



JAMES
RENWICK
ALLIANCE

Craft Weekend '98: "At Home with Crafts"

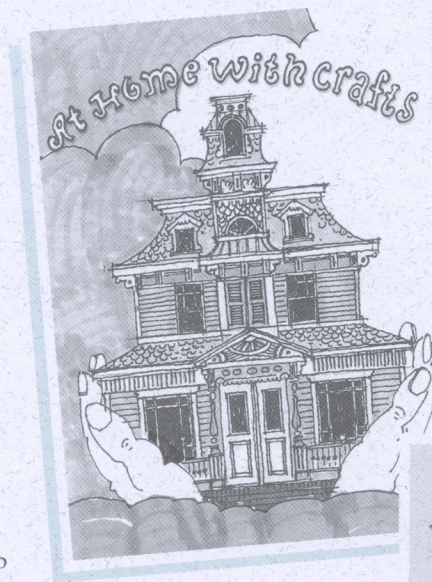
Says Gala Chair Sharon Buchanan, "You are ours for the weekend"—Craft Weekend, the high point of the Alliance year. Taking its cue from the current Renwick Gallery exhibit, *Inspiring Reform: The Boston Arts and Crafts Movement*, Craft Weekend '98 focuses on craft in the home. This year's benefit gala is built around the theme, "At Home with Crafts," and invitees are urged to wear "ensemble(s) reminiscent of a favorite room in your home." The Saturday symposium, "Home, Again: The Arts and Crafts Revival," links the gallery's exhibit to present trends in thought, living, and design. And Craft Leaders Caucus Day is built around the theme, "Living with Crafts."

The high point, as always, will be the gala, which will be held on Friday, April 24 at historic Decatur House, just around the corner from the Renwick Gallery. The carriage house and courtyard provide an elegant setting for the dinner and auction, where Alliance members will have a chance to bid on works by some 40 outstanding craft artists, plus trips to Philadelphia, Maine, Seattle, and more!

Members of the Craft Leaders Caucus may be operating on adrenaline when they get to the gala. They will have spent most of Friday discussing the care and display of craft collections—first at the Carlton Hotel with a panel of experts, then at the home of Toni and Bob Gordon, where experts will use the Gordons' collection to demonstrate ways of displaying craft objects. Some of Washington's leading craft galleries will display their artists' work throughout the house.

The weekend's agenda continues Saturday morning at 9:30 with the symposium in the Renwick Gallery's Grand Salon. The symposium, moderated by Kenneth Trapp, features Beverly K. Brandt, associate professor of design at Arizona State University; Jeanne Falino, assistant curator of American decorative arts and sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Tommy Simpson, artist and furniture maker; and *New York Times* food writer Marian Burros. Alliance Patrons assemble that evening for dinner at the home of Ryna and Mel Cohen. The weekend winds up on Sunday with an Alliance craft study tour of three private collections and the Sansar Gallery, where participants will be able to meet craft artists Ronald Puckett, Robert Carlson, and Robert Hacker.

And of course everyone will want to allot time for the exhibit at the Renwick Gallery and for the Smithsonian Craft Show. All in all, the weekend promises to be an opportunity to have a wonderful, enlightening time while supporting crafts, the Renwick Gallery, and the James Renwick Alliance. ■



◀ Invitation to the April 24th benefit gala, designed by Laney and Michael Oxman



▶ Decatur House, built in 1819, is the location for the Renwick Alliance Craft Weekend '98 Gala.

From the President



JAMES RENWICK
ALLIANCE

Quarterly

Spring 1998

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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During the past months I have frequently been asked about how the Alliance conducts its business. What part of the funds raised actually go toward programs? Who is on the Board of Directors, and what happens at board meetings? I would like to share with you some information on these and related subjects.

The Alliance is a 501(c)3 organization, registered in the District of Columbia. Compared with other charitable organizations, we spend only a small portion of our budget—about a quarter—on administration. We have only one paid, part-time employee; our books are kept by one C.P.A. and are audited annually by another. Volunteers do most of our work; countless hours of donated time are what make the Alliance the *effective* organization it has become. Last spring our treasurer, Phil Brown (another volunteer), suggested that we publish pie charts in the *Quarterly* to illustrate how the funds are spent. Since then, Phil has been organizing our financial information so that it can be printed in an upcoming issue.

The Board of Directors is composed of 40 people representing a diverse group of artists, collectors, and others dedicated to the promotion of American craft and to the Renwick Gallery. Guided by bylaws, it both sets and implements policy, and it approves the yearly budget. It is a working board in the full sense of the word. Every board member serves on at least one committee, and committee chairs must be board members. (Committee members, on the other hand, may come from the general membership, and we

encourage everyone to get involved in committee work.) The Board of Directors meets monthly throughout most of the year. Meetings are held at directors' homes and are open to any Alliance member who wishes to attend. (Call Julia Brennan at 703-812-4500 if you desire to do so.)

I hope I have provided some interesting and helpful information about the Alliance's inner workings. I would be happy to answer any further questions you might have.

In the meantime, I urge you to participate in Craft Weekend, April 23-26. Many volunteers are hard at work to make this a very special event. You'll have opportunities to learn about crafts and have a great time too.

I look forward to seeing you there!

Susan Haas Bralove

President

Photo: Brooke Bralove

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Inspiring Reform: The New Renwick Gallery Exhibit

By **Kenneth R. Trapp**

Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts and Crafts Movement celebrates the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston. The 150 objects shown here are but a small fraction of the rich material culture of the arts and crafts movement created in the metropolitan Boston area between the late 1890s and the 1930s.

Originating in England in the mid-nineteenth century, the arts and crafts movement reached its peak at the turn of the century, transforming art and culture in the British Isles and America and even as far away as Australia. The movement embraced social as well as design reform: William Morris, John Ruskin, Charles Robert Ashbee, and others argued that the social ills spawned by unbridled industrialization – overpopulation, displacement of people from the land, pollution, poverty, disease – would threaten the very foundation of society if not ameliorated. Although reformers were not blind to the positive aspects of industrialization, they believed that reducing factory workers to the status of machine-tending slaves was an unacceptable evil.

One result of rampant industrialization was the outpouring of cheap and shoddy goods. The credo of the arts and crafts movement was that the useful should be made beautiful, and that the useful



and beautiful would inspire people to strive for “plain living and high thinking.”

In this country the movement first took root in Boston, the American city most closely linked to Great Britain.

Boston, with its many cultural institutions and its well-educated populace,

proved to be fertile soil, and it embraced the movement with a fervor unparalleled elsewhere in the United States. The city was also home to well-established workshops and industries sympathetic to arts and crafts principles: furniture production, silver-smithing, printing, textile production, and ceramics.

Inspiring Reform continues the scholarly exploration of the arts and crafts movement begun in 1972 with the landmark exhibition organized at Princeton University and shown at the Renwick Gallery in 1973. Since then, studies have focused on the movement as it spread through America—western New York State, California, Minneapolis and the upper Mississippi, the Southern Highlands and Southeast, New Orleans, and Utah and the Intermountain West.

That popular interest in the arts and crafts movement continues is most clearly seen in magazine advertisements for mission-, prairie-, and bungalow-style furnishings. The historical arts and crafts movement, however, is but one of many styles and has been nearly emptied of its profound philosophical underpinnings. The present exhibition is an opportunity to return to the movement's earlier, dynamic days. ■

► Paul Revere Pottery
Ida Goldstein, decorator
Vase, ca. 1908
matte-glazed earthenware,
8 3/4" x 7 1/2" in diameter
Collection of R. A. Ellison



▲ Arthur J. Stone
and Herbert Taylor
Altar vases, 1915
silver and gold,
9 7/8" x 8 1/4" in diameter
Collection of the
Pomfret School

Alliance Adds Major Work to Gallery Collection

Last December the James Renwick Alliance, through its acquisitions committee, acted to acquire Michael Frimkess's vessel, *Ecology Krater II*, for the Renwick Gallery. The work, which had been on the gallery's "wish list" for some time, has the appearance of an ancient Greek vessel, but the

decorative images are thoroughly modern.

According to Curator-in-Charge Kenneth Trapp, it will go on view next summer when the display of the gallery's permanent collection is changed.

(For further information on the acquisition process, see Sherley Koteen's article in this issue.) ■

“Gift of the James Renwick Alliance”: Helping to Develop the Renwick’s Permanent Collection

By **Sherley Koteen**

Chair, Acquisitions Committee

Helping to acquire a major work for the Renwick Gallery’s permanent collection is a heady, humbling, joyous experience. Acquisitions have been the number one priority in the Alliance budget for a number of years. Sometimes, as with Michael Frimkess’s glorious clay vessel, *Ecology Krater II*, acquired in 1997, the process takes years; often, negotiations over a specific object are protracted and complex.

Where does the process begin? In a sense it begins with the vision of the Curator-in-Charge

concerning the collection’s present character and the direction it should take. The vision takes concrete form in a “wish list” of works that meet his criteria for acceptance. But where are these works? Who owns them? Are they available for purchase, and will they be accepted by the Renwick’s parent, the National Museum of American Art?

Through its Acquisitions Committee, the James Renwick Alliance plays an important role in the search. The committee is composed of officers and members of the Alliance board and their immediate predecessors, along with founding mem-

bers and members of the Craft Leaders Caucus. Kenneth Trapp has invited committee members to assist him in identifying works by artists who are significant contributors to contemporary American crafts but are not represented in the collection, as well as pieces that would enhance the representation of an artist whose works are already

included and works that would fill gaps in the collection’s holdings.

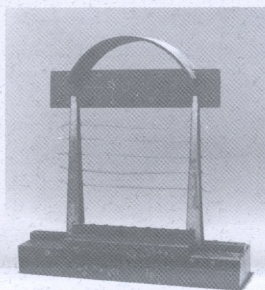
The Curator-in-Charge takes it from this point. Any contacts or negotiations with a work’s owner are solely his responsibility, and it is he who ensures that a purchase has the approval of Elizabeth Broun, director of the National Museum of American Art. When satisfied that a work is worthy of the collection, that it is available for purchase, and that a reasonable asking price has been established, Ken presents the case for acquisition to the Steering Committee, a subgroup of the Alliance Acquisitions Committee, for discussion and preliminary response. In turn, the Steering Committee makes preparations for the semiannual meeting of the full committee, furnishing members with Ken’s description of each work and its significance for the collection. Thus, the scene is set for the final phase in the process of acquiring art with funds from the James Renwick Alliance.

Raising the curtain on Craft Weekend ’98, the spring meeting of the Acquisitions Committee will take place in the Renwick’s Grand Salon on Thursday, April 23, from 6:00 to 7:30 pm. It will open with a reception that provides committee members an opportunity to examine at first hand the works being considered. During the meeting that follows, the Curator-in-Charge will give a full-scale presentation for each piece and the rationale for adding it to the collection. Finally, the full committee votes, and ballots are collected and tallied. “And the winners are: _____!” This is always a special moment in the history of the Alliance/Renwick relationship and the building of the nation’s premier collection of contemporary American crafts. ■

Helping to acquire a major work for the Renwick Gallery’s permanent collection is a heady, humbling, joyous experience. Acquisitions have been the number one priority in the Alliance budget for a number of years.

Craft Workshops: A Unique Opportunity

"Belvedere for Eros",
small standing sculpture,
mixed media,
15½ x 12 x 2 inches,
Jody Klein ▼



The spring series of Alliance craft workshops gets under way on March 28. This is a unique opportunity to learn about craft from the inside—and to have fun while you're learning. The only prerequisites are an interest in craft, curiosity, and a taste for esthetic adventure. Students in accredited DC area schools are encouraged to apply for free admission as space allows.

Each workshop is held on Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm. On the Sunday afternoon following the workshop, the presenter will give a free lecture at the Renwick Gallery. For further information and registration, call Julia Brennan at 703-812-4500.

The following are details on the four workshops.

Jody Klein

Mixed Media Sculpture

March 28/workshop, March 29/lecture

The work of Massachusetts-based Jody Klein is represented in such institutions as the Renwick Gallery and the Fine Arts Museum, Boston. Her workshop will focus on using fiber-based elements to transform flat and linear materials. Each participant will have an opportunity to fabricate a work based on personal imagery.

Boris Bally

Metal Tricks and Techniques

April 4/workshop, April 5/lecture

Trained as a jeweler in Switzerland, Boris Bally applies his jeweler's skills to unlikely objects such as highway signs and golf tees. He will demonstrate the fabrication and studio tricks that he learned in Switzerland. Workshop members will not create actual work but will participate through watching, asking questions, and taking notes.

"Treadwear", brooches,
18k yellow gold,
3 x 2.8 x 4 inches,
Boris Bally ▼

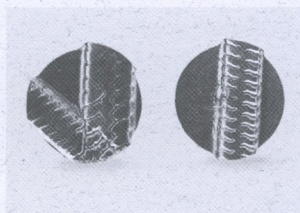
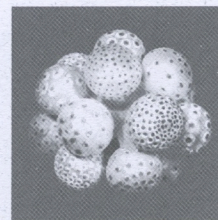


Photo: David L. Smith

"Urchin Protea", ▶
Borsilicate glass,
7½ inches in diameter,
James Minson



James Minson

Borsilicate Glass

April 18/workshop, April 19/lecture

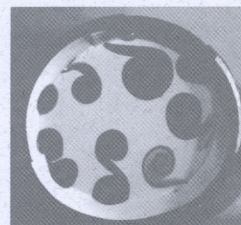
Born in Australia and the recipient of an MA from Tama Art University in Tokyo, James Minson has taught at both Pilchuk and Penland. His workshop will focus on various approaches to Borsilicate glass construction. It will give novices an opportunity to learn more about Borsilicate glass and its uses.

Judith Salomon

Ceramic Slab Construction

May 23/workshop, May 24/lecture

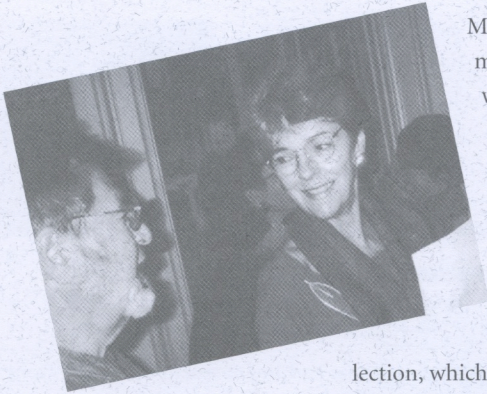
Judith Salomon received her academic training at Rochester Institute of Technology and the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred. She teaches at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Her work, she says, enables her to "create my own ideas about architecture, construction, and containers." The workshop will focus on building vessels with slip cast earthenware slabs. She hopes the hands-on experience will inspire many questions.



◀ Platter, ceramic,
22 x 4 inches,
Judith Salomon

The Philadelphia Craft Show Trip

All of us lead such full lives that early November seems a long time ago. But the memory of the Alliance trip to Philadelphia lingers. The trip's main target, of course, was the Philadelphia craft show, and Sandy and Norman Mitchell arranged a big block of time midday for participants to enjoy its wonders. But they also scheduled a visit to a remarkable private collection and a long stop at the Snyderman and Works Galleries to talk with leading craft artists and enjoy their works.



▲ **Mary George Kronstadt talks with Leonard Evelev at the Evelevs' home.**

Helen and Leonard Evelev clearly enjoy their eclectic collection, which brings objects from traditional cultures together with modern crafts and works on paper. The range of traditional objects is tremendous: a wooden Santos from Ecuador, a spectacular Filipino shaman's hat, a Tibetan horse blanket, silver jewelry from Nepal, Yemen, and Turkmenistan. Cheek by jowl with these works were a chest by Stephen Whittlesey, ceramics by Jun Kaneko and John Gill, works on paper by such

artists as Sol Lewitt and Thomas Nozkowski—and ceramic work by Helen Evelev herself. The Evelevs were eager to share their feelings about the works in the collection and to discuss provenance and history with trip participants. They also were impeccably gracious hosts.

After a few hours at the craft show—and for many, lunch in the chaos of the Reading Terminal market, an eclectic experience in its own right—participants boarded their bus for Cherry Street, home of the Snyderman Gallery and The Works Gallery. As usual, Ruth and Rick Snyderman had assembled a spectacular array of wonderful craft-art pieces: “ceremonial vessels” by Henry Hallem, furniture by Henry Royer, ceramics by Donna Anderegg and Hayne Bayless, cast-glass constructions by Mark Kobasz. Henry Hallem and Mark Kobasz were on hand to discuss the intensely personal process of creating such work, and Rick added comments from the gallery owner's perspective. These two galleries are true gems, and lovers of craft owe Rick and Ruth a debt of gratitude for the support they have given the craft movement in general and the Renwick Alliance in particular. ■

Family Heirloom Day—Connecting with our Heritage

By **Shelly Brunner**

Renwick Book is Here

Skilled Work, the Smithsonian's new book about the Renwick Gallery, is now available at the book store.

Alliance members at the Sponsor level (\$250) and above will receive a complimentary copy.

On March 22 from 11am to 3pm, the Renwick Gallery will offer an opportunity to celebrate your family heritage, focusing on objects, stories, and other representations of family life. Bring your own heirloom(s) with you!

Renwick docents will offer family tours of the exhibit, *Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts and Crafts Movement*.

There will be not one but three workshops. Daughters and Sons of Dorcas, an African-American quilting group, will assist participants in constructing a quilt block. Barbara Satterfield, author of the children's book *The Story Dance*, will lead participants in telling stories about the heirlooms they have brought to the museum.

And Bill Adair of Gold Leaf Studios will demonstrate the construction of gold leaf frames, with Renwick docents assisting participants in creating their own frames.

Bruce Hutton, old-time folk singer, will perform American tunes and tell stories about the theme of family. His stage set includes antique instruments and his own family heirloom quilt collection.

Participants will also be offered take-home activities to help them explore their family heritage: *How to Interview Grandparents* and *How to Create a Grandparent Book*.

Family Day is funded by a generous grant from the Windgate Foundation. ■

Upcoming Events

James Renwick Alliance and Related Events

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

March

March 5 (Thursday)

Exhibition opening: *Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts & Crafts Movement*, Renwick Gallery, 6-8 pm

March 12 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am-3 pm (continuous)
"Beatrice Wood: Mama of Dada": The life, the loves, and the influences of this ceramic artist

March 15 (Sunday)

Exhibition Tour, Renwick Gallery lobby, 3 pm.
Renwick Gallery Curator-in-Charge Kenneth R. Trapp reviews the exhibit, "Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts & Crafts Movement".

March 22 (Sunday)

Family Heirloom Day, Renwick Gallery
(see article elsewhere in this issue)

March 26 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am-3 pm
(continuous-repeat of March 12 program)

March 27 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, noon.
Renwick Gallery program coordinator Allen Bassing surveys 18th and 19th century textiles made by women.

March 28 (Saturday)

Workshop, Art League School annex, Alexandria, 10 am-3 pm
Jody Klein, mixed media

March 29 (Sunday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm
Jody Klein, mixed media

April

April 2 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am-3 pm (continuous)
"The Complete Metalsmith with Tim McCreight": Basic jewelry making – joining, cutting, forming, and surface techniques

April 4 (Saturday)

Workshop, Montgomery College, 10 am-3 pm
Boris Bally, metal

April 5 (Sunday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm
Boris Bally, metal

April 8 (Wednesday)

Opening reception, SOFA, New York City

April 9-12 (Thursday-Sunday)

SOFA, New York City

April 16 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am-3 pm
(continuous-repeat of April 2 program)

April 17 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, noon.
Renwick Gallery program coordinator Allen Bassing surveys the tools and implements used in 18th and 19th century America for crafts, hunting, agriculture, and food preparation.

April 18 (Saturday)

Workshop, Art League Madison Street annex, Alexandria, 10 am-3 pm
James Minson, flamework glass

April 19 (Sunday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm
James Minson, flamework glass

April 22 (Wednesday)

Opening, Smithsonian Craft Show, National Building Museum

April 23-26 (Thursday-Sunday)

Smithsonian Craft Show, National Building Museum

April 23-26 (Thursday-Sunday)

Spring Craft Weekend, Washington DC

April 23 (Thursday)

Acquisitions Committee meeting, Renwick Gallery

April 24 (Friday)

Craft Leaders Caucus Day

April 24 (Friday)

Gala benefit and auction:
"At Home with Crafts," Decatur House, 6:30 pm

April 25 (Saturday)

Symposium: "Home, Again: The Arts and Crafts Revival," Renwick Gallery, 9:30 am-12:30 pm

April 26 (Sunday)

Alliance Craft Study Tour

May

May 7 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am-3 pm (continuous)
"Neon with Craig Kraft": Step by step through the history, tools, and processing of neon tubing for sculpture

May 8 (Friday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, noon.
Renwick Gallery program coordinator Allen Bassing reviews unique musical instruments of the late 20th century.

May 14 (Thursday)

Video, Renwick Gallery, 10 am-3 pm
(continuous-repeat of May 7 program)

May 23 (Saturday)

Workshop, Art League Madison Street annex, Alexandria, 10 am- 3 pm
Judith Salomon, clay

May 24 (Sunday)

Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm
Judith Salomon, clay

May 30 (Saturday)

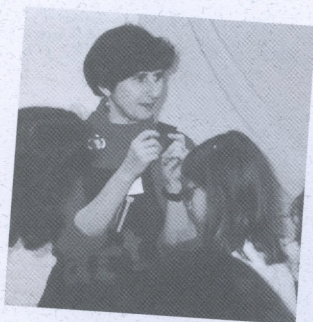
Lecture, Renwick Gallery, 3 pm.
Clay sculptor Adrian Saxe discusses his complex and sophisticated stoneware and porcelain pieces, five of which are in the Renwick Gallery's collection. Supported by the American Hand Plus Gallery.

June

June 4-6 (Thursday-Saturday)

Craft Leaders Caucus Trip, St. Louis

► Alliance-sponsored events in bold



▲ Lisa Vershbow leads a parent-child jewelry workshop, held in November.



◀ Maria-Teresa Fernandes (right) talks with an attendee during last fall's craft workshop on embroidery as an art form.



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Quarterly

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