

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

CONTAINER CONCEPTS

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METAL - GLASS

An abstract submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Art

by

Ruth A. Meyer

June, 1980

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June, 1980

PREFACE

ART is a moral law.
It gives a soul to the mind,
flight to the imagination,
a charm to sadness,
gayety and life to everything else.

- Plato

Art is universal. It knows no language barrier. I find that through my visible expressions in metal and glass I am able to communicate ideas and feelings difficult to express in words. I am a receptacle of feelings and emotions that come to me from everywhere. Everything that has ever touched my life, good, bad or indifferent, makes up the artist in me. Each sculpture I fashion is a very personal statement involving my entire being.

My containers express a Truth as I see and feel it; thoughts and dreams I need to share. I hope that my work has substance that communicates this to others. The viewer, of course, will be affected by his own emotions and experiences. That, I feel, is as it should be. All I ask is that my art will evoke some response on an emotional level.

Ruth A. Meyer

DEDICATION

For Frank, with all my love and gratitude, for the many years of loving support, encouragement, patience, and for his enduring faith in me and my ability.

And for Bracha, Eliezer, Sruly, Esther, who

Light Up My Life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

There are a few people who have had an important influence on my life and work during this project. Without their support and special attention this task would have seemed overwhelming. To my Advisors, Louise Lewis and William C. Davis, I extend a most sincere thank you for their invaluable assistance. I gratefully acknowledge the encouragement, advice and gentle guidance of my friend, Advisor and Graduate Thesis Committee Chairman, Fred Lauritzen, who allowed me the freedom to explore and to grow at my own pace.

Many thanks to all of my friends and fellow artists who supported me with thought and deed; but most especially to Jean, and to Sandy for her loving enthusiasm.

Ruth A. Meyer

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ABSTRACT

CONTAINER CONCEPTS

METAL - GLASS

by

Ruth A. Meyer

Master of Arts in Art.

June, 1980

Life begins in a container. Life ends in a container. Our total existence is dominated by containers. I am exploring my relationship to containers.

Just as the spokes must be joined to the rim to create a wheel, it is the space created by joinery and enclosed within that defines a container. It is this space then that becomes fully important. I utilize the space within and without to communicate my thoughts and ideas about life and living. To me a container is a miracle. There is something magical, mystical about its private nature. Is it not its function to guard its contents from prying and inquisitive eyes? I cannot resist opening one. Can you?

For wonderful secrets and treasures may be hidden within
its bosom.

Work is love made visible.
And what is it to work with love?
It is to weave the cloth with threads
drawn from your own heart
even as if your beloved were to wear
that cloth.
It is to charge all things you fashion
with a breath of your own spirit.

- Kahlil Gibran¹

My visible expressions of love are the sculptures I
fashion out of Metal and Glass. My containers are the re-
flections of visions, images and dreams of my inner being.
They are indeed 'charged with a breath of my spirit'.

Like all receptacles whose basic use is keeping or
containing, the box, or container, is a feminine symbol².
My golden "Venus" (Plate I) was conceived with this idea in
mind. The title, "Venus" was suggested by the "Venus of
Willendorf". This container is my impression of the space-
age female figure; a warrior fighting for equality and
her rightful place in the sun. The multiple, removable
compartments represent the versatility of the modern woman.

The tactile nature of my containers will relay physical
as well as psychological emotions to others. For example:
The smooth roundness of the silver "Bell Tower" (Plate II)
may evoke a feeling of peace and harmony. This 6 inch
high container is constructed on several levels. It is
a combination of a closed space, and the symbolic infinity

of the spiral, representing all of life, which escapes from it. Resting inside the closed container is a silver bell. Its handle is fashioned from a tall, spiral seashell electroformed with a coat of copper and then silver plated. The body of the bell was raised and shaped from a flat round of 18 gauge copper sheeting and then silver plated. The bell is magical. It has a very delicate musical tone. Hold it up to your ear and ring it. I hear the beginning strains of an operatic overture. Classical music is a cherished and beautiful part of my life.

The rough-textured, biomorphic form of the silver container "Embryo" (Plate III), housing a magnificent Baltic geode, reveals to me the grandeur of nature and the mystery of life.

Recycling the bone and combining it with silver, "Bone of Contention" (Plate IV) gave me the opportunity not only to create a lovely sculpture, but to express my feelings about our times. A removable chamber, located under this sculpture, contains another small, round box. Three golden monkeys: 'Hear no evil; See no evil; Speak no evil,' are sitting on the lid, guarding a very tiny penny located within. This is my statement about our economy and the STATE OF OUR UNION.

The "Treasure Chest" (Plate V), was constructed from 18 gauge copper sheeting and coated with varicolored, antique goldleafing. There are several chambers in which

to store or hide your treasures. However, it already contains the most precious of all treasures, L O V E, reflected in the mirror behind the sliding door located at the bottom of this container. "...And when Love speaks, the voices of all the gods makes heaven drowsy with the harmony". - William Shakespeare³

The little Cage entitled "Humanity Enslaved"(Plate VI) serves to express several thoughts. First, it is a visible statement of my own 'escape'. I am the silhouette struggling to reach freedom. All of my life society had filed me neatly into a box. I spent most of my previous years doing all of the 'should do's'. It took me more than a decade to find the courage to return to school and continue my studies in Art. When I finally did, I escaped from my 'cage' and entered the world of 'want to do' and freedom. We are all trapped in our little cage. We can all escape. Nobody said it is easy. The cage also portrays the shame of social injustice, hate and prejudice. The transparent, barely human silhouettes heaped at the bottom, graphically depict the cruelty of man's inhumanity to man.

I chose to work in metal because it is one of the four basic elements of the earth. It is one of the most difficult for man to manipulate and control. I enjoy the challenge of taking this resistant matter and shaping it into visual expressions of my own psyche. 'Conquering' the metal is like overcoming the adversities in my life.

Like the metal, I am stubborn in attaining the goals I have set for myself. Metal protects. Metal is permanent. Metal is immortal. Its chances of destruction are slim. Hopefully, my metal sculptures will enable me to leave to the world a small part of my Self.

I am somewhat of a perfectionist. I believe that my Art must be a harmonious union of design and craftsmanship. Because I feel so strongly about creating a 'perfect' piece I must take care not to over-work my sculptures. One of the most difficult lessons for me to learn was to stop working when the piece is finished.

The creative process is, on occasion, a painful one. Every artist experiences periods of frustration and self-doubt, when problems of design and technique seem insurmountable. I am certainly no exception. During these agonizing times I find that I have to back off and retreat into my inner consciousness to reevaluate and search for solutions.

A good example would be the technical difficulties I recently encountered during the construction of the musical "Carousel" (Plate VII). After completing the exterior shell without too many problems, several frustrating obstacles presented themselves: How to create the revolving platform that could somehow be joined to the winding mechanism of the music box, so that the interior of the Carousel would rotate as the music played. ...

Also, I needed to find a way to wind the Carousel from the top. These problems had to be solved before I could continue my work. I designed, experimented and discarded. Nothing seemed to work. More than once I decided to 'give it all up', but only long enough to start again with new determination. And, as always, the solutions came. I soldered a 5 inch brass tube to the winding mechanism of the music box. Then I mounted the rotating platform around the bottom of this tube. Another brass tube, with a smaller diameter, was inserted through a small opening at the top of the Carousel. Finally, I soldered a knob to the top of this removable tube. With the aid of this mechanism the Carousel can be wound by turning the knob at the top and the platform revolves as the music plays.

Welcome, O Life!

I go to encounter for the millionth time
 the reality of experience and to
 forge in the smithy of my soul
 the uncreated conscience of my race.

-James Joyce⁴

In other words, every creative encounter is a new experience. Each one may present problems that never even occurred to me during the designing process. However, they are usually resolved sooner or later and I am able to continue my work with renewed vigor and inspiration. Actually, I seem to thrive on adversity and problem solving. I need to create; and have learned to accept these frustrations as being a part of the creative process. In

spite of these problems, or, perhaps because of them, I love what I do and really enjoy working with my hands.

Creative people, as I see them, are distinguished by the fact that they can live with anxiety, even though a high price may be paid in terms of insecurity, sensitivity, and defenselessness for the gift of the 'divine madness,' to borrow the term used by the classical Greeks.

- Rollo May⁵

As an artist working in the 3-D Media, my interests extend to other artistic crafts. At this time, I am also working with stained and leaded glass. Glass is also of the earth. But in total contrast to the metal, glass is fragile and delicate. Glass affords me the luxury of including a rainbow of colors in my work. My 'love affair' with glass began, when I tried to find a material that would create a harmonious union with metal. During this exploration I became totally enchanted with the beauty of stained glass windows and containers. "Painting" with pieces of glass and lead came, has greatly expanded my horizons, adding a new, exciting dimension to my Art.

It is easier in our society to be naked physically than to be naked psychologically or spiritually - - easier to share our body than to share our fantasies, hopes, fears and aspirations, which are felt to be more personal and the sharing of which is experienced as making us more vulnerable.

- Rollo May⁶

By revealing to you the thoughts and feelings of my 'secret heart', I have attempted to share with you MY fantasies, hopes, fears and aspirations. Now, I must let my Art speak for itself.

Ruth A. Meyer

.FOOTNOTES

¹Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet (98th ed.; New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1977) pp. 27, 28.

²J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (2nd ed.; New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1976), p. 31.

³William Shakespeare, Bartlett's Familiar Quotations (8th ed.; New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1953) p.335.

⁴James Joyce, A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1975) p. 17.

⁵Rollo May, The Courage To Create (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1975) p. 94.

⁶Rollo May, ibid, p.8.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATES

I - XV

PLATE I

"Venus"

18 gauge copper, acid etched and gold plated. Three Jade stones.

6½ inches high; 2½ inches deep; 2½ inches wide



PLATE I
"Venus"
Interior View



PLATE II

"Bell Tower"

18 gauge copper, silver plated, with 2 pearls.

Container: 6 inches high; $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter.

Bell: 4 inches high; $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter



PLATE III

"Embryo"

Cast Sterling Silver with European Geode inside. With two pearls: one pink pearl inside; one black pearl under the bottom of container.

2½ inches high; 1½ inches wide:
1½ inches deep.



Plate IV

"Bone of Contention"

Beef bone. Sterling Silver top, lid and bottom.

4½ inches high; 1½ to 2½ inches wide;
1 to 2 inches deep.



PLATE IV
"Bone of Contention"
View 2



PLATE V

"Treasure Chest"

18 gauge copper, gold-leafed and
antiqued.

4½ inches high; 1 to 2½ inches wide;
1 to 2½ inches deep.



PLATE VI

"Humanity Enslaved"

18 gauge copper. Acid, patina and rust

3½ inches high; 3 inches wide;
2½ inches deep.

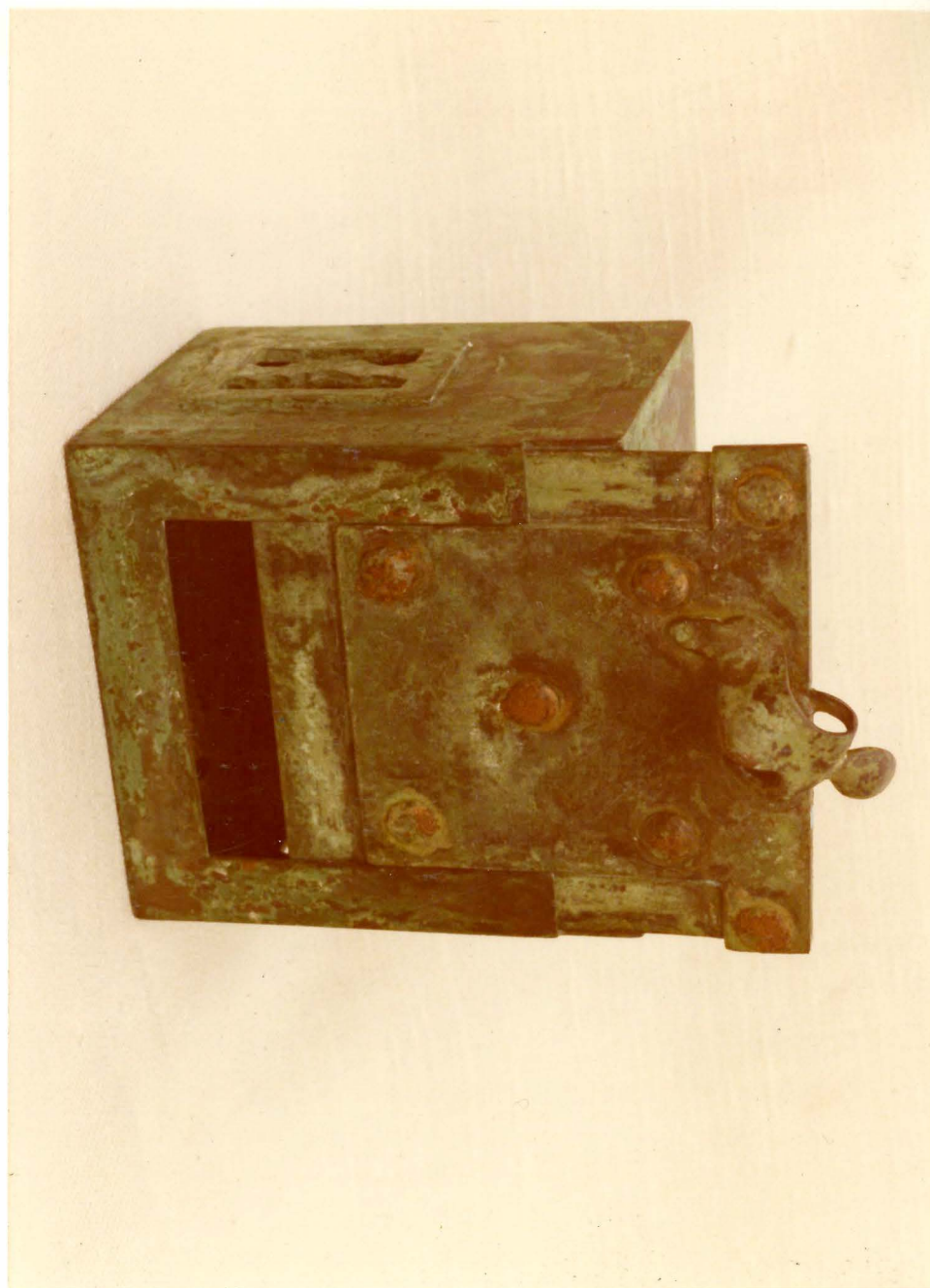


PLATE VII

"Carousel"

18 gauge Dixie Gold, gold-leafed and antiqued.
Interior and liner are made of golden plexi-glass.

Music Box, located in bottom, plays:
"It's a small world", as interior platform with miniature musicians rotates.

8 inches high; 4 inches in diameter.
Six-sided.



PLATE VIII

"Reliquary"

18 gauge Sterling Silver. Acid etched design on front and back. Topped by an Amethyst. Container lined with red plexiglass.

5 inches high; 2½ inches wide; 2 inches deep.



PLATE IX

"L'Chaim - To Life"

Gold-plated Sterling Silver Goblet;
Raised from a 6 inch round sheet of
18 gauge silver.

6½ inches high; 2½ inches in diameter.



PLATE X

"Solar Serenade"

Solar powered Music Box. Will play outdoors when skys are sunny. May also be played indoors with the aid of a 100 to 150 Watt light bulb.

When activated plays: "My Music Box
Dancer that noone can see".

Solar unit and music mechanism is encased in a container of 18 gauge Dixi Gold. Top center has small saphire.

3 inches high; 4 inches square.



PLATE XI

"Spice Box"

Sterling Silver, 18 gauge. With 2
sapphires. One on top; one inside.
Comes apart in center. Has 3 compart-
ments. Velvet lined.

4 inches high; $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches in
diameter.



PLATE XII

"Till the End of Time"

Stained and leaded Glass Clock. 15 inches
in diameter. Battery operated. With
string pulley Music Box.

8 sided, handcrafted solid Walnut Frame.



PLATE XIII

"Skyblue-pink reflections"

Stained and leaded Glass Box. 3 inches
high; 6 inches wide; 4½ inches deep.

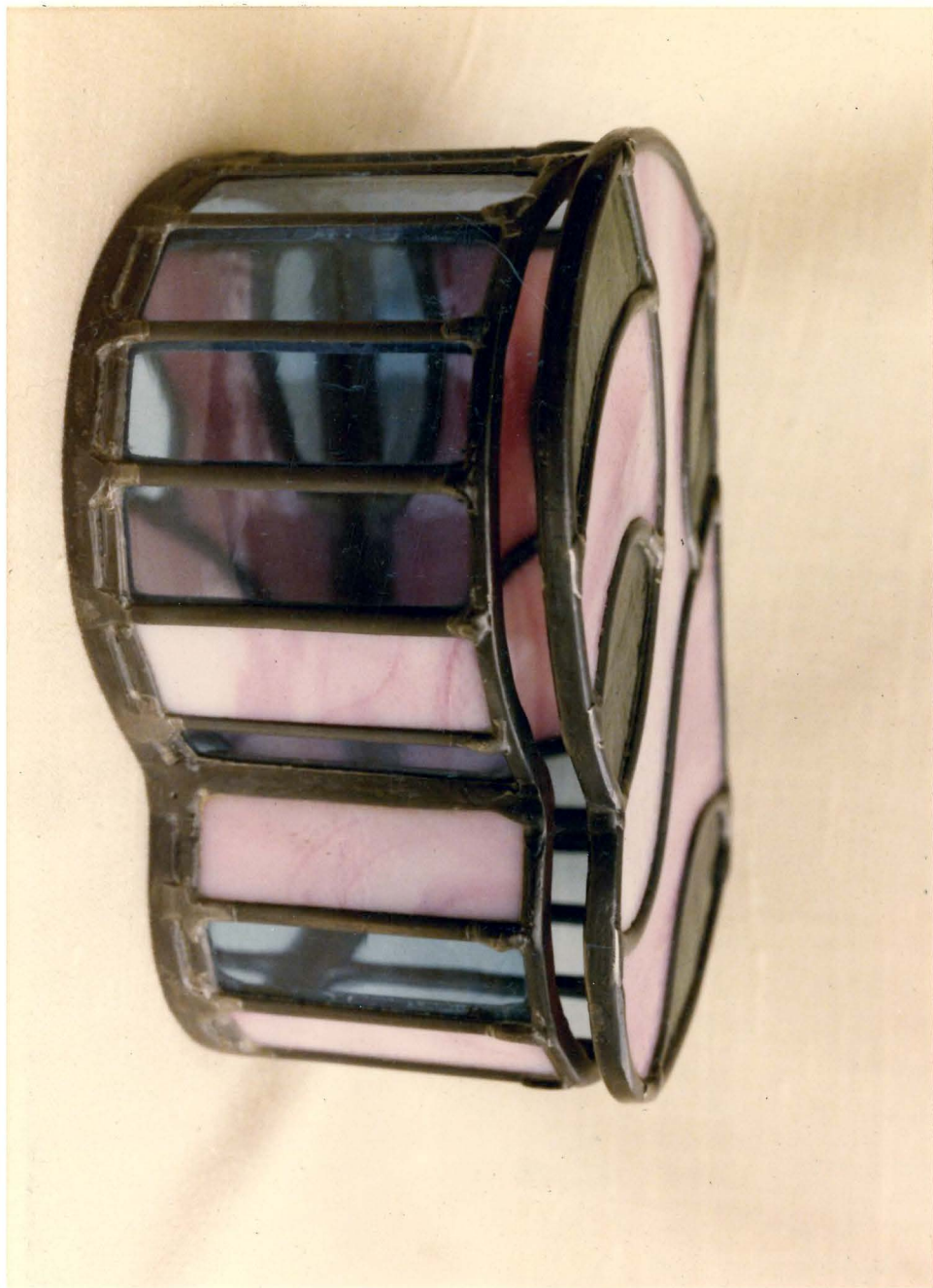


PLATE XIV

"Blue and Gold Bottle"

Stained and leaded glass four-sided bottle.
Inserts of Dixie Gold and mirror

6½ inches high; 3½ inches square.



PLATE XV

"Splendor in Glass"

Stained and leaded glass window.

Handcrafted, stained Oak frame.
21 inches in diameter



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Technical Involvement.

Finding and exploring new methods of joinery.

Coating the finished metal surfaces with gold and silver plating, gold-leafing and patinas.

Exploring and using new Surface Embellishments, textures, engravings and inlays of bone, Abalone shell and Turquoise.

Electroforming over non-conductive materials: i.e. bone, wood, wax, plastic and found objects.

Perfecting a working formula of finely divided copper or bronze filings to be used in the above process. Raising, chasing, sinking and forging of metals.

Materials Used.

Copper, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Dixie Gold, Nickel Silver, Lead and Glass.

Seashells, Plexi-glass, Wood, Bone, Fabric, found objects, pre-formed metal shapes; also precious and semi-precious Stones, Pearls and Beads.