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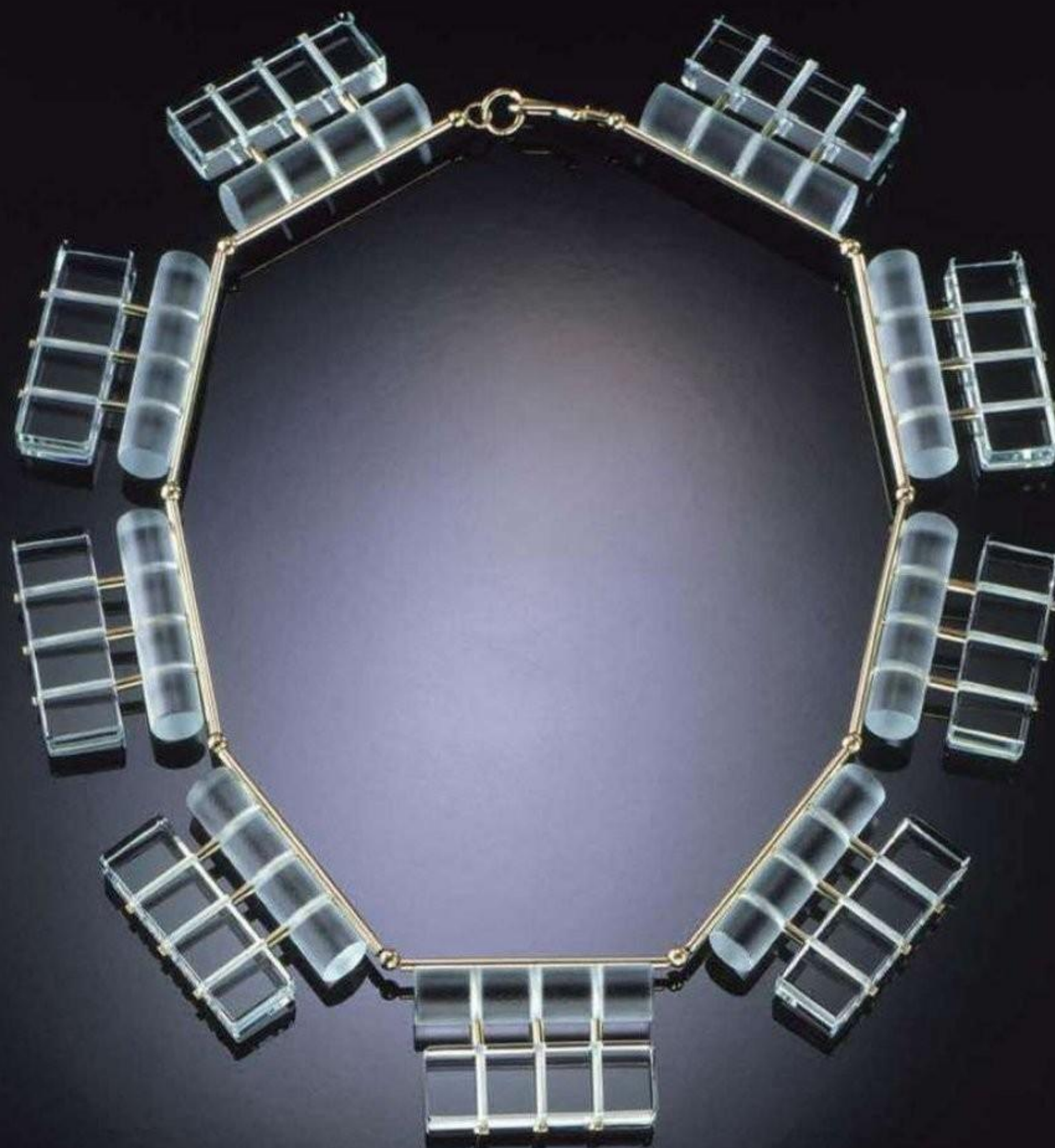
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75 years

americancraftmag.org
February/March 2017



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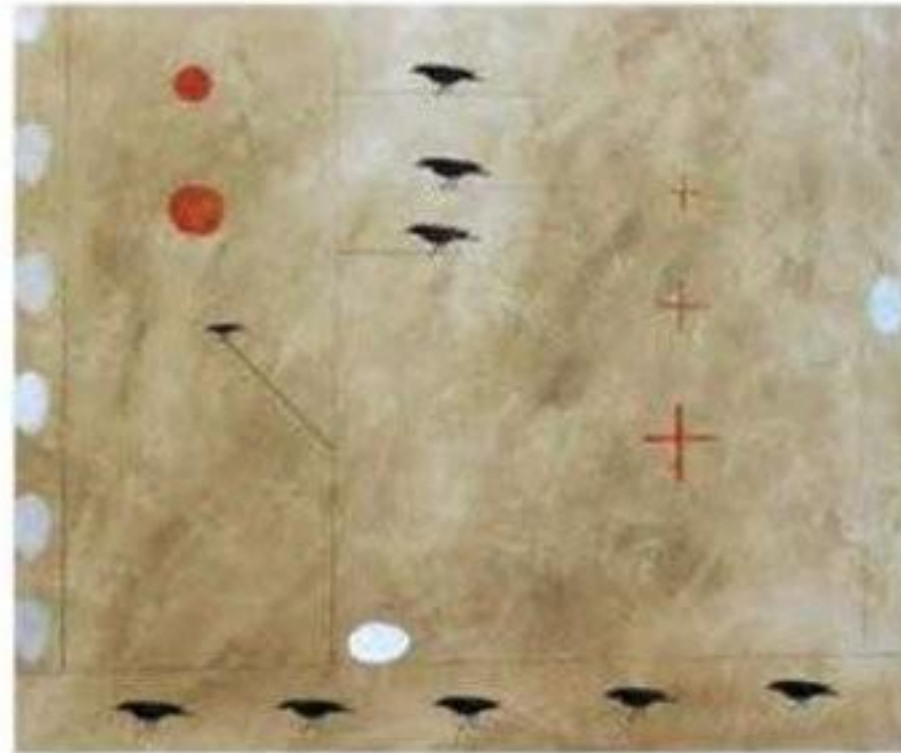
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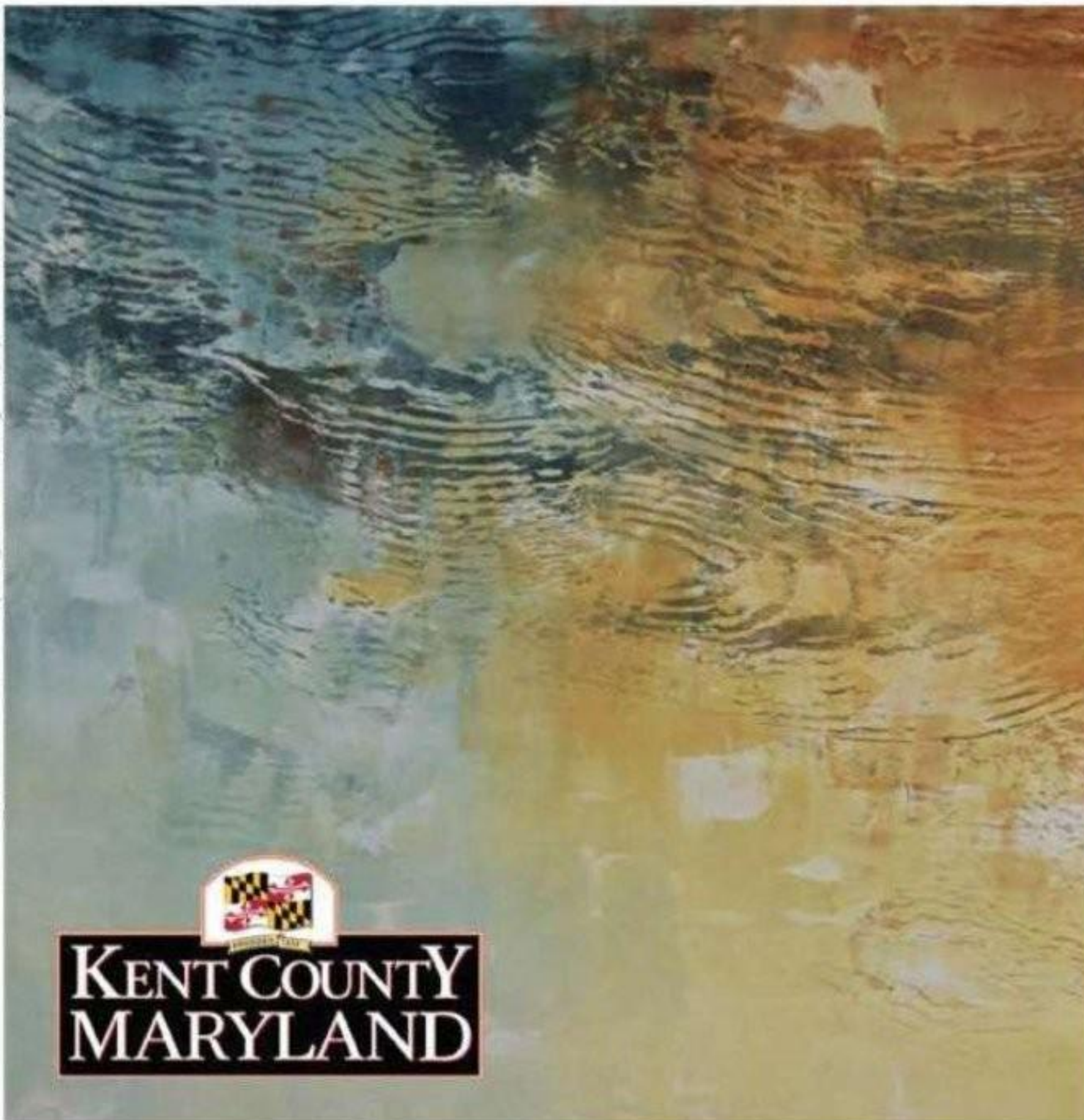


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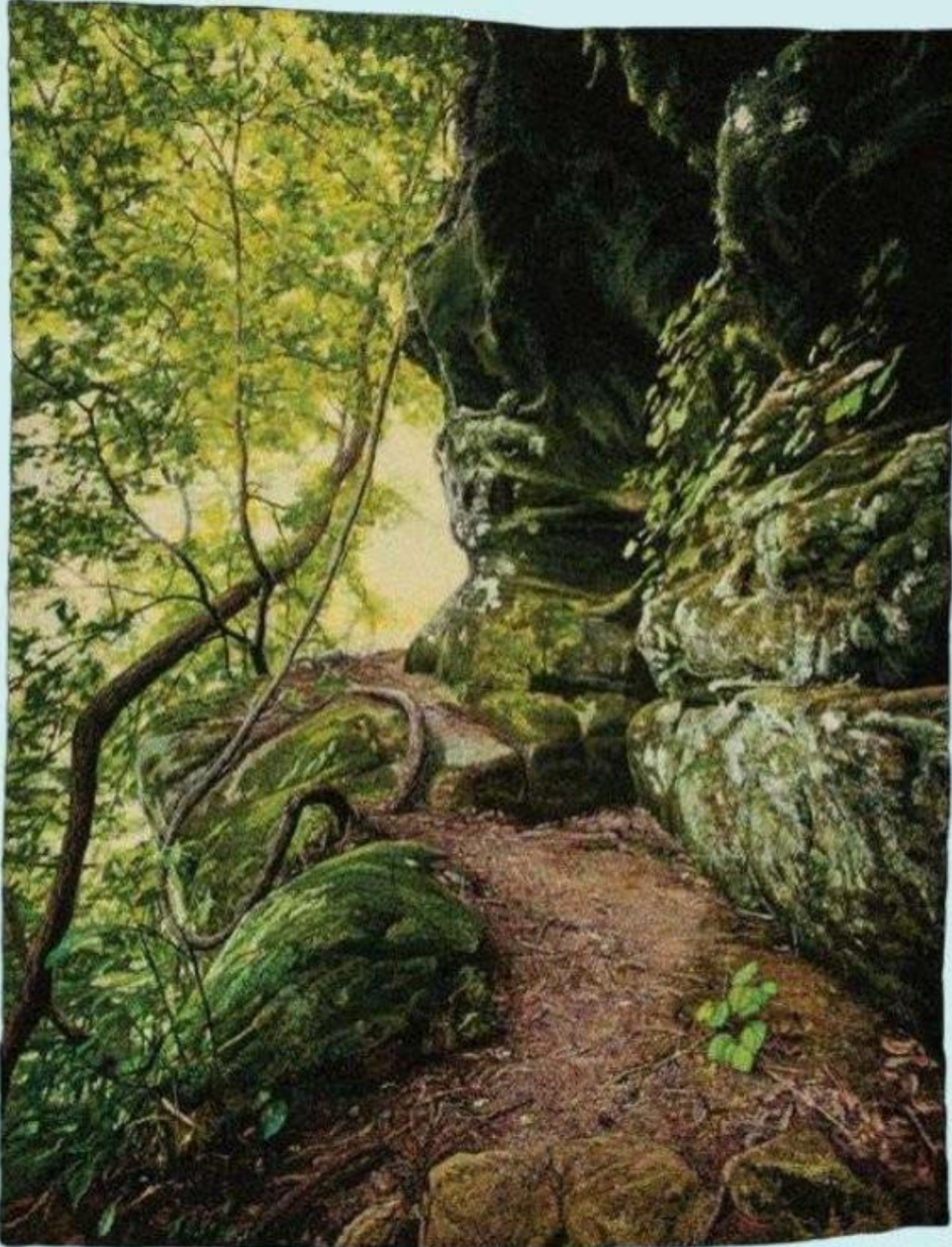
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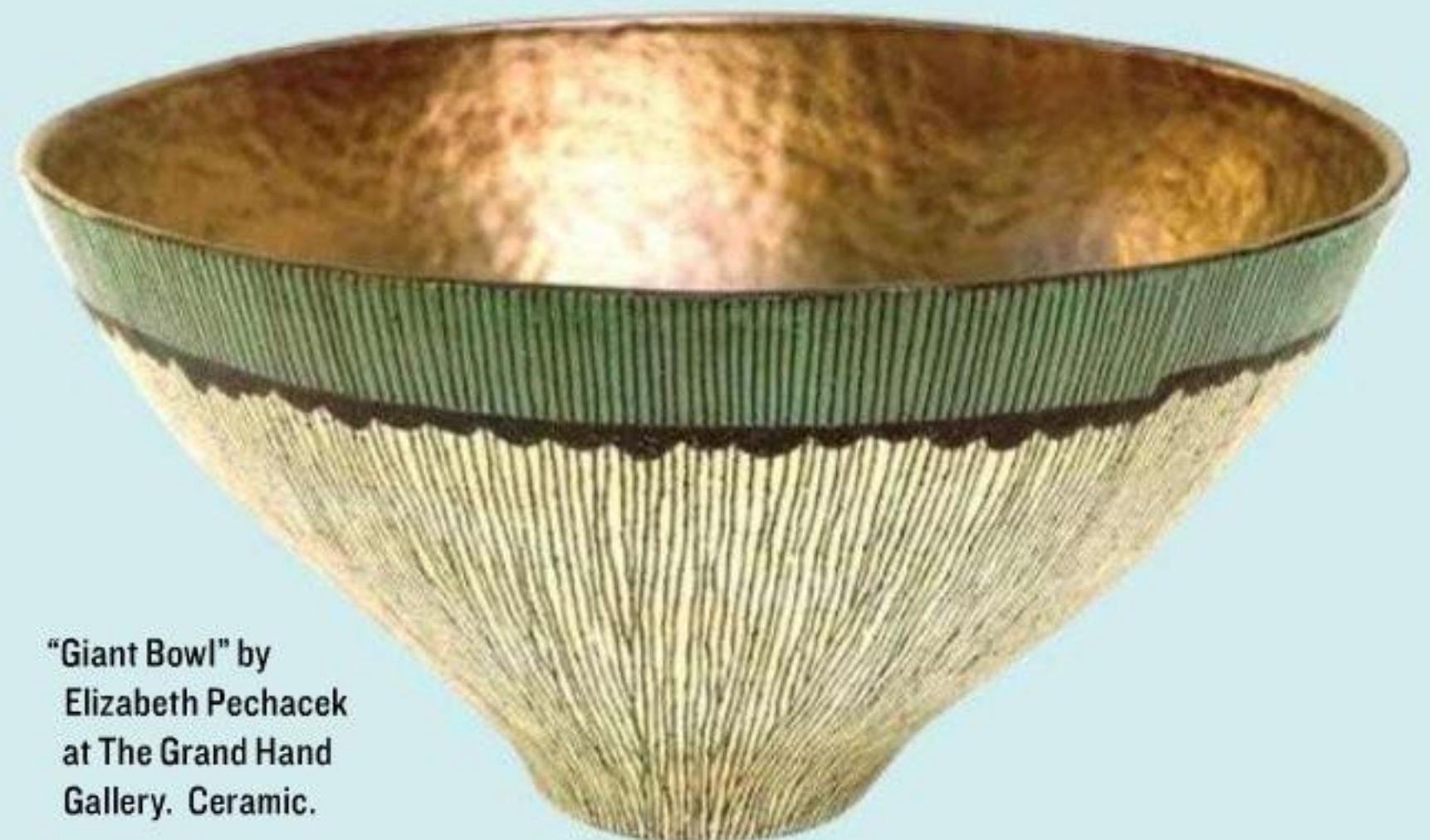
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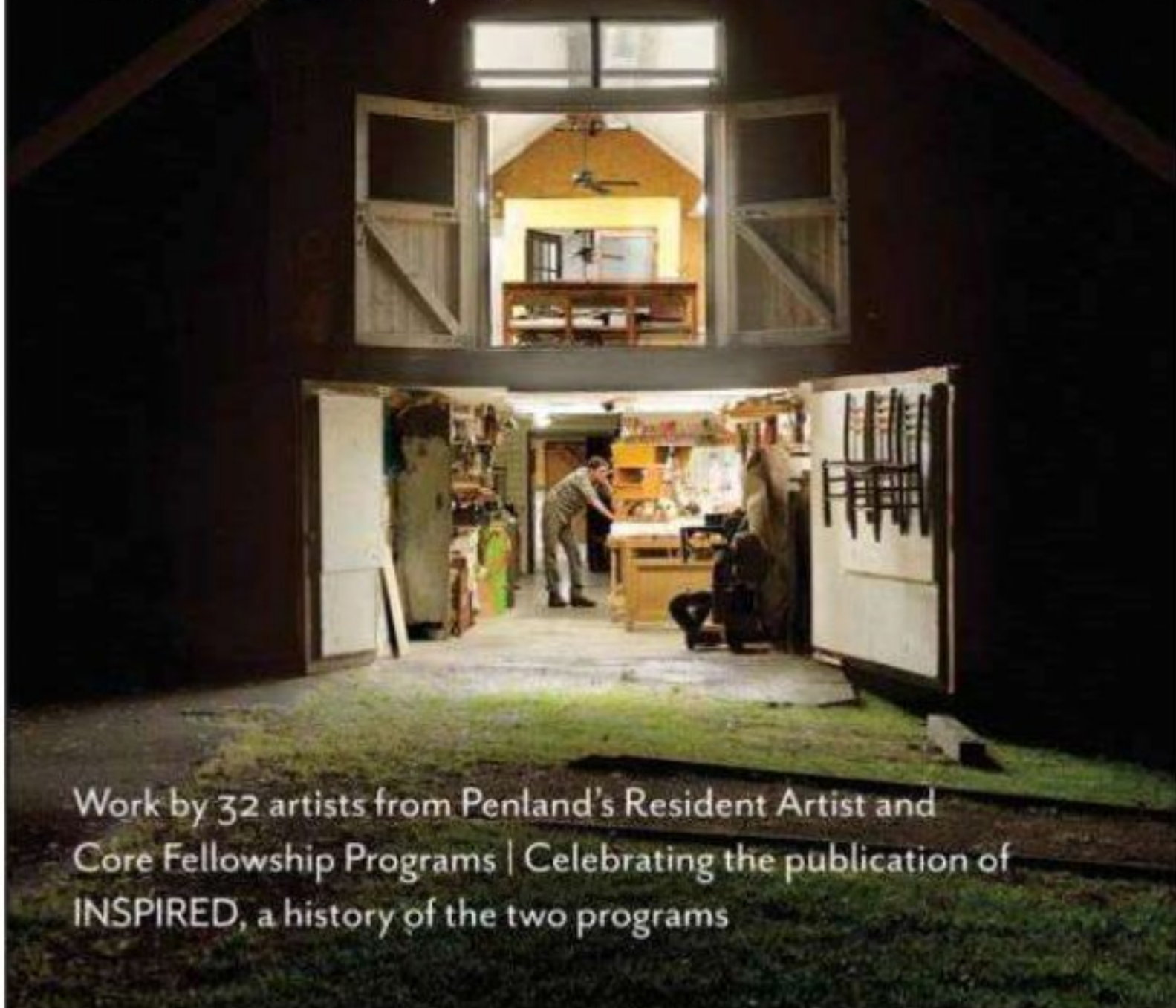
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C American Craft

Vol. 77, No. 1
February/March 2017



On the cover
Christopher Kurtz's latest work includes this cheeky take on the Windsor chair.
Photo: Andy Wainwright
page 60

Hannah Beatrice Quinn's *Type A Stool* (2013) is anything but.
page 16

Departments

10 *From the Editor*

Come together and create.

12 *Connect With Us*

In letters and on the web.

16 *Zoom*

Hannah Beatrice Quinn's dapper brooms and stools, and Block Shop's chic scarves made in partnership with traditional woodblock printers. Plus: Gallery Naga on studio furniture as fine art; surprising wooden goods; shows that run the gamut from Prince to minimalism to guns and ammo; new books, including *Your Inner Critic Is a Big Jerk*; and readers answer: What's your most essential tool?

28 *Personal Paths*

Under the guidance of his beloved carpenter father, young Gustav Reyes learned how to work with wood. Yet unlike the four-by-fours on construction sites, Reyes' lightweight bentwood jewelry and furniture defy the physical properties of the medium. Brigitte Martin talks to the Chicago maker.

34 *Personal Paths*

A PhD in molecular biology and a thriving art career generally don't go hand in hand, but for Idaho woodworker Kristin LeVier, science and art are perfect complements. Diane Daniel reports on the artist's unique journey.

36 *Collective Unconscious*

Let's not be superficial; a tree is just as beautiful below the bark. Julie K. Hanus spots six artists who remind us to appreciate the rhythmic allure of wood grain.

38 *Material Matters*

Informed by color theory and nature's mysteries, Northern California artist Victoria Wagner transforms chunks of discarded wood using radiant spectrums of color, turning tree into canvas. Deborah Bishop has the scoop behind the nature lover's dual fascinations.

86 *Wide World of Craft*

Halifax, Nova Scotia, boasts a robust art scene, a plethora of hiking trails, and an affordable cost of living. Philip Moscovitch finds out why craft artists – and craft lovers – can't get enough of this coastal city.

94 *Ideas*

From thrones to camp stools, recliners to ergonomic office chairs, the furniture we sit on says a lot about who we are and what we value. Megan Guerber interviews Witold Rybczynski about his new book, *Now I Sit Me Down*, to learn why sitting is such a significant (if awkward) part of the human experience.

116 *One Piece*

Martin Puryear's *Big Phrygian*.

42
*The Infinite
and the
Infinitesimal*

Leonardo Drew started his art career drawing superheroes; an encounter with Jackson Pollock's masterfully chaotic compositions changed his course. Today, Drew's massive mixed-media assemblages are like a dense, weathered forest, to be explored without a map. Joyce Lovelace talks with the Brooklyn artist.

52
Tipping Point

Atop a forklift with chain saw in hand, Arkansas sculptor Robyn Horn approaches her work as a fearless adventurer. Joyce Lovelace calls on the hardworking artist to learn about her affinity for both wood and stone – and the value of listening to materials.

60
Necessary Tension

Practicality and poetry – seemingly opposite ends of the craft spectrum – balance the woodworking practice of Christopher Kurtz. Brian K. Mahoney checks in on the Hudson Valley artist and finds out how craft helps ground him.

68
CRAFTED LIVES
The Experiment

Jon Brooks lives in a world of his own making, literally. His cozy New Hampshire home and studio are like something out of *The Hobbit*. The sculptor and furniture maker fills his space with wiry characters, sinewy ladders, and furniture that looks like it's about to take off. Christine Temin pays a visit to the offbeat artist.

76
*Putting It
All Together*

Katie Hudnall defies genres, blending illustration, sculpture, and furniture to create interactive works that cunningly unfurl like a pop-up book. Deborah Bishop chats with the Indianapolis artist about bringing her imaginative drawings – and clever sense of humor – to solid form.

“All my joinery – and there are air quotes around that word – tends to be visible.”

KATIE HUDNALL



Functionality is a springboard rather than an endgame for most of Katie Hudnall's work, including *Side Table (Blue)* (2015).
page 76



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When the world doesn't seem bright and orderly, you might need to create your own world. Settle your inner turmoil by putting your hands to work.



The Tough Make Art

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, but I've been stressed out. As I write this, the United States has just elected a new president after the most tumultuous election season in memory. And it's not as if the election has brought closure. Friendships are ending over politics. Families are breaking apart. Hate crimes are surging. People are taking to the streets. The country feels more polarized, less civilized, than it has in decades.

Like a lot of us, I'm looking for ways to cope with the discord, to feel hopeful again. I'm returning to the basics: eating well, exercising, trying to sleep, spending time with loved ones. But I'm also doubling down (as the pundits would say) on art.

I used to make more art, but, paradoxically, my job is something of a disincentive. Every day, I see so much wonderful, polished, expert work that I hesitate to try it myself. And maybe it's not just me.

It's easy to settle into being a spectator, rather than a participant – to assume that only some people are meant to make.

But, my friends, everyone is creative. If you're human, you're creative. And this is a time to prize process over product. This is a time to focus on craft as a verb, not a noun. Put aside the messages of our linear, ruthlessly efficient bottom-line culture. And know that tapping into your creativity is immensely healing. It's one of the joys, one of the fundamentals, of being alive.

"When we're scared," psychotherapist Satya Doyle Byock says, "the imagination contracts." The antidote is to "make art, make music, write, get your imagination moving." Which means silencing the editor within: "Do not judge anything you want to do or that wants to come through you. Your creative self will help you heal and will almost

certainly help to move your community forward."

So today I'm going to declutter my neglected studio – a tidy space calms the mind – and I'm going to start making something. I don't know what, but I know it will be made with community in mind. I'm thinking about the man at the Black Lives Matter demonstration in Charlotte who offered free hugs to protesters and the police – many of whom took him up on it. I'm thinking about Michael Strand and his efforts to bring people of divergent views together around pottery. At this point in history, we all need to be social-practice artists; we all need to use our creativity to connect, to soothe, to awaken, to find common ground, and to lobby for kindness in our country.

As the brilliant Toni Morrison wrote after the 2004 election, "This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair,

no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear." Art, she wrote, "is how civilizations heal." Art, my fellow Americans, is essential.

IN THIS ISSUE: You'll find a poster kicking off the celebration of the 75th anniversary of our publisher, the American Craft Council; it's the first in a series of nine. Beginning with the April/May issue, we'll be highlighting important events in the history of craft, decade by decade, starting with the 1940s. The posters are our way of thanking you, our readers and members, for your support. It continues to be crucial as we seek to remind people of the value of the imagination.

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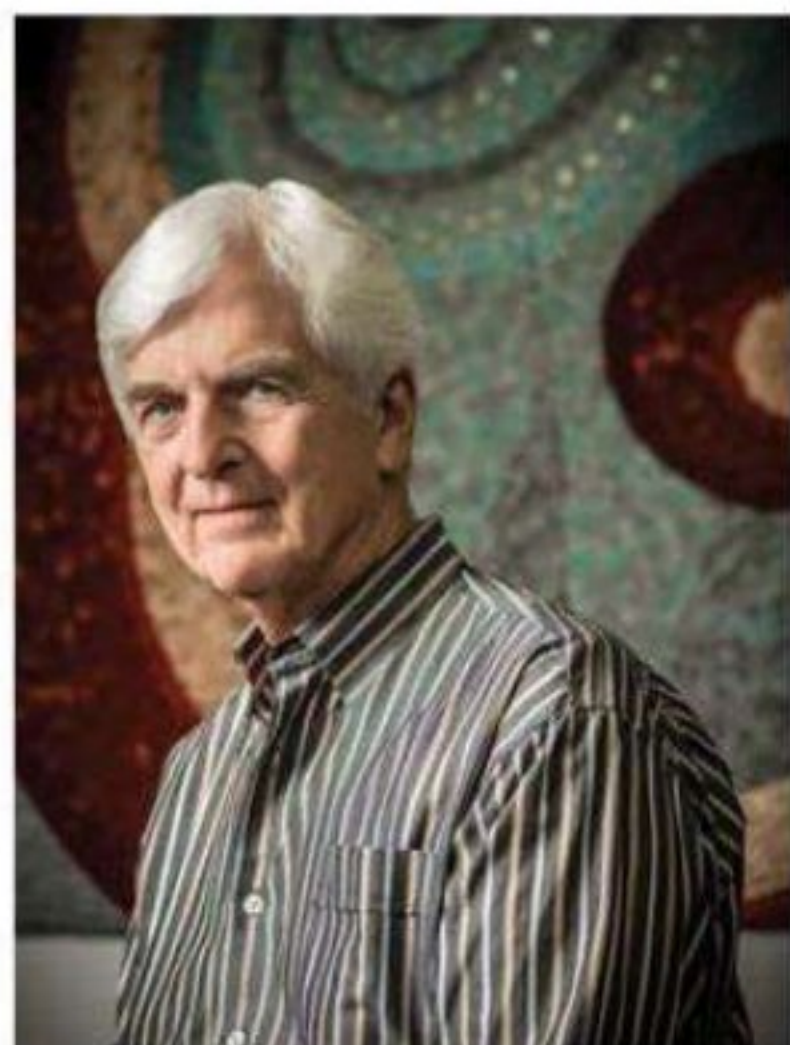
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To The Editor



Master Insight

A true treasure and a genius ["Masters: Gerhardt Knodel," Oct. 10, online video]. The greatest teacher; his words still resonate with me daily. Thank you, Gerhardt!

~Pamela Wiley via 

An Inside Look

What a studio ["Masters: Myra Mimlitsch-Gray," Oct. 3, online video]! Would love to have a day in it. Inspiring.

~Orla O'Grady via 

Myra Mimlitsch-Gray – one of my art heroines.

Thanks, *American Craft*!

~Bentley Utgaard via 

ABOVE:

In our online video, Gold Medalist Gerhardt Knodel offers sage advice and a glimpse inside his studio.

RIGHT:

Recently named ACC Fellow Myra Mimlitsch-Gray's Loops series treats metal like fabric. See her video on our website.



FROM TOP:

Nancy asks, Nancy gets: Pieces from the Lois Boardman collection by jewelry artists Gijs Bakker, Carolyn Kriegman, Manfred Bischoff, and Stanley Lechtzin.

Lose the Labels

I just finished reading your essay ["Read. Roar. Repeat," Oct./Nov.], and I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed learning about the history of the magazine. I was so glad to read your response to the art critic's charge that the magazine doesn't pay much attention to the difference between art and craft anymore. I say, "Hear, hear!" Why do we have to pigeonhole the work? Thank you for standing up for those of us who are compelled to make.

~Beth Blankenship via email

Guts and Glitz

The show of Lois Boardman's collection ["Jewelry to Think By," Oct./Nov.] is fascinating. Her taste is brave; wish there were more works on display, though.

~Nancy LeMay via 

Keep in Touch

We'll publish a cross section of your notes as space permits; they may be edited for length and clarity.



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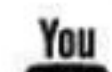
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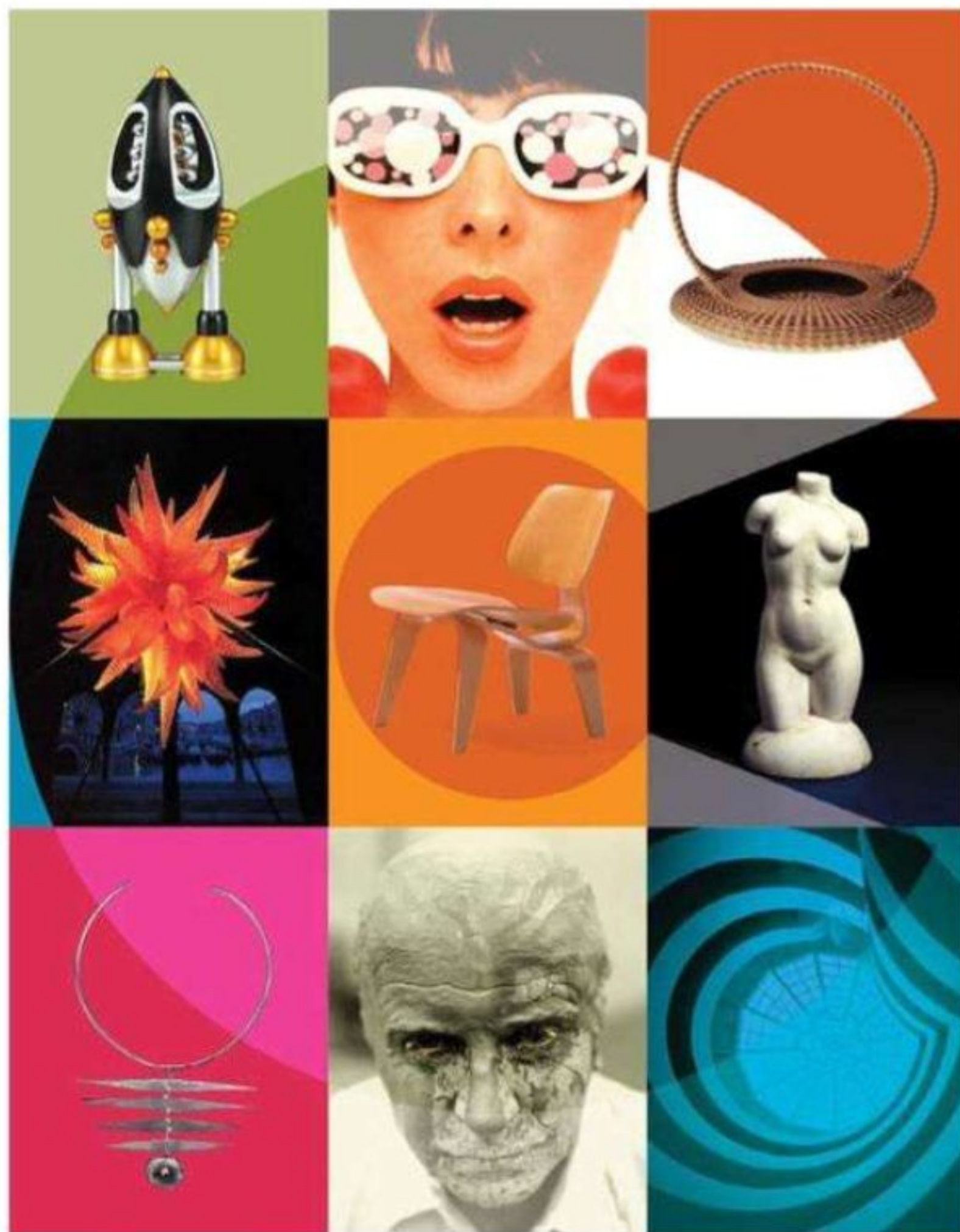


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On The Web

Find these extras and more at craftcouncil.org.

Turn to [page 32](#) to find the first of nine commemorative posters celebrating ACC's 75th anniversary. Each of the images shown here will appear on a poster tucked within the magazine in the coming months.



Nine Posters, Starting Now

Our anniversary celebration continues in this issue with the launch of our poster project commemorating 75 years of making. Here's how you can get in on the action:

- If you're a history buff: You might expect to see charismatic ceramist Peter Voulkos in a craft timeline, but rock legend Jimi Hendrix? From Eames chairs to Etsy's founding, discover many fascinating craft connections. To see an interactive version of our timeline of key moments in craft history, visit craftcouncil.org/75years.

- If you're a collector: As part of your ACC membership, you'll receive a special heritage-printed poster in each issue of the magazine. Like what you see? Be sure to tell a friend. The only way to enjoy this set of nine posters is to become a member.

- If you're a social butterfly: Share your thoughts on social media with the hashtag #75yearsofmaking. Did we miss anything? What moment had the biggest impact on you or your craft practice? What events now are shaping the future? We want to know.



Award Season

We're pleased to announce that *American Craft's* August/September 2015 Community Issue won a first-place Eddie award for general excellence in the 2016 national Folio awards. We also won Folio's honorable mention Ozzie for overall design and for the design of "Free Form," a story on sculptor Christian Burchard in the February/March 2016 issue.

American Craft also recently took home 14 awards from the Minnesota Magazine & Publishing Association, including golds for overall excellence and overall design. The magazine swept the editor's letter and profile categories.

ACC Conference: Catch the Replay

The ACC traveled to Omaha, Nebraska, in October for "Present Tense," our 12th national conference, which also included the 2016 American Craft Council Awards celebration ["Masters," Oct./Nov.]. At the convening, leaders in the field, including Sonya Clark, William Warmus, Ayumi Horie, Rosanne Somerson, and Otto von Busch, covered topics such as education, collaboration, criticism, and process. All of the featured speakers and moderated conversations were captured on video. Watch the full playlist at bit.ly/ptvideos.



Ben Semisch Photography

Artists, enthusiasts, scholars, students, and museum professionals from across the country gathered at ACC's "Present Tense" conference to discuss trends and issues in the field.



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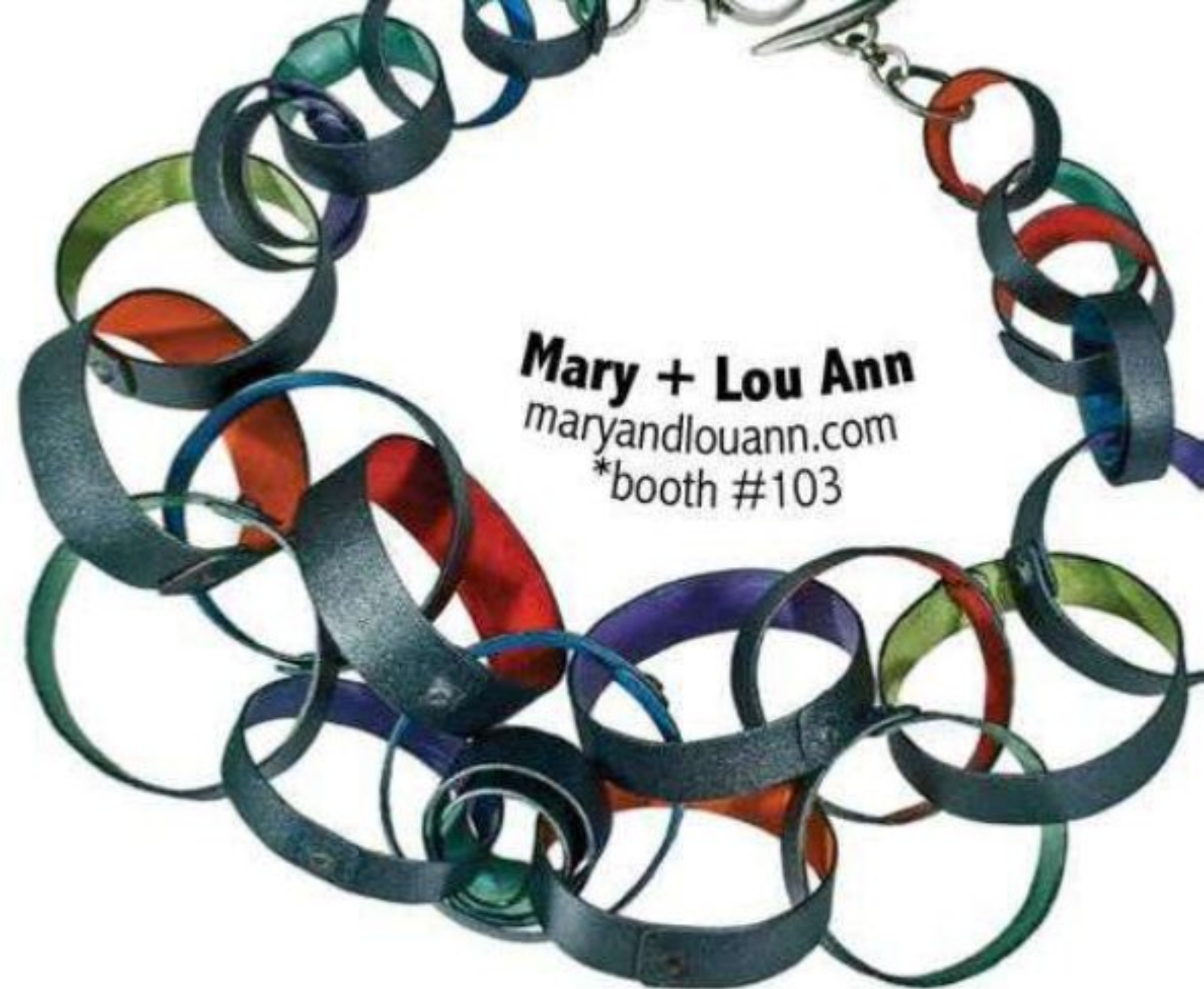
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A timely survey of shows, views, people, and work



Hannah Beatrice Quinn's brooms are too lovely to store in a closet. The artist is committed to crafting beautiful objects with a purpose.



Playfully angled, powder-coated steel legs set apart Quinn's walnut **Type A Stool** without jeopardizing practicality.

The Right Direction

Creative context: Quinn hails from an artistically oriented family. Her mother is a graphic designer, her father, a historic-preservation architect.

Multifaceted maker: "When I went to CCA, I thought I was going to be a textiles major," Quinn recalls. She did, in fact, take as many textile classes as she could – along with electives in jewelry, fashion, and photography.

Right place, right time: As an art school grad, Quinn credits Workshop Residence with giving her a formative grounding in product design. The organization is the brainchild of Ann Hatch, a well-known San Francisco art patron and the great granddaughter of T.B. Walker, who founded what became Minneapolis' Walker Art Center in 1879.

On Our Radar

Hannah Beatrice Quinn

BROOMS AND DUSTPANS AREN'T likely to become trendy objects anytime soon, but this doesn't deter 24-year-old Hannah Beatrice Quinn. She wants to make something you need.

Starting with her thesis in the furniture design program at California College of the Arts, Quinn has been thoughtfully building a collection of what she calls "fine, handcrafted objects for daily life."

"In my generation, there's this whole thing of not wanting your parents' stuff and not

wanting things that you have to carry around," says Quinn, who earned her BFA in 2014. In her work, the San Francisco artist strives for a compromise between "special object" and necessity. "Like, if you're going to be cooking, you need a good cutting board. You need a broom for wherever you live."

And Quinn's brooms, like each of her chosen objects, are not the kind you have to hide in your closet. She sources the corn straw from a third-generation broom maker in California's

Central Valley. She hand-bevels the handles from walnut, cherry, or ash, before topping them with a leather strap for hanging.

"Especially in San Francisco, spaces where we live are getting smaller. Not everyone has a broom closet," Quinn explains. Hearing her describe her devotion to function, it's easy to forget the kicker: Her brooms are works of art that flatter any wall.

After graduating from CCA, Quinn landed a coveted spot with Workshop Residence, a for-profit San Francisco



LEFT:
The 24-year-old dreams of finding her stylish wares in homes throughout the country. These brooms and dustpans were part of her BFA thesis show at California College of the Arts.

TOP:
Quinn's **Block Brushes** are made of Douglas fir and broomcorn sourced from a third-generation broom maker.

BOTTOM:
Framed by Quinn's colorful **Bookends** of scrap steel and cork, well-loved books become an artful accent.

retail operation that brings together artists and product design, providing the financial backing to carry ideas into production. There, she refined her ability to both satisfy her artistic vision and produce market-feasible goods.

Quinn's Type A Stools are a clear example of this mediation between work and play: Thick, walnut tops rest on colorful steel legs that jut out at varied angles. Her powder-coated steel bookends are similarly playful. The result: a set of

unique, attractive objects that stays true to Quinn's insistence on usefulness.

"I'd love in 10 years to walk into a person's house, in, like, Michigan, and see somebody with my broom," she says. "Sometimes I think about just taking stuff to the thrift store to see it just get sold for \$10, and seeing somebody else get to take it home."

Since completing her stint at Workshop Residence, Quinn rents part of a co-working space called Hunt Projects, a money-

saving measure that's made it possible for her to continue her work post-graduation. She also participates in a collective with three former classmates called Make.Do.; it's named for a World War II-era campaign by the British government to encourage creative thriftiness in austere times.

The group works together on pieces such as the Make.Do. camp stool, which combines Quinn's woodworking with a textile artist's organic cotton seat. The collaboration gives

Quinn a place to think beyond her usual approach, while remaining rooted in the practical world.

"Having some sort of boundary is really nice," she says. "So if I have an idea and I want to make it, I'll make it. But then I'll take it, look at it, and go, 'OK, I've got one of these; now what can I do that everyone else can enjoy?'"

~ANDREW RANALLO

hannahbeatricequinn.com
Andrew Ranallo is American Craft's digital producer.

Product Placement
Block Shop



Entrepreneurs and sisters Hopie (left) and Lily Stockman at Lily's home in Joshua Tree, California.

Block Shop's cotton-silk scarves are made in partnership with a co-op of traditional printers and dyers in Rajasthan, India.

The artisans use mostly natural dyes and locally sourced materials. The blocks for the designs are hand-carved, and each scarf is hand-printed.



CALIFORNIA COOL MEETS centuries of tradition at Block Shop, the Los Angeles design studio of Hopie and Lily Stockman. Working with printers and dyers in Bagru, Rajasthan, the two sisters create textile products – including their signature oversized cotton-silk scarves – woodblock printed in the traditional Indian way. The look is modern and minimal, with geometric patterns inspired by a desert vernacular and palette.

“They’re a little bit bohemian. They love to travel, love to read.

They appreciate how things are made, from their food to their clothes,” is how Hopie describes Block Shop customers, who include Hollywood regulars such as Drew Barrymore, Jenny Mollen, and Busy Philipps. “There’s a strong travel element to our products,” Hopie adds. “People love bringing their scarves on the plane, on the train, in the mountains. They’re lightweight, pack easily, can work as a sarong or a picnic blanket. Whatever you need it to be, it will do the work for you.”



ABOVE (3): Block Shop takes its name from the printing technique, but the sisters also work with skilled weavers in Jodhpur. They use watercolor sketches by the Stockmans and hand-dyed thread samples (top left) to make pieces such as the Diamondback dhurrie (top right).

Baby blankets are a new item. All are organic Indian cotton; the Saddle Blanket, shown here, uses natural indigo. The dhurrie rug is inspired by earth artist Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field* in New Mexico.

Both painters, the Stockmans got the idea for their company in 2010. That year Lily went to India to study miniature painting and met a fifth-generation hand-block printer who was starting an artisan cooperative in Bagru. She wound up experimenting with him on some fabric designs. "Lily was sending samples to me in my cube," recalls Hopie, then an investment consultant in San Francisco. "I was getting excited about them, sharing them with friends." Sensing a way to make

good and do good, they partnered with the co-op, and Block Shop was born.

Today Hopie, 32, and Lily, 34, collaborate on the designs, which start as watercolors. Twice a year they travel to Bagru to work out compositions and colorways with their team of some 18 artisans. "They love to weigh in, and always end up tweaking and improving what we bring over," Hopie says. The designs are then carved into wooden blocks used for printing. "Our master carver,

Raju Chhipa, is truly an artist. The woodcarvings are gorgeous. We think of them as little sculptures."

At the heart of Block Shop's business model is ethical production and transparency in the supply chain – working directly with the artisans, making sure they're paid fair wages. The company also puts 5 percent of profits toward health programs in the Bagru community, including primary care, vision correction, and water purification. "The most important part

of our business is our relationships, both with our wonderful family of printers in India and our sisterhood of customers," says Hopie. "For us, that's the magic of Block Shop – that connection to this little village. Being able to show our customers exactly who's making their product makes us extremely happy and excited."

~JOYCE LOVELACE

blockshoptextiles.com
Joyce Lovelace is American Craft's contributing editor.

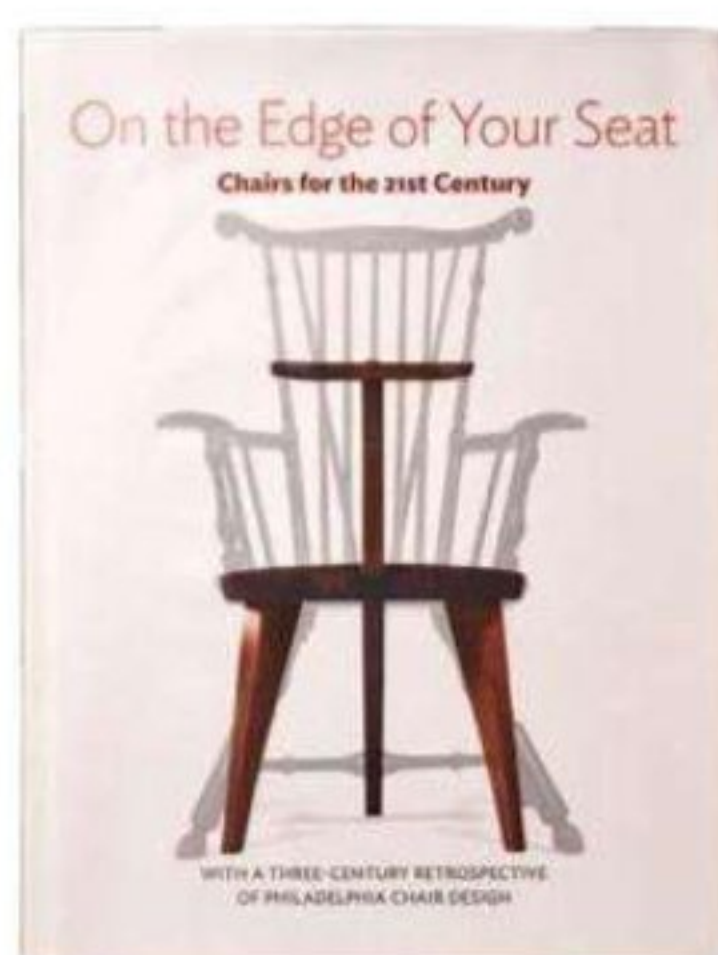
Modern Meets Traditional

Sister, sister: Hopie and Lily Stockman enjoyed an idyllic childhood on a farm in New Jersey, "full of animals, nature, lots of creative outlets, and no TV." As kids, they turned an empty garage stall into their art studio, where they first started painting together. Lily went on to study art at NYU and Harvard. Hopie majored in art and English lit at Brown, then earned a Harvard MBA.

Lots of likes: With more than 80,000 followers on Instagram, Block Shop uses the social media platform for feedback and to showcase the people and processes behind their brand. The small-world engagement goes both ways, as the artisans in India get to see customers wearing items they've made.

But, wait, there's more: Along with scarves, Block Shop offers printed pillows, and a line of cotton dhurrie rugs made by a weaving cooperative near Jodhpur. Just out: hand-blocked cotton baby blankets in soft, sweet shades of pink, blue, and gray – "for the design-conscious mama who wants to get the baby stuff that she likes, too."

The Short List Dose of Inspiration



**On the Edge of Your Seat:
Chairs for the 21st Century**
By the Center for Art in Wood
Schiffer Publishing, \$60

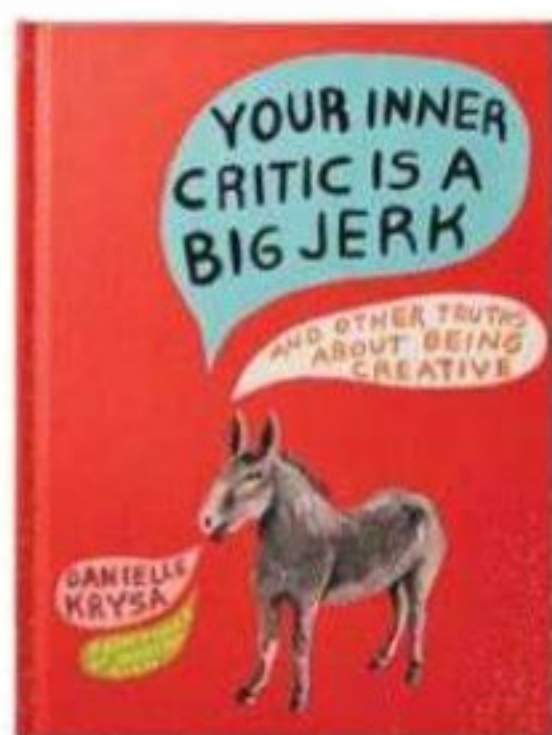
ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT distinguishes itself beginning with the first act – literally. The text opens with a brief “melodrama” from the imagination of furniture maker Roy Superior, in which a family of cavemen acts out the origin of furniture, as well as the history of craft. It’s a humorous prologue for

a serious, substantive book, based on a 2016 show of the same name, a collaboration of the Furniture Society and the Center for Art in Wood.

Moving on from the Pleistocene, readers will find a sweeping pictorial narrative about the history of chair design in Philadelphia, where innovation in furniture dates to the 17th century. This context sets the stage for the high point of the text: a juried selection of 45 seating

objects by 39 makers, from Sophie Glenn’s *School Desk* and Mira Nakashima’s *Concordia Chair* to Po Shun Leong’s *Fortune Cookie Stool* and Misha Volf’s *4x4 Bench*. Juror commentary and a succinct essay by each artist, as well as spectacular photography – including many stunning antique chairs – make *On the Edge of Your Seat* an enlightening addition to any craft and design bookshelf.

~JESSICA SHAYKETT

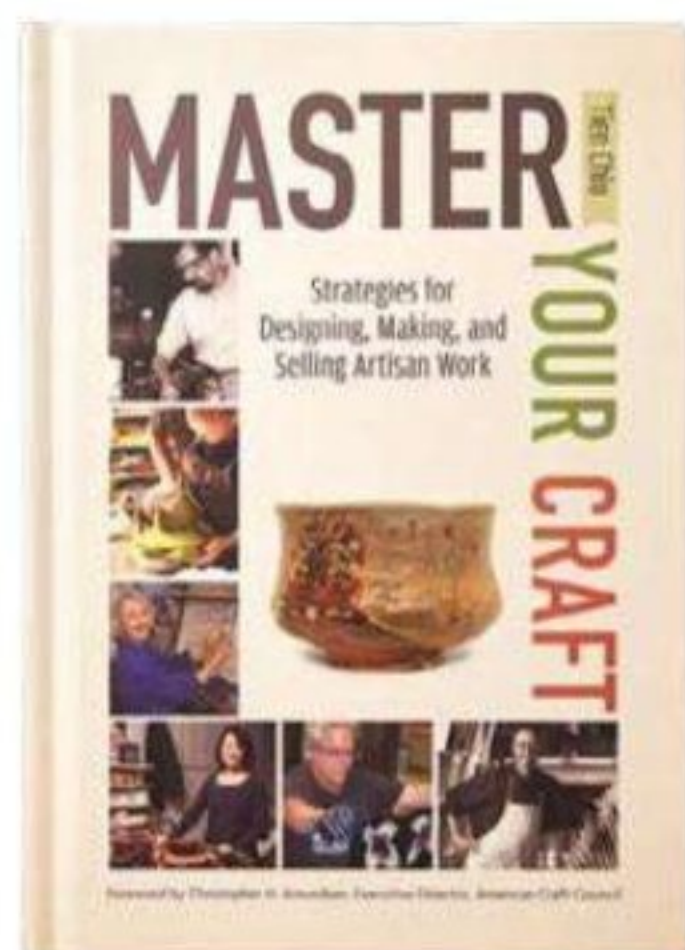


**Your Inner Critic Is a Big Jerk:
And Other Truths
About Being Creative**
By Danielle Krysa
Chronicle Books, \$17

THEY SAY YOU CAN’T JUDGE a book by its cover, but sometimes the cover just lays it all out there. *Your Inner Critic Is a Big Jerk* is one such volume, a self-help guide for all of us

self-destructive creatives. In its lively pages, Danielle Krysa, author of the popular *Jealous Curator* art blog, pulls from her own and others’ experiences to give it to us straight, providing exercises to dismantle that jerk-of-an-inner-voice and get back to making with confidence. Afraid of ruining pristine paper? Try drawing on something less

precious. Blinded by jealousy? Start confessing it – you may find others envy your talent as well. By adding a dose of humor to her honest advice, aided by Martha Rich’s amusing illustrations, Krysa teaches lessons that aren’t so hard to swallow. You’ll laugh, you’ll cry, and, best of all, you’ll cheer yourself on. ~MEGAN GUERBER



**Master Your Craft:
Strategies for Designing, Making,
and Selling Artisan Work**
By Tien Chiu
Schiffer Publishing, \$30

TIEN CHIU BEGAN HER CRAFT career executing the needlework and knitting designs of others. Trained in engineering, she was working in software development and, though adept at handwork, considered the design process mysterious, even magical. Ultimately,

though, she tired of following others’ directions and tried making original pieces – a shift she calls “quite traumatic.” *Master Your Craft*, she says, “is the book I wish I’d read when I started designing my own work.”

Fourteen chapters take the reader through what Chiu calls the “creative cycle.” She offers her own hard-won practical wisdom, along with guidance and examples from 22 other artists in a range of mediums,

covering everything from design, construction, and evaluation to revision, finding your voice, and selling. Eighteen exercises make the learning concrete. Throughout, she reminds readers that persistence, a desire to learn, and a willingness to fail are as important as skill and experience.

Chiu embraces trial and error, and her methodical approach will encourage readers to do that, too. ~MONICA MOSES

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Fuller Craft Museum

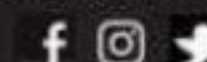


Laura Petrovich-Cheney, *Big Deal*, 2015, salvaged wood from Hurricane Sandy.

***What Remains: Wooden Quilt Sculptures of
Laura Petrovich-Cheney 10.22.16 – 11.12.17***

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Shows to See

Cloth, Close Up: Textile history is topical in Chicago and San Francisco; in Minneapolis, quiltmakers honor a musical legend, and in Houston, Navajo weaver Melissa Cody has a showcase.

CA / San Francisco
de Young Museum

**On the Grid:
Textiles and Minimalism**
to Feb. 12

deyoung.famsf.org

Simplicity, symmetry, repetition:
The principles of minimalism
manifest in two dozen textiles
from the museum's collection.

CA / San Francisco
*San Francisco Museum
of Craft and Design*

Felt DeCoded

Feb. 11 – Jun. 4

sfmcd.org

Janice Arnold curated this show
of her wool felt work. She aims
to honor felt's importance in
human history as a medium for
shelter and apparel, while envi-
sioning its future uses, both
practical and aesthetic.

DC / Washington
*Smithsonian American
Art Museum, Renwick Gallery*

**June Schwarcz:
Invention and Variation**

Mar. 10 – Aug. 27

americanart.si.edu

From her first artistic experi-
ments in the 1950s until her
death in 2015 at age 97, June
Schwarcz went where no enam-
elist had gone before. She was
inspired by far-flung sources
such as Scandinavian design
and Japanese ceramics and tex-
tiles, but her metal forms and
vessels, colors, and textures
were all her own. This array
of more than 50 objects, some
never before on public view,
is the first major museum retro-
spective of her work.

IL / Chicago
Art Institute of Chicago

**Modern Velvet: A Sense of
Luxury in the Age of Industry**
to Mar. 19

artic.edu

What fabric speaks of luxury in
a smoother voice than velvet?
In 44 examples from the muse-
um's collection, this show looks
at designers and producers who
kept velvet classy, even after
traditional ways of making it
gave way to mass production.

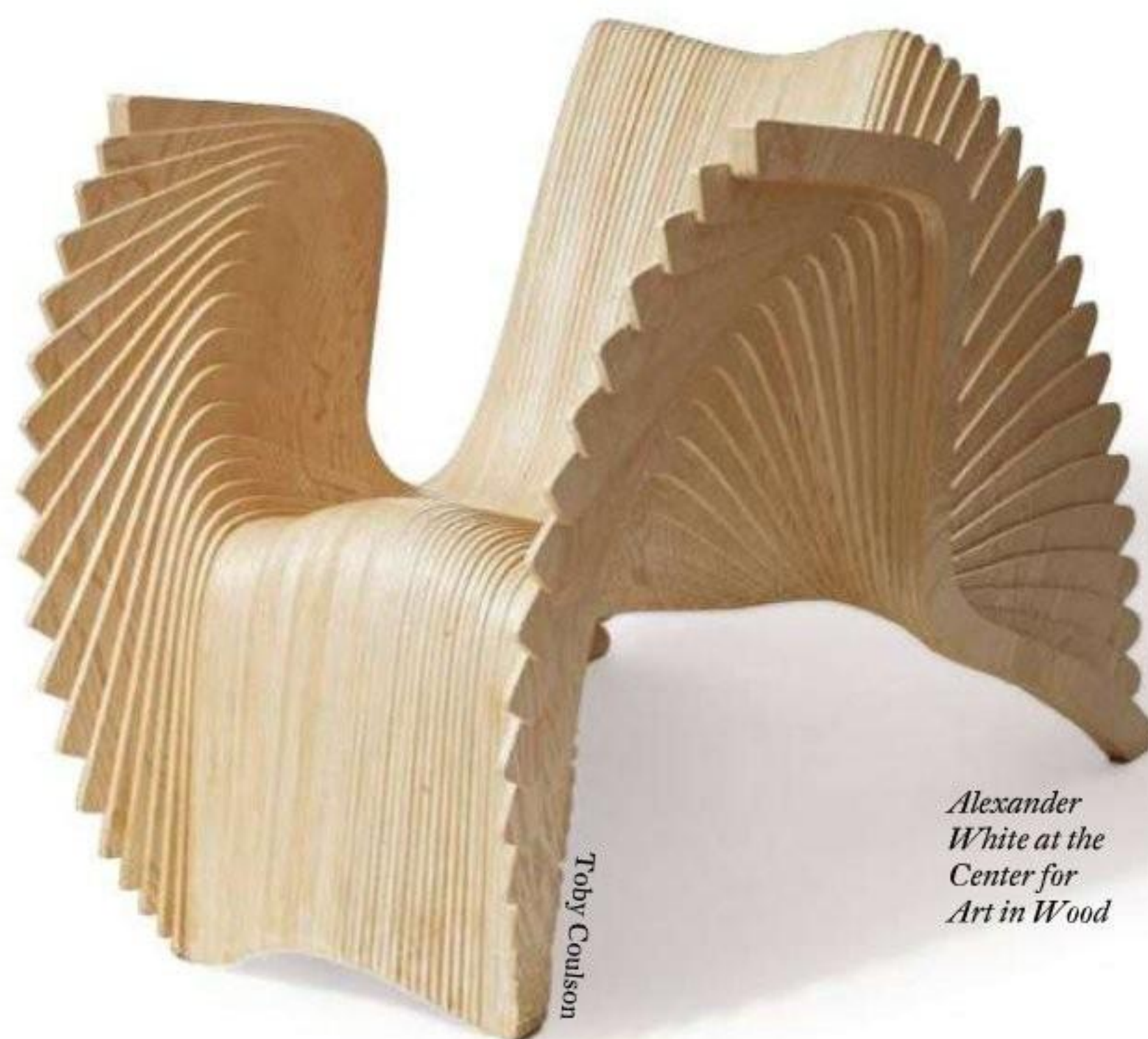


Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

LEFT:
A panel from a
lady's evening
tunic designed by
Maria Monaci
Gallenga, ca. 1920,
at the Art Institute
of Chicago



June
Schwarcz
at the
Renwick
Gallery



Alexander
White at the
Center for
Art in Wood

MN / Minneapolis
*Textile Center,
Joan Mondale Gallery*

**Commemorating
His Purple Reign:**

A Textural Tribute to Prince
Mar. 9 – Apr. 29

textilecentermn.org

International quilt artists
honor Prince's fierce original-
ity and cultural impact in this
home-state homage that marks
one year since his death. The
juror is Carolyn Mazloomi,
founder of the Women of
Color Quilters Network and
an NEA National Heritage
Fellow. (See "Stories in the
Cloth," Apr./May 2016.)

PA / Philadelphia
Center for Art in Wood

Wood, Revisited

to Apr. 8

centerforartinwood.org

Lasers, computers, and other
high-tech tools have joined
handsaws and lathes in many
wood artists' studios, influenc-
ing what gets made and how it
looks. This show of 27 works
from the past two decades,
curated by Anne Carlisle and
adviser Glenn Adamson, maps
some of the ways technology
has altered the field.

TN / Memphis
Metal Museum

Guns, Violence & Justice
to Apr. 30

metalmuseum.org

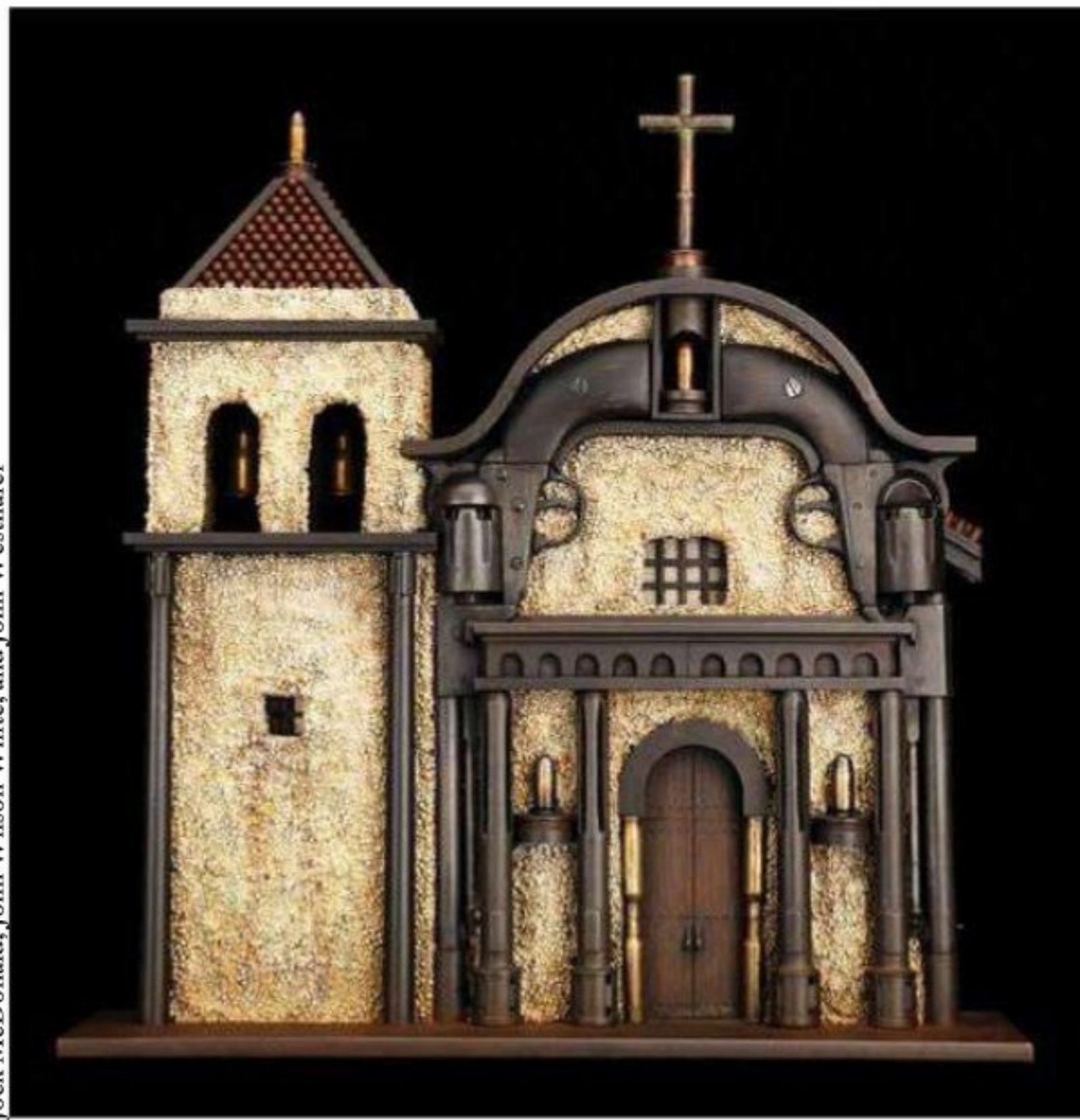
In this group show, Boris Bally,
David Hess, Darryl Lauster,
Stephen Saracino, and Victor
Hugo Zayas take on cultural
and personal issues surrounding
guns, among them protection,
aggression, and recreation.

TX / Houston
Houston Center for Contemporary Craft
Future Tradition: Melissa Cody
 Feb. 3 – May 28
crafthouston.org
 Melissa Cody is a fourth-generation Navajo weaver and 21st-century artist who weaves both those elements into the 12 works on view. Her vibrant colors are a link to the Navajos of the 1860s who were imprisoned by the US military in New Mexico; there, weavers reused fibers from the brightly hued blankets they were issued to create intricate textiles. In this solo show, the artist's boldly geometric work carries her family, cultural, and personal history into our own time. (See "Clear Focus," Aug./Sep. 2015.)



ABOVE:
 Melissa Cody
 at the Houston
 Center for
 Contemporary
 Craft

Jock McDonald, John Wilson White, and John Westhafer



ABOVE:
 Al Farrow
 at the Bellevue
 Arts Museum

WA / Bellevue
Bellevue Arts Museum
**Divine Ammunition:
 The Sculpture of Al Farrow**
 to May 7
bellevuearts.org

A church door framed by handguns, a mosque tiled with bullets: Guns and ammo are the materials for Al Farrow's elaborate sculptures of cathedrals, synagogues, and other religiously charged objects that call down a hail of questions, such as: Is there a clash between material and subject matter – or a fundamental connection?

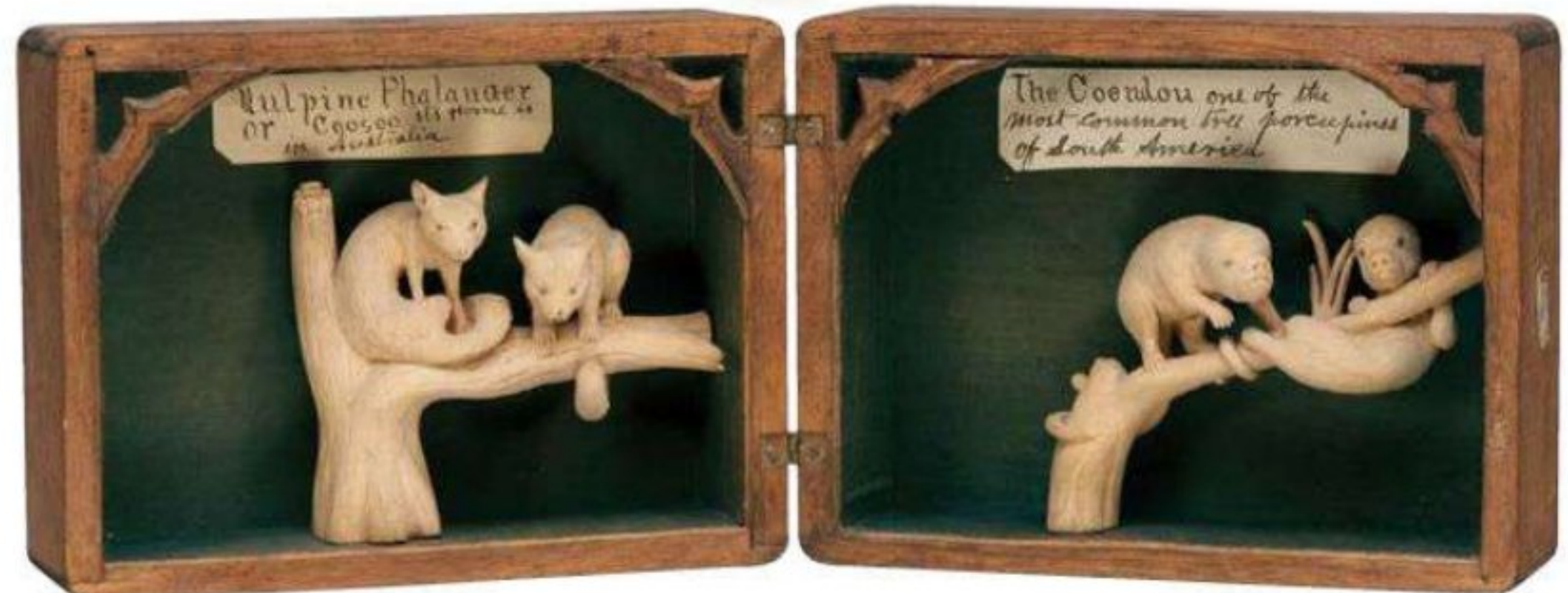
RIGHT:
 Linda
 MacNeil at
 the Museum
 of Glass



Michael Tropea

WA / Tacoma
Museum of Glass
Linda MacNeil: Jewels of Glass
 to Oct. 1
museumofglass.org
 Trained as a metalsmith, Linda MacNeil began making small sculptures of metal and glass early in her four-decade career but soon turned to jewelry; since the late 1980s, her elegant necklaces, collars, and brooches have been the mainstays of her dual-medium work. This exhibition is a double first: an in-depth retrospective of the artist's pioneering work and the museum's first show of jewelry.

WI / Sheboygan
John Michael Kohler Arts Center
The Road Less Traveled
 to Dec. 31
jmkac.org
 The center celebrates its 50th anniversary with a yearlong series of 16 shows that explore art environments: homes, yards, or other spaces that artists have creatively altered, often filling them with artwork made from materials at hand and following no formal plan. The center has made art environments a focus of its collection and scholarship since the 1970s.



RIGHT:
 Levi Fisher
 Ames at the
 John Michael
 Kohler Arts
 Center

Shop Talk Gallery Naga



Meg White,
Arthur Dion

IT WAS 1986 WHEN GALLERY Naga director Arthur Dion started showing furniture at the gallery on Boston's tony Newbury Street. There were seven artists in "Elegant Wit: Contemporary New England Furniture": Judy Kensley McKie, Tom Loeser, Alphonse Mattia, Jere Osgood, Mitch Ryerson, Tommy Simpson, and Ed Zucca. They were all up-and-coming, but "we didn't know how all-star it was until the [Boston] Museum of Fine Arts did its 'New American Furniture: The Second Generation of Studio Furnituremakers' show in 1989," says Dion, who is still a partner in Naga. That show featured about 25 makers, Dion recalls, "15 of whom we'd shown." The imprimatur of the MFA validated his efforts.

Naga's audience was and still is mainly collectors of paintings, Dion says. He took a risk with furniture, and with that first show, "we were astonished when it was such a sensation. Almost everything sold." He felt that the field was bicoastal, and in 1988 he did an "East/West" show with West Coast makers including Wendy Maruyama and Garry Knox Bennett. "There was a lot of material exploration on the West Coast – metals and plastics in Garry's case. In general, the aesthetic was jazzy. The East Coast aesthetic was fairly jazzy, but the West Coast was more so – California unfettered."

In part he did the "East/West" show because he was competing with Meredyth Hyatt Moses, whose Clark Gallery in the Boston suburb of Lincoln was also showing studio furniture. "I wanted to get the jump

on Meredyth," Dion says. Eventually, though, he and Moses collaborated rather than competing, jointly producing shows at both galleries, further strengthening the presence of studio furniture in the Boston area. Furniture's presence was also bolstered by the region's schools, including the Program in Artisanry at Boston University, Rhode Island School of Design, and the North Bennet Street School. "The Northeast is the national center for furniture making," Dion believes. It's noteworthy that one of the country's pre-eminent studio furniture makers, Rosanne Somerson, is now president of RISD.

Still, Naga hasn't developed a house style. "As adventurous as I think we are, we've always been very strict about functionality," Dion says. "If it's a chair, it has to feel good."

Eventually, however, Naga's shows began to have themes.

"We did 'The Bath' in 2001," Dion says, "with vanities, storage units, and inventive toilet paper holders." He goes on: "We did 'Under Cover' in 2005, an exploration of interesting uses of upholstery, which had a historically oriented catalogue. We went to museum storage to inform our contemporary presentation. In 2007 we did 'Coffee, Hall, and End: Small Tables by Studio Furnituremakers.'" The gallery's current director, Meg White, is curating a group show of outdoor furniture.

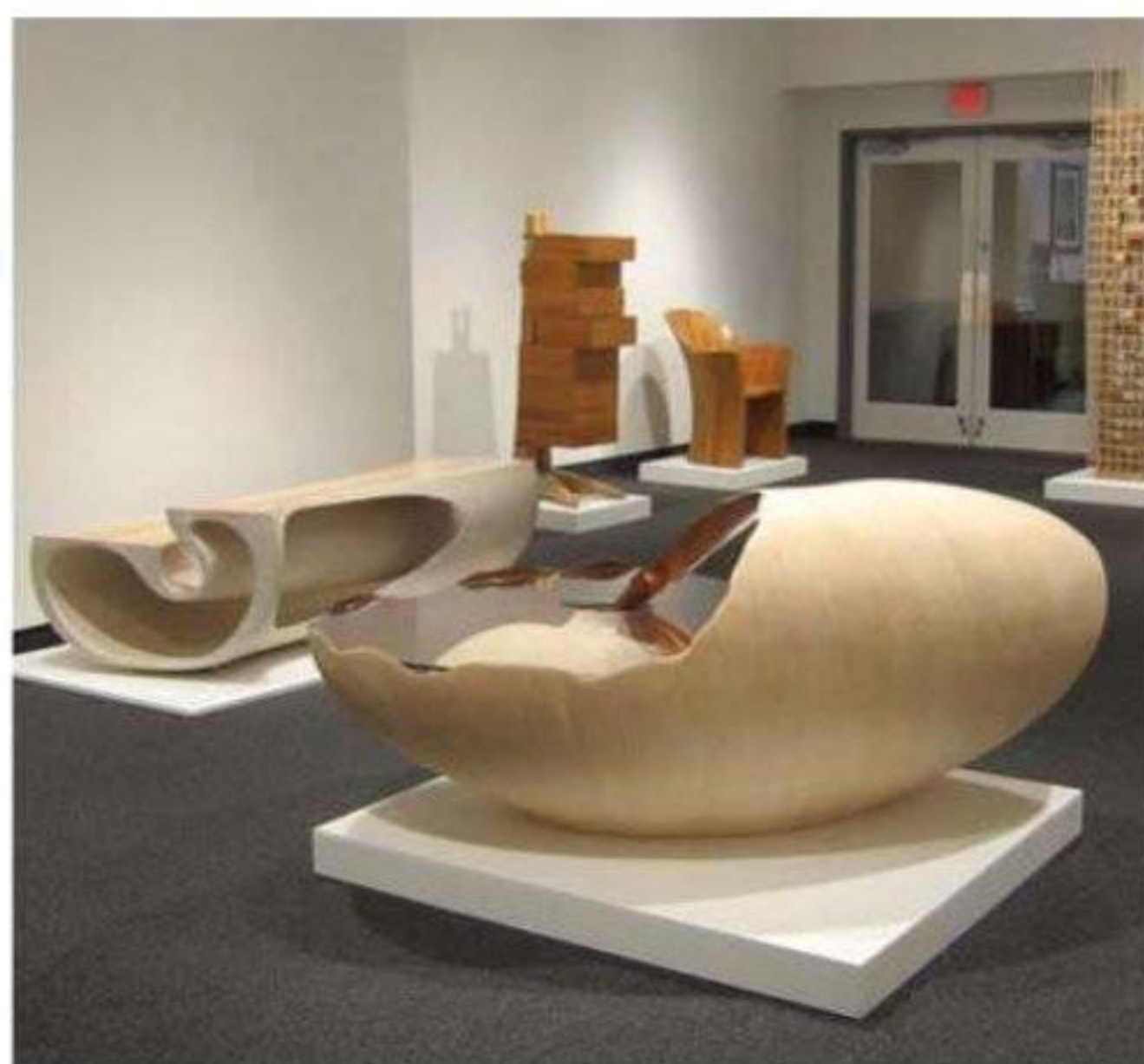
But most of Naga's furniture shows have been solo turns; of the 24 furniture shows the gallery has mounted since 2001, 17 focused on a single maker – Judy Kensley McKie is a prime example. Her tables and benches take the form of animals. Playful, yes, but, says Dion, "her work is like something living that has paused. She summons a sense of animate spirit that is very affecting."

In Boston, Gallery Naga has showcased studio furniture for 30 years. The 2013 exhibition "Furniture with Soul II" (above left) featured works by Joseph Walsh, Daniel Lacey, Yuri Kobayashi, and Marc Fish (pictured clockwise from left).

"It's worth noting," says Dion, "that although Naga was one of many galleries involved with studio furniture – a list that has now shrunk – they, almost without exception, showed furniture as craft. Naga's role was to present furniture in the context of fine art, with no explanation necessary. We don't show any other crafts. One of the conclusions that Meg and I came to is that, in addition to wonderful materials and superb craftsmanship, studio furniture offers objects that have value as works of art." ~CHRISTINE TEMIN

gallerynaga.com

Christine Temin is an arts writer in Boston.



ABOVE:
Judy Kensley McKie's
benches and tables, evoking the spirit of animals, are popular at the gallery.

RIGHT:
California maker Garry Knox Bennett represents what Arthur Dion calls the "jazzy" aesthetic of the West Coast.



Goods Timber

➤ 1960s design and midcentury craftsmanship inspire Brooklyn company **Candylab Toys'** heirloom play cars. Made of solid beechwood, these throwback racers, cabs, and trucks –

which include cute details such as the Woodie model's magnetically attached surfboard – can withstand even the most rambunctious play by actual as well as inner children. candylabtoys.com



Adrian Popescu

▼ Although good things come in small packages, better things may come in ginormous bundles. Founded by Catherine-A. Lalonde, Montreal studio **Atelier 4920** embraces the physical feat of knitting with oversized wool and supports those ready to take on the challenge. Handmade scarves,

blankets, and hats are available for purchase, along with patterns, chunky yarn, and 14-, 32-, and even 48-inch birchwood needles. atelier4920.ca



Courtesy of Atelier 4920



Courtesy of Secret Wood

▲ **Secret Wood**, of Vancouver, British Columbia, conjures handmade scenes of wood, resin, and other surprising materials to wear on your ring finger. Choose from a dark, mysterious forest, a real flower blanketed in glow-in-the-dark snow, a windswept wilderness – or something from another world all together. mysecretwood.com

◀ In central Utah, **Light & Ink** artist Lisa Lewis preserves the stories within tree rings by inking and printing salvaged stumps. The idea came to her as a way to record memories of the cherished tree she climbed as a child. Images are available as giclée prints and original artworks. lightandink.bigcartel.com

◀ Using locally sourced lumber that's sustainably harvested in the Midwest, Rosie Kovacs and Hayes Shaneshy of **Brush Factory** celebrate traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design in their furniture and limited-edition reference posters demonstrating sawing and joinery techniques. The Cincinnati duo specializes in custom designs, but their classic end tables and hip Wooden Bottle Rocks can be purchased online. brushmanufactory.com



Courtesy of Brush Factory



Chantel Hardy

zoom

Voices What is your most essential tool?

➤ The most essential tool in our shop is the trim router. We strive for work that is both beautiful and intelligent, and this versatile tool has a hand in how we express that balance. The trim router allows us to create seamlessly rounded edges as well as hidden details in our door and drawer pulls. With it, we can blend pieces that at first glance appear to be carved out of one solid piece of hardwood.

~**ABIR ALI AND ANDRE SANDIFER**,
furniture designers and
makers, Detroit

Jill Preston



Courtesy of the artist



♣ I use hand tools almost exclusively, and I have many favorites, but most of them would be useless without my workbench holding things in place. I made the bench

following an 18th-century French design. It serves as a constant reminder to me of the enduring traditions of the craft.
~**DYLAN WELLER**,
woodworker,
Santa Fe, NM



♣ My most essential tool is probably my planer. I use this tool almost every day. It is a combination of being extremely powerful and easy to handle. I use it for a variety of applications.
~**KATIE GONG**,
interior designer,
installation artist,
maker, San Francisco

Emily Fishman



♣ I am a Native American basket weaver; my 10,000-year heritage defines who I am. My favorite tool is my awl, which I made from a deer bone. This awl does not rip plant fibers as I weave, while metal awls can. It also holds tension as I

weave and helps shape the basket.
~**PAT COURTNEY GOLD**, basketweaver,
Portland, OR

♣ My most essential tool varies depending on the work that I am making at the time, but my 118-pound Peter Wright anvil gets lots of use, whether I am hammering out ingots, forming

bracelets, or adding texture. It was handed down to me from a friend who used it for 30-plus years. It's a very important tool to me.
~**NICK LUNDEEN**,
jeweler, Brooklyn,
NY

We're Honored.



American Craft has been recognized as **best in its category** in the 2016 national Folio awards. One of the top competitions in publishing, with more than 2,800 entries, Folio recognized our **Community Issue** of August/September 2015. This is the second such award we have won since 2013.

Folio also awarded honorable mentions to *American Craft* for overall design and feature design.

We'd like to thank the judges as well as our amazing artists and, you, our readers — we wouldn't be here without you.

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Around Life's Curves

In an evolving career, Gustav Reyes found an early touchstone in wood.

STORY BY *Brigitte Martin*



GUSTAV REYES TAPES REMINDERS to his computer. A recent one: “Don’t forget to play.” “It’s what my wife wants me to remember while I am at work,” he says. “I have a tendency to get bogged down by all the detail involved in running my business.” The Chicago woodworker and jewelry maker needs to be reminded to “keep things fun and light,” he says. “After all, that’s how I went into making jewelry in the first place.”

Reyes gratefully attributes his success to support from his wife and parents. His family moved back and forth between the US and Mexico, where he was born, settling in the US in 1973 when he was 5 years old. The family made Chicago their home, and Reyes’ Puerto Rican father, a carpenter who worked construction, sometimes brought along his young son to work

sites. There, he taught him wood-working basics and impressed on him the pride of good workmanship. They spent time together like that until Reyes was 11, when his father was killed in a work accident. “My father was my hero,” he remembers.

Some people never really recover from tragedies like that, and Reyes becomes emotional when he recalls how he made it through. “I coped with his sudden loss by making little dollhouses,” he says. “I was absolutely obsessed with building small spaces for a good long while.” His mother’s help was crucial; she was a rock for Reyes and his siblings. She encouraged his artistic inclinations through the teen years and supported him while he studied painting and drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1986 to 1988.

“I absolutely loved my art history classes; they opened my eyes to the world,” he says. “But somehow I never felt a connection with any of the other subjects offered. I didn’t hang with the artsy kids’ crowd either, so one day I just left the school.”

Reyes soon became a husband and breadwinner, working a variety of jobs for the next few years while making wooden boxes in a small workshop in his basement. He and his wife carefully planned their next steps to make his dream of being a full-time woodworker a reality.

The turning point came in 2005; he had quit his day job and opened an Etsy shop. When he was featured on the Etsy blog, people began to take notice.

But that was only the beginning. Shortly after he became self-employed, his wife, who

RINGS

Gustav Reyes began his jewelry career making custom wedding rings. Customers often send him material – wood, stones – with a story behind it, which he incorporates into the piece. He finds it makes the work especially meaningful, not only for the clients, but also for him. A bonus: They take good care of the rings, “just like they ought to take care of their relationship,” he says.

OPPOSITE (5): Reyes’ Ad Idem rings (far left and center) use wood he salvages from other craftspeople. The custom wedding band sets are from his Simply Wood Rings line. A client provided the gemstone ring, which Reyes surrounded with rosewood. On the far right, a ring with interior wood from a pew.



BRACELETS

Reyes adapted a steam-bending process to coax wood into small curved forms. It’s a process he always finds wondrous, no matter how often he does it.

TOP LEFT:
Three-Sided Hickory Coil, 2014

TOP RIGHT:
Fumed White Oak Organic Coil, 2013

LEFT:
Walnut Organic Coil, 2016



LIGHTING

Reyes considers himself more of a woodworker than a jewelry maker, which might explain why he's so comfortable taking risks with the material.

ABOVE:

Arc Series Lamp I,
2012, white oak,
walnut, 18.5 in. tall

ABOVE LEFT:

Arc Series Lamp II,
2013, red oak,
fumed white oak,
13 in. tall

has a metal allergy, came to him with a question. "She had curled a piece of paper into a ring and wanted to know if I could build her a ring as thin as that paper – only made from wood," he says. The challenge was all he needed to move in an entirely new direction.

At the Art Institute, Reyes had learned about a steam-based wood-bending process invented in the early 19th century by German-Austrian cabinetmaker Michael Thonet. He began researching the technique in earnest, to learn how to adapt it to a small scale. "To this day, it never ceases to amaze me that a material heavy and solid enough to hold up a house can also be rendered soft, lightweight, and malleable when treated differently," he says.

It took only a few months before Reyes made his first ring from wood; his customers took note. Some had sent him wood to build boxes for them; now they asked him to make rings – using everything from driftwood collected on a beach to *peepul*, which is considered sacred in India. Not every kind of wood is structurally sound enough to withstand the bending necessary to create a ring shank, but today Reyes always includes at least a bit of the artifact in his custom rings, usually as an inlay. "Everything I work with comes with stories and meaning, which renders my jewelry authentic and deeply personal," he says. "As a result, my customers take excellent care of their wooden rings, just like they ought to take care of

their relationships. They treat them with respect."

As his customers take care, so does Reyes. He believes earnestly that, as human beings, we should be conscious of our environment, take only what is needed from it, and leave hardly a trace behind. That's why he favors wood: Eventually it disintegrates without harming its surroundings.

"I love my customers," he says. "They understand the true value of my work, even though it is not made from precious materials."

These days, Reyes combines three distinctive businesses under one roof: His brand Simply Wood Rings features his signature one-of-a-kind wedding bands; a separate jewelry line he began in 2008 under his own name tends to run considerably larger, pushing the natural limits of wood. And taking a cue from those larger designs, Reyes recently started a third venture, a furniture business that scales up his swirly wooden forms even further to form bases suitable for tables. Reyes' favorite

material is salvaged rosewood left over from a Chicago xylophone manufacturer that went out of business. "The wood swings," he says. "It has the perfect balance between stability and flexibility. Thankfully, I have a huge stockpile of it. I can use it for many years."

Looking around the artist's 4,000-square-foot studio in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, you half expect Tyra Banks to sashay in at any moment and pull one of his large signature necklaces from the display to show off in a photo shoot. Located on the fifth floor of what used to be an old factory, with whitewashed walls and tall windows overlooking the Chicago skyline in the distance, the space feels industrial and modern, yet airy and calm.

Reyes and two employees work in his striking showroom, running the administrative side of his business, while two other employees create Reyes' wooden rings in the adjacent workshop under his direction. A door between the spaces muffles the humming of the machines and tools. Mastermind Reyes moves easily between desk duty and woodshop many times a day.

Reyes considers his three business segments and every activity that supports them as equal parts of his *Gesamtkunstwerk*. "Everything I do feeds into each other seamlessly," he explains. "I couldn't make my furniture if I didn't have prior material knowledge from developing and working on my wooden jewelry lines. I actually consider myself more of a woodworker than a jewelry artist."

Reyes approaches the adjustments he makes to his website with the same meticulous eye for detail as when he is designing a new piece for his jewelry line. Nothing is an afterthought. He is proud of his assistants and recognizes their value to his success – so much



FURNITURE

"I couldn't make my furniture if I didn't have prior material knowledge from developing and working on my wooden jewelry lines," Reyes says.

Table, 2013, white oak base

BELOW: Wood is neatly stacked in Reyes' studio, labeled with the names of clients who sent it.



NECKLACES

Following the success of Simply Wood Rings, Reyes developed his eponymous jewelry line in 2008, known for its bigger, bolder designs.

Tie Me Knot, 2012, walnut, hickory, 28 in.

so that he shares his profits with them. "I hire people who are good at things I have little interest in. I trust them completely to do their job well." This hands-off approach helps Reyes focus mostly on creative tasks, keeping in mind his wife's reminder to make time for playfulness. "Every morning, I wake up and am happy to realize that I lead a wonderful life. When you push the boundaries of what you do, you define them."

His next big project: opening a storefront and gallery space in Chicago. Stay tuned.

+

gustavreyes.com

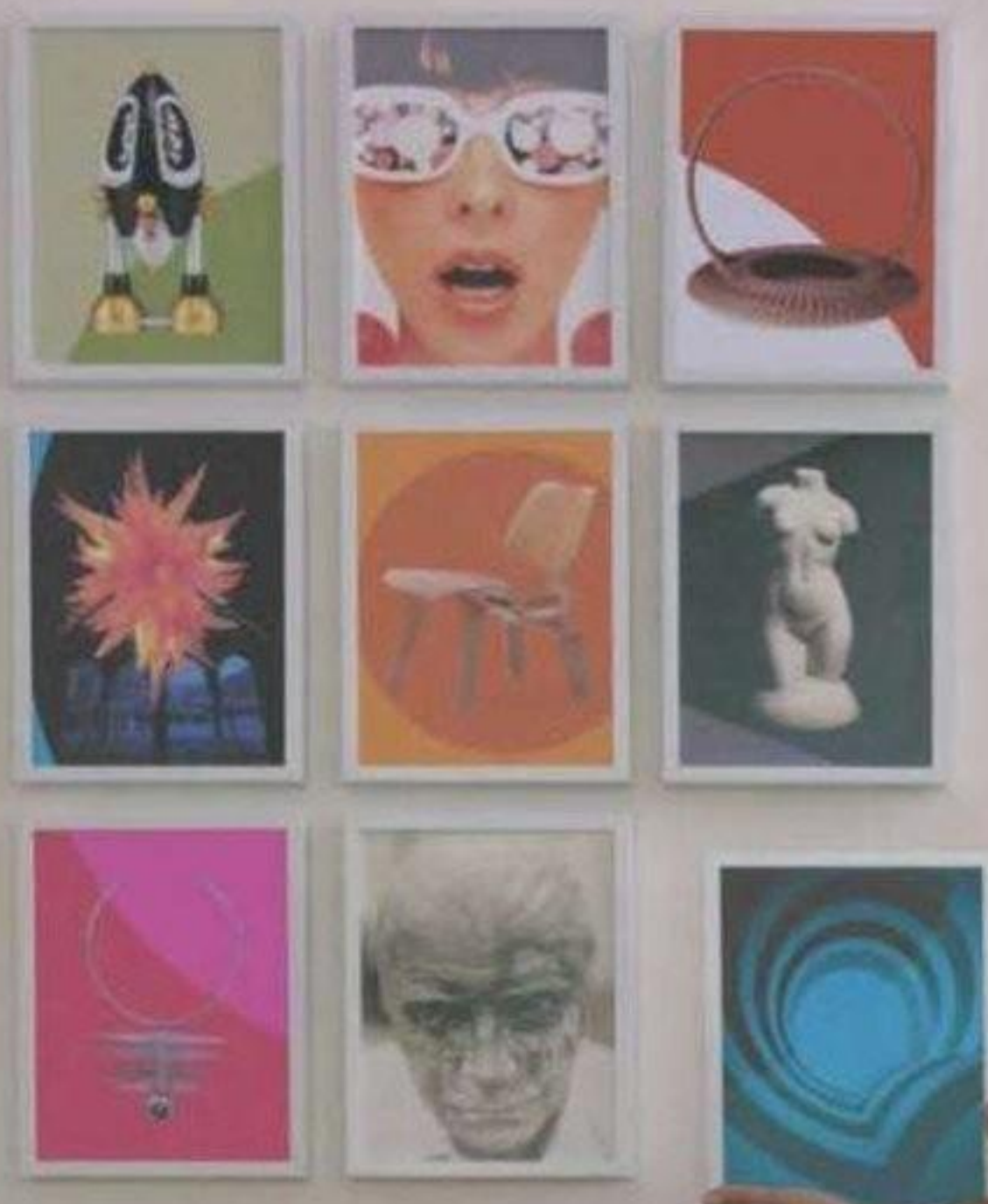
simplywoodrings.com

Brigitte Martin is the founder and editor of Crafthaus, and president-elect of the Society of North American Goldsmiths.





PROMOTION



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Beginning with this issue, you'll find a heritage-printed poster inside every *American Craft* magazine. Each one folds out, commemorating one decade of craft history, all the way back to the American Craft Council's founding in the early 1940s. Produced in partnership with Mohawk Fine Papers and Shapco Printing Inc., this series of nine limited-edition posters is our way of saying thank you - and here's to the next 75 years. We can't wait to see what you make next.

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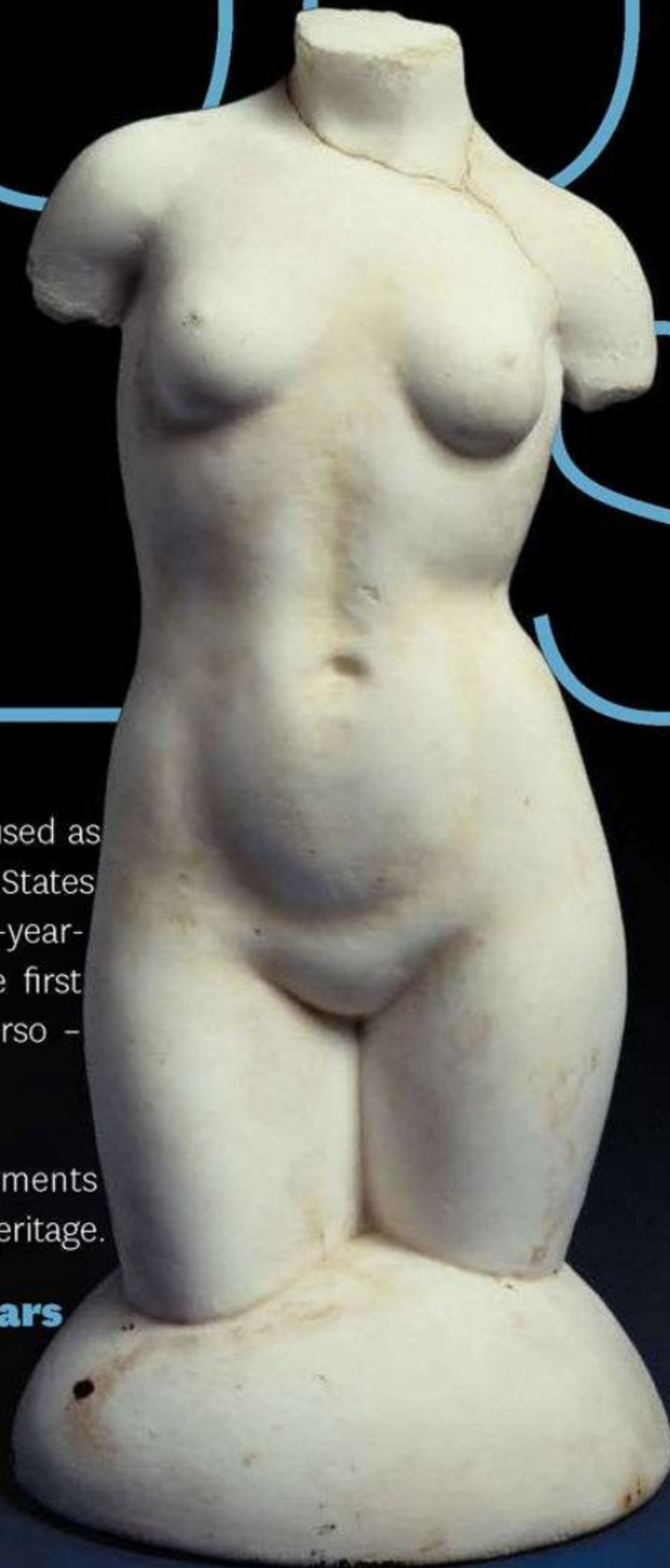
Next Poster:

COOL GLASSES

Did you know? Glass wasn't used as an artistic material in the United States until fairly recently. In 1942, 20-year-old Harvey Littleton made the first hot-glass piece – this nude torso – outside a factory.

Discover this and other big moments in our country's colorful craft heritage.

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Microorganisms in Maple

*Kristin LeVier
arrived at
woodworking
through
molecular
biology.*

STORY BY
Diane Daniel

The Ominousa Burl Bowl (2012), of compressed beech and mallee, manifests the artist's longtime fascination with the mesmerizing movement of microscopic organisms.



A DECADE AGO, KRISTIN LEVIER shifted from researching the behavior of bacteria to shaping and carving intricate wood sculptures. The transition puzzles some people.

"I'm often asked how I could go from work that uses the left brain to something that uses the right," says LeVier, who lives in Moscow, Idaho. "But that's not the case. If you do good science, you have to be creative. And in art, there's a lot of problem solving."

In fact, LeVier, 48, has had a hand in both worlds for decades. Growing up, she always painted and drew. In her early 20s, while studying for her PhD in molecular biology at Dartmouth College, she stumbled onto woodworking as an escape from the books.

"Dartmouth had a workshop where you could walk in without knowing how to do anything," she says. "It was run by two amazing men, and they taught you from square one." It helped that she's a perfectionist who follows directions well.

From there, a series of research jobs kept LeVier connected to universities that happened to have woodshops, and she continued to make small pieces of furniture for fun.

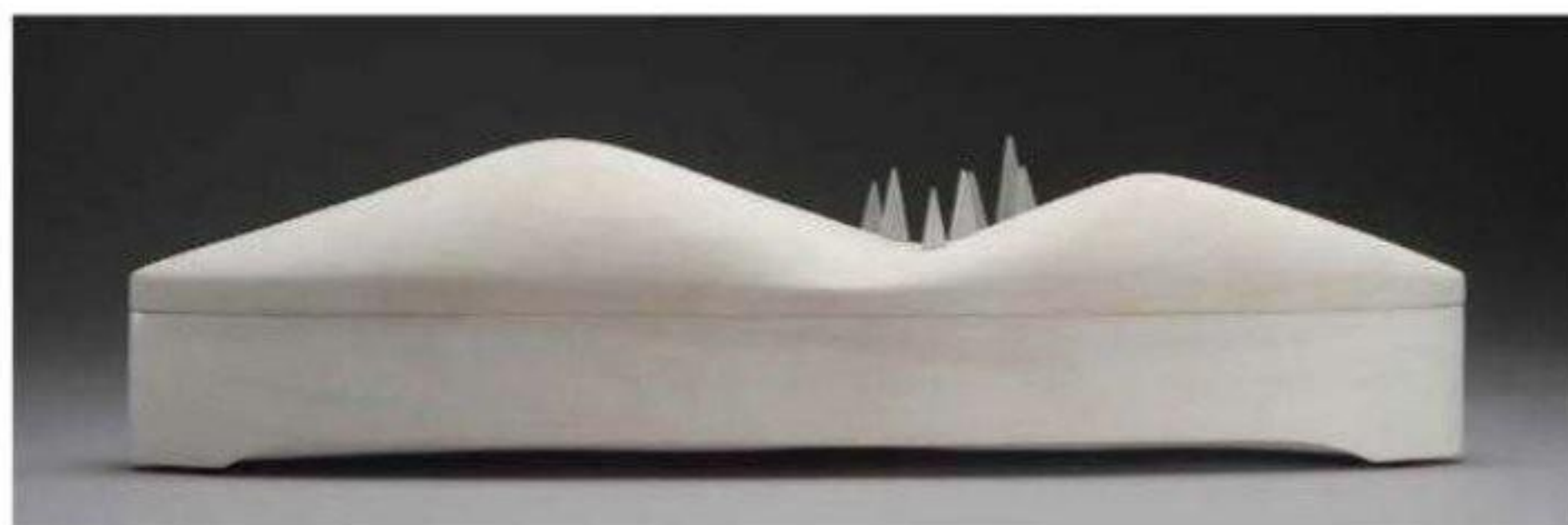
When her husband, a stream ecologist, took a job at the University of Idaho in 2005, she decided to stay home with their 2-year-old son and try woodworking full time. She figured she'd make small functional pieces to sell at art fairs. But a chance introduction to renowned wood artist Jim Christiansen changed her course again.

"He is a born educator and has taught me so much," she says.

"One day, Jim said, 'Do you want to be a woodworker, or do you want to be an artist?' I started crying on the spot. I wanted to be an artist, but I hadn't had the courage to say that."

Shortly after they met, Christiansen invited her to share his workshop, and a few years ago they moved into a larger space with fellow woodworker Ben Carpenter.

Science and nature inform and inspire much of LeVier's



Palouse Box (Winter) (2009) is a maple-and-glass tribute to the rolling hills surrounding LeVier's home in northern Idaho.

BELOW:
LeVier sees
spoons, such as
the **Awaken Spoon**
(2016), as talismans
for all that home
means: family,
nurturing, growth.



ABOVE:
The zebrawood
Horn VII
(2015), from
LeVier's Con-
temporary
Taxidermy
series, explores
the complexity
of cells.

work. Some sculptures conjure colorful cells with wiggly cilia, while a spoon handle morphs into sinuous chive leaves. In the Contemporary Taxidermy series, curved segments of wood resemble vertebrae.

"I think that looking at the world through science gives me a broader sense of what's beautiful. Like who's going to look at a chive and say, 'Oh, that's incredible?'"

She takes her dual role as artist and scientist seriously. "If you're just talking to me,

I'm kind of silly and goofy, but when I'm making a sculpture, I'm very earnest and serious," she says. "I try to make it filled with the wonder I see. I feel like these things are achingly beautiful."

To achieve her fluid, natural forms, LeVier uses compressed hardwood, a material that Christiansen told her about when she wondered how she could manipulate the wood for a piece she'd had in her mind for a decade.

"People have been bending wood forever, but through steaming," she says. "What I can do with compressed wood is bend it when it's not steaming-hot, and with my hand, very intuitively. I twist and turn it, and then hold it in front of a hairdryer to dry."

The former molecular biologist began working with wood as a respite from studying. Many of her works, such as **Undulata Bas** (2014), merge her dual passions for science and making.

Since working as an artist full time (after-school time is devoted to her two children, ages 10 and 13), LeVier has quickly become recognized in juried shows, winning awards and gallery invitations.

"I feel like I'm on the verge of big change – right on the edge," she says.

Some of that has to do with growing her business, but the challenge is also artistic. "I'd love to do something so big that it completely terrifies me."

kristinlevier.com

Four LeVier pieces will be included in an Arrowmont instructors exhibition at the Folk Art Center in Asheville, North Carolina, opening in mid-February. Diane Daniel is a writer based in Florida and the Netherlands.

Deeply Ingrained

Don't judge a book by its cover – and don't judge a tree by its bark. These artists look past surfaces to the patterns found within.

SPOTTED BY
Julie K. Hanus

Greg Klassen



▲ For **Greg Klassen**, making furniture “begins and ends with the beauty of a slab of wood” – and it shows. His River Collection is rooted in that deep appreciation for nature: inspired by the twisting Nooksack River near his studio in Washington state and made from trees sustainably harvested from its banks. gregklassen.com

✦ As **Mattia and Marco Salvatore** demonstrate, one need not work in wood to channel its inner qualities. The brothers, sons of Murano glass artist Davide Salvatore, use traditional Venetian techniques to recreate grain in seductive glass. artemest.com/artisans/studio-salvadore

▼ Minneapolis jeweler **George Sawyer** uses the Japanese metalworking method of *mokume gane* – which involves fusing layers of colored metal – to make his stylish rings. Their extra-crisp lines are thanks to Sawyer’s signature end-grain technique, which orients the edges of the metal ribbons toward the ring’s surface, so the pattern runs through the thickness of the ring. georgesawyer.com

Allen Brown



Courtesy of Artemest.com



Courtesy of Saatchi Art



▼ **Daisy Kelly**, of UK-based Day Design Co., imprints her Forest of Ceramics pieces with wood grain from local trees. The vases, tumblers, bowls, and pots come in an assortment of shapes and sizes – encouraging people to cultivate a little forest inside their home. daydesign.co

Courtesy of Day Design Co.



▲ Why wood? Berlin artist **Tilo Uischner** explains it thusly: “It brings its own story into the picture; it reveals its character while you work with it and keeps its final secret till the moment when you apply the first layer of lacquer.” Wood’s warmth helps convey the subtle see-me-as-I-am quality that Uischner seeks to illustrate in his portraits, which combine marquetry and acrylics. saatchiart.com/tilouischner

Good Vibrations

Victoria Wagner explores the mystical properties of color on paper, metal, and wood.

STORY BY
Deborah Bishop



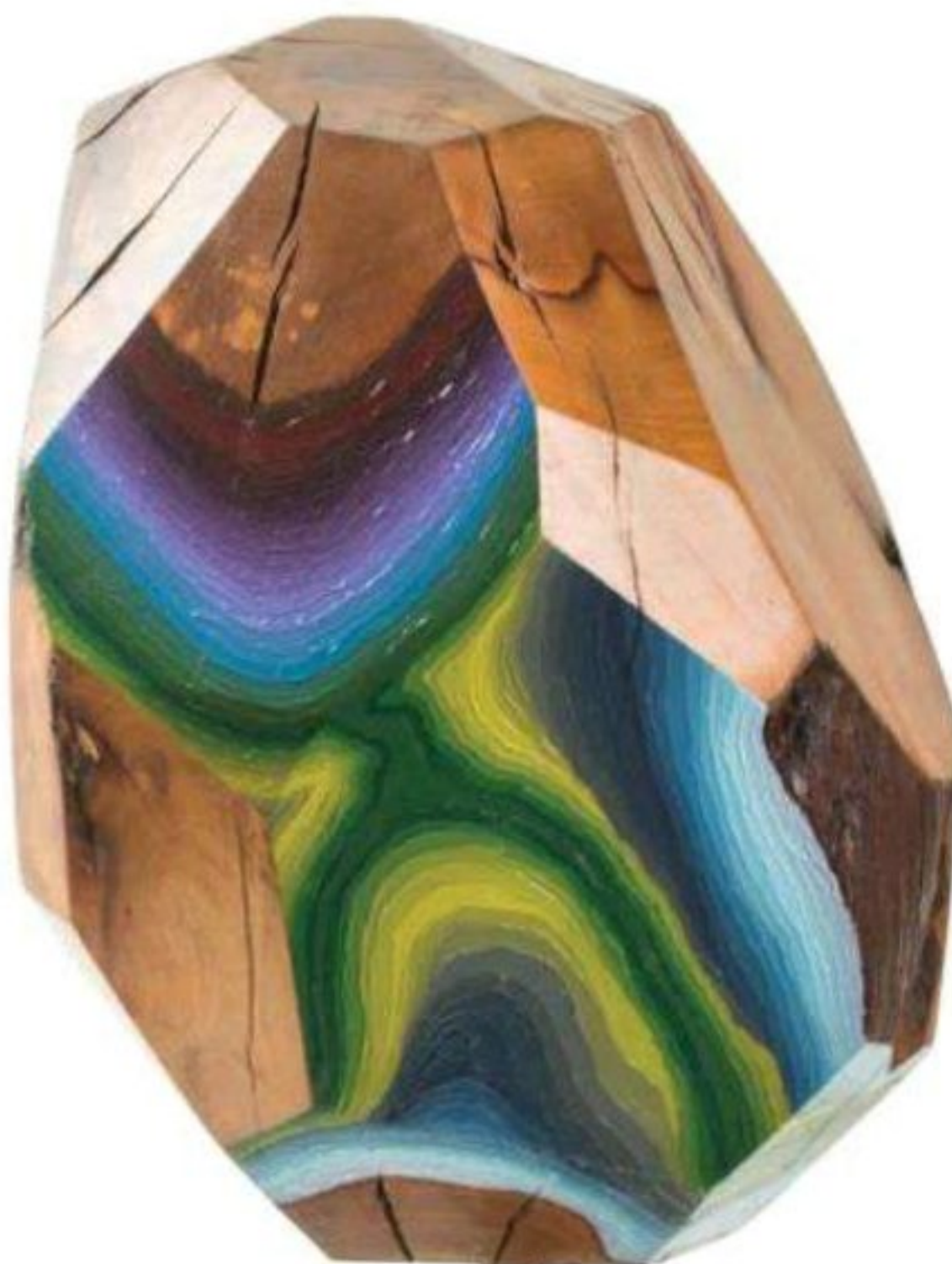
VICTORIA WAGNER'S LOVE affair with wood started about four years ago, right after she was almost beamed by a chunk of the stuff falling from the sky.

Wagner, a painter, was having some diseased trees taken down on her property in the rural Northern California town of Occidental, and the airborne piece of Douglas fir gave her pause.

"I looked at it and thought, 'Who are we, anyway, to cut down a tree? What right do we have? I need to do something with this piece of wood, to show it proper reverence.'"

So Wagner, who had previously used paper and canvas as her, well, canvas, secured the wood to her painting table with a vise, grabbed a handsaw, and started faceting the edges. Following organic growth patterns, she then painted the surfaces with gradient spectrums of color. "And suddenly, I had this little

Salvaged wood turned out to be the perfect medium for Victoria Wagner's twin passions: color theory and the mysteries of nature.



FAR LEFT:
Woodrock:
St. Dorothy's Rest
(Frozen River), 2016, found madrone,
oil paint, steel,
32 x 14 x 12 in.
(including 12-in. stand)

ABOVE:
Woodrock:
River Sand in the
Late Afternoon, 2016,
redwood burl, oil paint,
steel, 42 x 12 x 11 in.
(including 24-in. stand)





gem,” she says, describing the progenitor of her Woodrocks series. The sculptures, which she continues to make, are a mash-up of two of Wagner’s particular passions: color theory and the mysteries of nature.

Now an adjunct professor at California College of the Arts, Wagner, 48, received her BA in art in 1993 from Humboldt State University and her MFA from Mills College in 2001. Although she has lived amid the sea air and redwood forests for many years, Wagner carries with her a memory of the luminous hues of the high desert at the base of the Sierra Nevada mountains, where she grew up. With influences ranging from Albers (Josef and Anni), to Agnes Martin, Brice Marden, and her mentor Ron Nagle (whom she calls an “absolute color genius”), she has made a career of exploring subtle shifts of color across the spectrum.

ABOVE: Color is Wagner’s language, no matter the medium. Her **Neon Herringbone** triptych and **Oak Woodrock** were part of her 2014 solo exhibition at Dose Project Space in Brooklyn.

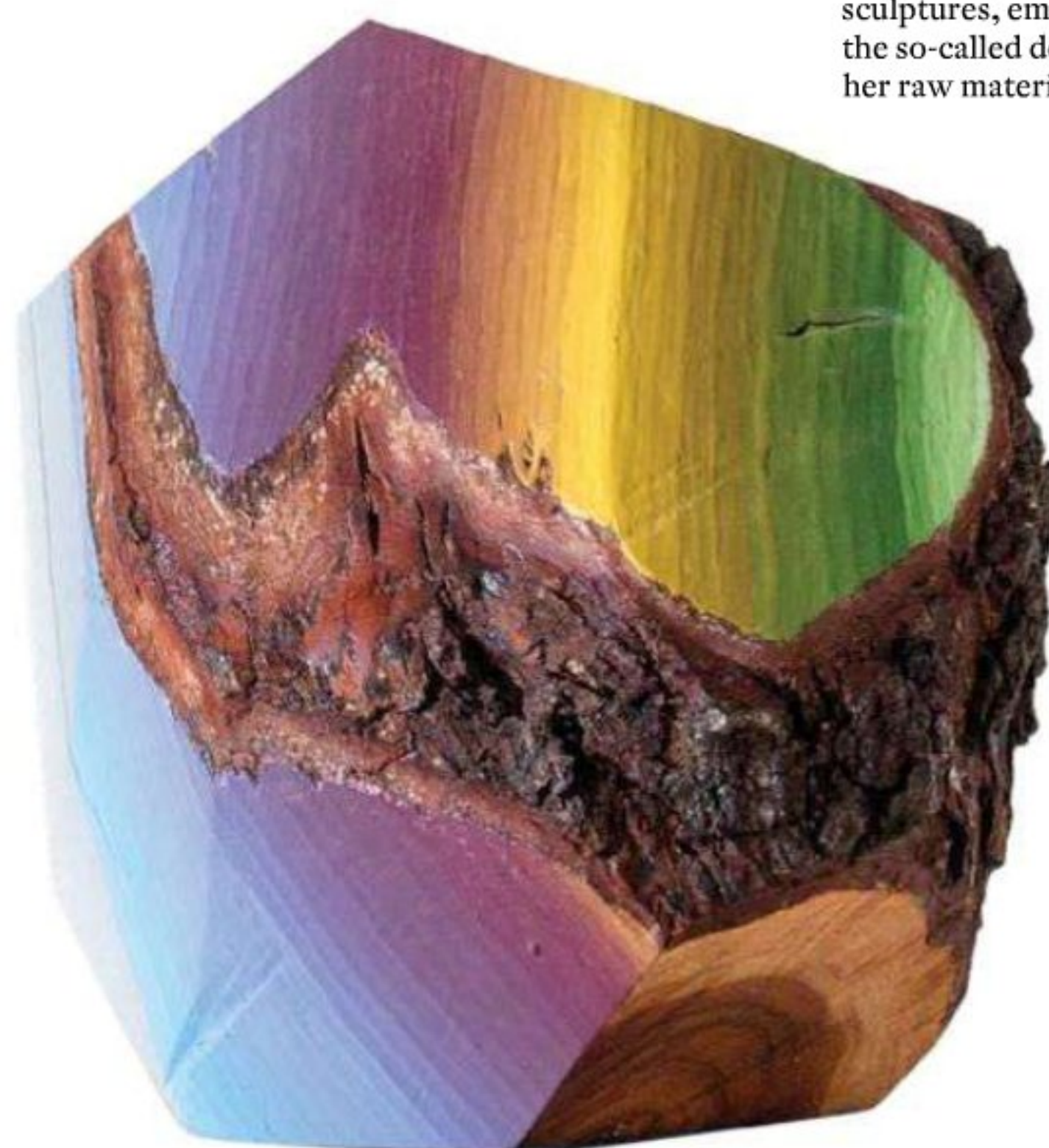
RIGHT: **Woodrock: Cedar’s Broken Path**, 2014, coast live oak, oil paint, approx. 10 in. tall

Explains Wagner, “Colors in relation to each other create subtle vibrations that have a very profound effect on our emotions and psyches, on a totally non-verbal level.”

Wagner likes to pose herself color riddles, which she solves as she works in oil, gouache, and acrylic. “I’ll ponder a problem, like if I start with gold, what do I have to add incrementally to get to silver? Or when I look at wood, I might think



ABOVE: Wagner shapes salvaged wood into jewel-like sculptures, embracing the so-called defects of her raw material.



this piece peaks forest green and lilac. What’s the track to get from one to the other? And they might not even hold two ends of the spectrum, so I might have to fold in another primary color to get back around.”

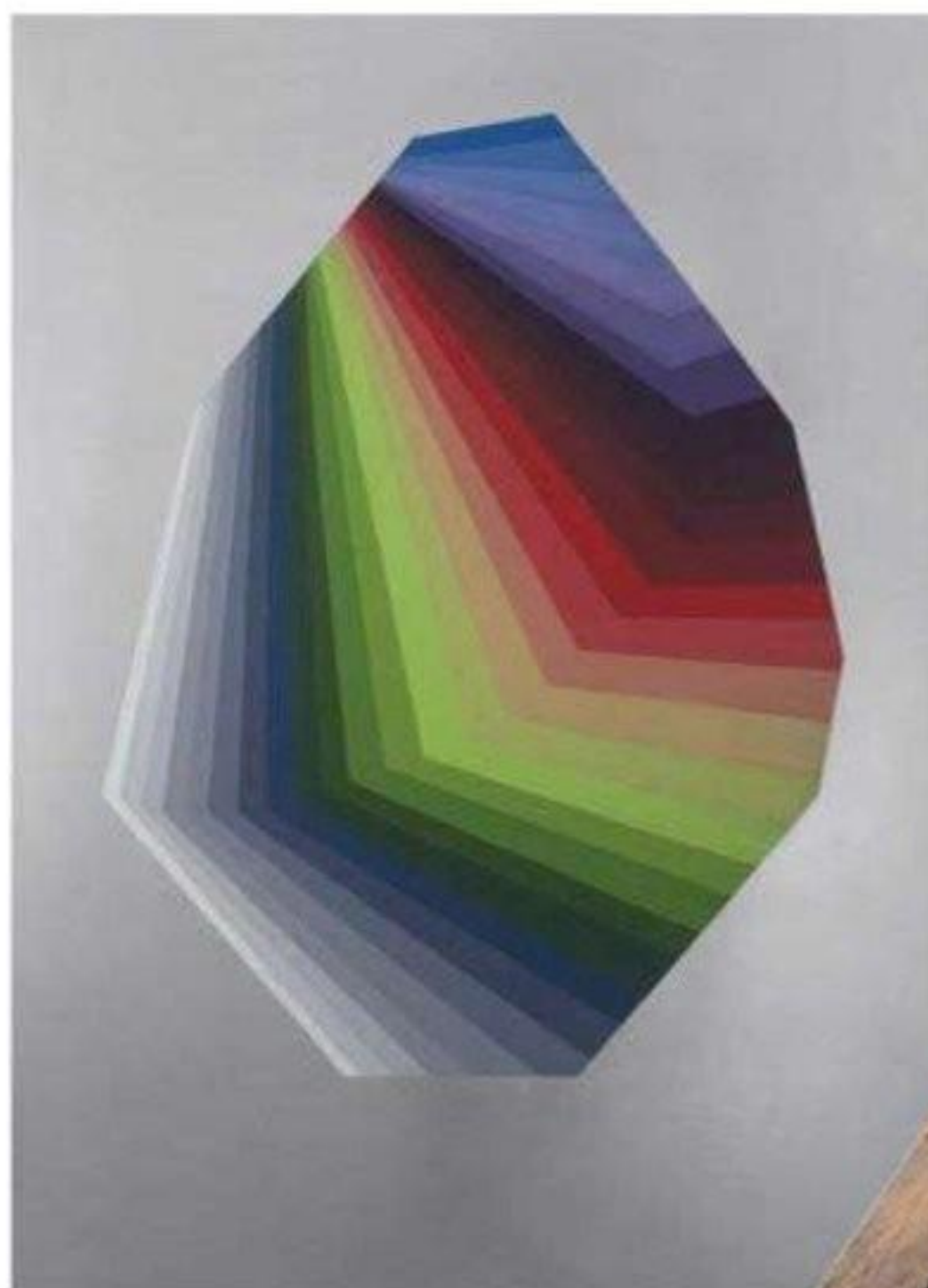
At the same time, Wagner has a mystic’s interest in the natural world, and credits two books for nurturing her current affinity for raw wood: Sir James Frazer’s *Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, and *The*

Secret Life of Plants by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, a controversial treatise that examines sentience in plant life.

Soon after her original woodworking foray, Wagner invested in a proper set of tools and started finding salvaged hunks left in her driveway by friends, neighbors, and the local lumberjack. A major turning point came when she began to incorporate the areas damaged by the likes of termites, rot,

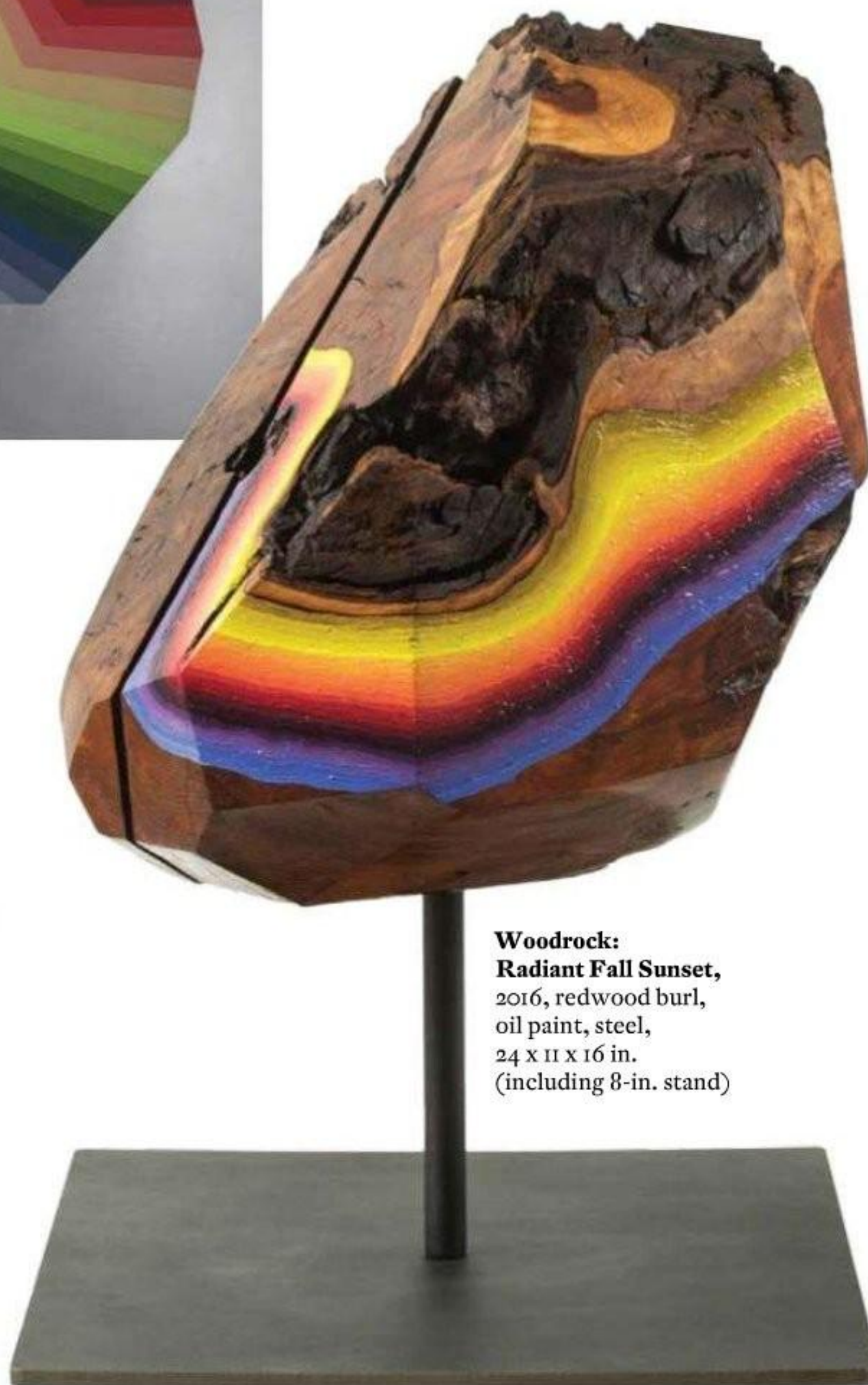
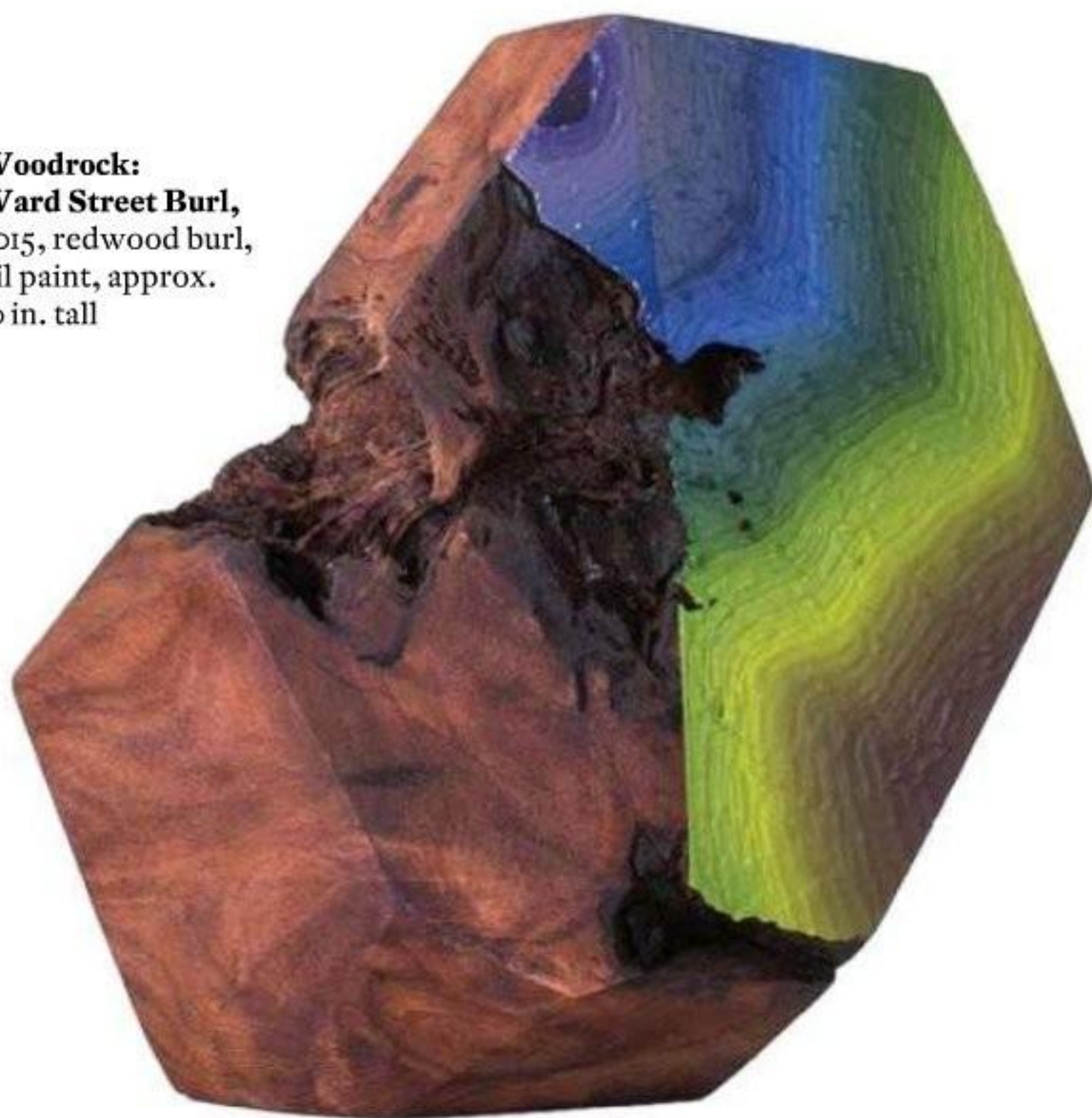


FAR LEFT:
Geode: Moody Awe,
2016, oil paint,
aluminum, 48 x 36 in.



LEFT:
Geode: 9-Sided,
Silver White to Deep
Violet Blue, 2015, oil
paint, aluminum,
48 x 36 in.

Woodrock:
Ward Street Burl,
2015, redwood burl,
oil paint, approx.
10 in. tall



Woodrock:
Radiant Fall Sunset,
2016, redwood burl,
oil paint, steel,
24 x 11 x 16 in.
(including 8-in. stand)

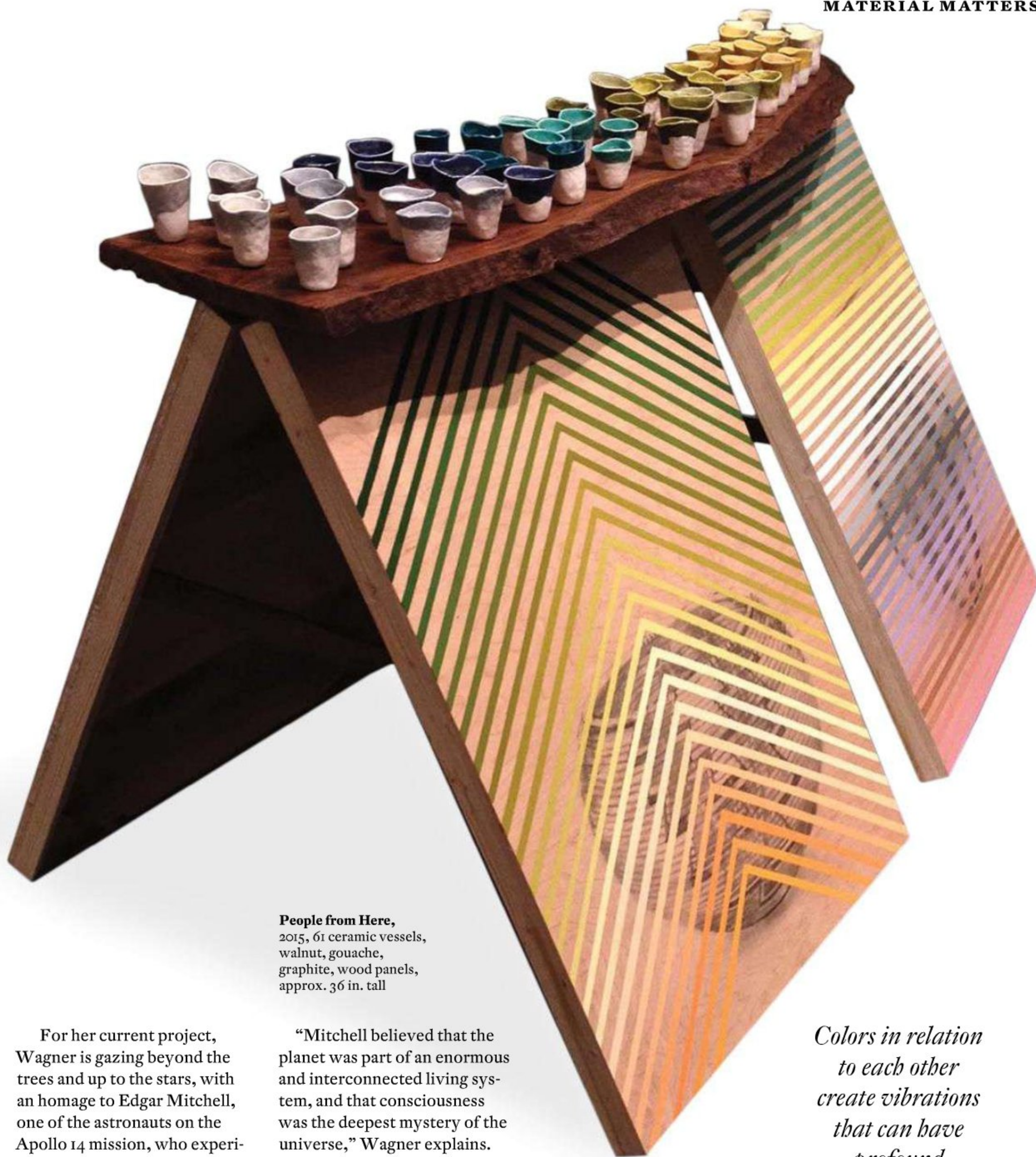
bees, and the chain saw, rather than cutting them away. “I realized that the natural raw edge was actually a beautiful expression of the downed tree – not something to remove, but to celebrate.”

Although sculpture has been central to Wagner’s work of late, she has not abandoned her two-dimensional Spectral paintings. She recently began working on aluminum, using

the reflective metal to pull the viewer into the flattened-out depictions of her Woodrocks. And Wagner painted directly onto wooden panels for *People from Here* (2015), an installation that refers to the Washoe people, who lived on a reservation near where she grew up. (“People from here” is the literal translation of *washo* in the indigenous language, which is all but extinct.)

Four color-field paintings are arranged as sandwich boards, a nod to the smoke shops that were the only business many Native Americans could sustain. Underneath the paint are sketches of baskets by artists including Dat So La Lee, a celebrated Washoe weaver from the 19th century and among the first to trade with European Americans. Sixty-one colored ceramic vessels

(made by Wagner and CCA alumni) sit atop a walnut slab, where they represent the number of tribal territories in California before Europeans arrived. In the last week of the show at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the first 61 people to arrive were handed a plain white porcelain vessel to swap for one of the territory vessels, a symbolic reenactment of the whitewashing of the state.



People from Here,
2015, 61 ceramic vessels,
walnut, gouache,
graphite, wood panels,
approx. 36 in. tall

For her current project, Wagner is gazing beyond the trees and up to the stars, with an homage to Edgar Mitchell, one of the astronauts on the Apollo 14 mission, who experienced a mystical epiphany out in space. She is pairing miniature components of the Apollo space station with ceramic “moon rocks” and color-gradient paintings based on images of the moon landing.

“Mitchell believed that the planet was part of an enormous and interconnected living system, and that consciousness was the deepest mystery of the universe,” Wagner explains. “And that, in a nutshell, is everything that I embrace.”

+

victoriawagner.com

A frequent contributor to *American Craft*, Deborah Bishop is a writer and editor in San Francisco.

Colors in relation to each other create vibrations that can have profound emotional impact, Wagner says.



In his Brooklyn studio, Leonardo Drew assembles richly textured mixed-media sculptures that are as detailed as they are immense.

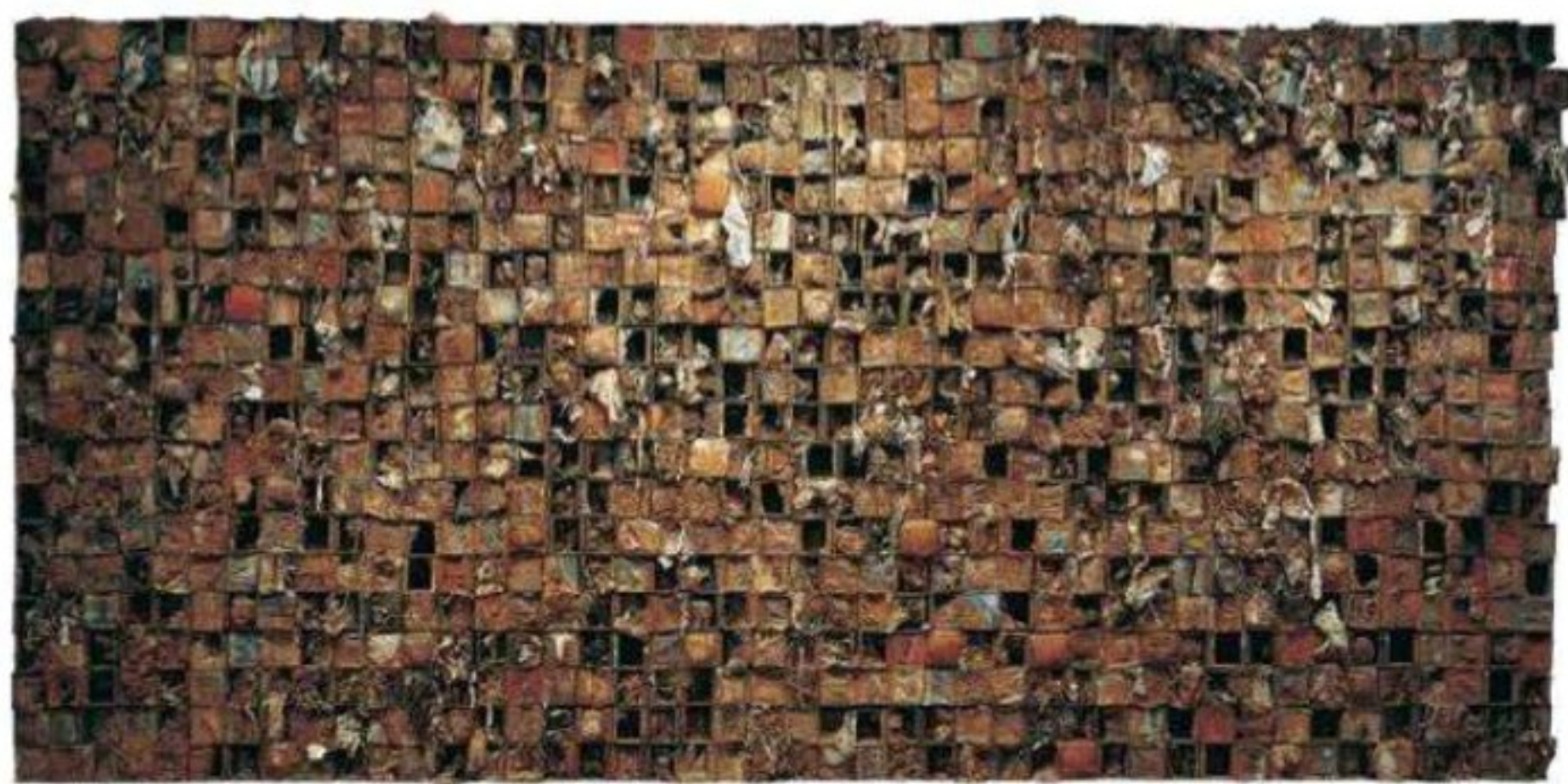


The Infinite and the Infinitesimal

*Leonardo Drew
won't say what
his work means.
He'd rather let you
figure it out.*

STORY BY
Joyce Lovelace

PORTRAIT BY
Michael O'Neill



WHEN WE LOOK AT AN ENIGMATIC artwork, it's tempting to read its title for clues. It's for this very reason that Leonardo Drew has always identified his pieces by number rather than name.

"What I'm feeling, what I'm going through, why I create – it's not as important as your experience as a viewer," says Drew, who has been making mixed-media sculptures for more than 25 years. For almost a decade, his main material has been wood – planks, roots, branches, small fragments – that he cuts, paints, burns, and otherwise manipulates for a weathered effect, then assembles into wall compositions, large freestanding structures, and room-size installations. "There should be some complexity between an artist and the people taking in the art," he continues. "I do feel deeply about allowing viewers to realize themselves, allowing the work to act as a mirror to reflect back on them. If I told you exactly how I was feeling about the work, then, in effect, you would only go there. You would not allow yourself to explore."

So take a wander through Drew's woods. Be warned: They're deep and vast, and you may get lost before you find yourself. But it's a wondrous trip, filled with startling, strangely beautiful visions.

Art critics have called some of them "dystopian" and "apocalyptic," evocative of the ruins of war, disaster, and industrial decline. Others suggest organic

Drew uses numbers for titles so he doesn't influence – or restrict – viewers' interpretations.

ABOVE, RIGHT (detail): **Number 43**, 1994, fabric, plastic, rust, string, wood, 11.5 x 24 x 1 ft.



Drew, age 13, at his first exhibition. DC and Marvel comics were interested in hiring him for his illustration talent, but an encounter with Jackson Pollock's work changed his course.

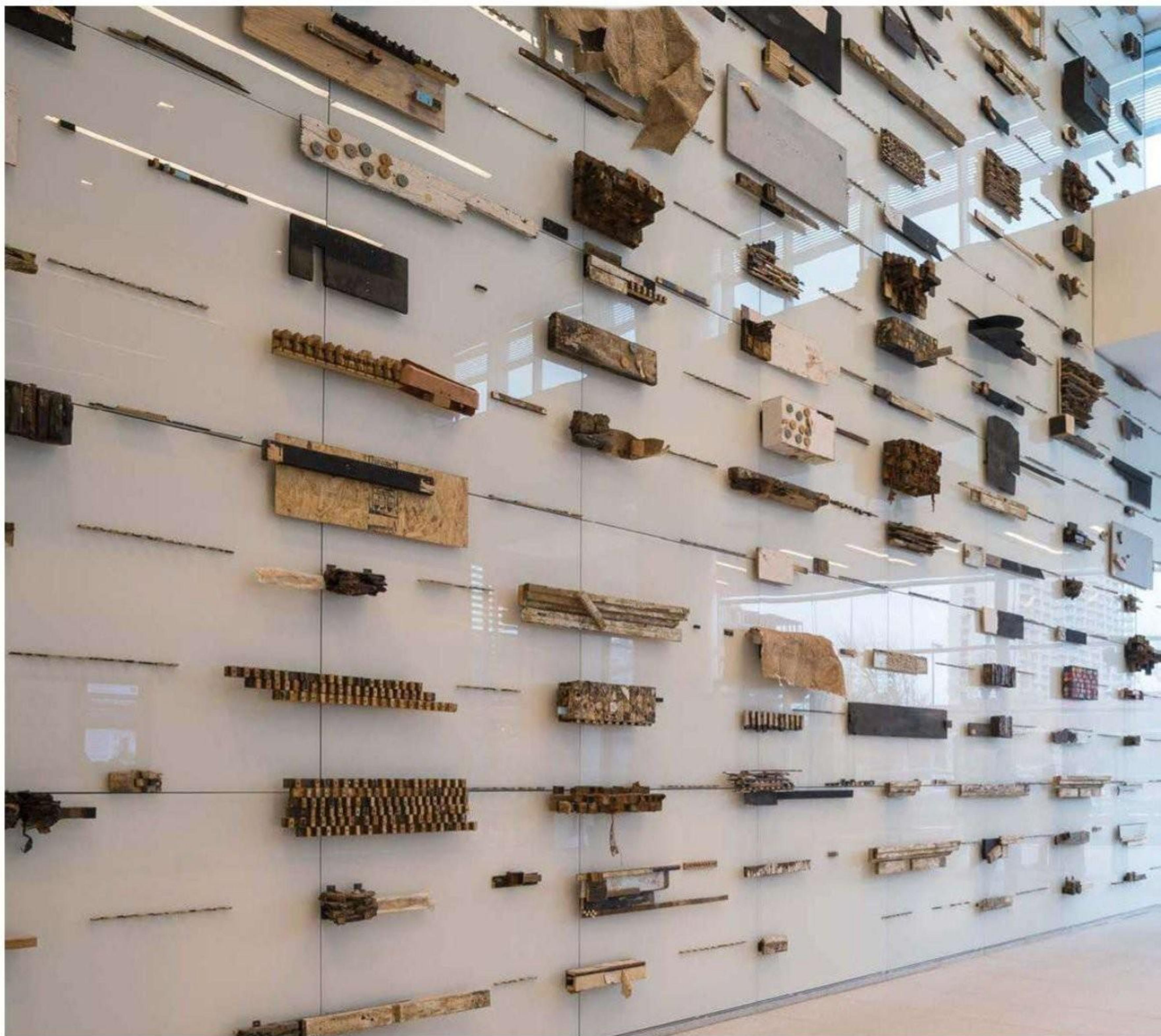
erosion and decay over time. What might grab you first is their powerful physical presence. Get closer, and it's the detail that astonishes, the hundreds and thousands of pieces Drew arranges into intricate, ordered chaos.

In his wall pieces, small components often are packed in loose grids that resemble landscapes or densely populated cities viewed from above. These works are themselves walls, built by a craftsman the way nature would build them. We confront them head-on,



Number 43 photo: Dorothy Zeidman; detail: John Berens / All images except those by O'Neill are courtesy of the artist





*Drew's
Number 123
installation
could almost be
a deconstruction
of one of his big
assemblages.*

Drew sometimes makes variations on the same work for different sites, such as *Number 123* (2015, above) in a Houston government building, and a 2007 version for a deCordova Museum exhibition (right).



123 photos: (top) Nash Baker; (bottom) Peter Harris



dimensional structures, which have the feel of a barricade or massive beaver dam. The angle of the base is one of support, though it's fragile and unstable, barely able to contain or ward off the action and energy within and without. His works on paper, depicting poetic images such as a tree trunk with gnarled roots visible underground, seem more serene, personal, internal. And then there are his installations, whole walls hung with a multitude of separate pieces, each one unique. It's as if the artist were deconstructing one of his own compositions, telling us: Don't focus on the overall complexity; look at the individuals – the parts.

So is Drew's art a statement on the place of the individual in an ordered, constrictive society? A story of energy and matter, the cycle of birth, life, death, regeneration? A contemplation of overwhelming forces we can't control? Again, he's content to let us speculate.



While he prefers mystery in his creations, the artist himself is engaging, an easy mix of earnest and irreverent, with a big, infectious laugh. He thinks of his work as an expression both of himself – his background, experiences, “things I don't have to call on, because they're just there” – and larger, if not overt, influences such as his African American heritage and the human history and zeitgeist we all share.

Born in Tallahassee, Florida, in 1961, he grew up in the projects

Number 130L (2015) filled a wall at a recent show at Vigo Gallery in London. Made of wood and screws, it's almost 10 feet wide.



Michael O'Neill

can't see around them, can only imagine the world beyond. Yet on their seemingly impenetrable surfaces, disparate elements stand out, events erupt. Something big happens, and it's not about little things anymore. Here's a hole, signaling disruption, dissent, a connection to the other side. Over there is a thrust point, where pieces break out, escape, try to fly.

A similar tension animates Drew's looming three-

“Worlds within worlds, right?” he says, offering a hint. “Think in terms of the infinite and the infinitesimal. Think in those terms and then you'll get it. There is micro space, and there is outer space. All of these things can be worked, but you have to realize that they are part of you. You are not separate from them. We are a part of nature, and you've got to let these things flow through you. So I think bigger.”

of Bridgeport, Connecticut, during the political and social upheaval of the '60s and '70s – “some very moving times. Even if you were young, you felt it.” He inherited his artistic gift from his father, who liked to sketch, while his mother, a nurse, gave him his drive and work ethic. His name was prophetic: Leonardo drew, constantly. “My mother used to try to stop me. She's a force of nature, and she couldn't make

Drew likes to play different movies on various screens as he works, a way to connect with a completely different medium. He admires filmmakers and has more than 3,000 movie titles in his collection.



Jason Wyche

me stop,” he remembers. “In school, they would give me a test paper, and I would flip it over and start drawing. I was always in trouble.”

His art talent was so formidable that people took notice, and at 13, Drew started exhibiting paintings at local venues. Soon he was being courted by the likes of DC and Marvel comics and *Heavy Metal* magazine, and on track to success as an illustrator. After seeing the paintings of Jackson Pollock, however, he resolved to pursue artmaking in a more personally meaningful way. He moved to New York City and got his BFA at the Cooper Union in 1985. By the decade’s end, he had earned a quiet reputation in the art world for work that demonstrated a profound engagement with materials. Part of his inspiration, he says, was the landfill he’d seen from every window of his family’s apartment growing up — “God’s mouth,” he once called it, “the beginning and the end. Talk about the essence of us — it’s right there, in those places, all the things that travel through us, that we’ve experienced, not only physically but spiritually.” In 1989, a Manhattan gallery exhibited his wall hanging *Number 8*, a thick tangle of wood,

For Drew, process matters more than product. “More than anything, he’s an explorer,” close friend Richard Shebairo says. Each work presents a fresh set of challenges.

ABOVE:

Number 134, 2009, wood, mixed media, 15.5 x 23 x 7.5 ft.

RIGHT:

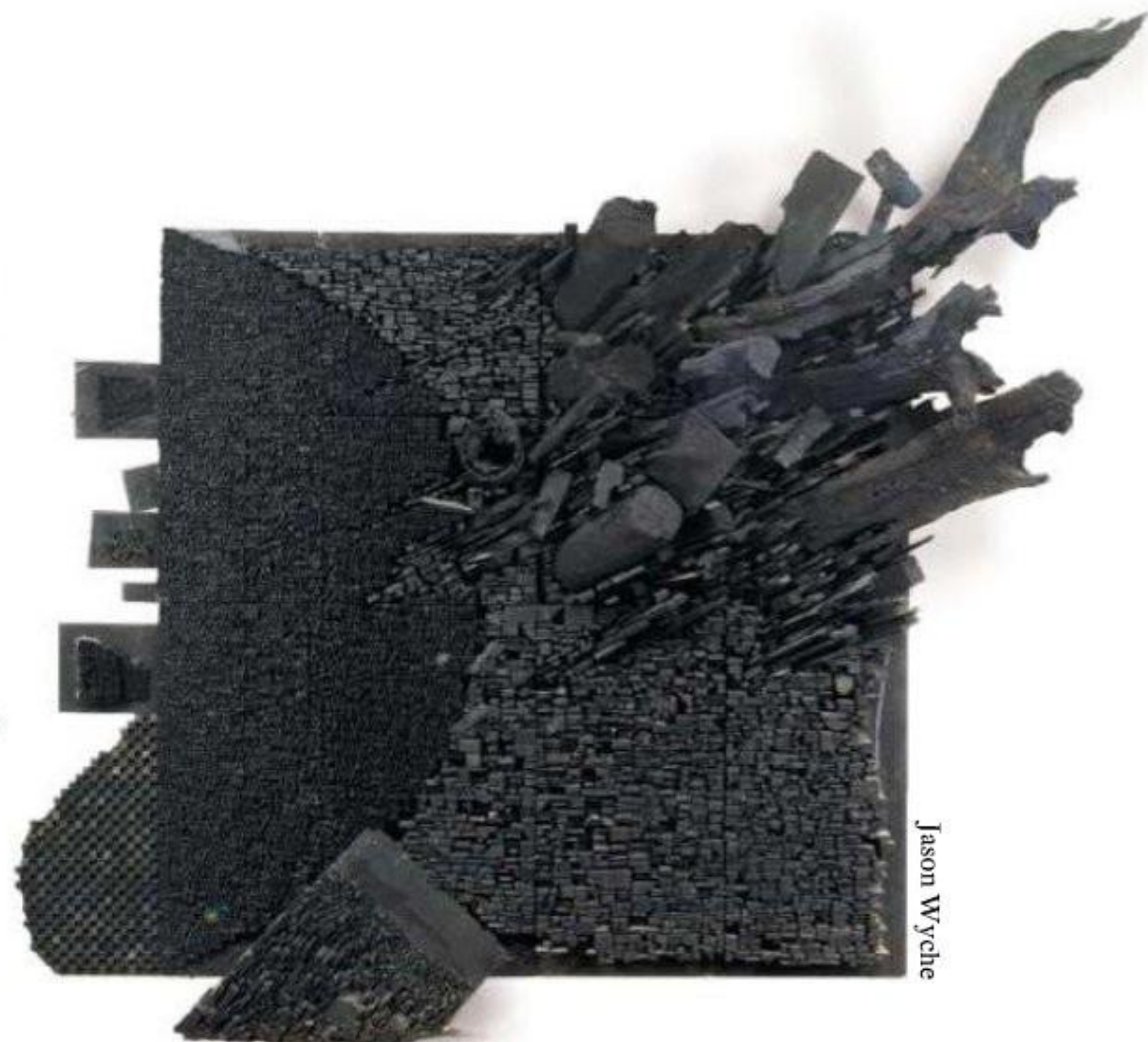
Number 8 (1988), composed of animal carcasses and hides, feathers, paint, paper, rope, and wood, was a major turning point for Drew.

TOP RIGHT:

Number 185, 2016, wood, paint, pastel, screws, 10 x 11.2 x 2.5 ft.



Frank Stewart



Jason Wychie

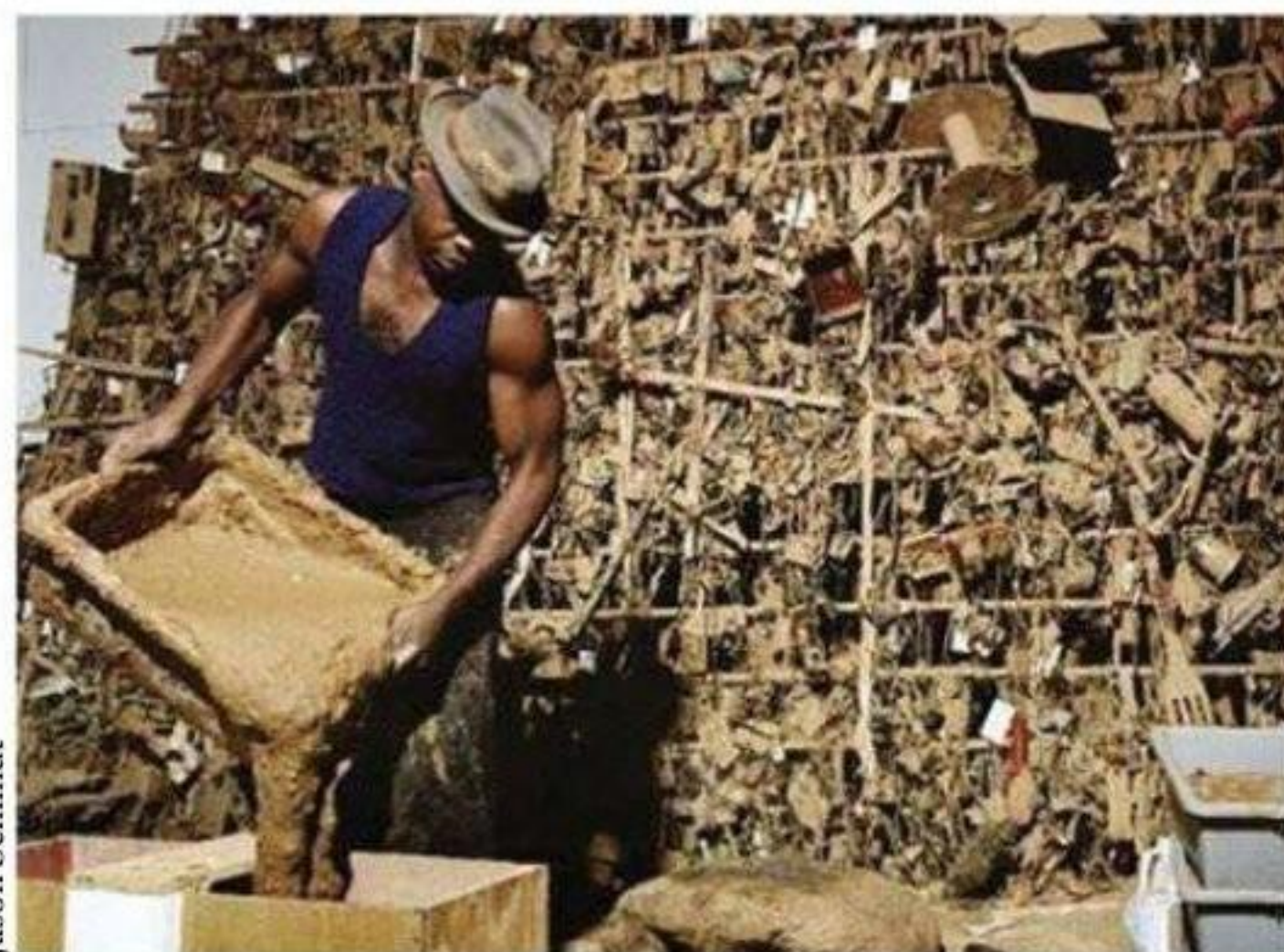
The Brooklyn artist travels to California each year to gather wood scraps and debris.

paper, rope, and feathers, along with such unlikely elements as animal hides and carcasses. It was a critical sensation; today, it's seen as a seminal work.

Since then he has explored materials ranging from cast paper to rusted metal and been featured in museums and galleries around the world. Based in Brooklyn, he travels during the summer to Northern California, where friends own land, to gather his raw stuff, like the "monstrous" tree root that made its way into a recent piece. Today, he's satisfied with wood; who knows what's next? "It's not like I try to put a cap on my creative process and materials."

Now in his 50s, he continues to grow and evolve. "Just like

The artist pours a slurry for **Number 95** (2005). Though he's well known for his use of wood, he's interested in all kinds of materials.



Jason Schmidt



the Grand Canyon or a redwood tree, we're layered, right? Rings have been added."

Home and studio have been one and the same for Drew his entire adult life; he works constantly, obsessively. "There's no separation between how I approach my work and how nature decides that it's going to carve a mountain," he says. "I don't sleep at all," he half-jokes, "but who needs it?" A cinephile, he keeps films playing on multiple TVs around the studio while he works, either on a classic-movie channel or from his collection of more than 3,000 titles: "It keeps me in touch with another way of creating." His favorite directors include Terrence Malick, "for his quiet but powerful resonance," and Stanley Kubrick, "for his systematic constructs," working in separate parts that come together to create a whole.



TOP:
Drew calls the 15-foot-wide **Number 162** (2012) a "large drawing" that chronicles the places he's been and things he's done.

ABOVE:
Number 133L,
2015, wood, paint,
24.5 x 24.5 x 18 in.

"I've known lots of artists who are totally devoted to their craft, and Leonardo is that. But more than anything, he's an explorer. What he's looking for is the process, the journey," says Richard Shebairo, Drew's close friend and accountant. "In the early years, he would make these fabulous pieces and cannibalize them to make other pieces," Shebairo recalls. "It was never about the object itself, but the exploration of materials, the challenges he would set up for himself and figure out how to overcome, constantly pushing to something new and unimagined. He goes where the experiment takes him. There is a path he hasn't fully discovered, that has no end. And we get to join him on the trail."

Having begun his voyage at a relatively young age, Drew still empathizes with aspiring artists and understands the



quest to find one's voice. "If you're in school, try to glean as much as possible from that," he advises. "But also know when to get rid of the excess that will keep you from the big reveal – the one we're always trying to reach out to, and capture. The answer should be one that is elusive, yes, but in some way, in your mind, achievable. You should imagine that you can get at it. But the fact is – I just tell you honestly – you never get it," he says, bursting into laughter.

He pushes forward nonetheless and recently went to China to collaborate with artisans on cast and tricolor-glazed ceramic versions of his sculptures.

"It's an ongoing journey. I keep imagining the next thing, and there it is, right in front of me."

+

leonardodrew.com

Joyce Lovelace is American Craft's contributing editor.



Drew remains inspired by the landfill he saw from his childhood home in the projects of Bridgeport, Connecticut. "Talk about the essence of us – it's right there, in those places, all the things that travel through us, that we've experienced, not only physically but spiritually," he says.

Number 77, 2000, found objects, paper, paint, wood, 14 x 56 x 5 ft.

The artist at the Great Wall of China in 2015. He recently returned to the country to collaborate with ceramists on renditions of his sculptures.

Tipping Point

Robyn Horn's steady, diligent execution yields precariously balanced sculptures that seem to defy physics.

STORY BY
Joyce Lovelace

PORTRAIT BY
Mark Jackson





Walking Man,
1996, redwood burl,
16 x 26 x 8 in.

OVERLEAF:
Since the early 1980s,
artist Robyn Horn
has worked with wood,
producing sculptures
small, large, and mam-
moth. She's pleased
when people have to
look hard to figure out
how she makes her
work. "I like messing
with them a little bit,"
she says.

“
Moving in silent
desperation /
Keeping an eye
on the Holy Land /
A hypothetical
destination /
Say, who is this
walking man?
”

ROBYN HORN HAS ALWAYS loved those lyrics from the James Taylor song “Walking Man,” which he recorded in 1974. They even inspired the names of two of her sculptures, *Walking Man* (1996) and *Hypothetical Destination* (2003). A one-time singer and guitarist herself, she’s been a fan of Taylor for a long time.

“He had a series for a while that had a lot of restlessness and movement in it, like he could never really settle down. Or at least it sounded that way in his music,” says the Arkansas

artist, 65. That sense of motion and volatility – the urge to wander, break free, even fall apart – is what Horn captures powerfully in her Slipping Stone series, rocklike forms she’s been carving out of wood for more than 15 years. Ranging from pedestal-sized sculptures to 10-foot outdoor monoliths, with such titles as *Slip Sliding Away*, *Slightly Off Course Again*, and *Approaching Collapse*, the works are geometric abstractions that suggest moments when something’s got to give: a pile of blocks, a stack of

dominoes, a gust of wind, a wave gathering momentum before crashing ashore. They lurch, lunge, whirl, teeter, tilt, and shift – and, as she says, “you’re not sure exactly where they’re going.”

Even as they hint at impending chaos, the Slipping Stones radiate beauty and grace, while celebrating the figure and grain of the wood and the iconography of stonework. “Tangible vestiges of movement in a ballet” is how David McFadden describes her work in *The Sculpture of Robyn Horn*, to



be published this year by the University of Arkansas Press. The former chief curator at the Museum of Arts and Design, McFadden goes on to discuss her sculptures' "engaging 'stop-motion' quality," comparing them to the sequential structure of a movie and the famous movement studies by 19th-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge.

Horn's works can look animated and precarious because they're so sturdy and expertly crafted. Most begin as a single hunk of wood that she cuts

ABOVE:
**Hypothetical
Destination**, 2003,
redwood burl,
16 x 19 x 8 in.

TOP:
Although Horn began
her woodworking
career using a lathe,
a current tool of choice
is the chain saw.



ABOVE:
Slip Sliding Away,
2001, rosewood,
33.5 x 11 x 11 in.

ABOVE RIGHT:
**Tilted Keystone,
One Stone Gone**,
2015, cocobolo,
26.5 x 10 x 5 in.

with a chain saw (if it's a softer species such as redwood, which she uses for her big pieces) or band saw (for hardwoods such as cocobolo), then refines with power and hand tools. Their curves, angles, and textured surfaces can be smooth and subtle, or rough, gnarly, and chunky – again, depending on the properties of the wood. Her genius is making one sculpted whole look like a collection of separate components improbably joined together, layered and overlapping, with artful touches of negative and positive space. She'll create a brickwork-type arch in which the keystone – the segment at the top that holds the structure together – has slipped and lost its way, so that the other bricks appear about to tumble down. Sometimes she'll cut a piece out

entirely, let it hang in midair or sit on the ground. "It fools the eye, which I enjoy," she says of the illusory aspect of her work. "People have to look hard to determine if it's all one piece. They want to believe it's assembled. I like messing with them a little bit – that's kind of fun." The fact is, her designs couldn't physically hold together any other way. Maybe it's a metaphor for life: To show weakness, to be open to disruption and change, requires strength and stability.



"An artist and a gentlewoman" is how a local newspaper once described Horn, who in conversation is as down-to-earth and genuine as they come. She was born in Arkansas and has lived there all her life. Hers was a "comfortable, typical 1950s-'60s" small-town childhood, with an artistically inclined mother who painted the window signs for the family's chain of shoe stores (and at 91, still paints today). In high school, Horn focused on music, playing in an all-girl rock band called the Opposite Sex. As an art major at Hendrix College, she started painting and got interested in modernist abstract art, especially cubism. She remembers being fascinated by Marcel Duchamp's 1912 painting *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, drawn to its

woody palette of brown, gold, and black, "but mostly the implied movement of this figure coming down the stairs."

After graduating in 1973, she worked various jobs – she was a photographer for the state parks and tourism department – before marrying her husband, John, a letterpress printer, in 1979. When his brother started turning wood on the lathe in the early '80s, Horn was intrigued and took up the craft, just in time to become part of a new woodturning movement. She made a name for herself turning round sculptural forms called Geodes, followed by a series of Millstones. "I've always enjoyed stones," she explains, "stone cuts and stone walls, standing stones, stone circles." By the late '90s, though, turning no longer satisfied her creatively.



*Her genius is
making one
sculpted whole
look like a
collection of
separate
components.*

Approaching Collapse,
2016, redwood, black dye,
10 x 5 x 2.8 ft.

For one wedding anniversary, Horn and her husband gave each other a forklift.

Swirling Rhythm,
2016, maple burl,
31 x 27 x 5.5 in.



On a visit to the home and studio of Barbara Hepworth in England, Horn was captivated by the late sculptor's monumental outdoor pieces. She had already been sculpting and carving, though not on a large scale. Seeing Hepworth's work inspired her to pursue that direction, leading to the Standing Stone series and, since 2001, her Slipping Stone series.

Horn and her husband live on a large rural property just outside Little Rock, near a state park. "We've got a lot of deer hanging out, coyotes and bobcats. That's part of the joy of being out here in the woods."

There's a stone circle on the grounds and a line of 10-foot stones heading down a hill. "We had a big party when we were planting these. A bunch of friends came over and helped us, and it was fun," she says. "I love the way it looks. There's something figurative about the stones standing there, so massive. It's wonderful to have them around." She and John have a big metal building that houses their studios, along with storage space for her wood and the printing presses he collects: "He had one press when we got married. He now has over 200. Moving big, heavy things is

something we've done together for 30-something years." For one wedding anniversary, they gave each other a forklift, which she uses to hoist herself up on a pallet and chainsaw her big pieces outdoors.

Hand in hand with the couple's artistic pursuits is their support of the craft field. Robyn Horn is on the board of the Windgate Foundation, which has given grants to the Arrowmont, Haystack, and Penland schools, as well as to the American Craft Council, and sponsored fellowships for up-and-coming makers through the Center for Craft, Creativity & Design in

Asheville, North Carolina. "Being able to give students some early assistance in their careers through classes or residencies at these nonprofits is a valuable and worthwhile experience," she says, adding, "We also believe the arts can be helpful in teaching core subjects in public schools. More than half of us learn visually."

Grounded at home and happy in her studio, Horn finds herself on a roll creatively these days, confident enough with her material and tools that "I can get them to help me do what it is I want to do," as she puts it. "Sometimes I have a

Industrial Series No. 9,
Pierced, 2016, pine,
steel, 18 x 9 x 12 in.



ABOVE:
Horn outlined
Resisting Collapse
(2014), a maquette for
a much larger piece,
with chalk before
carving. The finished
slabs look as though
they're frozen in time,
right before they top-
ple over.

RIGHT:
Nailed, 2016, cherry,
nails, 22 x 21 x 3.5 in.



piece designed, and the wood says, 'Really, you should go in this direction.' And if you listen, it can help you. You don't want to let it overpower you, but it's important to respond to the surprises you find in wood." She keeps moving toward her hypothetical destination.

"My advice to young artists is get in a shop and work. Make things. The act of doing it is what inspires you. Picasso said it well: 'Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working.'"

+

robynhorn.com

Joyce Lovelace is American Craft's contributing editor.



Most of Horn's sculptures begin with the rough cuts of a chain or band saw, which she later refines using hand tools. Here, she uses a chisel for finish work on a maple Slipping Stone.



NECESSARY TENSION

The sculpture and furniture of Christopher Kurtz.

STORY BY

Brian K. Mahoney

PORTRAITS BY

Jennifer May

CHRISTOPHER KURTZ IS SWINGING on a swing set. It's a warm October afternoon, and he's doing quality control on his latest creation, benches (one each of teak, Alaskan cedar, ash, and basswood) that hover like rippling magic carpets from a metal frame. He'll be installing the piece – a clever way to showcase his new suspended seating – later today at Field + Supply, the annual modernist craft fair held just down the road from Kurtz's Kingston, New York, studio in the bucolic town of Stone Ridge. (The piece will prove to be the smash hit of the fair, mobbed for three days with people of all ages piling on for group selfies.)

TOP:
Suspended between sculpture and furniture, (A) **Typical Windsor Form** (2004) became an early calling card for Kurtz's multifaceted approach to making.



The seating seems effortless, a minor bit of whimsy. But that's by design. Kurtz, a woodworker who identifies as a sculptor first and a furniture maker second, is not interested in showy demonstrations of technique. Behind his work's apparent insouciance lies tremendous technical rigor and a fascination with negative space.

Take Kurtz's recent series of starburst sculptures, constellations of diaphanous staves tapering off in fine points. All are made from blocks of wood carved down to whispers with a spokeshave – a process similar to sharpening a pencil. Kurtz then joins the pieces and covers the seams in layers of graphite or milk paint.

LEFT:
Without making furniture, Kurtz says, he'd get lost in the fantasy of sculpture. Pieces like his **Quarter-Round Ladder-back Chair** (2010) bring him down to earth.



Hudson Valley sculptor and furniture maker Christopher Kurtz is both a poet and a pragmatist. His practice balances – and sometimes blends – the two.

Just as he seeks harmony in his work, Kurtz strives for equilibrium in his practice.



"I want it to be a sculpture first," Kurtz says, "then the craft is something the viewer understands after spending some time with it. Craft can be like golden handcuffs. People can hide behind technique. Good technique doesn't always make good art."

Kurtz's virtuosity and materials-based approach is partly explained by his assistantship with Martin Puryear, whom Kurtz refers to as "a force in contemporary sculpture, an amazing craftsman, and incredible human being" – and the man who taught Kurtz how to work with wood. In 1999, after two years at Kansas City Art Institute, two years at Alfred University, and a summer intensive studying landscape architecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, Kurtz was done with academia. "I graduated from all these fancy schools, and I felt like I didn't have any skills," Kurtz says.



TOP:
Swing Seat (Two-Seater),
2016, handcarved
ash, pigmented oil,
manila rope

ABOVE:
Transformed into
a swing set for the
Field + Supply craft
fair last fall, Kurtz's
deceptively simple
suspended daybed
was a big hit – for kids
and adults alike.

So Kurtz sought out Puryear, the working artist he most admired. Through a friend of a friend, he got Puryear's address and mailed his portfolio and a letter asking for a job. "It was a total cold call," Kurtz says. "And then Martin called me and said, 'Yeah, this looks great. I would love to work with you, but I only hire people who are local.'"

Kurtz, who had moved back home to Kansas City, packed his bags and relocated to Hudson, New York, closer to Puryear, with no job and no money. Once Kurtz arrived, he called him back. "I said, 'I live in the Hudson Valley now; what do you think?'"

Kurtz spent five years working as Puryear's assistant. "I could have stayed working with Martin forever. He's deep water to drink from." One of Kurtz's last duties with Puryear was helping with the artist's bravura retrospective at MoMA in 2007.



TOP, BOTTOM:
**E. 68th St.
Dining Chair,**
2016, white oak,
brass, leather
upholstery,
35 x 18 x 22 in. ea.



**Circle Armchair
and Ottoman,**
2008, maple
plywood, milk paint,
29 x 22 x 25 in. (chair),
13 x 14 x 20 in.



Though this is an older work, Kurtz recently returned to the circular motif. "Nothing is ever over," he says.



**Hollow-Leg
Dining Table,**
2016, ebonized ash,
2.5 x 9.2 x 3.6 ft.

Like Puryear, whose enigmatic work is also confoundingly familiar, Kurtz's pieces can be mysterious and challenging, while maintaining a tone of serenity and bright optimism. *Singularity* (2013), an elegant bramble of basswood points stretching 6 feet high and 12 feet wide, might be a squad of ballerinas in arabesque, or it might be galloping herd of bison straight from *Dances with Wolves*.

Unlike Puryear, Kurtz tends to wear his influences on his sleeve, and the modernist aesthetics of Brancusi and Giacometti are easy to spot in his purity of line. His furniture tends to challenge materials, as in the Bauhaus-inspired dining tables with hollow legs that reference the tubular steel furniture of Marcel Breuer and Mart Stam. The legs disappear through the tabletop, mini-black holes sucking expectations down through the elastic portal between art and design. At this point, Kurtz is very comfortable tweaking perceived notions.

"I've taken a slow-cooking approach to my career," he says. "I'm 40 years old now, and I'm just now starting to get a body of work that I feel like is mine."

The first commission Kurtz ever got was from a friend's parents – a set of 10 birdcage Windsor chairs. The production of the intricate, many-spindled chairs took much longer than expected and proved an eye-opening experience to the nascent maker. "There was so much lathe turning, I got so overwhelmed," says Kurtz. "That production kicked my ass. It blew up my romantic idea of the woodturner in the woods making chairs for a living."

His response? A sculpture: (A) *Typical Windsor Form* (2004), a Mobius strip of two intertwining chairs pitched at angles impossible to sit on – an anti-chair that became an

The title work of a 2013 solo show at Hedge Gallery, **Singularity** is handcarved basswood finished with milk paint. Kurtz's starburst-like works demonstrate his technical prowess, but the artist considers them sculptures first. "The craft is something the viewer understands after spending some time with it," he says.



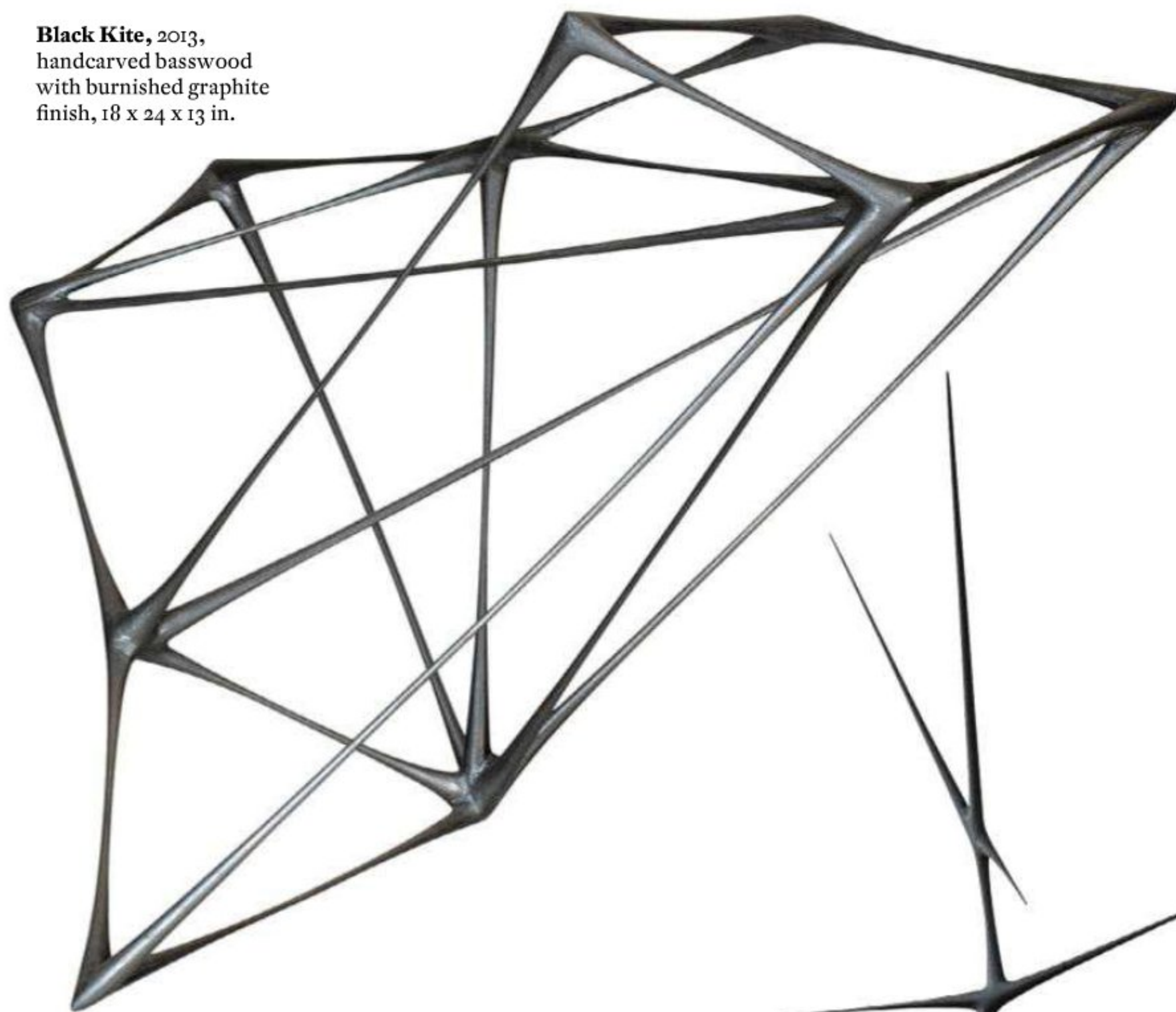
Kirstie Tweed

Art and craft, form and function – Kurtz's work draws its magic from the spaces in between.



"I'm 40 years old now, and I'm just now starting to get a body of work that I feel like is mine."

Black Kite, 2013,
handcarved basswood
with burnished graphite
finish, 18 x 24 x 13 in.



LEFT:
En Pointe,
2012–13,
handcarved
basswood,
milk paint,
monofilament,
5.3 x 3.3 x 3.3 ft.

Many Stars,
2013, handcarved
basswood, milk
paint, monofilament,
45 x 18 x 15 in.

early calling card for a furniture maker with a wildly creative streak. "I loved those Windsor chairs but felt kind of beleaguered by them after a while," he says. "With the sculpture, I wanted to regain the ownership of my love for that chair again. I struggled with these notions of 'Am I a sculptor? Am I a furniture maker? Am I going to be a craftsman? Am I going to be a conceptual artist like I was trained in art school?' (*A*) *Typical Windsor Form* embodies all the struggle and the pleasure of making things and looking at furniture history and figuring out my identity as an artist or designer or maker."

Just as he seeks harmony in his work, Kurtz strives for equilibrium in his practice. "If all I'm getting are furniture commissions, I skip work and start on a sculpture to balance it out," he says. "And if I only did sculpture, I'd totally get lost in fantasy, in poetry. The furniture brings me back down to earth. If I feel too earthbound by the furniture, I'm able to have a break from that with the sculpture."

This is the necessary tension in Christopher Kurtz's work, the practical magic in its duality: design and chance, form and function, art and craft. It's also its simple, unifying framework. The furniture turns into sculpture, the sculpture turns into furniture. All Kurtz's schooling, his time with Puryear, his years of perfecting his technique and mastering the materials—they add up to the work of one man's hands. "Ideas come from making things," says Kurtz.

"I like the alchemy of manipulating materials with your hands, taking a stick of wood and transforming it into something magical."

✦
christopherkurtz.net
Brian K. Mahoney is editor of Chronogram, a lifestyle magazine covering the Hudson Valley.



Kurtz's sculptural works are so elegant as to appear effortless, but in reality they require careful planning. Here, the artist pauses with a new piece in progress.

The Experiment

*To glimpse
into furniture maker
Jon Brooks'
fertile imagination,
look no further
than his home.*



FURNITURE MAKER JON BROOKS works in a fairy-tale setting, a huge swath of conservation land in the woods of southern New Hampshire. At its center is the house that he and his then-wife built in 1970, which looks like it's from an upscale version of *Hansel and Gretel*; the grounds include vegetable and flower gardens, a chicken coop, and sculptures. He built his first studio in the same style as his house; after a devastating fire a few years ago, he, wife Jami Boyle, and friends rebuilt the

ABOVE:
New Hampshire artist
Jon Brooks hangs out
in a nook of his house
with friend Maggie.

RIGHT:
Brooks built his home
in 1970. The endomor-
phic structure sits among
wood and stone sculp-
tures he created a few
years later. **Tri-Stair**
exalts a potted plant.
He and his wife, Jami
Boyle, sleep at the top
of the home's turret.





INTERVIEW BY
Christine Temin

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
John W. Hession

multi-structure complex in a more muted style, but the whimsical touches remain.

When did you start making art?

I was 5 or 6. It was because of a problem with a teacher who wanted me to color inside the lines. Her response to my protest with a wad of crayons landed me in an art program

at the Currier Museum of Art, near where I grew up in Manchester, New Hampshire, and where I had a retrospective more than 60 years later.

What kind of influence did college have?

I was accepted at Rhode Island School of Design and Rochester Institute of Technology.

I chose Rochester because it was farther away from home. I was interested in sculpture rather than furniture at first, but that changed after I became Wendell Castle's first apprentice. He was a mentor, and that stays with you through your life. Wendell wrote the introduction to the catalogue for my 2011 retrospective at the Currier.

You've always made sculptural furniture, but your work has changed over the years. Tell us about your early work.

My early pieces were often made of a single piece of wood. I love [Constantin] Brancusi's and [Isamu] Noguchi's work, and I tried to find wood with sculptural lines that could still be used functionally, although



not all my furniture is intended to be functional. Sometimes I combined several large pieces, maybe of different woods.

Where do you get your wood?

When I was at RIT, I had to get it from salvage in upstate New York. But once we bought this property and built a house, I was able to use wood from the

BELOW:

The main living space of Brooks' home is alive with his work. **Throne** (bottom right, 1970) provides a cozy pine seat for reading, while the seatless **Ghost Chair** sculpture (center, 2014) only appears functional.



LEFT: Seated on top of **Sphere**, Maggie gazes at Brooks' **Spiral Pillars**. Made in the 1970s, the works are pressure-treated wood so they can withstand the elements.





TOP: Brooks fits stretchers to the many legs of a chair. The work is the third in a series of wiggly furniture pieces that look like they might creep away.

ABOVE LEFT: Brooks cavorts with a piece in the early stages, pondering next steps. "I do what I have to to get them to make sense to me," he says.

ABOVE: The artist beside his 27-foot Shaker-inspired ladder (2015) commissioned by the historic Hancock Shaker Village in Massachusetts.

200 acres of conservation land around us. I made a 3-mile trail system, and wood regenerates very quickly in New Hampshire, so I don't have any problem sustainably harvesting the wood I need.

I look for curved shapes and strong lines. I mark trees and harvest a bunch of wood at one

time. I strip the bark and store the wood, much of it curly sticks for my current work. Wherever I am, I use only indigenous woods. Exotic woods are not in my repertoire.

There was a significant turning point in your work. Tell us about that.

It started when a Tasmanian artist I had met in the US recruited me for an artist-in-residence position in 1983–'84 at the University of Tasmania. At first I continued with my previous work, but I soon decided that since I was in a new place, with new materials available, I should try some-

thing different. Tasmania has huge forests with indigenous woods like Huon pine, which is wonderful for furniture. I loved Aboriginal art, which uses a lot of color, so color increasingly entered my work. I began to make work, some of it non-functional, assembled from multiple pieces, some smaller sculptures. By the time I returned home, my work had changed totally.

How was the new work received back home?

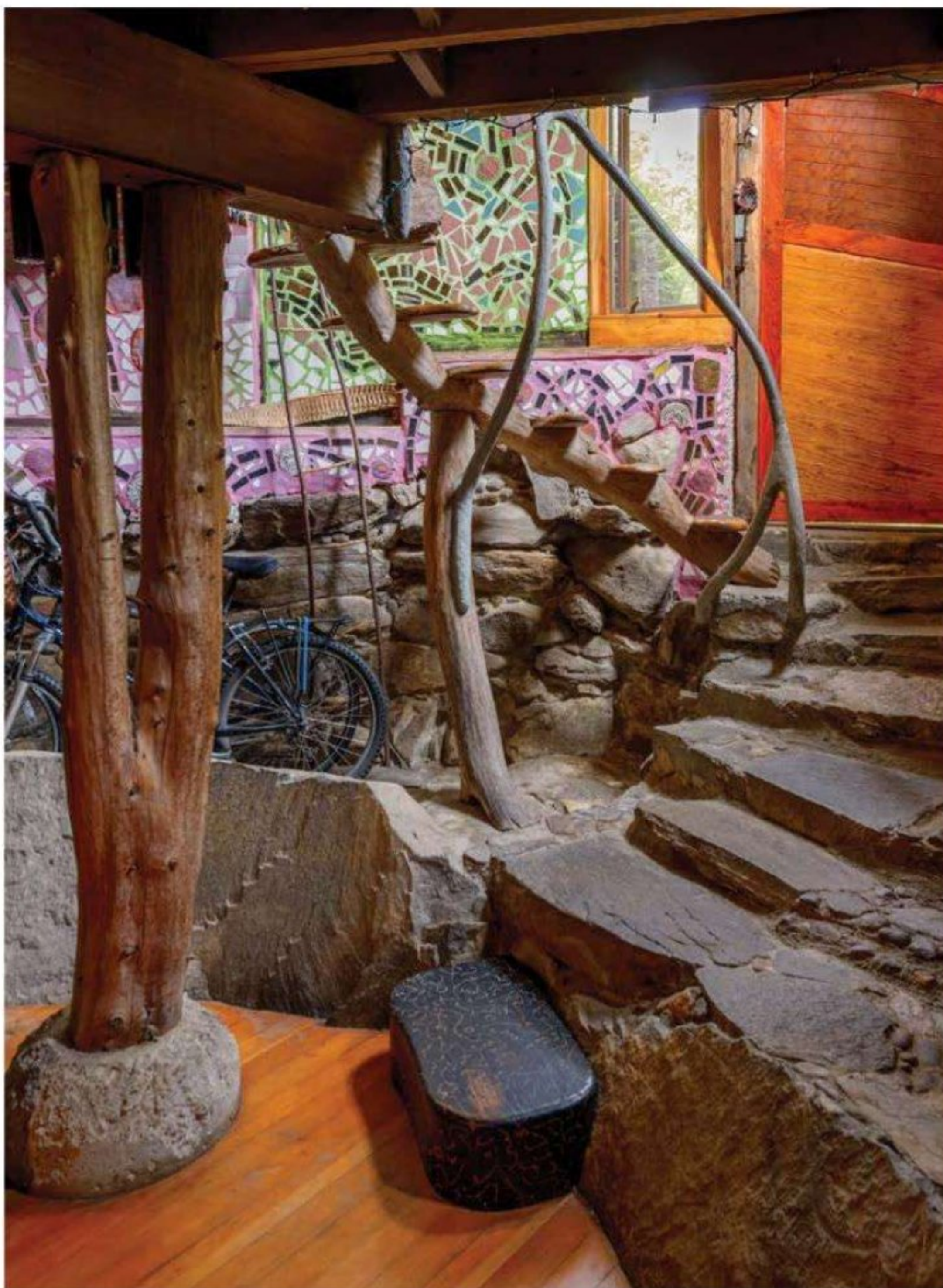
Galleries loved it. Clients accustomed to my previous pieces weren't so enthusiastic, and since I didn't want to continue in that style, there were no commissions for a while. But gradually the commissions came back. In some periods I've had two to three years' worth of commissions.

How do you price your work?

Some of my work is on spec and some on commission. The price is based, in part, on time. For years Jami nudged me to keep track of my time, and I finally started to. But now I just know instinctively how much to charge. This chair I'm working on now, with nine legs, will take hundreds of hours and sell for \$20,000.

Tell us about your house.

I had no formal training in architecture, but fine art was a great foundation, and, as a child, I had always built things like treehouses in the woods. Initially the house was supposed to be a simple A-frame, but the ceiling turned out to be too low at the edges, so we just lowered the frame to be the floor. We were then free to adopt a more unusual design. I didn't want to live in a box, so the only straight line is the floor. We did everything ourselves; fortunately, the local building code wasn't enacted until the year after we started the house. The house is actually overbuilt.



Brooks likes to trade work with other makers. Mosaic murals by Isaiah Zagar add color to the front entry.

It was an experiment, but it's lasted since 1970. Good, right?

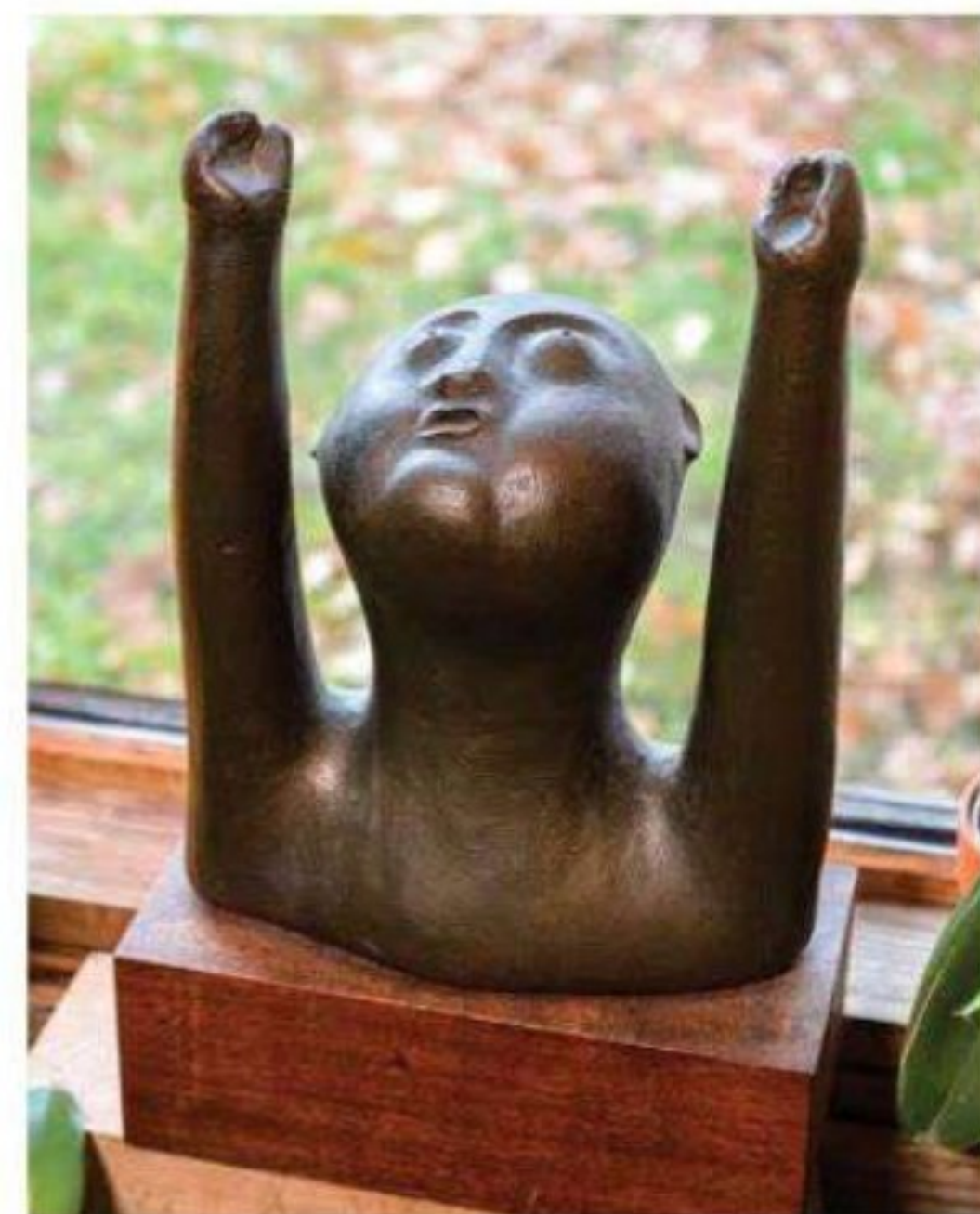
Do you have much of your own work in the house?

The house contains both early work – like a very big chair from a single piece of wood, like the tall non-functional ladders made of curly sticks – and recent

TOP RIGHT: Brooks made this chestnut sculpture to commemorate the 1972 birth of his daughter, Rebekah, now a jeweler.

work, like the small painted sculptures made of bronze, after Garry Knox Bennett and Judy [Kensley] McKie put me onto a foundry in California.

Besides your own work, what else do you have in the house? Among my favorites are a plaster sculpture by Wendell Castle,



ABOVE: His mentor Wendell Castle made this plaster sculpture in the 1960s and gave it to Brooks.



LEFT: Brooks named **Torus** (2015) after the doughnut-like geometric form it's based on. The textured pine chair was carved from a single piece of wood.



a stool by Stephen Hogbin, mosaic tile work by Isaiah Zagar on interior walls and the exterior chimney, wall sculpture by Randy Shull, and other work by Howard Werner, Deborah Felix, and Gerry Williams, and ceramics by Edwin and Mary Scheier. All the works were traded for, with the exception of ceramics that were collected by my parents.

You lost a lot of work in a fire a few years ago. What happened?

I had a studio that we built in 1972 and added to over the years, with a bench room, machine room, and storage place. In December 2010, heavy snow caused a main electric wire to pull off the front of the studio and start a fire. Jami woke up and called the local volunteer fire department, but it took

them half an hour to get here. She directed them while I was off ranting in the field, but they couldn't do much, and we lost four buildings. All the pieces I had finished or in process, more than 20 of them, were destroyed. It was devastating.

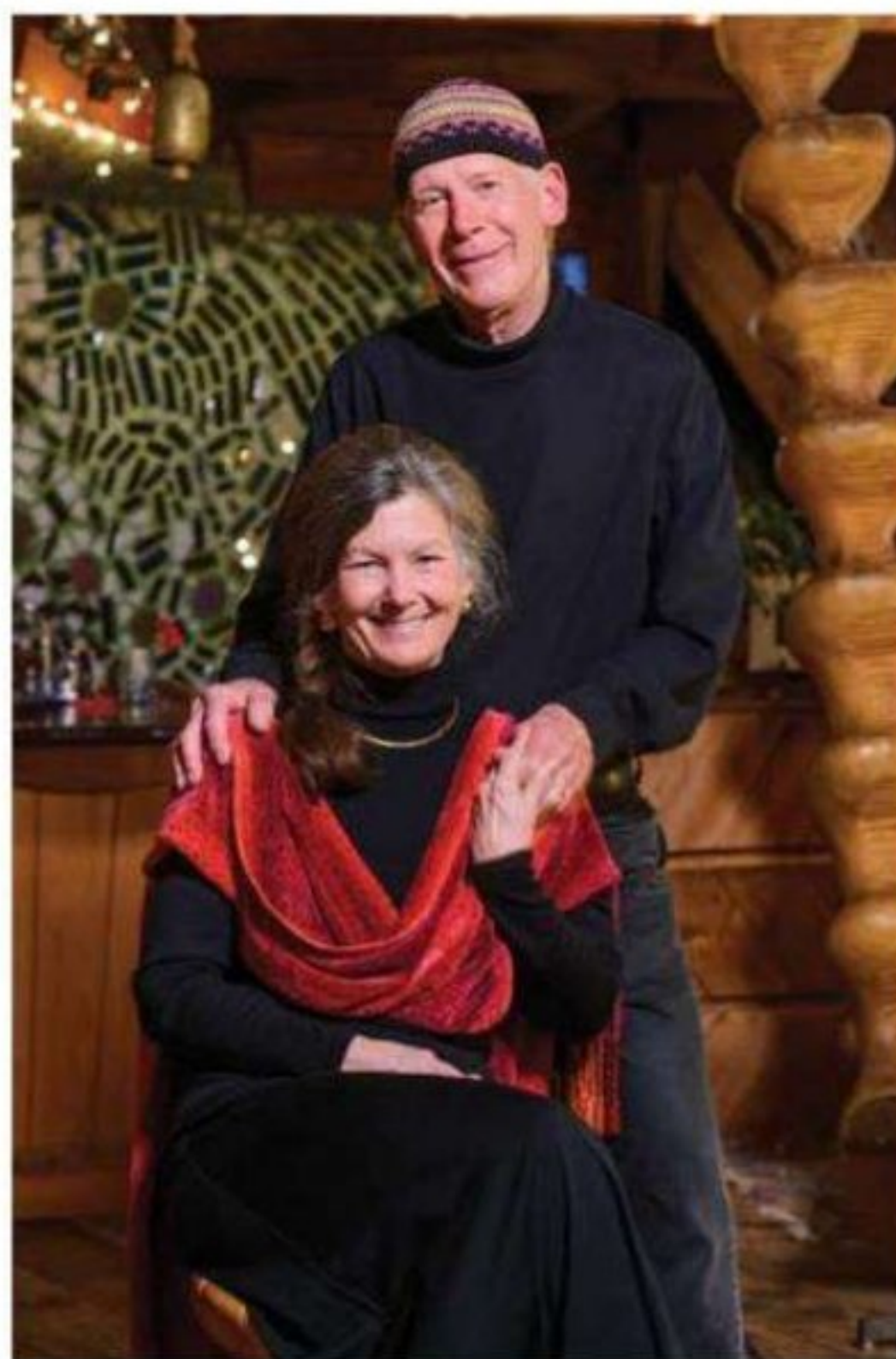
How did you recover?

It was hard, but the global community, including CERF+, really helped. It donated money,

tools, and support and said my work must go on. Martin Puryear even gave me a special type of vise to replace mine, which had burned.

By January we had plans for a new structure, which was prebuilt elsewhere by my older brother, a post-and-beam builder, and moved here.

I got back to work, but I had to do something reflective of the fire, so I made some works from



pieces charred by the fire, and I've used a torch on a few pieces since then.

You also had an exhibition to prepare for.

Yes, a retrospective of my work, called "A Collaboration with Nature," which opened in March 2011, with works from private collectors and museums. It was very gratifying, because my work was initially not well received

in New Hampshire. The League of New Hampshire Craftsmen once asked me to bring them work, and after a while they called and asked me to take it back! But that has long since changed, and the Currier show brought me from an emotional bottom after the fire to the top.

✦ jonbrooks.org
Christine Temin is an arts writer in Boston.

OPPOSITE: Brooks likes to unwind after a busy day in the studio by cooking on his 19th-century range. He carved the 10-foot staircase leading to the sleeping loft at the back of the room from a single piece of elm; chisel marks serve as treads.

TOP LEFT: Brooks connected spiral forms to create his coat rack. Behind it stands **Fire Buddha** (2010), which he made with a piece of stovepipe he found in the charred remains of his studio fire.

ABOVE LEFT: Brooks and his wife, Jami Boyle, an ordained minister and interfaith spiritual director.

TOP: A stool by Canadian artist and friend Stephen Hogbin, traded for when both men were residents at Artpark in western New York.

ABOVE: **Snake Man, Fear and Temptation** (1990) is Brooks' response to the abundance of poisonous snakes in Tasmania. A Hearthstone stove heats the house; Brooks and Boyle collect wood to keep it burning.

Putting It Together

*Equal parts bricoleur
and woodworker,
Katie Hudnall builds
her fantastical creations,
piece by piece.*

STORY BY *Deborah Bishop*

PORTRAIT BY *Harold Lee Miller*





Inspired by the imaginative worlds of Edward Gorey and Jules Verne, plus down-to-earth farmyard architecture, Katie Hudnall creates art that is part furniture, part pop-up book.



KATIE HUDNALL'S WORK has the same wonky logic and otherworldly beauty as a half-remembered dream.

The artist, a prolific sketcher with a BFA in sculpture (Corcoran College of Art and Design) and an MFA in furniture design and woodworking (Virginia Commonwealth University), seems most at home in the interstitial realm that exists between genres. She has a category on her website called *Furniturish*, and indeed, it's in the "-ish" that her hybrid creations of the functional and the fantastical seem to take flight.

With aesthetic inspirations such as Edward Gorey – whose detailed pen-and-ink drawings evoke elaborately imagined (and deliciously macabre) worlds – as well as fabulists such as Roald Dahl and Jules Verne, Hudnall imbues her assemblages with similarly unexpected elements. Many are interactive – equipped

ABOVE (3): **Sea Sloom**, 2009, found wood, paint, ink, color pencil, lenses, lacquer, hardware, 2.5 x 5 x 1 ft.

A gentle, humorous way to take on the rising waters caused by climate change, *Sea Sloom* reimagines the hull of a boat as a trailer for pedestrians who might need one that can float. The hatches open both up and out.

ABOVE RIGHT (2): **Cabinet With Sidecar**, 2007, wood, metal, glass lens, paint, ink, pencil, lacquer, hardware, 2 x 2 x 1.25 ft.

Telescoping drawers hide a key to the main door, which features a peephole. This is the first time Hudnall painted over the grain on a piece and later redrew it, which, despite being tedious, made her giggle.

with multiple portals, secret compartments housing tiny keys, Lilliputian vignettes, and telescoping arms that extend several feet. "I love that moment of opening something up – a door or a drawer – when the private becomes public, and you feel this shiver of surprise and delight," she explains.

Her surface treatments are no less intricate. The wood – much of it small, discarded bits rescued from dumpsters and gutted houses – is embellished with pen-and-ink drawings and layers of paint, creating finishes that impart antiquity, suggest decorative wallpaper, and even painstakingly add back the grain that's been painted over. With such illustrative attention to detail, the pieces appear almost to have risen, fully formed, from the pages of her sketchbook. Which, in a sense, they have.

Almost all pieces start as extremely detailed drawings,

confirms Hudnall, 37, who had planned to study illustration as an undergrad before decamping to sculpture when she realized she could make the things she had been drawing. Finding clay too "smushy" and metal too hard, she had her "Goldilocks moment" as soon as her hands touched wood, although her affection was not necessarily reciprocated.

"I was terrible at it, initially. I just had no natural affinity for the formal processes of traditional furniture making," says Hudnall (who today teaches many of those techniques as an assistant professor of furniture design at the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis). "For the longest time I was trying to cram my concepts onto a classic furniture form. It took me a while to figure out what I wanted to say, and the methodology that would best let me say it."

Baby steps in that direction occurred after her graduation



Shark Fin Cabinet, 2014,
found wood,
hardware, fasteners,
ink, paint, dye,
lacquer, wax,
5.6 x 1.7 x 1.3 ft.

Like the stilt houses on the beaches of North Carolina, where Hudnall spent summers as a child, this curio cabinet has tall legs that look as if they have been partially submerged.





from Corcoran in 2001, when she moved to Oberlin, Ohio, and found a job working for sculptor Palli Davene Davis Holubar. “It was eye-opening. Her methods were much more intuitive than the rigid ones I’d been forcing myself to master,” says Hudnall. “And she pushed me to go to graduate school, which hadn’t been on my radar.”

Hudnall credits two of the professors on her graduate committee at VCU – woodworker Bill Hammersley and Susan Iverson, a textile artist – for helping her find her voice. “Susan figuratively gripped me by the shoulders, and told me, ‘Your sketchbook is full of all these wonderfully wonky

drawings, and yet you keep banging away at this really formal woodworking stuff.’”

Iverson laughs at the memory. “Once you understand how interesting Katie’s internal world is, and how rich her sense of humor, you long to see that made tangible. We gave her license to dip into that world, and after that, it was just magical,” recalls Iverson. “One of her pieces, *The World’s Longest Drawing Table*, still makes me laugh out loud,” she continues, describing a somewhat zany, precariously long and narrow structure. Wrought from two boxes of kindling, it puts its construction methods proudly on display.

“There was a moment where I realized I could get much closer to my drawings – where I tend to accentuate connections rather than hiding them – by just using a band saw and bolts. Now all my joinery – and there are air quotes around that word – tends to be visible,” says Hudnall.

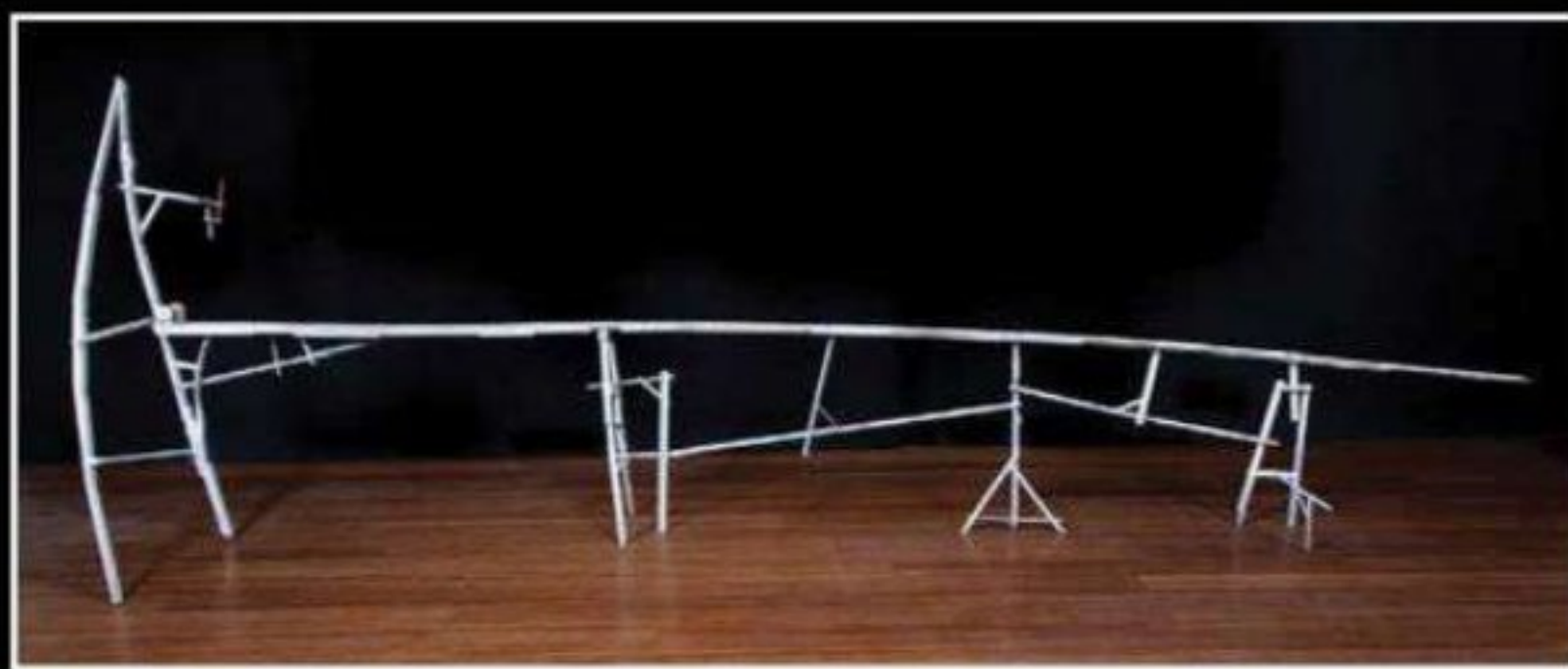
After receiving her MFA in 2005, a move to her then-girlfriend’s family farm in the wonderfully named Bumpass, Virginia, further expanded Hudnall’s woodworking vocabulary. Refining her formal skills in a cabinet shop by day, she had a studio in one of the many outbuildings constructed by her girlfriend’s grandfather.

“He was the most amazing tinkerer and jerry-rigger, and became my making hero,” says Hudnall, who was strongly influenced by the vernacular architecture of the farm. “It was all on the surface – board-and-batten techniques, visible bracing – that beautiful and honest language. I took those construction methods and just shrunk them down.”

Even as Hudnall has refined her craft, her pieces have retained a deceptive air of being, as she says, “cobbled together.” But, in fact, there are a lot of meticulous calculations required to get the pieces to stand up and the various mechanisms to move smoothly. (It’s not surprising

The World's Longest Drawing Table,
2007, found wood,
hardware, paint

Extending 10 to 18 feet, the structure is, at certain points, a mere 3 inches wide. "There's a beauty about something that looks as if it shouldn't be able to carry its weight: the scrappy underdog, defying expectations," Hudnall says.



LEFT:
Pirate Stool, ca. 2005,
wood, upholstery,
hardware, paint, copper

"I love pirates – for a lot of reasons," Hudnall says, among them the way they cobble themselves together with peg legs, patches, and hooks. Her stool – or is it a chest? – contains a trove of legs for different occasions, including a striped pajama peg for bedtime.



BELOW:
Ben's Lunch Box,
2009, found wood,
hardware, paint,
ink, lacquer,
9 x 18 x 7 in. (closed)

Hudnall traded this custom lunch carrier, embellished with her signature watercolor and pen-and-ink drawings, for a bike a friend built. Naturally, the work includes a secret compartment.



to learn that Hudnall designs pop-up books for friends in her spare time.)

A sail-like rigging animates *A Half-Month's Worth*, Hudnall's entry for a moon-themed show at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. She made it in 2013, soon after moving from rural Kentucky – where she had lived in a converted barn and could see the Milky Way – to Indianapolis, where the only visible celestial body was the moon.

Opening the smallest drawer compels a painted paper sail with the waxing crescent to open up; each successive drawer raises another sail. A rumination on the passage of time and one's connection to the natural world, *A Half-Month's Worth* was made in real time, as it were, with Hudnall finishing the illustrations at the end of the fortnight by the light of a full moon shining into her studio.

It's one of her many pieces with a connection to the sea, for which Hudnall has a deep affinity, having grown up near the Potomac River and spent summers in eastern North Carolina, where the houses are built on stilts as a flooding precaution. *Shark Fin Cabinet* (2014), whose fin-shaped curio shelving rises up and down, has bluish water marks painted on the bottom of its skinny legs, as if having been partially submerged. *Sea Sloom* (2009) suggests the hull of a boat in cross section, with hatches that open both up and out. "I was thinking about climate change, rising waters, and how a pedestrian might need a kind of teardrop trailer that could float." A humorous way into a serious topic, *Sea Sloom's* interior is painted with a pattern that evokes swirling tidal patterns.

Another nod to the sea (and Jules Verne) is *Nautilus* (2015), part of a collection of scaled-down libraries made by local artists and installed around Indianapolis. Loosely designed after the image of



a boat, *Nautilus* is berthed in a hospital, where its contents offer a means of escape to a happy realm. A tiny vignette is installed in one of the top windows, where a staircase filled with miniature books rises up to the moon – a bulb that lights up at the push of a button.

"I've been drawing things that open, unfurl, and engage the viewer in funny ways for years, and I'm just now getting to the place where I can actually build them," says Hudnall, reflecting on the challenge of not letting the difficulty of the process define the look.

"There was this sign in my graduate school shop that said, 'Don't let the tool rule,' a reminder that you don't want people to get lost in the mechanics of how you built the work," she continues, sounding not unlike an illusionist who wants her audience to fixate on the

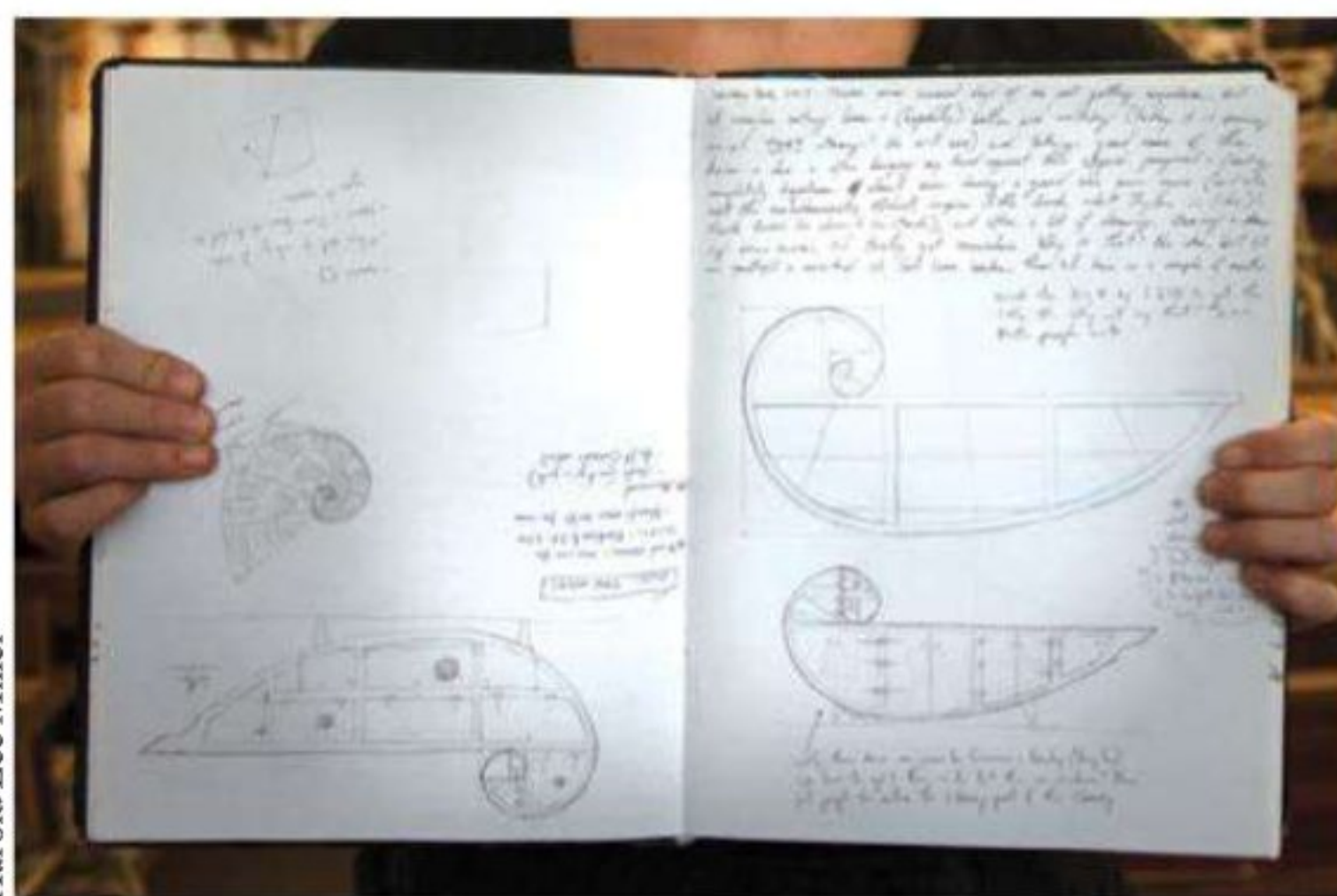
BELOW:

Nautilus, 2015, salvaged wood, plywood, other wood, hardware, plexiglass, ink, paint, lacquer, wax, 6 x 10 x 2 ft.

Docked at a hospital in Indianapolis, *Nautilus* houses a lending library and a tiny vignette at the crest of its wave-like curl: A staircase full of books rises up to a moon, which lights up at the push of a button.

RIGHT: Hudnall's sketches for *Nautilus*. "I've been drawing things that open, unfurl, and engage the viewer in funny ways for years," she says, "and I'm just now getting to the place where I can actually build them."

Harold Lee Miller



RIGHT: **A Half-Month's Worth**, 2013, found wood, hardware, paper, paint, ink, lacquer, wax, string, 5.7 x 1.25 x 3 ft.

Created for a lunar exhibition, this celestial structure has a series of drawers; when opened, each one hoists paper sails painted with the phases of the moon.



Half-Month's photo: Michelle Given

dove flying out of the hat, rather than the hidden compartment. "You just really want them to focus on the magic."

+ katiehudnall.com

Deborah Bishop is a writer and editor in San Francisco, and a frequent contributor to *American Craft*.



Making our community stronger

The American Craft Council believes artistry and craft are life enriching, and inspiration is vital to human expression. No other national organization fosters craftsmanship the way we do. ACC touches all corners of the craft field through a variety of programs and activities designed to champion craft.

As a nonprofit, ACC turns your philanthropic support into educational programs to help emerging artists gain necessary skills and pursue their dreams; into professional opportunities that allow artists to promote and sell their work to thousands of people; and into awards that bring recognition to master artists and celebrate their contributions to the field.

The people and organizations on these pages have been generous partners in this effort. We thank them deeply for their commitment to the continued vitality and growth of the craft field.

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We couldn't do it without you. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Stuart'.

Stuart Kestenbaum
Chair, Board of Trustees

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

Chris Amundsen
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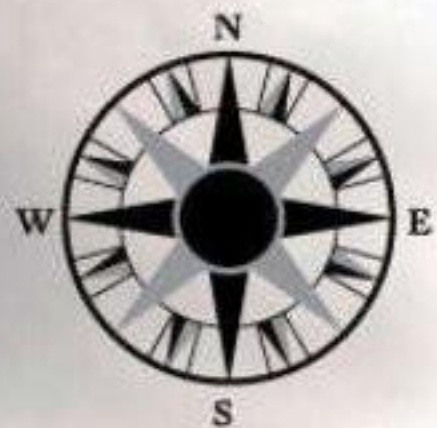
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Halifax, Nova Scotia

Stay Awhile



*This maritime city attracts makers
with its affordability – and keeps them
with its vibrant arts scene.*

STORY BY
Philip Moscovitch





Set on one of the world's deepest harbors, Halifax offers a balance of urban conveniences and outdoor activities.

Photo: Len Wagg



ABOVE:
At **Wonder'neath**,
Heather Wilkinson
helps a young maker use
a handsaw. The work-
space's free open-studio
events connect artists
with the public.

RIGHT:
Harness Round
Necklace by **Kiersten
Holden-Ada**. She's
among the many artists
who came to Halifax for
NSCAD University and
then made it their home.



**Halifax Crafters
Society** (top), an all-
volunteer organization,
keeps shows affordable
for local makers such as
Sarah Sears (above).

HEATHER WILKINSON GREETs me with a big, cheery smile before turning to show a teenager how to clamp a dowel he wants to notch. "Tighten it on each side, and then you can take really small strokes," she tells him. By the time he's made his first cut, Wilkinson is already across the room, helping a young boy feed paper into an electric typewriter and explaining how the carriage return works.

It's a bright September day and the first open studio of the season at Wonder'neath, the North End Halifax workspace founded by Wilkinson and Melissa Marr, both interdisciplinary artists. It provides studio space for 12 professionals, along with space open to the public for free, twice a week, almost year-round. This

afternoon, there are two dozen people here – many of them kids – sewing costumes and pillows, painting, handbuilding.

Wilkinson says it's all about building relationships between professional artists and members of the broader community. "It's kind of a delicate ecology that we manage. With spaces like this, we're building up a level of support in the community for the work that we're doing," she says, before trailing off to go thread a bobbin.

In Nova Scotia, a province that juts out into the Atlantic, mutual support has long been a survival tactic – whether in fisheries, the nascent wine and craft beer industries, or the arts. About half of the province's 1 million people live in Halifax, which is built on one

of the world's deepest harbors. The walkable downtown rises steeply from the waterfront and is close to natural spaces such as Lawrencetown Beach – a popular spot for hard-core winter surfers – as well as a multitude of wilderness trails. Affordable housing, ocean views, and a thriving cultural scene have made the city attractive to many craft artists.

One is fashion designer Gary Markle, who came to Halifax from New York City in 1990 because he wanted to "do life a little differently" in a place "where you could get to the ocean in 20 minutes, hike in the woods, and find fresh vegetables from a farmer," he says. Today, he is head of the craft division at NSCAD University, formerly the Nova Scotia

College of Art and Design, which has offered an MFA in craft since 1973.

"The work produced here is pushing boundaries," Markle says. "We're not out ahead of people in terms of digital technology, but we are in terms of fresh ways of looking at things that might be traditional, like throwing vessels or creating hollowware." Connections to rural life also have a powerful influence on many Halifax makers, and traditional arts such as quilting and rug hooking remain popular.

Markle points particularly to the exuberant crocheted playgrounds of Toshiko Horiuchi MacAdam, who teaches at NSCAD. Working with her husband, Charles, MacAdam uses a traditionally domestic



ABOVE:
NSCAD University's
**Anna Leonowens
Gallery** shows work
by students, faculty,
and other artists. The
gallery is named for
the school founder –
who was also the basis
for the fictional charac-
ter in *The King and I*.

RIGHT:
Therese Bombardier
is one of 12 artists with a
studio at Wonder'neath,
where she makes ceram-
ic jewelry and function-
al ware.



Toshiko Horiuchi
MacAdam reinterprets
traditional craft tech-
niques in her colorful
crocheted playgrounds.



Prince Charles visited the **Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market** in 2014; it's the oldest continuously running farmers' market in North America. The upper floor is devoted to craft.



art form to create huge dyed-nylon installations that invite children to bounce and hang. (She first got the idea after watching kids clamber onto one of her textile sculptures in a gallery.) "Her work is breathtaking," Markle says. "She's at the top of her game; she is in her 70s, and she is unstoppable."

The Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council – soon to become Craft Nova Scotia – has also been nurturing craft in the province since the early 1970s. Executive director Susan Hanrahan says the organization helps attract artists to Halifax; what keeps many here is the beauty and affordability of Nova Scotia. "You can get a house with an outbuilding you can use as your studio

without breaking the bank," she says. "It's an inspirational place to live."

Therese Bombardier, who makes ceramic jewelry and functional ware at her studio at Wonder'neath, notes that Nova Scotia "isn't the most prosperous place – so we've got to be industrious." One organization helping artists to "make stuff happen" is the Halifax Crafters Society (she's on the board), which many credit with making the business of craft more fun. The Crafters hold two annual juried shows, with free admission and reasonable fees for vendors. The family-friendly winter show is always lively, with a DJ and snacks. Bombardier says the Crafters "keep it fresh" with new vendors and support for emerging makers.

Kiersten Holden-Ada is a regular at the Crafters markets. She moved to Halifax from western Canada 15 years ago to study at NSCAD, and, like many, wound up staying. The jeweler says she sees "a lot of younger up-and-coming artists and craftspeople here these days. There tends to be a climate of support for each other, as opposed to really teeth-gritted competition." She credits shared studio spaces, like the one she works out of with five other jewelers, for fostering the community's camaraderie. "Talents that are not shared are not talents" reads a piece of paper stuck to the door.

Back at Wonder'neath, the open-studio evening is winding down. At closing

time, Wilkinson calls out, "Just pointing out it's 7 o'clock!" A group of kids handbuilding with clay carry on, while across the room, a young woman keeps painting. Reluctantly, some of the other participants begin packing up and getting ready to go.

The teen who was notching the dowel when I arrived heads past Wilkinson, a completed stylized arrow in his hand. "That looks great!" she says.

✦ *Philip Moscovitch is a freelance writer and radio documentary producer who frequently writes about Atlantic Canada.*



The **Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Halifax** (above) showcases work by Canadian makers such as jeweler and mixed-media artist **Kari Woo** (left).



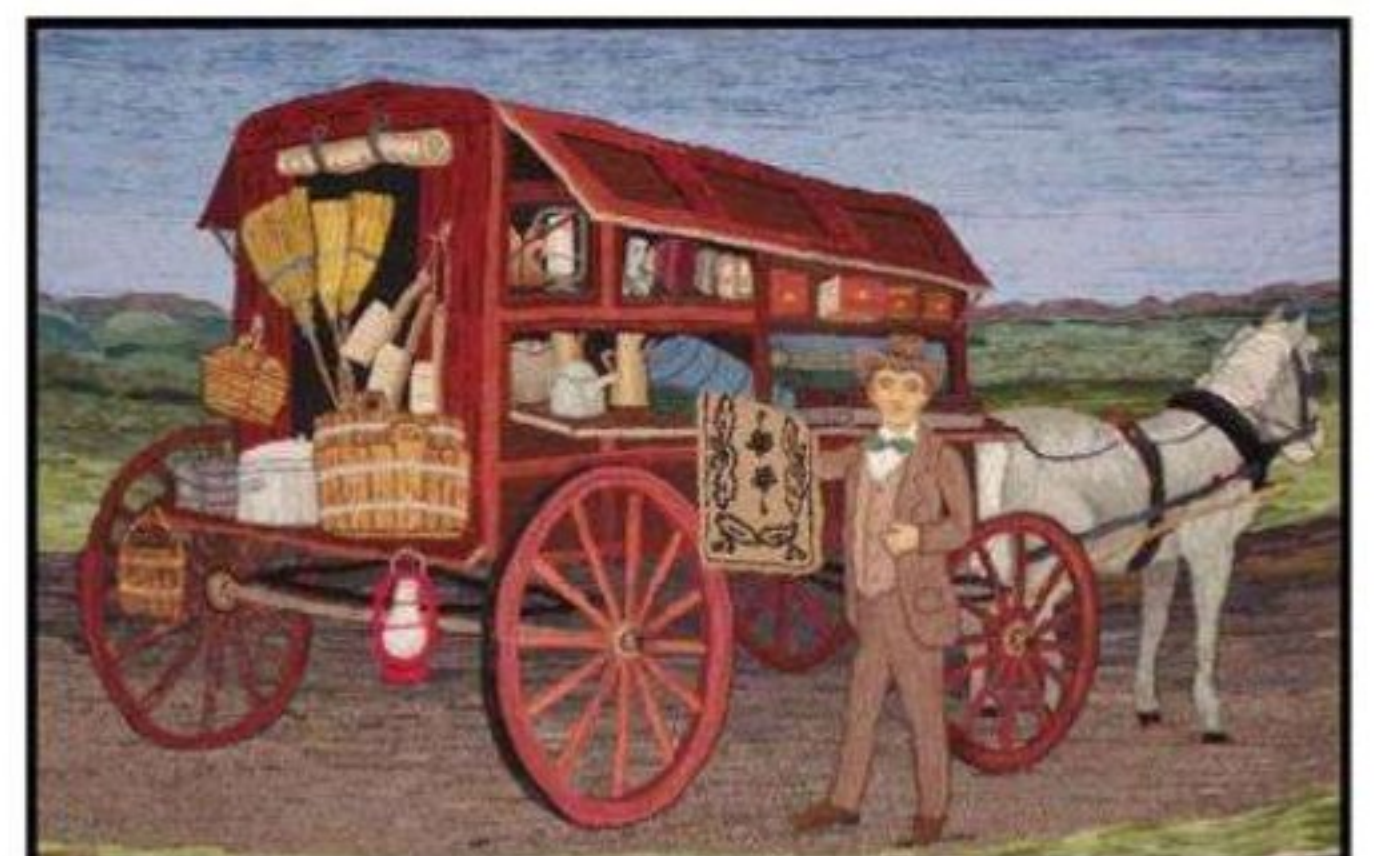
LEFT:
During their evening
fairs, **Plan B Merchants
Co-op** spills into a street
bustling with curious
craft lovers.

BELOW:
Lost & Found's mix
of vintage clothes
and locally handmade
wares is a draw
for Halifax hipsters.



ABOVE:
Made in the Maritimes
owners Joel Kelly and
Mark Smith, with man-
ager Krissi MacKenzie.
The boutique special-
izes in goods handmade
in eastern Canada.

RIGHT:
**The Hooked Rug
Museum of North
America** has a vast col-
lection of work, includ-
ing *The Yankee Peddler*, a
tribute to famed hooked
rug designer Edward
Sands Frost.



If You Go

Halifax Seaport

The waterfront development offers a cluster of venues where you can look or buy. Visit the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design's **Designer Craft Shop** for everything from ethereal wood sculptures to intricate hats, jewelry, photography, and functional ceramics. Across the street, the NSCCD's **Mary E. Black Gallery** is the only public gallery in the province dedicated to fine craft. Then drop into the **Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market**, grab a snack, and head to the second floor, devoted almost entirely to craft.

1. Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design
craft-design.ns.ca

1a. Designer Craft Shop
 1099 Marginal Rd., Suite 116

1b. Mary E. Black Gallery
 1061 Marginal Rd., Suite 140

2. Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market
 1209 Marginal Rd.
halifaxfarmersmarket.com

The **Designer Craft Shop** is a part of the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design, which supports regional makers with a gallery, shops, and studio space.



Downtown

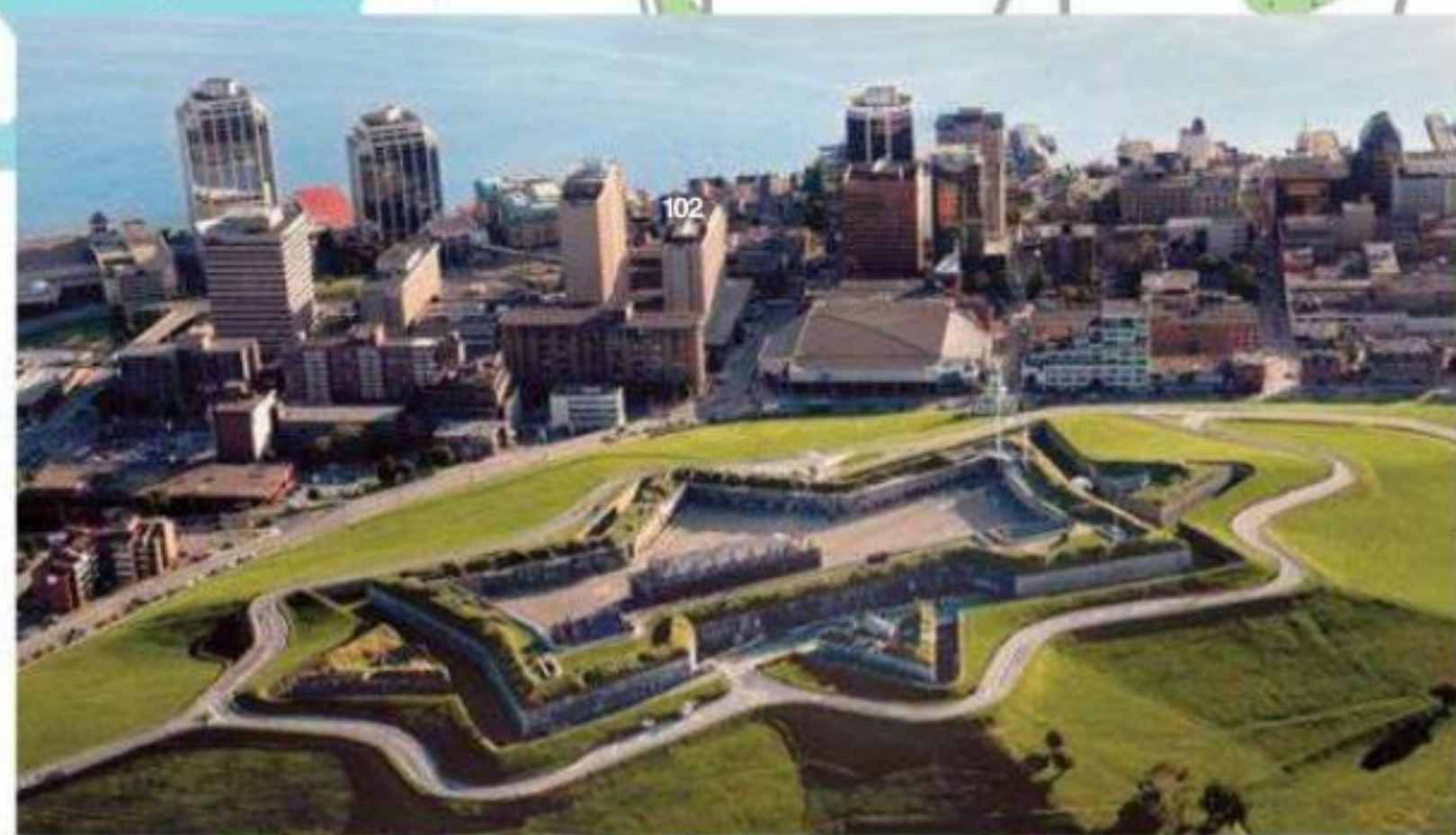
NSCAD University's **Anna Leonowens Gallery** features work by students, faculty, and visiting artists. A few blocks southeast is the **Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Halifax**, where rotating exhibitions display a variety of craft and fine art. After visiting the galleries, walk up Citadel Hill to **Inkwell Modern Handmade Boutique & Letterpress Studio**, which specializes in paper products and is located just below Fort George, a star-shaped 19th-century British fort. Then head up Spring Garden Road, past the city's architecturally stunning Central Library, and visit **Jennifer's of Nova Scotia**, which has exclusively featured work by Atlantic Canadians for nearly 40 years.

3. Anna Leonowens Gallery
 NSCAD University campus
 1891 Granville St.
alg.nscad.ca

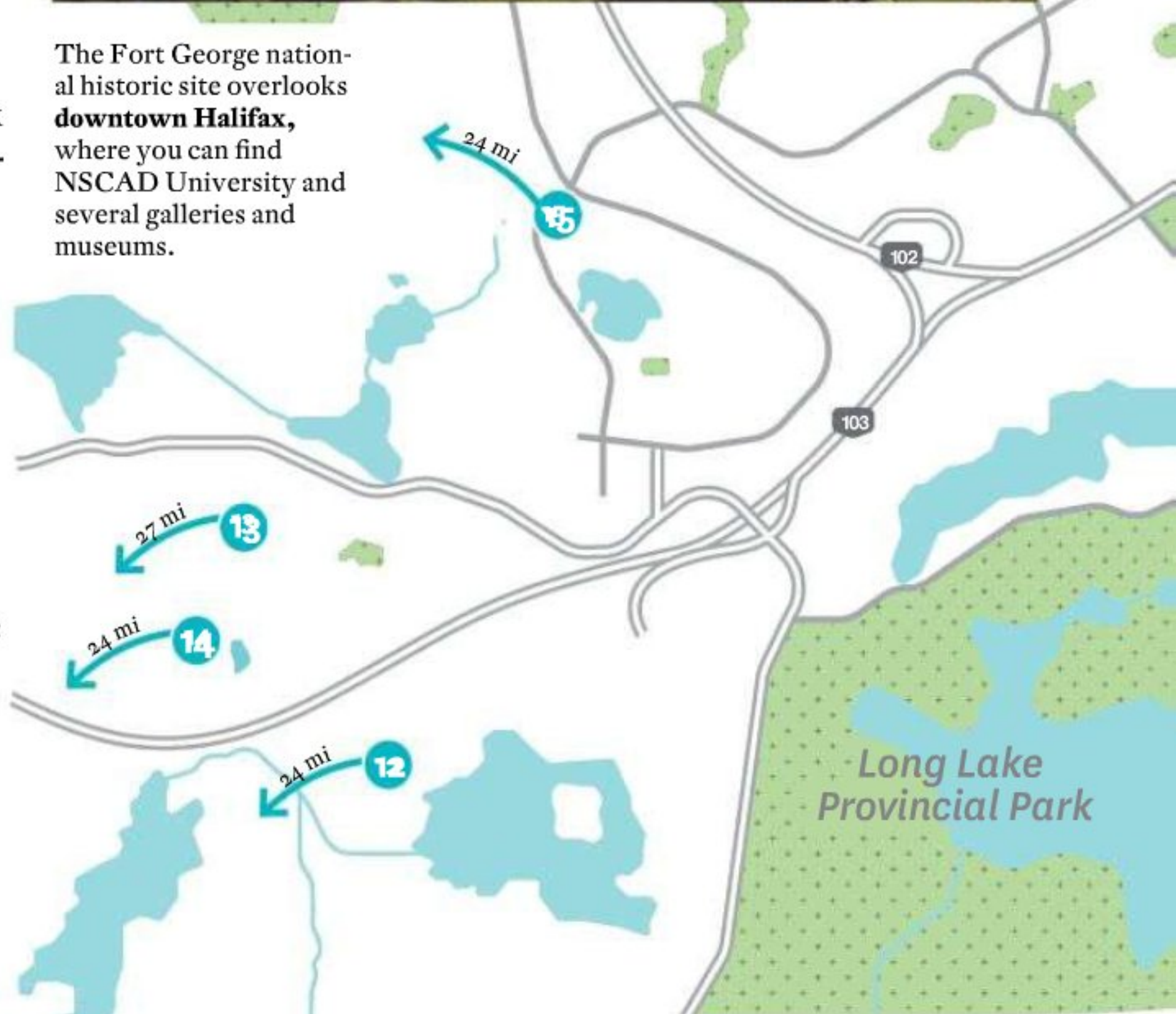
4. Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Halifax
 1723 Hollis St.
artgalleryofnovascotia.ca

5. Inkwell Modern Handmade Boutique & Letterpress Studio
 1658 Market St.
inkwellboutique.ca

6. Jennifer's of Nova Scotia
 5635 Spring Garden Rd.
jennifers.ns.ca



The Fort George national historic site overlooks downtown Halifax, where you can find NSCAD University and several galleries and museums.



North End

Agricola and Gottingen Streets and the historic Hydrostone district feature lots of small boutiques with distinctive handmade items. Try **Lost & Found** for vintage clothes and locally made wares. **Plan B Merchants Co-op**'s sprawl of rooms are chock-full of offbeat wares, including many handmade items by members. **Made in the Maritimes** and **Lady Luck Boutique** both offer work by dozens of artisans, many of them local. If you're feeling creative, stop by **Wonder'neath**'s free open-studio events on Fridays and Saturdays to make your own crafts.

7. Lost & Found
 2383 Agricola St.
 (902) 466-5986

8. Plan B Merchants Co-op
 2180 Gottingen St.
facebook.com/PlanBHalifax

9. Made in the Maritimes
 5527 Young St.
madeinthemaritimes.com

10. Lady Luck Boutique
 5519 Young St.
facebook.com/ladyluckboutiquehalifax

11. Wonder'neath
 2891 Isleville St.
wonderneath.com



Peggys Cove

The traditional fishing village (population: 35) is under an hour's drive from downtown and filled with seasonal shops. **Beales' Bailiwick** was one of the first shops in the country to stake its reputation on Canadian crafts, and much of the inventory is made by Nova Scotia artists. Just up the hill is **Peggy's Cove Jewellery Studio**, goldsmith Steven Mehle's studio shop. Keep going to **Hags on the Hill** for leatherwork, jewelry, and ceramics made by local women artists.

12. Beales' Bailiwick

124 Peggys Point Rd.
beales.ns.ca

13. Peggy's Cove Jewellery Studio

154 Peggys Point Rd.
facebook.com/PeggysCoveJewelleryStudio

14. Hags on the Hill

173 Peggys Point Rd.
facebook.com/Hagsonthehill

Lunenburg County

A little more than an hour from Halifax, the towns of Lunenburg and Mahone Bay are home to a striking number of galleries, shops, and studios. Take the old Highway 3 hugging the coast and stop at the **Hooked Rug Museum of North America**, open from May through October, along the way.

15. Hooked Rug Museum of North America

9849 Hwy. 3
hookedrugmuseumnovascotia.org

The village of **Peggys Cove**, less than an hour from Halifax, is home to rugged scenery and several craft boutiques.



Seasonal Fairs

The **Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council** (soon to be Craft Nova Scotia), **Halifax Crafters Society**, and the **Dartmouth Makers** each hold two juried shows a year (winter and spring or summer) that have their own distinctive flavors and are brimming with quality vendors. Check out their websites to plan your visit.

Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council

(Craft Nova Scotia)
nsdcc.ns.ca

Halifax Crafters Society

halifaxcrafters.ca

The Dartmouth Makers

dartmouthmakers.tumblr.com



Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman

Charles and Ray Eames responded to the recliner craze of the 1950s with an upscale leather version that swivels rather than reclines.



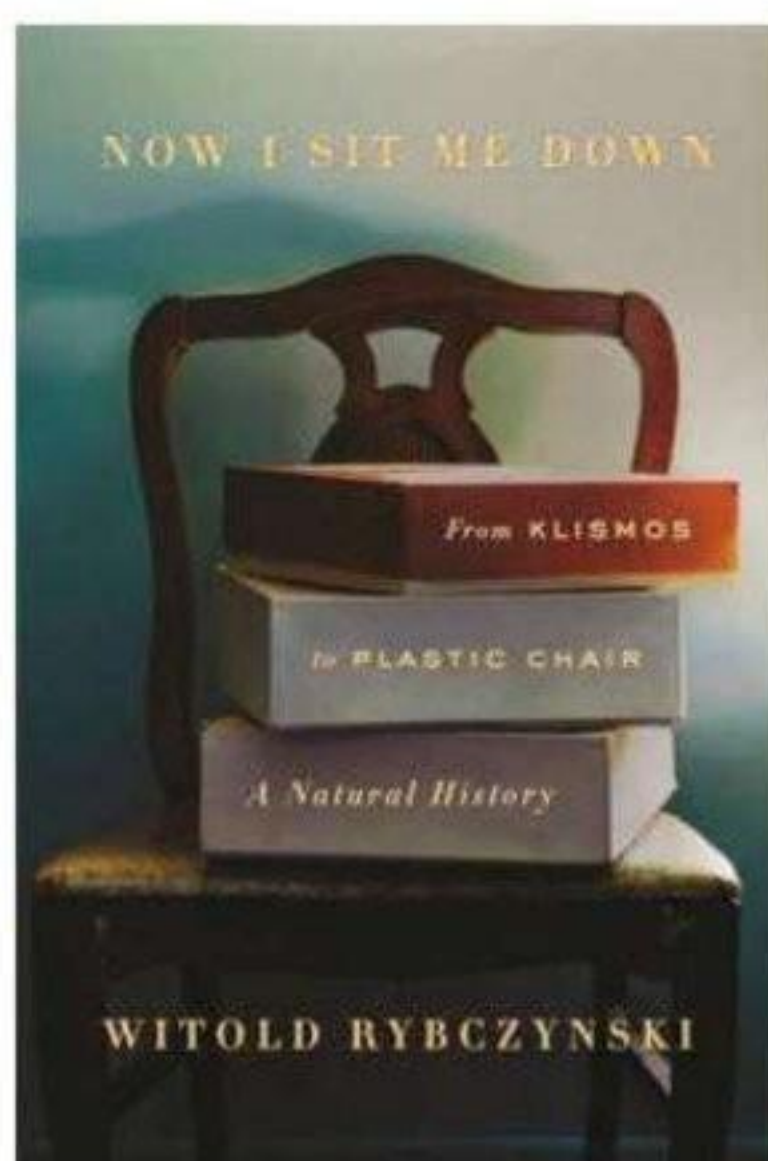
Ant Chair

Arne Jacobsen's stackable chair, designed in 1952, was named after the insect with the segmented body and spindly legs.

Take a Seat

A new history of chairs finds there's more than meets the eye – and the bum – in this piece of furniture.

INTERVIEW WITH *Witold Rybczynski*
BY *Megan Guerber*



RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE PROBABLY sitting on something. Maybe you're nestled in a favorite reading chair below a lamp or a window, or you're perched on a wooden stool at your kitchen counter. Perhaps you're biding time on a generic upholstered bench at the doctor, or you're wedged into a vinyl seat on a plane. Or maybe – lucky you – you're reclining in a midcentury Eames lounge chair.

We may not talk about them much, but chairs, in their many forms, play a big role in our lives. And although experts say our sedentary culture isn't doing us any favors (standing desks, anyone?), there's no denying that we're creatures of habit who love to sit. We simply couldn't do without chairs.

As an architect, Witold Rybczynski understands the form of a chair in a way many of us don't. As a professor emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania, and a writer on topics such as domestic comfort, the history of hand tools, and the impact of style and fashion on

architecture, he has a rare grasp of the evolution of chairs – if not sitting – over the ages. His latest book, *Now I Sit Me Down: From Klismos to Plastic Chair: A Natural History*, takes a humanist approach to this often-ignored piece of furniture, connecting trends, culture, and technological innovation to provide a personal and historical survey.

He took a moment to chat about why chairs are often our most treasured pieces of furniture – and why we can stand to sit in them for only so long.

You devoted a whole book to the chair. What's so special about this piece of furniture?

I think chairs are very personal, not just for me but for many people. There are many characters in literature who have a favorite chair or who are associated with a chair. In *All in the Family*, Archie Bunker's chair was very important. And even when he wasn't on the screen, the chair was almost like a stand-in for him, and other people weren't allowed to sit in it.



Klismos Chair

It's hard to improve on a good chair: This design dates back to ancient Greece and is widely copied today.



Windsor Chair

An English invention of the late 17th century, the Windsor chair, with its strong, lightweight, and comfortable design, remains popular.



Wassily Chair

This low-slung modern classic, designed by Marcel Breuer in the 1920s, looks better than it feels, Rybczynski says.

So I think chairs, of all the furniture, are the most personal.

And they often remind of us people. Why is this so?

They remind us of people because we use human terms to describe chairs. They have “arms” and “legs” and “backs” and “seats.” It’s easy, when you look at a chair, to imagine the person in it. If it’s empty, then you can almost see a person sitting in a chair, because it’s got arms to support, and it’s got a back – especially if it’s a chair you associate with someone.

There’s a long history of chairs that look like animals. And chair legs traditionally had claws at the end or paws or hoofs or things like that. There’s a very famous chair that I illustrate in the book called the Ant Chair. It’s designed by Arne Jacobsen, a Danish architect. He was designing a factory [in the early 1950s], and he had a cafeteria for the workers, and he wanted modern chairs. He couldn’t find any chairs that he liked that would fit his aesthetic,

so he designed this chair, which was very famous because it’s the first chair where the seat and the back are made out one piece of molded wood. But he put very thin metal legs on it, and it’s called the Ant Chair because it actually looks like an ant. It’s got these insect-like legs and then a kind of curvy top, and so it reminded people of an insect.

Why do a number of chair models – including the Greek klismos chair – remain popular centuries after being developed?

A chair, of course, is a tool. It’s used for sitting, among other things. And actually there are many tools that last a long time. A claw hammer, for example, was invented by the Romans – who invented nails; that’s why they needed a hammer.

But if you look at Roman hammers, they’re basically the same as hammers today. You can’t really improve a hammer. And chairs are the same. Take a Windsor chair, for example: If you want to make a chair

out of wood, and you want to make it light and not too expensive, that’s an excellent design, and you can’t really improve on it. And so people simply repeat it.

Also, sitting hasn’t changed. The human body hasn’t changed. So a stool that the Egyptians sat on will serve us just as well. The little folding camp stool is a very good example, because that dates back to Egyptian times.

There’s a wonderful quote from Charles Eames, who said, “[Designers] should only innovate as a last resort.” We think of innovation as a marvelous thing, but really, if you don’t need to innovate, it’s always safer not to. Why would you reinvent a hammer?

You also quote Niels Diffrient, famous for his ergonomic chair designs, who said that sitting comfortably is “a rather unsolvable problem.” Why is it so difficult to make a comfortable chair?

It’s the human body. I mean, basically the body is very well

designed for walking and running and standing. Sitting is very awkward because you have to support the back, the sitting bones. If you’re sitting on something hard, you eventually get uncomfortable. If you’re sitting, pretty soon you cut off the circulation to some part of the body, and that also leads to discomfort. So it’s essentially very difficult, if not impossible, to be really comfortable over long periods of time if you’re sitting. That’s really a function of the human body, and there’s not much you can do about it.

Speaking of comfort, you write about your Wassily Chair, one of the most iconic modern chairs around. For years you yearned for one, then realized it wasn’t enjoyable to sit in once you actually got one. Now it serves as a classy clothes rack in your bedroom. Why has modern chair design often ignored comfort?

In the early 20th century, you have people like Frank Lloyd

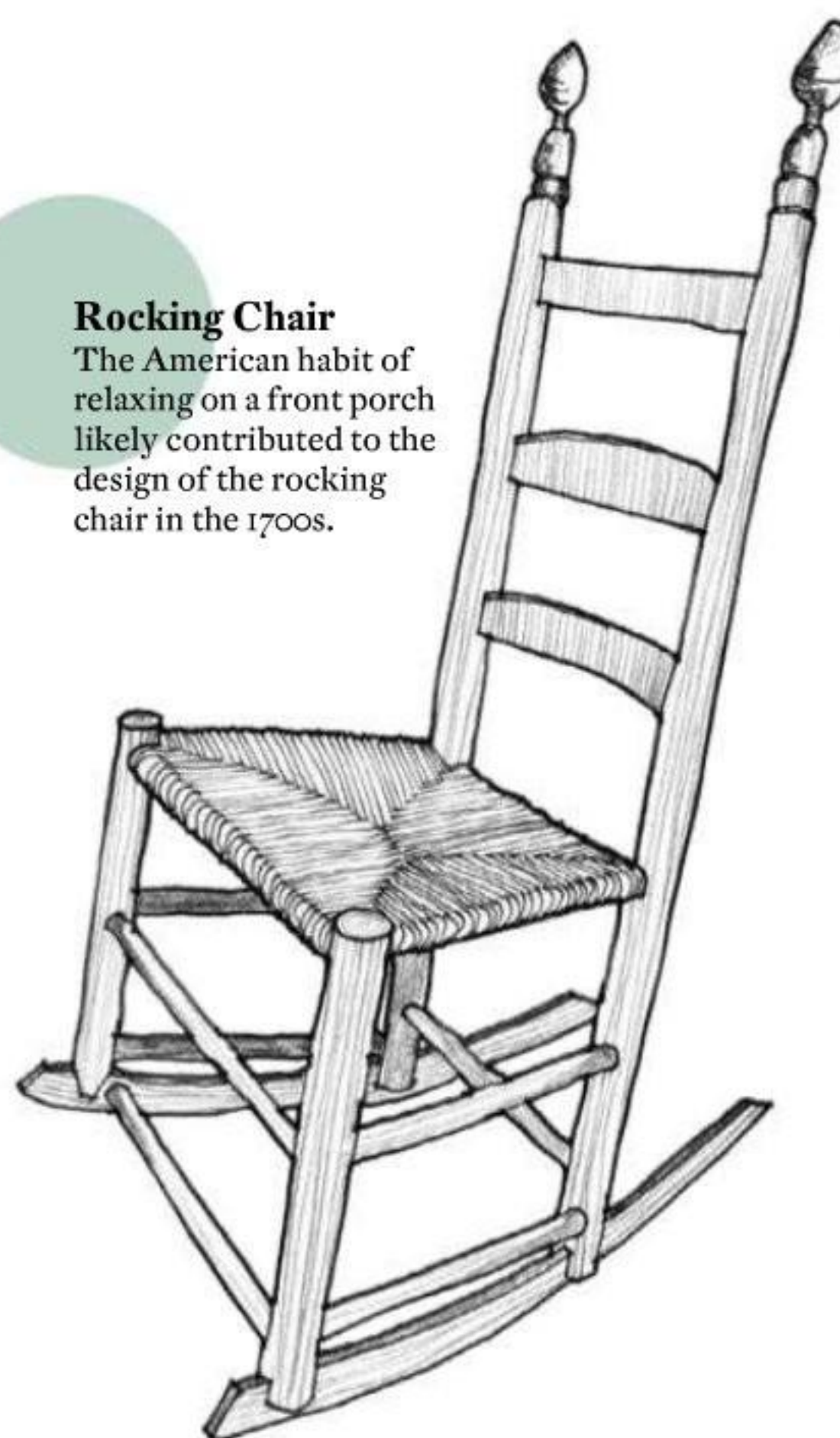
Wishbone Chair

Midcentury Danish designer Hans Wegner's mass-produced chairs balance style and comfort while looking handmade.



Rocking Chair

The American habit of relaxing on a front porch likely contributed to the design of the rocking chair in the 1700s.



Wright or Charles Rennie Mackintosh or the Austrian designers who design chairs, but they're not carpenters or chairmakers. And so designing the chair becomes much more theoretical than if it's being designed by somebody who makes it or knows how to make it.

Early in the 20th century, when modern chairs appeared, it's not just that the person designing the chair is not the same person who makes it; it's also that the idea of design becomes separated from the chair. So you can actually talk about the design of a chair and not talk about comfort or how solid it is or how long it will last.

Previously, I don't think people thought of design as a separate aspect of a chair. The comfort of a chair, the durability of a chair, the way it was made – these were all combined, conceptually.

It's not necessarily a good thing when we separate design from everything else, because it's very artificial. It's like talking about the way a person

looks rather than the way the person actually is. It favors just one aspect of a chair.

Many chair designs are closely tied to customs. For example, the rocking chair is a distinctly American design. Why is this?

Well, we invented it. The cradle, which is a kind of rocking baby bed, dates to the Middle Ages. So people knew about them, and people built cradles for hundreds of years. But it wasn't until the 18th century in the United States that somebody combined chairs and rockers. The earliest American rocking chair is actually a nurse chair meant for women holding babies.

So it was invented here, but it also became very popular here. It wasn't just used by women holding babies. It was used by all sorts of people, and [by the 1820s] it really became a craze, a sort of fad. It's also connected with the porch, because sitting on the porch is an American habit. Most of the United States has really hot, humid summers, and so people build

porches, and the rocking chairs somehow became a natural thing to put on a porch, because you could rock and sit there, and the rocking actually creates a little bit of a breeze. So there were a number of things like that that sort of encouraged the popularity of rocking chairs, which eventually migrated to Europe, much later.

Originally, Europeans were taken aback by the design.

You quote one who called it a "wooden narcotic."

I quote lots of Europeans who visit America and who are kind of surprised at the rocking chair, because they've never seen such a thing before. The chair is, in many ways, a status piece of furniture. So the idea of a chair that moves is kind of anti-status, because it doesn't look important or serious to see a chair rocking back and forth.

You also say that, in chair design, "form does not follow function; it follows culture."

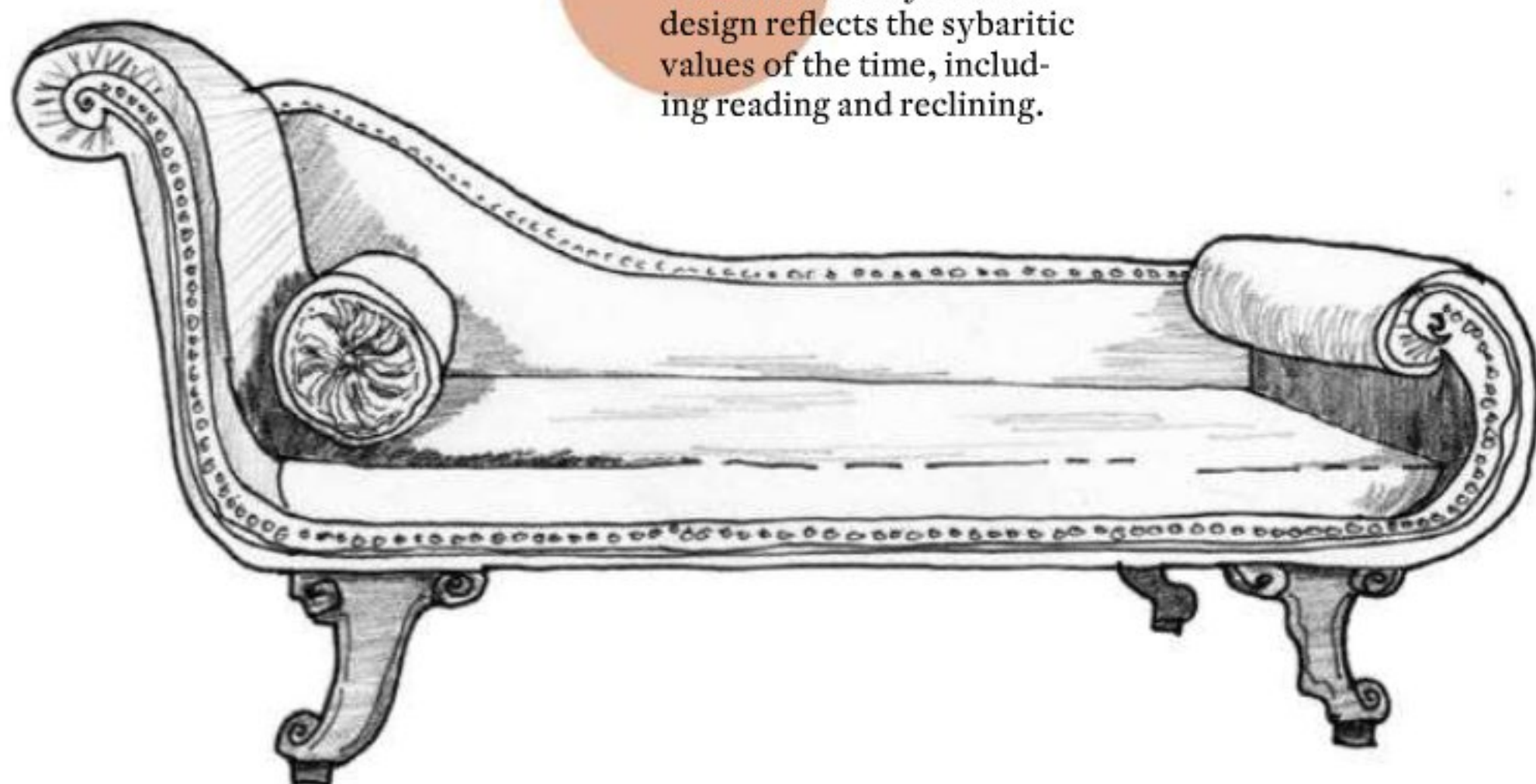
What do you mean?

I was pointing out that posture comes first, that chairs vary according to posture, and posture is not something that starts with the chair; it starts with society. People want to relax more, or they want to look more vertical, more strict. The Shakers didn't build the kind of chairs they built because they had technical limitations. They wanted a certain kind of furniture because they wanted to sit very vertically. Shaker furniture is not meant to relax in. That's not the kind of chairs they built, and that was very much part of their worldview.

Similarly, if you look at French furniture of, say, the 18th century, there's all sorts of chairs to relax in because it was a very materialistic, sybaritic society that liked the idea of relaxation and reading and entertaining people. And so they developed chairs – the chaise longue is a particular one – that you could recline in and feel relaxed in, and read books. Reading became popular

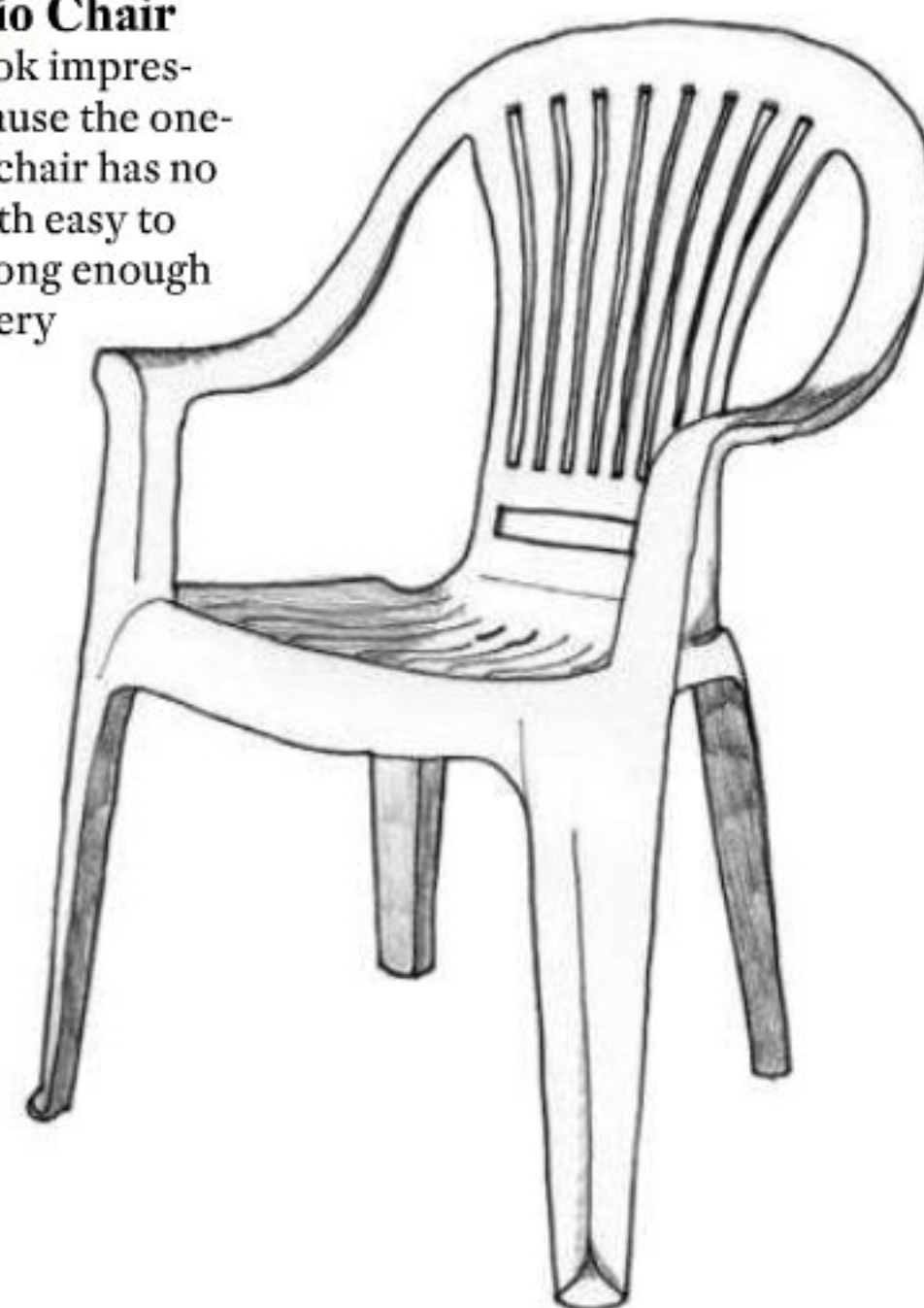
Chaise Longue

The 18th-century French design reflects the sybaritic values of the time, including reading and reclining.



Plastic Patio Chair

It may not look impressive, but because the one-piece plastic chair has no joints, it's both easy to make and strong enough to last for a very long time.



at that time. So the posture comes from society and culture, and then the chairs follow from that.

So the chaise longue defines the values of 18th-century France. What about contemporary culture?

I reached out to three experts to find out which chair defines our time, and they each chose the plastic monobloc chair. I think the reason is that it's a chair that's uniquely of our time, and there's nothing like it preceding us. The main reason is that it's a chair that's made out of one piece of material. It gets rid of all the joints. And joints are always the challenge in chairs.

So that's part of the reason, and the other one, of course, is it's a mass-produced chair that is literally untouched by human hands. It's entirely made in a machine. When it comes out of the machine, it's ready to be sat on. It doesn't have to be polished or painted or anything. And because it's made from a cheap material, it's an

extremely inexpensive chair. I think the reason that it is such a symbol of our time is that it's a global chair. The plastics industry exists in all countries of the world, and they're the ones who really invented this chair.

It's also an unusual chair because it doesn't come from a chair designer. It really comes from a factory making plastic buckets and water containers, and they just are looking for products to make, because they have these huge machines turning out various things. So they were looking for products, and they just added the chair as one of the things they made in these factories.

I was surprised when the people I asked suggested this chair, because I hadn't thought of it at all. I thought maybe the ergonomic task chair is the chair of our time. But I was really convinced at the end.

Do you have a favorite chair designer?

I devote a whole chapter to Hans Wegner, the Danish

furniture designer. I think, if I had to pick one person, it would probably be him. Partly it's because he was trained as a joiner. He was trained as a furniture maker, but he ends up working as a designer for mass-produced furniture. And so he has the skills as a carpenter; somebody called him the world's best carpenter.

His chairs are made in factories, but they also manage to look like they were made by a person rather than a machine. They are beautiful designs, which are both original and very traditional.

What else did you learn while writing *Now I Sit Me Down*?

I quote design critic Ralph Caplan, who said, "A chair is the first thing you need when you don't really need anything." And I think there's some truth in that. I've written a whole book about chairs, but it's important not to make chairs more than they are. I mean, it is a tool for sitting, and the truth is, you can sit on anything.

If you get tired when you're hiking, you can just sit on a rock or a tree stump or just on the ground. So in that sense, we shouldn't make a chair more than it is. It's a simple tool that's a pleasure to sit in if it's a good chair, and especially if it's a favorite chair.

Talking to people since the book came out, I realize also that what makes a chair a favorite is not the design, it's what you do in it. The chair that you read in, for instance, can be a favorite chair because that's where you take time out of the day to relax and read a book. It wasn't the design of Archie Bunker's chair that made it his favorite. I think it was because that's where he came home at the end of the day and relaxed.

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American **Craft** Shows

2017



B

Melinda Risk

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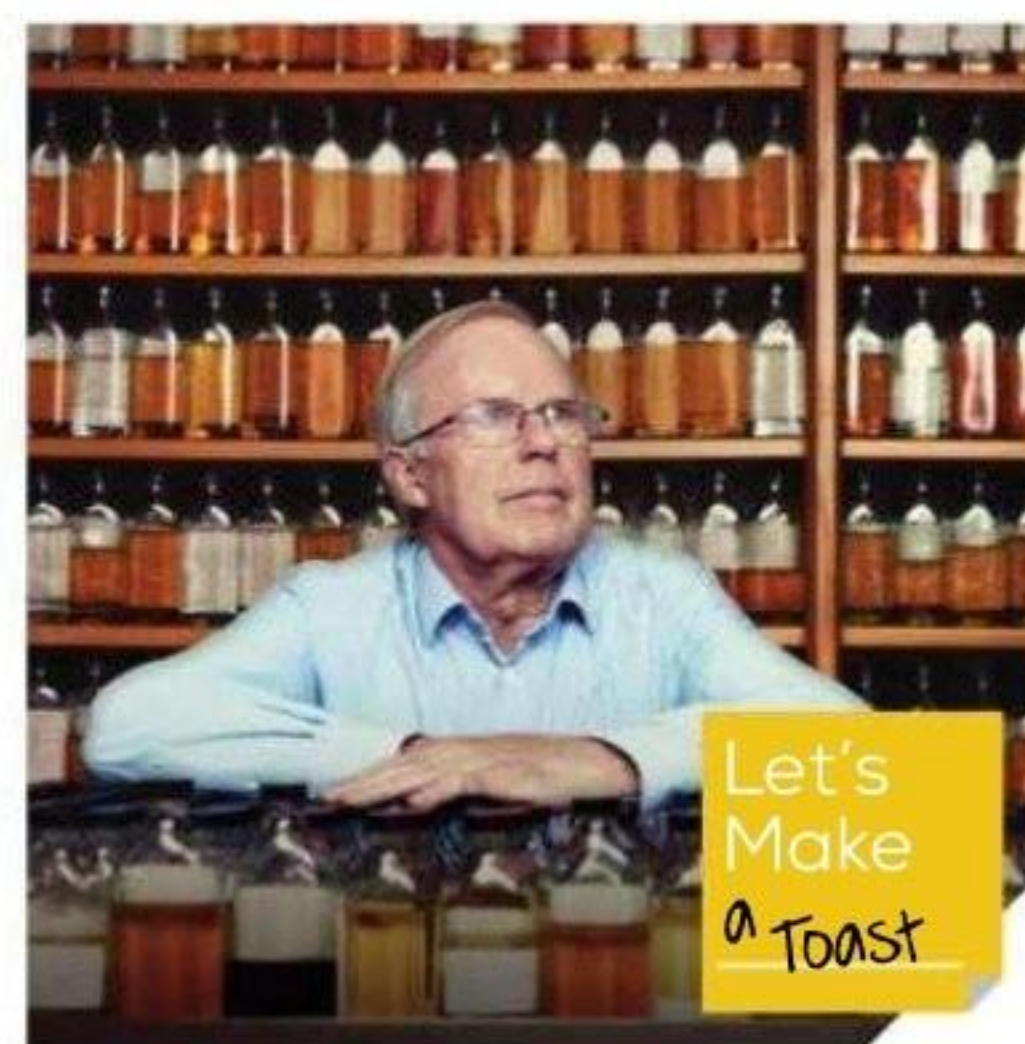
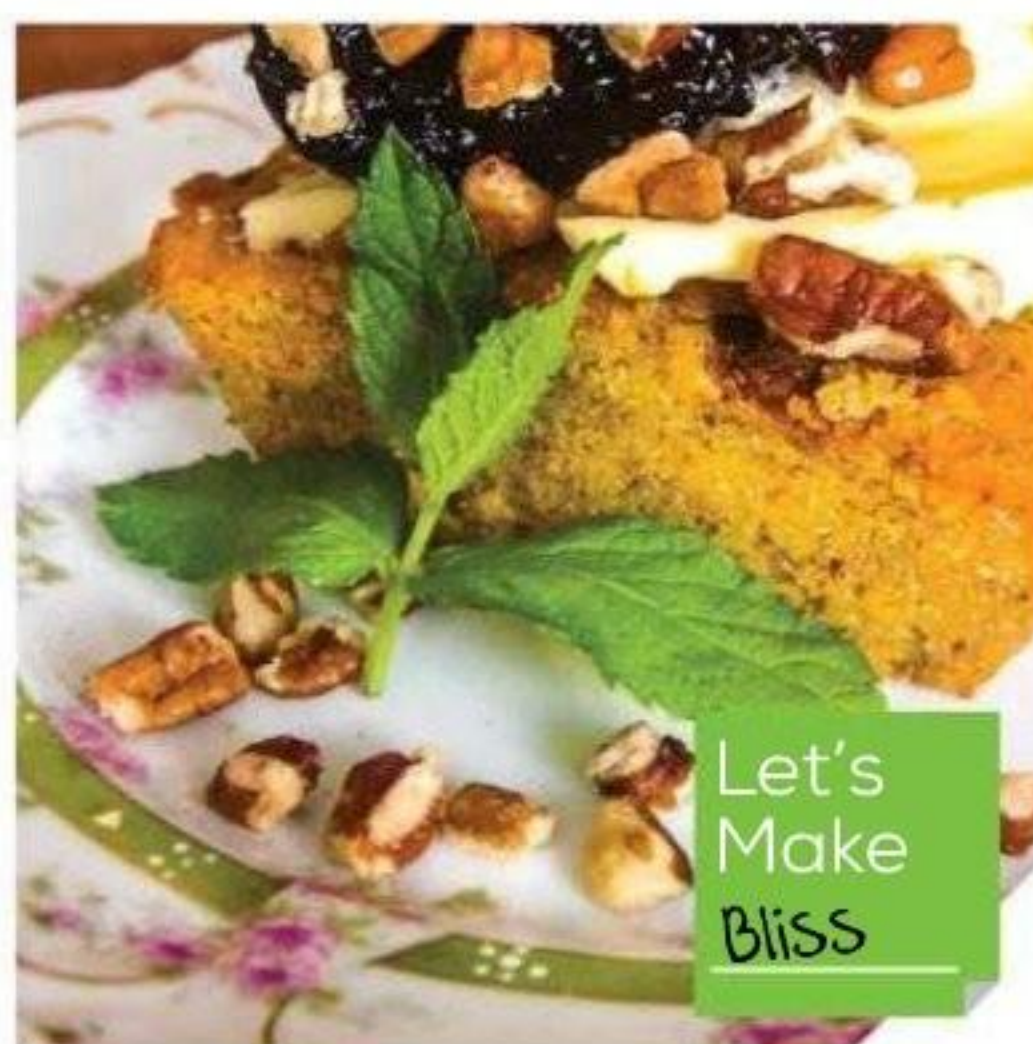
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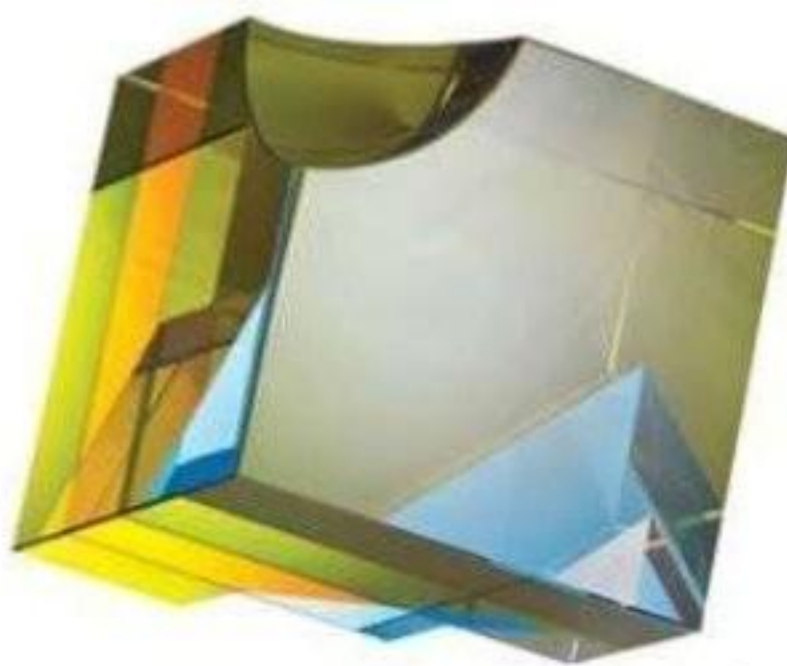
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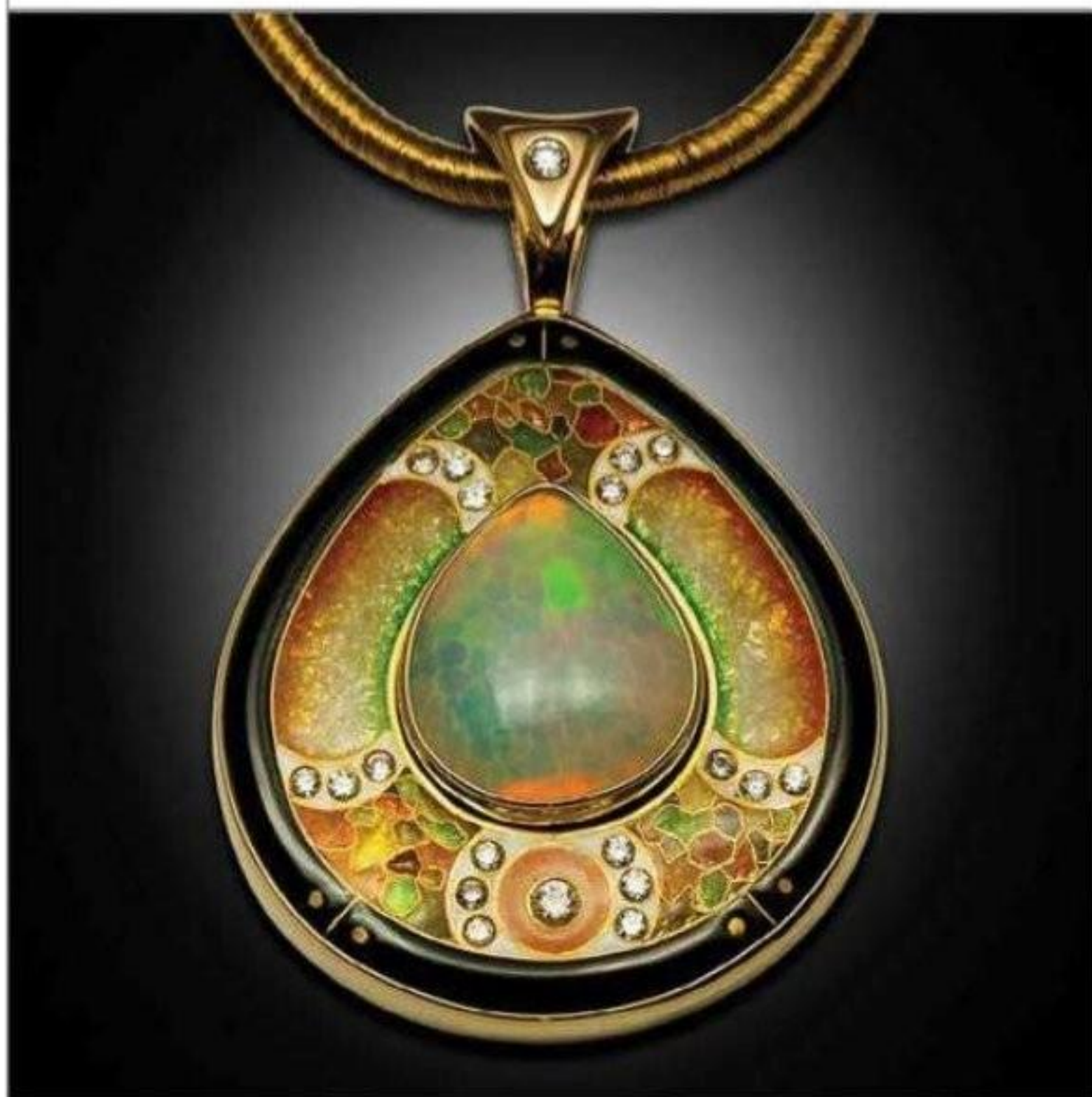
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Ad Index

American Craft Council	32, 33, 84 - 85	Max's	9
American Craft Council Baltimore and Atlanta Show Section	S98 - S112	Museum of Glass	Cover 2
Anderson Ranch	6	Myra Burg	9
Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts	114	Palm Beach Contemporary	5
Artful Home	Cover 4	Paradise City Arts Festivals	11
Artrider Productions	9	Penland School of Crafts	114
Corning Museum of Glass	6	Penland School of Crafts Gallery	6
David Patchen	1	Peters Valley School of Craft	27
Fuller Craft Museum	21	Pilchuck Glass School	115
Gravers Lane Gallery	4	Rago Arts and Auction Center	3
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts	115	Santa Fe Clay	114
IndieMe Inc. /ACRE (American Craft Retailers Expo)	Cover 3	The Clay Studio	6
James Renwick Alliance	21	The Grand Hand Gallery	4
Jewelers Outside the Box	14 - 15	Topaz Gallery	4
Kent County Office of Tourism	2	Western Design Conference	27
L'Attitude Gallery	4	Weyrich Gallery/ The Rare Vision Art Galerie	4
Marketplace	113	White Bird Gallery	4



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The American Craft Council is a national, nonprofit public educational organization that traces its inception to 1941. Founded by Aileen Osborn Webb, the mission of the Council is to champion and promote the understanding and appreciation of contemporary American craft. Programs include the bimonthly magazine *American Craft*, annual juried shows presenting artists and their work, the American Craft Council Awards honoring excellence, a specialized library, conferences, workshops, and seminars.

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With the Grain

FOR OUR WOOD ISSUE, WE asked distinguished sculptor Martin Puryear to share thoughts on the material that has inspired him for more than 40 years.

“Wood is seductive, but it’s a demanding material,” he observes. “Because it was once a living organism with a cellular structure, it swells or shrinks with changes in humidity, and this movement has to be taken into account by the craftsman-artist,” he says. And because wood is fibrous, “it’s much stronger – and more

easily worked – in the direction of the tree’s growth than it is across the grain. It can’t be welded like metal, so connections need to be reinforced with some kind of joint, which typically involves making cuts and carefully fitted penetrations.”

Fortunately, he points out, “humans all over the globe have had many centuries to learn to work with wood’s idiosyncrasies, and the result for today’s creator is an enormous reservoir of knowledge, which is being rapidly updated.”

Puryear trained in the fine arts; when he went to Sierra Leone as a young Peace Corps volunteer in the 1960s, for the first time he saw skilled woodworkers who didn’t use power tools; they used traditional joinery out of necessity, not as a fine craft. He also spent time with iconic furniture maker James Krenov in his studio in Sweden – another turning point.

He went on to take wood to expressive heights as a sculptural medium – honoring the material in a way that transcends

it – in objects of poetic beauty such as *Big Phrygian*.

Now 75, at the peak of a career filled with honors (including a MacArthur Fellowship and the National Medal of Arts), he resists the limelight as he always has, preferring to focus his energy in his studio in New York’s Hudson Valley. Let the work speak for itself, he urges, citing the wisdom of the Japanese philosopher and craft advocate Soetsu Yanagi: “The thing shines, not the maker.”

Martin Puryear
Big Phrygian, 2010–14,
painted red cedar,
4.9 x 3.3 x 6.3 ft.



Photo: Ron Amstutz, © Martin Puryear, courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery



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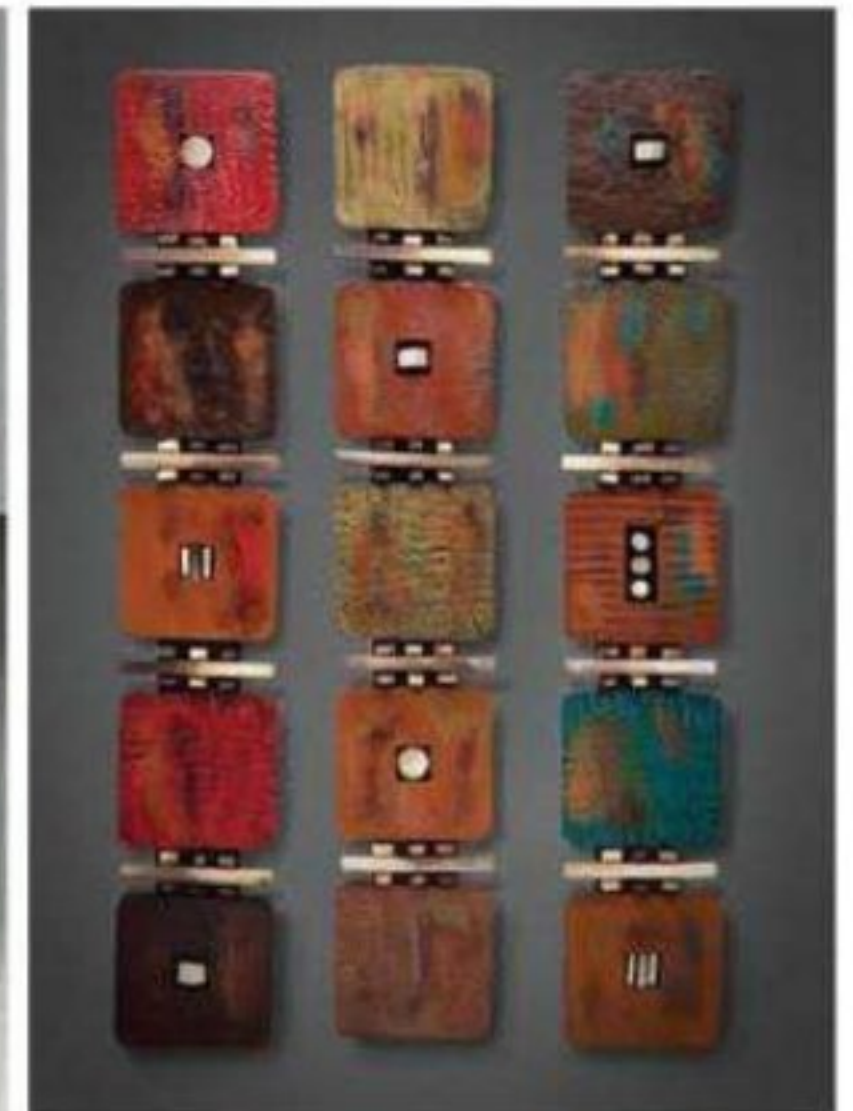
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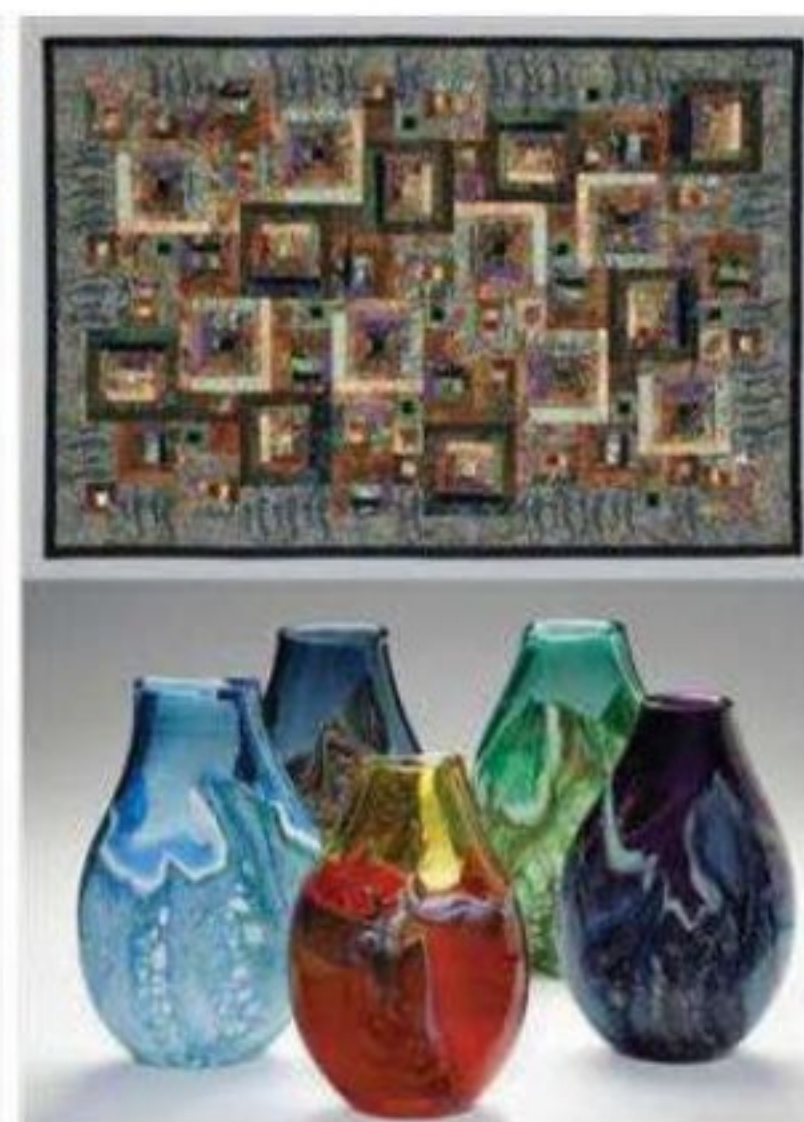
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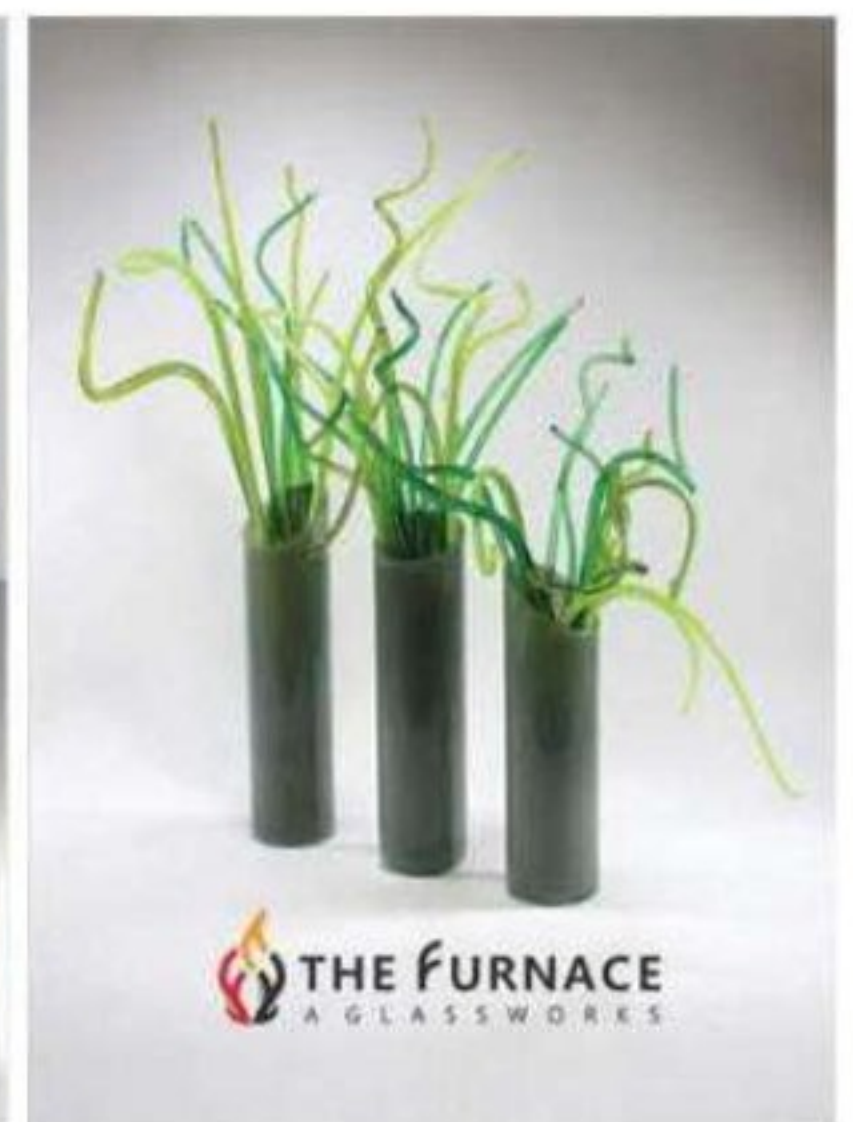
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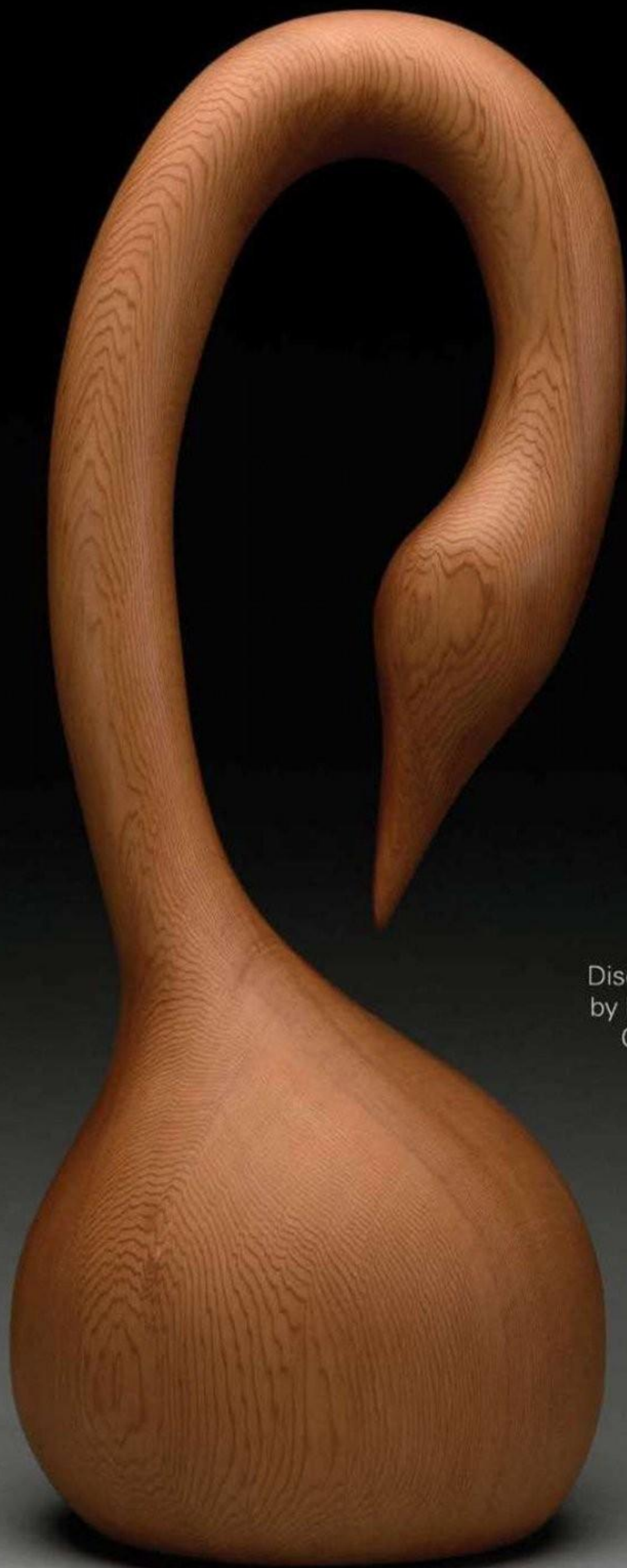
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