

# Silver Society Student Awards 2022

## A report by Anne Barros



This year's Silver Society of Canada student awards were presented at the L. A. Pai Gallery in Ottawa on June 4, 2022. Graduating students in the Jewellery Design and Metalsmithing Department of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design were the happy recipients.

A year-end show of student work is usually quite disparate. Because these students were using recently-learned skills like raising and anticlastic forming to express an assigned theme, "commemoration," there was a coherence at times in both techniques and concepts. As suggested by the exhibition title, *Tactile Chronicles*, the variety of surfaces was notable and included planishing, corrugation, patination, and electroforming. The gallery window signage was a montage of these colorful surfaces.



The top award winning piece by Mavis Chen, *Will There Be a Bird*, commemorates her father. It unites two Chinese cultural customs - tea drinking and having a pet bird - both of which were important to her father. The sterling silver raised bottom of the vessel is for preparing and serving tea, while the top is a delightful birdcage, symbol of home for Chen. The handle and lid are of basswood and the execution looks very professional. Chen says that she tries to find a "balance between functional, aesthetic, and storytelling."

Mavis Chen, *Will There Be a Bird*, sterling silver, basswood, 20x17x9cm, 2022. Top Award.



Honorable Mention went to a piece entitled *Coleoptera* (an order of insects that includes beetles). Its maker, Hannah W. Craig, declared that the “teapot was created as a celebration of the physical process of traditional silversmithing techniques, an embodiment of William Morris's philosophy of joy in labor.” She spent months raising the body from a flat sheet of silver, intuitively working with the metal until it became, according to Craig, “it wanted to be and what I wanted it to be.” The handle and two spouts are made of hollow tube forms (spiculus). The teapot’s surface is planished and highly reflective. A large labradorite is bezel set into the knob for opening the top.

Hannah W. Craig, *Coleoptera*, sterling silver, labradorite, 13x11x27cm, 2022. Honorable Mention.

As if this beautiful tentacled form were not enough, Craig "after falling in love with chasing and repoussé," decided to add a scarab beetle to the bottom of the vessel. The finely executed detail of the top of the beetle’s body can only be seen by peering into the teapot. The message Craig has embodied is: "Take a moment to lie in the grass and look real up-close at bugs sometime. It’s important."



Mackenzie Pearl Reid won her Honorable Mention for a teapot entitled “Tied to Home.” Reid’s small copper pot is really two raised volumes, similar to two round stones from the Nova Scotia shoreline to which she feels connected.

When tied together, the two volumes become a female form that represents Reid, while also giving homage to her Nova Scotia home. The finished stone-like texture on the vessel is unusual and achieved with a large piece of raw quartz. In her artist’s statement, Reid says that silversmithing allows her to express the textures of her surroundings and their connections to our emotions - how we all are shaped by our past.

Mackenzie Pearl Reid, *Tied to Home*, copper textured with quartz, 11x5x19.5x7cm, 2022. Honorable Mention.



Candlestick by Hoaming (Jim) Nao

Attending the opening was Hoaming Nao, recent graduate of the NSCAD Jewellery and Metalsmithing Department. His piece in the exhibition was a lily flower memento mori honoring Dr. Sandra Alfodi, a much loved and respected craft and art historian at the college. Nao formed the lily flower and leaves in copper and patinated them to make a candlestick whose color stood out strongly in the gallery display. Part of Nao's education involved time in Denmark, where he studied at KEA, the Copenhagen School of Design and Technology. There he especially wanted to learn the business side of metalsmithing in what was the center of Danish modern silversmithing.

Professor Kye-yeon Son, a recipient of the Governor General/Sadie Bronfman Award and well-known internationally for her vessels, announced the winners from nineteen pieces of hollowware exhibited in the gallery. Her Forward to the exhibition noted that today's silversmiths honor the knowledge and experience required to "understand their materials and control complex processes." She also feels that contemporary silversmiths value the artistic endeavor needed to "push the boundary of traditional practice to redefine what hollowware can be."

According to Son, the jury (Sorrel Van Allen, Emma Piirtoniemi, Greg Sims, and Kye-yeon Son) looked for "one-of-a-kind pieces rooted in traditional craft materials and technique coupled with individual expression that transcends skill."

Son and a few other teachers, makers, galleries like L.A.Pai, and the Silver Society of Canada, are to be congratulated for their efforts to promote silversmithing in a world where silver is not held in the esteem it once enjoyed. If seen in terms of design, hand skills, and personal expression, this exhibition of hollowware points to some blue sky in the future. Perhaps these students sense a desire for sculptural and functional objects handmade in silver and other metals, patinated in bright colors, and telling stories of commemoration, celebration, and simply, imagination.

**Anne Barros** is a silversmith. Her work is in many public and private collections. She is the author of *Ornament and Objects; Canadian Jewellery and Metal Arts 1946—1996*.



Quaigh, Sterling siler

8 x 3"



Allana congratulated by her fellow students when receiving the award.

Members of the Silver Society of Canada fundraised to give a monetary award for the best silversmithing piece of the class of 2022 at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design. The winner was Allana Gerry who made this lovely quaigh.

Also thanks to her professor Brigitte Clavette for the excellent guidance she gives to her students. Allana is a trained nurse from B.C. Allana crossed Canada to try something new and study for two years at the College.