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**Theory and Craft: A Case Study of the
Kootenay Christmas Faire**

Sandra Alfoldy

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

Theory and Craft: A Case Study of the Kootenay Christmas Faire

Sandra Alfoldy

In this thesis Modernism's lack of involvement with craft, the social theory of consumption, and material feminism, will be used to position craft within existing theory.

It is my hope that through this thesis I will demonstrate that craft can and must work with contemporary theory in order to take an active role in its future directions. By relying on the work of theorists, combined with the specific example of the Kootenay Christmas Faire, I hope to initiate a broader debate on the theoretical interest in craft by both craftspeople and those operating within institutions of art.

To Mom and Dad

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF APPENDICES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
1 THE KOOTENAY CHRISTMAS FAIRE	7
2 CRAFT AND THE THEORETICAL DIVIDE	18
3 MODERNISM AND CRAFT	32
4 SOCIAL THEORY	50
5 FEMINISM	68
CONCLUSION	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY	96
APPENDICES	109
FIGURES	113

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Questionnaire, Kootenay Christmas Faire, December 1995.
2. Programme, "Obscure Objects of Desire? Reviewing the Crafts in the 20th Century." January 10 - 12, 1997, University of East Anglia.

LIST OF FIGURES

- 1 Pauline Hanbury in front of her caravan. Early 1970's. Collection of Pauline Hanbury.
- 2 Jack Anderson and Pauline Hanbury. December 1974. Collection of Pauline Hanbury.
- 3 Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market. December 1995.
- 4 Family at American Craft Council's Rhinebeck, New York Faire, Spring 1973. American Craft Council Archives, Box 1 Regional Assemblies Northwest, from *Seventeen Magazine's* "Make It," Spring/Summer 1973.
- 5 Tours of W.P.A Handicraft Project Begun, *Milwaukee Journal*, newspaper clipping, September 6, 1940. From Hildreth J. York, "New Deal Craft Programs and their Social Implications", Janet Kardon (ed) *Revivals! Diverse Traditions: A History of Twentieth Century American Craft* (New York: American Craft Museum and Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 57.
- 6 Peter Voulkos, *Untitled*, 1981, Earthenware, 42" x 22".
- 7 Elaine Alfoldy, Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market Poster, 1995.
- 8 Adelaide Alsop Robineau at her Revelation kiln, 1904. From Peg Weiss, *Adelaide Alsop Robineau: Glory in Porcelain* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

INTRODUCTION

Craft criticism is largely limited to discussions of the technical, and as a result, craft production remains undertheorised and ignored within a larger cultural arena. There is a direct link between this lack of theory in writing about craft and the avoidance of topics related to craft within universities, consequently leading to a lack of attention from professionals in the art world who have completed university programmes. However, if, as Pamela Johnson has suggested, "history, theory and practice need to be looked at together if the area of craft is to mature,"¹ then writing about craft must address this issue. Thus, in this thesis I seek to analyse the Kootenay Christmas Faire as a case study by suggesting that specific examples of critical concern in the production, consumption and marketing of crafts can be united with theory and, in this way, provide a place for crafts in what Janet Wolff has called the "critique of master narratives."²

Through years of active involvement in British Columbia's Kootenay Christmas Faire, held annually since 1974 in Nelson, I became aware of a concern in the craft world that the introduction of theory into studies of craft would disregard practice. This fear was combined with resentment as artisans perceived a hierarchically-based disdain toward the crafts and their producers. For years this has led to a self-referential "art-versus-craft" debate which is not only counterproductive, but also leaves the area of craft under-explored in the institutional and academic art world. The attitudes I have uncovered reflect a strong tendency toward non-theory in craft writing, which has prompted me to seek to understand if theory can function effectively as part of a discussion of the

¹ Pamela Johnson, "Positive Thinking", *Crafts* (July/Aug 1995): 35.

² Janet Wolff, "The Artist, the Critic and the Academic: Feminism's Problematic Relationship with Theory", in Katy Deepwell (ed), *New Feminist Arts Criticism: Critical Strategies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 17.

production of craft. Theory, following the work of Lynne Pearce and Sara Mills, will be considered as a "position which provides a way into" a discussion of craft production and consumption by making use of "already thought out "schemas" or models" of the way such discussions work.³ This important question has been raised in recent writings by and about craftspeople. As these tentative speculations on the use of theory with craft avoid identifying which theories might illuminate craft topics, it is my desire to make some concrete suggestions, utilizing both historical examples and theory in order to assist in the development of a greater understanding of the place of the production, marketing and consumption of handicrafts. Hand-crafted objects contribute over two billion dollars annually to the North American economy, with approximately 30,000 craft fairs held every year.⁴ Most writing about craft fairs is limited to practical information on booth display in journals for craftspeople. I have been able to locate only three articles which take a critical approach to craft fairs, Lisa Hammel's "20-Year Venture" in *American Craft* (1985), Frank Ozerko's "Craft Fairs and Originality" in *Ceramics Monthly* (1992), and Pamela Blume Leonard's "Craft/Folk/Function" in *Art Papers* (1992).

This thesis is divided into five sections which highlight the relationship between craft and theory and, in the process, provide a discussion of what I feel to be propitious theories for the study of the production, marketing and consumption of craft. Chapter One provides an overview of the Kootenay Christmas Faire, clarifying the social, economic and political environment in which the fair developed. The Kootenay region of British Columbia, having welcomed over the past hundred years both Quaker and Doukhobor settlements, was an ideal locale for groups seeking to set up utopian communities. Canadian "back-to-the-land hippies"

³ Sara Mills and Lynne Pearce, *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading* (London: Prentice Hall, 1996), 314.

⁴ Wendy Rosen, *Crafting as Business* (New York: Chilton Books, 1994), 10.

and American draft dodgers united in the Nelson area. It was a socially aware group with a special interest in issues of economic independence, joy in labour and equality for women. Based on a return to a mythological utopian tradition, the Kootenay community echoed many of the thoughts expressed by William Morris in writings such as *News from Nowhere*.

Chapter Two examines the views of craftspeople toward the use of theory in structuring discussions of their artistic production and lifestyle. Issues identified through the Kootenay Christmas Faire, such as function, production, display spaces and the sensory appeal of craft, will be shown as having the potential to resist theory because they oppose the constructed category of "modern art." The festive atmosphere of the Kootenay Christmas Faire with its multi-sensory focus is contrary to the traditionally conceptual spaces of "high" art. David Howes, in *Sensorial Anthropology* and curator Jennifer Harris in "Contextualising the Conceptual", have exposed how the sensory element of craft assists in the consumption of craft while, at the same time prohibiting the entry of craft into the traditional gallery or museum space. Because groups such as those in Nelson were dedicated to establishing alternatives to the conventions and commodities of western culture, the art historical theories developed by high profile critics such as Clement Greenberg were anathema to the artisans involved. This antipathy toward theory can be seen in the writings of craftspeople such as Bruce Metcalf who fear the *carte blanche* adoption of modernist theories. I shall also seek to show how modernist art critics, still writing today (for example, John Bentley Mays) continue to provide craftspeople with reasons to distrust theory.

Chapter Three will attempt to trace the institutional impact of the theories of modernism as well as modernism's exclusions. A re-reading of Greenberg's "Avant Garde and Kitsch" will highlight the void he created through his silence on the hand-crafted object. Relying on the writings in *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the*

Forties, as well as writing by Harvey Green and Hildreth J. York in *Revivals! Diverse Traditions 1920-1945: Theory of 20th Century American Craft*, I will attempt to initiate a theoretical debate against the exclusive use of modernist theory in the analysis of craft. Examples from the Works Progress Administration, showing the large number of women employed through handicrafts, will be contrasted with the institutionalization of modernism with its male dominance. The issue of the commodification of male artistic geniuses such as Jackson Pollock, Peter Voulkos, Jasper Johns and George Ohr will be highlighted by reading modernist critics such as William Rubin and Michael Fried.

Chapter Four will examine social theories which open up the debate on new modes of cultural writing allowing the emergence of previously repressed groups. Relying on the work of Terry Eagleton and Janet Wolff, I intend to show how social theories may open up the material conditions of craft production, marketing and consumption to theoretical analysis sympathetic to the needs of crafts.

Jonathan Harris's demonstration of the social realities of "high" art in *Modernism in Dispute*, leads to a discussion of *The Social Production of Art* by Janet Wolff, the central reading in my attempt to unite social theory with the study of crafts. Michel Foucault's critique of absolute truth will be contrasted with Kant's and Greenberg's view of universal truth in art. Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* will identify Kant's and Greenberg's art criticism as forms of knowledge open to a critique of subjectivism based on the primary experiences of individuals and not as a universal experience. Because the Kootenay Christmas Faire represents the consumption of craft, issues of consumption, based on subjectivism, will be theorised. Robert Bocock's *Consumption* and Stephen Bayley's *Commerce and Culture* will be used to trace the historical development of consumption by offering concrete examples of the origins of exhibitions leading up to the Kootenay Christmas Faire. These examples will be combined with the theories of William

Morris, particularly his desire to provide a joy of labour through objects, and Karl Marx's view of the alienation of industrialised labour, to demonstrate how the hand-crafted object appealed to consumers through what Cornel West has termed, the "fetish of the unique."⁵

Chapter Five will attempt to show how feminist theory might open up a sophisticated discussion of crafts and trace women's role in the development of craft exhibitions. The theorists who inform my argument about women's craft production and consumption are: Chris Weedon, particularly her theory of objects as tokens of exchange and value through their reception as signs; Gayatri Spivak, whose use, exchange and surplus triad of excess in domesticity enables domestic production to be opened up to a reading beyond necessity; and Janet Wolff, who demonstrates historically prescribed roles for women and their crafts through social theory. In addition, Anthea Callen's four categories of female craft worker will be used to show how the philanthropy of moneyed women, although essentialized as a care giving role, was key in providing all women with new forums for economic and artistic development. Women whose involvement with hand-crafts will be discussed include, in Canada, members of the Women's Art Association, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, Pauline Hanbury and Marion Baxter, in the United States, Candace Wheeler, Maria Longworth Nichols, Adelaide Alsop Robineau and Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, and in Great Britain, May Morris, Kate Faulkner, Norah Braden and Katharine Pleydell Bouvarie.

The Kootenay Christmas Faire's concern with the creation of alternative lifestyles, the development of an economic base through a niche market, and its mothering by founder and organizer Pauline Hanbury are issues which deserve

⁵ Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference", in Russel Ferguson (ed), *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 34.

academic treatment. It is the intention of this thesis to begin an investigation into how the crafts can work with theory to develop a space within art history.

CHAPTER 1

THE KOOTENAY CHRISTMAS FAIRE

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the Kootenay region of British Columbia experienced an influx of young people. Many of these individuals were part of the "back-to-the-land" movement, and had chosen the Nelson area for its affordability and natural splendor. The "back-to-the-landers" were part of the post-1950s generation who sought alternatives to the consumer oriented lifestyle of the previous generation. As C.R. Robertson described in his Task Force on Government Information Report to Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1969, "these people all seem to want one thing, not money or security, but self-respect and community respect and the privilege to lead their own existence."¹ The rural isolation of the Kootenays was perfect, as Kenneth Wethues concludes in *Society's Shadow: Studies in the Sociology of Counter Cultures*, "because the hippies could not go to Washington or Ottawa, the proponents of the new order could go only to the country, where untold thousands live today."²

The Kootenays had provided a refuge for many groups, including communities of Doukhobors and Quakers, in the decades prior to that of the "hippie" generation. A large group of Doukhobors moved to the West Kootenays during the 1930s to live on the privately-owned land of their leader Peter Verigin. They refused to swear the Canadian Oath of Allegiance, fearing that it was "another force that would ultimately lead to conscription and militarism."³ The Doukhobor community rejected materialism, and was largely self-sufficient, relying

¹ Ron Verzuh, *Underground Times: Canada's Flower-Child Revolutionaries* (Toronto: Deneau Publishers, 1989), 213.

² Kenneth Westhues, *Society's Shadow: Studies in the Sociology of Counter Cultures* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1972), 183.

³ F.M. Mealing, *Doukhobor Life: A Survey of Doukhobor Religion, History and Folk Art* (Castlegar: Kootenay Doukhobor Historical Society/Cotinneh Books, 1975), 20.

on the sales of their produce and handicrafts to survive.⁴ There was also a small Quaker community in the West Kootenays. In the United States during the Quaker's Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1967, the Friends voted to oppose the Vietnam War effort, and to engage in an "underground railroad" sending resisters and medical supplies across the border to Canada.⁵ The "back-to-the-landers" consisted of not only urban refugees, but political refugees: the American border was easily accessible, only a few kilometers away. No statistics are available which cite the number of draft dodgers in the Kootenays, but Renee G. Kansinsky in her book *Refugees from Militarism: Draft-Age Americans in Canada*, states that by January 1974, official government records suggest that between 5000 and 6000 Americans were living in exile in Canada, with unofficial reports of up to 40,000.⁶ Kansinsky estimates that two-thirds of the draft dodgers remained in British Columbia because of the mild climate and spectacular countryside. Characteristically the draft dodgers were educated (over 90 percent had some college experience), supported rural living over urban, and favoured communal values over capitalistic ones.⁷ Although there is no documented evidence of a connection between Doukhobor or Quaker communities and the draft dodgers, their convergence in the Kootenays is of interest. Westhues provides a clue as to the popularity of the Kootenays to alternative groups:

For many centuries, the United States and Canada were a safe refuge for countercultural movements that arose in Old World

⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁵ Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 267.

⁶ Renee G. Kansinsky, *Refugees from Militarism: Draft-Age Americans in Canada*. (New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1976), 5. Kansinsky makes a distinction between draft dodgers and deserters. The draft dodgers had higher levels of education and were of the middle class, whereas the deserters had lower levels of education and were of the lower class.

⁷ Ibid., 12.

Europe in opposition to established orders and then came to the New World in the hope of finding in the vast expanse of North America a place in which to give concreteness to alternative mentalities...Mennonites, Doukhobors, Shakers...the hippies sought this refuge in the same shrinking ruralness.⁸

Pauline Hanbury, the founder of the Kootenay Christmas Faire, described this "back-to-the land" phenomena as "hippie kids and city folk trying to get a little bit of magic in their lives."⁹

In the United States after World War II, and continuing through to the post-Vietnam War era, many returning veterans benefited from America's G.I. Bill. This was an army project, which among other features, provided therapy through craft work for veterans returning from war. G.I. Arts and Crafts centres were under the supervision of the Engineering Division of the Office of Chief Engineers, with the stated objective of developing innate creative skills in order to provide "release from tension, constructive re-creation and enjoyment."¹⁰ These craft programs, apart from employing large numbers of professional crafters, allowed veterans to realize their talent as independent professionals, able to be their own bosses and live off the land. JoAnn Brown, one of the organizers of the 1966 American Craft Council fair in Vermont, recalls how many of the participants had received some form of craft training through the G.I. Bill, and had turned this army training into an independent lifestyle.¹¹

⁸ Westhues, *Society's Shadow*, 190.

⁹ Pauline Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 9, 1996, Kuskanook, B.C.

¹⁰ *Design Guide: Art and Crafts Centers*, Engineering Division, Military Construction Directorate, Office of Chief Engineers, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. American Craft Council Archives, Box 34, U.S. Army Arts and Crafts Programs.

¹¹ JoAnn Brown, Executive, American Craft Enterprises, Telephone Interview, February 20, 1996.

A large number of the new arrivals to the Kootenays had backgrounds which included some art training. For both students and non-students, Nelson's Notre Dame University became a central meeting place. Although not all full-time artisans, many young people used their talents to earn income. A pattern emerged with people earning money during the summer months through readily available outdoor work, such as tree-planting, while using their craft work as an income source during the winter months. Soon it was evident that there was a need for outlets to sell the increasing number of hand crafted items to a growing market. Through the university and artistic community, "many gatherings, festivals, and parties turned into organized events."¹²

Instrumental in the development of an outlet for the burgeoning craft market was Pauline Hanbury, a resident of the Kootenay area and a practicing potter. Hanbury grew up in England surrounded by the activities of her "community minded and much appreciated" mother who volunteered in countless fairs. These English Fall fairs and May fairs left her with a sense of wanting to bring people together into celebration, a sense she later translated into the marketplace.¹³ Hanbury believed that the artisans of the Kootenay area were talented individuals, who "had a right to a market for their work and needed the marketplace to make them measure their dreams against the reality of what people would actually buy."¹⁴ As Shawn Lamb, Director of the Kootenay Museum Association describes, Hanbury was essential in helping "craftspeople as they learned how to market their work professionally without feeling that they had compromised the often hard-won

¹² Pauline Hanbury, *Rambling Through the Kootenay Christmas Faire: An Annual Celebration of Hand-Crafted Wares, Works of Art and Homespun Music: Twenty Years*. (Nelson: The Kootenay Museum Association and Historical Society Archives, 1994).

¹³ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 1996.

¹⁴ Shawn Lamb, "Heritage Now" in Pauline Hanbury (ed) *Kootenay Christmas Faire*, 1994.

convictions by which they tried to live their lives.”¹⁵ Quite popular in this emerging art scene was a hearkening back to traditional methods of trading and bartering, with services being exchanged for goods. Hanbury recounts instances of swapping, such as “If you deliver my baby, I’ll make you a dinner set.”¹⁶

In 1973, Pauline Hanbury and her husband Rick were living in the small community of Blewitt. She describes the community as being filled with “funky people” who were participating in tree planting, art school, pottery, and seeking not just crafts, but an alternative lifestyle. Through the British Columbia government program Opportunities for Youth and Women, Hanbury obtained funding in the summers previous to 1973, to travel the Kootenay area doing workshops and selling her pottery. This took on a festival style, with her caravan being a focus for both events and sales, through her use of puppet shows, dancing and spontaneous gatherings (Fig.1).

In Hanbury’s pursuit of lifestyle, she became involved in the Yosodhara Ashram, a retreat on Kootenay Lake. It was there she met Jack Anderson, a recent arrival from Texas. They decided they should hold a marketplace for the new area artisans which would also function as a community celebration, and Notre Dame University, owing to its popularity as a gathering place, was selected. During the spring break of 1973, the first Multifusion event was held. In addition to functioning as a marketplace for the handicrafts of the locals, it served to bond this growing group of new arrivals who shared similar goals and lifestyle.

Pauline Hanbury, after her upbringing in England, surrounded by the community of fairs, says she worried that “community was leaving our lives”, and so based this first event on the “centuries gone by concept of village life - where

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September, 1996

events bond people - not straight money making."¹⁷ Jack Anderson was in charge of Multifusion's workshops, while Hanbury acted as the chief organizer. Multifusion was a success - such a success that Hanbury and Anderson decided to carry on the event on in the form of the Kootenay Christmas Faire. As the event was to take place in the winter, an alternate location was necessary, and so the Faire was moved from the University to the Nelson Civic Centre, where it has been held annually ever since.

The first Kootenay Christmas Faire was held in December 1973. It continues to be a weekend-long event, taking place either at the end of November or beginning of December. Pauline Hanbury describes the event as "artisans and community coming together with musicians and talented folk to celebrate and make a happening"¹⁸ and, I would add, with the benefit of making a profit. Although Hanbury emphasizes the gathering and community of the event, she states, "I really started the faire in order to sell pots."¹⁹ It was largely due to Hanbury's overall vision and care-taking of the artisans that such an event developed. For the first five fairs, Jack Anderson worked with Hanbury (Fig. 2), and together they created an independent and self-supporting event consisting of mostly professional artisans. Jack Anderson left after 1977 to be director of British Columbia's Cultural Services, a position offered to Pauline, but she refused, because "I didn't need the stress, and I liked what was going on in the Kootenays."²⁰

Hanbury realized the need to create the atmosphere of a gathering in the rather bleak basement of the civic centre, and transformed it into "an outdoor organic experience."²¹ Craftspeople brought in "their back yards, forests, kitchen

¹⁷ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 1996.

¹⁸ Hanbury, Kootenay Christmas Faire, 1994.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September, 1996.

²¹ Ibid.

tables, coal-oil lamps, old wood stoves, all for aesthetics and the organic experience."²² Of course this violated many fire and food regulations, resulting in heavy scrutiny from the officials. It did not help that the group organizing and participating in this "faire" were hippies. Hanbury suggested that the long-time residents of Nelson, and the Baker Street merchants "saw the faire as a loss to them and did their best to convince the city fathers that we "hippies" should never be allowed to darken the civic centre again."²³ During the two days of the event, they were constantly threatened by the fire department, health department and several city council members with immediate closure. Hanbury and Anderson promised they would present an acceptable event the following year.

What caused the wrath of the officials was that the artisans "had shocked the Baker St. merchants with the amount of revenue" they generated.²⁴ Why had the faire been such a success? Apart from the desperate need for an outlet for the sale of hand-crafted objects, the faire also provided an event which celebrated an alternative lifestyle as being successfully lived by many in the Kootenays. The Kootenay Christmas Faire attracted over 3000 people that first weekend, and continues to attract up to 5000 people to this day, with almost continuously increasing revenues.²⁵ Apart from the marketplace, the faire featured dances on Friday and Saturday night, continuous "homespun" live music (including the Nelson Ladies Doukhorbor choir), puppet shows, clowns, jugglers, balloon ladies and magicians for the children, along with daycare service. Some members of the community extended their warmth to the artisans, for example, "sometimes people would bring food snacks in baskets for the craftspeople."²⁶

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Hanbury, Kootenay Christmas Faire, 1994.

²⁶ Ibid.

By the second Kootenay Christmas Faire in December of 1974, word had spread and the event proved to be even more successful. More and more people came to see the event and make purchases, also leaving money with the Baker Street merchants who had been so fearful the year before. Approximately one hundred craftspeople participated, and Hanbury worked hard to ensure a harmonious atmosphere between crafters. This care-giving by Hanbury, combined with the fact that she was pregnant with her son Tobias, led to her designation as the "mother of the Kootenay Christmas Faire"--a title which still remains. Moss Holland, a glass artist who has participated in the Faire from the beginning, said of Hanbury, "you could call her the mother of crafts in Nelson. She's really supported the crafts community."²⁷ Shawn Lamb credits Pauline Hanbury with the title of "mother", claiming that "all this character of the fair has come from the unstinting and fierce love with which Pauline Hanbury has cajoled, brow-beaten, cozened, scolded, coaxed and finally gentled everyone who has come into the orbit of the Kootenay Christmas Faire."²⁸ Hanbury herself admits to being "very motherly about everything, unlike some other type who would want to go in there and be a glamour puss."²⁹ Her role as a care-taker led her to a personal involvement with all the participating artisans, "The problems between hobbyists and professionals I took personally, if someone was underselling prices I would tell them to charge more, if someone was selling seconds, I'd make them advertise that they were seconds - now with the jurying system everything is much more professional."³⁰ It was exactly this personal involvement that led to Hanbury's "burnout" and her handing over the faire to a different group of organizers after twenty years.

²⁷ Anne DeGrace, "Christmas Crafts Faire Celebrates 20 years" in Pauline Hanbury (ed) *Kootenay Christmas Faire*.

²⁸ Lamb, *Heritage Now*, 1994.

²⁹ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 1996.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The Kootenay Christmas Faire is now run by the Kootenay Artisans Marketing Association, a non-profit group of craftspeople, headed by Micki Stirling. The Faire, now titled the Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market (Fig. 3), has become a juried show, with a committee of artists who are Kootenay Artisans Marketing Association members serving as the jury.

Soon after the first Kootenay Christmas Faire in December 1973, the market for the crafts was recognized, and many small, often short-lived outlets opened. The Kootenay area in the 1990s features many professional outlets for artisans, with over eight in Nelson, including a cooperative craft market started by many of the original participants in Multifusion and the Kootenay Christmas Faire. Despite the number of outlets, the Kootenay Christmas Faire remains popular today, still functioning as an event, not just a marketplace for wares. Nelson has boomed as an artistic centre, with its artisans described as "a powerfully talented community [which] has built for Nelson a Canada-wide reputation."³¹

Pauline Hanbury's community-minded vision, and her understanding of the need for a new market for the crafts led to the creation of one of the longest running and most loved craft fairs in Canada.³² It offered a reflection of a lifestyle, as Wendy Rosen, a professional craft fair organizer in the U.S. explains: "To artisans, craft making was symbolic of peace, tolerance, equality and a sense of freedom. Today, craft making is still a revolution."³³ Hanbury's timing was perfect, as the "back-to-the-land" and "women's movement" were opening new markets for a hearkening back to traditional production and consumption of goods.

³¹ John Villani, *The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America* (Santa Fe: John Muir Publications, 1996), 233. In his book, Villani ranks Nelson as the number one small art town in Canada, number four in North America.

³² Other contenders for the most loved craft fair in Canada include Ottawa's Elegance Christmas Fair, Toronto's One of a Kind, Montreal's Metiers d'Art Christmas Fair, and Victoria's Crystal Palace Christmas Fair.

³³ Rosen, *Crafting as Business*, 4.

In the spring of 1973, when the first Multifusion event was taking place, *Seventeen* magazine was reviewing the American Craft Council's fair in Rhinebeck, New York:

And it's happening all over the country as craftsmen and women gather to show their wares and exchange ideas. You could see potters, batikers, woodcutters, weavers, jewelers, macrame-ers demonstrating their crafts in thatched huts and patchwork tents in an open field. Mothers nursed babies, family meals got cooked and shared day-to-day life continued in a grand sort of commune style.³⁴ (Fig. 4)

The styles of Multifusion and the Kootenay Christmas Faire, with their "outdoor organic experience" were filling a niche in demand. As a Nelson craftsperson observed, "craftspeople do reflect the lifestyle of the community - wooden spoons for rice and cooking, candles hand dipped and rolled, woven garments. These artists make what the shopping community demands in their lifestyle."³⁵ Hanbury ascribes the popularity of the crafted objects to the fact that "people need certain items to make them feel good - our urban age suffers from a lack of natural beauty which is replaced by beautiful items within the home - there are far worse ways we spend our money than on things people have created with love."³⁶

This sounds much like the philosophies of the arts and crafts movement which originated in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with social reform played out through art. William Morris, the figurehead of the arts and crafts movement, was committed to reform through craftsmanship, and as such he blended "arts, ideals and business."³⁷ Through his writings Morris advanced the utopian ideals of the arts and crafts movement, including his romanticized view of

³⁴ *Seventeen's Make-It!* Spring/Summer 1971, 104.

³⁵ Questionnaires, December 1995.

³⁶ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September, 1996.

³⁷ Wendy Kaplan, *The Art that is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1987), 35.

Medieval art and labour. He found a wide audience for his work, particularly among those people who were considering the implications of the Industrial Revolution. As Anthea Callen has suggested, "the notion of a rural idyll held great attractions for a middle class disillusioned with the sordid effects of a society based upon mechanized industry."³⁸

It was exactly this "disillusionment" that the Kootenay Christmas Faire used in its appeal to craftspeople and purchasers. The "urban refugees" and political refugees sought a utopian return to a pre-industrial era through a strong sense of community, traditional modes of barter and trade and a return to established material practices of craft. The consumption and artistic production of the post-war era and the economically powerful 1950s came under scrutiny. This led the crafts to further isolate themselves from modernist institutions through location and lifestyle. This removal, as well as the tendency to refuse the discourses of the "high art" world, has contributed to the dismissal of craft within the larger cultural arena. It is an ironic situation because the crafts occupy a central role in the consumption of North Americans and, through that, in the construction of visual environments.

³⁸ Anthea Callen, *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870 - 1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 9.

CHAPTER 2

CRAFT AND THE THEORETICAL DIVIDE

Michel Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* offers a discussion which might be taken as a conversation between craft and certain forms of theory:

Inclination speaks out: "I don't want to have to enter this risky world of discourse; I want nothing to do with it in so far as it is decisive and final."

Institutions reply: "But you have nothing to fear from launching out; we're here to show you discourse is within the established order of things...and if it should happen to have a certain power, then it is we, and we alone who give it that power."¹

The Kootenay Christmas Faire's early participants found themselves to be a cohesive unit due to shared views on lifestyle and artistic production. These views were outside the mainstream of urban life and accepted "art". That the accepted art of urban institutions was composed largely of modernist painters and sculptures, placed the formerly avant-garde work in an interesting and ironic position of representing the "values of the consumer and corporate oriented marketplace"² so distrusted by the "back-to-the-landers". The influence of modernism prior to the revolutionary 1960s, represented by the activities of critics, galleries, publishers and dealers, had left, indeed still often leaves, modern art criticism as an oppositional force to the artistic practices of a large number of the Kootenay artisans.

Modern craft practitioners have struggled with the issue of "high art," feeling both a desire to adopt its language and status, and a desire to disavow its emphasis

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 215.

² Kansinsky, *Refugees from Militarism*, 12.

on the conceptual. Their struggle has not been assisted by the art critics who have condemned the crafts to an anti-theoretical space by denying them any access to realm of art. John Bentley Mays commented in *American Craft*, "art critics will never be paying as much attention to crafts as craftspeople (and even some artists) think they should. This is so not because craft or craft-as-art (as I have experienced it) are inferior to art, but because they are not art."³ Attitudes such as Mays' force the crafts into an inferior critical position and leave craft practitioners rejecting any efforts to incorporate theory, which they feel belongs to the makers of "high" art. A questionnaire handed out to artisans in the Kootenay Christmas Faire contained the response "we have a very appreciating audience in each other's (the crafters) spirits, we do not need critics telling us we are or are not art...it's hard enough not to have the world catch up to you."⁴

There *is* room for this alienation of craft from art theory to be addressed through the critics, galleries, publishers and dealers who once undervalued this rich area. Linda McGreevy, an art history and criticism professor at Old Dominion University, writes of "the symbiotic relationship of critic and artist...through the power of recognition."⁵ Many artisans worry about a lack of theory within the crafts. Pamela Johnson warns of a self-referential and ultimately isolating world of craft unless history, theory and practice are looked at together. But what are the fears of artisans that lead them to deny the role of theory in craft, and what are the fears of high art institutions which lead them to deny any examination of the crafts? Often, the issue appears to be one of function versus non-function. Pamela Blume Leonard in her article "Craft/Folk/Function" states it in simple terms, "In fine arts, a

³ John Bentley Mays, "Comment" , *American Craft*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (Dec/Jan 1986): 38.

⁴ Nelson questionnaires, December 1995. See Appendix

⁵ Linda McGreevy, "Crafting a Collaboration", *Art Papers*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 1992): 35.

functional object is not art, period."⁶ She calls for a banding together of crafts advocates to "question the automatic debasement that a functional object undergoes."⁷ Craftsmanship and the hand-crafted object are inseparable from their considerations of use, which is a sign given externally to an object; whereas, in the modernist view, when significance is inscribed within the object, and not external to it, it is called art.⁸

Why then, has architecture been able to avoid this trap? Perhaps it helped that many of the "geniuses" of the Renaissance such as Alberti and Palladio, were architects as well as painters. Nevertheless, it remains ironic, as both the crafts and architecture have as their focus utility and aesthetics. As Witold Rybczynski writes, "like the architect - and unlike the sculptor or the painter - the furniture maker is governed by how furniture is used as well as how it is made, by what sentiments it evokes as well as how beautiful it looks and how comfortable it feels."⁹ Despite the similarities between architecture and craft, architecture was accorded high status by the modernists. In 1949, Clement Greenberg, quoting Nikolaus Pevsner in *Our Period Style*, makes the point that, "the recovery of true style in the visual arts, is one in which once again building rules."¹⁰ Could it be that while, "modern furniture, decoration and design are manifestations of the new style...what most essentially defines the new unity of style in architecture, sculpture and painting is, however, their common tendency to treat all *matter*, as

⁶ Pamela Blume Leonard, "Craft/Folk/Function", *Art Papers*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 1992): 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸ Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*, (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1986), 153.

⁹ Witold Rybczynski, *Looking Around: A Journey Through Architecture*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 32.

¹⁰ John O'Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume Two: Arrogant Purpose* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 322.

distinguished from *space* as two dimensional"¹¹ something not as easily accomplished through the materials of craft production? Jane Kessler writes convincingly that:

The lack of content has been the club often used by critics to bludgeon the field of crafts. The existing assumption that defines content implies that essential meaning in craft objects is not enough to view with the essential meaning in painting or sculpture. It implies that craft as a whole is lacking in substance and that emphasis on form and material supersedes the presence of significant meaning.¹²

Kessler goes on to argue that the aspirations of certain crafters to the status of fine art have denied craft's own inherent rich meaning and has led some artisans to contrive meaning. Through the example of Toshiko Takaezu, a potter who creates vessels but closes the opening, Kessler demonstrates how Takaezu's work takes away the object's ability to function as a vessel, shifting it into the realm of the sculptural while maintaining its primary reference to its origin as a functional clay vessel. Bruce Metcalf makes the same argument in his article "Replacing the Myth of Modernism" where he fears an assumption "that the language of art criticism fits craft like a comfortable old pair of pants."¹³ He warns that an assimilation into art is deadly to craft and should be avoided. Metcalf believes that in this intellectual climate anything can be art, but not anything can be craft. He offers the reader four simultaneous identities for craft: made substantially by hand, medium-specific, defined by use, and defined by the past.¹⁴ These identities, necessarily arising out of tradition, have been denied artistic merit and, as a result,

¹¹ Ibid., 324.

¹² Jane Kessler, "Content", *Art Papers*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 1992): 2.

¹³ Bruce Metcalf, "Replacing the Myth of Modernism", *American Craft*, Vol. 1, No. 53 (Feb/Mar 1993): 41.

¹⁴ Ibid., 40.

Metcalf claims that craft has avoided theory which has been instrumental in this very denial.

Many crafters argue that craft production relates to the concept of a lifestyle, "living in response to life rather than in conscious intellectual analysis of it."¹⁵ This is precisely the argument put forth by many of the artisans of the Kootenay Christmas Faire. As one participant in the Faire writes, "it is a gift to wake up happy to go to work everyday."¹⁶ However, there are those, like Pamela Johnson, who recognize the importance of liberating craft from "too much self-referential, self-protective discussion, which leaves the crafts world isolated, effectively talking to itself."¹⁷ Mary Douglas, a Renwick Fellow in American Craft at the Smithsonian Institution has recognized the importance cultural institutions play in the interpretation of craft artistically and economically. She writes that craft "is different from the other arts with their canon of art historical scholarship to back up the criticism which backs up the marketing. At least you get a pedigree with their package."¹⁸

While some crafters are trying to adopt the language and therefore the status of "high" art, not contemplating the effects of modernist theory on craft, other crafters are denying any intellectual interest in the world of theory - "this paucity of thinking and writing on craft has led to a vacuum in debate and standards."¹⁹ Ceramicist Paul Mathieu views the materials of craft production as not easily lending themselves to theoretical discourse, and the ensuing silence of

¹⁵ Kessler, *Content*, 4.

¹⁶ Nelson Questionnaires, December 1995, see Appendix.

¹⁷ Pamela Johnson, "Naming of Parts", *Crafts*, (May/June 1995): 35.

¹⁸ Mary Douglas, "Chihuly Sweepstakes: The Venetians, Tutti Putti, Niijima Floats, Glassmaster", *Art Papers*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 1992): 9.

¹⁹ Metcalf, *Replacing*, 41.

craft as censure; "the subject is more or less taboo."²⁰ This results in an absence of craft from the modernist institutions of "high" art. Several aspects of the world of craft as represented through the Kootenay Christmas Faire point out the inherent differences between "high" art and craft production and consumption.

Firstly, professional artisans who earn their income from their craft must work within a certain level and schedule of production. Moss Glass Works and Sweetmud Pottery, both involved with the Kootenay Christmas Faire, not only participate at the event, but also supply their own galleries, as well as a number of other galleries within the Kootenays and beyond, including crafts cooperatives.²¹ It is a "Catch 22" situation--in order to make a living, hand-crafted items need to be made and sold and this conflicts in both time and production with the opportunity to display hand-crafted wares at prestigious events. As David Poston writes in *Crafts*, "very little work actually gets sold out of the forbidding glass boxes of major exhibitions."²²

Secondly, the success of craft is largely due to the fact that it remains outside the forbidding glass boxes, and stays within events like the Kootenay Christmas Faire. A *New York Times* article pokes fun at summer arts and crafts markets, while simultaneously stating exactly why they are so popular:

Real galleries make people nervous. Enter a gallery and one is likely to be approached by a sinuous young man wearing strange clothes who whispers, "Don't you feel how this piece revitalizes the old symbolic motifs with primordial force?" I find myself muttering feeble excuses about my walls being full

²⁰ Paul Mathieu, "The Space of Pottery: An Investigation of the Nature of Craft", in Gloria A. Hickey (Ed.) *Making and Metaphor: A Discussion of Meaning in Contemporary Craft*, (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1994), 27.

²¹ In the Questionnaire (Dec 1995), question #4 asked "How many craft fairs do you participate in each year?" Responses averaged four fairs per craftsman, with the lowest number being one, the Kootenay Christmas Faire, and the highest number being fifteen.

²² David Poston, "A Minority Sport", *Crafts*, (July /Aug 1986): 12

and making a quick exit from the gallery while the sinuous young man sneers at my clothes. Nothing like that happens at outdoor art sales, where one can eat ice cream and get a tan and have fun. Every one can be an art critic out on the street.²³

Even major museums and galleries who hesitate to display craft within their sacred chambers have no hesitation in selling crafts through the accessible and popular giftshop. Jennifer Harris, curator of textiles and deputy director of the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, England, argues that the postmodern era is not the time for the crafts to enter the gallery sanctuary:

At a time when many fine art curators are taking on board the fact that the creation and preservation of art objects takes place in multiple social and political contexts, and are looking to provide alternative 'readings' of painting and sculpture, it would be a great pity if craft work, which has generally been attractive for its accessibility, were to become marginalised as the preserve of a cultural elite.²⁴

Harris is idealizing a future within museums and galleries when the bias toward the conceptual has been replaced with "multiple social and political contexts" however, I believe the inclusion of craft objects within institutions, beyond their role in giftshops, provides necessary openings for craft as sophisticated artistic objects, therefore providing a re-reading of the gallery space within the gallery space. It is not enough to speculate that galleries may change, it is necessary to provide displays within accepted "high art" spaces which offer craft as art, not anthropological inspiration for art. The 1996 show "A Labor of Love" curated by Marcia Tucker at New York City's New Museum of Contemporary Art, was a successful attempt to bring craft into art's space in its own terms. Tucker, in her

²³ David Bouchier, "Capturing the Artistic Soul of Suburbia", *The New York Times*, (Sunday May 22, 1994): L-23.

²⁴ Jennifer Harris, "Contextualising the Conceptual", *Museums Journal*, Vol. 92, No. 8 (May 1992): 33.

essay for the show, writes of the patronizing and self-congratulatory tone of the "experts" toward craft objects, which are often seen as saved by the gallery, which protects them from the hordes waiting to buy them.²⁵ Craft objects should have the choice of being found in galleries, fairs, or both.

Thirdly, the role of museums as institutions of power and wealth are not in accordance with the desire of many artisans, including those who participate in the Kootenay Christmas Faire, to create their own alternative lifestyles. The deep convictions of the original "back-to-the-landers" remain and are articulated through personal interviews and questionnaires. Pauline Hanbury speaks of people "selling out", such as the co-founder of the Kootenay Christmas Faire, Jack Anderson, who went on to become an arts administrator and, "became a good yuppie - bought a condo and asked me if I wanted to time-share in Yucatan, I said no thank you!"²⁶

Every one of the twenty questionnaires answered by the artisans of the Kootenay Christmas Faire, contained a comment regarding lifestyle choices, many stating how "lucky we are to be independent craftspeople - I just can't imagine life without the independence of craft fairs."²⁷ Peter Dormer writes about the post-war craftsperson's ideology, "the ideal was to live from work that was one's own and done to the highest possible standard. It was a way of turning away from the structured routine of twentieth-century life."²⁸ The artisans of the Kootenay area have gone on to be highly successful, and their hand crafted objects continue to be popular precisely because they represent concerns such as utopian lifestyles. The fact that the public buys hand-crafted items because of their accessibility prevents

²⁵ Marcia Tucker, *A Labor of Love* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 8.

²⁶ Hanbury, Personal interview, September 1996.

²⁷ Nelson questionnaire, December 1995.

²⁸ Peter Dormer, "The Ideal World of Vermeer's Little Lacemaker", *Crafts*, (July/Aug 1988): 12

many crafters from desiring to clutter the objects with "hoity-toity art theory."²⁹ What is sacrificed due to the demands of constant production, adherence to the community of craftspeople, and limited entry into the institutions of art, is the status of "transcendental genius". This lack of craftspeople as "geniuses" is a sign of the separation of "high art" and craft, a division marked by the Renaissance development of the western notion of artist. Gombrich describes "the historically decisive phase of assimilation of visual arts to their sister arts... thus it was not so much the work of the human hand which became an object of admiration, but any token of the creativity of the human mind."³⁰ It is only when assimilation of a craftsperson occurs within the machinery of the art world, that a genius is born. Herbert Read, the British art critic, wrote about Bernard Leach, modernist critics praised Peter Voulkos, *Vanity Fair* reviews Dale Chihuly, all of these craftsmen having attained a status usually reserved for painters and sculptures.

Fourthly, in the age of mass production and marketing, craft objects such as those found at the Kootenay Christmas Faire are said to offer purchasers a comforting nostalgia. The promotional campaign used by the Faire "sells" images such as rocking chairs, wood stoves, and cats curled up sleeping. It is as Pauline Hanbury described, "the perfect thing for the urban refugees - an idyllic, slower pace of life, but they don't understand what makes it that way and suffer from the syndrome that if you want it you buy it and take it with you - fortunately that makes for good sales."³¹ These "possessions of self-hood"³² act as symbols, for

²⁹ Lecture and Question Period, Capital Theatre, Nelson, British Columbia, August 24, 1995.

³⁰ Burgin, *The End*, 154.

³¹ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September, 1996.

³² Thomas J. Schlerth, "Object Knowledge: Every Museum Visitor an Interpreter" in Susan K. Nichols (ed) *Museum Education Anthology*, (Washington DC: Museum Education Roundtable, 1984), 114.

"modern consumption is based upon symbolic systems of meaning, symbols which are linked in with alienated forms of creativity."³³

Craftsmanship, with its links to tradition, operates as a nostalgic symbol; "the product is sold through its personal relationship with the purchaser--this method of business is reminiscent of days past when personal service was the order of the day."³⁴ The craftsperson is seen as an extension of his or her objects, representing an idealized image of a person safe from some fundamental dangers of our society.³⁵ Lois Moran, editor of the journal *American Craft*, has described the craftsperson as helping to sell the concept that the handmade is special over the machine made, that the hand is superior, through a nostalgic reference to the past.³⁶ The twentieth-century consumer then uses this idealized image to counter the homogenizing effects of mass production and consumption: "Craft objects reinforce personal identity...consumers intuitively read the uniqueness of the handmade object as a tangible analog to their own singularity: the marks of hand fabrication symbolize the uniqueness of an individual life."³⁷ The importance of personal contact with customers keeps crafts fairs alive, but limits the transition of hand-crafted objects into institutional settings.

Finally, another factor paramount in the creation and sale of craft objects is the sensory element. The sensuous appeal of the crafts destabilizes artistic boundaries. Established art spaces are often based on the western hierarchy of the senses, with the visual, (and therefore the conceptual) at the head. Immanuel Kant wrote that "the pleasures of the senses [are] tyrannical; only in the contemplation

³³ Robert Bocoock, *Consumption*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 49.

³⁴ Rosen, *Crafting as Business*, 10.

³⁵ Rudolf Arnheim, "The Form We Seek", *Fourth National Conference of the American Craftsmen's Council*, August 26-29, 1961, University of Washington, Seattle, American Craft Council Archive, Box 1.

³⁶ Lois Moran, Personal Interview, New York, February 21, 1996.

³⁷ Metcalf, *Replacing*, 45.

of the aesthetic could people be free. The object that insists on being enjoyed threatens ethical resistance to it, and denies the distance required by the aesthetic."³⁸ This helps to ensure that the glass cases remain in gallery spaces, and are absent in the majority of craft spaces. In craft, the conceptual importance of an object is inextricably tied to function, process, materials and tactility.³⁹ It is demonstrated through every sense at the Kootenay Christmas Faire, from the smell of potpourri and fresh-cut boughs, the taste of jellies and chocolates, the sounds of homespun music, to the feel of the hand-crafted objects visitors are encouraged to pick up and hold. Charles Henry, a nineteenth-century British aesthetician who formulated a psychophysical aesthetic, dreamed of a harmonic work of art, where both the physical properties and psychic functions of that which reaches our senses - light, colour, form and sound - "are understood in their mutual interdependence, the creation of harmonic works become possible."⁴⁰ Edward Lucie-Smith has compared a craft fair to a sporting event, where clients share the pleasure the craftsman takes in displaying his or her skill, which in turn inspires the viewer to feel an almost physical response to seeing and feeling materials treated in such a virtuoso fashion.⁴¹ The Kootenay Christmas Faire, with its emphasis on being a total experience, continues to undermine the superior position of the visual within Western culture. David Howes in *Sensorial Anthropology* quotes James Carey from 1969, "It is not only that youth wants experience; it wants experience that unifies rather than dissociates the senses."⁴² Howes summarizes that, "this reunion of

³⁸Tucker, *A Labor of Love*, 31.

³⁹ Angela Adams and Paula Owen, "Beyond the Visual: Crafts and the Sensory Component of Art", *Art Papers*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 1992): 11.

⁴⁰ Jose Arguelles, *Charles Henry and the formation of a Psychophysical Aesthetic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), vii.

⁴¹ Edward Lucie-Smith, *Craft Today: Poetry of the Physical*, (New York: American Craft Museum, 1986), 37.

⁴² David Howes, ed., "Sensorial Anthropology" ,*The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 172.

the senses made possible a new awareness of human interconnectedness."⁴³ This leads to a sense of identity and inclusion, which often leads to consumption of craft objects. It is very common to hear visitors at craft fairs claiming "I could make that". Objects invite tactile responses, creating intimacy and an ability to engage with the world.

Even the term visual art represents the reliance on a single sense for artistic authority. Angela Adams and Paula Owen write in "Beyond the Visual", that it is natural to have learned to put our aesthetic trust in our visual sense after having been educated in art through slides in darkened rooms.⁴⁴ It is inevitable that there is resistance to an aesthetic synesthesia,⁴⁵ for it erodes the hierarchy of value which has been carefully built to divide visual art from "low" art. Clement Greenberg, advocate of "high" art, insisted that the senses must be informed by the mind, or "man [would be] unable to attain civilization."⁴⁶ In our postmodern age, when precepts from the crafts arts are beginning to inform the visual arts field, the crafts must not abandon their principles just as they are becoming valid. Derek Guthrie, former editor-in-chief of *New Art Examiner* writes,

For the crafts to adopt wholesale the outworn rhetoric of Abstract Expressionism, the Greenbergian ideal of the autonomous art object that comments on its own origins, and the notion of a universal fusion of cultures and for crafts to shift away from the tactility engendered by function and towards an entirely visual and conceptual notion of value, is the equivalent of suicide.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., 172.

⁴⁴ Adams and Owen, *Beyond the Visual*, 10.

⁴⁵ Synesthesia, defined by Diane Ackerman in her book *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 290 as "a thick garment of perception that is woven thread by overlapping thread", has been used culturally to describe a balance between the senses. In the nineteenth century, Baudelaire and the Symbolists were particularly interested in synaesthesia..

⁴⁶ John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume Two: Arrogant Purpose*. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987), 147.

⁴⁷ Adams and Owen, *Beyond the Visual*, 11.

The modernist notion of vision as the superior sense has a long tradition. Plato divided the senses into the "higher" senses of vision and hearing and the "lower" senses of smell, taste and touch. He exalted vision and hearing as pathways to rational knowledge, claiming that "to let oneself be ruled by sensation ought to be morally repugnant to people of good taste and virtue."⁴⁸ With the Renaissance rediscovery of classical Greek thought, this hierarchy was resumed. Giovanni Boccaccio in his *Decameron* (1358), praised Giotto, for "he had brought back to light that art that had been buried for centuries under the errors of those who painted rather to delight the eyes of the ignorant than to please the intellect of the wise."⁴⁹ By the time of Immanuel Kant, the existence of the object was deliberately suppressed in order to help the viewer achieve a state of contemplation. Pamela Johnson has argued that the value of crafts lies in helping to restore conceptual responses to the realm of the senses, that the contemporary interest in craft is not one of nostalgia, but rather one of fulfillment, recapturing the ability to engage with the world through materials and narrative.⁵⁰ The crafts appeal to an essential human need. As William Drummond wrote in 1623, "What sweet contentments doth the soul enjoy by the senses. They are the gates and windows of its knowledge, the organs of its delight."⁵¹ Craftspeople must remain true to the notion that the conceptual power in their work is transmitted at least partially through sensory appreciation, and not sacrifice it in favour of an outdated emphasis on the conceptual.

⁴⁸ Nicholas Humphrey, *A History of the Mind*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 62.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁰ Pamela Johnson, *Out of Touch: The Meaning of Making in the Digital Age*. Conference paper, University of East Anglia, January 1997.

⁵¹ Humphrey, *A History of the Mind*, 51.

The production, display, marketing, functional tradition and sensory appeal of the crafts continue to stand as oppositional devices in the face of "high art". In order to understand why modernist institutions find these traits so objectionable, it is necessary to examine the development of modernism.

CHAPTER 3

MODERNISM AND CRAFT

The oppositional relationship between craft and modernism became institutionalized following World War II. It is my intention in this chapter to trace how North American galleries, critics and academics succeeded in creating this artificial and political separation, which continues today. In using the term modernism, I am referring specifically to the discourses associated with the Abstract Expressionist movement.

The critical champion of Abstract Expressionism was the American art critic Clement Greenberg.¹ Greenberg, who spent his evenings drawing from live models through a Works Progress Administration studio in the late 1930's,² was greatly influenced by the ideas of Emmanuel Kant, whom he called his "essential source."³ Kant believed that a disinterested attitude identical in all individuals and cultures and inherent to human nature existed, where "no trace of personal desire exists - every true judgment of beauty contains an implicit claim to universal validity."⁴ Greenberg's conviction regarding intuitive experience in judging art was based on Kant's formulation about intuitive experience and aesthetic judgment.⁵ Like the genius of the artists, the genius of the intuitive critic was essential in determining

¹ Harold Rosenberg was also a key theoretician and spokesperson for the Abstract Expressionist movement. Rosenberg's main essay on the movement is "American Action Painters" (1952).

² John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume One: Perceptions and Judgments*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xvii.

³ Stephen C. Foster, *The Critics of Abstract Expressionism*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 20.

⁴ Metcalf, *Replacing the Myth*, 42. In contrast, contemporary anthropological research suggests that few visual experiences are understood the same way, see the collection of essays in *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*, David Howes (ed).

⁵ O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: Volume One*, xxiii.

what qualified as true art. Greenberg's writings were immensely influential in terms of establishing the modernist institutions of art, and took Kant's theories further in determining artistic "truth" through a focus on the conceptual. His ideas were manifested through the work of the artists he influenced. Barnett Newman wrote in 1971 that the Abstract Expressionist painter was the true revolutionary: "He is the philosopher and the pure scientist who is exploring the world of ideas, not the world of the senses...so the artist today is giving us a vision of the world of truth in terms of visual symbols."⁶

In 1939, Greenberg published his article "Avant Garde and Kitsch" in the journal *Partisan Review*. This article was to act as the manifesto for the Abstract Expressionist movement. In "Avant Garde and Kitsch", Greenberg applauded the invention of an entirely new artistic truth, "a superior consciousness of history,"⁷ while never specifying whose history. The artist's values he claimed as entirely aesthetic, rejecting the subject matter of common experience. Through this rejection the artist succeeded in producing something entirely new, based on the "medium of his own craft,"⁸ his own subjectivity. It was an art which sought to negate the art of North America's recent past, as well as that of more distant times and places. It followed that craft objects, rooted in tradition, would be disavowed through this process. Ironically, in this new Abstract Expressionist art, artists such as Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko claimed "that is why we express spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art."⁹ This allowed artists like Jasper Johns to include hand-crafted objects - for example, he included pots by George Ohr as background subject matter in his painting *Ventriloquist*, 1983. In their search for a

⁶ David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro, *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8.

⁷ O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: Volume One*, 7.

⁸ Shapiro, *Abstract Expressionism*, 17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

universal symbolism in a timeless art, the artists overlooked the fact that primitive and archaic art were, like all art, products of their time and place.

While espousing the virtues of the avant garde in "Avant Garde and Kitsch", Greenberg warned against kitsch, the product of the industrial revolution, mass-produced art, which he claimed was "the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times."¹⁰ In his writing he did not directly address the field of craft, distinctly different from both the avant garde with its focus on the purely formal and its (so-called) rejection of the economics of survival, and kitsch with its mass-production. What Greenberg succeeded in accomplishing through "Avant Garde and Kitsch", was creating a new definition of true art as necessarily difficult and conceptual. This guaranteed that the masses would be unable to access it, and the elite would then support it, through an "umbilical cord of gold."¹¹ The money provided by the elite among the ruling classes succeeded in popularizing modernist art among those who were able to make it appear dominant. Post World War II found that "museum trustees, virtually all fulfilling at least the minimal qualification of disposable wealth, had ties with industrial and political power."¹² This power of money and curatorial influence was put into the service of the avant-garde critics and artists, who were able to use the political situation to declare new American art as occupying the space formerly occupied by European painting, and traditional American arts and crafts.

Serge Guilbaut describes abstract expressionism in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, as a movement which "came to represent the values of the majority but in a way (continuing the modernist tradition) that only a minority was

¹⁰ O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: Volume One*, 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17. Greenberg used this phrase in his essay "Avant Garde and Kitsch", where he suggests that culture belongs to the ruling class through an "umbilical cord of gold."

¹² Shapiro, *Abstract Expressionism*, 20.

capable of understanding."¹³ The difficulty of the new art was its allure.

Greenberg's "Avant Garde and Kitsch" enhanced this lure:

Its difficulties become a barrier to be catapulted by people with upwardly mobile cultural aspirations. Who wants to be left standing outside the gardens of the elite? Who can admit to not understanding a mode if to do so is to be tagged "uncultured."¹⁴

Greenberg, in authoring this elitist manifesto, was ensuring himself a position of influence as the purveyor of artistic truth. As a "guru" of Abstract Expressionism, he could determine accepted art and artists through the power of his words.

Greenberg wrote little about the crafts. What writing he did on crafts includes a review article on Helmet Bossert's *Folk Art in Europe* (1953), where Greenberg states that "Folk art had, like most of exotic art, to wait for modern painting in order to become appreciated seriously."¹⁵ In the same article, Greenberg goes on to argue that high art will enable the flavour of the geometrical regularity of folk art to survive in more than a "quaint or arts-and-craftsy way."¹⁶ Greenberg wrote about his fellow art critic, Britain's Herbert Read, and through his critiques mentions the crafts. Herbert Read began his career in the Department of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum 1922-1931,¹⁷ where he developed the view that while sculpture was imitative, pottery was "plastic art in the most

¹³ Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*. Arthur Goldhammer, Trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁵ John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume Three: Affirmations and Refusals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 153. The Abstract Expressionists were not the first set of artists to appropriate folk art. Pablo Picasso used folk images in his work, and Henri Rousseau marketed himself as a "naive" folk artist.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁷ Tanya Harrod, "Herbert Read", *Crafts*, (July/Aug 1993): 14.

abstract form."¹⁸ Read's vision of modernism, like that of Greenberg, included a view of abstraction as crucial to the avant garde. However, his vision of ceramics as representative of that abstraction obviously differed greatly from Greenberg. In a 1947 review of Herbert Read's *Grass Roots of Art*, Greenberg claims that Read's vision of a duplex civilization where manual crafts would flourish alongside the "geometric" rationalized arts was unacceptable, because Read accepted that "the life of the senses could be maintained in the face of abstract rationality."¹⁹ Greenberg argued that civilization was a failure until the senses were informed by the mind, and "Mr. Read's handicrafts will exist only as hobbies and hobbies have too precarious a place to enable them to defend sensuous intuition against abstract rationality."²⁰ Greenberg dismisses the crafts as too sensual a vehicle for conceptual concerns. Herbert Read's attitude toward the crafts was a shifting one, and ultimately he adopted a view similar to Greenberg, claiming:

We can admit the virtues of hand-made things, the vitality of organic forms, the nervous sensibility of the hand-traced line - we can admit all these virtues in the art of the past, and then renounce them!²¹

Read's change in attitude is attributed to changes in the political and economic climate of the 1930's, when the individual effort's of the 1920s were replaced with communal effort, evidenced in Read's turn toward Walter Gropius and his views on handicrafts in service of industrial production.²² Herbert Read, despite his final renouncing of the handicrafts, offered British crafts of the 1920s and 1930s something North American crafts were denied - positive critical attention.

¹⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁹ John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume Two: Arrogant Purpose*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 147.

²⁰ Ibid., 147.

²¹ Harrod, *Read*, 15.

²² Ibid., 14.

During this period, studio pottery in Britain received coverage in the *Observer*, the *Guardian*, the *Spectator*, and was considered the cutting edge of the avant garde.²³ Unfortunately, with Read's shifting attitude, critical attention toward British craft faded after World War II, replaced, as in North America, with being backdrop items in the paintings of the avant garde - for example, Ben Nicholson's *Still Life (Winter)*, 1950. It is very possible that Herbert Read's attitudes toward the handicrafts may have been influenced by Clement Greenberg. At the 1949 "A Symposium: The State of American Art" organized through the *Magazine of Art*, Greenberg critiqued Read's suggestion that abstract and naturalistic art were compatible.²⁴

It should be mentioned that events like the 1949 Symposium were vital in eliminating critical attention toward crafts. The focus of another symposium, sponsored in 1948 by *Life Magazine* and held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was the new painting by Greenberg's carefully selected artists Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb and William Baziotis. Works by these artists had already been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, and this forum provided the museum with a public justification for its recent purchases.²⁵ That the conceptual works of the avant garde were to be regarded by all as acceptable high art was evidenced by both the presence of influential critics and writers at the symposium²⁶ and the lack of any critique of this new work. It is doubtful that there were absolutely no detractors of the new work; the reason for this lack of negative criticism may be more political, as David Schapiro speculates:

²³ Julian Stair, *Studio Ceramics: Ghetto or ghetto mentality?* Unpublished conference paper, University of East Anglia, January, 1997.

²⁴ O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg, Volume Two*, 287.

²⁵ Schapiro, *Abstract Expressionism*, 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21. Critics and writers present at the symposium included Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro, member of the Museum of Modern Art Actions committee, and H.W. Janson, professor of art at Washington University in Saint Louis and author of the widely read Janson's *History of Art*.

It is fair to infer that critics who found the new mode retrogressive, vapid or meaningless, or who refused to accept its validity were gradually rejected for publications in art magazines, if not the more general or scholarly press. The relative scarcity of published comment questioning either the premises of the products of these artists suggest that the movement had captured the powers of the art establishment.²⁷

Serge Guilbaut calls this lack of critical opposition the tragedy of American modern art history, leaving a legacy of artworks and texts which have acquired sacred status; "ritual repetition has finally made them untouchable."²⁸

Greenberg's final view on craft, issued at the 1992 conference "Critical Studies in Craft Arts" at New York University, was that "craft is not art."²⁹ That we continue to be a society involved in modernist attitudes is evident through such recent statements as "modern art itself, in all its variety, is proof that the historically anti-hand, anti-craft strategy continues to be radical and greatly rewarding."³⁰

In the years leading up to Greenberg's manifesto on the avant garde, North American crafts had been enjoying something of a resurgence as a source of national pride during economic hard times. President Roosevelt's "New Deal" provided America with federally funded art programs under the title of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Holger Cahill was appointed to head this program. A strong proponent of American crafts, he saw them as rich in potential for raising national pride, essential during the depression.³¹ Cahill had curated an exhibition

²⁷ Ibid., 22.

²⁸ Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, 9.

²⁹ Metcalf, *Modernism*, 42.

³⁰ Mays, *Comment*, 38

³¹ Harvey Green, "Culture and Crisis: Americans and the Craft Revival", in Janet Kardon (ed) *Revivals! Diverse Traditions 1920-1945: The History of 20th Century American Craft* (New York: American Craft Museum and Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 39.

of American folk art at New Jersey's Newark museum in 1930, which served as an "emblem of positive political identity."³² Cahill fostered the revival of colonial crafts, also supported directly by the Roosevelts with Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement in Val-Kill Industries in 1927, an arts and crafts colony producing colonial revival crafts.³³ The WPA sponsored over 3000 projects and exhibitions of craft work, and through the Farm Security Administration, experiments in handicraft production and craft fairs were carried out through nearly every state.³⁴ Holger Cahill's largest project was the Index of American Design, intended to "pioneer the appreciation of Americana" by employing over 500 painters in 32 states to produce over 23,000 watercolours and drawings of traditional American craft objects.³⁵ The Index of American Design involved members of many art institutions, including then curator at the Museum of Modern Art, Mildred Constantine.³⁶ The Index of American Design was representative of Cahill's vision of authentic American art, one which relied on tradition.

In Cahill's 1934 book *Art in America in Modern Times*, he makes many references to the importance of the historical in art, "The modern movement followed many trails. A few of these trails led nowhere in particular, but the main

³² *Ibid.*, 40.

³³ *Ibid.*, 47. Val-Kill was the name of the Roosevelt's new "cottage" located on their Springwood, New York estate, set apart from the property by the Val-Kill stream. It was here that Roosevelt and her friends Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook generated the idea of Val-Kill Industries in 1927. For more information on Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement with Val-Kill Industries, see Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One 1884 -1933* (New York: Viking Press, 1992).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39

³⁵ Francis V. O'Conner, ed. *The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs*. (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972), 43.

³⁶ Hildreth J. York, "New Deal Craft Programs and their Social Implications" in Janet Kardon (ed) *Revivals! Diverse Traditions 1920-1945: The History of 20th Century American Craft* (New York: American Craft Museum and Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 60.

road was a good one. It led back to the sources of tradition."³⁷ Holger Cahill's New Deal concept of culture and community utilizing the crafts, "invested hopes in a return to mythical pre-industrial, pre-urban and pre-capitalist past."³⁸ He demanded that craft programs be socially useful, providing a democratization of art, a program for fruitful leisure activity, and an antidote to the dehumanization of the machine age; "indeed a kind of national therapy was pursued through these programs."³⁹ By 1940, the New York World's Fair Contemporary Art Building was including Works Progress Administration and Federal Arts Project handicrafts and demonstrations, and was the showpiece for the introduction of Cahill's special project, the Index of American Design. This open recognition of the consumer's "cultural needs" was in direct opposition to the evolving modernist sensibilities also on display at the World's Fair Contemporary Art Building.⁴⁰ The increasing popularity of the government funded handicrafts came under scrutiny from the Fair Labor Standards Act, which invoked laws preventing the marketing of handicrafts if they were in competition with manufactured industrial projects;⁴¹ therefore the Works Progress Administration never developed marketing and production units. Not only were these populist hand-crafted objects anathema to the exclusionary intelligentsia of the modernist avant-garde, they met with resistance from the capitalist/industrial lobby.

The artworks commissioned by the Federal Art Project were of naturalistic or realist styles. One group of artists, that came to be called the Regionalists, with Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton, glorified America's rural agrarian past,

³⁷ Holger Cahill and Alfred H. Barr Jr. eds., *Art in America in Modern Times*, (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1934), 34.

³⁸ Jonathan Harris, "Modernism and Aesthetics in the U.S.A 1930-1960" in Jonathan Harris et al (eds) *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the Forties*, (Hong Kong: The Open University, 1993), 16.

³⁹ York, *New Deal*, 55.

⁴⁰ York, *New Deal Craft*, 56.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 60

demonstrating the independence and self-reliance of Americans.⁴² These were traits espoused through the handicraft workshops of the WPA. Another group of artists, the Social Realists, including Ben Shahn, William Gropper and Philip Evergood, held Marxist views to one degree or another, and featured work showing the working class as exploited by the powerful capitalists. With the end of World War II, the beginning of the Cold War and the introduction of McCarthy anti-communist sentiment, the political implications of the Social Realists fell into disfavour. For example, Ben Shahn, a member of the Artist's Union, who up to the end of World War II was involved in social and political movements through his artwork, such as working for the Farm Security Administration photographing the poverty of the Great Depression, found himself on the outside following his 1947 retrospective show at the Museum of Modern Art⁴³. Greenberg disliked Shahn's show, which coincided with the beginning of Pollock's drip paintings, writing "what his retrospective show at the Museum of Modern Art makes all too clear is how lacking his art is in density and resonance."⁴⁴

Despite the fact that it was during the period of the Federal Art Projects (FAP) that Greenberg published his "Avant Garde and Kitsch" which was "dedicated, above all, to transcending the mundane, the banal and the material through the use of metaphor and symbol,"⁴⁵ many of the artists who were part of the Abstract Expressionist movement had also been involved in the FAP. The first year of the FAP employed 5,500 men and women, including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner, Mark Rothko, and Adolph Gottlieb.⁴⁶ The increased socialization through the FAP would have led to discussions and an

⁴² Schapiro, *Abstract Expressionism*, 11.

⁴³ Frances K. Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artist in a Cold War Climate 1947-1954* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁵ Harris, *Modernism*, 6.

⁴⁶ Schapiro, *Abstract Expressionism*, 14.

exchange of ideas; Barnett Newman who was never involved with the project, complained that his friends did not take him seriously as an artist because he had not been employed by the FAP.⁴⁷ However, many of these artists met as part of the Federal Art Project titled the Easel section, administered by the abstract painter Burgoyne Diller, which encouraged abstract paintings.⁴⁸ The existence of this developing avant garde within one unit of the Federal Art Project was not in accordance with the philosophies put forth by most of the other projects. Jonathan Harris writes that "the federal nature of art projects enabled artists to remain in their home towns - retarding the destructive emigration of artists to metropolitan centres on the east coast. In this and other respects, the philosophy of the Federal Art Project was explicitly anti-Modernist."⁴⁹ The Easel section project was based out of New York City, and headed entirely by men.⁵⁰ In contrast, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Division of Statistics recorded that of the 28, 600 people involved in the WPA handicraft work, 20, 600 of those were women, with over 17, 600 women receiving pay for their work in over 612,000 craft classes (Fig. 5).⁵¹ The use of various forms of realism and the handicrafts to define and give a social function to American art was being challenged by Greenberg with his concept of the avant garde.

Funding for the Federal Art Project ended in 1945, with the beginning of what has been called cold war culture. Around 1948, Greenberg's critique of artists and critics as isolated and alienated from political and ideological concerns, led to his declaration of abstraction as an "ambitious" art,⁵² while social realism and the handicrafts with their focus on tradition seemed increasingly outdated.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵¹ York, *New Deal Craft*, 60.

⁵² Harris, *Modernism*, 53.

Abstraction satisfied all the demands of Kantian theory, with its artistic autonomy using only disinterested formal elements. Greenberg's turn away from social concerns into an outward embrace of the supremacy of American painting on the international scene, paralleled McCarthyism and the cold war politics of the time, with their desire for international superiority. Having fulfilled their earlier function during the depression this left the handicrafts looking parochial. With the advent of abstraction as the dominant "high" art form, any artistic object concerned with tradition and use was ignored, for it lacked the formal qualities necessary to create a transcendental state in the viewer. The nonfunctional became enshrined as an artistic standard. Greenberg claimed to be not at all interested in the social or political conditions under which abstract expressionist art was produced. His "disinterested" position was radical, and left him with "an apocalyptic vision of the "bad" driving out the "good"."⁵³ Greenberg writes that "Kant's critique of logic, which attempted to establish the true nature and limits of logical reasoning, is the model and basis for all authentic Modernist projects."⁵⁴

Disinterestedness as a theme in western aesthetics came to be an exclusionary process, with no regard for social or historical issues, based on the judgment of the geniuses within the art world. Despite Greenberg's "disinterestedness" in the social, the artists he represented went on to become phenomenally successful. It is interesting that this group of disinterested intellectuals retained such strong political ties. For example, the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, organized in 1951, consisted of intellectuals such as Greenberg and Rosenberg, and received a substantial portion of its generous budget from the CIA, who supported the Committee's dedication to upholding "the

⁵³ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 58.

interests of American world power."⁵⁵ Greenberg and such fellow Modernist critics Michael Fried and William Rubin held powerful positions within the lives of selected artists and American art institutions. For example, William Rubin, who was a curator at New York's Museum of Modern Art from 1967 to 1973, had a brother Larry who was an art dealer, who bought and sold the work of artists favoured by Greenberg. This helped to establish museums as "repositories for precious objects picked out by specialists."⁵⁶ Raymond Williams calls this "selective tradition,"⁵⁷ with art institutions acting as the main agencies for transmission of an effective dominant culture, this notwithstanding the modernist denial of social and economic implications. There are almost religious overtones in the writings of the modernist critics, as they describe art as providing a "salvation from the routines of everyday life,"⁵⁸ conferring greatness and genius, with "museums as temples, critics as clergy and aesthetic experience as mystical revelation,"⁵⁹ a far cry from the comfort and utility provided by craft objects, with their often anonymous creators.⁶⁰ This type of writing left the art object, artist and critic in a superior position, subsequently allowing them to make superior economic gains.

The notion of the avant-garde artist as genius was taken up by the American media, with magazines such as *Life* (August 8, 1949) featuring a double page spread on Jackson Pollock with the title "Jackson Pollock: Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?" The image Pollock presented, of rebellion and novel

⁵⁵ Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 387.

⁵⁶ Franscina, *The Politics*, 80.

⁵⁷ Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, (London: Verso, 1989), 32.

⁵⁸ Franscina, *The Politics*, 93

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that many of the objects operating as key connections to religious experiences, such as chalices, incense burners, and vestments were almost exclusively the work of craftspeople.

ideas, was soon made into a popularized stereotype, which succeeded in creating huge sales. It is ironic that a 1951 *Vogue* magazine featured a model in front of Jackson Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm* at the Museum of Modern Art for their photo spread titled "Spring Ballgowns."⁶¹ This involves social and economic implications verging on kitsch, which Greenberg and his modernist counter-parts were denying.

I must also note here that during this period the most successful craft artist was the ceramist Peter Voulkos, who operated under the influence of abstract expressionism (Fig. 6). Living in California in the 1950s and 1960s, Voulkos was described as part of the great American "forthrightness, the fearlessness, the individuality, the aloneness of each man's search,"⁶² a description of a craftsperson as transcendental genius. The fact that Voulkos would take his traditional and utilitarian vessel shapes, such as vases, and throw them on the ground and against walls (popularly compared to the movements of Jackson Pollock) rendering them useless, and that he was represented by several modernist galleries is no surprise. Edward Lucie-Smith, the noted craft critic, writes disturbingly, that, "Voulkos had been acting in a manner long customary with craft, following in the footsteps of an established fine arts movement."⁶³ Voulkos, it can be argued, was simply seeking to make his ceramic work marketable and recognizable in the modernist art world, and not acting in a "manner long customary with craft."

As the late 1960s approached and the American public began questioning cold war politics, it was inevitable that modernism, which was the perfect "disinterested" art for the politics of the 1950's came under question as well. The

⁶¹ Frascina and Harris, "Modernity and Modernism Reconsidered" in *Modernism in Dispute*, 156.

⁶² Doubet, Ward, "The case against formalism in ceramics", *New Art Examiner*, V. 14 (Feb. 1987): 38.

⁶³ Lucie-Smith, *Craft Today: Poetry of the Physical*, 33.

Vietnam war and the social unrest it unleashed helped to reveal power bases in a selective dominant culture. That the Museum of Modern Art was the paradigmatic Modernist museum led both the politics and the modernism of its supporters to be questioned. The symbolic sites of modernist art consumption - the museums, galleries, art journals, with "art for arts sake"- were being divided from a youth culture whose "artists involved in civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements actively opposed the critical and institutional forces involved with "high" art."⁶⁴ As Terry Eagleton writes in the *Function of Criticism*, the 1960s saw "within the space created, previously repressed or inarticulate needs, interests and desires [finding] political and symbolic form, mediated by changed idioms, practices and cultural modes."⁶⁵

The emergence of the civil-rights movement and women's movement led to further critiques of existing power structures, including modernism and the powers of institutional art. The "disinterested" practices of modernism were called into question, criticized for having diverted attention away from the social aspects of art. How could a truly disinterested art have ensured that its practitioners made huge economic gains, or that its female artists were under-represented and undervalued? In 1972 the American critic Leo Steinberg used the term postmodernist for the first time, introducing the idea of critiques on the ground of differences, the myth of originality, and historical narratives.⁶⁶ Of course the introduction of postmodernism did not spell the end of modernism. Modernist critics are still actively espousing the virtues of their views, with a 1987 discussion with Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss and Benjamin Buchloh yielding the following:

⁶⁴ Ibid., 162.

⁶⁵ Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From 'The Spectator' to Post-Structuralism*, (London: Verso, 1984), 119.

⁶⁶ Frascina and Harris, *Modernity*, 237.

In as much as it reaffirms - with only occasional exceptions, male white supremacy in visual high culture, the critical canon to which we all adhere...we are also united as critics in our almost complete devotion to high culture and our refusal to understand art production.⁶⁷

The postmodern introduced the demand for an active reader as opposed to a passive viewer.

The artisans raised during modernism's halcyon days have come to see it as an economic mecca with questionable powers. Peter Fuller writes in *Crafts*, that "Modernism in art, architecture and design, with its indifference to human needs, hostility to nature, and celebration of mechanical process...[has led the] right and left...to merely disagree about how the spoils from this destructive process might be divided, and who should control and direct it."⁶⁸ He is concerned, like the metalsmith Bruce Metcalf, about the indiscriminate application of the "myths of modern art" onto craft, for "modern art with its history and theory is envied for its financial rewards by craftspeople."⁶⁹ What modernism has done to alienate the crafts, is to emphasize form as the most important aspect of art, therefore leaving craft's implicit utility and materials as unimportant. Formalism was Greenberg's key to saving high culture from the threat of kitsch. Many in the crafts world adopted formalism, its language and its focus on the "bowliness of bowls and clayness of clay."⁷⁰ Bruce Metcalf describes the status-hungry craftsperson who amputated the many social implications of craft in order to fit into the modernist vision of "high" art.⁷¹ However, formalism privileges the power of sight, leading to a sensory elitism with damaging potential to craft with its synaesthetic properties.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 165.

⁶⁸ Peter Fuller, "The Craft Revival?", *Crafts*, (Sept/Oct 1984): 13.

⁶⁹ Metcalf, *Replacing the Myth*, 40.

⁷⁰ Howard Risatti, "Craft after Modernism: Tracing the declining prestige of craft", *New Art Examiner*, Vol. 17 (March 1990): 32.

⁷¹ Metcalf, *Replacing the Myth*, 42.

For craft objects to be treated formally they would have to be removed from their utilitarian function before you could perceive them aesthetically under glass in a museum or gallery. Greenberg's "Avant Garde and Kitsch" and subsequent modernist theories damaged craft by not dealing with craft, therefore relegating it to the same class as everyday, machine-made objects. As Howard Risatti states in "Craft after Modernism":

Greenberg's theory made a central issue of the different attitude expressed toward materials in craft versus fine art. Where painting and sculpture offered pictorial experiences, craft objects offered material experiences. Where painting and sculpture offered a conceptual world, craft objects offered the real thing - optical effects in painting were illusory, in glass and metal they were real. Where painting and sculpture offered disinterested form, craft objects offered functional form, functional design.⁷²

Greenberg's statement at a 1992 conference that "craft is not art", reiterated by John Bentley Mays, critic for the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, lays down theoretical justification for the separation of fine art and craft through exclusionary theory. These exclusionary tactics, leading back to a disavowal of craft practices during the Great Depression, have led to a strong anti-theory bias in the craft world. Often the theory seen as practiced by the art world is modernism. This leads many craftspeople, such as Bruce Metcalf, to dismiss any art theory, stating "art has its own rules and its own language, which make implicit claims to dominance over all other codes. If you want to join the club, you have to speak, act and think like club members, and they are not particularly interested in being challenged."⁷³ This is not always the case, because in the postmodern age, many theories lay outside modernism.

⁷² Ibid., 34.

⁷³ Metcalf, *Replacing the Myth*, 40.

As craft writers and producers realize that within the postmodern there are openings for discussion of craft in theory, many are calling for discussion, but with uncertainty as to what type of discussion, or what theories may be useful. Recent writing on the crafts reflect this desire for the use of theory. Pamela Johnson in her article "Naming of Parts", speaks of the necessity of criticism, while cautioning the crafts not to be too eager to imitate art criticism. Peter Dormer speaks of the role of theory within crafts as necessary, but speaks of theorists as being divorced from real experiences. Tom Fisher writes in *Crafts Magazine* that it is time craft students have knowledge that allows them to situate practice within culture, namely social theories. Bruce Metcalf with his anti-modernist stance speaks of the need for craft to reclaim its social function of entering the personal space of its viewers and consumers. Again he speaks of social theory, as does Janet Wolff in her book *The Social Production of Art* where she convincingly argues the need for art to be seen as "historical, situated and produced."⁷⁴ It is my desire to demonstrate how craft can obtain a theoretical base, not by relying on traditional art historical theories related to modernism, but by focusing on what might loosely be called postmodern theories, particularly social theory and feminism.

⁷⁴ Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 1.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL THEORY

As argued in the previous chapter, modernist art criticism with its focus on aesthetic truth and its disinterested attitude toward social conventions was in opposition to hand-crafted objects, which were living reminders of tradition. That the hand-crafted object was an item produced with consumption or use in mind, also led to the avant-garde's exclusion of crafts from its theoretical discourses. I would like to point out that despite modernist theory's lack of reference to consumption, its art objects remain valuable as a result of the purchasing power of the elite that is tied to a particular class by their "umbilical cord of gold." Modernism's insistence that it remain outside issues of consumption, and craft's fundamental involvement with market economy, make it necessary to turn to social theory for analysis of craft.¹ Raymond Williams in *The Politics of Modernism* summarizes the inability of modernism to deal with populist craft, "the self-reflexive text assumes the centre of the public and aesthetic stage, and in doing so declaratively repudiates the fixed forms, the settled cultural authority of bourgeois taste, and the very necessity of market popularity."² This chapter will look at the social theory of consumption and how it relates to the crafts.

Open discussion of the concern of artists with the consumption of their art products remains clouded by the modernist notion of the "genius," with his or her romantic role being aesthetically, not financially focused. A recent article on Claude

¹ "High Art" itself can benefit from increased attention to its own consumption, and the social forces underlying its economics. Recent writing on this issue includes Mary Anne Staniszewski's *Believing is Seeing: Creating the Culture of Art*, Stuart Ewan's *All Consuming Images*, and Stephen Bayley's *Commerce and Culture: From Pre-Industrial Art to Post-Industrial Value*.

² Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, 33.

Monet in *Vanity Fair* notes the continued distaste over the artist's preoccupation with the financial side of his work:

Lovers today of the quintessential Impressionist are shocked to learn that Monet was concerned at all with money and the business of art. The grey-bearded master of light and color has come down to us as an immensely sensitive artist interested solely in translating his personal sensations before nature into paintings of boundless beauty.³

This idealized image of the modernist artist as separate from money is ironic when one considers how quickly modernism entered into a comfortable relationship with capitalism. Whereas traditional art historical analysis has led to transcendent images of artists such as Monet, current study allows the economic role of craft to be considered; "the resulting flowering of social history has turned scholarly attention from great men and historical events to the reconstruction of social fabrics and historical processes."⁴

It is the characteristics of craft objects which make them appropriate for consideration through theories of consumerism. Ann Smart Martin in her article "Makers, Buyer and Users" makes a distinction between consumerism, which she defines as the cultural relationship between humans and consumer goods and services, and consumption, which she states is the process by which consumer goods move through the economy. Although contemporary craft artists are playing with the notion of functionality, craft objects still largely relate to their historical roles as useful items. It is this historical role as objects, despite the contemporary status of many craft objects as symbolic rather than essential, which allows

³ Paul Hayes Tucker, "Monet's Illusion" , *Vanity Fair*, Vol. 58, No. 7 (July 1995): 101.

⁴ Ann Smart Martin, "Makers, Buyers and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework", *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol 28, No. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1993): 144.

purchasers to relate to them. Even if the object itself is not necessarily designed for use, the materials used in its production are often steeped in tradition. Fibre, clay, metal, glass and wood, although not exclusive to craft, nor the only materials of craft production, offer easy references to the consumer. Ann Smart Martin claims that craft objects are quintessential consumer goods, for they represent a negotiation of value and meaning between producer and buyer which continues as the goods enter a new life as historical commodity through the second-hand trade or the museum market.⁵ Both the materials and utilitarian forms of the majority of craft objects stem from tradition, and in turn many craft fairs are able to use these traditional bases as nostalgic marketing tools. The handmade represents bygone, mythological representations of the past. Of course it is not simply nostalgia which appeals to the buyer in the case of the crafts, it is also the sensual nature of the materials and uses of the hand-crafted objects. The fact that craft fairs afford purchasers a chance to meet the makers of the objects for sale is crucial in developing craft objects as representative of intimacy, a characteristic in line with a utopian and nostalgic past. This intimacy, combined with the opportunity to own an individualized object, are the main characteristics of craft objects which ensure their popularity.

For the craftspeople producing these objects, there exists the reality of production levels and sales. Whether choosing to do production lines of goods or one-of-a-kind objects, financial survival depends on the appeal of the objects to the consumer, and in turn, consumer response can dictate to a certain degree production levels. The marketing techniques of the craftspeople involved with craft fairs is dependent, then, on the type of fair they are involved in and the type of craft objects they are selling.

⁵ Martin, *Makers, Buyers and Users*, 145.

I mention these basic characteristics of craft related to consumption, for they are the concerns of craft vital to survival, but have also been detrimental to the development of a theoretical base when involved with modernist theory. However, these characteristics become important in theoretical terms when one examines them through the lense of social theories of consumption and consumerism. The role of material objects within the framework of power and art institutions can be assisted by understanding how craftspeople negotiate cultural capital within the larger context of a market economy. The theorists I will consult in my examination of the consumption of crafts include Janet Wolff, Terry Eagleton, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. I will continue to look at the writings of Clement Greenberg to provide a contrast to the views of the social in art theory.

In shifting the focus away from traditional views of art, Janet Wolff urges the abandonment of any "humanistic notion of an 'essential' individual and pre-existing social experience."⁶ This displaces the Kantian view of essential and universal truth, and allows art to be seen as a "repository of cultural meaning and systems of signification."⁷ Wolff's suggestion of the importance of the social in the production of art is in conflict with the view put forth in "Avant Garde and Kitsch", where Greenberg speaks of the artist as "retiring from the public altogether" with "subject matter or content becom[ing] something to be avoided like the plague."⁸ Wolff argues that it is the existence of the artist within a given society which defines the creation and reception of works of art. Ann Smart Martin

⁶ Wolff, *Social Production*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in John O'Brian (ed) *The Collected Writings of Clement Greenberg, Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgement*, 8.

points out that material objects are representations of the given society of the artist, being symbolic bundles of social, cultural and individual meanings.⁹

Greenberg and Kant were both using artistic objects, whether a painting, sculpture or cultural artifact, to represent universal truths, rather than as objects functioning as individual possessions. The objects themselves were accorded the role of representations of genius, rather than granted individual meaning. This construction of truth through material objects was completed by those in positions of power, both through economic and cultural capital, who had the wealth to display and promote their collections of "sacred" objects through artistic institutions, such as museums, galleries, and journals. When speaking of these truths as artificial creations, I am relying on Michel Foucault's critique of "absolute" truth, in which he stresses that "traditional history's search for origins in great moral truths is entirely misguided; everything is subject to history's disintegrating gaze. There are no absolutes."¹⁰ As the wealthy developed institutions which demonstrated that their knowledge, as materialized through their objects, was power, it became a cyclical truth then, that knowledge was power, for it followed that power was knowledge. Objects, classified as "high" art, rather than craft, took on the mantle of authenticity, situating themselves as collections of constructed truths, which were actively taken up by society as absolutes. The avant-garde, sensing their absorption by the bourgeoisie, then tried to avoid producing objects which the bourgeois could own. Terry Eagleton describes this as the negative avant-garde, "you cannot integrate that which consumes itself in the

⁹ Martin, *Makers, Buyers and Users*, 141.

¹⁰ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, 13-14. Foucault was greatly influenced by his rereading of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, and focused on Nietzsche's rejection of the notions of absolute truth.

moment of production."¹¹ Again, the crafts were left outside this (ultimately illusory) avant-garde anti-consumption, evidencing themselves as physical objects.

Kantian and Greenbergian notions of the universal in terms of artistic truth can be seen as views developed within specific social and historical frameworks. As Pierre Bourdieu writes in *Distinction*, "taste classifies and it classifies the classifier."¹² As in the cases of both Kant and Greenberg, "art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences and thus contribute to the process of social reproduction."¹³ Bourdieu was key in arguing against Kantian notions of the universality of the aesthetic, stating that subjectivism, the forms of knowledge about the social world were based on primary experiences of individuals.¹⁴ Bourdieu saw power as concealed in cultural practice and social exchange, and intertwined with the material conditions of symbolic and cultural capital.¹⁵

It is essential for the study of craft and its economic and artistic survival, that the social function of art as commodity be acknowledged. Art and craft objects operate as heavily coded cultural signs. The utilitarian functions of craft help to demystify social codes. It is through the act of purchasing that the objects signify the purchaser; the role of signs and symbols are central in this process of consumption. The theory of the social production of art put forth by Janet Wolff is key in the "critique of master narratives"¹⁶ by focusing on critical concerns in the production, practice and marketing of art, and in this thesis, craft. Wolff speaks of

¹¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 372.

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-7.

¹⁶ Janet Wolff, *The Artist, the Critic and the Academic*, 17.

the social co-operation and mediation between the conception and the reception of most arts, stating:

In the production of art, social institutions affect, amongst other things, *who* becomes an artist, how they become an artist, *how* they are then able to *practice* their art, and how they can ensure that their work is produced, performed and *made available* to a public.¹⁷

The power of craft fairs such as the Kootenay Christmas Faire, is that they can negotiate their own art market according to the desires of the artisans. Wolff quotes Vasquez regarding the capitalist production of art, "In the long run, even artistic work comes under the general law of capitalist production and becomes regarded as merchandise."¹⁸ This is the strength of craft, to provide its artisans with immediate financial resources. The evolution of the Kootenay Christmas Faire from Pauline Hanbury's need to sell her ceramic pots and to provide other artisans with income during the winter months, is no different from the need of the abstract expressionist artists to have Clement Greenberg or Harold Rosenberg provide an introduction of their art to the modernist art world. It is simply a difference of who becomes the artist, how they enter that realm, and how their work is made available to the public. The commodification of artwork is a reality which exists whether the art object is considered to be high or low. In the case of the crafts, sales of craft objects as commodities has been the norm.

The desire for possessions initially generated by the wealthy elite, spread through all classes and, with the advent of the industrial revolution, the ability to purchase mass produced objects became reality. London's Great Exhibition of 1851 was a commercial venture operating under the guise of culture that used the

¹⁷ Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18. See Adolfo Sanchez Vazquez, *Art and Society: Essays in Marxist Aesthetics* (London: Merlin Press, 1973): 86.

allure of culture to help the general public view and possess objects on a massive scale, following the capitalist dream, "buy me and become me."¹⁹ This was the beginning of the "spurious" kitsch Greenberg was later to criticize; objects of mass-production, often based on providing the lower classes with inexpensive entertainment such as "any pulp novel."²⁰ It is interesting to note that attendance at the British Museum tripled during the Great Exhibition, demonstrating the public appetite for displays of "merchandise."²¹ Not surprisingly, there was a parallel development of department stores at this time, feeding and helping to construct the public in terms of the desire for objects. The Bon Marche appeared in Paris in 1869; a lavish store, decorated with fountains, plush seating areas, fresh cut flowers, it boasted a real art gallery within the shopping area; "while museums taught their visitors about the aristocratic taste of earlier generations, the department store allowed its consumers to mimic their habits and attire and their tastes."²²

In April of 1861, the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company, "Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals"²³ was about to make a huge impact on the same middle class of consumers, appealing to their already developed desire for unique, hand-crafted objects. Terry Eagleton summarizes the appeal of hand-crafted objects such as those by William Morris: they "provided a critique of alienation, exemplary realization of creative powers, as ideal reconciliation of subject and object, universal and particular freedom and necessity,

¹⁹ Stephen Bayley, ed., *Commerce and Culture: From Pre-Industrial Art to Post-Industrial Value*, (London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 1989), 12.

²⁰ Saul Ostrow, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch, Fifty Years Later" , *Arts Magazine* Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec 1989): 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

²² Tom Wolff, "Chester Gould vs. Roy Lichtenstein" in Stephen Bayley (ed) *Commerce and Culture*, 45.

²³ Ray Watkinson, *William Morris as Designer*, (London: Trefoil Publication, 1990), 16.

theory and practice, individual and society."²⁴ This is the void Greenberg does not address in his article "Avant Garde and Kitsch", this area of handmade goods not considered from the perspectives of high art, but nevertheless produced and purchased in response to the materials of mass-produced kitsch.²⁵ Department stores were developing the notion of reproducibility while craftspeople were promoting the notion of originality. The mass produced items found in department stores were helping to establish a sense of social identity for the new wealthy middle class. Thorstein Veblen, an American sociologist in his 1899 book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, coined the phrase "conspicuous consumption" to describe the developing mass market between 1890 and World War One.²⁶

This period marked the beginning of image-consumerism,²⁷ where reproduced objects, often direct copies of nostalgic classics, began serving as replacements of the original. It continues today on a large scale, often with cannibalized images of popular artworks serving as mass-produced originals for the majority of the public. Here is where hand-crafts found their niche, for almost every object was an original, offering purchasers intimacy combined with an individual statement. Of course both the reproduced and original objects were dependent upon their role as signs. For the reproduced objects, their decoding is active only when the image is easily recognizable, and therefore often based on "masterpieces" by the transcendental geniuses of the art world who have been canonized by the institutional powers. On the other hand, original craft objects often have

²⁴ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 369.

²⁵ It must be noted that the frustration felt by Morris and other Arts and Crafts groups was based on their inability to produce objects which were actually affordable to the masses without the assistance of mass-production. See Peter Ackroyd, "Blooming Genius."

²⁶ Bocoock, *Consumption*, 15.

²⁷ Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, *Introducing Postmodernism*, (New York: Totem Books, 1995), 49.

anonymous producers; however, their decoding occurs in respect to their utility and their uniqueness.

Antonio Gramsci termed this intense phase of mass production and consumption "Fordism" - a play on the role of Henry Ford's motor cars in mass marketing.²⁸ By the 1950's this mass consumption had spread to all social groups, and was not restricted to gender. Post World War II saw men spending less time as "fighters" and more time developing as consumers.

The crescendo of "conspicuous consumption" was inevitable. William Morris, whose arts and crafts objects were produced from a genuine desire to combat the industrial revolution with its alienated labourers and mass-produced objects, even found himself swamped by the "ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich,"²⁹ who insisted on purchasing objects simply for the act of consuming. What had started for Morris as a desire to "give people pleasure in the things they must perforce use,"³⁰ ended with him declaring the arts and crafts movement to be dead, and stating that he would be happy to live in a house with nothing but white walls.³¹ It is interesting that Pauline Hanbury, who left the Kootenay Christmas Faire after twenty years, speaks of similar concerns regarding the "urban refugees", who she says want objects which can provide them with an idyllic, slower pace of life, without understanding what makes life that way. She speaks in disparaging tones about changes to the Kootenay Christmas Faire over time, with the introduction of technologies such as credit cards, resulting in a "loss of the feeling of uniqueness, on the surface it looks the same, but now it's all about dollar

²⁸ David Forgacs, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, eds., *Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Cultural Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 186.

²⁹ Peter Ackroyd, "Blooming Genius" , *The New Yorker*, (September 23, 1996): 90.

³⁰ William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, (London: Penguin Books,1986), 86.

³¹ Ackroyd, *Blooming*, 40.

signs - it's hard not to have the world catch up to you, the urban refugees did that."³²

Karl Marx wrote that alienation was destined to occur when capitalism dominated; for the alienation which arose when workers produced goods which did not belong to them resulted in "the negation of that essence of creative activity in the capitalist mode of production."³³ Consumerism's active ideology that the meaning of life was to be found in buying things and experiences was meeting with increased resistance. Janet Wolff uses these concepts of isolation and alienation put forth by Marx to make the point that his concern was not specifically about art, but about joy in labour. His famous passage in volume one of *Capital*, reiterates his view:

We are positing labour of a form that is exclusively characteristic of *man*. The operations carried out by a spider resemble those of a weaver, and many a human architect is put to shame by the bee in the construction of its wax cells. However, the poorest architect is categorically distinguished from the best of bees by the fact that before he builds a cell in wax, he has built it in his head. The result achieved at the end of a labour process was already present at its commencement, in the imagination of the worker, in its ideal form. More than merely working an alteration in the form of nature, he also knowingly works his own purposes into nature; and these purposes are the law determining the ways and means of his activity, so that his will must be adjusted to them.³⁴

The imagination of the worker, and the knowledgeable manipulation of nature's materials is what provides most professional craftspeople with the drive to keep producing. An anonymous Nelson potter writes, "Working with clay is like having a blank canvas, but it is a canvas with thousands of years of love and ideas behind

³² Pauline Hanbury, *Personal Interview*, September 6, 1996.

³³ Bocock, *Consumption*, 49.

³⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Literature and Art*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), 53-54

it.”³⁵ The craftsperson working independently owns his or her objects through the act of creation. It can be argued that the alienation felt by workers producing items of mass production is also felt by consumers purchasing these items. The craft objects, made by the participants of the Kootenay Christmas Faire, function as alternatives to alienation for the consumer, as one might assume they are not purchased from reasons of necessity, but more likely from a desire to consume objects which appeal to the imagination. As Cornel West points out, the survival of crafts in contemporary market economies is dependent upon “our market economy system of values...[which] fetishises that which is unique--that which permits the sense of absolute individual ownership.”³⁶

People shop for qualities they desire in themselves, which are personified and reflected in the objects they choose. Craft objects as individualized statements appeal to this constructed desire in the consumer. According to Michel Foucault, objects help people acquire knowledge, and therefore power by comparing their perceptions to those of others.³⁷ By talking about differences, not similarities, and by voicing the individual over the whole, the false powers of institutions might be removed.³⁸ This relates back to Foucault’s cycle of the power of desire and the desire for power. The purchaser attempts to gain power for him or herself through objects purchased for their representational properties, properties not inherent in them, but given to them through economic and cultural powers. For example, the visitor wearing a museum tee-shirt wishes to display his or her social status and knowledge, thus influencing others in their perceptions as well as defining his or her self through material objects. The same holds true for hand-crafted objects; a place

³⁵ Questionnaires, Nelson, December, 1995.

³⁶ West, *The New Cultural Politics of Difference*, 153.

³⁷ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, ed., “Museum Communication: An Introductory Essay”, *The Educational Role of the Museum*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 21.

³⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), xiv.

setting for an elegant dinner party of original hand thrown and decorated plates sends a different material sign about the host than would be the case if the dinner party took place around Tupperware settings. If the Tupperware is used to make a statement by the host, then he or she is still representing knowledge of objects through an inversion of kitsch. These "possessions of self-hood"³⁹ act as symbols, for "modern consumption is based upon symbolic systems of meaning, symbols which are linked in with alienated forms of creativity."⁴⁰

The work of the structuralists, who influenced both Foucault and Bourdieu, is helpful in analyzing the connection between objects and their function as signifiers. For example, Roland Barthes described the role of wine as an object of consumption in French culture:

Wine is felt by the French nation to be a possession which is its very own...It is a totem drink, corresponding to the milk of the Dutch or the tea ceremonially taken by the British Royal Family.⁴¹

The view developed that all consumption is of symbolic signs, shared codes of signifiers--a system of signs and symbols. As Pierre Bourdieu wrote, "a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code into which it is encoded."⁴² Consumption is thus an idealist practice, with ideas being consumed, rather than the objects themselves. This ties back in with the niche craft has found, whereby its utility operates as a comfortable sign, not just a necessity for the purchaser. The Kootenay Christmas Faire, with its focus on using symbols for an "organic experience" such as kitchen tables, coal-oil lamps, old wood stoves and cedar boughs, is successful at selling

³⁹ Schlerth *Object Knowledge: Every Museum Visitor an Interpreter*, 114.

⁴⁰ Bocoock, *Consumption*, 49.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴² Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 7.

craft objects which operate as coded signs to provide a continuation of this atmosphere for the purchaser (Fig. 7). These craft objects often focus on traditional material, for example, bees wax, clay, and wool, being manipulated into useful items such as candles, bowls and rugs. Craftsmanship, with its links to tradition, operates as a nostalgic symbol; "the product is sold through its personal relationship with the purchaser - this method of business is reminiscent of days past when personal service was the order of the day."⁴³ Janet Wolff points out that the economics determining which objects are produced and consumed depends upon social conditions; "works of art...are not closed, self-contained, and transcendent entities, but are the product of specific historical practices on the part of identifiable social groups in given conditions, and therefore bear the imprint of the ideas, values and conditions of existence of those groups, and their representatives in particular artists."⁴⁴ That the Kootenay Christmas Faire represents a large number of "back-to-the-land" and alternative lifestyle groups is reflected in the artistic materials used and craft objects produced, just as the social conditions of New York under the modernist influence led to artists producing large scale abstract expressionist works, expressing American superiority within the art world. Modernist critics such as Clement Greenberg would not have acknowledged the role of the social conditions of artistic production, instead declaring that abstract expressionism somehow contained universal truth, thus relegating craft practices to non-art. Janet Wolff in the *Social Production of Art* is instrumental in allowing craft to be seen as legitimate artistic activity, for she exposes the reality that "in a society like our own, where power is based on economic position, and

⁴³ Rosen, *Crafting*, 10.

⁴⁴ Wolff, *Social Production*, 48.

more specifically on relationship to the means of production, the ideas which tend to dominate in society are those of the ruling class."⁴⁵

Even in the craft world, it is the ideas of the ruling class which often determine the production of craft objects. Just as William Morris ended up producing for the bourgeois who could afford his objects, similar tendencies are seen today. A 1996 exhibition at the American Craft Museum in New York City featured White House Crafts, with certain "geniuses" of the craft world, such as Dale Chihuly, featuring items not readily afforded by the middle classes. Chihuly, a recognized "genius" of the world of art glass, sells his glass works for prices reaching into the millions of dollars. Called the aesthetic heir of Louis Comfort Tiffany, Chihuly speaks of himself as a conceptual artist, not decorative, despite his materials, and prides himself on the distance between his hand and the finished pieces; "I wonder if any other artist in the 20th century has had more assistants than me?"⁴⁶ An even more cogent example of craft as a reflection of bourgeois life is offered through the activities and reception of Martha Stewart, with her magazine and television show titled *Martha Stewart's Living*. Stewart is personified through her magazine and television show as the transcendental genius of the craft world. *Martha Stewart's Living* earned over 200 million dollars in revenue in 1996 alone.⁴⁷ Like Chihuly, Martha Stewart does not make her craft projects, but rather they are done by her huge team of editors and designers. In the November 1996 issue of *Martha Stewart's Living*, none of the articles or craft suggestions are credited to Martha Stewart, instead she is referred to in articles as an omniscient being. There is Martha's calendar, and every article makes reference

⁴⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁶ Bob Colacello, "A Touch of Glass", *Vanity Fair*, Vol. 63, No. 7 (Dec. 1995): 210.

⁴⁷ Barbara Walters Special, ABC, WVNY Burlington, Vermont, *The Twenty most Fascinating People of 1996*, Broadcast December 6, 1996.

to Martha Stewart's "tips". Stewart is featured in photo spreads, particularly those dealing with celebrities; for example, in the November issue, Thanksgiving at Frank Lloyd Wright's Auldbrass, owned by Hollywood producer Joel Silver, is featured.

Whether it is Martha Stewart or an artisan at a craft fair, the craftsman is nonetheless seen as an extension of his or her objects, representing an idealized image of a person safe from some of the fundamental dangers of our society.⁴⁸ Lois Moran, editor of *American Craft*, has described the craftsman as helping to sell the concept that the handmade is special over the machine made, that the hand is superior, through a nostalgic reference to the past.⁴⁹ The twentieth century consumer then uses this idealized image to counter the homogenizing effects of mass production and consumption: "Craft objects reinforce personal identity [:] consumers intuitively read the uniqueness of the handmade object as a tangible analog to their own singularity: the marks of hand fabrication symbolize the uniqueness of an individual life."⁵⁰ The Kootenay Christmas Faire represents complete accessibility, twisting intertextualities in the formation of a personal narrative between producer and consumer that is unattainable in the world of "high" art.

All of this is in direct opposition to modernism's disinterested critical view. I do not think craft need view itself as a lesser artistic practice because of its constant appeal to the consumer's individuality through material items. Not only did the paintings promoted by Greenberg through his art criticism go on to make their owners millions, the paintings have now become part of the earlier mentioned image-consumerism, selling themselves, ironically, through utilitarian forms such as

⁴⁸ Rudolf Arnheim, "The Form We Seek", *Fourth National Conference of the American Craftsmen's Council*, August 26-29, 1961, University of Washington, Seattle, American Craft Council Archive, Box 1.

⁴⁹ Lois Moran, Personal Interview, New York, February 21, 1996.

⁵⁰ Metcalf, *Replacing*, 45.

umbrellas, mugs and ties: "in the Metropolitan Museum the first thing you hear when you cross the threshold is the whirl of cash-registers, evidence of a mighty commercial machine."⁵¹ As Foucault wrote in *The Order of Things*, "value is created or increased, not by production - but by consumption."⁵² To me this demonstrates that modernist "high" art is just as embedded in a certain definition of the personal as craft. Social theory of consumption is effective in addressing the shared status of both fine art and craft; however, both stand to "lose" in such an analysis because it focuses on their fragility in relation to their absorption within the economic. Both operate as "utopic" activities, craft with its idealized craftsman, and "high" art with its genius artists. It is on the level of consumerism, where boundaries blur, that art and craft can meet.

An important aspect in considering consumption as a legitimate tool for theoretical analysis of the crafts, is that of gender. Women were active agents in the popularity of handicraft exhibitions and department stores. The department stores specifically targeted their promotional literature at women, who were responsible for the social lives of their class, and for providing their moneyed husbands and fathers with an elegant and respectable home, wife and daughter. That department stores and handicraft exhibitions were also among the first social sites seen as respectable for women to visit unaccompanied by men helped increase their popularity.⁵³ In addition, women were able to use craft work to manoeuvre between the choices of marriage or career, as the handicrafts were seen as the ideal medium for women, being "decorative, small-scale, domestic,

⁵¹ Bayley, *Commerce and Culture*, 5.

⁵² Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 194.

⁵³ Bocock, *Consumption*, 95. See also, Lynne Walker, "Vistas of pleasure: women consumers of urban space in the West End of London" in Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed) *Women and the Victorian Art World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 70-85.

with no heavy intellectual or philosophical content.”⁵⁴ That craft has been condemned in the "high" art world as too personal reflects this role of craft as a largely female entity until the latter half of the twentieth century. The fact that the Kootenay Christmas Faire was organized by Pauline Hanbury, with her assuming the role of the "mother" of the Faire, continues the tradition of women's involvement in the crafts.

As with social theory, feminism allows the field of craft to be explored through theory. I would like to use materialist feminism to discover some parallels between the Kootenay Christmas Faire and the history of women's involvement with the crafts as an art form and an economic and ideological opportunity.

⁵⁴ Moira Vincentelli, "Potters of the 1920's: Contemporary Criticism" Gillian Elinor et al (eds), *Women and Craft* (London: Virago, 1987), 74.

CHAPTER 5

FEMINISM

The worlds of craft and women are intimately united, with both realms operating under the perceived umbrella of the private or domestic sphere. Women have been involved with the production and consumption of craft objects, and therefore it is appropriate to use materialist feminism in the examination of craft because I am concerned with the material conditions of production.

Gayle Rubin, as part of her sex/gender system¹ uses Marx's view of the value of labour and power as a historical and moral condition to describe capitalism as "heir to a long tradition in which women do not inherit, and in which women do not lead," and in which women have only begun to participate in the profits of capitalism. Contemporary craft fairs such as the Kootenay Christmas Faire are continuations of an ideological opening for the advancement of women as more than simply products under a capitalist dynamic. Women are producers, and therefore the earners of surplus wage value, disturbing the "historical and moral element", creating for themselves new roles as independent producers. It is only recently that alternative views of the importance of craft have been theorized; for example, Gayatri Spivak's view that production in the home versus the essentialized role of women devalued "women who don't work", therefore involving domestic craftwork in this devaluation.² Spivak enables domestic (utilitarian) production to be opened up and spoken of in such a way that it is not devalued under the Marxian

¹ Gayle Rubin defines her "sex/gender system" as a set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity. See page 159, in "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex" in Rayna Rester (ed) *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Feminism and Critical Theory", *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, (New York: Methuen, 1988), 79.

schema of the domestic workplace as "pure exchange" within the capitalist realm of production.

The essentialized female is described by Diana Fuss as the sign of woman fixed as "transhistorical, eternal, and immutable", leading to the creation of binary oppositions between male and female.³ These are dangerous essences, as they lead to binarism without regard for the cultural or historical conditions of their development. These binary oppositions between male and female echo the oppositions set up by modernism with its essentialized views of "high art" and craft and male and female. As women in the Victorian era were gaining artistic power through education, modernist Octave Uzanne in *The Modern Parisienne* warned against the feminization of art, which he felt would lead to a "flood of mediocrity."⁴ Women could have the skills of an artisan, but not the specialness of male genius, required by modernist art for recognition. The "natural" role of femininity in women manifested itself in craft work, and was often praised in embroidery samplers, such as:

Give me a bible in my hand
A heart to read and understand
And faith to trust the lord
And sit alone from day to day
And urge no company to stay
Nor wish to roam abroad
Sarah Marchant, 1834⁵

This sampler expresses "the cosy genius,"⁶ which continues to explain the inherent joy in crafting and "continues to appeal because there are moments when one feels

³ Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*, (New York: Routledge, 1989), xii.

⁴ Tickner, *Men's Work*, 48.

⁵ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1984).

⁶ Scott, Susan, "Clarice Cliff's Modern Legacy", *Antiques*. Vol. 68, No. 12, (March/April 1995): 13.

like cosiness rather than angst, profundity, or high art.”⁷ This ties back in with the concept of marketing craft objects through a link with comfort. Women, trained to provide and seek domestic comfort, were the practitioners and consumers of craft “cosiness”. The action of choosing to indulge in cosiness was not always historically available to women, often it was enforced. The basis for the social reform of the arts and crafts movement was inspired in large part by John Ruskin’s writings such as *Stones of Venice* (1853). Craft work was seen as a way to keep women out of trouble, and due to its inherent utility, to keep women “among the necessities of a [male] worker,”⁸ with “no danger of tempting them from their homes”, and therefore with no danger of women interrupting the patriarchal status quo.⁹ This tradition of craft as humble women’s work led to what C.R. Ashbee called the “dear Emily” syndrome, where amateur lady craft workers sold at extremely low prices, undercutting the selling of crafts produced professionally by the Guild of Handicrafts.¹⁰ This continues today, with Pauline Hanbury describing her efforts to make hobby craftspeople raise their prices as not to force the professional artisans into a losing price competition.¹¹

In a cruel twist of irony, as women tried to meet these expectations of providing their husbands and homes with a sense of comfort, men were generating acidic opinions on the popularity of domestic crafts. A critic for *Spectator Magazine* wrote in 1712:

What a delightful entertainment it must be to the fair sex,
when their native modesty, and tenderness of men towards

⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁸ Rubin, *Traffic*, 164.

⁹ Anthea Callen, “Sexual Division of Labour in the Arts and Crafts Movement” in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (eds) *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design*. (London: Women’s Press, 1984), 152.

¹⁰ Harrod, Tanya, “Review Article, Women and Crafts” in *Crafts*. (March/April 1988): 53.

¹¹ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 6, 1996.

them, exempts them from public business, to pass their time in imitating fruit and flowers...another argument for busying good women in works of fancy is because it takes them off from scandal, the usual attendant of tea-tables and all unactive scenes of life.¹²

Over 250 years later, views toward craft have not changed drastically, although, associations between gender and the nature of craft tend to be implicit rather than explicit. In 1988 Peter Dormer wrote:

The lace maker is to be envied, and people argue that crafts workers are fortunate to have occupations in which they can 'lose themselves'...To lose oneself in ordering and re-ordering one's work postpones the questioning of purpose and the setting of goals; and it is, after all, the setting of purpose and the striving for goals that makes men and women worldly.¹³

Notwithstanding such attitudes, the realization that there were larger opportunities to be gained by producing craft, and increasing outlets for profit was leading to great change, beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This chapter seeks to document some of the women involved in these great changes, leading up to Pauline Hanbury who herself was instrumental in constructing a positive change for access to the profits of crafts.

Important in this change was a shift in the attitude of women toward craft, brought about by an altered economy. With the advent of the industrial revolution, craft as pure necessity was phased out. Eileen Boris in "Crossing Boundaries: The Gendered Meaning of the Arts and Crafts", points out that before the late nineteenth-century most women sewed the clothes worn by their families, whereas

¹² Anonymous critic, *Spectator*, 1712, as quoted in Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 172.

¹³ Peter Dormer, "The Ideal World of Vermeer's Little Lacemaker" in *Crafts*, (July/Aug 1988): 12.

by 1890, 60% of men's wear was readymade.¹⁴ This did not remove women from the vision of the essential woman as domestic craft worker. Lucy Maud Montgomery uses her heroine Valancy in the *Blue Castle* to demonstrate this vexation with craft work:

It rained all forenoon without cessation. Valancy pieced a quilt. Valancy hated piecing quilts. And there was no need of it. The house was full of quilts. There were three big chests, packed with quilts, in the attic. Mrs. Frederick had begun storing away quilts when Valancy was seventeen and she kept on storing them, though it did not seem likely that Valancy would ever need them. But Valancy must be at work and fancy work materials were too expensive."¹⁵

This passage demonstrates how craft work as a universal feminine hobby was being replaced on the level of the product (in Marxist terms) both as product of the female (in the essentialized sense), and product of the worker (for the future husband). Valancy demonstrates Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory of excess in domesticity, where Spivak represents woman within the triad of use, exchange and surplus.¹⁶ It was the replacement of pure use value of the hand-crafted object by surplus value which allowed women to take craft objects outside of the home, where they were not of immediate necessity. This was the key in opening up channels for women through the sale and public display of their craftwork.

The decline in the need for crafts after the industrial revolution was also responsible for the changes in the roles of women working with craft. Exhibitions of craft work, the forerunners of contemporary craft fairs, emerged at this time, playing a role in the shift toward women as public producers not simply consumers.

¹⁴ Eileen Boris, "Crossing Boundaries: The Gendered Meaning of the Arts and Crafts", in Janet Kardon (ed) *The Ideal Home, 1900-1920: The History of Twentieth Century American Craft*, (New York: American Craft Museum and Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 35.

¹⁵ Lucy Maud Montgomery, *The Blue Castle*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1926), 17.

¹⁶ Spivak, "Feminism and Critical Theory", 79.

Ruskin's writings, mentioned earlier, were read by William Morris and informed his views on art and labour. William Morris was committed to reform through craftsmanship, and as such he blended his vision of social and economic life with his views on art. Through his writings, Morris advanced the utopian ideals of the arts and crafts movement, including his romanticized view of Medieval art and labour. This process of romanticization was later repeated by the "back-to-the-landers" who were instrumental in the development of the Kootenay Christmas Faire. Morris found a wide audience for his work, particularly among people who were considering the implications of the industrial revolution, "the notion of a rural idyll held great attractions for a middle class disillusioned with the sordid effects of a society based upon mechanized industry."¹⁷ This search for a rural idyll driven by the effects of the Vietnam war and the social movements of the 1960's, was played out again across North America almost a century after William Morris had popularized it. William Morris with his drive to reinstate the handicrafts as a legitimate art form was therefore providing an ideological opening for women, as handicraft makers, to be seen as artists. In *News from Nowhere*, Morris argued that "Time was when the mystery and wonder of handicrafts were well acknowledged by the world...and in those days all handicraftsmen were artists as we should now call them."¹⁸ William Morris with his employment of women designers, such as Kate Faulkner and his own daughter May Morris, was involving women in the artistic workplace.

By the 1880's when the arts and crafts movement was fully developed, women had closely aligned themselves with it. It was a certain class of woman who was able to join in the arts and crafts, specifically the wealthy, who "joined

¹⁷ Callen, *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870-1914*, 9.

¹⁸ Morris, *News from Nowhere*, 89.

with male connoisseurs and male architects to dominate the movement."¹⁹ For women with the economic advantages to pursue the crafts as a pleasurable field of endeavour, it did not take long before they realized that the arts and crafts movement "provided women with alternative roles, institutions and structures which they then used as active agents in their own history."²⁰

As early as 1842 the Female School of Design in London offered day school training for needy gentlewomen,²¹ and in the United States, the Philadelphia School of Design for Women was opened in 1844.²² Academic recognition of the crafts provided important validation of the field. By 1884 when the British Home Arts and Industries Association was hosting huge arts and crafts exhibitions at Albert Hall, women were not only the chief organizers but were also accorded significant amounts of display space.²³ Lynne Walker describes how through the British Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society women were able to actively reinterpret and professionalise their traditional feminine crafts. ²⁴ In Canada, the 1854 Nova Scotia Industrial Exhibition in Halifax featured for the first time a "home industries" section in their program where women were able to exhibit their wares.²⁵ In 1900, the Montreal Women's Art Association hosted Canada's first Exhibition of Arts and Crafts at the Art Galleries, Colonial House, Phillips Square.²⁶ It helped that the exhibition space was the top floor of Henry Morgan's new Hudson Bay

¹⁹ Boris, *Crossing Boundaries*, 37.

²⁰ Lynne Walker, "The Arts and Crafts Alternative" in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (eds) *A View From the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design* (London: Women's Press, 1989), 165.

²¹ Callen, *Sexual Division*, 155.

²² Callen, *Women Artists*, 43.

²³ Kaplan, *The Art that is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920*, 35.

²⁴ Walker, "The Arts and Crafts Alternative", 169.

²⁵ Display reference, McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec, "Nova Scotia Quilts" exhibit, 1995.

²⁶ Archival Resource, Virginia Watt, Metiers des Art Archive, Montreal Quebec.

store, thus serving Morgan as a publicity gesture in the opening of his store. In 1905, Sir Malcolm Tate refused to legislate the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, because he would not accept the names of women on the bill.²⁷ It was necessary for members of the Women's Art Association to appeal to Lord Strathcona, who was socially involved with several of the women, to consent to being honorary president, and as a result the Canadian Handicrafts Guild was established in 1906.²⁸ This example suggests that despite the fact that women were in charge of creating, organizing and making a financial success of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, they still required the symbolic presence of a male to legitimate the process of women's entry into the social and political sphere. Lisa Tickner describes a subversive process whereby women borrowed the rhetoric of male genius to advance their situation.²⁹ In the case of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, women were forced to borrow the male presence, but as Tickner described of England, it was a subversive borrowing.

Anthea Callen has divided the women involved in the movement into four categories: the working class, artisocratic upper-middle class, impoverished gentlewomen, and lastly, the elite inner circle.³⁰ The premise of the philanthropy of the second group of moneyed women toward the first group of working class women was predicated on some important social gains for the bourgeois. Working class women were viewed as deprived culturally and were therefore given inspiration through craft activity, as well as marketable skills. The upper classes who provided these opportunities through craft work remained the benevolent recipients of the gratefulness of the lower classes, whose development they

²⁷ Metiers des Arts Archive, Montreal Quebec, fond number MG30 D360.

²⁸ Act of Incorporation, Canadian Handicrafts Guild, May 1906.

²⁹ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 165.

³⁰ Callen, *Women Artists*, 2.

oversaw. As artists were considered useful to society, they could act as "active agents of moral and social welfare, providing pathways to the truth,"³¹ pathways suitable to upper-class women possessed by the spirit of philanthropy. The economic imperative for working class women's crafts were obscured through the statements of the arts and crafts philanthropists, who, as Lynne Walker points out, "saw the goals of workshop activity from an idealistic perspective."³² The crafts, being the useful arts, were the perfect outlet for philanthropy; after all, as Terry Eagleton summarizes in his *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, "what is it in the end, that the Bourgeoise cannot take? Meaninglessness."³³

In Britain, the Industrial Society at Golspie, founded in September 1850 helped rural women market their handicrafts.³⁴ It was, however, more important in promoting the cause of philanthropy and the goodwill of philanthropists. Mary Carus-Wilson, a native of Scotland, and resident of Montreal, the wife of a professor at McGill University, told the Congress of Women at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893, that British philanthropists possessed,

The insight to recognize the value of these native industries, the sympathy to understand their usefulness and profitableness to the peasants, and the skill and patience to initiate and perpetuate a scheme for their resuscitation ere it was too late.³⁵

Mary Carus-Wilson was also very careful to repeat that the women who possessed this benevolent wisdom to help with these schemes were the three successive Duchesses of Sutherland.³⁶ The women involved in philanthropy in the United

³¹ Joan Jeffri, *The Craftsperson Speaks: Artists in Varied Media Discuss their Crafts* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), xviii.

³² Walker, *The Arts and Crafts Alternative*, 170.

³³ Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 372.

³⁴ Mary Ashley Carus-Wilson, "Serving One Another" in Mary Kavanaugh (ed) *The Congress of Women*. (Chicago: Philadelphia Publishing Co., 1895), 653.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 652.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 653.

States varied slightly from Britain and Canada, in that they were members of America's moneyed elite rather than aristocrats. Where Britain tended to reflect some of William Morris's socialist influence, the U.S. arts and crafts world was not so much interested in restructuring the manufacturing process³⁷ as they were interested in promoting ideals of good taste, and ultimately raising the cultural level of the entire population.

Candace Wheeler provides a good example of a woman with both the money and interest in handicrafts to affect a large number of women. In 1877, Wheeler, the wife of a successful stockbroker, founded the New York Society of Decorative Art to both provide artistic women with an income and market for their work, as well as educate them in the ideals of good taste.³⁸ Wheeler fits into Anthea Callen's fourth category of women, as she belonged to the "elite inner circle" along with artists such as Louis Comfort Tiffany who became her business associate.³⁹ Candace Wheeler's "unique little band of accomplished American gentlewomen," as well as her rugmaking industry near her Catskill summerhome, served to provide an "uplifting" experience through the crafts for local women.⁴⁰ Another well known American philanthropist and ceramic artist, Maria Longworth Nichols, who started the highly successful Rookwood Pottery in 1880, was independently wealthy.⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, the most famous woman philanthropist of American rural crafts was Eleanor Roosevelt, who helped to organize Val-Kill Industries in 1927.⁴²

³⁷ In fact American arts and crafts pioneer Gustav Stickley encouraged industry in art. See Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), and Barbara Mayer, *In the Arts and Crafts Style* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993).

³⁸ Boris, *Crossing Boundaries*, 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 38

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴¹ Vance Koehler, *American Art Pottery*, (Seattle: University of Seattle Press 1988), 132.

⁴² Green, *Culture and Crisis*, 40.

Canada offered an interesting mixture of women of noble lineage (British aristocrats were living in Canada often because of their husbands' governmental appointments) and the independently wealthy nouveau riche found in the U.S. Arguably the most significant woman in spreading "the word" about the arts and crafts in Canada was Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, wife of the Earl of Aberdeen, the Governor-General of Canada in the 1890's.⁴³ Although Lady Aberdeen only resided in Canada for seven years, she started the Canadian National Council of Women, where she did special work in promoting home industries, and in finding markets for women's handicrafts. Lady Aberdeen's paper at the Congress of Women, Columbian Exposition, Chicago in 1893 reflected her aims in Canada:

The special field where home industries are of peculiar use as a source of maintenance, is in the country where women and children can employ their leisure time in carrying it on.⁴⁴

Lady Aberdeen's speech also contained some strong words which reveal the growing awareness of power among women involved in the arts and crafts:

And here, in this Women's Building, I may be pardoned for again drawing attention to the fact...that it is women who, for the most part, invented the means of carrying on domestic industries, that men only took them up and developed them on a larger scale when they saw there was a profit to be made out of them.⁴⁵

Canadian women in the Women's Art Society revived many regional crafts through the mission of their society to "encourage even the most ordinary of our home industries."⁴⁶ They intended to do this through connections with fairs held in

⁴³ Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, "Encouragement of Home Industries" in Mary Kavanaugh (ed) *The Congress of Women*, 743.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 743. This quote contains a contradictory message between the home industries as "maintenance", followed by Lady Aberdeen's reference to them occupying only "leisure time".

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 743.

⁴⁶ Women's Art Society Archives, Box 1, Folder 1, McCord Museum, Montreal.

different centres. The use of fairs, whether agricultural, regional or religious was helping to propagate the ideals of the arts and crafts movement, as well as earning women some money and public recognition. Women's work, as well as the women themselves were being introduced into the public sphere. In addition, Canadian women were travelling to the United States and Britain to participate in international exhibitions. The 1904 annual report of the Montreal branch of the Women's Art Association records a grant of \$1200 from the government to fund an exhibit at the St. Louis World Exposition of women's handicrafts, to fund Canadian women's participation in a Handicraft Exhibit of the Women's Institute in London, England, and to fund the travel expenses of the President of the Montreal chapter to give a speech in Berlin encouraging home industries (this talk was heard by women from Germany, Holland, France and Italy).⁴⁷ The involvement of women in arts and crafts exhibitions coexisting with the involvement of women in the suffrage movement is no coincidence. As Engels pointed out, economic dependence on men was key to women's oppression, and developments in the movement simply mirrored in microcosm the larger social stirrings of the day.⁴⁸ That a large number of craft fairs, particularly the Kootenay Christmas Faire, and the American Craft Council fairs in Vermont and New York, were organized and turned into income producing events by women during the period of the women's movement in the late 1960's, should thus be of no surprise.

Pauline Hanbury was raised in England by a mother who was able to participate in the legacy of philanthropist volunteerism. Her mother's involvement in community fairs, "always busy with jams and jellies, and with her apron spilling

⁴⁷ McCord Museum Archives, Women's Art Society of Montreal, Drawer 1, Folder 1, 1904 Annual Report, 7. For more information on the Women's Art Association see Heather Haskins, "Bending the Rules: The Montreal Branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada 1894 - 1900" (Montreal: Concordia University MA Thesis, 1995).

⁴⁸ Callen, *Women Artists*, 217.

over with tickets and such,"⁴⁹ led Hanbury to wish to provide a similar service to her community of craftspeople in the Kootenays. Her stated goal of bringing the public and craftspeople together to introduce people to good craft and educate them while providing craftspeople with income, remains the same goal as the women involved in the original craft fairs, the only exception being that Hanbury was not working within an exclusively female group.

Over time, more and more women from all classes were working full-time as professional producers of craft. In 1910 the President of the Chicago Woman's Club urged women on by describing "the home [as] the center of life, and if we can take art into the homes and then through the homes into the neighbourhood, and then from one neighbourhood to another, we shall soon make our whole city beautiful."⁵⁰ In 1900, 37 percent of arts and crafts college students were women, twenty years later 47.3 percent were women, and these women were continuing to found their own colleges as well as their own businesses.⁵¹ Cheryl Buckley shows that in 1861, 31 percent of the work force in the great English potteries were women, and by 1951, 61 percent were women.⁵² Although women played such an active role, they were still relegated to a separate working sphere from their male counterparts. The men did all the throwing and creating of the vessels, with women concentrating on the decorating. This was simply a continuation of the Victorian ideals of the essentialized female, where women were unable to do the hard labour involved with certain craft materials. This limited the transition from domestic to professional for female craft workers. However Adelaide Alsop

⁴⁹ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 1996.

⁵⁰ Boris, *Crossing Boundaries*, 37.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵² Buckley, Cheryl, *Potters and Paintresses: Women Designers in the pottery industry 1870-1955*. (London: Women's Press, 1990), 47.

Robineau provides an example of a North American woman who was able to cross these boundaries, and enter the world of the female studio potter.

Adelaide Alsop Robineau started her art career in the late 1860s studying painting with William Merritt Chase. Her parents separated, and Adelaide, as the eldest of three daughters, was forced to relinquish her painting career to enter the American art potteries and earn an income as a decorative china painter.⁵³ Robineau was subject to the major influences on female crafters in the 1870s - the Centennial exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, the writings of John Ruskin, William Morris, and Charles Locke Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste*.⁵⁴ Robineau visited the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition where she was impressed by the display of painted china by the women from Cincinnati, including Mary Louise McLaughlin and Maria Longworth Nichols. The Cincinnati School of Design had raised funds to take part in the Exposition through such activities as a Martha Washington Tea Party, where they auctioned off their painted china tea cups, raising \$385, enough to participate in Philadelphia.⁵⁵ Adelaide Robineau was only one of many who were impressed with the burgeoning field of pottery for women. In 1880 when the Cincinnati Pottery Club held their first Annual Reception and Exhibition at the Dallas Pottery, huge crowds attended and as well they received national coverage through *Harper's Weekly*, which sent an engraving artist to cover the event:

Throughout the appointed hours, crowds surged up and down the old wooden stairway and in and out of the kiln sheds which were also in gala array...carriages were standing as far as you could see.⁵⁶

⁵³ Peg Weiss, *Adelaide Alsop Robineau: Glory in Porcelain*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

In 1899, Adelaide Alsop married Samuel Robineau, also a ceramic artist, and together they established the Ceramic Studio Publishing Company, which published many "how to" manuals on ceramics. By this point, Robineau was no longer satisfied with simply decorating ceramics, and undertook to "master" the entire process. In 1901 she made her first bowl, and in 1904 introduced herself to an international audience at the St. Louis Exposition.⁵⁷ By 1905, Tiffany and Company was retailing Robineau's vases in New York, and in 1910, she was the grand prize winner at the Turin International Exposition.⁵⁸ Robineau was among the first women to enter the domain of men, mastering the potting wheel and kiln as well as the decorator's brush (Fig. 8). Robineau had benefited from her friendship with Mary Chase Kelly, who established Pewabic Pottery in Detroit, and who was friends with Horace Caulkins, the inventor of the Revelation Kiln, a portable, electric kiln.⁵⁹ After Robineau had acquired her own Revelation kiln in 1903, she began promoting their use for women through *Keramic Studio*, encouraging women to go into studio pottery, completing ceramic work from clay to finish.⁶⁰

Women found studio pottery offered new freedom, for there they were able to complete all aspects of clay work independently. The studio pottery movement was a reaction against the elaborately painted pottery of the nineteenth century, which was waning in popularity.⁶¹ It was heavily invested in returning ceramics to its roots, and so abandoned the movements of mainstream art such as art nouveau and the avant garde. By turning its back on painting and sculpture and developing personal aesthetics, it produced traditional craft objects, which did not get involved

⁵⁷ Ibid., 24

⁵⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁹ Garth Clark, *American Ceramics: 1876 to the Present*, (London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1987), 43.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁶¹ Ibid., 42.

in the developing concepts of surface and form. This resulted in studio pottery developing an antipathy toward art theory, and art theory developing a condescending view toward studio pottery, a situation which remains somewhat similar today. The pottery vessel was invested in the tradition of the objet d'art, relying on its status as commodity to ensure continuing success, while skirting the edges of the avant-garde, and later obtaining limited support from critics such as Herbert Read with his praise of its inherent abstraction.

Adelaide Alsop Robineau's leap from decorator to thrower of pottery was significant, for she was shifting from her essentialized role of the female in craft. This was also happening in Britain, where Norah Braden and Katharine Pleydell-Bouverie, former workers at Bernard Leach's pottery, left to form their Cole Pottery in 1925.⁶² However, unlike American women such as Adelaide Alsop Robineau and Maria Longworth Nichols, these British women potters exhibited symptoms of C.R. Ashbee's "dear Emily" syndrome. For example, Katharine Pleydell-Bouverie was described as self-deprecating about her work, generous, and as always selling her work at absurdly low prices.⁶³ This is reminiscent of the same humility Pauline Hanbury complained of when working with some female crafters at the Kootenay Christmas Faire, who forced Pauline to insist they raise their prices, or they would end up underselling everyone and doing no one any favours in legitimating their craft work.⁶⁴

Despite the huge gains made by American women potters like Robineau, they were still bound to class ties and the opportunities provided by the men in their lives. It was Robineau's husband Samuel who was able to fund their *Keramic Studio* magazine, and Mary Longworth Nichols who started the highly successful

⁶² Tony Birks and Cornelia Wingfield, eds., *Bernard Leach, Hamada and their Circle*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 139.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁶⁴ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 1996.

Rookwood Pottery in 1880 had a wealthy father.⁶⁵ The Rookwood Pottery was steeped in social distinction based on class lines, for it emerged out of the Cincinnati Women's Pottery Club, which brought together women from prominent families. This was a world apart from the lives of rural women crafters, whose work, "stank of poverty" and could not escape the trap of immediate necessity, where, "your work was used, trodden on, or worn right out like you yourself."⁶⁶ Where the Rookwood Pottery was a progressive step for women crafters, it was only because it fit nicely into accepted roles for society women, who had the economic backing to afford such endeavors. Meanwhile, the craft work of working-class women was ignored, or treated with benevolence as in the case of the philanthropists. While Louis Comfort Tiffany was collaborating with Candace Wheeler, Adelaide Alsop Robineau and the Rookwood Pottery, he was at the same time hiring young middle-class women to curb the power of unionized craftsmen.⁶⁷

After the turn of the century, and World War I, the arts and crafts movement and its female participants underwent some major changes, beginning with the loss in popularity of painted china work, and the introduction of studio pottery. Educational opportunities for women in craft increased, and during the depression with the introduction of the Works Progress Administration, women served as professional teachers of craft. The W.P.A had an entire chapter devoted to Women's Profession Projects, Recreational Projects and Educational Projects, with over 20, 000 women participating in 1938⁶⁸. As mentioned before, the fact that

⁶⁵ Koehler, *American Art Pottery*, 132.

⁶⁶ Pamela Simpson, "Women and Craft", *Woman's Art Journal*. Vol. 13, No. 2, (Fall 1992/Winter 1993): 49.

⁶⁷ Koehler, *American Art Pottery*, 39.

⁶⁸ York, *New Deal Craft*, 60. The Women's Profession Projects, Recreational Projects and Educational Projects included all manner of traditional crafts, often created for the decoration of federal buildings. There was a large assortment of craft programs during this time, including the Public Works of Art Project, with ceramics in Ohio, Native pottery in New Mexico, home furnishings in Miami. Other programs included the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth

the Roosevelt administration's art projects were aligned with craft work and social realism led them to be abandoned in terms of "high" art. This alignment of craft with social realism did not help craft to cross any modern boundaries of fine art. Considering the previously disinterested stance of commercial and studio potteries regarding art theory, craft's lack of theory was being reinforced. The economic viability of the crafts during the Depression, often linked with women's production, had dire consequences in terms of Greenberg's view of "high" art as disinterested and, consequently modernism as disinterested, worked to separate women's domestic craft from fine art. Despite the advances made by both craft and women during the arts and crafts movement, things remained much the same in the institutional art world.

Women were not willing to forsake the independence the crafts allowed them, despite their non-entry into the world of "high art." The introduction of the G.I. Bill opened up roles for craftspeople, both men and women, to earn independent incomes from teaching, while researching their own art. Often women producing craft found themselves at home with young children after working in the war effort. Craft was fulfilling its role, demonstrated in centuries previous, of allowing women to remain in the domestic sphere while being creative and producing some "pin money." Quite often, the women producing crafts found themselves lacking outlets for their work.

A good example of women generating a professional forum for crafts out of domestic roles is the case of the "Kingcraft Story". In 1948, Marion Baxter,

Administration, the Rural Arts Program of the Agricultural Extension Service, the Department of Indian Affairs, National Forest Service and National Park Service, including the decorating of many National Park lodges. Several regional guilds were supported in part by this federal funding, such as the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild and the New Hampshire Arts and Crafts League - See also Allen H. Eaton *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* (1937; reprint, New York: Dover, 1973), 292-299.

President of Kingcraft, moved to King Township, Ontario with her husband. She was restless in this rural setting and began weaving. In 1950, she invited the secretary of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild to come and meet with herself and thirty other women from the community.

On that day, thirty women, two small children and a baby in a laundry basket, met in our living room and listened to a fascinating story of the increasing development and interest in handicrafts, and the splendid opportunity that could be ours in this field.⁶⁹

Baxter was amazed to discover how many of the women living in her rural area were involved in producing craft objects. From this meeting began Kingcrafts, an organization that went on to develop educational facilities, a gallery, and exhibitions during the 1950s.

In the United States, independently wealthy Aileen Vanderbilt Webb, daughter of William Church Osborn, a former president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was interested in reviving the waning crafts. Her philanthropist activities, paralleling those of American women of the nineteenth century such as Candace Wheeler, began in the 1930's, when she organized rural women in Putnam County, New York to provide them with markets for their work. Webb funded the American Craft Council, as well as financially backing the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York City (interestingly enough, located across the street from the Museum of Modern Art). It was Webb's goal to confirm the artistic validity of the crafts worldwide, "we've removed crafts from the level of the church fair in this country -- now we must do it for the world."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Archival Resource, Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Adelaide Mariott Papers, F 1157 CL6 MU5757. Marion Baxter, Unpublished speech, *The Kingcraft Story*, 3.

⁷⁰ *New York Times*, Friday, August 17, 1979.

To put the continuing role of women involved in the crafts in perspective, it is important to point out that while Marion Baxter and the others sat in her Ontario living room in 1950, Peter Voulkos was garnering attention in California as a genius under the abstract expressionist movement. Where women were desiring control over the making and marketing of their work at a most basic level, the "fine crafts" had been consumed by the world of fine arts, and therefore had become valued through the adoption of the individual genius. "Peter Voulkos...[his] work is a grasping at the principles of 20th century art and a negation of the value of craft."⁷¹ Here we go back to the split in the world of craft, between craft as modernist commodity and craft as independent lifestyle commodity. The realm of modernist commodity craft is still saturated with male presence. As Chris Weedon states, craft under the fine arts mantle operates as a token of exchange between members of a specific social group, acting as the bearer of value and coded significance through its transaction between receiver and sender.⁷²

Examples of craft as tokens of exchange between male members of the modernist art system are common. The popularity and high level sales of the work of George Ohr, the "mad potter of Biloxi" who was praised as "strange, obscure, a genius and a cult figure," can be partially attributed to the incorporation of his vessel forms in the paintings of Jasper Johns (praised by Clement Greenberg) as background objects.⁷³ Craft shows in galleries often have a higher percentage of male exhibitors. Of the highly influential "Craft Today" exhibit at the American Craft Museum in New York City in 1987, only 38 percent of the exhibitors were

⁷¹ Editors, "Poetry of the Physical and Poetry of the Physical Meets the Press", *Women Artists News*, Vol. 12, No. 4, (Fall/Winter 1987): 7.

⁷² Griselda Pollock, "Painting, Feminism, History", *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 171.

⁷³ Jeff Perrone, "Madness, Sex, Exhaustion", *Art Forum*, Vol. 28, No. 5, (January 1990): 97.

women.⁷⁴ This is especially interesting, considering that Edward Lucie-Smith, one of the two male curators of the show, states in his catalogue introduction, that "it is probable that, among the leading craftspeople working in the United States today, women form a slight majority."⁷⁵ Could it be that because the institutional art world still values the work of male artists, male craftspeople are glorified so that the craft world will be taken more seriously in the art world? Tanya Harrod points out that modernism's reverence for continual development in the arts results in the downgrading of women's achievements, which are often rooted in the long tradition of female craft.⁷⁶

The Kootenay Christmas Faire, and Pauline Hanbury as the "mother" of the fair, continues many themes introduced by women's involvement in the arts and crafts. The fact that the Kootenay Christmas Faire was organized out of the Multifusion event at Notre Dame University reflects craft work as a legitimate extension of women's education, as well as an outlet for women to earn independent incomes. Women's ability to function as independent professionals through teaching began in the nineteenth century through the many design and craft academies. Women not only were students, but taught at institutions founded as early as the 1842 Female School of Design and the 1844 Philadelphia School of Design. Adelaide Alsop Robineau and many other well known female artisans worked within university and college settings, with Robineau working as a ceramics instructor at the People's University in University City, St. Louis in 1911-12, where for a brief time she enjoyed unlimited resources and aesthetic freedom.⁷⁷ In the United States, the Works Progress Administration afforded women the opportunity to teach, particularly important, considering the economic devastation of the

⁷⁴ Editors, *Women Artists News*, 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁶ Harrod, Review article, *Women and Craft*, 53.

⁷⁷ Clark, *American Ceramics*, 53.

depression. After World War Two, the G.I. Bill continued the tradition of women teaching crafts, this time as therapeutic skills for returning veterans.

The Kootenay Christmas Faire provides a venue for professional craftspeople, many women.⁷⁸ The role of arts and crafts exhibitions, to provide women with the opportunity to make their work public and also earn revenue, is as essential today as then. Hanbury's initial goal of providing an outlet to sell her pots was the same as the women of the nineteenth century, who used the popularity of exhibitions and world fairs to secure a public spot for their artistry, viewing each women's pavilion or handicraft display as a "hard won victory."⁷⁹ Like Hanbury, who developed for herself a paid role as fair organizer, many women have been provided with various levels of income through arts and crafts exhibitions. Candace Wheeler was paid \$1200 for her work in 1892 as the "first lieutenant" of the Women's Building for Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893,⁸⁰ and in 1904 Miss Robertson and Mrs. Peck received monetary compensation for their involvement in the Canadian exhibit sent to the St. Louis Exhibition.⁸¹

Although the Kootenay Christmas Faire (today titled the Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market) is increasingly more professional, Pauline Hanbury always worked hard to make sure it was accessible to all levels of crafters, from hobbyists to professionals, ensuring that there was an interesting and wide array of choices for consumers. She believed that all craftspeople should be given the chance for exposure, for if someone's work was not of high enough quality, it would not sell

⁷⁸ Based on the participant's lists provided by the organizers of various fairs, I have been able to create some statistics on the percentage ratio of women to men. In the Kootenay Christmas Faire, it is an even 50% division between female and male, as it is at Montreal's Salon des Metiers d'Art. The Halifax Forum Christmas Fair, a non-juried show, has on average 64% women to 36% men.

⁷⁹ Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women*, (Chicago: Academy Press, 1981), 3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁸¹ McCord Museum Archives, Women's Art Society of Montreal, Drawer 1, Folder 1, 1904 Annual Report, p. 7.

and they would not return. A large number of these "drop in" hobby craftspeople were women.⁸²

As mentioned earlier Pauline Hanbury's one-on-one communication with all craftspeople, combined with her pregnancy during the second annual Kootenay Christmas Faire, led her to be titled, "the mother of the Kootenay Christmas Faire." This essentialist female role as caregiver is one that she enjoys, and is also one that paralleled the involvement of female philanthropists in the craft world. Pauline Hanbury has described her mothering role as one of necessity, "I was constantly there to move things along, and I think I was very motherly about everything, starting with the second year of the Faire when I was pregnant."⁸³ The choice of Hanbury to organize and order as a strong mother, not as a "glamour puss" or dictator lent itself well to an event which based its success on the ideals of a nostalgic yesteryear, where a comforting and strong essentialized female role was encouraged. That Hanbury could take this role of the domestic mother and translate it into an entrepreneurial role, as the businesswoman and organizer of a very successful annual event, disturbs the historical elements of the signifier "mother", by shifting it into a largely male role. Because signifying systems are not ahistorical,⁸⁴ as Greenberg and Kant argued, the setting of the Kootenay region in the 1970s was ready to embrace Pauline as a mother of the crafts, while acknowledging her role as an independent businesswoman.⁸⁵ Women like Pauline Hanbury, who succeeded in taking the elements of craft production outside the

⁸² Hanbury, Personal Interview, September 1996.

⁸³ Hanbury, Personal Interview, September, 1996.

⁸⁴ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 51.

⁸⁵ With the exception of the Baker Street Merchants in year one. As Pat Brown, a participant in the Kootenay Christmas Faire describes in her questionnaire response, "I remember more clearly the people in their woolly sweaters and toques - mostly snow covered - mingling among craft people in the most friendly warm smiling way at that fair - but oh, how the "Baker street bandits" would complain - they didn't think they were gaining any benefit by the fair - they were wrong of course".

home, or sphere of the essentialized female, while retaining elements of the female (such as pregnancy), are helping the crafts to enter the domain of the public while acknowledging their debts to the female spirit in ensuring their survival.

Candace Wheeler, Maria Longworth Nichols, Adelaide Alsop Robineau, Lady Ishbel Aberdeen and Aileen Vanderbilt Webb, while relying largely on the money and opportunities provided through their husbands or fathers, managed to use their roles as wives and daughters in a complementary manner with their public roles as artisans and organizers of the crafts to subvert the hand-crafted object which was once wholly devalued as domestic into something considered valuable and public. In every instance, they used in part craft fairs and exhibitions to accomplish this goal, for fairs provided social inspiration as well as economic reward. In addition to providing themselves with opportunities as businesswomen in newly developing and previously male worlds, they provided many women with the opportunity to market their work. Many of these women through their role as philanthropists, can be seen as examples of the mothering role that was also filled by Hanbury. Their caretaking of fellow women through the provision of markets for economic development parallels her creation of a market for craftspeople for exactly the same purpose. While Hanbury has helped those of the same class as herself, middle class, mostly educated, seeking a "back-to-the-land" lifestyle, the women working during earlier epochs often assisted women who were of a lower economic class than themselves. It makes sense then, that Pauline Hanbury's mother was heavily involved in volunteering in the organizing of fairs in England during her childhood, where Hanbury would have had instilled in her the role of caretaker, a role she later translated into a business setting. The fairs of the late 1960's and early 1970's, despite offering forums for women involved in the women's movement as independent craftspeople, relied on a historicized and often essentialized image of the female as domestic, mother and nurturer. Not only is Pauline Hanbury referred

to as the "mother" of the crafts, but in write-ups on the early American Craft Council fairs in Vermont and New York, *craftsmen* are described in the same breath as "mothers nursed babies, family meals got cooked and shared."⁸⁶ The photograph illustrating *Seventeen Magazine's* account of the Rhinebeck, New York fair of 1973, shows a man standing over a woman who is breast feeding a baby (see Fig. 4). Although women's traditional roles are often emphasized in the writing on craft fairs, it is the strength and perseverance of women like Pauline Hanbury which has ensured the organization and economic success of craft fairs.

⁸⁶ *Seventeen Magazine*, (Spring/Summer 1973), 104.

CONCLUSION

Two museums face off across the street in New York representing a divide which many now want to challenge: on the south side of the street the American Craft Museum presents ideals of the craft world and on the north the Museum of Modern Art stands as "the principal impressario, the chief exponent"¹ of "high" art. Bridging the gap would threaten both worlds with loss; one as the utopian oasis protecting against the cruel world, the other as the bastion of artistic and critical genius, apart from mundane social reality. However, recent writing from both worlds suggest that it is time for a reconciliation, with social theorists challenging traditional art history, and craft theorists questioning the role craft has to play within artistic institutions. It is encouraging to see that recent conferences and publications are focusing on the critical content of craft. January 1997's *Obscure Objects of Desire? Reviewing the Crafts in the 20th Century*, sponsored by Britain's Eastern Arts Board,² featured topics such as: "Relations with Modernism and Postmodernism" with Gillian Naylor's paper "Celebrating the Vernacular: From the Popular Arts to Pop", "Production, Consumption and Value" with Cheryl Buckley's presentation "Dressmaking in the Lives of Working-Class Women Between the Wars", and "Language, Poetics and Methodologies", with Pamela Johnson's essay "Out of Touch: the meaning of making in the digital age." The American Craft Museum and Harry N. Abrams, Inc. are publishing a number of books of collected essays titled *The History of Twentieth-Century Craft*, with seminars and books covering topics such as "The Ideal Home: 1900-1920", "Revivals! Diverse Traditions: 1920-1945", and "Craft in the Machine Age: 1920-

¹ Clement Greenberg, "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture" in John O'Brian (ed), *Clement Greenberg: Volume Two*, 169.

² Papers will be published by the British Craft Council, Summer 1997. See appendix for full programme.

1945". Within the world of art history, contemporary journals have begun to dedicate their pages to the concerns of craft, for example, November/December 1992's *Art Papers* titled "The Craft Issue", and Fall/Winter 1996's *Artichoke*, titled "The Art of Craft - The Craft of Art."

Despite the exciting advances being made, these current negotiations run the risk of falling into distinct categories, such as those outlined by Stephen Inglis, Director of the Research Branch at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in his paper *Overview: Forming Discourse*. Inglis outlines three forms of discourse for the crafts: craft as object, craft as process and crafts as broader human tradition.³ In craft as object, he states that the adoption of modernist language brings increased sophistication to crafts. In craft as process, he quotes Edward Lucie-Smith's idea of crafts as a society within a society, and maintains that this category is the main form of communication between practitioners. Inglis in his third form of discourse, craft as broader human tradition, involves the languages of anthropology, material culture, art history and philosophy. It is a dangerous set of separations, with modernist language being held as the provider of artistic sophistication, craftspeople as insular artists, and all other discourses as separate and distinct. In this age of interdisciplinary studies, craft's avoidance of these artificial boundaries and incorporation of methods from many disciplines will allow it to fully understand its role within contemporary society. Andrew Jackson warns in "Against the Autonomy of the Craft Object" that "historians of contemporary craft practice must regard their subject matter as an integral part of material culture, and hence subject to the same modes of analysis as those found in the social sciences."⁴

³ Stephen Inglis, "Overview: Forming Discourse" in *Making and Metaphor: A Discussion of Meaning in Contemporary Craft*, ed. Gloria A. Hickey (Hull, Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1994), 22.

⁴ Andrew Jackson, "Against the Autonomy of the Craft Object" paper given at *Obscure Objects of Desire? Reviewing the Crafts in the 20th Century* University of East Anglia, January 1997.

The craft world must be aware of what is happening within the other realms of artistic production. As the writing about crafts matures into theoretical discussions, examples such as design history and modernist art history can be studied to avoid potential difficulties. These difficulties include the dangers of invented artistic geniuses, preconceived notions of taste and value, and narrow subject matter. Materialist feminism, initially seen as one of the most attractive theories for many craftspeople, with its ability to highlight the significance of women in the development of the infrastructures of the craft world, must be carefully examined as well as to avoid the reproduction of social divisions within the crafts. Through an interdisciplinary examination of the symbolic processes of craft, including the Kootenay Christmas Faire, it is possible to develop strategies to deal with future developments in the crafts. Consumption is key in the formation of meaning for objects, and every individual who chooses to participate in craft fairs, whether as purchasers or artisans, is defining him or her self within a given culture and society through arbitrary factors of possession. It is my hope that through this thesis--with its incorporation of the methods of social theory, consumption and materialist feminism, as well as its re-examination of modernism in relation to craft-- I have demonstrated that craft can and must work with contemporary theory in order to take an active role in its future directions. By relying on the work of theorists, combined with the specific example of the Kootenay Christmas Faire, I hope that I have helped to initiate a broader debate on the theoretical interest in craft by both craftspeople and those operating within the institutions of what until now have been the "fine" art.

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APPENDICES

November 29, 1995

Dear Artisan,

My name is Sandra Alföldy, and I am working on a Masters Thesis in Art History. This thesis is a case study of the Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market. I am researching the history and impact of the fair.

It would help me greatly to have you assist me in gathering information. It would be a great help if you could please take a minute and fill in this small questionnaire. This will be confidential, unless you would not mind putting down your name and the name of your business.

The questionnaire can be returned to Andy or Elaine Alföldy at their booth. Thank you for your help!!!

Question #1

What types of items do you produce?

Question #2

Do you do this work professionally or as a part-time practice?

Question #3

How many years have you been involved in the Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market? If you have participated for over 5 years, how have you seen the Market evolve?

Question #4

How many craft fairs do you participate in each year?

Question #5

Do you reside in the Kootenay Region?

Question #6

Do you see the Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market as more than just a retail event? Specifically, do you find it a source of social interaction or a reflection of lifestyle?

PARALLEL 'STRAND' PROGRAMME

Please note that each session ends with half an hour's discussion.

	A Room 01	B Room 010
	National and Regional Identity	Relations with Modernism and Postmodernism
Friday pm 17.00- 19.00	State involvement with peasant crafts in East Central Europe 1947-1995 Lou Taylor (University of Brighton)	The Art of Craft: Eileen Agar's ceremonial for eating Bouillabaisse Alex Buck (London)
Session 1	Living tradition or invented identity? The restructuring of the crafts in post-war Edinburgh - Elizabeth Cumming (Edinburgh College of Art)	From East to West: From design to craft: The case of the bamboo chaise longue - Charlotte Benton (Cambridge)
	The Oriental, Orientalism of Managi Soebei and the Mingei Theory - Yoko Kikuchi (Chelsea College of Art & Design)	The Straw Donkey: Craft and Design in Post-War Italy - Penny Sparke (Royal College of Art)
Saturday am 09.30- 11.00	Socialism and the Crafts in Poland David Crowley (University of Brighton)	Studio ceramics: 'Ghetto or ghetto mentality?' Julian Spurr (Royal College of Art)
Session 2	The National Question in Contemporary Hungarian Craft and Design - Guy Julier (Leeds Metropolitan University)	Beautiful Things: Dartington and the arts of the potter and weaver David Jeremiah (University of Plymouth)
Saturday am 11.45- 13.15	Affirmed Objects in Affirmed Places: History, Geographic Sentiment and a Region's Crafts - Michael J. Chiarappa (Western Michigan University)	The 'lost continent of Crafts - Historical, myth, or vision of the future?' Andrew J. King (City of Bristol College)
Session 3	A Change in the Fabric of Society: Fert-making in nomadic Kyrgyzstan Stephanie Bunn (University of Manchester)	Alternatives and Interventions for Urban Futures: The crafts in relation to architecture in the public interest Malcolm Miles (Chelsea College of Art and Design)
Saturday pm 15.00- 17.00	Homo Orientalis: Bernard Leach and the Japanese Soul - Edmund de Waal (Ceramicist, London)	Ben Nicholson: Between Art and Craft Jeremy Lewison (Tate Gallery)
Session 4	Twentieth Century Myth-Making: Persian Tribal Rugs - Patricia Baker (London)	"Functioning Decoration": Humanising Modernism: Crafts, Objects and the Eameses - Pat Kirkham (Bard Graduate Centre, New York)
	Crafts, Colonialism and Nabonnoci: the Arts and Crafts in Ireland 1909-1925 Neil Sharp (University of Sussex)	Celebrating the Vernacular: From the Popular Arts to Pop - Gillian Naylor (Royal College of Art)

Appendix 2: Programme, *Obscure Objects of Desire? Reviewing the Crafts in the 20th Century*. January 10 - 12, 1997, University of East Anglia.

C Room 0.18	D Room 0.06	E Room 1.34
Production, Consumption and Value	Language, Poetics and Methodologies	The Dissident Workshop
<p>Craft, Design and Textile Production in Zimbabwe Angharad Thomas (University of Salford)</p> <p>Work, Professionalism and Gender: Women Designing between the Wars Jill Seddon (University of Brighton)</p> <p>Dressmaking in the Lives of Working-Class Women Between the Wars Cheryl Buckley (University of Northumbria)</p>	<p>"The Hand That Thinks" Jivan Astfalck (Goldsmith, London)</p> <p>Against the Autonomy of the Craft Object - Andrew Jackson (University of Wolverhampton)</p> <p>Out of Touch: the meaning of making in the digital age - Pamela Johnson (London)</p>	<p>The Castration of Skill - Clive Edwards (Loughborough College of Art and Design)</p> <p>Some notes on the politics of architectural making Dan Menck (Designer, London)</p> <p>Creative consumerism and craft DIY home improvements in Britain in the 1950s - Jen Browne (Southampton Institute)</p>
<p>Eel-traps without eels: the changed aesthetics of craft production Mary Butcher (Manchester Metropolitan University)</p> <p>Gender Identities in Pueblo Pottery Moira Vincentelli (University of Aberystwyth, Wales)</p>	<p>Craft, Art or Design? In pursuit of the changing concept of "craft" - Anna-Marja Ihtasu (University of Joensuu, Finland)</p> <p>C. G. Jung and the Crafts Marina Margetta (Royal College of Art)</p>	<p>Glass in architecture: structure and decorated surface - Jane McDonald (University of Wolverhampton)</p> <p>The truth about the craft economy Carol McNicoll (Ceramicist, London)</p>
<p>Stained Glass: Art or Anti-Art? Nicola Gordon-Bowe (National College of Art and Design, Dublin)</p> <p>Perceptions of Value: The Role of Silverware in Society Helen Clifford (V&A/RCA)</p>	<p>Language, Memory Self and "Field" Mike Hughes (University of the West of England)</p> <p>Kunsthandwerk - Stefan Muthesius (University of East Anglia)</p>	<p>Workshop dissidents in postwar Britain: Anthony Froshaug, Norman Potter and their circle - Robin Kinross (Hyphen Press)</p> <p>Alfred Powell, 19th century idealism and 20th century practice in the Cotswolds Jacqueline Sarsby (Cheltenham & Gloucester College)</p>
<p>Museums and Regulated Work in the Crafts - Robin Emmerson (Liverpool Museum)</p> <p>Craft Practice and political democracy June Freeman (Independent)</p> <p>Grand Desire: Paradoxes in Haute Couture as Craft Work - Richard Maron (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)</p>	<p>Text and Textiles Victoria Mitchell (Norwich School of Art and Design)</p> <p>Buy Me and Become Me - Sandra Alfeidy (Concordia University, Montreal)</p> <p>Authenticity: A look at the Glass Case Hann Kallha (Academy of Finland, Helsinki)</p>	<p>Touching the Stone - Brenda Berman, Annet Saring (Incisive Letterwork)</p> <p>The dissenting workshop - Alan Evans (Blacksmith)</p>

Appendix 2: Programme, *Obscure Objects of Desire?* Reviewing the Crafts in the 20th Century. January 10 - 12, 1997, University of East Anglia.

FIGURES



Figure 1: Pauline Hanbury in front of her caravan. Early 1970's.



Figure 2: Jack Anderson and Pauline Hanbury. December 1974.

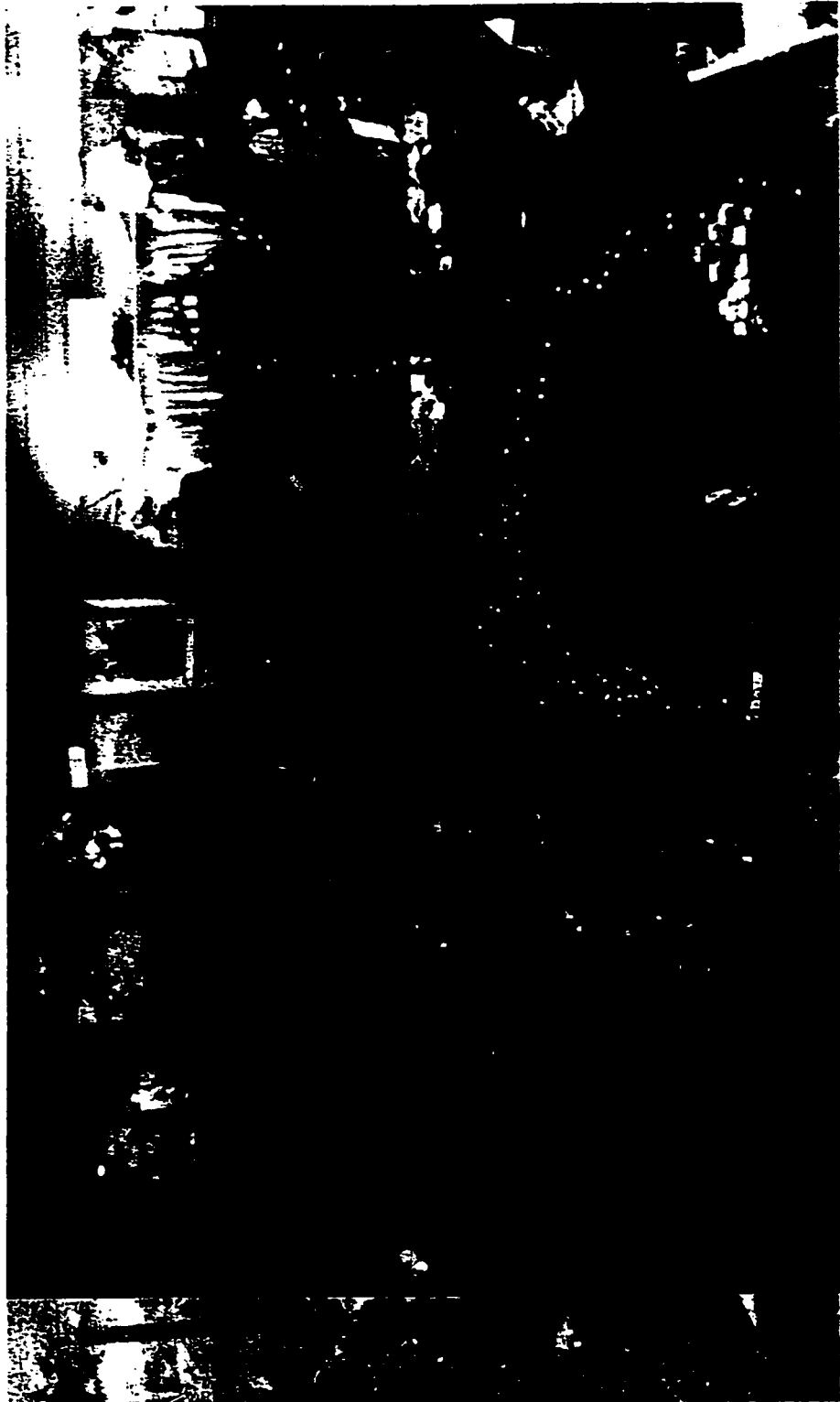


Figure 3: Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market, December, 1995.



Figure 4: Family at American Craft Council's Rhinebeck, NY Faire, Spring 1973.

Tours of WPA Handicraft Project Begun



Figure 5: *Milwaukee Journal*, newspaper clipping, September 6, 1940.

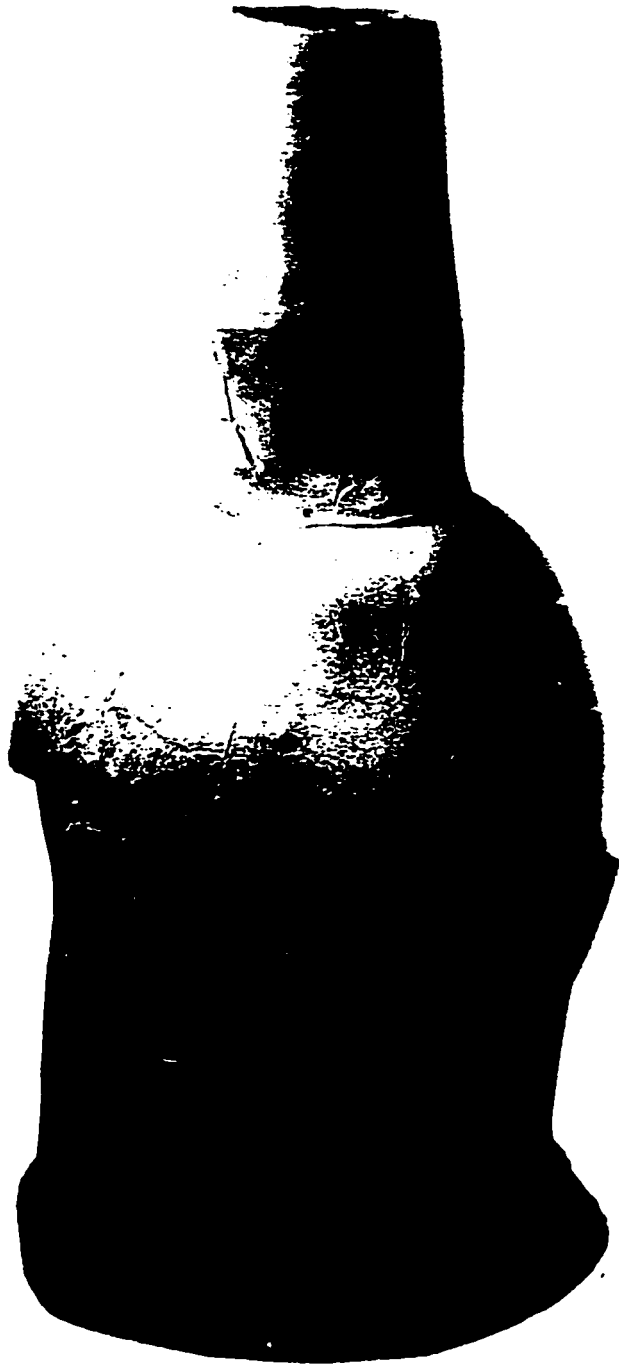


Figure 6: Peter Voulkos, *Untitled*, 1981, Earthenware, 42" x 22".

KOOTENAY ARTISANS CHRISTMAS MARKET

CIVIC CENTRE NELSON

THURSDAY DEC. 1 2-9 P.M.

FRIDAY DEC. 2 11-9 P.M.

SATURDAY DEC 3 11-9 P.M.

ADMISSION: \$2 ADULTS
\$1 KIDS, SENIORS
\$5 FAMILY OR ADULT
WEEKEND PASS

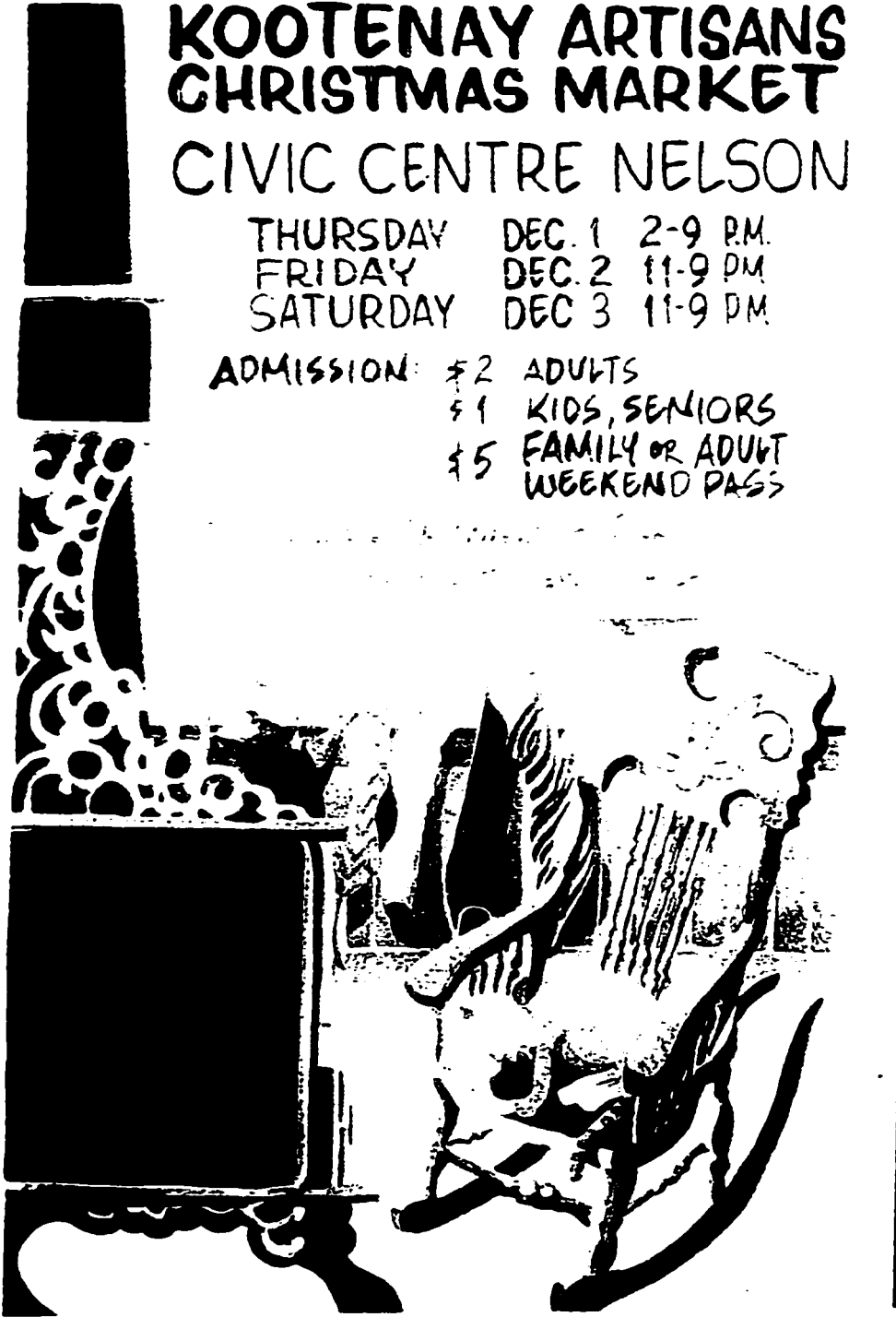
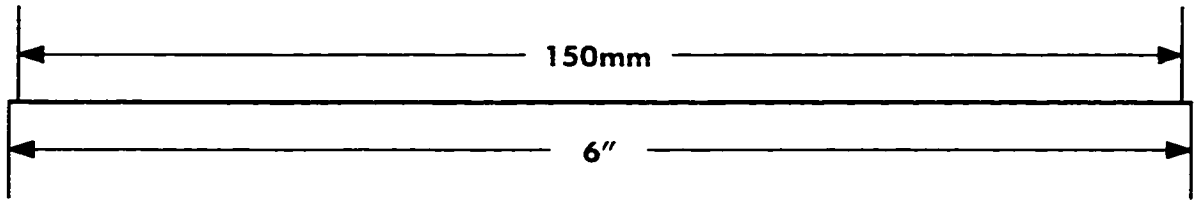
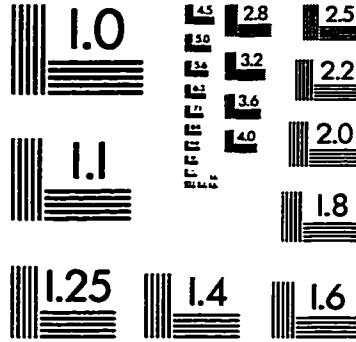
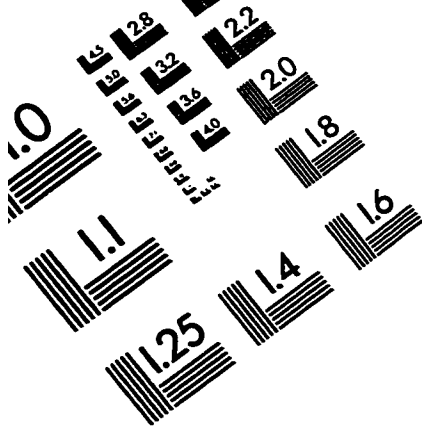


Figure 7: Elaine Alföldy, Kootenay Artisans Christmas Market Poster, 1995.



Figure 8: Adelaide Alsop Robineau at her Revelation kiln, 1904.



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