

The Frederick Trip: Hidden Treasures

by Bob and Irene Sinclair

You never know what you'll find when you take to the road. That was one lesson of the Alliance craft study tour in September to Frederick, Maryland and the surrounding country-

side. Under the knowledgeable guidance of Lenel Strochi-Meyeroff and Susan Agger, the tour kept coming upon unexpected treasures.

The bus stopped first outside an anonymous warehouse housing the workshop of Jon Sutter. An engineer by background, Jon produces well-

constructed furniture that manages to look industrial and whimsical at the same time. His inspiration comes from industrial forms — objects designed to combine high function-

al demand with minimal cost. "One discovers an incredible vocabulary of design solutions" in such objects, he says. "I celebrate these solutions and transfer them into the realm of furniture."

The next stop, a typical small town house in an old part of Frederick, revealed a beautifully crafted interior containing Kevin and Margaret Hluch's studios and their eclectic collection of art and craft works — the result, in part, of their extensive stays abroad, including a stint in Kenya where Kevin taught under a Fulbright-Hayes grant. Kevin, a ceramist, teaches



at Montgomery College. Margaret is a fiber artist who uses color, pattern, and texture to evoke the richness of the cycle of life and the culture of the home. The work of both has clearly been enriched by their international experiences. Kevin also writes extensively on the nature of craft and its relationship to art.

Trip participants were able to experience the joy of living with crafts during a catered picnic lunch in the Hluchs' charming garden. All the plates, platters, and bowls were made by Kevin. Each participant selected a drinking vessel from a collection of original mugs and glasses. After lunch the group visited the studio and gallery of Bill Van Gilder in Capland.

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▲ British trained Bill Van Gilder showcases his Capland, Maryland and Kevin Hluch speak on their work as fiber artist and ceramist, respectively, from their Frederick town house (below).



JAMES RENNICK ALLIANCE



Quarterly

From the President



JAMES RENWICK
ALLIANCE

Quarterly

Winter 1997-98

The Quarterly is published four times a year by the James Renwick Alliance, a national independent nonprofit organization created to celebrate and encourage American craft artists and their works, and to support the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Editors

Bob Sinclair
Dalene Barry

Graphic Design

Cox & Associates, Inc.

Contributing

Allen Bassing
Solveig Cox
Bob Sinclair
Irene Sinclair

Kenneth R. Trapp
Joan Wessel

James Renwick Alliance

Julia Brennan,
Executive Assistant

209 N. Edgewood Street
Arlington, VA 22201

703•812•4500
fax 703•812•0300
web www•jra•org

A few days ago I ran into an old friend who had recently joined the Alliance. She greeted me with great excitement, saying that since she had joined, she had received something in the mail every day! I was delighted that we were providing a source of constant stimulation, but I started to wonder at what point it all becomes too much. My husband, too, has the impression that the Alliance sponsors an event-a-day. I started thinking about those interminable seasons and post-seasons in professional sports, and I wondered whether the Alliance suffers from a touch of the same disease.

The challenge, as I see it, is to plan enough events to keep the enthusiastic interest of our membership, while not planning so many that people are overwhelmed by the choices. My primary feedback comes from those I see most frequently, my fellow Alliance Board members, but I worry that they may have greater tolerance than other members for a full schedule. The most direct way to find out whether we are providing what you want, however, is to ask!

What parts of our program do you like: workshops, lectures, tours of exhibitions, craft study tours, symposiums, social events? What else would you like us to provide? This is your organization, and you have an opportunity to help shape its programs. One way to register your preferences is to send in the volunteer form in the last issue of the Quarterly; it's not too late. But if the dog ate your form, you can phone or fax Julia Brennan (phone 703-812-4500, fax 703-812-0300) with a message about your preferred areas of participation, along with your ideas for future programs.

Photo: Brooke Bralove

Many of you are already involved with Alliance activities. I want to thank Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff and Susan Agger for running a terrific trip to Frederick, MD; Marilyn Barrett and Barbara Waldman for organizing the outstanding Caucus trip to Wisconsin; Sandy Mitchell and for putting together the wonderful tour to Philadelphia; Sherley Koteen for creating a stellar collectors' panel at the Washington Craft Show; and Alliance Board officers, committee heads, and committee members, all of whom volunteer countless hours to keep the organization running smoothly and full steam ahead!

The season is off to a good start, and the new year is about to begin, highlighted by the Spring Craft Weekend April 23-26. Plans are underway for the Saturday night gala and for the weekend's other events. It should be an exciting time, and we hope you will participate.

Join us in making 1998 the best year ever!

Susan Haas Bralove
President

What parts of our program do you like: workshops, lectures, tours of exhibitions, craft study tours, symposiums, social events? This is your organization, and you have an opportunity to help shape its programs.

Proposals Wanted:

The James Renwick Fellowship Program in American Crafts

by **Bob Sinclair**

Holiday Gift Idea!

■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Dan Dailey lithograph limited edition portfolios are still available. Call Julia Brennan at (703) 812-4500.

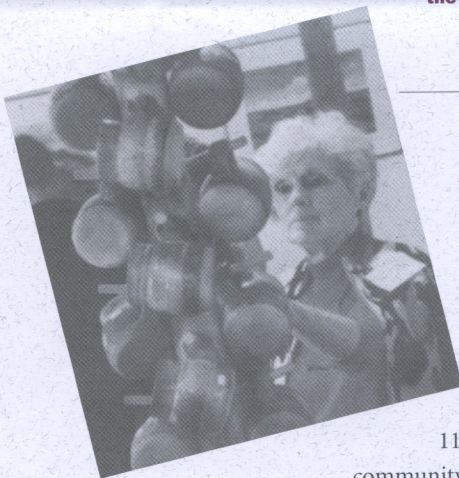
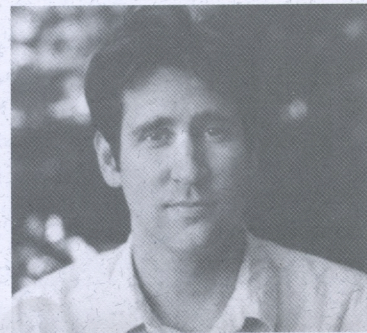
Now is the time to submit proposals for the James Renwick Fellowship Program for scholarly research in the modern American craft movement. Supported by the National Museum of American Art and the James Renwick Alliance, fellowships are available for a period of three to twelve months for study at the Renwick Gallery. The deadline for applications is January 15, 1998. Appointments will begin on or after June 1, 1998.

Next year's fellow will succeed Dr. Kevin Melchionne, who is currently investigating the topic, "A Philosophical Approach to the Studio Crafts," at the Renwick Gallery and the NMAA. ■

► **Kevin Melchionne, James Renwick Fellow, 1997-98. Mr. Melchionne is the 15th Fellow-in-residence since the program began.**

For a brochure and further information about the fellowship program, write or call:

Renwick Gallery
National Museum of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC 20560
(202) 357-2531



The Frederick Trip *from page 1*

The picture-perfect setting is adjacent to Gathland State Park. Trained in England, Bill operated a pottery for several years in Swaziland, near South Africa. For the past 11 years, however, he has lived in this community in the hill-country near Frederick, producing functional stoneware and wood-fired and salt-glazed pottery.

Our final stop was Brunswick, an old railroad town on the bank of the Potomac River. There the group visited fiber artist Karin Birch, whose intricate work integrates painting, beadwork, and

embroidery. Basing her work on her experience of the forest and river around her, Karin is currently creating a body of work with multiple layers of meaning: "sometimes delineating ideas, sometimes obfuscating them." The "personal visions" that are the result of this process are challenging and emotional — and always imbued with integrity and a fine artistic sense. Her work was the final treasure on a treasure-filled day. ■

▲ **Chase Bruns inspects mugs at the studio gallery of Bill Van Gilder (above).**

► **Karin Birch, of Brunswick, Maryland, discusses with the study tour attendees her personal visions as expressed through her intricate fiber art (right). David Montague and Mary Rousselot examine examples of Karin's work (left).**



Wyndgate Foundation Grant Funds Renwick Program for Families

by **Dalene Barry**

No more finding a sitter every time you want to participate in a Renwick event! Plans for a series of Family Days at the Renwick Gallery are underway and will include hands-on fun for children of every age.

This family outreach program is the result of a Renwick proposal that was recently awarded a grant by the Wyndgate Foundation. The grant will make possible an initiative to sponsor a series of twelve Family Days, including specific holiday celebrations, over the next three years.

Alliance Board member Shelly Brunner worked on the grant proposal, taking her inspiration from last spring's Anniversary Celebration workshops. Each Family Day will be based on a particular theme, offering workshops appropriate to many different age groups. Story telling, craft demonstrations, take-home projects and other interactive programs will also be included in this series that will cover the many different media of American craft work.

A plumed hat off to Shelly for her creative hard work! ■

Midwest Artists and Collections Highlight October Caucus Trip

by **Joan Wessel**

▼ **Cynthia Boyer inspects one of the products of the Arts and Industry program at the Kohler Company Design Center (below).**

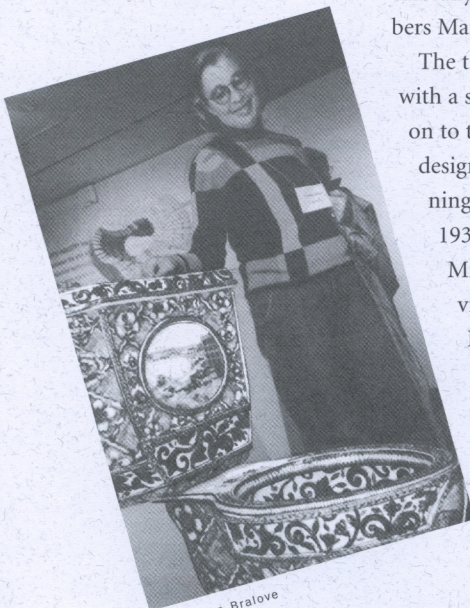


Photo: Sue Bralove

Forty-four members of the Craft Leaders Caucus spent three days touring in Milwaukee, Racine, and parts in between. It was a packed schedule, carefully planned and executed by Caucus members Marilyn Barrett and Barbara Waldman.

The trip began in glorious, sunny weather with a stop at the Katie Gingrass Gallery. Then, on to the S.C. Johnson Wax, Inc. headquarters designed by Frank Lloyd Wright — as stunningly modern today as when it was built in 1939. After taking time out for the famous Midwestern pastry, “the kringle,” the group visited the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts and the Johnson Wax Council House to enjoy the corporate art collection. In the evening there were cocktails at the waterfront home of Samuel and Imogene Johnson (he is Chairman and CEO of Johnson Wax) and

dinner with Karen Johnson Boyd and William Boyd in their Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home.

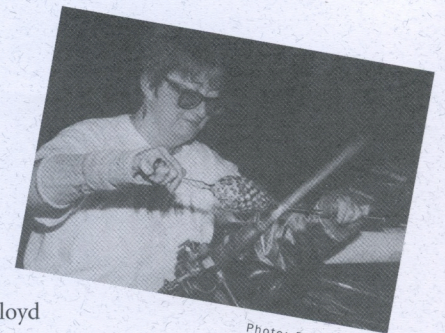


Photo: Paul Parkman

The following day was spent at the vast manufacturing complex of Kohler. Our group visited the Kohler Design Center and factory and enjoyed lunch in a rustic log clubhouse on the corporate grounds. Later we were guided through an historic planned community conceived by Walter J. Kohler in 1918 as a residential and commercial area for his workers. The development featured boulevards, beautiful gardens, and plenty of open green spaces. We also visited the John Michael Kohler Arts

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▲ **Lampworker Ellie Burke gives a demonstration in her studio (above).**

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Center, where we were greeted by the Center's Director Ruth Kohler.

Back in Milwaukee, we stopped at the studios of several Milwaukee craft artists, highlighted by a glass lampwork demonstration by Ellie Burke. Later we visited the Milwaukee Art Museum and the home of the museum's board President Jack Pelisek and his wife Jill. We were treated to still more fine craft viewing at the beautifully designed contemporary home of Jim and Ellen Flesch.

Thursday, en route to Chicago for the SOFA festivities, we visited "Wingspread," an example of Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie houses, built for the father of Karen Johnson Boyd and Sam Johnson. We also stopped at the studio of sculptor Bill T. Reid in the Prairie School. Our final stop was the home and studio of Laura Foster Nicholson, filled with her lovely muted woven textiles. ■

Why Jury?

by **Kenneth R. Trapp**

I believe that a responsive and responsible curator is one who makes time to leave the demands of the office to meet the public. One of the more rewarding aspects of my job is public service carried out across the country in numerous venues: lectures

to small groups or university audiences, conferences and meetings with colleagues to discuss issues pertinent to craft and the museum world, and the jurying of art. It is the latter public service that I wish to address here.

So far this year I have juried art competitions in Alaska, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Ohio either as a single juror or with other jurors. These experiences have ranged from state-wide arts exhibitions, to national invitations, to competitions in specific media. The jurying was done sometimes from slides only, sometimes from slides first with the objects selected later from the art

itself, and sometimes from the actual work gathered in one place.

Why do I jury art? It certainly is not because of the money. All honoraria — and they are modest — go to a fund at the National Museum of American Art to support curatorial research and travel. I like to jury art for three reasons. First, whenever I travel across the country to meet with artists and colleagues, I have the

chance to promote the Renwick Gallery, the NMAA, and the Smithsonian Institution (I do not think of one separately from the other). Nothing is more effective than talking to people directly, face-to-face.

Secondly, as I expand my network of colleagues in my travels, I find that in fact many times I am making new friends. And it is these new friends to whom I turn when I am looking for artists, for exhibition ideas, and for venues when we want to travel an exhibition. They comprise an invaluable resource, a perfect embodiment of "It's not what you know, but who you know."

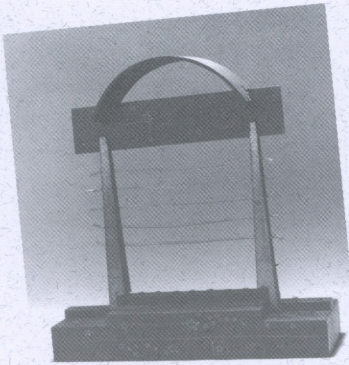
My third and perhaps most important reason to jury art is to see "what's out there." For sheer numbers of works of art that can be seen in a concentrated period of time and in one place, nothing can compare with the experience of jurying art. As much as I would like to visit artists around the country to see and discuss their work in their studios, time simply precludes such a "luxury." The jurying of art in all parts of the country is essential to the development of a national collection. Not all artists are represented by galleries, and not all good art finds its way to large cities. I never cease to be amazed by the substantial work that is being created in what urban dwellers think of as "out-of-the-way" places. Recently I read that a marked characteristic of craft is that it is decentralized, that there is no single center of craft in the United States that dominates the field. This fact becomes more and more apparent as I jury art around the nation. ■

Not all artists are represented by galleries, and not all good art finds its way to large cities. I never cease to be amazed by the substantial work that is being created in what urban dwellers think of as "out-of-the-way" places.

Kenneth R. Trapp is Curator-in-Charge of the Renwick Gallery.

Spring Craft Workshops Will Feature Mixed Media

by Solveig Cox



▲ "Belvedere for Eros", small standing sculpture, mixed media, 15 1/2 x 12 x 2 inches, Jody Klein

The Spring Craft Workshops sponsored by the James Renwick Alliance will begin in March with Jody Klein, whose quilt depicting the Renwick Gallery has traveled far and wide. Jody is now doing mixed media constructions, using techniques based on reinterpretations of traditional textile techniques.

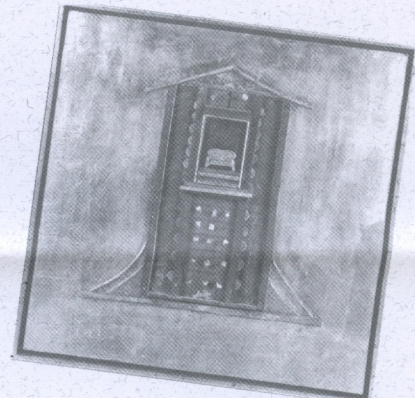
James Minson, an Australian glass artist now working in Seattle, will conduct a flame-working workshop in April, coinciding with his exhibition at Arts Afire in Alexandria, Virginia. Boris Bally will be next, with a workshop/demonstration on studio tricks, mechanisms and cold connections. Boris's recent works are both witty and innovative, often incorporating the use of jeweler's skills on

non-precious materials such as highway signs, golf tees, and other surprising objects.

At the end of May, ceramic artist Judith Solomon will show us how she uses slabs of low temperature clay and underglaze to construct vessel forms.

All workshops will be held on Saturdays, followed by lectures at the Renwick on Sunday afternoons. Brochures with details on each workshop will be available in January. ■

▶ "Furnished Belvedere", construction, mixed media, 22 x 22 x 3, Jody Klein



Photos: Warren Patterson

Mark Your Calendar for Spring Craft Weekend

It's Coming!

Watch the mail for your renewal letter and return it right away. You won't want to miss any of the exciting programs we've planned for you in 1998!

April in Washington doesn't stop with the cherry blossoms! One of our Capital City's most popular spring offerings is the Smithsonian Craft Show, and with it comes the Alliance's Spring Craft Weekend. The 1998 Craft Show featuring more than 100 artists is scheduled for April 23-26, at the National Building Museum. Preview reception will be Wednesday evening, April 22.

The Alliance's Spring Craft Weekend will include an acquisitions meeting and optional

dinner for the Craft Leaders Caucus on April 23; a full day of events for Caucus members on April 24; a symposium co-sponsored by the Alliance and the Smithsonian Women's Committee on the morning of April 25; a gala auction and dinner at the National Museum of American Art that evening; and a Craft Study Tour to artists' and collectors' homes on April 26! The events on April 25 and 26 are open to all Alliance members. We hope you'll plan to join us. ■

Upcoming Events

James Renwick Alliance and Related Events

December

December 4 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am - 3 pm (continuous)

"Contemporary Ceramics," a survey of 85 ceramic artists including Andrea Gill, John Glick, Wayne Higby, Richard Notkin, and Betty Woodman — all artists represented in the Permanent Collection. 25 minutes. Grand Salon.

December 5 (Friday)

Panel Discussion, Washington Craft Show, Washington Convention Center, 1 pm

"Crafting a Collection: Discovering Emerging Artists." Alliance Board member Sherley Koteen moderates this discussion; panel members include Ronald Abramson, Susan Butler, Olga Hirshhorn, John Kotelly.

December 13-14 (Saturday-Sunday)

Craft Demonstration, Renwick Gallery, 11 am - 3 pm

Jewelry artist Loes van Riel-Pfuehl discusses and shows the materials and techniques she uses in fabricating articles for personal adornment. Grand Salon. Supported by the Pearl Rappaport Kaplan Fund.

December 18 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am - 3 pm (continuous)
(Repeat of December 4 program)

December 19 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 12 pm
Renwick Gallery Programs Coordinator Allen Bassing discusses 19th and 20th century designs for industrial and commercial products. Grand Salon.

January

January 8 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am - 3 pm (continuous)
"Aardman Animations" is a collection of five animated films, plus a look behind-the-scenes in the making of these expressive and versatile works. 60 minutes. Grand Salon.

January 11 (Sunday)

Gallery Talk, Renwick Gallery, 2 pm
Renwick Gallery Curator-in-Charge Kenneth Trapp will guide visitors through the newly rotated Permanent Collection. For James Renwick Alliance members, by reservation.

January 15 (Thursday)

Gallery Talk, Renwick Gallery, 12 pm
(Repeat of January 11 program)

January 17-18 (Saturday-Sunday)

Craft Demonstration, Renwick Gallery, 11 am - 3 pm
Basket maker Tom McColley of West Virginia explains the materials and techniques used in the making of his finely wrought works. Grand Salon. Supported by the Pearl Rappaport Kaplan Fund.

January 22 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am - 3 pm (continuous)
(Repeat of January 8 program)

January 23 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 12 pm
Renwick Programs Coordinator Allen Bassing discusses the decorative designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, including rugs, furniture, windows, graphics and production work created between 1892 and 1955.

January 25 (Sunday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm
Fiber artist George Shinn discusses the process and materials used in the making of floor cloth (stenciled and painted canvas carpets). Grand Salon. Supported by the Steven Thurston Memorial Fund.

February

February 12 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am - 3 pm (continuous)
"Neon with Craig Kraft" features nationally recognized light sculptor Craig Kraft as he reviews the history and talks about the tools and materials used in the processing of neon tubing. 90 minutes. Grand Salon.

February 14-15 (Saturday-Sunday)

Craft Demonstration, Renwick Gallery, 11 am - 3 pm
Barbara and Virginia Cieslicki, a jewelry design and production team, show how they assemble their light-weight plastic, and very easily wearable, jewelry. Grand Salon. Supported by the Pearl Rappaport Kaplan Fund.

February 15 (Sunday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm
Jewelry designer Linda Hesh discusses her use of flea market finds combined with products of the lost wax method in making her one-of-a-kind pieces, as well as her production work. Grand Salon.

February 20-22 (Friday-Sunday)

Baltimore Craft Show, Baltimore Convention Center
Friday, 10 am - 9 pm
Saturday, 10 am - 9 pm
Sunday, 10 am - 6 pm
One-of-a-kind and production works by close to one thousand of America's best craft artists, including members of the James Renwick Alliance.

February 26 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am - 3 pm (continuous)
(Repeat of February 12 program)

February 27 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 12 pm
Renwick Programs Coordinator Allen Bassing surveys the crafting of contemporary musical instruments.

▶ **Alliance-sponsored events are in bold**

For further information on upcoming events, call Julia Brennan at (703) 812-4500.

"Skilled Work" to be Published by Smithsonian Press

Plan your 1998 gift-giving around this soon-to-be-released publication from Smithsonian Press. "Skilled Work: American Craft in the Renwick Gallery," a coffee-table-sized book, will feature works from the Permanent Collection of the Renwick Gallery, as well as an extensive history of the Gallery's first quarter century of collecting and exhibitions. The book is scheduled for publication next spring.

Quarterly

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