pictured with "Tribal Urn", 1.4 metres tall. This piece, constructed from 80 rings of custom wood and finished in acrylic lacquer, won a \$500 consolation prize at the 1989 Putaruru National Exhibition, adding to his 1988 award at the same show for "Most Innovative Turner".

Below,
"Tribal Urn",
by Tom Capey



A DUNEDIN COMMISSION

By Linda Harvey

This five metre hanging is above the door of the Mornington Methodist Church, visible to all as they return from celebrating the Eucharist and as they go out from the sanctuary after worship.

Designed by hymn writer Colin Gibson, it was commissioned by the late Alex Mabon and given to the church in his memory by his family. A central feature of the design is the text "Creation sings a new song to the Lord", which is taken from a hymn by the twentieth-century writer James Phillip McAuley. The images displayed reflect this hymn and another written for the Centenary celebrations of the Mornington Church. The hanging was worked by Jeanette Gibson and Robin Aitken. The lettering is of padded gold and silver kid shadowed by bonded letters of silk organza and stitchery.

Reading from top to bottom, a sunburst of Creation made of padded and decorated fabrics is attended with beaded and jewelled stars. A soaring albatross, symbol in Aotearoa for the Holy Spirit, is also made of padded kid decorated with black kid and grey stitching on its wings. Dolphins of layered chiffon leap from a shimmering sea. At the base of the hanging, people silhouettes fashioned of padded leathers complete the sweep of Creation as they are drawn towards the church.

The hanging represents six hundred hours of work and was completed between August and December 1990. It was worked in six sections, hand-stitched together with overlapping design sections applied last. Some fabrics were bonded to the background; there is a little machine embroidery but most of the design is meticulously hand-stitched.

AOTEA TAPESTRY

The Aotea Tapestry, which now hangs in the entry foyer of Auckland's Aotea Centre, was unveiled by the Prime Minister Jim Bolger on April 24. The 11.4x6.5 metre tapestry, estimated to have cost \$650,000, was sponsored by Fletcher Development and Construction, who completed construction of the complex in 1989.

Associate-Professor Robert Ellis, of the Elam School of Fine Arts, designed the tapestry, which was produced by a team of six hand weavers at the Victorian Tapestry Workshop in Melbourne, Australia.

Elizabeth Currey, chairman of the Aotea Arts Centre Arts Committee, said the tapestry is the centre's principal art work, and joins a growing art collection of international standing which will attract visitors from around the world. She said her organisation had approached tapestry workshops around New Zealand to find that local studios did not have the substantial resources needed.

"The Victorian Tapestry Workshop is regarded as one of the world's finest and we decided to go with the best to create the best," Mrs Currey said.

The rich tapestry embodies signs and symbols which most viewers will quickly recognise, however, the designer welcomes visitors to supply their own interpretations.

Robert Ellis said he designed the work with Auckland, its people, history and land in mind. At the top, a variety of star chart symbols, based on the southern skies, establishes geographic location and navigation reference points. The constellation Pleiades/Te Huihui o Matariki relates to the annual replenishment of earthly resources.

Beneath this is a landscape formed by elemental forces, its surface conditioned by continuous volcanic activity. There is evidence of human occupation stretching over a millenium.

Cartographic symbols, surveyors marks and weather chart signs suggest recent attempts to define the nature of the physical landscape.

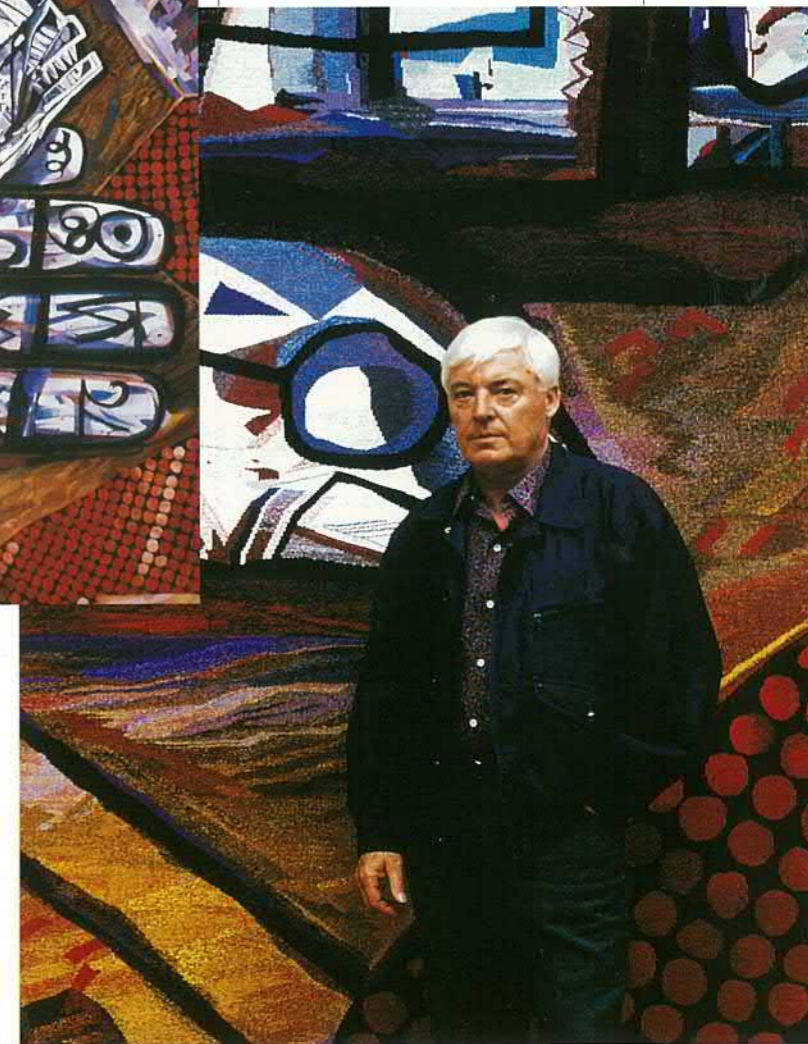


Above: The Aotea Tapestry, 11.4 metres high and 6.5 metres wide, hangs in the foyer of the Aotea Centre.

Reflecting Auckland's marine history, Ellis has chosen a John Dory, a fish with long established spiritual connotations, to symbolise the abundance and diversity of marine life. It is poised over an open hand of friendship and good fortune. Astronomical and botanical characters signifying riches and prosperity, embellish the hand.

In the lower left area, a fountain of pure water acts as a sustaining life force, and as a cleansing agent removing tapu. In the corners, the ancient signs of Alpha and Omega relate to the beginning and ending of all things, and the perpetual life cycle.

(Editor's note: Auckland craft writer Helen Schamroth comments on the Aotea Tapestry on page 39 of this issue.)



Right: designer Robert Ellis stands beside the tapestry.



Above:
The Maloof inspired
rocker in walnut
and sycamore by
Jim Grimm.

USA INSPIRED FURNITURE

A love of wood, jazz music and the outdoors was the motivation for a seven month trip to the USA by Nelson woodworker Jim Grimm. Following a trip to Northern California to visit wood gurus James Krenov and Art Carpenter, Grimm found himself doing a series of workshops at Anderson ranch in Colorado.

There he met Sam Maloof, an influential woodworker from Just outside Los Angeles. He was invited to spend time assisting Maloof in a commission to equip an entire office building with hand-made furniture. In all, Grimm spent six weeks with Maloof.

The rocking chair (pictured) is a design which Maloof has worked on perfecting for 40 years. Grimm estimates that since his return to New Zealand he has spent 75 hours working on the chair.

INTERNATIONAL WEAVING SCHOOL



A scenic seaside town slap in the centre of the country. That's the location for the INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF WEAVING. Australian resident Birgite Armstrong will be commuting from the NSW farm she owns with her husband Neale to spend six months of each year at the school which opened in Picton on February 3. Her partner in the venture is Marilyn Rea-Menzies. The two plan to bring in tutors from throughout New

Zealand and overseas to run residential courses aimed at the more experienced weaver as well as classes catering for local needs. They also hope to employ one or two graduate weaving students on an apprenticeship arrangement.

The picturesque old building at 22 Broadway, Picton will also house the mail order weaving supply business Glenora Crafts, formerly of Tauranga.

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REVIEWS

MALCOLM HARRISON AT THE DOWSE

Reviewed by Ann Packer

"There is a Chinese tale of one hundred blind men brought before an elephant. "What is before you?" they were asked. Each felt the animal and went away bearing one hundred different stories of what they had been led to..."

Malcolm Harrison's statement to accompany his exhibition at the Dowse Art Museum is preceded by this tale, cautioning viewers that the message or meaning in these pieces is ultimately up to us. A generous gift: Harrison's new work particularly, and the quilts which were shown at the Manawatu Art Gallery last year (most of which are here), is loaded with symbols and literary, historical, geographical and other references. And all this is filtered through an intensely intimate lens, resulting in works loaded with personal significance.

This exhibition is wide ranging, encompassing the development of the artist's themes over recent years. It includes the dark works from the Manawatu exhibition, itself a stunning assembly - the striking "Mortal Angels", all 17 panels of it, is better lit and without the

reflection from the floor which augmented its sombre impact - and the sonnet and trauma cloaks, all introspective works. The electrifying, provocative triptych "Creator/Destroyer: Kissing Death: Lies" is here displayed as Harrison originally intended, closely linked, the clashing colours intensifying the encounters between the male couples quited into each piece.

Eight brightly-coloured smaller quilts are like greetings cards, happy affirmations of small events: Happy New Year, A Quiet Meal at the Chez, The Blue Lantern (Colette and M.E. and talk of w.t.), Letter from Chester. All feature a trendy Max Headroom type silhouette, and often include those cliched expressions found in cards.

The real excitement in this exhibition, though, is generated by the largest new pieces, which bring together the many themes Harrison has been exploring, both universal and personal: myth, symbol, religious rite and pop culture, cartoon heroes, as well as the small but equally precious rituals of daily living. These new works emerge in brilliant colours breaking out of the more muted earlier images, integrating previous ideas.

In "Russian Caviar" which greets the visitor in the Dowse's foyer, an ostensibly formal encounter takes place against a panorama of city and harbour, the breeze lightly lifting a curtain. Yet religious images hint at hellfire and damnation: vignettes of cherub and disrobing male suggest inner conflict. "Three nights in Stockholm" similarly evokes a curious mix of T.S. Eliot's Prufrock and John Le Carre, though this piece is more fragmented.

As always, Malcolm Harrison demonstrates superb control of his medium, constructing his quilts from fabrics of a breathtaking variety of colour and texture, controlling disparate weights to produce a perfectly integrated whole. His stated intention to take up painting, and his recent exploration of etching suggests that these may well be his last quilted works. Don't miss them.

Left: "The Letter"
by Malcolm Harrison.
Photo: Peter Gibbs.
See also cover photo,
"Nightswimmer"
courtesy Dowse Art Museum.

WEARABLE ART

Reviewed by Sue Curnow

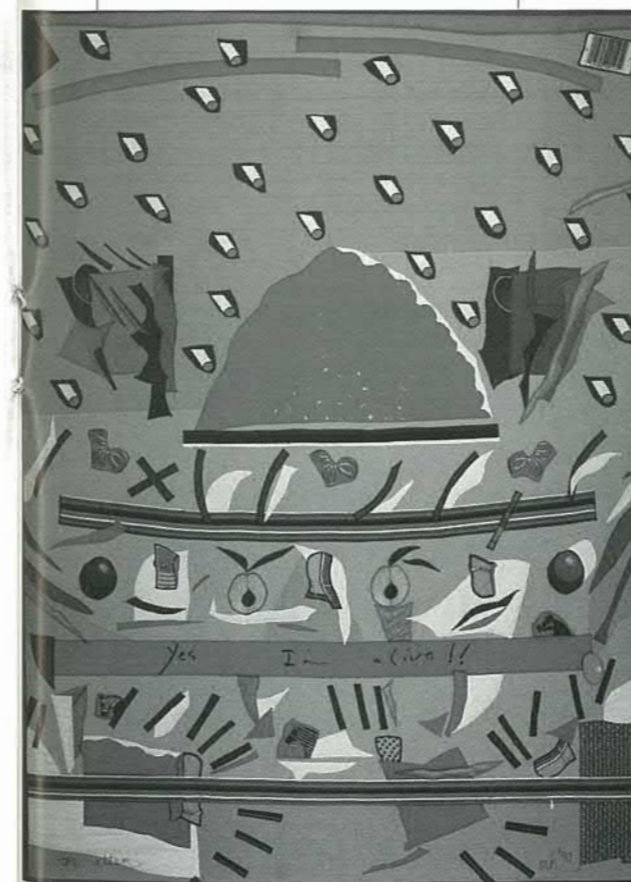
This was the ninth consecutive annual Wearable Art exhibition hosted by Compendium Gallery - testament to owner Pam Elliott's commendable faith in the value of the genre. Aware of the importance of movement and three-dimensionality to the proper viewing of clothing, she ensures that an opening parade is staged, at a separate venue, before the garments are put on static display.

With the Benson and Hedges extravaganza still fresh in our minds, this year's show was, more than ever, a reminder of just how close the categories of "fashion" and "wearable art" have become. It's a good time to reflect upon the origins of and reasons for such a concept as "wearable art"; on what does its continuation as a separate genre depend? In the beginning, it served as a showcase for the work of people skilled in textile crafts - the cloth was the thing, and simple, basic styles the most appropriate for its articulation. The concerns of high fashion - line, form - were not those of wearable art; its concerns with fabric, embellishment, experiment, often led to criticism regarding a lack of attention to style, and frequently, to finish.

Today, we have - at least in the Compendium collection - garments which are stylish and well-made, of unique fabrics made by a variety of methods. And we observe - in the Benson and Hedges collection - garments which fit exactly the same description. Indeed, one might even go so far as to say that the latter had more "challenging" ideas than the former. So, what's it all about? Are the creators of wearable art trying too hard to be fashionable - and therefore saleable - thus endangering its continued existence?

True to its roots, the parade was divided into categories of fibre (rather than daywear, sportswear etc); outstanding in the silk class was the work of guest exhibitor Sally Govorko. Painting with Procion dyes, using resist techniques, she achieves extraordinary degrees of depth, separation, and saturation of hues; the patterning is considered and controlled, the overall effect one of richness and diversity. Several types of silk, each giving its own quality of drape or texture to the colours, are used. A thorough understanding of the principles of clothing design and construction - a result of 20 years in the boutique business - makes it possible to integrate these lovely fabrics with good design.

Kristin Leek, who has had garments in each show since its inception, has developed



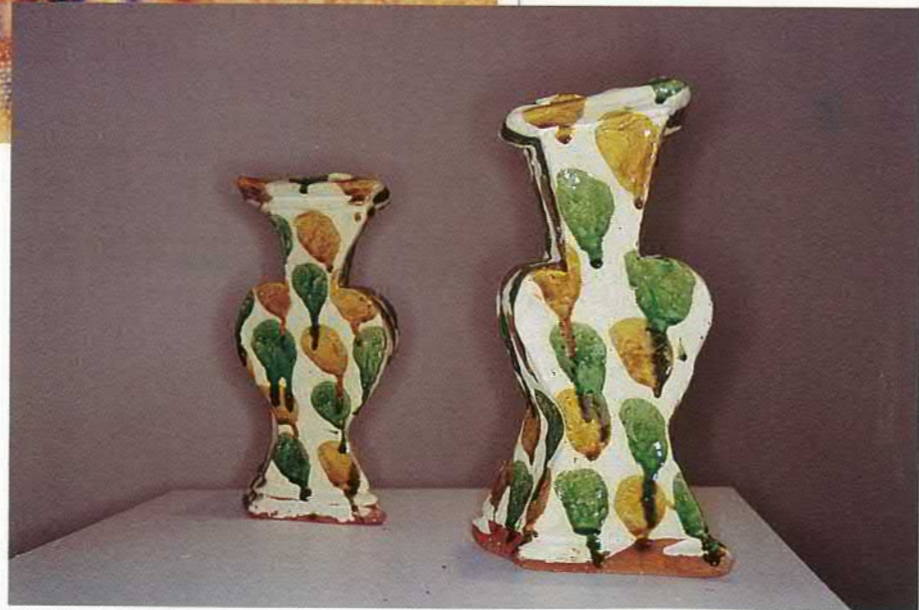


Above: Hand knitted "Teacup" coat by Suzie Crooks.

and refined her skills wonderfully, producing for this one a long, loose-fitting silk coat, screen-printed and overpainted, lined with silk satin and finished with tiny covered buttons.

Another familiar exhibitor, Yanny Split, had a surprise in store for those who associate her with formal, fitted clothing which uneasily straddles the fashion/art fence. Creative use of knitting machines, well-accepted - and with great results - in many other places, has yet to be explored here; Yanny's dashing ensembles in heavy cotton, wood, and mohair, combined with stitchery and embellishment, show a strong lead in this direction. The "Why not?" approach of this designer is seen also in breathtaking hand-knitted garments by Suzie Crooks. Playful switching of stitch patterns, type and weight of yarn, and colour, results in slightly bizarre, delightfully imaginative, jackets and dresses; their apparent spontaneity belies the great skill involved in their making.

Of the cotton garments, Wendy Bennett's screen-printed, reversible, hooded jackets exemplified her customary mix of pragmatism and creativity - a winning combination. A disappointing lack of quilted, pieced, or embroidered garments, or of menswear, indicates perhaps the current economic non-viability of these types of work. Leather, too, was conspicuously absent. Otherwise, there was much to admire and appreciate - philosophical questions notwithstanding - in the high quality entries of the 16 exhibitors, to all of whom it is impossible to do justice here. We can anticipate with interest and pleasure the celebration of the first decade, in 1992.



Right: Vase forms by Richard Parker. Photo; Anne Nicholas

RICHARD PARKER

Reviewed by Malcolm Harrison

In January 1988 at the Ceramics Symposium held in Dunedin, Richard Parker began a further change in direction of his work by cutting vessels from solid blocks of clay. In the technique-oriented ceramics world this shift was much commented on and opinions polarised. Collectors, the buying public, or interested viewers could find no neutral ground when looking at these pieces. A conflict of opinion arose over the new. An established potter was introducing us to a different visual language.

Yet the techniques were not new. The pale slips and heavy glazes stopping short of the bases refer back to ceramics created during China's T'ang Dynasty. Their vigorous and strong shapes juxtaposed with an elegance and indolence in decoration reaffirms a Chinese origin of thought. But despite these references Parker's work remains entirely personal. The voice he speaks with is his own and doesn't rely upon the ancients or current modishness.

By stepping back centuries from the Leach and Hamada school of thought Parker has introduced a new spirit and kindled a graceful energetic strain into New Zealand's ceramics.

From the time of the Dunedin symposium his work has become more assured, the repertoire of shapes expanded, and workmanship freer and increasingly masterful. His total ease and control over the clay is apparent.

In those intervening years I have viewed several Parker exhibitions, always finding myself on familiar yet alien territory. The yellow and green glazes have, for me, become identified with the colours of the kowhai; the pale whitish slip with the dazzling brightness of many Northern beaches. Details on the pieces are like fingerprints of the artist. They have been inherent in Parker's work for years.

Yet coupled with this enthusiasm for his ceramics I have conflicting thoughts about their rawness and the uncompromising presence they create. There are few practitioners in the visual arts whose work can shake one into healthy questioning and the pieces created by this ceramic artist often achieve this.

His recent exhibition at the Fisher Gallery lacked none of this conflict, and can only be described as superb. Carefully selected into groups of twos or threes, the 18 works were elevated so the lowest was viewed at waist height, the highest at eye level. The vases

varied from the reasonably small through to three impressively large pieces whose strength dominated the studio gallery.

Familiar touches were present. The yellow and green glazes, askew symmetry, dancing bulbous shapes and the everpresent spontaneity and unwillingness to disguise the nature of clay.

New touches were in the shape of almost heart shaped vases, a glowing pohutukawa red glaze, decorations of small glazed crosses, and two impressive planting boxes with lush diagonal stripes.

One of the marks of an artist is an ability to develop and allow their work to evolve. Richard Parker has allowed these things to happen and in doing so has raised questions and has challenged our accepted aesthetic mores.

NORSEWEAR POTTERY AWARD

Reviewed by Gaeleen Morley

213 entries were received for the pottery section of the Norsewear Art Award. Only 63 were selected for the final show by Rick Rudd of Wanganui, President of the N.Z. Society of Potters.

Brian Gartside (Auckland) won the \$2,000 award for his "Lake Mountaine Morraine". Gone are the vibrant colours and large scale of his earlier work. This piece was small by comparison - a wonderful build-up of texture upon texture resulting in a visual impact of quiet strength.

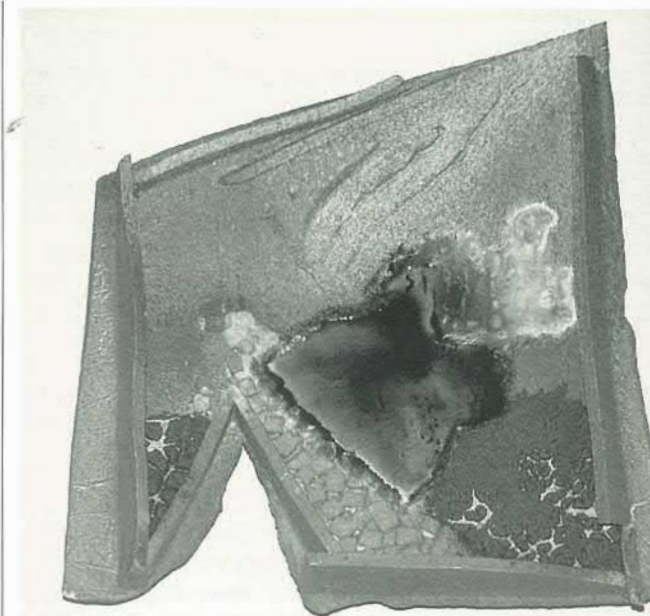
The three merit award winners were Raewyne Johnson (Wanganui), Peter Henderson (Dunedin), and Paul Laird (Nelson).

Raewyne Johnson's thought provoking entry, "Maketu Series III" consisted of three terracotta bowls containing found objects from the sea and its environs - kina and paua shells, bird skeletons and feathers, seaweed and sponges.

The interior of Peter Henderson's slipped bowl showed a wonderfully free decoration, simple and professional.

"Atlantis Submerged" by Paul Laird was an intricate large construction, a busy work with additions of gold lusted cats.

Some of the smaller pieces in the show held great appeal. Rosemary Perry's divine celadon glazed discoid bottle was quite breathtaking. I also liked Margaret Hunt's tiny copper reduced carved bowl, Evelyn



Above: "Lake Mountaine Morraine", by Brian Gartside. Photo, Gaeleen Morley.

Kelly's narrow porcelain bottle which showed her crystalline glaze to perfection, and Tui Morse's diminutive teapot with brush work decoration.

Of the larger pieces, the surface of Peter Gibbs' salt glazed bottle was totally seductive. The precision of George Newton Broad's decoration is awesome.

Other impressive pieces were Raewyne Atkinson's "Nikau" and the sculptural "Candleholder" by Gail Sammons.

Overall the exhibition created a good deal of comment. The display, using screens to cut the gallery space into sections, was not successful, and some work wasn't shown to its best advantage because of poor lighting.

Below: Earthenware bowl by Peter Henderson. Photo Gaeleen Morley





Above: "Celtic Roots - Transition" & "Future Warmth - Translation", by Alan Brown. Photo: James Bowman.

THE GLORIOUS GOBLET

Reviewed by Peter Gibbs

Most practising craftspeople at some time have had a love/hate relationship with a theme show. It can be a real pain to turn away from the series of work you're doing, to something which has been imposed by the necessity of producing within restrictions formulated by someone else. On the other hand, working towards a theme show can be a liberating experience, allowing ideas to come forward which would otherwise never have seen the light of day.

"The Glorious Goblet", at the Crafts Coun-

cil Gallery during April, meant different things to the various participants. For hot glassworkers, silversmiths, and woodturners, it was the opportunity to make forms which are part of their normal repertoire. For leatherworkers, warm glass artists, and basket makers, it was a challenge to take what is essentially a functional object and interpret it in a non-functional way.

Interestingly, of the fifteen potters represented, almost all chose the non-functional route, making statements which were as much about the current phase of their normal work as they were about the concept of the goblet.

In comparing the work of the thirty eight artists, it was obvious that the different limitations of the various media made for striking variations of interpretation. Mastery of the appropriate technique was essential to the successful realisation of the idea.

Hot glass artist Peter Raos summed this up in his catalogue statement: "The main difficulty in working with glass is the complicated technical nature of the process. After years of striving to meet the technical demands, the realisation comes that technique is the platform for launching ideas. Without the technique the ideas remain unrealised. Without the ideas the techniques remain as processes. If art is a passion pursued with discipline, and science is a discipline pursued with passion, then craft is a joining of art and science."

Woodturner Peter Battersby also talked of the importance of technique. "My belief is that the design of a turned object is its only permanent feature and that technique should if necessary be invented to enable the design to be executed."

The most successful pieces in the show were those which did just this. Raewyn Atkinson's "Nikau Goblets" took the sturdy

stem and the graceful flaring leaves of the Nikau and translated them successfully into clay. The techniques of dealing with clay have been evolving over time, those to do with clay have come as a result of her recent trip to Canada to study glaze (see NZ Crafts 34, Summer 1990).

Alan Brown is a master of technique. He also has the rare ability to consider deeply what he is doing with those techniques and to produce works of art as a result. Brown took two definitions of the word goblet: "...a tall stemmed drinking vessel (modern); a bowl-like drinking vessel (ancient)". He produced turned matai bowls to fulfill the ancient definition, then tenderly cradled them on bronze stands.

Technique overwhelmed good ideas on many of the goblets. While most of the exhibitors are master craftspeople, not all have the ability to transform their skills into art - and I mean that in the sense of "craft art" as I don't believe we should be bowing to the concepts of the "art" world.

There was art in the graceful and delicate Kauri and Maire goblets of Peter Penhall, but many other entrants just demonstrated that they could handle techniques cleverly, without sympathy.

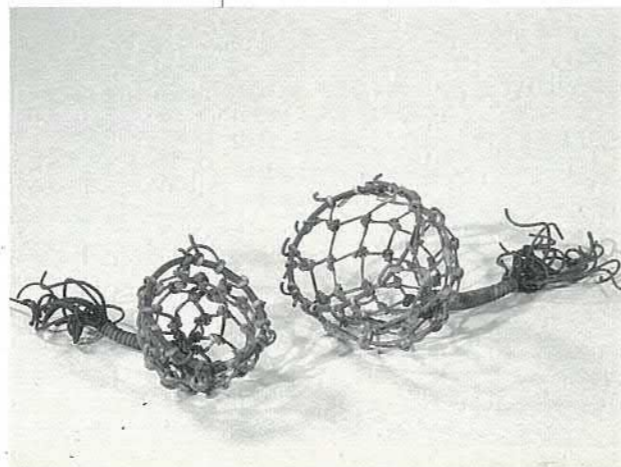
I thought the concept of a goblet worked against leatherworker Marie Potter and basketmaker Willa Rogers. Although their forms were clever in concept and well executed, the materials were too remote from those associated with the notion of a goblet.

All in all, it was an interesting show, a welcome opportunity to see leading craftspeople from all parts of the country and from many craft disciplines. It showed that many have a mastery of their materials, but only a few have the spark which truly sets them apart.

Below: "Something to celebrate I & II", Nikau Goblets by Raewyn Atkinson. Photo: James Bowman.



Right: "Claret et Clarette" (Une paire de gobelets avec des trous or a pair of holey goblets). Made from leather thonging & leather cowhide strip by Marie Potter. Photo: James Bowman.



BOOK REVIEWS

BASKET MAKING - BY OLIVIA ELTON BARRETT

Reviewed by Willa Rogers

Basketmaking is undergoing an enthusiastic revival in many parts of the world, especially Europe and North America. As a result we are being offered many attractive publications. *Basket Making* reflects the current level of English basketmaking which still, with a few notable exceptions, reflects the traditional, utilitarian concept of the craft.

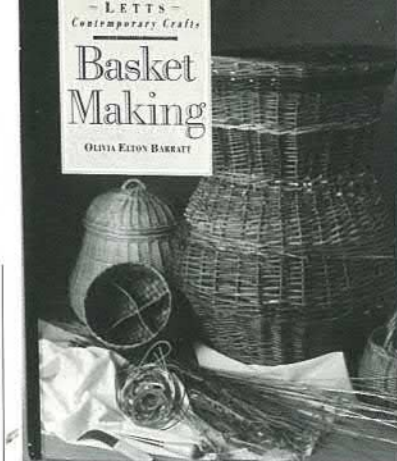
Although this is a slight volume (95 pages), it is a welcome addition to the selection of books geared to the needs of the beginning basketmaker. The many delightful and informative coloured photos both inspire the novice and provide an easy to follow analysis of the basketmaking process. It is attractively and systematically laid out, and the enthusiasm of the author for her subject and her appreciation of the work of other English basketmakers add to its value as a very readable and useful book.

After a general introduction which includes a brief history of basketmaking, the author covers in detail materials and equip-

ment, with photographs of tools used and a description in some cases of adequate and inexpensive substitutes. There is a brief section on dyeing and the chapter on techniques gives a comprehensive overview of the subject.

The main emphasis of the book is focused on detailed descriptions and photographs of charming individual baskets by different basketmakers. Most of these are traditional "practical" containers using rush, cane and willow, e.g. egg basket, tray, letter basket, rush hat, dog basket, fruit basket. Each basketmaker shows a sensitive use of materials and high technical skills. One of the most interesting baskets is a diagonally plaited rush basket with a lid - a simple basket of readily available fibres and not a difficult project for a beginner.

It is disappointing that there is only a brief reference to coiling, which is an easily mastered technique which can be happily combined with many materials both natural and synthetic and gives the basketmaker much freedom to improvise and experiment. And the one example of a frame basket was an all too brief and superficial introduction to the



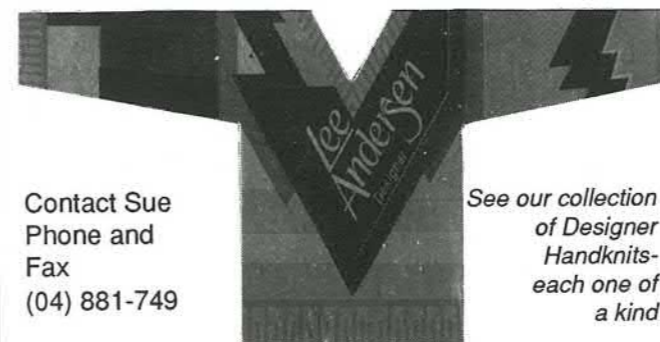
wealth of shapes made possible with the use of spokes and handles.

The most interesting section of the book is the "Gallery" section where the work of individual English basketmakers is featured. The inclusion of more work by Lois Walpole and Sheila Wynter would add to this section; they are making innovative, colourful containers using a variety of "found", "urban" materials in conjunction with more traditional fibres. This chapter could also have benefited from the addition of statements about their work by the featured basketmakers.

Although the information in this book is based on materials readily available in England, it does have a universal appeal and the contemporary New Zealand basketmaker could readily substitute local fibres for the more traditional willows, rushes and cane.

Let Contemporary Crafts, published 1990 by Charles Lett & Co. Ltd, Diary House, Borough Road, London SE1 1DW (hardback). Price £9.95.

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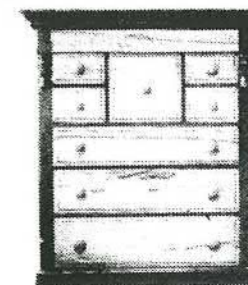
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CAROLE SHEPHEARD



Carole Shepherd was recently appointed to the Craft Panel of the QEII Arts Council. She majored in stage and costume design at Elam School of Fine Arts. Craft NZ editor Peter Gibbs talked to her at Wanganui Polytech Summer School in January.

"I never really liked working in the theatre, I was too young and naive and unable to assert myself enough to work among the likes of theatre type people, so I went to training college.

"From that point on it was really teaching and marriage and children and all those things that people do. I got back into work again in about 1976, after a summer school in Auckland. I went back into print making which is an area that I hadn't really done at art school, but I figured that I needed something that was quite restricted, quite disciplined.

"I put a lot of energy into the students I'm working with now. They have to be a bit realistic about what ambition is and what being successful is. It's an odd one for me to be back working in an establishment that I left in 1967. To find that in fact it hasn't changed greatly on some levels. I work part time, a half time job in print making and I run a women's theory paper too. The women's theory is in art and available as an internally assessed paper for students. It's still ghettoising a little bit, it'd be great to think that women were included in mainstream art history. I always thought that at some point it would just become part of everything else that was

going on. But what's happened in some cases is that it's seen to be done by people like us so others seem to think they can just neglect it.

Craft NZ: "Do you set out to make feminist statements in your work?"

"I don't set out to cover women's issues but my work is very much about who I am and how I live and the things that are important to me and sometimes they'll be about the good things and sometimes about the not so good things. They tended to be a lot more overtly political in the early 80's. I think I'm still as active but I don't feel the need to lay down the issues as thickly as I did then. I still think there's a need to do it, but not by me. I've probably got a bit more thick skinned, but also my situation's changed quite a lot, I am more confident about what I'm doing and maybe can help in other ways. Certainly change can be made from the position at Elam.

"I guess at the same time when I was involved with women's work I was also aware of the whole art/craft issue. There were a lot of areas of women's lives that were involved with the making of craft objects using quite traditional processes, but I thought were being negated in some way.

Craft NZ: "Because they weren't being categorised as art?"

"Yes, that's not great now but I certainly think that there was quite a severe split between the two movements. Because I'd done stage and costume work, because when I was at art school I'd made marionettes, and worked with fabrics, I always thought this shouldn't be..."

Craft NZ: "You've been appointed to the Craft Panel how did your first meeting go?"

"I went with all the prejudices that everybody does having been outside an institution. Often I am quite critical of situations like that and always have been but I've always felt that when you're amongst it you sometimes feel some of the difficulties that you never knew about before. I always wondered if I had the ability to sort and sift out as I thought I did - you often don't have to put it to the test. With every slide that I looked at I was aware that this was somebody's life, career and possibly future sitting right in front of me. What I was very pleased with was the discussion and dialogue and search for understanding of what we were looking at from the people on the panel."

Craft NZ: "What about the concern that no craft sector groups are represented on the panel."

"I don't ponder the problem at all, I think that because of the involvements I've had in a range of craft activities, I have done a hell of a lot of looking and reading. I've curated exhibitions and selected pottery shows and judged this and that and I think that the eye you have is transferable. I would hope that I would apply almost the same sort of critical attention to a painting or a piece of sculpture as I would to a pot and to a piece of fibre or wood. I think that where it is difficult is in some of the works that are very traditional. I tend to have to work very hard when I come up against those works and I do ask some questions at that point and go and do some homework."

Craft NZ: "What about the future?"

"I don't live day by day but I don't in fact have anything that I'm particularly aiming for. All I hope is that I can carry on working. Really my life is quite layered in a way because I have a commitment to my teaching and my work, but I still have a family and a house, garden, cats and dogs which I'm not at the moment prepared to limit.

"I don't want to be in a University teaching situation forever. I'm enjoying it now, I've got a 5 year tenure and then up for review. I still believe in short term tenure for University and for any situation, Polytech or whatever and I hope that I can do that. My personal ambition is to achieve some things that I've always wanted to do within my work and finally I'm getting enough technical information together to do it. A lot of my work technically is quite complex and I know it's not that it's never been done before, it's just that I haven't got to do it. I still like my involvement with the craft world I guess. I get a lot of enjoyment out of meeting other people."

MARIA TIPPETT

Canadian art historian Maria Tippett was in New Zealand recently, researching articles on this country's crafts. The first time she visited was to see writer E.H.McCormick. She regards him as a mentor since reading his "Arts and Letters in New Zealand" (1940). In fact it was this book which prompted her to write "Making Culture, Institutions and the Arts in Canada".



She draws a comparison between the cultures of New Zealand and Canada - "...new cultures, striving for a sense of identity while at the same time realising what's going on elsewhere in the world". She describes craft in New Zealand as "...really impressive, really superior..."

Tippett ranks her visit to Len Castle as the highlight of her visit. She had admired his work during her 1974 visit, but now found him a more mature and eloquent artist.

Following her visit to New Zealand, Maria Tippett travelled to England, where she took up a new appointment at Cambridge University.

FRANCES JACKSON



Left: "Life and Death of Sela", by Frances Jackson, modelled by her daughter Kirsty.



Above: Collage showing influences on "Life of Sela".

From a studio under Lopdell House in Titirangi, Auckland, I run a professional millinery business called Headdress, and offer private tuition in the art and craft of millinery. A Queen Elizabeth Arts Council grant has enabled me to equip my studio.

In January of this year I exhibited seven headdresses as part of the Carrington Polytechnic Craft Design graduation exhibition at Lopdell House.

In many cultures headdress may show the wearer's social status, their age group, their exploits in love, battles or daily life. It may protect the wearer from the elements or simply enhance their appearance. By using feathers, hats hint at camouflage, both attracting and distancing the onlooker at the same time. When I design and make an item of headdress I feel I have created something special.

My initial working with fibre and fabric began as a textile technician and then out of necessity. In 1973 I lived and worked on a remote East Coast sheep station an hours drive inland from Tolaga Bay. Despite wearing many layers of clothing I couldn't get warm. I began collecting the discarded fleeces from the shearing sheds and taught myself to spin and then knitted them into warm jerseys. I also made quilts out of recycled old clothes and fabrics. Soon I was sharing my skills with people in the local community.

After a move back to Auckland my quilts came off the bed and onto the wall. I developed a three dimensional body of work in the form of cloaks and wall hangings and soon held my first solo show at Textures Gallery in 1979.

In 1985 I travelled to Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Thailand to research textiles and their use. Out of this experience developed an interest in researching more closely my own heritage - particularly the women on both sides of my family tree. Sometimes they did not have much control over their lives. My great-grandmother Sela, a Tongan, married an Englishman and had three daughters. At an early age they were removed from the family in Tonga and sent to New Zealand to be raised as English ladies.

"Life and Death of Sela", a headdress in remembrance of my great-grandmother uses Tapa cloth, a traditional plant fibre used widely in Tonga, a seagull's skeleton and a small bird's nest. A box lined with handmade plant fibre paper with two miniature cloaks resting in the box represents Sela in life and death. With each headdress is a collage to show my sources of influence. A photo of Sela, a seagull skeleton photocopied image, a mummified figure, two crossed black feathers representing death, some cornhusks and flax handmade paper that includes an image of my daughter Kirsty wearing the finished headdress.

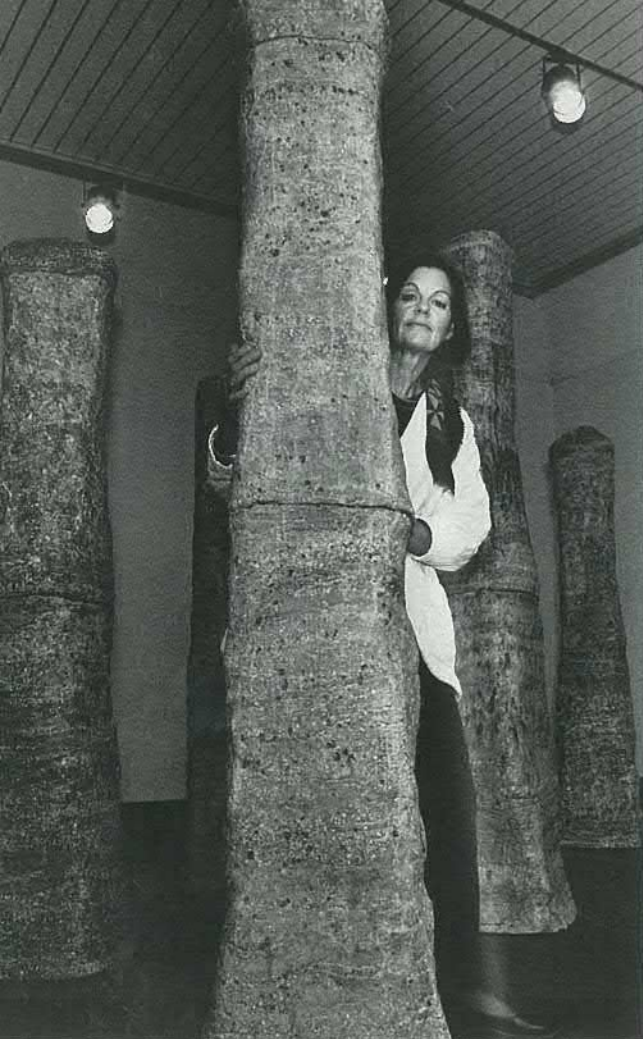


Photo: Nelson Evening Mail

CHRISTINE BOSWIJK

Opening Christine Boswijk's exhibition "Xenoliths '91", QEII Arts Council Manager of Crafts Programmes Edith Ryan described it as "... a historic occasion. There's never been an exhibition like this in New Zealand".

Christine Boswijk recently resettled in Nelson after studying and teaching in Australia. Her workshop on the coast looks out towards the craggy Mt Arthur area, a view from which she draws constant inspiration.

Future projects include work on the New Zealand ceramics collection which will travel to Expo in Seville. She is also planning for a major exhibition at the Dowse Art Museum.

(A review of "Xenoliths '91" by John Crawford will appear in issue 37 of Craft NZ.)

GAIL WEISSBERG

Current artist-in-residence at Nelson Polytech Craft Design Department is American born, New Zealand raised ceramic artist Gail Weissberg.

Weissberg was born in Los Angeles, but came to this country at the age of four. She spent time at Wellington Polytech School of Design before taking the one year ceramic

course at Otago. She is adamant that she is a ceramicist - she doesn't like the connotations of the word "potter".

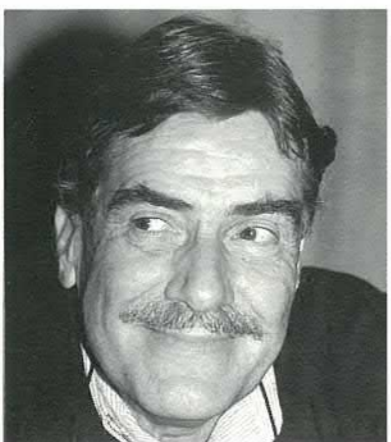
In 1984 she returned to California and spent two years in San Francisco before



moving across the Bay to Oakland. Time at University has been interspersed with making money through working behind a bar, fund-raising for a rape crisis centre, and making jewellery.

When the opportunity arose to apply to QEII Arts Council for the Nelson artist-in-residency, she was quick to seize it. She describes the course at Nelson as: "A good learning opportunity. Going to one of these courses would have put my work light years ahead".

BYRON TEMPLE



One of the few production potters in the USA to have achieved widespread recognition, Byron Temple was a recent visitor to New Zealand under the New Zealand Society of Potters Tours Programme. Temple began training at Ball State University in 1951. Further study at the Brooklyn Museum School and the Chicago Art Institute preceded a term as the first American apprentice with Bernard Leach at St Ives Pottery in England.

Since 1962, he has run his own production pottery. His functional work is easily recognisable for the absence of anything extraneous to function and the sparing use of glaze. He says of his work: "I limit myself to designs that can be easily repeated. I neither find this restrictive, nor inhibiting; rather, I am able to explore more intensely the fundamental qualities of form, craftsmanship and expression."

"As an independent studio potter, producing 5000 pieces of stoneware and porcelain tableware a year. I am also aware of my contribution to and limitations within an industrial society."

During his time in New Zealand under the QEII funded potters' scheme, Byron Temple gave workshops in Wanganui, Greymouth, Dunedin and Christchurch.

ROBERT COMPTON

One of the best organised of recent visitors from overseas was Robert Compton. Here from Vermont, USA with his wife Christine, Compton had circularised most pottery groups in New Zealand well in advance of their visit, and had organised a full series of workshops.

George Kojis, at Wanganui Regional Community Polytech praised the workshop as showing the importance of organisation and survival skills in making a good living from crafts. Students from Wanganui's Business Studies course also sat in on the pottery workshop because of the sections on administration and marketing.

On a practical level, the workshops concentrated mostly on the design and making of high quality moulds for slip-casting.



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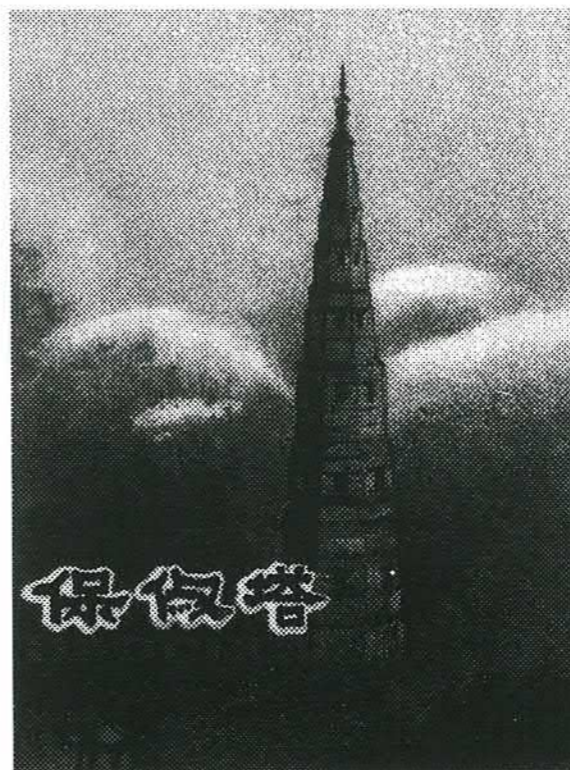
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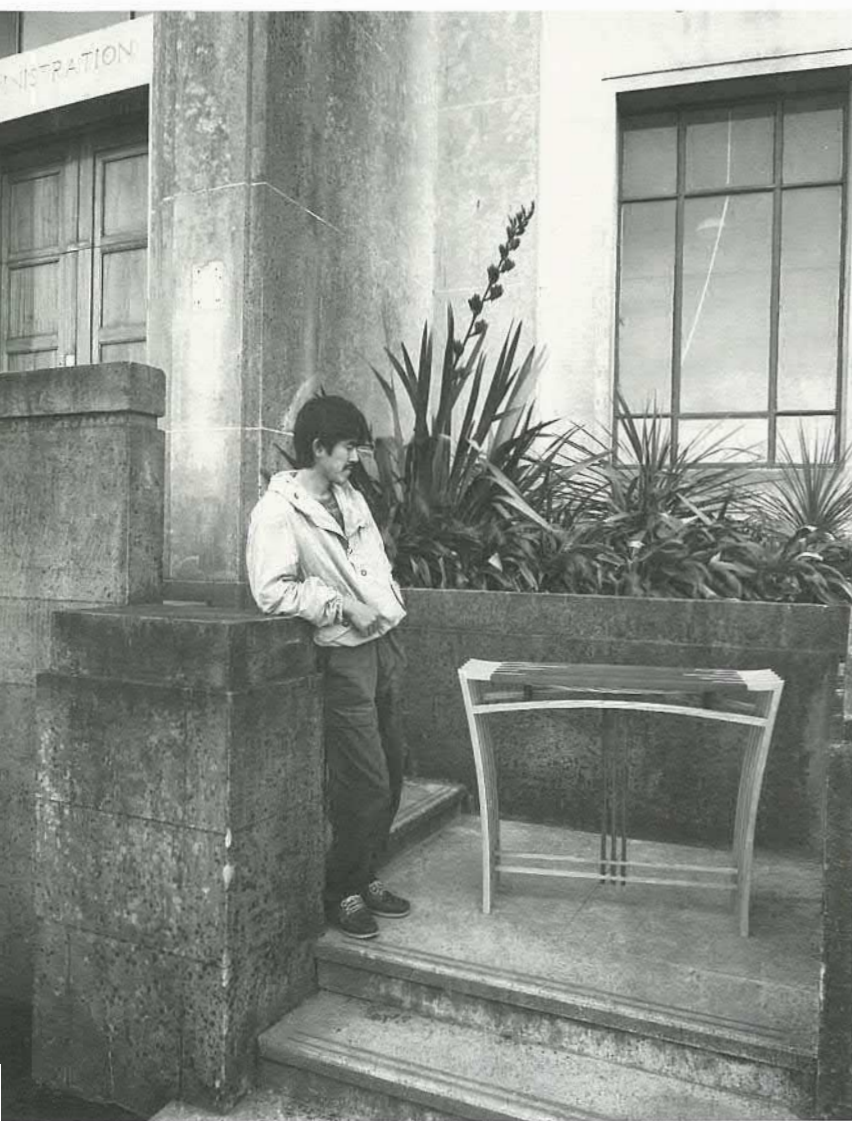
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KAZU NAKAGAWA

BY CHRISTINE THACKER

My first encounter with work by Kazu Nakagawa was at a group exhibition entitled "Island Statements" in a gallery at Waiheke Island. The piece was a small, pale, wooden box with gently concave, uplifting curves which made the object seem to expand beyond its physical dimensions. Segments of large circles seemed to have been cut, captured and joined to create a form of simple elegance. This expansive spirit combined with an elegant regard for line and form defines much of Nakagawa's work.

Kazu Nakagawa with his award winning piece from the 1989 Crafts Council/Winstone Biennale. Photo; Haru Sameshima.



It can take some time to reach the front door of the Waiheke Island home of Kazu and his wife Mika, both from Japan and now resident in New Zealand. The house is set well back on the property and the front yard is both an orchard, with tempting in-season plums dropping from the trees, and a sculpture park sporting several large and small-scale assemblages, evidence of Kazu's more recent artistic adventures. They are different to

his sophisticated and finely crafted furniture pieces but clearly come from the hands and mind of the same maker. They are a creative escape for Kazu. There are no structural or functional concerns to constrain his enjoyment in assembling these forms out of demolition timbers, old corrugated iron, pieces of chicken wire netting, and the like.

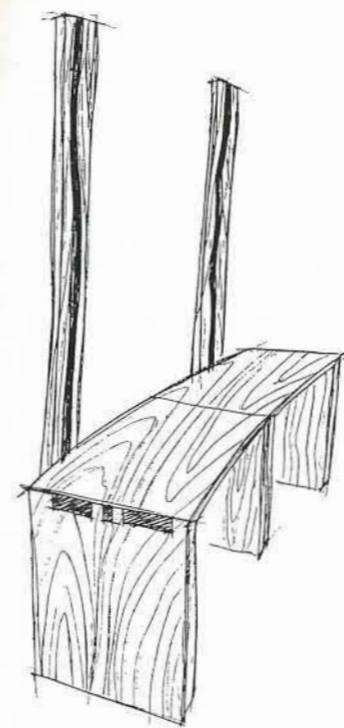
Kazu and Mika travelled to New Zealand four and a half years ago on what was to be the first stage of a world tour, planned to last about two years. Their reasons for leaving Japan included concern for the consumerism and "throw-away" attitudes to modern living found in the larger Japanese cities, their home city being Chigasaki which is 100 kilometres west of Tokyo, where Kazu was born.

To experience distance in a way that jet travel denies, the pair chose to travel by container ship taking two weeks to reach Sydney then on to New Zealand. To maintain this self-sought isolation they still communicate with home only by letter. After travelling for six months around the South Island, and working for a time in Auckland, Kazu wanted to establish his own workshop and a chance meeting soon found them visiting and then living at Waiheke Island. They say Waiheke provides easy access to Auckland and a wider cross-section of people than an exclusively rural or city setting.

The life Kazu and Mika lead at Waiheke Island is a technologically simple one although it is not one of abstinence or the avoidance of modern appliances. Rather, it is in accord with their desire to live and think in an uncluttered way. "If you live your life more simply you will find more pleasure more often," they say. In keeping with this they choose simpler solutions to both domestic and work requirements.

Along with one year at a technical college, Kazu's working association with wood has been a life-long one. His grandfather, who lived in the country and with whom Kazu would spend holidays, worked with timber and fibrous papers making free-standing screens and sliding room dividers. Kazu also identifies a furniture-making uncle of Mika's as being a significant source of inspiration for him. Time at technical college is traditionally followed by an apprenticeship of several years but this was side-stepped in order to avoid the strong stylistic influences of the school and its teachers.

Kazu thinks too much inflow of ideas and information can cloud and blur the focus on your own truths. Once again he stresses that this is not avoidance. If any information from traditional or contemporary sources is significant it will be absorbed and will emerge. His view is a holistic one: "Everything comes through your hands into the work you are making even without you noticing." Everyone, he suggests, is the product of all they have ever experienced: "When you are born, where you grow up ... what you eat ... who you meet ..." Every aspect of your work and your existence reflects the uniqueness of your life history and patterns.



Right and above: "A Pair of Chair" (1990).
Ash with Urushi finish.
Photo and sketch; Kazu Nakagawa.



Below and left : Bench (1990).
Oak with Urushi finish.
Photo and sketch; Kazu Nakagawa.





Upper: Raw material (NZ grown Walnut) by the workshop.
Lower: Chair (1991) (Walnut).
Photos: Kazu Nakagawa

His choice of materials is a primary creative act. Kazu says the sensory aspects of wood appeal to him. He enjoys the tactile qualities of the surface, the weight and, interestingly, the sounds which are made when tools hammer, tap, cut and plane the timber.

Before going near a bandsaw Kazu makes as many as 100 quick sketches. These are not, he says, pictures of furniture but free-form images, ideas made graphic. From these, one or two will emerge as ideas of enduring interest and Kazu will start reworking and refining the image into a form with three-dimensional structural possibilities. The next stage will sometimes be a cardboard model. This is followed by decisions on suitable and/or available timbers. If these are not to hand, or available from local timber merchants, a journey to an Auckland timber yard with a wider range of materials is necessary.

Along with native timbers such as rimu or kauri, which are at times available from demolition sources, Kazu likes to use hard timbers such as ash and oak. One reason for this preference is his enjoyment of the sound these timbers make while being chiselled and worked, but they are also readily available and provide good, strong, tight-fitting mortice and tenon or dove-tail joints, which he uses in preference to metal jointing.

Once the timbers are selected they are sawn and shaped, the joins are refined and fitted and any structural

modifications are attended to. The components are now temporarily assembled and assessments, both structural and aesthetic, are made. Kazu examines the work, gauging his reactions and feelings and checking the construction details. When it all looks good and feels right, the piece is finally glued and assembled and the finishing process begins.

The desired colour and patina are achieved by several methods, one of which is oiling the timber with a linseed-based mixture. To enhance the natural colour and grain of the wood on suitable items, such as a recently completed, walnut, high-backed chair, Kazu polishes the surfaces with a cloth pouch containing rice bran. The timber is rendered silken to the eye and touch by this technique. Different effects result from applying up to 15 coats of a resin from the urushi tree. The Japan-based suppliers of the resin add iron pigments so the product is available in natural, black or iron-red. It is

very strong when set, with a laquer-like sheen and because it is a natural wood-derived product it will expand and contract with the timber. Kazu tells of timber being excavated in Japan after 2,000 years underground, well preserved underneath a high-gloss coating of urushi resin - a testament to its qualities of preservation and its time-honoured traditional use in Japanese woodwork.

With each project, Kazu works intensively and for long hours in a relocatable-type garage workshop about 40 metres away from the house. It is small and compact with a bandsaw, drill-press and table saw for Kazu, and a bench near the window for Mika's glass leadlight work. A neatly stacked assortment of planes with flat or gently curving bases adorn the walls. Kazu uses traditional Japanese woodworking tools which are beautifully proportioned and weighted. Most New Zealand woodworkers have some Japanese tools because of their aesthetic appeal and because they allow for finer finishing work. The handsaws and planes are designed to pull towards the body allowing for accuracy and finer control. The planes and chisels are weighted very differently to Western tools. The chisels have a sharp, hard-metal edge, for working the wood, laminated on to a layer of soft metal to weight the chiselling edge and to allow for ease of sharpening. They are simple and elegantly designed, intelligent tools.


"Too many tools make the hands forget what they know," says Kazu. With his hands and few tools he invests the furniture he makes with physical poise and aesthetic balance. Descriptive opposites can be applied to each piece: bold and delicate, simple and sophisticated, solid and lightsome. Ornamental detailing will often be an extension or echo of the structural process with dove-tail recesses becoming decorative features. Sometimes the colour and grain of the timber provide rich surface effects and Kazu enjoys the game of chance involved as he planes away layers to reveal new textural pictures.

Kazu has exhibited his work in several group shows in and around Auckland for which he has received acclaim, commissions and a merit award, and he is very keen for his work to be exhibited beyond Auckland and further afield.

Making a living is helped by a regular stall, especially over the summer months, at the Saturday market at Ostend on Waiheke Island. Smaller items made by Kazu along with Mika's glass lamps, photograph frames and leadlight boxes sell there.

Kazu says that the wood he uses is nearly always older than he is. His regard for his chosen material is evidenced by his practice of rescuing shooting acorns, nurturing them for about a year, then offering them to friends and visitors, thus completing the cycle of his craft.

Future developments and directions are uncertain for Kazu but with whatever he makes he will be channeling his life through this work, listening to the sound of nature and finding pleasure without even seeking it.



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HISTORICAL KNITTING

BY HEATHER NICHOLSON

Early in 1990, I visited Britain on a three month study tour with the very welcome aid of a grant from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. My main aim was to study historical knits to help my research project on the history of knitting in New Zealand. As well, I was invited to tutor and meet other knitters at the remarkable 12 day Textile Arts Festival Bradford 90.

I studied reserve collections of knits in 13 major museums, and also viewed display items in several collections. The 300 assorted knitted articles I examined included a piece of 900 year old Arab knitting, a wonderful lace christening baby dress knitted with miles of sewing cotton for the 1851 Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, and various small Tudor garments. Besides these were 17th and 18th century silk knits such as liturgical gloves, women's jackets, men's waistcoats and undershirts, one of which is said to have been that worn by King Charles I when he was beheaded. Footwear varied from fine silk stockings made to flatter shapely male legs, to patterned Albanian and Indian socks.

Knitting became common in England in the 15th and 16th centuries and consisted mainly of wool caps in a variety of fashionable designs, mittens, undershirts, sleeves, and stockings. All were knitted with handspun wool yarn in the round, that is, with sets of several double pointed needles.

Most examples were found in soil in London demolition sites. The brown colours suggest that coloured fleeces were used, but the real reason is that the garments were stained by having been buried in the soil for so long.

Knitted Tudor wool stockings are oddly primitive. By the 16th century, wealthy people in England were already wearing very expensive and expertly made fine silk stockings imported from Italy or Spain. Why was the construction of the English stockings so crude compared with contemporary European silk gloves and stockings? Unlike cap making, stocking knitting was not captured by a trade guild. It was quickly taken up by ordinary folk, men, women and children, including farmers, cottagers, labourers, and fisher folk.

Perhaps the English knitters had to work out what to do for themselves. Did they attempt to copy what they saw the gentry wearing? Was information exchanged or stolen? There is an account of a London apprentice copying some borrowed Italian stockings in 1564.

Knitting soon became a very important way of supplementing other income. By the end of the 16th century British knitters were exporting wool stockings of all qualities to the rest of Europe. The value of the common hand knit hosiery trade is rarely mentioned in history books.

I am intrigued by these humble 400 year old knits and have tried to follow the thought processes of the folk who saw a useful new way to provide something warm

for the family, turn an honest penny, and improve the new product.

Textile keepers often do not show you all their treasures at once. They wait to see if you treat their articles with respect. Good researchers at the Bath Museum of Costume may be given a little treat and be shown the padded long johns. These are a machine or handframe made set of men's long underpants with stirrups, probably early to mid 19th century. The pants are very well detailed and seamed. As the fabric was worked, tufts of fleece wool were worked into the inside of the stockinet fabric, over the thighs and calves, just like warm Newfoundland mittens. However, the padding was not for warmth, but to fill out thin calves and to create a becomingly curved and muscled look at a time when men's clothes were cut very close to the body. The tufts are cut and sculptured to best effect.

The reward waiting for a co-operative researcher in The National Museum at Edinburgh is "The Gunnister Burial". This consists of the clothing on a man's body found buried in peat bogs in Shetland. He may have been robbed and buried by footpads about 1700. He wore woven clothes as well as several knitted articles including beautifully made, but well worn thigh length stockings, roughly made "slippers" sewn onto the stockings, a round cap, a pair of gloves, and a little knitted purse. Everything is stained brown. The purse, 13cm x 9.5cm, is decorated with two scarcely discernible narrow bands of simple pattern knitting, one in red, the other yellow. This is the first record of such knitting in Shetland, but does not prove it was done there.

Unlike the Tudor wool knits of about 150 years or so earlier, the stockings and gloves are skilfully worked, with careful, neat shaping to the leg and ankle, wrist and fingers. The main fabric throughout is stockinet, with a little knit-purl patterning.

How did Fair Isle colour knitting begin? There is no real evidence to show that the Fair Isles learned anything from the crew of the ship of the Spanish Armada that was wrecked on its shores. This belief appears to have arisen through repetition of romantic 19th century conjecture.

The first written reference to coloured knits was made in 1822, 300 years after the Spanish wreck, when a visitor remarked on local fishermen wearing brightly coloured and patterned stocking caps. The Shetland Museum owns several fisher hats made about 1950 by an elderly lady as replicas of the hats she made for fishermen in her youth, about 1880. The small, all-over colour patterns are reminiscent of Faroese patterns. The men worked in 30ft open boats, and the crew wore dark colours while the skipper wore a bright, red patterned hat.

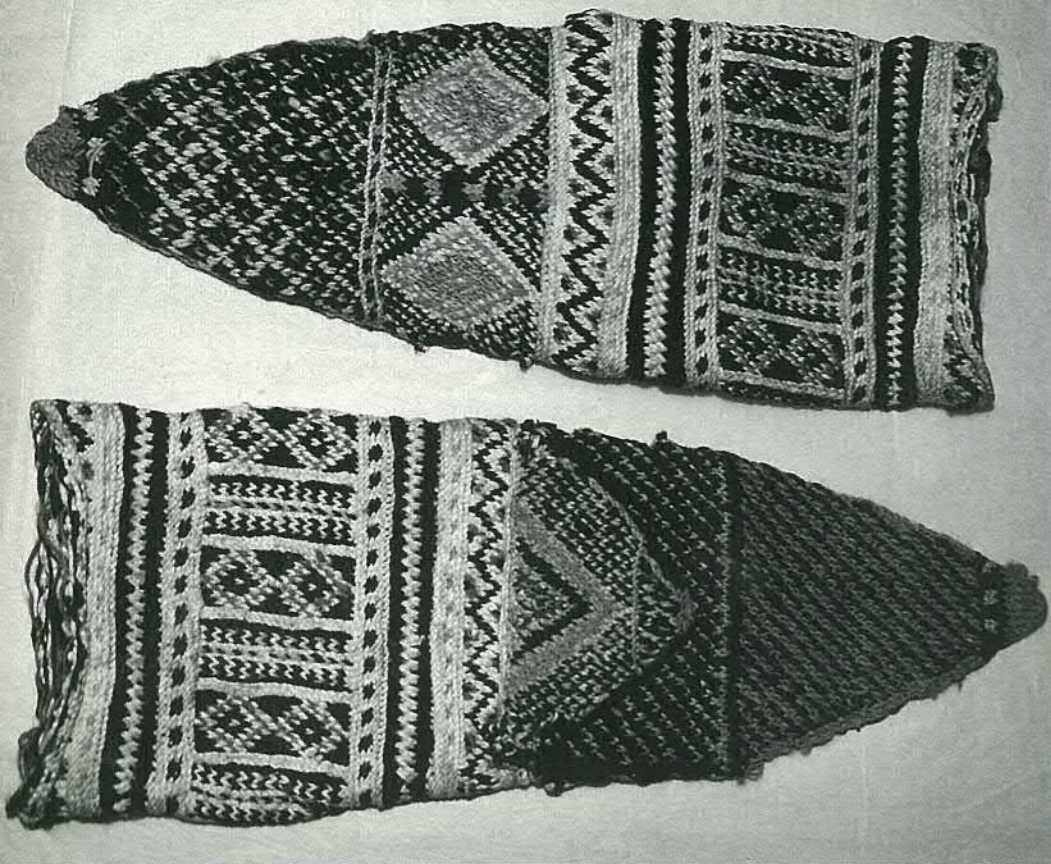
There is a story of a Fair Isle sailor bringing home a woven shawl, which knitters copied to entertain themselves. It reminds us that traditional craft designs were rarely developed in isolation. There was constant inter-



Above: Dismembered jumper, 1920's or earlier. Photo; Heather Nicholson.



Right: Jumper - Virtuoso Competition; 1935. Photo; Heather Nicholson.



Above: Albanian Socks, 1934, Victoria and Albert Museum. Photo: Heather Nicholson.

change of ideas, especially along trade routes. Certainly much colour patterning in knits throughout Europe can be linked with woven and embroidered motifs.

The Shetland Islands are on an ancient and very busy shipping lanes which link countries around the North Sea and the Baltic with the Atlantic. Stranded colour knitting had developed as a popular folk craft in these areas from about 1800.

The oldest Fair Isle knits in The National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh were presented around 1850. They are two expertly made caps and small bags with elegant, well developed OXO patterning, complete with colour play between background and motifs. Thus perfect "Fair Isle" patterns seem to appear quite spontaneously, with no trace of simpler forerunners in the islands. Were these items made in Estonia where colour work was well established by 1850? Maybe these fine articles were the very ones that set our Fair Island and Shetland ancestors off on their own distinctive knitting style.

Early examples of colour knitting are usually small articles like long fishermen's hats and scarves made for local use, most of which show wear and tear. Brightly patterned tams, scarves, gloves and some astounding stockings seem to have been made for the tourist trade. Somehow, the colours and patterns that look exciting on jerseys look funny on knee-socks.

The oldest known coloured jersey in Shetland dates from no earlier than about 1895, when jerseys generally began to become acceptable outer wear. The fabric design is a simple striped pattern with 11 row red bands alternating with 7 row blue peeries. The patterns of crosses and octagons are quite naive compared with the 1850 caps.

The jersey is very simply constructed, and nearly all later garments repeat its basic shape. It was worked entirely in the round, and like many 19th century garments, there is no ribbing anywhere. There is no under-arm gusset, and I saw only one gusseted Fair Isle jersey. The armholes and round neckline are cut and the shoulder stitches are joined with a three-needle cast off between two colour bands.

Later Shetland knits were very much influenced by fashion. After 1920, the old red and blue bands were largely abandoned. Various coloured motifs were set on a beige or grey background, and numerous new designs such as hearts, flowers and anchors were introduced.

Fair Isle colour knitting became all the rage when Edward, Prince of Wales was seen wearing a Fair Isle

jumper on the golf course, about 1922. It had been given to him in the hopes that it would improve the sales of such garments, and the ploy worked wonderfully well. Soon, every smart young man appeared in a "Fair Isle" vest.

Knits are usually made to be worn, and old garments are often unraveled and recycled, so comparatively few articles have survived. After years of reading and peering at photographs, I was excited and inspired by the opportunity to see so many important historical knits. My explorations supplied many answers and set up numerous new puzzles. And it is wonderful how the works of the past can suggest ideas for the future. My improved technical knowledge, and the contacts with museums and knitters are helping me greatly in researching our own knitting history.

Many thanks to the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, for awarding me a generous grant to help me make my study tour. Thanks also to the staffs of the different museums who were so helpful and interested. They all now have copies of my notes. Thanks to Sue Leighton-White for her generous assistance.

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Numerous addresses, references and an account of the Bradford Textile Arts Festival and my museum studies is in my report deposited in the Crafts Council of New Zealand Resource Centre.

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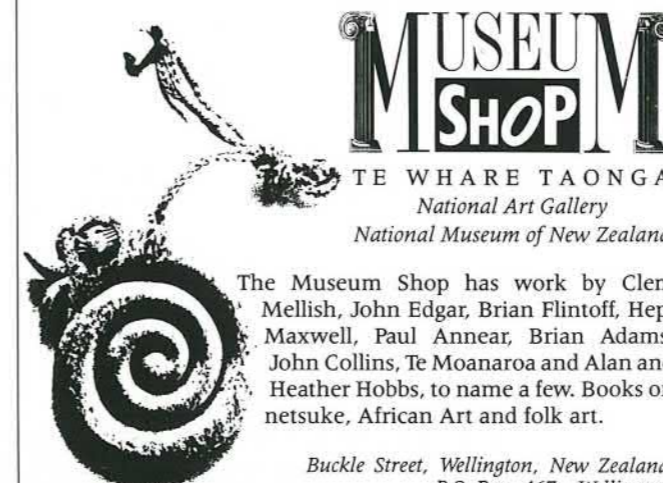
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KOHIA KO TAIKAKA ANAKE

BOB JAHNKE

"Ruia taitea, kohia ko taikaka Anake"
(Strip away the sapwood, gather only the heartwood.)

Such was the aim of the recent exhibition of contemporary Maori art at the National Art Gallery in Wellington but some of the heartwood was absent and some of the sapwood appeared.

The exhibition was the outcome of an offer of space, time and expertise by the Gallery to Nga Puna Waihanga and Te Waka Toi. The concept behind the show was to provide a "review" of contemporary Maori art and its position in relation to the "modern" Maori art movement which may be traced to the 1950s. The exhibition was therefore conceived as a three tier show which recognised the status of the "senior" artists as the originators of the modern movement, identified some of the "mid-career" artists and revealed the diversity of talent and expression that may be found in the "regional" areas of Maoridom. Along the way some of the leading Maori artists declined or were unable to participate because of alternative commitments.

Artists at the forefront of "modern" Maori art like Robin Kahukiwa, Cliff Whiting and Ralph Hotere were conspicuous by their absences.

One may be justified in criticising the uneven quality of the show. However, one must consider the exhibition philosophy which Nga Puna Waihanga has maintained since its inception in 1973 as the "Maori Artists and Writers Society". It is a philosophy of "whanaungatanga", one which encourages the emerging artists to stand alongside their predecessors, their peers and their "kin". It is also a philosophy that defines art from a cultural perspective. The western divisions of "craft" and "fine arts" become superfluous rhetoric in this context.

Finely woven cloaks of Digger Te Kanawa offer a fitting counterpoise to the drawn mantles that cloak John Ford's landscapes.

Manos Nathan's carved earthenware shares a genealogical kinship with the bronze figure of Lionel Grant. The traditional figurative references are categorically stated by these artists who share a common heritage as creators of whare whakairo. Grant has come to carving as a graduate of the Rotorua Carving Institute while Nathan, as a graduate of the Wellington Polytechnic, has adopted the mantle of carver through personal choice and self discipline. The media may seem alien but the conceptual manifestation maintains an indelible link with tradition.

Riki Manuel, like Grant, is also a graduate of the Institute. His impeccably carved poutangata maintains the tradition of the three dimensional "tiki" image with ancestral connotations paramount.

One recalls the Ngati Kahungunu poutokomanawa that graced the "Te Maori" exhibition or the poutangata that provoked at the encroaching warriors atop the palisades of old. In Manuel's work the tradition of conven-

tionalized metonymical Maori portraiture encroaches upon Western naturalistic convention. The conventionalized physiognomy of tradition is transcended; conceptual realization becomes perceptual. However, this digression into naturalism remains flirtive as the rest of the anatomy remains grounded in a tradition that is constantly under review.

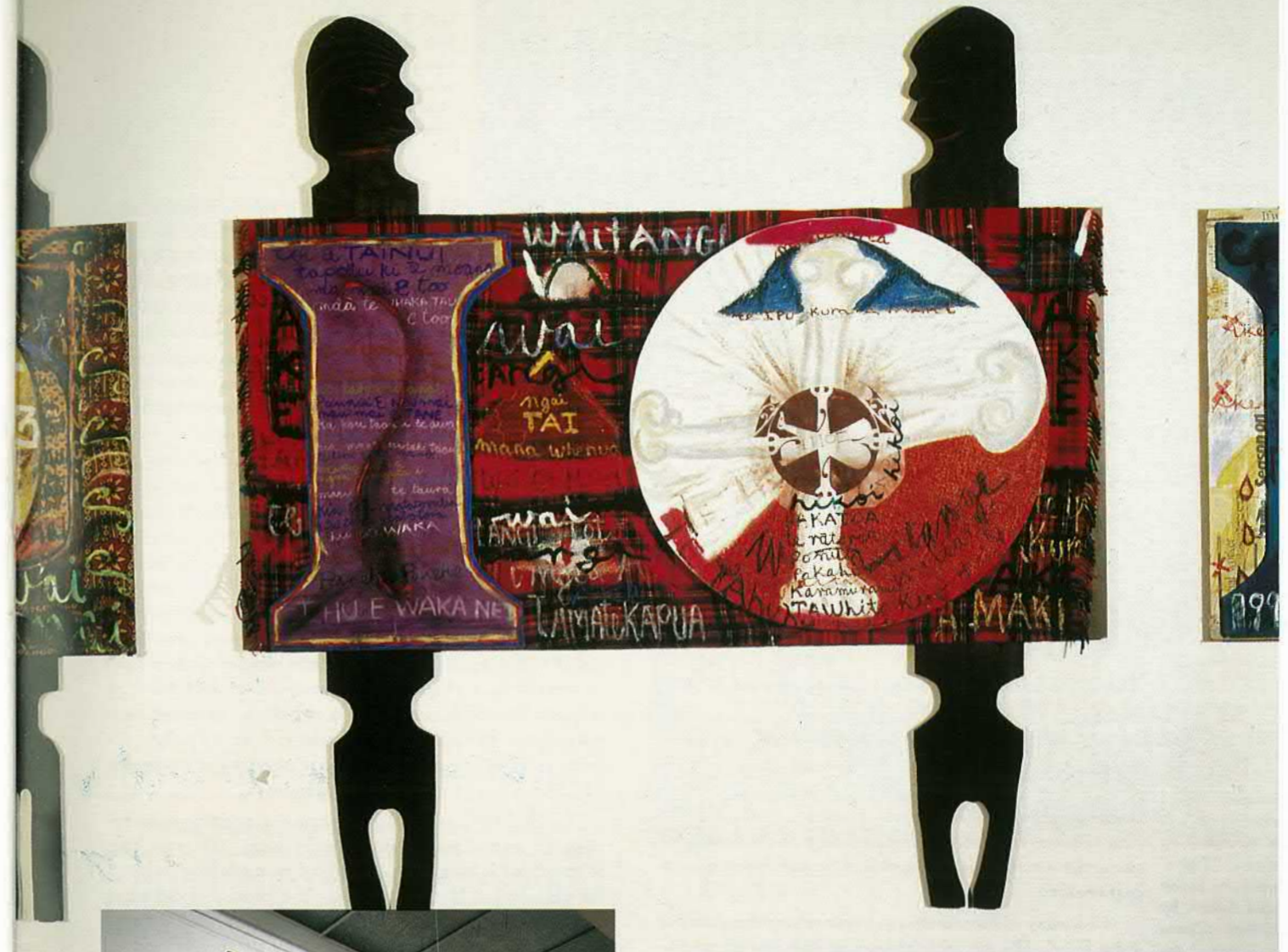
In the 1880s an innovative development spearheaded by the Maori prophet Te Kooti Rikirangi, saw Western artistic conventions introduced into the whare whakairo. The disintegration of Maori artistic concepts wrought by a society under political and social siege demanded a drastic reassessment of mnemonic transference. A reassessment that was forced upon the Maori from the beginning of colonization as missionaries dictated their moral code with desecrating severity. The once potent figurative images become neuter under the moralising scalpel or succumbed to the "word" of the righteous.

Te Hau ki Turanga, built in 1843, provides an earlier testament to this reappraisal. The ancestral figures which grace the interior of this whare whakairo are clothed with the masks of prudity demanded by the canons of conversion. Like the true artist, Raharuhi Rukupo rises above suppression to confront visitors to the National Museum forecourt with powerfully sculpted images. The context has changed but the power remains.

Across the chest of one of the poupou the ancestor is identified in classical script; a concession to the abeyance of the powers of interpretation. Ironically, the arrival of "western literacy" prompted a decline in cultural literacy.

Te Tokanga-nui-a-noho, built in 1872 under the direction of Te Kooti Rikirangi, reveals a more literal concession to Western iconography. In this house the masks of prudity are replaced by naturalistic references between the legs to assist in the identification of ancestors. Maui, the folk hero, is seen with the sun at his shoulder and between his legs is the canoe from which he landed his great fish. Now, painted names identify the ancestors should the iconography remain inaccessible.

In its original state, the front of the house contained figurative images ranging from stylized flower and leaf motif on the porch to naive portraits on the door. These painted images presage a flowering of painted imagery that would become a legitimate alternative in house decoration until the 1920s. It appears significant that the decline in figurative painting coincided with the establishment of the Maori Carving School at Rotorua in 1926 with its apolitical orientation. The move towards naturalism evident in the paintings and poupou of Te Tokanga-nui-a-noho finds its "tour de force" in the poutokomanawa and poumua figures. Removed from their original load bearing context these figures achieve a naive naturalism that is unrivalled in its assimilation of the European naturalistic convention. Although the attempted contrapposto of the female poutokomanawa figure is as immobile as the "kore" figures of preclassical



Greece, the provocative lure of this image is haunting. Much more innovative is the original poumua figure with head inclined on a clenched hand, supported at the elbow by a raised knee. This figure is developed to such a sophisticated level of anatomical realisation that one suspects the use of a live model. When compared with Manuel's figure one finds a regression into "tradition" as redefined by the "archaicising orthodoxy" perpetuated at the turn of the century by people like Augustus Hamilton.

Ngata's programme of artistic revitalization although founded on edifying principles, ensured a continuation of this prefabricated tradition. As a product of the Rotorua Carving Institute, Manuel maintains this tradition. The stamp of Rukupo prevails but beneath the veil one is able to glimpse the artist.

While Rukupo provides a model for the Rotorua Carving Institute other influences are seen in the work of other artists.

A Pacific connection is evident in Greg Whakataka Brightwell's relief sculpture "Maui, Te Mana o Ngati Porou". The echo of Maui reverberates from Hikurangi to Hawaiki-nui, Hawaiki-roa and Hawaiki-pamamao.

Above: "Waitangi Wall", mixed media on panels, by Emily Kara. Initially exhibited, Fisk Gallery, Auckland. Photo courtesy National Art Gallery.

Left: Maui, Te Mana o Ngati Porou, by Greg Whakataka Brightwell. Photo courtesy National Art Gallery.



Left: "Te Manawatu o Hau", installation in wood, stone, works on paper by John Bevan Ford. Photo courtesy National Art Gallery.

monoliths devoid of the extraneous anatomical references other than the head. While the head of the traditional ancestral figures were enlarged in deference to sacrosanct condition, the artist now uses the head alone to stimulate concepts of commemoration. Thus, Haunui gazes in awe at the "heart stopping" splendour of the Manawatu river.

The economy of Ford comes closest to the minimalist tendencies which prevailed in the works of Arnold Wilson in the 1950s. His "Moumou" installation, equally minimalist, continues a fascination with the cylindrical post as a conceptual embodiment of power. Now the poles stand "unbarked" and "im-

paled". We stand at the crossroads, unsure of the road to conservation. Should we ascend or descend? Entrapped like the fallen children of Tane we succumb to the erection of a new god; Technology? In its wake, chips fly from its mechanical adze never to be resurrected. Alas, the canoe of Rata is mere myth.

In "Apiti Hono" Wilson reverts to narrative as he revisits his sacred mountain in the Urewera. The raw bite of the chisel is laboured as the bird men are assailed by the diamond of Maungapohatu. The manaia of old must contend with the burden of transplanted symbol of the diamond and the club which heralded the messianical ministry of Rua Kenana.

As the Prophets of the nineteenth century appropriated the symbols of the European so the artist resurrects their potency, sometimes elusively and at other times blatantly.

None of the artists are as forthright in their condemnation of colonial injustices as Emily Karaka and Selwyn Muru. In their hands the paintbrush wields the power of the gesticulating taiaha of the warrior confronting transgression.

Karaka's "Waitangi Wailing Wall" is laden with word and symbol. The messages attain the status of political graffiti which is unashamedly frank. Even the once sacrosanct name of "Io" is subject to the desecrating hordings of authoritarianism. The spectator is forced to "stop" and question the validity of one's past and future lest we become a society defaced by our inability to validate the covenant that is the Treaty of Waitangi.

In the canvasses of Selwyn Muru, the word is raised above graffiti. Like the painted passages found in some of the turn of the century meeting houses the artist confronts the viewer with statements that provoke consideration. In the act of perception one realises; in the act of verbalisation one acknowledges. In this dual attack on the senses the viewer also becomes the audience. A fact that did not escape the artists of the turn of the century.

Thus, Whakataka, the canoe builder and Pacific voyager acknowledges his roots.

Alan Wihongi's poutangata series stand closer to home, albeit on steel bases. Pattern submits to sculptural concentration in deference to Wihongi's tribal carving heritage where sculptural priority was paramount. The link remains tangible; conventionality remains intact; the artist's economical transitions remain hesitant and exploratory.

Economy of form is more severe under the chisel of John Ford. His monumental sentinels tower above the spectator generating reminiscences of the Easter Island

Below: From left: "Mana Whenua", Robert Jahnke. "Aotea Tomokanga", "Ngohi Moana Riunga", & "Taniwha Konutu", by Ross Hemera. "Titiro" (9 panels), by Jacob Scott. "Apiti Hono", by Arnold Wilson. Photo courtesy National Art Gallery.



Elsewhere in the exhibition artists use the word to assist the viewer in their interpretation of artworks. Whether they are chiselled, engraved or charred, the word permits an extrasensory perspective into the consciousness of the artist.

Para Matchitt has sometimes titled his work with the sweeping rhythm of an angle grinder. In Te Ngakau MCMXC he uses corrugated iron letters in a sculptural interpretation of a motif from the flag of Te Kooti. The letters sit in the heart like the inscriptions of some forlorn romantic. It is probable that this trivial allusion is pure coincidence and the initials merely place the work within the context of its date of creation. In the final analysis, this symbol of the bleeding heart of Maoridom borrowed from its original Christian context has provided the artist with a symbol that continues to be provocative.

This appears to be the first time that Matchitt has rendered this motif in three dimensional space. However, like most of the artists in this exhibition, Matchitt's work maintains a "frontal" presentation.

Apart from Matt Pine and recent "fine arts" graduates like Brett Graham and Peter Robinson, the dominant trend is one of "frontality".

Whether this approach is pursued deliberately or intuitively it provides a salient feature which helps to bind the show together. As traditional Maori sculpture is essentially one of relief this is hardly surprising.

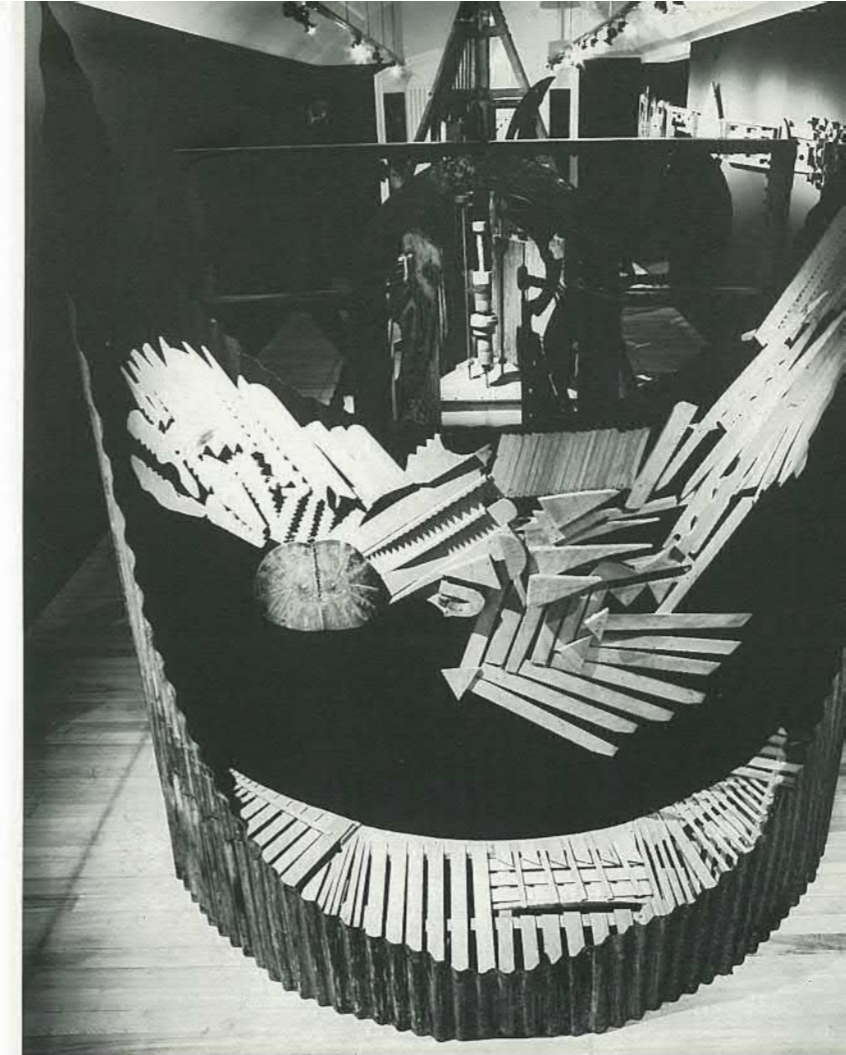
Even Fred Graham's "Separation of Rangi and Papa" demand a frontal relationship. Since one is unable to achieve this position in the context of the exhibition one cannot fully appreciate the formality and the transitional conventionality that links Manuel's "traditional" and Matchitt's "modern" figures.

The gateways of Ross Hemera and Matchitt also prevail upon the spectator to view these structure from specific "frontal" reference points. Although these works by their very nature encourage the viewer to pass through the structures in order to assume an optimum vantage point.

In Hemera's case, the invitation to negotiate the space is prompted by a classical serenity which is somewhat precarious in the "Aotea Tomokanga" gateway.

Matchitt's steel portals on the other hand provided a psychological barrier to passage. The avian guardians rendered from plate steel retain the "barbs" of their acetylene creation. They hover at head height with provocative beaks to taunt the intruder. This emphasis on the tactile qualities of materials offers another tantalizing link throughout the exhibition. But none are so brutal in their material manipulation as Matchitt and Muru.

Throughout the show there is a conspicuous interplay of alternative materials with wood playing a major part in these juxtapositions. Wood is seen against metal, glass and plastics. Elsewhere, weathered surfaces play against chiselled surfaces as the heartwood is exposed.



Even the painters are seduced by the expressive potential of timber. It is employed as the sentinels of the Treaty by Karaka while Sandy Adsett capitalizes on the rough sawn surfaces to provide tactile passages of relief against pristinely painted surfaces in his "Tuhi Series".

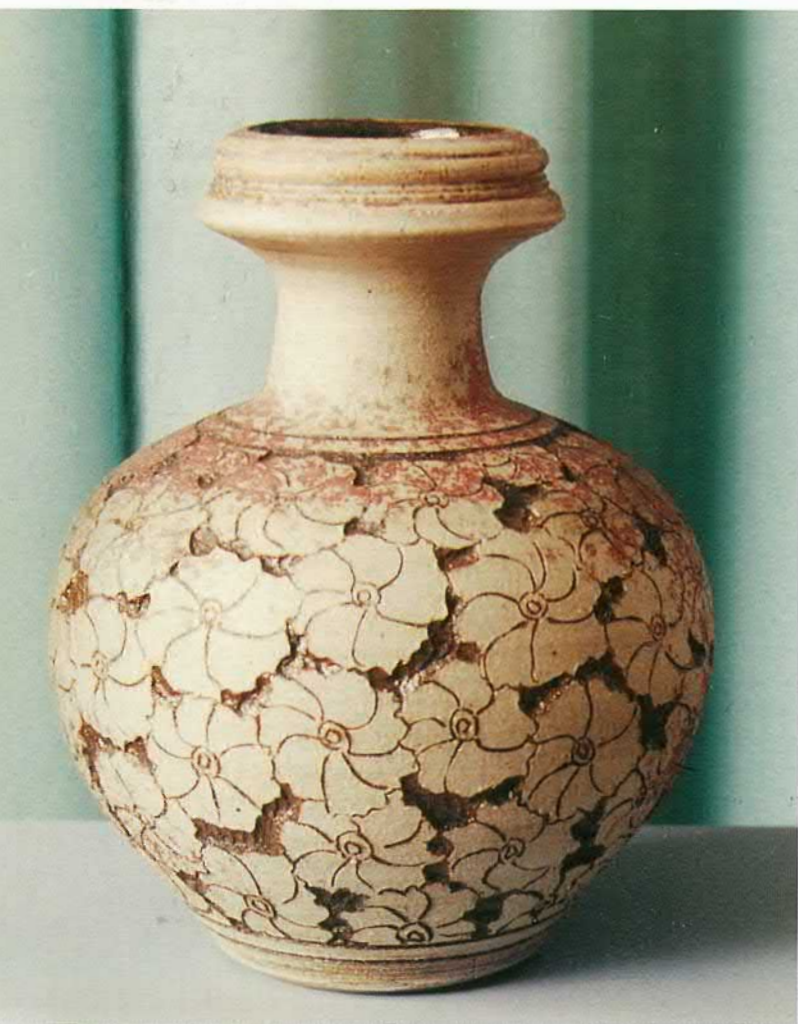
Within the traditional context the Maori artist maintained a formalist approach in his treatment of wood. Rarely did the artist exploit the inherent irregularities of the timber.

In this exhibition we witness several artists exploring the latent aesthetic qualities of surfaces. For some artists the marks etched by the elements of nature present an added genealogical dimension that is sustained and intensified as the "heart" of the material is revealed.

This appropriation of a Western aesthetic appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of materials may be compared to the innovative adaptation of word and symbol witnessed in the late nineteenth century. Here too the appropriation is charged with new meaning; one that promotes concepts which are undeniably Maori. One can only hope that the "classicising" trend of the authorities on Maori art at the turn of the century do not resurface in "modernist" guise to stifle this exuberant expression that is Maori art. No! New Zealand art.

"Sometimes we need to look back to go forward, and there is no end to learning, no matter how old you are. Kia kaha. Kia manawanui." (Digger Te Kanawa, 1990).

Above: "Nga Tohu no Te Wepu", by Paratene Matchitt. Photo courtesy National Art Gallery.



COLLECTORS

PAT BASKETT

Wally and Adele Hirsh's front door opens on a large squat vase form by Steve Fullmer. It sits like a huge yellow toad demanding acknowledgement before one mounts the stairs.

In the light of what unfolds, the obeisance is a profound gesture to New Zealand pottery and Hirshs' love of it. Over 22 years they have collected 192 pots by 78 potters.

The fact that Fullmer greets guests is also significant. The collection is strong on traditional, mostly large, vase forms, but it's peppered with those that challenge conventional boundaries, like Fullmer's "Flat Fish", and Richard Parker's heavy squared-off vase with daub decoration.

Amidst the serious elegance and intent a good laugh goes a long way.

To the Hirshs pots represent not only an essential part of New Zealand's generally much undervalued creative life. They are often a link with a friend. On a visit to Nelson last summer they called on more than a dozen potter-friends. Much of their collecting is done this way, from the studio. They are also frequenters of galleries and exhibitions.

Some pots have special associations, like the cylindrical porcelain vase by Melanie Cooper which Wally pings as he goes by. Wally taught Melanie at primary school, and years later, seeking to understand what he found so fascinating, he enrolled at a pottery night class, with Melanie as tutor. They also have a bowl of hers, one of the few in their collection, of an enigmatic deep blue/purple.

Wally's interest in pottery was sparked off at Training College in Wellington where Doreen Blumhardt gave him a feel for the raw material, and inspired his interest in creativity. It's this aspect that draws him to a piece. New Zealand ceramists are as diverse as anywhere, he says, pointing from an unglazed, lidded pot of Ted Kindleysides, Japanese in flavour, to a highly decorated vase of Gail Weissberg. If there's a guiding light behind their selection, it's the desire to show this diversity. It's also what urges them on.

"If you don't keep going, you're not as representative as you'd like to be," Wally says.

The collection has a solid backbone to it, of potters whose reputations were already established in the early seventies. There are five of Graeme Storm's round vases with their sturdy necks and tops, most with intaglio decoration, six of Len Castle's bowls and wall pieces.

Three pieces show the range of Rick Rudd's work. John Parker is represented by two bowls and three small vases. Warren Tippett is unique, in that the only work they have of his is also the first piece they bought.

A computer enables them to be precise about such details. Each pot is numbered and catalogued, with

date and place of acquisition. Notable exceptions from this period are Barry Brickell, Don Thornley and Yvonne Rust. They are pleased to have at least one work by James Greig.

Out of the seventies, and into the eighties, I sense a slight penchant for the pot with applied decoration. There is a fair representation of the work of John Crawford, for example, who drapes the human body and face so successfully around pots. Royce McGlashen would be pleased to see a large slab teapot spouting nonsense across the kitchen bench. Others of his work include a slab vase and a smaller spooft teapot.

"The thing I ask myself is, do the decoration and the pot go together," Wally says.

The case in point is a robust blossom jar by Barry Ball, with overall decoration of equally robust brush strokes. In contrast, Wally picks up two black pieces of Anneke Borren, and points out their subtle charcoal patterning.

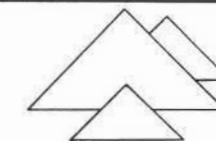
Once bought, a pot is not destined to languish on the same shelf for ever. Wally and Adele are constantly moving them around, bringing to the fore what was formerly in a corner. Current companions on the floor in their "family" room are three women by Gail Sammons. The first was bought at an exhibition in 1987, but explains Wally, she was lonely. He wrote to Gail, asking her to send another, on approval. Two arrived, and stayed. They make a dramatic group. Their bold conception is counterpoised by small areas where the glaze is applied with extreme delicacy. Wally and Adele admit that their initial purchase took "a wee bit of courage" but the three women look very much at home.

Not all in the Hirshs' collection is big and bold. Adele has a special liking for teapots, and the finer works of potters like Lee Le Grice, Beverley Luxton and Debbie Pointon. One gem is a small piece in the shape of a fish hook by Robyn Stewart, glowing green and with the feel of jade.

Tucked away in a downstairs room is the beginning of a collection within the collection, that brings a hitherto unsounded note - the domestic pot. Wally is collecting jugs. Amongst jugs by the Spencers, Renton Murray and John Crawford is one by - guess who? Its honest shino glaze brings forth a dozen names, all wrong. Steve Fullmer made it.

Far left:
Upper; Work by G. Weissberg.
Lower; Work by Graeme Storm.
Right: Part of the collection.

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AUSGLASS CONFERENCE

By Rena Jarosewitsch

Dana Zámečnicková, one of Czechoslovakia's best known and internationally acclaimed artists, was recently brought to Sydney, Australia by AUSGLASS, to conduct a 3 day workshop "Illusory Space" and to be, along with Susanne Frantz, Corning Museum, a key speaker at the AUSGLASS Conference "Contemporary Making - Current Thinking".

Dana, who began her career as an architect, then worked as a stage designer, has worked as a freelance artist in Prague since the early 1970s, primarily using glass. Her best known works are of pictorial spaces filled with spaced sheets of float glass layered from front to back. They give the illusion of space that stretches to infinity. More recently the 3D aspect has become more prominent. Her pieces, often life size, have become more sculptural, colourful and expressive.

Apart from conducting a very successful three day workshop Dana gave slide and video presentations at the 1991 AUSGLASS Conference.



Right: "Old Photography", 35 x 47 x 33cm, by Dana Zámečnicková

"Image and Space" was the title of her first talk. She introduced the work of her husband, artist Marian Karel and other Czech artist colleagues who primarily work with glass. The enormous impact that Jaroslava Brychtova and Stanislav Libensky (Professor at the Prague Academy of Applied Arts until the late 1980s) had on the contemporary glass movement in their own country was obvious. Apart from teaching proficiency of technique, they fostered artistic independence and exchange amongst students.

Small scale to monumental sculptures are created by working glass in a variety of ways. The works, often large scale, apart from showing a taste for restraint in form, are emotionally powerful and often the inner world of the object itself is emphasized.

It is not at all surprising that contemporary Czech glass has such high status worldwide.

Susanne Frantz, Curator of 20th Century Glass at the Corning Museum, Corning, N.Y., USA, was the other key speaker at the conference and this was her first visit to Australia. Apart from sharing slides of the vast glass collection the Corning Museum has acquired over the years, she raised important points worth contemplating.

She emphasized the importance for a serious artist of practising self-examination to the extent where the question is asked... "why do I make my work? Art should be

sacred and not made to please and sell. The maker has to refuse to let it become a commodity." Susanne points out the mistaking of decorative objects for art and names ideas, creativity and integrity as essentials for art making.

Grace Cochrane, Curator of Australian Decorative Arts and Design at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, spoke on "function". Grace explored why function is an issue by pointing out that it had been devalued in recent decades because other art practice thought it unimportant. Grace suggested that function is indeed OK and that there are many sorts of function to consider. Her talk was most inspiring.

Maureen Cahill, Australian artist, founder of and lecturer at the Glass Department, Sydney College of the Arts, shared with us "Challenges in Architectural Glass Commissions". "For some artists, relying upon the Gallery situation might be limiting. The opportunity to explore large scale, site specific works beyond the plinth belongs to public spaces."

Warren Langley, foremost Australian glass artist who regularly lectures overseas, spoke about "Ethics and Survival"; integrity of style, of dealings with galleries/shops, the integrity

of truth, self and spirit. He considers the use of technique to create a recognisable idiosyncratic style crucial to the survival process.

Warren shared with us his studio philosophy that is based on intense research and diversity and he looks upon his operation as product based with a strong design focus.

With this article I only focus on few highlights of the programme. Contributions generally were of great relevance to the practicing glass artist and the theorist alike.

Parallel to the Conference two major glass exhibitions were held. The exhibition at Blaxland Gallery "Glass: Challenging the Medium" showed innovative glass work by Australian artists. Kathy Elliott, Warren Langley and Richard Morrell were the winners. The Glass Artists' Gallery in Glebe, Sydney staged the exhibition "Glass: Appreciating the Medium" and Brian Hirst and Meza Rijdsdijk shared the prize.

AUSGLASS (The Australian Association of Glass Artists) has about 250 members. The AUSGLASS Conference Co-ordinator, Vic Keighery and the AUSGLASS committee have to be congratulated for conceiving and co-ordinating such an interesting, varied conference, workshop, exhibition and entertainment programme.

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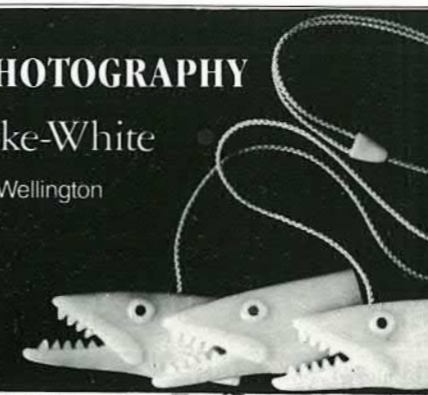
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COMMENT - THE AOTEA TAPESTRY

HELEN SCHAMROTH

The tapestry at the Aotea Centre has been installed and officially unveiled by the Prime Minister Jim Bolger. The unveiling was witnessed by a host of civic dignitaries and the fine arts cognoscenti, but where were the fibre artists who had been invited? Did they deliberately boycott the event?

The tapestry was designed by Robert Ellis, Associate Professor at Elam School of Fine Arts, and executed by the Victoria Tapestry Workshop in Melbourne. Local fibre artists had been sidelined.

It was no surprise that the creating of this tapestry created a storm amongst craftspeople, especially weavers and embroiderers. After all, we have such a fine weaving tradition and so many weaving enthusiasts, surely it could have been made here.

What's more, even the Victorian Tapestry Workshop had to purchase a loom especially made in the USA, and have it freighted across to Australia. Why couldn't the loom be brought here?

Why indeed. The Victorian Tapestry Workshop has had fifteen years experience

of working on major projects and of interpreting other people's designs. In New Zealand we really don't have that expertise.

The committee commissioning artwork for the Aotea Centre (and there are several major works, all by local artists) did investigate the possibility of creating the work here. Their decision was that it wasn't possible.

The decision makers could have investigated other works suitable for the location, works that could have been created locally. But they wanted a tapestry, and it would be difficult to argue the appropriateness and effectiveness of the way the 74 square metre space has been handled.

Controversy surrounding large public works is not a new phenomenon, nor is the concept of translating a painting into tapestry. This tapestry is an exceptionally fine work, and it is likely to be world renowned for its scale, design, rich symbolism and complexity, as well as for the sensitive interpretation of Ellis's painting, so let's put this into a more positive perspective.

There will be spin-offs for weavers. The

medium of tapestry, which reached its high point in the Middle Ages, will surely gain renewed stature and respectability, much as it did when Henry Moore's tapestries were shown at the Auckland City Art Gallery some years ago. It will definitely rate as a tourist attraction, and those who see it may take time to discover other work in similar media. The exceptionally high standard of the work must surely be an inspiration to local weavers and create a new benchmark for assessing tapestry weaving. It may also inspire local businesses to consider tapestry weaving as a valid art form to enhance their buildings.

I suggest we celebrate this work rather than appear petty and small minded. The work is after all a partnership with our Australian neighbours, and it must benefit both parties to develop co-operative ventures. Above all, let us celebrate the fact that however much this is a work of "fine art", it is just as much a magnificent example of a craft with a long tradition, in a public space. May there be many more.

RECENT WORK



Recently received slides from the Crafts Council Resource Centre. Clockwise from top left: Anthony Williams; Brooch, 50mm, 18ct gold and platinum, diamonds, opals, enamel-plique a jour, and champleve. Elizabeth Mitchell; "Mangoes", silk painting 350x500mm. Mark Piercey; tree lucerne 295x220x70mm. Helen Schamroth; "Frameworks for

Survival - Mururoa Waters", photo, Haru Sameshima. Anne Powell; Kowhaihai design, carved and pierced, porcelain, copper sulphate slip. Diana Parkes; detail "Carnation Galaxy". Slides are available for hire to groups and individuals. A full catalogue of available slide sets is available from the Crafts Council of NZ, P.O.Box 498, Wellington.

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Feasting My Spirit, by Liane Cowell of Whangamata.
Winner of the 1991 Art in Wool Award.