

Movies

Plastic: The material of a thousand uses at HRM

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 This same ideal epitomized Art Deco
 Bakelite's golden age

The Scarsdale Inquirer

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Editor's Note

Arts & Entertainment

Friday, March 5, 2010

The Scarsdale Inquirer

Page 17

Showcase



Michael Barrett and Steven Blier



What's up 'Hamlet's Sleeve'?

Whimsy that works

By SYLVIA O'HAGAN

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Evolution of French

Showcase



DARIO ACCOSTA PHOTO
Michael Barrett and Steven Blier

Evolution of French art song

Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts in Katonah, Michael Barrett, artistic director, in collaboration with the New York Festival of Song, Steven Blier, artistic director, will present "The Sweetest Path: The Evolution of French Art Song," a concert with Caramoor's Vocal Rising Stars on Saturday, March 13, at 8 p.m. in the Rosen House Music Room.

From the fathers of French *mélodie* to its 20th century innovators, "The Sweetest Path" traces the development of the most poetic, lush and luminous vocal traditions. A quartet of singers selected from various regions around the United States perform music by Gounod, Fauré, Ravel, Debussy and many others, joined by Barrett and Blier at the piano. The artists are soprano Charlotte Dobbs, mezzo-soprano Rebecca Jo Loeb, tenor Matthew Peña and baritone John Brancy.

The Vocal Rising Stars initiative, launched as a pilot program in spring 2009, focuses on singing outside the realm of opera, including the song recital and vocal chamber music. Singers at the beginning professional level are invited to Caramoor for a weeklong residency that offers intensive daily coaching, rehearsals, and workshops with mentors.

Tickets are \$25. Call the Caramoor box office at 232-1252 or visit www.caramoor.org. The concert will be repeated March 16 at 8 p.m. in the Kaufman Center's Merkin Concert Hall in New York City. Tickets for the Merkin Concert Hall performance are \$40 and \$55. Call (212) 501-3330 or visit merkinconcerthall.org.

Classics in Concert Festival

Hoff-Barthelson Music School's Classics in Concert Festival, concentrating on the music of the late 1700s and early 1800s, begins March 6 and will run through March 13. Performances include student solo recitals, chamber ensembles, the Festival Orchestra and Festival Chorus, Wind Ensemble, Symphonette, Chamber Orchestra, the Flute Clubs, Junior and Beginner Voices, and Chamber Choir in addition to student soloists and ensembles.

On Sunday, March 7, at 1:30 p.m., at the school, a recital, discussion and master class by pianist Joseph Smith, at which he will focus on classical performance style issues, will take place.

Student soloists and ensembles can be heard in a variety of performances at the music school, 25 School Lane, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. These events are free and open to the public. Call the school for times.

The Festival Chorus and Orchestra will perform under the direction of Jun Nakabayashi at the Community Unitarian Church, 468 Rosedale Ave., in White Plains on Saturday, March 6, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 7, at 7 p.m. Excerpts from Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 2 in B flat Major, Opus 52 will be featured.

Admission for the concerts at the Community Unitarian Church is \$13 general; \$11 seniors, \$2 for students. For info, call 723-1169.



Fort Hill Player's cast of "For Better"

Love in the age of Twitter

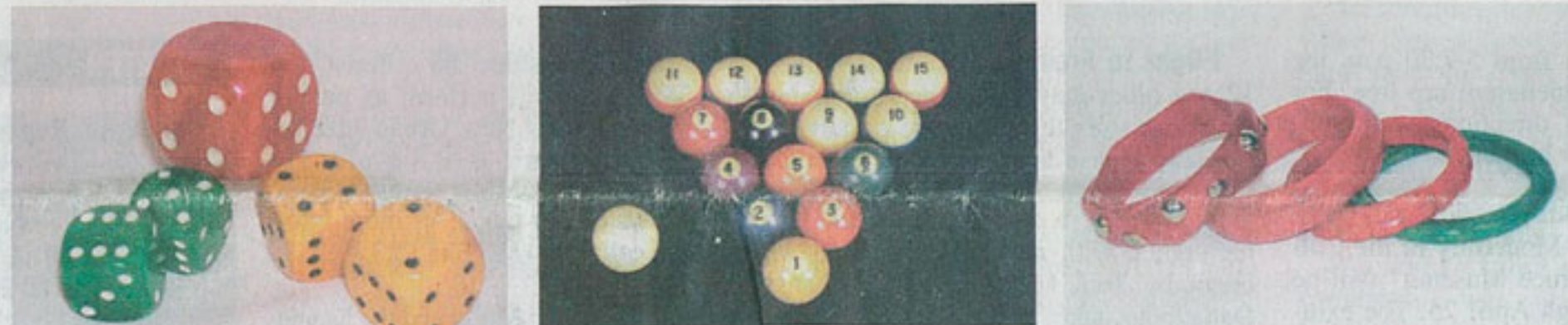
Fort Hill Players will present Eric Coble's LOL romantic comedy "For Better — Love in the Age of Twitter" March 12, 13, 19 and 20 at 8 p.m. and March 13 at 2 p.m. at Rochambeau School, 228 Fisher Ave., White Plains.

In our modern day, "plugged in" world do a bride and groom really need to be in the same country for their wedding? Karen and Max want to get married, but their globe-trotting jobs keep them apart. iPhones and e-mail keep them connected, but overlapping conference calls, texting and twitter create moments of sublime confusion.

Directed by Melinda O'Brien, the cast features Toni Fazio, Lou Morris, Matt Regney, Steve Schnapper, Jennifer Weiss and Lorna Whittemore. General admission tickets are \$17, \$14 seniors and high school students, \$8 children. Tickets at the door or online at FortHillPlayers.com. For information, call 946-5143.



Collector Reindert Groot at home in Amsterdam with items from his Bakelite collection.



Dice, 1940s-1950s; United States and European, various color cast phenolic resin. Pool table balls; USA, cast phenolic resin. Four Bakelite bracelets, c. 1940s-1950s; United States, cast phenolic resin, carved.

JASON WELLER PHOTOS

PLASTIC

The material of a thousand uses

By TRACI DUTTON LUDWIG

Today, plastic has a bad rap. But when Bakelite, the first fully synthetic resin, was invented in a Yonkers laboratory in 1907, it was heralded as a wonder material. To understand what that meant and how this new compound changed the world, "Bakelite in Yonkers: Pioneering the Age of Plastics" takes us back in time at the Hudson River Museum. The exhibition was organized by Reindert Groot, a pre-eminent Bakelite collector who heads the Amsterdam Bakelite Collection, and

Hugh Karraker, the inventor's great-grandson and an actor from Redding, Conn. Bakelite's inventor, Leo H. Baekeland, was a brilliant Belgian scientist who graduated cum laude at age 17 and earned a Ph.D. at 23. In 1889, he immigrated to America with his wife Celine, a painter and women's rights activist. He made his first fortune selling his patent for a revolutionary photographic paper, Velox, to the Eastman Kodak Co. This afforded the family

"Snug Rock," an estate overlooking the Hudson River in Yonkers. Baekeland drove one of the first cars in Westchester, navigated his yacht on scenic Hudson River excursions, served as president of the American Chemical Society, and supported his own independent chemical research.

Like many scientists of the day, Baekeland's experiments aimed to create a substitute for shellac and celluloid. These early "plastics" were dangerous because they burned at high temperatures and could not be used as insulating materials for the growing needs of the electrical industry.

The fourth kingdom

One day in a converted barn laboratory behind his Yonkers house, Baekeland's research brought success. Using a catalyst, he combined phenol and formaldehyde in a massive pressure cooker to forge a new phenol polymer that was malleable, durable and impervious to heat. Sold under the trade name Bakelite, this new compound was heralded as a "wonder material." Period adver-

Continued on page 19

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By SYLVIA O'HAGAN

The intricate design of a medieval sleeve, as Hamlet would have worn... a corset... a ruffled collar... a series of historical clothing designs, all made solid and permanent in the medium of ceramic, detail the collection by Ellen Wilkinson that has been on exhibit at Manhattan's Ceres Gallery since Feb. 2.

"I have had a very positive response to my current show," said the Dobbs Ferry artist. "I believe it takes people by surprise because it isn't like most ceramic work they have seen... each piece is a useful object, but also a sculpture; it is accessible and also humorous."

The artist is following up her New York City show, "Hamlet's Sleeve," which concluded Feb. 27, with an open studio event at Pottery-on-Hudson, 145 Palisade St., Studio 2-S, Dobbs Ferry, Sunday, March 7, from noon to 5 p.m.

Wilkinson is relatively new to the medium of ceramics, after having studied fine art and architecture and worked as a draftsman and art educator. "Hamlet's Sleeve" is her second exhibited collection of ceramics. Her first show was in 2008, two years after moving to the village.

"I started studying with Linda MacKenzie and Larry Lee at Pottery-on-Hudson in 2006 and I haven't stopped," Wilkinson said. "I have never found anyone as generous and willing to teach as the teachers at Pottery-on-Hudson... both Linda and Larry have years of experience and immense skill... they are very special teachers."

The studio is managed by Scarsdale's MacKenzie, a member of the Westchester Arts Council's Artist Roster, Hudson River Potters and former ceramics studio manager/instructor at the JCC of Mid-Westchester.

Before arriving at Pottery-on-Hudson, Wilkinson delved into ceramics a decade earlier, and had taken classes at the New Jersey Center for the Visual Arts, the Clay Arts Center in Port Chester, and Westchester Art Workshop. In fact, it was Wilkinson's studies that first brought the artist and her husband, Adam Cricchio, a creative director, to Westchester.

"I lived in Manhattan and Brooklyn for years, but when my husband and I wanted to get out of the city, we didn't know where to go," Wilkinson recalled. "As I became more interested in ceramics, I discovered Clay Arts Center in Port Chester and started to take a class there. I told Adam that we needed to move to Westchester."

Enamored of her new medium, Wilkinson has, for now, stopped painting — her original focus — as she is "committed to ceramics."

"Ceramics is an amazing material because you can

Continued on page 19



JIM MACLEAN/SCARSDALE INQUIRER
Ellen Wilkinson molds a sculpture at Pottery-on-Hudson in Dobbs Ferry.

Hoff-Barthelson faculty concert to benefit Haiti

"Help for Haiti," a relief effort concert featuring members of the Hoff-Barthelson Music School faculty, will take place at the school, 25 School Lane, on Sunday, March 14, at 1 p.m.

Proceeds from the recital, for which a minimum \$20 contribution is requested, will be sent to Doctors Without Borders, an international medical humanitarian organization created by doctors and journalists in France in 1971. In 1999 Doctors Without Borders received the Nobel Peace Prize for its disaster relief efforts.

Among the Hoff-Barthelson faculty members who will contribute their time to the "Help for Haiti" concert: pianist Helene Jeanney, violinist Gary Kosloski, cellist Peter Seidenberg, pianist David Oei, soprano Jenny Hayden, pianist Elena Belli, pianist Delana Thomsen.

"As musicians, we find ourselves turning to the language we know best when we want to help others in need. The desperate situation in Haiti is such a moment. Through our music we can bring solace and, in this case, raise funds for much-needed medical care for those



suffering in Haiti," said Joan Behrens Bergman, Hoff-Barthelson executive director.

The program will include Elyse Knobloch, flute, and Peter Press, guitar, who will play "A Psalm for Thanksgiving" by Handel; Belli and Thomsen, pianos, April Johnson and Kosloski, violins, Naomi Rooks, viola, and Seidenberg, cello, will play J.S. Bach's Concerto No. 1 in C minor for 2 pianos, BWV 1060. Claudia Wald, soprano, with Jonathan Ackerman at the piano will sing two Aaron Copland settings from the "Twelve Poems" of Emily Dickinson; duo-pianists Oei and Jeanney will play the Schubert Allegro for Piano in A minor, D. 947; Seidenberg, cello and Eileen Buck, piano, will perform the Rachmaninoff Vocalise for Cello and Piano, Opus 34, No. 14; soprano Hayden, with Oei at the piano, will sing "Tres Poemas," Opus 81 by Turina; and violinist Kosloski will join pianist Jeanney in two Fauré pieces: the "Berceuse," Opus 16 and the Sonata in A Major, Opus 13, Allegro molto.

For info, call 723-1169.

Movies

BRONXVILLE

Clearview Bronxville Cinema 961-4036
I-The Ghost Writer (PG-13) Fri. 3:45, 6:45, 9:35; Sat. 12:45, 3:45, 6:45, 9:35; Sun. 12:45, 3:45, 6:45; Mon. to Thurs. 4:45, 7:40
II-Alice in Wonderland (PG) Fri. 4:45, 7:15, 9:45; Sat. 11:30, 2, 4:45, 7:15, 9:45; Sun. 11:30, 2, 4:45, 7:15; Mon. to Thurs. 5, 7:30
III-Crazy Heart (R) Fri. 4, 7, 9:30; Sat. 1, 4, 7, 9:30; Sun. 1, 4, 7; Mon. to Thurs. 5:15, 7:50

GREENBURGH

Greenburgh Multiplex 747-6000

HAWTHORNE

Saw Mill Cinemas 747-2333
I-The Last Station (R) Fri. & Sat. 1:45, 4:40, 7:15, 9:55; Sun. to Thurs. 1:45, 4:40, 7:15
II-Crazy Heart (R) Fri. & Sat. 1:35, 4, 6:55, 9:40; Sun. to Thurs. 1:35, 4, 6:55
III-Alice in Wonderland (PG) Fri. & Sat. 1:05, 1:40, 3:50, 4:25, 6:40, 7:10, 9:20, 9:50
IV-The Blind Side (PG-13) Fri. & Sat. 1:15, 4:15, 7:05, 10; Sun. to Thurs. 1:15, 4:15, 7:05
V-Ghost Writer (PG-13) Fri. & Sat. 1:20, 4:10, 7, 10:05; Sun. to Thurs. 1:20, 4:10, 7
VI-Shutter Island (R) Fri. & Sat. 1:10, 4:20, 7:20, 10:15; Sun. to Thurs. 1:10, 4:20, 7:20
VII-Lightning Thief (PG) Fri. & Sat. 1:25, 4:05, 6:45, 9:25; Sun. to Thurs. 1:25, 4:05, 6:45
VIII-Cop Out (R) Fri. & Sat. 1:30, 4:35, 7:30, 10:10; Sun. to Thurs. 1:30, 4:35, 7:30
IX-Avatar in 2D (PG-13) Daily: 1, 4:30, 8

LARCHMONT

Clearview Larchmont Playhouse 834-3001
I-The Ghost Writer (PG-13) Fri. 4:10, 7, 9:45; Sat. 1:30, 4:10, 7, 9:45; Sun. 1:30, 4:10, 7; Mon. to Thurs. 4:10, 7
II-Valentines Day (PG-13) Fri., Mon. to Thurs. 6:50; Sat. & Sun. 1, 6:50
III-White Ribbon (PG-13) Fri. & Sat. 3:45, 9:20; Sun. to Thurs. 3:45
IV-Crazy Heart (R) Fri. 5, 7:30, 9:50; Sat. 2:30, 5, 7:30, 9:50; Sun. 2:30, 5, 7:30; Mon. to Thurs. 5, 7:30

Clearview Mamaroneck Playhouse 698-2200

I-Alice in Wonderland 2D (PG) Fri. 3:45, 6:15, 9; Sat. 1:15, 3:45, 6:15, 9; Sun. 1:15, 3:45, 6:15; Mon. to Thurs. 3:45, 6:15
II-Shutter Island (R) Fri. 4, 7, 10; Sat. 1, 4, 7, 10; Sun. 1, 4, 7; Mon. to Thurs. 4, 7
III-Cop Out (R) Fri. 4:15, 6:45, 9:30; Sat. 1:30, 4:15, 6:45, 9:30; Sun. 1:30, 4:15, 6:45; Mon. to Thurs. 4:15, 6:45
IV-Percy Jackson & the Olympians (PG) Fri. 4:30, 7:15, 10; Sat. 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10; Sun. 1:45, 4:30, 7:15; Mon. to Thurs. 4:30, 7:15

WHITE PLAINS

City Center15 Cinema De Lux 747-6000;
DH=Director's hall screenings extra charge, call theater

CLEARVIEW CINEMA 100 946-4680

I-Ajami (NA) Fri. 4, 7, 9:50; Sat. 1, 4, 7, 9:50; Sun. 1, 4, 7; Mon., Wed. Thurs. 4:20, 7:20; Tues. 2:20, 5:20, 8:20; Wed. & Thurs. 4:20, 7:20
II-Crazy Heart (NA) Fri. 3:45, 6:45, 9:50; Sat.

12:45, 3:45, 6:45, 9:50; Sun. 12:45, 3:45, 6:45; Mon. Wed. Thurs. 4:10, 7:10; Tues. 2:10, 5:10, 8:10

III-The Hurt Locker (NA) Fri. 3:30, 6:30, 9:30; Sat. 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30; Sun. 12:30, 3:30, 6:30; Mon. Wed Thurs. 4, 7; Tues. 2, 5, 8

IV-An Education (NA) Fri. 5, 10; Sat. 12, 5, 10; Sun. 12, 5; Mon. Wed. Thurs. 4:30; Tues. 2:30, 8:30

V-A Single Man (PG-13) Fri. 7:30; Sat. & Sun. 2:30, 7:30; Mon. Wed. Thurs. 7:30; Tues. 5:30

YONKERS

Clearview Central Plaza 793-3232

I-Alice in Wonderland 3D (PG) Fri. 3:15, 4:20, 5:50, 7, 8:30, 9:40; Sat. 11, 12:15, 1:40, 3:15, 4:20, 5:50, 7, 8:30, 9:40; Sun. 11, 12:15, 1:40, 3:15, 4:20, 5:50, 7; Mon. to Thurs. 5, 6, 8:15

II-Shutter Island (NA) Fri. 3:30, 6:45, 9:50; Sat. 12:30, 3:30, 6:45, 9:50; Sun. 12:30, 3:30, 6:45; Mon. to Thurs. 4:50, 8

Hurt Locker (NA) Fri. 6:45; Sat. & Sun. 12:45, 6:45; Mon. to Thurs. 8

III-The Crazies (NA) Fri. 3:45, 7:15, 10; Sat. 12:45, 3:45, 7:15, 10; Sun. 12:45, 3:45, 7:15; Mon. to Thurs. 5:15, 8:30

Movieland 793-0002

I-Brooklyn's Finest (R) Fri. to Sun. 1:40, 4:40, 7:50, 10:50; Mon. to Thurs. 1:40, 4:40, 7:50

II-Cop Out (R) Fri. 2:20, 5, 7:30, 10; Sat. & Sun. 11:50, 2:20, 5, 7:30, 10; Mon. to Thurs. 2:20, 5, 7:30

III-Percy Jackson and the Olympians (PG) Fri. 2:10, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30; Sat. & Sun. 11:40, 2:10, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30; Mon. to Thurs. 2:10, 4:50, 7:40

IV-The Wolfman (R) Fri. to Sun. 4:30, 10:20; Mon. to Thurs. 4:30

IV-Valentine's Day (PG-13) Fri. 2:40, 5:20, 8, 10:40; Sat. & Sun. 12, 2:40, 5:20, 8, 10:40; Mon. to Thurs. 2:40, 5:20, 8

V-Dear John (PG-13) Daily: 2, 7:20
VI-Avatar in Real-D (PG-13) Fri. 3:10, 6:40, 10:10; Sat. & Sun. 11:30, 3:10, 6:40, 10:10; Mon. to Thurs. 3:10, 6:40

PLEASANTVILLE

Jacob Burns Film Center 747-5555

I-The Last Station (NA) Fri. 2:15, 5:10, 7:30; Sat. 2:15, 5:05, 7:25, 9:45; Sun. 12:10, 5:05, 7:25; Mon. 5:15; Tues. 5, 7:20; Wed. 7:20; Thurs. 5:05, 7:25

II-Crazy Heart (NA) Fri. 2:30, 7, 9:20; Sat. 2:40, 5:10, 7:30, 9:50; Sun. 2:15, 5:10, 7:30; Mon. 7:20; Tues. 5:05, 7:25; Wed. & Thurs. 5

III-The Art of the Steal (NA) Fri. 2:20, 5:05, 7:15, 9:25; Sat. 12:15, 2:30, 5, 7:10, 9:20; Sun. 2:40, 5, 7:10; Mon. 5; Tues. 5:15, 7:30; Wed. 7:30; Thurs. 5:10, 7:20

IV-Saffron (NA) Fri. 5
V-The Cat from Outer Space (NA) Sat. & Sun. 12

VI-Oscar Nominated Live Action Shorts (NA) Sat. 12:05
VI-Oscar Nominated Live Animated Shorts (NA) Sun. 12:05

VII-A House Built on Water (NA) Sun. 2:30
VIII-Tehran's Statues (NA) Mon. 7:30
IX-The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (NA) Wed. 7

X-A Little Kiss (NA) Wed. 4:45
XI-Earthbound (NA) Thurs. 7:30

Plastic: The material of a thousand uses at HRM

Continued from page 17

tisements lauded it as "miraculous" and praised the dawn of a "fourth kingdom" — animal, vegetable, mineral and "synthetics made by man."

Initial enthusiasm over the "material of a thousand uses" was not misguided. Bakelite supported early 20th century advancements in science, industry, transportation, telecommunications and mass production. In the 1930s, doctors used it to craft a prosthetic skull for a man injured in an accident. It was the material of progress. Possibilities seemed endless.

Examples of automotive parts, light fittings, electrical components, telephones and radios represent some of the first uses of molded Bakelite. Molded Bakelite was manufactured by a process that ground up blocks of Baekeland's phenol-formaldehyde polymer, added fillers for greater density and stability, and pressed the combination into product molds where shapes were fused under intense force.

Around 1928, cast Bakelite was introduced. This development enabled the sticky phenolic mass to be poured into forms and harden over longer periods of time, at lower temperatures. It required no added fillers and remained transparent in its finished form. It was receptive to color agents for a rainbow of custom hues. These decorative characteristics made it a favored material for household objects, decorative wares and jewelry. The good condition of many such objects — on view and in use for more than 75 years in some cases — attests to Bakelite's durability.

"Probably if you hooked it up correctly, this would still work," Groot said, pointing to an early radio from his collection. The same could be said about a Japanese folding table lamp, an adding machine, and an electric beer warmer from Germany. The beer warmer is one of the most curious objects in the show because "most people like to drink their beer cold, not warm," Groot said.

A charming mechanical desk agenda by Corodex was one of the last objects obtained from a Dutch manufacturing company that closed its doors a year ago. Groot said, "Times have changed. Now we have cell phones, and everything is on computers, so there is less need for these kinds of items now. They're no longer in

use — but that is what makes them interesting too."

His comment touches on a strong point of the exhibition. The show not only documents the history of plastics; it is also a lens into the rolling progress of the 20th century. Visual displays plot advancements in telecommunications, travel and domestic life. A section on early radios, televisions, telephones, and communications accessories shows just how far we have come in 100 years. "But there is still Bakelite in your cell phone, today," Groot pointed out.

Kitchenware is another big category. Colorful pitchers, salad servers, cups, bowls, thermoses and table settings fill entire cases. Car parts are their own subdivision, with examples of motor components and water pump housings still in use today. There is a charming section on toys and a case devoted to jewelry.

"Too often, it's just a slice of cast plastic with a pin stuck on the back," Groot said about the Art Deco brooches and whimsical pendants that are highly collectible in the United States. "In Europe, Bakelite bracelets can be really cheap, but here they can cost several hundred dollars. It's fashion hype."

The collector

A photographer and documentary filmmaker, Groot began collecting in 1990. Attracted to early mechanical and photographic devices, his first purchase was a black Bakelite slide projector that he "paid too much for." But it sent him on a quest to find more items, at more affordable prices. As a collector, his eyes are always open for new discoveries. "Sometimes I don't know what I'm looking for until I actually find it," he said.

Items are available through eBay, antique and thrift stores, trade shows and flea markets. While the Internet has opened access to goods, Groot prefers the human interaction of hand-to-hand commerce. "It's that exchange between people that I find exciting and fun. I love the flea markets, and some of them are very good. I go with the attitude that we can all learn something from one another ... and I have made dear friends along the way," he said.

What's up 'Hamlet's Sleeve'? Whimsy that works

Continued from page 17

build every aspect of any idea with the clay ... it can be a perfectly flat sheet, it can be round, it can be carved or twisted," Wilkinson said. "I also love that ceramic work can be a vase, but also a dress ... It has nothing to do with the rules set forth in fine art."

agement and a full scholarship for three and a half years ... I completed the four-year program in painting in 1982."

Wilkinson then moved to New York, where she said she was determined to live, and painted in several different studios in Tribeca before making her way to Westchester, where she also had

Groot estimates his collection at 4,000 pieces — 290 of which he has lent to the current show. While mindful of proper storage and conservation, the collector enjoys living with Bakelite in the central Amsterdam home he shares with his wife Fieke. An Art Deco table, marbled desk accessories, decorative radios, cheerful kitchen bowls, felt tip marker caps, and a stylish toilet seat in lipstick red — they are all visible reminders of Bakelite or its modern successor Melamine.

Even at home, some of Groot's favorite possessions are meant to be "admired, not used," he said. One is a glossy white ashtray designed by Anna Castelli Ferrieri for Kartell in 1979. A sign of the swinging disco party era, it measures about 12 inches in diameter and can accommodate 24 smokers. Undulating grooves around the edge are for cigarettes, while ashes are meant to fall through a pattern of open circles in the center.

"It's really quite sculptural and beautiful. I especially love it because it was a present from my wife. She found it for \$2 or \$3 in a Salvation Army thrift shop. It's a treasure and important because of the design," Groot said.

Other favorites on display are children's toys from the former Eastern Bloc and rare model cars from Great Britain. The original cardboard box of a Russian domino set reveals its heritage — a tiny Soviet rocket blasting off behind the game's brand name. A Golden Arrow racecar in perfect condition dates from 1931; a green Codec car dates from the late 1940s. Because of their rarity and condition, some cars are worth several thousand dollars — even more if they have an original box.

"New collectors are afraid to spend a lot of money on a single item, but with time, you learn to buy the best you can afford," Groot said. He estimates investing "a few hundred thousand Euros" in his collection and has only been duped by a few fakes, usually over Internet purchases.

His one regret? Not buying an unusual, expensive Eiffel Tower-shaped slide projector at a trade show years ago. He has only seen one — and has been looking for a second example ever since.

When asked what prompts specific pur-

chases, Groot said the overwhelming factor is an object's "sense of good design — an attention to aesthetic form consistent with an object's function."

This same ideal epitomized Art Deco design and fueled Bakelite's golden age from 1930 to 1950. At this time, artists embraced commercial materials, organic geometry, simple lines and streamlined shapes to visually embody the meaning of "progress." Consumer products that previously required a combination of materials or a complicated production process could now be manufactured out of one simple, modern medium — Bakelite. It fed the birth of industrial design.

Most pieces in the show were created by anonymous engineers and craftsmen. However the work of several international modern designers stands out: Louis C. Kalf, Russell Katz, Raymond Loewy, William B. Petzold, Carlo Ponti, Dieter Rams, Philippe Starck (for Alessi), and Anna Castelli Ferrieri and Isao Hosoe (for Kartell).

Groot said, "I particularly love quintessential Japanese design. Whether they're making tiny slide projectors, cameras or speakers, Japanese design is playful and whimsical. The products are immediately recognizable because they are so cute."

As a self-conscious collector, Groot values the small and ordinary objects as much as the large and important ones, especially if they might otherwise be overlooked. Cable switches, such as the "cheap and small" on/off switches for floor and table lamps, are a good example. Groot has at least 100.

"Usually the switches are very dirty when I get them, so I take them apart, clean the pieces, and reassemble them," he said. But this labor is not perceived as work because Groot enjoys handling the objects: "The switches represent one product, but each is unique. Each has a different design. Each has a different story to tell."

"Bakelite in Yonkers: Pioneering the Age of Plastics" is on view through June 6 at the Hudson River Museum, 511 Warburton Ave., Yonkers. For hours, admission and other information, call 963-3550 or visit www.hrm.org.

and has worked for five years for the Community and Access programs of the Museum of Modern Art.

"Every week on Tuesday, when the museum is closed to the public, the programs offer museum tours for community groups such as partially sighted guests, learning disabled and guests

