

THE CANADIANA COLLECTION

The first of this collection, *Canadiana #1* was sketched in the winter of 2003, along with several other concepts, following a visit to a local museum in Northern Ontario. The exhibition included objects similar to many with which I was familiar. My parent's families were both farming/logging pioneers at the turn of the last century and aged tools and equipment were old family friends. Made evident by the prized objects in the gallery rooms was a renewed awareness of the quest for 'civilisation' in this new and remote place and the daily reality of physical labour. The definitions of strength were clarified. Primary roles for men and women were dictated by capacities, mental and physical.

Creating, with the tension of thread, the resistance of clay, the drape of bias fabric or the grain in wood, creates a personal record of time. Unlike electronic engagement, where perfect sequences equal perfect results, materials and methods must be honoured; coaxing and care are fundamental. Physical wisdom can be learned but not transferred. E-gaming may be intellectually stimulating but I suggest it creates enormous physical hunger for genuine engagement.

CANADIANA #1 is an edgy pairing of ideas and is purposefully proportioned as a hatchet, a tool for cutting small wood to light fires. Axe heads exist from prehistory, a perfect symbol for the creation of civilisation around fire, treasured moments of exchange and respite from labour.

NUPTIALS #1 examines the creation of lace in truly feminine form and as an expression of the appearance of wealth; prosperity as embellishment. Perhaps an effective salute to an effective partnership, the lace bride *is* having the desired effect on the spike.....

Re CANT HOOK and **NUPTIALS #2** are realigned symbols for the partnerships of those 'Hewers of Wood'. The former draws parallel with individuals holding power over the lives of many others, the latter honours a finely tuned duo whose success lies in beautiful balance and cooperation.

Showing partnership as a sustained encounter, **COPE** is structurally motivated by the transfer of contour, here illustrated as molding. One form must assume the profile of another to create a sound juncture. This is not just wearing down, nor a simile to endurance, rather the creation of strength by combination, applicable to interpersonal or cultural adaptation.

Swift societal changes demand adaptation and redefined roles for men and women. **GPS** uses a familiar format but replaces a known object with my Grandfather's plumb-bob, galvanized in the years before stainless steel. Using gravity, this weight was used to establish or transfer a point from one level to another. En pointe, it is clad in a tutu. If society lacks cultural commonality, classical forms of art and performance are pressured to validate their historic, artistic and ritual values. Canada's place in the world is a work in progress.

Comparative values are given gentle salute with **OUTLET**. Suggesting that individual expression is now found through being 'plugged in', I would point out that the touque is a warm and inviting, 'unplugged' nod to those who maintained their dignity and individualism in a solitude now difficult to imagine.

In response to expanses of space, secured by extended connection, **NETWORK** honours the commonality of handwork and the sharing of stitches as a basis for women's exchanges. Used here is a binary stitch, having only two simple reversed knots set in pairs. Lace is created in the moments between other tasks; while the child sleeps, the pies bake or before workers arrive for a meal. Such focussed work offers the mind an escape from other concerns. This lace piece drapes quietly, waiting for the real 'centrepiece art' to arrive. A Mason Jar Sealer ring is fitting punctuation in a statement on survival in a northern winter.

PRESERVANCE was an idea that arose in consideration of conviction. I do not suggest that salvation is necessarily to be had by reaching for the lifeline of Christianity. The strength of personal conviction is, however a mighty survival tool which bypasses unresolved doubts that accompany scrutiny and science. Fate falls in line after assumption.

In complete contrast to the refined formality of lace and craftsmanship, **HOME** is simply formed, suggestive of nurturance, safety and collectivity. No hand-book is available to guarantee sleek perfection on the home front. 'Home' is derived from an ancient French word for village and homes are crafted daily with whatever skills and materials are available.

**"IF YOU LOOK CAREFULLY, YOU WILL SEE IT IS NOT
THE CLOWN WHO IS LAUGHING!"**

Marcelle Marceau

Ruth Abernethy
February 2006