

AMERICAN
art
COLLECTOR



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*Also Showcasing
Glass, Ceramics & Wood*

A craftsman, Malcolm Martin, is shown in a workshop, focused on carving a small wooden piece. He is wearing a dark green t-shirt and is positioned in the center of the frame. In the foreground, large, curved wooden forms, likely part of a boat hull or a large sculpture, are visible, creating a sense of depth and scale. The background shows a workshop environment with various tools and equipment.

Collaborative FORMS

MALCOLM MARTIN AND GAYNOR DOWLING
USE TRADITIONAL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES TO
CARVE HIGHLY TEXTURED WOODEN PIECES.



By definition, collaboration is the process of working with someone toward a common goal, outcome or product. Such is the method for artists Malcolm Martin and Gaynor Dowling who, together, create hand-carved wooden works they refer to as “vessel-sculptures.”

“Our work is a total collaboration, and we will usually both have worked in some way on any given piece,” they explain. “Designs, textures and finishes evolve slowly, piece by piece, and the totality of the work itself has taken on the character of the third member of our team, suggesting the next steps on from what we have already made.”

Martin trained in fine art, combining sculpture with art school training before shifting his focus to wood in the early

1990s. Dowling trained in textiles. Since 1997, Martin and Dowling have lived and worked together in Stroud, Gloucestershire, in England, making wood art series almost exclusively using hand tools, traditional gouges driven with mallet or the pressure of the hand.

“Each piece we make is primarily about the interaction of the trained hand with particular tools and an individual piece of timber,” Martin and Dowling say. “We often use very small sketches as a starting point; they leave a lot still to be decided in the actual carving. We draw out on the actual block, remove the waste on the bandsaw—our one machine—and then get to work with gouges, refining the form and adding texture.”

Influences for the pieces come from

almost everywhere, with the artists explaining, there are “too many influences to mention, a lifetime of absorbing everything life and the museums have to offer. Eastern ceramics have always been important to us, but so, too, have the different traditions of woodcarving across the world, and world textiles. Always more the arts of the people than those of the court though—more alive and more direct.”

May 7 to 30, Traver Gallery in Seattle will host the pair’s first solo exhibition at the showroom, featuring around 30 works curated from two bodies of work. The first grouping is comprised of larger, solid vessel-sculptures Martin and Dowling have made for years. The second set of work is new joined forms that came about during a nine-week residency in 2013 at The



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2 Center for Art in Wood in Philadelphia.

Widemouth, limed
and scorched oak,
9 x 11 x 3"

3

Black Cup, sycamore,
bookbinder's thread,
13 x 11 x 1½"

4

Maple Stem Cup,
maple and silk,
12 x 8 x 2"

5

A group of Malcolm
Martin and Gaynor
Dowling's limed and
scorched oak vessels.

"Malcolm Martin and Gaynor Dowling use very traditional hand tool techniques to carve their pieces, but what they are achieving with them is the carving almost appearing to be a drawing. It's not a super-fine carving process. They really allow the tooling techniques and handwork to show in the texture on the piece," says Sarah Traver, president of Traver Gallery. "I think what really strikes me as different in their work is how they play with dimensionality. The work appears as if it could be two-dimensional from far away, and it's not until you approach them that you see they are three-dimensional works, and see the shadow and light play on the surface. It's so dynamic."

Most of the large works are solid forms in oak that become almost like torsos or tree trunks. They also put together large still life groupings with multiple pieces in a specific arrangement. In the show, these vessel-sculptures will include two 6-foot-tall forms, as well as the smaller pieces *Ribbed Bottle*, *Grooved Form*, and *Widemouth*, among others.

"The solid forms invite heavy surface textures," Martin and Dowling describe. "The finish on the ribbed pieces is 'limed and scorched,' a signature surface of ours. The wood is first limed white, and then scorched to accentuate the 'drawing' of the raised lines, which char to, literally, charcoal black. The whole form becomes a support of this drawing with the gouge, one

mallet stroke at a time."

The more recent joined pieces are hollow forms created by piercing and stitching or binding together. Displayed in the exhibition will be their largest grouping of these new works, including the sycamore and bookbinder's thread piece *Black Cup* and a work from maple aptly titled *Maple Stem Cup* that uses silk.

"These explore the relation of inside and outside, and tend to be on a much more intimate scale for the hand to explore," say Martin and Dowling. "The cup forms are made from a single piece cut down the center to carve a back and front, and then glued and stitched back together. The stitching adds color and a form of drawing around the edge; the carved textures being lighter on the thin sections of natural wood."

"This is really the first time they'll be showing in the Northwest. We're excited to be introducing their work here," Traver says. "Martin and Dowling are doing such interesting and contemporary work that I've never seen before. It's pretty exciting." ●

MALCOLM MARTIN AND GAYNOR DOWLING

When: May 7-30, 2015; May 7, 5-8 p.m., reception

Where: Traver Gallery, 110 Union Street, #200, Seattle, WA 98101

Information: (206) 587-6501, www.travergallery.com