



RENWICK QUARTERLY

June, July, August 1985

Published for the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, by the James Renwick Collectors Alliance.

"The Woven and Graphic Art of Anni Albers" is Major Summer and Fall Show

Anni Albers, revered as America's foremost artist-weaver, will be honored at the Renwick Gallery during the final six months of 1985 in a retrospective exhibition covering sixty-three years of her creativity. An illustrated book on the artist, with three essays about her and her woven and graphic art, has been published by the Smithsonian Institution Press to compliment the exhibition. A printed checklist of the eighty works in the exhibition will also be available to visitors.

German-born Albers was educated at the Bauhaus where she met her husband, Josef, with whom she emigrated to the United States in 1934. As new faculty members at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina, they brought to their adopted land the Bauhaus view that functional handmade objects and designs for industrial production are aesthetically equal to unique objects made as purely personal expressions. They moved to New York in 1949, and to Connecticut the following year when Josef Albers was appointed Chairman of the Department of Design at Yale University. Anni Albers has continued to live in Connecticut since her husband's death in 1976.

Anni Albers won admiration first for her art weavings, but influenced many others through her two books, Anni Albers: On Designing, 1959 and Anni Albers: On Weaving, 1965. She is an expert on both subjects; her Bauhaus tapestry and rug designs, and the sample fabrics she made at Black Mountain College for industrial

production, demonstrate her sureness of design and innovative use of unorthodox materials in weaving. The "pictorial weavings" that she began at Black Mountain College exemplify her mature integration of texture and subtle coloration into woven compositions.

Her interest turned to printmaking in 1963. Thereafter she adopted this new art medium exclusively, and in 1970 gave away her loom. Anni Albers' prints, sometimes handcolored or otherwise manipulated after printing, demonstrate the same lively exploration of printmaking's creative potential that she has brought to weaving. In recent years she has also occasionally designed fabrics for industrial production; their patterns --whether printed, acid-etched or machine-embroidered--continue her lifelong exploration of color and form.

The exhibition was organized by the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and will be presented at the following locations:

Renwick Gallery (June 12, 1985 through January 5, 1986)

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut (January 30 -March 23, 1986)

Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (April 19-June 2, 1986)

Portland Art Museum and Oregon School of Arts and Crafts (June 29 -August 25, 1986)

Frederick S. Wight Gallery, University of California at Los Angeles (September 28-November 17, 1986).



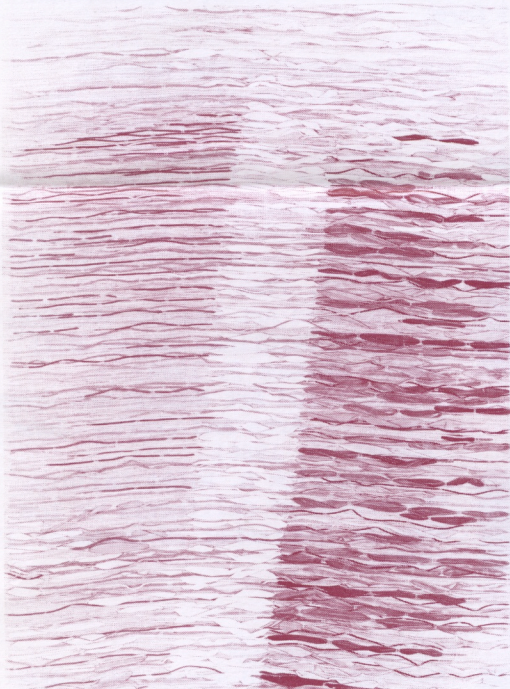
"Red Black and White"
Wallhanging by Anni Albers, 1948. Silk and cotton, doublecloth, 69 1/8 by 47 5/8 inches. Collection of Bauhaus Archiv, Museum für Gestaltung, Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany.

Alliance Gifts to Renwick Go on View

Visitors to the Renwick Gallery are admiring gifts of the James Renwick Collectors Alliance, purchased this spring with funds from contributing members. Cynthia Schira's magnificent four-panel wallhanging, Reflections --for which the Alliance provided half the purchase funds--went on view in April in the exhibition, The Flexible Medium: Art Fabric from the Museum Collection. Mary Lee Hu's elegant wire necklace, purchased solely by the Alliance, is the Gallery's "featured object" this summer. Both works will be exhibited with other objects from the permanent collection later this year when the "Flexible Medium" exhibition ends.

Cynthia Schira's Reflections exemplifies in her mature work the fusion of her creative response to the flatness of the Kansas plains, where she lives, with the inspiration she has gained from her study of historical textiles and techniques from other cultures. In the past two decades she has explored weaving techniques with added wefts for non-structural surface patterning, and weft twining, a technique in which two or more strands continuously twist around warps to produce a fabric. Her sculptural weavings employing aluminum strips and mirror attracted international attention in the early 1970s when her work was selected for inclusion in the Biennale Internationale de la Tapisserie in Lausanne, Switzerland. The honor was again accorded her work two years later.

Reflections is the culmination of her development of elusive, subtle images created by bringing to the surface of her large-scale

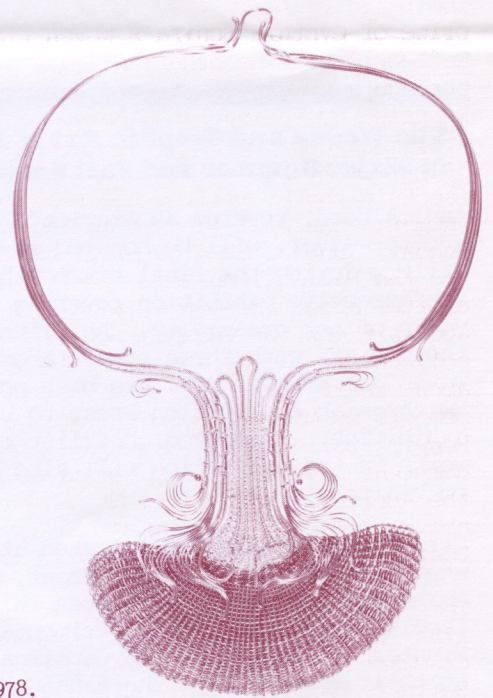


Detail
"Reflections"
by Cynthia
Schira, 1982.

Cotton and linen warp, dyed rayon and bound resist cotton braid tape, brocade, 95" x 151". Museum purchase with support from the James Renwick Collectors Alliance and Roberta Golding.

panels a brocade weft of dyed rayon and bound resist dyed cotton braid tapes. The sheen and the subtle coloration of the tapes are a reminder of the artist's period of study in Japan and the inspiration she derived from Japanese aesthetics. Their horizontal activation of the flat woven surface suggest the flatness of the artist's Kansas environment.

Mary Lee Hu's Choker #38 made in 1978, embodies the unique vocabulary of forms she has developed from direct manipulation of various metal wires for their linear and fluid qualities. In it she has combined fine and sterling silver wires with 18 karat gold and 24 karat gold wires, contrasting them dramatically with brilliantly-colored lacquered copper wires.



"Choker #38"
by Mary Lee Hu, 1978.

Fine and sterling silver wires, 18K and 24K wires, lacquered copper wires. Gift of the James Renwick Collectors Alliance.

Hu was born in Lakewood, Ohio, and earned her B.F.A. degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1965, and an M.F.A. degree from Southern Illinois University in 1967. She is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Art at the University of Washington in Seattle.

She first worked with wire in a macrame project for a college weaving class, but soon learned that macrame was unsuited to her visual ideas in metal. She diversified her techniques to include wrapping, twining, twisting, looping, crocheting, knitting, basket-weaving and fusing. During the past twelve years she has exhibited her unique jewelry widely both nationally and internationally, consistently experimenting with the creative possibilities of metal wire.

**Flexible Medium:
The 1985 National Forum on
20th Century American Art Fabric**

by Marcia C. Mattingly

"Flexible Medium: The 1985 National Forum on 20th Century American Art Fabric", a symposium sponsored by the James Renwick Collectors Alliance and the Smithsonian Resident Associate Program, was held in the Carmichael Auditorium of the National Museum of American History on April 27. Some 200 collectors, curators, gallery owners, artists and students attended, according to Jean Michael, the seminar chairman. Many traveled from as far away as California, Ohio and Puerto Rico for the one-day event which featured slide-illustrated lectures by four key figures in the modern art fabric movement.

Ed Rossbach, renowned artist, author and Professor Emeritus of Design, University of California at Berkeley, began the day's discussion with an historical survey of "American Art Fabric from the 1930s through the 1950s." His talk focused on the influence of European artists and teachers, such as Loja Saarinen, who designed wallhangings and rugs for studio production, Marianne Strengell and Anni Albers, both of whom established studios in the United States to design prototypes for industrial production, and on the renewed interest in traditional American handwovens typified by the research of Mary Atwater. He indicated how these very diverse trends--the legacy of the Bauhaus and Wiener Werkstätte movements and that of the colonial cottage--united in emphasizing the visual and structural aspects of weaving which dominated the art fabric of the time.

Mr. Rossbach was followed by noted artist Sheila Hicks who addressed "The 1960s: Architectural-Scale Fiber Art and Sculptural Off-Loom Weaving." Ms. Hicks reviewed her own experiences as a graduate student in art at Yale University to living and working in South America and Europe during the "glamorous" decade which saw the inauguration of the Lausanne Biennale Internationale de la Tapisserie. Simultaneously, she provided an overview of the Eastern European, Asian, and American artists whose efforts led art fabric in a totally new direction--away from the two-dimensional exhibition lengths of the past, "off the loom and off the wall," to massive three-dimensional sculptural pieces accepted and sought after as architectural commissions and museum installations.

The afternoon lectures started with Glen Kaufman, artist and Professor of Art, University of Georgia, presenting another aspect of contemporary fiber work, "The 1970s, Wearable Art and the Surface Design Movements." They concluded with Mildred Constantine, co-author of

Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric and The Art Fabric: Mainstream, dealing with the developing trends of the 1980s such as the increasing use of machine-made cloth, wire, synthetics and other non-traditional materials.



Concluding the "Flexible Medium" seminar, speakers answer questions from the audience.
Left to right: Ed Rossbach, Sheila Hicks, Mildred Constantine and Glenn Kaufman.
(Photo by Paul Parkman)

Following a question and answer period, the seminar audience adjourned to the Renwick Gallery for a reception and a chance to view the exhibition The Flexible Medium: Art Fabric from the Museum Collection. The installation is comprised of about twenty diverse pieces owned by the National Museum of American Art which together strikingly illustrate the rapid development of art fabric over the last forty years. Included as one of the most recent acquisitions is a Commemorative Quilt by Jody Klein which was commissioned by the James Renwick Collectors Alliance to celebrate the Gallery's tenth anniversary.

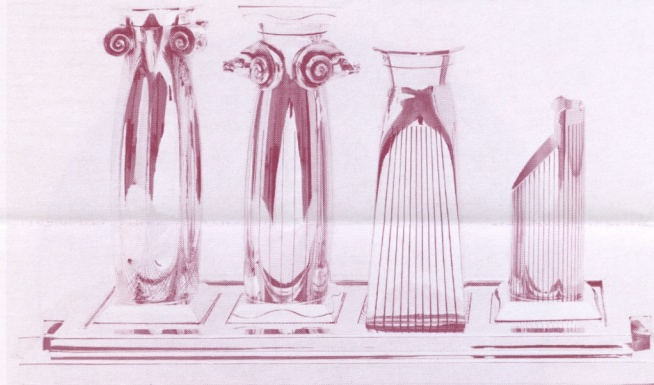
The art fabric forum was scheduled to coincide with the Washington Craft Show sponsored by the Women's Committee of the Smithsonian Associates so that seminar participants also had an opportunity to see the work of the craftspeople featured in the nationally juried retail fair. More than one third of the one hundred booths in the show exhibited fiber work including paper, baskets, quilts, tapestry, rugs, wearables and jewelry.

The seminar was the third in a series of successful national forums on contemporary American crafts. Plans are already underway for next year's symposium, according to Elmerina Parkman, President of the Alliance. Wood and metal are both being considered as possible topics. Further details will follow in upcoming issues of the Renwick Quarterly.

Current Renwick Shows Emphasis Furniture and Tableware Designs by Architects

Two Renwick exhibitions, and a sales show in the Museum Shop this summer, emphasize architectural design ideas applied to domestic objects, and the vitality of new handcrafted furniture in color. Exhibitions elsewhere in Washington, on the Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh (June 26 - August 30 at the Federal Reserve

Board) and the American architect Robert Venturi (closes June 9 at Octagon House, American Institute of Architects), also feature their furniture designs. Surface and Ornament, July 10 - August 30, at the Dimock Gallery, George Washington University, examines furniture designs by architects. The last, like the Renwick's current show, Material Evidence: New Color Techniques in Handmade Furniture explores the creative use of Formica Corporation's new solid-color laminate, Colorcore.



Charles Jenck's coffee and tea service, sterling silver.

Also at the Renwick, Architecture in Silver features silver coffee and tea services that were designed by eleven internationally-famous architects and handcrafted in Italy by the Alessi firm. Among the architects represented are Americans Charles Jencks, Richard Meier, Stanley Tigerman and Michael Graves. It ends July 29. A companion sales exhibition, through August 25, Architects Design for the Tabletop, in the Renwick's Museum Shop offers dinnerware, glassware, silver and stainless steel serving accessories by architects including Frank Lloyd Wright, Arne Jacobsen, Aldo Rossi, Ettore Sottsass, Richard Meier, and Robert Venturi.

The "Material Evidence" exhibition at the Renwick Gallery includes twenty-two objects by nineteen outstanding American furniture artists, embracing stylistic influences of post-modernist architecture, Victorian furniture, and a spoof of Art-Deco design. It continues through September 22.

Encompassing this plethora of exhibitions on the designs of architects for non-buildings, the Smithsonian Resident Associate Program has planned a lecture series, "The Architect as Designer: A Fusion of Sensibilities." In five lectures, guest speakers will discuss the designs of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Frank Lloyd Wright, Paul Phillippe Cret, and Venturi, Rauch, and Scott-Brown. The series begins on July 9. For subscription information, telephone 357-3030.

Alliance Trip to Philadelphia

by John Michael

Because Sunday, March 24th started overcast and drizmal, there was no clue to suggest the remarkable quality of the James Renwick Collectors Alliance trip to Philadelphia. The busload of members and friends left Washington at 8:30 on a schedule and day organized by Belle and Roger Kuhn. The first stop was the Helen Drutt Gallery. The show of Anne Currier's ceramic works set the style for the day. It was inventive and strong. Brunch was included with the browsing.

A short distance from the Gallery brought everyone to the compressed private world of Helen Drutt at Rittenhouse Square. Probably nowhere does anyone squeeze more beauty into a small space than Helen manages. The richness and variety of objects is renaissance in scope.

The stalwart Alliance band then moved to the residence of Jack and Helen Bershad where large rooms of precisely placed canvasses, tapestries and pottery reflect a free spirit of creativity. Many of the paintings were the work of Helen Bershad and they set the mood for the entire home.

Next came the remarkable penthouse lair of Irvin Borowsky and Laurie Wagman and a perfect setting for glass. Works by great craftsmen lined the window ledges and the sky provided the background 32 floors above ground. Coming down from the clouds was only in a physical sense because the next stop was the Snyderman Gallery and The Works Gallery of Ruth and Rick Snyderman. Few galleries in this country have greater range and excellence in all the crafts. The visit provided a civilized tapering-off time.

Dinner at the Knave of Hearts was the right setting at the right time. The trip back passed in blissful satisfaction. The Kuhns had executed a day of thoughtful rhythm and purpose that could not have been improved.

Teapot Sales Show in Shop Opens August 29th

Our Cup of Tea: Contemporary Crafted Teapots, Cups and Spoons, a sales exhibition opening in the Renwick Museum Shop on August 29, will include approximately fifty-five objects by twenty potters. Though the closing date for slide submissions is June 10, Museum Shop buyers anticipate that the range of functional and non-functional styles will be diverse, as will be the prices--from about \$36 to \$1500. It will continue through October 20.

Inquiries about the James Renwick Collectors Alliance should be sent to:
James Renwick Collectors Alliance, 5240 Nebraska Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20015
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NEWS From the Alliance

Photo
Paul Parkman

At our February meeting the Board members voted unanimously to purchase and donate to the Renwick Gallery, a sterling silver, gold and copper choker made by Mary Lee Hu. In addition, the Board voted to contribute half the purchase price of Cynthia Schira's woven fiber piece, Reflections. The other half was made available through a private donor and through funds supplied by the National Museum of American Art; Reflections was installed in time for the "Flexible Medium" seminar on April 27th. Mary Lee Hu's choker will be the featured object for summer; she will lecture at the Renwick on Sunday, June 30 at 4:00 p.m.. Both the Alliance and the National Museum of American Art are excited about these two wonderful new acquisitions for the Renwick Gallery's permanent collection. Information about the artists and about their work were presented to the Board members by Michael Monroe, Curator of the Renwick Gallery. Mr. Monroe's presentation was comprehensive and enlightening as he discussed the artists, their work, the museum's philosophy about collecting, and answered questions from Board members. Thank you, Michael!

The "Flexible Medium" seminar on Saturday, April 27th was an outstanding success, as reported elsewhere in this issue by Marcia Mattingly. Seminar Chairman Jean Michael, with the help of other Board members, tirelessly distributed over 2500 flyers, telephoned a multitude of potential subscribers and she and her husband John, co-owners of Acorn Press, printed the handsome portfolios containing related fiber and textile information which were given to the registrants.

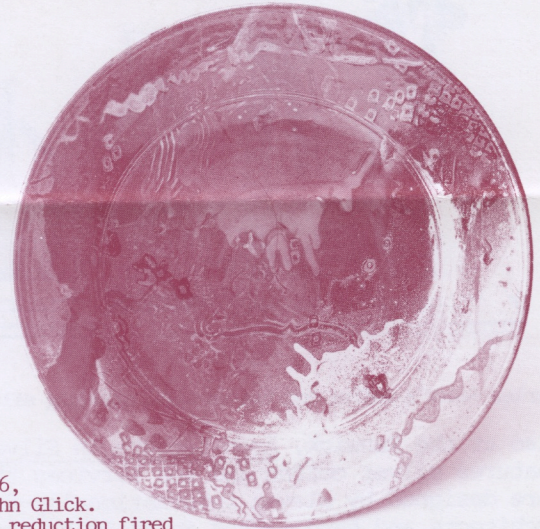
The Alliance's Philadelphia tour on Sunday, March 24th, which Roger and Belle Kuhn planned, was also highly successful, as reported by John Michael in this issue. We look forward with great anticipation to the Fall Craft Study Tour, which we expect will take place in October. Watch for information in the next Renwick Quarterly.

Rebecca A.T. Stevens was invited to join the Board in March. Rebecca brings her expertise in several areas: she is a lecturer, author, artist, juror of contemporary craft objects, a consultant on contemporary textiles for the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., where she has also been guest curator. In addition, she

was the guest curator for The Flexible Medium exhibition currently on view at the Renwick. We are both delighted and fortunate to have Rebecca as a Board Member.

Elmerina Parkman, President
James Renwick Collectors Alliance

Ceramic Plate by John Glick Given to Renwick Gallery



Plate, 1976,
made by John Glick.
Stoneware, reduction fired
to cone 10 with multiple glazes.
Gift of Susumu Hada in memory of his wife, Martha.

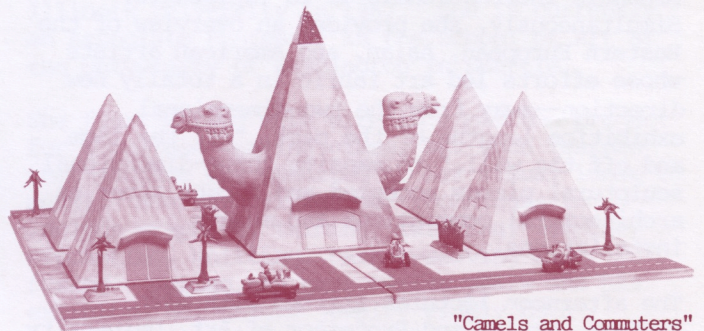
A 19 1/2 inch stoneware plate by John Parker Glick, glazed and patterned with rich color, has been given to the Renwick Gallery for the collection of the National Museum of American Art. The piece, made in 1976 and accepted as a gift from Susumu Hada in memory of his wife, Martha, shows the artist's mastery of surface decoration, including brushwork on the clay surface with multiple washes of colored glaze and slip. The plate is a superb example of Glick's thrown functional forms fired in an oxygen-reduced atmosphere for which the artist and his Plum Tree Pottery in Farmington, Michigan, are nationally respected. Glick's ceramics helped to bring renewed respect to American functional pottery in the 1970s after a period in which abstract and figurative ceramic sculpture predominated. The decorative style of this graduate of Wayne State University and the Cranbrook Academy of Art was described by Garth Clark and Margie Hughto in their book, A Century of Ceramics in the United States 1878-1978 (E.P.Dutton, New York, 1979) as "strongly influenced by his interest in Japanese pottery, but at the same time reminiscent of the early Abstract Expressionist works of artists such as Mark Tobey."

Public Programs and Exhibition Openings

- June 12: Exhibition opening: The Woven and Graphic Art of Anni Albers includes 80 examples covering sixty-three years of the artist's creativity in Germany and the United States. Closes January 5, 1986.
- June 20: Creative Screen: Berlin--Paul Anderson: Wiedersehen. Journalist Paul Anderson talks about the Berlin in the thirties which he knew as a student and the modern Berlin metropolis (16 min).
In Berlin--The National Gallery
The National Gallery was the first museum designed by the famous architect Mies van der Rohe (13 min).
The Bauhaus--Its Impact on the World of Design. This film shows the great social responsibility of townplanners, architects, and production designers. Anni Albers studied weaving at the Bauhaus in both Weimar and Dessau, and received her Bauhaus diploma in 1930 (20 min).
All three films courtesy of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. 11 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m.. Free.
- June 23: Lecture: Architecture and design critic and curator Susan Grant Lewin will discuss contemporary furniture design in conjunction with the exhibition, Material Evidence: New Color Techniques in Handmade Furniture. Ms. Lewin is creative director for the Formica Corporation and former senior editor of architecture and design for House Beautiful magazine. She has served as curator for a number of competitions and exhibitions including Surface and Ornament, an exhibition of conceptual furniture by architects to be exhibited at Dimock Gallery, George Washington University, July 11-August 30, 1985. Free. At 3:00 p.m..
- June 27: Creative Screen: Repeat of June 20.
- June 30: Lecture: Nicholas fox Weber, Executive Director of the Josef Albers Foundation, will discuss the work of Anni Albers in conjunction with the exhibition The Woven and Graphic Art of Anni Albers. Free. At 8:00 p.m..
- June 30: Lecture: Mary Lee Hu, Associate Professor, School of Art, University

of Washington, Seattle, will discuss design and fabrication of her jewelry. Her work has been featured in three Renwick Gallery exhibitions--Goldsmith '74, The Animal Image, and Good as Gold: Alternative Materials in American Jewelry. "Choker #38" is the featured object from the permanent collection of the Renwick Gallery this summer. Free. At 4:00 p.m..

- July 11: Creative Screen: Indian Pottery of San Ildefonso. The late Maria Martinez, America's foremost native potter, demonstrates the process of creating her famous black pottery--beginning with a ceremony of spreading sacred corn before the clay is dug, through the coiled construction of a pot, its firing and polishing. A CINE award-winning film (27 min). These Potters Throwing, a behind the scenes visit to the studios of the well-known potters, Peter Vulkos, Shoji Hamada and Antonio Prieto (20 min). 11 a.m., 12:15 noon, 1:30 p.m.. Free.
- July 18: Creative Screen: Repeat of July 11.
- Aug 8: Creative Screen: With These Hands, 1970. Eight distinctive American artist-craftsmen express their thoughts about their work and lifestyles--Harry Nohr, wood; Peter Vulkos, clay; Dorian Zachai, fiber; Clayton Bailey, clay, rubber and plastic; Paul Soldner, clay; Toshiko Takaezu, clay and fiber; James Tanner, glass; J.B. Blunk, wood. 11 a.m., 12:15 p.m., and 1:30 p.m.. Free.
- Aug 22: Creative Screen: Repeat of August 8.
- Aug 29: Sales exhibition opening: Our Cup of Tea: Contemporary Crafted Teapots, Cups and Spoons. Closes October 20.



"Camels and Commuters"
Teapot set by David B. Ward, 1984.
Ceramic, overall size 22 x 22 x 10 inches.