JOHN MARSHALL
an exhibition of recent work in gold and silver

held in the galleries of the
LOWE ART CENTER

under the auspices of
THE SCHOOL OF ART — SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

January 11-February 7

introduction and notes by
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This is the Fourth in a Series of Special Exhibitions sponsored by
the School of Art Celebrating the Centennial of Syracuse University,
Syracuse, New York 13210.
The instability of aesthetic value is one of the most startling aspects of the revolutionary decade of the 1960’s. Worldwide mechanization, political confrontation and social reorientation have deeply affected the artist. And while the fantastic variety of artistic expression during the past ten years has betrayed a basic uncertainty, even the threat of disintegration in our time, there is strong evidence of a new spirit that may well determine the future.

This was evident some years ago when John Marshall held his first one-man exhibition in Syracuse University’s Lowe Art Center (April, 1967). Only a few months before that time the world had been shocked by the flood disaster of Florence. The tragic loss of art works, books, manuscripts and other historical treasures was fantastic. The devastation in human terms was even worse, when thousands of artist-craftsmen lost their shops, their tools and their basic means of livelihood. The wholehearted response of concerned citizens from all parts of the world brought millions of dollars, not alone for the preservation of historic monuments, but especially in material aid to the artist. It dramatized as never before the universal recognition of the artist-craftsman as essential to our contemporary life.

The issue is old and persistently desperate. It involves not only the 100-year long struggle of the creative individual against the machine, but the sheer survival of that unique combination of craftsman’s skill and creative imagination which we call the artist. Artistic tradition is by no means a matter of shop handbooks, museum storerooms or historic styles, but the direct and fundamentally human communication of teacher to pupil, of master to apprentice, in the inspired environment of the studio-workshop.

In the professional School of Art at Syracuse University the museum’s exhibitions are an integral part of the educational process. The significance of Marshall’s exhibition, as was pointed out at the time, was that while it was the first one-man show of a young and dedicated designer-craftsman, it revealed the personal devotion, imaginative curiosity and sustained performance characteristic of a new generation of artists who are building the new traditions of the future.

In the short span of a student generation since that time the building process has moved swiftly. The driving and relentless curiosity of young artists has sometimes stretched the imagination of areas beyond the means capable of providing permanent and living form. The fantastic development of new materials and techniques has all too frequently evolved without the artistic insight which makes the product a work of art rather than an empty form. Indeed the conflict of the new social and educational environment has challenged the validity of the artists’ profession itself, so that the resulting frustration finds its only release in noisy student protests and public demonstrations.

The answers come back with ringing clarity in exhibitions like this. The success of Marshall’s first show led to numerous awards in regional and
national competitions, significant institutional commissions and similar exhibitions in New York and other university art centers. The work and the enthusiasm generated by it have infected the classroom. In three years the classes in silversmithing have been filled to capacity. The tone has been changed from an auxiliary "craft" course to a regular sequence of professional standing. Students majoring in this program have won national awards in competition as well as design positions in leading industries.

John Marshall was born February 25, 1936 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was graduated from Langley High School there in 1954, and served three years with the 82nd Airborne Division, then the 11th, principally in Germany. His early interests in art during high school were encouraged by a devoted teacher, Mrs. Bridgewater, and further fostered by scholarships to Saturday classes at the Carnegie Museum which stressed fundamentals of drawing and painting, particularly of the human figure. An aptitude for sports carried him into the professional level of baseball and football which then occupied a good share of his time during his military service.

On his release from the Armed Forces in 1957 he spent a year at construction work, then attended Grove City College for another year as a Business Administration major. His interest in art drew him to evening classes in general drawing and design at Carnegie Institute of Technology and eventually determined his enrollment as a full-time student under the G.I. bill at the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1960. Upon graduation in 1965, he became an instructor in the School of Art at Syracuse University.

Cleveland has long been famous for its tradition of fine craftsmanship and good drawing. His major interest in gold-
and silversmithing was developed under a group of distinguished artists and designers, notably the silversmith, Frederick Miller, the goldsmith, John Paul Miller, the enamelist, Kenneth Bates, and the ceramist, Toshiko Takaesu. It was in this environment that he developed what might be called the classic approach of the contemporary. Its emphasis was on the constant search for new ideas and new forms, but of equal importance was the consistent control of the perfectionist in the use of the right material for the right form in the right composition.

In this process, Marshall contends, time has no meaning, since the control of a product on a time-and-material basis destroys the concept of aesthetic quality which is a human rather than a mechanical attribute. Similarly, he argues that the ultimate concern of the artist should be human and as a result, he prefers to design for individuals rather than the abstract mass of marketplace. Success through recognition and significant commissions has served to strengthen his convictions and intensify his work. The latest and most ambitious project is the Chancellor's Bowl, commissioned by Chancellor William P. Tolley for the university collection in 1969. Raised from a 14" x 16" 7-gauge plate of sterling silver, it was stretched to a sphere and extended to a rectangular shape roughly 18 by 18 inches with a 9 inch depth. The sparkling iridescence produced by the hammer marks is not merely a decorative surface treatment, but intended to convey something of the spontaneity and strength of both the material and process. The design is based on the movement of the metal, with the emphasis not so much on the planishing hammer, but the collet and pein hammers with their oval striking surfaces. This parallels the sense of power revealed in the form itself as it combines the round and square shapes.

The ladle is short-handled to provide better control from the wrist in the pouring process. The ivory handle carries a warmth in color which sets the key to the soft luminosity of the polished metal. Its combination of silver and gold, along with the granulated chips, repoussé and chased surfaces, creates a sparkling accent to the total composition. When empty, the ladle—locked as it is into a special platform on the edge—produces a bowl within a bowl effect and complements the movement over the sphere like a jewel set in a label.

Thus the work has an aesthetic and psychological identity similar to the sculptor's quality of spectator's involvement. Indeed it demonstrates the fact that this is not the traditional craftsman mechanically at work in his shop, but an artist whose personal expression reflects the deeply felt experiences of the world about him, from the gigantic architectural forms and peaceful spaces of the modern city to the quiet rustle of the autumn landscape which he sees daily near his home.

The impact of environment has its parallel in his use of other artistic media. He loves to draw and his interest in the animated surface through relief and repoussé can be compared to drawing as a discipline as well as inspiration. The competition
7. THE CHANCELLOR'S SERVING BOW
with the machine has made us overwork our silver today, he
argues, so that the product frequently becomes sterile and
lifeless.

Some of his designs, such as the brooch which he called
"Medley," are based on drawings from nature, in this case
a flying moth whose fluttering form is animated by facets of
green gold granulated chippa and the chased silver. Many
of the reliefs, such as the tree-growth design on the
stainer of the ladle, are developments of drawings involving
several reclining figures. The organic flow of line and form
in the relief of "Sanctum" has its origin in the drawing of a
single, studio-type reclining figure. The same consistency in
feeling for form, continuity, and an space-creating use of light
appears in his design of the display cases and the total
exhibition.

These ideas and attitudes are not isolated impressions but
an integral part of an artist's way of life. While he is devoted
to teaching, he is also interested in the students' success
and recognition. He saw the famous craftsmen exhibition of
"Young Americans," held in New York's Museum of Con-
temporary Craft as a major accomplishment in that it gave
young people a chance to compare themselves to other
artists. Competitions in the designer-craftsman field he felt
have often been unfair because young and inexperienced
artists are pitted against established professionals. The re-
sult here was a revelation of fresh and new ideas and a
revived understanding of materials in the direction of form
for form's own sake rather than the overworked doctrine of
"form chasing function." Today a new generation of artists-
craftsmen is making its way into the public conscience as it
is in the other arts and the educational programs with which
they are associated.

Thus, out of the conflict of ideas which animates the vari-
cous fields of the fine arts, the young artist and the educa-
tional institutions with which he is involved are themselves
discovering the solutions to contemporary problems. This
exhibition is an inspiring demonstration of the freshness and
faith of the new generation.

Laurence Schmeckebier

Syracuse University
CATALOG
Measurements given in inches, height preceding width or diameter.

1. FLOWER BOWL
1969. 6" x 11" Raised and chased with removable inside vase with gold cap, pierced and chased.

2. BREAD TRAY
1969. 12" x 8" Formed Sterling with ivory handle, chased and repoussé ridge and walls.

3. "SANCTUM"
1969. Green gold chips on fine silver brooch with green gold cap 3" x 3½".

4. "MEDLEY" BROOCH
1969. 2¼" x 2¾" green gold and fine silver, chasing and repoussé with granulated chips.

5. "PERCEIVED" PENDANT
1969. 3" x 1¼" green gold granulation and fine silver.

6. COFFEE SET

7. THE CHANCELLOR'S SERVING BOWL
1969. 9½" x 10½" x 16". Stretched from 14½ x 16½ 7-gauge sheet of sterling silver, 24 quart capacity. Ladle with 14K gold strainer with chased repoussé and granulated gold chips, ivory handle notched to fit banded edge of bowl. Commissioned by Syracuse University for its Centennial Year.

8. PENDANT
1969. 4½" x 3½". Top section and stems of green gold. Lower sections fine silver with green gold granulation. Awarded the Women's Council prize in the 1969 Finger Lakes Exhibition at the Memorial Art Gallery of Rochester, N.Y.
9. CANDY DISH
1968. 5" x 9", raised sterling silver form with 14K yellow gold chased finish.

10. "OUTGROWTH" PENDANT
1969. 3 3/4" x 2 1/4". Green gold granulation and fine silver.

11. CHALICE
1967. 13" x 6 1/4". Sterling silver and gold. Lower form raised from 12" 18-gauge sterling silver disk. Black raised and chased crown of thorns design and soldered base. Top cup form stretched from 4 1/2" 7-gauge disk. Chalice is designed in two parts with the lower form to hold the wine and the upper chalice cup which it supports. Objects U.S.A. 1970 collection.

12. ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING RINGS
1969. Green gold and fine silver fabricated with granulation.

13. "WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN"
1969. Enamel on chased fine silver and basse-taille copper, 10" x 12". Awarded Thomas C. Thompson prize at the 25th Ceramic National Exhibition, Everson Museum, Syracuse, N.Y.

14. LAVABO AND CRUETS
1968. 8" x 3", 4 1/2" x 7", raised sterling with gold plate interior and gold cap on wine container. Commissioned for the new altar of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Syracuse, N.Y.

15. COCKTAIL SERVER
1969. With gold strainer. 8 1/2" x 4" raised with soldered base.

16. "SPARROWS"
1969. Enamel on chased fine silver and basse-taille copper.

17. "MOTH" BROOCH
1969. 3 1/2" x 2", green gold and fine silver, chasing and repoussé with granulated chips.
12. ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING RINGS  

13. "WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN"
CHRONOLOGY
1936—Born Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1944—Military Service, principally in Germany.
1958-9—Graduate School, University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y.
1959—M.A. in Art Education, University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y.
1960-6—Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pa., graduate school.
1964—Award for coffee set in "Sterling Today" competition, sponsored by the Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America.
1965—First one-man show in Lowe Art Center, Syracuse University.
1966—Promotion to Assistant Professor, Syracuse University.
1967—Second one-man show, Lowe Art Center, Syracuse University.
1968—Promotion to Assistant Professor, Syracuse University.
1969—Women's Council Award, Rochester Finger Lakes Exhibition at the Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, N.Y.
1970—Second one-man show, Lowe Art Center, Syracuse University.