



DEFINITIONS FROM THE PAST

by Ruth M. Home

(Reprinted by permission from "Community Courier", July-August 1958)

The terms, amateur, artist, craftsman, professional are projections from the past into the modern maelstrom of the arts. The controversy about the meaning, and consequent spheres of influence, arises out of the need to define terms to fit the modern community.

Let us look at the past for authority, however, because we are not inventing new terms, just reviving old one.

First the professional in any field of visual arts has been always with us. When Old Stone Age man drew his paintings on the walls of his cave and sculptured his cave bear, he set the precedent for the modern artist because there is evidence that the man who did the work was a sort of specialist, a priest, a sorcerer perhaps, but nevertheless someone who was not anyone. Similarly in other forms of expression, metal, pottery, or weaving, the work tended to be done by certain individuals, or a group; it was not common to all.

As civilization became more complex and the work more complicated, organizations developed to maintain standards of craftsmanship and to protect the economic position of their members. And so ensued a long period of learning culminating in the right to be called a master of his craft or a professional.

Thus the key to the word professional is first learning, and then money. The professional may have some creative ability above his fellow men. He also has definite standards of work or craftsmanship, the outward and visible sign of which is recognition by his fellow professionals and membership in the various professional organiza-

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tions such as the Ontario Society of Artists, the Ontario Association of Architects, the Art Directors' Association, and so forth.

What distinguishes an amateur from a professional is first his attitude, and secondly his dependence upon other work for his livelihood. The word originated from the Latin "to love" and from the French "lover". Hence the primary role in society of the amateur is one of intelligent and enthusiastic appreciation, not necessarily creation. Lorenzo the Magnificent, Lord Burlington, Horace Walpole, and John Ruskin were all amateurs. Today the term is used for one "who cultivates a thing as a pastime". Sometimes the work of the amateur is of the same high quality as the professional. His enthusiasm may amount to an obsession, but if his pay cheque comes regularly from other sources outside his creative field, he is not a professional.

Before the Renaissance, the terms craftsman and artist were synonymous, referring to an anonymity who created beautiful things for his patron the amateur. In the Renaissance, however, the artist emerged as a personality whose biography was written and whose work showed a self-consciousness, a tendency to emancipation from the dominance of his patron. This man apparently began to feel a deep sense of responsibility towards his gifts and a faith in his own artistic genius. Thus the artist is a man whose creative genius dominates his techniques or his skill in execution.

As early, therefore, as the Renaissance the division between the craftsman and the artist may be found. The more the artist elevated his position, the more the craftsman became the honest, meticulous worker, famous for his technical ability, but with a tendency to leave the creative side to his so-called betters. The division became greater when the Academies in France were founded and certain aspects of creative work, that of the sculptor, the painter and the architect, became ennobled. Today we, therefore, talk about "arts and crafts" rather than "the arts".

The craftsman still worked in the medieval tradition and in the guild fabric until the Industrial Revolution robbed him of his economic position and reduced him as a worker to the operator of a machine. The revival of the craft idea may be attributed to William Morris and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite group who promulgated with enthusiasm the philosophy of an ideal existence where one worked with one's own hands to make simple objects of beauty. Out of the amazing mixture of morality, religious mysticism and aesthetic enthusiasm of this group emerged the ideal of the modern craftsman, one who designs and makes with his own hands objects of beauty for special orders. He becomes a professional who supports himself by the practice of his craft and he fills a special place in modern society answering the urge for individuality in our surroundings.

Unfortunately, because of industrialization, the most important

characteristic of his work is that it is hand made. The ingenious, the technical ability, the skill of workmanship overshadow the object. There is a tendency to admire the overworked, the curious, the overdecorated and the complicated because it takes time and is obviously the work of man's hands. Patience and skill become more important than the usefulness and harmonious beauty of the object. Hence the hand-made is opposed to the machine-made, with the emphasis upon the technique rather than upon the object.

In the past, the artist, the craftsman and the professional were all synonymous terms referring usually to the same person. No term gave a special halo to the user nor a special mystery to his work. The amateur was the perspicacious patron and critic who frequently worked at his art but not for money. To-day the amateur may attain the standards set by the artist and be therefore a professional -- minus the money -- by hard work and exacting standards of technique and design. Whether he works at one of the noble arts or at one of the crafts, which are being elevated to their former position, he may still call himself an artist.

ASSOCIATE & FELLOWSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Articles from members wishing to qualify for the higher membership awards must be in by March 28th this year. For further information about number and type of articles, etc., write to Mrs. Reta Larmour, Apt. 307, 2649 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario.

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THE CHRISTMAS SALE
by Nora Huyck, F.C.S.C.L.

The fourth annual sale of leather goods made by members of the C.S.C.L. was held November 26th to 29th at the Canadian Handicrafts Guild shop on Bloor St. West, Toronto.

Twenty-five members sent in goods for sale and the gross receipts were \$729.05. The committee was well satisfied with the results and feel that the extra two days of the sale were worthwhile.

The quality of the articles was better this year than last. This is not only the observation of the committee, it was noted by several customers who know good craft work. Since last year's work was better than the year before, we feel there is generally a gradual improvement, and that in a few more years all the articles offered for sale will be really outstanding in craftsmanship.

The general public is beginning to be aware of the sale and to look for it late in November. The response to the invitations sent out has justified their expense. Several customers--and these were not dragged along by their leathercraft friends -- were back for the third year and many expressed thanks for the invitation.

The committee would like to thank those who sent along bigger articles for display. There was a very good selection of big and small pieces and enough of both to make an attractive window display and a good display in the sales room upstairs. We did receive a few articles which we could not put out for sale -- they just were not good enough-- there were some others which we would have preferred not to offer for sale; however, our stock was not large enough to allow us to discriminate too severely.

We do hope that within the next few years our members will have improved their craftsmanship to the point where we will no longer be faced with this problem. We feel it is quite possible because we did have some really excellent pieces -- they were no longer in the hobby class, they had advanced to the craft class.

The committee is grateful to all the willing helpers from the Toronto branch who helped list and tag articles and who formed the sales staff. A letter has been sent by your Executive to the Canadian Handicrafts Guild to thank them for the use of the upstairs room and the window for display and to thank the two girls who set up the window display.

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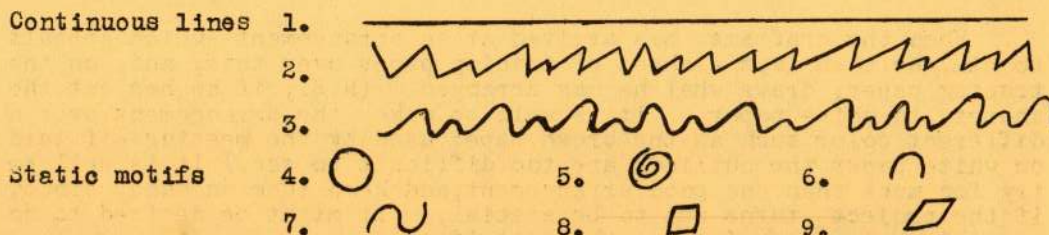
ANNUAL MEETING DATE

The date for this year's Annual Meeting has been tentatively set at Saturday, April 11th, 1959. It is hoped that we can again have our meeting at the Ryerson Institute of Technology, Toronto.

DECORATIVE DESIGN
Cut-outs for the Purpose
 by Anne Hook, F.C.S.C.L.

(A talk given at the November Meeting of Toronto Guild)

In "Canadian Leathercraft", Summer, 1957, issue, the following Alphabet of Line was shown:



This was referred back to, at the November 1958 meeting, as a warming-up, or preliminary to the putting into action, the application of this alphabet, for the purpose of making cut-outs, suitable for use as decorative design for leathercraft.

Combinations of these motifs and their variations were sketched on the blackboard. Casual doodling followed, of the type usually found on the telephone pad, showing how this alphabet repeats itself involuntarily. Out of these scribblings, lines were deepened in which suggested interesting shapes, and the conflicting lines erased. Geometric shapes were formed. Curves were experimented with. Leaves were drawn simply, and in outline only. Milkweed pods were on hand, to provide a model for outline drawings.

After a period of watching, the members were each given sheets of brown paper, approximately purse size, also sheets of white paper to draw on for the cut-outs. This they proceeded to do.

(During this exercise the electric kettle blew a fuse and plunged the building into darkness.) Some 15 or 20 minutes later, candles arrived, and, by candlelight, those who had arrived at motifs of suitable size to use on the purse shape, proceeded to make a cut-out of their motif. Each craftsman then proceeded to cut two more identical motifs, and grouped the three motifs in various positions on the brown paper purse shape.

(At that point, the coffee, no longer too hot, was served, and took precedence.)

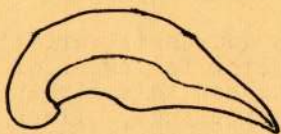
Given time, and light, the procedure from then on, is as follows:

When a pleasing shape is arrived at, it is triplicated (or quadruplicated, or quintuplicated!), and then arranged on the paper pattern of the project to be decorated. With the movable motifs, it is possible to arrive quickly, at a great many different arrangements, and so to be able to choose the most interesting, before drawing the decoration in its final form. Also, it eliminates the frustration of tediously making several drawings, hoping each time to get a better one.

When the craftsman has arrived at an arrangement which appeals to him, he then lays a sheet of tracing paper over this, and, on the tracing paper, draws what he has arranged. (N.B., if he has cut the shapes in white paper, it is well to make the arrangement over a different color such as the brown paper used by the meeting--if laid on white paper the outlines are too difficult to see.) It is well to try for more than one good arrangement, and keep them on hand, since, if the project turns out to be special, it might be desired to do something else carrying out the same idea.

Two examples follow, the first a natural form, the second a geometric.

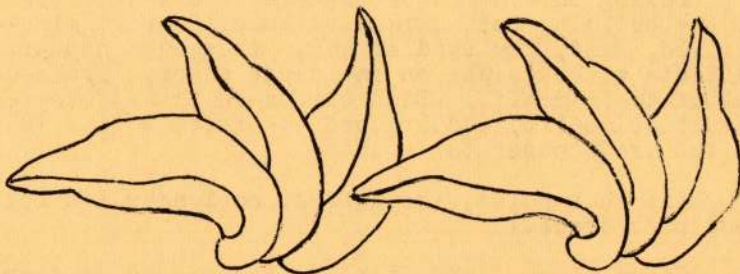
Example 1.



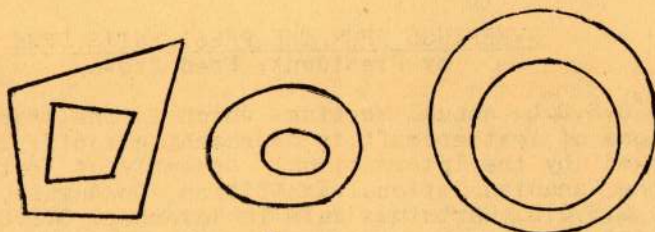
Arrangement 1.



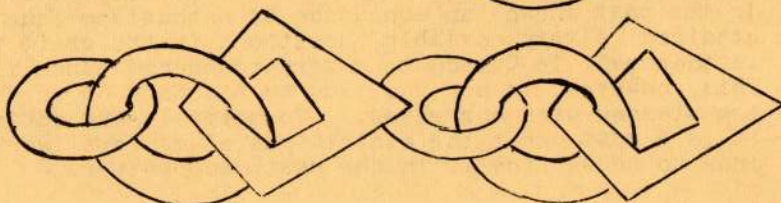
Arrangement 2.



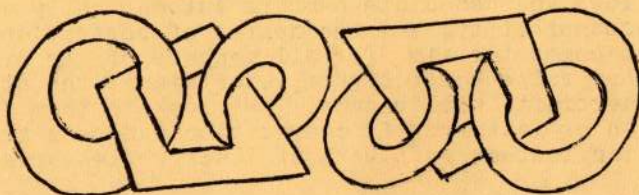
Example 2.



Arrangement 1.



Arrangement 2.



In Example 1, the motifs were laid down, touching each other. In Example 2, the centre areas were cut out, and the motifs slit so that they could be strung together, daisy-chain fashion. This gives them a true look, when drawn, and is much easier to achieve than if they are laid on each other, without being strung.

When doing decoration, it is important to work toward getting an interesting outline, since the outline is what catches the eye. This can be done in two ways: (1) by drawing from a model when the decoration is required; (2) by keeping a clipping file on hand for possible ideas to be found in magazines, cards, etc., (when clippings cannot be made, tracings would be substituted), and going into this file for suggestions, when necessary.

It takes a very small bit of good decoration to spark an idea suitable for adaptation to leathercraft--or any other craft! Library books on ANY craft could prove helpful--it is very limiting to stay to books on leathercraft alone. Metal craft, lino printing, textile printing, books on crafts generally, are all good sources. No craft lives to itself, just as no person lives to himself.

And above all, it is well to keep in mind that the common fault of beginners is in trying to be too original. It is best to try for one good small motif, and play it to the hilt. Some day, it may be just as much a part of you as your signature.

SWEEPINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

by President, Fred Brown

The C.S.C.L. Annual Meeting which is the start of a series of exhibitions of leathercraft, is approaching rapidly. This, of course, is followed by the International Assembly of Leathercraftsmen in May, the Canadian National Exhibition in August, and terminates with the C.S.C.L. Christmas Sale in November. C.S.C.L. members have in the past shown an abundance of enthusiasm due to which we have attained a very enviable position in the craft field and raised leathercraft in Canada to a very respected place in Arts and Crafts. This, however, is not the time to sit back on our haunches and feel too pleased with ourselves. To maintain and advance our position, it is a must that the exhibitions of members' work not only continue to be as fine as in the past, but better.

Fellows and Associate members automatically assume a very definite responsibility, and the degree of perfection of their craftsmanship becomes the aim for all members of the organization. The higher they raise their sights, the higher the standards of Canadian leathercraft will become. We look to them for guidance. No exhibition or leathercraft competition can be a true representation of Canadian leathercraft without their wholehearted support.

About now you may well be wondering just what this is all about. The Canadian Handicraft Guild's competition and exhibition on Canadian Crafts at the C.N.E. is our one big opportunity of the year to let the public see just what is being done by Canadians in the Arts and Crafts. Although the prizes were more numerous and of far greater value than ever before, the response last year was to put it mildly, not quite up to par. Although the quality of the craftsmanship was on the whole quite good, there were, however, far too few articles entered for judging. We were however not alone, since this trend applied also to most of the other crafts. This situation if permitted to continue, could become quite serious. Through the cooperation of the Canadian National Exhibition Women's Division, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild and the tireless efforts of its staff and volunteers, the Canadian craftsman is offered the opportunity of not only competing for prizes of excellent monetary value but also to display his work at the largest annual show of its kind on the North American Continent. Neither C.S.C.L. nor any of the other Guilds affiliated with the Canadian Handicrafts Guild could possibly undertake such a colossal venture on their own. The exhibition should be a good representation of the very finest in Canadian craftsmanship. Let us make the 1959 Exhibition just that--the very finest public showing of leather art in Canada.

Although it seems a very long way off at the present time, we should not forget the annual C.S.C.L. Christmas Sale. It is becoming more widely known and more successful each year and our members

who give so generously of their time most certainly deserve the support of our best craftsmen in their endeavour to make the sale a noteworthy event of the year. It has been suggested that more articles for men are required, ranging in price from \$5.00 to \$10.00, of simple but good design, and with strong masculine appeal.

Help make 1959 a memorable year for C.S.C.L.

BRANCH COMPETITION

The Annual Meeting of C.S.C.L. in April will of course again feature the Branch Competition and it has been rumoured that a certain city not too far distant from Toronto and noted for its football team has been bold enough to state that they will take home the trophy this year. Naturally, it would be very unfair to name this branch but we do know that they have some very fine leathercraftsmen on their team which of course could make it a very keen competition. However, all branches are blessed with excellent craftsmen and the writer would like to make it quite clear that at the present moment at least he is not accepting any bets under any consideration. He would however like to see a real wing-ding competition and may the best branch take home the coveted Weston trophy.

Judging will be done on the new point system which was instituted by Dr. Ralph Larmour last year and proved to be so successful. Rules will be the same as for last year's competition, as follows:

1. All work to be that of C.S.C.L. members only and no article will be accepted that has been exhibited at any previous C.S.C.L. Annual Meeting.
2. Each Branch exhibiting must be a full-fledged member branch of C.S.C.L. in good standing.
3. No individual member may have more than ONE article entered for competition.
4. Articles only to be judged. There will be no credit given for elaborate display.
5. Judging to be done by Board of Selection members using point system based on six articles with particular attention given to originality of design and pattern; However a branch may if they so desire enter less than six articles but judging will be done as outlined above.
6. All articles for competition are to be assembled in specified place immediately before judging.

7. Branches wishing to compete are asked to send in notification two weeks prior to Annual Meeting.
8. Selection of articles for competition will be made by the branch concerned and if a branch representative is unable to attend Annual Meeting, a directive should be sent along with the branch display designating articles selected by branch for competition.

* * * * *

C.S.C.L. EXECUTIVE

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Vice-President: Harold Wilson, 400 Charlton W., Hamilton, Ont.
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 Don MacKinnon, Toronto; Mrs. Mae MacKinnon, Toronto; Clyde
 Johnson, Mimico, Ont.; Miss Anne Small, Toronto; Mrs. Grace
 Jones, Hamilton, Ont.

TORONTO GUILD

Meetings have been held regularly the third Friday of each month. Due to pressure of business, the President, Russell MacMillan has had to give up his appointment, and meetings are now under the care of the Vice-President, Richard Sirman, who is also acting as Toronto Guild liaison on the National Executive Council.

BARRIE GUILD reports an increase in membership and prospects for a very active season.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

We are very pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs. Margaret McFarlane as Assistant Editor of "Canadian Leathercraft". Mrs. McFarlane is well-known to most leathercrafters, having served previously on our Executive and being very active in the formation of the Society.

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