

Volume 44 Number 3 | Winter 2021

FUSION

A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS



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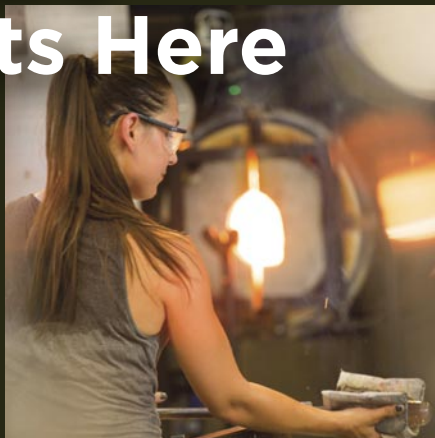
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A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS

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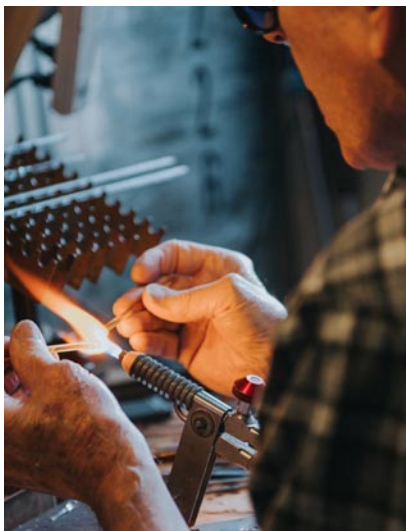
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Ed Roman flameworking in his studio, spring 2017. Image: Gal Capone Photography, 2017, courtesy of Tanya Lyons. See *Remembering Ed Roman*, a collaborative tribute by Ed's colleagues, friends, and family, page 6.

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FUSION

A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS

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Passages. Welcome to the first issue of *FUSION: A Magazine for Clay and Glass* in this new year.

Our beautiful cover image, of glassblower Ed Roman flameworking in his studio, introduces *Remembering Ed Roman*, a special tribute to a very special artist who passed away March 2, 2020. This is a personal and intimate remembrance of a man known as The Grandfather of Canadian Glassblowing: a collage of stories about Ed in his studio and at his supper table; about his passion, ingenuity, and integrity as an artist; about his compassion, humour, and kindness for fellow artists, friends, and family.

To the Roman family – Ed's life partner Wren (Jude) Crossland, their daughters Aidan Roman-Crossland and Robin Stamplicoski, and their families, I am deeply grateful for your wonderful spirit and practical help. I also thank artists Joyce Burkholder, Kathy Haycock, Anya Gansterer, Tanya Lyons, Jon and Suzann Partridge, and Linda Sorensen, each of whom has shared moments of their time with Ed.

I'm mindful of Wren's note to me: "Due to the pandemic, which landed just weeks after Ed's death, we were unable to hold the two life celebrations for him, that we had planned. This tribute is going to be the best we can do for commemorating him!"

FUSION Magazine looks for ways to connect contemporary ceramic and glass art and practice with the heritage of clay and glass work. I'm very pleased to re-introduce artist Mary Watts and the Compton Pottery through Dale Headington's lovely essay and memoir *Thank You, Mary: Mary Watts and the Compton Pottery*. Artist Mary Fraser Tytler Watts (1849-1938) worked in paint, textiles, metal, and clay. Founder of the Compton Potters' Arts Guild in the Surrey village of Compton UK as a communal space and support

for local potters, she and her husband, artist George Frederic Watts, built the pottery down the hill from their home. A working production studio until 1956, Dale notes that Mary Watts and the makers of the Compton Pottery deftly took the Victorian Arts and Crafts Movement into the television age.

My deep appreciation to Dale for permission to reprint his article, as well as for knocking off the winter snow and photographing his heirloom Compton pots; to David Wheeler, Founder, Publisher and Editor of *HORTUS: A Gardening Journal*, for permission to reprint this article, first published in *HORTUS* 135, Autumn 2020, and for his generous assistance throughout; and to artist Simon Dorrell, Art Editor of *Hortus*, for his kind permission to reprint his drawing of Dale's Compton snake pot.



Sun grass, Grey County, Ontario. Image: Margot Lettner

Marking another kind of passage, *FUSION* welcomes back our frequent contributor Heather Read with *Making When Things Get Hard*, her reflections on the past year of art-making with her two daughters. In her thoughtful telling of their adventures, Heather also explores creative practice as solace and salve. Their Wobbly Bowl seems a delicate, faceted metaphor for human life these days.

As always, *FUSION*'s Winter issue highlights the work of two Established Artists in our Featured Artist Spotlight, this time recognizing Evan Ting-Kwok Leung, Clay, and Jerre Davidson, Glass, two exceptional artists continuing to deepen their influences, engagements, and practice.

Where I am, the winter sun lingers and will set at 5:10 p.m., three minutes later than yesterday. Wherever we are, may we find small joys along the journey.

Margot Lettner
Editor



Ed Roman, round vase, undated.
Image courtesy of the artist's estate

Remembering Ed Roman

Ed Roman, known as “The Grandfather of Canadian Glassblowing,” passed away on March 2, 2020.

Learning the skill of torch work from his father, a neon glass tube worker, Ed became a working artist early, making and selling glass figurines for spending money and later financing his university studies. As a University of Toronto graduate, Ed taught secondary school history for three years before returning to school at Sheridan College School of Craft and Design. There, he studied the fine craft of hot-glass furnace blowing and met his life partner, artist Wren (Jude) Crossland.

Beginning at their Bardville Studios outside Bracebridge ON; then from Windy Ridge Studios on their small homestead outside Brudenell ON; and later from their home in Killaloe ON, Ed experimented with, designed, and made exquisite glass art that drew on this passion and skill as a colourist, sculptor, and painter.

In *Remembering Ed Roman*, colleagues, friends, and artists Joyce Burkholder, Anya Gansterer, Kathy Haycock, Tanya Lyons, Jon and Suzann Partridge, and Linda Sorensen offer remembrances of a man they lived art and life with as artist, friend, and often mentor. FUSION thanks each of them for sharing their memories and admiration.

FUSION also gratefully thanks the Roman Family – Wren (Jude) Crossland, and daughters Aidan Crossland-Roman and Robin Stamplicoski and their families – for their generous and thoughtful collaboration in bringing this tribute together; and for their own remembrance of a man they hold as artist, partner, father, grandfather, and friend.

For earlier appreciations of Ed, see Mark Jones, "Grandfather of Canadian glass artists



Ed Roman as a young boy, c.1950, blowing glass at the Port Stanley Fair. Image courtesy of the artist's estate

celebrated in Killaloe" in *The Valley Gazette*, November 20, 2018

<https://thevalleygazette.ca/grandfather-of-canadian-glass-artists-celebrated-in-killaloe/> and Clark Guettel, "Ed Roman Hangs Up His Jacks" in *Contemporary Canadian Glass*, Autumn 2007:15

<http://harrismediagroup.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/CCGfall072.pdf>

Remembrance of Ed's passing can be found at <https://www.eganvilleleader.ca/obituaries/edward-thomas-roman/>

Joyce Burkholder

Ed Roman was not only a highly regarded artistic glass blower, particularly for his landscapes in glass, but he was also an excellent landscape painter on canvas and board.

Windy Ridge, Ed and Jude's farm for several decades, was aptly named. An old log homestead on a hilltop, with breathtaking views of layer upon layer of hills and valleys, was his inspiration in all seasons. He was portraying their life in his superbly crafted glass landscapes and finely detailed paintings.

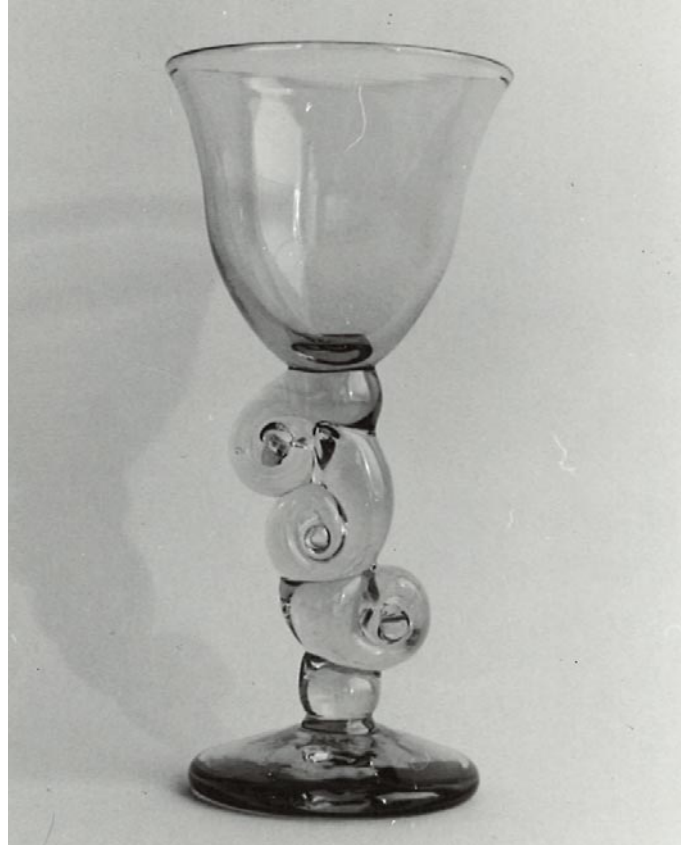
Ed also had a wonderful way of seeing and capturing atmospheric light in his work. Sometimes painting a late winter sun with glowing shadows stretching across undulating fields of snow; and other times a full moon holding court over the valley, with cool greens and blues and a lake shining in the distance. He was a colourist, highly skillful with his palette in all mediums; and used this skill to portray his love for life, family, and his surroundings.

I knew Ed to be a humble, caring, and sensitive artist. Over the many decades of being at the same craft shows selling our wares, we had long esoteric conversations about life and also the down-to-earth challenge of earning a living. It takes courage and strength to make the commitment to live from one's art: and Ed certainly had that.

Joyce Burkholder is an Ottawa Valley working artist for 50 years ... and still at it!
<http://www.joyceburkholder.com/> and
<http://www.hillsidepaintingsandpottery.com/>
She is also a member of Wild Women,
Painters of the Wilderness
<http://wildwomenartists.ca/>

Anya Gansterer

My first encounter with Ed was as a child. My parents and Ed's family were artists and newcomers to "the Valley" during the 1980s. They found each other among the arts and craft scene and decided that, in lieu



Ed Roman, Simple Curly-Q goblet, c. 1974-1980.
Image courtesy of the artist's estate

of having family close by, they would spend holidays together. I spent a lot of time at Windy Ridge playing with Ed's daughters, Aidan and Robin. Occasionally we would peek through the window into Ed's glass studio and watch him blow glass. Peeking through the glass into his creative world supported my young dreams of building my own life with art.

As a teenager, I accompanied my mother along the craft fair trail as her booth assistant. Ed and his family were usually on that trail, too. I would inevitably end up at their booth and spend my pocket money on one of Ed's glass animals or a paperweight containing a magical world, a collection that I still treasure.

More recently, I've had the pleasure of curating two exhibits of Ed's work. The first was a retrospective that coincided with his retirement from glassblowing, in 2007. Then, in 2015, I curated an exhibition titled *Grandfather's Collection*, which featured Ed's private collection of glass work that he had collected over the years, along with some of his own work. The effect of his art was felt by many, including Rita, one of the visitors to the exhibition, who stated:

"[It's] very special to experience this amazing collection of art pieces by the most gifted glass blower I have been privileged to know. The artistry of glass and poetic worlds will resonate within my spirit for a very long time."

Ed Roman is known as the Grandfather of Canadian Glass Blowing, a title that he wouldn't have let on. But anyone who took the time to get to know him would soon learn that Ed was humble, gentle, and very much deserving of that title. One of my fondest memories of Ed is of him sitting at his dining room table in their old farmhouse at Windy Ridge, eating apple pie and regaling everyone with a long-winded joke that I would never "get" – mostly because I was too distracted by all the art treasures in their house to make it through to the end of the story!

Thank you, Ed, for living an artful life: and thank you for the chance to peek into your creative world and become inspired to build my own artful life.

Anya Gansterer is a Curator, arts advocate, and community arts facilitator in Killaloe ON <https://placemakingdesign.ca/>

Kathy Haycock

Ed was already an internationally recognized glass artist, a quietly creative soul, when I met him. I had recently begun oil painting and joined the Madawaska Valley Studio Tour, where he was an extremely talented senior founding member. His blown glass was greatly admired and avidly collected.

But it was not until a few years later that I began to appreciate how deep his talent was. His glasswork was filled with graceful design, rhythmic movement, delightful light and, in many pieces, even the suggestion of swirling landscapes. Then I had the opportunity to paint with him. He was a very accomplished painter, too. His lovely watercolours reminded me of the Group of Seven: A. J. Casson, in fact. Casson would strike in the start of several paintings onsite in the morning, then repair to camp to finish them from his memory and



Ed Roman, Glass Landscape, undated, collection of Kathy Haycock. Image: Kathy Haycock

imagination in the afternoon. Ed's imagination, like Casson's, was full of lovely natural flow which he expressed in his fluid molten glass. I am truly thankful to have known him, and to have a piece of his in my art collection.

Kathy Haycock, SCA AFC OSA is a painter, weaver, and stained glass artist; and member of Wild Women Wilderness Painters, three plein air landscape painters moved by the underlying influence of landscape as expressed in Ed's glasswork www.kmhaycock.com www.wildwomenartists.ca

Tanya Lyons

Growing up in the hills outside Killaloe ON, in the Ottawa Valley, I was exposed to many artists and artisans: painters, ceramists, metal workers, and glass makers. Many of the locals collected their work and used it in the day-to-day. I remember admiring Ed Roman's dragon stem goblets, the magic they held. Fascinated by the delicacy and the skills needed to create them.

I didn't expect to be a glass artist but I, too, went to Sheridan College and ended up in the glass program. A place that has seduced and transformed many glass artists.

After many years in Quebec I returned to Killaloe to raise my daughter and continue my glass work. In 2017, I had the opportunity to give a lecture at the Glass Art Association of Canada's Conference on the theme "Re:Do."



Ed with Tanya Lyons, spring 2017. Image: Tanya Lyons

I chose to write about Ed Roman and Re:turning to my hometown community where I first watched glass being made. I was fortunate to be able to spend time with Ed; listening to his stories was facilitating. He had stories from his childhood, when he entertained tourists by making glass figurines; stories about being in love with glass yet uncertain that becoming a glass artist would earn him a living; and, of course, the story of being given the most magical opportunity when Sheridan College started a glass program.

Ed met many other passionate makers at Sheridan, like Clark Guettel, and when they graduated they were living a dream. Beginning the adventures of building glass studios and laying the foundation for Canadian Studio Glass. Ed and Clark were early seeds of the Canadian glass movement that scattered across this vast land to set up studios in the hills, away from bureaucracy and regulation.

I was moved by the stories of these passionate pioneers of the rough-and-ready studios, places built for survival, indulgence, and growth. I am honoured to have had time in the studio with Ed, the Grandfather of Canadian Glass, as well as to be able to carry on the tradition of glass in these hills.

Tanya Lyons is a Glass Artist/Maker in Killaloe ON glass@tanyalyons.ca www.tanyalyons.ca

Jon and Suzann Partridge

Ed was often referred to as the “Grandfather of (hot glass) Glassblowing.” We have known Ed and Jude since the early 1970s when we moved to Muskoka to set up our Studio. During the late 1970s Ed and Jude, along with ourselves, were featured in a half-hour television program called *Faces of Small Places* from CKVR in Barrie ON that was filmed at our Studios and well-received by viewers. Ed and I were also on the Advisory Board for glass and clay at Georgian College in Barrie.

In 1976 we were included in a book called *Handmade in Ontario: A Guide to Crafts and Craftsmen*, by Susan Himel and Elaine Lambert (published by Van Nostrand Reinhold).

Ed was a member of Muskoka Arts and Crafts (M.A.C.) and participated in the Annual Summer Show for many years. When Ed and Jude made the move to their rural homestead outside of Brudenell ON we didn't see as much of them; but always looked forward to their company when they came down to the Annual M.A.C. Summer Show and stayed with us.

Ed was a good friend, and we enjoyed his company and our discussions about the similarities between firing a potter's kiln and a glass furnace. The materials we used paralleled each other and, for a short period of time, I made some pots for his glass furnace. He was also a wealth of information regarding hot glass and world history.

Ed was masterful with his use of colour and design in his landscape vases and in his collectable dragon goblets. An artist, a national treasure in Canada for his contribution to the development of hot glass, Ed's legacy will live on as the Grandfather of Glassblowing.

Jon Partridge (Potter) since 1973. Still actively creating pots. Suzann Partridge (Multimedia Artist) pottery@muskoka.com



Ed with work in hand, spring 2017. Image: Tanya Lyons

Linda Sorensen

I have known Ed for over 40 years as a family man, fellow back-to-the-lander, friend, glassblower, and fellow artist. It is hard to say how I got to know him first since, back in the day, we were all raising young families and living off the land, in a community where our lives would intertwine. I was aware of his amazing talent with glass, though, through our local Madawaska Valley Studio Tour and the international acclaim that followed his work. I would marvel at the magic excellence of his craft as he spun little fanciful animal figurines; fine paperweights of mystical shapes and colour; and enchanting goblets

and bowls that were pieces of art. His creative spark for his medium knew no bounds. For many years we shared life-drawing classes with like-minded artists. Ed was also an accomplished landscape painter – and a good one! He was a true artist at heart, and I shall never forget his kind and gentle spirit.

Award-winning artist Linda Sorensen paints vibrant, iconic, wilderness and wildlife paintings in acrylic. She also paints the wilderness landscape on site in all seasons, in oils. Her works can be found across the globe www.lindasorensen.com
<https://www.facebook.com/algonquinwildernessart/>



Ed Roman, tall vase, undated.
Image: Gerry Gardiner, White
Pine Photography

Ed was an inquisitive soul, drawn to the magic and mystery of art at an early age. At five, he already had a keen eye for colour, form, and line. At seven, he learned the exacting craft of torch-work from his father and, as a teenager, he mastered neon tube work.

Through selling glass figurines, Ed financed his way through university and earned a B.A. History, Honours, from the University of Toronto; travelled Europe; and studied at the Sorbonne, Paris, France.

After returning to Toronto he taught secondary school. Although a dedicated and well-respected educator, he left after three years to follow his life dream and true calling and enrolled in the “hot glass” program at Sheridan College School of Craft and Design. There we met.

Throughout 45 years of being life and business partners, and raising our two daughters, we always strove to support each other in our two very disparate disciplines – sharing creative sparks, bouncing ideas around, and encouraging experimentation. Indeed, we enjoyed collaborating on two duo-shows: *Bottles, Boxes and Bowls* (Winnipeg) and *Landscapes in Glass and Textiles* (Toronto).

It was through creating pieces for the latter that Ed perfected the technique used for his world-renowned landscapes. He “painted” onto a hot glass core with molten coloured glass rods. This technique perfectly melded his skills and interests in painting and glass blowing. Similarly, his widely collected and intricate “dragon goblets” exhibit successfully integrated torch-work and hot-glass work with an unexpected bit of whimsy. The heat and fire of the “dragon” (furnace) is captured in a delicate little glass dragon-creature.

Over the years, Ed amassed an admirable collection of works by several colleagues whom he admired. Ever an adventurer in glass, he didn’t hesitate to experiment with an array of techniques evident in his collection – creating incredibly skilled drawings with sandblasting; trapping ethereal transparency in “tree landscapes”; capturing fascinating translucency in fumed vases.

Ed was extremely generous, often giving freely of these exquisite pieces to appreciative friends, collectors and, yes, family. Over time, many of his finest pieces found pride of place in the homes of both our daughters.

As a teacher, parent and role model, Ed was gentle, patient, and trusting. He never tired of sharing his knowledge, skill, and passion. From him, our youngest daughter, Robin, learned not only how to make snakes, snails and puppy dog tails on the torch – it’s harder than it looks! – but the importance of building a career that nourishes one’s soul; she works in the art of listening and supporting others. Our oldest daughter, Aidan, utilizes the creative and innovative spirit, learned from and nurtured by him, in everything she does. As well, the skills learned as his “sales assistant” at craft shows have served her well!

At every opportunity, “Pappa” shared his love of art with our five grand-babies. Patiently, he taught them various fine art skills; and contentedly joined them in sketching, drawing, colouring, and painting sessions. Happily, as they follow in his wake, Ed’s creative spirit lives on.

Wren (Jude) Crossland is Ed’s life partner. Aidan Roman-Crossland and Robin Stamplicoski are their daughters.



Ed at the furnace, c.1975-1985.
Image courtesy of the artist's estate

Thank You, Mary: Mary Watts and the Compton Pottery

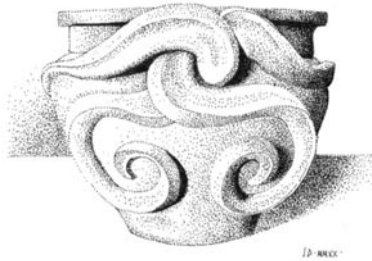


Mary Watts and the Compton Pottery, snake pot. Image: Dale Headington

We all have terracotta pots or planters of some description in our garden, decorating terraces, steps, balconies and borders. Most come from garden centres and most are of a uniform design, but few can match the glamour and prestige of those made by the Compton Pottery in the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1980s my father was given two garden pots by a friend whose family had owned them since their garden was designed eighty-odd years before. They lived in my late parents' garden for years until one day I realised they reminded me of something and suggested they take a little more care with them. They were original Compton pots.

The story of the pottery – or more correctly the Compton Potters' Arts Guild – which flourished from 1900 to 1956 in the Surrey village of Compton, is also largely the story of its remarkable founder, Mary Fraser Watts.

Mary Fraser Tytler (1849-1938) was born in India but spent much of her youth in Scotland. In her twenties, she studied art in Dresden before moving to the Kensington School of Art and, finally, to a course in sculpture at the Slade in 1872-73. She was known initially as a portrait painter and through her work became friends with the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, who lived at Freshwater on the Isle of Wight. Alfred, Lord Tennyson and the artist George Frederic Watts also owned homes nearby and the Freshwater Community was



Drawing by Simon Dorrell,
Art Editor of *Hortus*,
reproduced with permission

where Mary met the man often called the greatest artist of his time.

Watts (1817-1904) had married the actress Ellen Terry when he was forty-six and she was sixteen, but she had eloped with another man within a year and Watts divorced her. He had not remarried in the intervening years, but was again drawn to a much younger woman with

artistic talent and he and Mary married in 1886, when she was thirty-six and he was sixty-nine. The marriage was childless, but both husband and wife continued to produce a vast creative output, mainly at their Surrey home in the village of Compton, to which they moved in 1891 and built a house, Limnerslease, designed for them by the Arts and Crafts architect Sir Ernest George.

After her marriage, Mary painted less, concentrating instead on metalwork, textiles, pottery and bas reliefs. She joined the committee of the Home Arts and Industries Association which was started by Lord Brownlow in the 1880s to encourage handicrafts among the "lower classes," and as a result Mary started evening courses in terracotta pottery in the drawing room at Limnerslease. These were eventually attended by up to seventy local villagers and when, in the late 1890s, the local council decided to build a new chapel in the village cemetery, Mary was an obvious choice to design it. She worked it in "a fusion of art nouveau, Celtic, Romanesque and individual style,"

which resulted in one of the most unique buildings in Britain. Her vast team of largely amateur but hugely enthusiastic local potters joined in the undertaking and virtually every village resident was involved in the construction of the chapel between 1896 and 1898.

On completion, Mary decided that to waste the talents and skills honed by her workforce would be a terrible loss of both skill and income to all concerned and so founded the Compton Potters' Arts Guild in 1899. The newly-formed commercial enterprise needed somewhere to operate, so the Wattses built the Compton Pottery down the hill from their home. In 1903, plans for the Watts Gallery were drawn up, which included accommodation for twelve apprentice potters. It soon became one of the most successful ventures of its type in Britain.

The pottery's output included household figures, jugs, plaques, bookends, lamp stands and pendants, as well as terracotta garden pots, sundials, birdbaths and other garden ornaments. There is even a Compton pottery grave memorial in Green Lane Cemetery in Farnham. Quality was paramount and the reputation of the work quickly spread. Many London stores sold their wares, including Liberty & Co.; Liberty even allowed Compton to be one of the few suppliers who were permitted to mark the work with their own maker's stamp, instead of Liberty's own.

George and Mary Watts were friends of both Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens, so it was inevitable that both of those celebrated designers would use Compton wares in their garden designs. In 1904 Lutyens was asked to design a new garden at Hestercombe in Somerset for Edward and Constance Portman and he liberally sprinkled Compton ware throughout the finished work. Hestercombe, which after Mrs. Portman's death in 1951 became the headquarters of the Somerset Fire Brigade, is often described as Lutyens' finest garden design. Since the Fire Brigade left the house in 2012, the garden has been fully restored to its former glory, but one wonders how many of the original Compton

pots remain. Gertrude Jekyll frequently used Compton pottery in her designs and even commissioned one that was subsequently known as the "Jekyll model." Clough Williams Ellis also commissioned work for his Italianate village at Portmeirion in north Wales and the company won medals at the Royal Botanical Society and took the highest award of the Home Arts and Industries Association, the Gold Cross.

Compton garden pots came in all shapes and sizes, from around ten inches high to several feet. One of the most notable was the snake pot [pictured on pages 15 and 16], which featured two coiled serpents forming handles on either side of the pot, with their heads coming round to face each other on the other two sides. There were also scrollwork pots in various designs, some with scrollwork handles, some with scrollwork body. Recommended by Gertrude Jekyll, the company produced miniature garden pots for Queen Mary's Dolls House in the 1920s – the house having been designed by Lutyens and its garden by Jekyll.

Eventually, the Guild became a limited company run by Georges Aubertin, continuing to manufacture work based on Mary Watts's designs, even after her death in 1938. Many will remember the famous *Potter's Wheel* interlude film introduced by the BBC in February 1953. These short films were brought in to allow for changes in studios or the frequent transmission problems encountered in those early days of the service. The *Potter's Wheel*, surely the best known of them all, showed Georges Aubertin throwing a pot, neatly taking the Compton pottery from the age of the Victorian Arts and Crafts Movement to the television age of the late twentieth century.

Sadly, though a successful enterprise for more than fifty years, the pottery was unable to compete with modern designs and cheaper production techniques and like many in the same position, was obliged to cease production in 1956. Happily, the Watts Gallery Artists' Village now flourishes on the site of the old pottery, including the Watts Gallery

itself, with an unrivalled collection of G.F. Watts's work, an exhibition of original Compton pottery, the studios of both George and Mary in their newly-restored home at Limnerslease, the Watts Chapel designed by Mary and built by her craftsmen and women, shops and a tearoom. It must surely be one of the temples of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

As for my father's pots, they now live with me – one in the hall and one in the garden room. They are two of Mary's original designs and luckily both remain in perfect condition, enhanced by a beautiful patina from decades of outdoor use. They are among my favourite possessions. Thank you, Mary.

Dale Headington is an historian, researcher, genealogist, bookseller and enthusiastic amateur gardener who lives in the Brecon

Beacons in mid-Wales. Instagram: [@clocktowerbooks](https://www.instagram.com/clocktowerbooks). This article first appeared in *HORTUS* 135, Autumn 2020 and is reprinted courtesy the editor and the author <https://hortus.co.uk>. Drawing by Simon Dorrell, Art Editor of *Hortus*, reproduced with permission. Images of Compton pots by Dale Headington, used with permission.

FUSION thanks all for their generosity.

To learn more about Mary Watts and the Compton Pottery, go to <https://www.wattsgallery.org.uk>

To see Georges Aubertin in the BBC *Potter's Wheel* interlude, go to <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0276jjh>



Mary Watts and the Compton Pottery, garden pot. Image: Dale Headington



Making When Things Get Hard

Our Wobbly Bowl, 2020. All images, pages 19-22: Heather Read, 2020.

As I child, I excelled at glue-gun masonry. I grew up in a suburban town on a street that looked like every other street in the subdivision. At some point in my childhood, my parents put down a covering of small stones in the space between the neighbour's house and ours. I loved them. I spent many summer moments in the rock pile. Eventually, either I was old enough or technology was cheap enough that I was given a glue gun. And so, I built furniture: couches, tables, and beds for dolls. I made a cardboard house with a tiny stone fireplace and chimney. I figured out how to create trails of glue around my creations, which I called spider webs; imagining this made them look like antiques. My fingers were constantly blistered as I sat in my garage, working in the rock pile.

In my life since, I have made toys, quilts, ceramic cups and teapots, muffins, and my wedding ring, among other objects. I have friends who make moccasins, grow vegetables, create elaborate Halloween costumes, carve canoe paddles, print etchings, and make pottery. I have family members who sew dolls, quilts, and toy elephants. My brother once built a model of the Batmobile out of Lego as a child, using schematics from a movie pamphlet, long before movie tie-in models existed. My mother is a painter. My husband is building a table. My grandmother was a masterful wool-worker; almost all her grandchildren have at least one crocheted blanket, and her daughters each have at least five.

I had been expecting, then, when I had my first child that she would be a natural maker. My second seems to be headed on that track,

but my first was more interested in being out in the world, running and climbing. She possesses an effortless ease in making new friends on a playground that both her father and I lack. And so, when we had her, we went out, until we could not go out anymore.

Almost instantly, in March 2020, I began encouraging all forms of craft and art-making in our home to cope with the significant shift in our lives caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Sometimes, this art-making was joyfully received. More often, it was met with hysterical fits, as she resisted with all her strength any lessons I tried to pass on about how to be safe with materials. But I pushed on. I knew I needed to make things to get through this, and I needed to take care of her.

And so, she would have to learn to make things. Our most successful projects so far have been with clay. We made play clays from the Gardiner Museum's educational website; we were given an excellent kit from the Robert McLaughlin Gallery that included a clay project; we ordered air-dry clay online from art stores; and found a studio in Toronto, Clay Space Studio, that offered to deliver a clay kit to our home, among other clay activities.¹ Working with clay regularly made our home life calmer.

Artistic practice is known to be a solace and a salve in very challenging situations, helping people work through both large-scale and personal trauma. Examples are everywhere. From time to time, Canadian institutions feature exhibitions of work like this, such as the 2013 show *Transformation by Fire* at the Gardiner Museum.² Researchers have devoted careers to studying the role of



Elsa and Anna, 2020.

artistic practice in areas like Japanese American and Canadian internment camps (such as Jane Dusselier, Delphine Hirasuna, and Kirsten McAllister, among others).³ The book *Creativity Behind Barbed Wire*, edited by Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum, explores creativity in internment and prisoner-of-war camps worldwide, documenting utilitarian items like dental moulds, as well as decorative embroidery, carving, and painting.⁴ Sometimes the creative actions the authors explore are subversive; sometimes they look towards a hopeful future. At one point in my career, I helped a friend put together an art show involving a collective of women who had been political prisoners in Iran. The plasticine clay works ranged from scenes of remembrance of prison life; to meditations on peace, freedom, mental health, and the importance of resistance to oppression. There have been, of course, works about and in response to health crises as well: on a grand scale, projects like the quilt honoring the victims of HIV/AIDS; and, on a small scale, researchers working with bereaved individuals to make art in support groups.⁵

So, why do we make things during hard times? I first began thinking about that question when I studied folklore in graduate school. The folklorist Ian Brodie has a lovely passage explaining the origins of the field, noting that:

“[it] has an emphasis on the tacit, the

informal, the quotidian, the interstitial, the local and the marginalized. Its lodestone is tradition, what has been done, and what we do again, in part because we have done it before....”

I love the phrase “What we do again, in part because we have done it before”;⁶ I can think of no better description of why I am insisting on teaching my daughter craft during the pandemic. The things we are making together during the pandemic are not particularly beautiful; instead, they are expressions of family and newly created tradition. They are less about themselves than they are about the relationships they embody. They solidify the time I am spending with her, showing her concretely how we are here for each other, with each other, together.

If she remembers anything from this time, I want her to remember the hours we spent painting underglaze on our wobbly bowl and forming the characters from *Frozen* out of



Solar system project we made, 2020.



Summer clay session with my daughter, 2020.

clay: getting messy and making things, again and again, because that is what we do when things get hard.

Heather Read is a writer and researcher based in Toronto. She has worked at cultural institutions across Canada. She holds a PhD in Adult Education and Community Development and can be reached at heather.read@gmail.com.

¹ Gardiner Museum's Family Days activities: <https://www.gardinermuseum.on.ca/learn-create/familydays/>; Robert McLaughlin Gallery's Summer Art Camp in a Box program: <http://rmg.on.ca/rmg-summer-art-camp-in-a-box/>; Clay at Home program offered by Clay Space Studio: <http://clayspacestudio.com/clay-at-home/>

² Gardiner Museum's *Transformation By Fire* exhibition from 2013: <https://www.gardinermuseum.on.ca/event/transformation-by-fire-women-overcoming-violence-through-clay/>

³ Dusselier, Jane. *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008; Hirasuna, Delphine. *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps 1942-1946*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2005; McAllister, Kristen. "Photographs of a Japanese Canadian Internment Camp: Mourning Loss and Invoking a Future." *Visual Studies* 21, 2 (2006): 133-156.

⁴ Carr, Gilly and Harold Mytum, eds. *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire*. New York, USA: Routledge, 2012.

⁵ Kahut, Mary. "Making Art from Memories: Honouring Deceased Loved Ones Through a Scrapbooking Bereavement Group." *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 28, 3 (2011): 123-131.

National AIDS Memorial: <https://www.aidsmemorial.org/interactive-aids-quilt/>; Crawley, Rosalind, Samantha Lomax, and Susan Ayers. "Recovering from stillbirth: the effects of making and sharing memories on maternal mental health." *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 31, 2 (2013): 195-207; Kahut, Mary. "Making Art from Memories," 123-131.

⁶ Brodie, Ian. "Folklore and the Liberal Arts." *Journal of General Education* 61, 3 (2012): 229-239.

**FUSION MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT
FEATURED ESTABLISHED ARTIST,
CLAY**

Evan Ting-Kwok Leung

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The world turns all around and time is changing, but nothing is to be blamed. We have limited control of life. Day after day we have tasted pain, anger, sadness, or happiness in different stages. Our lives are similarly short but, if we embrace impermanence and work with it, life can be a joy. Perhaps we could appreciate the painful beauty gently passing by as a unique lesson.

I am a ceramic sculptor born in Hong Kong in 1977, moving to British Columbia, Canada with my parents in 1994. Growing up with my painter father, I have been exposed to the arts for as long as I can remember. Following my passion and interest, I went to Kwantlen University College and the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Canada, to study visual arts. Since 1998, I have participated in solo and group exhibitions in Canada and other countries.

In recent years, my ceramic installations of multiple slip-casted porcelain IV Bags, human body forms, and plastic tubing have been exhibited in several biennales, including the 2020, 2016, and 2012 Taiwan Ceramics Biennale (Recommendation Prize, 2016); Latvia International Ceramics Biennale 2018; 11th International Ceramics Competition, Mino, Japan (Honourable Mention, 2017); and the 1st Cluj International Ceramics Biennale, Romania (Highest Recognition, 2013).





FUSION MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT
FEATURED ESTABLISHED ARTIST, GLASS

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I am a sculptor currently working in glass. Each sculpture I create explores the shifting rhythms of a particular space, using gestural shapes, light, shadow, and reflection to capture these spatial rhythms.

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, I first studied at the Scottish Ballet School and later danced professionally. These early experiences are fundamental to my identity, my love of dance and music integral to my work. By recording dance movement in a motion capture studio then translating it into a 3-dimensional form using a rapid prototype machine, I explore feminine energy expressed through emotional gesture, allowing the dancer to become part of the sculptural concept.

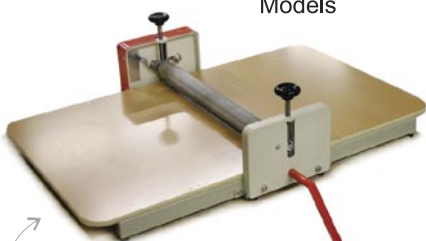
I studied at various centres of excellence in glass education, including Pilchuck, WA; the Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass, NY; and North Lands Creative Glass in Caithness, Scotland. I have received a number of awards, including a first-place award of excellence in sculpture at the Canadian Society of Artists Exhibition, and an Ontario Arts Council Project Grant. My work is also featured in New Glass Review 41 (Corning Museum of Glass, 2020); and has been exhibited in Korea, Scotland, USA and Canada. I work out of my studio in Southern Ontario, Canada.



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