



Featured Recent Acquisitions

January 28 – July 12, 2015

Featured Recent Acquisition: *Byobu* by Mariko Kusumoto

One of RAM's more popular exhibitions in recent memory was **Mariko Kusumoto's** 2010 exhibition of elaborate metal box constructions. She uses a wide array of metalsmithing techniques to create interactive sculptures that continuously open and unfold to reveal hidden elements. There is a toy-like element to her work in that these function like adult playsets. Visual and metaphorical delights abound, and bound out of doorways and drawers that open to reveal increasingly smaller parts of an intriguing whole. At the same time, Kusumoto demonstrates a keen awareness of cultural history—both Japanese and American. While she references Japanese theater and woodblock prints, she also recalls the box assemblages of the American surrealist sculptor **Joseph Cornell**.

Byobu are Japanese folding screens with wooden frames covered in silk. They are intended to keep out drafts and create separate interior spaces. Kusumoto's screens act as a theater stage accompanied by a myriad number of props, clothing changes, actors, and set designs. Each of these pieces has a magnet so that—like a child's paper theater or dollhouse—items can be added, subtracted, or rearranged, creating literal performances or surrealistic compositions that act out dream images as the "designer" creates his/her own magical stage set.

Kusumoto was born in Japan in 1967 and grew up in a 400-year-old temple where her father was a Buddhist priest. She studied painting and printmaking as an undergraduate in Tokyo and received her MFA degree from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco in 1995. An opportunity to work in metal and create jewelry near the end of her graduate studies set Kusumoto on her path to creating these constructions. However, her initial training as a printmaker still appears in this body of work—in the elaborately patterned and etched surfaces that recall the metal plates used in printing. Kusumoto also demonstrates a strong reverence for line in her surfaces—something one would expect from an artist who draws. She deftly blends elements from her cross-cultural background. The vignettes one can create of kimono-clad women in landscapes recall imagery in historic Japanese prints—but also the surrealist compositions of **Salvador Dali**.

R|A|M

Mariko Kusumoto's Techniques

Electroforming

A thick layer of metal is deposited onto a non-metallic object or metal piece. The non-metallic object is covered by conductive paint or sprayed onto the areas where the metal is to form. After placing the piece into a tank of copper **electrolytic** solution, it is connected to the negative lead from the rectifier. A copper **anode** equal in size or larger than the piece is placed on the opposite side of the tank, which is connected to the positive lead from the rectifier. During electroforming, the copper molecules leave the anodes and go into the electroforming bath. The copper molecules present in the bath are deposited onto the **cathode** (the piece that you want to form in metal).

Decals

Decals are used to add color and imagery on the metal surface. The images are printed on special paper. After being cut to size, the paper is soaked briefly in water to loosen the decal from its backing. The decal is then carefully slid onto the surface. After drying, the decal adheres to the metal.

Etching

Etching is the process of using strong acid or mordant to cut into the unprotected parts of a metal surface to create a design. The areas that will remain un-etched are covered with a **resist** (a paste or other substance that is impermeable to acid). For the resist, Kusumoto uses toner from a laser printer or photopolymer film. When the etching is complete, the piece is rinsed with a **neutralizer** and the resist removed. Sometimes the artist may choose to allow areas of the metal to be completely eaten away in the etching process, creating open spaces in the metal surface.

Maquette

A maquette is the artist's preliminary model. Kusumoto's maquettes are typically fashioned from paper, resulting in three-dimensional samples that help her visualize what the final pieces will look like. During the process, she plays with space, color, and composition. Then, Kusumoto makes a decision on the final design of the work.

R|A|M

Featured Recent Acquisition: *Chalice and Paten* by Harold Schremmer

While we celebrate new gifts of jewelry in this gallery space, RAM also presents two major acquisitions in hollowware that have recently arrived. This *Chalice and Paten* were created by the American silversmith **Harold Schremmer** (1928 – 2014) for **Reverend Ronald O. Crewe**, longtime pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Racine.

Schremmer graduated from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1953, operating a smithing studio throughout his career. He taught at Maine College of Art in Portland and the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, and was awarded a Tiffany Foundation Grant. His ceremonial objects are in collections around the world. Some of Schremmer's more noted commissions include the elimination trophies for six years of the America's Cup races and a number of commissions for the Vatican, including an altar cross for the High Altar of Saint Peter's in Rome. At a time when many congregations were building modern churches for expanding American communities, artists like Schremmer were selected to create liturgical objects for use in these contemporary architect-designed buildings.

When Fr. Crewe was ordained, his parents commissioned his personal chalice and paten as a gift. This is a frequent practice in the Catholic Church and Fr. Crewe used these objects throughout his career. Schremmer paid strict attention to physical requirements the Church established for the use of materials in making these objects, but was allowed design freedom within those boundaries. The chalice and paten are sleek and simple in design with almost no ornamentation. The knob above the base of the chalice that was used for picking it up is surrounded by a band decorated with stylized images of loaves and fishes. This recalls a famous sermon from the life of Christ but also reminds us that a fish has been a longstanding symbol for Christianity.

Fr. Crewe presented these items to RAM on the occasion of his retirement in memory of his parents. They are the first examples of liturgical artworks to enter the museum's collection.

Society of American Silversmiths Glossary of Commonly Used Silversmith Techniques (abridged)

Silver has been known and valued as an ornamental and coinage metal since ancient times. Silver mines in Asia Minor were probably worked before 2500BC. The alchemists called the metal Luna or Diana after the goddess of the moon and ascribed to it the symbol of a crescent moon. With the exception of gold, silver is the most malleable and ductile of all metals.

R | A | M

Annealing – The heat treating (softening) of metal after it has been work-hardened with steel tools, and is necessary between raising and forging stages. Annealing is also used to remove tension in a piece of metal before brazing, helping to reduce warpage.

Brazing – This form of soldering utilizes high temperature alloys to join high temperature metals. When brazing sterling, care must be used to prevent **firescale** or firestain which is formed at higher temperatures than **soldering**.

Chasing – The technique of detailing the front surface of a metal article with various hammer-struck punches.

Checking – The hammering down onto the edge of a form. This technique strengthens and visually thickens the edge.

Crimping – A rapid raising process by forming radiating valleys from the center to the outer edge of a metal object then raised. Generally used on thinner gauge metal.

Engraving – The process of cutting shallow lines into metal with a sharp graver, reproducing artwork which has been drawn on a metal article. Unlike machine engraving, hand engraving removes metal when cutting. **Bright cutting** is another form of engraving which when viewed is very reflective because of its flat, angled cut.

Forging – A process that has as its primary purpose: the alteration of the original thickness and cross-section of metal. This is usually through hammering wire, rods of metal, **ingots** (as would be forged into sheet by modern day Colonial Williamsburg silversmiths), or heavy sheet stock (for forming most flatware).

Forming – A process which has as its primary purpose: altering a sheet of metal so that it changes planes, three-dimensionally. Changes in the metal's thickness are incidental by-products of the process of forming.

Patinate / Repatinate – To apply or reapply a chemical to darken the recesses on ornamental pieces and engraving that had naturally developed over time. This process is sometimes applied to objects that have had their darkening removed from dishwashers or chemical strippers such as Tarnex.

Planishing – The act of hammering or refining the surface of a metal object with highly polished hammer faces. This process refines the surface after raising and may be used as a decorative element. Great care must be used, for even a speck of dust will make an impression in the metal being hammered.

R | A | M

Polishing – The process of refining a metal surface by use of abrasive compounds applied by hand or a polishing wheel attached to a long-spindled motorized arbor which runs at high speed. Various finishes may be obtained with a wide variety of abrasive compounds applied to the polishing wheels such as rouge—this compound imparts the brightest finish. More abrasive compounds will produce less reflective finishes, emphasizing the object's form.

Raising – The technique of forming a flat sheet of metal over a cast iron T-stake or head, forming and compressing the metal to take a hollow form. This labor-intensive process is the purest form of silversmithing.

Repoussé – A process used to roughly emboss a metal object from the back or inside with larger punches than those used in chasing.

Sinking – The hammering of a flat piece of metal into a concave hemispherical shape in the top of a tree stump or any dished form. A small bowl shape is formed in the center of the sheet producing a lip, enabling the piece to "ride" the end of a raising stake, aiding in the raising process.

Soldering – A low-temperature form of brazing. This technique is used for joining low-temperature base metals such as pewter and does not possess the strength of brazing solders when joining higher temperature metals such as silver.