

Harvesting Clay The Beauce Pottery in the 1940's by Alan C. Elder (In English)

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La moisson d'argile

En mai 2008, le Mus e canadien des civilisation a inaugur  une nouvelle exposition en vitrine consacr e   un style d'art populaire qu b cois. La moisson d'argile - La c ramique de Beauce dans les ann es 1940 donna aux visiteurs l'occasion d'admirer une collection de plus de soixante pi ces de potiers d'argile rouge r cemment donn es au Mus e et provenant de collections priv es.

When I joined the staff of the Canadian Museum of Civilization as curator of Canadian craft and design in 2002, one of my first jobs was to survey the existing collection and ascertain both its strengths and weaknesses. The Canadian Museum of Civilization's collection includes both industrial and handmade ceramics from all parts of Canada.

In 1976, a large collection of industrially made ceramics--primarily from Alberta manufacturers such as Hycroft and Medalta--had been acquired from an Albertan collector. Many of these works are now part of a longterm display in the Ressources de la fronti re section of the Museum's Canada Hall.

In 1989, Stephen Inglis, then the Museum's director of folk culture studies, acquired over 200 works from Erica Deichmann Gregg. These handmade works, made by Gregg and her late husband Kjeld Deichmann formed the core of an exhibition that travelled across the country. Other acquisitions, such as the Massey Foundation collection and the Ontario Crafts Council collection, included ceramics; each brought with them their own specializations.

However, I was concerned that examples of work by many of the important potters of Quebec were missing from the CMC's collection. Particularly noticeable was the lack of Beauce ceramics. The Beauce pottery is important to the Canadian Museum of Civilization for two reasons. It is the story of changing aesthetics from the early 1940s to its demise in 1989, but it also reflects social issues, such as growing urbanization, the distribution of income and the maintenance of cultural traditions. I was particularly interested in looking at the early production of the pottery: the red-clay works of the 1940s.

I was fortunate to meet Daniel Cogn , author of the book, C ramique de Beauce. Daniel offered works from his collection, and introduced me to another collector, David Rhody. Along with Richard Carrier, they generously offered over 100 works to the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It is a selection of these works that is currently on view.

Alan C. Elder

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