

CRAFT YEAR 2007 REPORT

With the assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Crafts Federation/Fédération canadienne des métiers d'art (CCF/FCMA) organized Craft Year 2007, a year-long nation-wide celebration of Canada's fine craft culture. Through our connections in the contemporary fine craft community, the CCF/FCMA encouraged all facets of the fine craft scene to participate, including museums and galleries, educational institutes, arts publishers, single media organizations, collectives and even individual craft artists. Many heeded our call, and joined in on the celebration by hosting fine craft exhibitions, seminars, workshops, lectures and conferences, and by taking on new activities or challenges in the fine craft field. All these events combined gave life to the Craft Year 2007 celebration, with 712 events taking place across the country.

With the funds from the Canada Council for the Arts, the CCF/FCMA was able to create an online hub for all the special Craft Year activity, at www.craftyear2007.ca. This website acted as a gathering point, where visitors could learn about activity happening in their region, other areas of the country, and even Canadian participation in international events. Visitors could also learn more about fine craft by reading articles on Canadian fine craft by Canadian authors in our Online Library, spread the word to others by sending a Craft Year 2007 online postcard, see the work of Canadian craftspeople and read about our artists in the showcase gallery.

The Craft Year 2007 website featured the work of our top craftspeople, and informed the public of the high level of fine craft activity in Canada today. It helped us to expand our audience, develop awareness and increase markets nationally and internationally.

This grant allowed the CCF/FCMA to build a website dedicated to contemporary fine craft in Canada, an item which was lacking from our online community. Prior to Craft Year 2007, there were many fascinating sites about fine craft organizations, museums and galleries with fine craft collections, and sites for individual artists, but nowhere was there a gathering place where individuals from the many sectors within the community could celebrate their activities together. The Craft Year project truly became a



Above: Antoine Lamarche, *Wine Glass*, 2002

project of unification – it got us all talking, working together, and celebrating our successes.

One of the main reasons the CCF/FCMA chose to create such a broad celebration was to highlight the fine craft activity that we, within the national scope of craft, knew was taking place across the country. It was our goal to make the many communities of fine craft stand and say, “we are here, we are active, and we are talented – take notice”, not only to celebrate their talents but to be recognized, to find each other, to make connections and to inspire even more activity into the future.

In fact, Craft Year 2007 inspired more activity than even the CCF/FCMA expected... much more. When plans for the event started to take shape over five years ago, the original Craft Year planning committee had hoped to record between fifty to a hundred events across the country. At the close of 2007 there were 712 events listed on the Craft Year 2007 website as part of the celebration. An unprecedented number of exhibitions, special events, fine craft sales, workshops, lectures, book launches and conferences took place across the country, many of which were inspired by the Craft year 2007 celebration. We heard from a number of young craftspeople who put together their first group exhibition, attended their first craft conference or to took new classes to improve their skills, all inspired by Craft Year 2007's rallying call.

Organizations, institutions, guilds and individual craftspeople latched on to the project, and an awareness campaign spread through media releases, email links and word of mouth until www.craftyear2007.ca had over 19,000 hits by over 5500 unique visitors. A surprising number of pages were viewed from other countries, including many American and European visitors – which had the unexpected but very valuable effect of raising our international presence. The Canadian Crafts Federation has since been contacted by the World Craft Council, and has re-established our connection to the organization since the days of the Canadian Crafts Council. An American craft organization, the

Craft Organization Development Association, was even inspired to get involved, holding their annual conference outside of the United States for the first time ever in 2007. Another major connection came from the Cheongju International Craft Biennale organizing committee from Cheongju, South Korea, who while visiting Vancouver, met with representatives of our member organization: the Crafts Association of British Columbia. Our representatives there informed the committee of the Craft Year 2007 event and the Canadian Crafts Federation, and a fantastic collaboration was born. Canada is now slated to be the 2009 Cheongju International Craft Biennale's official guest country, our next major project to promote Canadian fine craft – and this time on an international stage.

Back at home, Craft Year 2007 inspired even more activity. Major conferences were held on Canadian soil, including a special College-funded event that coincided with the CODA conference in Calgary. The Alberta College of Art and Design's craft departments joined forces to develop Invisible/Visible, a conference directed at exposing the talents of Canadian fine craftspeople and creating a discourse around contemporary craft. Another even larger fine craft conference, Neocraft, was held in Halifax at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design University. This conference raised even more international awareness for Canada, as many of the 24 speakers hailed from countries as far as England, Ireland, Wales and Sweden.

As impressive as the national and international events Craft Year 2007 inspired are, it cannot be forgotten that the majority of Craft Year events were grassroots endeavors by small, new and collective organizations. Galleries in small towns and rural areas held Craft Year events just as those in the major urban centers did. Great examples of the far reaches of Craft Year 2007 include a national juried exhibition which took place in small town Port Perry Ontario at Meta4 Gallery, a series of rug hooking workshops in rural Raleigh, Newfoundland, and a national touring exhibition of work by members of the Metal Arts Guild of Canada which traveled to

large city centers like Calgary, Toronto and Halifax, but also small towns like Haliburton, Ontario and Iqaluit, Nunavut.

The impact this grant has had on our organization was stronger than anticipated. In the short term, it brought a larger traffic flow to the CCF/FCMA, and a renewed interest in national Canadian craft activity. In the long term, it gave us a new level of recognition, and planted the seed of our organization in the minds of those involved in the visual arts of Canada. The project was a catalyst for action, and helped raise awareness for our organization and our varied media. Craft Year 2007 was such a success, that the CCF/FCMA board has passed a motion to continue the practice on a regular basis, with the next Craft Year celebration planned for 2015.

Perhaps the most important benefit which arose from the Craft Year 2007 project was the increased number of opportunities to fine craft artists. A popular section of the website was our 'participate' page, where individuals and organizations could find out how to be involved. One aspect of this page was the 'opportunities' section, which listed a calendar of calls for entry specifically focused on fine craft media. Over 60 calls for entry were posted to this page, a terrific resource for individuals interested in having their work shown in exhibitions or looking to participate in juried, high-level fine craft sales.

The Canada Council grant allowed the CCF/FCMA to experiment online, and to develop new methods of disseminating information. The Craft year 2007 website was a great development experience for the organization, and has already begun to change the way we look at our larger CCF/FCMA website, as well as future project-specific sites. Plans have been put in motion to give our main website a much-needed facelift, where we will incorporate many of the Craft Year 2007 functions. This will give the data compiled from Craft Year 2007 a longer life, allow us to build legacy content and bring new, functioning database structures to the main site.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following details the sections of our website which were developed with the assistance of funding from the Canada Council for the Arts.

FEATURED ARTIST

Five high-profile fine craft artists were featured on a revolving basis on the main home page of www.craftyear2007.ca throughout the course of the year. The following artists had six images presented on the home page, with a larger biography and gallery up all year long in the showcase section (for more information see below): Peter Powning, New Brunswick, Susan Low-Ber, Ontario, Kai Chan, Ontario, Antoine Lamarche, Quebec, Michael Hosaluk, Saskatchewan

INTRODUCTION

Featuring images of excellent fine craft by artists from across the country, the introduction page informed visitors about the CCF/FCMA and about Craft Year 2007 and how it began.

EVENTS

The events section of the website was split into two sectors, one a database with information on all the activities taking place across Canada, and the other a listing of special occurrences which did not necessarily fall under the categories outlined in the events database. The database featured over 700 events, and could be viewed in a yearly, monthly, weekly or daily calendar. Visitors could search the database by location, material, event type, or with a general word search to locate information about events they were interested in. This was the most popular section of our website by far. The highlighted events page featured information about special book launches, magazine issues featuring fine craft, as well as new websites and television airings of fine craft programming. This section also broke down the activities of each provincial craft council, so visitors could see exactly what each of our member organizations was planning for the special year.

WHO'S INVOLVED

The Who's Involved section became a great resource for visitors interested in organizations, institutions and artists involved in Craft Year 2007. The page featured a listing of links to websites with a tie to fine craft in its various media.

PARTICIPATE

This section featured many different pages of information for those interested in stepping beyond the role of a viewer. There we posted an invitation to participate, a submit form where artists, galleries and promoters could inform us of their Craft year 2007 activities, an opportunities calendar which featured calls for entry in fine craft from across the country, a send a postcard feature where visitors could send personal messages to others via email, accompanied by an image of Canadian fine craft, and a donate page, where those who wished to support the CCF/FCMA could electronically donate funds to our organization.

MEDIA PAGE

This section allowed the CCF/FCMA to post our news and press releases. Information about special events, national and international activity, award winners and other newsworthy items were posted here.

ONLINE LIBRARY

The online library section of our site was an exciting special project inspired by Craft Year 2007. The first portion of the library contains articles which were donated to the CCF/FCMA. These nine articles had been published in a variety of magazines and books, and we were given permission to post them online. The larger section of commissioned articles was written specifically for the CCF/FCMA, through a project funded by the Canada Council's Jean Chalmers Grant. Here, these new articles written by nine Canadian authors discuss many different focus points in Canadian fine craft. This project is something the CCF/FCMA plans to continue, as the Online Library is a great resource for those interested in learning more about Canadian fine craft (a form of literature not readily available to everyone in Canada,

nor easy to locate in one convenient place.)

SHOWCASE

This section of the site features the work of 28 fine craft artists from across the country. Each craftsperson featured here has between 3 and 10 images of their work posted, with details about each piece and a biography on each artist. The CCF/FCMA plans to continue developing this database, and incorporate it into our main website for further expansion.

FRANCAIS

Although the CCF/FCMA was unable to secure enough funding to translate www.craftyear2007.ca into a fully bilingual site, we developed a section which would easily direct our francophone visitors to sections that were translated, and to the Consiel des métiers d'art du Québec's French website which featured content on Craft Year 2007 and other fine craft information in French. This system was a good compromise and will be implemented on our newly designed site until funds to translate all our correspondence and information are available.



Above: Michael Mosaluk, *Bowl of Strange Fruit*, 2007