

## Glass Exhibition a Roaring Success

by **Ronn Ronck, NMAA**

**G**lass! *Glorious Glass!*, the current exhibition at the Renwick Gallery, got off to a blazing start in September and continues to draw appreciative crowds. It has been warmly received by the media:

- In a surprise visit to the press preview in September, Doug McKay of Channel 4 interviewed Curator-in-Charge Kenneth Trapp and filmed part of his tour with the media. The piece was broadcast that evening.
- A fascinating article on Washington glass artist Therman Statom ran in the *Washington Post* Arts section on September 26. The *Post* also ran notices and photos in the Home section and named it a Weekend's Best selection in the Calendar section.
- The *Washington Times* covered the exhibition in its calendar, and the *New York Times* ran a notice on the front page of its Art section, along with a color photo of Susie Krasnican's piece, "Dress for Success."

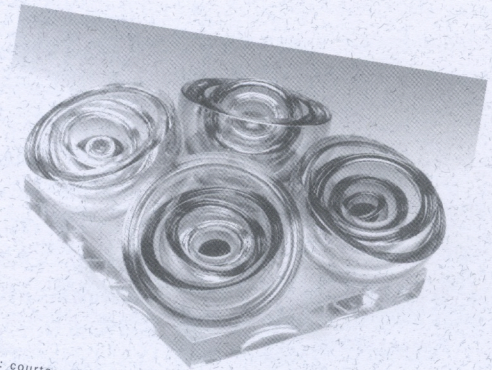


photo: courtesy of the NMAA

▲ Harvey Littleton, *Four Seasons*, 1977, blown glass, 5 3/4 x 10 1/4 x 10 3/4 inches, Gift of Paul and Elmerina Parkman

- Krasnican's work was also reproduced in color along with a notice in the *Where and When* section of *Washingtonian* magazine.
- Stories have also appeared in *Antiques and Arts Weekly* and *Glass Shards*, the newsletter of the National American Glass Club.

*Glass! Glorious Glass!* continues until January 30, 2000. Docents will lead walk-in tours of the exhibition weekdays from December 1 to 17 and January 3 to 28 (except January 17). ■



JAMES  
RENWICK  
ALLIANCE

### Get Ready for Craft Weekend!

Chair Norman Mitchell reports that plans for Craft Weekend 2000 are well in hand. The schedule so far:

<b>Thursday, April 27</b>	<i>Evening</i> – Acquisition meeting and museum tour
<b>Friday, April 28</b>	<i>All day</i> – Craft Leaders Caucus Day <i>Evening</i> – Patrons Dinner
<b>Saturday, April 29</b>	<i>Morning</i> – Symposium: "Personally Speaking: Artists Talk about their Art and their Lives" <i>Evening</i> – Gala at the Russian embassy: "Ornament for the 21st Century"
<b>Sunday, April 30</b>	<i>All day</i> – Alliance Craft Study Tour of Washington

# From the President

JAMES RENWICK  
ALLIANCE

Quarterly

Winter 1999-00

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.

*Editor*

Bob Sinclair

*Graphic Design*

Cox & Associates, Inc.

*Contributors*

Jeremy Adamson

Allen Bassing

Barbara Berlin

Sue Bralove

Frances Burka

Brenda Erickson

Jan Maddox

Nina Lane Neily

Carol Ridker

Ronn Ronck

Bob Sinclair

Kenneth R. Trapp

*Photography*

Sue Bralove

Clemmer Montague

Bob Sinclair

*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

This fall has been filled with exciting activities for members of the James Renwick Alliance.

Many of you attended the Opening Reception at the Renwick Gallery for *Glass! Glorious Glass!*, organized by Curator-in-Charge Kenneth Trapp. The show is a sparkling success, with as many as 100 visitors per hour at the museum. Both overnight Alliance trips this fall—the craft study trip to the Hudson River Valley in September and the Craft Leaders Caucus trip to Providence and Boston in October—were completely filled. As a participant on both trips, I can attest to the fact that both were highly successful, filled with excellent opportunities to expand one's knowledge and understanding of the field of craft. On behalf of the trip participants, special thanks to Norman Mitchell for organizing the Hudson River Valley Trip and to Mary George Kronstadt, Herta Loeser, JoAnne and Libby Cooper, and Sandy and Norman Mitchell for organizing and leading the Providence-Boston Trip. Also, plaudits to Janet Schiff for organizing and leading a first-rate day trip to Philadelphia during the Philadelphia Craft Show.

An updated *Save the Dates!* card describing upcoming Alliance events will be mailed this month together with a membership renewal form. Please renew promptly to take advantage of a wide range of activities that have been planned for next year. Among these are craft study tours to the Baltimore craft show on February 26 and to the Fiber Art in Museums Symposium in Philadelphia on April 8. You will also be receiving invitations to attend the opening reception for two shows, "The Renwick Invitational: Five Women in Craft" and "The Art of John Cederquist" on March 30, and to the events which comprise Craft Weekend, April 27-30.

Last spring, the Alliance Board of Directors voted to amend the Alliance's bylaws by establishing a National Resource Board. This board is to include individuals who are members of the Alliance and who have been active in assisting the Alliance meet its goals. The purpose is to recognize members who have made significant contributions to the success of the Alliance and to secure their continued support as the Alliance builds on its past accomplishments. Members of the National Resource Board will meet at least once annually

under the leadership of the Alliance Vice President and provide advice and counsel to the Alliance Board. At its November meeting, the Alliance Board approved a list of proposed National Resource Board members submitted by the Planning and Nominating Committee. Approximately 50 people are being asked to join the National Resource Board for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2000. I will report to you on the composition of this board in the next *Quarterly*.

Another initiative undertaken by the Alliance Board has been to establish a new award, the Distinguished Educators Award, to be presented to two or three especially deserving craft educators on behalf of the James Renwick Alliance during Craft Weekend April 27-30. The incoming and outgoing Honorary Boards, together with the Alliance Board of Directors, are being asked to submit nominations for the award. We plan to announce the honorees in February.

The Board of Directors has also approved a slate of eighteen individuals who will be asked to join the new Honorary Board for the years 2000-2002. In writing to these nominees to ask them to serve, I called their attention to the fact that in its seven-teen years of existence, the Alliance has contributed over \$850,000 toward the purchase of 135 objects for the permanent collection of the Renwick Gallery. As members of the Alliance, you should be proud of this achievement. As we look ahead to the new millennium, I am confident that we can work together to build on our past achievements and continue our strong support for the Renwick Gallery.

**Last spring, the Alliance Board of Directors voted to amend the Alliance's bylaws by establishing a National Resource Board. The purpose of this board is to recognize members who have made significant contributions to the success of the Alliance.**

**David Montague**  
President

# The Renwick Invitational

by **Kenneth R. Trapp**

## The Renwick Invitational 2002

I am happy to report that NMAA commissioner Shelby M. Gans and her husband Frederick have stepped forward to underwrite the second *Invitational* for 2002. The Ganses generously helped fund the renovation of the permanent collection galleries in 1997. They have proven themselves loyal supporters of the Renwick Gallery.

To say that I am deeply grateful to Eleanor and Samuel Rosenfeld and to Shelby and Frederick Gans is an understatement. Their personal support of me as a museum professional and a friend will live long with me after I have left the Renwick Gallery. Eleanor, Sam, Shelby, and Fred are the truest of true friends.

—K.R.T.

In March 2000 the National Museum of American Art will inaugurate *The Renwick Invitational*, a new biennial exhibition series. The first *Invitational* is *Five Women in Craft*, highlighting the art of Myra Mimplitsch Gray (metal), Mary Jackson (sweetgrass baskets), Janel Jacobson (porcelain and net-suke), Sondra Sherman (jewelry), and Consuelo Jimenez Underwood (fiber). Of these artists, Gray, Jacobson, and Underwood are represented in the museum's collection.

The *Invitational* grew out of a conversation I had with Eleanor and Samuel Rosenfeld in May 1997 after we toured the newly renovated galleries that house the Renwick Gallery's permanent collection. They expressed an interest in funding a special exhibition series that would highlight young, emerging, unknown, and deserving artists. In subsequent conversations with Betsy Broun we decided not to limit the series by age as that was too defining. More to the point, with many Americans retiring earlier than ever and with people changing careers in the prime of life—not to mention the graying of the country—the idea of defining craft by age was no longer valid. When we began to discuss the series it was not yet named; the title would come later.

Rather than begin by explaining what the *Invitational* is, I think it best to explain what it is not. The *Invitational* is not organized to promote the already known, in particular artists who have had major museum retrospective exhibitions or who have been the subjects of monographs. On the other hand, the artists who will be included in forthcoming *Invitationals* are known—they are known to their peers and to discriminating collectors and to curious curators. The *Invitational* is organized to educate the public about excellent work created in craft media.

When I began to think about the *Invitational*, my enthusiasm waned when I thought it had to

have the usual line up—a potter, a weaver, and so on. But when the idea of thematic exhibitions came to me my enthusiasm returned. It dawned on others before me that most of the artists being considered for the *Invitational* were women.

The first artist I decided to include was Mary Jackson. Her presentation at the James Renwick Alliance Craft Weekend symposium in April 1997 was magical. And I find her baskets clean, strong, and majestic. Whereas her work is “overexposed” to some because she participates in national craft shows, her work speaks eloquently to me and I believe she shouldn't be punished for trying to sell her art—whatever the venue.

In choosing the artists for *Five Women in Craft*, attention was given to where artists live and the materials they use. When I began, Sondra Sherman was in Philadelphia, then she moved to Savannah, and now she is in New Paltz, New York. Consuelo Jimenez Underwood is an artist I had the good fortune to know in California. In 1997 the museum purchased her magnificent, politically charged quilt “Virgen de los Caminos” (Virgin of the Highways).

Although I have been told that *Five Women in Craft* is politically correct—a term, by the way, that I do not apply to myself or to my work—I prefer to think that the exhibition is simply correct, i.e., right. To work at the Renwick Gallery for any length of time is to learn that social and cultural issues are very much a concern of our constituents. We are watched by those who care for crafts.

With uncommon altruism, the Rosenfelds were clear from the beginning that their support of the *Invitational* was in no way meant to determine its content or direction. The Rosenfelds understand a truism of magnanimous giving—often we get more the less we demand. We at American Art want nothing more than to satisfy Eleanor and Samuel Rosenfeld in a meaningful way that celebrates their generosity. They are exemplary patrons of the arts. ■

# To Providence and Boston

by Sue Bralove

▼ Question: Who are these people, and what are they doing?

Answer: Toots Zynsky (right) and her son (left) form a hot glass disc into a vessel.

The Craft Leaders Caucus trip to Providence and Boston began in torrents of rain; it ended on a crisp Sunday amidst the full-blown splendor of the autumn foliage. The intervening five days were filled with the vivid works and personalities of some of New England's finest artists and rare glimpses into the homes and lives of the area's

most seasoned collectors.

For some, the highlight of the trip was the opportunity to visit the studios of some of the country's most eminent glass artists and to see, first-hand, how they manipulated glass in their own distinctive ways.

In Providence we visited Howard Ben Tre, who used slides and actual examples to illustrate the indoor and

outdoor cast glass sculpture for which he has become famous. Some of his newer projects are on a civic scale, such as a series of gardens with fountains and street furniture for Warrington Town Centre in England.

Toots Zynsky gave us her first-ever group demonstration of how she forms her multicolored glass vessels. We watched in awe as she heated a glass disc to the exact temperature to bend and fold it without losing the forms of the tiny individual rods that covered it. Assisted by her son, she used an oven whose top lifted up by depressing a foot pedal. She formed the piece over a spun metal bowl, repeatedly putting it back in the oven to soften. We were captivated by her exacting technique, as well as her friendly, no-nonsense personality.

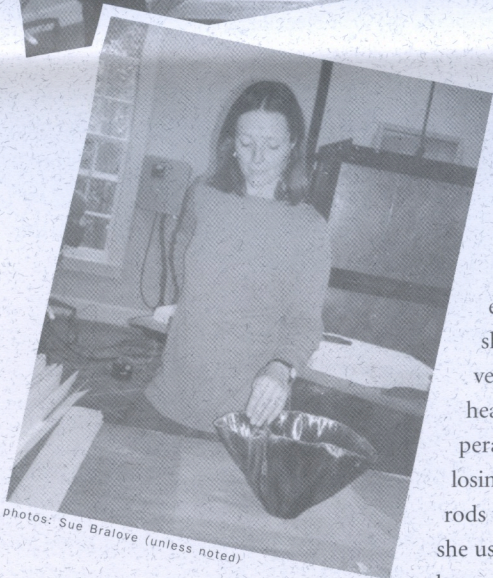
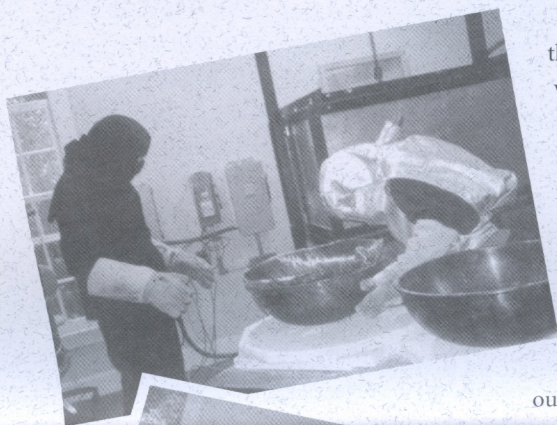
Jim Watkins had mounted a small show of his black and white cast glass pieces. In an adjacent room we watched his assistants blow glasses for his colorful production line of tableware. At Steve

Weinberg's studio we saw how he began with large discs of optical glass from Germany, transforming them through melting, molding, and grinding into amazingly beautiful sculpture. We even learned the secret of how he is able to place uniform bubbles at precise locations inside the glass. Also in Providence is the studio of Daniel Clayman, who explained how he uses wax and plaster forms as the basis for casting both the metal and the glass elements of his sculptures.

Michael Glancey's studio and home are across the state line in Rehoboth, Massachusetts. In a style which could only be described as that of a stand-up comic, Michael explained how he cuts his glass (which is blown in Sweden) and how he applies the metallic elements which distinguish his work. The inspiration for his designs were all around, in his drafting templates as well as his collections of seeds, branches and other natural elements. We enjoyed a box lunch on the deck and in the sunny kitchen of his home while he signed catalogues and entertained us with anecdotes and humorous observations.

Providence is the home of the Rhode Island School of Design, and its outstanding glass program is one reason why so many glass artists work in the area. RISD also has a distinguished metals program, and our group was privileged to have as a guide the chair of that program, Louis Mueller. Louis arranged for us to visit the RISD museum, where the metalsmiths and other faculty members had work on display, and he invited Jonathan Bonner to present a slide talk about his sculptural work in metal—from sundials and weather vanes to pure sculptural forms.

Louis had also organized a special exhibition and sale of work by metals faculty members, several of whom were present: Scott Cormier, Anne Essex, Noara Elyashiv, Daniel Kruger, Robin Quigley, Barbara Seidenath, and Johan Van Aswegen. Dean of Fine Arts Jay Kugen welcomed the group and exhibited some of his own work in metal. Last but not least, Louis invited us to his own studio for a bounteous and filling buffet



photos: Sue Bralove (unless noted)

▲ Toots Zynsky in her studio with one of her colorful glass vessels.

► **Ruth Conant tries out one of Boris Bally's recycled road sign chairs as Evelyn Asrael and Boris look on (right).**

lunch, after which he took us on a whirlwind tour of a RISD classroom building which houses four departments, including metals. In the evening, he joined us at Martina Windels's new jewelry store, Martina & Company, where we had cocktails and more opportunities to meet gallery artists and purchase their work.

The next morning metal artist Boris Bally, formerly from Pittsburgh but now working in Providence, hosted a wonderful breakfast with his wife, Lynn. At their recently renovated studio we saw piles of old Pennsylvania highway signs

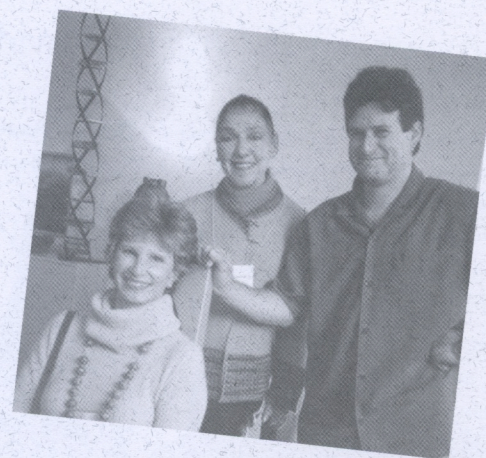
which Boris turns into tables, chairs, bowls, forks, spoons, jewelry, and whatever else his creative mind can conjure up. Even the stairway to the living loft above is unique, its railing constructed from discarded shovels.

The drive from Providence to Boston took us along the Rhode Island shore to the home of collector, art patron, and fellow Caucus member Daphne Farago.

We were dazzled by the sunshine and sparkling

water views from the house, but even more by the exquisite collection so finely displayed within. Daphne generously answered our endless questions and even let us rummage through the drawers of her extensive jewelry collection. She began as a collector of American folk art and now collects craft in all media. Ceramics and glass are featured on the ground floor of the house; fiber, including a diverse selection of baskets and small wall pieces, grace the second.

Still in the countryside and not far from the water is the home and studio of Chris Gustin. A



retired ceramics

professor, Chris is now doing one-of-a-kind work and has recently started a ceramic tile business. He has moved from his old house, a former chicken coop, into a new one, which is filled with his work, the extraordinary paintings of his wife, Nancy Smith, and their collection of work by other artists.

As we have seen again and again on these tours, artists take special pride in the design and building of their own homes. Jay Stanger is no exception. We stopped for dinner at Jay's home outside of Boston. Although not yet completed, it is a showcase for his wood and metal constructions. In the open living room is a grand, curving staircase whose railings were still being fabricated in the adjacent studio. The floors are patterned with a mixture of colored woods. While we wandered around the house, we enjoyed cocktails and a buffet dinner catered by a local Italian restaurant. Dessert was served in the studio while Jay talked about his work and showed us the pieces of furniture he was currently building. Jay's energy and enthusiasm for his work permeates his life and that of his family.

Friday morning we woke up ready to tackle Boston, with its fine galleries, special collections, and wonderful restaurants. Thanks to Caucus member Herta Loeser, a brunch was hosted for us at The Society of Arts and Crafts, where we viewed a special turned-wood exhibit. The hundred-year-old Society held a gala birthday party on Saturday evening which several group members attended.

In a rare interval of free time, people checked out the galleries on Newbury Street, taking in exhibits such as the Japanese glass at Chappel.

*continued on page 6*



photo: Clemmer Montague

▲ **Bob Aptekar, Judy Aptekar, and Howard Ben Tre with a Ben Tre stone and glass sculpture in the foreground.**

► **Bernice Stearman, Michael Glancey, and Marshal Jacobs in the artist's kitchen.**



## To Providence and Boston continued from page 5

▼ Sharon Buchanan, Ruth Conant, and Bob Buchanan pose with "Stacked Pot" by Todd Mckie.



▲ Alliance president David Montague and Ryna Cohen relax amidst Art Deco furnishings in the home of collector John Axelrod (center).

▲ Bill Kolodner, Marilyn Barrett, Barbara Berlin, Daphne Fargo, Arnold Berlin, Susan Agger, Carolyn Alper, and Muriel Pear examine Daphne's extensive jewelry collection (bottom).

Gallery and Brother Thomas's glazed porcelain at Pucker Gallery. We broke up into small groups to visit the home of John Axelrod, where he and Jeannine Falino, curator of decorative arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, showed us the collection. John's interests range from Art Deco and mid-century West Coast ceramics to Funk Art, Afro-Brazil 20th century, and African-American late 19th and early 20th century art. As he explained, every piece of art has four dimensions, the fourth being the story about the piece. John discussed the fourth dimension of many of the pieces, impressing us with his energy, his knowledge, and his love for collecting art.

After a wonderful lunch at Biba, we split into two groups, alternating visits to the home of Graham and Ann Gund and to Mobilia Gallery. At Mobilia there were three exhibits: "The Teapot Redefined II," "The Great Balancing Act," and "New Baskets by Jan Hopkins." Several of the artists were present to talk about their work, and the

group reveled in the opportunity to make purchases from these shows, as well as from the gallery's extensive inventory of fiber, baskets, jewelry, and much more. At the Gund home, we were led through the collection by curator Sarah Miller—the Gunds were away in Washington at the time of our visit! Their spacious, late 19th century house holds a large collection of primarily post-World War II paintings, sculpture, ceramics, and works on paper. Mr. Gund is an architect, and his

eye is attracted by pattern, color, and whimsy. Major paintings by Hans Hoffman and Philip Guston, as well as ceramics by Judith Salomon and Betty Woodman, illustrate these features.

The rest of the afternoon was taken up by visits to artist studios. First we saw Andy Magdanz and Susan Shapiro at Avon Place Glassworks, a cooperative venture with other glass artists similar to the one they have established on Martha's Vineyard. We then went to the shared studios of furniture makers John Everdale, Judy McKie, and Mitch Ryerson. Judy was out of town, but Mitch showed us some of her drawings and carved foam forms from which her bronze pieces are cast. Mitch had some of his own pieces in the studio, illustrating his playful use of found objects in making furniture. John had photographs of his finely crafted designs in wood, and he spoke to us about some of the commissions he had filled.

We returned to Mobilia for an extravagant buffet dinner, complete with the *best* Chinese dumplings. Joanne and Libby Cooper, owners of Mobilia, were the primary planners of the Providence/Boston trip. The generous dinner, as well as the extensive care they put into planning the trip, are indicative of what good friends they are to the Alliance.

Saturday began with a trip to the Peabody Museum at Harvard to see the glass flower collection made by Leopold and Rudolph Blaschka between 1887 and 1936. Created as botanical illustrations, the specimens are so intricate and accurate that it is hard to believe they are made of glass. There are over 3000 models, including sections of seeds and flowers that reveal the endless variety of natural forms. We made a brief visit to the Barbara Singer Gallery, where Todd McKie's ceramics and paintings were on view. We also saw work by artists David Friedheim, Stephanie Chubbuck, and Sarah Williams.

At the studio of artist Mags Harries and architect Legos Heder, we ate lunch while we viewed slides of the couple's collaborative environmental projects. Whether decorations for a four-mile-long wall in Arizona, patterning for a park sidewalk, or

**Proposals Wanted:  
The James Renwick  
Fellowship Program  
in American Crafts**

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, 2000. Appointments will begin on or after June 1, 2000.

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

a series of sculpted gloves for a Boston subway, their projects bring people together in an awareness of shared place and community.

After a brief tour of Brattle Street and its rich 19th century domestic architecture, architect Simeon Bruner took us home to his own house. He and his wife, artist Leslie Gould, showed us their collections of Oceanic art, early Wendell Castle furniture, and contemporary American art. Part of the group left to dress for the party that night, while others boarded the bus for a drive west of the city and to the home of art dealer Meredyth Moses. It could not have been a more beautiful day to drive through the country to this perfect showcase of emerging art, with its gardens of outdoor sculpture.

The late afternoon sun lit up the already flaming autumn trees as we drove on to the studio of glass artist Sid Hutter. Sid, with the help of his assistants, illustrated how he cuts discs of glass, gluing and

coloring them to create his distinctive stacked glass vessel forms.

Many of the artists and collectors we had visited joined us for an elegant farewell dinner at Clio. After dessert we had a chance to thank Joanne and Libby Cooper and Sandy Mitchell, as well as Norman Mitchell, Herta Loeser, and Mary George Kronstadt, for all the work they put into making this ambitious trip a reality. And we were also able to thank the artists and private collectors who had generously shared their studios and homes with us.

The group said its final farewells at brunch on Sunday morning at the home of Caucus member Chris Rivkin. Both a glass artist and a collector, Chris lives on the edge of Hingham Bay. Her house is the perfect, light-filled showcase for her in-depth collections of established and emerging glass artists, including Tom Patti, Dale Chihuly, and Sonia Blomdahl. ■

## The Renwick Fellow for 1999-2000

by Jan Maddox

From June through August, Justine Walden was in residence as the 18th James Renwick Fellow in American Crafts funded by the James Renwick Alliance. A resident of Philadelphia, she has a BA in philosophy from the University of California (Berkeley) and an MA in American studies from the University of Pennsylvania. For the past few years she has been teaching and doing research in American art, with emphasis on the decorative arts, as a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania.

Ms. Walden's proposal was entitled "The American Textiles: Art, Craft, Design, and Industry, 1930-1950." Her research focused on the concept of the artist as a professional designer, the evolution of the role of women visual artists, and the influence of immigrants and refugees from Europe. Early fabric designs by architects and artists, as well as Works

Progress Administration projects in the 1930s, served as examples of a growing interdependence among art, craft, design, and industry.

During the pre- and postwar period in the United States, design education was greatly influenced by the modernism that began to be disseminated through art departments that looked to the Bauhaus, its teachers, and its pedagogy for inspiration. Institutions like Cranbrook and the Black Mountain School provided leadership in design education and the inclusion of crafts, including textile design, into traditional curricula throughout the United States. The papers of artists and historians, samples of designs, swatches of fabrics, and other related materials are in the Archives of American Art at the National Museum of American Art, making it especially suited to Ms. Walden's study. Her research will be incorporated into her Ph.D. dissertation. ■

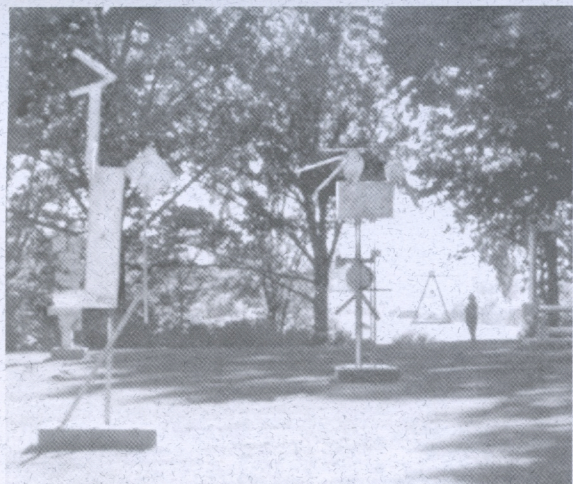
# The Alliance Tour: Splendor along the Hudson

by Frances Burka, Brenda Erickson, Carol Ridker, and Bob Sinclair

The late September craft study tour of the lower Hudson River valley was the most extensive trip ever undertaken by the James Renwick Alliance as a whole. On the itinerary were not just outstanding craft studios and private collections, but displays of so-called “fine art” (especially sculpture) that took one’s breath away. The fall scenery in the Hudson valley was itself a work of art. And there were off-the-beaten-track pleasures such as the “other CIA”—the Culinary Institute of America, where the group was treated to one of the trip’s many subversively delicious meals.



Boarding the bus at Newark Airport, the tour first stopped in Upper Nyack, on the west side of the river just upstream from the Tappan Zee bridge, to visit two very different houses. The home of ceramic artists Michael Lucero and Cheryl Laemmler is a converted carriage house. Where the original horse stalls were located, Laemmler has installed sculptures of horses’ heads



photos: Bob Sinclair

▲ Michael Lucero with Lisa and Dudley Anderson (top).

▲ Storm King Art Center: works by David Smith in foreground, piece by Mark Di Suvero in background (bottom).

and accompanying dogs that overlook guests at the dinner table. The décor uses fifties furniture, such as Eames Eiffel Tower chairs, that the couple has found at flea markets and thrift shops. Lucero’s smaller ceramic pieces are also part of the décor.

Simona Chazen greeted the group at her contemporary split-level home almost across the road from Lucero and Laemmler. The house, designed by

Theodore Ceraldi of Syracuse University, descends from the road down to the Hudson, with niches along the way for modern art and an extensive glass collection. The range of glass extends from early Littleton and Howard Ben Tre to Libensky and Brychtova’s column “Victory,” created in celebration of Czechoslovakia’s liberation from communism. Both visits were heightened by gracious and informative walkthroughs by the owners.

Few participants knew what awaited them at Storm King Art Center, the next stop. Founded in 1960 by H. Peter Stern and Ralph Ogden, the center is an immensely ambitious endeavor to place outdoor sculpture within natural surroundings rather than as ornaments in a formal setting. One could see a huge Calder stabile and a Kenneth Snelson piece, among many others, as the bus went up the drive to the main museum building. A major David Smith retrospective awaited the group on the other side of the building; one could look past and through Smith’s metal sculptures to four more Calder stables on the next rise and three works by Mark Di Suvero on a far hillside. Just a few additional highlights: “City on a High Mountain,” a work by Louise Nevelson; Andy Goldsworthy’s “Wall that Went for a Walk,” a 2,300-foot dry-stone wall, built with material from a fallen wall on the property, that winds among trees and seems to go underwater at a pond; and a small sculpture by Barbara Hepworth, based on the Möbius curve. A magic moment came on a knoll, where many of the pieces dotting the grounds could be seen in the late afternoon sun. As the participants rested on Isamu Noguchi’s granite piece, “Momo Taro,” the guide related the Japanese folk tale, “Momo Taro the Peach Boy.”

Dinner that evening was at the Depuy Canal House in High Falls, deep in the rural New York countryside (but not quite so deep as it seemed: the bus followed such a roundabout route to get there that some participants expected to see Binghamton around the next bend). The tavern,



▼ A landscape graced by the works of Mark Di Suvero.



built in 1797, is now in the hands of John Novi, who served a meal that showed why he is regarded as one of the region's premier chefs.

Saturday was SUNY day: the State University of New York, New Paltz, and the craft artists associated with it. In the morning the tour visited the university campus, which was humming with creative student activity. Then, after that gourmet lunch at the "other CIA," it split into several groups,

which were ferried in SUNY vans to the studios of outstanding craft artists: metalsmith Myra Mimlitsch Gray, jewelers Sondra Sherman and Lisa Galnick, ceramist Mary Roehm, jeweler and painter Jamie Bennett, and goldsmith Pat Flynn.

Then into the woods again, this time for cocktails at the home of collector Arthur Williams, who specializes in the decorative arts of the last three centuries, along with contemporary ceramics and nineteenth-century painting and folk art. And taking a much more direct route, the tour passed the Depuy Canal House on its way to yet another superb dinner at the Inn at Stone Ridge.

On Sunday the Alliance got off on one of its famous early morning departures to the studio of sculptress Ursula von Rydingsvard.

Since her work is constructed mainly of cedar four-by-fours, it was not surprising that we found ourselves once again deep in a dense forest. Ursula

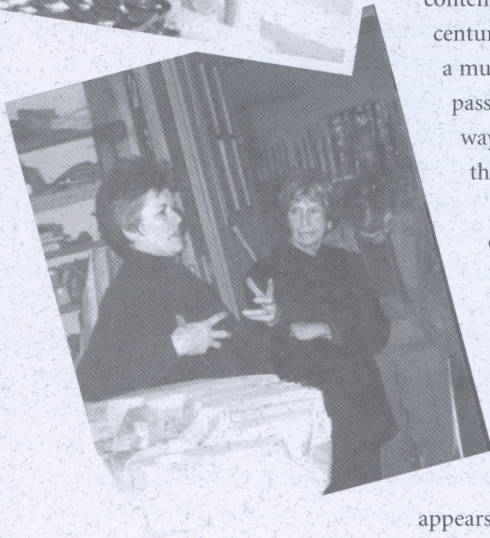
appears half her age: strong, stunning, and statuesque. Her talk made clear to the group her many years of experience dealing with the organically conceptual and very labor intensive-process

of cutting, stacking, bolting, gluing, and carving the milled beams to create very powerful forms (one of which the group had seen two days earlier at Storm King). The work in progress at her studio was a series of vessel/bowl forms four or five feet high and often as wide. The stacked cedar beams are end-cut, chewed by a chainsaw, and labeled to facilitate reassembly with bolts and glue. Each piece of wood has its place, almost like a massive three-dimensional puzzle. Ursula made it clear that she is a very intuitive artist, rarely doing any analysis as she works on these massive forms; they either please her eye or they don't.

The last stop of this tour was Kykuit, the Rockefeller compound on the east side of the Hudson. Rockefellers still live on this enormous estate, but the main house and gardens are open to guided tours. Governor Nelson Rockefeller was the last member of the family to live in the house, and his art collection still graces the building and grounds: sculpture by Brancusi, Maillol, Calder, Nevelson, and Smith; huge Picasso tapestries; a big Miro painting in the living room. Looking out across the private golf course to the Hudson, one wondered whether a player's handicap took account of the course's "sculpture hazards."

And so back to Newark airport. Those three days, with Norman Mitchell in Washington and Myra Mimlitsch Gray in New Paltz as the chief organizers, were extraordinarily rich. ■

*(For the view of one participant, see the following article.)*



▲ Metalsmith Myra Mimlitsch Gray with Colleen Kotelly (center).

▲ Sculptress Ursula von Rydingsvard discusses her work (bottom).



▲ Sculpture at Kykuit, the Rockefeller estate on the east side of the Hudson.

# A Craft Artist on the Bus

by **Nina Lane Neily**

**I**t seems odd to view a bus tour as a life-changing event, but the Alliance trip to the Hudson River valley was that for me. After contemplating for hours what made this three-day tour so profound and pivotal, I finally decided that it was all about feeling. It was the kind of experience that would never be repeated; everything came together “just right.”

I am a goldsmith, and I had a particular interest in this tour since it would be visiting my alma

mater at New Paltz as well as several goldsmiths’ studios. I was traveling with my good friend Sharron Parker, a feltmaker who, like me, lives in Raleigh. As luck would have it, Sharron and I were the last people to board the bus at Newark airport – which meant we could not help attracting the notice of the 40 or so people already aboard.

Sharron and I had joked that we would “stick out like sore thumbs” and would most likely be consigned to the back of the bus. And indeed, as we boarded with embarrassment, it was obvious we were the “new kids on the block.” But we were immediately enveloped by a warm, jovial, sincere group of people, most of whom had traveled together before. They actually were anxious to meet us. We were “the artists” they had heard about. We soon discovered that craft artists rarely travel with the Alliance. Most of these people had a

passion for art but were not practitioners. The “feeling” had begun.

Those of you who have sat on a tour bus know that there is a great deal of time to converse with the people around you. This was a formidable group from all walks of life: doctors, lawyers, builders, judges, salespeople, tax preparers, teachers, military and government workers, physicists, psychotherapists, social workers, gallery owners, landscape designers, not to mention some who were practicing artists or had been in the past.

The group had an incredible thirst for knowledge, as evidenced by the foraging for newspapers

every morning. There was not much talk at breakfast or early on the bus as people digested the contents of the papers. Put people like this on the bus, add their passion for art, and you are bound to experience more than what the itinerary seems to offer.

The group showed its knowledge and interest early on as we visited a ceramist’s and a collector’s home. I became painfully aware that these folks knew their artwork and were perfectly ready to ask about or comment on pieces that piqued their interest. They didn’t miss a single piece of art, even if it was tucked away in a garden or in the corner of a curio cabinet. They had a tremendous amount to teach me, but I wondered how I was going to stand my ground for the next three days without appearing a misfit as a narrowly focused “artist.”

These feelings of inadequacy were soon put to rest as I sat with various individuals and discussed the art we were experiencing. I found we had similar thoughts, likes, dislikes, and questions. Many times we agreed we just did not understand some of the art we were seeing. As the conversations continued on the bus, over meals, and walking between buildings, I began to notice there was a hunger to know more about “the artists on the bus.” It was evident that this group appreciated an opportunity to interact with practicing crafts people. Never before had I experienced so many people wanting to meet me and know me. I have always wanted to know what makes other artists tick, but it had never occurred to me that someone would want to know what made me tick.

What affected me most was the sincere concern of these people for the future of craft and its collector base. We craftspeople rely on collectors, who not only put food on our tables but also carry our work out into the world. Collectors sustain our history as artists; they pass our work along to museums and to the next generation. There were serious questions about how to encourage the next generation of collectors to understand how critically important their role is.

Out of the discussions about collectors arose concerns for our museums and their financial

**It seems odd to view a bus tour as a life-changing event, but the Alliance trip to the Hudson River valley was that for me. After contemplating for hours what made this three-day tour so profound and pivotal, I finally decided that it was all about feeling. It was the kind of experience that would never be repeated; everything came together “just right.”**

base. I came to realize that the public in general and artists in particular need to support our museums in ways that go beyond simply contributing money. Attendance at lectures encourages a museum to continue its educational efforts. Volunteers and docents are greatly needed, doing more work behind the scenes than most of us will ever conceive. I was quite embarrassed that as an artist, I had not done my share of behind-the-scenes work supporting a museum I hoped would one day support me.

By the end of this incredible weekend of art and discussion, I was completely overwhelmed with emotion: I had made new friends, I had stirred old memories by visiting places I had not seen in 20 years, I had compared my work with that of my peers, and I had been rejuvenated. After this trip, as I work long hours in my studio and

wonder whether anyone really cares about my pieces and whether I am contributing to our culture, I can reflect on my tour with 44 individuals who had a great impact on this artist. They cared, they questioned, they wondered where I had been, they said, "We want to see more." I am now producing work that is my best effort to date. I know the energy and love I experienced from this group of people have had a direct effect on my work.

So in my own humble way I would like to give the Renwick Alliance a sincere and humble "thank you." Thank you for your contributions and your love of the arts, the artists, and the museum. Most of all, thank you for "the feeling" that continues to reside in me, the feeling that keeps me creating during the lonely late hours when I used to think no one cared. ■

---

## Why Join the Craft Leaders Caucus?

by **Barbara Berlin**

**T**he Craft Leaders Caucus, the upper membership group of the James Renwick Alliance, offers the opportunity to give more monetary support to the Renwick Gallery and to gain greater personal reward. Caucus membership seems to bring about a feeling of warmth and belonging; as one member said, "There is not one person in this group that I wouldn't be happy sitting down next to at a meal." Members share educational experiences on special study tours in this country and abroad; they vote on proposed acquisitions for the Renwick Gallery; and they come together on Caucus Day during Craft Weekend. We welcome the latest members: Sondra and Howard Bender, Eve Benton and Malcolm Bund, Dede and Oscar Feldman, Elaine and Paul Marks, Eleanor and Sheldon Matzkin, Joan and Martin Messinger, and Claire and Robert Smith.

I know you will want to read Sue Bralove's article on the Providence/Boston trip; I suspect the trip is one of our all-time greats. We are grateful to Libby and JoAnne Cooper, Mary George Kronstadt,

Herta Loeser, and Alliance trip coordinator Sandy Mitchell who together made it happen.

Our retreat at Captiva, Florida has been rescheduled for 2001. We are now making final decisions about trips next fall and in the spring of 2001. In the nearer future we can look forward to the trip to Australia on March 25 - April 8, led by Judy Bloomfield and Norman Mitchell; and Caucus Day during Craft Weekend, chaired by Jackie Chalkey.

Caucus members, your questions and thoughts are welcome. Please let me hear from you. Together, we can make your Caucus membership the best it can be!

If you are not a Caucus member, we hope you will upgrade to this very rewarding level of membership. The annual cost is \$1250 for couples and \$1000 for individuals. Trip costs vary. To join the Craft Leaders Caucus, to learn more about membership benefits, or to be in touch with Caucus members during your travels, contact Julia Brennan at (703) 812-4500. Join now! ■



**JAMES  
RENWICK  
ALLIANCE**

209 N. Edgewood Street  
Arlington, VA 22201

BULK RATE  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 4297  
ROCKVILLE, MD

# Quarterly

## Winter 1999-00

Glass Exhibition a Roaring Success . . . . .	<b>1</b>	Cederquist Exhibition Opens March 30th . . . . .	<b>12</b>
Get Ready for Craft Weekend . . . . .	<b>1</b>	Welcome, New Alliance Members! . . . . .	<b>13</b>
From the President . . . . .	<b>2</b>	Upcoming Events . . . . .	<b>14</b>
The Renwick Invitational . . . . .	<b>3</b>	Join the James Renwick Alliance . . . . .	<b>15</b>
To Providence and Boston . . . . .	<b>4</b>		
The Renwick Fellow for 1999-2000 . . . . .	<b>7</b>		
Proposals Wanted: The James Renwick Fellowship Program in American Crafts . . . . .	<b>7</b>		
The Alliance Tour: Splendor along the Hudson . . . . .	<b>8</b>		
A Craft Artist on the Bus . . . . .	<b>10</b>		
Why Join the Craft Leaders Caucus . . . . .	<b>11</b>		

