



Congratulations

Brigitte Clavette

*Saidye Bronfman Award Winner,
Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts*

Nomination Statement

The Canadian Crafts Federation is honoured to have nominated Brigitte Clavette for the Saidye Bronfman Award. Administered and promoted by the Canada Council for the Arts as part of the Governor General's Awards, this Award recognizes the careers of exceptional artists who have helped shape the field of fine craft. We thank visual artist Ann Manuel, writer and co-nominator of Brigitte Clavette, for her extensive efforts.



Mutation

Sterling silver, bronze, ink on paper on wood

Artistic Achievement

"Clavette's subtly complicated objects and vessels are made by testing and pushing the limits of her media."

- Tom Smart, Director, Beaverbrook Art Gallery

Brigitte Clavette is recognized among her peers as one of Canada's foremost artists in the fine craft of silversmithing. She has been winning awards and curatorial accolades over her forty year career as she maintained a rigorous studio practice and exhibition schedule. Clavette has established, developed and taught silversmithing programs across Canada and served as Studio Head at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design.

Elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts (2000), she is the recipient of the Excellence Award for High Achievement in the Arts (2002) and the Strathbutler (2006), New Brunswick's highest awards. Exhibited extensively across Canada and internationally, Clavette's work, including commissions, is held in public and private collections, notably the Royal Ontario Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK, the Art Gallery of Guelph, and His Excellence and Mrs. Boutros-Boutros Ghali.

Clavette has pushed the field forward with 'manu forti', a 'strong, sturdy, brave and resolute hand', spinning rituals into routine, inviting examination and reverence of the quotidien. Her designs and collaborations have resulted in pivotal works including Wasted, Manu Forti (Strathbutler Award) and Fish Slice (Victoria and Albert Museum), referred to as 'minimalism at its best' (Rabinovitch, Contemporary Silver, 2005). Memoria was recognized as a significant technical and aesthetic achievement. Clavette's work is especially innovative and memorable due to her ability to pull away from traditional methods of fabrication of one object to complete compositions of parts. These works which she sometimes refers to as functionless, cross cultural and economic divides to create larger narratives.

Clavette's mentor, Lois Betteridge, has described her work as "...original and diverse in concept, meticulously made, and...at all times delightful."

Impact

"You have taken silversmithing beyond."

- L. Betteridge, in conversation with Clavette,
opening of Territories in Metal, AGB, ON.

Dr. Denis Longchamps, essayist for Territories in Metal, 2019, referred to Clavette as among those who have "developed a distinctive visual language... exploring conceptual and technical territories." With exceptional mastery, she invites examination of our own rituals and excess. Clavette was taught not to put any marks on the metal that she might later need to remove, a mantra she lives by daily in her work and life.

Clavette's teaching skills have been praised for how she 'imbues her students with respect for techniques that underlie excellent silversmithing and jewellery without stifling their need for originality and creativity' (Betteridge). Inclusivity, direct training and encouragement is the trademark of her 40-year career, with 35 years as instructor and studio head of the Jewellery/Metal Arts program at the NBCCD.

Clavette deeply values lineage in her craft. As one of the longest serving leaders in Canadian craft education, she has been key in the growth of metal arts in NB and beyond. As an educator across Eastern, Central (Ontario's Haliburton School of the Arts) and Northern Canada (Nunavut Arctic College) she has influenced four generations of metalsmiths and jewellers. Outside the classroom she helps students transition from student to mentee to colleague. She retains the respect and admiration of those who came before her and those who follow; a testament to Clavette's character, dedication to Canadian craft and profound respect for her mentors.

Her impact is evident in the careers of her students, including Michael Massie, Claude Roussel, Shane Perley Dutcher, and Mathew Nuqingaq. Clavette has developed curriculum and designed metal studios for NB Community College, Dieppe, NB (Francophone) and at Sunbury Shores Arts Centre, Charlotte County, NB, with the latter initiative increasing accessibility in one of Canada's poorest areas. She has contributed enormously to the number of diverse, successful metal artists and jewellers with established studios aiding in the revival of our Atlantic Canadian rural areas.

Impact

Clavette has participated in many collaborations and invitational exhibitions. She has worked with respected curators including Dr. Sarah Alfoldy, Dr. Denis Longchamps, Tom Smart and John LeRoux. She has curated exhibitions and developed collectives which include former students and colleagues. Her extensive commissions for governments and agencies have helped strengthen the voice and lineage of metal.

Brigitte generously leads while advocating for others to succeed. Through her art and her life-long involvement in mentorships, collectives, committee and board work, she has left an undeniably deep mark.



À Table

Sterling silver, steel, found object,
watercolour on paper on wood

Relevance

"I've known Brigitte for over 30 years and to this day I think of how she taught us; to be open minded, willing to try new things. I still go to her for advice or help with a technique. She is always there to help."

- Michael Massie, OC, Artist

As a Francophone in an English society and as an educator across Canada, Brigitte understands and works on issues surrounding vulnerability and marginalization of people of different socio-economic backgrounds, intellectual abilities, and minority groups including First Nations, Inuit, and LGBTQ2+ communities. Early in her career she studied American Sign Language to enable communication with a student.

Through her work with The Sheila Hugh Mackay Foundation and in the past on the boards of ArtsNB and the Cultural Human Resource Council (CHRC) she strives to open up programming through changes in language and outreach.

Clavette is known for creating safe, inclusive studio environments. She draws on experiences of all people to enable respectful dialogue and exceptional work, underpinned by mastery and a strong work ethic. This atmosphere embodies her studio where she welcomes young artists facing particular challenges to finish work under her guidance. With this reputation she was selected to mentor student Shane Perley Dutcher as he created work for Adrienne Clarkson. These contributions and her encouragement and inclusion of metalsmiths, particularly First Nations, in collectives and exhibitions have nourished careers.

Respected as an arts community builder and 'citizen artist', Clavette was awarded "Craft Hero" status by the provincial council, Craft NB. An apt moniker, as she continues to create and fight for rich, inclusive experiences and environments for her diverse viewers, colleagues, students, and arts communities.