In Death as in Life, a Personalized Space

iel, which is attacrees or presence is here."
In prayer wheel, designed by Chrisher Moench, a 47-year-old artist in Bellingham, Wash, is part of an arging funcrary art movement that reach an apotheosis of sorts when a second or the second of the second o



in her living room, where she can occasionally give them a spin

of burnished terracotta, redwood burl, black glass, even biodegradable paper mixed with ashes from ancient oaks that, in terms of sheer artistic am-bitiousness, hark back to the ancient Eventieus

Americans who died were cremated; in 2005, roughly 32 percent were. The numbers are steadily rising, with the Cremation Association of North America forecasting a cremation rate of 51.12 percent — more than half American Continued on Page 7

A Place on the Shelf



Americans are personalizing their space even after death with cremation urns designed by artists and craftspeople, like the textured steel urn, left, by Tony Knapp of Seattle.

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In terms of artistic chutzpah, Ms. Lo

Cremation is growing and so is the art of the urn, from gems to sculpture.

Lamont Langwortny, a 7r-year-old archi-tect in Sebastopol, purchased a patinated copper urn with a "Zen feeling" from Ms. Lomasney, in which he said his own ashes will eventually be housed. "Twe always dis-liked the idea of spending a lot of money to throw people into the ground," he said. "Once you're gone, you're gone. But at least art brings it one level up and blends in with your décor."

Michael W. Monroe, the director of the Bellevue, Hash, and the lead juror for the Philadelphia show, said he initially had trouble taking the "art um" concept seriously. But he came around. "As the world becomes more computerized, people want to connect with he handmade," he said. The urns, he continued, "give you a sense of aesthetic control over your final."

The famously conservative funeral in-

The famously conservative funeral industry is catching up.
About 15 years ago, the Batesville Casket
Company introduced Dolphins in Motion, an
irregularly shaped cast-acrylic urn that, because it was not square or vase-shaped or
toronze, was considered an industry breakthrough — particularly given its status as
the first commercial urn to break \$2,000.
Then, in 2003, anticipating the coming wave
of boomer deaths, Batesville hired Nambé, a
New Mexico manufacturer of midcenturyinspired housewares and other objects, to
create art urns out of its signature metal alloy.
Nambé enlisted two A-list industrial de-

create art urns out of its signature metal allay.

Nambé enlisted two A-list industrial designers — Karim Rashid and Eva Zeisel,
both based in New York — to design cremation urns a well as smaller "keepsake" urns
and jewelry that allow cremated remains to
e divided among family members. The sinuous, stylish urns have done so well that the
company is adding to the line, said Joe Weigel, the Batesville marketing director.

"If people started to think about alternatives in advance," Mr. Rashid said, "maybe
companies would be compelled to create
more interesting — and contemporary —
options."

more interesting — and contemporary — options."

Ron Hast, the publisher of Mortuary Man-agement magazine and the Funeral Monitor newsletter, regards urns like Mr. Rashid's as "an oddity." Nevertheless, he said, they represent several important industry trends, most notably a demand for simplici-ty that has turned hearse processions, once a staple, into a rarity.

But he remains skeptical. "They're trying to get hundreds of dollars for a ginger jar," he said.

Although art urns are still a specialty item — about 5 percent of all urns sold—the

said. Although art urns are still a specialty m—about5percent of all urns sold—the Intry's nearly 2.5 millior≪annual deaths





ART FOR THE AGES Maureen Lomasney, above, in her new funerary-art gallery, Art Honors Life, in Graton, Calif.; among ly organized were, clockwise f sell; the Pillow Box clay urn by Darlene Davis; Darin Montgomery's Urn-a-Matic, a vintage vacuum cleaner-style urn that $plays\ "Seasons\ in\ the\ Sun"; Scott\ Dewaard's\ TSG-Keepsake\ urns; Chama\ Valley\ by\ Laura\ Bruzzese; and\ Sunny\ Van\ Zijst's$ Aqua Ovaal, made of hand-blown glass; and, top left of page, a bronze dog urn by Joy Kroeger Beckner.

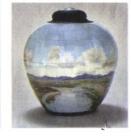












buildings.

More recently, American colonists carved tombstones with hourglasses, skeletons and other elaborate motifs, while Georgian and Victorian artists crafted now-macabre-seeming mourning jeweiry, with tiny skulls entombed inside coffin-like crystals and ornate "hairwork," featuring finely wrought miniature scenes in cut hair, which survives

entombed inside coffin-like crystals and ornate "hairwork," featuring finely wrought
miniature scenes in cut hair, which survives
decay.
"As our understanding of death changes
over time, the forms we use to mourn also
change," sald Robin Jaffe Frank, senior associate curator at the 'Ale University Art
Gallery and the author of "Love and Loss;
American Portrait and Mourning Miniatures" (Yale University Art Gallery, 2000).
"We're all object-oriented, and we need tangible forms to express our relationship to a
person no longer here. Mourning art responds to a deeply lett need."
Many artists, including the noted Washington State glass artist William Morris,
have noticed a growing number of requests
for the state of the state of the state of the state
few yearts ago, Mr. Morris was inscroor.
I few yearts ago, Mr. Morris was losted
refered to the state of the state of the state of the state
create a cinerary urn farter his own mothor's death. After Sept. 11, he created his critcally acclaimed Cinerary Urn Series, 70
glass vessels arranged in niches meant to
suggest a columbarium or tomb.
"In our society, we don't have objects that
deal with death," he said in a telephone interview. "It's a subject that is so ethereal
and evanescent. Urns provide a reference
point, allowing death to become a little less
abstract."

Nestled on a hill amid seven acres of pinot
ori in the Russian River Valley, the new

point, allowing death to become a little less abstract."

Nestled on a hill amid seven acres of pinot noir in the Russian River Valley, the new house of Marc Bommersbach and Judith Olney, both 53, includes a special niche for the couple's favorite sculpture — an animated figure in textured steel with a playful till of the head. Unbeknownst to visitors, the sculpture is a cremation urn for Mr. Bommersbach's ashes. (Ms. Olney has a handmade paper acorn for herself.) The jaunty artwork reflects Mr. Bommersbach's Joyous spirt, his wife said.

"There are a lot of sculptures around, but the fact that this was utilitarian cinched the deal," Mr. Bommersbach said. "The beauty of art is, no one needs to know."

He was quick to add: "But we don't dwell."

