

Toe River Arts Council - Spruce Pine

continued from Page 31

And you'll be surrounded by generations of Woody's chair making in Mitchell County in 200 Years of Chairs.

The Toe River Arts Council's exhibition will take you back to when Wyatt Woody first set foot in the county in the late 18th century and continued a tradition that endures to this day.

Wyatt started from the local hardwoods and ended with handcrafted "mule-ear" chairs (so-called because of the way the back posts of the chairs stick up—like ears on a mule) that he bartered for his family's needs. These were greenwood chairs with no metal fasteners or glue used on the weight bearing structural parts. Chair posts air-dried, then parts driven together tightly, rounds interlocking. As the posts dry they shrink onto the rounds clamping them tight. And at Woody's Chair Shop today, that technique is still used.



Woody's Chair Shop, June, 1964. Permission for use of photographs from the Arval Woody, Chair Maker, Collection #9 from the D.H. Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

The business passed from family to family, first to Martin who continued supporting his family by turning out hand-made chairs, and then to Arthur Woody, the third generation of Woody chair-makers and among some of the first instructors at Penland School of Crafts. He and his daughter, Miss Decie, taught the art of seating chairs with hickory bark at Penland's newly established "Related Crafts" department.

They were Lucy Morgan's neighbors and friends. In her book, *Gift from the Hills*, Morgan wrote of Arthur and his three grandsons, concluding, "We have craftsmen in our mountains!"

Wyatt's great-great grandson Arval and his brothers, Walter, Paul, Frank, and Floyd, picked up the chair business after the war. Although Arval had been hanging around his grandfather's wood shop since the age of 6, he didn't decide to carry on the tradition until he returned from World War II and discovered that jobs were hard to come by. From his knowledge gathered from early years of watching and learning, wood from his father's sawmill, and a desire to make the best chairs available from the pride innate in the legacy of his family, Arval and Walter kept the chairs coming as his brothers followed other paths.

From the wooden, waterwheel-powered barn workshop to the concrete block building Arval and his brothers built in Grassy Creek in 1946, Woody's Chair Shop still operates, still makes chairs. Today, Scott



General view of booth at State Fair, Raleigh. Left to right: Paul Woody, Arval Woody, Walter Woody. 1962. Permission for use of photographs from the Arval Woody, Chair Maker, Collection #9 from the D.H. Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

Woody stands before the lathe—a seventh generation Woody.

And over in McDowell County, Max Woody, a second cousin, has operated his own chair shop for over 60 years—with the same use of local materials, attention to detail, and same beautifully simple designs.

When Wyatt began producing chairs, the cost was perhaps a bolt of cloth or a couple of cans of coffee. Arval's grandfather sold them for 3 for \$1 when an acre of land went for \$3. When Arval and his brother began making the Betsy Ross chair (modeled after the one she likely sat in while sewing the American flag), the price tag was \$7.00.

Now a Woody's chair is displayed at the Smithsonian Institute's Museum of Art and Design and in some of the finest homes around the world. In 1952 through a connection with Terry Sanford, then Governor of North Carolina, three of Woody's chairs went to the White House—one for President Kennedy, the other two for his children, Caroline and John, Jr. But being commissioned by the White House wasn't Woody's proudest accomplishment. That was reserved for being named a North Carolina Living Treasure by the UNC Wilmington Institute for Human Potential.

Arval Woody summed up the fine tradition of chair making that Woody's has come to represent in one short sentence, "We get the tree in the forest, and when we finish it up, it's in the living room."

The Toe River Arts Council is a not for profit organization promoting the arts in Mitchell and Yancey Counties, and supported by donations, memberships, local government, grants (including the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts), and supporters who understand the benefit of art in our community.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Gallery at 828/765-0520 or visit (www.toeriverarts.org).

Crimson Laurel Gallery in Bakersville, NC, Offers Works by Chris Pickett, Steve Hansen, Jeremy Randall, & Bonnie Seeman

Crimson Laurel Gallery in Bakersville, NC, will present three new exhibits including: Featured Artist Show: *Chris Pickett - New Work*, on view from June 3 through July 1, 2015; *Everything Old is New Again*, featuring works by Steve Hansen and Jeremy Randall, on view from June 6 through July 28, 2015; and *Ceramics and Glass*, featuring new work by Bonnie Seeman, on view from June 6 through July 28, 2015.

Jeremy Randall and Steve Hansen have the unique quality of creating contemporary work with a reference to aged materials. Both Randall and Hansen focus on functional pieces that appear hand built with stains, textures, corrosion, and imitated metallic surfaces that are meant to be read on multiple levels, as both historical imagery with pop cultural referencing and rural architectural forms.

Page 32 - Carolina Arts, June 2015



Works by Jeremy Randall

According to Hansen, "These works can be understood and appreciated for purely for their technical merits or for the

continued above on next column to the right

Don't forget about our website:

www.carolinaarts.com



You can find [past issues](#) all the way back to August 2004!

You can find [past articles](#) all the way back to June 1999

Also don't forget about our two blogs:

[Carolina Arts Unleashed](#)

[Carolina Arts News](#)

Send us your email address to be added to our list to receive notice of each monthly issue.

info@carolinaarts.com

nostalgia associated with icons of advertising, but there are other levels of understanding available to those who choose to tease them out. In these works I blur the boundaries between art and commerce, between craft and art."

"If I have really done my job well, then my work will enter the world of commodity and be purchased as art, thus creating the final link in the chain of reference," adds Hansen.



Works by Bonnie Seeman

Randall says, "Familiarity evokes memory and I look to this association to present nostalgia through form. My reference to rural American architecture and antique rural implements places the viewer in a familiar setting which is layered with time, function and history while color creates celebration in these iconic objects. The vessel forms tie these objects back to the domestic space, enriching ones living environment while allowing for quiet contemplation and a reminder of a simpler time."

You will be delighted with both the visual as well as the functionality of these two outstanding artists. Join us as we celebrate their work.

Bonnie Seeman's newest body of work incorporates highly sculpted and detailed ceramics with small glass accents. The combination is similar to a beauty mark or focal point on a complex and busy surface. Seeman's pieces are often compared to medical illustrations where more com-



Work by Chris Pickett

plex underlying structures are highlighted and exaggerated for clarity.

"I am very interested in the utilitarian object and how it can be used as a means of narration," says Seeman. "My work blends the macabre with the beautiful, which acts as a metaphor for the fragility and resiliency of life. By using my interest in morphology and anatomy I present the viewer with a detailed examination of the living structures of the natural world. The juxtaposition of the botanical and anatomical elements can simultaneously be jarring, disquieting, and beautiful. This dichotomy also enhances the tactile quality of the work enticing personal interaction with the viewer."

With the appearance of being freshly constructed, the fullness of form allows these vessels, made by Chris Pickett, to evoke a sense of play and ease. The generous volumes are metaphors for our own bodies that reference both the comforts of physical intimacy as well as childlike items, such as toys and stuffed animals. Exaggerated pillow forms create a desire to physically interact with the work, and the voluptuous curves awaken our preconceptions of volume and what it represents: vitality, sensuality, generosity and abundance. With these vessels Pickett provides the user with a transformative personal experience through use, rather than to address needs of utility, necessity, or convenience

For further information check our NC Commercial Gallery listings, call the gallery at 828/688-3599 or visit (www.crimsonlaurelgallery.com).