

RENWICK QUARTERLY

Sept., Oct., Nov., 1990

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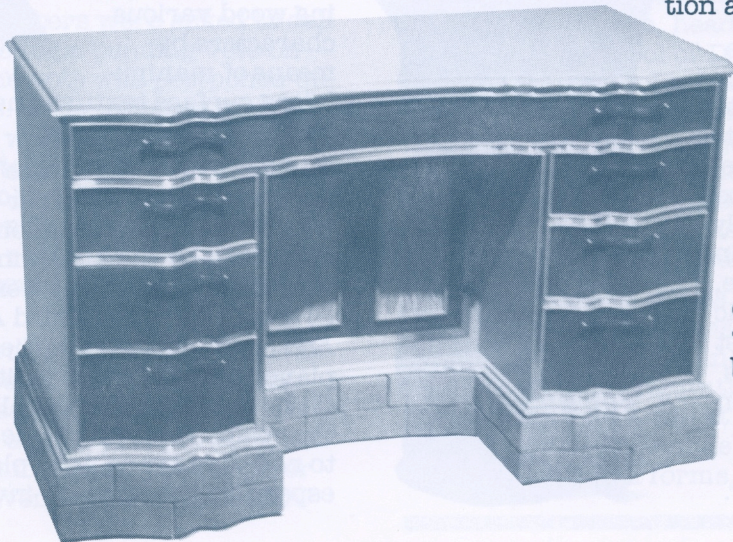
Alliance Funding Assists New Acquisitions for Renwick Gallery Permanent Collection

The James Renwick Alliance voted to assist with funding for several major objects for the Renwick's permanent collection, following a presentation by Curator-in-Charge Michael Monroe on April 20, in the Grand Salon. These most recent works to join the permanent collection are a Boston kneehole desk by furniture maker Garry Knox Bennett, a quilt by fiber artist Lia Cook, three works by jeweler Arline Fisch, and a hand-crafted chaise by Michael Hurwitz.

Garry Knox Bennett has played a pivotal role in freeing the American studio furniture movement from its obsession with the seductive beauty of wood. Bennett uses disparate materials — including wood — and employs traditional fine wood-working techniques merely as a means to realize his exuberant, distinctly identifiable works. As the acclaimed master of incorporating a variety of synthetic and natural materials in a single piece of furniture, Bennett has inspired a generation of furniture makers to redefine the parameters of fine woodworking. His contribution to the field is both currently and ultimately of great value.

Bennett's "Boston Kneehole," a bureau table, was made in response to an invitation by the Museum

Garry Knox Bennett,
"Boston Kneehole," 1989,
Honduran rosewood, maple,
aluminum, brick, Fountain-
head, ColorCore, antiqued
bronze, watercolor paint,
31 3/4" x 24" x 85".

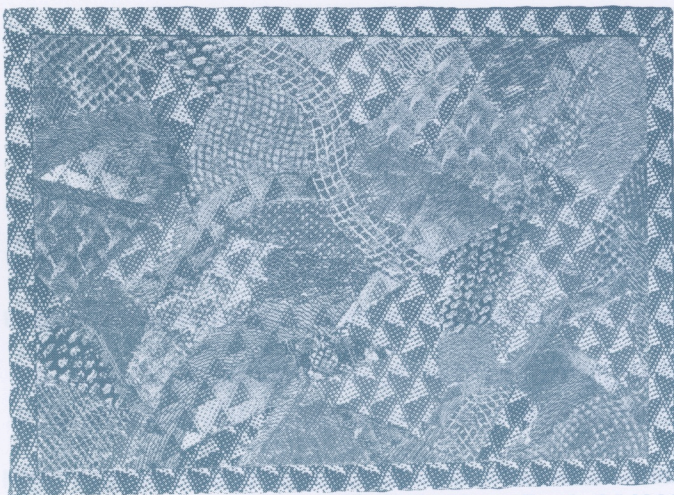


of Fine Arts, Boston, to participate in an exhibit in which each artist used an antique piece of furniture as inspiration for a new piece. Bennett's interpretation of his chosen piece, a 1760 Boston kneehole, is as quiet and elegant as its forebearer; however, his wit, humor and discrete use of contemporary materials speak of the Twentieth Century. This furniture maker's ability to integrate traditional historical references and materials with contemporary design concerns and materials is astonishingly well proven in this 1989 Kneehole. Bennett has managed to honor tradition and simultaneously overturn it.

Lia Cook's art is a celebration of cloth; she weaves fiber hangings whose subject matter is fabric — hung, piled, draped and quilted. Her weavings are of strong interest both aesthetically and technically. The art and craft of her work are interdependent. Cook combines paint with her weavings. First, she distorts the actual weave of her "canvases" by adjusting the tension of her loom, or by hammering the textiles thoroughly to flatten them. Then she paints her strongly dimensional canvases with themes of fiber and concerns for light reflection and absorption.

"Crazy Too Quilt" is a large-scale and excellent example of Lia Cook's "fiber about fiber," in this case stitchery. The artist has given the traditional crazy quilt an atypical harmony of color, texture and scale. Cook has framed her "quilt" with a uniform border which lends new status to the early social and economic basis for historic quilting efforts.

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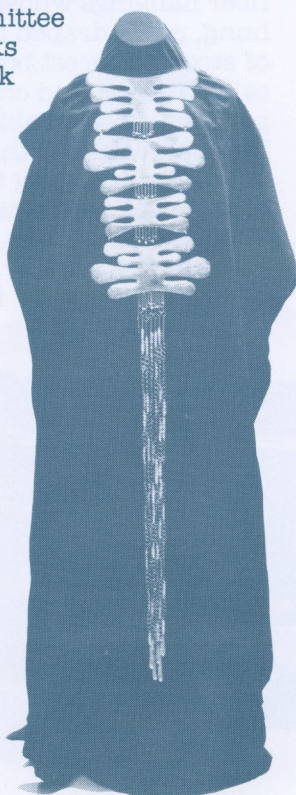


Lia Cook, "Crazy Too Quilt," 1989, abaca, rayon, painted and pressed, 83" x 87".

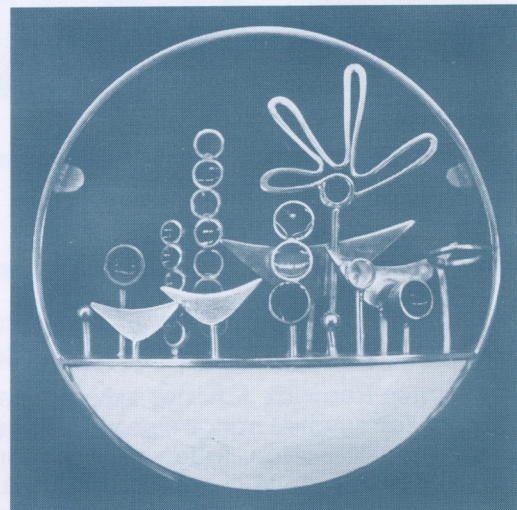
Jewelry, as it is approached by Arline Fisch, is created to make the wearer both look and feel beautiful. Her work, proceeding from this premise, is highly personal and inventive in form, retaining an air of delicacy and femininity regardless of the date of completion or size of the piece. Throughout her career Ms. Fisch has displayed a preference for dramatic rather than discreet jewelry, and her interest in large-scale effect and total adornment are expressed most in recent works, but always with careful attention to the scale of the human form. She has been a teacher for all of her 30-year career as a jeweler. Her book "Textile Techniques in Metal for Jewelers," is the definitive manual for her innovative woven metal technique.

The Alliance acquisitions committee chose to support all three works by Ms. Fisch which the Renwick presented — each from a different period of her career. The early "Garden Pin," from 1962, is a delightful assemblage of playfully made silver and enamel elements intuitively assembled into a storybook garden diorama. The wearer's clothing is visible through parts of the jewelry, integrating owner with art. "Body Adornment," completed in 1971, illustrates her interest in movement, light and texture in jewelry. A musically enchanting curtain of chains hang from the breast plate, evoking an unknown exotic culture. In Ms. Fisch's most recent work, the artist has shown a special fascination

Arline Fisch, "Body Ornament," 1971, sterling silver, 52" x 10" x 1".



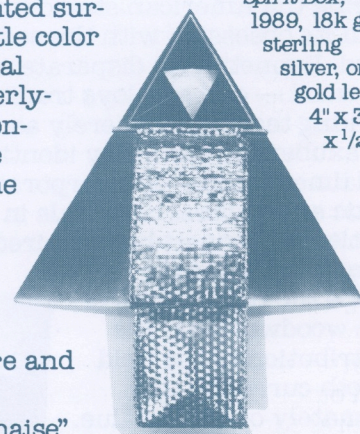
with the traditionally spiritual, ritualistic and mystical functions of jewelry. "Spirit Box," a pin made in 1989, is an exquisite example of work in this conceptual realm. It is formal in design and materials — polished black onyx in a form where triangle echoes triangle and forms a platform for a pyramid. Woven gold suggests a ritualistic cult vestment, and forms a hinged golden curtain which opens to reveal a gold-leafed chamber of mysterious symbolic function.



Arline Fisch, "Garden Pin," 1962, sterling silver, enamel, ivory, 3" wide x 1/2".

Michael Hurwitz believes that "Wood as a medium is as capable of self-expression as any of the other traditional fine arts media." He makes functional objects with a strong sculptural presence. He creates elusive and tantalizing qualities largely through the manipulation of painted surfaces, always in subtle color harmony and textural scale with their underlying forms. Among contemporary furniture artists, Hurwitz alone is investigating the possibilities of giving wood various characters by means of manipulating surface texture and color.

Hurwitz's "Rocking Chaise" is part of the "New American Furniture" exhibition organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This work, now in the Renwick Gallery, won the Grand Prize in the Third Annual American Craft Award Competition earlier this year. The artist played off of the compositional aspects of a Fancy Chair by Samuel Gragg (1722-1855), interpreting the scale, strength of line, relationship of positive to negative space, interplay of paint and detail and especially the sense of invention. Rather than



Arline Fisch, "Spirit Box," 1989, 18k gold, sterling silver, onyx, gold leaf, 4" x 3 1/2" x 1/2".

recasting these elements, Hurwitz stretched out the line and placed it on a rocking structure. In doing so he created a furniture form which evokes an image of a magic carpet for the fantasy of the viewer and user. The quiet,

lithe simplicity of the "Rocking Chaise" testifies to Hurwitz's refined sense of design, structure and finish.

Michael Hurwitz,
"Rocking Chaise," 1989,
mahogany, oil paint,
steam-bent lamination,
traditional joinery, 34 3/4"
x 24" x 85". Photo courtesy of the
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Alliance Advocates Arts Funding

by Geni Dunnells

The current crisis in federal funding for the arts has galvanized the Alliance and its members into action. In June, President Jerry Paulson sent a letter on behalf of the Alliance to key Congressional chairmen and committee members urging support for the National Endowment for the Arts. Members of the Alliance also received a letter explaining the crisis and encouraging them to contact their representatives in Washington.

Judging from copies of the heartfelt, articulate letters sent to us by a few of our members, the response to the alert was positive. Unfortunately, some of the Congressional replies were not as positive, indicating only lukewarm support, at best, for the NEA. Clearly, tight money and a failure to find a consensus will make reauthorization an uphill battle.

In July, Alliance board members were asked to call their Congressional offices for a pending vote on NEA funding. However, the vote was postponed until after the August recess. Thus, Alliance members and other proponents (as well as opponents of any federal funding for the arts!) may have the August recess and most of September to influence Congress on this issue. Presently there are 26 proposed amendments to the reauthorizing legislation. Your phone call or letter could be *THE* deciding factor in this debate!

For 25 years, NEA support has given craft artists critical seed money to develop their talents. The Alliance believes that preserving the artistic freedom and creativity of artists is important for the cultural life of our communities. We need our members' continued involvement to sustain NEA now and in the future.

These actions of the James Renwick Alliance, a private, independent organization, do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Renwick Gallery or the Smithsonian Institution.

"Glassworks" will be on View During Installation Beginning November 3

Seven contemporary artists working in glass have been invited to install site-specific works at the Renwick Gallery. The installation and exhibition "Glassworks" will be on view in two phases: The public is invited to watch the first phase installation November 3-9; exhibition dates for this phase will be November 9, 1990, through February 3, 1991. Phase two will be installed December 7-14, and on exhibit December 14, 1990, through April 14, 1991.

Mainstream glass art is dominated by works on a small scale, often variations on vessel forms, whose aesthetic accomplishments frequently revolve around technical prowess. Inextricably bound to the processes conditioning its creation, principally glass-blowing and casting, glass art tends to be materially self-referential.

However, the artists participating in "Glassworks" stand apart from such trends expressly because they use glass in ways that confound its axioms of fragility and dematerialization. Rather than being the principal subject of their work, glass is their material of choice, imbedded in a broader artistic enterprise. Moreover, their projects are large in scale, exceeding the normal limitations imposed by traditional glass-working techniques. Ranging in scope from architectonic structures and stained glass to figurative sculpture, "Glassworks" offers a selective look at some of the unconventional directions in which contemporary glass is moving, particularly to the domain where the distinctions between the crafts and the fine arts are inconsequential.

Artists included in the first phase of "Glassworks" include Bruce Chao, head of the glass program at Rhode Island School of Design; Richard Harned, associate professor of art at The Ohio State University; Mark McDonnell, chair of the glass department at California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland; Judith Schaechter, a stained glass artist based in Philadelphia; and Therman Statom, a Los Angeles artist who creates environments composed of spontaneously painted sheet glass.

The second phase artists are William Morris, a teacher at Pilchuck Glass Center in Stanwood, Washington, who combines blown and sculpted glass elements in figurative works, and Ginny Ruffner, also an instructor at Pilchuck Glass Center, who paints and assembles mixed media compositions in sculptural forms.



"The State of the Crafts 1990"

by Matthew Kangas

Photo by Joy Thornton.

(The following remarks were excerpted from Mr. Kangas's address to the James Renwick Alliance on April 8. Mr. Kangas was a 1989-90 recipient of the James Renwick Fellowship in American Crafts. He is an independent art critic and curator living in Seattle.)

As we approach the end of the Twentieth Century, it is time to look back and take stock, and to see where we are today with respect to yesterday.

If the century began with an elevation of crafts because of a fear of the industrial revolution's effect, the preservation of the crafts today is still much defined by the presence of technology in our lives. Though the dream of William Morris never came true — his utopian socialist fantasy of the artisan working for Everyman and enhancing everyday life — the special position of the crafts is still available to those who choose to subscribe to its various and multifarious sets of ethics and aesthetics.

The truth is, the development of the avant-garde in painting and sculpture at first elevated the design and creation of functional objects and then, after Lenin's 1922 crackdown and Hitler's 1932 ban, for example, eventually marginalized them altogether. It was not until after World War II in our country that, thanks to the expanded enrollment of GIs in university art programs, that the dissemination of a handicraft aesthetic got a second wind.

From there, a split or division developed between those who preferred the humbler status of the crafts and those who claimed fine arts status and recognition. Today, the division remains and, no matter how much we may wish it away, the art versus craft issue will never go away; it is a central aesthetic question which enlivens debate and discourse and which reflects the lack of unanimity of opinion within American crafts. And why should there be unanimity? We are a nation of over 200 million people. If even one percent of the population cares about the crafts seriously, that still means two million people see a variety of shades of meaning with regard to craft's status in our society.

If I were to create a hierarchy based on my taste alone, I would distinguish among non-functional objects in clay, glass, metal, wood and textiles which appeal to me as an art critic searching for meaning, content and expressive qualities completely apart from use.

Add to that a separate but equal status for functional works in those materials. Here the art critic's challenge for interpretation is severe for, compared to conventional art forms, it is difficult to determine the same kind of content in functional objects unless, that is, one dismantles the object according to certain aspects. For example, the iconography of surface decoration in some pottery may be more interesting than the pottery as a whole.

Thus, the reason most art critics ignore or remain silent about functional crafts is that they are too lazy to seek additional knowledge about the objects' long heritage or they simply have nothing to say. When critics such as myself have spoken up and made comparative analytical and evaluative judgments, the responses from craftsmakers have often been angry or hurt. This has led me to write elsewhere about a generally anti-intellectual climate within American crafts today that does not exist in the fine arts. Could it be that the calls for "better writing" and "serious commentary" on the crafts are coming from educated artisans and appreciators or connoisseurs but not from many makers themselves, or that the demands are really concealing desires for criticism as a form of market recognition?

For here, the danger of market pressures seems far more prencious than technology in terms of affecting the state of the crafts. For the past ten years, a phenomenon I call the gallery vessel has developed into a powerful controlling element determining what kinds of objects craftspeople make. For better or worse, and mostly worse, very large and very small versions of traditional functional forms have received greater market support and, indeed, critical recognition than functional productionware or figurative sculpture. The rise of the art glass movement is a perfect example. This new category of the gallery vessel which isn't really new — Howard Kottler called it "palace ware" — has separated the production craftsman from the sculptor with the gallery vesselmaker in between, lording it over both.

What is it then that will determine how the future values the achievements of today?

I do not know but I will make a few guesses. After the onslaught of New York's neo-conceptual and consumerist art seen in the Hirshhorn Museum's recent "Culture and Commentary" exhibition, I foresee a further split between those who only care about art's ideas, specifically social commentary, and those who, rejecting such tiresome but relevant ideological art, call for and crave an elevation of technique or craft which will carry personal or private content. It could be stated another way: those who have completely bought into the view of art as society's scolder and those who long for the subjectivity and privacy of the original avant-garde.

It is at this point of interface where craft's current window of opportunity lies. As the world grows

smaller and colder, the role of craft which celebrates the touch of the human hand and the sensibility of the individual maker has much to offer those recovering amnesiacs who long for the warmth of craftsmanship after a decade of cold steel, Formica and the photographic image. Far from being irrelevant, the crafts could reintroduce human values which the fine arts world sorely needs. But it will not be easy for there is a deep strain of ambivalence within American crafts toward this larger world.

If craft artists of all persuasions do not seek greater recognition and respect in all validating institutions — magazines, museums and galleries — then what I fear will happen — the co-opting of craft's ideas by fine artists — could occur.

So the challenge is there. In my travels as this year's Renwick Fellow in American Crafts, I have seen a resurgence of fine functional pottery, for example, that is very heartening and I have a feeling that such artists will continue regardless of institutional neglect or endorsement. Nonetheless, I agree with members of a panel at the recent National Council for the Education in Ceramic Arts conference in Cincinnati that the time has come for the National Endowment for the Arts craftsmen's fellowships to more widely acknowledge the essential role potters have played in the flowering of American crafts today.

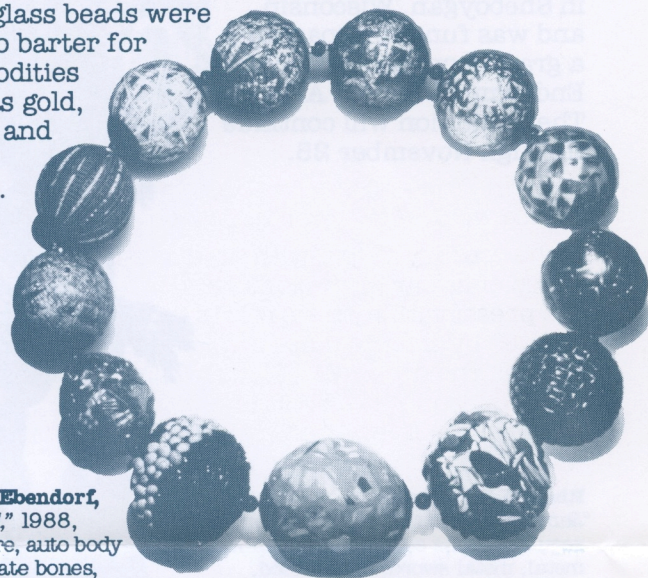
Furthermore, none of our museums is collecting broadly enough and deeply enough in Twentieth-Century American crafts. Instead of brand names already rewarded by the market and curators who follow their lead, let us seek out the unknown craftsmakers all across this country so that our national collections will be truly national with none of the safe regional hierarchies I have encountered in Washington, DC and New York City museums.

Finally, I wish to close these remarks with an example of how other countries support the crafts. With Eastern and Central Europe at the top of everyone's minds, isn't it interesting to note that the one art form all those governments supported most vigorously was the crafts? It may have been because of the traditional links of the crafts to the peasant class. Or it may have been because the crafts posed no political threat whatsoever. It certainly is true that, more than Modernism or Post-Modernism, the crafts will endure. But what will happen in our own country if craftsmakers are asked to sign anti-obscenity loyalty oaths in order to receive their grants from the NEA? The day when American craft artists will have to stand up and be counted may not be far off.

©1990 Matthew Kangas

"Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art" On View through November 25

The historic legacy of beads transcends thirty thousand years. Over these millennia, countless cultural manifestations have emerged for this very personal and socially-cued means of adornment. Cro-magnon man strung pierced bear and lion teeth into necklaces to be worn as adornment, to indicate social standing, and even today numerous African tribes value beads for their medicinal powers. From the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century, glass beads were used to barter for commodities such as gold, spices and even slaves.



Robert Ebendorf,
"Untitled," 1988,
ColorCore, auto body
putty, slate bones,
1930's glass, tantalum, photographs, Christmas paper, Chinese
newspaper, 24k gold foil, colored glass stones, seashells, rubber,
hammered copper end caps, plastic beads, 12" x 12" x 2".
Lent by Donna Schneider.

Much Twentieth Century thinking relegates beads to the subordinate function of adornment. However, within the last two decades, contemporary artists have found them to be a viable and exciting addition to pre-existing artistic media such as painting and sculpture.

Beads, the primary medium out of which the objects in the exhibition "Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art," was created, have not traditionally been considered a fine art material, despite their long history of use as decoration and adornment. In this exhibit, artists explore the formal possibilities that beads provide. The use of beads to create art objects also calls into question the esthetic boundaries between art and craft, high culture and secular culture. Artistic sensibilities as far reaching as those of artists Sherry Markovitz, Arch Connelly, Joyce Scott and John Garrett, for example, have demonstrated that using nontraditional materials such as beads expands upon established approaches to making art.

Today, artists are innovatively mixing traditional art forms such as painting and sculpture with

popular craft practices such as woodworking, basket weaving and quilting. This has provided an occasion to explore the formal and conceptual parameters that constitute the art object as well as an opportunity to question the social purpose of art.

"Structure and Surface: Beads in Contemporary American Art," was organized by the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and was funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The exhibition will continue through November 25.



Rhonda Zwillinger,
"Sentinel Shaman," 1988, faux jewels, sequins, shells set in silicon caulk on metal, metal sword, oil on wood, 64" x 23" x 19".

James Renwick Fellowships in American Crafts

by Elmerina Parkman

The Smithsonian Institution and the Renwick Gallery announce the fourth annual fellowship program for scholarly research in the modern American craft movement. The James Renwick Fellowships in American Crafts, a major Alliance initiative in 1987, are now funded primarily by the Renwick's parent museum, the National Museum of American Art, with additional support from the Alliance.

Research proposals are sought from candidates knowledgeable in the history of Twentieth Century American art, craft or design, and proposals concentrating on post-1930 craft developments or their historical antecedents are especially encouraged. Fellowships are available for up to 12 months in residence at the Renwick Gallery and NMAA. The deadline for applications is January 15, 1991.

In 1988, the first James Renwick Fellowships in American Crafts were awarded to Dr. Nancy Corwin, who conducted research on her book to

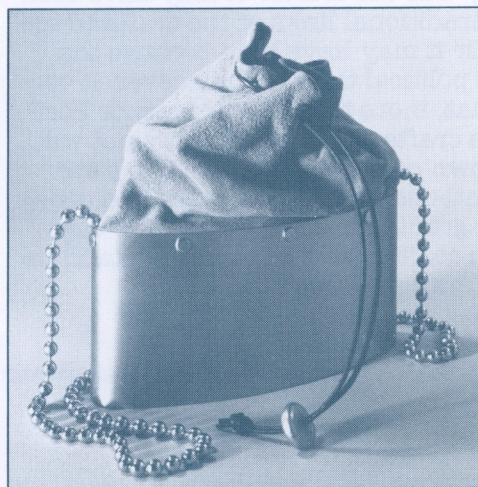
trace and evaluate the history of fiber art since 1945, and Patricia Malarcher, who examined the critical writing generated by selected major craft exhibitions from 1969 through 1987. The following year, two fellows were selected: Matthew Kangas, a Seattle art critic and curator, and Winifred Owens-Hart, associate professor of ceramics at Howard University in Washington, DC.

The third fellowships were recently awarded to Susan L.F. Isaacs, a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, and Charles S. Talley, editor of *Surface Design Journal* and a San Francisco freelance journalist.

For more information and application forms for the James Renwick Fellowship in American Crafts, write: Office of Fellowships and Grants, Smithsonian Institution, Suite 7300, L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, DC 20560, or call (202) 287-3271.

"Sensational Statements: Artwear" Offers Holiday Shopping at the Renwick

Wearable art by 30 craft artists is currently featured in the Renwick Gallery's museum sales shop. The wide range of media includes hand-painted silk scarves and handcrafted shawls, marbled, layered and frayed silk scarves, and a multicolored array of rayon chenille scarves woven in intricate patterns. Jackets and boleros, hand-stitched and multi-layered, are also available in full-spectrum colors, along with tapestry-look headbands, umbrellas, and tote bags in handprinted fabrics. Beautiful handbags in silk tapestry and crocheted linen, and hand-woven bow tie and cummerbund sets are featured for early holiday wardrobe planning. Jewelry creations offer many selections including marbled silk earrings and barrettes, uniquely knotted works with precious gems, and sterling silver animal and folk art motifs with African trade beads. The museum sales shop exhibition runs through October 8.



Wendy Stevens,
"Oval Bucket," 1990, brass, suede, chain. Photo by Jennifer Kotter.

Chicago Craft Study Tour and New Art Forms Exhibition

The renowned New Art Forms exhibition at the Navy Pier will be just half the attraction for an Alliance craft study tour to Chicago on September 13-15. Participants will also visit some of America's most prestigious private collections, artists' studios and private showings in galleries.

Included in the package are the opening reception of Lenore Tawney's new exhibit at Fairweather-Hardin Gallery, the preview night benefit for New Art Forms, visits to the collections of Ben Heineman and Objects Gallery owner Ann Nathan, personal talks with and visits to the studios of ceramic artist Ruth Duckworth and fiber artist Joan Livingstone, a private reception with Karen Johnson Boyd, owner of Perimeter Gallery and a member of the Craft Leaders Caucus of the James Renwick Alliance, to view the gallery's exhibition of Toshiko Takaezu's new works, and a private luncheon at the Art Institute of Chicago with a brief lecture on Lenore Tawney's museum exhibit. A special discounted pass will also be available for return visits to the Navy Pier.

Cost for the craft study tour package is \$250 for Alliance members, \$275 for non-members. Airline and hotel accommodations are not included and should be arranged separately. Discounts on airfares and deluxe hotel rooms are available.

Due to the nature of the private collections and galleries we will visit, a limited number of participants can be included in the Chicago tour. For further information, contact Shelley Gollust at (301) 229-0928. A registration form is available below.

Reservation Form

James Renwick Alliance Craft Study Tour
Chicago - September 13 - 15, 1990

Please reserve _____ places for me on the Chicago tour. I enclose \$_____ to cover the cost (\$250 for Alliance members, \$275 for non-members).

Name

Address

City

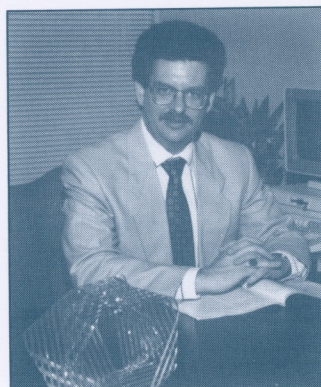
State

Zip

Day Phone

Evening Phone

Mail this form to: James Renwick Alliance
Chicago Craft Study Tour
6801 Winterberry Lane
Bethesda, Maryland 20817



News from the Alliance

by Jerome Paulson
President

This *Quarterly* provides a good opportunity to look at what the James Renwick Alliance did for you and the Renwick Gallery this past year, and to look forward to the activities of 1990-91. The Alliance had many remarkable achievements and several firsts this past year.

Lilian Burwell, chairperson of the education committee, organized the innovative "Craft and Fine Arts in the Living Space: Separate or Same?" There was also the engrossing series of quilting demonstrations which were presented in conjunction with the Slave Quilts exhibit.

Educational activities are cooperative efforts between the Alliance and the Renwick Gallery. The key people at the Gallery are Michael Monroe and Allen Bassing. One of the more recent and fascinating programs, arranged by Mr. Bassing with the support of the Alliance, was a two-day demonstration-lecture program in conjunction with the calligraphy exhibit.

The calligraphy exhibit and its associated programs exemplify the broad range of support which you, the Alliance, provide for the Gallery and represents a level of collaboration of which we should be very proud. The James Renwick Alliance provided support for Vicki Halper when she was a curatorial fellow and planned this particular exhibit. The Alliance then provided support for the educational programs which supplemented the exhibit.

In the coming year, Jean Efron and Lilian Burwell will work with other members of the Alliance in planning educational programs. The Alliance, as well as the general public, can look forward to programs which complement the exhibition schedule of the Gallery and programs of a more general nature related to crafts.

The Spring Forum and Craft Weekend, organized by Vice President Andrea Uravitch, Nancy Carter and a host of others brought many members of the Alliance together for two days of educational activities and fun. In the coming year, Nancy Carter will be working with new board member Mandy Hoffman to organize another spectacular event.

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The 1989-90 year saw a major increase in acquisition activities supported by you. The Alliance participated in the purchase of 14 objects which are now part of the permanent collection of the Renwick Gallery. This is the largest number of objects which the Alliance has ever helped purchase in one year. Both Elizabeth Broun, Director of the National Museum of American Art, and Robert McCormick Adams, Secretary of the Smithsonian, have written to express their gratitude and appreciation for your support of the Renwick Gallery. It is my hope and plan that we will maintain or exceed this level of acquisition activity in the coming year.

The Craft Leaders Caucus grew from concept to over 60 members in one year. These individuals will provide an important core group within the Alliance structure. This segment of the Alliance, lead by Sherley Koteen, Rebecca Stevens, Mel and Lee Eagle, and Paul and Elmerina Parkman, held its first official meeting in Washington in April.

The Caucus will have its second national meeting in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in November. Phil Hanes, Lee Eagle and Ford Singletary are organizing this exploration of the roots of American crafts. A Washington meeting will occur again in April 1991.

The Alliance conceived and developed the James Renwick Fellowship in American Craft. Matthew Kangas and Winifred Owens-Hart have been the fellows for 1989-90. For the coming year, the fellows will be Susan L.F. Isaacs and Charles Talley. You now provide support for the second fellow each year.

Penland, North Carolina; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Baltimore, Maryland, were the destinations of Alliance craft study tours this past year. The tour to Penland was the first overnight tour undertaken by the Alliance. During the coming year, we will go to Chicago and several other places to learn about American crafts and spend time with marvelous people who share an interest in this subject.

Sometimes, events occur which jolt a facet of society and alter the activities of organizations. This past year, the political threat to the existence of the National Endowment for the Arts was such an event. All of you received information from the Alliance about this situation. Many of you wrote to your elected representatives to express your support for the NEA. You were kind enough to send us copies of your correspondence and the replies which you received. I also got many letters from members praising the Alliance for providing important information about a crucial issue. As far as I know, we are one of the few general craft organizations to undertake such an effort.

For the first time, the Alliance has a president-elect — Mel Eagle. The position of the president-

elect will allow a smoother transition from one president to the next. The president-elect will spend this year developing the future programming and planning the growth of the Alliance. During Mel's tenure, the Gallery will celebrate its 20th anniversary and the Year of American Craft will occur. I look forward with great anticipation to working with Mel.

The Alliance is doing well. Continue your participation in the Alliance, the organization which supports the nation's collection of American crafts — the Renwick Gallery.



Mohamed U. Zakariya,
"Koran, Chapter 27,
Verse 19," 1986, gold,
ink and watercolor on
paper. Lent by the
artist. This work is
featured in "Four
Contemporary
Calligraphers,"
extended through
January 1, 1991.

All hand lettering, especially non-Asian scripts with phonetic alphabets, went into decline with the advent of the printing press in the Fifteenth Century. What has persisted, with inevitable historical revivals and declines, is writing as an art form — calligraphy. The word derives from the Greek "kali," for "beautiful," and "graphein," or "to write." Such "beautiful writing" is the product of long apprenticeships and meticulous training. Like other traditional crafts, calligraphy is inherently conservative, its forms and aesthetics historically grounded in function. Calligraphers, like other contemporary artisans must balance the demands of utility, which in this case is legibility, with both aesthetics and self-expression.

The calligrapher uses words much in the same way as a painter places objects in a composition. He achieves emotion by varying tools, papers, and the density, color, slant and speed of the writing. The text can suggest (or in religious documents, demand) a particular interpretation. A poem about wind in the grass might be written in thin strokes with a dry brush, giving the writing a breezy, fragile air. A religious text might require heavy, dense lettering that is both clear and authoritative. A dialogue between friends might combine two scripts or colors to differentiate voices and characters. Words that are difficult to read may increase the poetic or mysterious aspect of the text. Intentionally illegible words can evoke delight or contemplation.

Renwick Gallery Public Programs - September, October, November 1990

September 13:

Creative Screen: "Film Firsts" is a fascinating collection of motion picture milestones going back to 1902. This film survey includes examples of techniques, animation and advertising. Included are the first filmed versions of "Cleopatra," "The Great Train Robbery" and the earliest work of such great directors as D.W. Griffith and George Melie. This historic entertainment was considered daring when it was first shown publicly. (54 minutes). Free. At 11 AM and 12:15 PM.

September 26:

Illustrated Lecture: Renwick public program coordinator Allen Bassing will survey tools used in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century America. These handmade implements and utensils were employed in hunting and fishing, farming, woodworking, food preparing and serving, spinning and the transporting of goods and people. In early America, ironworkers generally forged only those parts of the tools that had to be made in a blacksmith's shop. Wooden handles and tool finishing were left up to individual owners. It was not until after the Civil War that machine-made tools came into wide use. Free. At noon.

September 27:

Creative Screen: Repeat of September 13. Free. At 11 AM and 12:15 PM.

October 10:

Illustrated Lecture: In conjunction with Hispanic Heritage Month, Allen Bassing will discuss crafts produced in New

Mexico and California by colonial settlers from Spain and Mexico, and by Native Americans who were under missionary influence. The great Spanish missions were established along major waterways, particularly the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, and followed a coastal route in California from San Diego to San Francisco. They were the dominant artistic force throughout the entire Southwest region, as well as being focal points for colonial settlement. Because of their isolation and physical environment, they produced a distinctive kind of Spanish colonial culture, with unique forms of religious art and domestic crafts. This folk art and craft thrived until the American occupation of 1846. Free. At noon.

October 11:

Creative Screen: "Godzilla Meets Mona Lisa" is a witty, award-winning film by Ralph Arlyk offering a splendid tour of the Pompidou Center and the Louvre in Paris. What museums are meant to be to the museum visitor are voiced through interviews with artist David Hockney, a Paris cop and outspoken tourists. (56 minutes). Free. At 11 AM and 12:15 PM.



October 25:

Creative Screen: Repeat of October 11. Free. At 11 AM and 12:15 PM.

November 27:

Creative Screen: "Hot Glass" is a film in two sections. The first deals with the daily routine in an Irish glass blowing workshop with demonstrations by famous glass blowers in attendance at an International Hot Glass Conference. The second part shows the glass fabrication techniques of such artists as Dale Chihuly and Jamie Carpenter from the United States and other craftspeople from England, Sweden and Italy. (50 minutes). Free. At 11 AM and 12:15 PM. The film "Hot Glass" is distributed through the American Federation of Arts Film/Video Program.

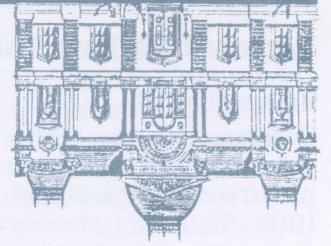
November 29:

Creative Screen: Repeat of November 27. Free. At 11 AM and 12:15 PM.

November 30:

Illustrated Lecture: In conjunction with American Indian Heritage Month, Allen Bassing will discuss the crafts of the Pacific Northwest. Among the major groups in that region are the Eskimo-Aleut, Athabaskans and Tlingits. Prehistoric Eskimo cultures date back more than 2000 years. The work to be surveyed over this long period will include figures in walrus ivory and stone; masks of wood; and clothing from buckskin and wool. The objects help illustrate the thought patterns, religion and traditional everyday world of these peoples. Free. At noon.

Inquiries about the James Renwick Alliance should be sent to:
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