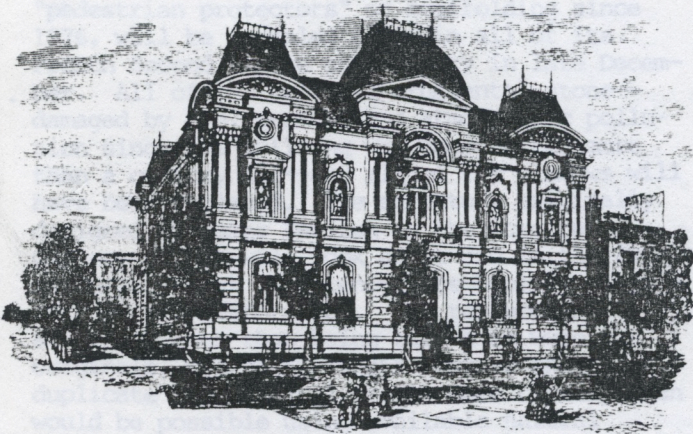


# RENWICK QUARTERLY

Dec. 1985, Jan. Feb. 1986

Published for the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, by the James Renwick Collectors Alliance.

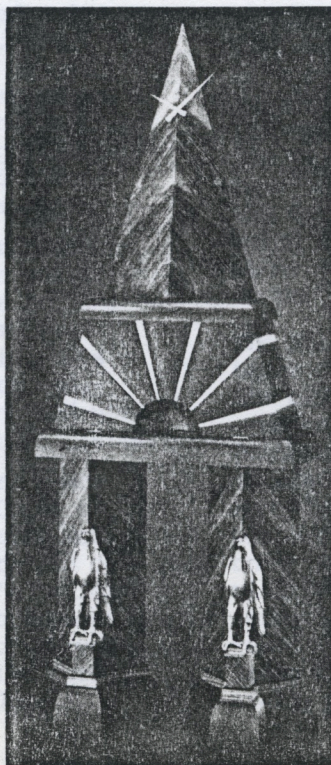


## "Masterpieces of Time" Opens in December

"Masterpieces of Time: Clocks by Wendell Castle", an exhibition of the master craftsman's newest body of work -- thirteen floor-standing clocks -- opens at the Renwick Gallery on December 24. Castle's distinctive sculptural furniture was in the Renwick's inaugural exhibition in 1972 and was then characterized by its curvilinear, organic forms. In recent years he has refined both the forms his furniture takes and the quality of material he uses in it. The clocks are made of exotic woods, inlays of sterling silver and mother-of-pearl, and are fitted with silver and gold-plated metal hardware. Several of them recall the luxurious French art deco furniture of the 1920s and 30s; others are more architectonic or whimsical. All are both sculpture and decorative art.

The clocks represent concepts of time from magic to mystery, from poetry to reason. All but Ghost Clock tell time; it is a trompe l'oeil wood sculpture of a tall "grandfather" clock wrapped in cloth. Masterworks all, they each require more than 1,000 hours of labor to create. Two of them are also desks. Sun God hides a desk in the body of the clock, which pays tribute to the ancient Egyptian method of telling time. Castle has embellished this elegant wood structure of tulipwood, purpleheart, rosewood and holly with gold leaf, adorning it with gilded bronze eagles standing guard on their own pedestals. The Desk Clock also fully conceals a desk with drawers in the base of the curly mahogany and maple clock. Its shape reminds one of the American cowboy with bowed legs. The "cowboy" in this sculpture is heavily inlaid with mother-of-pearl and abalone.

The other clocks in the exhibition are as distinctive and unique as the names Castle has given them: the Jester resembles a human form dressed in a harlequin jacket, with arms as clock's hands and the legs covered in dark red leather stockings; woods used are curly mahogany and imbuya. Dr. Caligari, inspired by the 1920s film, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, is totally asymmetrical with an interior cabinet painted black and white in a loosely expressionistic style; Four Years Before Lunch, subtitled Grandson in a Hawaiian Shirt, requires consultation of four half-covered clock faces to tell the time and has a poem by Edward Lucie-Smith carved into the back. Other clocks in the exhibition are titled Arch, Bird, Octagon, Mystery, Trophy, and Ziggurat.



Wendell Castle is a native of Kansas and earned a bachelor of arts degree in sculpture at the University of Kansas. That background, combined with a master of fine arts degree in industrial design, is apparent in his masterful application of functional design principles, and sculptural sophistication, in his work. His furniture is in numerous public and private collections. His studio near Rochester, New York, was expanded in recent years to include a school with two dozen full-time furniture students. In addition to his personal production of unique art furniture, he supervises several students in executing his designs. "Masterpieces of Time" will remain on view through May 4, 1986.

Sun God clock by Wendell Castle, 1985, made of tulipwood, purpleheart, rosewood, with gold leaf and battery-operated works. 94" high by 39" wide. Lent by Alexander H. Milliken, Inc. Photo by Bruce Miller.



## Renwick Restoration Ends !!!!!!!

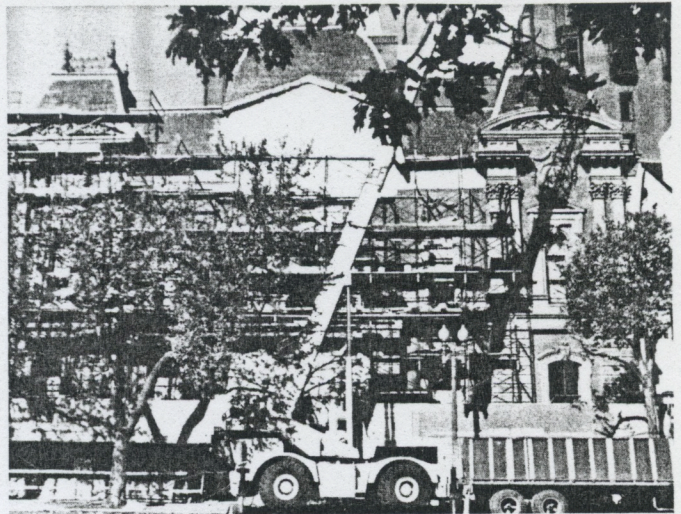
The facade of the Renwick Gallery, obscured by "pedestrian protectors" or scaffolding since 1976, will be revealed again in all of its French Second Empire style glory in late December. All of the original ornamental stone--damaged by age, weather and atmospheric pollution since the building was constructed more than a century ago--and all of the windows will have been replaced. The structure originally designed by James Renwick as the Corcoran Gallery of Art will look as it did in the 19th century, though 20th century technology plays a role in its restoration. The replacement stones, rather than being carved as were the originals, are cast. Their texture and color duplicate the original stones more closely than would be possible using available natural stone. The windows, too, are similar in appearance to the originals but are double-pane and are made of a special glass that filters ultraviolet rays harmful to works of art.

The building has had an eventful history. Though it was begun in 1859 by William Wilson Corcoran, a merchant banker and philanthropist, as one of the first public art galleries built in the United States, the Civil War interrupted its completion. It was used for the storage of military uniforms, and as headquarters for the Quartermaster General of the Union Army, Montgomery C. Meigs. When the Civil War ended, completion of the Gallery's interior resumed. The first public event held there was a grand ball to raise funds for the completion of the Washington Monument, also interrupted by the Civil War. President and Mrs. Grant presided over the gala affair in the gallery's principal painting gallery (now called the Grand Salon), which was festooned and decorated with cages of singing canaries.

When the building was finally completed and opened as the Corcoran Gallery of Art, its galleries were illuminated by rows of gas jets for evening viewing, and during the day second-floor skylights permitted natural light to flood the rooms of paintings. First-floor galleries were devoted to ceramics, bronzes, and plaster casts of classical Greek and Roman statuary.

Because there was no storage space for objects other than those on view, the Corcoran collection outgrew the building by the 1890s and the present Corcoran Gallery was erected a few blocks away. When the Gallery moved into its new quarters, Renwick's building was rented, then purchased, by the U. S. Government and used for more than sixty years as the Court of Claims.

In the 1950s the government needed more space for offices, including those for the Court of Claims, and plans were laid for a massive modern office building facing Lafayette Square and occupying the block where James Renwick's building stands. Fortunately, the wheels of Government commonly turn slowly and funds were not provided for the proposed building's construction during the Eisenhower administration. When John F.



Where is the Renwick in this picture?

Behind the scaffolding and crane that are scheduled to disappear in December, when restoration of the historic building is expected to end. Photo Paul Parkman

Kennedy became President the building plans were reviewed, then scrapped in favor of preserving the residential scale of the houses facing Lafayette Square and the crumbling Court of Claims building.

It wasn't until 1964, and the Presidency of Lyndon Baines Johnson, however, that then-Secretary of the Smithsonian, S. Dillon Ripley, persuaded the President to transfer the building to the Smithsonian for restoration "to exhibit in the restored gallery, examples of the ingenuity of our people, and to present exhibits from other nations". Its restoration was coupled with the preservation of the remaining townhouses on Jackson Place, facing Lafayette Square, and the construction of a large office building behind them and Renwick's gallery.

Because much of the ornamental stone had crumbled so badly that carved details were gone, the firm that received the contract to restore the building found it necessary to consult late nineteenth-century photographs and hire a sculptor to recreate them. His facsimiles were then used to cast new surface ornament directly on the surfaces of the original building stones, using a composition material made from ground stone salvaged from the building and securing it to the building with steel pins.

The building, renamed the Renwick Gallery in honor of its architect--who had already designed the original Smithsonian Institution "Castle"--opened to the public in January 1972 as the Smithsonian's showplace for American creativity in crafts and design. It looked as good as new--for a few years. However, one morning a piece of stone fell from the building's face onto its front steps. Fearing risk to gallery visitors, Smithsonian officials ordered an examination of the building's surface, and discovered that the layer of applied detail seemed loose in several places. Removal of all potentially dangerous, loose material ensued, follow-



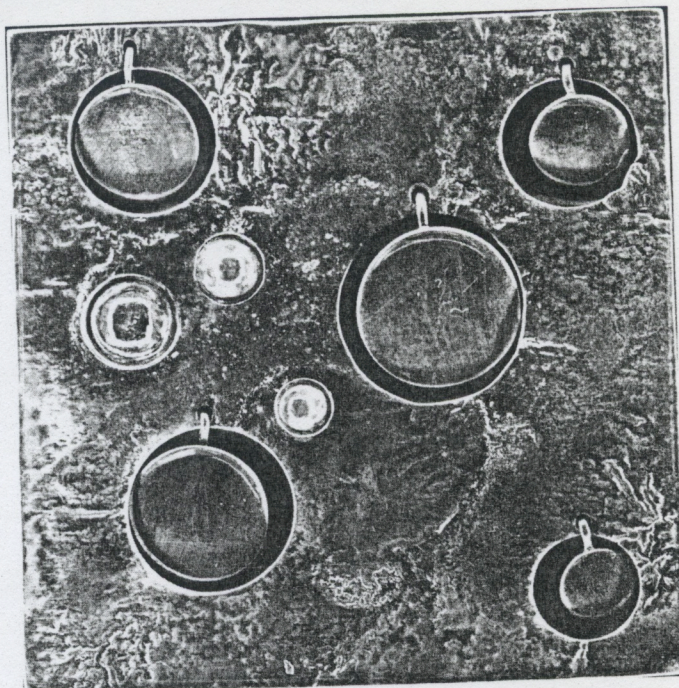
ed by a detailed examination of all original stone surfaces that revealed the need to replace approximately 90% of the stones. The decision was made to request funds from Congress for a stone-on-stone replacement, and to ensure that the project would receive the finest professional attention possible, it was divided into a sequence of steps. Following the cleaning of the original stone surfaces detailed drawings were made. Then resculpting of missing detail, preparation of surfaces, from which to make casts, production of casts sturdy enough to hold the durable cast stone composition, actual casting of the stones, and finally, removal of original stones and replacement with the new replicas were accomplished.

It has been a long process. Because the Renwick's exterior has been hidden by scaffolding, cranes and construction paraphernalia for so long rumors have persisted that the building was closed, and was being demolished. Taxi drivers have refused to drop their passengers there for that reason. Now that work is coming to an end, fans of the Renwick are rejoicing that this splendid architectural gem will again be a beautiful ornament at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

### Metalsmithing From the 1940s and 1950s Featured

Jewelry by Carlyle H. Smith and Margaret De Patta, and a silver muffineer by Margret Craver will be the Renwick's featured objects from the permanent collection in December and January. They focus attention on the revival of metal-working skills following World War II, and the influence that the three artists had on others in their field.

Shortages of materials and labor during the war had restricted metalsmithing and jewelry-making in the United States. At the war's end, however, a series of workshops for metalsmithing teachers revived the use of metal for functional and decorative objects. Margret Craver was the

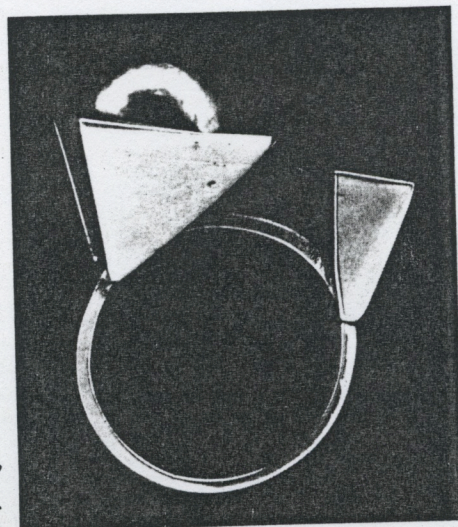


Brooch by Carlyle H. Smith, 1957, 2" square, reticulated sterling silver with lapis lazuli. Gift of the artist.

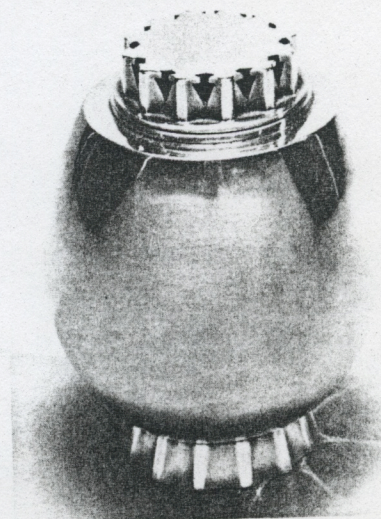
most vigorous proponent of metalsmithing and was active in the vocational rehabilitation of war veterans. Like Margaret De Patta in California and Carlyle H. Smith at the University of Kansas, Craver influenced generations of American metalsmiths through teaching and creative example. Each of these three is represented in the museum collection by an object that exemplifies both technical skill and design originality.

Margaret De Patta is perhaps best known for giving metal and gemstones—often eccentric in shape—equal prominence in her sculptural brooches. In the ring in the NMAA/Renwick Gallery collection she has combined metal shapes to feature both the pearl and the setting in an original way, without sacrificing the comfort of the wearer.

Carlyle H. Smith's brooch contrasts polished silver disks, which glitter as the wearer moves, with a reticulated silver background. Such



Ring by Margaret De Patta, 1953, white gold with baroque pearl. Museum purchase.



Muffineer by Margret Craver, 1946, 4" high, sterling silver. Gift of the James Renwick Collectors Alliance.



contrast in surface and shape frequently appears in his work. As a teacher he has also been consequential, training such nationally-respected metalworking professors as Robert Ebendorf, L. Brent Kington and Richard Mawdsley, all of whom are also represented in the collection.

Craver's muffineer--a gift of the James Renwick Collectors Alliance--is an updated sugar shaker, popular from America's colonial past. She gives it sculptural form, playing the polished and unadorned cylindrical walls against triangular openings near the top. In her design the shaker top acts as an architectural cornice and finial while serving also as a functional element.

**Gift of Ceramic Sculpture by  
Victor Schreckengost  
Enhances Renwick Collection**

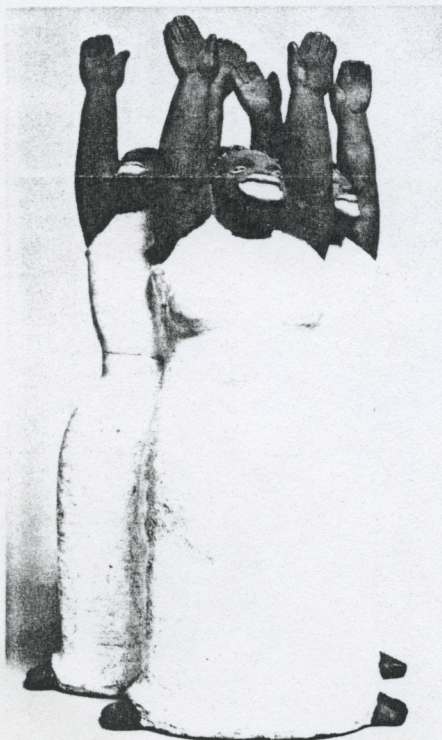
Viktor Schreckengost, whose sculptural and decorative objects from the 1930s and 40s are significant among American ceramics, has given the Renwick Gallery three of his most celebrated creations. The Ohio artist and industrial design professor at the Cleveland Institute of Art has given the museum Glory, Glory, a 19-inch glazed sculpture of women gospel singers made in 1938, and Apocalypse '42, his 16-inch ceramic parody of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse--an armed Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito with a uniformed figure of death astride a galloping horse, flames from its hooves licking the world across which it races. The third gift of the artist is a porcelain punchbowl with four service plates entitled The Hunt made in 1931.



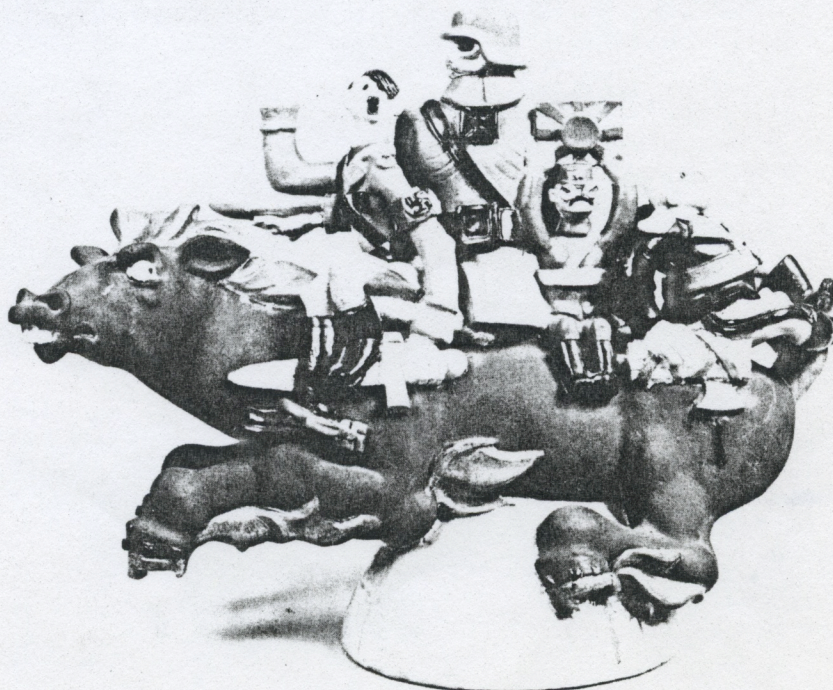
"The Hunt", 1931, white porcelain, underglaze decoration.

Its decoration of horses, and riders dressed for a fox hunt, give the set a stylish, modernist appeal that has assured its place in the exhibition on art deco design in America that the Renwick plans to open in December of next year.

Schreckengost grew up in a family of potters and was a student at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Admiring the works of the Viennese sculptor Michael Powolny in 1929, Schreckengost decided that he must go to Vienna to work with his mentor at the Kunstgewerbischule. He returned to Cleveland a year later with a whole new aesthetic. Unlike American artists working in clay who used it to imitate other materials, Viennese ceramists exploited the tactile qualities of clay, modeling their pieces freely. Both Glory, Glory and Apocalypse '42 exemplify the biting wit and informality that characterize Schreckengost's post-Vienna sculpture.



"Glory, Glory", 1938, modeled red clay, raw borax glaze, blackbird englobe.



"Apocalypse '42", 1942, modeled directly in red clay with opaque and transparent glazes.



**NEWS**  
**From the Alliance**



Photo  
Paul Parkman

I am happy to report that it has been a very successful year for the Alliance--our Contributing Membership and contributions are at an all-time high! Our beautiful new brochure features the objects purchased with Alliance funds, provided by Contributing Members, and donated to the Renwick Gallery for its permanent collection.

In addition, recent lectures at the Renwick, co-sponsored by the Alliance, including Dale Chihuly's and the furniture series, have drawn record attendance. The audiences have included such luminaries as Congressman Sidney R. Yates (D-Illinois) and Clement E. Conger, Curator of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, Department of State and the White House. Our tours and craft study trips continue to be popular and have attracted Contributing Members from Washington State, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and New York City. Last spring's seminar, "The Flexible Medium," co-sponsored with the Smithsonian Resident Associate Program, brought together artists, museum professionals, collectors, gallery directors, students, and craft enthusiasts from across the United States. Nearly half the 200 registrants for this one-day seminar came from outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

In the year ahead, we hope not only to increase the number of memberships but also the contributions which will allow us to broaden our



Dale Chihuly (right) talks informally with members of the audience following his talk at the Renwick Gallery on September 23rd.  
Photo: Paul Parkman

educational programs and make additional acquisitions for the Renwick Gallery's permanent national collection. As we go to press, discussions are underway for a seminar on contemporary wood in conjunction with the exhibitions, "Masterpieces of Time: Clocks by Wendell Castle" and "The Art of Turned Wood Bowls" at the Renwick Gallery and planned to coincide with the fourth Washington Craft Show. This all-day seminar will take place on Saturday, April 19, 1986, and feature artists and experts on wood and art furniture. A two-day trip to New York City is also being considered for next fall.

It is indeed rewarding to know that the Contributing Membership renewal rate is 86%, suggesting that our Members are solidly supportive of the organization's goals. The Alliance is a major source of support for educational programs and acquisitions for the Renwick Gallery; our continued growth as a national organization is of vital importance not only to the Renwick and Alliance but also to everyone interested in supporting and promoting art in craft media.

Elmerina Parkman, President  
James Renwick Collectors Alliance

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Inquiries about the James Renwick Collectors Alliance should be sent to: James Renwick Collectors Alliance, 5240 Nebraska Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20015.

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**"Soup to Nuts" New Renwick Sales Show**

Serving accessories for the home will be the Renwick Gallery Museum Shop focus in the "Soup to Nuts" sales exhibition opening on February 10. Though a selection was not yet made at the deadline for Quarterly text, Museum Shop buyers said that they expect to select ceramic, glass and wood bowls, ladles, nutcrackers and nut-bowls, pitchers, coffee and tea pots, and casseroles for the event, which ends April 6.

The program of sales exhibitions was initiated as a joint effort of the Smithsonian Museum Shop buyers and the Renwick Gallery staff several years ago in an effort to augment the curator-organized gallery exhibitions. The sales exhibitions were intended to provide a dignified sales opportunity for craftsmen producing high-quality functional objects, since the gallery exhibitions concentrate on unique art objects made of clay, fiber, wood, glass and metal. Both the selection of sales exhibition themes, and the objects available for sale, receive the scrutiny of both Renwick Gallery and Museum Shop craft specialists.



## Public Programs and Exhibition Openings

Dec. 5: Creative Screen: German Emigrant Artists and Authors in America. A colorful look at 19th century artists such as Albert Bierstadt and Heinrich-Baldwin Mollhausen and novelist Fredrich Gerstädter and their reactions to the United States of that period (8 min). German Handicrafts. An examination of contemporary German handicrafts and production techniques--clay, fiber, glass and wood--as exhibited in Frankfurt at the Museum of Applied Arts (Museum für Kunsthandwerk) designed by architect Richard Meier of New York (31 min). The films listed above are shown through the courtesy of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and in conjunction with the exhibition, "The Woven and Graphic Art of Anni Albers". Christmas Customs Near and Far. The origin of many of our Christmas customs enacted in typical scenes by children of German, Swedish, Mexican and Italian descent (13 min). Free. At 11 a.m., 12 noon and 1 p.m.

Dec. 8: Lecture: Frances Nelson, former director of the Gallery of Applied Arts, New York City, will discuss the work of architects who design furniture in this fifth lecture in the series, "Furniture, the Design Revolution", co-sponsored by the James Renwick Collectors Alliance and the Renwick Gallery. Free. At 2 p.m.

Dec. 15:



Lecture: Pilar Viladas, Senior Editor, Progressive Architecture, will talk about the yearly design competition in furniture and lighting sponsored by that magazine, the final lecture in the series co-sponsored by the James Renwick Collectors Alliance and the Renwick Gallery. Free. At 2 p.m.

Dec. 19: Creative Screen: repeat of December 5.

Dec. 24: Exhibition opening: "Masterpieces of Time: Clocks by Wendell Castle."

Jan. 9: Creative Screen: Children of the Mist. A film about the Tuhoe people of New Zealand. Isolated in the remote valleys of the New Zealand east coast until well into this century, the Tuhoe are finding ways to hold on to their traditions as they work and live in the urban present (30 min). Treasures from the Land. The story of four craftsmen--whose work is included in the current New Zealand craft exhibition--

potter Barry Brickell, weaver Judy Wilson, Maori woodcarver Paratene Matchitt and greenstone carver Donn Salt. (28 min). Free. At 11 a.m. 12:15 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. Films are shown through the courtesy of the New Zealand Embassy.

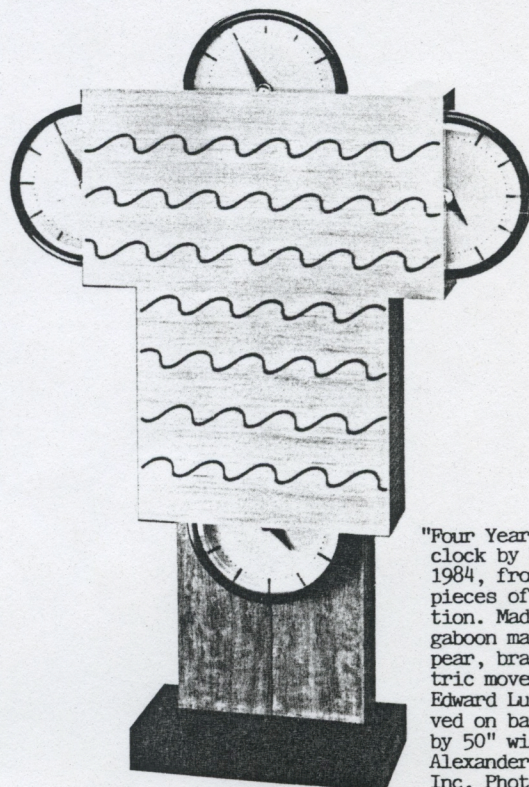
Jan. 23: Creative Screen: repeat of January 9.

Feb. 9: Lecture: Jeweler designer and maker Marjorie Schick will discuss her work. Free. At 2 p.m.

Feb. 10: Sales exhibition opening: "Soup to Nuts."

Feb. 13: Creative Screen: Painting in an Empty Land. The relationship of New Zealand's "marvelous light" and the land, to art is discussed through the works of four of its foremost painters--Colin McCahon, Michael Smither, Brent Wong and Sir Tofswill Woollanston (21 min). Treasures from the Land. The story of four craftsmen whose work is included in the current New Zealand craft exhibition----potter Barry Brickell, weaver Judy Wilson, Maori woodcarver Paratene Matchitt and greenstone carver Donn Salt. (28 min). Films are shown through the courtesy of the New Zealand Embassy. Free. At 11 a.m., 12 noon and 1 p.m.

Feb. 24: Creative Screen: repeat of February 13.



"Four Years Before Lunch" clock by Wendell Castle, 1984, from the "Masterpieces of Time" exhibition. Made of satinwood, gaboon mahogany, Swiss pear, brass with electric movement. Poem by Edward Lucie-Smith carved on back. 71½" high by 50" wide. Lent by Alexander H. Milliken, Inc. Photo Bruce Miller.