

President's Message, Posted on ABANA.ORG October, 2009

Fellow members by the time you read this my term will have ended and I will have attended the American Craft Council Convenings and their annual conference in Minneapolis, MN. The Convenings is a series of Round Table discussions between similar interests and are designed to share current topics.

Collectors & Patrons, Educators & Academia, Curators & Museum Professionals, Craft Media Groups & Non-Profits, Writers and Media for Craft, Marketplace for Craft and last, but not least, Makers.

Each Convenings session will be both audio and note-recorded. These recordings and notes will be helpful to the Council with regards to strategic and programmatic planning, giving them insight into the issues and concerns that are being identified in the field and by the field. They will also be photographing each group throughout the sessions.

Representatives from the American Craft Council Board of Trustees will be joining each group to sit in on the conversation and to answer specific questions about the Council.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time ever that ABANA has been requested to participate. The theme of the 2009 American Craft Council conference is "Creating a New Craft Culture". With the assistance of your ABANA Board and several members at large I have gathered a significant and important set of information and questions. Hopefully I will bring back some much needed insights as to how other organizations work to represent their membership in their area of Craft. How do these organizations present opportunities for increasing the Public's awareness of their Craft? What events do these organizations plan, promote and sponsor that provide their members with opportunities to show and market their work? The list of ideas and suggestions I have received goes on and on.

Here is a partial list of attendees to the American Craft Council Convenings, The Furniture Society, The Glass Art Society, The Society of North American Goldsmiths, The American Association of Woodturners, Northern Clay Center, Highpoint Center for Printmaking, The Textile Center National Center for Fiber Art, Craft Scotland, Concordia University-Saint Paul, Franconia Sculpture Park, Clay Squared to Infinity Ceramic, Canadian Crafts Federation, American Tapestry Alliance, Surface Design Association, Guild of Book Workers.

Each one of these organizations represents an opportunity for Inter-Craft Collaboration and networking. You may be thinking by now, "What do these other organizations have to do with Blacksmithing?" My answer is simple, "Plenty"! These organizations are ambassadors for their representative craft. They work with their membership to increase public awareness of their Craft. They work with their membership to provide opportunities to show and market their work. These organizations represent all levels of interest within their membership, both Professional and Hobbyist alike. All of these organizations have educational programs, grants and scholarship, conferences and promote workshops for those members interested in improving their skills. They all have resource information and materials available to their members.

Something we all are aware of, or should be aware of is the under-representation of Iron work in the world of Craft. A prime example of this is the SOFA shows. International Expositions of Sculptural Objects & Functional Art held in Chicago, New York and Santa Fe. Another huge Craft venue is the annual ACC Buyers Shows in San Francisco, Baltimore, Saint Paul and Atlanta. These are just a few of the venues, there are plenty more and we just need to tap into the opportunity to network together with these other Craft based organizations to move forged Iron work into the mainstream.

If we are to continue to grow as an organization, we must continue to explore, stimulate, inspire, educate the Public, participate with other Craft based organizations to promote opportunities for Artists and Crafts people to show and market their work.

In closing, please feel free to contact any board member with concerns, questions, and suggestions. We have our ears on and are listening

For Love of the Craft,
Rome H. Hutchings, ABANA President