Carolina Culture

From quilts to whirligigs, Charlotte Brown collects NC’s folk art treasures
Dr. Charlotte Brown leaves her office on the third floor of the Talley Student Center and leads a visitor down a long hallway past cubicles and display cases to a simple gray door. On the other side, in a large suite of storage rooms, she pauses to survey some – but not nearly all – of the treasures of NC State. She turns down an aisle and browses quietly, picking up a large ceramic vase, then stops to admire a brightly painted wooden grasshopper. She points out a framed black and white photograph that captures a suburban scene from the 1950s, a group of teenagers at a drive-in movie theater.

It’s a small sampling of the 25,000 objects that make up the holdings of the Gregg Museum of Art & Design, the focus of Brown’s professional work and her passion for more than 25 years. When Dr. Banks Talley, the longtime vice chancellor of student affairs, and Henry Bowers, then director of the University Student Center, recruited Brown to take the position of curator of art in 1982, the university had two gallery spaces but just a single small storage closet.

When she retires on March 1, Brown will leave an impressive artistic and cultural legacy for the university and the state: an art, craft and design collection valued at $5 million; a purpose-built museum facility that opened in 1992; the records of 80 exhibitions that have documented a wide array of North Carolina’s cultural and artistic contributions; and a support system that includes a highly skilled professional staff and the non-profit “Friends of the Gregg” organization. By almost any measure, Brown’s tenure has been
remarkably successful.
It's also a lot to leave behind.
"That's the hardest thing about retiring," she says. "Trying to find ways to use up the next 25 years. I hope I don't fail retirement."

She's joking, of course. Brown and her husband are already planning a trip to Belize to visit Mayan ruins (and go snorkeling). Then there's the archiving work she's promised to do in Asheville, at the historic Penland School of Crafts. And the American Association of Museums is hoping to press her into service as a consultant to help small and growing museums in the region organize and plan their collections. She'd also like to do some writing in her spare time.

It's understandable that Brown would be in demand, especially in retirement. If there's an art to building an art collection, then she's a master. And even though she doesn't describe it this way, a successful curator has to have an unfailing eye, an instinct for seeing the special quality that makes an otherwise ordinary object a piece of art. Without that, you're a collector, not a curator.

"I've never thought about whether I had an eye or not," she says. "I see things with a lot of clarity and understanding. I hear the conversations among things, that they talk to each other and they talk to me."

What the collected works say, to the trained ear, is how we've experienced our lives as a people — in our homes and communities — and how we've defined ourselves and adapted ourselves over time. From textiles to ceramics, paintings to photographs, furniture to folk art, the Gregg's exhaustive collection chronicles the cultural history of North Carolina.

"North Carolina culturally is very rich," Brown says. "Things like quilts, ceramics, and folk art are so abundant. We just got a great whirligig, which is a little more accessible to people. Once you realize that you don't have to be a critic or a collector or an art historian to like objects, the world opens up in new ways. You can learn so much about your own past. An urn is not just an urn, but a door to an understanding of your past."

The collection serves an important purpose in the day-to-day life of the university. Simply put, it's a teaching tool. Every piece of art, every exhibition, every collection of objects is tied to the classroom.

The collection is noteworthy, too, because much of it has been generously donated by alumni, friends of the university, and residents all across the state and region.

"My job description was to build a collection, build a building and build a support organization," Brown says. "The easy part was to build a collection that was curriculum driven. Design and decorative arts, textiles, ceramics, glass, furniture, wood, metals and photography; these are all parts of the curricula of so many colleges.

"As a result, NC State, through luck and opportunism, is in the forefront of the ascendancy of American craft art. We really do have precious things. And it's been such fun to bring them all together."

After Brown retires, Dr. Lynn Jones Ennis will take over as interim director of the Gregg. The university will conduct a national search and plans to fill the position within six months.
Like the ground crew preparing for a satellite launch, staff members in the Department of Registration and Records and the Office of Information Technology are excited as they get ready to go live with the launch of a new student information system (SIS) next week that will impact approximately 40,000 campus users.

There’s a lot riding on the outcome. SIS is used for the storage and maintenance of all student academic records including addresses, classroom scheduling, student registration, transcripts, class rosters and grade submission. The new system, based on the PeopleSoft software program, should make everything run smoother, faster and more efficiently. But progress doesn’t come easily. The staff has been hard at work for the past three years, preparing for the transition from one complex system to another.

The process began with a detailed fit/gap analysis comparing every function that is completed throughout the course of an academic year in the old student system with how that process is handled by the new system. Any gaps in functionality then had to be addressed by either a change to the business process or a customization to the system. Detailed testing of the system, including the conversion of hundreds of thousands of student data rows, began last February. In addition to this work, Registration and Records staff started providing training on campus in January 2009 and will continue to offer classes until March.

“This has been a huge cross-campus effort with faculty and staff in colleges across the university assisting in the testing of the upgraded system,” says Dr. Louis Hunt, vice provost and university registrar. “While many people’s first reaction is one of resisting change, they will see the reality is that the old system had many limitations that simply aren’t present in the new system.”

For example, the upgraded system has more robust prerequisite checking to keep students from enrolling in classes without the proper academic preparation. The new system will allow for students to be auto-enrolled into labs when one is required with a course. Students will no longer have to submit paper applications for graduation; it will be available to them online.

And there are many advantages to faculty and advisors as well. Professors can post grades immediately, without waiting for an overnight batch process. Also, faculty will be able to continue to access information from previous years, such as class rosters and grades submitted. Advisors no longer have to hand out 4-digit PINs to students for registration access. Instead they will simply remove a hold from the student’s record.

“This system will also position us to develop workflow,” says Hunt. “Processes that previously involved paper being routed around campus for signatures will soon be handled online. It will be a major timesaver for students and faculty.”

“We were deliberate in our timing for launching this upgraded system,” says Michelle Johnson, associate registrar. “When we implemented MyPack Portal in 2007, it was to prepare us for this system upgrade. The navigation to the system will be the same, it will just look different when you get there.”

Also taken into consideration, Hunt says, is allowing faculty and students time to get used to the upgraded system before summer/fall registration ramps up in March.

“Our previous system was an aging mainframe environment. The university devoted a lot of resources to bridge from that system to the Internet, where students and faculty are used to retrieving information,” Johnson says. “The new application is Web-based, so our resources won’t have to go toward building the bridge, but rather toward continually improving the system. Plus, many major universities across the country are using this system and sharing best practices with each other.”

And differences can already be seen.

“The vet school implemented a new grading system,” Hunt says. “With this new system, functional users can build the new requirements in 30 minutes – something that would have taken months of work from both technical and functional staff in the old system.”

Tutorials for the new system are available in the portal and at www.ncsu.edu/sis. Any questions? Call the help desk at 515-HELP.

-- Caroline Barnhill
If you discovered a window that allowed you to see what life was like in the past, how far would you go to ensure that window stays open? For John Balaban, professor of English and poet-in-residence at NC State, the answer is halfway around the world – to Vietnam. 

Before the Internet, video, film, and photography, the only way to pass information from one generation to the next was to write it down. For many in medieval Vietnam, that meant using the Nôm writing system. But now only a handful of scholars around the world can read Nôm, and the manuscripts written in that style are beginning to disappear. As humidity, temperature, insects and rodents take their toll on the Nôm texts, the window those manuscripts provide into hundreds of years of Vietnamese history and culture is threatening to close forever.

But Balaban, through the Nôm Preservation Foundation he founded and oversees, is working with the Vietnamese National Library, the NCSU Libraries and preservation expert John Dean of Cornell to digitize the content and restore the original texts of approximately 4,000 manuscripts in the Vietnamese National Library. The NCSU Libraries provided materials for use in the physical restoration and preservation of the documents.

Balaban estimates that the manuscripts date back to at least the 17th century, and include texts ranging from works of poetry, religion and history to maps and even census data. Balaban also hopes that, by placing electronic copies of the manuscripts online, Nôm scholars around the world can have better access to the documents and expedite their translation.

Balaban was awarded a medal of appreciation from the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in December for his ongoing work to translate and preserve Vietnamese literature. Balaban has also won international recognition for his work translating Vietnamese poetry written using the now obscure Nôm writing system.

Asked what his 10 years of work meant to him, Balaban said, “some closure for me on the war I went to as a young man...and the immense pleasure of helping to open to the Vietnamese and to the world some treasures of this cultural heritage.”

**SAVING MEDIEVAL TEXTS**

**DR. JOHN BALABAN AND THE NCSU LIBRARIES RESCUE IMPORTANT VIETNAMESE MANUSCRIPTS.**

Article by Matt Shipman
Culinary Showcase a Taste Treat

University Dining will showcase its team of chefs at the Culinary Showcase, scheduled for 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 5, in Fountain Dining Hall. Campus chefs will take center stage in the dining area, where students, faculty and staff not only can watch them create their signature dishes, but also taste them.

Emerging Issues Forum Sold Out

Due to high demand, registration for the 2009 Emerging Issues Forum is now closed. If you are still interested in attending the Forum, visit the Web site, http://www.emergingissues.org, to add your name to the waiting list. Even if you are unable to make it to the forum in person this year, there are still several ways to participate. The Institute for Emerging Issues will have a link to the forum’s live audio stream on its Web site. As you listen, you can send questions to the speakers by email at 2009IEIForum@gmail.com. For the first time in Forum history, IEI will be hosting a virtual workshop with its six live forum sessions from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Feb. 9. Participants in the virtual workshop will discuss how North Carolina can utilize its technology infrastructure to adapt to the exponential growth it will see in the next several years. If you’re interested in participating simply visit http://www.emergingissues.org on Feb. 9.

Ariely to Speak

Dan Ariely, author of “Predictably Irrational: A thought-provoking look at decision making,” will speak at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 12, in Poe Hall, Room 216. Admission is free.

Screening of ‘The International’

Columbia Pictures is sponsoring an advance screening of “The International,” starring Clive Owen and Naomi Watts. The free screening will take place at 10 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 11, in the campus cinema. Tickets are available in the Witherspoon Student Center, Room 104.

Brotherhood Lecture Features Gary

Willie E. Gary, J.D., renowned trial lawyer, humanitarian, and co-founder of the Gary Foundation, headlines the University-Community Brotherhood Lecture at 1 p.m. Friday, Feb. 6, in the Witherspoon Student Center (Washington Sankofa Room). Free and open to the public.

Diversity Program Planned

The Office for Equal Opportunity sponsors several programs throughout the year to help the campus community learn more about equal opportunity and diversity. Upcoming programs include “Protected Class of National Origin,” from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesday, Feb. 11. To learn more about this and other events, and to register, visit http://www.ncsu.edu/ equal_op/education/oeo_programs.html.

The Impact of Social Media

Ken Eudy, CEO of the strategic communications firm CapStrat, will launch Communication Week 2009 with a talk about the impact of social media. Event is from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 16, in Caldwell Lounge. Sponsored by the Department of Communication. Free and open to the public.

High Tech Design Lecture

Joanna Berzowska’s “Electronic Textiles and Responsive Garments” lecture is set for noon Thursday, Feb. 12, in Daniels Hall, Room 434. Berzowska is the founder and research director of XS Labs, where her team develops innovative methods and applications in electronic textiles and responsive garments.

Lincoln’s 200th Birthday

The departments of political science and history are sponsoring a panel discussion to mark the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln. The event is set for 4 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 12, in Winston Hall, Room 029, and features political science professor Sanford Kessler on “Lincoln and the Crisis of the House Divided;” history professor Susanna Lee on “Lincoln: The Great Emancipator;”; and political science professor Anthony Solari on “Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: Reinventing Government in the Time of Crisis.” Birthday cake will be served. For more info, contact: Traciel Reid at 515-5109.

Recyclemania Grips Campus

NC State is competing in Recyclemania for the second year. The competition runs through March 28. Last year NC State ranked 17th among 400 U.S. colleges in the 10-week national recycling competition. Waste Reduction and Recycling, University Housing, University Dining, and the Office of Sustainability are working to increase awareness of the event. The goal is to rank in the top 10 for this year’s competition.

For more information, visit http://recyclemania.org.

Great Decisions Program

NC State will once again participate in the Great Decisions Program during the 2009 spring semester. Developed by the Foreign Policy Association in 1954, Great Decisions brings millions of Americans together in communities across the country to discover, discuss and decide their opinions on foreign policy issues. The program at NC State will be coordinated by the School of Public and International Affairs and will focus on four different topics regarding current U.S. foreign policy.

The lectures start at 7 p.m. and are held in the Withers Hall auditorium. The schedule is:

• Tuesday, Feb. 10 – “Human Rights” with Robin Kirk, director of the Human Rights Center, Duke University
• Tuesday, Feb. 24 – “Cuba” with Dr. Dario Moreno, director of the Metropolitan Center, Florida International University

Nasar to Speak

Dr. Sylvia Nasar, author of A Beautiful Mind, will be speaking at NC State at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, in Stewart Theatre. Nasar will speak on the topic: “Globalization and Economic Shifts in the 20th Century.” Following her speech, she will answer questions and sign books. The event is sponsored by the Union Activities Board Issues and Ideas Committee and is open to the public at no charge.

Fitness Screenings

Get body fat and blood pressure screenings in the Campus Recreation Center from noon to 2 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 9.

Meet CHASS Dean Candidates

Faculty, staff and students are invited to hear presentations from the four final candidates to be dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The candidates are:

• Dr. Todd Diacon, vice provost for academic operations and professor of history at the University of Tennessee, will visit NC State Feb. 10-12. He’ll make a public presentation on Wednesday, Feb. 11, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. at 126 Witherspoon Student Center. Faculty and staff are invited to meet Diacon from 2:30 to 3 p.m., and students are invited to meet Diacon from 3 to 3:30 p.m.
• Dr. Jeffery Braden, interim dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and professor of psychology at NC State, will interview Feb. 16-18. His public presentation will be Tuesday, Feb. 17, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at a location to
be determined.
• Dr. Steven Lynn, senior associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, chair of the Department of Religious Studies and professor of English, University of South Carolina, will visit NC State Feb. 18-20. His public presentation will be Thursday, Feb. 19, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at a location to be determined.
• Dr. John Stevenson, associate vice chancellor for graduate education, associate dean of the graduate school and professor of English, University of Colorado, Boulder, will visit NC State Feb. 25-27. His public presentation will be Thursday, Feb. 26, from 2 to 4 p.m. at a location to be determined.

Join Study Circles on Race
Register online (http://www.ncsu.edu/equal_op/education/study_circles.html) for Study Circles on Race and Race Relations to work together with faculty, staff and students democratically to actively address issues related to race relations on our campus. These Study Circles are sponsored by the University Office for Equal Opportunity. Upcoming session starts Feb. 25.

Faculty and Staff Notes

Writing Program Honored
North Carolina State University’s First-Year Writing Program has received a Writing Program Certificate of Excellence from the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Established in 2004, the Certificate of Excellence is awarded to college or university programs that provide instruction in writing. Among the many aspects of NC State’s program that the selection committee noted were its small class sizes, renewable full-time contracts for faculty members, teaching-assistant training program, and professional development opportunities.

Extension Group Honored
The Extension Forestry group has been selected to represent North Carolina as the winner of the Southern Growth Policies Board 2009 Innovator Award. The program, NC Woody Biomass, was chosen from a strong pool of nominees in the Southern region as an outstanding initiative that encourages economic opportunities relating to bio-products, alternative energy, and energy efficiency.
As one of 13 Innovators in the Southern region, the program will be publicly honored on Monday, June 8, in an awards ceremony and reception during the Southern Growth Policies Board’s annual conference in Biloxi, Miss.

Staff included in the nomination include:
• Dr. Robert Bardon, Departmental Extension Leader and Associate Professor
• Dr. Dennis Hazel, Extension Specialist and Associate Professor
• Dr. Mark Megalos, Extension Specialist
• James Jeuck, Extension Associate
• Christopher Hopkins, Outreach Associate
• Jasmine Shaw, Graduate Student
• Susan McIntyre, Graduate Student
• Nate Osborne, Undergraduate Student
• Rick Hamilton, Emeritus Extension Specialist

Bivins Book Honored
Jason Bivins’s “Religion of Fear” has been named as the recommended book for February 2009 by the Ontario Consultants on Religious Toleration. See http://www.religious tolerate.org/index_bom.htm.

Deiters Receives NSF Career Award
Dr. Alexander Deiters, assistant professor of chemistry, has received a Career Award from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The award is one of the highest honors given by NSF to young university faculty in science and engineering, and is intended to advance the development of their research and careers. Deiters will receive a five-year, $500,000 grant to fund research related to his proposal titled, “Solid-Supported Cyclotrimerizations – A Library Approach to Research and Teaching.”

Birkland Named IEI Fellow
Tom Birkland, the William T. Kretzer Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Public Affairs in the School of Public and International Affairs, was among six faculty members from universities across the state selected as Fellows through the Institute for Emerging Issues. The program provides North Carolina faculty with resources and opportunities to become engaged in public policy issues affecting the state.

Gustke Honored
Dr. Larry Gustke, associate professor of parks, recreation & tourism management, will be honored with the North Carolina Department of Commerce’s Winners Circle Award for his contributions to the state’s tourism industry. The award will be presented at the upcoming Governor’s Conference on Tourism, March 1-3, at the Raleigh Convention Center.

The Krispy Kreme Challenge was started in 2004 by NC State sophomore Chris McCoy, and began with just 10 participants.
On Saturday morning 5,000 will participate to raise money for N.C. Children’s Hospital programs.
The rules are simple, if brutal: you have one hour to run two miles, eat a dozen donuts, and run two more miles. Register at www.krisy kreme challenge.com.

The Bulletin is published weekly, except during the summer and holidays, by North Carolina State University News Services. To subscribe to the online version, visit www.ncsu.edu/bulletin.

Please submit news and announcements one week in advance of publication.

News Services
Campus Box 7504
Raleigh, NC 27695

Phone (919) 515-5863
E-mail bulletin@ncsu.edu
Web www.ncsu.edu/bulletin

Editor: David Hunt
A former trustee, a professor emeritus and a longtime state official will be honored with the prestigious Watauga Medal by North Carolina State University for their distinguished service to the university.

C. Richard Vaughn, Dr. J. Lawrence Apple and E. Norris Tolson will received the awards, the highest nonacademic honor bestowed by NC State, at the university’s Founders’ Day Dinner on Monday, March 9, on campus. Chancellor James Oblinger will present the medals.

C. Richard Vaughn, an NC State alumnus, served on the university’s Board of Trustees from 1985 to 1989 and again from 1999 to 2007, chairing the audit, finance and planning committee, and the NC State Investment Fund Members Board. He also served as a director of the NC State University Foundation and is a current member of the Park Scholars Selection Committee and a director of the NC State Student Aid Association.

Vaughn, of Mount Airy, N.C., is chairman and CEO of the John S. Clark Company, chairman of the North Carolina Granite Corporation and chairman of Riverside Building Supply, Inc. He built the John S. Clark Company into one of the largest building contractors in North Carolina over the past 25 years.

As a 1961 graduate of the NC State College of Engineering, Vaughn has been a loyal and generous supporter of the university. He has been a member of the Alumni Association for 25 years and is a member of the W.J. Peele Lifetime Giving Society, which honors donors who have given $1 million or more to NC State. In 2004 he pledged $5 million to the Wolfpack Club to fund scholarships and renovations to the football stadium. The Wolfpack Towers were renamed the C. Richard Vaughn Towers in recognition of his generosity. Vaughn has also given more than $100,000 to NC State academic funds. He created the C. Richard Vaughn Scholarship Endowment to support an undergraduate scholarship in the College of Engineering.

Vaughn has served on the Mount Airy Board of Education, the Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce and the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History.

Dr. J. Lawrence Apple, a professor emeritus of plant pathology, earned three degrees at NC State, including a Ph.D. in plant pathology and genetics in 1955. He served on the faculty from 1955 to 1991 and is widely known for his work in international agricultural development. He served as assistant director of research and academic affairs in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, director of the Institute of Biological Sciences, and director of international programs at the university.

Apple, of Burlington, N.C., is also known for his tireless advocacy for the NCSU Libraries. He helped to raise funds for the libraries in his roles as president of the Association of Retired Faculty (1994-1997), president of the Friends of the Library (2000-2002) and currently as a member of the Forever Club’s executive committee. In 1994 Apple and his wife Ella established the J. Lawrence and Ella H. Apple Library Endowment. They have also been generous supporters of the plant pathology department and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and are members of the W.C. Riddick Lifetime Giving Society.

E. Norris Tolson, president and CEO of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center in Research Triangle Park, has served the citizens of North Carolina as a business and policy leader for more than four decades. Tolson graduated from NC State with a bachelor’s degree in crop science and agribusiness in 1962. After serving in the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps from 1963 to 1965, he joined Dupont, where he held various research, marketing and sales assignments in the company’s agricultural products and electronics business for 28 years. He retired in 1993.

He then served in some of the top policy positions in the state. He was a two-term legislator (1994-1997), Secretary of Commerce (1997-1998), Secretary of Transportation (1998) and Secretary of Revenue (2001-2007).

Tolson, of Pinetops, N.C., serves on the NC State Board of Visitors and the Alumni Association board, as well as the College of Education Foundation.