

## NEWSLETTER

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## SAN FRANCISCO TRIP

**T**he Art Jewelry Forum's next trip is to San Francisco. The dates of the tour are Thursday, October 21st through Saturday, October 23rd. This is going to be a wonderful excursion filled with educational, cultural and festive events.

The trip is starting to take shape (there are so many venues to choose from in the San Francisco area that the committee is holding itself back from overwhelming you!!!) but ideas on the forefront include:

A day of gallery visiting in Palo Alto, San Francisco & Mill Valley. This will

be followed by dinner at AJF board member Susan Beech's spectacular home high on the hill in Tiburon. Susan will discuss her jewelry collection, and we will be able to enjoy all of her other artwork as well.

Another day will be spent in the East Bay visiting the Oakland Museum whose collection includes merry renk, Margaret DePatta & Peter Machiarini, considered by some the founders of art jewelry in the Bay Area. One of the last things Ken Trapp did at the Oakland Museum, before going on to become the chief curator at the Renwick, was to put together an excellent collection of contemporary California art jewelry. Then on to CCAC (California College of Arts & Crafts)

metals department with a tour by director Marilyn da Silva.

The Bay Area is home to many great jewelers. We are considering visiting the studios of Deb Lozier, Kent Raible, Janet Alix, Harriett Berman, Petra Class, Mariko Kusumoto, Heidi Nahser, and Marilyn & Jack da Silva - just to mention a few.

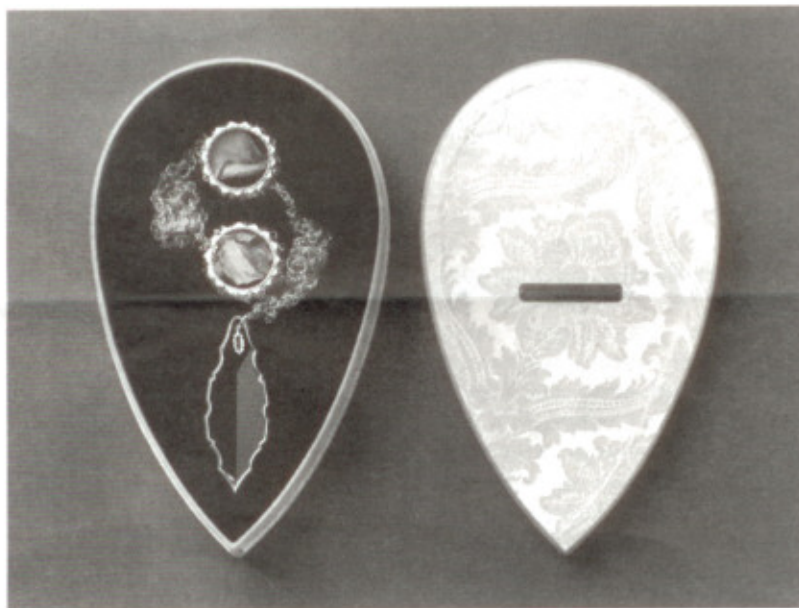
Our annual meeting will be held at the home of founding AJF member, Sylvia Ellessor. Sylvia is a wonderful hostess with an extensive jewelry collection and a fabulous home—the perfect environment to discuss future events for AJF.

The trip will culminate with the opening of a major jewelry show at the San

Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum titled, "BEYOND THE OBVIOUS RETHINKING JEWELRY," curated by Susan Cummins. The show will feature jewelry artists Jamie Bennett, Lisa Granlick, Keith Lewis, Bruce Metcalf, Sondra Sherman & Kiff Slemmons. Most of the jewelers will be in attendance, and there will be a panel discussion as well as individual presentations.

The committee is working on hotel and dinner accommodations. Trip applications will be mailed as more plans are finalized.

San Francisco is a wonderful City to visit, and the best month is October with fabulous weather and few tourists. You don't want to miss this trip!!!



Sherman, "Miss Havisham," Necklace in Box

## COLLECTING JEWELRY — FOR A MUSEUM OR YOURSELF

by Lloyd Herman

**F** For many of us, collecting seems like a human need only slightly less intense than food, shelter, sleep and sex. For some, collecting comes earlier in that hierarchy! Among the most interesting of collectors I have met are Lisa Englander of Racine, Wisconsin, and her husband Bruce Pepich, Director of the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts there. They collect in depth in many fields, including contemporary jewelry. Bruce agreed to talk with me a little about collecting, since his museum has become one of the most significant collectors of contemporary American craft, including art jewelry.

The Wustum Museum is unusual in that it was begun in 1941 without a collection, but has responded to offers of art objects that have shaped its mission as a fine arts museum.

Among the first was a collection of works on paper and block-printed textiles made during the depression in the Works Projects Administration. The textiles signalled the initiative toward collecting contemporary craft, but through the 1970s the museum focused on regional artists and expanding the works on paper collection.

Racine is an industrialized city, famous for Johnson's Wax and the Frank Lloyd Wright buildings that house the company. Consequently, Bruce believes that it is a community that values the work of the hand. Since the late 1980s the museum has decided to focus on contemporary craft, which wasn't otherwise being well represented in the region, but had always received a positive response there. Unlike the craft-exclusive American Craft Museum or Renwick Gallery, the Wustum collects work in clay, wood, fiber, glass and metal with emphasis equal to collecting paintings, works on paper and sculpture of all kinds. Their approach to exhibition organization is to examine works in every medium for suitability to an exhibition theme.

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cially jewelry, of which there were some 30 pieces—the first pieces of jewelry to enter the museum's collection.

"Karen's gift was of unbelievable quality, and was given for the good of the field and the community," Bruce recalls. "It was something of a sacrifice; she told me that she missed the pieces. Her spiritual connection to the artists and what her gift would do for the craft field and those artists' careers over-rode her own spiritual connection to the work.

This was a gift from the heart, and really helped make a solid foundation for the jewelry collection."

Others gifts from generous collectors have continued to enrich the Wustum's collection of contemporary craft and, with few funds for acquisition, the collection remains "donor-driven," growing to some 800 craft objects—about one third of the museum collection—since the Boyd gift in 1992.

How are decisions made? "I don't see the collection going in any one direction. I'm interested in showing very fine art jewelry, narrative work, nonprecious and recycled materials. We have a few production pieces, and an issue we are discussing just now is an offer of production works. We did accession a 100-piece collection of African jewelry because it was historically important and helped broaden our audience.

"I want to emphasize our connection to artists. Bob Ebendorf gave us three or four things by Boris Bally, then Boris gave us pieces. We've entered into long-term supportive relationships with artists who have been catalysts to introduce us to the work of other artists. It's an ongoing activity, creating a relationship between us and some of the artists, both in the collection and the exhibition program.

Bruce and Lisa personally collect contemporary jewelry, often choosing pieces that either might wear on a coat lapel. "I don't wear the earrings," Bruce laughed, "but in the area of brooches and some rings we look for things that we can share. We have an interesting jewelry collection, but it is done on a budget. We are surrounded in the museum by the crème de la crème of artifacts in our culture. Most of us are not in the financial ballpark to collect

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the kinds of objects that are in a museum. Lisa is a painter with a great color sense and we never buy work that won't go with the shape of our heads." Bruce chuckled.

When asked whether he and Lisa buy jewelry that would not be worn, he replied, "We haven't bought many pieces like that, but the museum has bought pieces for the collection that we know wouldn't be worn, but they were too wonderful not to have. I know the museum has received gifts of jewelry from some collectors who have presented the pieces to us because they were problematic to wear. Right now we have one or two things that because of their weight create certain problems with clothing in our personal collection, but we work around that. From the standpoint of our personal collection, we're acquiring on a small enough scale, but we require ourselves to really work the object through an acquisition process (like that of a museum) before taking it home."

So what is the philosophical difference, if any, between the way a museum collects and how we, as individuals, do? The Wustum is interested in acquiring works by American master craftspeople, but Bruce says that they are most interested in the quality of the individual piece, whether by an established master or a newcomer. In that, he and his wife share a collecting viewpoint with the museum—and perhaps with AJF members.

The majority of AJF members are women, not surprisingly because women wear jewelry more than men. I believe that most who one day realize that the number of examples of contemporary jewelry they own constitutes a "collection" made choices very unlike those that I, Bruce Pepich or another museum curator might make. Their choices were made not only with personal taste, but an idea of where and how a piece would be worn and with what—its wearability taking precedence over artistic content.

There is a pattern in most personal collecting of craft art. Early purchases are often timid—sometimes almost souvenirs of an artist rather than prime examples of that person's creativity. As the comfort level of spending increasing amounts of money improves, though, collectors make bolder and bolder purchases. Eventually collectors will attempt to see an exhibition early so that they may select what in their eyes is the best in the show (and within their comfort level to spend).

How do these changes occur? The fancy word is connoisseurship. What it means is simply looking and evaluating - examining your own criteria for ownership. Though no museum professional will advise you to collect with investment in mind, it is more likely that an artist's most ambitious work will appreciate in value more than a minor one will. An example in jewelry would be to buy the important brooch or neckpiece, not the earrings that provide less opportunity for artistic expression because of their scale and their functional requirements.

What will eventually happen to your collection? Jewelry in the past has been treasured for its beauty and for the exceptional quality of gemstones or workmanship. Art jewelry today, though, does not rely on precious metal or

gems, so will it hold its value if willed to your heirs? If you have an eventual museum gift in mind, find out what interest the intended recipient museum has in contemporary art jewelry.

Each of us has a unique history of visual experiences. As children we begin to choose and sort, and keep objects that at the time have value or interest. We are bombarded with a thousand visual bits of data daily, from television commercials to architecture and automobiles, and what we see in shops and museums. Our choices are guided by our visual histories, our connoisseurship. And that is what collecting is based on!

## METAL ARTS GUILD

AJF members were received by the "Metal Arts Guild of the SF Bay Area with infectious enthusiasm at a recent panel discussion the guild hosted in SF. AJF members Susan Beech, Donna Briskin, Sharon Campbell, and Elizabeth Shypertt were invited by Guild and AJF member Carol Windsor to share their views on collecting art jewelry. Over thirty artists, gallery owners and other AJF members attended and the interchange was lively, frank and informative.

Many artists found it helpful getting to know the collectors as individuals and learn what they think about when considering purchasing a piece of jewelry. The panelists were given over 40 questions to think about before the meeting, such as: Have you ever bought a piece that you knew you wouldn't wear? Do you have any allegiance to domestic work or do you collect internationally? Do you like to discover emerging



Carol Windsor, "Pacifier Pendant"

artists or prefer purchasing work of established artists? Do you favor narrative or formally driven work? Where do you keep your collection when it isn't being worn? sparked a lot of conversation.

Another hot topic was the evolving etiquette between artists, collectors and galleries. Key concerns included: the desirability of a closer relationship between collector and artist; protecting the interests of the gallery which gives artists a place to show their work for a sustained period, showcases new work, and makes available large bodies of work for the collector's consideration. The areas where interests overlap should be sorted out; all three groups were challenged to think more about how they can work together to support art jewelry as a whole.

After the program artists were excited to see the jewelry the panelists had worn and brought to share. The entire event was so special it is highly recommended; the list of questions is available to facilitate future meetings.

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