

Visionary Spoons

By Robert McWilliams

I'm a visionary, but I'm a practical visionary.

In 1972, I envisioned a white-haired old coot wearing denim bibs sitting on a low stool with a stack of kindling on one side and a big bucket of wooden spoons on the other side. The old coot picks up a stick from the stack of firewood, and after five minutes of effortless whittling, he produces a voluptuous spoon. He looks at it critically, unnecessarily shaves off a few a few high spots, throws it in the bucket; and then without looking, he picks up a another piece of kindling and starts another spoon.

Now that I'm past being an old coot and am, in fact, an old geezer, I have carved many buckets of spoons, and I can tell you it's harder than it seems. First, firewood won't work. When I started, I thought knots and cracks in firewood would make the final result more interesting, but what they really do is make the spoon useless.

The other thing that is wrong with my old coot dream is the image of him sitting on a stool and effortlessly whittling with a pocketknife. Pocketknives are wonderful for opening cardboard boxes and for some kinds of detail work, but they are no good for carving for the same reason that you can't pound a four-inch nail with a tack hammer. In order to carve the bowl of spoon, I need to stand up and secure the piece firmly in a sturdy vise and use a one-inch gouge and mallet. I start at the center of the bowl, like I am trying to drill a hole through the center. When I reach the right depth, I scoop out the rest of the bowl. I now also know that the most important first step is the saw-cut that defines the slope from the lip of the spoon to the bottom of the spoon's bowl. If this is done right, at angle of about 45° to the top edge of the bowl, the spoon will have a lip that won't chip or split and will still scoop up solids and liquids. I "carve" the convex side of the bowl with a rasp so that I can be certain to make the exterior conform to the interior bowl shape.

I've discovered that the most useful spoons are really a compromise between a spoon and a spatula. A short (six to nine inches) straight-handled spoon is the right length.



Visionary *Adam and Eve Spoons*, wood, found metal, and bowl 10 x 10 x 12H inches.

Anything longer falls out of the bowl and is hard to store. A flat, rather than a convex, lip works as a scraper for scooping up beans and similar victuals.

I've made spoons out of most of the common American trees: basswood, pine, poplar, and soft maple, but these woods don't have a grain that appeals to me, and they don't develop an interesting patina. Oak, ash, chestnut and hickory have too many pores and the grain is too coarse.

I use rough-sawn American black walnut lumber averaging between two and four inches in thickness, some boards of which were originally 15 feet long! I bought these boards at different farm auctions when I lived in Ohio and brought them with me when I moved back to Oregon. One batch that I bought during the 1980's was dated in chalk with the year 1912. I've asked why farmers stored these huge walnut boards, but I've never gotten a satisfactory answer.

You don't meet many supercilious people at farm auctions, but my paranoia tells me some of them thought me "declass " because I immediately cut the 15-foot

walnut boards into six-foot lengths. But I did that only so that I could get the boards into the trunk of my 1975 Dodge Dart to bring them home. So, like I said, 15-foot long, three- to four-inch thick rough-sawn walnut lumber is perfect for carving spoons. All sides are visible so it's easy to avoid the most troublesome cracks, knots, and sapwood. This concludes my discussion of practical spoons.

Perhaps my most ironic visionary spoons are my *Adam and Eve Spoons*. This pair and their serpent companion are partly inspired by eastern Kentucky folk artist Edgar Tolson's enigmatic Adam and Eve carvings. Now that I've had many years to think about them, I think they summarize my spoon-carving career. According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were the first humans, and my first carving was a spoon. Furthermore, a spoon is a fusion of the female (bowl) and the male (handle). But more importantly, the male is supposed to epitomize the practical and logical and the female is supposed exemplify the intuitive and visionary. My *Adam and Eve Spoons* merge the practical and the visionary.



Practical Spoon with Stand, walnut and found metal 4 x 17 x 7H inches.

Pacific Northwest SCULPTORS

4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd. #302
Portland, OR 97214
www.pnwsculptors.org

The Pacific Northwest Sculptors Newsletter is a bimonthly publication of the Pacific Northwest Sculptors, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the public through educational programs and sculpture exhibitions. We are a dynamic, inclusive community of artists who inspire and support each other's growth with ideas, skills, and knowledge.

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Submissions to The Pacific Northwest Sculptors Newsletter

Send to: lmustberg@gmail.com

Deadline for the Feb/Mar issue: Jan 10

Join or renew your membership at

www.pnwsculptors.org/membership.htm



Scan with your
smartphone for the
PNWS website

President's Message

By Carole Murphy, President



Dear PNWS members and
newsletter recipients,

The Pacific Northwest Sculptors is looking for a few good board members to round out our splendid Board of Directors. Membership in PNWS is not required to join

us on the board; in fact, it would be helpful to have a few outside influences. There are so many areas that we would love to have further expertise in: marketing, publicity, knowledge of the art world, knowledge of grants, knowledge of how to work with others, funding, finances, event coordination, leadership, running a show, organizing, writing, and computers, just to name a few. We are looking for people who would like to join a dynamic board that meets once a month to decide on the direction and focus of our organization, a group that continues to raise its standard of excellence and further its sphere of influence. The board is a vital, active, warm, inclusive group that is devoted to its members (currently over 175) and to furthering PNWS momentum.

Here are some of the reasons to become a board member:

- It's a chance to make a difference in the growing world of sculpture in the Northwest.
- It gives you inside connections to the art world and an opportunity to further your name in sculpture.
- You will be part of a dynamic group that directs and moves PNWS.
- You'll have an inside view of the inner workings of a great arts organization.
- You'll be on the inside track of the art scene in the Northwest.
- You will assume a leadership role in PNWS.
- You will learn about networking and making

Upcoming Meetings

All meetings are *POTLUCK*. If you can't bring food or beverage, come anyway. Portfolios and works-in-progress are always welcome!

There is no meeting in December.

January Meeting - Potluck

Wednesday, January 15, 7 pm
Hosted by Olinka Broadfoot
2505 SE 11th, Ste B024 [Basement]
Portland, OR. 97202
(513) 307-0325
www.olinkabroadfootgallery.com

February Meeting - Potluck ELECTIONS

Wednesday, February 12, 6:30 pm
Hosted by Marty Eichinger
2516 SE Division St.
Portland, OR. 97202
(503) 223-0626
www.eichingersculpture.com

things happen in the art world.

- You will learn what goes on behind the scenes, such as how to put on a show.
- You will become part of a warm, inclusive, dynamic group of people at the center of things.

List of duties:

- 1) Attend monthly board meetings.
- 2) Respond to group emails when a discussion is at hand.
- 3) Select a committee to be a part of.
- 4) Attend the group meetings at least a couple times a year.
- 5) Attend the yearly retreat.

Devote some of your time, talent, and expertise to furthering an outstanding arts organization, and, at the same time, augment your own personal resume. So please, call or email me, and we'll talk about the possibilities!

See you at the meetings,

Carole
503-235-7233
sculptor@carolemurphy.com
President of Pacific Northwest Sculptors

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Email info@pearlpacking.com

Member News

PNWS Board Nominations Now Being Accepted

Nominations are now open for anyone interested in serving on the PNWS Board of Directors. Board members do not have to be PNWS members or artists. Anyone can be nominated as long as they have a passion for art and a desire to contribute to the further success of our organization. That means your partner, friends, or acquaintances can be nominated for the board. Please forward your nominations to laurie.vail@gmail.com. Elections will be held in February 2014. Nominations can also be made at the elections meeting. This will take place on February 12, 2014. See the meetings listings for the time and location.

PNWS's Pakker Given Coveted UNESCO Award

Renowned Seattle sculptor and PNWS member Ulrich Pakker received the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's "Inspiring Humanity Through Art and Science" award November 7 in Huntsville, Alabama.



Opretel Welding Helmet for Sale

Used less than 6 times, so like new condition. Here is a link to information about it: http://www.globalsafetyco.com/wldhelmet_sprn.htm?gclid=CPj-rfqfv-LoCfc1xQgodEkcAXg

Asking \$150.00 plus shipping if necessary. If interested, contact Trisha at 503.936.0547 or trisha@hasslerstudio.com.

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Website Matters: Wild Apricot

You probably noticed during our last membership drive that the entire application could be filled out online. This was due to the efforts of our membership chair Marlena Nielsen who set up a system with an online service called Wild Apricot. With Wild Apricot, it is no longer necessary to painstakingly enter each member's data into a spreadsheet. Apricot does it automatically. Hmph. Back when I was membership chair, I scratched the data onto a rock with a burnt stick. That was good enough for my grandfather and good enough for me.

When Marlena sent out the renewal notices, they had a link to Apricot. The membership page of www.pnwsculptors.org also has a link to Apricot right at the top.

There are two versions of Apricot. For non-members, there are member listings (members control what info they wish to be public), a newsletter and email announcement sign up, class listings, a membership application, and a donate button. Members have expanded access.

To login for the first time, enter your email address, and click the "forgot password" button. You will then get an email allowing you to set your password. Once logged in, you will be able to alter your profile and set the information you wish members to see and the information you would like the general public to see. You can even upload images and create a portfolio. (This is not meant to replace the artist gallery on our website, but it does allow members to maintain an online presence by themselves). You will also have access to the Calls for Artists. Unlike the calls that are sent out a couple of times a month to your inbox, the Apricot version is constantly updated. This means you'll see more timely notices of upcoming deadlines.

All in all, Apricot is pretty slick and a good thing, and in fact we've seen an uptick in the membership renewal rate compared with last year. Bear in mind, though, that Apricot is not meant to replace our online member gallery at www.pnwsculptors.org. That is still our main showcase. If you do not have an image and blurb there, please email me at: gheath6006@msn.com. There is no charge for inclusion in the gallery. Our site gets a lot of hits, and I'm betting most people go right to the gallery, so don't miss out.

Cheers,
George Heath
Website Coordinator



Monday by Sam Hingston,
13.5" x 10" x 9.5", hand-molded
cement and wood.

Sam Hingston at Guardino Gallery

Sam Hingston will be one of two featured artists showing their work at Guardino Gallery in January 2014. A mixed media sculptor, Sam works primarily with wood while incorporating metal, glass and stone. Also included in the exhibition will be several of his latest works in hand formed cement. He will be showing alongside Shannon Passon who works in encaustics. The show opens on January 4 and runs through January 28. The Guardino Gallery is located at 2939 NE Alberta St. in Portland.



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4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd #302
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New Sculpture

Fresh Ideas from PNWS



Marionette's Day Off
by Pam Mummy

Glazed ceramic, leather,
copper and string
Approx. 12" x 10" x 10"
pam@pmummy.com

PNWS Sculptor Spotlight

Marlena H. Nielsen

Over the past few years, I have explored carving aerated cement with Carole Murphy, raku, and other ceramic-related sculpture, and ultimately I have decided that bronze is the medium for me. As I experimented with other forms of sculpture, I was also engaged in a research project on a nineteenth-century stained glass firm. My research taught me that our history can easily be forgotten. I found myself desiring to recreate, through sculpture, stories from our history in order to educate and preserve that history.

The heron medallion was inspired by an illustration made by Charles Booth, one of the nineteenth-century stained glass artists I had researched. The illustration was published in an 1876 publication entitled "Modern Surface Ornament." The medallion represents an era known as the Aesthetic movement. Mr. Booth was partners with Stephen Slack of the firm Slack & Booth of Orange, New Jersey.

This firm sent glass around the Horn in 1875 and up to the Columbia River, where it was later installed in St. Paul's Church in The Dalles, St. Thomas Church in Baker City, and Ascension Chapel in Cove, Oregon.

www.realpeoplesculpture.com



Heron Medallion, Dark Classic Bronze Relief, 6.6" diameter