



2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

THE
NEW
UTILITARIAN

EXAMINING OUR
PLACE ON THE
MOTHERBOARD
OF TECHNOLOGY

NCECA
INVITATIONAL
EXHIBITION

BENNETT
BEAN

A FEW YEARS AGO, I had the sense that all my studio work was deadline-driven and I thought, "Wouldn't it be wonderful to have no employees, no deadline, and to walk into the studio with no agenda?" So I cleared my schedule for two weeks and told my employees to go home. For the first five or six days I just wandered around the studio doing nothing. Finally, I settled on the idea of doing some drawings that had been rolling around in the back of my mind for some time. I went to New York and bought perfect pencils, came home, and thought, "I need a knife to sharpen my pencils." So I took three days and made one—a perfect pencil-sharpening knife. And with that object, I was inadvertently in the world of knives. Having seen some Kyocera knives made from cintered zirconium-dioxide, I thought, "How intriguing—ceramic knives." The material is harder than anything except diamonds. The only way to cut it is with diamond abrasives on a computer numerical control (CNC) machine, but you have to give the machine a map. So I sent one of the women who worked for me off to learn Rhino, a three-dimensional imaging program. We then built the knife in the computer using Rhino, put it on a disk, and sent it off to a CNC machine, which created what is known as a tool path. Since each pass of a water-cooled abrasive wheel only removes a 1/1000th of an inch, it took the machine a long time to cut the knife. At this point I had a blade without any clothes/handle, so I fabricated a handle of precious-metal clay. Interesting idea—ceramic blade and metal handle. I am now collaborating with jewelers on a series of handles made of precious stones and gold.

Confession: After a lifetime working with my hands, holding tools, I simply couldn't build this blade entirely in a machine. I had to make a real model to experience how it felt in my hand. It was from this physical tool that we created an image we could scan into the computer and build.

>>> NAKED KNIFE
2001
Zirconium dioxide
6.5 x .75 x .25 inches



>>> GOLD KNIFE

2004

Zirconium dioxide, gold, diamonds

6.5 x .75 x .25 inches

Handle made in collaboration with
Barbara Heinrich



<<< KNIFE WITH PMC HANDLE

2003

Zirconium dioxide, precious-metal
clay, pearl

6.5 x .75 x .25 inches