

CRAFT QUARTERLY



James Renwick Alliance

SUMMER 2018



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The JRA Quarterly is published three times a year by the James Renwick Alliance, an independent national non-profit organization that celebrates the achievements of America's craft artists and fosters scholarship, education, connoisseurship and public appreciation of craft art. Founded in 1982, the Alliance fulfills its mission through public programs, educational trips, publications, recognition of craft artists, and financial support of museums and other non-profit organizations, including the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Although efforts have been made to eliminate errors of fact, spelling and grammar, the editor apologizes in advance for any such errors that may remain.

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ON THE COVER:

Work by Richard Haining, recipient of the JRA 2018 American Craft Council Award of Innovation. Photo courtesy of the artist.

ABOVE: Demonstration piece by Chris Antemann inspired by her *Little Maid* available from MEISSEN®

CONTENTS PAGE:

2018 Distinguished Artist Sharon Church in her studio. Photo courtesy of the artist.

ON THE BACK:

Work by Hybycozo (Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu) in *No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man* at the Renwick Gallery. Photo by Lynda Slayen.

LEARN MORE

www.jra.org

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Members and Friends,

It has been another stellar year for the James Renwick Alliance!

Our 2017-2018 Distinguished Artist Series (DAS) concluded with two amazing artists: Chris Antemann and Sharon Church. Details about each weekend can be found on pages 15-18. A huge thank you to Fleur Bresler and Brenda Erickson for their sponsorship. Plans for the 2018-2019 season are underway. If you are interested in becoming a DAS sponsor, please contact the JRA office. Be sure to check the website (www.jra.org) and sign up for the weekly e-newsletter to get the most up-to-date information on our all of our upcoming events and trips, including a trip to Richmond and a Caucus trip to Cuba!

At the end of April, to coincide with the Smithsonian Craft Show, the JRA welcomed five celebrated Distinguished Educators and honored them at Spring Craft Weekend. Sonya Clark, Helen Drutt English, Andrea Gill, John Gill, and Albert LeCoff came together to share their unique stories and perspectives on teaching in the craft world. Full details are on pages 6-8.

Finally, it is with mixed emotions that I announce that I have submitted my letter of resignation and my last day in the office will be July 19. The seven years I have spent at the JRA have been rewarding both professionally and personally and, it has been a privilege to be a part of this fantastic organization. I have learned so much about American Craft and I am thankful to all the artists I have met along the way. I will take with me many wonderful memories.

Thank you all for your ongoing support and dedication to the James Renwick Alliance. I look forward to seeing you all at future events as I join you as a member and supporter.

Best wishes for a lovely summer,

Cicie Sattarnilasskorn



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TUCSON

JAMES RENWICK ALLIANCE TRIP TO TUCSON, AZ

By **Geraldine Ostrove**

Twenty three JRA members and friends spent three packed days of visits to the art and craft community of the Tucson region. The trip was expertly planned and led by fiber and mixed media artist, Claire Campbell Park. Remarkably, in this brief time we visited four collections, seven home studios, five galleries, five museums, and seven notable restaurants.

The collectors' homes displayed spectacular art and stunning architecture. Farah and John Palmer have a significant glass collection that includes works by Lino Tagliapietra, Dale Chihuly, Dan Dailey and Dante Marioni, among many other works by Seattle and Tucson artists. The spacious grounds of their contemporary home have been brilliantly landscaped by Farah. Seymour and Marcia Sabesin, supporters especially of local and regional artists, display their collection inside and outside a 1985 home designed by Judith Chafee, a pioneer of contemporary modern architecture. Sheryl and Bob Greenberg's striking, minimalist, white home was awarded the Home of the Year 2016 by the American Institute of Architects, Southern Arizona. Their art is displayed with comparable restraint. Having lived in Tucson for 30 years, Dan Leach described himself as a "home-grown" collector. He lives in a 1937 house and owns a collection of objects numbering in the thousands.

Artists welcomed the JRA group to their homes and studios. Claire Campbell Park's fiber and mixed media work was displayed in her home as well as at the Davis Dominguez Gallery. We saw examples of her earlier series and her current series, rectangular hangings of luminous linen, whose multi-hued palettes are influenced by Josef Albers' color theory.



At the art-filled home and studios of Betty and Joe Harris, Betty spoke to us about her metalwork, elegant design, and her jewelry, often set with semi-precious stones. Joe, a native of Arizona and collector of local artifacts, makes a variety of metal objects. The couple also creates collaborative works.

Rancho Linda Vista began in 1910 as a cattle ranch and has been an arts community outside Tucson since 1969. Among the residents who welcomed the JRA group was Joy Fox, who makes abstractly figurative ceramic sculptures, serene, timeless and sometimes playful. She and Albert Kogel create whimsical collaborative works in wood and clay. We also visited the studio of Judith Stewart, who sculpts the female form in clay or bronze.



Another home and studio was that of Eleanor Moty and Michael Croft. She is a metalsmith, jeweler and pioneer in the application of electroplating and photo-etching, a “founding mother” of American studio jewelry. Her exquisite works now consist entirely of one-of-a-kind brooches, only six to eight in a year. Michael, a knife maker who began metalsmithing as a jeweler, developed a passion for toy automata after his retirement from academia. The objects he collects, as well as makes, delighted his JRA visitors.

Su and Ned Egan divide their time between Tucson and Oregon. Su is a weaver who employs Scandinavian techniques, and Ned a sculptor who fashions scrap metal into fantastical and humorous pieces. We also met Carrie Seid, whose serene work uses color and light as structural components in metal box frames covered with translucent fiber netting or plexiglass.

At the Tucson Museum of Art, officials introduced us to newly built galleries showing the exhibits *Dress Matters: Clothing as Metaphor* and *Mid-Century Perspectives*, a show of architecture and furnishings. We viewed exhibits at the Arizona State Museum, a major archaeological repository of artifacts and documents representing the pre-history and history of Arizona and the Southwest, and at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson, where the well-known Native American basket maker Terrol Dew Johnson took time from the workshop he was conducting to give us an illustrated lecture. A highlight was the cultural museum, botanical garden, and nature preserve,

Tohono Chul, which means “desert corner” in the Tohono O’odham language. Featured artist, Janet Windsor, introduced us to her nature-inspired, light-filled quilts. Pima Community College houses the Louis Carlos Bernal Gallery in its Center for the Arts complex, which exhibits a wide range of contemporary artists and media, including paper artist and maker Helen Baribeau, who introduced us to her work.

Galleries continue to provide an important component of Tucson’s craft and art life. Tom Philabaum, a clay and glass artist, opened his glass gallery in 1982. In its annual High Fiber exhibit, the Conrad Wilde Gallery exhibited impressive works by Jodi Colella, Monica Durazo, and Eun-Kyung Suh, among others. The Etherton Gallery, specializing in 19th and 20th century photographs, shows regional artists working in other media as well, such as the current exhibit of white, sculptural works of paper artist Rhod Lauffer. Among the artists represented by the Davis Dominguez Gallery for contemporary art were several whom the JRA group met during this trip. The distinctive Yun Gee Park Studio and Gallery for selected contemporary media seeks to appeal to all five senses of visitors to its rooms and gardens.

JRA visitors experienced the impressive richness and variety of the artistic life of Tucson and the surrounding region during this extraordinary trip.

SPRING CRAFT WEEKEND

SPRING CRAFT WEEKEND 2018 IN REVIEW



A

Spring Craft Weekend was a great success, raising over \$100,000 to support the mission of the James Renwick Alliance (JRA) and the legacy of American Craft. Participants celebrated, learned, purchased and explored in a weekend devoted to appreciation of craft art.

JRA Craft Leader Caucus members met at the National Building Museum on April 27, 2018 for an afternoon luncheon featuring a presentation by Sebastian Clarke, Director of Estate Services at Rago Auctions. Clarke revealed moments of triumph and stories of horror in what he called, "A Collector's Journey: A Love Story in Three Parts." Special guests in attendance included Robyn Kennedy and Abraham Thomas from the Renwick Gallery, as well as Rago Auction's founders David Rago and Suzanne Perrault. Attendees were treated to complimentary admission to the Smithsonian Craft Show taking place on the floor below, where many spent their afternoon. The event was co-chaired by Barbara Berlin and Sandy Mitchell.

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The following morning provided the educational highlight of the weekend, a panel by the JRA 2018 Distinguished Educators at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Before the museum opened to the public, almost 100 guests gathered in the McEvoy Auditorium to hear the unique stories of our five Distinguished Craft Educators who have made significant impacts on American Craft. Audience members learned about the political inspiration and personal roots of Sonya Clark's artwork; the trailblazing significance of Helen Drutt English's multifaceted career; the educational legacy of Albert LeCoff in wood art; and the teaching, mentoring and ceramic art of Alfred University professors Andrea and John Gill. Craft legends like Lloyd Herman, founding director of the Renwick Gallery and Paul J. Smith, Director Emeritus of the Museum of Arts and Design were in attendance. Stephanie Moore, director of the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design moderated the panel, fielded questions and thanked panel organizer, Andrea Uravitch. Awards were presented to the Distinguished Educators at the Craft & Cocktails evening.

Shaken & Stirred, JRA's first Spring Craft Weekend Craft & Cocktail Party, was led by co-chairs Kathy Furlong and Michele Manatt. Arriving along the flower-lined drive of Maryland's historic Glenview Mansion, guests were greeted at the door and surrounded by jewelry from by the Baltimore Jewelry Center. They were encouraged to enjoy handmade centerpieces, sample the delicious hors d'oeuvres and try one of the signature cocktails named after the JRA members being honored. The vivacious Michael Bobbitt, Artistic Director of Adventure Theatre MTC, was the master of ceremonies of the evening program. Sandy and Norman Mitchell received the One-of-a-Kind Award, given to especially outstanding individuals who have dedicated years of valued service to the JRA and the wider craft community. Paul and Elmerina Parkman, founding members of the JRA, were crowned for their leadership and dedication. Shirley Jacobs, affectionately known as our Patron Saint, was toasted for her awe-inspiring ability to raise over \$2,100,000 with charm and grace over her 15 year tenure as Patrons chair.



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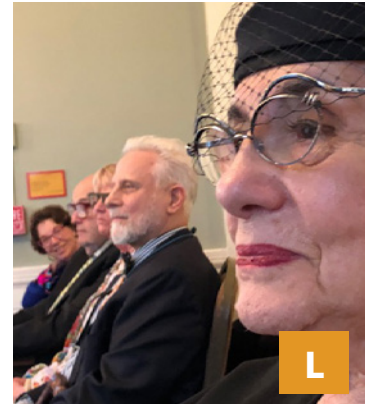
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The weekend concluded on Sunday with visits to the studios of Chris Shea and Eric Markow & Thom Norris. Guests arrived first at Chris Shea's studio tucked away in the woods. The walk to his blacksmithing studio had a rejuvenating effect after the bus ride. Guests enjoyed popcorn and prosecco as they relaxed in the rural Maryland setting before seeing a demonstration by Shea. Sparks flew as he demonstrated his techniques, discussed his approach to craft and responded to questions from the audience. Following the visit with Chris and his wife Dana, guests journeyed to the beautiful home and studio of Eric Markow & Thom Norris. Visitors wandered with hors d'oeuvres, desserts and drinks in hand, through their home gallery admiring larger-than-life woven glass sculptures. In the studio, the artists unveiled their nearly-completed first piece in a planned series of life-sized woven glass samurais, that complement an earlier series of life-sized kimonos.

The JRA celebrates the achievements of America's craft artists and fosters scholarship, education, connoisseurship and public appreciation of craft art. Spring Craft Weekend showcased the artists and educators who have dedicated their lives and creativity to extending the legacy, grace and joy that embody American Craft.

- A. Celebratory Toast at SCW Crafts & Cocktails. Photo by Gary Slayen.
- B. Rebecca Stevens asks a question at the Caucus Luncheon. Photo by Jaimianne Amicucci.
- C. Luncheon co-chairs Barbara Berlin and Sandy Mitchell. Photo by Cicie Sattarnilasskorn.
- D. Distinguished educators John Gill and Sonya Clark. Photo courtesy of Sonya Clark.
- E. SCW Distinguished Educator Panel. Photo by J.G. Harrington
- F. Distinguished Educator, Andrea Gill. Photo by J.G. Harrington
- G. Prince Paul and Empress Elmerina Parkman with Lloyd Herman. Photo by Gary Slayen.
- H. Crafts and Cocktails Co-Chairs Kathy Furlong and Michele Manatt. Photo by Lynda Slayen.
- I. Karen Fagelson, Lynda Slayen and John Fagelson enjoying Crafts & Cocktails. Photo by Gary Slayen.
- J. Sandy and Norman Michell receiving the One-of-a-kind Award from Gwen and Jerry Paulson at SCW Crafts & Cocktails. Photo by Gary Slayen.
- K. Patron Saint Shirley Jacobs and JRA president, Jackie Urow. Photo by Gary Slayen.
- L. Distinguished Educators at Crafts & Cocktails. Photo by Sonya Clark.
- M. Rebecca Ravenal with Chris Rifkin and Denise Lebica. Photo by Gary Slayen.
- N. Chris Shea demonstrating his blacksmithing techniques. Photo by J.G. Harrington.
- O. Eric Markow & Thom Norris reveal their first piece in a new samurai series. Photo by Jaimianne Amicucci.
- P. Stephanie Moore and Arnold Berlin enjoy works by Chris Shea. Photo by J.G. Harrington.



MARKED FINESSE: SANDY AND NORMAN MITCHELL, A WINNING PAIR

By Cicie Sattarnilasskorn

The 2018 James Renwick Alliance One-of-a-Kind Award was presented to Sandy and Norman Mitchell at Spring Craft Weekend. The Mitchells join a distinguished group of individuals whose names have become synonymous with commitment and generosity to the James Renwick Alliance (JRA) and the wider craft community.

In an endearing tribute at the awards ceremony, Gwen and Jerry Paulson -- dear friends of Norman and Sandy and long-time members of the JRA -- highlighted the many contributions of the Mitchells through a fictitious Netflix-type series entitled *The Mitchells of Maryland*. We learned that Sandy and Norman hail from Philadelphia where they met and married. Norman finished dental school prior to entering the army. While serving his country, Norman developed a love for bridge, a passion that continues to this day. After the army, the Mitchells moved to Maryland where Norman set up his dental practice and he and Sandy raised two children. Sandy went on to receive a bachelor's degree in art history and a graduate degree in American studies.

Fast forward to 1991 when Sandy and Norman became members of the James Renwick Alliance. The following year, they became members of the Craft Leaders Caucus, the highest membership level of the organization, and in 1995 became Patrons of Spring Craft Weekend. Over the past 25 years, they have both served multiple terms on the JRA board. Both Sandy and Norman undertook meaningful leadership roles within the JRA. Sandy and Norman have co-chaired Spring Craft Weekend along with its many individual events including



Caucus Day and the Gala and Auctions. For over a decade, Sandy was the Chair of the Trips Committee, responsible for planning and coordinating so many wonderful trips and travel experiences that make the JRA a uniquely special organization. Norman served as President of the James Renwick Alliance. It was during his tenure that the organization hired professional staff and moved into an office. Beyond these valued leadership roles, Norman and Sandy have continued to participate in JRA trips and programs, and are always willing to lend a much appreciated helping hand. In addition to their contributions to the JRA, the Mitchells devote their time and skills to other arts organizations. Sandy was a docent at the National Museum of

American Art (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum) for 13 years and for the last 15 years, has been a docent at the National Gallery of Art. Norman served as President of VisArts (formerly Rockville Arts Place) and was a board member of The Clay Studio in Philadelphia. He currently serves on the Hood College Ceramic Advisory Board. The Mitchells continue their generosity beyond the Alliance, making significant contributions to the Lloyd Herman Curator of Craft Fund at the Renwick Gallery as well as generous donations to the Renwick Gallery renovation fund set up by the Alliance to support the JRA named gallery.

The James Renwick Alliance is fortunate to have benefited from the dedication and generosity bestowed by Sandy and Norman Mitchell. Their gifts are too many to enumerate which made their selection as recipients for the One-of-a-Kind Award an easy decision. When

asked how they felt about receiving the award, the Mitchells responded with the following statement:

It has been our great honor to receive the One-of-a-Kind Award from the James Renwick Alliance, a group of very special hard-working, dedicated people. We've made many wonderful friends with whom we've shared extraordinary travels, seen the work of wonderful artists while supporting and promoting craft art and artists. It has been a privilege and an honor to be a part of this amazing group. We've loved being involved as the organization has grown throughout the years. The best part is that it's always been lots of fun. Many thanks to all.

Many thanks to YOU, Sandy and Norman Mitchell!



CALL FOR ARTISTS JAMES RENWICK ALLIANCE

The Chrysalis Award

Awarding **GLASS** in 2018 Apply by August 1, 2018

The James Renwick Alliance (JRA) sponsors an annual award recognizing an emerging craft artist showing merit, skill and innovation in their work. The awardee will receive a \$5,000 award and a complimentary membership to the JRA for one year. The finalist will have an opportunity to give a brief presentation about their work during an award presentation in October 2018.



INNOVATION IN WOOD

By Jaimianne Amicucci

Milling, cutting, stacking and gluing hundreds of tiny wooden pieces, Richard Haining, uses what others may consider refuse to make his beautifully curvy, large and sturdy vessels. After the rough form is created, the final form is worked by hand. The larger cuts provide the more bulbous parts of the vessel, the tight lips and curves are formed from the smaller detailed pieces. "Since I build piece-by-piece, layer by layer, the result is an insanely beautiful random patterning. Unlike segmented work, I have no pre-planned math." To most people's surprise, there is also no lathe work in Haining's wooden vessels.

"I took a rather circuitous path to discover my passion was working with my hands," says Haining who attended two other colleges and participating in a three-month National Outdoor Leadership School program, before finding himself at the Rhode Island School of Design. Haining first studied ceramics and later focused on furniture-making, before graduating in 2005. A few years later, he settled into a position at a Brooklyn set-design company, where he stayed for seven years. It was there that he began experimenting with discarded scrap wood to make his art. "Very quickly I became engrossed in the challenge of using very small parts to create a larger whole. This material other people deemed 'waste' was in my eye perfectly good, it just required a bit more time and patience to create the finished piece."

Today Haining participates in three to six shows a year including the American Craft Show Baltimore, Philadelphia Craft Show, and the upcoming American Craft Exposition in Chicago. Richard Haining's unique process and excellence in execution, won him the 2018 American Craft Council Award of Innovation sponsored by the James Renwick Alliance (JRA). This award has



been given annually by the JRA for the last three years, with strong leadership by board member Rebecca Ravenal. This year's jurors included collector, writer and artist Diane Charnov, collector Leslie Lane and collector JG Harrington. "Whether the piece I'm working on is a vessel, a sculpture, a table or a light, the ritual of creating unique objects from previously discarded materials raises awareness as to what we consider valuable and desirable. It is my hope that my work will inspire mindfulness and appreciation for materials often overlooked."

Top photo: Richard Haining's booth at ACC Baltimore.
Lower photo: Richard Haining with award signage and JRA jurors, J.G. Harrington, Diane Charnov, Leslie Lane and organizer, Rebecca Ravenal.
Photos by Jaimianne Amicucci.



NO SPECTATORS: THE ART (AND CRAFT) OF BURNING MAN

A

By Diane Charnov

Burning Man, the artistic and cultural phenomenon that has grown from a small gathering on a San Francisco beach to a 75,000-person spectacle in Nevada's Black Rock Desert, has found a new, and some say unconventional home in the nation's capital. This "thing in the desert" has been modified and transformed over 2,500 miles away to create the blockbuster show, *No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man*. It has overtaken the Renwick Gallery on a scale never before seen in the nation's first structure built as a museum.

According to Stephanie Stebich, the Smithsonian American Art Museum's (SAAM's) Margaret and Terry Stent Director, over one million visitors are anticipated during its near year-long installation. In the opening month alone, record attendance exceeded *Wonder*, the previously most-visited Renwick show. *No Spectators* has not only broken attendance records, it has broken new ground in how craft is presented to and viewed by the public.

Nora Atkinson, the Lloyd Herman Curator of Craft and visionary behind the show, generously offered a special tour to James Renwick Alliance (JRA) members. She also dispensed with her traditional curatorial title for this exhibition, and at the press preview referred to herself as "Chief Instigator." That title seems fitting for a show that includes large-scale installations from the Department of Mutant Vehicles (DMV) and glossary to alert visitors to terms like Matter Ot of Place (MOOP) and Default World (the rest of the world that is not Black Rock City).



B

While the show may lack pyrotechnics, it is igniting discussion and fueling controversy around the future of craft. During the press preview, Nora praised the modern artists of Burning Man. She also drew parallels between the 19th century Industrial Revolution that gave rise to art movements celebrating the handmade and the 21st century maker culture fueled in part by a reaction to the Technological Revolution. While materials in this exhibition are largely familiar (textiles, jewelry, sculpture, wood, metal, and even feathers), there is no denying that the works mark a significant departure from traditional craft.

Created not only by master artisans, the art of Burning Man also includes work of novice volunteers. The Grand Salon has been completely transformed by “temple master” David Best and volunteer teams who have created intricate and expansive environments. The Temple took on an even greater significance as a place to honor lost loved ones in the wake of the recent passing of Burning Man founder Larry Harvey. In poignant remarks, Best added, “perfection is not the only thing we are looking for in craft. Craftsmanship is integrity too.” From Best’s ingenious use of balsa wood scraps from toy dinosaur factories to his reflections on the role of the temples to honor lost loved ones, this exhibit plays a profound artistic and emotional role for many visitors.

Initially, the title *No Spectators* seems ironic for a museum where visitors typically stand at a respectful distance from art. In a nod to Burning Man culture, this exhibition seeks to bridge the gap. It invites viewer participation through writing tables stocked with pens and balsa wood notecards, chalk left on Candy Chang’s, “Before I Die...” board, and *Shrumen Lumen* by Folhaus psychedelic light sculpture which responds to visitors’ movements around origami mushrooms.

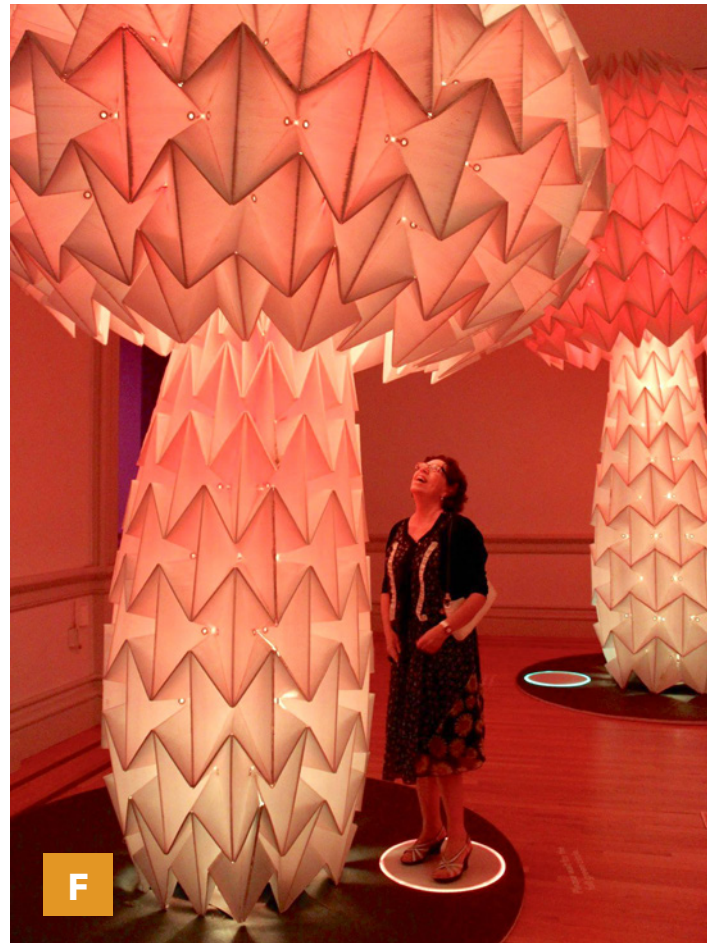
Thanks to the Renwick’s partnership with the Golden Triangle Business District, interaction with art also occurs outdoors. Tourists, office workers and craft lovers engage with the six outdoor installations, whether listening to Maya Angelou’s voice read “Rise” on Mischell Riley’s sculpture, discovering the secret hourglass inside *Future’s Past*, Kate Raudenbush’s intricate laser-cut sculpture or shaking hands with Lisa Fryklund and Robert Ferguson’s *Ursa Major*, the bear made of





steel, Styrofoam, concrete and 170,000 pennies. As Joe Malunda, Senior Account Supervisor at Edelman observed, “The Burning Man sculptures look out of place in a neighborhood full of high-powered consultancies and law firms - and that’s what makes these installations so appealing. It’s not every day you walk into the entrance of your DC office and are greeted by a bear made out of pennies.”

This year, Nora Atkinson has been the visionary behind exhibitions that ask the museum visitor to enter the world of craft through opposing ends of a binocular. In *Murder is Her Hobby: Frances Glessner Lee and the Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*, visitors wandered the Renwick with tiny magnifying glasses and peered into miniature dioramas to solve 19th century



murder mysteries. In *No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man*, visitors are thrust into an oversized awe-inspiring world of craft on a previously unimaginable scale. One of the ten principles central to the culture of Burning Man is to “leave no trace” as “Burners” depart the Nevada desert as they found it. At the Renwick Gallery it is apparent that this exhibit raises issues in craft that will continue to leave a trace and inspire discussion for years to come.

First floor open through September 16, 2018

Second floor open through January 21, 2019

In the Neighborhood: No Spectators: Beyond the Renwick - through December 2018

July 18, 2018 - 6:00pm - The Jewelry of Burning Man with Lady Bee (Christine Kristen) on the importance of jewelry to the culture of Burning Man.

A. Detail of embroidery. Photo by Diane Charnov.

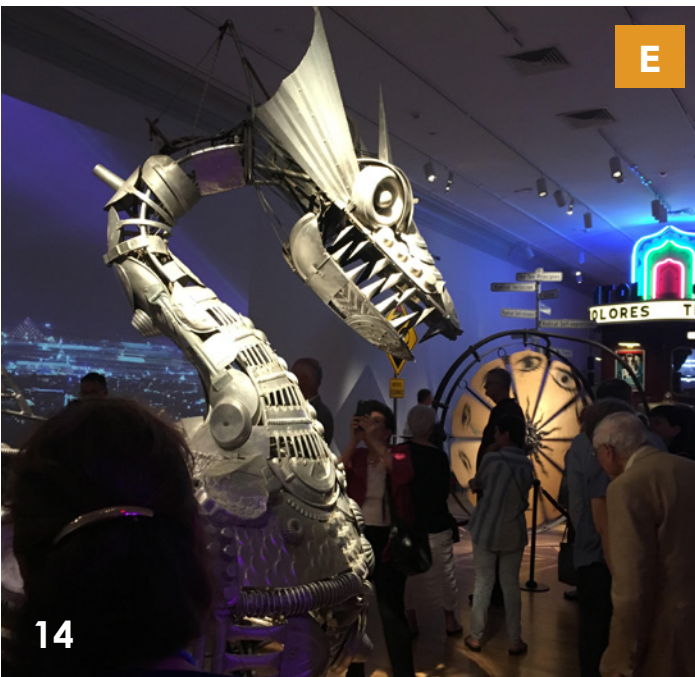
B. Installation photo by Diane Charnov.

C. Entrance photo by J.G. Harrington.

D. Artist Kate Raudenbush with *Future’s Past*. Photo by Diane Charnov.

E. Visitors enjoy the JRA members-only tour. Photo by Jaimianne Amicucci.

F. JRA President Jackie Urow with *Shrumen Lumen* by Foldhaus. Photo by J.G. Harrington.





DISTINGUISHED ARTIST SERIES

CHRIS ANTEMANN "NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S PORCELAIN"

By Diane Charnov

Porcelain is a ceramic material steeped in intrigue, tradition and mystery. Its story winds its way from China to Germany and beyond. Over the centuries, it has captivated emperors, pirates and collectors alike. On March 10th and 11th, ceramicist Chris Antemann delved into the history of porcelain and her role in its modern evolution. During the Distinguished Artist Series (DAS), Chris shed light on the obsession or "la maladie de porcelaine" in the 1700's and demonstrated her techniques. Her coveted work blends 18th century Rococo style with her modern imagination; her large-scaled work is filled with courtesans' furtive glances and chandeliers dripping with forbidden fruit.

Chris described her unique partnership with the revered Meissen porcelain factory artCAMPUS program and likened it to a modern day fairy tale. Her international journey includes a BFA in Ceramics and Painting at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, an MFA in Ceramics from the

University of Minnesota, the most coveted residencies at the Archie Bray Center, Kohler and Jingdezhen (China) as well as her partnership with Meissen - the stuff of fairy tales.

When Chris received an email from Dr. Christian Kurtzke, Meissen's CEO, she thought she had been "pranked" online. His search had unearthed her thesis on porcelain figurines along with images of her work including cowboys bathing with goats in porcelain bathtubs. Dr. Kurtzke was seeking ways to, "...promote cooperation with international exponents of the fine arts...and tap fresh sources of creativity." He also was in search of ways to address the contraction of the German market of collectors and grow a wider international market. From his artistic interest and business plan, Chris was tapped, brought to Meissen's artCAMPUS and an extraordinary adventure and partnership began.

Her childhood filled with chamber music, art and her grandmother's Hummel figurines formed a perfect backdrop to

her artistic journey. During the DAS weekend, she was joined by her mother, Anna, and her husband, Jakob Hasslacher, an artist she met at the Bray and with whom she co-runs the LH Project, an international ceramics residency in their Oregon studio. Chris spoke of close family ties, and fondly recounted time with her second family at Meissen, including her team of 16-year-old apprentices and women with 10 to 30 years of ceramic experience.

The demonstration at White Point Studio (maker space of former JRA Board member and artist Tamara Laird and Laurel Lukaszewski) was a rare opportunity to watch her work. There she created one of her limited edition pieces, the maid, who at first appears as a traditional figurine, but upon closer inspection reveals a modern day undercurrent. The twist of her head, coyly looking behind her, transports the maid from her base and frees her from complete subservience. Through subtle gestures, Chris crafts independence and sly disobedience into traditional themes.



As Bruce Guenther, Portland's Art Museum's former Chief Curator observed, "This is not your grandmother's porcelain." In Chris' hands and imagination, her work, from *Forbidden Fruit* to *Antemann Dreams*, retains a fidelity to the history of porcelain yet also infuses tradition with her own modern sensibility. In her creative world, subtle humor upends traditional gender roles. Women gain strength in her porcelain landscapes and replace men who traditionally held up pillars; battle is done with butter knives rather than swords.



This hybrid of past and present appears in much of her work. Figurines, fruit and fantasy mix with tension between the sexes, whispered secrets and elaborate desserts. While fast food and indoor plumbing have replaced hours-long banquets and chamber pots, in Chris' work, human relationships are unmasked and drama and furtive glances are alive and well. For an artist who has devoted much of her life to sculpting elaborate ceramic dinner banquets, the wonderful potluck dinner at Clemmer and David Montague's art-filled home was a perfect setting and tribute to a gifted artist.

During her presentation at American University's Katzen Center, Chris paid homage to collectors and expressed gratitude to the James Renwick Alliance (JRA) for its support. She shared stories of some collectors who reserve (or avoid) certain numbers in limited editions based on principles of numerology. Fairy tales and porcelain often conjure up images of demure women and fragile pedestals. Chris Antemann defies such stereotypes, challenges the notion that porcelain is fragile and reconsiders the role of feminine strength in clay. When asked what is next, she mentioned an upcoming trip to Russia, where her work will journey to the Hermitage. The JRA should stay tuned for the next installment in Chris' journey, as this overseas trip could well include a fairy tale chapter for interested members.

SHARON CHURCH: MAKER'S STORIES

By **Adriana G Radulescu**

During a beautiful weekend in spring, Distinguished Artist Sharon Church delighted the members of the James Renwick Alliance (JRA) and fellow art and craft lovers with a workshop and a presentation on her techniques and body of work. The weekend, generously sponsored by Fleur Bresler, was part of the JRA's Distinguished Artist Series that happens four times a year.

Sharon Church is an accomplished studio jeweler and educator whose work is found in international, private and permanent public collections. For 35 years, she taught at Philadelphia's University of the Arts. Previously she spent time as an instructor at Skidmore College, Arrowmont, Penland and Haystack. For her accomplishments as an educator, Church was awarded the Lindback Distinguished Teaching Award from the University of the Arts, the Richard C. von Hess Faculty Award, two Venture Fund Awards from The University of the Arts, and in 2008 she received The James Renwick Alliance Distinguished Educator Award.

Sharon Church is an insightful, sensitive and lively artist who captivated and engaged her audience with meaningful stories from her life and studio. Sharon's workshop was hosted on April 21 at the Artists & Makers Studios 2, a cooperative of artists' studios, workshop spaces and galleries in Rockville, Maryland. The workshop's title, *Ukibori - Can Process Lead to Creativity?*, was exciting, not surprisingly for an artist known for her gracefully carved jewelry.

Albert Paley was Sharon's professor during her first year as an M.F.A. student at the Rochester Institute of Technology. He guided her towards subtracting surfaces and she started by carving waxes. Later she learned to cast in metal, and then started to carve wood using jewelry tools. By Sharon's admission, her favorite tool is the flex shaft. It was a chance comment made by one of her former students, Sean McMullen, that



introduced Sharon to the Ukibori technique. Later, fellow artist, porcelain and wood carver, Janel Jacobson taught her the process.

Ukibori is a Japanese carving process in which the carver creates compressed areas in a piece of wood, then files and sands the surrounding surface material down to the bottom of the compressed zones. The carved wood is then soaked in hot water and the compressed zones rise above the adjacent sanded surface. After the piece is dry, Church finishes the process with fine sanding followed by dyeing, painting and a clear satin spray or wax. The result is a rich, velvety texture with deep color undertones. The technique itself is the vehicle for achieving a final piece, and part of the complex process of an artist's creativity.

Top photo: Meghan Ayers and Sharon Church.

Photo by Neal B. Schlosburg

Lower photo: Workshop attendees inspect a piece made by Sharon Church. Photo by Neal B. Schlosburg.

The inquisitive workshop title was the platform from which Church stimulated the audience to think about process as a means of creative discovery. She spoke about the fears and inner doubts artists face during the creative process. "We don't know what we are looking for." She compared the creative process with "swimming in mud." The way to conquer it is to "keep working in the studio and when you find it, you know it."

Sharon spoke about her own process, which starts with choosing a model from nature, then sketching and rendering. "I draw things until I feel them in my body!" Her sketches are beautiful and elaborate, with a tridimensional axis to assist with the carving. The next step is selecting the right



Workshop participants watching the Sharon Church demonstration.
Photo by Neal B. Schlosburg.

piece of wood: the wood species, the size, shape that will be appropriate for the selected model, and tracing the sketches into the wood before carving. The carving process is a long one, and sometimes mistakes or mishaps happen. "Life is an experiment and this one went wrong," Sharon said about a piece that cracked in the middle when almost finished. But as she read in a fortune cookie, "mistakes are opportunities," and that cracked piece became from one brooch a pair of beautiful earrings the artist wore at the workshop.

Meghan Ayers, Sharon's former student and assistant, skillfully carved a piece of Castello boxwood for the Ukibori demonstration and assisted Sharon on completing the project. The

audience was invited to watch closely,

18 and towards the end of the workshop,

participants were treated to a "hands on" tactile inspection of the finished piece, and of other Ukibori jewelry pieces brought by the artist.

The next day, on April 22, Sharon Church's lecture was hosted at the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center. The presentation included an overview of Sharon's work and the work of her assistant, Meghan Ayers. Rebecca Ravenal, JRA's Chair of the Distinguished Artists Series, introduced the artists and announced that the Society of North Americans Goldsmiths (SNAG) would award Sharon Church the 2018 Lifetime Achievement, to be presented at the SNAG's 2018 MADE Conference in Portland, Oregon on May 24.

Sharon's presentation began with images of her earlier work and stories of the artist's relationships with gallerists, including the commissions and support she received from Helen W. Drutt English (2018 Spring Craft Weekend Distinguished Educator) and her latest solo exhibition at Sienna Patti Contemporary. Each of Sharon's pieces has its own story - the maker's stories. Her frog brooch "Oh, No!" involved three years studying frogs, and owning a pet frog named "Tickle Toes". There are pieces with stories of grief and healing, friendship and hardship, loss and growth, and ornate objects to be held, not worn. A beautiful pendant, titled "Topsy Turvy" pays homage to 19th century German biologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel, whose lithograph of a Siphonophorae is a perfect mate to Sharon's piece.

A proud educator, Sharon concluded the lecture with her presentation of Meghan Ayers's work, graceful wood and metal pieces to be worn, and handmade chains as performance pieces in collaborative work. She spoke further about the creative process, the life and purpose of an artist, the long time it takes to become one, and the value of dreaming in the studio and experimenting, from working with paper clay embedded with spices, to fusing gold and silver and ending with a new metal form. Her lifelong source of inspiration and comfort is nature. "Nature is a metaphor for life, my life."

MEMBER PROFILE

BENDER GALLERY

Bender Gallery is a James Renwick Alliance gallery member located in Asheville NC, owned by Bernadette and Miles Bender.

Since Bender Gallery opened in 2005, you have represented hundreds of artists. What is your criteria for selecting artists? Bender Gallery has grown quite a bit since we opened as a glass-only gallery. While we still specialize in contemporary glass sculpture by renowned and emerging national and international artists, we have expanded into fine art and other mediums. When we select artists, we look for work that is compatible with the clean, modern aesthetic of Bender Gallery; we prefer work that can live in a collection without becoming dated and tiresome. We focus on collectible artists that are continually improving and evolving their body of work. We search for innovative use of materials, a unique vision, relevant ideas and a strong work ethic. We take a special interest in representing and nurturing emerging artists.

During the time of this interview, you are just moving into your new gallery space. What prompted this move and what can we expect in the new space? At this moment we are not open in our new space, but will be in a couple of weeks (our target date is July 15 to be open to the public). We had sorely outgrown the space at our previous location and desired to be located closer to the other top galleries in Asheville on Biltmore Avenue, or what we refer to as "Gallery Row". Our new space will still have our clean, modern aesthetic and the extra space will allow us to produce more exhibitions, represent a greater number of artists and expand our offerings beyond glass sculpture and paintings into ceramics and mixed media.



This summer you are also participating in Asheville's Summer of Glass. Can you explain what this is and how it came about for our readers who may not know? Asheville's Summer of Glass is a celebration of glass art and culture in the Western North Carolina region. The celebration was inspired by Chihuly at Biltmore, a first-ever art exhibition at the Biltmore Estate featuring the colorful monumental glass sculptures of Dale Chihuly set among the home and gardens of the estate. In conjunction, a group of sixty area art galleries, nonprofit organizations, individual artists, museums and independent businesses, have rallied together to produce Summer of Glass, a program of glass-centric art exhibitions, tours, lectures, events and a North Carolina glass history exhibit. This massive collaboration of area businesses, institutions and individuals are working together to share western North Carolina's unique glass culture and its contributions to the American Studio Glass Movement. Bender Gallery is hosting exhibitions including the works of glass artists Hiroshi Yamano, Eric Hilton, Lino Tagliapietra and Toland Sand among others.

Photo of Bernadette and Miles Bender, owners of the Bender Gallery.

SAVE THE DATES

JUNE 2018

6/1 Member Tour of *No Spectators:
The Art of Burning Man*
5:45pm - 7:30pm
Renwick Gallery

JULY 2018

7/22 Fiber Studio Tour
Time TBD
DC Arts Studios

AUGUST 2018

8/12 Roberto Lugo Meet-Up
4:30pm - 6:00pm
District Clay

8/9 - 8/11 Penland Trip

OCTOBER 2018

10/6 Tim Tate DAS Workshop
9:30am - 12:00pm at
Washington Glass School

10/7 Tim Tate DAS Lecture
& Chrysalis Award
2:00pm - 3:00pm at
AU Katzen Arts Center

10/21 Studio visit with Sean Schieber
2:00pm - 4:30pm
Private Studio in
New Market, MD

10/26 - 27 Richmond Trip

NOVEMBER 2018

11/18 Caucus Afternoon of Learning
2:00pm - 4:00pm
Private home in
Alexandria, VA

DECEMBER 2018

12/1 JRA Day
11:00am - 5:00pm
The Woman's Club of
Chevy Chase



MEMBERSHIP

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www.jra.org