



fig.1 Florence Wyle, **Head of Norah McCullough**, c.1930, plaster, 57 x 23 x 16 cm,
Coll. of MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan. (Photo: University of Regina)

NORAH McCULLOUGH

Pioneering Professional Craft in Canada

In a career spanning five decades, Norah McCullough (1903-1993) contributed greatly to Canadian culture, particularly in the area of crafts. However, her role as one of this country's preeminent arts administrators remains largely overlooked in art historical literature. Perhaps this can be attributed to the many pathways of McCullough's career. She curated exhibitions and wrote catalogues on several significant Canadian artists; in later years she organized a traveling show of paintings by Montreal's Beaver Hall Group for the National Gallery of Canada in 1966, and twenty years after, she wrote *Arthur Lismer Watercolours* for the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre. The painter Ronald Bloore has credited McCullough with discovering the western folk artist Jan Gerriet Wyers, and in 1989 the Saskatchewan Arts Board presented her with an Annual Lifetime Award for Excellence in the Arts.

During the peak of modernist sensibilities McCullough had boldly promoted and curated exhibitions of marginalized materials, including folk art and the crafts. Her desire for including both professional and amateur artistic production was certainly at odds with the realities of organizing some of the first juried exhibitions of the highest quality crafts. Gender is possibly another reason for her absence from art historical study. As an attractive single woman occupying positions of power in post-war culture, McCullough developed a strict professional persona to avoid gender stereotyping. As her friend Patricia Leigh Wiens recalls: "Norah was a powerhouse, and not always loved for it."¹ McCullough's contributions to the crafts, however, remain indisputable even if they are not fully acknowledged. By the time she retired from public life in 1968 she had established the Saskatchewan Arts Board as a craft-inclusive educational, funding and exhibition body; served as Canada's first representative on the World Crafts Council; orchestrated the formation of the Canadian Craftsmen's Association, and curated *Canadian Fine Crafts*, Canada's largest-ever exhibition in this field. Feted by the National Gallery of Canada upon her retirement, McCullough was praised for her achievements. The Norah McCullough Lecture Series, designated as a bi-annual forum for leading researchers in the crafts, was the Gallery's final tribute to McCullough. Sadly, the speakers' series was not actively promoted after its inception and this has surely contributed to her relative lack of recognition. The project's brief history also serves as a reminder of the tenuous and delicate relationship between crafts and the institutions of Canadian culture.



fig.2 Norah McCullough in Pretoria, South Africa, c.1940.
(Photo: courtesy of Robin Poitras)

Born in Alison, Ontario in 1903, Norah McCullough was the daughter of Dr. John W.S. McCullough, appointed the Provincial Officer of Health for Ontario, and Chief Medical Officer in 1912. Her siblings followed in their father's footsteps, her brother becoming a doctor and her sister serving as the chief Public Health Officer for the City of Toronto.² While McCullough might have been expected to become a scientist herself, she instead chose the arts. In 1925 she graduated from the Ontario College of Art with a specialization in painting and two years later was in the employ of the Art Gallery of Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario), where she would assist Arthur Lismer for ten years. During that time McCullough became a force within Toronto's art community and developed an impressive list of contacts including members of the Group of Seven, the ethnologist Marius Barbeau, and the sculptors Florence Wyle and Frances Loring.

McCullough was also careful to nurture her public image. She dressed well, always employing a dressmaker who could fashion the latest designs from handcrafted fabrics, often using cloth commissioned from weavers. McCullough was noted for wearing jewellery made by Canadian craftspeople and she was admired for her cooking, her knowledge of wines, and for hosting excellent parties. As Patricia Wiens notes, "Norah possessed an elegance that separated her from the average social strata."³ The cultivation of these talents should not be viewed as frivolous. In the social climate of the times McCullough skillfully balanced her roles as an upper-class single female, and a talented and bright career woman. In the 1930s Florence Wyle produced a stylized, modernist plaster and bronze portrait (fig.1) of McCullough. The sculpture shows her strong nose, full lips, and high cheekbones, but most remarkable are McCullough's eyes: "icy blue – intense and intimidating – they made you not question her."⁴

Her work as Lismer's full-time assistant from 1927 to 1937 in his children's art programs at the Art Gallery of Toronto initiated her career as one of Canada's chief supporters of craft. During the period 1933 to 1938 the Gallery received grants ranging from \$6,000 to \$10,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to support educational instruction expenses, supplies, and training for teachers.⁵ McCullough directly benefited from Carnegie Foundation money: "To broaden my view, I was sent in 1934 to the Courtauld Institute, London, and enabled through a number of other Carnegie grants to survey educational programmes at the Cleveland Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Boston Museum of Fine Art."⁶ While attending the Courtauld McCullough began taking courses in the history of embroidery, textiles, English furniture, pottery and porcelain, glass, gold and silversmithing, and studying the work of William Morris.⁷

In 1938 Lismer selected McCullough to move to Pretoria, South Africa to help organize an art school, a venture also funded by the Carnegie Foundation.⁸ McCullough (fig.2) spent nearly a decade in Africa and it was here that she

observed the importance of Native craftspeople. McCullough was also painfully aware of the social inequalities faced by South African tribes and the malnutrition, ill-health and illiteracy that resulted from a lack of access to proper education and inadequate wages. However, McCullough also realized that the crafts played a vital role in providing independent cultural expression for this oppressed group.⁹ Her time in South Africa was featured in a 1946 *Star Weekly* article titled "A Girl Against the Veldt," and her experience of the cultural and natural "exoticism" of South Africa was highlighted by stories of mistaking crocodiles for logs while swimming in the Zambesi River, and stumbling across a native initiation ceremony.¹⁰ The *Globe and Mail* also wrote of McCullough as an independent woman, able to lead in the public sphere yet conforming to society's expectations of women in the arts through her involvement with children's art education. Toronto newspaper articles on McCullough admired her ability to negotiate a role for herself within Canada's artistic milieu: "When we heard that, grown up, she had taken a prominent place in art leadership, we were not surprised...we were willing to bet guineas that the woman in question could not be tamed to docile following of anyone else's ideas."¹¹

Upon her return to Canada in 1946, McCullough worked for the Extension Services Department of the National Gallery of Canada. A year later she left Ottawa to become the Executive Secretary of the Saskatchewan Arts Board.¹² The title of McCullough's new position is misleading, for in actuality she was the director of the newly-formed organization. This was a significant move in her career, for not only was she given complete control over the Board, she now switched her focus to adult education. During her time in Regina from 1947 to 1958 she maintained links to the National Gallery staff, recommending Prairie artists to them and bringing their traveling exhibitions to Saskatchewan. She was seen locally as a conduit to the national art community and regarded as part of the cultural elite. To be sure, one of McCullough's main aims was to raise the level of cultural awareness in the province: "She was adored, and good at talking to people, and considered the first lifeline to what was going on in the country."¹³

One of her early projects in Saskatchewan was to organize a home industries programme modeled on Marius Barbeau's initiatives to train rural Quebecers in traditional craft practices such as weaving.¹⁴ By the mid 1950s she had also established several craft projects that promoted cottage industry. These were based specifically on British Art Board models which often considered craft an equal player in the national arts scene.¹⁵ For example, Patricia Wiens established a pottery studio in eastern Saskatchewan that quarried pure deposits of lime-free clay, supplied pottery equipment, and built a studio open to all members of the community.¹⁶ McCullough placed ads in small-town Saskatchewan newspapers inviting local craftspeople to demonstrate their skills to the public. As a result, large numbers of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds were encouraged to preserve

and promote their own work. Wiens recalls Ukrainian women demonstrating weaving on looms built by their husbands, and using dyes made from crêpe paper. The inclusive nature of these projects resulted in strong rural support for the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

In 1956 McCullough's interest in the crafts expanded when she received a Canadian Government Overseas Awards Fellowship to study home industries in Europe. She set out to investigate the working relationship of artists and craftspeople, citing in her proposal the example of Picasso's connections with the potteries that produced the wares he had painted. From 1956 to 1958 she traveled in France, England and Denmark, where she looked at regional variations in craft as well as the range of materials in craft production, and methods of marketing. This experience was instrumental in shaping her approach to Saskatchewan's own handicraft program. During the next decade she was also the National Gallery of Canada's liaison officer for Western Canada which gave her new opportunities to highlight the crafts. Although she was still based in Regina during this period, she spent increasing amounts of time in Ottawa.

In order for crafts to be taken seriously, McCullough believed that the quality of Canadian work needed substantial improvement. By the mid 1960s consensus on the definition of professional craft was slowly developing and three key elements emerged. In order to be regarded as professionals, craftspeople first required exceptional technical skills; and secondly, they were expected to give conceptual meaning to their objects. This meant that their forms, images, and materials were to be articulated in a manner that reflected an awareness of and engagement with the current language of fine arts. Thirdly, craft professionals required a set of infrastructures including organizations and exhibitions, as well as educational opportunities for the administrators who oversaw crafts' development. McCullough's concern for professionalism in the field might be taken for granted, but as a woman with socialist leanings she was concerned that the definition of professionalism would prove to be too exclusive. The Saskatchewan Arts Board's early successes had relied upon its inclusive nature and McCullough was hesitant to exclude craftspeople who were considered to fall outside mainstream definitions of "good" craft. However, this created a certain amount of confusion. In the early 1960s McCullough arranged annual juried exhibitions of local Saskatchewan artists in Regina; but Patricia Wiens recalls that after a number of these presentations, professional artists and craftspeople stopped submitting work, objecting to the high number of amateurs in the shows.¹⁷

At the same moment that McCullough was dealing with the widening gap between professional and amateur makers in the province, Canada's national craft organization, the Canadian Handicraft Guild, was facing the same dilemma. By 1963 the Guild's problems had captured the attention of *Canadian Art* magazine. In design writer Sandra Gwyn's article, "Guild at the Crossroads,"¹⁸ she lauded the



fig.3 Aileen Osborn Webb leading the first meeting of the World Crafts Council. Rice, Jacqueline (ed.), *The First World Congress of Craftsmen, June 8-19, 1964* (New York: American Craftsmen Educational Council), 203. (Photo: American Craft Council Archives)

long history of the Guild, but also pointed out the division between the senior members' adherence to tradition and the younger members' desire for change and new directions. Many of the latter members felt that the Guild's definition of craft failed to recognize that craftspeople were working in increasingly varied and overlapping media. It was becoming clear that the Guild's 1906 mandate to preserve traditional craft no longer applied to contemporary makers, many of whom were trained as artists and expected to exhibit and compete in exhibitions. Gwyn shared McCullough's support for the increasing number of educated, professional craftspeople:

But in 1963, when the home arts are all but moribund, when the *habitant* woodcarver, the Maritime hooker of rugs, the country cabinet-maker have all given way to the sophisticated, art-school trained fine craftsman, and less fortunately, to the "do-it-yourselfer" with his cut-price craft kit, the Guild's confused organization and outdated structure put it at an almost hopeless disadvantage.¹⁹

Gwyn praised the Quebec chapter of the Guild as leading the way for the modernization of the organization with its Spring 1963 exhibition, *The Arts and Crafts of Canada*, at the Guild headquarters on Peel Street in Montreal. Norah McCullough served as the only woman on its three-person jury, signifying her role as a recognized expert in the Canadian craft community.²⁰ Nevertheless, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild turned to the United States for its symbolic capital in the form of Aileen Osborn Webb (1892-1979), the philanthropist who sponsored the American Craft Council. When she visited Montreal to open the Guild's exhibition, Webb took the opportunity to promote her most ambitious craft project yet, the First World Congress of Craftsmen. It was an event that would dramatically increase McCullough's own involvement with craft.

The Congress was held 8-19 June 1964 at Columbia University in New York. Webb believed that by uniting the world's craftspeople (fig.3), the event would contribute to world peace; and the conference attracted nine-hundred and forty-two attendees from forty-seven countries. Some delegates undoubtedly took advantage of Webb's offer to provide free board and lodging for the two-week period but the costs of travel meant that the Congress was dominated by Americans: six-hundred and ninety-two were in attendance. The second largest delegation comprised thirty people from Canada.²¹ Seven represented the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, three were from the Canadian Guild of Potters, one attended on behalf of Les métiers d'art du Québec, and the remainder were delegates from various arts groups and galleries across the country, including Norah McCullough who represented the National Gallery.²² The Conference booklet, "A Short Guide to World Crafts," contained material submitted by each national craft association and provided revealing statistics and surveys of the crafts in the countries represented at the Congress. The American section gave extensive listings of craft organizations, universities and art schools offering professional training for craftspeople, and a list of successful artists who worked in various craft media. "It is of interest to note here," wrote the Education Department of the American Craft Council, "that the approach to craftsmanship in America is that of the individual artist, working most often alone as both designer and producer, and creating one-of-a-kind prestige pieces."²³ This contrasted greatly with the approach described in the booklet's other entries, including the section on Canada. While the Canadian text noted a revival of interest in the crafts, its anonymous author confessed to the lack of schools or institutions here that offered full instruction in crafts, and cited the hobbyist focus of provincial craft programs, leading to "the major drawback that confronts all craftsmen [is that] little of the work done is recognized as art."²⁴

While American craft was advancing within the recognized hierarchy of the fine arts, Canadian crafts struggled to occupy the same professional space. Lois Moran, the editor of *American Craft*, believes that "Canadians could see what was

happening in the United States and wanted to fill that gap in their own country.”²⁵ The American Craft Council had achieved its artistic aims through a number of initiatives funded by Webb over the preceding twenty years. America House, a successful retail outlet in New York City, was established in 1940, followed in 1942 by the launch of the publication *Craft Horizons*, with a distribution of 3500 copies and a professional editor.²⁶ In 1946 the Council created the School for American Craftsmen within the Fine and Hand Arts Division of the Liberal Arts College of Alfred University in south-western New York State (today affiliated with the Rochester Institute of Technology). This involvement in the university milieu elevated the status of crafts in America by linking it to professional levels of training and by placing new emphasis on the development of conceptual skills.

As well as the economic capital Aileen Osborn Webb invested in hosting the 1964 First World Congress of Craftsmen, cultural and symbolic capital came into play in her selection of the participants in its numerous conference panels and workshops. Among them were two influential Americans: René d’Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the writer Harold Rosenberg. Rosenberg had achieved critical fame through his essay, “American Action Painters” (first published in *Art News* December of 1952), and his books, *The Tradition of the New* (1962) and *The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audiences* (1964). Unlike his contemporary Clement Greenberg, who focused on the avant-garde at the expense of craft concerns, Rosenberg was careful to note the links between art and craft. In *The Tradition of the New*, he argued for the self-reflexivity that was developing within American craft: “A form of work establishes itself as a profession not only through the complication of its technique – many of the ancient crafts involved more complex recipes than their counterparts today – but through self-consciousness with regard to this technique.”²⁷ He added that: “This is a time of rapid change in the arts as well as in any other field of human endeavor. Old classifications are apt to become obsolete overnight. As folk art declines and individual craftsmanship gains in importance, the line dividing craftwork from sculpture often becomes very vague.”²⁸ In his paper for the panel discussion “The Contemporary Scene,” René d’Harnoncourt agreed with Rosenberg’s assessment of crafts as fine art, although he excluded the non-professional. The enthusiastic response to their views led the American Craft Council and the World Crafts Council to seek to institutionalize their national modernist narrative and make it the official description of the international craft world. With over six hundred representatives from the United States at the Congress, the dominance of American attitudes was not surprising.

Many of the Canadian representatives were influenced by the conference’s emphasis on non-traditional crafts, and a serious political and ideological rift would develop by the end of the Congress. Those attending on behalf of the Canadian

Handicrafts Guild had assumed that their president, Harold Burnham, a weaver, curator and well-regarded author, would act as the primary Canadian representative to any future body that arose from the Congress.²⁹ A March 1964 Canadian Handicrafts Guild bulletin had clearly stated the case: "Our president, Mr. Harold B. Burnham, who is also president of the national guild, is to be the official Canadian delegate."³⁰ It therefore came as a surprise to many when Norah McCullough became the Congress delegate as a result of the votes of "young rebels" at the conference. McCullough represented a shift toward the new and she was also aware of the professional standards promoted by many Canadian craftspeople. In the words of Anita Aarons, the "Allied Arts" columnist for the journal *Canadian Architecture*:

Hitherto the craft field, so called, has been the province of the adult educator or the leisure time dilettante and preserve of archaic custom. This orientation made it of little use to the architect. However, the new group, while not excluding these other activities, has forced attention on the changing nature and growing body of artist-designers who defy categorization and means by education and professional practice to elevate their status to one of economic reality and social responsibility.³¹

McCullough was careful to appear to be inclusive of non-professional craftspeople. However, the "young rebels" had their own exclusive mandate as they intended to improve the quality of Canadian crafts by promoting the work and ideals of specific craftspeople. Following her return to Regina from New York, McCullough was approached by the Guild to participate more fully in their activities. While McCullough had served as a juror for their exhibitions, she had never played an official role within the organization. Wilson Mellen, President of the Quebec chapter, raised the possibility of appointing McCullough to replace Burnham as the new national president of the Guild. However, like many others, Mellen feared that she would be too busy as liaison officer for the National Gallery to be effective in both positions.³²

Interest in McCullough increased when she began arranging an alternative national organization to institute major changes in the structure of Canadian crafts – changes that challenged the very existence of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild. On 26 June 1964, the Saskatchewan Arts Board sent out a newsletter written by McCullough in which she encouraged Canadian craftspeople to respect the urgent need for a national organization to work with the World Crafts Council. No mention was made of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild serving as this entity. After she had received over seven hundred names and addresses of craftspeople, a second more detailed "Newsletter to the Craftsmen of Canada from Miss Norah McCullough" was distributed in mid-September. Here her suggestions for a new national organization centred on two key questions. Basing

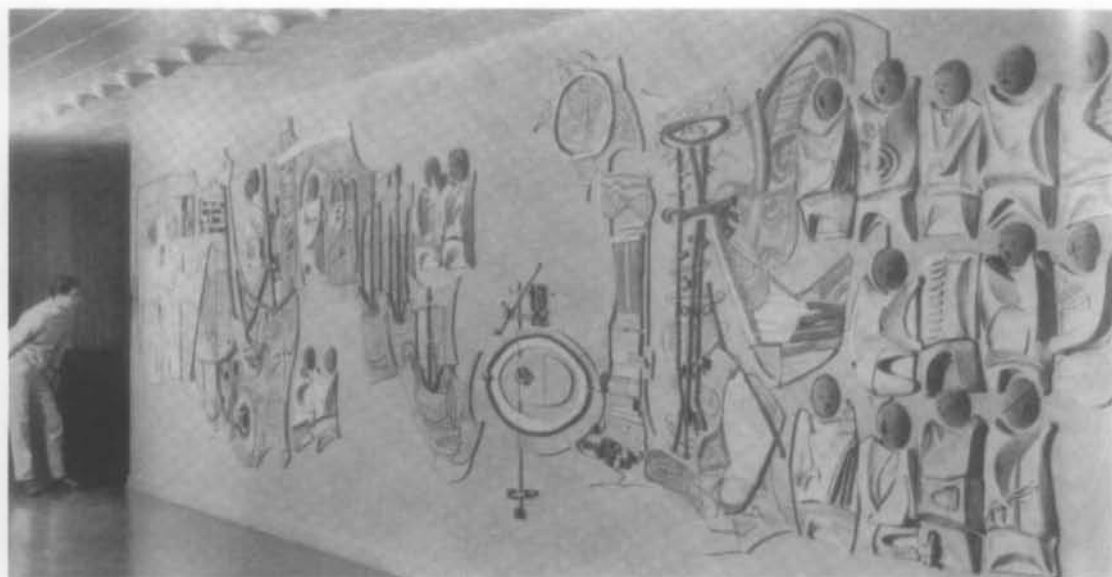


fig.4 Merton Chambers with his ceramic mural, in Aarons, "Canadian Handicrafts and the Architect," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal*, May 1965. (Photo: RAIC)

her argument on the importance of unity of purpose and good communication, she first asked craftspeople if a new organization was necessary. But even more important, she raised the issue of criteria for membership. Recalling debates over exclusivity at the New York Congress where delegates had agreed on the importance of international relations and the limitations of restricted membership, she urged Canadians to keep the new organization open to artist-designers, rural and folk designers, and amateurs as well as enthusiastic laypeople. Almost all the recipients responded to her newsletter and with the majority in favour of a new organization, a conference was planned to take place at the Department of Architecture and Interior Design, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, on 5-7 February 1965. The more than forty government officials, university professors, craftspeople and representatives of major craft organizations who attended the meeting brought a diversity of backgrounds and approaches. One important motivation for creating a united group was that Canadian craftspeople were keenly aware of increasing funding opportunities available to organizations planning events for the Centennial year.

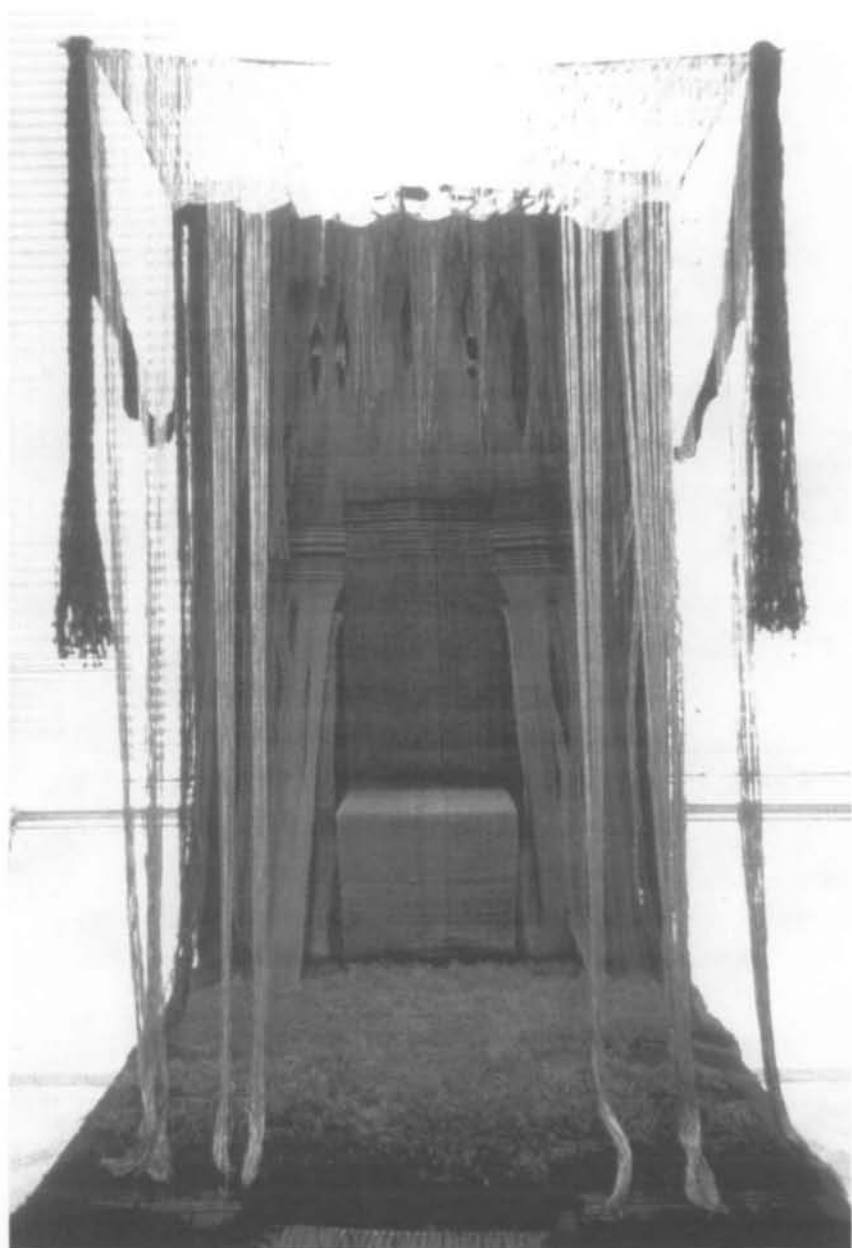


fig.5 Charlotte Lindgren, *Aedicule*, 1967. (Photo: courtesy of Charlotte Lindgren)

Government officials took advantage of the Winnipeg conference to announce new initiatives that would benefit Canadian craft and design. The Department of Industry, along with the National Design Council, unveiled "Canadian Design '67," a programme intended to promote good design. The Minister of Public Works announced a commitment to set aside one percent of the cost of any new federal government buildings for works of art.³³ These initiatives brought increased opportunities for craftspeople working in a more conceptual manner. For example, the ceramist Merton Chambers from Ontario won commissions for his large-scale ceramic murals (fig.4), and the textile artist Charlotte Lindgren from the Maritimes created free-form woven sculptures for federal government offices (fig.5). The fear of being excluded from these opportunities whether through geography, status, or lack of symbolic or cultural capital, provided craftspeople with the incentive to engage in collective action.

Although the American Craft Council was not represented at the Winnipeg Conference, there was an awareness of the importance of its activities and its impact on Canadian craft, along with the need for strong Canadian representation in the North American section of the World Crafts Council. Despite McCullough's attempts to emphasize the increased quality of Canadian crafts, the perceived strengths of the Americans continued to expose the deficiencies of Canadian efforts:

Handcraft in the USA is big business. This is due to the indefatigable devotion of a dynamic entrepreneur, Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb and her organization, the American Craftsmen's Council. With her vision and untiring effort (plus the use of personal fortune) she and her craftsmen supporters have elevated the handicrafts of America well above the sentimental preservation of cottage craft, or the promotion of the indigenous native artifacts as perpetual souvenirs. A well organized body of contemporary trained craftsmen is producing highly original, well crafted products in any media. They expect, and do, earn a good professional income disposing of their products to all branches of society, independent of the tourist industry.³⁴

What had begun as a conference focusing on crafts ended, as McCullough had undoubtedly intended, by creating a new organization dedicated to "all those forms designed for use in man's environment, either hand-made or designed for large-scale industrial production."³⁵ Delegates to the Winnipeg meeting had agreed that there should be room for "jewelry, pottery, weaving, enameling, sculpture and murals or, for other artifacts that can be industrially produced from well-designed prototypes such as printed textiles, ceramic garden planters or furniture."³⁶ Arnold Rockman, editor of *Canadian Art* and contributing art critic to several Canadian newspapers, suggested the name "Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts/Conseil canadien pour les arts de l'espace." Rockman argued

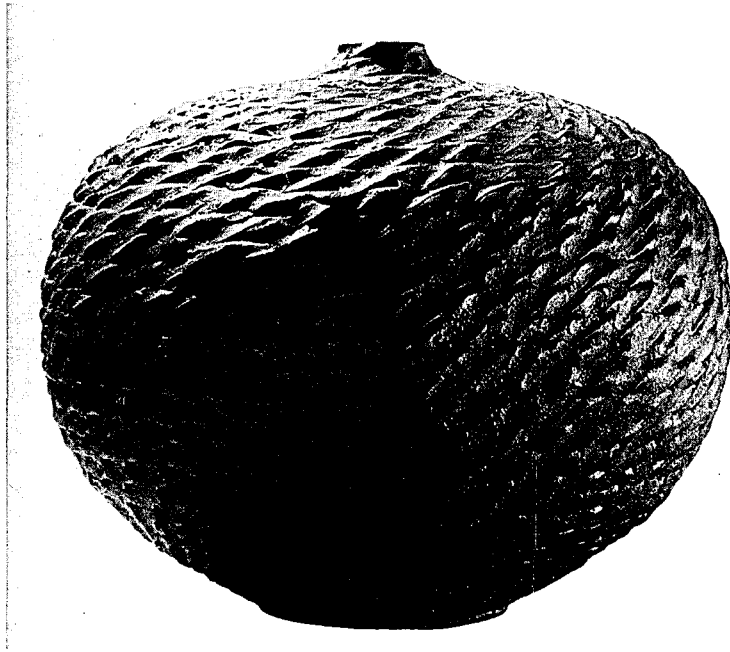


fig.6 Joan Bobbs, Stoneware bottle, 1966. This bottle was featured on the cover of the *Canadian Fine Crafts* catalogue and poster. (Photo: courtesy of Joan Bobbs)

that the title embraced far more than craft and would benefit craftspeople far into the future. For Burnham and other members of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, however, the name indicated a problematic shift away from craft concerns toward an overly broad involvement with design, architecture and art.

The government officials at the Winnipeg conference recognized the potential of the new organization to operate as a standard-setting body. The Expo 67 Corporation officially demanded evidence from the Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts that it could speak as a national organization for the majority of Canadian craftspeople and designers. However Jean-Claude Delorme, the Secretary-General of Expo attended the Winnipeg meetings and had already decided that the Council's standards were high enough to satisfy the government.³⁷ The new organization and its leaders were thus officially sanctioned as the gatekeepers of Canada's craft culture. Following the Winnipeg meeting, the Canadian Council undertook the momentous task of uniting Canada's craftspeople, designers,

and architects. The executive committee consisted of Norah McCullough as Chair, Françoise Brais of Montreal as Vice-Chair, and George Shaw from Regina as Secretary-Treasurer. In Burnham's official report on the conference he offered his sympathy to this group, stating "the problems faced by this executive council are of the greatest magnitude."³⁸

Based in Regina, a city outside the dominant power base of Central Canada, the group held greater appeal in the West than did the Guild; but soon its official address was moved to Ottawa in the hope of securing federal funding. By the summer of 1965 it was clear to the executive that they could not retain the name Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts. Although the words reflected McCullough's ideals for an all-encompassing national arts group, the Department of the Secretary of State was unwilling to provide funding to the association under this name as there were too many organizations already using the phrase "Canadian Council."³⁹ The executive committee began searching for a replacement, well aware that their choice had to embrace the established goals of the group: "The problem is that the word design does not translate into French. There has been some strong feeling about including words like 'professional,' and excluding words like 'Guild,' and we did not want to call it by a name too closely emulating the American one, the American Craftsmen's Council."⁴⁰ After a great deal of discussion among the executive and its lawyers, the group was renamed the Canadian Craftsmen's Association/Association des Artisans du Canada, identifying the organization specifically with crafts, and thus abandoning the desire of many members to publicly encompass a wider variety of arts within its mandate.

The new organization suffered a significant setback when Norah McCullough resigned as Chair in 1966 to curate a major exhibition of Canadian crafts for the National Gallery of Canada for the Centennial celebrations. Her traveling exhibition *Canadian Fine Crafts* (fig.6) was the largest of all the 1967 craft exhibitions and was praised by *Time Magazine* for convincing the public that finally "fine crafts have something artistic to say."⁴¹ Ironically, while women were highly involved in the establishment of the new group of craft professionals in the 1960s, men were often asked to operate as the "official" arbiters of good taste and professionalism in the field. McCullough, the recipient of Carnegie Foundation grants, founder of the Canadian Craftsmen's Association, Canada's representative to the World Crafts Council, and National Gallery curator, was required to work with an American male judge in jurying the final selection for her Ottawa show. Daniel Rhodes (1911-1989), a ceramist and professor of ceramics at Alfred University in New York State became her co-juror. The Gallery and the press promoted his involvement, believing that it would ensure a professional approach to the crafts. Trained as a painter, Rhodes was well-known in North America through his exhibitions and for his publications in which he espoused the

view that artistic individuality and technical skill in ceramics could be achieved simultaneously.⁴² It is, however, too simplistic to argue that the National Gallery of Canada was discriminating against McCullough because of her gender. There was in fact a declining interest in the crafts at the Gallery because of tighter restrictions on travelling exhibitions and the difficulties of storing fragile craft objects.⁴³ Unfortunately, it would be the last exhibition of its type organized by the Gallery.

Published material on the exhibition always acknowledged McCullough's key role in the show, but Rhodes soon stole the spotlight as a leading authority on crafts. The Gallery's newly-appointed director Jean Sutherland Boggs, thanked Rhodes in her Forward to the *Canadian Fine Crafts* catalogue for his "wise guidance;" and indeed McCullough herself wrote to Rhodes expressing gratitude for his "sound guidance in selecting the crafts," adding her appreciation for "clarifying my own judgment."⁴⁴ However, her resentment over credit he erroneously received as a single juror surfaced in an October 1966 internal memo to National Gallery curator, Jean-Paul Morisset: "As for the jurying please note that our notices state that Rhodes assisted in the jurying for I actually was his co-juror."⁴⁵ Rhodes was given the entire catalogue essay to espouse his views on Canadian craft, but Norah McCullough was rendered mute despite the central role she had taken in organizing the largest exhibition of Canadian crafts that Canada had ever witnessed, and one that set attendance records and drew only positive reviews.

Nevertheless, McCullough's efforts made a major contribution to the ascendant state of Canadian craft in the late 1960s. A profound shift in its ideology was signaled by the emphasis on professionalism that emerged under her leadership during the formation of the Canadian Craftsmen's Association. As a professional arts administrator, McCullough played a significant role in the institution of new ideals for Canadian crafts on both the national and international stage. Her dedication to the frequently marginalized crafts, as witnessed by her initiatives to institutionalize the field, continues to impact upon today's craftspeople and administrators. It is time that the legacy of Norah McCullough receives its proper attention.

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Notes

- 1 Patricia Wiens, interview with the author, 28 Aug. 2003.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid. Wiens notes that McCullough was a beautiful woman, with a striking figure, "remarkably thin ankles, nice legs and a flat tummy."
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 For a more detailed breakdown, see Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, Series III (grant files), Box 348, folders 3-4, Columbia University.
- 6 Ontario College of Art Alumni Association, *Alumnus*, Spring 1983. National Archives of Canada, MG30D317, Volume 8, McCullough, Norah and Family.
- 7 Norah McCullough, *Biographical Notes*, NAC, MG30D317, Volume 6.
- 8 In 1938, \$2160 was granted to cover McCullough's salary and travel expenses to establish and direct the Children's Art Center in Pretoria, South Africa. In 1939 and 1940 the Carnegie Corporation gave two additional \$3000 grants, "for continued support of the work of Miss Norah McCullough in the organization and development of the Children's Art Centre at Pretoria." My thanks to Jane Gorjevsky, Curator, Carnegie Corporation Collection, Columbia University, for her assistance.
- 9 "New Cultural Vistas Open to Rural Areas," *The Regina Leader Post*, 10 Feb. 1948.
- 10 "The old native whispered to her to retreat quickly to her car and as she ran the native women commenced throwing stones at her," in H.J. LAWLESS, "A Girl Against the Veldt," *The Star Weekly* (Toronto), 5 Jan. 1946. The exoticism of McCullough's encounters with the "natives" was also captured in an article in the *Regina Leader Post*, in which McCullough praised her students: "The African Natives she described as intelligent and extremely appreciative of any assistance given them. In Miss McCullough's opinion the natives are especially talented in handicrafts." "New Cultural Vistas Open to Rural Areas," *Regina Leader Post*, 10 Feb. 1948.
- 11 Pearl MxCARTHY, "Art and Artists," *The Globe and Mail*, 4 Jan. 1938.
- 12 Sandra Flood is currently researching the history of the Saskatchewan Arts Board as part of her post-doctoral research on Canadian craft from 1950-2000.
- 13 Wiens interview.
- 14 Norah McCullough, *Looking Back to my Early Days in Regina*, NAC, MG30D317, Volume 6. During McCullough's time at the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Canada's first arts board, it established initiatives to "assist handicrafts groups." "New Arts Board for Saskatchewan," *Regina Leader Post*, 2 Feb. 1948.
- 15 See Tanya HARROD, *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Wiens notes that David Smith, the founder of the Saskatchewan Arts Board was instrumental in assisting McCullough with her projects. At the time he was the provincial Director of the Adult Education Division, Department of Education.
- 16 Wiens interview.
- 17 Ibid. Wiens states that the painter Maxwell Bates, one of the jurors, called McCullough from Calgary in the early 1960s claiming that he found her guidelines for selection were confusing.

- 18 Sandra GWYN, "Guild at the Crossroads," *Canadian Art* 20, no.5 (September/October 1963): 276-81.
- 19 Ibid., 277.
- 20 The other members were Gordon Webber, painter and professor at the School of Architecture at McGill University, and Paul Arthur, the Managing Editor of *Canadian Art* magazine.
- 21 The third largest delegation was Italy with twenty-eight representatives, the fourth largest was Mexico with twenty-two, followed by India with fourteen. New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Bolivia, Liberia, Ethiopia, Ghana and Tanganyika also had representatives at the conference. Czechoslovakia and Hungary were the only countries from "behind the iron curtain." "First World Congress of Craftsmen," *Craft Horizons* 24, no.5 (Sept./Oct. 1964): 8.
- 22 American Craft Council, New York, *Short Guide to World Crafts*, June 1964. AAC Archives, WCC Box 2. The Canadian participants in the First World Congress of Craftsmen were: Françoise Braise, Montreal, Secretary of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Harold B. Burnham, Toronto, President of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Merton Chambers, Toronto, Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Helen Copeland, Toronto, Olea Davis, Vancouver, Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Canadian Guild of Potters; Professor and Mrs. Eric Dodd, Calgary; Aleksandra Dzervitis, Toronto; Ruthann Gardner, Thornhill, Ontario; Mrs. McGregor Hone, Regina; Tess Kidick, Jordan, Ontario; Mr. and Mrs. Michel Lacombe, Verchères, Quebec; Bailey Leslie, Toronto, Canadian Guild of Potters; Norah McCullough, Regina, National Gallery of Canada; Ludwig Nickel, Winnipeg; John Pocock, Toronto; Eileen Reid, Montreal; H. Baroness Riedl-Ursin, Montreal; Ellis Roulston, Halifax, Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Catherine Ross, Toronto; Mildred Ryerson, Toronto; Tutzi Haspel Seguin, Toronto; Mr. and Mrs. George Shaw, Regina; Laurant Simard, Les métiers d'art de Québec, Montreal; Sheila R. Stiven, Toronto; J.R. Woolgar, Yellowknife, Canadian Handicrafts Guild; Jack Young, Saskatoon.
- 23 American Craft Council, *Short Guide to World Crafts*, June 1964, 101 (Conference proceedings).
- 24 Ibid., 12.
- 25 Lois Moran, interview with the author, 9 Dec. 1999, New York.
- 26 *Craft Horizons* changed its name to *American Craft* in 1979. Lois Moran was appointed editor in 1980.
- 27 Harold ROSENBERG, *The Tradition of the New* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962 ed.), 63.
- 28 Ibid., 84.
- 29 Harold Burnham and his wife Dorothy were major forces in the Canadian craft milieu. Both were affiliated with the Royal Ontario Museum, where Dorothy Burnham worked as a curator from 1929 until 1980. Together they published *Keep Me Warm One Night* (1972), considered to be the seminal text on early handweaving in Eastern Canada. Dorothy Burnham published a number of key histories of textiles, including *The Comfortable Arts* (1981), *Cut My Cote* (1973), *Unlike the Lilies* (1986), and *Warp and Weft* (1980). Her husband published *Handweaving in Pioneer Canada* (1976) through the Royal Ontario Museum.
- 30 *Canadian Handicrafts Guild Bulletin* 53 (March 1964): 2.
- 31 Anita AARONS, "An Absent Minded Attitude," *Architecture Canada* 505, 44/10 (October 1967): 22.

- 32 Wilson Mellen to Adelaide Marriott, 25 Jan. 1965. Archives of Ontario, Ontario Crafts Council, Archives of Canadian Craft, MU5752, Box 7, BW8-CB2.
- 33 "Stress Excellence of Design," *The Windsor Star*, 8 April 1965.
- 34 Anita AARONS, "Canadian Handcrafts and the Architect," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* 476, 42/5 (May 1965): 16.
- 35 "Report of the Meeting of Canadian Craftsmen Pro Tem Committee Winnipeg, 5-7, 1965." NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Jean-Claude Delorme, to George Shaw, Acting Chairman, Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts, 10 March 1966. NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association.
- 38 Harold Burnham, "Report of the Winnipeg Conference," Archives of Ontario, Ontario Crafts Council, Archives of Canadian Craft, MU5750, Box 5, BU-BW2.
- 39 Norah McCullough to Glen Lewis, University of British Columbia, 26 Aug. 1965. NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association: "We would never get our charter through the Secretary of State office because it seems there are already too many organizations with 'Canadian Council' linked in their terminology."
- 40 McCullough to Alan E. Blakeney, 6 July 1965. NAC, MG28I222, Volume 1, Canadian Craftsmen's Association.
- 41 "The Arts: Beauty by Design," *Time Magazine* (23 Dec. 1966): 9.
- 42 Daniel Rhodes was well known for his books, *Clay and Glazes for the Potter* (New York: Greenberg, 1957), and *Stoneware and Porcelain: The Art of High-Fired Pottery* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1959).
- 43 Wiens interview. She notes that the National Gallery of Canada's neglect of the crafts is a result of a number of issues, including increased concerns for the safety of traveling exhibitions (humidity, storage and shipping) and budgetary factors. It could be argued that the situation coincided with the growth of the National Museum of Man (today the Canadian Museum of Civilization) as the gatekeeper for Canadian crafts, a role that was heightened in the late 1970s when the Massey Collection of Canadian Crafts was gifted to the Museum.
- 44 McCullough to Alfred Rhodes, 25 Feb. 1966. National Gallery of Canada Archives, 12-4-296, Volume 3, Canadian Fine Crafts.
- 45 McCullough to Jean-Paul Morisset, 17 October 1966. NAC, MG30D317, Volume 7, McCullough, Norah and Family.

NORAH McCULLOUGH

Pionnière de l'artisanat professionnel au Canada

Norah McCullough (1903-1993) a apporté, dès les années 1920, une contribution importante au milieu canadien des arts. En tant qu'administratrice des arts, conservatrice et fondatrice de l'Association des Artisans du Canada, elle s'est engagée avec audace à promouvoir un large éventail d'activités culturelles. Elle est peut-être mieux connue des historiens de l'art par son travail sur le Groupe du Beaver Hall, mais le présent article veut souligner sa contribution au domaine de l'artisanat. À un moment où les artisans canadiens luttent pour se faire admettre en tant que groupe professionnel, Norah McCullough leur a fourni de nouvelles occasions d'être reconnus officiellement en créant une nouvelle organisation et en mettant sur pied une des plus importantes expositions d'artisanat, *Canadian Fine Craft*.

Peu de temps après avoir obtenu son diplôme de l'Ontario College of Art, en 1925, avec spécialisation en peinture, Norah McCullough devient l'assistante d'Arthur Lismer à la Art Gallery of Toronto (devenue la Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario), où elle enseigne dans des classes d'art pour les enfants jusqu'en 1937. Pendant ce temps, elle acquiert de l'influence sur la scène artistique de Toronto, cultivant des amitiés avec les sculptrices Florence Wyle et Frances Loring, membres du Groupe des Sept, et l'ethnologue Marius Barbeau. L'intérêt de McCullough pour l'artisanat remonte à 1934, alors qu'elle suit des cours de l'Institut Courtauld (université de Londres), voyage de recherche financé par la Corporation Carnegie. En 1938, elle est choisie par Lismer pour aller à Pretoria, en Afrique du Sud, mettre sur pied une école d'art subventionnée par la Carnegie. Pendant les huit années qu'elle passe en Afrique du Sud, elle constate l'importance de l'artisanat pour les artisans indigènes, et s'intéresse aux problèmes de malnutrition, de mauvaise santé et d'analphabétisme dus à l'impossibilité d'accéder à une éducation convenable et, par conséquent, à des revenus adéquats. Pour McCullough, l'artisanat joue un rôle vital pour procurer à cette population opprimée une expression culturelle indépendante.

À son retour au Canada, en 1946, elle développe l'idée de la responsabilisation à travers l'artisanat dans son travail à la section des services de l'expansion de la Galerie nationale du Canada (devenue le Musée des beaux-arts du Canada en 1968). En 1947, elle est engagée comme secrétaire exécutive du Conseil des arts

de la Saskatchewan, poste qui lui permet de réaliser certains programmes d'artisanat dans le but de préserver et de promouvoir les talents d'artisans de diverses origines ethniques. Déjà, dans les années 1950, elle avait réalisé en Saskatchewan plusieurs projets de promotion de l'artisanat à domicile, inspirés des modèles britanniques où l'artisanat joue un rôle important sur la scène des arts. En 1956, son intérêt pour les métiers d'art s'accroît avec l'octroi d'un prix du gouvernement fédéral pour étudier le travail à domicile en Europe. De 1956 à 1958, elle voyage en France, en Angleterre et au Danemark, étudiant les variantes régionales ainsi que les différents matériaux utilisés pour la production d'objets artisanaux et les méthodes de mise en marché. À son retour à Regina, elle est engagée par la Galerie nationale du Canada en tant qu'agent de liaison avec les provinces de l'Ouest, poste qui lui permet de promouvoir davantage l'artisanat.

Elle s'intéresse bientôt à l'amélioration de la qualité des métiers d'art au Canada, car selon elle, ils ne pouvaient occuper une place sérieuse dans la hiérarchie des arts à moins d'accroître leur valeur esthétique et leur expertise technique. Au début des années 1960, le Canada manque d'infrastructures professionnelles pour les artisans. La Guilde canadienne des métiers d'art, organisation nationale qui avait reçu le mandat, en 1906, de préserver l'artisanat traditionnel, est perçue comme une institution sur le déclin, incapable de fournir des perspectives d'avenir à un nombre croissant de professionnels instruits. Au même moment, Aileen Osborn Webb, fondatrice de l'American Craft Council, crée le World Crafts Council en 1964. Les trente délégués canadiens à l'assemblée inaugurale du conseil élisent Norah McCullough comme représentante canadienne à cette nouvelle organisation internationale de métiers d'art. Elle ne tarde pas à profiter de ce poste et, en février 1965, elle organise une conférence d'artisans, d'administrateurs d'art, de fonctionnaires du gouvernement et de professeurs d'université pour discuter de la nécessité de créer une nouvelle association d'artisans au Canada. Le résultat de cette rencontre est la fondation de l'Association des Artisans du Canada. Cette dernière supprime bientôt la Guilde canadienne des métiers d'art comme principal groupe d'artisans, alors qu'elle est choisie pour superviser les normes pour les métiers d'art au Canada à l'exposition universelle de Montréal, Expo 67.

En 1966, McCullough démissionne de son poste de présidente de sa nouvelle organisation afin de se consacrer à la mise sur pied d'une exposition majeure d'artisanat canadien pour la Galerie nationale du Canada à l'occasion de l'année du centenaire. Son exposition itinérante, *Canadian Fine Crafts*, est la plus importante de toutes les expositions d'artisanat du centenaire, et le magazine *Time* la félicite d'avoir convaincu le public de la valeur artistique des

métiers d'art. Encouragée par le succès de cette exposition d'artisanat et pour célébrer la prise de retraite de Mme McCullough, en 1968, la Galerie nationale du Canada crée la série de conférences sur l'artisanat Norah McCullough, qui se poursuit pendant une décennie.

Bien que les métiers d'art ne furent qu'une partie de ses nombreux intérêts dans le domaine de l'art, Norah McCullough fut parmi les premiers défenseurs de la place de l'artisanat parmi les beaux-arts au Canada. Pour cette seule raison, sa contribution mérite d'être célébrée.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette