

Sign at the Museum of the American Arts & Crafts Movement

THE MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT OPENS TO THE PUBLIC ... FINALLY

By Robert Rust

The long-awaited opening of this fantastic collection of all things Arts and Crafts Era had its soft opening last September to members and locals. A Gala Opening was held on December 3rd 2021 (2 years late due to delays and Covid 19) and it was spectacular: the people, the food and the still-controversial architecture. Of course, many of the locals, politicians and donors and builders came to be honored... But we – Pam and I and our Collector, Dealer and Craftsman – came to see ‘The Stuff’ on display, in the upper four floors above the grand central atrium.

The somewhat shy collector-donor-designer Rudolfo Ciccarello of this magnificent undertaking was lauded by his architect, and other dignitaries, including Auctioneer and Star of Antiques Roadshow David Rago.

Unfortunately, for those attending the opening that evening, the collections were not open to viewing. We came a day early to wander through the galleries of Furniture (Craftsman, Roycroft, Limbert and others), Lighting (Stickley, Van Erp, Toothaker, Dard Hunter and many more), Metalwork (Roycroft, Stickley, Jarvie, and more), and even Pianos by Baillie-Scott (UK) and Craftsman Workshops!

continued on next page



*Gustav Stickley
Craftsman furniture on
display, featuring inlay*

MAAC OPENING (CONT)

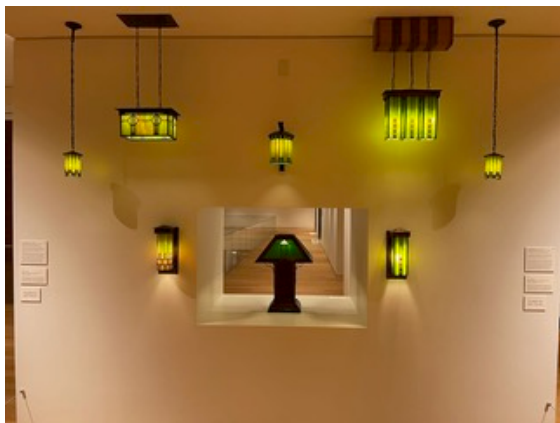


Rare original Van Briggles store sign in a modern frame

The inaugural special exhibition galleries, which will change periodically, were The Work of the Roycrofters including all aspects of their craftsmanship, books, copper, lamps, furniture and also stained glass. Pam and I contributed a few items of silver, ceramics and ephemera (including photography) to this opening exhibit.

The other opening exhibition, and an area that I have collected since university, is Pictorial Photography of the 1st quarter of the 20th century. It featured the work of all the greats from the United States and the United Kingdom and Europe. Some of note were, Steglitz, Coburn, Käsebier, Day, Emerson and in all more than 50 different artists.

It takes more than one visit to see the collections with over 1000 items (I suspect) in the museum's holdings. We will be back many times and later this year as a traveling exhibit of Charles Rennie



A display of lighting fixtures by the Roycroft Shops and Victor Toothaker Shop of East Aurora (c. 1904-1929)

Mackintosh will take over the two special galleries on the second floor. (See Dennis Barrett's review of the exhibit on page 5).

I hope to present a talk on the collections to the CACS membership some time in the coming year.



The Grand Opening Gala inside the Atrium (December 3, 2021)



The MAACM in St. Petersburg by night

TED ELLISON: A STOKING SUCCESS STORY



Fireplace by Theodore Ellison

By Cynthia Shaw

On Saturday, January 15th, CACS held its second virtual Winter Symposium, featuring a presentation by Theodore Ellison entitled "From Hand to Hearth: The Untold Story of American Mosaic Fireplaces." The focus of our last newsletter's Artist Corner article by Julie Leidel, Ellison discovered the Arts and Crafts movement in high school when he visited Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic Hollyhock House in Los Angeles. A decade later, while pursuing an art degree in ceramics at San Francisco State, he became fascinated with glassmaking (then and still a technically challenging field undertaken by few artisans). In 1998, after apprenticing as a leaded glass window maker, Ellison decided to create his own domestic designs, working with both glass and mosaics. Eventually joining Artistic License, a guild of professional revival practitioners in the Bay Area, he met and mentored under an "old-school" tile setter (Riley Doty) who taught him some time-honored traditions of the trade.

This illustrative talk focused mostly on the historical precedents set by architects like George W. Maher (b. 1864; d. 1926), a Chicago Prairie School architect noted for melding Craftsman characteristics with more traditional aesthetic elements (see contributor Tina Strauss' related sidebar). After visiting every extant Maher-designed residence in Oak Park, IL, Ted realized that not only were Maher's spectacular leaded windows and mosaic fireplace surrounds (often

fabricated by the renowned firm of Giannini & Hilgart) undocumented, but their homeowners were sadly uneducated about their significance (unlike comparable, well-known glass and mosaic works by Louis Sullivan, Louis Comfort Tiffany, John La Farge, Greene & Greene and Frank Lloyd Wright). Ellison is currently writing a book to spread the word about these forgotten masterpieces (along with a guide on best practices for their restoration).

Now a self-taught master of his craft, it's clear that Ted is as passionate as he is protective of the fragile mosaic designs he custom-creates for his clients (typically shipped and delivered pre-mounted on a backer board). While we didn't get to see any of his personal works (or his own home's Native American-inspired fireplace) that night, we are still basking in the afterglow of such a hearth-warming success story!



Right: Stained glass window by George Maher from the James Patten House in Evanston, IL (structure demolished)

Below: Fireplace by Theodore Ellison



MORE ON MAHER

By Tina Strauss, Director of the Victorian Society Chicago Summer School Program

As a newcomer to Denver – and a former resident of Chicago – I was thrilled to hear the topic of the CACS Winter Symposium “From Hand to Heart: The Untold Story of American Glass Mosaic Fireplaces” with Ted Ellison. I was delighted to watch this review of the George Maher houses where these fireplaces were found. George Maher is one of my favorite Chicago area architects. Having been a docent in Chicago, I gave tours of Kenilworth where George Maher lived and worked from 1893 until his death in 1926.

George Maher was born in West Virginia and lived in Indiana. He was an apprentice in an architecture firm in Chicago by the age of 13. He eventually worked in the office of Joseph Lyman Silsbee, a notable Victorian architect, along with a fellow draftsman, Frank Lloyd Wright. Maher opened his own office in 1889 and did his first design in Kenilworth in 1892. He moved there with his wife the following year into a house he designed. Over the next 30+ years, he completed 40 buildings in Kenilworth, as well as buildings in Chicago, Wisconsin, Minnesota, California and New Jersey.

Maher’s style evolved over his career, beginning with Victorian style cottages, some with 2 stories, and progressed to large Queen Anne homes. He developed his own unique Prairie Style during the

period from the late 1890s to 1910. His Prairie Style designs followed his motif rhythm theory of decoration (typically using nature as an inspiration, such as flowers and thistles). Maher used his own original color palette with his houses, different from that of Frank Lloyd Wright. Maher had several major commissions at this time such as Pleasant Home in Oak Park (1897), the James Patten house in Evanston (1901) and the remodeling of the Nickerson Mansion in Chicago (1901, now the Driehaus Museum). Several of the houses that Ted Ellison referenced were from this period.

Maher was profoundly influenced by the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis. Here is where he first learned about architectural styles from contemporary European design. He subsequently built several homes incorporating elements of the British Arts and Crafts style and/or the Vienna Secession.

George Maher designed buildings for Northwestern University in Evanston, Il. and administrative offices and homes for the J.R. Watkins Medical Supply Company in Winona, Minnesota. After World War I, Maher formed an architecture office with his son, Philip, designing buildings and landscape plans throughout Chicago. George Maher died in 1926 after several years of poor health.

I hope this helps to provide some background on the talented architect who frequently included mosaics in his fireplace designs. There is a wonderful example of his fireplace design in the American decorative art galleries in the Art Institute of Chicago. Several still remain in his houses, as Ted so enthusiastically showed us.



Fireplace in Stewart Inn (Wausau, WI)

MACKINTOSH IN ALBUQUERQUE; HOFFMANN IN DENVER

By Dennis Barrett

On the third week in January, having talked up the Charles Rennie Mackintosh exhibit in Albuquerque in these columns, I decided to fly down to New Mexico to catch it in its *last* week there (before it moved on to Florida). Two days later I drove the few miles to Denver's Kirkland Museum to see the Josef Hoffmann show on its *first* day. Glorious juxtaposition, as it turned out! What a week! I am struck with the similarities and differences, and the numerous connections I found between the two.

To start with, the expense. The one-hour flight to Albuquerque is not expensive – when reserved well ahead. But cost the earth at the last minute! Add to that the car rental, to drive the few miles from the airport to the museum, and the cost to replace the camera which I managed to lose (after taking photos, also lost, for this article.) Whereas in Denver, I drove my car to the Kirkland, easily found street parking, and, as a member, paid no admission fee. And for once I studiously avoided the temptations of the gift shop – so it all cost me nothing.

Then there's the scope. The Mackintosh show, *Designing the New: Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Glasgow Style*, is, as intended, a blockbuster. I cheerfully spent the day on it. The Hoffmann show, *Josef Hoffmann's Vienna*, is a more modest affair, and you can see it in an hour or two. The Mackintosh show draws on the holdings of all the major Glasgow museums and many private collections too; the Hoffmann exhibit uses all objects that are held by the Kirkland, although half of them have not been shown before.



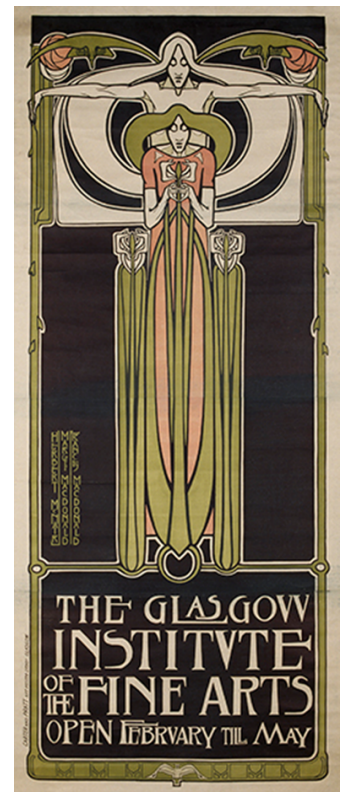
*Tall chair by Mackintosh.
Elegant... and uncomfortable.*



*Bentwood chair by Hoffman.
Elegant... and uncomfortable.*

But the two protagonists had a lot in common – beside their obvious mutual affection for squares, and for exquisite high-back chairs so uncomfortable as to be unusable. (The latter trait shared with Frank Lloyd Wright, whose name comes up often when considering these two.) Mackintosh and Hoffmann both trained as architects, but they designed not only buildings, but everything *inside* their buildings too, so that the whole caboodle impressed as a single “total work of art” (translation of the German mouthful, *Gesamtkunstwerk*.) Both also benefited from scholarships that sent them to Italy to study Italian art, early in their careers.

Both the exhibits seek to contextualize their work, emphasizing their influencers and their fellow workers: Mackintosh's in the Glasgow Style and Hoffmann's in the Viennese Secession and Wiener Werkstätte. Mackintosh was one of “The Four” -- he and his wife, Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, her sister Frances, and *her* husband, James Herbert MacNair¹ -- and the unofficial fifth, usually uncredited, Talwin Morris; and a major influencer of them all, well documented, was Aubrey Beardsley. Hoffmann is generally



Giant size poster in the Glasgow Style

MACKINTOSH & HOFFMAN (CONT)

referenced along with his fellows in the Secession, especially Koloman Moser and Gustav Klimt, and his relation to the firms that implemented his designs, Jacob and Josef Kohn, and later the Gebrüder Thonet; a major influence on Hoffmann was Mackintosh! Often when friends of an artist are roped in for a show, I am suspicious that the motive is actually padding, but here the aim seems truly to place the artists in context, and it succeeds admirably.

Mackintosh was invited to Vienna, and furnished a whole room, at the 8th Secession exhibit in 1900. Mackintosh and Hoffmann respected each others' work, and are known to have met in 1910. For the exhibit mounted in 1933 after both Charles and Margaret had died, Hoffmann was unable to travel (from Nazi Germany) but sent a glowing appraisal of Mackintosh's continuing influence. And at the annual gathering of Continental Artists after his death, a single toast was raised, contrary to custom, to Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

How are these two exhibits relevant to *our* concern, the Arts & Crafts Movement? Essentially, the movements in Glasgow and Vienna were, like the Arts & Crafts movement, rebellions against the prevailing standards in the art world. More specifically, various authors have discerned influences extending in both directions between the British Arts & Crafts Movement and the Glasgow Style, as well as between British Arts & Crafts and the Secession and Wienerwerkstätte. (These interactions occurred largely before 1900,



Hugh Grant contemplates the re-creation of the Kabarett Fledermaus in the Hoffmann exhibit at the Kirkland ... while listening to a Strauss waltz. Lots of squares.



Mackintosh place setting on permanent view at the Kirkland. At least a part might have been used at the Fledermaus.

when the Arts & Crafts Movement was decades old in Britain, but just getting underway in the United States.) William Morris himself came to the Glasgow School of Art to lecture on Arts and Crafts when Mackintosh was a student, in 1889. His lecture was intended to set the direction of growth, and it did.

A stark difference between Glasgow and Vienna lay in the importance of women. I can't recall a single mention of a non-male in the Vienna show, while in Glasgow the women were given equal billing with the men. Two of "The Four" were women, and women were equally important in all the artistic offshoots of the Glasgow Style. At the time, the woman suffrage movements were just starting up on both sides of the Atlantic; women did not gain the right to vote till 1918 in Britain, 1920 in the U.S.

One of the hallmarks of the Kirkland Museum is to show not only the furniture of the period, but with it the fine art that would have accompanied it. In the Hoffmann exhibit they have carried the motive one dimension further in the direction of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and provided music of the period too. In the background but never loud enough to distract, there is an eight-hour soundtrack of opera and operetta, Strauss and Lehar and many others, curated by the founding director, Hugh Grant, from his extensive recordings library. And you can download it.

Technology plays a further role in both exhibits. Mackintosh was first an architect, and you couldn't

continued on next page



The continuing Viennese presence in Gallery 4 of the Kirkland

very well bring buildings from Scotland to New Mexico. But you could record tours of the buildings with drones that explore every nook and cranny, and that's what the organizers have done. Likewise in Denver, since the magazine of the Secession, *Ver Sacrum*, is too delicate to allow the public to thumb through its pages, we are provided with images of the whole first number on an electronic tablet; swipe your finger across and the page turns.

The imposing large pieces in the Mackintosh exhibit are the 15-by- 5-foot May Queen, by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, and four 8-foot-high posters. They are impressive! In Denver, there is a recreation of the *Fledermaus* cabaret, with tables emerging seamlessly from a photograph (one of three extant) of the underground gathering spot that thrived briefly in Vienna. One can peruse the menu (reds and whites from Germany and Austria, but the expensive champagnes, Heidsieck and Veuve Clicquot, imported from France!) But, disappointingly, the tables are not set with silverware. Aha! In Gallery 4 there is a full place setting of Charles Rennie Mackintosh flatware. Don't miss the complementary Glasgow-Style pieces that are on display at the Kirkland all the time.

The Hoffmann exhibit is happy throughout, a celebration. In the Mackintosh exhibit, there are forebodings (all the beautiful *wooden* fittings of the library in the Glasgow School of Art, photographed before 2014, induce a momentary shudder.) But the real sadness is saved for the very end. Mackintosh,

while revered on the continent, was largely without honor in his own country; he had few commissions, few buildings built in his lifetime. He died of untreatable cancer of the tongue at age 60, unable to speak at the end. Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh outlived him by only four years. And his great masterpiece, the Glasgow School of Art, burned in 2014 and burned to the ground in 2018. I weep as I think of it.

The Mackintosh exhibit has left nearby New Mexico, but it's not too late to see it! It will be on exhibit at The Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement in St. Petersburg, FL, from 11 March to 5 June. (See Robert Rust's account of the opening of that museum earlier in this newsletter).

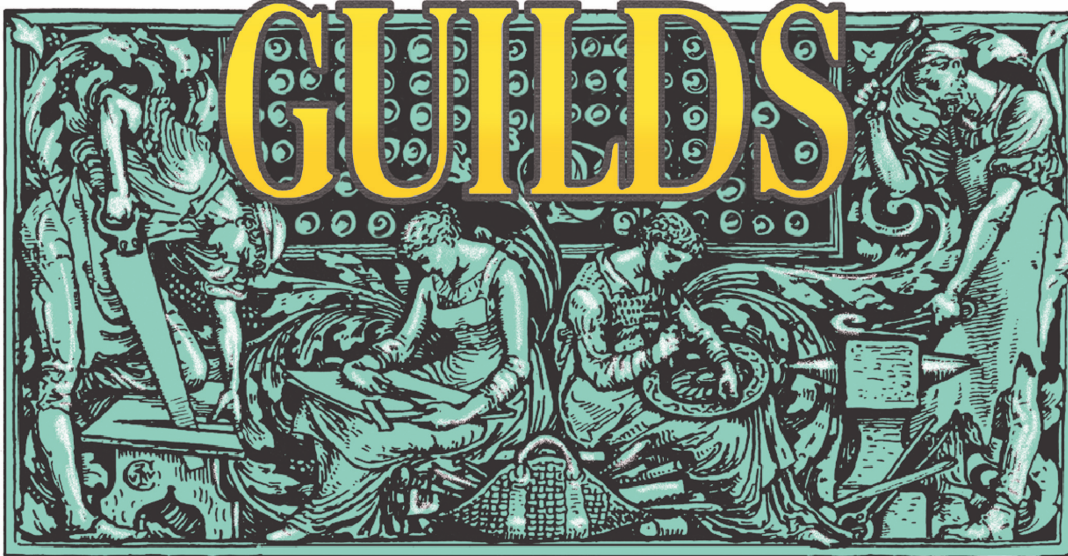
After that, the various objects will scatter to Glasgow's museums and various private collectors. The Hoffmann exhibit, easily accessed in Denver, will be at the Kirkland till 3 April. (Then in June the Frank Lloyd Wright show takes over Gallery 12. See the Kirkland website for details of the lectures regarding the FLW exhibit, which start as soon as March.)

Note: The spelling (or mis-spelling) of both Mackintosh and MacNair seemed almost random, even in the authoritative book accompanying the exhibit. Until I found the notes: McIntosh switched to Mackintosh in 1893; McNair changed to MacNair upon marrying, in 1899.



A poem by Rainer Maria Rilke in the opulent publication of the Secession, Ver Sacrum. All 12 issues of the first year are displayed at the Kirkland.

The Colorado Arts and Crafts Society Presents
A GATHERING OF THE



THE COLORADO ARTS AND CRAFTS SOCIETY'S ARTISANS GUILD FORUM
A PRESENTATION OF THE BEST IN COLORADO FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2022
AMERICAN MOUNTAINEERING CENTER
710 10TH STREET, GOLDEN, COLORADO
10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

Art | Calligraphy | Ceramics | Glass | Home Decor | Illustration
Jewelry | Leather | Metal | Paper | Textiles | Woodwork

ARTISANS WILL SELL THEIR WARES
& GIVE HANDS-ON DEMONSTRATIONS
OR PRESENTATIONS ABOUT THEIR CRAFT

FREE ADMISSION



For more information email Cynthia @ cshaw8623@gmail.com | www.coloarts-crafts.org

DON'T MISS CACS LIBRARY SALE AND SILENT AUCTION AT THE GOG

Since our establishment in 1997, the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society has amassed a stellar collection of antique and contemporary publications encompassing every aspect of the Arts and Crafts Movement. As a fund-raising effort for our volunteer, non-profit organization, we have decided to sell the entire assortment of books and periodicals - including original leather-bound book sets printed by Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters - at this year's "Gathering of the Guilds." These items will be carefully priced, with the hope that they will end up in your good hands and homes! We will also host a silent auction featuring items donated by artists and vendors.

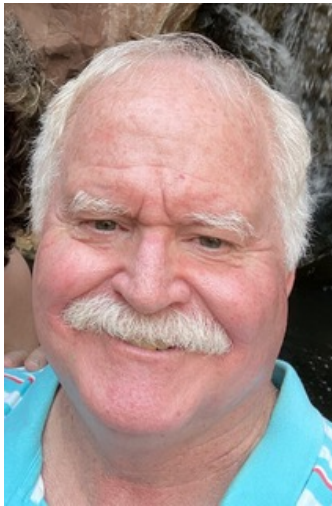


ARTIST CORNER

LIVING ARTISTS INSPIRED BY THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT



by Julie Leidel



Jeff Icenhower

For this installment of our Artist's Corner, I interviewed our very own Jeff Icenhower. Jeff is a CACS board member, and the owner of Mission West Arts & Crafts Leather. He will be exhibiting at our Gathering of the Guilds show and sale on April 24, 2022 in Golden. Jeff's leatherwork is unique, and unlike any leather work since the Arts & Crafts era. His website is mwaac.com.

What drew you to the medium of leather?

When I was 10 years old, I participated in a 4-H leather working program. I learned the fundamentals of decorating, assembling and finishing leather projects. Since then, my creative learning has been informal and self-taught. My dad had a set of the basic tools that he passed on to me. I used those for the 4-H lessons, then picked them

up again when I was in college and made belts for my friends to generate some needed spending money. I began creating items using traditional decorating themes from the American West, the kind of work seen on cowboys' saddles and holsters.

The Arts and Crafts aesthetic is a major theme in your leather work. Tell us how you fell in love with this era and how it inspires your art?

I have always preferred the simple elegance of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic. The oak built-ins, the stained glass, the pottery, the hammered copper and the solid comfortable furniture all appealed to me. I knew what I liked, although I had no name for it. Then one day in 2014, shortly after moving back to Colorado, my wife and I were visiting some friends whose home was a beautiful example of Arts and Crafts style. They were also connected with the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society. Talking with them I put a name and a history to this aesthetic I had so long admired.

Oddly, to my mind, there were no leather accessories in my friend's home. Leather seemed a natural fit with the Arts and Crafts aesthetic. Intrigued by this, I began to explore the use of leather in Arts and Crafts design. Discovering a reprint of a 1919 Roycroft Copper and Leather catalog online provided my first images of Arts

continued on next page



ICENHOWER (CONT.)

and Crafts leatherwork. Since then I have explored the history and themes of the Arts and Crafts movement, drawing on them to inform both the types of items I create and the decorative elements I add to them. One particularly helpful resource has been the book, "Artistic Leather of the Arts and Crafts Era," written by Daniel Lees.

My appreciation for this movement has only deepened as I have grown to understand its foundation. Early proponents of The Arts and Crafts movement recognized the value in handmade items of all kinds. Artists are free to develop new themes and to draw on the movement's deep history of design elements. Acceptance is driven not by some 'rule book', but by the investment of the artist's "head, heart and hand," as so clearly articulated by Elbert Hubbard. Working in the Arts and Crafts provides a wealth of different creative opportunities.

Tell us a bit about your artistic process, from conception to final product?

The process for creating something out of leather is usually straightforward and consists of similar steps from one project to the next. Once an item is selected, leather must be chosen and cut out, dye and finish applied, and final assembly completed.



Leather bookends by Jeff Icenhower

Like any craft, the mechanics must be understood and respected to make the best final product. Besides mastering the needed skills, one significant challenge is determining the amount and kind of decoration to be added. William Morris famously said, "Have nothing in your home that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful." Working with leather I often find myself making something that can be both useful and beautiful. The intended use of the item often drives the selection of decorative elements. A simple leather pad or set of bookends with matching table runner provide the opportunity to decorate the leather with almost any of the recurring Arts and Crafts themes. On the other hand, making a leather-covered picture frame often calls for a more subtle touch, for the frame should complement the artwork without overwhelming it. In the latter case, the leatherwork shines by providing support to the primary piece, not as a stand-alone work.

What is one of your greatest achievements, or do you have a favorite project?

My favorite project (so far) was a set of bookends and a table runner that I sold several years ago. I started with a Roycroft set as the inspiration, and the finished product was striking. I am, admittedly, always trying to create a new favorite project.

continued on next page

Leather clock by Jeff Icenhower

ICENHOWER (CONT.)

As far as creative achievements, I've explored some non-traditional uses of leather that have proven very successful. Leather can be molded when wet and will hold its shape when dry, a characteristic that allows the creation of a tray in the shape of a Gingko leaf. It is simple, unique and beautiful. For another innovation I have used leather carving to reproduce the effect of classic line drawings. This produces a subtle image that can be used to good effect for favorite pets and portraits taken from photographs.

What are some of the lessons you've learned in working with leather over the years?

The difference between a dreamer and a craftsperson is time in the shop. I believe almost anyone can learn to be an effective leatherworker. However, few people are willing to invest the time needed to learn the necessary skills and to actually make items. Another thing I have learned is people are not as critical of my work as I am. As an artist, I have had to avoid pointing out 'flaws' I perceive in work I have done to potential owners of those items. Finally, people love leather and they appreciate quality craftsmanship. This makes working as a leather craftsman a true delight.

WE'RE MOVING!



NEW LOCATION GRAND OPENING
APRIL 23 10AM-6PM | 1028 S. GAYLORD ST. DENVER, CO



The Arts & Crafts Messenger, the newsletter of the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society, is published quarterly for the society's members as part of their membership contribution. Send comments to polly@codyssia.com. All articles are ©2022 the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society, with rights reverting to the authors after publication.

Directors & Officers of the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society:

President:

Mark Davidson 303.355.8582
mdavidson@fwlaw.com

Vice President / Education Chair:

Cynthia Shaw 303.324.1269
cshaw8623@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Beth Bradford 303.778.0580
bbradford6@gmail.com

Secretary:

Lexi Erickson 303.882.7775
jerick99@mac.com

Membership Chair:

Helene Arendt 303.885.1159
csbmetalsmith.com

Multimedia Chair:

Julie Leidel 303.263.8577
thebungalowcraft.com

Tour Coordinator:

Robert Rust 720.732.6922
2rfinearts.com

Newsletter:

Polly Washburn 303.669.6399
codyssia.com

Directors-At-Large:

Dennis Barrett 303.744.8682
Jeff Icenhower 970.310.0756

All correspondence concerning the society or membership should be sent to Colorado Arts & Crafts Society, 8623 Garland Court, Arvada, CO 80005 | www.coloarts-crafts.org



www.coloarts-crafts.org
413 S. Humboldt St.
Denver, CO 80209

A Year of CACS Membership

Annual membership fees are below. You can make your membership payment through PayPal to: [Paypal.me/CACSmembership](https://www.paypal.com/US/merchstore/CACSmembership).

Checks can also be made out to the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society and mailed to:
Beth Bradford at 413 S. Humboldt St. Denver, CO 80209.

Please contact our membership chair, Helene Arendt at CACSmembership@gmail.com with any questions.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/GIFT FORM

Clip out this message for your gift recipient:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Full-time-student membership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Artisan/Guild membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family membership (same address required) | <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Individual membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$60 Organization or Business membership | <input type="checkbox"/> GIFT MEMBERSHIP |

Name _____

Organization or Business _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

