

**August 4 to 15
2004**

OPENING RECEPTION

Hiroshima Day
Friday | August 6 | 5 to 9 pm



Ken Vickerson **Series**

***new* gallery**

109 Case Goods Warehouse, The Distillery
55 Mill Street, Toronto, Ontario M5A 3C4
tel 416.304.0726

gallery hours

Wednesday to Sunday, noon to 5 pm

COVER IMAGE "Dibber" from Ploughshare Series, 2004,
recycled gun, pear wood, sterling silver, 29 cm X 5 cm X 5 cm.

Ken Vickerson: Series

by Michele Perras

IN MANY WAYS, MAKERS RESPOND TO the needs and desires of those who consume their work, as well as to the needs and desires of making itself. The primary intent of making is to communicate an idea, to create a conver-

sation between maker and audience, culture and cultural artifact, in an ongoing dialogue that shapes our experience and provokes exchange. Goldsmith Ken Vickerson presents his current body of work, entitled *Series*, as a way to facilitate such an exchange. Composed of three distinct explorations, *Series* looks at and analyzes themes of transformation and process in response to the times we live in.

Ploughshares originated as a commission for Toronto's Rosedale United Church which asked Vickerson to create a ceremonial shovel from the barrels of confiscated shotguns acquired from the local police services. The potential implications of the project inspired Vickerson to develop it further as a response to escalating violence throughout the world. The transformation of weapon as object into a symbolic tool for cultivation and nurture reflects the infinite possibility for change both in individuals and in a culture. Because Vickerson expresses this through gardening tools such as the "Dibber", we are able to contextualize the pieces into our own lives because their meaning is immediate and relevant. The intent and purpose in cultivating a garden, in fostering growth, act as a guiding metaphor: change is essential, but requires direction and effort. After the original bead sights were removed, the shotguns were carefully forged into tools. New sterling bead sight replicas were repositioned on these tools to emphasize the urgency for change.

A softly turned pear-wood handle encloses the barrel of each piece; the choice of wood references hope and redemption. Speaking about duality as well as transitions, *Ploughshares* embodies a synchronized balance where darkness compliments light, acknowledging that both aspects are somehow necessary, in equal proportion, to achieve harmony. Through their connections to the earth, and to our hands, they signal the grounding and empowerment of reconciliation and forgiveness, of moving beyond negative experiences with newly acquired strength and hope.

The creation of a sacred space in which to nurture change is yet another thematic focus in the *Garden* series. Vickerson's emphasis here is not so much the potential for change, but the process itself. In *Cultivators*, silver worms that curl around the finger allude to an endless cycle of regeneration where soil itself is made and remade. The delicate petals of "Quatrefoil," composed of layers of laminated metals, reference material transitions, and a sustained equilibrium. Vickerson extends suggestive cues that prompt us to nurture our own mytho-

ologies, to invest in a site where decay yields to vitality. In “Grow Ring,” a rock crystal is set above the recurring text and the stone’s curvature distorts the script unless the ring is held a particular way. It conspires with the wearer, encouraging intent and progress. We are reminded that the process provides as much insight as the objective, and that clarity comes with a change in perspective.



“Tableau XII: Generations,”
2003, sterling silver,
copper, rock crystal,
6 cm X 5 cm X 1 cm.

Responding to a culture that craves image and metaphor as much as product, the *Low Resolution* series examines the processes we use to make meaning. Each work offers an opportunity to construct microcosmic realities, where symbol and motive collide to create narrative. Social commentary emerges through intentional scenarios, and the repeat appearances of a single icon let us participate in the exchange as we recognize its presence throughout the series, and are able to anticipate and interact with the narrative that Vickerson creates. He addresses specific issues throughout these works, such as racial profiling or foreign policy, yet leaves them ambiguous enough to provoke dialogue and alternative interpretation. He expects our own insights and perceptions to actively play a role, even in our position as an audience.

“Tableau XII: Generations” resonates with the *Low Resolution* pieces, yet embodies many of the themes explored throughout *Series*. A direct reference to the Talavera ceramic style found in Puebla, Mexico, *Generations* reflects the duality and ideology of Mexican culture. The skulls of *Día del Muertos* refer to the balance between life and death, an equal integration which creates cosmic harmony. External and internal processes of transformation are represented in the iconic faces, and Vickerson’s composition mirrors that of the Talavera, where a universal structure is translated into a distinct arrangement of form. As well, a sense of history is felt throughout “Generations” in the recognition that the past shapes the present and we must use our experience to inhabit the future.

Throughout *Series*, Vickerson investigates the spaces that transformation and process occupy within our culture. He articulates the necessity of cultivating change, asking us to reassess our motive and intent. By establishing multi-layered relationships, *Series* offers an arena for an open exchange of ideas, knowledge and insight.

MICHELE PERRAS,
BFA, is a maker and writer who studied Jewellery and Metalsmithing at the Ontario College of Art and Design. A former resident of the Craft Studio at Harbourfront Centre, she currently lives in Toronto, and is fulfilling her duty to preserve the dream.

KEN VICKERSON

graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 1982. In 1985 he established a goldsmithing practice in Toronto, producing custom jewellery work and art objects. Mr. Vickerson's work has been exhibited widely, including exhibitions in Europe, Asia, the U.S. and Canada, as well as appearing on the cover of *Metalsmith Magazine* a publication of the Society of North American Goldsmiths. He teaches as an Associate Professor in the Design Division of the Ontario College of Art and Design and was recently elected to the Royal Canadian Academy.



"Grow Ring" from Cultivator Series, 2004, sterling silver, 22K gold leaf, acetate, rock crystal, 3.5 cm X 2.5 cm X 1.75 cm.

Because there is very little critical writing on contemporary Canadian crafts, Anne Barros and Lily Yung felt the urgent need for craft artists themselves to take action and inform the viewing public that there are ideas behind the materials in craft practices. We hope that **new vIEWS** will make critics reflect on their indifference to crafts, while at the same time provide interested writers an opportunity to have their views published. In so doing, it is anticipated that the much needed writing on crafts will begin to happen. Aside from serving as a record for future reference, such documentation will help contemporary Canadian craft artists to define their place in the history and tradition of craft making.

This small publication is funded by the two editors. We hope that the craft community will recognize its importance and will sponsor individual issues so that we can keep **new vIEWS** going. Anyone interested in sponsorship please contact us at: 416-924-7068.

new is a gallery founded by seven Toronto craft artists with the goal to provide an alternative exhibition venue for contemporary fine craft artists at all stages of their careers.

THIS EDITION OF **new vIEWS**
GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY:

**ONTARIO COLLEGE OF
ART AND DESIGN**

© the artist, the writer, the editors 2004

EDITING Lily Yung and Anne Barros
DESIGN Kathe Gray/electric pear