



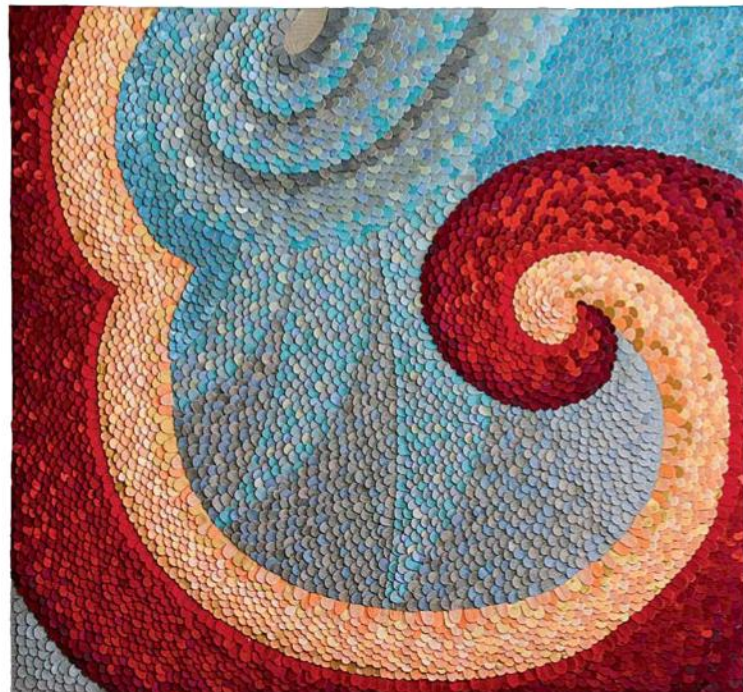
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2016
*American
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*Gold
Medalist
Gerhardt
Knodel*

75 years

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October / November 2016

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C American Craft

Vol. 76, No. 5
October/November 2016

Irina Zaytceva's *Twins* (2013) is just one striking piece from the Burger collection of contemporary ceramics recently acquired by the Flint Institute of Arts. **page 36**

On the cover
In one of his newest works, *Regeneration #5* (detail, 2016), Gold Medalist **Gerhardt Knodel** draws inspiration from an 18th-century Chinese tapestry. **page 48**



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From the Editor

How masters not only endure, but thrive.

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Zoom

Alicia Scardetta's candy-colored textiles and Edgewood Made's small-batch wares for the home. Plus: Treadway Toomey on the auction business; collector Lois Boardman on her donation of provocative jewelry to LACMA; sumptuous goods for your house and wardrobe; the fall's top shows; new books, including *Moving Sam Maloof*; and readers share the best lesson they've learned from a mentor.

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Pat Kruse collaborates with son Gage to carry on traditional Ojibwe birch-bark techniques. Joyce Lovelace talks with the Minnesota maker about the trees' sacred skin.

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There's a lot to commemorate in this issue, which got us thinking about tributes. Megan Guerber spots six artists intrigued by homage.

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In Michigan, an expansion of the Flint Institute of Arts is under way, including a new craft wing and state-of-the-art demonstration space. Megan Guerber reports on the addition – and the strengths of a community better known for its struggles.

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At MIT, father and son Martin and Erik Demaine work with their hands to exercise their brains – and use technology to help push the boundaries of making. Joyce Lovelace checks in on the artists about their recent Rare Craft Fellowship Award.

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Thanks to their tireless research, Harold B. Nelson and Bernard N. Jazzar have become the foremost experts on modern and contemporary enameling. Joyce Lovelace talks with the two organizers of the traveling show "Little Dreams in Glass and Metal" about the history and potential of the sometimes overlooked medium.

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Wide World of Craft

The craft scene in Omaha thrives in a resilient and supportive community. Andrea Kszystyniak maps out the art hubs of this Midwestern city on the edge of the plains.

88

Ideas

"Community engagement" is a buzzword in art; it's also a practice, Jenni Sorkin argues, for which women laid the groundwork – with little fanfare and less recognition. Joyce Lovelace talks with the art historian about her new book *Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community* and the three women who shaped the way many artists work today.

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One Piece

Donna Ruff's 2.23.13.

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Masters: 2016 American Craft Council Awards

It's time to celebrate. Meet 2016's College of Fellows inductees, and the winners of the Award of Distinction and Aileen Osborn Webb Award for Philanthropy, who will be honored for their varied and profound contributions to the field in October, in conjunction with ACC's conference "Present Tense."

Gerhardt Knodel

Myra Mimplitsch-Gray

Michael Cooper

Nick Cave

Françoise Grossen

Hank Murta Adams

Chris Gustin

Edward S. Cooke Jr.

Sara S. Morgan

CERF+



70

Read.

Roar.

Repeat.

Has it been 75 years already? To mark *American Craft's* diamond anniversary, Monica Moses leads a behind-the-scenes tour of key moments in the magazine's history – and the debates with readers that have played out in these pages.

2016 ACC Fellow **Nick Cave** has been making his Soundsuits since 1992, but his portfolio has expanded to large-scale installations. **page 56**



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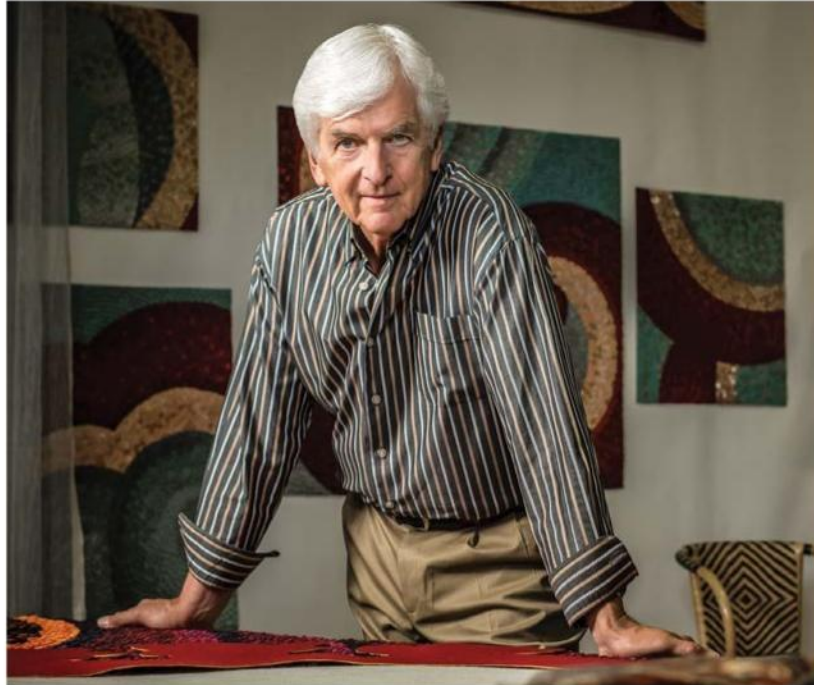
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Rose Slivka (above) was *Craft Horizons*' editor in chief for 20 years – enduring in spite of the controversy she stirred up (page 70). The same embrace of risk is apparent in the career of Gold Medalist Gerhardt Knodel (right, page 48), who continues to take chances rather than resting on his laurels.



Resistance Is Fruitful

WITH THIS ISSUE, I'VE BEEN thinking about longevity. As we've talked with the winners of the 2016 American Craft Council Awards, which honor people who have continued to make a difference for more than 25 years (page 46), I've pondered the commitment and perseverance that sort of influence requires.

And as I researched the history of this magazine to mark our 75th anniversary (page 70), I've been struck by two editors in chief: Lois Moran, who led for 27 years – one of the longest tenures of any magazine editor in her day – and Rose Slivka, at the helm for 20 tumultuous years. I've wondered: How does someone – editor, artist, anyone – negotiate the challenge of thriving in a given role for decades?

It might be tempting to assume the key to longevity is playing it safe, keeping your head down, staying the course, and avoiding controversy.

But that's not the lesson of the masters we're recognizing in this issue. Slivka, editor from 1959 to 1979, was a lightning rod. Throughout her tenure, she prodded craftspeople – most of whom were focused on technique and function – to think more expansively, more artistically. She infuriated readers with her glowing praise for iconoclasts such as Robert Arneson and Lenore Tawney. She featured work that readers called “sick,” “pornographic,” and outright “bullshit.” Yet she endured, even triumphed. Today, she's cited as one of the most influential voices in the midcentury craft movement.

When I think of Slivka and her staying power, I'm reminded of philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer's assertion that new ideas always face resistance. First, they're ridiculed, he wrote. Then, they're violently opposed. (See “bullshit,” above.) Only after that, he said, can they be accepted as self-evident.

By the time Slivka turned over the reins to Moran in 1980, readers had pretty much embraced the overlap of art and craft.

Sometimes the resistance to new thinking is external; sometimes it's internal. ACC Gold Medalist Gerhardt Knodel went through the ridicule-opposition-acceptance progression in his own mind as an undergraduate steeped in traditional ceramics technique. On a field trip to the Bay Area, he visited another ceramics program and was floored by what he saw. He watched students at the wheel moving with the clay “in very erratic ways” and “making the most eccentric objects,” he recalls. “And at a point where I would feel that the pieces were pitiful, they carefully took them off the wheel, put them to the side, and proceeded to make more of the same.”

The students he watched were under the direction of Peter Voulkos, who pushed them to physically engage with

the clay and to express themselves first and foremost. After enough time witnessing this new way of working, Knodel could feel his thinking shift.

“I went back to UCLA, and I told the people I was working with: Something was lacking in my education,” he says. The experience sparked a lifelong habit for Knodel; he started asking more questions, considering alternatives, experimenting. He learned to challenge his most fundamental assumptions. And he's been repeating the process for the last 60 years.

Longevity is not about finding an approach and holding on for dear life. It's about active, continual, committed renewal. As we put together this issue, we learned that lesson from the best.

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Editor in Chief



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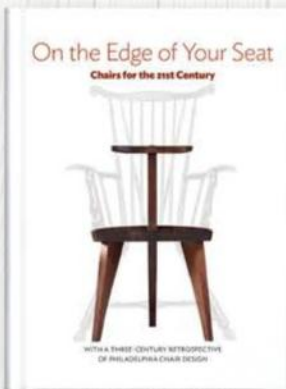
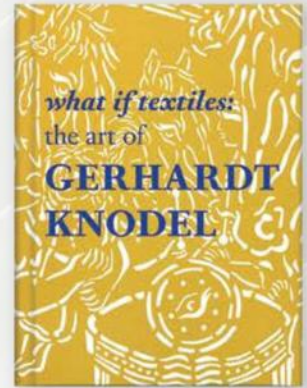
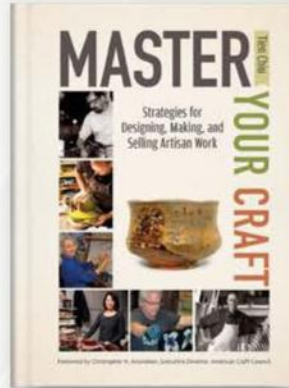
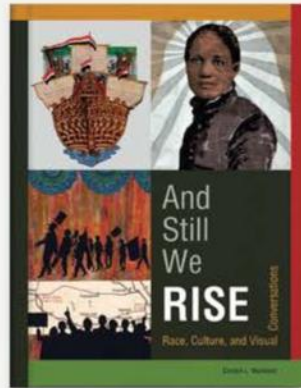
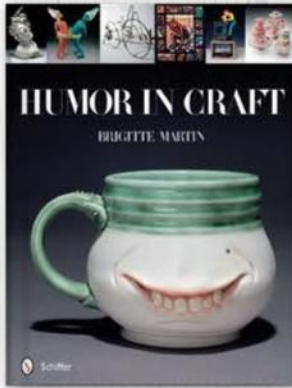
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ZOOM

A timely survey of shows, views, people, and work

On Our Radar Alicia Scardetta



THE FIRST THING MOST PEOPLE notice about Alicia Scardetta's weavings and wall hangings is their prismatic array of tropical colors: coral pink, turquoise, neon yellow, magenta. The 26-year-old Brooklyn artist says her playful palette was inspired by the Nickelodeon cartoons she watched as a kid, her family's Mexican heritage, and her upbringing in sunny San Antonio, Texas. She's also described her work as riffing on childhood friendship bracelets.

"A lot of adults seem afraid of using vibrant colors or having them in their homes," Scardetta says. "The color makes my pieces different from what people expect when they think of textile art."

Scardetta's pieces have quickly found a following since she began making them about five years ago. Her work has been shown in several group exhibitions and featured in boutiques around the country and on the popular shopping site One Kings Lane, where they sold well. On Instagram, she has more than 9,000 followers.

Color on the Side

Day job: Managing the wholesale business of Coral & Tusk, a Brooklyn company that specializes in embroidered home goods.

Time spent: Her large pieces – up to 50 by 18 inches – require four to six weeks of steady work in the evenings and on weekends.

Motivation: "My pieces celebrate girlhood and youth, and I'm not afraid of being feminine, because weaving has historically been done by women."

Heroes: Sheila Hicks, Lenore Tawney, Anni Albers.

Craft-school connections: Teaches at the Textile Arts Center, where she's also had a residency. She's been a tapestry assistant at Penland School of Crafts and studied at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts.

Big plan: She hopes to do more residencies and eventually focus on fiber art full time.

Scardetta got interested in textile art when she was a student at Pratt Institute. After seeing historical weavings on several blogs, she became curious about the medium and found her way to the Brooklyn branch of the Textile Arts Center. She interned there in 2011 and was

immediately hooked. She continued her studies in fine art and drawing, earning her BFA in 2012, while building a frame loom, investing in cotton and wool yarn and metallic threads, and taking classes at the center.

Scardetta makes two kinds of work: wall hangings with

cotton ropes wrapped with yarn, connected at various junctures by wrapping; and weavings with open spaces filled with wrapped cords. Sometimes many wrapped cords hang off the weavings in a sort of hammock formation, giving them a sculptural quality





OPPOSITE
LEFT:
Melted, 2014,
cotton, wool,
21 x 11.5 in.

LEFT:
Tamarisk,
2014,
cotton, wool,
34 x 18 in.

RIGHT:
Jaws II, 2014,
cotton, wool,
20 x 12 in.

BOTTOM
RIGHT:
Forever, 2015,
cotton, wool,
metallic thread,
cotton warp,
20 x 18 in.



strongly reminiscent of Sheila Hicks' work. Scardetta says her first such piece, *Melted* (2014), was a breakthrough: "It got me off the wall, and then I made another piece with even more hanging cords, which I call appendages. The three-dimensional quality of textiles

is definitely something I'm continuing to investigate."

"I discovered the wrapping technique because I was interested in negative space," Scardetta recalls. The wrapped cords allow her to create interesting negative forms, and she loves that. In *Jaws II* (2014),

near the top, the weaving breaks into a forest of wrapped cords on an angle; weaving resumes in the lower half, creating an effect like an open jaw chomping through the piece.

"This is time-consuming work that's made by hand, and I hope people see that in

the work – the hand, and time, in physical form," she says. "And I hope my pieces stir up good feelings – because it's happy work." ~LIZ LOGAN

ascardetta.com
Liz Logan is a freelance writer in Brooklyn.

Product Placement
**Edgewood
 Made**

DAVID SHORT AND GEORGE Dubinsky are on a mission to fill every room in your home with their deliberate, simple housewares.

The Edgewood Made co-founders connected in 2011 in the furniture design program at the School for American Crafts at Rochester Institute of Technology. Thanks to that foundation, “we’ve always seen the house as this cabinet that stores all these other levels of objects,” Dubinsky says. Their company’s first object: the signature wood-grain ceramic cup that Dubinsky originally designed for his thesis show.

Since then, the pair has designed and manufactured accessories and furniture including bowls, plates, flasks, vases, tables, and chairs – all produced in small batches at their six-person workshop in Philadelphia. The forms vary, but are united by Short and Dubinsky’s shared aesthetic and product philosophy.

Their approach emerged during a three-day, dead-of-winter camping trip in the Adirondack Mountains in 2011. “Everyone bailed except for George and me,” Short remembers. “So the whole time we were just hiking by ourselves, talking about craft and nature and how nature builds things.”



At their Philadelphia workshop, co-founders George Dubinsky (left) and David Short hang with a Yates-American V36 band saw, one of their many machines. Offshoring has given the partners a chance to secure other-wise pricey machines at bargain-bin prices.

RIGHT: While the word “manufacturing” turns off many craft enthusiasts, the Edgewood Made co-founders embrace it as their medium. Here, **Porcelain Marcy Bowls** await packaging.



All photos: Edgewood Made

Edgewood Made’s **Walnut Dining Table**, which seats 10, is built with rounded edges and corners, a mainstay of their design aesthetic.



**In the
 Groove**

Two of a kind: Though co-founders David Short and George Dubinsky didn’t start working together until they met at Rochester Institute of Technology, they attended the same community college furniture design program, and later found out they had the same guitar teacher growing up.

Homage: Their company is named for Edgewood Road in Yardley, Pennsylvania, where Dubinsky grew up and started working with wood.

Inside out: The Edgewood Made workshop is adorned with rock-climbing holds that reconnect the pair to nature even when they’re surrounded by machines.

Part of the process: Edgewood ceramics have long been made in four muted colors, but the pair recently added a fifth: a combination of the other colors’ salvaged leftovers, for a marbled look. Says Short: “We didn’t wake up one day and say ‘Oh, we want to make these multicolored plates.’ Instead, we had all this leftover clay and said ‘What can we do with this?’”



LEFT: One of Edgewood Made's signature products is the 10-ounce **Porcelain Wood Grain Cup**, a vessel the company describes as a "testament to tactility."

ABOVE (2): The golden ratio is a design guidepost for Dubinsky and Short. Add to that a subtle palette, and the result is understated objects such as their **Porcelain Pitchers and Flasks**.

They observed, for example, how nature prefers sturdy obtuse angles – “the successful edge,” Dubinsky explains. Straight from the woods and into the workshop, Edgewood’s style is built on its earthen palette and balanced proportions, informed by the golden ratio.

“As long as we abide by our own set of beliefs and rules, everything just kind of creates itself. It’s that natural path of least resistance,” Dubinsky says.

“None of these rules are really steadfast. They’re our jumping-off point,” Short adds.

Case in point: Many of the Edgewood duo’s latest designs are inspired as much by their means of production as by their initial vision.

“I’ve been saying that our medium is manufacturing,” says Dubinsky. He points to their ceramic vase, which is cast in a two-piece mold that can leave a distinct line where the two halves come together. As Short explains: “Instead of trying to make that making process disappear, we embellished the seam and made it into a design detail.”

It’s in this process of refinement and discovery that Edgewood finds its groove, even as the two navigate among mediums and methods.

“What you learn from the process of one medium translates to your bag of tricks that you could take to the next medium,” Dubinsky says. “We’re just process guys.”

~ANDREW RANALLO

edgewoodmade.com
Andrew Ranallo is American Craft’s digital producer.



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Shows to See

Past Presence: Retrospective exhibitions take a fresh look at artists better known (Claire Falkenstein, Peter Voulkos) and lesser known (Russell Childers), while an East Coast archaeological dig uncovers the work of anonymous craftspeople from centuries past.



AL / Dothan
Wiregrass Museum of Art
Assimilation: From Clay to Cotton, the Pottery of Guadalupe Lanning Robinson
to Dec. 31

wiregrassmuseum.org
The artist moved from her native Mexico City to Alabama more than 30 years ago. Both cultures inspire her pottery and quilts, and her work in cloth informs her work in clay: Her wheel-thrown stoneware pots are embellished with detailed hand-drawn designs that have a quilt-like geometry.

CA / Los Angeles
Edward Cella Art & Architecture
Jun Kaneko: Mirage
to Oct. 29
edwardcella.com
This show marks the artist's return to the state where he

got his start more than 50 years ago, when he studied with Peter Voulkos at Berkeley and Paul Soldner at Scripps College. Black-and-white ceramic sculptures are paired with a series of 9-by-7-foot abstract paintings stretching 63 feet to form an installation replete with Kaneko hallmarks: monumental scale, repetition, balance, restraint.

CA / Los Angeles
Fowler Museum at UCLA
The Box Project: Uncommon Threads
to Jan. 15
fowler.ucla.edu

Collector Lloyd Cotsen asked 36 fiber artists, most of whom normally work in two dimensions, to come up with 3D pieces that would fit in a smallish box. Their responses are far from Squaresville: diverse works that riff on imagery such as cartoons and gardens, game boards and the night sky. Following its run at the Fowler, the show moves to the Racine Art Museum and the Textile Museum at George Washington University.



Claire Falkenstein
at the Crocker Art Museum

CA / Sacramento
Crocker Art Museum
Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture
Oct. 2 – Dec. 31
crockerartmuseum.org
Claire Falkenstein (1908 – 1997) could never be contained within one city or one medium in her broad and bold artistic explorations. Best known for her sculpture, she also created prints, paintings, jewelry, stage sets, films, architectural commissions, and works in glass, while moving around the Bay Area, Paris, New York, and Los Angeles. This retrospective, with 65 key pieces, follows the artist wherever and however she worked.

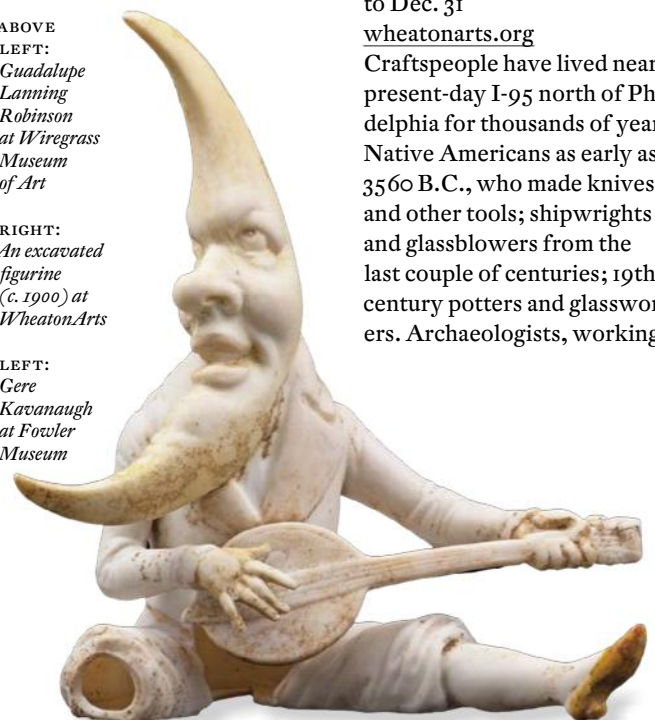
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LEFT:
Guadalupe Lanning Robinson
at *Wiregrass Museum of Art*

RIGHT:
An excavated figurine
(c. 1900) at *Wheaton.Arts*

LEFT:
Gere Kavanaugh
at *Fowler Museum*

MN / St. Paul
AAW Gallery of Wood Art
Turning 30
to Dec. 29
galleryofwoodart.org
The American Association of Woodturners celebrates its 30th anniversary with this show of 32 works by AAW members, exploring aspects and attributes of the number 30 and the organization's 30-year culture of sharing knowledge and camaraderie.

NJ / Millville
Museum of American Glass
at *Wheaton.Arts*
From the Ground Up: Archaeology | Artisans | Everyday Life
to Dec. 31
wheatonarts.org
Craftspeople have lived near present-day I-95 north of Philadelphia for thousands of years: Native Americans as early as 3560 B.C., who made knives and other tools; shipwrights and glassblowers from the last couple of centuries; 19th-century potters and glassworkers. Archaeologists, working



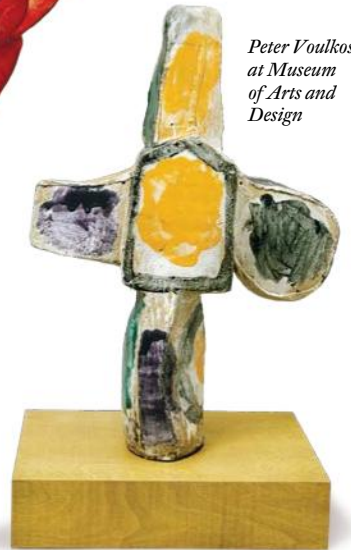


LEFT:
Russell
Childers at
the Hallie
Ford Museum
of Art

RIGHT:
Chris Abrass
at Facère
Jewelry Art
Gallery



Peter Voulkos
at Museum
of Arts and
Design



sell his carvings of family, friends, animals, and his own memories. Twenty-five pieces, plus his carved toolbox, make up this first retrospective of his work.

TX / Houston
Houston Center
for Contemporary Craft
CraftTexas 2016

to Jan. 8
crafthouston.org
The ninth iteration of HCCC's biennial juried exhibition shows off talent as big as the state it's in. Fifty-three works by 38 artists address themes such as genetics and upcycling, in all traditional craft mediums as well as in cut paper, installation, and sculpture.

WA / Bellevue
Bellevue Arts Museum
BAM Biennial 2016:
Metamorphosis

to Feb. 5
bellevuearts.org
This fourth edition of the BAM Biennial showcases the work of 49 Northwest metal artists chosen from 330 applicants, a Biennial record; among artists in the

show are Rik Allen, Jana Brevick, Deborah Butterfield, and Midori Saito.

WA / Seattle
Facère Jewelry Art Gallery
Signs of Life 2016

Oct. 19 – Nov. 9
facerejewelryart.com
Nine jewelry artists do their work. Nine writers are paired with one of those works, and use it to inspire their own. The result: a combined literary journal and art jewelry exhibition, an annual event for a dozen years now. This year's jewelry artists: Chris Abrass, Raïssa Bump, Barbara Cohen, Kristin Diener, Emiko Oye, Joan Hammond, Seth Papac, Linda Threadgill, and Wolfgang Vaatz.

along the route as the roadway is readied for improvements, have been digging up artifacts – almost a million so far. This show, the first to put a selection of those objects on public view, focuses on the daily lives of glassworkers and potters whose history, until now, has been buried.

NY / New York City
Museum of Arts and Design

Voulkos: The Breakthrough Years

Oct. 18 – Mar. 15
madmuseum.org
American ceramics would be vastly different if Peter Voulkos had never happened. This show is the first to focus on his early career from 1953 to 1968, when he was just beginning to invent new methods of building and glazing pots, and to create forms never seen before in clay. The

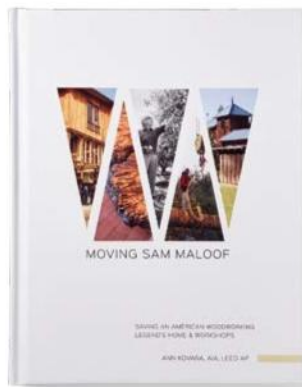
effects of these experiments have been reverberating ever since. Three rarely seen oil paintings reveal how the artist worked out his ideas in multiple mediums.

OR / Salem
Hallie Ford Museum of Art

Russell Childers:
Oregon Outsider

to Oct. 23
willamette.edu/arts/hfma
Russell Childers (1915 – 1998) was institutionalized at age 10 in what was then called a home for the feeble-minded. For nearly four decades he lived there in near-silence, fed and clothed but otherwise left largely to himself. He taught himself to carve wood, a skill that blossomed into an art upon his release to a rehabilitation center, where he was given space and support to make and

The Short List
Devotion



Moving Sam Maloof: Saving an American Woodworking Legend's Home and Workshops
By Ann Kovara
Schiffer Publishing, \$35

SAM MALOOF'S HANDCRAFTED California compound is almost as famous as the furniture maker himself, yet plans for a high-way extension once threatened its existence. The late woodworker and his artist wife

Alfreda responded with a decade-plus fight, first getting their home, studios, guest-house, and selected trees registered as historic property, then relocated as a "living" museum beside which they could reside. *Moving Sam Maloof* narrates this three-year relocation project completed in 2001, unfolding the complex negotiation between "progress and tradition, public needs, and private

lives." Construction manager and architect Ann Kovara, who helped oversee the project, tells the tale in loving detail. Her small, often personal observations reveal the cost of a tumultuous change for the couple, along with insider specifics on the move's logistics – an insightful read for Maloof fans and anyone interested in historic preservation.
~MEGAN GUERBER

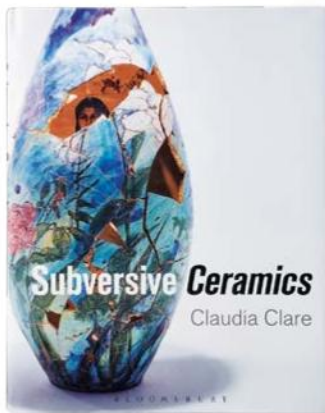


People Knitting: A Century of Photographs
By Barbara Levine
Princeton Architectural Press, \$17

THEIR NEEDLES CLICKING, lost in thought as a strand of yarn turns into a woolen wearable, people have found comfort in the act of knitting for centuries. In a 100-photo essay,

Barbara Levine – a collector, artist, and curator with expertise in vernacular photography – explores this cozy pastime. From the 1860s through the mid-20th century, *People Knitting* shows knitting men, women, and children in all walks of life, from anonymous nurses and prisoners to famous folks

including Eleanor Roosevelt and Ingrid Bergman. A charming detail for this reader: The images are presented sans text (identifying information is reserved for the index), allowing viewers to engage candidly as they page through this homage to an enduring art form.
~JESSICA SHAYKETT



Subversive Ceramics
By Claudia Clare
Bloomsbury Academic, \$39

WHILE SHE WAS WORKING ON *The Pot Book* (2011), Claudia Clare noticed something curious: "I was struck," she writes, "by the number of contemporary practitioners either declaring their work 'subversive' or having it described as such by others. I was similarly struck by the absence of any evidence to support the claim." In this new

book, Clare sets out to explicate that popular label, proposing a new set of analytical criteria "with which to understand and appraise the disparate work which has been marshalled under the 'subversive' umbrella." Clare productively defines "subversive" in political terms – arguing that much work so called is, in fact, satirical. She discusses such works produced in the late 20th century, before diving into an illuminating history that

spans ancient Athenian pottery to 19th-century anti-slavery ware. Then, the diverse contemporary work: artists responding to history or tradition; makers whose working methods subvert; and artists making protest ceramics, rewriting established political narratives. Rigorous and referenced, *Subversive Ceramics* is also opinionated and personal – a delightful, revealing, and compelling read.
~JULIE K. HANUS



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Colin Pezzano

Inside Track Jewelry to Think By

THE AUTUMN WEEKEND THAT opens October will mark a golden harvest for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as it presents the exhibition “Beyond Bling: Jewelry from the Lois Boardman Collection” and the associated symposium “Jewelry Matters.” A comprehensive scholarly catalogue documenting the core collection accompanies the show.

What motivates a collector to amass more than 300 pieces of wearable jewelry? Throughout her 30 years of acquisition, Boardman has maintained that she is merely the “custodian” of the collection. As Boardman’s collection goes on public display – and custody is transferred – we leaned in to hear about the big reveal.

Why do you want to give away your coveted jewelry?

Owning more than 300 pieces of jewelry – you can’t wear it all at the same time. And my family has no claims on it.

Why did you choose LACMA to be the recipient of your generosity?

I have a history with LACMA and the decorative arts and design department going back to the mid-1990s, including my tenure as chairperson of the museum’s support group, the Decorative Arts Council. Previous to this involvement, I had worked at the Pasadena Museum of Art in various capacities, and I understand the reliance on major collection donations. It was also important for me

to place the collection in Los Angeles, my adoptive metropolis (I was born in Chicago), as many family members and friends live in Southern California, and I want them to enjoy the collection.

Is the transfer of your jewelry collection to a public institution a milestone for you?

Absolutely. It’s a momentous occasion. After spending countless hours with LACMA curators Rosie Mills and Bobby Tigerman – researching and cataloguing the collection and

lunchtime meetings every couple of weeks – you began to feel part of a team with a common

Italian jewelry artist **Bruno Martinazzi’s *Goldfinger* (1969)** wraps the wearer’s wrist in a gilded grip.



Lois Boardman, jewelry collector and philanthropist



goal. It’s also a momentous time for the artists represented in the collection. Having their material in a public collection ensures their legacy.

Let’s talk about the character of your collection. Collectively, do the pieces follow the trajectory of advances in technology and materials? Is the collection composed of pieces that fit into traditional categories?

There are traditional pieces and unconventional ones. The range of materials covers the spectrum from precious to



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ZOOM



Nancy Worden's *The Leash* (2003) is a necklace made from materials ranging from mink to mother-of-pearl to US currency.

non-precious. It's everything from gold, silver, copper, bronze, rubber, cork, aluminum, wood, ceramics, glass, plastics, feathers, leather, and more. Some pieces are made using traditional metalsmithing techniques, some are fabricated by using technologies such as 3D-printing and digital imaging, and still others are created with experimental materials and methods.

Is there a theme that threads through the collection?

The collection represents a core of American and international jewelers who have made an imprint on the contemporary jewelry movement. And, although I have collected broadly, primarily from the 1970s forward, I have also collected several artists in depth – those artists whose works speak to me, with whom I feel an intimate connection when I wear their pieces. These artists – Nancy Worden is an example – I've gotten to know personally, and they've become part of the fabric of my life.

Some of the pieces you wear have a definite attitude. Is the intent to provoke a response, a reaction from the viewer?

The simple answer to that question is yes. Some of the pieces I've collected engage provocative themes: gender politics, the sociopolitical, race issues,

comments on commodification and consumerism; as a mirror of life, they are a statement about our contemporary culture.

The pectoral piece by Carolyn Kriegman (nicknamed "Miss America") is a case in point: Its red, white, and blue color scheme, its plastic material, and its rotating stars that form the nipples of the breastplate serve as obvious criticism of American politics and culture writ large. And I guess you could say it's a piece of kinetic art; when I wear it, the stars twirl as I move.

Tell us about the joy of collecting.

The joy has been the thrill of the hunt – and developing my eye aesthetically so I can search for significant pieces through personal interaction and through the internet. I buy globally and wear locally. The additive benefit is the increased network of artists, curators, dealers, and enthusiasts that has formed organically over the course of my collecting years.

I've also now found joy in giving: the joy of sharing the collection with the public, and increasing the awareness and appreciation of those who are inspired by jewelry.

~JO LAURIA

"Beyond Bling" runs through February 5. Jo Lauria is an independent curator and writer in Los Angeles.



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Merrie Wright, "Dazzle Rabbit (after Anni Albers with idiosyncrasies)," 2016. Stoneware.
Photo by Merrie Wright.

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Voices
What's the best lesson a mentor ever taught you?



Hannah Fink



Sarah Nikitopoulos

◀ The best lesson a mentor ever taught me is that there is a world outside of the four walls that surround me. This wise English teacher showed me that I don't have to be defined by my environment. Instead, I can act with reason and compassion to be a member of the present.

~**MOLLY GEISINGER**,
Hamilton College sophomore, American Craft summer intern, Ridgefield, CT

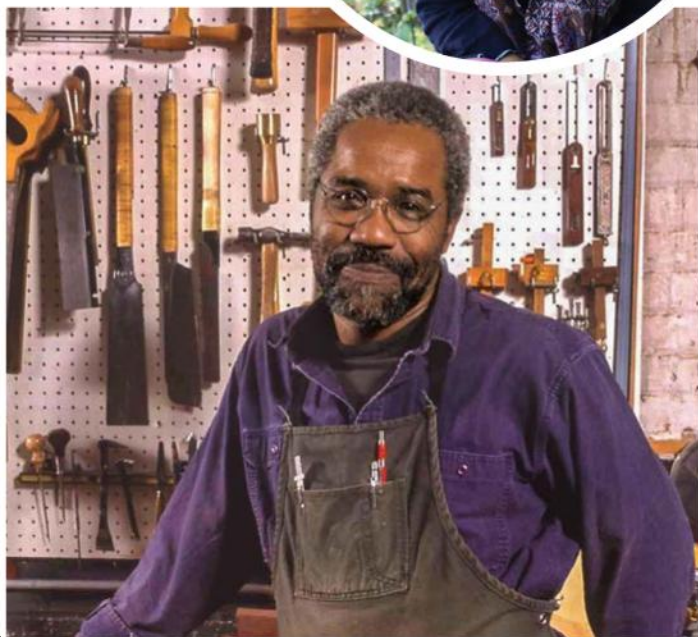
▲ During my apprenticeship with Rupert Spira, he advised me that if I wanted to make a career out of my ceramics, I should just go to my studio every day, make work, and sell it. Don't think about it, don't wait for

inspiration, just work. This advice has helped me create a daily 9-to-5 studio practice that allows me to support myself by making and selling ceramic art.

~**ANI KASTEN**,
ceramist, Mount Rainier, MD



Jack da Silva



Jonathan Binzen

▲ As far as mentors go, I have to say my father and several other men I grew up around [inspired me]. It wasn't so much that they were craftsmen in the classical sense – in fact, they all had desk jobs – but they knew their way around tools and took on a variety of home improvement tasks without hesitation. It was this can-do attitude that taught me the value of handwork and its satisfactions.

~**MICHAEL PURYEAR**,
furniture maker, Shokan, NY

➤ “Left, right, left, right.” During my corporate career, I worked for someone who had been in Vietnam. He used to tell me to keep my eyes open, stay focused on the goal ahead, and continue to march forward. Don't get caught up in the minutiae that don't mean anything – it just takes time and wastes energy.

~**ELLEN HERTZ**,
owner, Max's, St. Louis Park, MN



David Kern Photography

▲ My professor and mentor Alma Eikerman inspired me to look beyond my field of jewelry and metal arts for inspiration from other media, architecture, and nature. She encouraged her students to travel, do research, read, draw, and continue creating new work after graduating. I am grateful for her knowledge, insight, and generosity.

~**MARILYN DA SILVA**,
artist, program chair, jewelry/metal arts, California College of the Arts, Oakland, CA

risdweekend.com/alumni

October 7-9
2016

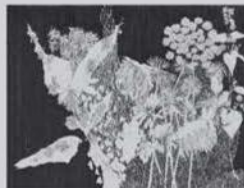
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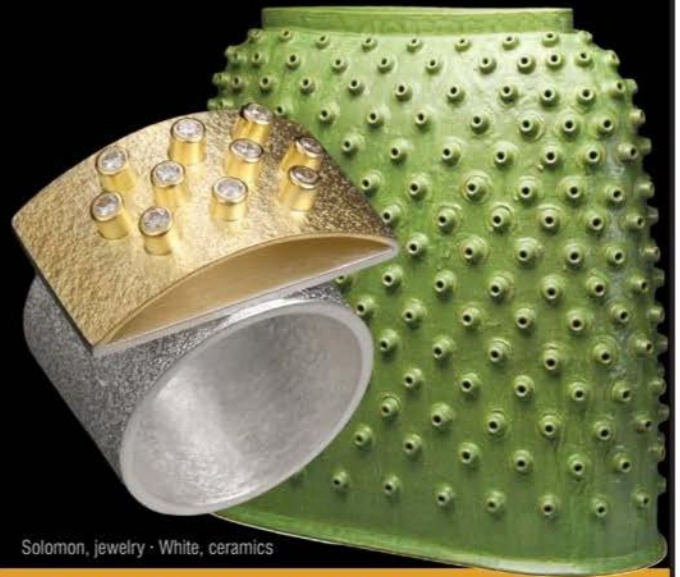
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➤ Although Montreal duo Marie-Pier Guilmain and Maud Beauchamp's limited-edition Stoneware Pitcher Set has an industrial look, it's handmade. The brooding, minimalist design can be found alongside other **mpgmb** collaborations that include – perhaps surprisingly – whimsical cardboard cat shelters. mpgmb.com



Daphné Caron

➤ Portland, Oregon, friends Nic Ramirez and Matt and Leigh Capozzi honor beloved West Coast peaks in their pints and tumblers. Handblown by Portland's Elements Glass, the design-focused trio's **North Drinkware** line includes Yosemite's Half Dome, Mount Rainier just up the coast, and Oregon's own Mount Hood (right). Just add beer or whiskey. northdrinkware.com



North Drinkware



Stuart Lorenz

◀ Minneapolis jewelry designer **Judith Kinghorn** makes her pieces, such as *Dahlia Brooch/Pendant*, with an age-old technique, fusing sterling silver and 24k gold with a mouth-blown torch. The result is a sumptuous, richly hued form that looks organic despite its metal makeup. judithkinghorn.com



Erika Duran

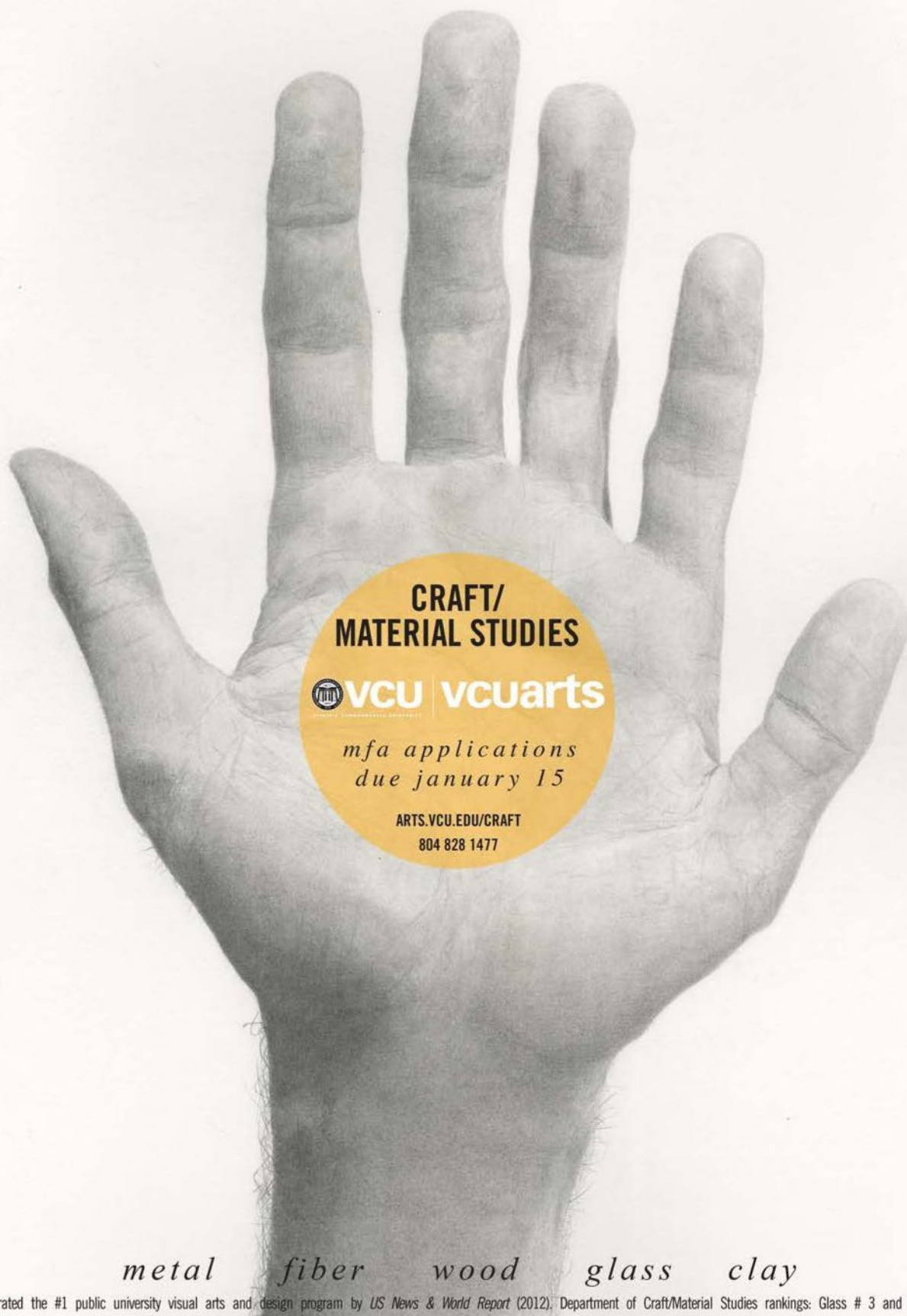
◀ Philadelphia artist **Erika Duran** hand-embroiders patches that bring luck to your denim or other regalia. Inspired by fate, chance, and the desert landscape of her West

Texas childhood, she dubbed her product line **Eradura**, a mash-up of her first name and the Spanish *herradura* (horseshoe), another symbol of good fortune. eradura.etsy.com

➤ For 25 years, furniture designer **Seth Rolland** has hand-built sculptural pieces that look equally at home in a gallery or your abode. Named after the coastal waterway he can see from his Port Townsend, Washington, residence, Rolland's 7-foot sapele Salish Sea Bathtub invites you to dream of sailing while soaking. sethrolland.com



Myron Gauger



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image: Evan Pomerantz, MFA 2015

Shop Talk
**Treadway
Toomey**



Treadway Toomey Auctions sells primarily 20th-century works on the secondary market. This **Deborah Butterfield** sculpture sold for \$157,500, about twice its estimate.

BACK IN 1987, DON TREADWAY and John Toomey were both longtime dealers in Arts and Crafts furnishings and decorative objects. Each had (and maintains to this day) his own gallery – Treadway in Cincinnati, Toomey in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. Given their similar interests and clients, they decided it made sense to team up. But instead of a retail partnership, the business model they chose was the auction.

“They felt that the future of the business was going to be driven by auction houses,” explains Joe Stanfield, head of fine art for Treadway Toomey Auctions. Specializing in 20th-century art and design, the firm prides itself on its niche focus and small staff of experts who “live and breathe this material,” as Stanfield puts it.

Arts and Crafts pottery and furniture were their mainstay at first; in the 1990s, they became early proponents of midcentury modern. This year they’re making a splash with the sale of several thousand items, including about 300 craft objects, from the estate of collector and philanthropist Candice B. Groot.

Groot, who died in 2015, amassed timepieces, erotica, and fine art, and what Stanfield calls “one of the ultimate collections of modern and contemporary ceramics.” Represented, often in depth, are masters of the post-World War II clay

art movement, among them Peter Voulkos, Ken Price, Viola Frey, and, in particular, Robert Arneson: “Without a doubt, the most Arnesons that will ever come to the market are from her collection.” A ceramist herself, Groot also made a point of supporting the work of present-day clay artists such as Michael Lucero, Beth Cavener Stichter, Kathy Butterly, Grayson Perry, and many others.

For any auction house, a collection like Groot’s is that rare and wonderful “get,” an encyclopedic array of museum-quality pieces, carefully curated by an internationally known connoisseur with a passionate vision. It’s also an extraordinary opportunity for buyers.

“People are interested in Candice’s material because it came from her. When an entire collection comes up for sale, the prices realized tend to be extremely high,” says Stanfield.

Treadway Toomey has offered the Groot collection in four separate sales spread out over 2016, with the final event scheduled for November 12. So far, many pieces have sold exceedingly well: *Work Boots* (1983), by Marilyn Levine, expected to sell for between \$7,000 and \$9,000, brought \$24,400; *Baby Scale*, a 1981 sculpture by Ken Price, sold for \$39,650, nearly double its estimate; Arneson’s 1981



Robert Arneson’s *Local Mind Disaster* (1972) was expected to sell for about \$25,000. It went for \$42,700.



Beth Cavener Stichter’s *Sanguine* (2010) was expected to fetch between \$10,000 and \$15,000. It sold for more than \$28,000.

Portrait of the Artist as a Clever Old Dog also topped its estimate, fetching a whopping \$121,500. The takeaway, says Stanfield, is that the value of work by blue-chip artists stands the test of time.

“Rarity is key. If something comes up for sale that has been in private hands or a museum collection for an extended period and fits criteria for collectors – rare, good condition, good provenance – the market almost couldn’t be stronger for that type of item.”

While 50-some people might typically attend a Treadway Toomey auction in person, the vast majority of bids are made online or by phone. Stanfield foresees a future of empty auction rooms, now that smartphones make placing bids a snap: “A lot of our clients like the idea of being able to be out for dinner and bid at an auction, all at the same time.”

Still, he often finds himself reassuring even his friends. “They’ll say, ‘Joe, what do I do? How do I bid? If I’m at the auction and I itch my nose, is the auctioneer going to sell it to me?’ It’s still a little mysterious, and it shouldn’t be. You have to give new buyers confidence that it’s a straightforward and easy process that can be fun and exciting.” ~JOYCE LOVELACE

treadwaygallery.com
johntoomeygallery.com



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Sacred Harvest

Birch-barker

Pat Kruse mines his Ojibwe heritage and passes on the art form to the next generation.

STORY BY

Joyce Lovelace

Pat Kruse uses birch bark and red willow to make intricate baskets and wall hangings, some 4 feet wide, using both geometric designs and tableaux of animals and plants. The artist started out making unadorned objects, but when he embraced the ornate style of his Ojibwe ancestors, his career really took off.

WALL HANGINGS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP (3): **My Brother's Blanket #1** (2009), **My Brother's Blanket #2** (2010), and **Untitled** (2010)



PAT KRUSE HAS A DEEP AND reverent connection to the natural world, which he honors by making beautiful, expressive objects out of the birch bark he gathers in forests near his central Minnesota home.

“I’m just a birch-barker – not too much more to it than that,” says the artist, 45, a member of the Red Cliff Band of Ojibwe. “I’m dedicated to what I do, and I love to do what I do.”

In collaboration with his 21-year-old son, Gage, Kruse creates intricate “paintings” and baskets out of bark pieces sewn together with deer sinew.

Some of his designs are abstract, while others depict images from nature, such as flowers, turtles, bears, and butterflies. He gets his rich, nuanced range of earth tones from different birch species – white, gray, yellow, silver – as well as from second-growth and even dead bark.

At the heart of Kruse’s art is love for his material, a passion that stems from his heritage. “Ojibwes have always known that birch bark is a sacred thing,” he says. “The skin of a tree is also a house, a boat, a drinking cup, a bowl, a storage container – then come all the different

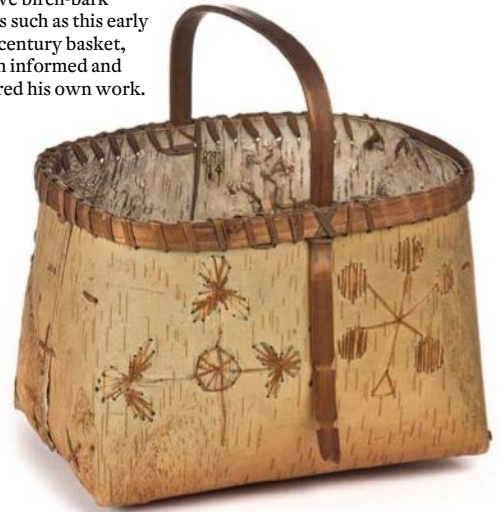
kinds of art. Birch bark is so sacred that we try not to waste even a scrap.” It’s this authenticity that lends a special soul to his pieces, which are prized by collectors.

“As a traditional cultural artist, Pat is the embodiment of gratitude and respect. If you’re lucky enough to get a chance to speak with him, you begin to understand how grateful he is to carry forward the birch-bark art forms of his cultural predecessors,” says Benjamin Gessner of the Minnesota Historical Society, where Kruse spent six months as an

artist in residence, studying 19th- and early 20th-century Ojibwe birch-bark artifacts in the collection. Gessner adds, “As Pat once explained it to me, the ancestors are communicating with us through what they have physically left. In these items, he sees worlds of possibilities for teaching and learning.”

“My mom told me I was born to be a birch-barker,” says Kruse, who grew up on the Mille Lacs and Leech Lake reservations. As a boy, he was always making “little things” – beaded objects, Christmas ornaments, dream catchers –

BELOW:
Kruse's 2014 residency at the Minnesota Historical Society allowed him to study Ojibwe birch-bark pieces such as this early 20th-century basket, which informed and inspired his own work.



BELOW:
Kruse and his son collaborated on this 2014 birch-bark appliqué *makak* (storage container) with cover.



Kruse has worked with his son Gage, now 21, for several years. The pair spend summers in the strenuous task of harvesting materials. "Birch-barkers work hard for their money," the artist says. "We make it look easy, but it's a very hard, honest trade. It's not something for the faint of heart."

but was most drawn to birch-bark crafts, which he learned at the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig tribal school and by watching people in his community build traditional birchwood canoes.

"My uncles and my mom and all, they were blanket makers and beadworkers and birch-barkers," Kruse explains. "We picked wild rice, onions, sweetgrass, wintergreen. My family

lived off the forest, because there wasn't much opportunity for employment on the reservations back then, and even to this day."

In his late teens and early 20s, he did a stint as a union worker in Washington state, maintaining naval ships. When he returned to the reservation and became a father, "I had to do something to make money, so birch bark it was." He produced unadorned objects at first, until his mother encouraged him to pursue a more decorative "old-school" Ojibwe style: "Once I started doing

that, my whole life changed." Before long, his work was not only selling briskly at the Mille Lacs trading post, but also gaining broader attention in galleries and museums.

Now Kruse and son spend their summers harvesting bark, then settle in during the winter months to make art. He's proud to have Gage by his side, carrying the craft on to a new generation. "It's like, my hand and his hand, same thing."

✦ [facebook.com/pat.kruse.5](https://www.facebook.com/pat.kruse.5)
Joyce Lovelace is American Craft's contributing editor.

Tribute

Artists honor the good, the bad, and the questionable.

SPOTTED BY

Megan Guerber

➔ Wisconsin artist **Kelly Rene Jelinek** takes the gore out of hunting trophies yet keeps them anatomically correct. Her detailed and fantastical creatures – built with traditional foam mounts, glass eyes, and an array of fabrics rich with pattern and texture – marry magical, fairy-tale imagery with the art of taxidermy. littlestagstudio.com



Kelly Jelinek



Plastic Jesus

◀ The 2015 FIFA case, where 14 members of the world soccer organization were charged with fraud and racketeering, rocked sports fans worldwide. London-born LA street artist **Plastic Jesus**

responded by carving faux \$100 bills into a FIFA World Cup trophy. Assembled from individually cut notes totaling \$2.8 million, it's the ultimate prize for a corrupt official. plasticjesus.net

➔ **Jaydan Moore** marks the changing meaning of heirlooms as they pass from one generation to the next. For his Platter series, the North Carolina metalsmith takes apart different found and donated trays, then merges the pieces into exquisite forms uncannily reminiscent of the originals. Made from metal marked by wear, his works carry the history of their past lives, now ingrained with new meaning. jaydanmoore.com



Mercedes Jelinek



Ehren Tool

← Ceramist **Ehren Tool**, a veteran of the first Gulf War, uses the cup to explore the cost of armed conflict. Its unassuming form, which he embeds with images of violence found throughout popular culture, helps open up difficult conversations as it

travels from hand to hand. In a humble effort to translate the abstraction of war into something tangible, Tool has created and given away an unfathomable number – more than 17,000 since 2001. dirtycanteen.com/ehren-tool.html



© Historic Royal Palaces and Richard Lee-Hair (2)



↑ A line in a soldier's will inspired British artist **Paul Cummins'** 888,246 ceramic poppies – one for each British and colonial military death in World War I. On view for four months in 2014, *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* spilled across the Tower of London's moat to mark the 100th anniversary of the war's outbreak. As volunteers gradually planted the clay blossoms over the months, the installation's impact grew one flower at a time. paulcumminsceramics.com



➤ Amsterdam artist **Vika Mitrichenko**, who hails from the former Soviet Union, makes Trophy Cups to celebrate the mundane, unsung moments of her father, a former swim coach for the Soviet

national team. While these small, sometimes absurd, deeds would otherwise go unnoticed, the tender inscriptions painted on porcelain trophies raise them to a new level of significance. vikamitrichenko.com



Maxim Tyminko

For his selfless love of art and helping his friend Mr.S.K. who is a painter to stop drinking despite Mr.S.K.'s remark, "You don't have a clue about contemporary art"



The Flint Institute of Arts is not only a museum; the flexible building also houses an art school for all ages (bottom left). By expanding the facility to include a new contemporary craft wing as well as an innovative “maker space” designed both for studio classes and public demonstrations (artist’s rendering, right), the FIA continues to connect the larger Flint community to the wonders of creating.



Looking Ahead

With a new craft wing and expanded educational offerings, the Flint Institute of Arts is investing in community.

STORY BY
Megan Guerber

WHEN YOU THINK OF FLINT, Michigan, what likely comes to mind is the city’s recent water crisis, or perhaps Michael Moore’s 1989 documentary *Roger & Me*, set amid the city’s economic decline after General Motors closed factories. These ongoing issues can overshadow an equally important story unfolding in Flint: a city with a lot to offer, whose art organizations are stepping up to enrich the lives of the people who live there.

The Flint Institute of Arts – both an art museum and the nation’s sixth-largest art school – is bolstering that mission with a major expansion that will add a contemporary craft wing as well as glassblowing education to its 1957 facility. Set to open next fall, the new wing, some 8,500 square feet, is designed to display two major collections: the



FIA’s new ceramics collection includes work by such contemporary greats as **Bennett Bean**.

recently acquired Dr. Robert and Deanna Harris Burger collection of contemporary ceramics and the Sherwin and Shirley Glass contemporary glass collection, on permanent loan.

The second part of the renovation will transform the art school’s nearly 4,000-square-foot courtyard into a year-round glass studio and state-of-the-art “maker space,” the site of studio

classes as well as glassblowing, ceramic, and metal-casting demonstrations. The FIA already offers diverse programs, including Free Saturday events and film screenings; these new demonstrations will dovetail with school tours and classes that combine a STEM and art focus, so visitors can learn more about the fascinating processes – scientific, mathematical, and physical – that artists use.

During demos, free and open to the public, trained volunteers will narrate the action, helping visitors link what they see to works on display in the museum. The idea is to translate the sometimes elusive terminology in wall labels into an accessible language that helps visitors differentiate between cast and blown glass, between a kiln and a furnace, so they can explore the museum with confidence.



“We do feel that there’s a disconnect between understanding art and making art,” says FIA’s director of development Kathryn Sharbaugh. “If you’ve experienced the process of making, you actually understand what’s in the galleries better.” By helping people to better grasp how works of art are made, the FIA not only nurtures appreciation for the arts, but can also inspire the curious to start making.

That’s a good fit for Flint. Located about an hour’s drive northwest of Detroit, Flint is a manufacturing city, a home to makers ranging from engineers and welders to ceramists and glass artists. The FIA has long reflected that heritage, bridging training in art and craft trades with its collections. Established in 1928, it’s literally a community art school attached to a museum,

a hybrid institution that links the process of making to the artwork it houses. Its new maker space will be a powerful tool to close the gap between product and process. As Sharbaugh explains, “It’s going to give people a better understanding of how things are made in general, not just art.”

FIA staff and supporters are excited, but they’re also prepared for criticism. The build-out has an \$8.5 million price tag, largely funded by a grant. In a city with deteriorating infrastructure and one of the highest poverty rates in the United States, can they justify spending on the arts?

“That’s the thing about Flint; it’s a city of really extreme contrasts,” says Shelley Spivack. She is an attorney, photographer, and the project director of the Buckham/



Karen LaMonte’s *Dress Impression with Train* (2005) is nearly 5 feet tall. It’s one of many large works in FIA’s new glass collection that the new wing will accommodate.

GVRC Share Art Project, which holds art classes for the kids at the region’s juvenile detention center. She describes how art enriches people’s lives and helps them see possibilities they might not otherwise have imagined. This understanding – and expansion of internal limits, which she has witnessed through her own work – is essential for people who are struggling or may feel trapped by circumstance.

Suellen Parker, a glass artist and one-time FIA student, agrees. “No matter how affluent your parents are or not, [it] just opens doors for you that you didn’t have when you’re allowed to create. You see different things in a different light.”

✦ flintarts.org
Megan Guerber is American Craft’s assistant editor.



Congrats on 75 Years

The American Craft Council would like to congratulate award-winning *American Craft* magazine for serving as an exemplary craft chronicler, tastemaker, and provocateur for 75 years.

Kudos to the magazine team for continuously elevating ACC's most prolific, longstanding program.

CONGRATULATIONS

CHRIS GUSTIN

on your induction into the
American Craft Council College of Fellows

*We celebrate your accomplishments and commitment to
creating communities where artists connect and engage.*

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PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFTS

 **PETERS VALLEY**
SCHOOL OF CRAFT

PILCHUCK
GLASS
SCHOOL 

High-Touch, High-Tech

The Demaines' origami innovations draw fresh recognition.

STORY BY *Joyce Lovelace*



Some of Erik and Martin Demaine's work, such as **Mint Tea** (2014, above), combines Erik's paper folding with Martin's glassblowing. Inside the teapot are folded dollar bills.

Inspired by the Bauhaus movement, **Waterfall** (2014, left) is an homage to weaver Anni Albers. Made of linen paper, the work imagines a collaboration between Anni and Josef Albers, her color-theorist husband.

A Graham Greene short story about destruction as a form of creation is folded into **Deconstructors III** (2013, above right). But the story can't be read without destroying the sculpture.

The red **Linen Swirls** (2015, right) is one of a series that explores one of the oldest textiles in the world; linen dates back more than 4,000 years.



AS MATH AND SCIENCE SCHOLARS, Martin and Erik Demaine operate at the leading edge of technological innovation. As accomplished artist-craftsmen, father and son are also happily at home with time-honored materials and methods.

"It feels special to make things by hand. I also think technology expands the power of your hand," says Erik, 35, a professor of computer science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He's world-renowned for his research in computational origami – the study of algorithms for folding, a field rich in practical applications for engineering – as well as for the ways he explores his theorems in the form of sensuously curved, folded-paper sculptures. Martin, 74, is a

mathematician, computer scientist, and glassblower who works in tandem with his son as an artist-in-residence at MIT. [Read our in-depth profile of the duo in the August/September 2014 issue.]

"It's important for us to find a balance between technology and handwork. We use technology to develop ideas, but the actual process of making our forms and sculptures is all by hand. The way we make things is traditional," Martin explains. "But," Erik chimes in,

"we always try to make things that no one has made before."

Their ingenuity caught the attention of The Balvenie, maker of single-malt whisky, which joined with the American Craft Council to present the Demaines with the Rare Craft Fellowship Award, given annually in recognition of the "maintenance and revival of traditional or rare crafts in America." For Martin and Erik, the prize felt like a gratifying nod to the field of origami, a centuries-old craft enjoying a kind of renaissance



The Demaines printed paper for **Folding Error I** (2014, above). If you were to scan the unfolded QR code with your phone, Erik says, you'd get the title of the sculpture.

In **Art Through Words I** (2015, left), a piece from the Calligraphy series, English and Arabic scripts are intertwined.

as contemporary sculpture. This past spring, the two met the other finalists, coppersmith Stephen D. Bradway, beadworker Teri Greeves, ceramist David MacDonald, and bicycle builder Erik Noren. Judges for 2016 were lead juror Anthony Bourdain, chef and TV personality; Perry A. Price, former ACC education director; and David Stewart, longtime Balvenie malt master.

The Demaines plan a trip to the Scottish Highlands to spend several weeks at the famed

distillery – “the place where the magic happens,” as Erik puts it. Since 1893, Balvenie craftspeople have made their product by hand, a painstaking process involving locally grown malt, an old-fashioned malting floor, stills maintained by a resident coppersmith, and coopers to look after the barrels. Malt master Stewart presides over the all-important aging of the whisky.

“For all the skill required to ensure consistency in The Balvenie, our malt master looks

forward to the future as much as to tradition: It’s he who pioneers new ways of bringing out the mysteries that hide within each drop,” according to the company’s website. That ethos resonates with the Demaines, who look forward to observing and meeting with The Balvenie team, maybe even partnering with them in some way.

“We always look for collaborations across disciplines,” says Erik. “Our hope would be to find something interesting to do together. We won’t know

what that is until we go there. We tend to improvise.” What they will find, no doubt, is affinity with makers like themselves, rooted in tradition and science, in pursuit of excellence.

“We’re curious and excited to see how it happens,” says Martin. “I think it’s going to be very natural and easy.”

✦
erikdemaine.org
martindemaine.org
us.thebalvenie.com
 Joyce Lovelace is American Craft’s contributing editor.

Enamel Re-emergent

STORY BY

Joyce Lovelace



BELOW LEFT: Sarah Perkins blends enameling and metalwork in *Seeded Container* (2003), a 4.5-inch-tall vessel intended “for use in some unknown ceremony,” the curators say.



The brilliantly colored veils Jamie Bennett saw on a visit to Istanbul inspired his *Chadour #18* (2002), with the artist adding a painterly touch.

FOR DECADES, ENAMEL WAS something of an underappreciated medium – at least compared with ceramics and glass, those other arts of the fire. Now, as a traveling exhibition illustrates, that’s all changing.

“Little Dreams in Glass and Metal: Enameling in America, 1920 to the Present” features 121 pieces by 94 makers who, in sometimes unorthodox ways, use enameling to create compelling works of art. The show runs through December at the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock after stops at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California, Fuller

Craft Museum in Massachusetts, and the Craft & Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles.

“The range and potential of the medium is as varied and rich as the imaginations of the artists,” says Harold B. Nelson, who, with Bernard N. Jazzar, co-curated “Little Dreams.” (The title was borrowed from the late Karl Drerup, a featured artist in the show who once used the term to describe his work.) The duo also co-authored the accompanying book, which highlights works from the collection of the Enamel Arts Foundation, the nonprofit organization they founded in 2007.

Layered depth, luminousness, opulent color – there’s no denying the uniquely seductive visual allure of enameling, the craft of fusing ground glass to metal at high temperatures in a kiln. What interests Jazzar and Nelson most, though, is how those qualities translate into artistic content. “What we’re trying to do is understand enameling as an art form, one that has rich layers of meaning, resonance, and profundity,” says Nelson. “While extraordinary craftsmanship is often involved, ultimately the finest work is not about that.”

The pieces in “Little Dreams” run the gamut: from small jewelry to large wall panels, brilliant colors to muted palettes, representational to abstract, highly refined to raw and gutsy, classic cloisonné to enamel combined with found objects. Young and emerging makers are represented along with mid-career masters and early pioneers. There are themes of nature, spirituality, and whimsy, but also edgy

takes on feminism, sexual identity, and other social concerns of today. “The emphasis is on content – the issues and ideas the artists wish to express,” says Jazzar. “The medium they happen to be expressing it in is enamel.”

The two scholars are based in Los Angeles, where Jazzar is curator of the Lynda and Stewart Resnick Collection, Nelson curator of American decorative arts at the Huntington Art Collections. They fell in love with enamel art more than 20 years ago, when they started spotting pieces in antique stores.

“We wanted to learn about this medium. We tried to find information on artists in books, but we couldn’t. There were lots of technical books, but no historical survey of the field,” Jazzar recalls.

Trained as art historians, they decided to do their own research. Over about eight years they traveled around the country, visiting museums and historical societies, artists,

Nature can “save” people, and in turn, people ought to protect the natural world. That’s the idea in **Gretchen Goss’** *Five Saves #5* (2009, detail).



relatives of deceased artists – any source for a piece of the puzzle. Their detective work was hands-on and meticulous: Once, to verify an artist’s date of death, they tracked down her gravestone in a cemetery.

“After a while, we had this vast amount of information,” Nelson says. “We felt something needed to be done to put it out there.” The result, in

2007, was their first landmark exhibition and book on the subject, *Painting with Fire: Masters of Enameling in America, 1930-1980*, which examined in depth the work of 15 seminal artists (all of whom reappear in “Little Dreams”) during an era of great popularity for the craft. The book explained how, by the 1970s, that very popularity had undermined the medium, as it came to be seen as a hobby rather than serious contemporary art.

“Renaissance” may be an overstatement, but the field since then is vibrant once again, and museums, collectors, and critics are taking note, according to

A traveling exhibition spotlights the possibilities of an often overlooked medium.

Jazzar and Nelson. “We champion this field because we feel it hasn’t been given its due. Ultimately we’d love to see enameling – and all the craft media – fully integrated into the life of institutions and collections,” says Nelson.

Having mined the past, they’re now looking to the future. As Jazzar says, “This has also been the story of our evolution. We started with the historical material, and now we’re moving into current work.” Nelson adds, “Our goal as a foundation is to raise public awareness of enameling, especially for young artists

RIGHT: The color and forms of **June Schwarcz’s** *Vessel #2193 “Dancer”* (2001) change as the viewer rotates the copper foil piece.



BELOW: *Manjusri #1* (1998) by **Harlan Butt** is named for a *bodhisattva* (in Buddhism, an enlightened being). The puzzle-piece pattern is one of the visual metaphors the artist often uses; here, it exemplifies a complexity that is both beautiful and distracting.



and creative individuals who are looking for avenues to express themselves.”

They note that the field is wonderfully intergenerational – a supportive network of artists of all ages. The epitome of the master who embraces the new was their close friend June Schwarcz, the endlessly innovative grande dame of enameling, who died in 2015 at the age of 97. “She was so nurturing and encouraging of emerging artists,” says Nelson. Adds Jazzar, “She was a model of what an artist is. She used this medium in so many different ways.”

MATERIAL MATTERS

Jazzar and Nelson have become the foremost experts on modern and contemporary enameling, recognized in the enameling community as tireless, passionate advocates. For them, it’s been simply a labor of love.

“Our hope is that, through all of our combined efforts, we will make a difference in this field, that more people will become aware of the amazing potential of enameling,” Nelson says.

+ enamelarts.org
“Little Dreams in Glass and Metal” opens October 7 at the *Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock*.



PROMOTION

Your right brain is calling.

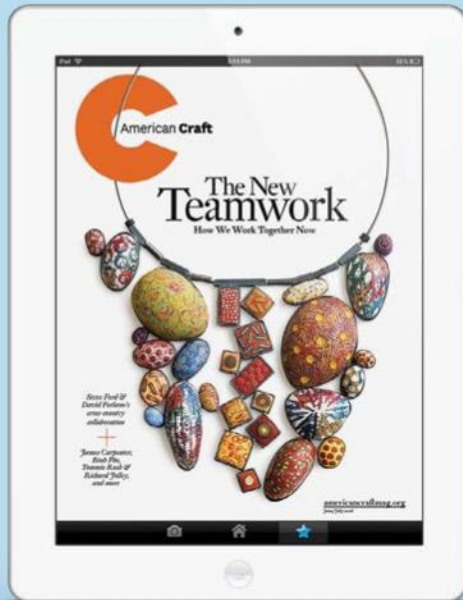
Are you listening? Join the American Craft Council, support fine craft artists, and receive a year (six issues) of the award-winning *American Craft* magazine for just \$40. **Join now!**



Photo: Kristy Kun, latest winner of our #YourRightBrainsCalling challenge on Instagram

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Take us
with you

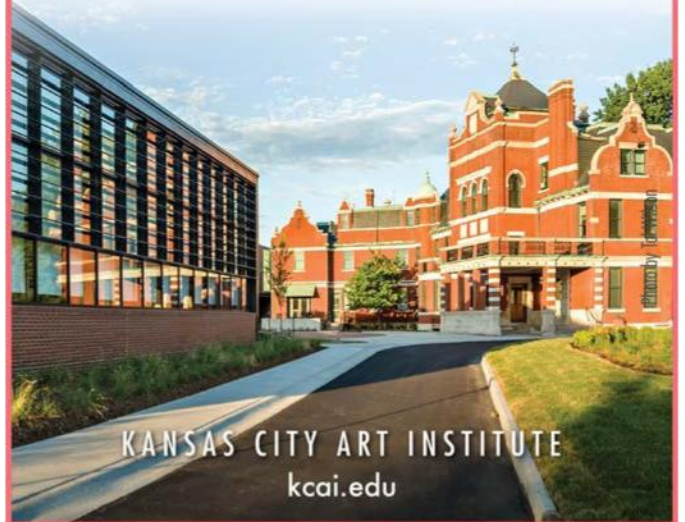


KCAI CONGRATULATES THESE FELLOWS & AWARD RECIPIENTS

Nick Cave ('82 fiber)

Christopher S. Gustin ('75 ceramics)

Sara S. Morgan (former KCAI Trustee)



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PROMOTION



American **Craft** Council

2016
American
Craft
Council
Awards

MASTERS



Join us October 14 in Omaha, Nebraska, to celebrate the winners of the ACC Awards.

Gerhardt Knodel, Gold Medalist

*Sara S. Morgan, Aileen Osborn Webb Award
for Philanthropy*

CERF+, Award of Distinction

Hank Murta Adams, Fellow

Nick Cave, Fellow

Edward S. Cooke, Honorary Fellow

Michael Cooper, Fellow

Françoise Grossen, Fellow

Cbris Gustin, Fellow

Myra Mimlitsch-Gray, Fellow

**Tickets on sale at
bit.ly/2016ACCawards**

2016
*American
Craft
Council
Awards*

MASTERS

THE AVERAGE TENURE AT A JOB TODAY IS around four-and-a-half years. For younger generations, it's even less. We have become a nation of rolling stones, skilled at reinvention – and shy on long-term commitment. The artists, scholars, and craft advocates profiled on the following pages, however, are exceptions.

Each has devoted decades to their cause: to making art, to the pursuit of knowledge, to building an infrastructure



Courtesy of the artist

to help the craft community thrive. They've made breakthroughs and mistakes. They've had successes and setbacks. And earlier this year, when we crisscrossed the country to interview these individuals, the winners of the 2016 American Craft Council Awards, a theme emerged – a kind of humility that becomes visible only in time. It's the recognition that every accomplishment merely sets the stage for the next challenge, that every lesson learned reveals how much more there is to know.

No matter where you are on your path – or how long you plan to stay on it – we know you'll find wisdom in their words and their work. And we hope you'll join us this October when we celebrate these remarkable honorees in Omaha, Nebraska, in conjunction with "Present Tense," ACC's first national conference in seven years. We've planned three days of unscripted, free-flowing conversation, and if our 2016 honorees are any indication, there will be inspiration and insight to spare.

~THE EDITORS

The ACC Awards

Since 1975, ACC has inducted 302 individuals into its College of Fellows, honoring those who have demonstrated outstanding achievement for more than 25 years. We celebrate them along with our Gold Medalist, a career-crowning honor reserved for a previously elected Fellow, and the winners of the Aileen Osborn Webb Award for Philanthropy and the Award of Distinction.

Since the inception of the College, new members have been elected by their peers – the preceding Fellows, whose ranks include Lenore Tawney, Sam Maloof, and Betty Woodman. It is a profound form of recognition to be honored by those who have walked the same road.

The ACC Library establishes a file for each honoree's work, archiving images, interviews, exhibition catalogues, and other documents and ephemera. Dig into these resources online through the digital collections. craftcouncil.org/library

Studio Sessions

Marvel at Gold Medalist Gerhardt Knodel's spacious studio, see the wondrous workings of Michael Cooper's creations, and peek inside Yale's Furniture Study with Honorary Fellow Edward S. Cooke Jr. This summer, *American Craft* editors hit the road and visited all of the 2016 ACC Award winners. Find the exclusive videos online. craftcouncil.org/magazine

Gerhardt Knodel has never stopped pushing the limits of his medium. The mixed-media *Destiny 2* (2015) is one of his folding books.



GERHARDT KNODEL

Gold Medalist

WHEN YOU COME UPON Gerhardt Knodel, cutting scallop shapes out of thick fabric in his cavernous studio near Detroit, he is alone – and supremely happy.

“Every day it’s a pleasure to come to the studio, to open the door, to get back to work,” he says. Many days he doesn’t even turn on the radio; he doesn’t want the distraction. “The life is here,” he says. “This is fabulous.”

Seeing him absorbed in his latest body of work, which draws inspiration from a centuries-old scrap of patterned cloth, you might decide that Knodel, one of the most accomplished fiber artists of our time, is especially self-reliant and self-possessed. You might think, “Here’s a guy who’s thrilled to be retired from Cranbrook Academy of Art,” where he was director for 12 of the 37 years he worked there.

But Knodel is not some solitary virtuoso shutting out the world. His fulfillment – as an artist, as a teacher – has always come through connection with other people. Neither star nor recluse, at his core he’s an



Gerhardt Knodel has made mammoth works for most of his career. In the past decade, though, as a full-time artist for the first time in his adult

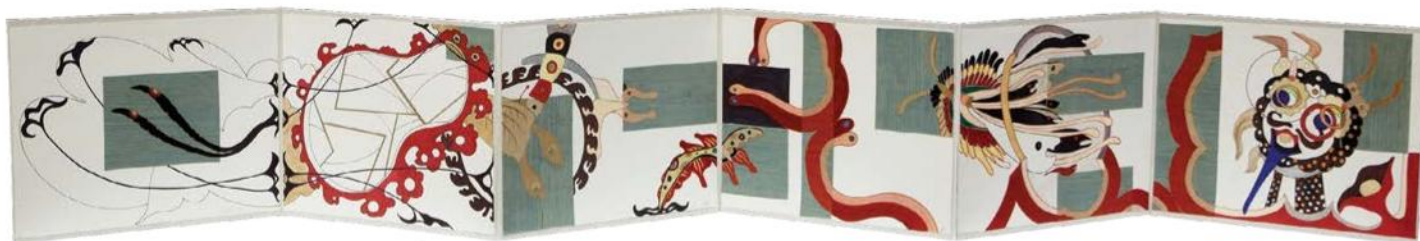
life, he’s been intrigued by smaller forms such as **Regeneration #5** (2016, above) and the 6-foot-wide **Destiny 1** (2015, below).

ensemble player. As a teenager, he relished working with his art teachers to decorate the gym for dances and the auditorium for theater productions, discovering the power of textiles to transform a space for a crowd. As a young high school teacher, he loved interacting with kids. “Bam! That was it,” he remembers. “It was so exciting to have 150 students coming into my room every day.”

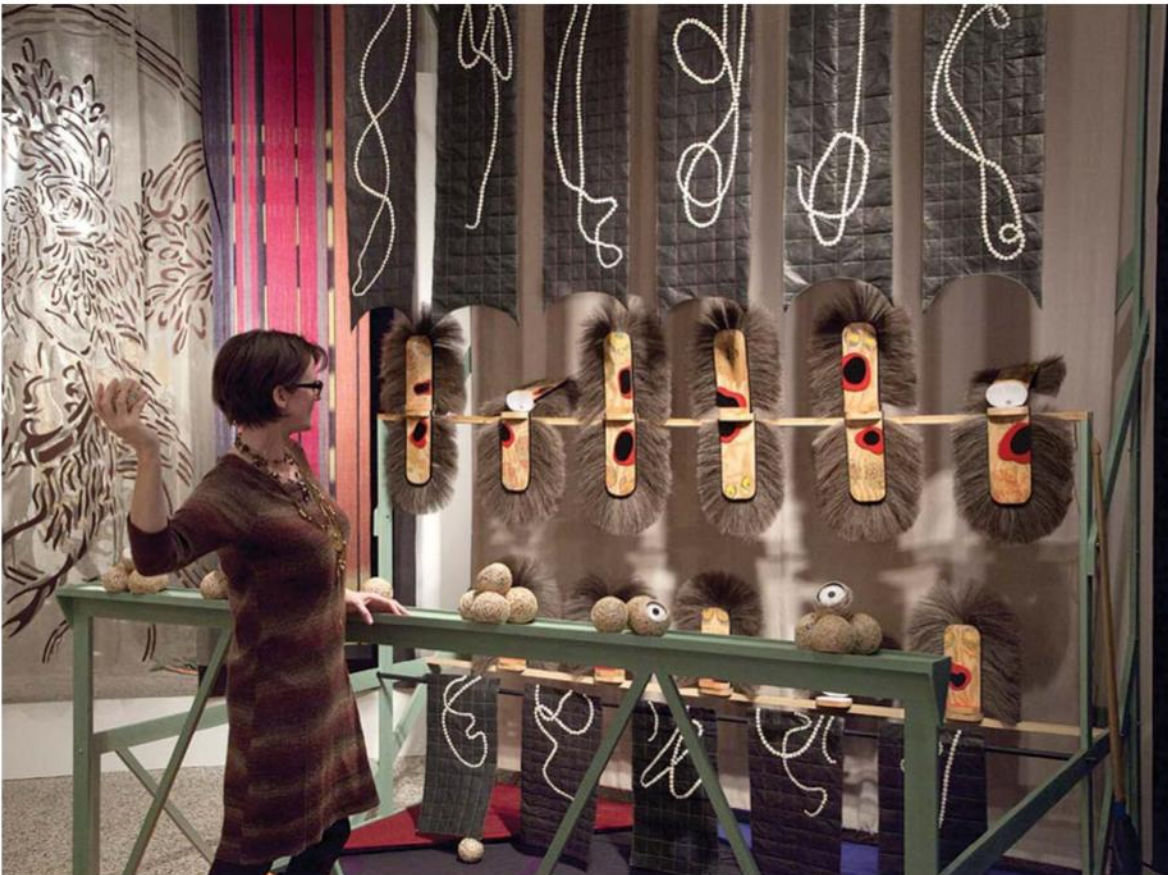
What he recalls most fondly of a six-week weaving workshop at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in 1967 were the deep bonds that formed between the students as they worked, passionately, around the clock. Before they parted, they sat in a big circle, sipping wine and reflecting. Fifty years later, he still savors “the pleasure of being part of a communal experience of making,” the memory of being in that intense creative circle.

Of course, other people are complicated; they don’t always offer cozy fellowship. Sometimes they challenge your perspective – which Knodel also values. He recalls, as a UCLA undergrad

RIGHT: Named to the College of Fellows in 1993, Knodel has balanced art and education at Cranbrook Academy of Art since 1970. He was the school’s director for 12 years, retiring in 2007.







LEFT:
Whoosh (2011), inspired by carnival games, examines the influence of art critics. The viewer is invited to toss balls containing text from *Art in America* at wooden heads representing critics evaluating the textile panels that hang above and below. The work reflects Knodel's conviction that viewers must reach their own conclusions about artwork.

RIGHT (TOP):
Act 8 (1974), 14 feet deep, uses resist-dyed silk, nylon cord, and steel cable supports.

RIGHT (BOTTOM):
In **Things That Get Caught in Trees After a Storm** (2016, one of six 29-inch panels), Knodel used fabrics manufactured in China to elaborate on textiles that had significance for other people at other times. The work incorporates photography of a historical textile, a new approach for the artist.

and a classically trained potter, watching students of Peter Voukos manhandle lumps of clay at the wheel in Berkeley – and feeling baffled and amazed. “That was really the first time that I had felt such a major contradiction to something that I had learned,” he says. He returned to UCLA convinced something was missing in his education.

When he settled in at Cranbrook in his 30s, he treasured the honest camaraderie, the give-and-take with other faculty leaders, who are artists in residence. They would come together, show their work, he recalls, “and engage in criticism very openly, with a kind of trusting relationship that was based on respect for the differences among us.” He

relied on that feedback and grew because of it.

Today, though he is working by himself, in a sense he still feels part of a community. Tapping into his vast store of historical textiles, he’s using them as reference points for his own ever-evolving work. As he cuts a piece of mass-produced fabric and arranges it in an assemblage, he’s thinking about the people

who’ve gone before. “It’s so interesting that historically, a good part of the world’s population was invested in textile-making,” he says. “It was the preoccupation of 90 percent of human beings.” Here, in his studio, surrounded by “bits and pieces of attention of people from other times and places,” Knodel is hardly alone. And he enjoys the company.



LEFT:
Calvino's Curtain: Invitation to a Future (2014) incorporates a loose narrative inspired by a 1957 Italo Calvino novel. Made of materials including polyester and Mylar, the 10-by-40-foot curtain expands to more than 100 feet wide.

RIGHT:
 Knodel aimed to "counteract the hard and efficient surfaces" of health care with **The Echo of Flora Exotica** (2005). The work, 42 feet tall, is installed at William Beaumont Hospital near Detroit.



Suspicion No. 1:
 "I am really suspicious about so many young artists outsourcing their work. I talk to graduate students in many parts of the country who simply will say: 'No, I didn't make it. I designed this piece of sculpture and I farmed it out to someone else.' We're getting to the point where we don't even ask the question about the making."

Suspicion No. 2:
 "I'm very suspicious about artists who establish a look to their work and then become slaves to their success. And the work becomes only repetitive. ... Living in this very exciting world of change that we're in, how can one drag along one's past to the degree that so many people do?"

The limits of intention:
 "We all live with our fingers crossed as we make things. We all hope that our ideas are leading in the right direction. But the interesting thing in art is that it's a by-product of intention. One doesn't intend to make great art."

You reap, you sow:
 "The degree to which one commits, as a dancer or a musician or a craftsman, to learn the basics is the degree to which one creates a platform for ultimately discovering art."

The Pontiac Curtain (1982) uses cotton twill tape painted and printed with dyes before weaving. Knodel was inspired to reimagine historical figurative tapestries by a scene at an Italian cathedral and the struggles of the Rustbelt city of Pontiac, Michigan, where the artist has his studio.

MYRA Fellow MIMLITSCH-GRAY



Split Slab (2012), of sterling silver, is a sculptural piece, but like many of the artist's works, has a curious air of functionality.

MYRA MIMLITSCH-GRAY IS WELL equipped and well trained. But of all of her tools, her ability to learn may be the most powerful. What has been most influential in the 30-year career of the upstate New York metalsmith is her willingness to embrace the ambiguity – the awkwardness, the anxiety, the reach into the unknown – that accompanies learning. Again and again, she has channeled that uncertainty into new, potent bodies of work.

Mimlitsch-Gray learned metal-smithing in high school and college, focusing on jewelry. It was a revelation. “I knew that I had discovered a passion for this material,” she says, “and that it was never going to leave me.”

Early on, though, while holding fast to her material passion, she changed her output. Urged on by professors who saw her considering the road less taken, she shifted to making hollowware. She became entranced by the social, functional connotations of trays, vessels, and other objects. “I am really motivated by metal-smithing and the objects that I associate with that,” she says – “objects for the table; objects of utilitarian function; ceremonial objects; things that might occupy the table, the sideboard, the mantel.”

In 2007, she engaged in another shift – this one way outside her comfort zone. She became an artist in residence at the Kohler Co. in Wisconsin, best known for its porcelain kitchen and bath components and plumbing fixtures; there she cast iron and brass among the factory workers, whose process was “very rigorous, linear, specific, and meticulous,” she says.

It was just the disruption she needed. “I had really run aground,” she says; her mastery of hollowware had become a crutch. “I really needed to find a new way of working, to put myself in the position of a novice.” When she returned to her own studio, she had to reacquire herself with old techniques – which led to yet another body of work. “I found myself back in my own studio – my own little studio with my own little tools and my own thin little metal.” She began making loops of metal, forming them as if they were fabric, shifting her perspective from table to wall.



Mimlitsch-Gray has been making her wall works, which appear to drape like fabric, since 2007.

Lately, she's changed her practice again, experimenting with vitreous porcelain enamel on steel. She's immersed in a new material and a new approach – along with a new openness to serendipity. “I'm learning to celebrate the incidental aspects that come out of the kiln,” she says.

Many artists seek mastery; then, when they arrive at that point, hold on tight. Mimlitsch-Gray searches for ways to be a newbie, a novice, a beginner. “I reach this point of knowing too much,” she says, “and then I need to un-know.”



Decanters (1990) is among her many works that refer to the domestic realm.



There's both pathos and wit in Mimlitsch-Gray's **Candelabrum, Seven Fragments** (2002 – 03).

Day job: When she's not in the studio, Mimlitsch-Gray directs the metal program at SUNY New Paltz.

From a young age: Mimlitsch-Gray can't remember a time when she wasn't making. She remembers poking pins in her dolls' ears to attach earrings, for example. “The crafts were always in me.”

Sensory joy: When she was about 12, her parents got a house plan from *Mother Earth News* and set about building an A-frame in the woods of northern Pennsylvania. Her job was straightening nails for reuse. “I enjoyed the repetition of it, the weight of the hammer, the sound of the nails in the can, the accumulated density of that mass of nails.”

The look of function: Her primary gallerist, Sienna Patti, says people often point to a Mimlitsch-Gray work and ask her, “What it is for?” “There's something inherently present in a metal object that suggests that it's game for something,” says the metalsmith.



Career highlights:

Cooper had his first major solo show at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco in 1977. In 2013, a traveling retrospective organized by the city's Museum of Craft and Design, titled "Michael Cooper: A Sculptural Odyssey, 1968 – 2011," bookended that accomplishment.

On craftsmanship:

In 1979, Cooper and his wife, Gayle, took a cross-country trip, visiting schools with wood programs with a focus on furniture or sculpture. "I realized I related much more to craftsmen," Cooper says. "We were in tune with the same sorts of concerns, I guess, from a craft point of view, from a making point of view – and using the tools. I respect tools. I love tools."

On beginning:

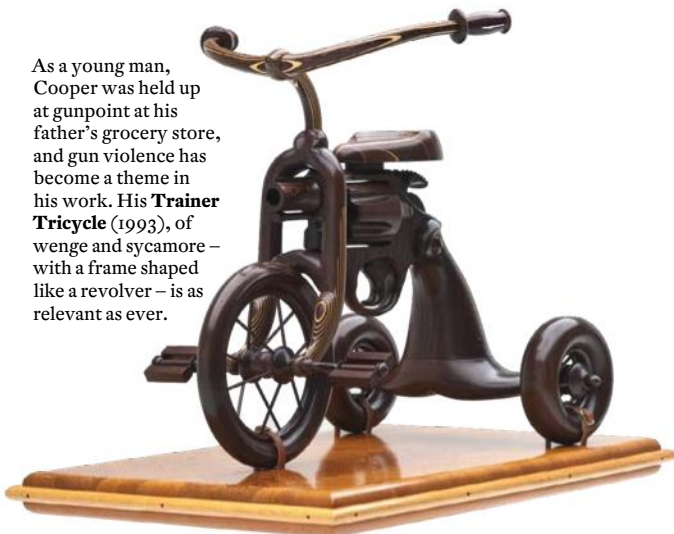
"Early on, you're trying to learn who you are. You've got to find out who you are – what you are about, what makes you different, and what seems real and honest from your point of view."

Making it:

"Success is: I can come into the studio and feel confident that I'm where I ought to be. I'm doing what I should be doing. I'm using the materials. And I've got the skills and I've still got the interest to explore."



As a young man, Cooper was held up at gunpoint at his father's grocery store, and gun violence has become a theme in his work. His **Trainer Tricycle** (1993), of wenge and sycamore – with a frame shaped like a revolver – is as relevant as ever.



RIGHT: A high-performance version of an earlier piece using an Adirondack chair, **Modified** (2010) has pneumatics to raise or lower the seat 6 inches. The lower position is for riding; the higher is "cocktail position."



MICHAEL Fellow COOPER

SOME ARTISTS TRACE THEIR path to childhood; they talk of growing up surrounded by fine-art influences. Not Michael Cooper. “I grew up in a small town,” he says, “and that just wasn’t part of our daily life.” What he did have – in spades – was exposure to craft, learning to work wood at his grandfather’s cabinetmaking shop. Perhaps it freed him; Cooper is among the most distinctive, imaginative sculptors of his generation.

Sculpture clicked for him in the late 1960s. He’d just earned a degree in commercial art from San Jose State when Fletcher Benton joined the faculty. The rising star had work in “American Sculpture of the Sixties” at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and a friend loaned Cooper the airfare. The variety, the craftsmanship: “It captured your imagination in ways that you couldn’t even predict,” he

recalls. He knew it, right then. “That’s what I want to do.”

Cooper stayed at San Jose, earning an MA in sculpture, and went on to an MFA at the University of California, Berkeley. “I really had no idea how I was going to make a living,” he says wryly. “And thank God, it all worked out.”

It’s easy to get lost in the fantastical nature of his work: *How the West Was Won, How the West Was Lost* (1977 – 2011) is a giant kinetic sculpture, featuring an oversized boot and oil derrick. Or their poignancy: *Trainer Tricycle* (1993) reimagines the vehicle’s frame as a revolver. Impeccably crafted, they appear to have sprung directly from his imagination; that Cooper also *makes* these objects, moving fluidly among mediums, as much engineer and architect as artist, boggles the mind.

Cooper is more modest. “The thing about making is this is my way of communicating. I don’t think of myself as a speaker. I don’t think of myself as skilled in any other way. This is my area to be real and contribute.”

“A contemporary approach to a reclining chair,” *Ride* (2008) has eight motors that help provide lift to the pneumatically controlled hopping legs. Fired up, it has an “unbelievable sound,” Cooper says.



ABOVE: Cooper’s latest piece is a six-wheeled vehicle powered by 1910-reproduction Harley Davidson motors, with a chassis of triangulated steel and a body of

laminated oak, recalling his 1975 *Soap Box Racer*. It’s been in the works for more than two years. “There’s nothing I do that happens in a day,” he says cheerfully.



Soap Box Racer made its debut at SFMOMA’s 1975 Soap Box Derby. The following year, it was selected for the legendary “California Design” biennial.



NICK CAVE

Fellow

THERE'S A TURNING POINT IN Nick Cave's career, and it's not on any CV. It didn't happen in the 1980s, when he studied at the Kansas City Art Institute or Cranbrook Academy of Art. It wasn't when, devastated by the Rodney King beating, he made his first Soundsuit out of twigs in 1992. It happened just 13 years ago, after he'd already made dozens of his signature wearable, life-size sculptures.

"I was showing, I was doing things, I was making things," he recalls, somehow, though, he was holding back. Then, one day in 2003, "I just woke up, and something said: Now

or never." The Chicago artist knew he had to make a decision – to commit to being an artist.

Before that moment, Cave says, he'd been waiting, hedging. He hadn't really acknowledged the fear, the risk, that artistic life entails. "I was dodging it," he recalls. "The moment that I decided to step into it, that's when my life changed." He signed up with Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. "The path started to open up and get real clear," he recalls. The gallery presented his first solo show in 2006.

Eight years ago, he made another decision – to expand his focus. He'd committed to following his path wherever it led, and he asked himself: What does it mean to keep evolving? Pondering the answer led him to collaborative, costumed performances that emphasize movement, community, and social change.

Heard · NY (2013), performed twice daily for a week at Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan, was a highlight. Cave worked

with a choreographer, a handful of musicians, and 60 Alvin Ailey dancers to create the performance in a space designed for something else entirely. He loved the comings and goings of the viewers; "you have a performance at 11 o'clock. Then you flush this entire audience out, and there's a new audience," he says.

Earlier this year, working with four social-service agencies in Shreveport, Louisiana, he orchestrated *As Is*. Some of the performers had disabilities; others were coping with domestic violence or HIV. It was "a very humbling experience," he says, "probably the most profound project" to date.

Opening in October may be his most ambitious project – a football-field-size installation at MASS MoCA in northwestern Massachusetts, incorporating dancers, singers, and poets.

"There's so much amazing talent all over this country," he says. Harnessing talent, and shaping it into a community with a mission, is his joy.

Mentor: At Cranbrook, Gerhardt Knodel (page 48) taught Cave to come at his work with conviction: "He taught me how to trust myself."

A disappointment: His latest solo show in New York, "Made for Whites by Whites." At a flea market, he'd found a "little bitty amazing black bust" – horrifically labeled "spittoon" – and proceeded to develop a body of work around the "most vulgar artifacts" he could find. But some reviews didn't fully appreciate the kitschy, racist legacy that was his point.

Day job: He leads the graduate program in fashion, body, and garment at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The question he poses to students: "How does the body become the vehicle, the instigator?"

After hours: During the day, he's with students or his studio staff. But in the evenings, in the studio until midnight, "there is a large chunk of time where it is just silent, and I am just making. And that's the time when I'm clear. And that's when I'm dreaming."



ABOVE: For *Heard · NY* (2013), Cave collaborated with dancers from the Ailey School to create performances at Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan. Dancers were dressed in vivid raffia horse costumes, and their dreamlike performances evolved over the course of a week.

RIGHT: Cave made *TM13* (2014) to honor Trayvon Martin, the unarmed teenager killed in Florida. The work is one of a series on the vulnerability of young black men.



Part sculpture, part performance, Cave's *Soundsuits*, such as this button-crusted 2015 work, are designed to cloak race and gender, and generate sound and movement – a nod to his training with choreographer Alvin Ailey.

Fellow

FRANÇOISE GROSSEN

THREE DISCOVERIES HAVE been pivotal in Françoise Grossen's career as a fiber artist.

The first happened in 1964. The Swiss-born Grossen was a 21-year-old student of textile design at the School of Arts and Crafts in Basel when she saw a small show in Zurich featuring the work of Lenore Tawney, Claire Zeisler, and Sheila Hicks.

It was a revelation. "It really seduced me," she recalls. The Americans' work was so striking to her, so exciting, that she decided to pick up and move to

the United States. "I had this image that it was happening here," says the artist, who now lives in Manhattan, "and that's when I started to really be in love with the whole field."

Enthralled, she headed to UCLA to study with Bernard Kester. But there were barriers. "I was a poor student coming from Switzerland" – with no car and no material. Kester "arranged everything," she says. "He took his car and took me to San Pedro to find some rope. And that was really an image of a professor that I didn't have in

Switzerland," she says. That was her second discovery: An artist doesn't have to do everything herself. Others can help.

An early work, *Swan* (1967), appeared in the landmark 1969 MoMA exhibition "Wall Hangings." Then Grossen became one of the fiber revolutionaries of the 1970s and '80s who broke with tapestry traditions, took fiber off the wall, and made it sculptural.

Which led to her third discovery: You never know when there will be a renaissance. Lately, Grossen's work has

been rediscovered. Curator Jenelle Porter included the groundbreaking *Inchworm I* (1971) in the 2014 traveling exhibition "Fiber: Sculpture 1960 to the Present." Last year, Grossen had her first US retrospective at New York gallery Blum & Poe. And *Five Rivers* (1974) appeared in "Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947 – 2016," which just closed at Hauser, Wirth & Schimmel in LA.

"All of this is a wonderful treat," she says, "and has made life really beautiful."



TOP: The vibrant **Contact III** (1977), 30 feet wide, was one of Grossen's works of the era that put textiles front and center in the gallery space.

BOTTOM: Grossen not only took fiber off the wall; in the case of **Inchworm I** (1971), she put it on the floor.



Five Rivers (1974) is almost 9 feet tall. Most recently, the piece appeared in the Los Angeles show "Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947 – 2016."



ABOVE: Made of sisal, **Swan** (1967) was part of the landmark 1969 MoMA show "Wall Hangings," the museum's first major exhibition of weaving as art.

Inchworm, Contact photos: Courtesy of the artist / Rteers photo: Genevieve Hanson, courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe



First job: Working for legendary textile designer Jack Lenor Larsen, whom she still admires for his unquenchable curiosity. “He’s always looking for new cultures, for new ways of approaching the material.”

New skills: Grossen exercised different muscles when she did enormous architectural commissions in the ’70s. “I had to present a model to convince a group of people that this is what they wanted for the building. And once they approved, I had to stick with the project, even if I had better ideas along the way,” she says. “This was a great discipline.”

Struggles: The ’80s and ’90s were a challenge. Her husband’s son died. Her husband died. The AIDS epidemic was peaking and seemed to hit fiber galleries especially hard; some closed. “Maybe I did a few less pieces,” she says, “but I learned a lot of other things.”

Her view of success: “For some, it’s to be on the cover of a magazine, and maybe it is for most people for a while,” she says. For her? Success is “being able to do what you really like.”

Grossen is happy to see the recent resurgence of fiber art. “It’s a whole chain of events that made it possible. You can’t say it’s just that, or the other thing. It’s the climate,” she says.

HANK MURTA ADAMS

Fellow

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HANK Murta Adams, try out back at WheatonArts, where the artist has an Airstream parked near a brick patio strung with festive lights. Since 2003, he has been pouring his energy into this 65-acre arts complex in Millville, New Jersey, serving as its glass studio creative director. Under his watch, Wheaton has reimagined and expanded residencies, and produced innovative exhibitions – growing its influence and community.

“The downside about being part of a community: It needs, and it needs, and it needs,” Adams observes good-naturedly. But community has also always been part of his practice, a necessary counterbalance to the solitude of the creative process. It’s what initially drew Adams, studying painting at Rhode Island School of Design in the 1970s, into glass. Hungering for physicality and dimensionality, he’d already begun doing sculptural work. Glass offered more.

Dale Chihuly, who ran the program, had fostered “this incredible lore of community,” Adams recalls. “It was really about this familial learning – this community of learning.”

But while connections sustain Adams, his work embodies a fierce independence. Merely one example, his large-scale, figurative busts – kiln-cast, crusted with wire, pocked with debris – upended glass-making tradition (to say nothing of classical sculpture), establishing Adams early on as an open-minded risk taker, an innovator, and an unmistakably individual voice.

Recently, he lent that iconoclastic spirit to a major project at Wheaton: “Emanation: Art + Process” opened in May 2015 and ran through early January. It was the culmination of a yearlong invitational initiative, where 11 artists, including Mark Dion and Judy Pfaff, came to the campus, and conceived and created work with the staff. The Wheaton crew then fabricated, finished, culled, and installed the work. “It created a very different power structure,” Adams explains. Instead of a curator selecting pieces, artists were picked – and the work flowed out of the communal, on-site experience. “I think it’s very honest to what the institution is and has been doing,” Adams says proudly.

Adams is perhaps best known for his expressive figurative busts, such as **Dumbbell** (2003), of glass and copper.



Many mentors:

Before RISD and Chihuly, Adams studied with Claude Falcone – a Philadelphia-area high school teacher legendary for his rigorous approach to art and design. “He didn’t just change my life,” Adams says. “He changed many lives.”

On teaching:

“You have to serve your own curiosity. When I’ve been the best teacher is when I’ve learned alongside students.”

The long view:

When Adams came to Wheaton 12 years ago, he had to step back from a successful solo practice. He doesn’t see it as a trade-off. “I matured in my view of what creativity entails,” he says. “I came here to try to engage in a different way and give in a different way.”



LEFT: Adams made **Produce** (2010), which stretches for 32 feet, while his mother was dying of cancer. “It was my way of reconciling with her life process and mine.”

RIGHT: Adams’ **Bombcluster (black)** (2001) is both a response to and break from his figurative pieces, whose renown began to feel limiting. He likes making those pieces, he notes, “but that’s not the only thing I do.”





WHEATONARTS

CHRIS Fellow GUSTIN

FAMILIES SHAPE ALL OF US, but few can pinpoint the moments with as much clarity as Chris Gustin. The ceramic artist grew up around clay; his parents – creative, artistic people – owned whiteware factories in Los Angeles. Gustin was headed down that path when his older brother, Dan, intervened. He and his wife, Jane, were studying at Kansas City Art Institute; he urged Gustin to join them.

“He took me aside,” Gustin recalls. “And it was a really powerful thing, because he talked about choices in your life and how to make them,

how to invest in something you love. And he saw that I loved making pots.”

That gift brought him to KCAI during Ken Ferguson’s tenure – “a golden period,” says Gustin, of teachers, peers, and energy. He went on to Alfred University, where he earned an MFA in 1977. After graduation, as Gustin was struggling to establish himself as a studio potter (fielding one rejection after another), he found a fat envelope in his mailbox – another gift, of sorts. He’d won an NEA Fellowship. He walked back inside and cleared the boards. “It was like, OK: I’m going to make work for *me*. These people believe in me.”

Some 25 years later, Gustin’s family redirected him again, in a profoundly different way. By then, Gustin had a successful career by any measure. His expressive sculptural work had earned him a second NEA grant, among scores of other honors. He had taught for 20-plus

years, retiring in 1999 from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth (at a mere 47). Then, in the late 1990s, his younger brother began having health problems, and, in time, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

Gustin and his wife, artist Nancy Train Smith, began visiting him more often. Over a period of years, he and Gustin had conversations about how the disease was changing his life – and how to let go of who you once were with integrity.

“And my work started to just let go,” Gustin says. “Everything softened, everything quieted.” In 2005, his brother unexpectedly died, one month before Gustin was scheduled to have a show. Bereft, he glazed everything he had made for the show white. Today, he considers it his first mature body of work.

“All the pots I love, throughout history, were made from that place – of community need, of spiritual need,” Gustin says. “It was the gift he gave me.”

A light touch: Gustin began using his anagama kiln (right) – a single-chamber, wood-fired design – for almost all of his work in 2006. He was drawn to how glaze and wood ash interact, creating subtle color that moves over and around forms, and syncs with their gesture and softness.

Early adopter: “You know the schoolbook thing, where you say what you want to be when you grow up?” Gustin asks. “I said: Pottery man.”

Place of pride: Gustin is a co-founder of the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts. “We formed it on the idea that everybody’s equal,” he says. “Get some kid who’s in his third year of undergrad school and put him next to somebody who’s been working 40 years, see what happens. Sit around at night and talk, sit by a campfire. It’s community at its deepest.”

Full circle: In 1996, Gustin added a tile business to his repertoire. He was inspired by the tile that he and his wife Nancy made for their home – and bolstered by his long-ago experience as a foreman in his parents’ ceramics factories.

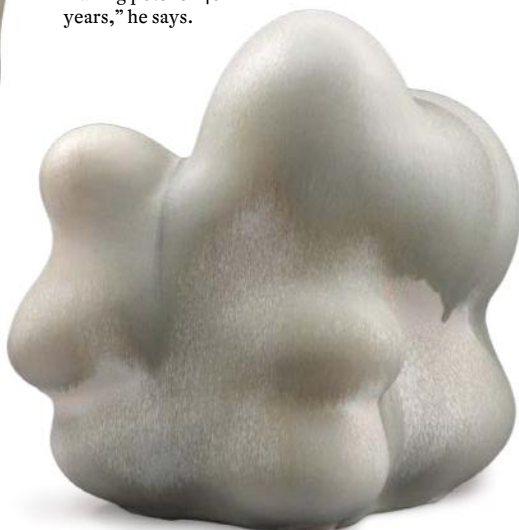
On vulnerability: Gustin made an active choice to talk about his brother’s death and how it changed his work. “One, it’s authentic, and it’s real, and it’s who I am. But the second [reason] is that a lot of times I’m talking to students, and I want them to understand that life is your source.”

LEFT:
Vessel with Dimple, #0511 (2005), nearly 4 feet tall, is from the White series, a 10-year investigation of large-scale, figurative form and emotion.

BELOW:
Cloud Series, #1612 (2016), is one of Gustin’s most recent pieces, representing a new body of work exploring pure form. “I couldn’t have made this piece without making pots for 40 years,” he says.



ABOVE:
Gustin’s roomy and picturesque studio in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts, was once an industrial chicken coop, which the artist bought in 1983.



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EDWARD S. COOKE JR.

Honorary Fellow

WHEN EDWARD S. COOKE JR. was writing his dissertation at Boston University, he realized he was eligible to take classes – so he signed up for a woodworking course with the Program in Artisanry. “Not something you always think about when you’re writing a dissertation,” he says with a smile.

But Cooke, who was studying rural artisanal cultures – pre-industrial cabinetmakers in Connecticut, to be specific – saw a bigger picture. “I had questions about the materials that I didn’t feel were being answered by a lot of scholars writing about it,” he recalls. His instructor was Thomas Hucker, who’d trained with a fifth-generation cabinetmaker. Their conversations were “incredibly important,” Cooke says, “to opening up what I could learn from contemporary makers in how we might look at the past in a totally different way.”

Today, as the Charles F. Montgomery Professor of American Decorative Arts at Yale, Cooke is a trailblazer; his approach to material culture blends the study of artifacts, social history, and the shop floor. Perhaps most distinctively, it begins with the object itself: “What I’m engaged with, more than anything else, is this idea of not object-centered scholarship – where you just zero down in on one object and sort of glorify it, talk about its aesthetic content – but how do you talk about object-driven inquiry?” Cooke explains. “What does it say about different moments in time? What does it tell us about the way people lived?”

A connoisseur, for example, might prize her ability to identify a piece of furniture, taking a kind of taxonomic approach. Cooke would be more likely to start from the inside, investigating the wood: What kind is it? How was it prepared? Slowly, he’d uncover its story. “Objects aren’t just static elements; they actually have a complex story in terms of their making. And then they have a complex story over their use or abuse over time.”

This approach has made him a nimble scholar, untethered to period or place. It has also made him an innovative educator. Among his proudest accomplishments is an art history survey course he developed. He was inspired by an urgent question: How do you break with the Western canon, which centers art history in Europe and privileges painting, sculpture, and architecture, without creating an artificial dichotomy?

The answer was literally in his hands. Focusing on rigorous looking – and touching – using ceramic, textile, metal, and wood objects from around the world allowed Cooke to break down the spurious separation between Euro-centric and non-Western art history, to offer many centers for the development of artistic production, and to overturn the hierarchy of mediums.

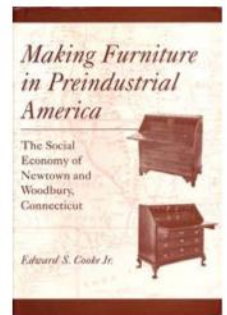
“It’s been liberating,” Cooke says. His own work, in turn, has become increasingly global and multidisciplinary in the past 10 years. “This has been, to me, the way in which you keep getting excited about what you do.”



LEFT: Cooke is an advocate for learning through experience. Here, he’s spindle turning on a treadle lathe at the Steppingstone Farm Museum in Maryland.

RIGHT: Cooke’s focus has become increasingly global in the past 10 years. In 2012, he traveled to Delhi with colleagues and grad students researching South Asian material and visual culture.

FAR RIGHT: Cooke’s approach of object-driven inquiry starts from the inside. Here, he discusses a Robert Prentzel chest with students in Australia.



On his CV: Cooke is a founding co-editor of the *Journal of Modern Craft*. He is also the author of three books, including *Making Furniture in Preindustrial America* and *New American Furniture: The Second Generation of Studio Furnituremakers*. His fourth is under way. The prolific scholar has also edited, authored, and co-authored numerous other publications.

Show and tell: Cooke's office is full of books (as one might expect), but there are also many objects. "To me, it's very symbolic," he says; he wants his students to understand that objects are another rich source of ideas. And he likes having them close at hand to bring to class.

Along the way: Cooke has an MA from the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture in addition to his PhD, and was a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for seven years before returning to Yale in 1992.

Full circle: The late Charles F. Montgomery was a mentor to Cooke, awakening his interest in decorative arts and material culture as an undergraduate at Yale. Being named the university's Charles F. Montgomery professor was a meaningful milestone.

Portrait: Chris Callis / Other photos: Courtesy of Edward S. Cooke Jr.



SARA S. MORGAN

Aileen Osborn Webb Award for Philanthropy

TODAY, HOUSTON IS A HOT SPOT for contemporary craft. In 1998, when Sara S. Morgan and her husband, Bill, first moved back to the city after living in Kansas City, that wasn't necessarily the case. "I was surprised," she recalls. "There was very little craft being shown."

At the time, her daughter, a new graduate of Kansas City Art Institute, was looking for studio space in Houston. Her search gave Morgan and her friend Ann Shaw Lancaster an idea – one that grew more ambitious by the moment: What if they could rally donors to

buy and renovate a building? What if they offered studio space for artists working not in a particular medium, but in an array of them? What if that cross-pollinating setup had an exhibition space, too, and a shop? And most presciently: What if it were a place where the public could come see artists at work, come experience the magic of making?

"We talked to artists, gallery owners, collectors – everybody seemed to think that this was a really great idea," Morgan says. Three years later, in September 2001, the cofounders opened the doors of the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft.

The center's – and thus Morgan's – impact on local, regional, and national contemporary craft cannot be underestimated. Morgan and Lancaster set the bar high from the start; for its opening show, HCCC brought in "Defining Craft 1"

organized by the American Craft Museum (now the Museum of Arts and Design).

Today, with its robust residency program, educational opportunities, and innovative exhibitions, the small-but-mighty HCCC is among an elite handful of organizations in the United States exclusively devoted to craft – playing an essential role in cultivating the next generation of makers and helping ensure that material culture continues to flourish.

For Morgan, who has taken a step back from day-to-day operations, but still serves on HCCC's board, it is – and always has been – a labor of love. "In past years, I've been more involved in social-service-type organizations, in policy organizations," she says. "And I have to say, as much as I got out of those, I had never experienced the pure joy of being involved in the arts."



LEFT: Metalsmith and recent resident Jera Rose Petal Lodge works in her HCCC studio. The center sponsors artists in a variety of mediums, for a wide exchange of ideas.



BOTTOM LEFT: Educational programs are a priority for HCCC. This handweaving demonstration took place during last year's Museum Experience Day, a free event hosted by Houston's arts organizations.

RIGHT (2): Co-founders Ann Shaw Lancaster and Sara Morgan (far right) needed real vision to take a rundown medical supply warehouse and imagine what it could become. Today, the HCCC's bright red façade is a landmark in the city and a national draw.



RIGHT: Morgan and her co-founder's earliest idea was more modest – but it quickly became clear that Houston would rally behind a venue for museum-quality craft.

Portrait: Robert Seale / Studio photo: Amanda Shackleford / Weaving and façade photos: Kim Coffman / Hard-hat photo: Courtesy of HCCC



Tireless advocate: Morgan has given her time to nonprofit, civic, and political organizations for more than 50 years. She currently serves on the board of the Houston Grand Opera and the Kinder Institute for Constitutional Democracy at the University of Missouri, and is a life trustee of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She is a past board member of the Children’s Museum of Houston, the American Craft Council, and Girls Inc., among other organizations.

Innovative vision: When HCCC opened, its design broke the mold, putting artists’ studios front and center—the first thing you see when you walk through its doors. “We wanted something different,” Morgan recalls, “an atmosphere where making was the important thing—and where people could come and witness that.”

Team effort: “Ann and I may have been the co-founders, but HCCC would definitely not have happened if it had not been for a lot of other people,” Morgan says firmly. “That old saying, ‘It takes a village’? It truly does. And this child has been raised very well by the village.”

Hometown pride: “It’s such a can-do city,” Morgan says of Houston. “If you’ve got a good idea, and you’re willing to work for it, you can do anything.”

CERF+ *Award of Distinction*

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?” At a recent disaster relief conference, an employee of the Red Cross asked Cornelia Carey, longtime executive director of the Craft Emergency Relief Fund, this very question.

Carey was ready to open their eyes. Artists have a “unique role in the ecology of disasters,” she explains. They’re highly vulnerable, because of the nature of their work. (For example, many are self-employed.) But they also “contribute tremendously to recovery.” From fundraising concerts and auctions to cultural institutions reopening, “the arts are what make a community feel good – or feel like there’s hope.”

That kind of sophisticated understanding of the big picture drives the work of the Vermont-based organization, better known as CERF+. And it has clearly also helped the 31-year-old national nonprofit remain as adaptable and resilient as the artists it supports. The organization was founded in 1985. The late craft show producer Carol Sedestrom Ross and Josh Simpson (a glass artist, and today an ACC trustee) took note of the

tradition of passing the hat for artists in need (who’d had a fire, perhaps, or an accident) and decided to institutionalize it. They raised \$40,000 – and in 1987 the newly minted Craft Emergency Relief Fund disbursed its first grant.

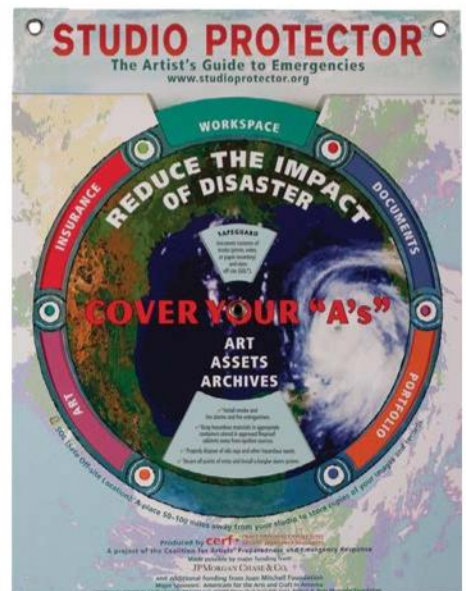
Since then, CERF+ has grown with its community – that little “+” in its name is a nod to an impressive array of work beyond emergency grants and loans. In 2009, CERF+ launched its Studio Protector, a first-of-its-kind guide to preparing for and responding to disasters. They have also invested heavily in educating artists about business insurance. (Nine-and-a-half times out of 10, Carey warns, homeowner’s insurance won’t cover what’s in the studio.) They work in policy, too; CERF+ has been leading a nationwide effort for a federal regulatory change so that self-employed people, including artists, can access an existing fund to replace work tools after a disaster.

As Carey puts it: “If we do the career-protection work really well, we’ll put our emergency-relief work out of business – which is the ultimate goal.”



LEFT: CERF+ executive director Cornelia Carey and then-director of programs Craig Nutt visit with New Orleans glass artist Mark Rosenbaum in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

RIGHT: Designed by artists, the Studio Protector wall guide makes “the dull details of emergency preparedness a little less tedious for creative types,” according to the CERF+ site. It’s a supplement to their robust studioprotector.org.



Portrait: Caleb Kemna / Fire photo: New Boston, NH, Fire Department



The long view: Hurricane Katrina was an aha moment for the organization, Carey says. “It became very clear that no amount of money we could ever raise was going to right somebody’s life when their home and studio had been reduced to a slab.” Emergency relief assistance has an important role to play, but it isn’t enough: “We had to invest significantly in helping artists build more resilient careers.”

Wherever the need: For the past four years, CERF+ has been working with art schools and professional development consultants to create a career-protection curriculum. On the other end of the spectrum, they’ve also been adapting their work to reflect the aging of many artists – adding the idea of planning for a legacy to career protection. It’s about “looking out and understanding what the needs are and how we can be responsive,” Carey says.

A meaningful milestone: Last year, CERF+ celebrated its 30th anniversary and concluded its first major gifts campaign, which raised nearly \$2 million. The endowment has allowed the organization to increase grants to \$6,000 and boost no-interest loans to \$9,000.

Deep roots: There are organizations like CERF+ in the fine arts world, but they’re largely funded by endowments from wealthy artists. CERF+ is an outlier – created by a community, for the community. “I think it keeps us integral to the community but also answerable to the community,” Carey says. “When an artist comes up and thanks me for the work we do, I say, really, we wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for you.”



In 2010, Jon Brooks’ wife woke him in the night: His studio was burning. It was a crushing loss – of artwork, tools, raw materials, and a custom structure the New Hampshire artist had built himself and



worked in for 40 years. CERF+ arrived the next day with a check. The outpouring of support helped Brooks recover from a loss that insurance wouldn’t cover. Within a month, work on a new studio had begun.

ABOVE: Carey (with her daughter, Addie, seated in front of her) recently hosted a CERF+ staff and board retreat at her Vermont farm.

Read. Roar. Repeat.

75 years

How our readers – delighted, dismayed, or disgusted – helped shape the craft field with their letters.

ESSAY BY *Monica Moses*

SIRS:

Each issue gives me great pleasure and information. Such a publication was badly needed, and I congratulate you on the standards you maintain.

RAY FAULKNER

*Head, Dept. of Art & Architecture
Stanford University, Calif.*

SIRS:

Every issue of Craft Horizons is interesting and informative, however controversial the subject matter. As often as I may seethe with indignation at something I particularly dislike, there is always something else of extraordinary interest to make up for it.

MRS. L.B. GRIMES

San Francisco, Calif.

SIRS:

Would you please cancel my subscription. When the level of your publication will rise again to an interesting magazine, I shall subscribe again.

M. WILDENHAIN

Guerneville, Calif.

The letters at left appear in the September/October 1958 issue of *Craft Horizons*, forerunner of *American Craft*. On one tidy page, you can see the diverging opinions that editors deal with – a pleased reader, another who alternates between contentment and seething indignation, and one who’s had her fill. (And not just anyone, but legendary ceramist Marguerite Wildenhain.) Who knows how Conrad Brown, the editor at the time, made sense of it?

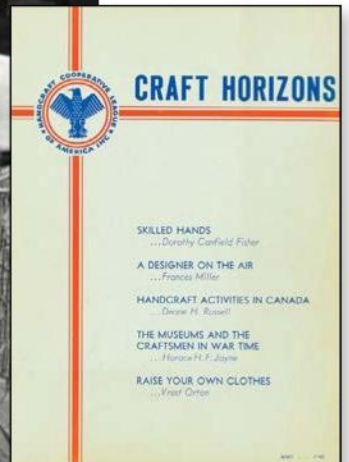
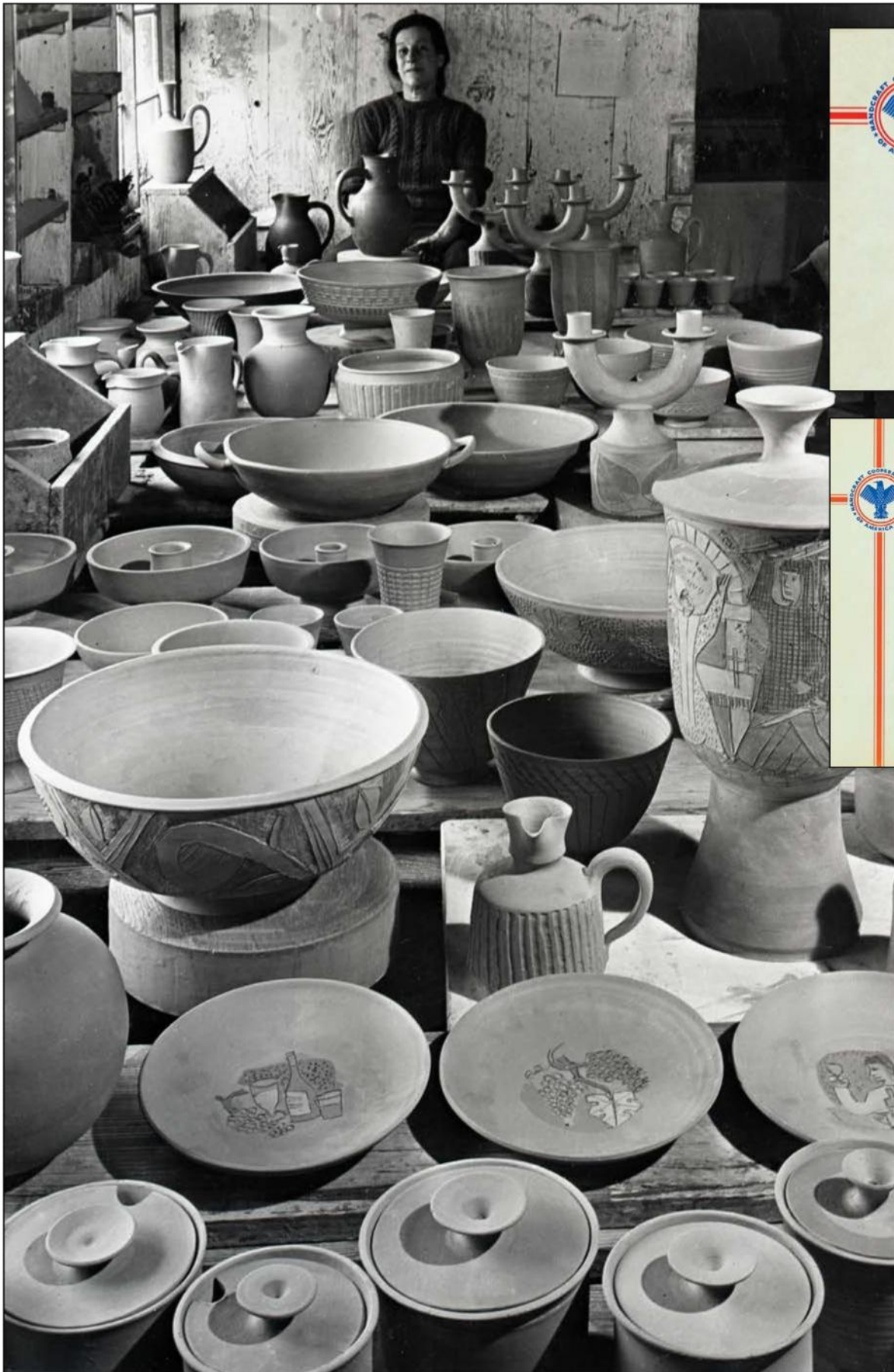
You see a lot of curious discord when you review 75 years of letters to the editor.

You also see the amazing, sometimes hilarious, evolution of American expression. Over the years, formally worded missives (does anyone say “missive” anymore?) give way to casual Facebook kudos and gripes. Terms like “groovy” and “far out” sneak into letters in the 1960s. By the time of the 2007 *American Craft* redesign, comments are blunt and unsparing, perhaps mirroring the no-holds-barred communication on the web today.

But the disagreements you see in 75 years of letters to the editor of the American Craft Council’s magazine, whether decorous or rancorous, tell a bigger story. Readers take issue – with the magazine’s writers, with other readers –

as a way of coming to terms. As they reacted to articles and images, as well as to developments in what became the 20th century’s “craft field,” they had an implicit goal: hashing out the essence of craft.

Specifically, they were debating the relationship between craft and art. As they responded to stories that reflected the impingement of modern and postmodern art on craft, between the lines, they were posing questions: Should craft stay true to its traditional functional roots? If it doesn’t, is it still craft? Should craft emulate art (itself a nebulous, ever-changing field)? What does it take to be recognized by the art world? Is that even a worthwhile goal? And later: Craftsmanship and skill don’t matter to art; do they still matter to craft?



ABOVE:
The magazine was first published as a nameless newsletter by the Handcraft Cooperative League of America in November 1941. The second issue, published in May 1942, was named by Maginel Wright Barney, sister of Frank Lloyd Wright. The name lasted 37 years.

LEFT:
Bauhaus-trained potter Marguerite Wildenhain, shown here around 1955 at Pond Farm in California, was an early – and often critical – reader of *Craft Horizons*.

“A specter haunts the craft world of America,” wrote critic John Bentley Mays in a 1986 commentary that touched off a landslide of angry notes – “the specter of art.” Art has long haunted craft, and you can see it in the letters.

THE EARLY YEARS 1941 – 1959

Letters to the editor in the magazine’s nascent years, when there were several editors, including ACC founder Aileen Osborn Webb, included polite skirmishes about whether fly-shuttle weaving could be considered handweaving (1945), whether the magazine was too casual in its precautions about working with lead (1946), and whether a ceramist designing tiles for manufacturing, with no hands-on involvement in the making, could still be considered a craftsman (1946). (“The comments offered in the article give my eyebrows a bit of a lift,” one genteel letter writer protested.)

Then, in 1957, came an eruption – the sort of complaint that would surface again and again over the next decade. For the third time in three years, an already controversial ceramist had judged a competition and favored his own students. The anonymous correspondent, writing in the May/June issue, had had enough:

Sirs:
The greatest example of complete juror bias occurred with the announcement of the winners of the Fifth Miami National Ceramic Exhibit of which Peter Voulkos was one of three juror members.

The listing of winners as Paul Soldner, John Mason, Kenneth Price, Bill Bengston, and Jerry Rothman came as almost no surprise to us in Los Angeles. They are all students of Peter Voulkos, teacher of ceramics at the Los Angeles County Art Institute. . . .

Peter Voulkos’ students cannot be the only ones producing award-winning ceramics, and one even wonders if their work could be



ABOVE: In the 1950s and '60s, the rugged work of California sculptor Peter Voulkos was a flashpoint in the magazine.

TOP: Editor Rose Slivka, who rubbed elbows with painters and sculptors, was a staunch defender of the avant-garde in craft. Many readers vehemently objected.

RIGHT: Slivka’s 1961 essay on abstract expressionist ceramics remains one of the articles most cited by craft scholars and curators.



classed as good ceramic ware, considering . . . they are but pieces badly thrown, badly glazed, and badly crafted.

NAME WITHHELD ON REQUEST

The writer is frustrated with nepotism, of course, but the letter also suggests something else: an uneasiness with the sculptural sensibility creeping into craft. Suddenly work that didn’t follow the rules – of functionality, of technique – was being rewarded, which did not sit well with many readers. (Voulkos remained a divisive figure to *Craft Horizons* readers; a 1966 letter writer called him “vulgar,” “publicity-hungry,” and a “monstrosity.”)

Letters about jury bias continued to trickle in over the next few years. (In 1959, a letter writer composed a funny 12-stanza poem on the subject.) In September/October 1959, ceramist Dora De Larios scolded her fellow makers. “Why is it that after every major show there is such a fit thrown by some craftsmen? So Peter Voulkos, John Mason, Larry Shep, and Henry Takemoto received the prizes. Good for them!” If the fit-throwers worked harder, she added, “they might begin to give competition to the winners that they are now being so petty in tearing down.”

THE SLIVKA YEARS 1959 – 1979

Rose Slivka came to her role just as an American craft movement was coalescing in the United States. Slivka’s goal was to raise the standards for American craft, and the articles, some of which were quite provocative for the time, were aimed at makers.

Raising standards is not a simple proposition, of course. And in Slivka’s issues, you see readers continually wrangling about quality and jurors’ role identifying it. *Craft Horizons* served as a forum for anyone

who had anything to say about craft. In November/December 1963, that somebody was another polarizing ceramist, Robert Arneson.

“As a member of the 1963 California State Fair craft jury, I wish to make known that censorship was imposed on this exhibition by its directors,” he began. A prize-winning leather and ceramic pot by Charles McKee had been removed from the show without the consent of the jury. What’s more, one of Arneson’s own pieces had been removed “because of its assumed ‘offensive nature,’” he wrote.

He dismissed most of the work in the show as “safe art and dull mediocrity” and called for a government investigation into the directors’ actions. For the big finish, he argued that if the directors didn’t want the best art, “the available space might be better used as a honky-tonk corral.”

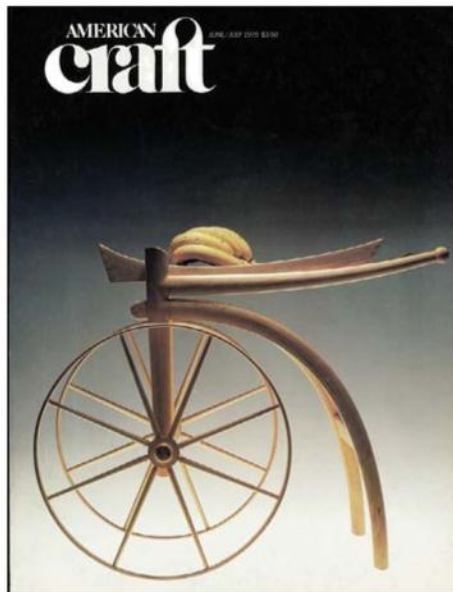
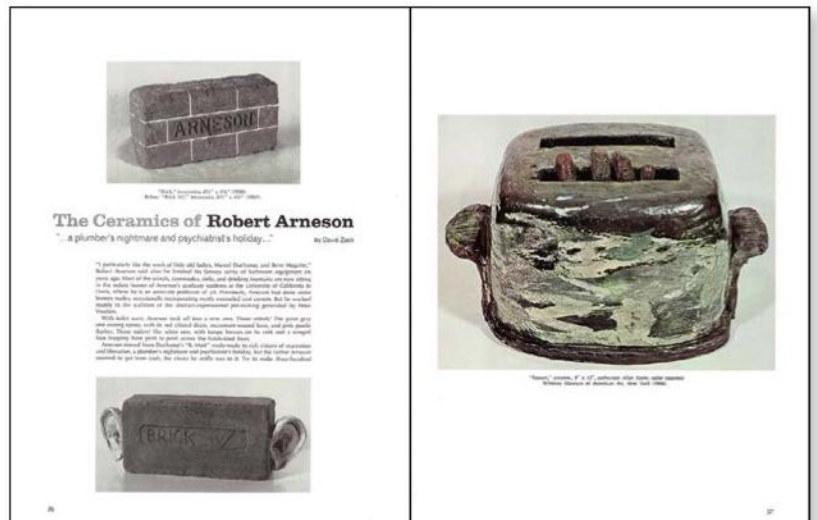
Jurying was a flashpoint, and mystery shrouded judges’ choices. In a first-person account in 1965, weaver Dorian Zachai explained how she made decisions as a juror. “I look at things with my insides – and that is all there is to it,” she explained.

Reader Jack Cloonan knew a softball when he saw one. “For those who would look at things with their insides,” he wrote in the May/June issue, “may I unfacetiously suggest that looking with one’s eyes precludes any possibility of ending up inside-out.” It was one of many responses to her manifesto.

Slivka may be best known for a 1961 feature that set the tone for the turmoil of this era. In the July/August issue, she advocated eloquently for the new sculptural aesthetic in ceramics, calling it uniquely American. She saw in work by renegades such as Voulkos, Arneson, and Harold Myers (whose pictured sculpture had the perhaps unfortunate title



Rose Slivka raised hackles when she championed craft that seemed to toss aside not only function, but also skill.



ABOVE (2): Robert Arneson, whose funk-art ceramics often bravely explored the body and its functions, struck a nerve in 1970.

LEFT: In 1979, the magazine’s name changed, along with the design and some regular features. In the June/July issue, Slivka wrote a farewell that serves as a snapshot of a field in transition.

Big Pile) a restless, noble search for identity. She lauded “the US craftsman, a lonely, ambitious eclectic.”

The essay unleashed an avalanche of comment that reads like a who’s who of midcentury craft. (It remains an important reference for the field.)

“It is difficult for me to tell you how much I admired ‘The New Ceramic Presence,’” wrote enamellist June Schwarcz, “how much I have felt the need for such an article, and how well I thought it was written.” Alfred University ceramics professor Daniel Rhodes called it “extremely interesting,” reflecting “a lag between the ‘fine’ arts, where the ideas seem to start,

and the ‘crafts,’ where the ideas crop out anywhere from 10 to 30 years later.”

But many from the functional community were not amused. “Quit corrupting the young generation with your fake double standards,” wrote Marguerite Wildenhain. (Wait, didn’t she cancel?) “Nobody in his senses can continue to subscribe to *Craft Horizons*, supposedly the magazine of the ACC, without blushing with shame or getting blue with fury.” (Fourteen years later, she declined her nomination to the ACC’s College of Fellows, citing its “horrible magazine.”)

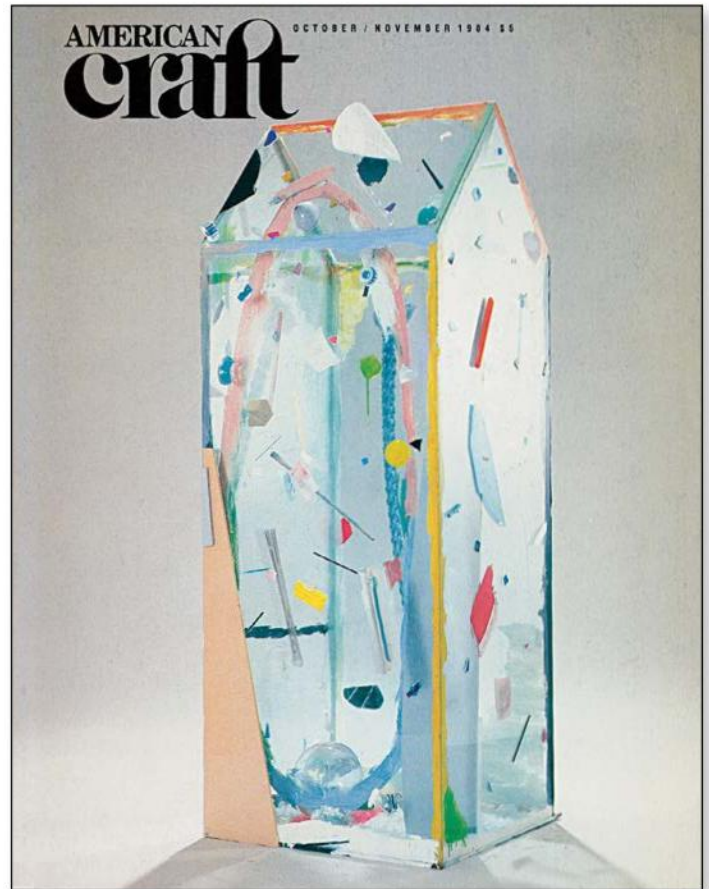


Lois Moran became the editor as the field was expanding to include curators, scholars, and collectors as well as makers.

In Lois Moran's era, craftspeople yearned to be accepted by the fine-art world.

RIGHT:
In 1984, a Therman Statom glass work on the cover drew ridicule; some readers questioned its craftsmanship.

OPPOSITE:
In 1986, Toronto critic John Bentley Mays explained why art critics pay so little attention to craft. Fine art is assessed with an "educated eye," he argued, rather than a craft enthusiast's touch. Readers complained—for months.



Then there was the priceless response of Warren MacKenzie:

For the longest time we had thought that the "Big Pile" in our neighbor's cow pasture was good only for enriching the fields. Now we find that if you can pile it high enough with the written word, or in the visual fields, it can pass for art. In the future, we will give up any attempt to make functional ceramics as an expressive form since, apparently, "Containers ... make almost no demands on our sensibilities, leaving us free" – free to concentrate on getting the cows to cooperate for higher and larger works of "ART."

Next on the firing line was Slivka's 1963 essay "The New Tapestry," featuring unconventional fiber works by "look-with-my-insides" Dorian Zachai, Claire Zeisler, Sheila Hicks, and Lenore Tawney.

Katharine and Harry Manning were indignant. "I trust that in the future you will not

publish such atrocities on weaving. . . . In our weaving studio-workshop, we keep this issue hidden from the students," they wrote.

Slivka took the heat and kept going. An early 1969 issue featured plastics and pop art. Lotte Streisinger predicted dire consequences:

The pages of your magazine are icky-bristly with pictures of plastics, machinery, mind expanders, thingamajigs, and weirdo nihilistic clay objects. . . . If the craftsman does not uphold the enduring values of humanity and the works of the human hand, who will? And if nobody does, we are lost, lost, lost. . . . Which side are you on, the side of pop-groovy-bullshit or the side of humanity?

A year later, the magazine covered the work of Robert Arneson, spurring a tsunami of criticism that continued for years. Readers called it "sick," "pornographic," and "juvenile."

Valera Lyles clearly enjoyed skewering David Zack's writing:

Were it not for your article, I would still view Arneson's ceramics as a nasty little boy's vulgarity rather than brilliantly searing, iconoclastic social comment. Now, joyously liberated and suffused with new insight, I am off to the bus depot restroom in search of yet another monument to man's unquenchable creativity and majestic search for truth."

David Smith wasn't buying it either: "Now that we have had a good, long look at the emperor's new clothes, we begin to see a naked ass."

Slivka's era was tumultuous, and it dramatically shaped what was now a bona fide field. She led craftspeople – many kicking and screaming – beyond the old perimeters to a realm where craft mingles with art.

In her farewell to readers of *Craft Horizons* in June/July 1979, Slivka reflected on how the

field had changed during her tenure:

Twenty years ago, when we were all young in the crafts, we were a small, intimate, talky group. . . . We have grown from a group to a movement, from being a unified assemblage of friends to being a diversified population of people who know each other and people who don't know each other, many strangers, many friends, and even some antagonists, going in many directions and with a multitude of needs. This is a new time.

THE MORAN YEARS 1980 – 2006

And a new time it was. In the six-month gap between Slivka and her successor, Lois Moran, the magazine changed its name to *American Craft*, added new departments, and redesigned. Plenty of readers liked the changes; Helen Garfolo called it "less pretentious" and "more genuine." But naturally there were detractors, including

COMMENT
by John Bentley Mays

And, later on, I will suggest reasons artists should do their work, leaving the art world and forget about craft-as-art. Indeed, everything I have to say here is addressed to the poster who is tired of his wheel and the sweater sooty of his loom. I have nothing to say to or about the contained, devoted craftsman—who will, in turn, be interested in reading I have to say.

But before getting on to my theme, a bit of history to put my own views in a broader perspective. The early 1980s, when I joined the *Globe*, were exciting years to be in the art beat in Toronto. The Canadian commercial galleries were promoting a new generation of sophisticated artists in all media. The city's network of art museums—far more considerable phenomenon in Canada than in the United States—was the scene of many important experimental projects and programs. Artists were moving to Toronto from all over the country to take part in the market, the discussion, the vibrant activity.

I soon concluded that, given the sheer weight of this new work and energy, the public's interest would hardly be served by limiting my columns to exhibitions of painting and sculpture in the venerable museums and well-established private galleries. The first task I set for myself was the extension of our regular local coverage to include and promote art, environmental installations, experimental film, photography and other forms of innovative work, wherever in the city they might be taking place.

My decision to expand in the direction of newer forms of visual art, incidentally had nothing to do with materials. The staff something made from was (and is) a matter of complete professional indifference to me. The ideas, strategies and consciousness of history in a work of art is, finally, the only thing that matters—along with its place in the great tradition of Modern artmaking.

The art of the tiny screen from the mid-1960s onward, for example, was a completely recognizable innovation within the Modern art movement, even though the technology hailed from outside the atelier of the more deluxe, luxurious arts such as painting and sculpture. Though video didn't look like conventional art in many gallery-spaces, I certainly did not have to invent an ingenious new art history to justify covering it. In their avowed attitudes toward medium, linguistic interest in the body and the commonplace, and their Modernist insistence on properties of seeing, video artists declared kinship in the great tribe of Modern art, whose patriarchs include Courbet and Manet, the Impressionists and Duchamp. And that brings us back to craft, or the absence thereof in my column. It is worth remembering that Modern art criticism, as we journalists practice it, began in popular reports on the news of this tribe—who was who and what was what at salons and salons des refusés in Paris during the mid-19th century. Whatever else we do, art critics will probably always be reporters on the complex, rambling tribe of Modernist artistry and sensibility, as it has descended and proliferated from the time of the great French Moderns down to the present. It is a big and wonderful job. But it does mean that art critics will never be paying as much attention to craft as craftspeople (and even some artists) think they should.

This is so not because craft or craft-as-art (as I have expounded it) is inferior to art, but because they are not art. Ceramic and fiber artists, like novelists and composers and physicists, belong to other tribes of creative

discourse, with peculiar languages, technical strategies, codes and histories. These may be engaging to the critical imagination. But, at present anyway, it is all most art critics can do to keep up with the developments in visual art without trying to take on aid do justice to so large an area of human creativity as craft.

But beyond my clear musings as a critic, there is another, more compelling reason for writing about, and not about crafts, art, music, theater, cooking or something else. The reason is the deep, abiding interest that art has been inspiring over more I boldly discovered it in my late 30s, about 35 years ago. Like many another art critic of my generation, I was lured into the career by the endless variety and invention, and the contentious spirit of liberty, displayed in the work of Pop artists, Minimalists and Conceptualists. And in the immensely engaging art of the neo-Dadaists of the 1960s and early 1970s. At first I merely loved the games being so fun. But what had me (and has never let me go) was not the aesthetic richness of contemporary art, but its deeply humane, critical spirit.

That spirit (like art criticism itself) was born in mid-19th-century Paris, in an atmosphere of skepticism and inquiry, curiosity about life and impatience with the conventional, and deep negativity toward established authority in all matters artistic, political, intellectual and ethical. Artists such as Courbet, Manet and Monet were not merely brilliant reinventors of painting. They were also spokesmen of art's new freedom from the tyrannies of academy, church, nobility, conventional ways of seeing and, alas—the established art critic of the day. Whenever artists have wanted to renew their art, they have looked back on country to the source, and reclaimed the radicalism, honesty and disruptive critical spirit of the beginning.

It does not need to be said that Modern art's peculiar dislike for the hand—along with Modern criticism's avoidance of crafts—is a heritage of this beginning. The pioneers of Modernism were exiled by the leveling changes in economic and civil society wrought by industrialization. The machine, not the hand, would become the emblem of these transformations, so the artists sought to create an art equal in power to the machine, and to the same, exciting dislocations of industrial culture, they were moved by skepticism and science, not by old-fashioned piety. It is easy to see why the haughty eye (with its inevitable, quizzical arched eyebrow) now gives precedence over the strong, humble, prosaical hand. Hands cannot contemplate; and the creation of works for disinterested, hand-off contemplation has traditionally been a central concern of all Modern art production.

Something that has been discovered since Courbet insulates the central vision of this strategy of disinterestedness as a way to relate to what is real, and Modern art itself, in all its variety, to proof that the historically anti-hand, anti-craft strategy continues to be radical and greatly revealing. All this is a matter of passionate conviction among many art critics and curators alike, even if it is not usually put so bluntly as I've done here. The wall is, empty, free and austere space in which painting and sculpture conventionally exist is cherished because it is there (and not in the familiar clutter of life) that Modern art yields up its complex, ceaseless truth about the world—not in being handled and known intimately, but in being contemplated by the educated eye.

AMERICAN CRAFT 38

Daniel Rhodes, who called the new name “a repudiation,” “a great mistake,” “chauvinistic and provincial.” Paging through *American Craft*, he said, “I felt almost a sense of shame at being identified with the craft scene. The shallowness of the writing, the lack of substance, the slick *House & Garden* layouts all contribute to an overall effect of cheapness and triviality.”

The new professionalism of the magazine – and efforts to broaden the conversation beyond makers – made many readers nervous. But within a few issues, Moran appeared to win over craft insiders. Like Rhodes, metalsmith Ron Hayes Pearson had worried that the redesigned magazine would be a “gaudy *People*-type publication that visually and verbally glamorized crafts,” but his April/May 1980 letter lauded “the trend toward greater depth.” In the same issue, scholar Janet Koplos praised the addition of

“lots more informational meat” to the content.

It’s possible that Moran learned from the beating Slivka took; she published fewer letters in her 26 years. But then-senior editor Beverly Sanders says the staff in fact received fewer letters. Perhaps the natural expansion of the field – the addition of gallerists, curators, and collectors to the audience of artists and teachers – had a pluralizing, stabilizing effect. Maybe the community had survived what group development psychologist Bruce Tuckman calls the forming, storming, and norming stages, and settled into performing. Maybe the tribe was becoming the establishment.

Not that there weren’t controversies in Moran’s time. In 1985, W. Hankinson objected to a Therman Statom sheet-glass work on the previous issue’s cover (Oct./Nov. 1984). “It looks like a reject from a first-grade glue session. I’ve found



ABOVE: In a 1999 exhibition review, Deborah Norton urged craft artists and curators to “play the game” to attract attention from the wider art world.

TOP: In 1987, George and Dorothy Saxe’s glass collection was deemed insufficiently discriminating.

better-looking art in the local city dump,” Hankinson wrote. Moran defended the choice in an editor’s note, pointing out that Statom had been included in an important recent exhibition, was a lecturer at UCLA, and had received a \$25,000 NEA grant. Potter Dick Wopert took exception to Moran’s defense. “To justify [Statom’s work] on the cover because the artist won \$25,000 from a fellowship is offensive,” he asserted.

Probably the biggest flap of Moran’s tenure began in

December/January 1986, with the publication of an essay by Toronto art critic John Bentley Mays explaining why art critics don’t pay much attention to contemporary craft. Craft artists, or as he called them, “artists,” do not get “validation, exposure, and recognition” from art critics because, simply put, craft is not art, Mays wrote. Fine artists, he explained, are “moved by skepticism and science, not by old-fashioned pieties.” Modern art, he wrote, is “anti-hand” and “anti-craft,” and the process of appreciating it is different. “Modern art yields up its complex, ironic truth about the world not in being handled and known intimately, but in being contemplated by the educated eye.”

Readers went nuts. It took several issues to publish the objections. Art historian and gallerist Theo Portnoy called Mays’ piece “a chore, so pretentious, so verbose and

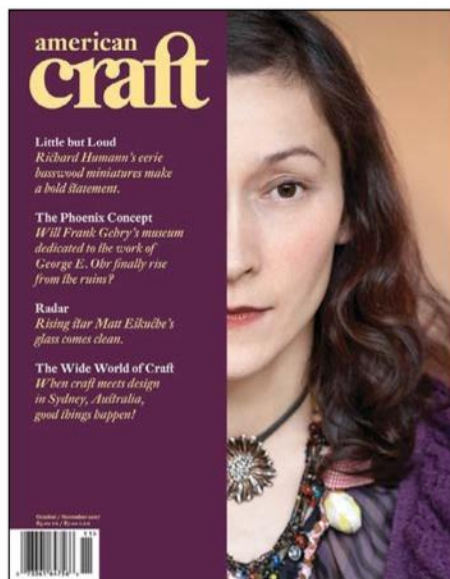
grandiose.” O.J. Bergeron got more personal: “Obviously he won the Canadian National Newspaper Award for criticism based on the size of his testicles and not his ability to validly judge art.”

Mary Byington confronted Mays directly: “Working with materials keeps us craftspeople honest, human, and quite discerning about quality. When you want to really understand art, make something. For now, to the trash heap with your words and ideas.”

In the rancor over Mays’ high-handed dismissal of craft, you see a central preoccupation of the Moran era: the desire of craft artists and allies – curators, collectors – to be acknowledged by the art world. Along with that came a new resolve to pay the dues necessary, if not sufficient, for acceptance – to document works, to know craft history, to formulate craft theory. To do as the art world does.

This resolve is clear in the letters responding to Robert Kehlmann’s dispassionate take-down of glass collectors George and Dorothy Saxe in the April/May 1987 issue. In a review of an exhibition of their collection, Kehlmann observed that collectors of glass – perhaps the most seductive craft medium – “have often failed to exercise the rigid

Editor Andrew Wagner launched a dramatic redesign in 2007. The inaugural issue featured a little-known French DIY artist. For a year, a cover flap greeted (and, in many cases, grated on) readers.



scrutiny in looking at glass that is routinely applied to other two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.” Reaction was mixed. Michael I. Brillson defended the Saxes’ investment in glass artwork. Al Shands congratulated Moran “for giving the writer the freedom to call the shots” as he saw them.

Bruce Metcalf continued the call for tough, independent craft criticism in eight pages of almost solid text in 1993. In the February/March issue’s “Replacing the Myth of Modernism” – 10,000 words, not counting footnotes – Metcalf argued that what craft had borrowed from modern art – a disinterested way of viewing and describing objects – had robbed it of its valuable roots in utility, in everyday life, in physicality. Don’t envy the art world’s cerebral detachment, he urged. But don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater; don’t be vacuous. “The paucity of thinking and writing on craft has led to a vacuum in debate and standards,” he lamented.

Response to Metcalf’s opus was measured, certainly lacking the passion of the Mays letters. Maybe that’s because Metcalf is a jewelry maker as well as a critic; he wasn’t some snooty outsider. One of the most articulate



Wagner’s issues are distinguished by typography that looks handcrafted.



A 2009 story on a London designer whose primary material is horse manure was the last straw for some readers.

and extensive responses came from furniture maker Joshua Markel, who argued that “rather than beat the long-dead horse of modernism, [Metcalf] really should be running, stick in hand, after mannerism.” He blasted the craft world for “the pursuit of the odd, the quirky, the distorted, the strangely proportioned,” for “the rejection of function and technical accomplishment in order to rub shoulders with the art world.”

Dulcimer maker Nicholas Blanton praised “Metcalf’s postmodern postmortem and his images of us poor craftspeople pressing our noses to the windows of fancy art galleries, wistfully looking at price tags.” But his parting shot took aim at the field’s burgeoning academic wing: “You MFAs got yourselves into this Just-As-Good-As-Art quandary, and you can get yourselves out. We’ve got work to do.”

As Moran’s time wound down, the debate continued: Should craft keep chasing after big brother art, seeking acknowledgment and approval?

Critic Deborah Norton’s answer, in a 1999 review of a London basketry exhibition, was a pragmatic yes. “Some may resent the idea of presenting craft with the primary aim of appealing to the art world,” she wrote. “But if, as appears to be the case right now, museums, galleries, the media, and financial powers-that-be all seem to favor fine art, craft must learn to play the game in order to get the recognition it deserves.”

No way, responded long-time *American Craft* contributor Jody Clowes in a February/March 2000 letter. Art is a bully to be confronted. “The paradigm of artistic hierarchy so deeply rooted in Western elite culture . . . will retain its power unless it is actively and consistently rejected by those who care deeply about objects made for use as well as contemplation.”

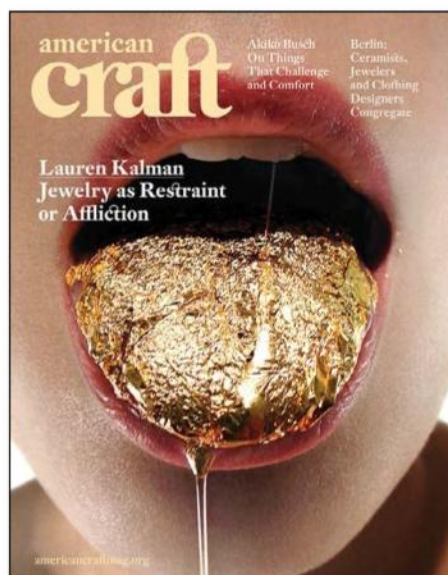
THE WAGNER YEARS 2007 – 2009

Lois Moran retired in December 2006 at the age of 73, after one of the longest tenures of any American magazine editor. If the transition from Slivka to Moran seemed dramatic, the change from Moran to Andrew Wagner was breathtaking. The 30-something Wagner came to *American Craft* from *Dwell*, a stylish consumer magazine about architecture and design that he had helped found.

For almost three decades, Moran had hosted a mannerly dialogue of tastemaking artist profiles and sober exhibition reviews. Wagner burst through the door and changed the subject. The redesign he launched in October/November 2007 announced the new era with colored text, a cover flap, inventive display typography, a detachable gallery and studio map, long lists of URLs (he also launched a magazine website and blog), and an emphasis on topicality (the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example). The cover featured a tight portrait of DIY artist Nathalie Lété. The cover story was 10 pages of photographs inside her Parisian loft; there were captions, but no other text.

Moran’s sedate gallery opening of gray heads sipping Chardonnay had morphed into a Renegade Craft fair.

Wagner stayed less than three years, and much of the feedback he drew concerned the redesign. Readers were split. Ceramist James Aarons was thrilled: “From bicycles to water towers to studio makers, this issue commemorates the brilliant and broad wonder of the craft (art) world.” Nina Graci relished the magazine’s new “joie de vivre and that of the artists featured” and was relieved to see less vitality-sapping “curator-encumbered copy.”



Two editors who followed Moran took some visible risks – and felt the backlash.



A gold-encrusted, dripping tongue accosted readers of the October/November 2009 issue, edited by Janet Koplos.

That cover, along with eight pages of Lauren Kalman’s “dermatological embellishments” alienated many readers.

Frank Schueler, on the other hand, demanded that Wagner “clean up the magazine or resign.” Jon Ryan and Tim Hill disliked Wagner’s emphasis on artists as quasi-celebrities; they missed the longstanding, formalist focus on artworks. “I would prefer to see a piece of artwork rather than the artist,” Ryan wrote.

Wagner ruffled feathers with the artists he profiled, too, perhaps channeling his inner Arneson. In April/May 2009, *American Craft* published a story on London designer Virginia Gardiner, who uses horse manure to make vessels and sculptures. Here’s a passage:

Her palm-sized dodecahedron Poo Gems may have the consistency of a seed-based chewy snack from Whole Foods, but they are certainly not meant to be eaten. “I had a technician at my college sizing one up in his hand and asking, ‘What is this?’” Gardiner says. “He just put it down very gently when I said it was shit.”

Lucia Kimball and Sharon Barette were among those who fumed. “The magazine does not showcase the quality of art and craft I have come to expect through the years, the article ‘In Praise of Poop’ being a prime example,” Barette wrote in June/July. Kimball was grossed out by the inclusion of excreta and creeped out by another story on insects as an art material.

Wagner’s rebuttal – a form he perfected as editor – is longer than either letter on “Poop” in that issue. It concludes: “While we can certainly understand your distaste for the work, we stand by our belief that it is important to consider it.”

What drove Wagner? It wasn’t necessarily a particular viewpoint on craft’s proper relationship to art. In any case, with his brash approach to content and design, he stuck a thumb in the eye of the craft establishment. Then he blew town.



TOP:
American Craft got a new logo in 2016, part of an overall rebranding of the Council.

BOTTOM:
 Outspoken critic Bruce Metcalf wrote a scathing piece in 2014 on contemporary art’s rejection of craftsmanship. Many readers cheered.

THE INTERREGNUM 2009 – 2010

Janet Koplos filled in as guest editor for four issues after Wagner left, injecting some historical scholarship into the magazine. In a striking post-Wagnerian touch, the August/September 2009 cover reads: “A Century Ago, Omega Workshops Led British Artists to the Applied Arts.” The issue also includes an essay on why

Boston was such an important craft incubator, birthing the Society of Arts and Crafts in 1897.

Koplos knew how to strike a nerve, though. The cover for October/November 2009 may be the most criticized in the magazine’s 75 years. The tight shot of Lauren Kalman’s gold-encrusted tongue, dripping saliva, introduced eight pages of body “embellishment” inside. In his article, writer Gabriel Craig called Kalman “the child of art and craft’s divorce” and praised her work as “both desirable and disgusting.”

By now, readers were accustomed to artists who brought arty, unsettling concepts to their work with craft materials; but most weren’t ready for this. Robert O. Fisch responded: “Lauren Kalman’s so-called art pieces like *Syphilis* are nothing more than tasteless attempts to attract attention.” David Bryant called it “self-loathing gone public.” Marlene Cole demanded “a retraction and apology to the real artists and your readers. It was the worst of taste. You should consult a doctor about this. It is not art.”

Koplos’ run ended with the February/March 2010 issue, and deputy editor Shannon Sharpe took over for four issues. A strain of social consciousness runs through those issues, perhaps foreshadowing later coverage of craft artists such as Aurelie Tu and Michael Strand. June/July featured a piece on prison inmates finding meaning and redemption in quilting; August/September, a priest who works as a sustainable-fashion designer. Only four letters appeared in Sharpe’s issues.

THE MOSES YEARS 2010 – PRESENT

In 2010, the ACC moved to Minneapolis; no New York staff chose to come along. So the magazine began again, with mostly new staff. Senior editor



These days, we aim to be open-minded and conversational. Some readers approve; some don't.

Hold on – did you see how she combined “craft” and “art” in the same sentence? Twice. And casually, probably without really thinking about it. Like a lot of people today, she apparently sees no conflict between the two. Nuanced differences, maybe, but not loaded conflict.

Today the magazine tends to focus on the good that artists do in the world and on the universality of the creative impulse. We try to speak to a broad creative audience, and we feel some urgency about making craft relevant to people who may not know its legacy. Why? Fewer people make things today – and we think making things is good for the soul, and by extension, for the world. We’re not above trying to inspire people to find their own creative spark, in whatever way is meaningful to them, however naïve that might sound.

The other day, I was at an opening at a museum, chatting with an art critic, who, I detected, doesn’t really like today’s *American Craft*. “You don’t pay much attention to the differences between art and craft,” he charged.

“Yeah,” I said, “we’re not really so interested in that. We’re mostly fascinated by the fact that, since the dawn of time, human beings have felt compelled to make things.”

“Well,” he sniped, “most of what they make isn’t very good.”

So after six years as editor of a 75-year-old magazine, I say to the craft world: Go ahead, emulate the art world. But not like that. Not like that!

✦ *Special thanks to ACC librarian Jessica Shaykett, who contributed reporting to this story. Megan Guerber, Molly Geisinger, Joyce Lovelace, Dulcey Heller, and Beverly Sanders (senior editor, 1980–2010) also contributed. Monica Moses is American Craft’s editor in chief.*

ABOVE LEFT: A 2014 interview with Glass Secessionism co-founder Tim Tate riled up studio glass fans and historians.

LEFT: Earlier this year, a discussion on the “sloppy craft” ethos annoyed many readers, who thought the magazine should stand firmly for craftsmanship and skill.



Julie K. Hanus and I, with longtime contributing editor Joyce Lovelace, creative directors Mary K. Baumann and Will Hopkins, and copy editor Judy Arginteanu, took up the path.

We’ve taken our share of criticism in letters – these days, they mostly come as tweets and Facebook posts, with the occasional blistering email. In a few cases, I think the interchange has contributed to the ongoing, incremental debate about how closely craft should consort with art. In April/May 2014, I interviewed Tim Tate, co-founder of the Facebook forum Glass Secessionism, which basically holds that it’s time to move past the studio glass world’s love affair with technique. Some readers admired Tate’s insights.

Others felt that, once again, craftspeople were taking a stand without being as well informed, historically and theoretically, as they should be. Lani McGregor of Bullseye Glass Co. emailed to say she agreed with glass scholar and curator Tina Oldknow, “who recently described glass secessionism as ‘little more than coffeehouse chatter . . . unless there will be some academic rigor behind it.’ We all enjoy our coffee and our chatter. Revisionist history, not so much.”

In the next issue, we published Bruce Metcalf’s essay, “Hot Glue & Staples,” which argued that craftsmanship should not be so reviled in contemporary art. Who could disagree? Well, Jason L. Starin did. He tweeted, “I read this story

a few hours ago, and it’s still irritating me to no end. What year is this? 1914?” (That’s the problem with Twitter; brevity’s great, but what, exactly, was his beef? I miss the old-school paragraphs of the ’80s.)

Earlier this year, we interviewed the editors of *Sloppy Craft*. Coverage doesn’t mean we endorse someone’s ideas, of course; it means we’re curious about them. But a lot of readers didn’t see it that way. “American Craft Council, you need to raise your standards instead of lowering them,” Cindy Billingsley posted on Facebook. “Let’s get off this bandwagon in craft and art of rewarding no skills [and] sloppy work. No wonder the general public has no idea what good craft or art is.”

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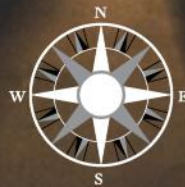
Hip Pop is the American Craft Council's juried exhibition of top emerging talent. The program provides a pathway for early-career artists into ACC's established, competitive craft shows. With lower-cost shared booths, extensive exhibitor support, and award opportunities, Hip Pop provides emerging artists an unparalleled opportunity to grow their clientele and careers.

Learn more about the program and deadlines:
craftcouncil.org/shows/emerging-artists-program

Questions? Please contact program manager
Lindsay Noble at hippop@craftcouncil.org.



Omaha, Nebraska Citywide



From established arts districts to fledgling venues, the craft scene in this Midwestern city is booming.

STORY BY
Andrea Kszystyniak



Renowned artist **Jun Kaneko** settled in Omaha some 20 years ago. He and his wife, Ree – a curator and an Omaha native – have become leaders of the craft scene.

IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA, CRAFT finds a home by the cash registers of popular coffee shops and in the galleries of the Old Market district. It's in new stores selling local wares and old-school spaces showcasing visual arts for decades. Fueled by the community's kinetic energy, artists young, old, and in between are opening businesses, starting fairs, and

Sculpture photo: Colin Conces



Exhibition photo: Aaron Zavitz

launching new creative spaces. The craft scene has grown exponentially in recent years, says jeweler and craft advocate Liz Moldenhauer, and it's on the cusp of explosion.

The scene lacks a single nucleus; instead, the arts flourish in pockets all over the city, thanks to a strong, interconnected community. Established arts districts include

the Benson neighborhood in north central Omaha, Vinton Street in south Omaha, and the Old Market downtown, while standalone galleries and boutiques are tucked in niches all across town. The Blue Pomegranate Gallery features metalwork, jewelry, and glass in West Omaha. The Union for Contemporary Art and Carver Bank feature works in

northeast Omaha. And craft fairs? Well, they pop up just about everywhere.

Cultivating craft

Because of its affordable cost of living, Omaha offers craftspeople a chance to more easily make their art a full-time gig – with several creative organizations playing a vital supportive role. Handmade Omaha, a

Kaneko, a cultural center Jun and Ree Kaneko established, offers a wide variety of programming. A recent exhibition: “Fabric of Survival,” tapestries by Holocaust survivor Esther Nisenthal Krinitz.



LEFT: **Passageway Gallery** is among several art spaces and boutiques in the historic Old Market district.

RIGHT: **Josh Knutson of Made by Human Studios** uses locally sourced wood for his kitchen utensils and abstract sculptures.



LEFT (2): Omaha makers have an array of craft fairs to choose from. **Handmade Omaha**, among the most prominent, hosts two large bazaars a year. Its co-founder, **Rachel Ourada**, works in many mediums. Her button jewelry is for the whimsically inclined.

RIGHT (TOP): A walk down the Old Market's quaint cobbled streets leads to galleries, boutiques, and restaurants. The district is a central hub for art and craft.

ABOVE: During open studio events, **Hot Shops Art Center** features glass demonstrations in the Crystal Forge Glass Studio.



LEFT: **Joslyn Art Museum** has an extensive collection of work by traditional and contemporary Native American artists, such as Teri Greeves.



RIGHT (BOTTOM): **Paperdoll Vintage Boutique** specializes in retro fashion, but also sells craft goods by local makers such as Amaral Jewelry.

collective of artists, is just one resource for the craft community. The group links craft makers to craft lovers, hosting two large bazaars a year featuring handmade goods.

Just north of downtown, woodworkers, ceramic artists, screen printers, and metalworkers can find equipment and workspace at Bench. The public woodworking shop, co-working space, and artisan hub also hosts fairs and offers classes.

A few blocks from Bench, many Omaha makers sell their wares at the newly opened True Blue Goods and Gifts. Co-owner Jessica Mogis began

the business to give artists a place to showcase their talent. "We didn't just want to open any store, we wanted it to be special and supportive of the community," she says.

True Blue features work by about 30 makers. Most are local; among them, Handmade Omaha's co-director, Rachel Ourada, sells whimsical crocheted riffs on taxidermy and fabric button jewelry, while Josh Knutson of Made by Human Studios makes wares from local wood. "It's just amazing how much talent there is locally when you take all of these people off the internet

and off Etsy and meet them one on one," Mogis remarks.

Head further north to find the Union for Contemporary Art, a space supporting community initiatives, with workshops, a co-op art space and ceramic studio, wood shop, tool library, and regular exhibitions such as the June show "Stitch" by textile artist Sarah Rowe. The organization will soon be relocating to a larger space a few blocks north, although a move date is still to be determined.

Omaha's larger art institutions, including Joslyn Art Museum, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, and

Kaneko, also help support the craft scene. Located just outside downtown, Joslyn features contemporary and historical American Indian craftwork in its permanent collection. The gallery also recently featured "Material Voices," an exhibition of work by famed fiber artist (and ACC Fellow) Sheila Hicks, a Nebraska native.

Old Market

Take a stroll through Omaha's historic Old Market district to enjoy charming red-brick roads, old-school architecture, and plenty of craft. There, Kaneko

OMAHA

A far-flung craft scene means there's a lot to explore. And this resilient community keeps on growing.



was founded in 1998 by internationally known ceramist Jun Kaneko and his wife, Ree, a curator. The space seeks to generate new ideas and celebrate creativity “throughout its diversity,” Ree Kaneko explains, from business to science to philosophy. The center often hosts wide-ranging exhibitions, including 2015’s “Fiber,” a multi-part show that featured work by craft luminaries such as 2016 ACC Fellow Nick Cave, along with the juried American Tapestry Biennial, and “Fabric of Survival,” 36 works by Holocaust survivor Esther Nisenthal Krinitz.

1. Carver Bank

2416 Lake St.
bemiscenter.org/carverbank

2. Union for Contemporary Art

2417 Burdette St.
u-ca.org/#welcome
(Move planned: 2423 N. 24th St.)

3. Bench

1441 N. 11th St.
benchomaha.com

4. Hot Shops Art Center

1301 Nicholas St.
hotshopsartcenter.com

5. True Blue Goods and Gifts

1320 Mike Fahey St.
truebluegoodsandgifts.com

6. Joslyn Art Museum

2200 Dodge St.
joslyn.org

7. Modern Arts Midtown

3615 Dodge St.
modernartsmidtown.com

8. Artists' Cooperative Fine Art Gallery

405 S. 11th St.
artistscoopomaha.com

9. Passageway Gallery

417 S. 11th St.
passagewaygallery.com

10. Old Market Artists Gallery

1034 Howard St.
oldmarketartists.com

11. Anderson O'Brien Fine Art

1108 Jackson St.
aobfineart.com

12. Omaha Clayworks

1114 Jones St., Studio C
omahaclayworks.com

13. Kaneko

1111 Jones St.
thekaneko.org

14. Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts

724 S. 12th St.
bemiscenter.org

15. Gallery 1516

1516 Leavenworth St.
gallery1516.org

16. Gallery 72

1806 Vinton St.
gallery72.com

17. Darger HQ

1804 Vinton St.
dargerhq.org

18. Apollon and Oracle Art Supply

1801 Vinton St.
apollonomaha.com

19. Project Project

1818 Vinton St.
projectprojectomaha.com

20. El Museo Latino

4701 S. 25th St.
elmuseolatino.org

21. Paperdoll Vintage Boutique

6107 Maple St.
facebook.com/heypaperdoll

22. Blue Pomegranate Gallery

17305 Davenport St., #103
bluepom.com



Omaha's galleries and boutiques offer local makers a range of opportunities.

ABOVE: **Gallery 1516** also includes a guesthouse for visiting artists and lecturers. Wire work by Omaha sculptor Larry Sosso floats near the ceiling.



LEFT: Vinton Street is another hot spot for galleries. **Darger HQ** shows work by both international and local artists, including Omaha sculptor Luke Severson.

The Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, founded by the Kanekos with several others, is located just a block away. The space hosts international residency programs and regular exhibitions at its downtown location, as well as at Carver Bank, its north Omaha branch born from a partnership with Chicago-based social practice artist Theaster Gates.

A smaller but equally vital venue in the Old Market is Omaha Clayworks, which offers classes, studio space for working artists, and a small shop. More craft is on view at a

number of other galleries in the district: Anderson O'Brien Fine Art, which showcases bubble-like bowls by Viscosity glass studio, as well as jewelry, ceramics, and textile goods; Passageway Gallery, a co-op, which shows Mark Fletmeyer's geometric woodwork, and glass and metal jewelry by Sandy Hagen among its craft artists; the Artists' Cooperative Fine Art Gallery featuring glasswork by Frank Daharsh, wood pieces by Doyle Howitt, and textile work by Agneta Gaines, among others; and Old Market Artists Gallery.

A few blocks beyond the Old Market you'll find Gallery 1516, which has featured wire sculpture by Larry Sosso.

North of downtown is Hot Shops Art Center, recognizable by its orange main building, a former mattress factory that provides 57 artist studios for glassmakers, ceramists, jewelers, and more. Building manager Tim Barry, also a partner at the complex's larger ceramic studio, explains the center's philosophy as one of artistic freedom: "We give [artists] permission to be creative, [then] stay the hell out of their way."

At their twice-yearly open house, the doors of Hot Shops' studios are flung open, welcoming visitors with gallery shows, music, and demonstrations ranging from glass blowing at Crystal Forge studio to casting and pottery, part of the center's mission to help the general public see the link between maker and finished product.

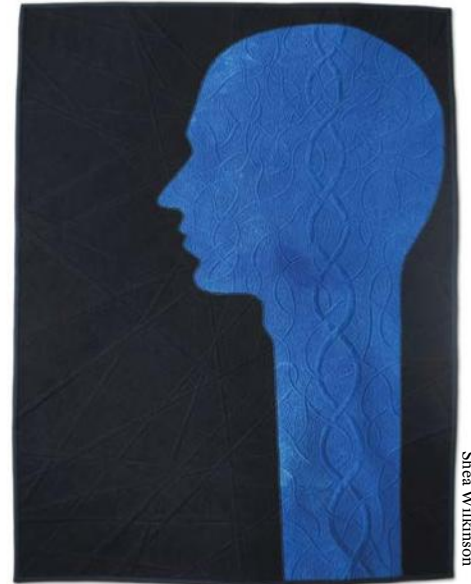
In the neighborhoods

In central Omaha, at Modern Arts Midtown, gallery owner Larry Roots showcases sculpture in a variety of mediums, in monthly exhibitions. From



LEFT: Chris Cassimatis' surreal work can be found at **Modern Arts Midtown**, a gallery for sculpture fans.

ABOVE: The space's recent "Abstract Expressionism" exhibition featured sculpture by Les Bruning, and, on the ceiling, *Cunkballs* by Colin C. Smith.



Shea Wilkinson



Corey Broman

Gallery 72 represents local weaver Shea Wilkinson (above) and glass artist Corey Broman (left), as well as nationally known glass artist Therman Statom.

Exhibition and Cassimatis photos: Courtesy of Modern Arts Midtown

there, head southeast to Vinton Street for another cluster of galleries, including Gallery 72, with exhibitions that have included Shea Wilkinson's celestial tapestries and glasswork by Corey Broman. Just down the street is experimental art space Project Project, as well as newer gallery Darger HQ. Oracle Art Supply and the Apollon share a building, providing art supplies, along with performance and visual art shows. South of Vinton is El Museo Latino, a hub for Latino art, which recently featured "Arte Plumaria," an

exhibition of Martha Lopez Luna's feather art.

Want to see more? Take a trip halfway across town to the rapidly growing and revitalizing Benson neighborhood, where Benson First Friday emerged in 2012, a monthly celebration of art. When founders Alex Jochim and Jamie Hardy began the event, it was supposed to be a one-time thing, but it celebrated its fourth year in June. "One of our biggest goals was creating this accessible platform to showcase work," Jochim reflects.

The event features an outdoor art market in the summer,

giving 20 to 30 makers booth space to sell anything and everything. There are exhibitions in stores and spaces up and down the neighborhood streets, too. In the winter, the outdoor market heads into hibernation, but plenty of work is still shown indoors, in stores such as Paperdoll Vintage Boutique, which features local craft, including jewelry by Haute Bauble.

Rachel Ourada has sold work at Benson First Friday from the start and has watched it flourish. "When we started doing Benson First Friday in 2012, it was really small and it was all by word

of mouth," she recalls. Now, it's one of the biggest events in the city, with nearly two dozen venues participating.

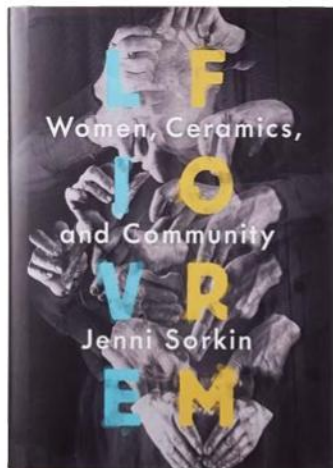
As Benson First Friday proves, makers can find a home just about anywhere in Omaha. From established galleries to storefronts to pop-up shows, the curious craft enthusiast has a citywide array of creative and innovative work to explore.

✦ *Andrea Kszystyniak is a reporter and writer in Omaha. She reports for the Omaha World-Herald and is a co-founder of Omaha Zine Fest.*

The Invisible Hands

Women ceramists pioneered a community-based, process-driven teaching style, Jenni Sorkin argues – setting the stage for today’s socially engaged art. It’s time to give them credit.

INTERVIEW BY *Foyce Lovelace*



IN HER NEW BOOK, *LIVE FORM: Women, Ceramics, and Community*, Jenni Sorkin offers a compelling look at three iconic figures of the modern ceramics movement: Marguerite Wildenhain, a Bauhaus-trained émigré who presided over the Pond Farm artists’ workshop in California from 1952 to 1980; Mary Caroline (M.C.) Richards, author of the influential philosophical guide *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*; and teacher-scholar Susan Peterson, referred to as “the Julia Child of ceramics,” who reached a broad audience as host of her own demonstration show on public TV in the 1960s. Through their pioneering, hands-on style of teaching and community engagement – using pottery as a “live form” of creative experience – these women laid the groundwork, Sorkin asserts, for the participatory, socially engaged artistic practice of today.

An assistant professor in the history of art and architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Sorkin has written widely on the intersection of gender, material culture, and contemporary art. She was in Los Angeles recently for “Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947-2016,” a sweeping exhibition she co-curated with Paul Schimmel at the Hauser Wirth & Schimmel gallery. We met up with her there to talk about her new book.

Why did you feel *Live Form* was a story that needed to be told?

There has been a lot of interest in thinking about the ways in which different kinds of non-traditional practices, like fiber, have influenced work today. I was interested in looking at an earlier group of women, midcentury women. When I was in my 20s, I worked on a large-scale exhibition of the 1970s called “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution,” held in Los Angeles at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2007. Working on that show – as a woman, at that age – propelled me to go back to graduate school, really [look even] earlier, and

think about the generation of women we might call protofeminist – who would not have called themselves feminists – who were really changing the landscape socially, through the means that they had available to them.

They were excluded from painting and sculpture, but ceramics, it turns out, was a place that was amiable to women. It offered women the ability to both earn an income through selling wares – because you could always make things people could buy – but also through pedagogy and teaching. And the idea that ceramics was an untapped field, because it was an other. It was exclusionary, secondary, minor, decorative. It had a history of women’s work attached to it. So I became keenly aware of and interested in that framework.

And that became your focus.

I have a studio art background as a fiber artist, and I always thought my first book would be about fiber in some capacity. At some moment in graduate school, this switch just happened – it was like a light came on – and I fell for the story of Marguerite Wildenhain.

I became interested in trying to figure out how to tell

this narrative that had to do with a misunderstood figure in the landscape of American craft, who was considered hard-core, European, traditional, entrenched in her own values, and in a Bauhaus trajectory, but [had other facets] if you look closely at her.

And there really hasn’t been scholarship on any of these women I’m covering. One of the legacies of American craft in this country is that there has been a paucity of writers and historians who work on this material. There are many exhibition catalogues, and a lot of archival work still to be done in this field, untapped. There have always been curators who have made shows in American craft history, and it has always been a field housed in the decorative arts departments. It’s been object-oriented, instead of asking deeply theoretical questions.

My book aims to create a theoretical framework for rethinking ceramics as a performative medium that is not necessarily object-based – that really has more in common with some of the social practice work we see today, that is a precursor to it. Much of the



In 1952, Wildenhain was the host potter at Black Mountain College's underrecognized Pottery Seminar, which also featured potters Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach, and philosopher Soetsu Yanagi, leader of the Japanese folk-craft movement. It was a "pioneering moment," Sorkin writes, "when the therapeutic properties of ceramics were integrated into an avant-garde context."



Wildenhain made this *Milk Pitcher* (1923) during her years at the Weimar Bauhaus. She was the only woman at the ceramics workshop, and in 1925 (the same year the workshop was shut down) was the first woman named a master potter in Germany.

Marguerite Wildenhain

Presiding at Pond Farm, the California artists' workshop, Wildenhain (1896–1985) was an exacting teacher. "Yet her practice has been misconstrued as object-oriented," writes Sorkin. Yes, her students threw hundreds of pots—but they fired none. "This is a radical reformulation of pottery," says Sorkin, toward process and lived experience. As Wildenhain herself wrote: "Pond Farm is not a 'school'; it is actually a way of life."

teaching and legacy of ceramics practice, in fact, has to do with building community and less about the objects themselves.

So you started with Wildenhain. How did you choose the other two women?

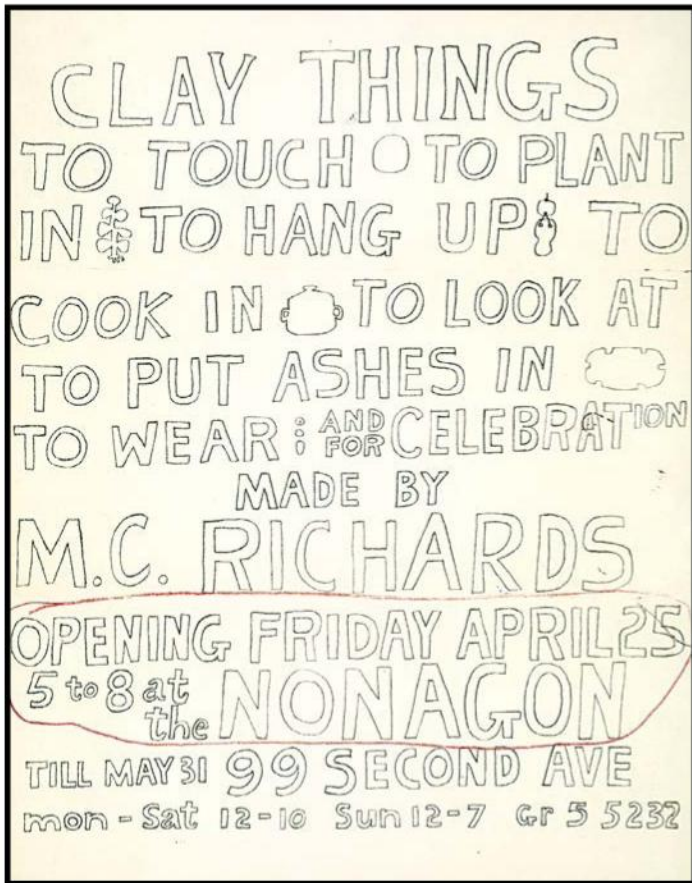
One of the criteria became their own legacies and relationships to writing. They all left behind a body of work that in some ways exceeded them as individual artists, [in] that their writing and teaching became ultimately more valuable historically than their [clay] work.

I would say, of those three, Wildenhain's [pottery] has been considered *as* important.

M.C. Richards came to pottery very late in her career. She always considered herself an amateur potter. She was a professor of literature at Black Mountain College and a theater director and a translator. She came out of an avant-garde artistic sensibility that she translated to craft, versus the other way around. Susan Peterson, on the other hand, comes directly out of craft history, but she's never been given any kind of

recognition. Even in her home city of Los Angeles, she is really underknown. You have to say she was Ken Price's first teacher for any kind of vague recognition to register. But she did publish quite a lot. She was the person I was able to meet, out of the three of them. I interviewed her, and she knew I was writing this book.

This issue of our magazine has a theme of mastery. Do you think there is a different dimension to the idea of mastery for women artists?



M.C. Richards

A potter, a poet, and a teacher at Black Mountain, Mary Caroline Richards (1916–1999) was a catalytic figure, who “embraced an interdisciplinary practice before such a term had come into full usage,” Sorkin writes.

ABOVE: In 1958, Richards staged this event in the East Village – a year before Allan Kaprow’s *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. The otherwise undocumented evening disputes the conventional narrative that men led the experimental performance art movement.



I’m going to put myself out there and say I think mastery is a male ideal, not a female ideal – although somebody like Wildenhain would very much disagree with me. She really had a sense of mastery, both about herself and her own work, and also about the kind of work and working habits she tried to instill in her students. She came out of the Bauhaus tradition that did believe in mastery. She attained master potter certification as the only woman potter at the ceramics workshop in Weimar in 1925.

I think her own relationship to mastery was propelled forward by the fact that she was a woman and had to prove herself, and that being a master, for her, was in some sense of the word about establishing an equal foothold as a woman artist.

LEFT: Richards taught English at Black Mountain until 1951 – returning in 1953 as a student of ceramics. The following year, she moved to Stony Point, New York, to join an artists’ cooperative that included John Cage and Karen Karnes.

ABOVE: While at Stony Point, Richards wrote her influential book *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person*. Prizing process over skill, Richards “returned clay to its roots,” Sorkin writes, focusing on the links between materiality and feeling one’s way in the world.

What concept would you use to describe the idea of mastery? Self-actualization? Coming into one’s own as an artist? Becoming comfortable with the material, expressive?

Those are all good concepts. I think the larger issue of mastery is that it has been cast off now as a value in craft practice. There is a lot of playing with material, and playing with it as an amateur, which is encouraged highly now in art schools, art circles, and even in material-based programs and departments.

We no longer have the same hierarchy of materials, and when the hierarchy of materials diminishes, mastery goes out the door.

What would you most like for readers to take away from your book?

I’d like people to understand that a scholarly read can also be a really moving read. That you can get absorbed in these women’s lives and livelihoods, because they have something to teach us even though they have passed on. They were never

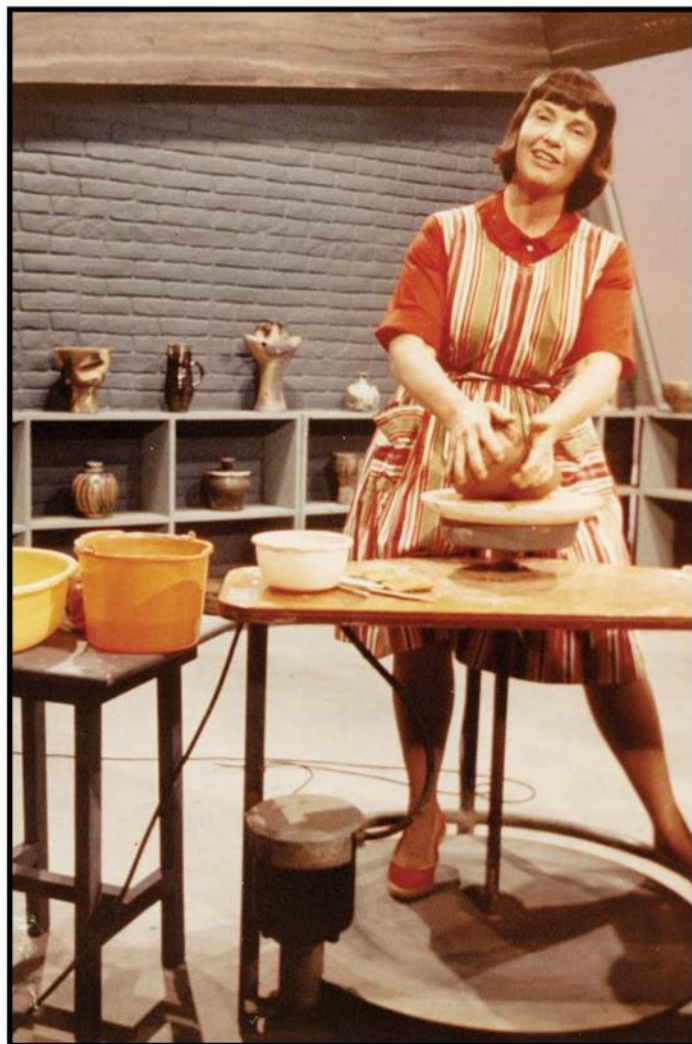
Susan Peterson

Susan Peterson (1925–2009) established two ceramics departments and spearheaded three non-degree programs, but for recognition to register, you have to say she was Ken Price's teacher, Sorkin says. Among her underrecognized contributions: a process-based television show that connected people with hands-on skills and knowledge; translated the pottery demo into a performative medium; and prefigured today's distance learning.



ABOVE: Peterson's own work, such as this stoneware *Bottle*, is rooted in domestically scaled functional wares, Sorkin writes. But "far more is at stake in her multimedia ceramics-based practice."

RIGHT: By the 1960s, ceramics was an outmoded technology in need of a wider audience, Sorkin writes. An accomplished ceramist, Peterson cannily understood that, reaching a broad public via the 54-episode *Wheels, Kilns, and Clay*.



in their own lifetimes, I think, regarded properly for the kinds of advances they made. It's only now, in our era of social-practice art, that these three women could be reclaimed, and thought of as pioneers of that social practice.

Ceramics has not been connected to social practice yet, except maybe by an artist like Michael Strand, who is doing social practice work through found mugs, mug swaps, things like that, and he does a great job. But trying to think about the crafts as actually pioneering social practice, rather than it

all coming from performance art or from the so-called fine arts, is a really important shift. That is why I feel most compelled to have written this book.

I get very frustrated with my own peer group, and students, who don't understand that making craft-based objects also is incredibly performative, incredibly non-object based. That there is no preciousness when you throw pot after pot after pot and you grind it down as Wildenhain had her students do. An unknown or forgotten fact of her practice is that her

students didn't fire. She wasn't interested in having them fire. She wasn't interested in glaze technique. She was interested in form, but form through throwing. And form through throwing becomes a metaphor for process itself – how you work in a daily way as a potter and embody that livelihood and lifestyle.

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Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community was published in July by the University of Chicago Press.

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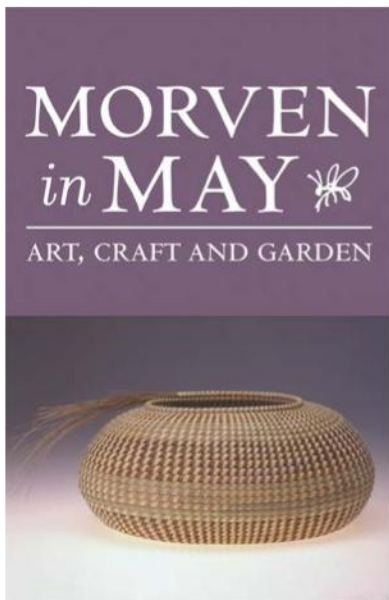
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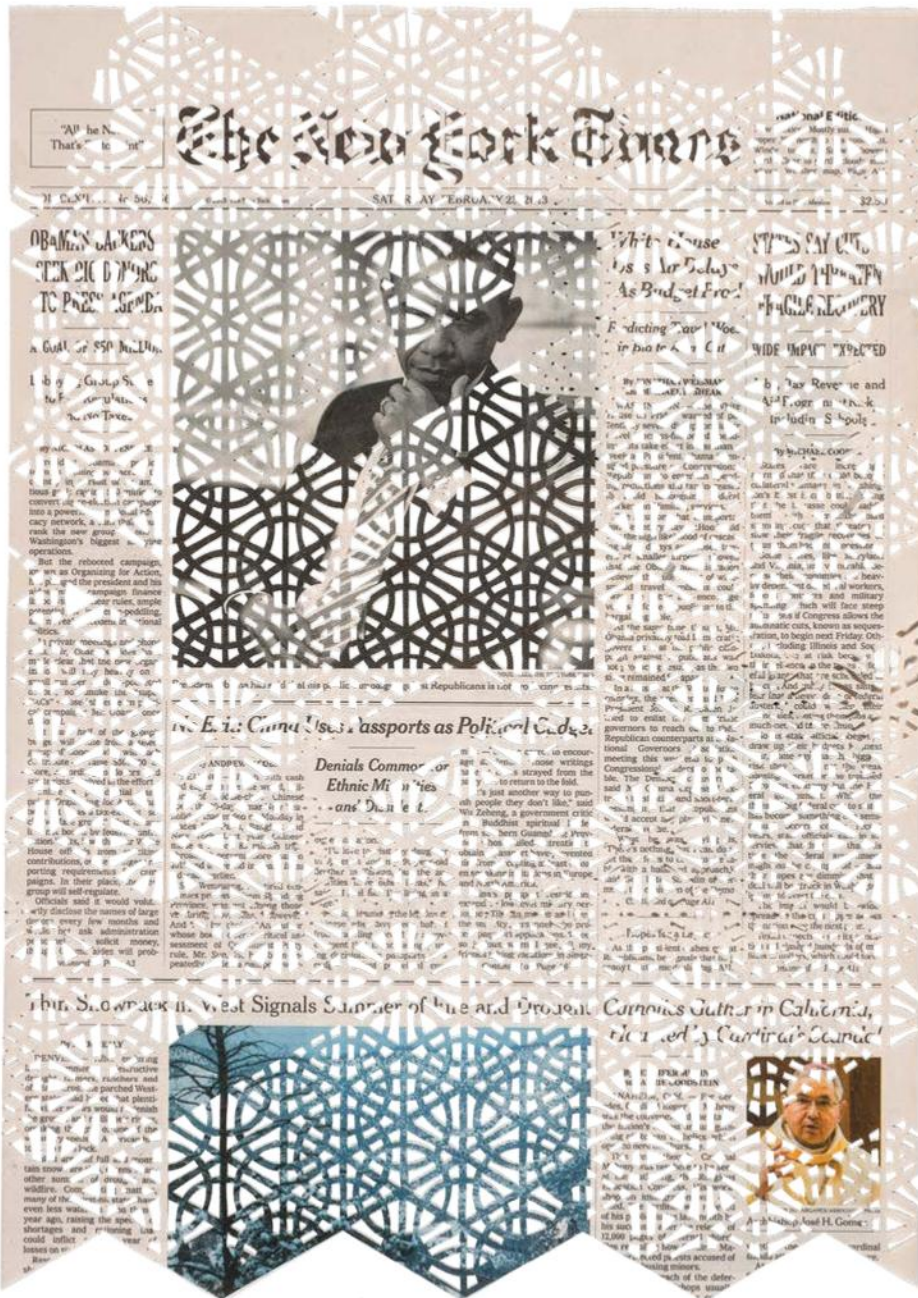
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2.23.13, 2013, newspaper, 10.5 x 11.5 in.

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PAPER IS IN DONNA RUFF'S DNA. Her great-grandfather was a bookbinder; her grandparents owned a scrap-paper company. As a child, she played with the taped pages of old books her grandmother gave her, learning to appreciate the subtle beauty of the old and discarded. She graduated with an art degree from the University of Miami in Florida, became a children's book illustrator in

New York City, and earned an MFA from Rutgers University, where she studied papermaking. She became intrigued with using paper as an art material, rather than making art on its surface. The Miami Beach resident has exhibited at the Art14 fair in London, MASS MoCA, and the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe. Earlier this year, her work appeared in group exhibitions at Central Booking gallery in New York

and San Francisco's Fog Design+Art fair. Using an X-Acto knife and burning tools, Ruff cuts and sings paper, removing small areas. What remains are intricate designs that, on closer inspection, reveal secondary patterns of negative space. She works mainly with discarded newspapers, often the front page of the *New York Times*. When she chose the page that became 2.23.13, she says,

"I was intrigued by the portrait of President Obama printed in black and white," which is unusual for the paper. "The pose is pensive but heroic." Ruff uses digital templates to make the geometric patterns, an interest indirectly influenced by her Jewish upbringing. (Religious texts bar the use of the figure.) "Ultimately," Ruff says, "all my work can be traced back to my interest in books and texts." ~DORIS GOLDSTEIN

Photo: James Hart

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