

The year has flown by. Inevitably, there were events to celebrate and people to mourn. The Ames Gallery celebrated its 35th year and, on a more personal note, Sy and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary, which made 2005 a memorable year for us. We shared the long history of our lives together by collaging our walls with photos, letters, tickets, and contracts. That was, in part, the inspiration for our upcoming vernacular photography show (see *Expect the Unexpected*, page 1). On a sad note, we mourn the loss of Wilbert Griffith (see *In Memoriam*, page 7). We share the world's horror at the death and devastation caused by a senseless war and so many natural disasters.

Looking ahead, we will be offering two newly released A.G. Rizzoli architectural portraits at the 2006 Outsider Art Fair in January. Also on the *Calendar* is the International Cane Collectors' Conference to be held in Napa in April (see *Canemania*, page 2).

Our sincere thanks to all of you who have made our 2005 such a great year. Karen, Sherry, and Sy join me in extending our very best wishes for health, happiness, and good cheer in the year to come. As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

Bonnie

Calendar of Events

In Memoriam
 Wilbert Griffith
 New Rizzolis
 Jim Bauer Sculpture
 Focusing on Photography

Ames News

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No. 28

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Bonnie Grossman



Photograph: I3/1005E, Couple, Man w/Crossed Legs, 5.5 x 4"



Photograph: 13/4055, Three Workmen, c1915, 6.25 x 4.25"

Expect the Unexpected: Focusing on Photography

March 1 – April 30



02B/4305, Memory Bottle w/Photo in Heart, c1915, Putty and Found Objects, 12"

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in vintage photography. Studio-produced *cartes de visite* and the larger cabinet cards of the mid-nineteenth century, as well as 20th century amateur snapshots, have captured the interest of art enthusiasts.

The more expansive area of vernacular photography embraces pictures taken by non-artists and not intended to be high art; the everyday remembrances of persons, times, and places. The amateur photographers might have been the parents or relatives who just had to record the vacation events or capture the baby smiling or pulling the dog's tail. While we might not want to sit through hours and hours of other peoples' snapshot records of their travels or family memories, a small, well-edited group of images may tell a humorous or touching tale.

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The “art” emerges when the viewer spots the unpredictable, the quirk, or the commonality that connects one image to another or links a group of photographs to form a collection that tells a story.

Photographs appear on memory vessels, encrusted along with seashells, nuts, beads and buttons. They are surrounded by cigar labels in so-called tobacciana. In the early part of the 20th century photos were sometimes turned into rich blue prints known as cyanotypes. Reproduced on cloth, these images could be assembled and sewn together as quilts or pillow shams, providing both a tactile and visual reminder of past times.

Pins, necklaces, rings, and bracelets that incorporated portraits were symbols of affection or of remembrance.

In the Ames exhibit we’ve gathered an array of images that we hope will amuse you, puzzle you, or in some way, touch you. ■



Photograph: 13/1005F, Three Stairstep Boys, 6 x 4.25"

Of Interest

Canemania!

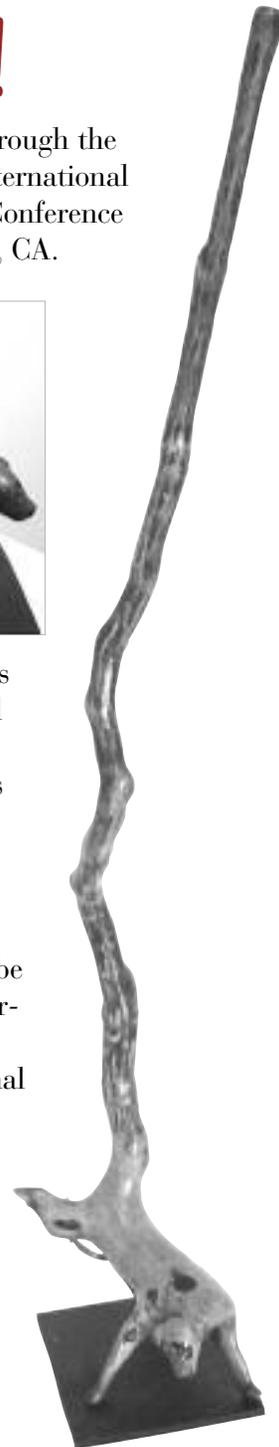
From April 20th through the 23rd, the Fifth International Cane Collectors’ Conference will meet in Napa, CA.



Prominent cane dealers from around the world will assemble to share discoveries, adventures and wise counsel ... all on the subject of the walking stick. The schedule for the 3-day conference will be balanced between information and entertainment. Along with formal talks and informal chatter there will be an evening affair at the Niebaum-Coppola Winery, with dinner and dancing amidst props from many of Coppola’s movies.

The Napa Valley is an exciting destination. Extend your trip and explore the many galleries, spas, antique shops and museums; you’ll find hundreds of wineries to tour and dozens of restaurants to enjoy.

For more information about the conference, go to www.canemania2006.com. ■



23A/04204, Dog Cane, c1920, Wood, 37 x 7 x 7"

Wilbert Griffith 1920–2005



Wilbert Griffith was born in Bridgetown, Barbados on August 29, 1920. Married, with seven children, he came to the United States in 1966. In 1995, thirteen years after his retirement from his work as

a machinist's helper, he bought some marking pens. He said: "I just began drawing with crayon and went from there. I didn't go into it for the monetary side or for a profession. I paint a little every day, it passes the time."

His colors were tropical, with lush greens, reds, browns and yellows as his primary palette. A few of the paintings were simply framed in wood, but for most he painted borders to surround the image. Each was meticulously signed, titled, and numbered; they were then suspended from carefully threaded hangers.

Most of Griffith's images included figures, usually groups of women, but he did not use a model. His people emerged



Wilbert Griffith, WG80/166, *Woman Sitting*, 2002, oil on canvas, 16 x 20"



Wilbert Griffith, WG 34/71, *Woman Portrait*, 1999, oil on canvasboard, 11 x 14"

from magazines, old library books and journals, and were joined together on the canvas in a harmony of color and culture. He liked to paint "blacks more in today's society than going back to slave days," but his island past was often apparent in his work.

Modest about his talent and his recent success, Griffith insisted that his painting was just a pastime, because "...the hours go real fast when you sit down with a brush." Griffith's paintings found an enthusiastic audience over the years at the Outsider Art Fair in New York, and his work is now included in very prominent collections. Several of his paintings were included in the 2003 *Revealing Influences* show at the San Francisco Museum of Craft and Folk Art; he is also a featured artist in the book *100 Artists of the West Coast*.

Wilbert died in Northern California on August 29, 2005, on his 85th birthday. We at The Ames Gallery will truly miss this gentle and unassuming man. ■

**THE
AMES
GALLERY**



2661 Cedar Street
(at La Loma)
Berkeley, CA 94708

The gallery is open by appointment and chance. Our small staff is present most weekdays from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm, and it is easy to arrange an appointment for an evening or a weekend.

A call ahead is always advised:
510-845-4949.



09/51105, Spiral Metal Staircase,
c1925, metal, 30.5 x 20"



At the Gallery

Through February 25

**Jim Bauer:
Whimsical Illuminated Sculpture**

Ames Gallery

March 1 – April 30

**Expect the Unexpected:
Focusing on Photography**

Ames Gallery

For more information about these exhibitions, visit:

www.amesgallery.com

Out & About

Through January 29

Folk Art for the Soul from Bay Area Collections

New Location:
51 Yerba Buena Lane
San Francisco, CA

Carole Austin and Ted Cohen,
Guest Curators

San Francisco Museum of Craft and Folk Art has moved. It is joining many of the city's arts organizations by relocating to the Yerba Buena Center in downtown San Francisco.

Folk Art for the Soul is an inspiring feast of visual treasures, from fanciful creations to functional items, drawn from some of the Bay Area's finest private collections. The works on view not only foster an appreciation of the variety of folk art forms in existence around the globe, they invite us to identify with the hearts and hands of their creators.

We're pleased that a number of our objects are included in this exhibit. Bottle whimsies, tramp art, and a bit of kitchenalia are among our items that can be seen in *Folk Art for the Soul*.

January 26 – 29

Outsider Art Fair

Puck Building
New York City, NY
Preview January 26
Show is January 27 – 29

For more information, go to
www.sanfordsmith.com

February 10 – 12

San Francisco Tribal and Textile Arts Show

Fort Mason Center
Festival Pavilion
San Francisco, CA

Preview February 9 with
Music by Sy Grossman's
Pacific Chamber Jazz

Show is February 10 – 12

For more information, go to
www.caskeylees.com

April 20 – 23

Canemanía 2006

**Fifth International Cane
Collectors' Conference**
Napa, CA

For more information, go to
www.canemanía2006.com
(See page 2 of *Ames News*.)

April 28 – 30

Los Angeles Antiques Show

Barker Hangar
Santa Monica, CA

Music by Pacific Chamber Jazz,
Sy Grossman, director

For more information, go to
www.caskeylees.com

FYI

For those of you in the Bay Area who derive pleasure in learning more about American decorative arts, I'd like to share an interesting resource:

The American Decorative Arts Forum of Northern California is an affiliate of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. They sponsor monthly lectures by various experts on a broad range of subjects, from tavern signs to tea drinking, from carving to carpets.

The gatherings are both informative and pleasurable. To join, check their website at www.adafca.org.



64/7405, Painted House
w/Dormer Window, c.1930,
wood, 19 x 14 x 11"

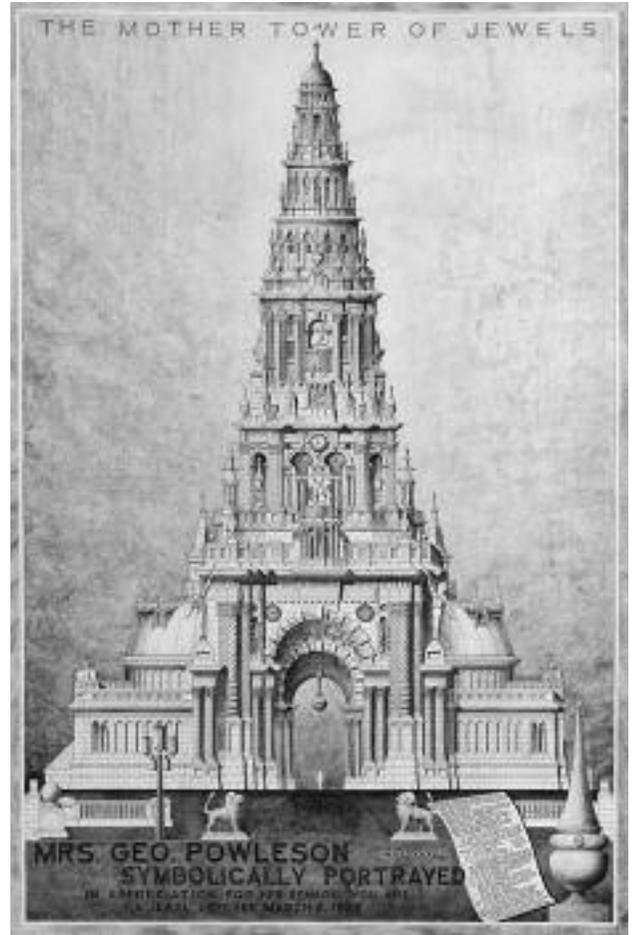
Our Newest Rizzolis



We're very pleased to be able to bring two newly released architectural portraits by A.G. Rizzoli to the market at the Outsider Art

Fair. January 2006 will mark the first time that these two pieces have been seen in New York since the well reviewed 1998 exhibit, *A.G. Rizzoli, Architect of Magnificent Visions* at the Museum of American Folk Art.

We are now pleased to offer for sale, *Margaret E. Griffin Symbolically Sketched/Palazzo Pianissimo* and *Mrs. Geo. Powleson Symbolically Portrayed/The Mother Tower of Jewels*. Margaret Griffin was a co-worker at the architectural firm of Otto Deichmann where Rizzoli served as a draftsman. It was Griffin who first revealed to us the meaning of *Y.T.T.E.* (Yield To Total Elation, Rizzoli's utopian dream). Mrs. Powleson, whom we never met, has been memorialized as *The Tower of Jewels*, one of Rizzoli's first representations of an individual in the likeness of a building. This piece is a further indication of Rizzoli's devotion to the San Francisco Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 where he encountered the original 432-foot sparkling Tower of Jewels. ■



A. G. Rizzoli, AGR/S-04, *Mrs. Geo. Powleson Symbolically Portrayed/The Mother Tower of Jewels*, 1935, ink on rag paper, 37 x 35"



A. G. Rizzoli, AGR/S-17, *Margaret E. Griffin Symbolically Sketched/Palazzo Pianissimo*, 1939, ink on rag paper, 24 x 36"

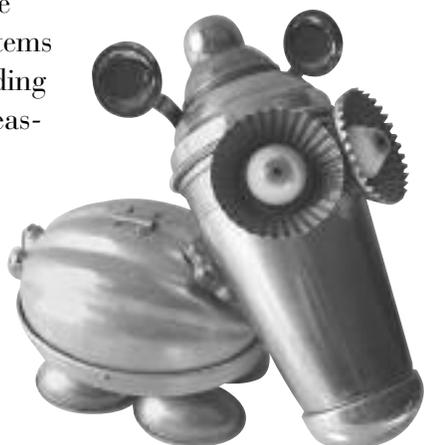
AMES NEWS

Jim Bauer: Whimsical Illuminated Sculpture

Through February 25

The Ames Gallery is aglow with a bevy of creatures, all assembled and brought to life by Jim Bauer. From the easily identified animals — dog, cat, and rabbit — to the claw-handed *Brainiac*, Bauer's robot-like sculptures are imaginative and enchanting.

Bauer's sculptures are made from kitchen items and hardware, including coffee pots, irons, measuring spoons, and sprinkler heads; they often include electric lights that shine through colored lenses, and there is one that has a working telephone in its chest cavity.



After the initial attraction, the viewer tends to deconstruct the pieces, slowly beginning to recognize the familiar components. A coffee or teapot spout is often the nose, ears may be spoons, tongs, or drawer pulls, bodies vary widely from gelatin molds to canteens to pressure cookers.

A former teapot and kettle salesman, Bauer haunts flea markets, thrift stores, and recycling depots in search of aluminum detritus.

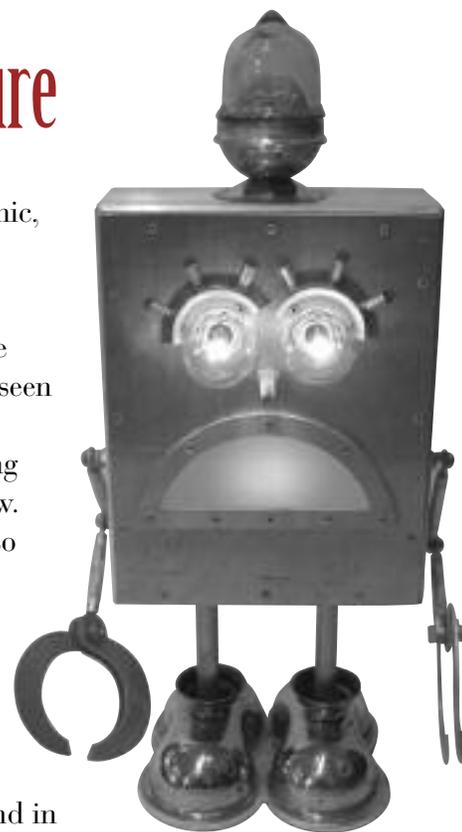
Discovering the occasional hardware store close-out sale is ecstasy. He is prone to reciting the model numbers and manufacture dates of the component parts of his creatures. He has also



been an auto mechanic, and a researcher at Kaiser Aluminum.

Bauer's unforgettable creatures have been seen locally, guarding a coffee shop or peering out of a store window. His sculpture has also been seen at The American Primitive Gallery in New York, the Boon Gallery in Salem MA, the Berenberg Gallery in Boston, and in Nordstrom displays.

The Ames Gallery has represented Bauer since 1996. ■



Jim Bauer creatures, clockwise from top left:

JB322, *Lavender Dog*, 2003, recycled aluminum, 12" h.

JB334, *Brainiac*, nd, mixed media, 21" h.

JB338, *Rabbit*, nd, mixed media, 16" h.

JB215, *Sex Kitten*, recycled aluminum, 22.5" h.