

**Interviews with Four Contemporary Women Craft Makers
About the Personal Meaning of Craft Making.**

Marie Louise Danese

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in
The Department
of
Art Education**

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ABSTRACT

Interviews with Four Contemporary Women Craft Makers

About the Personal Meaning of Craft Making.

Marie Louise Danese

This qualitative study employs the informal interview technique as both the research and data collection method to delve into the personal meaning that craft making provides for its participants. Research questions addressed four women's backgrounds, experiences and current studio practice dealing with crafts. This study provides the four participants with an opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns and beliefs. The women interviewed speak positively about significant craft making experiences over spans of time. This report demonstrates that such experiences should be made available to a whole range of learners. Results from this study clearly reveal an intense sense of satisfaction and accomplishment derived from craft making. The data analysis and results not only informed the author, an art educator, but it also offers other art educators the opportunity to view craft making as an engaging, meaningful and valuable conduit to successful learning.

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Of course the bulk of this thesis would not have materialized without the intuitive contributions of my four generous and talented participants. I want to thank each of them, Pina, Hazel, Sylvie and Grace, for kindly agreeing to take part in my study. I believe that the interviews were beneficial to us all and I am pleased to provide the means for their voices to be heard. I want to thank them for their contribution to Art Education and I want to encourage them to continue on their creative and rewarding paths.

DEDICATION

To my father,

ADAMO DANESE

October-12-1931 to July-08-2001.

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INTRODUCTION:

My research about the meaning and value of crafts for contemporary craft makers stems from a number of my own experiences either directly or indirectly related to crafts. One is through having taught Arts and Crafts to adults in community settings and to children in extra-curricular programs in elementary schools. Another is from my work for Concordia's Art Education Department in assessing pre-service teachers in both the elementary and the community settings and seeing how they deal with teaching crafts. And finally it also comes from my many years as a parent, by observing the art and the craft taught in day cares, pre-schools, elementary schools and high schools, in both the private and the public sectors.

The motivation for inquiring into the ***personal*** value of craft making primarily comes from the positive reactions that I have witnessed as craft makers display a great sense of interest, pride, value and satisfaction while they work on their pieces and when these pieces are completed. This sense of personal value spans the various age groups from small children, adolescents, as well as adults and

older adults. It is also a sense that expands beyond socio-economic, educational, cultural and religious groups.

Guided by my own hands-on experiences as both an art educator and as a student in craft making courses, in addition to the information that I've gleaned from a variety of literary research related to crafts, I chose to interview four women who are contemporary craft makers and ask them a series of questions. These questions ranged from those dealing with their early memories of craft making, to their education, to their current studio practice. These interviews were conducted in order to better understand what their personal motivations are and why these women choose to keep making crafts.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

From a research perspective I arrived at this question after much exploration into the arts and crafts area. I began by exploring historical research about the Arts and Crafts Movement in England and in North America. Key texts introduced me to the mindset, philosophy, influences, variety of work produced and the future vision set forth by the movement's British parents, notably William Morris and John Ruskin. I examined the ways in which crafts had previously been taught through books, magazines and in schools. I also looked for information dealing with crafts and Art Education. Here I found that there is a noticeable lack of information available. Another area where I've made many inquiries, still related to crafts, is in the field of popular culture. Here there is a large selection of sources available from television, videos, articles, magazines, books, web sites and craft fairs.

In this literature review I make reference to articles, books and web sites that deal with contemporary crafts and craft makers, and I discuss how they have informed my research. Within these, there are a variety of viewpoints that include historical, postmodernist, and feminist positions. A number of these references lend their support to

my questions on contemporary crafts and their meaning and value, while others led me to re-think what I thought I already knew. Most of these were obtained from hours of self-motivated research and some are references that were suggested to me by my thesis advisor, my committee members, and other fellow students. I have divided these references into three categories: art education, historical and contemporary.

ART EDUCATION:

Finding texts that dealt with crafts from the Art Education field was quite challenging. The first two articles in this section in fact, never mention the word "craft" in their writings. I chose to include them here however because they have contributed to my understanding of how crafts are perceived by some art educators. The other entries are concerned with education as well as craft practice, aesthetics and criticism.

In his article *Theorizing an Art Education of Everyday Aesthetics* (1999), noted art education professor and author Paul Duncum expresses his preoccupation with what art educators are really teaching school children in the contemporary art classroom. He makes references to how attempting to teach today's youth about high art or

the art that is in museums is often useless. He insists that art educators instead should be embracing the worlds that students are exposed to on a daily bases (such as advertisements, TV, magazines) and teach them, from there, about aesthetics. Duncum goes on to argue that art educators should embrace everyday objects, visual images and happenings and integrate these things into the teaching of aesthetics. He opens the doors for the field of art education to integrate everyday aesthetics and the role that it must take within it and alongside it, both in theory and in practice.

In his book *Art Education: Issues in Postmodern Pedagogy*, author Roger Clark, (1996) a Canadian contributor to the field of art education, attempts to explain the differences between modernism and post-modernism. Clark states that all revolutionary movements such as feminism, pluralism, or personal identity and culture, gradually become more conservative and elitist with time. Of particular interest to me is the list of differences between the modernist's and the general public's view of art. In the heading "Disdain for popular tastes" he tells us how public acceptance of a particular kind of art was a sure fire way for elitists to distance themselves from its acceptability. I think that this strongly applies to the way that crafts are perceived today.

Replacing the Myth of Modernism (1993) is a commentary essay in which author, craft maker and professor Bruce Metcalf, addresses many issues that have further contributed to my understanding of how crafts are perceived by some artists, craft makers and art educators. In his essay he begins by announcing that some people think that the art and craft conflict has been resolved. Yet he prudently warns craft makers by insisting that if they join the *art club* they are selling themselves short because "Assimilation into art is deadly and should be avoided" (p.40). He states that craft and art are different and that craft makers should stop pretending to be making art. He alerts craft makers that they do not need to have art envy, and that they should honor craft making on its own merit. To justify this, he takes us on a shrewd art history lesson and points out examples of how Modernism and its ideals have hurt crafts. He tells us that crafts should not look to art, but rather to craft history itself, to define its own theories. He discusses the psychological, social and symbolic values of craft, as well as essential components of craft such as decoration and how crafts relate to the senses. In his summary Metcalf acknowledges that fine arts has fashionably turned away from strict Modernist ideologies and now embraces works dealing with AIDS, politics, feminism, etc. Yet many of these works are still seen by people not trained in the arts as

inaccessible. Crafts however, remain more accessible to the average person and craft makers should build on this tradition.

Gift Giving Artists (2003) is a commentary article written by art educator and author George Szekely. With this article, he encourages art educators to address the issue of art gifts and discuss their value – not from a financial perspective but from the point of view of the art maker and the recipient. In relation to art education, we are again confronted with the fact that most children (as well as most adults) take great pride in giving personalized and handmade gifts. It creates a powerful motivation and a sense of personal value and joy. It also establishes a position of creator and beneficiary or audience. This article fully supports and confirms what I have experienced in my own teaching. That in fact, most children, unlike adults, do not draw sharp divisions between art and craft. Yet, they all make their art gifts to be fun, beautiful and useful; in other words they are both aesthetic and very functional.

Although this book was first written and published over forty-five years ago, it still makes important contributions to contemporary art education. While *Meaning In Crafts* (1959) by art educator Edward L. Mattil was written as a guide for elementary school art teachers, it can

certainly serve anyone interested in teaching creative development, be it in educational, extra-curricular or community settings. Interestingly Mattil often mentions the enormous influence that art educators make in the lives of children and that it is not to be taken lightly. It provides practical and procedural help for teachers yet strongly encourages them to develop their own methods and teaching philosophies. The book is filled with over 100 everyday craft ideas for school children that make connections to those of the past centuries and to those of other cultures. These include printmaking, puppetry, sculpture, painting and embroidery to name a few. The first chapter of this book is the one that informs my research the most. It briefly covers the historical development of crafts, and the differences between art and craft such as choices concerning utility, form and decoration. Mattil also addresses the creative processes that students experience and how they begin to make aesthetic judgments about their own work as well as those of others. These are concerns that are still being addressed in contemporary craft writings.

In their book *The Meaning of Things*, (1981) psychologists, sociologists, and authors, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton take us on a socio-psychological investigation that examines the relationships people have with certain objects and the

meaning they attribute to these objects. The chapter that contributes most to my research is chapter 3, *The Most Cherished Objects in the Home*. These authors analysed information obtained through interviews conducted in 1977, from 82 multigenerational families in the greater Chicago area. The selected participants had various educational, ethnic and socio-economical backgrounds. The researchers wanted to know what objects in their homes were important to them. Once the participants answered this question, the researchers made further enquiries about why this object was important, where it was kept, what it meant to them, etc. Within the assortment of objects that were mentioned, the category that is most relevant to my research is the one entitled *Visual Art*. This category included a wide assortment of two-dimensional images (not including photographs) that were dear to the participants; be they original works by renowned artists, paintings made by children, reproductions and the like. The authors state that "Adopting such a democratic attitude toward what constitutes art was necessary; otherwise, there would be a variety of impossible decisions about where to draw the line on legitimate art" (p.63). This chapter further informed my research by enabling me to view the questions asked by the researchers and the answers given by the participants. It also gave

me an opportunity to compare these results to those of my participants when I was processing my findings.

An additional book that was of assistance to me is *Family Art*, (1989), by British art historian and author Philip Pacey. I was immediately intrigued by the fact that there was a book devoted entirely to this subject. Pacey begins with many historical references and takes us up to the present day citing numerous examples of what, in his opinion, constitutes family art. Although Pacey begins by recalling family art from the past, he states that "family art contributes to a continual creating...it treasures its past which enriches its present; it carries its past into the future" (p.2). The two specific parts in this book that are of particular relevance to my research are chapter 13, *Giving and Perceiving* and chapter 14, *But is it Art?* In *Giving and Perceiving* Pacey discusses gifts – be they simply objects, complex symbols or signifying ideas. He further informed me on the act of giving and receiving, which I discuss with each of my participants. In *But is it Art?* Pacey tackles with what he deems to be the differences between art and craft. Here he clearly leans to Howard Becker's views (see p. 12) about what constitutes art and craft by maintaining, "I would suggest that the *making* may well involve craft, but also, that craft virtuosity does not necessarily result in art;...and that 'the crafts'

should not automatically be separated from 'art' and accorded a lowlier status because craft products are useful" (p.148). This view is significantly shared by those of my participants.

An article that has deeply captured my attention is *Craft Criticism* by author and editor Janet Koplos (1993). In it Koplos tackles a cluster of questions that deal with how craft objects are criticized, by whom they are criticized, the language used, the origins of this language, and the craft objects themselves. Most impressive to me is that Koplos clearly mentions that not all crafts should be put into the same bowl. She states that there are several different types of craft varieties and that they each need to be addressed in varying ways. These types are:

- 1) Art made from craft materials, usually shown in galleries and in art magazines, such as large glass or wheel-thrown pots that have adult human outlines
- 2) Artisanery, described as functional hand made wares
- 3) Public commissions, such as large textile works on display in public buildings (banks, hospitals, community centres)
- 4) Folk art, such as traditional Appalachian baskets
- 5) Prototypes, made by craftspeople for lines of products to be sold, such as jewels or flatware

- 6) Hobby crafts, such as needlepoint, crochet or rug hooking
- 7) "Exhibition work". These are items that while staying within the craft genre are made only to be seen and not to be used; they are in effect non-functional. Examples of this are teapots that do not pour or the vessels that cannot hold liquids.

This article, with its sub-divisions of crafts and its varieties, was the base for deciding the type of craft maker that I chose to interview for this thesis. Having read the texts mentioned above, I've gleaned that there are many varied opinions as to where crafts and craft making fit into art education. While some still reject crafts as trivial, others see crafts as a whole other entity and believe that crafts should have its own language for appraisal, different from the language that is used to make aesthetic judgements on art.

HISTORICAL:

Even twenty-five years after its publication date, professor, author and critic Howard S. Becker's commentary article *Arts and Crafts*, (1978) still rings true. He states from the start that none of what he is writing about comes from a systematic body of data but that it comes from personal experience as well as information from

sociological and historical studies of art worlds. Becker begins by describing the differences between what makes art "art" and what makes craft "craft". He assigns to the art and craft worlds, their own types of aesthetics, organizations, and ideologies. Then he imparts on them standards or criteria of utility, virtuoso skill, and beauty. He discusses sub-divisions between ordinary craftsman and (what he calls) the artist-craftsman and their similarities and differences. Throughout the article Becker brought my attention back to the artists, craftsmen, and artist-craftsmen, and the purpose or intention of the objects that they make. Becker also made me acutely aware that each of these is very influenced by employers, audiences, collectors and purchasers as well as curators, galleries and museums. In the end he concludes that craft implies "practical utility" and that art is about ideas.

Craft Dimensions Canada (1969) by art historian and author Harold B. Burnham is a small book printed to accompany an exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum by the same name. Although there are only a few pages of text in this book it gives us a crash course on a variety of subjects from those concerning Canadian immigration, economics, and this country's French/English situation. Other information provided about topics such as craft making heritage as

well as contemporary crafts and aesthetics, have assisted me in formulating several of the interview questions that I have asked of my participants with regards to their own opinions on these matters.

Another helpful book is entitled *Ornament and Object: Canadian Jewelry and Metal Art* (1997) by silversmith and author Anne Barros. This book takes a look at the past fifty years of metalwork and jewelry making in Canada. Here I was made aware of the lack of Canadian publications dealing with jewelry and crafts in general. This book has informed my research because Barros has already tackled areas of interest to me such as post war Canadian crafts, the 1960's surge of interest in crafts, women and crafts, materials and production. She also discusses production techniques, marketing, education and postmodernism. The observations made by Barros enabled me to formulate questions for my participants concerning their own personal memories dealing with early craft making experiences as well as their recollections about their own craft education.

Framing the Quilt: Historical and Contemporary Quilts of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (1999) by Alison Crossman, is an art history thesis. Her research question addresses the evolution of quilts from their functional origins as bedcovers to that of ornamental wall

coverings. She also looks at the feminist movement and its reclaiming of quilts as fine art. Crossman's insights on these matters assisted me in formulating several of the interview questions that I asked of my participants with regards to personal creativity, self-imposed craft aesthetics and the social aspects of craft making which can sometimes help define the personal value of craft making.

In another thesis, *A History of Evolution of the Teaching of Textiles and Weaving in Quebec Since 1905* (1987) Joni Crosby, an Art Education Master student, tells us that her purpose is to provide information for readers and researchers to use on several fronts. Crosby takes an in-depth, historical look at the teaching of textiles from 1905 to the (then) current day Concordia Fiber Arts program. From her thesis I have selected and extracted issues that make important contributions to my research such as discussions pertaining to women's craft education, passed on traditions, recreation and leisure, as well as education in general. Again these concerns have lent a hand in formulating some of the questions that I asked of my participants.

The sources mentioned above and others that support them have strongly contributed to my outlook of how crafts were viewed and

are by and large still seen today. Becker's conclusion, that craft implies utility and that art is about more about ideas, is often echoed in recent writings. Many of these writings continue to bring my attention back to craft aesthetics and the perceptions that the general public and craft makers themselves have towards crafts.

CONTEMPORARY:

CRAFT: Perception and Practice, A Canadian Discourse (2002) edited by craft historian, author and journal editor Paula Gustafson, is a recent compilation of essays and commentaries by Canadian craft practitioners, art historians, studio instructors and art critics within the past dozen years. Each of these authors in turn, makes a strong case for the advancement of crafts and promotes craft making as a valuable and rewarding experience to be made alongside art. Many of the writings in this book are directly linked to issues that concern me such as gendered or women's craft work, the audience or recipients of craft pieces and the importance of, or special meanings attributed to, certain craft objects. This book sets out to expose and make a convincing argument for the value of contemporary Canadian crafts. Throughout this book Gustafson continues to demonstrate the great lack of readily available Canadian craft publications about our

contemporary craft makers and their work. Understandably she maintains that craft makers nationwide could use such publications as important sources of motivation, support, reference and exposure.

Another helpful book is *Metaphor: A Discussion of Meaning in Contemporary Craft* (1994) edited by professor and art historian Gloria A. Hickey. This is a multidisciplinary collection of eighteen commentary essays, which were presented at a symposium by the same name. This book deals with Canadian crafts from thirty years ago to the date of its publication. Here again, there are a variety of contributors from craft makers, doctoral candidates and professors, in addition to gallery and museum curators. This book overtly addresses issues concerning contemporary crafts that I am concerned with and that have informed my research with relation to personal meaning, value, feminism, education, gender and cultural identity.

For a feminist perspective I have chosen a commentary article by author Sally J. Markowitz entitled *The Distinction Between Art and Craft* (1994). At the start of this article, very much along the same lines as Becker, Metcalf, and Koplos, Markowitz begins by questioning the distinctions between the words "arts and crafts", "art" and "craft". She goes on to discuss the criteria that is usually associated with these

words and continues to question why our society values the ideas that are associated with art, rather than the physical labor that is usually associated with craft; this too is reminiscent of Becker. Markowitz then makes clear, strong and deliberate points in relation to traditional women's work, and how she believes the work of marginalized groups, in this case women, are seen as crafts. She specifically makes references to embroideries and blankets made by Navaho women. This article raised many issues that helped me to formulate the questions that I asked my participants and it led me to delve further into the understanding that female craft makers have of their work and of themselves.

Richard Kalina's *Gee's Bend Modern* (2003) is an article about the exhibition currently traveling through the U.S.A. which features the quilts by the women of Gee's Bend. Gee's Bend is an all-black, small, remote, farm town of fewer than 1000 people, surrounded on three sides by the waters of the Alabama River, southwest of Selma Alabama. Kalina suggests that this is the kind of art that "forces us to carve out a meaningful chunk of historical space to make room for a new body of work." Kalina begins by providing a short history of this inlet and its inhabitants, but mostly we are brought to understand that these are not simply functional bedcovers. Even though they can be

seen as outsider art or craft, they are now considered to be works of art. The quilters are referred to as "artists" and Kalina establishes that even though they were not part of the mainstream, these women had their own art world. They, in fact, had a visual language, were concerned with esthetics, used handed-down traditions, displayed their pieces and worked individually and collaboratively. This is an excellent example of many aspects that tie the above references together. Exhibitions of this kind value the work that women have done throughout the ages that has previously been overlooked, minimized and undervalued. Although many references about these quilts are now being made to modern art, one fact remains: these quilts were made to be functional bedcovers and to keep people warm.

The *CODA SURVEY RESULTS* (2001) (Craft Organization Directors Association), is an example of a report of original research that describes the characteristics of a large group of American craftspeople. The purpose of this research survey is to provide as much accurate information as possible about the economic contributions of American craftspeople. The hypothesis presented by the researchers is that craftspeople have a significant national economic impact on the U.S. economy. The method used is quantitative as it uses statistics to prove its hypothesis. This survey

has informed my research because it has to do with the high and low art question as well as the validation of crafts, on both the personal and economic levels. In addition to quantifying the economic impact of crafts, the CODA survey explores the demographic makeup of the professional crafts field. For example this survey found that the typical craftsperson is female, Caucasian, about 49 years old, and works alone in her studio. Using the above findings as a general guide assisted me in selecting participants for this research who would on the whole fit this description. I chose to do this in order to ground my findings and have a reference point for any comparisons or differences that may arise from my interviews.

The above publications were all useful resources that helped me to formulate my interview questions with specific regards to individual meaning and value, and also guided me in asking questions concerning women's work and passed on traditions.

METHOD:

Again, the question that concerns me and that I have used as the basis for my thesis is...***what is the personal meaning and value of craft for selected craft makers?*** Given the scholarly resources in the previous section and a variety of other sources ranging from those related to craft history, craft teaching (DBAE, schools & community settings), and popular culture (craft events, displays, web sites, magazines and TV), as well as my experiences teaching arts and crafts, I had developed some ideas about the personal meaning and value of craft makers and I wanted to have them confirmed or discounted. Although I knew I would be asking questions to a variety of participants, I set out to tackle which research design would best serve me in answering my research questions. To do this, I began by personally reflecting on how I react when I'm asked to partake in answering a series of questions. I have responded to surveys and questionnaires either directly addressed to me or at random, by telephone or in print, on a large variety of subjects from health issues concerning elementary school children to educational Museums on the island of Montreal to municipal political parties to my favourite laundry detergent. I usually find it easiest to answer the yes-or-no type of questions or the multiple choice ones. Because I had been impressed

by the CODA survey, I contemplated conducting my own survey, loosely based on this example. Then I considered putting together a questionnaire. Both of these included a multitude of questions that could easily be answered by, as mentioned above, either indicating a yes or no, or multiple choice answers. Although these are both highly efficient data collecting devices I felt that neither one of these could go deep enough to get to the root of my question about ***the personal meaning and value of craft***. In fact I settled on the informal interview as my research method because it served two important purposes. It allowed me to ask a direct question, while at the same time, it provided a more open ended opportunity for each of my participants to discuss their love of craft making. I needed to be able to get information from different participants through assorted questions and I wanted to provide them each with the opportunity to recount their own significant stories.

I examined several Internet sites that contained good technical advice for conducting interviews with models of interviews, sample questions as well as examples of the types of questions not to ask. However, the following books, article and thesis are the ones that assisted me the most. In the end many of the interview questions that I asked my participants were designed through reoccurring themes

that I encountered throughout my readings and my teaching experiences. Although I did not conduct an ethnographic study, my interview questions were informed by ethnography which relies on the interview process for gathering data. Because both of the following books contain in-depth interview sections I often consulted with them and these books became valuable tools that helped me, from the formation of questions to the data analysis.

1. Relevant Literature

Ethnography: Principles in Practice (2000) by Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, seems to address all the relevant points which relate to ethnographic research. Points of particular interest to me were research design, and listening, recording, storing, retrieval, organizing and analysis of data. This book also has remarkable examples of interviewing styles, field notes, and insider accounts.

Writing Ethnographic Field Notes (1995) by R. Emerson, R. Fretz and L. Shaw, goes into further details about field notes. It provided me with many tried and tested examples. It also provided me with practical advice concerning the jotting down of important words, choosing the right words and phrases, and the re-reading, coding and

writing up notes and questions for my interviews. Of particular interest to me was a section about the researcher's chosen point of view: they are the first person, third person, omniscient and combination, point of views. This last one suited me best because it allowed me to sometimes write from a perspective that was in close proximity to the participants with attention to detail and voice, and at other times it allowed me to use a more distant or reportorial position.

Another very helpful book is *Qualitative Research In Educational Settings* (2002) by J. Amos Hatch. This book tells of types of qualitative research, design elements and collection, and of data analysis. It has a clear breakdown of guidelines and outcomes of sample interviewing techniques, including the informal interview technique that I chose to use.

After having read through several interviews conducted with artists and/or craft makers I chose to use Lisa Moore's, *Interview with Barb Hunt* (2003), as a departure point for my final interview questions. Barb Hunt is a textile artist from Canada's east coast. The questions asked in this interview tapped into many of the concerns that I wanted to discuss with my participants. Samples of these questions are: 1) Where were you born, where did you grow up and

where were you educated? 2) Did any teachers have a powerful influence on you? 3) How were you drawn to visual art? 4) Do you think about the audience when you work? 5) What cultural influences inform your work?

Though I had read an assortment of Art Education Masters Theses, one that I often looked at for guidance was *Issues in Community Art Education: Developing a Profile of the Community Art Educator* (2000) by Janette Haggar. Although the subject matter from this thesis is not related to mine, we both used the interview as our main source of obtaining information from our participants. I was quite inspired by the straightforward and efficient objectives that the author set out for herself, the methodology and the results of this work. I appreciated the clarity that this thesis offered me.

2. Procedure

For my pilot project in Art Education 682 Research Practice, I conducted a descriptive, qualitative, research. I used the interview as my research design and as my primary source of data collection. The first step of the pilot project was to select a contemporary craft maker and then conduct an interview with her. I interviewed a craft maker who was constantly exploring a variety of crafts and techniques. I

have used the results from that interview to further inform my thesis research. One important modification that I made from my experience with the pilot project was to devise some of my questions towards each particular participant in addition to some common questions. Furthermore, I now selected four participants. Guided by the *CODA SURVEY*, I chose craft makers who make crafts individually in their homes or in groups while taking classes in community settings. One woman creates beadworks; one makes handmade books and vases, one works with stained glass and fabric, and one works in a variety of media that include ceramics and wood painting. I continued to use the informal interviewing technique and I added some standard questions that I asked each participant in order to contrast and compare the answers.

As I previously mentioned at the end of the literature review, I used the sub-divisions that Janet Koplos has worked out to help me narrow down the participants that I selected for conducting my interviews. I also decided to conduct the interviews with participants that happen to coincide with the CODA Survey's result of a typical craftsperson. My participants were all women between the ages of 40 to 65 and they are what Janet Koplos refers to as Artisans. I casually know all the participants that I solicited for my interviews. At first I conducted a quick verbal consultation with each collaborator, informed

them of my intention and of the interview procedures. Another important change from the pilot project was that at an agreed upon time prior to the interview, I supplied each of the participants with the full list of main questions and of their particular questions in order to put them at ease with the interviewing process. This was greatly appreciated by each of my participants and it made them more willing to respond to the questions. In fact, it gave them the time and the opportunity to recall memories from their early craft making experiences and to evaluate important moments that have influenced their selected studio practice. Each of the interviews took place in the participant's home, which was convenient for both the participant and for myself. This made it much easier for me to get an accurate impression of them as craft makers and to see, touch and photograph their works. I used a tape recorder to record our interview and I took photos of participant's work that was significant to each of them.

3. Interview Process

The major challenge in any interview is to write well-worded questions in order to solicit engaging answers. For the pilot I wrote a series of interview questions and then consulted with E. Sacca, my Research Practice professor and with my thesis advisor professor L. Blair, before conducting the interview. For this thesis, some of the

core questions have remained the same (although I varied a few to address each individual craft maker) and were in relation to the participant's education, background, opinions and current studio practice dealing with crafts. After the interviews were conducted and recorded, I stored them on a memory stick through a digital voice recorder, re-listened to them and then transcribed them. Before going on to the next step, I let each participant read through the typed original transcripts of their own interview and allowed them the opportunity to make any changes, corrections or alterations to the transcripts. This was part of the agreement in each participant's consent forms (see APPENDIX #1, Consent Form).

The Lived Experiences of Four Contemporary Craft Makers

The following section is devoted to my four participants. Each of these contemporary craft makers was given an opportunity to recount her experiences, opinions and insights with regards to the personal meaning of craft making. In accordance with the required *Consent Form to Participate in Research*, each of my participants kindly agreed to sign the non-confidential section and will therefore, from now on, be referred to by their true names. Direct quotations from the original interview transcripts that are used in this section are identified by the use of italics and single spacing. Each craft maker's narrative account is preceded by a brief introduction and is then followed by a conclusion.

Interview with Pina

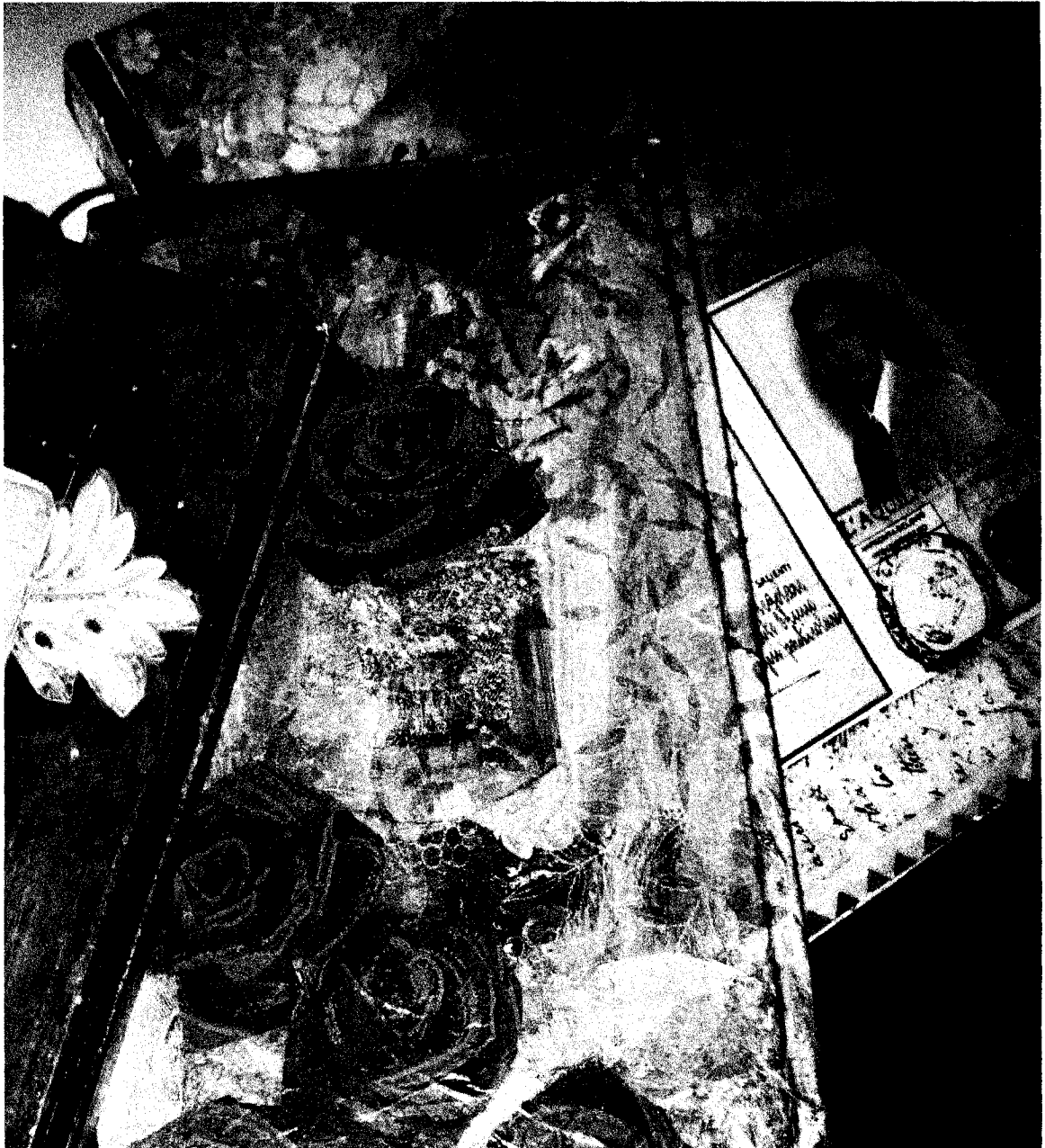
Pina and I met through our daughters who attend the same school and are good friends. When I learned that Pina had an active studio practice whereby she hand-made and sold journals and that she also was now deeply involved in creating hand painted vases, I decided to ask her to be one of my participants. (See pictures #P1 and #P2) After a couple of telephone conversations, Pina and I agreed on a mutually convenient time for the interview. Pina was the first of my participants to kindly invite me into her home in order to see her works and participate in the interview. It was a sunny springtime day and as I walked toward her home I saw that the front door was also a painting. The front door, which evoked a Chagall-like sensibility, had acrylic paint applied directly onto the wood. As I was coming up the front walkway and intently looking at its details, the door opened. We greeted each other and Pina let out a fluffy black and white cat, which stretched and then sat basking in the sunshine. The cat was then followed by a small, ginger colour dog that was very friendly and eagerly welcomed me. Walking in, I was struck by how much art work Pina had in her home. Some was in frames while some was free standing, but as with the front door, there was another piece integrated right onto the hallway wall that emitted a mystical feeling. This symmetrically patterned layout of vintage French Tarot cards, is



#P1 Two hand-painted red vases (2005)

Assemblage, acrylic paint, assorted paper, glass vases.

Vases by Pina Marte. Photo by M.L. Danese.



#P2 Three Journals (2005)

Assemblage & découpage. Mixed Media.

Journals by Pina Marte. Photo by M.L. Danese.

inlaid onto a textured, deep red stucco background and enhanced by intermittently inserted gems and stones. I had the feeling I was eavesdropping on a family Tarot card reading. We immediately started talking about several of the art works around us. There was so much information discussed in our short conversation that I was afraid to lose or forget some of it because my tape recorder was not on. Aside from all her studio work, Pina is also a licensed homeopath. The curio cabinet that contained and displayed many of her hand-made, textured journals also contained an assortment of aromatic oils and lotions that she uses in her work as a therapist. In addition to all of this there are also the beautiful, vividly-coloured, glass vases that Pina makes. At first I thought that she applied some special compound in order to get such an amazingly high gloss and smooth-textured finish on the outside of the vases. I then realized that she worked on the glass vases from the inside. She, in fact, purchases the wide-mouthed vases and from the inside, transforms them with decoupage, appliqué and acrylic paint. As I continued to look around, I saw that these rooms contained many highly sensory and functional objects such as baskets, carpets, earthenware, and, of course, her vases. We then sat at her kitchen table, made of solid wood with an inlay of brightly coloured and textured square tiles and I pressed the record button. We sipped a few cups of tasty, freshly brewed, spiced tea during the

course of a straight-forward informal interview from which I obtained the following...

When I asked about her background Pina told me that she was born in the borough of Notre Dame de Grace in Montreal. She went to public elementary and high school and then attended Montreal's Dawson College in the department of Fine Arts. She mentioned that the career opportunities for someone graduating from this department, at the time, were rather limited to teaching and this was not something she wanted to pursue. After a few years she met and married her husband and they began a family. Throughout this time however, Pina continued to take a wide variety of courses at community-based art centres, such as the Montreal Visual Arts Centre and the Sadie Bronfman Centre. She also occasionally attended conferences and studio workshops given by individual artists.

When I asked Pina about any early recollections related to crafts, she told me that she had many positive memories. Pina specifically recounted making crafts at a neighbourhood park and she remembered that she would often look forward to new upcoming opportunities to participate in the arts and crafts programs.

I would spend lots time at the camps. I was small, maybe 4 or 5. My mom would worry, but it was right across the street from my house! Well, once I remember we made an egg. We put ears on it, a nose, and a tail. It was a bunny. I remember that I kept it for so long, until it broke. Then it started to stink, so my mom said, "It's time", and she ended up throwing it out.

I asked Pina if there was any craft making in her home when she was young or while she was growing up and whether or not any of these skills were passed on or taught to her. She told me that her mother would do a lot of sewing and cooking. Pina would sometimes ask her mother to make her certain clothes, but that at the time, she herself wasn't really interested in those types of things.

When I was a teenager there was other stuff! That was more important! Hey! I had no time for crafts!

Pina told me that even though she had been making art and crafts for many years, it was seldom on a continuous basis. There was a definite split from when she was in school, to starting again after her kids were born. Pina described going through a period where she didn't want her children to watch TV and therefore introduced them to many different art methods and different art materials.

I had to do lots of reading and I had to make them "do things". I had to really get creative. So there were a lot of crafts at that time. For example when we would play with dolls, we made soft dolls. And then as they got older I went to their schools to give lessons. That was fun.

Next I asked Pina if she could recall a specific time or a specific person that got her interested in craft making or in doing something artistic. With a reminiscent look in her eyes she shared the following memory. Pina told me that she remembered a boy who sat at the desk next to hers in the second grade. She was very impressed by him because he could draw so well. She couldn't understand why no one else would give this boy any attention. She thought his drawings were amazing. In turn, he would tell her to keep practicing and that she would then become just as good at drawing as he was. With this came the following statement from Pina...

But...I can't draw. Even though I've taken the courses in school and at places like Visual Arts, it doesn't work for me. I can't see shading. There are certain things that I don't pick up on. No matter how long I try. It's like the piano, I just can't do it. So certain things, I can see and certain things I can't.

We then began discussing influences. Pina said that there was no one artist in particular that influenced her. She likes Chagall among many other different artists, and she really enjoys outsider art and children's art, but there is no one specific influence. When I asked her if she had any influential teachers, she responded by telling me that her high school art teacher loved her work and that she was always after her to do more. Her teacher was always very positive and encouraging. Later in the interview I asked Pina about any other influences,

references or sources of inspiration that motivate her work. Pina answered this by telling me again that there was no one particular source. She told me that she finds inspiration in a variety of sources ranging from art books to magazines and movies. More often however, she told me that she is frequently influenced by the visuals she encounters in her everyday life, and that she sometimes applies these colors, patterns or textures to her works.

I get more by seeing colors or patterns right on people. I'll look in magazines and I'll see an image and I'll like the image.

I wanted to know if Pina thought that her work was influenced in any way by her Italian cultural background and she simply said that it is not. When I asked Pina if there were any personal, social or political situations that affected her work she answered that her pieces are usually expressions of herself. She continued by saying that her work is mostly affected by her own sentiments, and that it is always very personal. With a playfully, self-mocking tone she said:

It's all about me.

Her pieces usually stem from visceral reactions or are often reflective of insightful personal emotions such as repression or freedom. She told me that the colors in a recent group of vases were really reflective of what she needed to let out. (See picture #P3)



#P3 Hand-painted vase (2005)

Acrylic paint, medium, glass vase.

Vase by Pina Marte. Photo by M.L. Danese.

It's what I'm feeling that day or what I need that day. I did energy work on myself and I saw that my Heart Chakra was out of balance; it was closed, it was dark. So I thought- I've got to open my heart.

I then continued by asking Pina about what guides her to make either the vases or the journals. She responded by telling me that even though her work is very personal, she needs her pieces to be practical or useful.

Well, for me I've noticed that it has to be practical. I can't just make art for the hell of it. I don't know why. It has to be something you have to use. It has to be functional. I'm a very simple person and I don't like a lot of stuff. So if I have something, it's got to serve a purpose. So if I use it OK. If I don't, out it goes. I don't want it. That's how I started. Like the journals, I made one for myself, and I thought it was beautiful! I have to make 'something'!

Next I requested that Pina tell me about her studio work.

(See picture #P4)

Well I've done collage, découpage, the vases and the journals; but always in that type of style, like my doors. I've also done printmaking. It's the same thing you see, it has no set structure. It's just putting on the colors and then putting it through the machine. You don't really know what's going to come out. I sort of like that. Even with my vases. I don't really know what's going to happen, but I'll just go with it and see.



#P4 Four Journals (2005)

Assemblage & découpage. Mixed Media.

Journals by Pina Marte.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

I then inquired about whether she was going to continue to do this kind of work for a little while longer. Pina answered by telling me that she goes through periods. For example she may go through about four months of continuous work whereby she is totally immersed in her work and will do little else from morning until night. And then she'll go through periods where she takes a break. Pina told me that she has been making the journals on and off for about six years but that they always evolve because she makes use of new and different elements and finds terrific ways to unite various aspects into them. Pina told me that after taking a decoupage class where all the students were told to make wall plates, Pina decided that this was not for her.

And for the vases, I took a découpage course and we had to make a plate that you hang up and I really liked the process. Although the teacher had all these rules, and I don't know where she came up with them. "You can't do this; you can only use this kind of paint". But in the end we all learned. Then I thought that I didn't just want to make this plate to hang up. So I thought of vases. I wondered how it would work with vases. So I used my own things, you know, acrylics instead of oils and this instead of that.

Rather than continuing to do something that was not interesting for her, she changed a few of the basic materials, such as using acrylics instead of oils, and then began to make the vases instead. She basically took the technique that she had learned and applied it to her own vases and to her journals. I continued by asking Pina if she finds

that this approach is rewarding for her. She responded with exhilaration. (See picture #P5)

Oh, yeah! It takes me to another place! This is like meditation. My whole day could go by and then somebody calls and says it's four o'clock, and I'm like, WHAT?

Pina happily continued to speak of being so involved by her work that she loses track of time. She can also get so absorbed that she can easily work on many pieces simultaneously. Pina is delighted to have found her medium. She is happy to work through the process of decoupage and assemblage.

Now, I was interested in finding out whether Pina generally thought of craft-making as feminine or feminist. Pina responded by saying that she did not think of craft making in this way. When I asked her what she thought about traditional "women's crafts" such as quilt making, opposed to "male craftsmanship" such as woodworking, Pina answered by saying:

I think that for me there's no male or female. Whatever you're good at, that's what you do and that's it.

She doesn't believe in imposing a gender to craft making. She spoke of taking a jewellery class with both male and female students. Pina knows some women who work with wood, and an amazing male jewellery maker. She continued to say that if her kids, both male and female, wanted to make a vase, she'd be ecstatic!



#P5 Journal 1 (2005)

Assemblage & découpage. Mixed Media.

Journal by Pina Marte.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

Next, we spoke about whether she generally made a link or a division between crafts and art. Pina was a little apprehensive about responding to this because she felt like she might be insulting some people. She answered by saying that when many objects were all alike, it was related to craft, yet as soon as every one is different, it's more like art, because they all have different expressions.

For me crafts are like when you see the wooden birdhouses painted blue with a snowman on it, when every one is the same...I'm picturing crafts like those angels that you see at Christmas. When I think of crafts I sometimes think of that, and when I think of art I can think of everything else that's out there. Every piece is different. You can't repeat; that feels more like art to me than craft.

Pina and I discussed several related topics derived from her opinion. She proceeded to tell me about a teaching experience she once had that involved a group of adults; some of whom were not interested by art or craft. When the lesson was over, she noticed that it was not the end result that was very important to the participants, but rather it was the creative process that was much more significant. Of this teaching experience she said;

It was like therapy, some had never done anything creative or hand-made. Some thought it was fun. Everyone had their own take on it. I think sometimes it just takes you to a different place. For some people it's the creative process that is more important or more interesting than the result. I think that for me it is the creative process, as long as I'm creating, it doesn't matter what it is.

By the same token Pina told me about her discussion with a gallery owner who was interested in selling her vases. He very bluntly asked her if she was an artist or a craft maker. Before she could even answer he told her that if her work was craft, he didn't want it in his gallery, if it was art, he was interested. Pina considers what she does to be art. Yet she was very uneasy with this man making craft sound like it was such a bad thing! At this point Pina began to question herself and others around her, about whether she was an artist or a craft person. We continued discussing obviously negative connotation towards crafts as well as the elevation of certain traditional craft makers, such as potters and quilters, to the artist status. Then I questioned Pina about if she thought the difference between art and craft was made in relation to the intent, the materials that are used, or what is done with the piece once it's completed. Pina told me that she had to mull these things over.

Later I asked Pina if she showed her work in galleries, craft fairs or other venues. She told me that a few restaurants have displayed some of her pieces. Even though Pina's pieces are inspired by her own sentiments, she doesn't keep them, she sells them. (See picture #P6)



#P6 Journal 2 (2005)

Assemblage & découpage. Mixed Media.

Journal by Pina Marte.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

She doesn't remain attached to the pieces. She told me that she is not very good at selling but that through her friends, clients and word of mouth, she does well. She also told me that she even had a web site. On it she displayed her journals, her vases and also her Homeopathic work, but it required too much attention and upkeep. In the end Pina decided that it was too businesslike for her and since she had to pay someone else for the upkeep, she closed it down.

I persisted in asking Pina who she thinks of when she starts a piece, is the work for her or for a viewer or buyer. Pina replied by telling me that she has made small, fun things that people requested from her such as cards or bookmarks, but that on the whole, working with someone else in mind is too stressful. She has tried to work for people who placed orders with specific themes, but Pina was unsatisfied and stopped. Working from what she feels is much better for her.

I was interested in knowing what Pina thought of the art and craft that she has seen being taught in our local elementary schools. Pina told me that she was not impressed by what she had seen and thinks that too much of it is production oriented and stereotypical.

They'll give them let's say, a bat, at Halloween...They have to cut it out, because it's already done, and paint it black. And then they put the eyes...So tell me how creative and how individual is that? So for me that's ridiculous!

She believes that those pre-drawn-stencils, where everyone's work ends up looking the same are terrible. Pina wonders where the creativity and individuality is with such things. She does however realize that the generalist teacher is not an art teacher. Pina did have good things to say about the high schools that her children have attended lately. Both her sons went to F.A.C.E. (Fine Arts Core Education), a downtown Montreal arts school, where their art was regularly encouraged, supported and validated. Her daughter goes to a private girl's school, Trafalgar, and the art program there is quite good. Pina added that her daughter also participated in Summer Camps at the Visual Arts Centre and that she made some very nice and creative pieces there.

One of the last questions that I asked Pina was concerning her motivation or her drive to keep working; to this she replied...

For me it's the personal satisfaction! I love making things and getting right into it. I love the creative process, the feeling it gives me and seeing the results.

Unfortunately, I had to wrap up the interview rather quickly because my recorder was going to run out of time. Our conversation however did not end for about another hour. Pina and I continued to sip our afternoon tea and talk. Our conversation covered a vast selection of topics ranging from art and wares created in third world countries, artists whose works we enjoyed, our families and our own studio production. Pina was a pleasure to interview and I appreciated the candidness of her outlook about crafts. I thanked her once again for kindly agreeing to participate in the interview and wished her all the best in her future endeavours!

Interview with Hazel

Hazel and I met during the fall semester of 2004. We were both enrolled in an introduction class in stained glass at a community visual arts centre. Our classes were rather loosely structured which allowed for casual conversations among the few students. I noticed that Hazel was at ease with and confident about her choices in regards to the color, texture and opacity of the glass that she had selected for our first project. After a couple of in-class discussions with her, I realized that she had been making different types of crafts for several years. In the winter session I decided to approach her about being a participant in my study, to which she kindly agreed. Hazel graciously invited me into her home for our interview. After agreeing to a convenient time and date I arrived at Hazel's condo ready to ask her many questions. Hazel warmly greeted me on her front walkway and as I entered into her lovely sunlit home I saw her creative influences everywhere. I immediately recognized the stained glass pieces that I had seen her work on in class. (See picture #H1) In addition to these I saw many of the pieces that she had spoken to me about. Hazel took me on a tour of her split-level home where she proudly displays many of her craft pieces. I was in awe at the variety of objects that she had created. I was also quite impressed by the wide range of techniques that she had used in making her crafts. The widespread assortment of



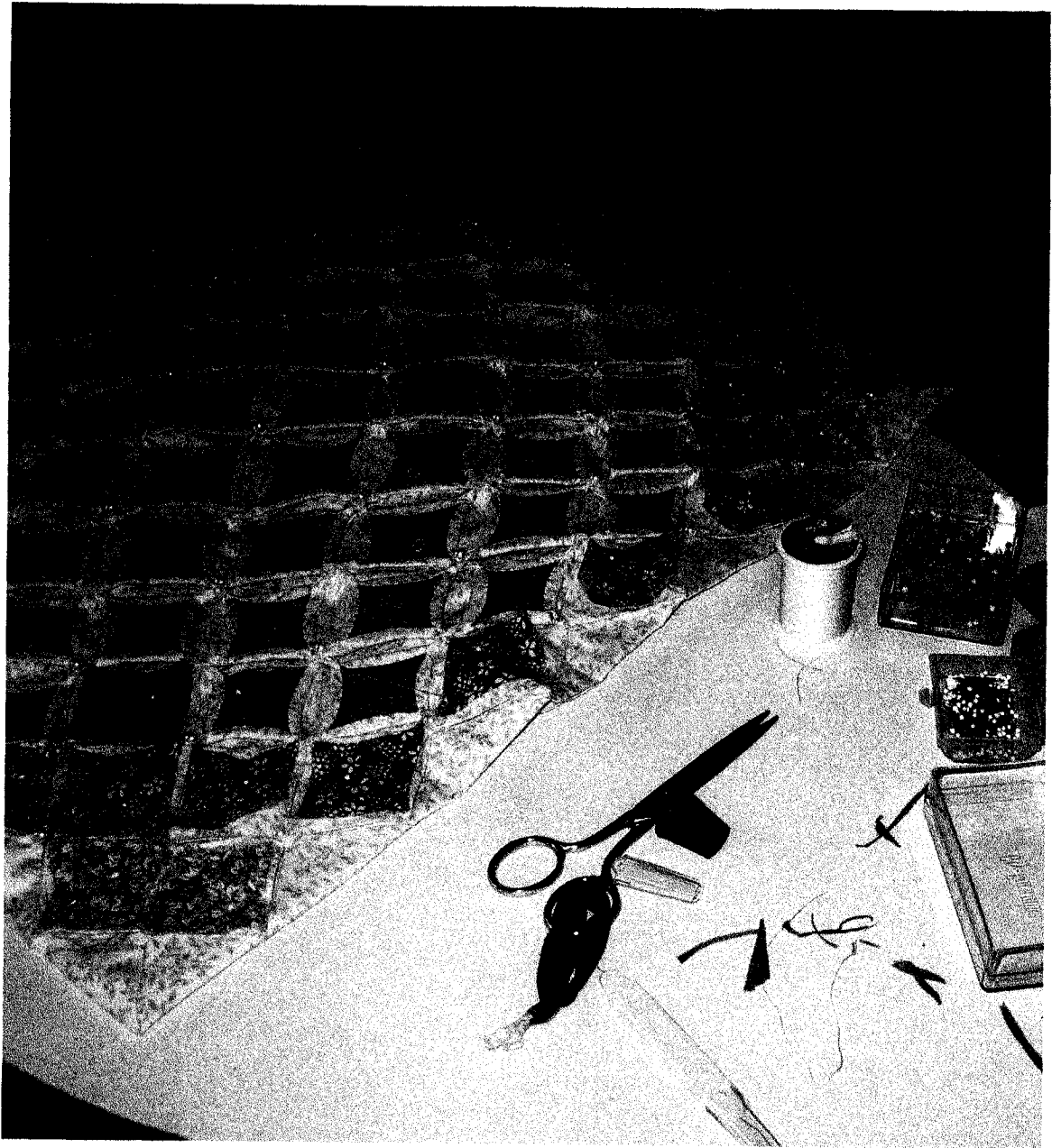
#H1 Three Tulips (2004)

Copper foil technique. Assorted coloured glass.

Stained Glass Tulips by Hazel Ruffle. Photo by M.L. Danese.

rich blue, patterned, fabric, square swatches that Hazel was currently using for a quilt, left me with several impressions. I could see that this was a woman who had devoted much of her time to craft making. I also got the sense that she had successfully learned many of the lessons that art students learn in school, such as color wheel, color mixing, tints, tones and values, through her own lived experiences. After she had shown me many more of her craft pieces, we settled at the dining room table, sipped our afternoon tea and began our informal interview. (See picture #H2)

Hazel was born right in the centre of England in the small town of Litchfield in Staffordshire. She went to a public, co-ed, primary school and to a public, girls-only, high school. Hazel left school when she was sixteen and went to live in Germany for a couple of years. She then returned to England and went to Teacher Training College in order to teach primary school children. Meanwhile, Hazel took several language courses in colleges and universities as well as art and craft classes in a number of community based settings.



#H2 Quilt pieces.

Sample area of a quilt in process & assorted materials.

Quilt by Hazel Ruffle.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

When I asked Hazel to tell me about an early recollection that she has dealing with crafts she very vividly recalled...

One of the very earliest things that I can remember is sitting and knitting in between my sister's legs. She was knitting herself an orange sweater and she had me there to stick the needle in, wrap it around, and pull it through. I think it was before I went to school. I went to school when I was five. I can remember then re-learning it when I went to school and I thought, "Oh, yes, I could do this!"

Hazel continued by telling me that her sister often involved her in craft making activities and frequently drew things for her. Hazel explained that a lot of people where she lived knitted and sewed their own clothes. They were all taught a variety of craft making skills at school and in the homes; they had no television.

When I asked her how long she has been making crafts she casually replied...

Well since that sort of time because we did it in school. And then you'd come home in the evening or in the afternoon and you'd sit around a table and stick and glue and fold.

I inquired as to whether Hazel could recall a specific person or a time that really got her involved in craft making. She responded by telling me that in school, every Friday afternoon, the girls had a lady teacher. In the summer they sewed and in the winter they knitted. Hazel

remembers working on specific items like handkerchiefs, where she and her classmates learned to tack and to hem and to do chain stitch embroidery with their initials.

I learned to smock. My sister, by the time I was ten, had had a baby and I had learned to make a little dress and I smocked it.

Later on, they were taught to make aprons, blouses, skirts and then absolutely anything else. Hazel clearly recalled the use of patterns and specifically remembered one lesson where the teacher taught the class how to use the sewing machine.

This was a class of at least thirty and we had lined paper and she made every single one of us use the machine, a hand machine, and sew along the lines. With no cotton in it to make sure we could use it.

Hazel reminisced about making beautiful flowers using counted thread embroidery and regretted not having any samples to show me.

It was great. We lived for those Fridays I think, most of the girls. And we could whisper to each other. I loved it!

When I asked Hazel to tell me about any artists, teachers or mentors who had a strong influence on her work, she again made reference to this particular sewing teacher. Then, Hazel also told me about very serious and upright, male, wood-working teacher from Teacher Training College. She recalled how students had gone in to learn how to make a few musical instruments like shakers and xylophones and

how the room was so well organized and all the equipment was marked. He was very open-minded and encouraged the students to experiment. Hazel would make suggestions and he would tell her to try anything she wanted.

It was so easy. All you had to do was get the material, get the wood, saw it and it was done. It was great! So then I discovered that I could do things like that too.

As we continued discussing Hazel's influences, I asked her if she thought that she was influenced by having lived in a number of different places and having traveled a great deal. She then recalled some of the amazing sights that she has seen such as the stained glass windows in cathedrals in England, France and Germany. Hazel noted that another personal influence for her craft making is that she spends quite a bit of time on her own and she likes to be productive. I also wanted to know if Hazel was influenced by any favourite books, journals or web sites. Hazel responded by telling me that she does use the internet quite a lot. She uses it to look up all sorts of information on craft making. Hazel is also an avid book collector and she has a large variety of art and craft books. Hazel doesn't subscribe to any journals but she does buy occasionally, depending on what she's interested in at that time.

Next I asked Hazel to tell me about the kinds of studio work and methods she has been concentrating on for about the last few years. Hazel responded by telling me that it's been the stained glass, patchwork and quilting. (See picture #H3) Because she had been interested in the quilt making, Hazel went to a shop in Pointe Claire, observed the courses that were going on, then signed up and started making a quilt. She told me that the courses last about fifteen weeks, and students make one or two squares between classes.

She shows you how to do it and then you sew like mad until the next class, and then she shows you some more and you don't have a week off because you've got too much to do.

When I asked her about the stained glass she told me she had seen it at a friend's house and was very interested in it. After a while, she registered in the introductory class at the Visual Arts Centre which we attended together. Hazel admitted that although she does make pieces that she gives away as gifts, most of the pieces that she has worked on lately have been for her.

But it does give me a great deal of pleasure making these things. It's great! I think it's the same for anybody who makes anything.



#H3 Loon on the lake. (2005)

Copper foil technique. Assorted coloured glass.

Stained Glass by Hazel Ruffle. Photo by M.L. Danese.

When I asked Hazel what keeps her motivated to make more work she replied by saying that it is the personal satisfaction and pleasure she derives from the piece once the work is completed. She told me it is a wonderful sensation and it keeps her wanting to do more. As we continued to look at her recent studio works and some works in progress, Hazel showed me an interesting base for a quilt that she is currently working on that has been inspired by the stained glass "look". (See picture #H4)

I haven't finished this one you see. It's like a quilt. I'm learning as many techniques as I can so I've got lots to do. So that's the stained glass and it made me think that this (quilt) would work well.

Hazel takes pleasure in taking the time to finish her pieces very carefully by hand. Another point that we discussed was time. Hazel feels that although some of the crafts that she has made are not in themselves very challenging, yet they take up a significant amount of time. We went on looking at a variety of work in which Hazel took great pride in showing me. Her ability to use colors and apply information that she has learned from one type of craft making to another is quite impressive. As we continued to look at the work I asked specific questions about technique and supplies. Hazel informed



#H4 Stained glass quilt in process. (2005)

Coloured fabric and cotton backing.

Quilt by Hazel Ruffle.

Photo by M.L. Danese

me that some of the courses stipulate that you must buy the patterns, tools and supplies from them; that's the way they make money. Hazel accepts this in the beginning when she is more occupied with technique than supplies. Later on, when she is more confident, she purchases her supplies where she sees fit.

When I enquired as to whether Hazel thought that she would continue working with patchwork, and with the stained glass, she proudly responded...

Yeah, I don't think I'll ever stop now!

I now requested that Hazel tell me if she sees craft making as feminine or as feminist. She replied that she thought it depended on what sort of craft it was being discussed.

In the past certainly, I think there were the certain crafts seen as boys' crafts and girls' crafts.

Here, Hazel noted her own experience; that it was seen as strange, when many years ago, she took a woodworking course. Her teacher was so amused that she was doing better than some men in the class. Hazel thinks it is absolute nonsense that crafts should be either masculine or feminine. She also recalled teaching sewing and knitting to both boys and girls in primary school; and the boys never said a thing, they just loved doing it.

I then asked Hazel if she thought her work makes reference to any specific culture. She mentioned the North American reference to the patchwork and quilts and probably an English reference to stained glass. She then noted that this is probably because she was brought up there, but quilts and stained glass can be found almost world wide. Hazel began telling me that currently, she feels students don't get the same sort of craft education or art education, as they used to in schools.

Subjects such as Home Economics...and shop classes...have gone out the window!

Hazel believes that this is a mistake because some students no longer get the same opportunities to explore craft activities. She says that now if want to take a crafting class, you have to get some sort of piece of paper, a qualification, at the end of it. And it takes all the joy out of it. In many schools you now need a portfolio just to attend such a class.

But I think, that patchwork is coming back and sometimes I pick up free magazines and they talk about knitting revivals and macramé revivals and I wonder if that's...well are these things being revived because we're pushing technology and computers and sciences. For some kids, it just doesn't speak to them and they need another kind of outlet.

Here, Hazel brought up the issue of creativity. She believes that aside from our rudimentary needs for shelter, clothing and nourishment, everyone can be creative;

Well its creativity isn't it? Cavemen drew on the walls...there's a creative instinct there.

Next, I wanted to know if Hazel thought there was a link or a division between craft and art. She responded by telling me that she thought there was a difference between the two and that it primarily had to do with giftedness. Hazel went on to say

We can all paint; we can all have an attempt to play the piano or whatever. But if you're really artistic or really musical, you have a gift. You know what I'm saying? So I would say that I was crafty, rather than artistic. Because I think you could learn a craft... But you'll never be an artist, a musical artist if you like, without the gift.

Hazel reminisced about drawing lessons at her school. Even though she truly felt she had no real drawing abilities, the teachers would tell the students exactly how to draw figures; and in the end everyone produced something that wasn't perfect, but quite good. Hazel sees this as being technical, not artistic.

I think craft is technical; but you have to stick at it.

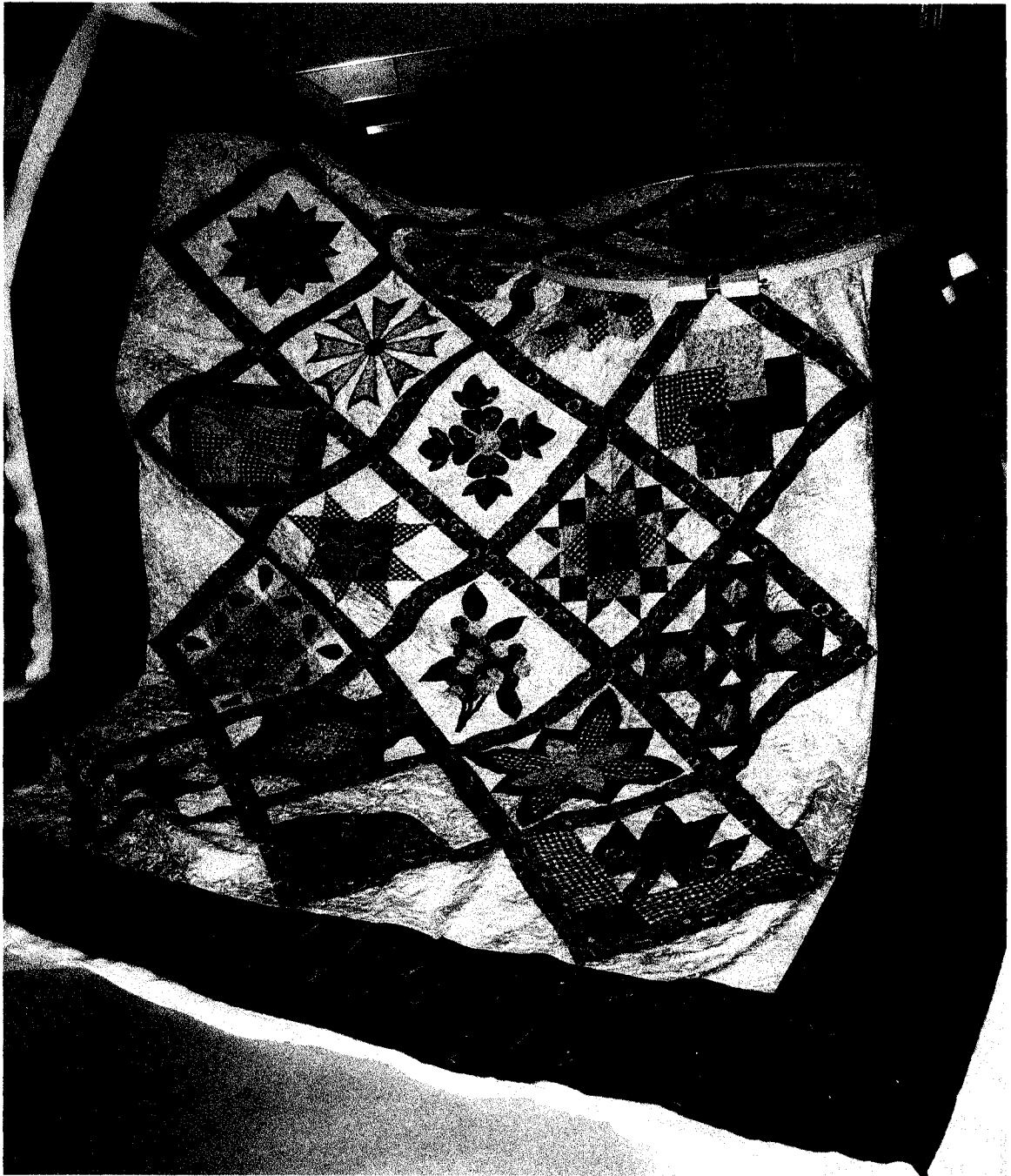
Bearing in mind Hazel's opinion, I wanted to know if there was a point after having gained enough technical knowledge, where she felt she could use her own artistic or creative instincts. Hazel responded by

telling me that, yes indeed, after she had gotten through the technical challenges of learning a new method, next came the enjoyable part. This involved making her choices with regards to colors, textures, patterns, symmetry and so on.

I have seen where the colors don't work so well and it doesn't matter how good the sewing is, it doesn't look quite right.

Subsequently I asked Hazel if she thinks about the audience, viewers or buyers when she makes a piece. Hazel simply told me she generally makes pieces for herself, but every so often she makes pieces to give to others. If she is making for someone else however, she wants specific directives in order to not disappoint the receiver. She mentioned wanting to make some stained glass pieces for her daughter's Victorian style home. Hazel clearly stated that she herself would choose to make the pieces reflect the architectural surroundings; yet she knows her daughter is a minimalist and has something else in mind. When I returned to the idea of selling her pieces, Hazel said

I don't think I would dare sell anything. And something like that quilt, when it's finished, it's got so much of me in it, that I couldn't possibly. It's like a family heirloom. (See picture #H5)



#H5 Quilt in process. (2005)

Assorted coloured fabric and quilting materials.

Quilt by Hazel Ruffle.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

I continued by asking Hazel if she shows her work in galleries or art fairs; she told me that she is part of a British group that makes crafts and ornaments for the annual Christmas tree display at the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts. Monies from sales are kept in order to purchase supplies for the following year. Aside from this Hazel told me she has no problem showing her pieces to anyone who is interested in seeing them.

Because Hazel has had experience with teaching, I wanted to know what she thought about how crafts are being taught today, in a variety of educational settings. She responded by telling me that unfortunately teachers no longer seem to have the time to teach craft making in schools.

*When I think back, I think that we were so lucky.
But if you haven't got somebody at home who does it,
how do you learn? And if you don't learn, how do you
get the pleasure out of it that I know is there for all of us
in different ways.*

Hazel believes the alternative to learning any of the crafts in schools is now to have to do it on your own in evening classes, community centers or shops. When I asked Hazel if she would consider going back to teaching, she said yes, but not in the public school system, perhaps in a community centre, old age home or women's shelter; Hazel is willing to leave the door open and see what happens.

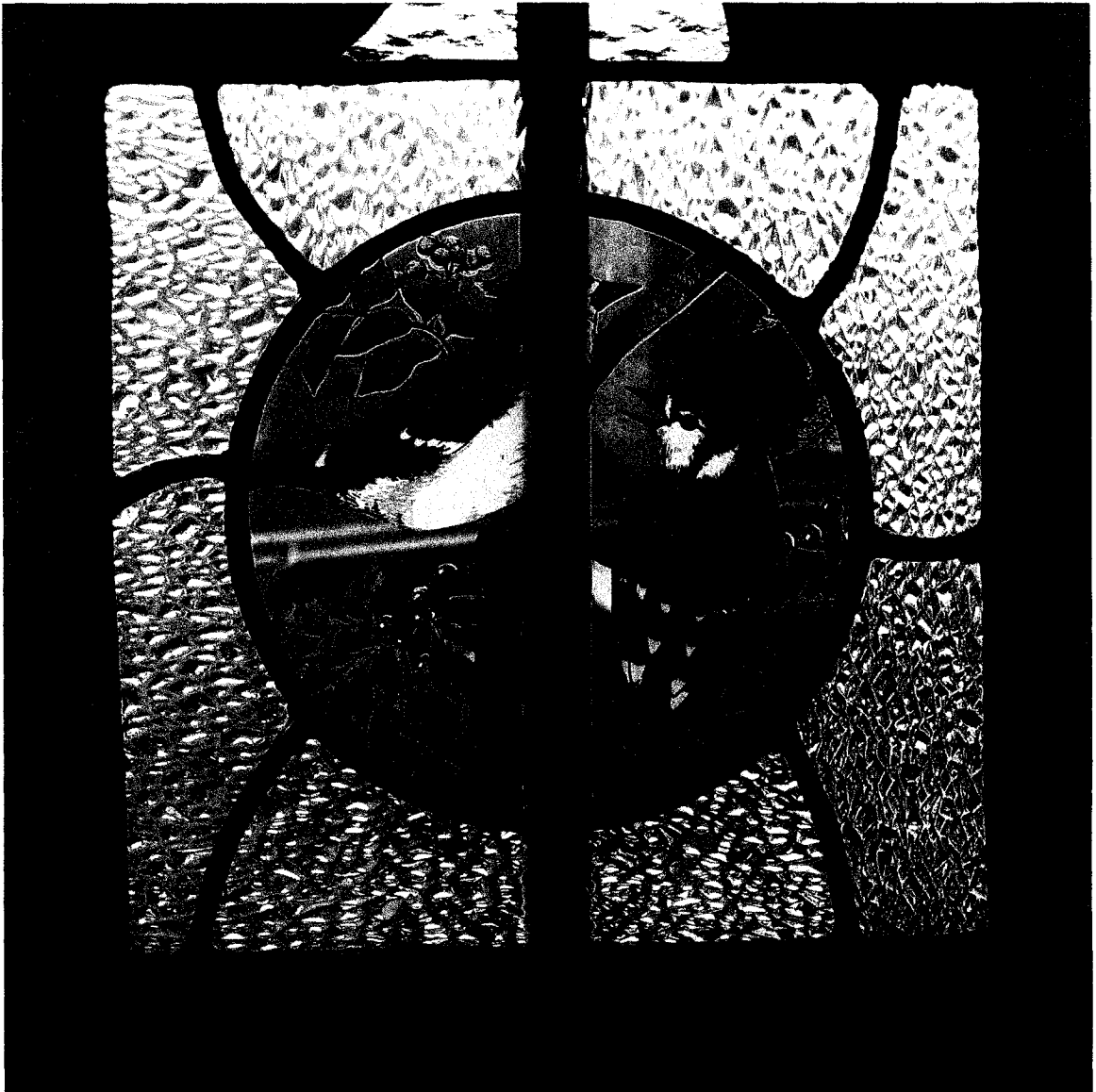
As our interview was soon coming to an end, I was interested in returning to the subject of stained glass. I wanted to know if, so far, the stained glass pieces that Hazel had made were for only for her. She told me that so far, they were. I went on to ask Hazel if there was a particular preference with the techniques that she used.

(See picture #H6)

I've done the lead came and the copper foil. And I've got to say that the lead came beats the foil hands down... I was quite pleased with it. It does hide a multitude of sins and you could cut things afterwards. Once you know how much you have to grind off, it helps. So I recommend it to you if you want to go on.

I went on to ask Hazel about the glass she chooses; I wanted to know if she had specific preferences and if she thinks she is experienced enough to tell the difference between the various types of glass. Hazel responded by telling me that although her present knowledge is still quite limited, she has had some experiences with a variety of glass types.

So for that reason, when I was doing the lead came, I deliberately chose glass that's easy to cut; because I've got limited time, I knew I didn't need any trouble with the glass.



#H6 Birds. (2005)

Lead came technique. Found object and assorted coloured glass.

Stained Glass by Hazel Ruffle.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

I continued by asking Hazel if she found the stained glass to be a good quality creative outlet, for her; she responded

Oh yes!

I also wanted to know if she found the stained glass to be liberating or limiting. On the whole, Hazel told me that she found it creative and liberating. She went on to say that when she is first learning anything, there are details that may seem a bit limiting, but then she goes on and she overcomes them. Because there is often a limited amount of time in which to complete pieces in, Hazel has had to lower her standards in order to finish within the allotted time frame.

Otherwise I might never finish it. I like the expression; I don't want it perfect. I want it Monday.

Finally I asked Hazel what she derives from craft making and why she keeps doing it.

Well I love it! I really enjoy it! It's personal satisfaction.

Hazel finished by wondering aloud what she or anyone else would do if there was no outlet for the creativity that exists in us all.

When the time on the tape recorder came to an end we continued discussing all sorts of topics that are related to art and craft such as the sadly lacking amount of time allotted to art and craft

teaching in elementary and high schools, as well as a few educational systems around the world that we knew about and either did or did not approve of. We then continued to view Hazel's crafts in order for me to take some photos.

Interview with Sylvie

Sylvie and I know each other casually because our children attend the same school. A mutual friend of ours had told me about Sylvie's bead works and how she wanted to purchase one of her ornaments for a special upcoming family occasion. (See #S1) A few days later, after dropping my child off at school, I was drawn to a crowd of women hovering around Sylvie as she showed a few samples of her works. When I asked Sylvie to be a participant in my craft maker interview she was hesitant, not fully sure that her beadwork ranked important enough to more *serious* crafts. As we spoke more, I reassured her that her opinions and craftwork were valid and she then agreed to be one of my participants. Besides allowing herself the time to do her beadwork, Sylvie's days are quite rigidly scheduled. Because both of her young teen-aged daughters are each involved in highly competitive level figure skating, her evenings and week-ends are often spent at the local arenas or travelling to national competitions. Her daytime schedule is also very tight because her support-staff job at the nearby elementary school has split shifts. Finding a convenient meeting time for our interview was quite the challenge but after a couple of failed attempts, Sylvie and I agreed on a time and date for the interview. Sylvie invited me into her home for the interview and to



#S1 Assorted Ornaments (2004/2005)

Foam spheres, sequins, coloured glass beads, pins & coloured ribbon.

Ornaments by Sylvie Lisella.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

show me her works. Walking into the building where Sylvie lives, I couldn't help but notice that all the apartments had woven wicker baskets filled with silk and fabric flowers hung upon each of the doors. The stairway that led up to her apartment had large windows that flooded the space with bright, warm sunlight. As she opened the door to her sunlit apartment, Sylvie's little fluffy cream coloured dog kindly greeted me and welcomed me in. Looking up, I was suddenly inundated with sunflowers. There were sunflowers on the walls, in picture frames, on the tablecloth, on the napkin holder and on the curtains. As we sat at the kitchen table and drank our coffee and tea, from cups laden with sunflowers, our interview got underway...

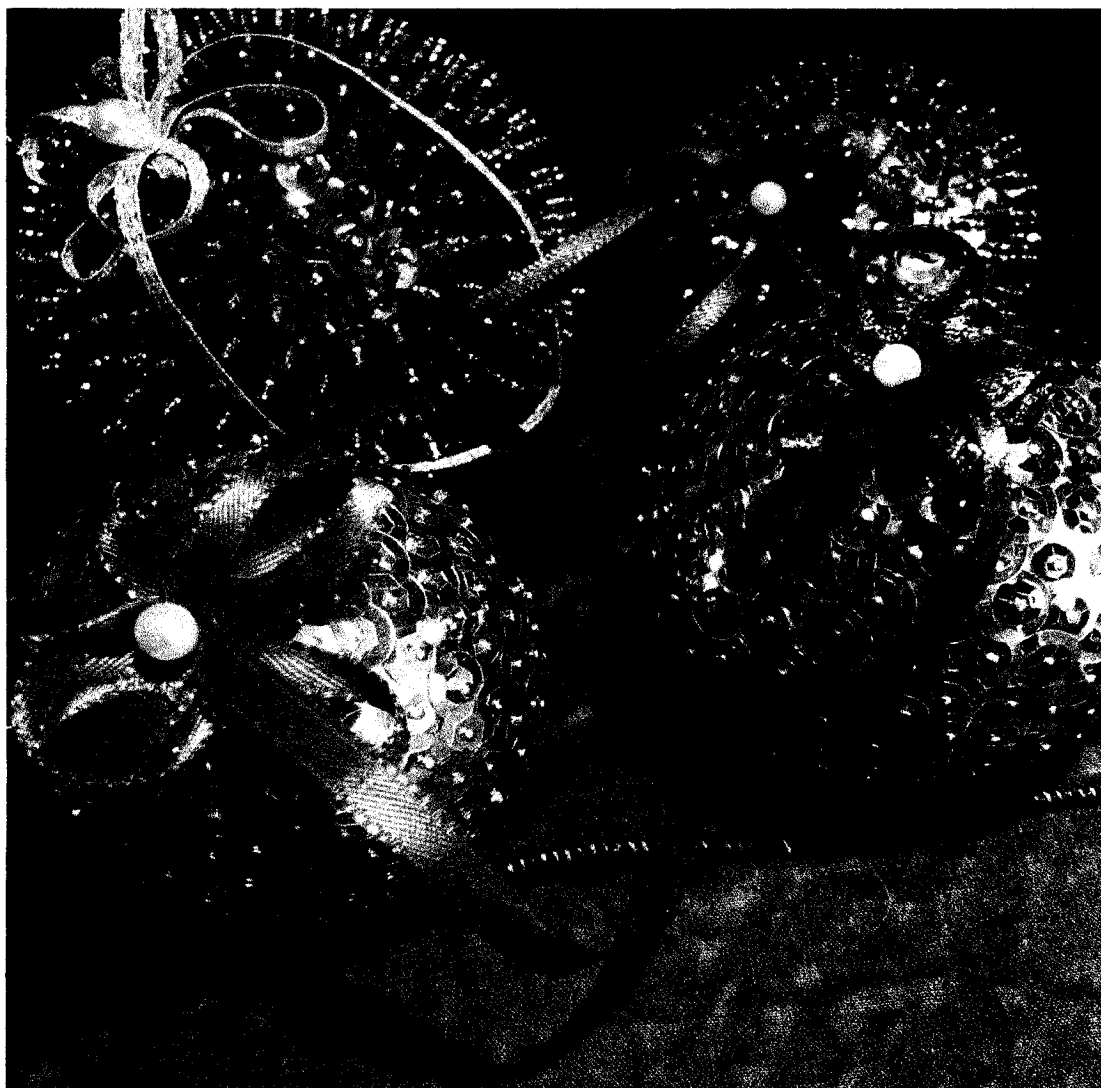
I began by asking Sylvie about her background and she told me that she was born and raised in Montreal. She went to public elementary school and high school. She went to work soon after graduating from high school and did not attend any post secondary schools. Sylvie never attended any kind of community craft courses; she learned beading from someone she knows.

I asked Sylvie to tell me about any early recollections that she may have dealing with art or craft making. Sylvie responded by telling me that she always remembers drawing, be it in school or at home. She

also told me that she unfortunately never kept any of the drawings from her childhood.

I loved to draw and art was always my favourite subject in school!

I continued to inquire about whether she had made any other kind of craft and she replied by telling me that she has done some painting. Sylvie told me that she would purchase kits that always came with an instructional guide or the use of templates. She would add paint to a base or a model and she remembers deriving lots of enjoyment from that kind of painting. Later on I asked if there were any crafts made in her home while she was growing up. Sylvie immediately recalled knitting. She remembered her mother teaching her how to knit but, she doesn't remember how to knit any more. When I questioned her about how long she has been working with beads in particular, she told me that she only started about seven years ago. She had started by doing small, simple crafts with beads, such as key chains and then she discovered making the ornaments. She recalled how she was very interested in seeing this kind of craft making. She was absorbed by the intricacies of the materials and the way that the light was reflected in the colors of the beads and sequins. Sylvie felt that because she has always loved the Christmas season so much, this particular craft was perfect for her. (See picture #S2)



#S2 Christmas Ornaments (2005)

Foam spheres, sequins, coloured glass beads, pins & coloured ribbon.

Ornaments by Sylvie Lisella.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

When I asked her how she became interested in the ornamental bead work, she told me that she had seen a friend making an ornament and that it really sparked her attention. Sylvie became so interested in the object and in the process that she was motivated to try making one on her own. The ornaments that her friend used to make were quite different from the ones that Sylvie makes now, in fact there were no beads on them whatsoever. Still, Sylvie remembers being very drawn to them. Sylvie then asked her friend about the materials that she used and where she could get some. She then began with a couple of different shapes and sizes and was soon experimenting with a variety of other materials available, primarily the beads.

I started to try different shapes and sizes, and now actually, I'm thinking of starting to make them for different occasions.

Next, I questioned Sylvie about her influences wanting to know if Sylvie had a teacher, artist or mentor who had influenced her work. Sylvie responded by saying that there was really no one except for her friend who got her started and who makes a similar type of ornament. Sylvie revealed that at the start, she and her friend sometimes got together and exchanged products, techniques, tools and materials, but that they haven't done so in a long time. Later in the interview, I continued by asking Sylvie whether she is influenced by her audience, viewers or buyers or if she makes the ornaments as she likes them.

Sylvie clearly informed me that if she has an order for an ornament, she is definitely influenced by the person who's ordered it. When she has an order, Sylvie asks for information on what the client's preferences are but she herself is responsible for purchasing all the materials necessary. She usually has samples to show, but at the same time she mentions that many things can be changed. She has never had any problems with this because her clientele allows her the artistic freedom to experiment.

I had one ordered for a birth. It was pink. It was for a baby girl and the grandmother actually asked me to, so I made it pink. It was a gift for the baby to put in the tree; as a souvenir of the birth. (See picture #S3)

I asked Sylvie if she saw her beadwork as being personal even though a piece is for a client. Sylvie maintains that it is still personal and that she still works on it as carefully as if they were for her, but that her time is put in a little differently. She still enjoys making them but if she has to make a dozen she'll be more preoccupied with time and she'll assemble them in a more productive way. If an ornament has not been ordered with any set criteria, Sylvie will make it as she pleases.



#S3 Pastel Ornaments (2005)

Foam spheres, sequins, coloured glass beads, pins & coloured ribbon.

Ornaments by Sylvie Lisella.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

Afterwards I asked Sylvie if she had a favourite journal, book, Website or TV show that deals with craft making or that guides or inspires her, she responded in the following way: (See pictures #S4 & #S5)

No, it's basically about me wanting to experiment. When I go to the store where I buy my materials, I look around and I think about the colors and shapes and basically it's my own need to experiment.

Sylvie told me that she doesn't feel the need right now to subscribe to any craft magazines, but that perhaps at some point, she might. Sylvie is very influenced by the vast selection of materials, textures and colors that she sees when she goes to her favourite shop on St-Laurent Street. There, she picks up different ideas from other crafts and then uses them in her next creation.

They have tons of beads and sequins and ribbons and pins. I really like to go there. But I also like to go there to just look around. I like to look at all the colors and then I think, and I try to put things and pieces together, and then I try it out and experiment. Just to see how it looks as a finished product.

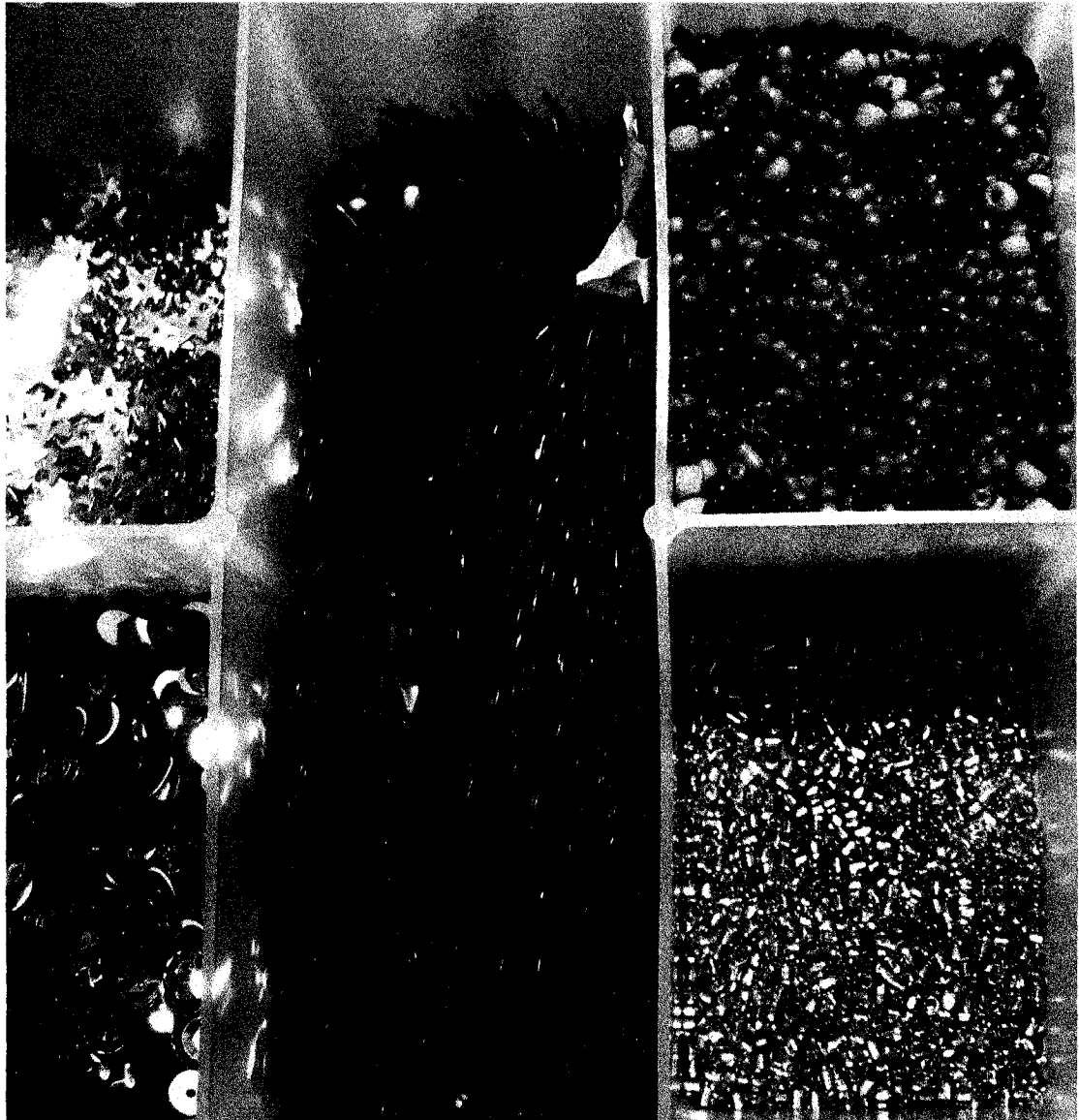
Then we discussed her studio work and the beading methods that she has been concentrating on for the last two years. We began discussing the possibility of moving away from the spherical base shape. Sylvie would like to try other shapes but tells me that some of the materials that she uses, such as the sequins and certain beads, not lend themselves very well to fit anything but a sphere.



#S4 Assorted ornament supplies 1 (2005)

Sequins, coloured glass beads, pins.

Photo by M.L. Danese.



#S5 Assorted ornament supplies 2 (2005)

Shaped sequins, coloured glass and plastic beads.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

Lately, Sylvie has been thinking of trying this beading method on bracelets. She has been considering trying something with them, but she thinks that she has to alter the base shape somehow.

In pursuit of these questions, I asked Sylvie if this type of craft making has been a rewarding experience for her and if she thought she would continue in this style. Sylvie answered with an absolute yes! She told me that she loves to work with the beads and that it gives her great joy to see the expression on people's faces when they look at the ornaments. Sylvie went on to tell me that she had donated several of her ornaments to be used in a skating fundraiser; her daughters were involved in a special out of town competition and the organizing committee was trying to find different ways to raise money. Not only did all her pieces sell but she received numerous orders for more ornaments.

That was really rewarding because it's something that I love doing and they all sold well. Some of them were bought as gifts and were sent all the way to Italy and France. So it was very successful.

From this, we discussed the actual size and portability of her ornaments. Although her pieces give the impression of being quite fragile, they might get damaged, but they won't break. Buyers seem to like small, precious looking and unbreakable items.

When I inquired as to whether there had been any social situations that had influenced or affected her work, Sylvie answered by saying that there was not. However when I asked her about personal things like gift giving and personal satisfaction, she responded by telling me that these were both motivating factors that continuously influence her work! She told me that she loved to give her ornaments as gifts and that people who receive them are always delighted. She continued by saying that the recipients of her ornaments display them proudly. Sylvie feels that the recipients of her gifts as well as her customers truly appreciate her work. This provides Sylvie with a great sense of pride and pleasure.

Now I asked Sylvie if she generally thought of craft making as feminine or as feminist and if she thought that her work makes references to those of traditional woman's work. She responded by saying;

I think crafts are for everybody. For whoever enjoys making crafts.

I prolonged this questioning by drawing her attention to traditional crafts like sewing, knitting and quilt making, and to the fact that these things served a purpose. I wanted to know if Sylvie thought that these types of things lent themselves more to women than to men or

if she thought that these crafts could still be open to everybody. Sylvie replied by telling me that she thinks that in the past, it has mostly been women who did this type of work but that she thinks it should be open to anybody who is interested in pursuing it.

Because I know that Sylvie lives in a multi-ethnic family, I wanted to know if she thought that her work made any direct links to a specific culture. Although her mother is French Canadian, her father is Italian, and her husband is Ethiopian, Sylvie's answer was no. Later she did acknowledge that her ornaments are usually for Christmas and that this is celebrated by all the various cultures in her immediate surroundings.

My next question concerned whether Sylvie generally makes a link or a division between art and craft.

Well craft basically, I think, is where you're working more with your hands and making objects. Art I think is more of a drawing or painting.

Sylvie is of the opinion that craft is something that is usable, touchable or accessible and that art is something that's going to be looked at or put up on a wall.

When I asked Sylvie if she saw herself as an artist or as a craft maker, she very proudly exclaimed...

A craft maker!

My next question dealt with whether Sylvie shows her crafts in galleries, craft fairs or any other type of setting. Since she had already mentioned the fundraisers, I was curious to know if she had participated in any other type of public venue.

There was the fundraiser but basically it has been just through word-of-mouth. People that I know, and then others have asked to see the ornaments. But usually, that's as far as it goes.

But before long, Sylvie began telling me about another friend of hers who had suggested that she show her ornaments by participating in an annual arts and crafts sale at her place of work. Sylvie was told that anyone could display their craft objects and sell them. The fact that it's always just before Christmas also makes it more interesting to her. Sylvie wanted to go, but this year the timing was too difficult. Eventually she would like to display the ornaments and sell them.

Because both her daughters are in different school levels, I wanted to ask Sylvie what she thought of the ways that crafts are being taught today in elementary school and in high school. I asked Sylvie about her impressions regarding what kids learn at school and whether she

thinks that they make crafts or art. Sylvie replied by telling me that at Dante elementary level, where our younger children go, we have a very good art teacher who works very well with the children. Sylvie believes that they make a variety of crafts while creating original pieces. In high school however, her impression is that the students are being taught to do more difficult things. Many tasks seem to be taught step by step and Sylvie thinks that if a child doesn't necessarily like art, they might get discouraged and they might not want to continue. But if someone likes it they'll want to learn each step of the way. Sylvie tells me that in elementary school art is was probably more fun; in high school, it is work!

Next, I asked Sylvie if either one of her daughters or anyone else helps her to make the ornaments to which she happily answered...

Yes, my daughters both help me. They both really enjoy making the ornaments.

I inquired if it was always voluntary on their part, or if she asks them for help or if she sometimes just puts them to work. Sylvie told me that it is usually voluntary though she sometimes just asks them to help out.

I wanted to know if Sylvie had ever considered teaching others to make this type of beadwork. She replied by telling me that she has

taught one of her friends who saw her work and asked if Sylvie would teach her. She found the one-on-one teaching experience quite pleasing. I carried on by asking if she would perhaps give a workshop where she might have ten or so people, and teach them. Sylvie replied by saying no, but then she recalled another rather satisfying event. Sylvie told me that when her younger daughter turned nine, her birthday party had a beaded ornament theme. Sylvie purchased a wide variety of supplies for the kids that came to her birthday party, and they were free to use whatever they wanted. Sylvie said that it was really nice to watch them all work and get so involved in making their own piece. In the end, each child went home with a beaded ornament and each one looked really different! Sylvie recalled a great feeling of fulfillment from that day.

Some of the kids actually asked me if they could come over on a summer day, when they have no school, and work on more of these.

Sylvie and I discussed the birthday party and the experience a little more. I told her that it might be something that a few of the kids may remember as their first significant craft making experience; especially the ones who had asked if they could come back to make more. Again I asked Sylvie if she liked this teaching experience. She told me that she found it to be a very rewarding day. (See picture #S6)

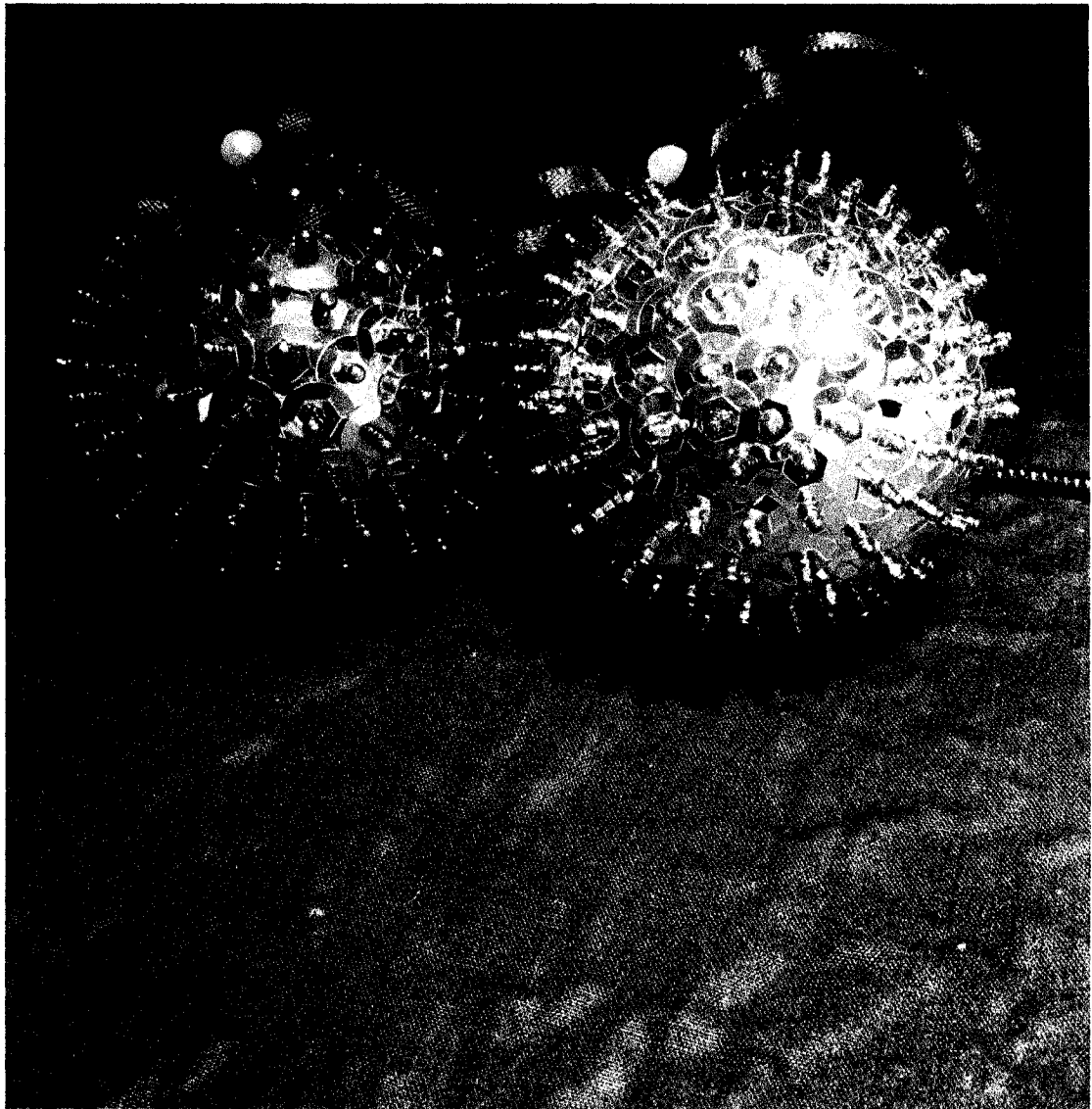
Yes, because it's something that I really enjoy doing. And obviously when someone is really interested in learning, it's more enjoyable. Yes, I really enjoyed it.

I concluded our interview by asking Sylvie if she taught her daughters how to make other crafts besides the beadwork. Sylvie told me that they had done some paint-by-numbers, and that they both love to draw. Sylvie likes to encourage any type of creative activity. She finds that it can take you away from the everyday running around and that on the whole, it is relaxing. She believes that being involved in a creative activity can really take you to another place. Sylvie told me that she sees creative activities for her daughters as more of a hobby, not something that they have to do.

Again time was running out. I turned off my recorder and readied my camera to take a few photos of Sylvie's work and her materials. Sylvie and I continued to discuss the importance and personal value that her craft making has brought to her. She has developed a strong enthusiasm for her beadwork. She was very clear about the sensation of personal satisfaction that she gets from a job well done.

I love making these ornaments!

I thanked Sylvie again for her participation in my interview and for letting me come over and take photos of her beadwork.



#S6 Blue & Green Ornaments (2005)

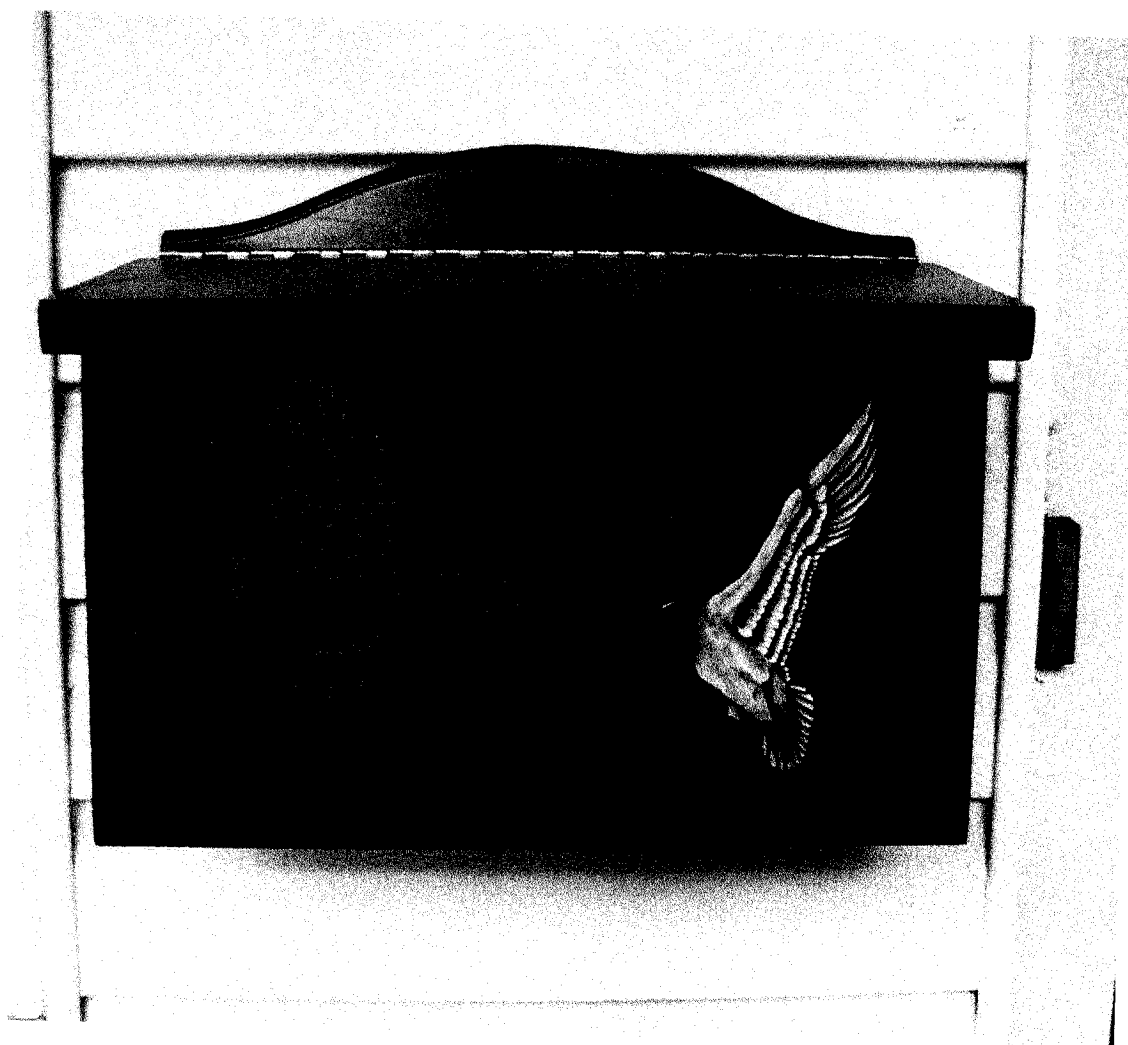
Foam spheres, sequins, coloured glass beads, pins & coloured ribbon.

Ornaments by Sylvie Lisella.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

Interview with Grace

Grace and I have known each other for several years. Her sister Nadia and I met in CEGEP and we've remained good friends ever since. When I was thinking of possible participants for this study I immediately thought of Grace because I had been to her house and remembered being impressed by the many hand made pieces that she chose to proudly display. After a few telephone conversations, Grace agreed to partake in the interview. Because of Grace's busy schedule, finding a mutually convenient time was quite challenging but well worth the wait. Grace was kind enough to also invite me into her home for our interview. While driving to her residence on the North Shore of Montréal one warm and very sunny May day, I couldn't help but notice the scenic environment that surrounded me. There was a quaint but solid bridge crossing a tranquil, sapphire-like, river where high school students were rowing canoes, and men and women stood wading by the same gleaming blue riverbank, hoping to catch a few fish. The lush greenery and grassy hills were very picturesque. As I drove onto the driveway, I was enveloped by the smell of blossoming trees. Looking at the front door, I noticed a hand painted, wooden letterbox that was undoubtedly made by Grace. (See picture #G1) After a warm greeting by both Grace and her friendly black and white cat



#G1 Mailbox (2003)

Acrylic paint on stained wood.

Mailbox by Grace Guglieri. Photo by Grace Guglieri.

Winston, I entered her home. We immediately began discussing some of her work which included many ceramic and wooden pieces. I was especially interested in a vase that was displayed on the fireplace mantle in her sitting room. I could see that Grace had made it with much attention to detail. Its shape, texture and umber tones were put together perfectly and were very complimentary to one another. (See picture #G2) After an amazing lunch, Grace kindly answered the following questions ...

We began the interview with a discussion about Grace's background. She revealed that she was born in Buenos Aries, Argentina and that she lived there until the age of one. Her parents then moved back to Italy where they all lived for seven years. After that they moved to Montréal, where Grace went to English public schools. When Grace finished high school she went to work. She continued taking a variety of evening classes at McGill and Concordia Universities in languages, accounting and administration; basically business classes. When I asked her if she had taken any art classes her response was...

Well I've always been a career person, so during that time, there was nothing. Later on, very much later on in life, I wanted to get into art. I started taking little courses in ceramics. It was around the corner and they had pre-fabricated or already moulded pieces and that's how I started.



#G2 Hand-made ceramic vase. (1998)

Clay, stain & glaze.

Vase by Grace Guglieri.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

Grace continued to tell me that after taking these courses she was ready and eager to do more. (See picture #G3) She then took ceramics courses at the Visual Arts Centre, which she really enjoyed, and classes at a Montréal CEGEP that she wasn't very impressed with due to the larger amount of students and a meagre amount of supplies.

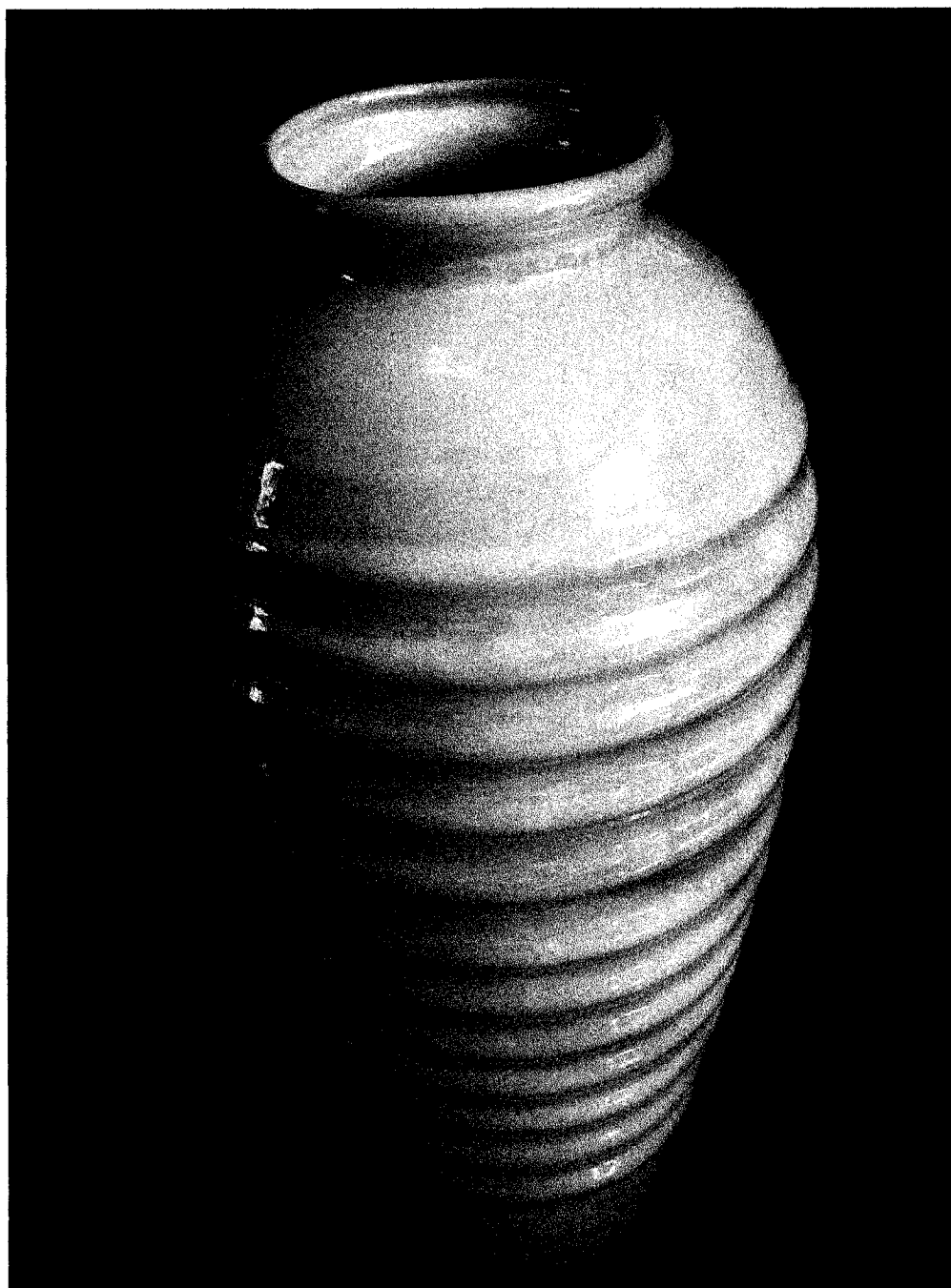
But about ten years ago I started looking at ceramics and I started getting back into it. I just needed an outlet. It wasn't about becoming an artist. I just wanted to do something with my hands instead of with my brains for a change. I was just fed up with the stresses of corporate life.

I thought that this was an interesting outlook; being motivated to take up ceramics as an outlet. I prolonged the topic and Grace said;

Yes, as outlet! And I thought that maybe it could open other doors. At that point I wanted to go into ceramics. I even have a kiln and everything.

Due to other obligations, Grace did not give up her job to become a full time potter. She stopped for a while and then realized that there was something else that she had wanted to experiment with.

Then I wanted to paint. All my life I had wanted to paint. So I took a course at the Visual Arts Centre in oils, and again I was not too pleased with my teacher there. I was also not pleased with what I did, and I didn't find that I was able to do what my brain wanted to do. So I let go of all that for a while. Then not too long ago I took a course in wood painting. And ever since then, I find that acrylic paint is what I really like.



#G3 Mother-of-pearl vase. (1994)

Pre-moulded clay vase & glaze.

Vase by Grace Guglieri.

Photo by M.L. Danese.

As I asked Grace to tell me about any early recollections she has dealing with crafts. She began by telling me that she may have answered this question quite differently if I hadn't provided her with the opportunity to look over some sample questions for this interview. Grace told me that this question along with some other ones enabled her to retrace many memories from her youth.

When I was very young, my mother taught me embroidery. I used to do all kinds of embroidery things, and I was very, very young; I'm talking about five years old. I did embroidery for a long, long time. In fact, later on in life, I put some of those things into frames.

Noticing that this evoked a pleasant smile, I asked Grace if she could remember details from the embroidery, such as colors or textures.

We used to make things like tablecloths. She used to make me do mostly flowers and leaves. It was very colourful. That's what I remember mostly.

Grace continued telling me that in addition to her mother being a highly refined seamstress, she occasionally made the upper leather parts for special order shoes. Grace, who was about five or six, would help her because she had little hands that could easily fold the pieces. Grace attributes her own meticulousness to these early experiences.

When I asked Grace if there was any craft making in her home while she was growing up she told me that there was usually sewing going on but that she also remembers doing lots of drawing. She then told

me that her mother was also a really good artist and that she was the one who taught Grace to draw.

She was a super meticulous person and even when I used to make drawings I'd show them to her and if they weren't right she'd say, "No, no, this is the way you have to do it". She would not accept it unless it was just, just perfect.

Grace remembers being in grade school, in Italy, and drawing very well. When she came to Montréal, she recalls her teachers being very impressed by her drawings. Our discussion caused Grace to specifically recall three particular drawings that she made when she was a little older. She remembers having devoted so much time and energy to working on them.

One was of Jesus on the cross, with the two men on the sides. I did a winter scene with the maple trees, the horses and the carriage, and people taking the sap from the trees. And the other one was of a train. It had all the intricacies of all the particular parts of the train. The teachers had asked me if they could keep them and I said yes. But today I think of it and it's too bad because I would have liked to have kept them.

At this point I asked Grace if there were any particular teachers, artists or mentors that had a strong influence on her own work. In keeping with what was already discussed, Grace mentioned the strong influence that her mother had on her work, both directly and indirectly. She also mentioned one of her uncles.

My uncle on my father's side; he was an artist. A real artist! He was a sculptor, painter, and inventor. Of course I don't or can't compare myself in any way, shape or form to this man.

When I enquired as to whether or not he was able to sustain himself by working as an artist or if it was something he did in addition to another type of employment, Grace informed me that this was his life. She went on to tell me that besides painting and sculpting, he would often sculpt right on tables and on cabinets. She very proudly pointed out two of his works that she has in her home.

This is one of his sculptures; the drunks. This was one of his first paintings. We don't have too much of his stuff here. He was still young and he couldn't afford to buy the materials to paint. That's on wood and then he sculpted the frame as well. He was a very, very talented man.

As we continued discussing other influences, Grace told me that she has always liked art and that she owns several art books. She told me that she often looks at, reads about, and is in awe of great artists. For example, when she looks at Michelangelo's work she is amazed at all the details and meticulousness that he'd put into his studies before painting.

For me it's a bit overwhelming. So I always feel that if you're going to do it, then do it well, or else, get out of it! It's just not your thing! You wouldn't hear me sing for instance. Or play an instrument for that matter. I wouldn't do it! It would devastate me because I would ruin the music.

Later when I asked her why she was so hard on herself with regard to the her work she made a reference to her parents by simply stating,

My parents were very critical and meticulous. You either did it right or you didn't do it.

As we returned to the topic of influences, Grace told me that she is currently very happy with her painting teacher.

The reason that I like the teacher that I have now is because she's not a tole painter. She's a real painter. And I know that her sister's an oil painter and she taught her a few things. So it's all in the approach. The things that she creates are amazing! With the colors and the way that she brings things to life. She's an artist; I don't care what other artists think. I know that today, people who paint on wood are not considered artists, but it's OK because it's going to go full circle. It's just a snobby attitude.

I asked Grace if she had a favourite journal, book, Website or TV show that she considers a helpful resource. She told me that there is a book that Pierre (her husband) had bought her some time ago that she still refers to for technical help. Grace mentioned looking through a variety of other books on technique or on specific artists and she wishes she had time to do more exploring. She let me know that she enjoys closely looking at art work to examine how exactly it was done.

I raised the question concerning references made to or derived from her own culture; Grace answered that there were none. I then asked

whether she felt that her heritage influence her work to which she answered;

Actually I'm accumulating a lot of photographs of the old country, of Italy. I like doing sceneries; but different types of sceneries. And I like what I see in a lot of these pictures so...I don't know, maybe I'll get into something like that.

Knowing that she has explored a variety of media, I invited Grace to tell me about what kinds of methods she has been using in her recent studio practice.

I've done crochet; I used to draw a lot. In fact I have a scrapbook and on one side I would write little sayings, or some poetry, and on the other side I would draw. So I used to draw well. Now I can't seem to do it any more, it's an art that you have to keep up I think. I've done ceramics. I've tried oil painting and acrylic. I've done flower arrangements. And I've done the wood painting.

I now wanted to know how all this makes her feel. Has it been rewarding for her and what sensations does she get from it all. Grace answered...

Accomplishment! I'm able to do more than run a company. Because when you've lived a whole life, well 35 years, being the director of a company, you live and breathe that kind of thing. You don't have time for anything else. I was doing 60 sometimes 80 hours a week, there is no time for anything else and you don't think you're capable of anything else.

Now Grace turned and with a noticeable tone of pride in her voice, she pointed at her windows and said;

Well look, I made the shades. I had taken a couple of sewing classes. I've made myself dresses. But you know my mother was always so meticulous that when I used to take the courses she used to tell me that it wasn't done properly. So I used to have a big conflict. The teacher used to tell me one thing and my mother would tell me another and I never learned; because it was too frustrating for me. So I abandoned that a long time ago. But, hey, I made the shades. And I'm so proud! And to me it is art. To me anything that I work with my hands is art.

Coming back to this sense of accomplishment, she continued

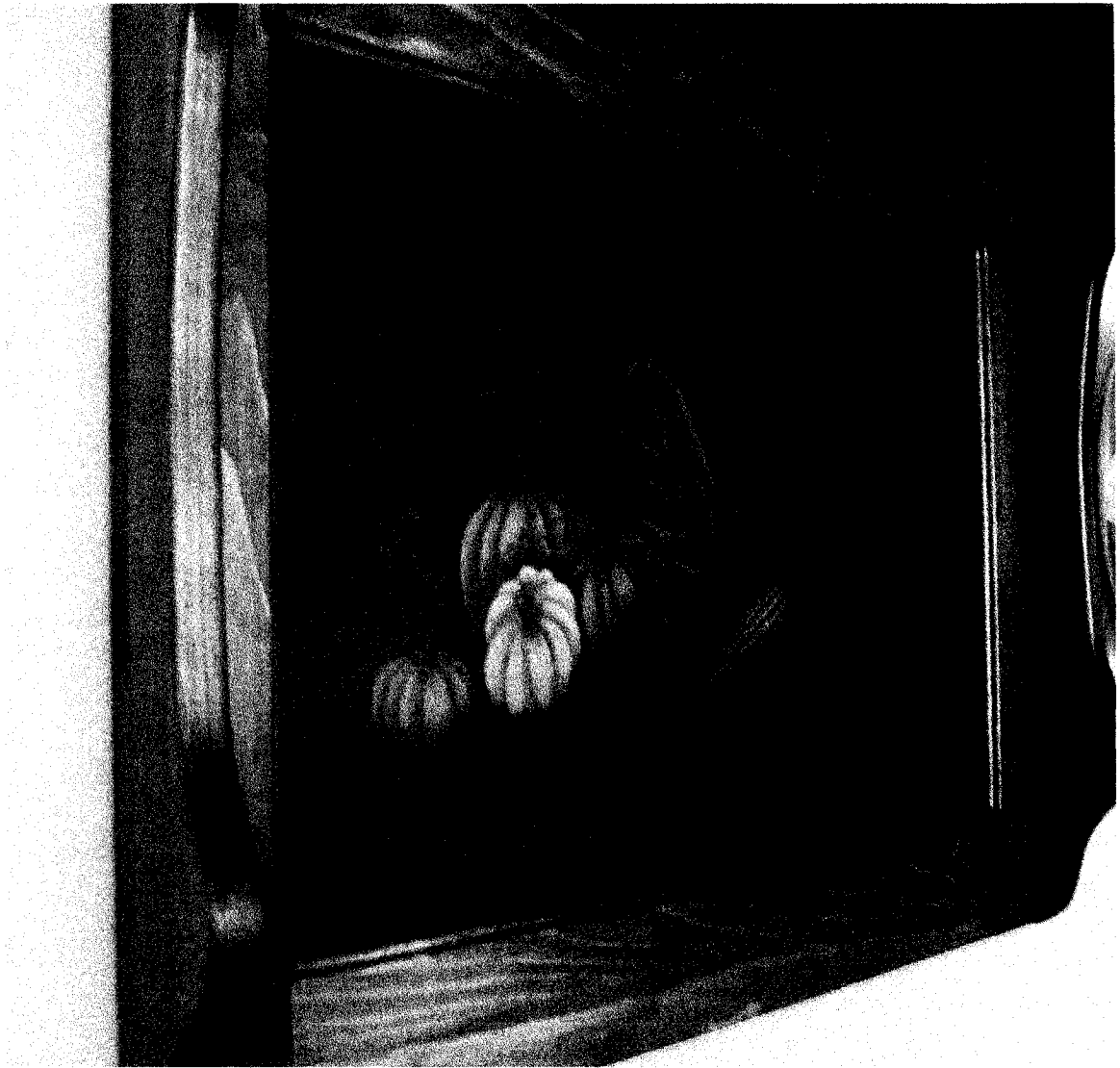
Yes! Accomplishment! I feel good. If I look at it and I'm pleased, it's great!

Shortly afterwards, Grace told me that this sense of satisfaction is sometimes short lived because she tends to look at things that are finished and then notice details that she thinks should be improved.

Grace mentioned that her teacher told her that she

...can paint a thing to death. At some point I have to say STOP! She tells me that enough is enough! So... but still, I'll show you one that's in the kitchen. One day I'm going to fix that dammed thing, because it just, you know, bugs me! But I do feel like it looks good and I've done a good job.

Grace showed me the piece, agreed that she was proud of it, and told me that the sense of attainment is wonderful. (See picture #G4)



#G4 Wall Tray (2005)

Acrylic paint on stained wood.

Mailbox by Grace Guglieri. Photo by Grace Guglieri.

I was curious about what Grace thought was going to come next with her work; did she want to go on and explore different media or would she continue with the acrylic painting for a while?

I want to get back into oils. Just to try it again. But I don't think it's a medium that I'm going to pursue. Not in the long run because I really like acrylics, especially the new acrylics that are like oils. I can do so much. I can even do it on canvas. And although right now, yes, I do copy a lot; in the future I'm going to create my own pieces, and that's where I think I'm going to go.

Being interested in the topic of copying, I asked Grace to elaborate.

It's in how you approach it, because if you just follow the mechanics of it, you're just copying a painting. That's it! But when you put a lot of time into it, to develop it, it's the same thing as what an artist does.

Then Grace told me that the other method she has been interested in and wants to try is stained glass. She finds the play of colors and light appealing and wants to explore it herself. She also wants to return to drawing.

Actually what I would like to do is get back into drawing, and actually draw my own pieces. Because I used to draw well and I'm hoping that it will come back with a bit of practice.

I now wanted to know whether Grace thought of craft making as feminine or as feminist and if she thought that her own work made

references to these ideas or to those of traditional woman's work.

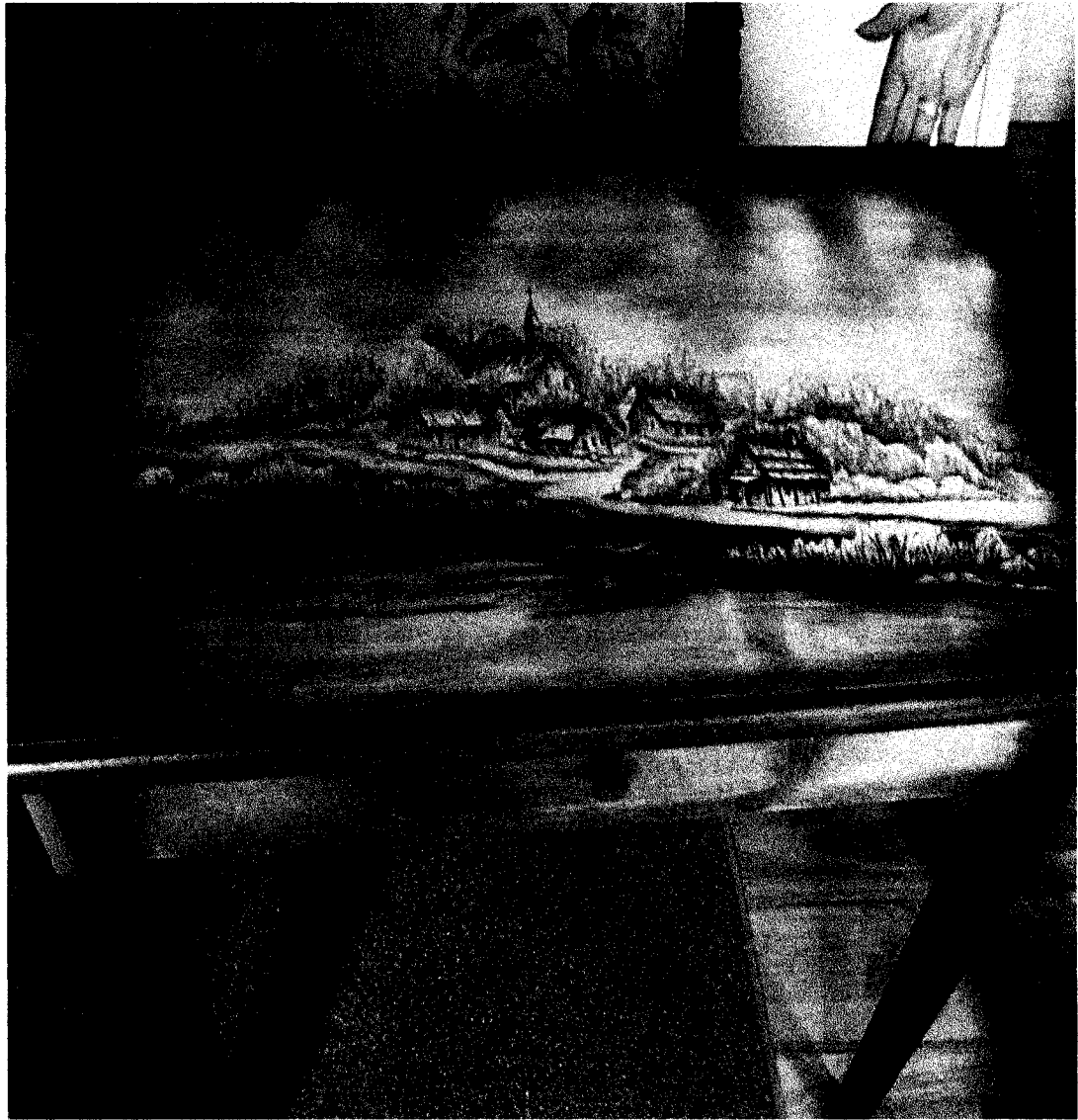
Grace responded by saying,

I think that what I'm doing right now, the acrylics, I'd have to say that at first I thought that it was mostly a female thing. But I've done some research on the internet and I have to say that there is a mix now. And since it's becoming more and more of an art form, and not so much a craft, there seem to be more men doing it. You know men are much more snobbish about the fact that they are making art instead of craft. So yes, to answer your question; yes, perhaps this particular craft is still mostly still done by women.

Grace went on to inform me that

What I didn't tell you is that I've also made small pieces of furniture. So it's all together. It's not only doing the painting, but you also learn how to stain the furniture, how to antique it, and other things all together. A lot of men learn how to do that. (See picture #G5)

Agreeing that furniture making is a traditionally male dominated craft, I then asked her about crocheting and embroidery work. Grace agreed that these were typically seen as female crafts. She also agreed that these types of craft have a more decorative or functional aspect to them. Yet she stated that she believes there should not be gender imposed on any form of art or craft.



#G5 Desktop (2004)

Acrylic paint on stained wood desk.

Desktop by Grace Guglieri. Photo by Grace Guglieri.

From that answer I asked Grace if she generally made a link or a division between art and craft. She very straightforwardly told me there is a division between art and craft.

And I've seen people in my own class, when I take the acrylic on wood classes; they paint like it's a craft. And I've seen others paint like artists. Somebody who paints like it's a craft, is somebody who just paints to get the job done and puts the minimum amount of color to give it the minimum results. That's crafts. And the things sometimes are just to sell, little trinkets.

Grace went on to tell me that she thinks the difference between art and craft comes with intent and with persistence. An artist is...

a person who will put their heart and soul into it to developing something. An artist will maybe take ten times the time required to get it just right. I call that art, because you're not talking anymore of just putting on basic colors, you're working it and working it and working it until it's just right. That to me is art. That's the difference.

Remarking that she views art and craft as very separate, I asked Grace if she thought there was a link between them; she answered

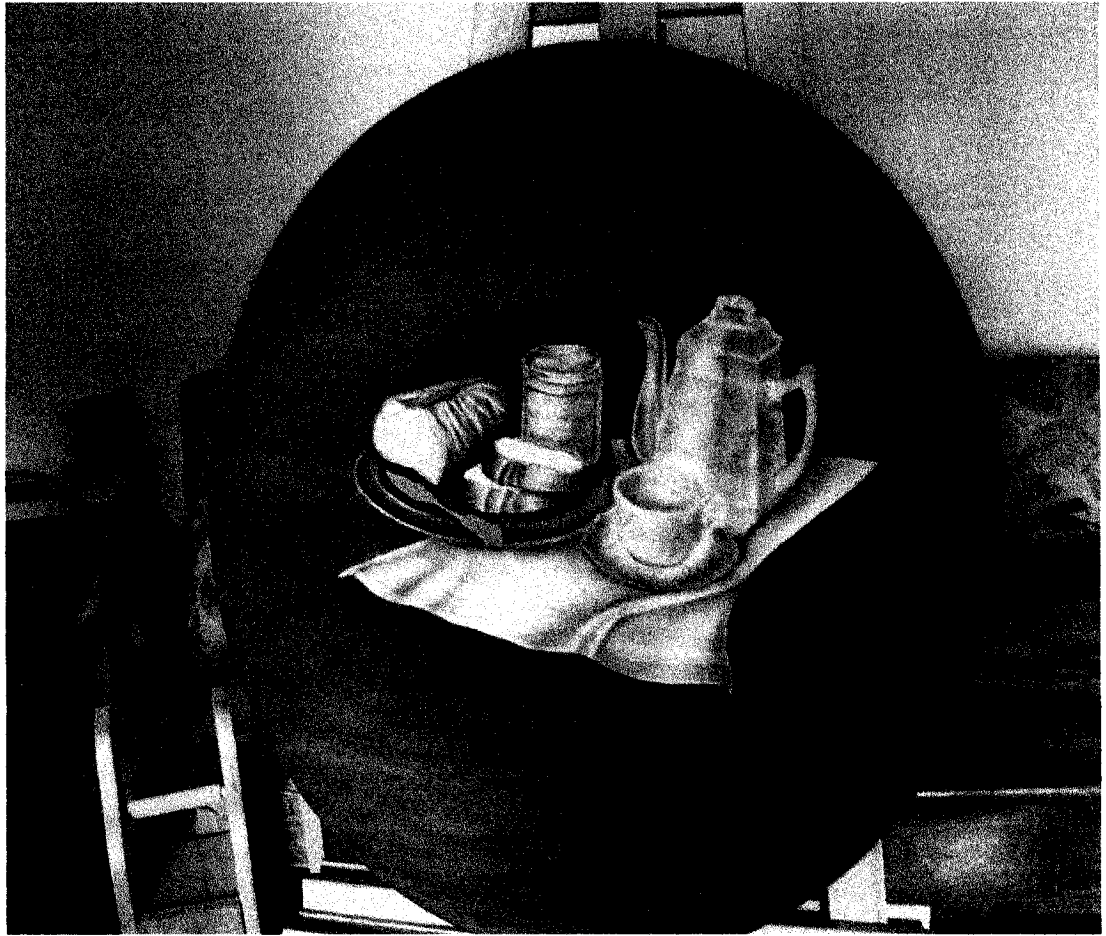
No. Personally I think that if you don't have your heart in it and you're just doing it for whatever reason, you're not really an artist. You're just doing it to make something to sell or for it to look pretty in your house. It's not the same thing, I know I've done a lot of things that I thought were great before, but now as I'm learning more and more, I look at them and I'm even embarrassed, so I don't show them.

As she continued with this subject Grace came back again to the issue of intent. She knows that technique can be taught, but it then has to be taken to a different level.

I have one teacher and she has a variety of students... she teaches everybody the same way. It's the desire of the person doing it. It's the want.

Next I enquired about who she thinks of when working on a piece. Is it a viewer, a potential buyer, someone for whom the work is intended for, or is it for her first and foremost? Grace fully admits that she is often concerned with what others think of her work, yet recognizes that there is no situation in which everyone will be pleased. She knows that people are going to critique her work even though she imposes high standards on her own pieces. Here again she spoke of being very critical of herself. (See picture #G6)

I think I also picked up art because I wanted to learn to relax a bit and let go. It doesn't always have to be perfect. But you know, even in art, I have difficulty with that. If I do meticulous things like faces, I'm better at it. If I have to do something more wacko, I have a lot of difficulty with that. It all goes back to being meticulous. You can't be meticulous if you're doing something freehand when you're painting! Teachers are telling me that it doesn't matter and that it has to be free, but it's very hard for me to do. If I have to make eyes and a nose or lips, for me it has to be very specific. I'll do better with that.



#G6 Tabletop {Unfinished} (2005)

Acrylic paint on stained wood.

Tabletop by Grace Guglieri. Photo by Grace Guglieri.

I then asked Grace if she shows her pieces in galleries, craft fairs or other venues.

No not yet. I don't think I'm good enough.

Grace did tell me that she wanted to tackle this at some point though. She told me about seeing the work of a classmate at a local library and thinking that her own work was just as good, if not better.

I thought to myself, I'm always like that, I always hold myself back thinking I'm never good enough, and I look at some pieces and I think, I did a far better job than that! And yet it all goes back to a lack of self confidence and being too meticulous. It's holding me back even in my art.

Unfortunately, at this point, the time on my recorder ran out. Grace and I however did continue the interview while I took notes and she answered the following questions in this way...

I asked Grace to tell me what she thinks of how that crafts are being taught today in elementary, secondary and post-secondary educational settings. She responded by telling me that she thinks that crafts are almost non-existent in schools; but she thinks that they should be taught to provide students with an extra creative outlet. Along the same lines I asked what she thinks of the ways that crafts are taught in community situations or in specialized craft school settings. Here, Grace told me that from her own experience, she thinks that in these

situations, the teacher makes all the difference. For example when she took courses at the Visual Arts Centre, she had an excellent ceramics teacher and the learning experience was very satisfying. At the same place however, she was very disappointed and dissatisfied with a teacher who taught oil painting. So much so that she was totally turned off by the experience and did not paint for a few years. Reflecting on this situation, Grace thinks that that person had very bad teaching skills. When she took a CEGEP level class though, there were too many students in the class and not nearly enough basic materials like brushes and glazes.

I asked Grace if she found it difficult to find the time and energy to work in such a variety of styles or if she finds the variety necessary for motivation. To this Grace replied that she now tries to concentrate on one type of style at a time; this keeps her more focused.

I wanted to know if Grace sees the objects that she makes as having to be functional. She answered by telling me that at this point, yes, she feels that they need to serve a purpose. (See photo #G6) She then added that maybe in the future, they won't need to be. I also asked Grace if she has sold any of her pieces or given them away. Grace said that so far she has not sold any but she has given a few

pieces away. These pieces have gone to close family members such as her sister and to Pierre's grand-daughter.

In the end I asked Grace what personal satisfaction she derives from making her pieces. She told me that when all goes well, she finds it extremely rewarding. She continued by saying that it's very satisfying to make something with her hands.

I love that feeling! I get a great sense of pride and pleasure from it.

Following our interview, Grace allowed me into her studio and I was able to photograph many of the pieces that she was working on or that were already displayed in her home. Grace was very forthcoming about many of her personal opinions. One of Grace's greatest assets is her personal experiences within a variety of community based classes and her familiarity with a variety of media. I thanked Grace for allowing me to interview her and encouraged her to forge ahead and continue to explore new avenues.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Now with the interviews done, I wanted to gather the information I had obtained and see what commonalities or differences were important among my four participants and whether they were reflective of the information that I had gleaned through various sources. As mentioned earlier, the questions that I asked my participants were devised through reoccurring themes that I encountered throughout my readings and my teaching experiences. Happily the majority of the questions were noteworthy for my participants and they elicited considerable responses that enabled me to categorize similarities and variances among them. Fortunately, due to the seemingly unrestricted nature of the informal interview, my participants also provided me with an interesting selection of topics that arose unexpectedly from our conversations.

After each participant consented to my using the information provided by the original transcription, I began to analyze the data collected. For this I began a process of breaking the answers down into separate components and further categorizing these answers. These categories were mostly formed from the common questions I asked of each participant. Following the coding suggestions from my

advisor as well as the ethnographic reference books, I devised a color coding system that allowed me to easily retrieve the information that I needed from the interviews. This process allowed me to amass a list of commonalities and differences between each of my participants. This process also enabled me to read the results more clearly. In addition to these topics, there were other themes that arose spontaneously from the interviews. The results collected from this data should help me to understand why craft making is such an important part of these women's lives and how these issues can be addressed in Art Education.

In the following section I have outlined noteworthy issues from both these areas. The order in which these issues are presented is generally reflective of the way the topics were discussed in the original interviews. The order in which my I present my participants was chosen because of the chronological order in which the interviews were held.

1) Background: Although my four participants *do* fit into the categories outlined by the CODA Survey's (2001) result of a typical craftsperson (female, Caucasian, works alone in her studio) as well as what Janet Koplos (1993) refers to as *Artisans*

(makers of functional hand made wares), I found that there was no one overriding similarity among my participants with respect to their backgrounds or education. Although they all presently live in the greater Montréal area, they all have various upbringings, educations and work experiences that in one form or another contributed to their craft making.

2) Early Craft Recollections: From speaking to a range of craft makers of various ages, I gathered that there was a special link between positive early craft making experiences and their decision to continue making crafts long after that favourable experience had passed. This particular category was one that brought forth very positive memories from each of my participants. Each one recalled their own pleasant experience with a cheerful smile and an affirmative declaration. Each participant also recounted a memory with particular attention to the tactile sense and the enjoyment that came with it. Pina animatedly recalled activities at a neighbourhood park, making a bunny from a smooth egg and carefully bringing it to life by applying a set of ears, a nose, and a tail. Hazel cheerfully recounted sitting with her sister who was knitting an orange woollen sweater and *helping her* by sticking in the needle,

wrapping it around and pulling it through. Sylvie happily spoke of knitting with her mom, of drawing, and of joyfully brushing on colourful paint. Grace pleasantly recalled the act of pulling thread through cotton fabric while embroidering colourful flowers and leaves on tablecloths with her mother. In keeping with the sensorial responses that are evoked from crafts, Paula Gustafson (2002) explains "We have been led to believe that such tactile experiences should be denigrated, distrusted, or perhaps dismissed; that our feelings, our physical sensations are not as real or valid as our knowledge." (p.197) Although haptic knowledge is rarely hailed as being as valid as knowledge gained from reading or derived from a visual occurrence, my participants clearly demonstrate that in their experiences, it is just as important. All the participants reminisced happily about the tangibility of the experience they chose to share. These positive memories, with their focus on tactile materials are reflected in a number of articles and books about craft making. Robert Metcalf (1993) supports the links made through crafts and the senses as he discusses how crafts specifically relate pleasant sensuous qualities. He states "craft objects, because they are used in so many ways, engage all the senses but taste." (p.46)

3) Significant Influence: Each participant was able to recall a person who had influenced them in a positive manner and who encouraged them to express their creativity. Pina was influenced by a boy in the second grade who seemed to her to draw effortlessly and encouraged her to draw for self improvement. She also mentioned her high school art teacher who was always very positive and encouraging. Pina mentions that there is no one particular style or artist that influences her; yet she is often influenced by the colors, textures or patterns found on ordinary or everyday items. This is reflective of Paul Duncum's view that art educators need to use everyday objects as a valuable resource when teaching about aesthetics. Hazel credits her sister for her encouragement and support while drawing and trying out a variety of crafts. She also mentioned two teachers. First there was a female school teacher who taught the schoolgirls how to make all sorts of crafts including sewing, tacking, knitting as well as chain stitch embroidery. Secondly there was a male wood-working teacher from the teacher training college who was very encouraging and gave Hazel free reign to experiment. Sylvie spoke of learning how to knit pieces with her mother when she was young. She also spoke about the support she got from her art teachers in high

school and, most recently, about the strong and positive influence from her friend who introduced her to ornament making. Sylvie credits this friend for technical, creative and moral support. Grace credits her mother as being her greatest childhood influence. Grace mentions that her mother taught her many basic skills and made sure that whatever Grace worked on reflected her very best abilities. Grace also recognizes two other positive influences in her creative development; one is her uncle, who was an artist in Italy, and the other is a painting teacher whose teaching skills and creative support she greatly appreciated. Each of the participants, by recalling these supportive and encouraging influences, reinforces the statement made by Edward L. Mattil (1959) about the importance and substantial impact that art educators can make in the lives of students. Although Mattil is particularly concerned with art educators, I prefer to use the word *instructor* because it allows for a broader scope. As these participants have stated, being creatively influenced, need not be confined to artists, craft makers or art educators alone. The writings of artist Mary Pratt (1999) and craft historian Paula Gustafson (2002), among other writings in *CRAFT: Perception and Practice, A Canadian Discourse*, echo these claims as they make references to the

variety of people who have influenced their creativity in countless ways. Creative influences and learning can come from parents, siblings, peers, teachers, mentors, or anyone else who makes a significant and positive contribution to learning.

4) Gender: The works and teachings of women such as Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro who have researched, reclaimed the value of, and made works based on and dedicated to traditionally female crafts, as well as articles by Paula Gustafson (1990), Sally Markowitz (1994) Sandra Flood (1995), and countless others indicated to me that there is still a substantial divide with regards to the crafts made by men and those made by women. Therefore, I was intrigued at the lack of significance that gender or feminist influence had among my participants. Although they acknowledged that many traditional crafts such as knitting, quilt making, or embroidery were almost exclusively made by women, none believed that these crafts are, or should be, exclusive to women only in today's world. By the same token they do not believe that more traditionally male dominated crafts such as metal, leather or wood working is still the exclusive domain of men. None of my participants thought

of their works as making any reference to traditional woman's work or of being particularly feminine or feminist.

5) Art /Craft Divide: Even though each participant had her own interpretation on the art and craft dichotomy, it was quite interesting to see that each opinion was supported by informed sources dealing with this issue. Pina clearly told me that when objects are all alike, it's related to craft, yet as soon as objects are different or more individual, it's art. This is echoed by many art historians and art critics who believe that originality is what distinguishes art from craft. Hazel said that in her opinion there *is* a division between craft and art because above all, art has to do with giftedness. In a recently published Art Education masters thesis entitled *Contemporary Art and the Non-Expert Viewer: A study of pre-conceived ideas about art*, Manon Douesnard's (2005) research participants also mentioned the idea of talent being "God-given". (p.27) Hazel went on to say that a craft could be learned but it does not necessarily make you artistic (p.147) Sylvie also sees a difference and expressed that craft is related to working with your hands and making functional or accessible objects, whereby art is more related to ideas or thoughts that are evoked by viewing drawings

or paintings. Sylvie's opinion is in line with that of Howard Becker's (1978) as he concludes that craft is about utility and that art is about ideas. Grace stated that she views art and craft as very separate whereby the primary difference between them rests with the approach taken. Grace's opinion is reflected in the writings of Canadian craft writer and curator Anne McPherson (1994) who in *CRAFT: Perception and Practice, A Canadian Discourse*, claims that "Artists often use the same materials as do craftspeople, the difference being in the direction from which they approach their work". (p.91)

6) Artistic Identification: Another reoccurring topic was that of personal creative identification. When a gallery owner was interested in selling Pina's vases and asked her to identify herself and her studio work, she emphatically replied that she is an artist and she makes art. She proudly sees herself as a creative person who makes heart-felt, original and aesthetically pleasing works of art that are functional. Hazel, on the other hand, sees herself as a craft maker. She takes pride in making technically perfect works that are functional, aesthetic and creative. Although she does not see herself as being artistically *gifted* she acknowledges her virtuoso skills and sees

craft making as her creative outlet. Without hesitation, Sylvie proudly identifies herself as a craft maker. She takes the viewpoint that her studio work is craft and delights in the creative processes and choices she makes from the conception to the completion of her ornaments. Grace admitted to currently seeing her artistic development more in line with that of a craft maker because she is concerned with details and technical challenges more than formal concerns. Yet Grace hopes that soon, she will feel confident enough to categorize her studio practice as art and view herself as an artist. In the end it seems that the way each participant views herself artistically is more than likely related to her opinion about the art and craft divide.

7) Self-Perceived Lack of Realistic Drawing Abilities:

Aside from Sylvie, who expressed satisfaction with her drawing ability, the other three participants expressed a self-perceived lack of sufficient realistic drawing abilities. Even though Pina successfully sells her pieces, she continues to feel that she does not have a sufficient ability to draw. Her statement, "*I can't draw*", displays a very high, self-imposed, standard for talent. Aware of this, Pina has taken art classes in order to remedy the situation but still isn't quite satisfied. Pina has overcome this

problem by finding a medium that doesn't require drawing: collage and assemblage. Hazel also took drawing lessons and feels that while she has learned the technical knowledge; she does not possess the artistic *gift*. Hazel states: "*You could learn a craft... But you'll never be an artist without the gift*". Like Hazel, author Philip Pacey (1989), places considerable importance and value on craft making when he states, "artists are *chosen*, by having received the gift of creativity in particularly ample measure". (p.147) Hazel continues to draw in order to pursue her craft making, whether it is by sketching a design for a quilt or the outline for a stained glass piece. Although Grace gave a detailed account of her skilful drawing abilities as a child, she now feels as though she can no longer draw as well, due to lack of practice. She mentioned that she often sketches out her ideas before attempting any new work. Grace wants to return to drawing and hopes to resolve the problem by doing specific studies and more practicing.

8) Functional Hand-Made Objects: Referring back to Janet Koplos' (1993) breakdown of crafts, each of my participants engages in studio practices which correspond to what she describes as *Artisanery*, in effect, the making of functional hand

made wares. Pina's painterly vases and visually charged journals are in themselves functional objects. Vases are containers that can hold other objects and journals are for recording information or thoughts. Although she can't quite explain why, Pina expressed the need for her work to be practical or useful, not only made for the sake of making. "It has to be something you have to use. It has to be functional...it's got to serve a purpose". Hazel's crafts, be they quilts used as warm bed coverings, fabric boxes used as containers or stained glass pieces used to embellish, are also functional. Hazel noted that she likes to be productive therefore she makes crafts that are useful. Sylvie's ornaments are also functional. Her ornaments not only enhance but they also mark an occasion, be it the birth of a child or a seasonal Christmas ornament. Grace feels that at this point, her works also need to be functional. This is most evident with her ceramic vessels and her wooden furniture pieces adorned with her hand painted scenes.

9) Instinctive Qualities: In opposition to the above self-perceived lack of realistic drawing abilities, I believe that all four of my participants possess certain artistic qualities. These

qualities have been learned either in formal settings, or self-taught and developed over time through trial and error. As with many skills, they are acquired, then sometimes taken for granted. Features such as the use of composition, line, texture, pattern and light are central to the studio work that each participant makes. Yet I believe that the most prominent quality that these women share is the significantly developed use of colour. Each participant mentions the importance of colour in her studio work. They also cite the imperative role that colour plays before the work is made; as a source of inspiration. Pina tells of being motivated by the colours and patterns people wear or some of the bright images in magazines. The use of colour in Pina's work is rarely arbitrary as she believes all colours carry certain significances and properties. Although she can't point out exactly why, Hazel's decisive use of colours, tints and tones in her quilts are essential to the finished product. She points out "I have seen where the colours don't work so well and it doesn't matter how good the sewing is, it doesn't look quite right." Sylvie is often stimulated by colour before she makes the beadworks. If the ornament is commissioned, she may have certain colour guidelines to work with; if not she often draws inspiration by visiting bead shops. Grace also is very inspired by

the use of colour, be it from photos, reproductions or nature. She has developed an instinctive use of colour in her work and she meticulously blends hues to produce the precise colour of paint desired to apply to her selected work.

10) Time: Another theme of importance that arose from the interviews is that of time. Time, in many forms such as...the passing of time, from childhood to the present; as in a certain point in one's life when a significant occasion occurs; the measuring how long something takes to do; to be punctual or meet a deadline; the loss of time or an absence of available time; as in a season or particular time of the year; as in now, the present, not the past or the future. Pina spoke of being creative as a youngster and of keeping her pieces for a certain duration of time. Later there was an absence of available time to be creatively productive. Pina then marks a point in her life, after her children were born, when she returned to making crafts. She spoke of phases, where they made many crafts together and she spent time in her children's schools animating craft activities. She then moved to the present where she creates hand crafted journals and vases. She speaks of losing track of time while creating. Being so wholly immersed in the

creative process, where time will go by and she is startled to realize that it has passed. This state of being one with creativity is now being described as "flow" by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who is currently considered to be one of the leading academic authorities on both creativity and happiness. In an online article entitled "*Flow*" & *Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (1999), Professor David Farmer briefly explains Csikszentmihalyi's lecture on this subject. Among other criteria, he describes flow as being completely involved and thoroughly focused on the present, and in fact not noticing the passing of time. This seems to perfectly describe Pina's state.

Hazel recalled craft making at specific times in her childhood such as Friday afternoons in school, at home with family members, in the winter and in the summer. The birth of her niece is marked by a dress that Hazel had sewn for her. Hazel then told me there was a period where she made very few crafts due to lack of free time. She also feels as though she wasted time trying to learn some crafts on her own time instead of taking courses. When she has free time, she likes to be productive. Later Hazel described taking quilting classes where she had to make a number of squares in a certain amount of time or risk falling behind. Hazel admitted to letting too much

time go by before trying stained glass. She also revealed that she works on several pieces at a time, sometimes abandoning one for a stretch of time but returning to it at a later point. Hazel takes pleasure in taking the time to finish her pieces very carefully by hand and recognizes that while some crafts are not very challenging, they consume a significant amount of time. Hazel confesses to sometimes wanting a process to go faster and to losing patience. She revealed that much of the craft work she has made contains many hours of her in them, and that someone else might not appreciate all the time she has poured into them. Finally, she believes that the educational system is doing students a great disservice by not taking the time to teach more crafts.

Sylvie reminisced about a time when her mom taught her how to knit. She recalled pleasant moments in time when she drew and painted. She spoke of the day when she first saw someone working with beads. She knew at that instant that she wanted to create her own pieces. Sylvie has been making her ornaments ever since. Sylvie fittingly conveyed the amount of time it takes to make an ornament, from conception to completion. Because they are so time consuming, she sometimes asks her daughters for limited assistance in order to

be able to deliver her ornaments on time. She discussed the seasons or periods in the year when she makes more ornaments. Because of her busy schedule, she doesn't have a lot of free time to do very much. Yet she makes the time to create her ornaments.

Grace described the many hours she spent learning how to embroider, knit, sew, crochet, assemble and draw, from her mother. She also conveyed the amount of time she spent working with and perfecting each of these skills. Grace recognized that she had spent too many hours and too many years working for others and denying her own creativity. She acknowledged that too many years had passed before she decided to go take her first ceramics course. Grace believes one has to dedicate a large amount of time and effort to developing and perfecting a skill. At this point in her life Grace is limited by the lack of available time she has to dedicate to her studio work. She admits to having to find or make the time to continue her wood painting. She also wants to make the time to take a stained glass class and get back into drawing.

11) Intended Audience: Art educator George Szekely (2003) suggests that art gifts establish clear positions of an art

maker and of a recipient or audience. Each one of my participants has a different departure point for her creation and each creation ends up in a different place. All my participants informed me that they had sometimes offered work from their studio practice as gifts to selected family members or close friends and that it was happily received. Of my four participants, both Pina and Sylvie currently produce works with the intention of selling, while the other two, Hazel and Grace, are presently making works for themselves. When I asked Pina if she had an intended audience or buyer in mind when she is in her studio, she responded by telling me she finds taking special requests for art work too stressful and unsatisfying. She prefers that the works stem from emotional responses to situations around her; once the piece is completed she sells it to whoever wants to buy it. Pina has showed her work in galleries, on the Internet and in other public venues, but she mostly sells through her friends, clients and word of mouth. On the other hand, Sylvie's craft ornaments are usually made with a particular audience in mind. Her work is often specially requested or commissioned by people for specific occasions. She has successfully sold her ornaments in a couple of public venues but more often than not, she also sells her beadwork through word of mouth. These two women

each have very different studio practices yet they both sell their works in similar ways. Hazel and Grace so far, have almost exclusively produced work for their own personal use. Hazel almost selfishly confessed that she is the audience for most of her crafts pieces. Curiosity drives her to new challenges and she surrounds herself with displays of her beautifully completed crafts. She will occasionally make for others but insists on specific details from the patron. She has given craft pieces as gifts to people she is close to. Hazel told me that presently she can't sell her work because it is too personal and she doesn't think others would appreciate the labour she has put into it. Specifically referring to a quilt she said: "It's like a family heirloom". At this point in her artistic development Grace doesn't feel ready to either publicly display or sell her work, but she is planning to do both in the upcoming future. Thus far Grace's class or studio work has been for herself or for a few family members. Even though her pieces are frequently displayed in her home, Grace admitted to being concerned about viewer reaction. Through their differences and similarities the notion of maker, recipient, viewer or buyer is present with all my participants. Moreover the motivation remains the same no matter where the final work resides; it's all about the sense of

pride, personal value and satisfaction the maker feels about their chosen studio practice.

12) Personal Value: Akin to the vivid memories brought forth by the early craft making, each of my participants had marvellous reactions to the personal value of craft making. Throughout the interviews I sensed that each of these women were very in tune with the benefits they reaped from their selected studio works. Pina was constantly expressing satisfaction in the creative process as well as in the exhilaration she felt when her piece was completed. She states *"For me it's the personal satisfaction! I love making things and getting right into it"*. Hazel's interview is often spotted with comments such as, *"I love it!"* and *"It's great!"* Hazel also told me that she derives personal satisfaction and pleasure from both the process and the completed piece. These positive sensations keep her wanting to do more. Sylvie too revealed that she loves making crafts; she gets an enormous reward from choosing the colourful materials, making the piece and seeing it completed. *"It's something that I love doing"*. Sylvie is enthusiastic about her craft making and enjoys the sensation of personal satisfaction. Sylvie is a proud craft maker and states *"I love making these*

ornaments!" Grace clearly and repeatedly voiced the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment she derives from her work. Grace finds the *hand-made* aspect of her work extremely rewarding. *"I love that feeling! I get a great sense of pride and pleasure from it."*

Conclusion:

The primary objective of this thesis was to inquire into the ***personal*** value that craft making provides for these particular four contemporary craft makers. This objective goes hand in hand with understanding why these women actively continue to make crafts even though craft making is often not deemed as significant as art making by society. Through my teaching, I had witnessed the many positive responses that craft makers encounter during a lesson. When I began to make inquiries into these personal experiences, I realized that there was little information or research that existed on this particular aspect of craft making. Due to this, I became drawn and motivated by this absence of information and I wanted to offer a viewpoint to Art Education that I thought was lacking. With this research I hoped not only to be able to provide my four participants with an opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns and beliefs, but I also wanted to inform myself as an art educator. For this undertaking I drew upon my personal teaching experiences, the knowledge I gleaned through relevant literature and, of course, the information, insight and results gathered and gained through the interviews with my four participants.

As the CODA Survey clearly shows, not only do many individuals make crafts but the *business* of craft making also has a significant impact on the economy. The survey also mentions that there are many positive and enriching aspects that craft making brings to individuals. My research focuses more on this latter aspect and my Data Analysis section clearly shows that craft making is very meaningful to these participants. Pertaining to this, art educators are always looking for art lessons that will provide a meaningful and engaging experience for students. I posit that craft making provides just this: a positive, engaging, meaningful, enriching and possibly even a memorable learning experience. Each of my participants vividly recalled an early and very positive craft making experience informed by a sensational, haptic event. I put forward that it is precisely this aspect that gives craft making the upper hand as a rewarding and enriching learning experience. Since it is often our tangible or sensory experiences that we retain and learn from the most and because craft making offers a substantial array of stimuli such as touching, smelling, and hearing in addition to seeing, craft making should provide participants with a remarkable and engaging learning experience. Not only does craft making fall under the currently acclaimed educational motto of *learning by doing* but the

activities actually go one step further because they offer the opportunity to *learn by doing and experiencing through the senses*.

Art educators can address and utilize craft making as an accessible, inviting, enjoyable, challenging, creative, and worthwhile form of learning. It is unfortunate that the few art education books that do refer to craft making are usually aimed at teaching young children. This study, because of its variety of significant craft making experiences over spans of time, demonstrates that craft making should be made available to a whole range of learners, not only to pre-school or elementary aged children. Craft making could be taught in high schools to adolescents, to adults and to older adults as well, in both educational and community settings. My teaching experiences as well as this research, confirms that adult individuals experience many positive and enriching aspects that craft making can provide. People of all ages should be able to bask in the personal gain and particular validation that comes from craft making. In fact several crafts allow for a range of precision and this can offer or enable those students who feel as though they are less talented, a feeling of ability, success, pride and self-esteem. Craft making can be viewed as an engaging and stimulating conduit to successful learning.

I believe that the results obtained from these interviews will be helpful for art educators because it will confirm to them that there is a need to recognize that many students want to make crafts, really enjoy making them and that there is a great sense of value and personal empowerment involved. Hopefully my research and any other like it will help the field of Art Education as a whole, to more readily accept and view craft making as engaging, meaningful and valuable. As a researcher I trust that my findings will provide educators with a convincing resource and encourage them to teach their students to make quality, individual or group crafts.

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APPENDIX #1

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Marie Louise Danese, for her Master's Thesis in the Art Education Department of Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of this research is to recognize and validate the personal and cultural meaning of craft making.

B. PROCEDURES

I have been informed that this research involves interviews about my craft making. It will consist of conversation along with the asking and answering of interview questions that will be conducted in a very considerate way. I am aware that the interviews will be tape-recorded; that the researcher will take notes, and that some photos of my work may be taken. The interviews will be conducted in a location that is convenient for both the researcher and myself. The research will require two to three meetings.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study will be either...
 - CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but not disclose my identity)
 - OR**
 - NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in the study results)
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-7481 or by email at areid@alcor.concordia.ca