

Sculptural statements in wood

Carved Vessels. Wood by Rick Swain at Compendium, Lorne St until May 13.

RICK SWAIN carves his vessels from solid blocks of timber. By not using a lathe he releases his forms from the circular bowl format into any shape he desires, geometric or freeform.

They become more

sculptural — still functional as vessels but with a greater sense of ritual than of everyday use.

This quality is enhanced by legs or frames raising the vessels, presenting each as if for a particular ceremonial function. The legs appear to be a separate unit from the vessel's body, the carving being in two parts later joined, but closer examination reveals that each vessel and its stand is deeply carved from a

single block.

Visual separation of the two parts is achieved by each bowl being polished to show the natural colour and grain of its wood, while its stand is stained a dark colour, giving a steely appearance. This device, which could look contrived, is excellently handled by

Swain, making his work special.

Kauri is used for its beautiful honey-silk texture, and macrocarpa for its stronger grain pattern and more variable coloration. Both these timbers carve well and Swain fashions them into undulating shallow vessels, forms which em-

ulate the character of slump-moulded glass.

In *Mac Bowl IV* (Mac for macrocarpa) a carved sheet of timber appears draped over a four-legged frame, the corners beautifully integrated into the leg tops as if wrought iron were supporting a soft fabric.

The timely named

Around the Galleries

Tribute to the Black Boat is a sweeping hull form, a vessel supported in an angled cradle "on the hard," its exterior and cradle stained black, the interior polished to a glowing gold. It is a racing yacht, a fruit bowl; a beautifully balanced sculpture.

Several *Suspended Bowls* relate in a series where the vessel form is draped more deeply into the space between its supports. Here, though the carved form follows soft curves, there is a tension achieved as might be seen in a tarpaulin stretched between poles, its shape drawn by the weight of water pooled within.

Further interest is added underneath these vessels where their bellies are textured with repetitive chisel marks or cross-hatched with scratch-lines, nicely offsetting the superbly polished interiors. These are well-designed, well-crafted vessel sculptures.

Sculpture by Stephen Mulqueen and Crown Lynn, *Hand Potted* at the Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga, until May 28.

THE Papakihau — Slapped by the Wind refers to "ventifacts," geological samples of stones shaped by centuries of

• A solid macrocarpa bowl by Rick Swain.

wind-driven sand until they appear to be deliberately designed abstract sculptures.

Water-worn pebbles and driftwood are commonly appreciated as naturally produced forms appealing to our sculptural and tactile senses, but ventifacts carry a deeper mystique. How could random forces sculpt these exquisite objects when they are as sensitively fashioned as Heworth, Brancusi or Hep might have done?

Stephen Mulqueen takes these, as he does ancient human-made artefacts like stone adze heads and flint tools, studying them to "explore the notion of cultural identity as a function of place." Culture here directly relates to a significant site — the quarry where the required stone was found and fashioned and the archaeological finds left behind.

Here he explores the cultural history of Tiwai Pt, the tip of a peninsula in Bluff Harbour. Ventifacts are to be found here, as are traces of 500 years of pre-European Maori stone-working, while close by is the high-tech aluminium smelter.

The sculptor discovers a magnificent three-

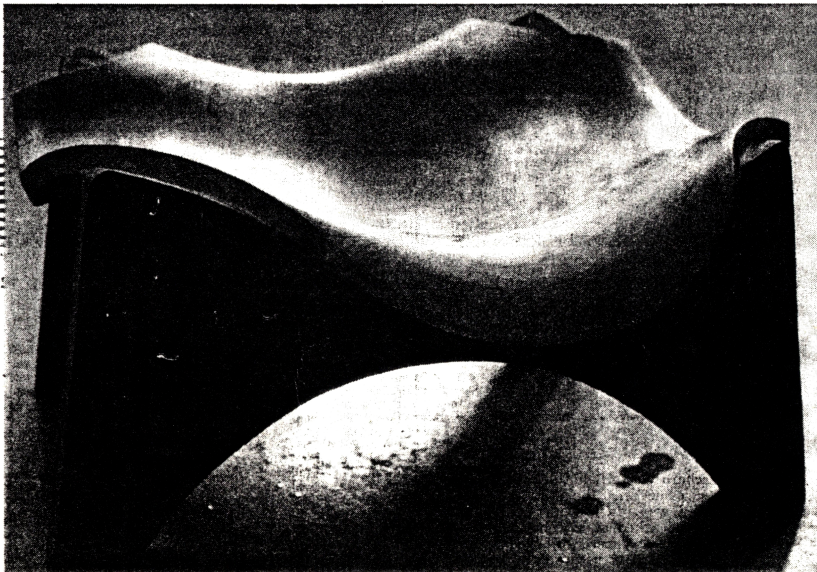
faceted ventifact, carves his birth date numbers into each face and casts a replica in modern metal — a birthstone linking natural and cultural identities of this site. The artefact belongs equally in a fine art exhibition, a geological collection or an anthropological museum.

Other archaeological finds are examined; adzes, fish-hooks and canoe paddles — even the negative shape caught in sandstone where an ancient canoe has rotted away in foreshore mud, leaving its hollow impression.

Crown Lynn — Hand Potted shows ceramic vessels thrown by **Ernest Shufflebottom**, an expert thrower from Wedgwood's Staffordshire potteries, who from 1945 to 1955 worked in Crown Lynn's Auckland factory producing handthrown pots to add to its range of mass-produced tableware.

This "artware" was quickly and accurately thrown with the final form being turned on a lathe. Glazed in the ubiquitous cream colour of the time or a soft green, these pieces are now valued as part of Crown Lynn's — and New Zealand's — ceramic history.

— Howard Williams



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