



Dimensions

Canada is full of craftsmen, and *Craft/Dimensions* magazine celebrates them six times a year (see below). A selection of covers and craft objects are shown above and to the right.

should get in touch with Women's Press, 280 Bloor Street West, Suite 305, Toronto, Ontario.

The Long Thin Line

There's always been a thin line between art and crafts but to the Indians of Canada the line, like the one in geometry, once had no width at all. In the last couple of decades it has become apparent to Indians that art can be prized and sold for its own sake and the results have been so impressive that the Royal Ontario Museum was able to mount a special Indian show last summer featuring painters and jewelers as well as carvers, basketmakers and weavers; artists as well as artisans. Craftsmen among the Salish have rediscovered old techniques, natural dyes and primitive looms and produced memorable tapestries. The versatile Bill Reid, a Haida carver, sculpts in wood, silver, gold and argillite, and Norval



Not unexpectedly, the exaltation and sanctification of the work of art has led to periodic reformations and profanations. During the French Revolution, for example, dragging it from its pedestal was a donkey's ears and tail on it and parading it through the streets, dragging it in mud, pinching it and proving that it is stuffed with sawdust were considered good and noble and has no meaning at all—and then placing it back on its throne. The Defakist Rudolf Humberstein once exclaimed in memory of his father: "As far as I am concerned, nothing is so disgusting as a piece of sculpture." He was right—except that the wets left on the body of the Defakist statue by the scourging were the military decorations.

The museum world has been enhanced its respectability. Our museums are full to bursting with antiques of art and works of anti-art. The religion of art has assumed more assidue than it ever had. It has been every scholar who came along

I do not deny that the contemplation of three sardines on a plate or of one triangle and one rectangle can enrich us spiritually. I merely maintain that the repetition of this act soon degenerates

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beauty. This continual interchange has a name: pressure. Things are pleasing because they are useful and beautiful. This covalence, conjunction, between the useful and the beautiful, the conjunction defines art and technology, usefulness or beauty. The handicrafted object satisfies a need in less impetuous than hunger and thirst: the need to take delight in the things that we see and touch, whatever their everyday use may be. This necessity is not reducible either to the mathematical ideal that acts as the force of attraction or to the desire for the strict rules of the religion of art.

Since it is a thing made by human hands, the craft object preserves the fingerprints—be they real or metaphorical—of the artist, who is the signature of the artist: they are not a name, nor are they a trademark. Rather, they are a sign, the scarcely visible, but

we can not only see it but caress it with our fingers. We look at the work of art but


and not touch it. The religious leaders had forbidden us to touch the statues of saints on an altar — "You'll burn your hands if you touch the Holy Father," we were told as children — and applied to painting and sculpture. Our relation to the industrial system is functional: to the work of art, semi-religious, to the hand-crafted object, corporeal. The latter in fact is not a relation but a contact. The interpersonal nature of craftsman's expression, directly and immediately, in sensation, the body in participation. To feel it first of all to be aware of something or someone not ourselves. And above all, yes, to feel with someone. To be able to feel with someone, to feel another's body, to feel him through others. The physical, solid has that bond to us

William A.
Ray Gumbay

others are no less strong than the legal, economic, and religious ties that unite us. The handmade object is a sign that expresses human society in a way all can read: not as a work technology, not as a symbol (art, religion), but as a mutually shared physical life.



Necklace, Spanish. "Pipa No. 1," women's half-hanging and. Manicue, gold and silver-plated necklace. McKelley. Most unusual 3-piece stone/sea shell



CRAFTS IN CANADA

The Arts and Crafts of the
Dimensions

Morriseau, an Ojibway, paints semi-abstract oral history. For more information on these and other artists and craftsmen, write the Canadian Guild of Crafts (Ontario), 29 Prince Arthur Ave., Toronto, M5R 1B2, or join the organization for \$10 and receive its bi-monthly publication, *Craft/Dimensions*.

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