

RENWICK QUARTERLY

June, July, Aug., 1993

Published by the James Renwick Alliance, a private non-profit organization created to support The Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

“American Wicker” Draws Enthusiastic Audience

by Jeremy Adamson

The Renwick Gallery's historical exhibition “American Wicker,” surveying the period 1850 to 1930, has coincided with a strong revival of interest in contemporary woven furniture. As a result, since opening on April 2nd, the show has attracted a great deal of attention from the local and national press, including two separate articles in *The New York Times* and reports in such decorating magazines as *House and Garden*, *Victoria*, and *Traditional Home*. Visitors have greatly enjoyed the show. Most are surprised by the nature and quality of the pieces on view. A common reaction: “I never thought wicker looked like this.” Many remember more commonplace, white-painted wicker in parents' and grandparents' homes, or at old summer resorts. For most, the exceptional quality of the eighty objects on display, virtually all in natural condition or with their colorful factory finishes still intact, is an eye-opener.

The installation design has been highly praised. Created by Val Lewton, Chief Designer at the National Museum of American Art, with the assistance of Claire Larkin and Linda McNamara, it is a rich

and varied setting. In the long north gallery, a late Victorian parlor has been created with an elaborate archway, fireplace, purple draperies and tall windows. Through the open parlor windows, visitors can glimpse a wicker-filled porch “outside,” reached by passing through the Palm Court and re-entering the gallery. Throughout the exhibition, informative text panels tell the story of American wicker, detailing its manufacture and use from the mid-19th century to the Great Depression. As one visitor from the London Crafts Council wrote in the comment book, it is a “beautifully staged and impressive exhibition.”

A richly-illustrated, scholarly book written for the exhibition by Associate Curator Jeremy Adamson details both the industrial and social history of rattan, reed, willow, and fiber furniture, and traces the design evolution from Gothic Revival patterns of the mid-19th century to modernist “stick-wicker” of the 1930s. Co-published by the National Museum of American Art and Rizzoli International, *American Wicker: Woven Furniture from 1850 to 1930* is available

from the Museum Shop in softbound form for \$25 and hardbound for \$45. The hardcover edition can be found in bookstores nationally.



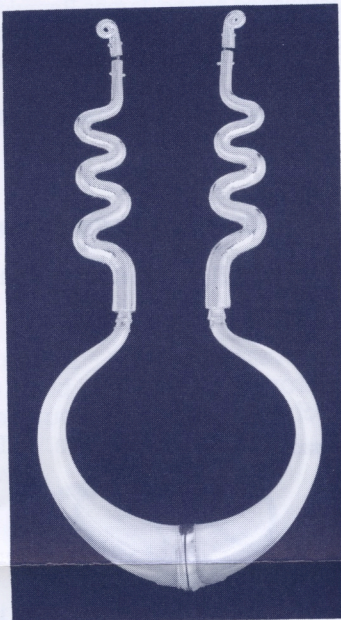
Arm Chair, 1850's; unknown maker; rattan, wood, caning and paint; 34 1/2" x 25 3/4" x 22 3/4"; collection of Steve Poole.

Six Works Acquired for Renwick Gallery's Permanent Collection

The James Renwick Alliance acquisitions committee approved funds for works by six of America's leading craft artists. The additions will greatly enhance the holding of the permanent collection of crafts in our nation's capital.

Presented at the February 8 acquisitions meeting were pieces by Stanley Lechtzin and Richard Shaw. Four pieces by John Cederquist, Carol Cohen, John McQueen, and Ronald Pearson were presented on April 15, as part of the recent Craft Weekend.

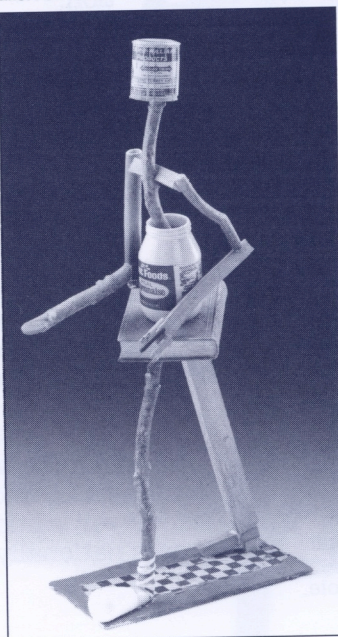
Torque #31 D by **Stanley Lechtzin** is a superb example of this craftsman's unique contribution to the field of contemporary American jewelry. Two of the most difficult problems facing the jeweler who wishes to make large-scale wearable objects are weight and sculptural form. Casting of metal solves one of the problems, but not the other. "Cire perdue" or "lost wax" casting gives great freedom of form, but the resulting solid mass creates burdensome objects to wear. Stanley Lechtzin has revived and refined the use of an electroplating technique discovered at the Elkington factory in England in the 1840s. In this process, a base matrix is covered with metal and then the matrix is removed, leaving the metal shell which may be strong, light in weight, and complex in form. Lechtzin's interest in recent technologies and materials has resulted in stunning works which take full advantage of the sculptural possibilities of plastic and metal. This piece would have been impossible to wear as jewelry had Lechtzin not chosen this approach to construction.



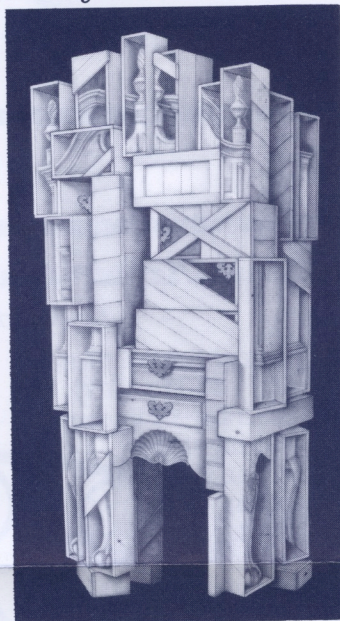
Torque #31 D, by **Stanley Lechtzin**, 1972; 7 1/2" x 15"; electroformed silver gilt and opalescent polyester; gift of the James Renwick Alliance and the Smithsonian Institution Women's Committee. Photo by Bruce Miller.

California artist **Richard Shaw** is best known for his trompe l'oeil assemblages in porcelain that stimulate the viewer to study common objects

Carrie, by **Richard Shaw**, 1992; 36 1/2" x 18" x 11"; slip cast and assembled porcelain with decal overglaze; gift of the James Renwick Alliance. Photo by Bruce Miller.



and then compare them with Shaw's facsimiles. *Carrie*, created in 1992, is an excellent example that demonstrates the artist's extraordinary facility to create illusions of reality and to make porcelain take on the appearance of other materials. Shaw has been variously called a surrealist object maker, a virtuoso technician, a punster, a neodadaist, a modern shaman, and a visual poet. His work has been characterized as reflecting influences as diverse as French porcelain, nineteenth-century American painting, California funk, and Hollywood. Clearly, this master of illusion is also adept at eluding those who presume to classify his art.



Ghostboy, by **John Cederquist**, 1992; 88" x 44" x 15"; birch plywood, sitka spruce, poplar, copper leaf, epoxy resin inlay and aniline dyes; gift of the James Renwick Alliance, Anne and Ronald Abramson and museum purchase. Photo by Bruce Miller.

In *Ghostboy* **John Cederquist** has faithfully represented a high chest of the type made by 17th-century Rhode Island cabinetmaker John Townsend. By means of birch plywood, poplar, epoxy inlaid resin, and aniline dyed lines Cederquist has crated the chest with sitka spruce veneer, shadowing, and foreshortening planes to reinforce a three-quarter perspective. *Ghostboy* was inspired by a piece that John created for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston exhibit entitled "New American Furniture," and which was considered his most ambitious piece to date. *Ghostboy*, created in 1993, however, represents an even more masterful handling of idea and material. Since many people have commented on the Cubist

character of his furniture, Cederquist decided to make this piece of crafted furniture take on the appearance — or lack of appearance — of a ghost. He makes the analogy that ghosts, like the images in Cubist paintings, have the ability to break up and reconfigure themselves into new images. The ghost image allowed Cederquist to decompose the high chest even further and like ghosts, he manages to visually trick us even further. The ghost image idea also allows Cederquist to be more loose and painterly with his airbrush, as opposed to the tighter, more controlled handling of his other pieces. Seven secret parallelogram drawers slide on an angle that follow the point of view. The placement of the drawers, and of the one cabinet door, combined with the deliberate fragmentation of the illusion, create a multi-layered reality that continually engages the eye and mind of the viewer.

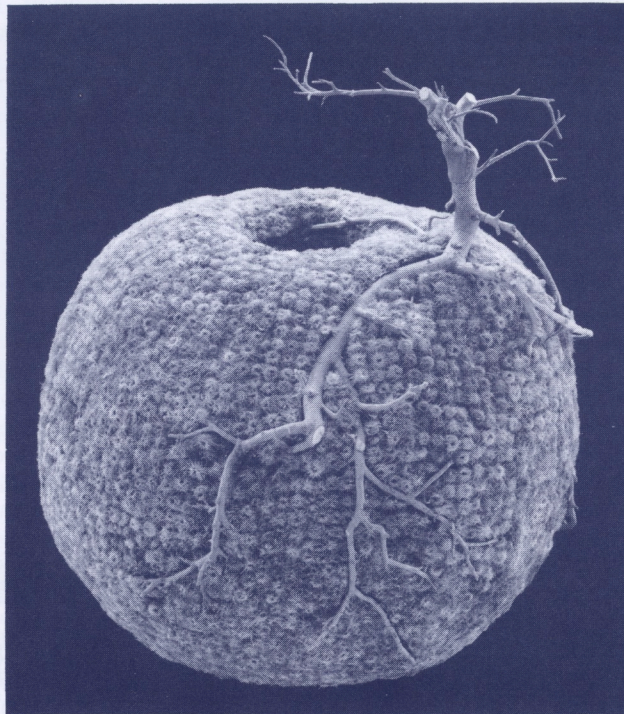
White Fish II, a glass and wood construction by **Carol Cohen**, is a strong example of her technique of creating illusions of three-dimensional form through the use of multiple sheets of glass. In this piece Cohen has been inspired by the early 19th-century Japanese

woodblock artist Hokusai. His powerful images of fierce tidal waves are interpreted by Cohen as a painting on the bottom panel of the box supporting the glass sheets. The watery medium of glass is appropriate to suggesting the serene but kinetic world that exists under the violent surface of the great breaker wave. Cohen's use of hyperbolic curvature across the top of this piece echoes the undulating action pictured below. Here the idea of motion is implied in a stationary object. Cohen's *White Fish II* encourages a new way to see time and envision space, motion, and movement. Variations on this idea can be found in earlier periods of visual picture-making, such as the time study motion photographs of Eadweard Muybridge. Simultaneous views of space are also at the heart of Cubism, allowing the front and sides of an object to be represented all at once. Simultaneous views of time are at the core of Futurism which allow the viewer to see the past, present, and future in one holistic now. With this piece Cohen shatters a violent moment into still little slivers, each fragment containing within it a separate quiet moment of time and space.

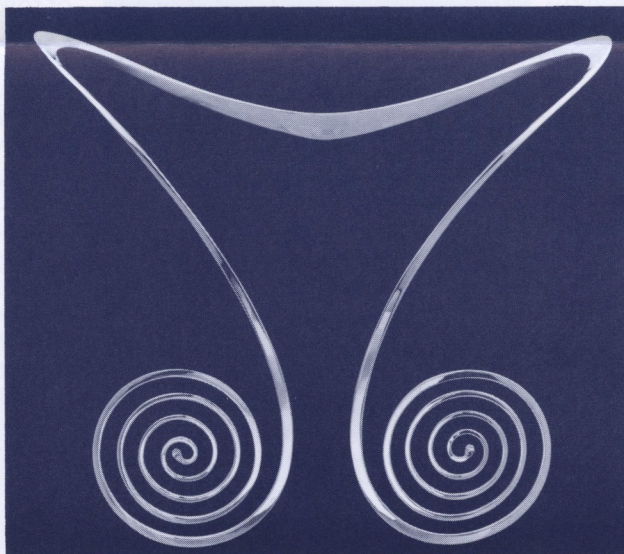
John McQueen's basket *Untitled #192* was formed by burdock burrs and applewood. The burrs that stuck to McQueen's socks and pants inspired a new method of non-woven, nonpatched construction. The burrs are gathered in the fall and cannot be stored. McQueen worked with them on-site, and constructed this basket adjacent to the burdock plant. Created in 1989, this basket was included in his one-person exhibition or

ganized by the Renwick Gallery in 1992. McQueen's sensitivity to nature is always part of an interaction with his natural inclination toward structural invention. One of John McQueen's most distinctive pieces, the spherical supporting form of this basket is analogous to the earth and the emerging twig to its venerated trees. One root disappears into the disquieting and mysterious interior of the vessel.

Ronald Hayes Pearson has been making jewelry and hollowware since 1948, and over the years he has come to be recognized as one of the most important and influential contemporary American designers. *Spiral Necklace*, created by Pearson in 1968, is an outstanding example of this artist's concern for the reflective quality of metal. The elegantly forged sterling silver is indicative of the crisp fluidity of forms for which he is known. Of the hundreds of jewelry pieces Pearson has designed and produced since the early 1950s, there are some he considers especially notable. *Spiral Necklace*, is a one-of-a-kind silver neckband that features two enormous spirals forming the terminals of a forged line which flows around the neck. There is a universality to this piece probably attributable to the use of the spiral, a form found throughout the history of metalwork. At the same time there is a kinetic energy generated by the change in cross section between the hammered-out segment behind the neck and the tapered ends forming the spirals. It is an extraordinary example of the fluidity of a forged line and of the delicate nuances possible in the hands of a master.



Untitled #192, by **John McQueen**, 1989; 23" x 19" x 20"; burdock and applewood; gift of the James Renwick Alliance. Photo by Bruce Miller.



Spiral Necklace, by **Ronald Hayes Pearson**, 1968; 9" x 9" x 5"; forged sterling silver; gift of the James Renwick Alliance. Photo by Bruce Miller.

Renwick Fellows Appointed for 1993-94

by *Jeremy Adamson*

Final selection for the 1993-94 Renwick Fellowships has been announced. Senior Fellow Jane Addams Allen has been awarded a twelve month residency, and Senior Fellow Dr. Margaret Carney Xie and Graduate Fellow Lynn Jones Ennis have each received three month appointments. Ms. Allen's appointment

is funded by the National Museum of American Art. Both Dr. Xie and Ms. Ennis will be supported by the James Renwick Alliance.

Jane Addams Allen is an independent scholar/

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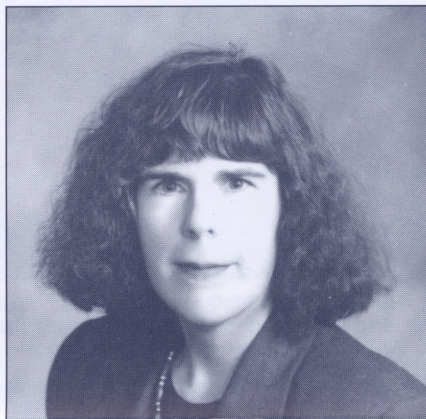
writer based in Washington, D.C.. She holds B.A. and M.F.A. degrees from the University of Chicago, and completed doctoral studies in the History of Culture at the same institution. In 1973, she founded, with Derek Guthrie, *The New Art Examiner* and as editor, developed it from a local Chicago arts tabloid into a national magazine. It remains one of the few art periodicals to treat craft and craft criticism seriously within a fine arts context. Ms. Allen has written widely for publications such as *American Craft*, *Art in America*, *Studio International*, and *The New Art Examiner*, and has also served as art critic for *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Washington Times*. A highly respected writer, she has been awarded two Art Critics Fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts, and twice has received the Art World/Manufacturers Hanover Trust Award for Art Criticism.

During her year-long Fellowship, Ms. Allen will complete a book-length manuscript now in progress which details the history of modern American studio crafts from the 1930's to the present. Organized in a roughly chronological fashion, the study will alternate between macro analyses of cultural, economic, and social backgrounds, in-depth analyses of key institutions, documents, and makers' careers, and extended interpretations of individual, emblematic works. The projected publication will be the first of its kind by a single author reviewing the field in such an exhaustive and illuminating fashion.

Margaret Carney Xie holds a doctoral degree from the University of Kansas and is a leading authority on T'ang, Sung, and Yuan dynasty ceramics. Assistant Professor of Art History and Director of the Museum of Ceramic Art at Alfred University, she previously held positions at the Spencer Museum of Art at the Univer-



Jane Addams Allen



Margaret Carney Xie



Lynn Jones Ennis

sity of Kansas, the University of Oregon Museum of Art, and, as Director, at the Bladen Memorial Art Museum, Fort Dodge, Iowa. At Alfred University, Dr. Xie is engaged in a multi-year project which will lead to a major exhibition and publication on the life, writings and ceramic art of Charles Fergus Binns, the "Father of American Studio Ceramics." In 1900, Binns founded the first ceramic program in the United States at Alfred, and the University museum has a large collection of his work. As a Senior Fellow, Dr. Xie will study relevant archival materials at various Smithsonian research centers and consult with staff to place Binns' work in a larger context.

Lynn Jones Ennis is a doctoral candidate in American Studies from the Graduate School of The Union Institute, Cincinnati. Her dissertation research focuses on the Penland School of Crafts, a subject with which she has been fascinated since her first visit in 1982. Ms. Ennis is pursuing an interdisciplinary study of the world famous Appalachian school, one that connects intellectual, historical, social and cultural patterns in the period 1900 through 1945, to fully reveal the confluence of forces that shaped Penland's history. At the Smithsonian, Lynn Ennis will consult with research staff and review documents recently acquired by the Archives of American Art in order to compile an accurate, chronological account of the early annals of Penland. She writes: "a carefully detailed history of the funding and early years of the Penland School of Crafts will contribute significantly to a new understanding of the definitional crisis of what craft represents in our culture."

Summer Craft Study Tour Will Visit Maine

by Sue Bralove

A craft study tour of Maine is planned for July 10-15. Initially open to 30 Craft Leaders Caucus and Alliance board members, the trip will begin in Portland with a reception at the Nancy Margolis Gallery and visits to the studios of furniture-maker Jeff Kellar and basket-maker Lissa Hunter.

The group will travel by bus up the coast of Maine to Deer Isle, stopping to visit fiber artists Gayle Fraas and Duncan Slade, furniture-maker David Margonelli and the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts. We'll

spend one night in the scenic seaport of Camden. From there, we will visit the newly-remodeled home of collector Nancy Talbot, located in a former church.

While on Deer Isle, the group will spend a morning at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and an afternoon visiting the studios of jeweler Ronald Pearson, blacksmith Douglas Wilson and weaver Kathy Woell. We will also see Mary Nyburg's Blue Heron Gallery; the collection of Haystack's founding Director Fran Merritt and his wife Priscilla; and the new island home of



Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, Maine

Alliance and Caucus members Eleanor and Sam Rosenfeld. Our final day will take us to the Leighton Gallery in Blue Hill and to Acadia National Park where we will have lunch at the famous Jordon Pond House. A tour of Asticou and Thuya gardens and a stop in the town of Northeast Harbor will end the day.

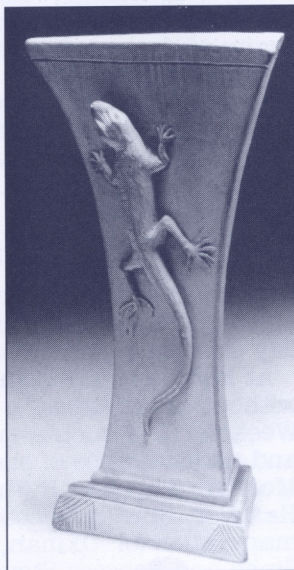
No serious study of Maine would be complete without encountering the lobster. Thus, our final evening will be celebrated with a lobster dinner.

For information regarding the Maine craft study tour, call Shelley Gollust at (301) 229-2148, or Sue Bralove at (202) 363-9643.

"The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life" Will Open October 8th

Organized and circulated by the Oakland Museum, the exhibition "The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life" will open at the Renwick Gallery on October 8, 1993. The result of seven years' work by Kenneth Trapp, Curator of Decorative Arts at the Oakland Museum, this major exhibition showcases California's unique contributions to the British-born Arts and Crafts movement. Inspired by the Golden State's spectacular natural scenery, wildlife and temperate climates, California practitioners

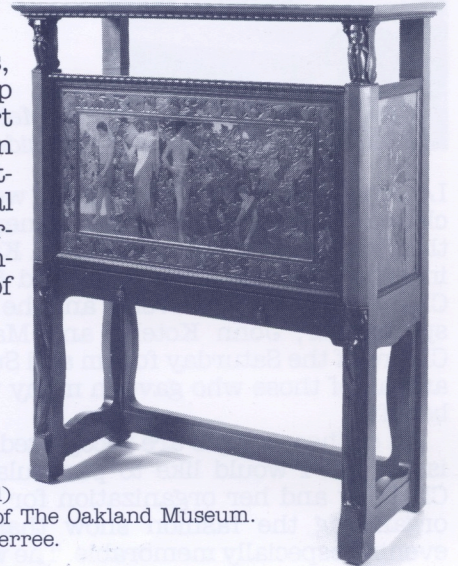
Triangular Vase, by **Alexander W. Robertson**, 1913; 6" x 3 1/4" x 3 1/2"; biscuit-fired buff earthenware with modeled lizard; courtesy of The Oakland Museum. Photo by M. Lee Fatherree.



ners of the Arts and Crafts movement often employed scenic motifs based on native flora and fauna, and left a legacy of superlative design in architecture, town planning, gardens and works of art.

Organized around the three major urban regions of California where the movement was most influential — the San Francisco Bay Area, the Southland from Santa Barbara to the Los Angeles Basin, and San Diego — the exhibition will present 200 objects from the mid-1890's to the 1930's created by individual artisans, small workshop studios, and art manufacturers in metalwork, art pottery, architectural ceramic tiles, furniture and furnishings of mixed and of media.

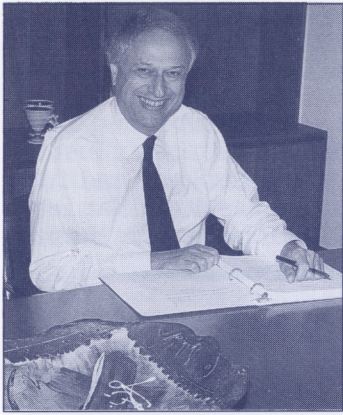
Desk, by **Arthur F. Mathews and Lucia K. Mathews**, c. 1910-15; 59" x 48" x 20"; carved and painted maple, oak, tooled leather and (replaced) hardware; courtesy of The Oakland Museum. Photo by M. Lee Fatherree.



According to Mr. Trapp, "The arts and crafts movement in the United States achieved its ideal in California. Although by 1900 California was no longer a wild and raw frontier isolated from the rest of the country, neither was the state heavily populated, spoiled by industrialization, or weighed by centuries of established traditions. California was a pre-industrialized Eden, a middle landscape between the uninhabited wilderness and civilized settlements." The exhibition is accompanied by a major book of the same title published by Abbeville Press. The lavish volume includes nine scholarly essays and is illustrated with more than 200 color and black and white images.



Electrical Lamp, by **Ernest A. Batchelder and Douglas Donaldson**, c. 1908-10; 21" x 23 5/8" x 20 5/8"; earthenware base colored with pigment, opalescent glass in copper frame; courtesy of The Oakland Museum. Photo by F. Lee Fatherree.



News from the Alliance

by Melvin B. Eagle
President

Looking back at our recent spring weekend events, it's clear that hard working and generous people make things turn out as well as they do. Kudos are certainly in order for Barbara Berlin and Sandra Oken, Co-Chairs of the Caucus events and the Saturday evening spectacular; John Kotelly and Mary Hartzler, Co-Chairs of the Saturday forum and Sunday tour events and all of those who gave in many ways to our great benefit.

All of these people are recognized elsewhere in this issue, but I would like to particularly thank Jackie Chalkley and her organization for underwriting and organizing the fashion show that made Saturday evening especially memorable. The wearable art made an exciting statement in behalf of its creators. Of course, the models, particularly the two hunks that showed off men's sweaters, were absolutely indispensable. (On advice of the audience, neither Michael nor I has abandoned our day jobs, although we're working on portfolios and would do it again for the right cause.)

Thanks also to the people that also bought items from the fashion show and the Harvey Littleton work that was one of the wonderful centerpieces. Aside from doing well in acquiring beautiful craft works, you have done good by supporting the artists and contributing to the Alliance at the same time.

There is one day (and night) job that I am abandoning soon, that of President of the Alliance. Two years has flown by and my term is ending. I could not have predicted how enjoyable and fulfilling the experience would be. Working with kindred spirits to achieve positive goals is rewarding; the extent of our progress is inspirational.

Aside from good things accomplished in working toward our goal of bringing craft art to center stage and keeping it there, we have broadened the spectrum of contributors and deepened involvement and the spirit of fellowship among the group. Why has this happened? Surely, one reason is the good natured approach that nearly everyone adopts in dealing with each other, an imperative when one considers the fact that the work is voluntary and is usually fit into an already busy agenda. On top of that, we are joined by a bond that is defined by a commitment to a mutually held ideal, a strong glue indeed.

What is the state of our union? We are in better financial shape than ever. At the end of our last fiscal year, we had by far the largest surplus that we have ever had. Ironically, the Smithsonian and, consequently, the NMAA and the Renwick, are in a worsening financial situation. The management of the Smithso-

nian has been, for the past year, a source of pessimistic reports and projections. Talk of staff cuts, sale of assets, and possible disposal of items from the collection has appeared in the local press. We must be alert to these trends to assist Michael in any way we can in averting such steps. We must also build the strength of our organization against the possibility that some action outside our control causes us to have to alter our course.

The Board of the Alliance has been a constant source of strength and support to me, both people who served in formal positions — officers, committee chairs — and those who pitched in on ad hoc basis. This is a *working* board. Many members of the Alliance not on the Board have also been generous with their time. Special thanks to three people: Michael Monroe, whose instincts for cooperation make him the ideal person to work with; Shelley Gollust, who is dedicated, hard-working, effective, and was patient with me when the need arose (frequently); and, of course, my wife, Lee, who aside from her service in official capacities in the Alliance, made it possible for me to serve by carrying a heavy load in our business and by being a wellspring of advice, encouragement, and love.

My best wishes to Paul Parkman and the other newly elected officers and directors. Since retiring Presidents of the Alliance don't usually organize presidential papers, found presidential libraries, or write memoirs, I will continue to work for the Alliance whenever and wherever possible and to enjoy the occasions when trips or other events bring us together for good works and good times.

Kudos and Thanks to the Craft Weekend Committee

"Living with Crafts — Inside and Out," the Alliance's fun and information-filled weekend in April, was the result of months of work, work, more work and organizational talents of many Alliance board members. Before we pat any of ourselves on the back, we extend particular thanks to Elizabeth Broun, Director, National Museum of American Art; Michael Monroe, Curator-in-Charge, Renwick Gallery; and Jackie Chalkley, Stephanie Pilk Thomas and Ruth Tarbell, co-chairs of the wearable art fashion show. The Alliance also notes the creative and generous efforts for the fashion show of Roi Barnard and his staff at Salon Roi, Nasreen S. Wills and staff at Georgetown Design Group, Inc. and the Fashion Merchandising Department at Marymount University.

Within the Alliance, special congratulations and appreciation go to John Kotelly and Mary Hartzler, co-chairs for the Craft Weekend; Sandra Oken and Barbara Berlin, co-chairs for the Craft Leaders Caucus meeting; Barbara Berlin (again!) for chairing Saturday evening's gala dinner.

At last there are committee (what would we all do without committees?) chairs to honor. The Craft Weekend was such a success thanks to the patience and perseverance of the following: Anne Abramson, Marilyn Barrett, Ruth Conant, Lee Eagle, James Hartzler, Shirley Jacobs, Sherley Koteen, Laney Oxman, Michael Oxman, Elmerina Parkman, Veena Singh and Rebecca Stevens.

Recent Contributions to the Alliance

The Alliance welcomes the gifts of the following contributing members, received between October 15, 1992 and May 1, 1993.

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Vicki Harper
Iris Hartman
Anne Gould Hauberg
Mary Lee Hu
Ida & Sidney Jervis
Susan Kakesako
Harriet Lembeck
Dr. & Mrs. Edward J. Leonard
Ms. Blanche Levenberg
Marcia Lewis & Larry Hunter
Dr. & Mrs. Robert Mann
Page S. Morahan
Dominie Nash
Cynthia Schira
Joan Shipley
Samuel & Rosanne Spear
Mrs. Phillip P. Steptoe
David Tannous
Anne W. Thomas
Dennis R. Trombatore
Katherine E. Vogel
Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada
Mrs. Lois Washinko
Mrs. Philip C. White

Renwick Gallery Public Programs

June 6:

Illustrated Lecture: In her talk entitled "Craft in the Services of Belief," Renwick Gallery Fellow Mary Douglas will discuss the work of six metalsmiths whose work comments specifically on contemporary society. This lecture is supported, in part, by the James Renwick Alliance. Free. At 3:00 PM.

June 10:

Creative Screen: The Fourth Animation Celebration is a showcase of independently produced animated short subjects, produced with partial support from the Samuel Goldwyn Company. (80 minutes). Free. At 12:15 PM and 1:45 PM.

June 12-13:

Craft Demonstrations: Woodturner Phil Brown will show how he takes green wood and cuts it away on a lathe to make an open-form container. This demonstration is made possible by a grant from the Pearl Rappaport Kaplan Fund. Free. From 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

July 14:

Gallery Talk: Jeremy Adamson, curator for the "American Wicker" exhibition, will lead a tour of the show. Free. At noon.

July 23:

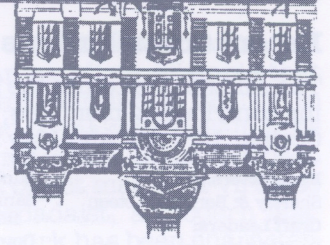
Illustrated Lecture: "American Craft Design and Decoration: 17th to 19th

June, July, August

Century" will be covered by Allen Bassing, Renwick Gallery Program Coordinator. Mr. Bassing will survey the accomplishments of early American craftsmen who created and embellished metal, signs and painting on walls and furniture. This is the first of a two-part series of lectures.

August 20:

Illustrated Lecture: "American Craft Design and Decoration: 17th to 19th Century." In this second lecture on the inventiveness of early American craftspeople, Allen Bassing will discuss printed and decorated documents, ceramics, coverlets and quilts, and needlework and embroidery.



James Renwick Alliance
6801 Winterberry Lane
Bethesda, MD 20817

“Crafts America: The Southeast” in Museum Shop

by Gary Wright

*We find in the shop, from the land of cotton
That the master-crafters have not forgotten
The pride and joy so clear in the making
Of the handmade crafts —
now yours for the taking!*

*There are things of all sort and type
and design —*

*There's really no limit to what you can find!
So come on down and see for yourself
That every case is packed, and every shelf.*

*With cups and pots, just right for tea;
And glass and tapestry made into jewelry;
Plus lamps for the table and lamps for the floor;
And heavy iron chairs — but wait!
there's more:*

*Ceremics and glass: bottles, bowls and vases;
There are caps and scarves to offset those faces.
You'll find handmade felt, and “hot mats”
to boot,*

And clever wood boxes out of gnarled tree root.

*And finally we find a choice of wall-hanging,
With pillows and frames concluding my
haranguing.*

*The one thing more that's left to remember:
This show runs through the month of
September!*



Bowl by T.S. Woodruff
