President’s Message

In my last message, I mentioned the 2009-10 MASC exhibition at the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art in central Toronto. However important this exhibition may be, our primary and immediate focus is the summer exhibit of MASC medals in Kelowna, B.C., at the Geert Maas Sculpture Gardens and Gallery, from July 5 to September 5 of 2008. The theme is the “Best of MASC”, chosen by Geert himself, and most aptly, for MASC never does anything in a mediocre way – not its exhibits, not its outstanding newsletter, not its regular meetings, and not its AGM. All the aforementioned surpass what I have seen in any other society I have participated in, to the credit of all participants.

Don’t miss the April 1st deadline to submit your entries. Check the particulars in the recently mailed Call for Entry. Most importantly, plan to participate in person by attending, if possible. Since the exhibition is in summer, many of you may be able to work being in Kelowna into your summer vacation plans. The opening will take place on July 5 from 1 to 3:30 p.m., and it would be great to see you there. See the notice about this in the body of this newsletter.

And speaking of important MASC events, we hope to see many of you at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) from July 18 to 20 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Ottawa. The actual meeting takes place on Saturday, July 19 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Come join your executive and directors, participate and enjoy our beautiful capital, even more so in summer, with it’s festive feeling and all the historical and cultural attractions it has to offer. Who says you can’t mix business and pleasure?

Coincidentally the Royal Canadian Mint is celebrating its 100th anniversary this summer, and will have a special commemorative exhibit. If you haven’t toured the Mint, you don’t know what you’re missing.

Many thanks to MASC vice-president Paul Petch, who as president of the Canadian Numismatic Association, has arranged for the MASC AGM to occur jointly with the CNA convention once again this year. Those who have never attended a MASC AGM have also been missing out on the spectacular exhibits that the CNA puts on at its AGM’s.

Returning to the theme of inspiration in medal making, I assume that most of you have begun or completed your submission for MASC’s Kelowna exhibit, but are looking ahead to producing a ceramic medal for the Gardiner. Remember, the Gardiner exhibit will commemorate the museums 25th anniversary in 2009, and our 10th in 2010, and therefore the Gardiner asks MASC to come up with medals made up of, and preferably, referring to ceramics, and if possible, with actual references to the Gardiner’s 25th Anniversary.

Plan to model directly in clay, or produce press or slip molds to cast existing medals in clay, or even try your hand at assemblage/collage techniques in a variety of ceramic materials: terra cotta, stoneware, china, porcelain, or even glass, using bits and pieces in a mosaic method. For inspiration, go to the Gardiner website gardinermuseum.com, or visit the Gardiner in person at Avenue Road and Bloor Street. You will be inspired and amazed.

Since this is my last “President’s Message” to you, as I will be stepping down at our next AGM, I would like to thank you all for your participation in MASC, as well as for your support. Special thanks to our exceptional executive and director’s panel, whose help and contributions were indispensable to me. In the meantime stay well, stay connected, and stay creative.

Farewell,
Saulius Jaskus

The Medal: “Joyous Motion” by Geert Maas

Joyous Motion

Bronze 140x105 x 12 mm

Limited Edition of 24, sold out

Dancing joyous figures represent many recreational activities and celebrate the joy of sport as seen in the Olympic games.

MASC would like to extend an Invitation to all of its members to attend

The Opening of
The Best of MASC Exhibition
on July 5, 2008 from 1 till 3:30 pm
The exhibition will be on view at
The Geert Maas Sculpture Gardens and Gallery
250 Reynolds Road, Kelowna, B.C.
from July 5 to September 8, 2008
maas@geertmaas.org
Since the beginning of time, animals have been featured in art as an integral part of the culture of any given time. This is seen in the beginning with cave drawings, later in the use of animals in the design of adornments or ceremonial instruments as with the Aztecs or Egyptians, and continued by European artists such as Mene, Barye, Landseer and many many more who also produced art for patrons who enjoyed a close relationship with animals.

The preference for the depiction of animals in a work of art has been noted among artists who create for the world of medals. To illustrate this interesting point, we will look at the 129 medals designed for The Society of Medalists. Unlike commissioned medals which require a specified theme, the Society of Medalists encourages foremost sculptors to create designs of their own choosing. It is of interest to note that since 1930 when the first two medals were designed for the Society, until 1995 after which none were commissioned, almost half of the artists choose to design around or use in some way, an animal in the theme.

Following is a sampling of these medals. Words in quotes are as used on the medal.

Let us look first at the medals where the animal was a natural choice of the artist:

1938 Dorothy Lathrop (1896-1986) was known for her animal sculptures, especially of young animals. She was also a distinguished medalist and used animals frequently in her designs. Her medal “Conserve Wildlife” (duck and antelope) was typical of her work.

1941 Weiler “Arctic” “Antarctic” (polar bear and penguins)
1982 Everhart II, “Dance of the Dolphins” (dolphins)

The following medals have animals that were automatic to the chosen theme:

1943 Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973) was considered one of the most prolific American artists of the 20th century. Her father, a professor of Paleontology, started her interest in animals. Her husband built Brookgreen Gardens (S.C.) for her. The choice of animals was a natural for her medal design illustrating “Africa”.

1952 James Earl Fraser, “Pony Express” (rider) “New Frontiers” (oxen drawn wagon)

1959 Katherine Weems (1899-1989) studied with Huntington among others and at the Bronx Zoo. She also studied Japanese, Chinese, Egyptian and Indian treatment of animals. She is best known for her huge rhinos at the Harvard University Biological Labs.
In many cases the choice of an animal to represent the theme or a concept was optional as the theme could have been represented through other images as easily. There are too many to illustrate all so a select few are shown below. For a full listing with photos of the Society of Medals collection go to: www.medalcollectors.org/Guides/SoM/SOM.html

1931  Macmonnies, Charles Lindbergh “Lone Eagle” (eagle plus)
1943  Schmitz, “Freedom from want and from Fear” (lamb among other images)
1946  Kiselewski, World Peace (dove)
1951  Williams, “Peace on Earth” (lamb)
1952  Gruppe re scouts (eagle)
1956  Fjelde, “Walt Whitman” (bird)
1958  Rudy, re farming (feeding geese)
1965  Weistrop, “Sower of the Forest” (squirrels)
1968  Lies, re scientific research (spider in web)

Norma Eliscu Banas is the daughter of American sculptor, Frank Eliscu. She lives in Naples, Florida where she operates the Aviary & Zoo of Naples. Norma writes for various sources on animals in art, exotic birds and greyhounds. She manages the Frank Eliscu website as well as one on animal collectibles at: http://animalsonart.com
Varietas delectat – the variety pleases – I recall this Latin adage when I try to sum up the art of Borsos. He was a universal artist prolific in graphics, painting and sculpture. He created great monuments of heroic proportions, intimate small sculptures, stone carvings, copper reliefs (repoussés), lots of drawings and book illustrations. His oeuvre comprises more than 400 medals as an integral part. From early childhood Borsos liked to draw and nurtured the ambition of becoming a painter. As a high school dropout he was apprenticed to the workshop of a goldsmith. He earned a living with engraving for a while. It dawned on him gradually that he had talent and interest in sculpture.

In his early works the copper reliefs (repoussés) predominate. This is a technically challenging discipline wherein a soft sheet of metal is placed on a malleable surface - usually a pad of Burgundy pitch or modelling wax – and the design is hammered into the relief from the reverse side using punches. The relief will be seen from the face which is embedded in the pitch or wax so the areas that are depressed will appear raised seen from the front. Borsos carved several outstanding portraits in Hungarian marble and other stones. The subjects were his friends, literary figures and artists. These portraits that he preferred to call “heads” are striking examples of an exceptional psychological insight and ability to capture the characteristics of the model.

Borsos arrived at medal-making at age 41 when he had already earned quite a reputation and his works had reached maturity. His success in this new field resulted from an interplay of several contributing factors:

1. Borsos had been an excellent and prolific draughtsman; his drawings were not just preliminary studies for his sculptures but independent graphic works. Several of his medals show linear composition where the line obtains some substance but barely protrudes into the third dimension. Some medals teeter on the border separating two-dimensional works from sculpture.

2. Experience with the goldsmith’s technique and repoussé enabled him to work in reverse, employing the ancient method of engraving in the negative. He executed most – if not all – of his medals in this manner.

The medals appear crude at first glance, the forms are reduced to bare essentials, the subject matter is handled with simplicity and great economy devoid of any superfluous details or ornamentation. The striking portraits and other images thus produced remind me of the great German expressionist woodcuts. Borsos probably would have protested against this suggestion because his ideal was the Greco-Roman and Renaissance culture, the art of Latin people. The compass of his pilgrimages was directed towards Italy and France. His beloved home was situated in the former Roman province of Hungary called Pannonia where the beauty of bucolic landscapes, the tranquility of atmosphere, the flora and fauna showed similarity to the Mediterranean regions. The people and motifs of this land appeared frequently in his art. The rendering of the horses for example is probably the most beautiful since Pisanello.

Engraving in the negative has advantages and also drawbacks. The contours can be demarcated sharply and precisely but the interrelation of the different depths of planes may suffer in the less experienced hands of those who are accustomed to modelling only.

I have tried engraving in the negative in some of my medals. The lettering is almost always made by negative engraving. The magnificent coins of the Greek city-states were struck in a way that is identical with the work of the present day engravers of the mint who prepare the dies in tempered steel for stamping the coins.

First one has to make a...
behind the MASC

plaster disc of a somewhat larger diameter than the planned medal by casting plaster on a very smooth surface e.g. glass pane. The disc should not be too thin because it may crack under pressure. The design must be converted into a mirror image. I draw the design on tracing paper, reverse it and use carbon paper to transfer it to the plaster disc. A great variety of tools are at our disposal for the engraving, e.g. burins, gravers, surgical spoons and curettes, gouges, dental drills, etc. The progress of work can be checked from time to time by pressing soft plasticine or wax into the negative thus obtaining a positive image like a ghost appearance. Care should be exercised to avoid undercuts.

The engraved plaster serves as a mold, after drying and sealing a cast can be made in it.

The series of portraits carved in-the-round gained continuity in low reliefs when Borsos took up the new discipline of medallic art. He had been a very cultivated man, an accomplished violinist, an avid reader of sophisticated literature and admirer of paintings. He was frequently in the company of prominent literary figures, entertained painters, musicians etc., bonded to many of them with lasting friendship. The subjects of his medals are these friends and colleagues. The list of persons reads as a “who’s who” in Hungarian cultural life. He immortalized also his dentist, the surgeons who treated him, and did not forget some favourite celebrities of international fame. A number of self-portraits complete the long list.

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I happened to know many subjects of his portrait medals, several of them personally, so I can attest to the true likeness, including the capture of the countenance and psychological makeup of the models.

Continued on page 6
The Medals Of Miklós Borsos

As the artist’s wife Ilona Kéry related in her foreword to the catalogue of a major exhibition, Borsos usually did not make preliminary studies or elaborate designs of his carvings or medals. He attacked the stone directly or started engraving the plaster disc following a very sketchy drawing on its surface, relying mostly on his intuition and astonishing memory. This method imparts to his work a sense of immediacy, truth and simplicity, his creations are never artificially mannered or overwrought.

Finally let’s quote some of Borsos’ thoughts on medallic art:

“Viewing a good medal it should not cross one’s mind that it is too small and it would be better in larger size. Despite its dimensions fitting in a palm it is always grandiose, monumental.”

“There who keep the pleasures of medal-making alive are usually strong enough to continue cultivating the medaling art without monetary reward or even without the hope of it.”

References:


Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art Exhibition 2009 - 2010

MASC President Saulius Jaskus has worked with Director Susan Jeffries at the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Arts to arrange an exhibition of ceramic medals. This exhibition will be shown from October to January in the main entrance of the museum, where it will be visible to all visitors to the museum. MASC members are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to show medals in terra cotta, porcelain and stoneware, as well as medals in which part of the medal includes a ceramic component. Often our displays have a majority of bronze medals, as that is the traditional medium of medals. It should be very interesting to see the results of a show where the predominant medium is clay.

The Best of MASC in Kelowna, BC

Everyone should have received a Call for Entry for the MASC Exhibition scheduled for the Geert Maas Sculpture Gardens and Gallery in Kelowna, British Columbia. This exhibition will run for two months during the busiest tourist time in Kelowna. Geert and Elly Maas are co-coordinating the exhibition and Doug Taylor is creating the catalogue.

All MASC medallists are encouraged to submit their work and if possible to attend the opening or visit the show during the glorious summer in British Columbia.

Would you like to show your medals in Lithuania?

MASC President Saulius Jaskus is from Lithuanian ancestry. On his visit to Lithuania last summer he contacted the St John’s Gallery in Vilnius. It is possible that an exhibition of MASC medals could be shown in Vilnius in August and September 2010. Saulius will explore the funding, size of display, theme, security, publicity and catalogue for the proposed exhibition. At the last MASC Council meeting it was suggested that this project be noted in the newsletter. This is to gather MASC members’ interest and responses. Please contact Saulius Jaskus, (phone: 416 966 3101) or Paul Petch, (email:p.petch@rogers.com ) with your ideas.

Royal Coin Cabinet, Sweden

Del Newbigging is pleased to be represented in the medal collection at the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm, Sweden. Recently three of his medals from the “Rise Up: Stop the War Against Women” series were purchased. They include “Rape: Weapon of War”, “Honour Killing” and “The Burka”. The British Museum had previously purchased “The Burka”. The Royal Coin Cabinet also purchased Newbigging’s medal entitled “AIDS”. It is presently on view at the Money Museum in Colorado Springs as part of the FIDEM Exhibition.
MASC AGM and Council Positions 2008

The next MASC Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday July 19. The AGM is once again being held in conjunction with the Canadian Numismatic Association’s annual convention, this year at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ottawa. Full information is being developed on the C.N.A.’s website at www.canadian-numismatic.org/2008ottawa.php. MASC is once again planning on mounting a medal display and hosting a MASC information table Friday July 18 through Sunday July 20, as has been done in the last couple of years.

One of the important agenda items at the AGM will be MASC Council positions, which will be up for review. MASC President Saulius Jaskus has indicated that he will be stepping down and vice-president Paul Petch is ready to assume the president’s position. Because of ill health, our recording secretary Linda Mazur-Jack has resigned. Andrea Yermy has come to our rescue and has immediately taken on the recording secretary’s job. Other council positions will remain the same. These include treasurer Ray Scott, membership secretary Eileen Milne and volunteer co-ordinator Deborah Patterson Dass. John Carolan continues as the editor for ‘behind the MASC’. The position of vice-president will become vacant. This is an important position as it should normally point to the leadership of the society. The MASC Council meetings are held in the Toronto area, so it would be necessary for someone conveniently located in southern Ontario to accept the position. If any MASC member is willing to stand for the position of vice-president, please contact president Saulius Jaskus.

FIDEM Canada

Lynden Beesley, Canadian Delegate for FIDEM (International Art Medal Society) would like to invite more MASC members to join FIDEM Canada. This is the way to learn about medal making world wide and to make new friends. The membership fee to FIDEM Canada is $75.00. Each FIDEM Canada member receives two copies of The Medal, the magazine published by the British Museum.

Medal Workshop in Kelowna, B.C.

MASC would be thriving in other parts of Canada if everyone would be as active as the folks in Kelowna. Wouldn’t it be great if we could have medal workshops in Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal and Halifax? Surely there are medal makers in these areas who could teach a medal making workshop. After all MASC is a country wide society. Or at least we would like it to be inclusive of all Canada.

On Saturday, February 23rd and Sunday 24th The Kelowna Sculptors Network Society held another medal making workshop. The workshop was led by Esteban Castillio, Alex Mentes and Lynden Beesley. Over the two days ten members attended the workshop including three new members. Thirty waxes were produced which are now at the foundry. Most members produced two designs and one member made a double sided medallion for the first time. It was fun and members got to know each other better. The patination session will take place at the beginning of April. Medals for the MASC competition will be photographed at that time and the registration forms submitted.

Kelowna Sculptors Network Society are looking forward to meeting other medallion enthusiasts in Kelowna this Summer.

Editor’s Request

We have now started a page that will be filled with news about the business, personal and artistic, of our members. For this article we need to have you participate. Let us know what you are doing. Tell us when you make a sale or get a commission. We’d like to know if you create a medal to mark an event in your family. It is good for all of us to know what our members are doing to further the cause of the art medal. This page will be printed blank if we do not receive some feed-back from you. Jump up and do your part for MASC.
CALL FOR ENTRY

STUDENT AWARD FOR ART MEDAL

$1000.00

Deadline: April 15, 2008

Theme: Open

Size: Not larger than 6” (150mm) in diameter

Shape: No restrictions

Thickness: No more than 10mm thick

One - Sided or Two - Sided.

Material: Non-malleable

(will not lose its shape when touched)

Medals juried from 4”x 6”photographs.

Include a head & shoulders photo of the artist

Final ten medals juried from actual medals

(Students will be notified if they make the short list)

Entry Fee: $10.00

(Personal cheque or Money Order made out to MASC)

Send photographs and entry fee to:

MASC Medal Award

1288 Ritson Road North, Suite 212,

Oshawa, Ontario, Canada L1G 8B2

Inquiries about this award should be directed by e-mail to

Del Newbigging at: newcar@sympatico.ca

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Condolences

MASC expresses sympathy to Director Eleanor Konkle upon the death of her husband on March 3, 2008

Ted Konkle was born in Grimsby, Ontario on July 24, 1925. He was a WWII Veteran, Flying Officer R.C.A.F. and R.A.F., graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design, long time employee of Eaton’s of Canada for national merchandise presentation and manager of public relations and special events. Ted was a world traveller who shared his adventures with spectacular illustrated shows followed by delicious dinners showing his creativity in the kitchen.

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The Peasant Dance
after Albrecht Duerer-1514,
by Wilhelm Albiez
bronze, 8.9 mm diameter

The Bookbinder
by Wilhelm Albiez
bronze, 8.2 mm diameter

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