SUSAN TABER AVILA is a textile artist and Associate Professor of Design (Fashion & Textiles) at the University of California Davis. She exhibits her artwork widely, both nationally and internationally, and her work has been published in numerous books and magazines. Recent exhibitions include Suzhou, Beijing and Wuhan, China where she is an honorary professor of Art & Design at Wuhan University of Science and Technology, and Buenos Aires where she met the dynamic Martin Churba, one of the hottest designers in Argentina. Interviewing him was a thrill: "I rarely get star struck but Martin's charm and amazing designs blew me away."

Leslie Clark is a freelance writer and editor based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In this economy, talking to jewelry artist Kristin Lora about her background as a corporate executive in telecommunications made her a timely subject. "Along with a website Lora also maintains a presence on Facebook," Clark says. "She remarked that galleries and stores, especially, need to take more advantage of email capabilities for business. When Lora wanted to show me photographs of her pieces, she whipped out her wireless laptop and handed me a CD. That's impressive."

Carl Little recently received the Maine Crafts Association's first individual award for "scholarly contributions to the field of craft." As part of the recognition he was given a pin that was designed by J. Fred Woell and produced in the Ronald Hayes Pearson studio on Deer Isle. Other awardees included Woell, Lissa Hunter, Chris Becksvoort, Paul Heroux, architect John Rohman, Maine Governor John Baldacci, and the Haystack School (where the awards ceremony took place)."}

Nezka Pfeifer is the Curator at the Everhart Museum in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where she develops exhibits that interpret the Museum's diverse collections of art, cultural history and natural science. While Curator at the Sandwich Glass Museum in Sandwich, Massachusetts (2000-2004), Pfeifer researched and developed an exhibition and catalog on the work of Arts & Crafts jewelry artist and designer Hazel Blake French. She has worked at several museums, historic sites and historic preservation organizations in the Northeast, and focuses on museum exhibitions, collections management and interpretation of material culture.
In the twentieth century, a jewelry designer on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, brought together her skill, education and artistic inspiration to create unique designs that mirrored the natural world around her as well as the historic legacy of the material in her jewelry. Hazel Blake French was an Arts & Crafts jewelry designer who interpreted the colorful beauty of Sandwich glass fragments through her creations of intricate and sculptural jewelry, which were inspired by the indigenous flora and fauna of Cape Cod. Internationally renowned for her designs, she left a multifaceted legacy of her vision to see the beauty in the everyday, along with an artistic ability to represent the natural world.

Hazel Blake French lived and worked in Sandwich, Massachusetts—the oldest town on Cape Cod—from 1914 to 1972, designing and creating one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces and sets that used local material for the stones and themes found in her daily life. French used cut and polished glass cabochons and designed settings that featured the natural life of Cape Cod, including cranberries, plants, birds, insects, animals, and marine life. She was well-respected in her community and among her peers in American Arts & Crafts jewelry during her lifetime, and received national acclaim in exhibitions and publications.

Cape Cod was a very important element in her life and work. As a girl, she summered in East Sandwich at the Wingscoton farm with her family and spent time collecting glass cullet and fragments on the beach and marshes. Born in 1890, the designer grew up in Brockton, Massachusetts, and attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts from 1909-1913, focusing on metallurgy and jewelry design. Some of her key instructors were leading members of the Society of Arts & Crafts, Boston, and greatly influenced her ideas in jewelry themes, as well as her training in design and craftsmanship. In 1914, she married Bertrand French, a civil engineer from Sandwich, and settled in the town, raising their three children, participating in the community, and running her jewelry design studio.
Sandwich, Massachusetts was the home of an important historical industry for Cape Cod, the Boston & Sandwich Glass Company. Founded in 1825, the factory was known around the world for its contributions to industrialized glass production, as well as the artistic and functional design of decorative and colorful glassware. At its height in the 1850s, the B&S Glass Company employed hundreds of men, women and children, and shipped many thousands of glass pieces around the country and the world. After the factory closed in 1888, the town of Sandwich experienced a huge economic depression, with many of the glassworkers moving away to other companies in the United States or changing professions. Over the course of the next few decades, the factory buildings were dismantled or destroyed, and the glass fragments located in the marsh dump became the last physical evidence of a once-prosperous company. These fragments, including broken items and pieces of cullet (fused glass batch), were collected avidly by locals and tourists during the twentieth century. Enterprising artists such as French, and other glass enthusiasts, used the fragments to make their own handicrafts, blending aesthetic concept with historical artifact. Working with professional lapidaries who cut the glass chunks into smooth and rounded cabochons, French created settings in silver, gold and copper (often soldering all three metals in one design) that would highlight to perfection the jewel-like colors she found in the glass stones.1

Her jewelry designs and artistic work highlight the essential philosophy of craftsmanship founded in the social ideals of the American Arts & Crafts movement. This movement was inextricably linked through the programs and organizations disseminated through the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Society of Arts & Crafts, Boston. The roots of the Arts & Crafts movement began in England during the mid-nineteenth century, associated with designer William Morris (1834-1896), and eventually came to the United States in the 1870s. Boston was a catalyst for the movement due to its close ties to English culture, its support for art education, and a history of craft traditions, as well as its transmission of Arts & Crafts ideas through an educational network of schools, societies, studios, and workshops.2

The proponents of Arts & Crafts advocated a return to manual work traditions and craftsmanship, inspired by medieval practice and guild organization, which would be for the worker’s enjoyment, creativity and investment in individual accomplishment. The natural environment, combined with beauty and function, was the main source of inspiration for designers in the Arts & Crafts movement, and it echoed the call for a return to a simpler, less mechanical lifestyle and way of work. Boston’s School of the Museum of Fine Arts, opened in 1877, offered training in decorative design and encouraged individual exploration in the techniques of various media. Craftsmen such as C. Howard Walker, a stained glass designer and architect, and George J. Hunt, a gold and silversmith, (both of whom were Hazel Blake French’s instructors) emphasized historic ornament, graphic design and surface decoration to their students, and supplemented their instruction with lectures by some of the main thinkers and artists within Boston’s Arts & Crafts community.3

Her long and successful career as a jewelry designer spanned five decades. After her acceptance as a Craftsman in the Society of Arts & Crafts, Boston (SACB) in 1925, French had several solo shows in Boston, Providence, New York, and Philadelphia.4 She participated in the SACB’s thirtieth anniversary show in 1927, featuring pieces of Sandwich glass jewelry, as well as gold and silver sets with semiprecious stones.5 Promoted to Master status in 1936 in the SACB, she eventually participated in many national and international craft exhibitions, including the 1937 Paris Exposition and the 1943 New England Handicrafts Exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum. She also received recognition for her designs in a book by Allen Eaton on New England handicrafts; in this text, she explained her artistic motivation.
as "trying to contribute something to art and to the pleasure of living." Her unique approach of using Sandwich glass also earned her acclaim in books on New England craftsmen, as well as a 1942 MGM Studio travelog film, Picturesque Massachusetts, focusing on the history and art community of Cape Cod, which was seen in the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

With her diverse artistic talents and technical abilities, she produced drawings, paintings, designs, textiles, tools, as well as metallurgy and jewelry design. Some of French's most refined Arts & Crafts jewelry designs used precious metals and semiprecious stones of lesser cost, such as garnet, peridot, aquamarine, opal, and baroque pearls for their color and interpretive value within the design. Her ideas for ornament in the jewelry pieces incorporated fragments from antiquity, including birds, flowers and historical objects from India, China and the Italian Renaissance. These gold pieces were affectionately called "the Crown Jewels" by her children and grandchildren. Eventually she came to use primarily Sandwich glass stones in her designs as she believed that the glass fragments' varied and subtle hues translated the natural themes she desired to interpret, such as the moods of the sea or the colors of the landscape. According to her grandchildren, in her pursuit of creative inspiration, she tried to make "three pieces for her soul" every year, and the works in this special category included a cattail brooch and a spider dewdrop necklace (nicknamed "Mariah"), which was featured in the 1937 Philadelphia Art Alliance Exhibition of Contemporary Arts & Crafts. Another greatly acclaimed design was the Pokeweed Bracelet (representing autumn) that was exhibited at the 1937 Paris Exposition and 1943 New England Handicrafts Exhibition at Worcester Art Museum. Artistic inspiration came from her surroundings in Sandwich where French had a large and well-organized garden behind her home and studio, including wildflowers, currant bushes and a frog pond. She took care of a variety of animals and birds in her yard, giving them individual names and often feeding them right out of her hand. Design ideas came while hiking through the woods, strolling on the seashore or walking in the fields near her home. The nautical and shipping history of Cape Cod, and the beauty of the rolling waves and tidal movements on the Sandwich shores were other sources of inspiration. "Having Cape Cod blood, [she] wanted to use Cape Cod motifs . . . to open people's eyes to the beauty around them." French devoted as much uninterrupted time as possible working in her studio on her designs. With the wood stove burning and music playing (her favorite composers included Wagner, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky), she labored a great deal on each piece, often taking a year to finish a set of jewelry for a customer.
Hazel Blake French used a wide variety of sketchbooks to draw, paint and design her creations from nature. Then she sketched all of her designs onto tracing paper before transferring them onto the sheets of metal—gold, copper and/or silver. She hammered the metal over forms and soldered wires together to make multic和平red settings for her glass jewels. Usually the rear, or unseen, sides of her pieces were finished as well as the front facades; her perfection in craftsmanship was a high ideal to which she held herself and her work, and that of her students. Her designs varied from simple leaves or berries to multilayered stones and settings that emphasized the inherent motion and rhythm of seawater, plants and creatures. She also dedicated time to creating ecclesiastical work, such as crosses for parishioners and friends. A great colleague and resource on these projects was Boston artist and craftsman Charles Connick, whom French contacted for information on Christian symbolism, due to his expertise in creating leaded glass windows for churches. She also created illuminations for printing, floral designs for wallpaper patterns, as well as fanciful place cards for ladies' entertainment and parties.

Many unique designs and settings have French's distinctive mark—her logo and hallmark consisted of two circling codfish (biting each other's tails) around her monogram. This logo appears on her cards, brochures and large jewelry designs, but many smaller pieces, such as earrings, do not contain the mark, as they would have been part of a larger set. She also used this logo on her painted wooden studio sign that hung outside her home in Sandwich. Many prominent citizens in the town commissioned pieces for their spouses or family members. She often made special gifts for her children, grandchildren, nieces, other family and friends; many times commemorating special events and creating unique designs for each. She also produced designs of jewelry and walking stick ornaments for European nobility, including Queen Elizabeth (the recently deceased Queen Mother). The United States government also commissioned designs, namely several silver "V for Victory" gull pins, which were handed out to heroes and leaders during World War II.

As a female craftsper, Hazel Blake French was part of a change in American culture. Women had always been involved in American craft, creating beautiful and functional objects for their families or businesses. The Arts & Crafts movement elevated women's participation in craft; half of the members in the Society of Arts & Crafts, Boston were women and they predominated in the craft displays and exhibitions. French also shared her talents with others in her community by teaching a wide variety of crafts, including jewelry, leatherwork, woodwork, basketry, and bookbinding, to children as well as giving private lessons to several individuals. Her three grandchildren also were excited students and greatly enjoyed spending time with their beloved grandmother and learning her craft. In later years, arthritis prevented her from working, and a detached retina made her fully stop designing in the last year before her death in 1972.

The creativity and originality of Hazel Blake French and her interpretive jewelry designs rejuvenated and extended the glass legacy of the town of Sandwich, a leader in the heyday of American glass manufacture. Her aesthetic sensitivity, keen observation and manifold artistic skills combined to create unique works of art inspired by her natural surroundings and sharpened by her deft technical training. Her jewelry speaks for itself, as well as for the commitment of each owner in caring for and treasuring the work of a multitalented craftsper.

FOOTNOTES