

Quarterly



JAMES
RENWICK
ALLIANCE

Happy Birthday to the Renwick!

by Ann Milne

Happy 25th birthday to the Renwick Gallery, and happy 15th to the James Renwick Alliance! The double birthday was celebrated at the Renwick Gallery on June 28th in fine fashion — literally, as many members strutted their craft clothes and accessories.

Larry Fuente, of “Game Fish” fame, wore a hat concocted of bits and pieces of game-fish-like baubles. Johannes Michelsen had the opportunity to see his turned-wood hats on a number of heads, both male and female. Michael James, of “Rehoboth Meander: Quilt #150,” was there with his wife Judy; Cliff Lee, ceramist, was there with wife Holly to admire his celadon “Cabbage Vase on Pedestal.” Many others mingled in the crowd of nearly 600 revelers; for the first time we were allowed to take our food and glasses into the galleries, which was a treat and, one hopes, a precedent.

The real stars of the evening were the two shows in residence: “The Renwick at 25” and the new installation of the permanent collection. Everyone praised the latter — and justifiably so. The collection has never looked so good nor the display so professional; the Renwick permanent collection has finally taken its place as a worthy peer of the bigger Smithsonian museums. Wendell Castle’s “Ghost Clock” now has its own room, as befits what may be the gallery’s most famous piece; it is the first thing you see when you turn at the top of the stairs. Other works are displayed to their best advantage as well, and pieces that have long been in storage are a delight to the eye.

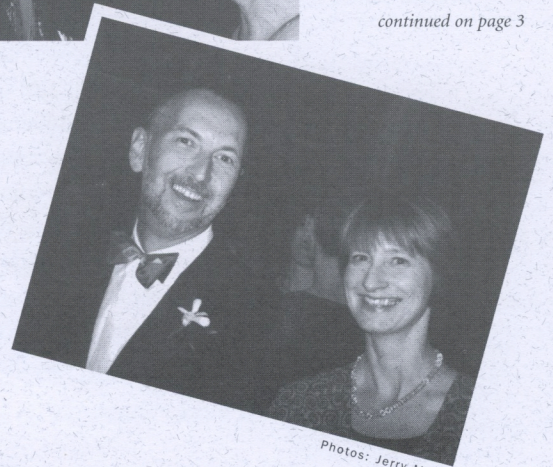


Kudos to Curator-in-Charge Kenneth R. Trapp and all the other people at the Renwick and the National Museum of American Art who were involved. The James Renwick Alliance contributed significant funds toward the reinstallation, and we certainly got our money’s worth.

The Grand Salon was resplendent with the large Haviland ceramic vases from 1876 that are part of the room’s heritage. They were there when the Renwick Gallery opened, but they were borrowed in 1976 for the Smithsonian’s Arts and

Industries building as part of the Bicentennial exhibition; they have just returned to the Renwick this year. They are installed on the banquettes — minus the brass

continued on page 3



Photos: Jerry Milne

▲ Attending the birthday celebration were Larry Fuente, creator of “Game Fish”, with fellow party goer (above) and Michael James, of “Rehoboth Meander: Quilt #150”, along with his wife Judy (below).

From the President



Hong Kong, Congo, Cambodia, the James Renwick Alliance — what do these have in common? All have installed new administrations in the past couple of months. Hong Kong and the Alliance even did it on the same day. One difference, of course, is that the change at the Alliance was both orderly and non-contentious. Our organization is in tremendously good shape, thanks to the efforts of its leaders and all its members.

But like Hong Kong and the others, the Alliance shares a need to respond creatively to changes in the world around it. I want to devote my first column to some of the changes you will soon be seeing and experiencing.

The Alliance may not have reached middle age, but the lady is receiving a face-lift! You've already seen the new logo, which is just one part of the redesign of our graphics. This summer, after interviewing several firms, an ad hoc committee selected Cox and Associates of Silver Spring to produce a logo and new designs for our stationery and publications. This issue of the Quarterly reflects these changes. The redesign of our graphics was undertaken in part to differentiate the identity of the Alliance from that of the Renwick Gallery; our old graphics were quite confusing in that regard. In addition, we believe a lady should always look her best; frankly, we deserve it!

Other changes will be less visible. They involve a mobilization of leadership at the committee level. We are soliciting the participation of all Alliance members in committee activities (fill out the volunteer form in this Quarterly and send it in!).

And we are giving the committees a larger role, with both more responsibility and more accountability, in determining Alliance policies and programs. At the same time we will be streamlining the Board's executive and administrative functions. A committee is being established to study our bylaws and make recommendations to the Board as to what, if any, changes should be made to help

the organization run more efficiently and effectively. To support the Board and the committees, Executive Assistant Julia Brennan is reorganizing our membership and other files so that we can make the best use of computer support in all our activities.

Finally, we are continuing to work with the Renwick Gallery and the National Museum of American Art to establish a written agreement delineating our relationship.

The strength and vitality of the James Renwick Alliance is enviable, thanks to 15 years of fine leadership and dedicated volunteer support. It is my hope that the changes over the next two years will produce an organization that not only looks good, but is strong and healthy too.

- Drop in at the Renwick Gallery.
- Visit our Web site.
- Volunteer to work on a committee.
- Come to our lectures, study tours, and other events.

Enjoy your membership in the James Renwick Alliance!

Susan Haas Bralove
President

The James Renwick Alliance needs to respond creatively to changes in the world around it. I want to devote my first column to some of the changes you will soon be seeing and experiencing.

JAMES RENWICK ALLIANCE

Quarterly

Fall 1997

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.

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Photo: Brooke Bralove

Renwick Gallery Exhibition: Michael Lucero



▲ "Man Balancing Vessel (Pre-Columbus)" 1991, hand-built white earthenware with glazes, 22 x 15 x 9 inches, collection of Arthur J. Williams

Michael Lucero is firmly based in ceramics but reaches into many other media; his forms and surface imagery show influences ranging from pre-Columbian art and surrealism to the popular media; his work persistently blurs the line between "craft" and "fine art". From September 12 to January 4, the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art will be host to *Michael Lucero: Sculpture*, an exhibition of more than 50 glazed ceramic, bronze, and mixed-media sculptures. The exhibition was organized by the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina; after leaving

Washington it will travel to New York, Kansas City, and Pittsburgh.

At a colloquium on September 11, Lucero will discuss his work with Renwick Gallery Curator-in-Charge Kenneth R. Trapp and Mark Leach, co-curator of the exhibition.

Mark Leach will lead a tour of the exhibition on September 14.

See the Upcoming Events calendar on page 7 for further details. ■



▶ "Anthropomorphic Jug Head with Moth on Hat (New World Series)" 1992, wheel-thrown and altered white earthenware with glazes, 18 x 14 x 17 inches, collection of Gae and Mel Shulman, courtesy Gallery Gae Shulman

Birthday from page 1

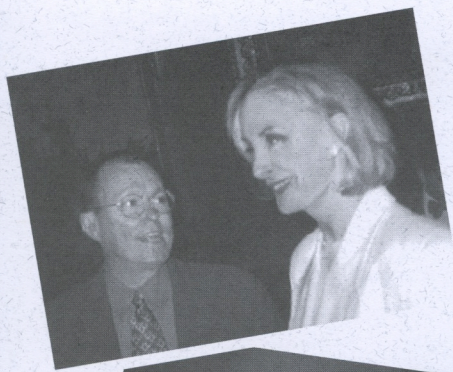
figures with trumpets that appear on pictures in the archives.

The birthday party was the occasion for welcoming remarks from a number of people. Betsy Broun, Director of the Renwick's parent, the National Museum of American Art, bade us welcome and introduced Founding Director Lloyd Herman and former Curator-in-Charge Michael Monroe. She wished

us happy birthday and thanked Barbara Berlin, outgoing President of the Alliance. Betsy also noted that the Renwick puts on excellent shows with the smallest staff in the Smithsonian.

Betsy introduced Ken Trapp, who told the group that the Renwick's importance has been given the ultimate recognition: one of its signs has been stolen. Ken went on to thank the perpetrator for this compliment. He also noted, as he has done on other recent occasions, that he feels more and more like part of the Renwick "family." He gave particular thanks to Paul and Elmerina Parkman and to the artists — both those who were present and those who were not. He introduced Barbara Berlin, who spoke enthusiastically about her two years as Alliance President and noted how much we value the relationship with both Betsy and Ken.

After the speeches the guests continued to mingle, eat, drink, talk, and generally enjoy themselves. We practically had to be shoved out the door. It was a wonderful party and a wonderful introduction to the gallery's new look. ■



Photos: Jerry Milne

◀ Ken Trapp and Shelby Gans during the celebration in the Grand Salon of the Renwick Gallery (above). Holly Lee and Jane Mason join in the fun (below). ■

Alliance Committees— The Rewards of Involvement

We all know the twin truisms of every volunteer organization:

- Nothing happens unless members make it happen.
- The more you put into an organization, the more you get out of it.

Hundreds of James Renwick Alliance members have turned those truisms into reality over the years, and it is to them that the Alliance owes its continued growth — growth in membership, growth in the scope of its activities.

Each volunteer has made a major commitment of time to support the cause of crafts, and each has reaped commensurate rewards in return.

The Alliance always needs more volunteers: programs expand, new programs are started, active members move on or are afflicted with burn-out. You are invited to become an active participant as the Alliance story continues to unfold. Committee chairs may call you, but there's no need to wait; volunteers who take the initiative are doubly blessed. Please take the time to fill out the form included in this issue of the *Quarterly*, or call the committee chairs directly.

The following are some specific ideas about where you can put your talents to work that go beyond the suggestions on the form:

Membership. Marilyn Barrett is seeking new suggestions for bringing in members. People with professional or semiprofessional experience at membership-building would be

especially welcome. In addition, she needs people to help with phoning and to staff the Alliance booth at craft events. Call Marilyn at (301) 229-7818.

Publicity. Do you have media contacts? Do you know of media outlets that the Alliance has not used? Do you have catchy new ideas for publicizing Alliance events? Call Penny Pagano at (202) 338-7926.

Publications. Bob Sinclair, editor of the *Quarterly*, and Joan Wessel, editor of the *Craft Leaders Report*, would welcome volunteers to report on Alliance events and trips. They also need photographers to catch snapshots of Alliance doings, and Bob would like editorial help. Call Bob at (202) 364-3634; if you're a Caucus member and would like to participate, call Joan at (202) 364-8291.

Workshop dinners. Each spring and fall, the Alliance brings well-known craft artists to Washington to conduct workshops. Potluck dinners with the artists after the workshops are a long-standing tradition. Irene Sinclair at (202) 966-5204 is always looking for people who will host the dinners in their homes.

Craft Weekend. This, of course, is the "big enchilada." Craft Weekend is the Alliance's most intensive single effort. The acquisitions meeting, the Saturday symposium, Caucus day, the Sunday tour, and the Gala succeed only because many people share the work. Call the Alliance's Executive Assistant, Julia Brennan, at (703) 812-4500. ■

Each volunteer has made a major commitment of time to support the cause of crafts, and each has reaped commensurate rewards in return.

▲ Volunteers made these outrageous hats to decorate the tables at "A Madcap Teapot Party", Spring Craft Weekend, 1996.

Photos: Susan Haas Bralove

Fall Craft Workshops

Once again this fall, the James Renwick Alliance is sponsoring a series of craft workshops. Artists in furniture and wood sculpture, jewelry, and fiber will lecture and demonstrate their craft. All workshops are on Saturdays; the next day the artists will lecture at the Renwick Gallery. The three sessions are as follows:

Bob Trotman

Getting from first ideas to a figurative wood sculpture incorporating elements of furniture.

October 18 / workshop, October 19 / lecture

Bob Trotman, a wood sculpture artist who lives in Casar, North Carolina, will demonstrate his process of drawing from a model, using photography, projecting with an opaque projector, making scale maquettes in clay, and accurately scaling up to the full-size carving. He will discuss the selection, use, and care of carving tools, lamination of wood, and methods of coloring and finishing. Participants are encouraged to bring drawings or works in progress for consultation as time permits.



▲ Maria-Theresa Fernandes, "Egyptian Symbols", 3 1/2' x 2' x 2'.

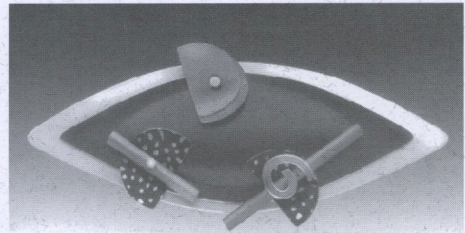


Photo: Peter Groesbeck

Lisa Vershbow

**Adult/Child workshop:
An introduction to creative jewelrymaking.**

November 22 / workshop, November 23 / lecture

In this, the Alliance's first ever adult-child workshop, adult/child teams will work side by side, sharing tools and ideas while creating their own pieces of jewelry. Two projects will be covered: a wire figure and a collage brooch. Using a variety of materials, participants will have a chance to become familiar with some basic metalsmithing tools and techniques. A materials fee of \$20 per adult-child team will be payable at the workshop. Minimum age for children is 9; workshop size is limited.

Maria-Theresa Fernandes

Embroidery as an art form.

November 1 / workshop, November 2 / lecture

This workshop is designed for all levels as an introduction to the use of stitchery as a textural and drawing tool. The emphasis will be on the creative process and free expression. Hand stitching, machine stitching, and polaroid transfers are some of the techniques to be demonstrated. If Ms. Fernandes's enthusiasm for her work rubs off on the participants, this workshop should produce many inspired artists.



Photo: John S. Payne

▲ "White Guy", Bob Trotman 1994, 64 x 36 x 27, lime-wood, drawer mechanism, dyes, pigments.

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

Space permitting, students in accredited DC-area schools may participate at no cost.

Renwick Gallery to Receive ACC Award

The American Craft Council has honored the Renwick Gallery with an Award of Distinction for 1997— one of eight such awards granted by the ACC this year. Congratulations to the Gallery and the National Museum of American Art!

NEW Alliance Address, Phone Numbers

Please note the following new information:

New address
209 N. Edgewood St.
Arlington VA 22201
Phone (703) 812-4500
Fax (703) 812-0300
Executive Assistant
Julia Brennan will be in the office weekdays from 9:00 am to noon.

Renwick Fellow Selected for 1997-1998

By Paul Parkman

Early this year, the Fellowship Committee of the Alliance met to select the 1997-1998 Renwick Fellow. The committee chose Dr. Kevin Melchionne as a Senior Fellow. Dr. Melchionne studied painting and sculpture at the Philadelphia College of Art and received his Ph. D. in philosophy from the State University of New York at Stonybrook. His dissertation, "Cultivation: Art and Aesthetics in Everyday Life", was an inquiry into everyday practices with an aesthetic dimension — interior decoration, for example. This year, under a grant from the William Morris Society of the United States, he has begun research on the theory of craft and the role of craft in contemporary culture.

Dr. Melchionne describes his ongoing studies as standing apart from the "conventional art history project." He is an aesthetician (one versed in the theory of beauty and artistic expression) working in the philosophy of the crafts. This philosophical approach, he says, should provide a "useful and lively complement to current critical and art-historical research on the crafts."

He notes there is an enormous gap in the crafts literature that needs to be filled by an underlying philosophy which would help form the underpinnings for scholars and art historians. It is his intent to help fill this gap through his studies. He looks forward to the opportunity provided by the Renwick Fellowship to interact with other fellows in these disciplines. This interaction, he hopes, will immunize his writings against the disease of excessive abstraction, which commonly infects philosophical discourse. Dr. Melchionne proposes the production of a book "in which the questions I have discussed are addressed with philosophical rigor yet cast in a writing style that will not annoy non-philosophers."

Dr. Melchionne will be in residence for 12 months commencing September 1. We look forward to his being with us this coming year as our first James Renwick Fellow philosopher in residence. It promises to be a lively and productive time! ■



The James Renwick Alliance needs your help. We would greatly appreciate any time that you feel you can spare to help us meet our goal of promoting the cause of crafts. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

Please complete the form at right, cut along dotted line, and return to:

**James Renwick Alliance
209 N. Edgewood Street
Arlington, VA 22201**

Volunteer Form

Name _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Day Phone _____

Evening Phone _____

I would like to volunteer in the following areas:

- Membership
- Study tours
- Publicity
- Publications
- Craft Weekend
- Education
- Office Help
- Development
- Other: _____

Special talents I have to offer (craft, graphics, computers, technical, writing, etc.):

- Focus of my interest in craft: Glass Wood Fiber Ceramics Metal
- Other: _____

Upcoming Events

James Renwick Alliance and Related Events

September

September 11 (Thursday)

Colloquium and Exhibition Preview

Michael Lucero: Sculpture, Renwick Gallery, 6:30 pm

Michael Lucero, Mark Leach, and Kenneth Trapp discuss Lucero's work.

September 12 (Friday)

Building tour, Renwick Gallery, noon

Renwick Gallery Programs Coordinator Allen Bassing discusses the Renwick Gallery building when it functioned as the U.S. Court of Claims.

September 12 (Friday)

Michael Lucero Exhibition opens, Renwick Gallery

September 14 (Sunday)

Exhibition tour, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm

Mark Leach, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, and co-curator of the Michael Lucero exhibition, will lead a tour of the exhibition. A Hispanic Heritage Month program.

September 18 (Thursday)

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

"Gaudi," a film documenting the architecture of Antoni Gaudi in Barcelona, Spain, 26 minutes. A Hispanic Heritage Month program.

September 21 (Sunday)

Alliance study tour to Frederick, MD.

September 25 (Thursday)

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

(Repeat of September 18 program)

September 26 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, noon

Renwick Programs Coordinator Allen Bassing will discuss folk art and crafts used to celebrate special events and holidays.

September 28 (Sunday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm

Sculptor and wood turner Robert Lentz will discuss the use of recycled materials in his work.

October

October 2 (Thursday)

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

"Sam Maloof, Woodworking Profile," a documentary on the tools, techniques, and subtle rhythms that go into furniture making, 55 minutes.

October 3 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, noon

Renwick Gallery Programs Coordinator Allen Bassing surveys contemporary American ceramics.

October 5 (Sunday)

Lectures and Panel Discussion, Renwick Gallery, 1 pm - 5 pm

An overview of contemporary American craft by five authorities: Karen Chambers (glass), Nancy Corwin (fiber), Robert Ebendorf (metal), Mark Leach (clay), and Albert Lecoff (wood); lectures introduced, and panel discussion moderated by, Kenneth R. Trapp, Renwick Gallery Curator-in-Charge.

October 13-17 (Monday-Friday)

Craft Leaders Caucus study tour to Wisconsin

October 16 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery,

10 am - 3 pm (continuous)

(Repeat of October 2 program)

October 17-19 (Fri-Sun)

SOFA Chicago, Navy Pier

October 18 (Saturday)

James Renwick Alliance brunch, 10 - 11:30 am

Kenneth R. Trapp, Curator-in-Charge of the Renwick Gallery, will be the special guest of the Alliance at a brunch to be held in the Pier Lobby, SOFA. All Alliance members are welcome.

October 18 (Saturday)

Workshop, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm, Maret School

Bob Trotman, wood

October 19 (Sunday)

Lecture, 3 pm, Renwick Gallery

Woodworker Bob Trotman discusses his provocative and intricately wrought melding of furniture with figurative sculpture.

October 25 and 26 (Saturday and Sunday)

Craft Demonstration,

Renwick Gallery, 11 am - 3 pm

Clay artist Lisa Naples shows the development of her hand-built, richly decorated, and functional pottery. Supported by the Pearl Rappaport Kaplan Fund.

November

November 1 (Saturday)

Workshop, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm,

Fillmore Arts Center at Rosario

Maria-Theresa Fernandes, fiber

November 2 (Sunday)

Lecture, 3 pm, Renwick Gallery

Fiber artist Maria-Theresa Fernandes talks about her work — a combination of collage and machine and hand embroidery. Supported by the Stephen Thurston Memorial Fund.

November 6 (Thursday)

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

"Beyond Tradition," a survey of Southwest American Indian prehistoric, historic, and contemporary art and craft, 45 minutes. An American Indian Heritage Month presentation.

November 6 - 9 (Thursday-Sunday)

Philadelphia Craft Show,

Pennsylvania Convention Center

November 7 (Friday)

Alliance study tour to Philadelphia Craft Show

November 9 (Sunday)

"Meet the Artist" and Exhibition Discussion,

Renwick Gallery, 3 pm

Clay artist Michael Lucero talks about his work in the exhibition, "Michael Lucero: Sculpture." Meet in the lobby of the Gallery.

November 20 (Thursday)

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

(Repeat of November 6 program)

November 21 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, noon

Renwick Gallery Programs Coordinator Allen Bassing looks at the work of clay artist Maria Martinez and the pottery of San Ildefonso, New Mexico. An American Indian Heritage Month presentation.

November 22 (Saturday)

Workshop, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm,

Art League School Annex, Alexandria

Lisa Vershbow, jewelry

November 23 (Sunday)

Lecture, 3 pm, Renwick Gallery

Jewelry artist Lisa Vershbow speaks about fabricating her work using non-precious metals.

November 29 and 30 (Saturday and Sunday)

Craft Demonstration, 11 am - 3 pm

Basket artist Debora Muhl shows how she assembles coiled sculptural basketry using Maine sweet grass. Supported by the Pearl Rappaport Kaplan Fund.

December

December 4 (Thursday)

Opening reception, Washington Craft Show

December 5-7 (Friday-Sunday)

Washington Craft Show,

Washington Convention Center

December 5 (Friday)

Panel, 1 pm, Washington Craft Show

Crafting a Collection:

Discovering Emerging Artists

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

► Alliance-sponsored events in bold



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ALLIANCE

209 N. Edgewood Street
Arlington, VA 22201

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Quarterly

Fall 1997

Happy Birthday to the Renwick	1
From the President	2
Renwick Gallery Exhibition: Michael Lucero	3
Alliance Committees	4
Fall Craft Workshops	5
Renwick Fellow Selected	6
Renwick Receives ACC Award	6
Upcoming Events	7

