



PETER POWNING

solo

SANDRA AINSLEY GALLERY

**SATURDAY, MARCH 7 TH, 4 – 7 PM**

JOIN THE NEW BRUNSWICK MUSEUM



AND THE **SANDRA AINSLEY GALLERY**

FOR THE OPENING OF AN EXHIBIT OF RECENT ARTWORK BY  
PETER POWNING, AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE NB MUSEUM.

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

**SANDRA AINSLEY GALLERY**

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**Special Guests**

Rachel Gotlieb- Adjunct Curator,  
Gardiner Museum, Jane Fullerton- CEO of  
the New Brunswick Museum.  
The artist will be present.

**Exhibit March 7 – April 11, 2015**

[www.nbm-mnb.ca](http://www.nbm-mnb.ca) | [www.sandraainsleygallery.com](http://www.sandraainsleygallery.com)



Thank you for inviting to me speak about Peter Powning's work. It's quite an honour. As Peter just said, when he came to Canada in 1970 with his wife Beth, today a noted author in her how right, they set up a pottery in rural Sussex, New Brunswick. Just to provide you with some historical context here, Peter was part, whether he was conscious of this or not at the time, of a larger phenomenon known as the American studio craft movement in which many artists and designers came to Canada in the 1960s, to work and teach, such as Donald Lloyd McKinley (with his wife Ruth Gowdy McKinley) and Robert Held at Sheridan College in Ontario, or Kent Benson who met the famous Michael Cardew in Abuja, Nigeria or yet another transplanted American is Walter Ostrom who settled out east to teach ceramics at NSCAD in Halifax. Some were avoiding the American draft and others felt sympathetic to the Canadian way of life and others, like Peter, were not formally educated in the crafts but they all came from the back-to-land, counter culture movement and they all significantly shaped the craft revival movement here in Canada. It's also remarkable that the Pownings chose to set up their 300 acre studio near Sussex, New Brunswick because this, some historians argue, is where Canada's studio pottery movement was born under Danish Canadian husband and wife Eric and Kjeld Deichmann who began making pottery in the 1930s in Moss Glenn, New Brunswick and eventually settled in Sussex.

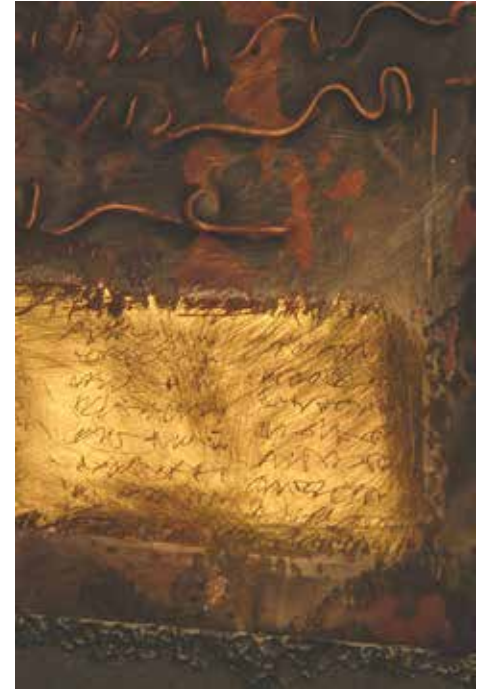


The Deichmanns became famous in their day, their portraits shot by Yousuf Karsh and romantically documented by the National Film Board until they closed their pottery in the 1960s. Peter, therefore, is part of this history and now contributes to it in his own right by demonstrating how studio craft can operate in a much expanded field. Peter began his career as a traditional studio potter, living off his own work making functional and decorative vessels in the then popular Japanese firing technique of Raku for the local and national markets. But look how far he has come 45 years later! While he still lives on his 300 acres with Beth, and works in clay, his practice has expanded to include not only the exquisite Raku crackle vessels but also sculptures made of cast glass, bronze, and steel and, more recently, he returned to photography which he studied in school. This is astonishing since most process-based artists or craft makers stick to a single media. You are a ceramist, or glass artist, furniture maker or a metalsmith. I believe only Roman Bartkiw, who taught in Ontario and Nova Scotia in the 60s, and the aforementioned Robert Held worked in glass and ceramics but certainly not on the same sophisticated level as Peter Powning. Peter's technical prowess in so many materials is second to none, particularly, when he skillfully manipulates these materials into one, single work of art. Powning is technically curious and an auto-didactic which explains his ease at handling a variety of materials and his ability to invent new processes such as pioneering indoor Raku firing by introducing a protective heat-resistant suit of armour, so to speak. The materials he chooses to work in are rooted in the ancient art of alchemy. While Peter is not transforming stone into gold, of course, nonetheless, he is altering material properties: clay to stone, sand to glass and metals from solid to fluid, back to solid once more but transformed into new wondrous shapes.





Under his deft hands and distinguished eye, clay, metals and glass undergo transformation by fire. What is also astounding, I think, is that Peter can work in such varied scale: small domestic tabletop objects, larger sculptural works to monumental public commissions. It cannot be said enough, that the breadth of materials and the dramatic change of scale in which he uses them is extraordinary. But as curators have pointed out, and Peter himself says, and as you can see for yourself in the gallery, there is strong continuum that unites his eclectic body of work. And it's simply this: Peter Powning's artwork questions humankind's connection and relationship to nature, the environment and history. He employs a repertoire of shapes, be it the disk, the circle, the arch, the fragment, the totemic column or the box reliquary (all signifiers of mysterious artifacts and time passing), the twig (the symbol of nature), or the house, the garment (emblematic of shelter)— he returns to these forms, imprinting with them with his own personal glyphs, time and time again and they all strike a fine balance between the organic elements of nature and the antiquated artifact. Powning's artwork is timeless and enigmatic but also it's very much grounded in our busy, daily post-modern life. There is nothing ironic about Peter's art; it invites us to pause, to look and to contemplate our profound relationship with culture, history, the environment, the passage of time and ultimately the meaning of life itself. Today, we are witnessing by many contemporary artists a return to material processes, and who show archaeological and archival impulses in their work to similarly question memory and making and offer metaphors drawing upon relics and fragments of the past. It's good and important to know that Peter Powning has been offering these interpretations in his vessels, and totemic forms other work for over 45 years like no other. Congratulations to you Peter on such an illustrious career and congratulations to the New Brunswick Museum for acquiring such an important archive and collection.



Cephalopod Reliquary ~ collaboration with Jake Powning





Blue Pyxidium  
2015  
20' x 11'd x 16" h. approx







Cephalopod Reliquary  
2015

Collaboration between Jake Powning and Peter Powning  
14" h x 9" d x 16" w



# BIG FLUX REDUX

11' 10" tall x 40" x 47"

Cast bronze, acrylic, corten steel.





## BIG FLUX REDUX

11' 10" tall x 40" x 47"

Cast bronze, acrylic, corten steel.



# Obelisk Redux

92" tall x 21" x 21"  
indoor/outdoor  
2015  
Cast bronze.









Obelisk Redux

in progress

92" tall x 21" x 21"  
indoor/outdoor  
2015  
Cast bronze.





Dark Obelisk

Cast Aluminum  
25 h x 4" x 4"

2015

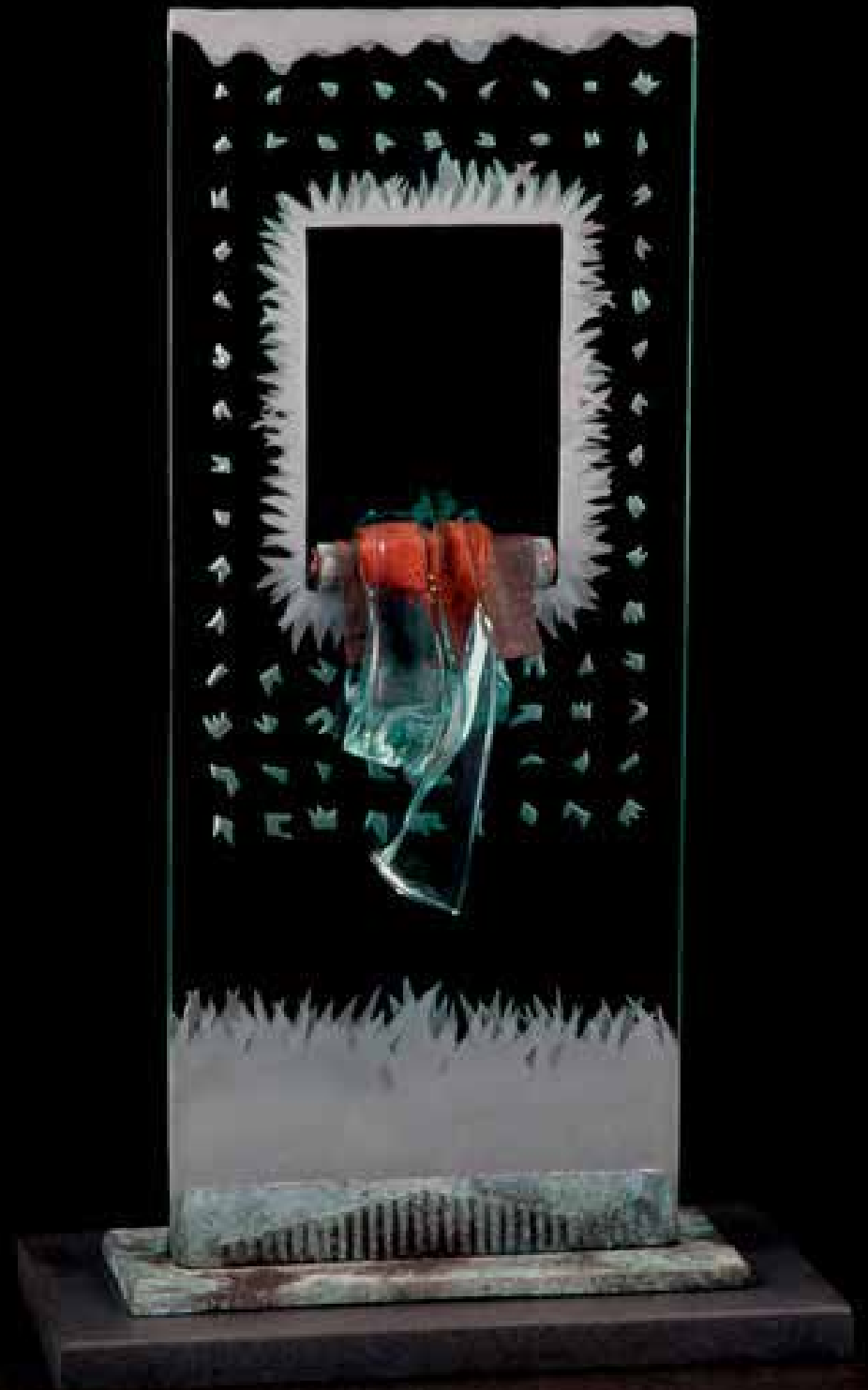




## BUNDLED SELF TABLET

25.5" x 15" x 8"

Glass, cast bronze, copper and granite.







## Emblematic Self

2015

Glass, copper, lead and  
steel.

22"h x 18" w x 6" d



Singular Self redux  
w/ stand  
glass, copper, steel, lead, gold  
leaf





Funct Self

Size: 24" w x 30" h x 8" deep

Material: slumped glass, copper, steel and stone







TRANSMUTATION #3  
13" x 5" x 21" / 33cm x 13cm x  
53cm  
Ceramics, cast bronze and stone.



TRANSMUTATION #2

13" X 6" X 48" / 33cm x 15cm x  
129cm

Cast bronze, acrylic, lead, gold  
and stone.

sculpture - pedestal



WHITE BRANCH VESSEL  
13" x 19"  
clay and bronze





FRAGMENTED BRANCH  
VESSEL

12" d x 19" h

Raku fired clay and cast  
bronze.





## BRANCH GLYPH ARCH VESSEL

19" w x 10.5" deep x 29" h  
Glass, cast bronze and  
ceramics.







HORNED BASIN

11" h x 12" d

Cast bronze, raku fired clay.





DISH REDUX

22" w x 20" h, 8" dia.

Cast aluminum, archival print,  
slumped glass, cast bronze and china plate





Long Way Home

Size: 19" x 21" x1.5"  
Material: Archival print  
in sculptural cast alu-  
minum frame.

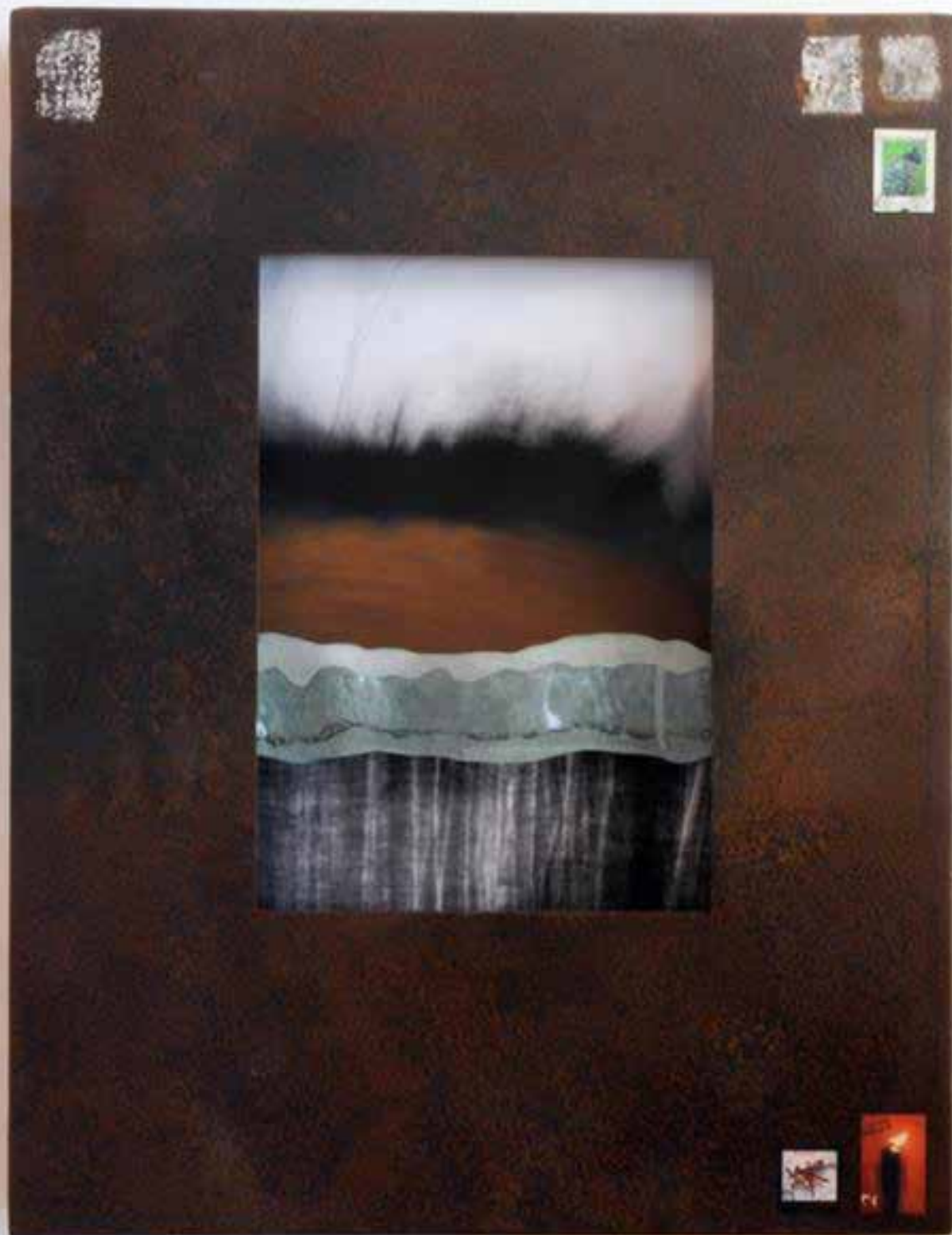




7 Penny Rhythm

Size: 24" x 30" x 3"

Material: Steel, photographs, glass, paper,  
aluminum.



## Bookscape and Clouds

Size: 24" x 24" x 2.5"

Material: Maple shadow box,  
photographic print mounted  
on aluminum.



## Bookscape Mulch

Size: 24" x 24" x 2.5"

Material: Maple shadow box,  
photographic print mounted  
on aluminum +  
letterpress letters..





## Waterbook Adrift

Size: 24" x 24" x 2.5"

Material: Maple shadow box,  
photographic print mounted  
on aluminum + glass object.



1,000 Words

Size: 24" x 24" x 2.5"

Material: Maple shadow box  
+ photographic print  
mounted on aluminum.



# Black Book

Size: 24" x 24" x 2.5"

Material: Maple shadow box ,  
photographic print mounted on  
aluminum and book fragments





## ACRYLIC PRINTS



Waterbook: Galaxy

40" w x 30" h

Archival print mounted on 12mm  
acrylic backed with aluminum.





## Pond Book

40" w x 36" h

Archival print mounted on  
12mm acrylic backed with  
aluminum.

Polycarbonate sculptural  
element.





"693"

40" w x 36" h

Archival print mounted on  
acrylic backed with alumi-  
num.





Studios and barn, Markhamville, NB, March 2015



photo: Greg Klassen