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Some People Call them Dolls. Capturing the Iconic Power of the Female Form in Non-ferrous Metals.

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Art and Design
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts in Visual Art

by
Alison Pack
May 2003

David Logan, Chair
Ralph Slatton
Catherine Murray

Keywords: raising, fabrication, casting, forming, holloware, color on metal, female forms, copper, sterling silver, fine silver, solder, clothing, vessels, feminism, colored pencils, gesso, acrylic paint

ABSTRACT

Some People Call them Dolls. Capturing the Iconic Power of the Female Form in Non-ferrous Metals

by

Alison Pack

The artist discusses her Master of Fine Arts exhibition at East Tennessee State University, Slocumb Galleries, Johnson City, Tennessee, October 28-November 8, 2002. Her exhibition was a personal narrative of her southern upbringing in small town Appalachia as well as a reflection of her inner thoughts and feelings towards feminism, adolescence, sexuality and Barbie. She chose to reference the female form, void of an actual body, implied through clothing. Works are figurative and sculptural and are constructed of copper, sterling, and fine silver. They are sculptural hollow vessels, raised, formed, and colored with gesso and prisma-color pencils.

Topics discussed: the artist's experiences as a woman, development in graduate school, casting versus raising, a detailed technical discussion on each piece, the influences of Marilyn da Silva's use of the narrative and color on metal, and Judith Shea's use of clothing to reference the human form.

Includes images and discussions of twenty-six works and images of the exhibition.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

After working with social and political themes of nature and the environment in undergraduate school, I was ready in graduate school to create work that was personal. After sampling a variety of studio courses in an art education program, I was ready to focus on working with metal and my personal developments as a studio artist. This was a time for me to focus on one technique and to discover what I needed to express about myself. The resulting works represent intense girlhood experiences. They are private and presenting them to the viewer is like sharing a personal secret. Together they create a personal narrative about my physical and mental development from a girl into a woman in rural southern Appalachia.

Almost like art therapy, creating these works has helped me come to terms with and understand how my identity was formed. To ease my desire for clothing and glamour I started to raise and fabricate dresses. Those works started out being inspired by Barbie dresses, but after making the initial dress form, I started to reflect on the things I had as a girl and how I played with the doll and the doll clothes. It was clear that I used clothes in pretend role playing even through high school. I would take on different personas through clothes, for example I would dress like a business woman one day, like a hippie the next or a preppie school girl. I would dress for different personalities through clothes. I realized that I liked clothes, I liked playing this way and I still enjoy dressing up when I have the chance. My dress vessels became vehicles for my fantasies. Fairy tales and fashion magazines shaped the romantic fantasies that I had about womanhood—the fantasies of womanhood that I once perceived as reality. Now as a woman, they act as surrogates of childhood experiences rekindling me with my childhood fantasies. These pieces are innocent—like the way I was in high school when I didn't realize that men looked at me as a woman because of the way I dressed. These pieces may look sexy, but they are not intended to be provocative, but a celebration of sexuality. The double-meaning is that the girl inside of the vessels was not aware of how overtly sexual that she was. That girl is me.

As an undergraduate student, there was a time that I questioned my identity. It was my first time away from the factors that had so strongly helped shape me. Wanting to blend in with the other girls around me, for a while I shunned my girl things, only to be miserable and to reinforce the things I love to find my happiness. In graduate school, I came out of the closet; I am a girly girl. My works are tributes to my notions of glamour, the times that I have felt glamorous in real life and in my mind. Like religious icons, these forms act as vessels and containers for the intangible, represented as female figures, like living clothes. Overtly sexual, some of my works are completely unrealistic in representation of the female body. They are stylized in relation to the individual outfits and moods that I was trying to portray. Some are surrogates for my fantasies and some are references to specific times in my life, when I was not a girl, but not yet a woman. They are personal totems and are not meant to guide young girls into womanhood. They are reflections of my coming to terms with losing my girl-hood innocence and gaining maturity as well as confidence in my sexuality and vampishness.

Retro? forms are the ones that flow out of me naturally and they strongly influenced this body of work. The vintage Barbie doll and her precursor, the German sex doll, Bild Lili, (Lord 7) have a very mysterious sophistication. As dolls, they are beautiful, sexy, and confident women. Looking ahead I am leaving their influences behind. The forms that I have been designing are gaining more strength in concept as well as in form. The plans for

new works that I am exploring are intentionally very sexy with playful juxtapositions of the female body to insects, animals and fashion accessories . I intend to pursue more forms that relate to the fifties and sixties, especially referencing the “The Playboy Era”.

This paper will discuss my work, its origins, and my adolescence and sense of identity. In chapter 2 I discussed the formation of my identity and touch on French feminist writers, Luce Irigaray, and Simone DeBeauvoir, and American leaders in the feminist movement; writers and activists Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinum. In chapter three I discussed my work in context comparing and contrasting it with contemporary female metalsmiths and sculptors, Marilyn da Silva, Elizabeth Brim, Judith Shea, and Linda Leviton. In chapter 4, I discussed my development as an artist. In chapter 5 I discussed raising and fabrication techniques and my approaches to coloring metal. This chapter will also include a glossary of terms. Chapter six is a description of pieces that explains the technical approach and surface treatment. Each technical description is followed by a short narrative explanation.

CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY

In many ways, these works are about identity—my identity and I believe that of many girls and women in America.

My identity comes through in my work. The narrative of my work deals with many of the life experiences and rites of passage that American girls undergo. I built up a lifetime of dreams around growing up into a woman. Rites of passage such as the prom are what helped form me into a woman who wants to experience glamour. Other rites of passage were my experiences with Barbie, as well as playing dress up in women's clothes and pretending that I was a woman of high stature, like Lady Diana. For better or worse these experiences formed my identity. However, I still remember the excitement of these things. Putting on a formal gown still makes me feel magical, like a princess.

Individual viewers will bring their own experiences to my pieces. For example, a woman who was abused as a child might look at *Cupcakes* with horror or pain. Another who grew up a lesbian might see the cruelty of the way she was being molded. However, they see something because these Cupcakes represent what really went on, without commentary. They are narratives, not criticisms. For me, I see one of the great loves of my life: glamour. I also see sexiness and power, things that I saw as a child, but didn't know it. I was awed by Barbie and Cinderella and Marilyn and I looked forward to becoming a glamorous woman like them. That identity was a way out of where I was. It's like Camile Paglia says in *Vamps and Tramps*: "I'm awed by drags. They have a deeper insight into feminism, and they understand that women dominate men and that being glamorous doesn't make them passive." (Paglia 490).

In this chapter I am going to briefly discuss a few major feminist writers such as Simone deBeauvoir, Luce Irigaray, and Betty Friedan and their ideas on identity. Because I made my works, I am much less naive about the commentary that women have made about being a woman. From an academic perspective this commentary helps place my work within the social milieu. However, my work does not make social commentary on being a woman. They commemorate experiences of my childhood that I mark as special. These were important to me then. I have explained these experiences through stories about my childhood. Without hearing the stories it is difficult to know the complete meaning in my work. Therefore, I will also briefly discuss three of the biggest influences on my girlhood: the Southern women around me and their expectations, the religion of my family, and popular culture.

Philosophical Feminists

Since the feminist movement and before, 'femininity' has been widely discussed and criticized and rightly so. The political issues around a woman's identity are new to me. Philosophical feminists talk long and hard about where a woman's identity comes from and what to do about it. Luce Irigaray stated that there is more to women's liberation than equality between men and women. Women and men must come to terms with their sexuality and understand it at all levels:

"...my thought on women's liberation has gone beyond simply a quest for equality between the sexes... women—and couples too—must be allowed to accede to another identity. Women can only enjoy such rights if they find a value in being a woman and not just in being

mothers....Women's exploitation is based upon sexual difference; its solution will come only through sexual difference." (Irigaray 11-12)

Women especially need to focus on the development of themselves and not just motherhood. A difference can be made when society as a whole understands the sexual differences of women and men as individuals.

Simone de Beauvoir stated that certain traits that women possess keep them oppressed and unable to compete with men. She stated that a women's environment shapes her to have these traits, which reinforces her belief that she is only capable of doing certain things. Betty Friedan defines this as 'the Feminine Mystique'. (Friedan) De Beauvoir believed, according to Donald L. Hatcher, that

"These character traits are not a function of any sort of feminine nature, but are a product of women's biological, social, and existential experiences. [de Beauvoir's] claim would then be, if a young girl is raised in this way, has these experiences, education, etc., then she will probably behave in a certain way, and this behavior is what dooms her to be a second class person. (Hatcher 4)

De Beauvoir believes that if women are able to understand how society shapes them they can choose to apply themselves to more than the housewife/mother role which they may have seen as their only choice:

However, de Beauvoir is not a determinist. No matter how compelling the social forces are which shape feminine behavior, she believes that women can always choose to change. But such a choice requires that women become conscious of the causes for their oppression and the real alternatives to the traditional feminine lifestyle of being a housewife/mother. (Hatcher 4)

This happened in the 1960s with Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*.

Gloria Steinem was deeply moved by what women were experiencing.. An avid activist and writer for many magazines, Steinem sought out experiences, such as being a Playboy bunny, which were demeaning to women so she could write about them. Instead of writing about oppression to enlighten women, her life was devoted to making change in women's lives. In the introduction to her book, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, Steinem states, " There have been days in the last ten or twelve years when I thought my collected works would consist entirely of fund-raising letters, scribbled outlines of speeches, statements hammered out at the birth of some new coalition, and introductions to other people's books." (Steinem 1) This statement is proof of how active she was in the feminist movement. One of the most important leaders in the women's movement, she helped found the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971 and *Ms. magazine* in 1972. <http://ohiohistory.org/steinem.htm> 1/26/03

Identity and ...

"To first-generation Barbie owners, of which I was one, Barbie was a revelation. She didn't teach us to nurture, like our clinging, dependent Betsy Wetsys and Chatty Cathys. She taught us independence. Barbie was her own woman. She could invent herself with a costume change: sing a solo in the spotlight one minute, pilot a starship the next. She was Grace Slick and Sally Ride, Marie Osmond and Marie Curie. She was all that we could be and—if you calculate what a human scale would translate to a thirty-nine-inch bust—more than we could be. And certainly more than we were... at six and seven and eight when she appeared and sank her jungle-red talons into our inner lives." (Lord 9).

It was apparent to me that Barbie was not raised to live the feminine mystique. She had complete independence from family and her male companion, Ken. The emphasis through her accessories were self-image and career choices, so many career choices that it would take many lifetimes to train for them. But Barbie obviously had it under control. Being exposed to the doll made me realize that I had more options than what the people around me were telling me. I could virtually do anything.

The Feminine Mystique

Betty Friedan's 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, actually describes the expectations I was raised under: "Occupation: Housewife."

'The mistake, says the mystique, the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love.' (Friedan 43)

The Southern ideas of femininity—at least in my little part of the south—such as being thin, always wearing make-up and being dressed to impress men, were forced upon me. I was taught to be a fashion consumer and to compete with other girls with my looks: this not only attracts boys but keeps husbands satisfied. I was taught to entice men through how I looked, how to be provocative without giving in to sex, not to mention the emphasis placed on weight and eating. The secret to a girl's happiness was starvation. The women who had influenced my life by indoctrinating me with girl things were continuously preparing me for marriage. The most important thing, I was taught, was to marry a good Christian boy and to raise a family. Marriage and family brought the highest level of security for a woman. Many girls were encouraged to go to college and did, only to come back home, marry their sweetheart, and live out the feminine mystique. The wife had certain responsibilities that she was to fulfill and fulfilling them would bring her happiness. At best, she could become a teacher or a nurse, a traditional female role. No matter how silly these things sound they are a reality in certain parts of the South.

Simone deBeauvoir stated in *The Second Sex* "The daughter is for the mother at once her double and another person...she saddles her child with her own destiny: a way of proudly laying claim to her own femininity and also a way of revenging herself for it." (quoted in *Forever Barbie*, p,1) The women around me seemed unable to separate these ideal ideas of girly-ness and femininity. They seem trapped in their youth, trapped in what I call the "Peter Pan Image". As women they were trapped in never-never land, believing that they are still teenagers, like Barbie, denying their womanly bodies. They are trapped in their adolescent minds and refuse to believe that they have adult bodies. For example, where I grew up the prom was often more important to the mothers than the daughters.

Barbie

"It is impossible to be *for one's self* actually an *other* and to recognize oneself consciously as object. The duality is merely dreamed. For the child this dream is materialized in the doll: she sees herself in the doll more concretely than in her own body, because she and the doll are actually separated from each other." (de Beauvoir 700, italics original)

But if Barbie's substance is the very essence of the mid-twentieth century, her form is nearly as old as humanity, and it is her form that gives her mythic resonance. Barbie is a space-age fertility symbol: a narrow-hipped mother goddess for the epoch of the cesarean sections. She is both

relentlessly of her time and timeless. To such overripe totems as the Venus of Willendorf, the Venus of Lespugue, and the Venus of Dolni, we must add the Venus of Hawthorne, California. (Lord 76)

What she was to me back then, was a beautiful female form that was off limits. She was the forbidden fruit, which only caused me to yearn for her more. She was someone that I could secretly interact with in cousin Angie's bedroom. I did not know why I was not supposed to come into contact with her, but I did know that she held the secrets to all the mysteries of womanhood. She was a teenage fashion model with the body of a woman, which is what I would be one day. Along with the body would come many events, that seemed frightening to experience.

When I first actually acquired my one and only Barbie, she was different than my other dolls. They acted as surrogates for my own babies and companions. My love for them was real, as if they were human. But Barbie was a woman, what I would become. She was a totem that represented all that I wanted to become. She was Crystal Barbie, blonde with lots of curls. She wore a plastic iridescent sheath dress that had straps to hold it up over her enormous chest and had ruffles at the bottom. She wore a matching boa made from the same material. She wore a diamond necklace with matching diamond earrings and a diamond ring. Her shoes were clear plastic, with flecks of silver glitter in them. I remember the smell of her plastic dress, her sweet plastic perfume. I remember hearing the crunchy sounds the plastic made when I moved her body parts and her face—so beautiful.

As a girl, playing with fashion dolls, I was mystified with their womanly features. Womanhood, breasts, menarche and sex were mysteries. Because Barbie was a teenager, she knew the secrets of a girl's physical change into a woman. She wore a bra, and make-up, and had an actual hair style, much more glamorous than my own long, red hair, parted on one side and clipped up on both sides. Barbie had mounds of this blonde hair. She had had her period, which obviously meant she had gone through the treacherous act of having to carry maxi-pads and tampons to school in her purse, something that I so feared the boys at school would find out about. Because she was beautiful and had the most exciting life, she had done the obvious: kissed a boy. At this point her losing her virginity never really entered my mind. She symbolized all the things I feared, dreamt about and wanted to become.

Clothes and Glamour

“...being glamorous doesn't make women passive.” (Paglia 491)

As a young woman, the past few years, I have reflected back to that time in my childhood when I wondered what I would become. I became a woman who enjoys glamour and sexuality. Barbie was pure glamour, something that I yearned for from birth. At three I would put on my white silky *Her Majesty* brand slip and this old pair of women's gold high heels. I would prance around pretending to be a woman.

When I was three, Angie gave me a pair of fuchsia Barbie heels. I had had some sort of bizarre lust to obtain them—the same way I lust for shoes even today when I go shopping. They were closed-toe and translucent with flecks of silver glitter that sparkled in the light. I was very drawn to them and cherished them deeply, the way I cherished so many miniatures. I stored them nicely in my Holly Hobbie jewelry box, on the top shelf, in a little yellow, satin-lined drawer. I would frequent them, and hold them in my hand.

I longed for my own pair of high heels. I received some teeny, wood-and-denim, platform clogs. I felt so grown-up in them. Those little sandals truly made me feel sexy. I felt like a woman but I was only three. I remember wearing them with my navy blue bathing suit with the yellow star on it and putting my hands on my hips,

one slightly cocked to the side and puckering my lips. I longed to be wanted like Marliyn Monroe and Bridget Bardot.

As I grew up, I was told to be quiet and not to laugh. I always had nice little outfits and what I wore literally became the strongest aspect of my personality in middle school and high school. Picking out my outfit was literally one of the parts of the school day that I enjoyed best. People made comments about my clothes, which gave me attention, good or bad. I read *Seventeen*, even though I was twelve. And whenever I could get a hold of *Tiger Beat* or *BOP*, I read those too. My mother condemned boy magazines, and the music that I yearned for. She thought they were sinful and worldly.

Even though I may never have the opportunity to wear one of the outfits that I have created, or never physically had the same figure, I relate to them, the same way I relate to dolls, the same way I relate to Barbie because she is a female image, an image that was based on the same sex as me. They start to become self-portraits, vehicles of fantasy.

CHAPTER 3

MY WORK IN CONTEXT WITH CONTEMPORARY ART

In this chapter I discussed four metalsmiths who deal with female forms. Each has a different approach towards scale and content. I discussed in this chapter Master metalsmith Marilyn da Silva, who has been the biggest influence on my personal technique, sculptor Judith Shea, blacksmith Elizabeth Brim and metalsmith/sculptor Linda Leviton. These women's works range from small scale to larger than life. Marilyn da Silva's works are formed, fabricated, sculptural and functional. The surfaces are carefully colored to enhance the overall form of the piece. Working with da Silva lead me to work in a similar way. My works, too, are raised, formed, and fabricated. In this body of work functionality was not a priority, but many of the forms do function as vessels. Under da Silva's influence I am exploring color as a way to enhance the forms. On the other hand Sculptor , Judith Shea's, bronze sculptures are life-size. Shea juxtaposes her figures with props that make them psychologically complex. Shea saturates her pieces in wax and then casts them, a process that lends itself much easier to the life size scale than fabrication would. Blacksmith Elizabeth Brim's works are life size and forged from steel. She makes feminine things that appear worn, expressing the realities of womanhood, unlike my works that express the ideal woman. Metalsmith/sculptor Linda Leviton's *Eve Series*, consists of life size dress forms that are woven from brightly colored wire over a dress maker's dummy. Beautiful and humorous in form, they are ultra feminine, which is how I would like for my works to be perceived.

My works are small in scale dealing with the outer shell of the clothing with the presence of the woman implied. They are reverent and iconic, personal totems of my past. They have a lot of similarities in form and scale but each one is different with the implications of the personal narrative. Upon viewing the works, he or she will bring a personal narrative and decision as to the works' meaning.

Marilyn da Silva

Seeing Marilyn da Silva's work in 1998 was a revelation. Having no experience in raising and very little in forming, I did not realize that something as magical as her works could exist without having been cast. Most of her works are based on the personal narrative dealing with major events that have strongly impacted her life. Several of her pieces are functional and some act as commemorative pieces. Her forms are intriguing, dark, elegant and mysterious. Her works are very mature and show the expertise of her skill. Her works take from events in life, fruit and organic forms and bird imagery. Her pieces are, in the words of Kenneth Trapp, curator, in charge of the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, "visceral and visually exciting." (Cooperman 16)

When viewing da Silva's work, it is apparent that a story is being illustrated. It pushes the viewer to question what is really going on. Since the answer is not obvious, chances are, that you won't be able to figure out her story line. In the cover story in the fall 1998 edition of *Metalsmith Magazine*, Andy Cooperman goes on to say, "They are wholly satisfying in and of themselves without knowledge of the specific narrative involved." (Cooperman 16). In her use of the narrative there are several elements that make up the story line. They work together to represent a moment in time. On the other hand mine are more iconic in that they are presented as a single static item. There are no props interacting with the piece

building up the story line or movement like da Silva's, which adds visual complexity and maturity to her works. My works are iconic in themselves, presented to the viewer as a single element.

If I had not worked with Marilyn in workshop situations I would not have been able to have completed this body of work. I use similar techniques in assemblage that I learned from da Silva. It was she who taught me how to work things out in segments in raising and fabrication. Even more important is the use of color that I learned from da Silva, which give my pieces a surreal quality which coincides with my personal story line. An innovator in color on metal, she relies on color to enhance her forms as well as texture and pattern that gives them a magical quality. She is careful to keep the form and surface in harmony with each other so one does not overpower the other but work together perfectly.

In a review of her work in *American Craft*, William Baran-Mickle notes her contribution to her craft:

...[da Silva] transcends mere form by applying visual texture and subtle color to her work. She has been a leader over the past decade in developing a technique of applying colored pencils over a gesso base. With this type of coloration, as opposed to the palette offered by traditional patination, she has extended a classic approach, using brush strokes, patterns and color to express emotion and to achieve a sophisticated playfulness. (Baran-Mickle 37)

Since the first time that I read about her, I was mystified by her use of color. I had been growing bored with the colors of copper and silver they didn't allow me to express the emotion of the narrative that was behind the piece. Seeing her work solved that problem and inspired me to develop my own technique. Like da Silva, I use color and texture. However, so far, I have kept away from patterns and representations on the forms that represent cloth. Too much information on the surfaces can detract from the overall elegance of the forms. (see Chapter 4, "Color on Metal").

Metalsmith Marilyn da Silva has used the forms of clothing void of the body in her works, *Put Out the Fire XIX-XX* (coat and dress snuffers, 1996), and *Makers Chalice*, 1998. *Put Out the Fire XIX-XX*, comprise two candle snuffers, one shaped as a woman's dress and the other as a man's jacket. The storyline of the snuffers in the *Fire* series deals with a fire that destroyed her home. A woman and man, depicted through clothing deal with the damage of their clothes from the fire, and the snake depicts the fight with the insurance company that tried to persuade them that they were still okay to wear.

Beautiful in form and craft, these two functional candle snuffers are part of a series of five. *Put out the Fire*, deals with many different layers of symbolism. The pewter dress and coat serve as the bells for the snuffers. The handles, elegant, surreal and unpredictable complete the narrative. The handle on the dress is a net for collecting money, but the net is torn and the money is escaping. A small snake winds up the handle. Through the coat hanger, hook on the blazer a small snake slips through, with his tail still emerging out of a small red pail. The handles are innovative and magical beyond what is needed for mere functionality. Andy Cooperman stated, "With the snuffers, for instance the line between functions and content fades almost to the transparency: the function is the content. (Cooperman 23)



Figure 1. *Put Out the Fire XIX-XX (coat and dress snuffers)*. 1996 Pewter, copper, brass, gesso, colored pencil.

Gallery owner Susan Cummins, stated, “There is a sureness with which she put things together.” “Her iconography became established with the snake (insurance company), hats (home and friends), ladders, firehouses and an assortment of personal effects all making recurring appearances in varying supporting roles.”(quoted in Cooperman 23). Like da Silva, my work rests on personal anecdotes. With hers she makes insinuations with the narrative. Mine are more iconic in nature because the form is presented as reverent and it makes its existence somewhat difficult to understand.

My favorite piece, *Makers Chalice*, from 1998 is sterling silver, copper, bronze, gesso and colored pencils. This piece is a commemorative cup dedicated to women. This piece has especially been an inspiration to my work, because everything that I have formed the past two years had dealt with the female body. This is a simpler piece with less of a story line, which leaves the question in my head, is the dress turning into a statue or is the stature turning into a dress. Once again in this piece the presence of the body is implied but void of an actual body, like a living dress. The maker is implied by the loose bricks, which would be needed for sculpting the dress and the silver scissors which would be needed for laying out the fabric of the dress. The color is subtle referencing grass and the color of a brick structure which helps to answer the question of what is taking place. Two bronze birds lay gently on the shoulders which hold up the eye of a stove, which supports the silver chalice. A small silver gate encloses it on a small grassy area, like an important memorial, at it’s base. Are the birds resting on this dress or actively participating in supporting the chalice?



Figure 2. *Maker's Chalice*. 1998, Sterling silver, copper, bronze, gesso, colored pencil.

Unlike her piece, *Put out the Fire*, there is not a story being told here, which makes it more similar to my works. Through the use of specific props da Silva forces the viewer to come up with the answer. In my works, which are singular items without props it is even more difficult to figure out the story line. Da Silva's use of color and texture are like her props, they enhance the story line. My use of color enhances the mood of the piece.

Elizabeth Brim

The narrative behind my work was deeply influenced by growing up in the South. Blacksmith Elizabeth Brim's Southern roots have influenced her work in the same way. Eden Sanders states that, "Most of the items that Elizabeth creates are girl things, aprons with ruffles, a disco top with fringe, pillows with buttons and lace, high heeled shoes, and a tiara." <http://www.calsmiyh.org/news2.html> Brim does not see her pieces as deeply feminist. "Elizabeth stated: Aprons and high-heeled shoes are not things that you think of as being made from steel. That's when I began to wonder what makes one want to make these types of things- say a hat or a pocketbook or a pillow, instead of a poker or a hammer. I decided that the reason was the way I was brought up. I was raised in a very strong southern woman society." (Juell 4)

Elizabeth Brim's work has the appearance of being battered as if it has experienced the realities of womanhood. I work hard to keep my miniature pieces smooth, taut and pristine like the ideal woman. Unlike Brim's life-size clothes shoes and hats which look worn and reflect the realities of womanhood, my narrative forms are smooth and taut like clothes on a mannequin or milliners form. They are "ideal" because anything that you wear gets wrinkled and time takes a toll on our bodies. I want my work to look pristine, new and young, because I am trying to capture my youth as well as the memories of it which are continuously being distanced from me as I grow older. Like Brim, I do not see my works as deeply feminist. Now as a woman reflecting back on my upbringing I see how important those things were to me at that point in my life. They now only affected me then but impacted my adulthood. I started making the things that shaped me. "Elizabeth Brim stated, you know in way I am making fun of myself and letting my work express who I am. Its important for people to try express something they know about-like themselves. That's what make it interesting to other people." (Juell 5)

This is exactly the way that I feel about my work. Removed from my childhood and adolescence I have been figuring my upbringing out, as well as coming to terms with it. Instead of being resentful about what was forced on me and expressing the painful memories of it through my work, I was able to find and appreciate the humor in it. Looking ahead, when I am at a different point in adulthood, no longer in my twenties, my works will be a reflection of something entirely different, that my future experiences as a woman will shape.

Judith Shea

Also working with clothing forms is sculptor, Judith Shea. Shea was trained as a fashion designer and her work is heavily influenced by the Minimalist movement of the 1970s and ancient Greek and Egyptian sculpture. (http://evlwebleecs.uic.edu/mariar/WACS/MGS_ARTISTS/ref_msg_shea.html.) Shea's work is different than my works which are fabricated, because it has evolved from cloth sculptures and fragments to bronze castings of the actual cloth forms that she saturated in wax. Like living clothes with a strong sculptural presence and traditional patination, they are large scale vessels. Unlike Shea's monumental works, mine are miniature which leads the viewer to interact with them intimately. Shea's natural metal surfaces seem aged and antiquated like ancient Egyptian and Greek relics. Coloring my forms completes the mood of a piece. After my forms are completely formed and fabricated it appears as though I need to breath life into them- and that is exactly what I do with color.

In viewing her works it is evident that her training as a fashion designer has been an influence, the same way that being trained to be a fashion consumer has influenced mine. Shea's works are obviously designed as a piece of clothing because her clothing forms look highly realistic and like they come from life. In comparison to the works of Marilyn da Silva and Linda Leviton, their clothing forms are more stylized

I was trained as a fashion consumer, and this comes through my work with the small attention that I pay to details and my choices behind the forms that I make. The content in material comes out in choice of clothes because that is what I want to capture. Lynda Forsha stated that, "With the resurgence of figurative art in the midseventies, Shea's work alone is defined by and investigation of clothing- clothing both as sculptural object and as surrogate for human form." (Forsha 7) I use clothes like icons to represent

the feelings of American girls. I have been avoiding props in order to keep the narrative more ambiguous. Presented as a single item without props the female forms that I create are iconic. My works, like surrogates, invite the viewer to become what the clothes would make them.



Figure 3 . *Enduring Charms*. Iron, copper 1986.

The void of the figure allows the viewers to project themselves inside of the forms. David Cateforis, Associate Professor of Art History the University of Kansas, stated, “In formal terms, the hollow sheath explored the relationship between interior volume and exterior space. In metaphorical terms, it becomes a vessel into which the viewer may project personal feelings and ideas. Rich in Allusive potential, Shea’s dresses encourage reflection on gender, the body, representation and manifold other subjects.” (<http://old.jccc.net/gallery/htms/Shea.htm>)

Her works are psychologically complex because of the different fragments of clothes and props that make up the scenarios. Unlike da Silva who uses multiple related elements to compose a story, the works of Shea appear like scenarios from dreams and everyday life. However, like the works of da Silva it pushes the viewer to question what it is really going on. Because the answer is not obvious, chances are that

the viewer will bring personal experiences to the piece. This is the case in two of her pieces, *Without Words*, 1988, composed of bronze cast marble and limestone and *Enduring Charms*, 1986 composed of bronze. She juxtaposed sculptural living clothes, void of the body with other objects to make the story line more complex.



Figure 4. *Without Words* 1988 bronze, marble, limestone.

In *Enduring Charms*, a large bronze sheath skirt with the appearance of someone walking looms over a small pyramid. Surreal in scale, the roles of the two objects have reversed. Instead of a monumental pyramid looming over a human figure, a monumental skirt looms over the pyramid. This forces the viewer

to consider the possibility of a female form such as an Egyptian Queen more powerful than anything mankind has ever seen. Looking closer at this partially clothed woman's body, it is difficult to decide if this skirt is ancient or contemporary. In this the spirit of a mighty Egyptian Queen or a half dressed modern day mother scurrying to get ready for work, contemplating picking up one of her child's toys? The answer is not obvious, but the piece is intriguing and suggest a powerful woman. Regardless of her intentions the influences of fashion and Greek and Egyptian Art is evident.

In her piece , *Without Words*, from 1988, which is bronze, cast marble and limestone, the dialogue between the three separate elements appears even more complex. A stone fragment of a female head draws the viewer in to what appears to be a living , seated man's rumpled overcoat. Behind and to the right of him the viewer is confronted with the back of an elegant living sheath dress; a form that appears both ancient and modern. Visual clues and the title suggest that there has been a quarrel between two lovers. Speechless the man is reposed and saddened. Stubborn and angry the woman has turned away and stands erect. There is a feeling of something's being incomplete and the fragment of the head reinforces that feeling. Perhaps they have both suffered a great loss and do not know how to comfort each other.

Linda Leviton

The humor in Linda Leviton's Eve Series is similar to the humor in Elizabeth Brims. The dresses in the Eve Series like mine, deal with the absence of the body with a woman's presence implied. Originally trained in textiles, Leviton too is using color through her metal work, by weaving her sexy elegant humorous forms with colored wire. Referring to *Eve in Paris*, she states about her works," My woven forms are created using a wire frame of heavy gauge wire, wrapped with colorful wire used in electrical motors. My *Eve* series of dresses and shoes used this technique. I began this series several years ago when I was invited to do a piece for a show entitled *Hung Out to Dry*. After making the initial dress from recycled motor windings and grounding wire, I decided that "Eve" had many faces and places to go and needed a pair of shoes to match. Thus the *Eve* series was born. (<http://lindalevito.com/bio.htm>)

Like the dress forms in Shea's work, the dress forms that Leviton creates have the resemblance of being both ancient and contemporary. Like my works, the forms are stylized with big breasts, hips, long torsos and wasp waists. Whimsical in appearance, the exaggerated proportions make them ultra-feminine, exactly what I love the most about her work. Her direct use of color is beautifully and elegantly handled. The lustrous, metallic surface of the wire that she has woven the forms with, give them the appearance of satin and velvet, rich feminine materials. Leviton says, "Color adds an artistic and thematic dimension to my work, giving life to the idealized women in my *Eve* series"(McCreight 76). Unlike Leviton, I color my works after they have been completely formed. I color them to tap into the mood of the pieces. They capture intense girlhood and adult feelings that are enhanced by color, the same way that Leviton's capture feelings of sexuality and glamour through her color choices. For example if *Eve in Paris* was yellow or olive green, the form would not reach its fullest potential and the piece would make an entirely different statement. Likewise if my *Cupcakes* were silver they would not appear as little girl clothes.

Leviton's works are about being a women and showing off the body. Her works are humorous because they are " in your face sexy". Her woven dress forms are idealized and a celebration of femininity. Extremely beautiful and ultra feminine they exaggerate and emphasis breasts, waists and hips. There is confidence and real classy fashion sensibility that comes through in the forms. They almost appear like costumes of high society socialites.

In two of her pieces, *Eve's Red Spiral Dress*, and *Eve in Paris*, the idealized female forms seem like modern day portraits of Marilyn Monroe. Unlike the work of Elizabeth Brim, which deals with the realities of womanhood, Leviton's work deals with the idealized, referencing beauty, sexuality, and power. *Eve's Red Spiral Dress*, copper and brass wire, is a beautifully woven, low-cut red sheath dress. The straps, bust line and waist are emphasized with beautiful golden spirals that appear both ancient and contemporary. Working with the overall form of the dress, these give it a sense of timelessness, like a modern day Greek statue. The slight twist in the torso and up curl in the skirt gives *Eve's Red Spiral Dress*, a bit of a sassy attitude. The perfect finishing touch is her matching demure red sling back high heels topped with their very own golden spiral. The shoes further emphasis the idealized woman because of their small scale.



Figure 5. *Eve's Red Spiral Dress*. Copper and brass wire.

Eve in Paris, of copper wire and beads, is more static but once again the emphasis is placed on the breasts, waist and hips. The bodice of the dress is a strong focal point because it is red. This draws even more attention to the dark blue bra cups and short striped ruffle, which slightly curls up before midway. The ruffle is layered on top of the dark blue sheath skirt and is decoratively and horizontally striped, in copper orange, green, red and dark blue. The straps and flower pendant, strategically placed between the breasts are woven to match. To draw the viewer in

even more are crystal beads which align the bottom of the up curled ruffle and create the center of the flower that rests between the two bra cups. She too has matching high heels.



Figure 6. *Eve in Paris*. Copper wire, beads.

CHAPTER 4

MY DEVELOPMENT AS AN ARTIST

When I started my graduate program I began making functional pieces incorporating geometrical designs and traditional surface patinas. The body of work I am presenting now is not functional. Most of the surfaces are covered. The forms are dictated by the content and not abstract patterns. I developed the technique and content shown in the present body of work over several difficult years of struggle with self doubt and introspection. I imagine it is this way for many MFA students, but it was a surprise to me. Below I am including a brief discussion of that development because I think it helps to explain my work and out of a hope that it may help some students better get through the difficult graduate school transition.

Beginning

My coursework required that I fabricate four boxes. My first box was a straightforward, geometrical container with a 1-inch square base, fabricated by soldering cut pieces of nickel and copper, and with an exposed, five-element hinge. I strived for perfection: I would go to sleep with the box in my hand. In my second box I rebelled against geometrical designs and shapes that lent themselves to flat planes. I borrowed the theme of nature from my undergraduate work. This box was leaf shaped and incorporated cast snails. The third box took me further. Working with the leaf box reminded me of a toy iron that I played with as a child. Thus, I decided to fabricate a small iron shaped box. I had initially planned to form a handle for the box out of wax and cast it, but my designs proved to be unsuccessful. I solved the problem by incorporating a found object, a round wooden clothespin, as the handle. I believe this box opened a door to my current body of work, by letting me use childhood themes and found objects.

During this time I was completely avoiding fabrication in my jewelry class. Instead I went back to the comforts of casting. This is where I found Barbie as a theme. Casting is a technique where any combustible model is burned out of a plaster mold. Once the model has completely burned away, molten metal is forced into the negative of the mold, creating a metal positive. I was aware that plastics were capable of burning out just like waxes. I took what was around me. My new collection of Barbie accessories was strewn across my dresser. I picked up a small doll brush and cast it into sterling silver. I set my birthstone in it and a lock of red hair. I entitled it *Self-Macabre, with artist's hair and birthstone*

This piece is where I found Barbie as a theme. I was memorializing objects from my youth as a reminder to myself of how special they were to me. Becoming close again to these objects rekindled my love for Barbie as well as the childhood experiences that these objects allowed me to revisit. I realized that I wanted to work with childhood themes. The ritual process of casting toys into precious metal made them sacred, because they took pop culture to a higher level. While the plastic toys burnt away into the atmosphere, it was as if I was offering them up to my childhood fantasies. The transformation from plastic to silver felt magical. Much like the milagros of Mexico, they became small offerings that symbolized my objects of desire. Spiritually they were a reflection of how much I love being a girl. They represented a mysterious power in transformation.

I determined to incorporate these cast objects into the last box in my fabrication class. This dictated my design but proved to be its ruin. This box had two requirements. It had to be a cylinder and had to incorporate the

marriage of the metals, a technique where two different colors of metal are soldered together on the same plane. While soldering the heels onto the lid, the copper and nickel pattern buckled on the edge—something that was irreparable. It was a difficult semester, I had not created anything like these boxes before, and it was intimidating. However, I had made the transition from flat sheet to the third dimension.

Penland

I decided that to be part of the metals community I would need to attend workshops. That summer, I took one at Penland School of Arts and Crafts, a nationally renowned arts and crafts center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. (Ref: <http://www.penland.org>). I was quite thrilled to be there. I was familiar with the school's reputation and world-renowned instructors. I was anxious, nervous and intimidated. I felt as if I were lacking in my skills and concepts as a metalsmith. However, working in the Penland metal's studio with a wide variety of metalsmiths proved to be a life affirming experience.

I chose a class that would help me to expound upon popular culture and fabrication. I was enrolled in a two-week workshop entitled "Little Precious: The Poetics of the Found Object." The instructor was Keith Lo Bue. Keith is widely respected in the metals community for his unique approach to metalsmithing. Keith reminds me of the pioneer in assemblage, Joseph Cornell, because he incorporates the discarded, such as insects, maps and artifacts, into his fabricated jewelry. At that time, he had had a story published on him in *Metalsmith* magazine, *Romancing the Bone: found object jewelry by Keith Lo Bue* (Greenbaum 23), and his work had recently become of a part of the Renwick craft collection at the Smithsonian. (<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/renwick/main.html>)

Keith has one of the most magical and charismatic personalities of anyone whom I have ever met. He was a tough teacher and he had a strong work ethic. My best piece during the workshop was a ring with a small dial on it with an arm-like tube unit that allowed a small red plane to spin around on it. It was one of the first things that I had ever fabricated. I stamped on it "fly away." It took all three metals instructors, Keith, Mickey Johnston and Robert Ebendorf, to help me figure out how to make it. At the big critique Keith praised my piece stating that it worked, conceptually and technically, on every level. I was thrilled! I started to feel hope for myself again as a metalsmith. Working with such renowned metalsmiths and receiving their praises was the encouragement that I needed to finish graduate school. It was affirming to know that other metalsmiths found my work to be interesting.

Discovering My Muse

In the fall, 1999, I started back to school, leaving the magic and support of Penland. I had complete freedom to design and make what I wanted in my jewelry class, but, without the support system of Penland, I abandoned fabrication took comfort in what I knew best, centrifugal casting. In my jewelry design class I continued casting Barbie accessories. However, I also began a course on raising, in which I had strict assignments. The course was a much-needed learning experience, difficult and productive, just like advanced fabrication. Raising is much different than casting. Instead of fostering a process where metal was formed I was forming metal. This was a transformation of the metal itself. At first, I hated it. Forming metal was a foreign process to me and it hurt my hand. I kept putting it off until finally I had to get back into it. I focused seriously and started back one weekend near the tenth week of the semester. Strangely enough, the small copper bowl just started to flow out of me. And I began to love it. I started into my second one. It seemed as though the metal had nowhere to go but up, up into a bowl.

Raising bowls was exciting. I wanted to use the technique to reflect what was inside of me. I wondered how I could transform this process into my own aesthetic voice. During the same time, I kept having this reoccurring dream about a small sterling silver, fishtail dress, modeled after the famous Barbie outfit, *Solo in the Spotlight*. You would have to understand, this is not a typical Barbie dress. Solo is very vampish, implying grown-up sexuality.. It is a tight black, form fitting tube with a tutu at the bottom that would be very difficult to move in. In a work of serious scholarship on Barbie, M.G. Lord said about this dress,

Packaged with a rose and a miniature microphone, ‘Solo’ was not the sort of thing one wore to a school dance. Its look was very Dietrich, evocative of the chanteuse she portrayed in Billy Wilder’s *Foreign Affair*. One could imagine the Lilli doll wearing it, rasping out ‘Falling in Love Again’ in some smoky Berlin cabaret. Charlotte Johnson, Solo’s designer, said that it was patterned on the outfit worn by a nightclub singer named Hildegard, Solo hinted at Barbie’s tainted genealogy, her emergence from the depths of an Axis-power cocktail lounge. (Lord 47-48)

As a girl viewing this dress, it represented becoming a woman and attending grown-up, glamorous events.

My dream dress was a vessel, perfect, as if a voluptuous woman filled it but void of her. She seemed still, much like a mannequin, but more like an upright, stiff milliners form used for displaying underwear and clothing. I decided to fabricate the dress. While raising a 10-inch copper cylinder, a fishtail skirt started to flow out of me. It seemed as though the copper was telling me how to form it. I had raised a beautiful form, but the severity of the angle changes caused half of it to collapse while I was redefining the hips. I was so frustrated it did not dawn on me to form the sections separately and deck them. This was my first lesson in raising.

After this painful attempt at raising a dress, I went back to the comforts of wax. Determined to create dress vessels, I began forming wax dresses and electroforming them but was disappointed. Much like casting, electroforming wax dresses was a way of using metal to form something. I was not forming the metal and that is what I desired to do. I wanted to form and fabricate dresses but needed guidance.

Arrowmont

I knew that I needed to learn the hardcore raising and forming techniques that were required to raise a dress. I believed that the only person who could teach them to me was the master metalsmith, Marilyn da Silva. I had read about Marilyn in *Metalsmith* magazine.(Cooperman). Her piece, *Harlequin Pair I*, was on the cover. I believed that she possessed the knowledge to raise any conceivable form. That summer, 2000, Marilyn was scheduled to teach a hollowware workshop entitled *T-4-2*, at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, TN. (<http://www.arrowmont.org>) The goal of the workshop was to raise and construct a small teapot that could hold two cups of tea. I applied to be a studio assistant, and was lucky enough to be selected, one of seven total, along with one other metalsmith, a graduate student at RIT.

I had the overwhelming desire to really move metal. I wanted to push it to its limits, forming it to appear like fabric as well as like a taut, metal outfit, full of tension. Marilyn da Silva taught me how to do this. She told me that hammering was like drawing and the realization came to me that if I could draw a dress form, then ease of formation should follow. Until this workshop, I had been working *around* the physical properties of the metal, not

actually working with the metal.

My time working with Marilyn was full of missteps. She was a perceptive and kind teacher. I was awestruck. She recognized my vulnerability and gave of herself generously. She helped me raise and form a sterling silver dress that functioned as creamer. She introduced me to delrin hammers as well as hammering on air and forming metal in a stump with daps—techniques that became a necessity in constructing my pieces.

Upon returning to my normal routine, Fall, 2000, I avoided making another dress because I feared failure. I consumed myself with casting Barbie purses and transforming them into lockets. It was obvious that I was running away from my fears and myself. Fear of failure and the safety in completing these pieces held me back. In my soul I longed to form vessels.

Reaching My Stride

During Christmas break, 2000, I seriously began fabricating dress forms. I believed that I had the inner strength to solve the technical challenges that I would face. I began raising bowls and forming bodices the way that Marilyn had taught me at Arrowmont. After three days of hard work I had raised and formed a dress vessel. During clean up, I accidentally ground a hole through the silver skirt on the flex-shaft. It broke my heart, but I knew that I would not give up. Still, this beautiful little silver gown, in my mind, kept snickering; you will never be able to do it by yourself.

During Spring, 2001, I continued the same processes that I had started during Christmas break. I quickly realized that fabricating cones would take less time than raising and planishing the skirt form. I learned that using the cone form for the bodice would appear natural as well as being easier to fit to the skirt form. I had found the best solution for forming bodices. I was still not satisfied. I wanted to create a womanlier figure with hips, and large breasts and butts.

Most of that semester was a struggle. May, 2001, approached. I began working on six dresses, full ball-gown skirts inspired by the *New Look* of Christian Dior (Lehnert 43) but with more contemporary bodices. These became *Jewel Tones* and *Fairy Tales*. After I had made these dresses, I decided that they did not look womanly enough. So, I began new research through paper patterns. Things started to click. Shapes started to speak to me: cylinders, cones a little hammering here, a little stretching there. I began a new hip shape, inverting a cone and dapping out hips and a butt. It is important for me to construct these forms to be well-crafted and appear to have the presence of a body. I want them to be pristine, elegant forms. I want them to be smooth and unwrinkled, the same way clothes and gowns appear on mannequins and milliners forms. These shapes are technically quite challenging and getting segments to fit together seamlessly was difficult. Often a particular segment was made four times to get a tight fit.

That summer I had planned to attend my second *T-4-2*, workshop with Marilyn and her husband, Jack da Silva, at Penland. The two-week duration was devoted to raising and developing a pouring vessel, as well as focusing on Marilyn's prisma-color technique. Her technique is an alternative process for coloring metal. Gesso is applied directly to a roughened metal surface. Once it is dry the piece is colored with colored pencils. Since I had always painted, I was anxious to try out the technique. I was tired of the colors that copper and silver could offer me

and wanted to enhance the overall form through color. I envisioned the copper with color, juxtaposed with silver. I adopted this technique because her surface treatments solved my design problem.

In preparation for the workshop, I designed a pouring vessel. It was a pair of wide-legged pants with a long-sleeved t-shirt. The left arm was on the hip and acted as a handle. The right extended in the air as a spout. I worked diligently trying to figure out how to fabricate a pair of pants. After forming the fifth pair, I succeeded, but the stance was too wide and the cropped Capri pant length seemed awkward when paired with a t-shirt. The awkward length made the representation of the body seem disproportionate. Technically, I had succeeded, but the awkwardness of the length and the unnatural stance of the figure posed new design problems.

I came back to school that summer and began designing more pieces. My craftsmanship was starting to pull together. I started three new pairs of pants. The last pair had the most natural stance and the most proportionate butt. These pants became part of the piece, *Li'l Rocker*, a pair of flare legged blue jeans with a tight fitting shirt and Elvis inspired belt. I also started, *Hurray!* two t-shirts paired with sterling mini skirts and, *Li'l Business Suit*, a business jacket, with a sterling silver skirt. I went back to the ball gowns, *Fairy Tales* and *Jewel Tones*, refining them, riveting bows in place onto sashes, to hold them in place for soldering.

Spring semester 2002, I felt confident that with the skills I had acquired, it was time to approach the fishtail dress vessel that had tormented me two years earlier. This required me to learn new forms. The hip shapes that I had been working with were exaggerated. Though they were humorous, I now wanted something more subtle, soft like the way a butt looks in tight skirt and similar to the way it is presented in an unclothed milliners form. I began this form with a new cone pattern, approaching it the same way that I had approached the many cordate bodices that I had formed. It was very hard to get the hips symmetrical. I made seven of these shapes, one per week. The two most successful ones became the hip forms in the two fishtail dresses, *Solo in the Spotlight* and *Fragile*. Getting the sheath skirt to fit perfectly to the bottom of the hip form and to look natural was even more challenging. The hips are rounded yet need to fit onto a straight, tapered skirt form.

I am very pleased with both of these dresses, *Fragile*, and *Solo in the Spotlight*. They are tall and slender, more stylized than the earlier dress forms, such as *Fairy Tales* and *Jewel Tones*. Something had started to change in my work. I had conquered new forms and gained confidence from my successes. Because of this I felt that my personality was beginning to shine through my pieces. I began to consider adding more narrative elements to my work, partially because of promptings from Marilyn da Silva and partially from my newfound confidence. I began sketches for a pair of figures, titled *Good Girls Go to Heaven Bad Girls Go Everywhere*. The title refers directly to my life and how I had been raised. After completing this piece, I started to look back at other aspects of popular culture that influenced me as a young girl. I fabricated a form based on the famous photograph of Marilyn Monroe with her skirt blowing up the air. To me she is a timeless sex symbol, one that made a big impact on another woman I admire; Madonna.

Summary

At the beginning of graduate school I relied on old familiar themes of nature and the lost wax cast technique. My course work required me to fabricate boxes. Confined to geometrical shapes I struggled to express myself as an artist. Relying on the comforts of casting, I began casting plastic Barbie accessories. Becoming reacquainted with

these objects reminded me of how much I love being a girl and of my childhood fantasies of womanhood. After learning how to raise, I had a strong desire to form dresses. After a failed attempt at raising a dress, I went to Arrowmont, to work with master metalsmith, Marilyn da Silva. While raising and forming dresses, I realized how important my southern upbringing and ideas of femininity are. Through these processes I developed a sufficient theme and mastery of skills to express myself.

CHAPTER 5

TECHNIQUE

Overview of Technique

All of my pieces are hollow sculptures and vessels. They are formed in two or more separate sections then stacked and soldered together. All of the forms begin as flat paper patterns. All bodices and t-shirts are formed from flat cordate and rectangular shapes. The chests are formed by hammering where the breasts would be naturally with punching dapps. They are hammered on a small round recession in a stump that allows the metal to be forced into the recession. After the chest is formed the rectangles and cordates are bent by hand, then hammered into a cone, and soldered at an overlapping joint.

The conical skirts are hammered, or “raised,” over a stake from a disk of metal. The conical skirts were bent, hammered, and soldered just like the chests. Pleats are hammered into the skirts on air with plastic mallets while being supported on the horn stake. The sheath skirts started as long tapered cone shapes. They were furrowed in a wooden canal and soldered together at a lap joint. Their ruffles started as cone shapes and the pleats were hammered with plastic mallets on air while supported by the horn stake.

The pants were cut in separate sections, modified rectangle, then soldered together. The butt and hips are hammered into the pant shape with dapping punches in a stump. The pant legs were furrowed in a wooden canal, hammered, and soldered at a butt joint. After the entire form was soldered together, the hips and butt were reformed from the inside with a snarling iron.

After the entire form has been stacked and soldered together with an air/acetylene torch they are air-cooled rather than quenched, to prevent warping. Then they are cleaned again in pickle and are thoroughly pumiced. The shell of the form is then cleaned up with various files and an abrasive stone. It is then given the chain saw file finish. This finish gives the form the tooth that is required to hold gesso and acrylic paints. The chain saw file finish is also given to some silver parts which works as a nice surface texture on most forms. Where files and riffler files cannot fit the metal is cleaned with various grit silicone wheels and oxide burs.

Fire scale is removed on large silver forms through depletion gilding. The copper sections are then colored using various techniques, but primarily gesso and colored pencils. After all coloring has been completed the piece is sealed with a matte varnish spray. This is with the exception of large silver areas, which are protected from the varnish with plastic bags. The unsprayed silver can be cleaned carefully with a polishing cloth. This should be done gently and with caution where colored areas make the transition into bare metal.

Color on Metal

Traditional Approaches to Color on Metal

The idea of color on metal is not new. In nature metal oxidizes, changing its color, in the presence of air. For example silver tarnishes to soft gray or black, steel forms rust, and copper and brass turn verdigris. In the studio, metalsmiths can speed up this process by using chemical patinas to achieve a certain affect. For example copper can be controlled to become red, black, brown, green or blue. Enameling is an ancient technique where metalsmiths fuse small particles of glass onto the surface of metal. Enamels come in every color and many different affects can be

achieved with them. For example, in cloisonné, “compartments or cells are created on a metal sheet and filled with glass powder.” (McCreight 10) The surface of metal disappears and what is left is the color of the glass outlined in fine silver. In a variation of this technique, for example the works of Felicia Szoard, which are constructed from highly textured metals, the enamel adheres to the creases and the high points are exposed. (ref)

The expertise required for enameling would have been too demanding to have been successfully used on my forms. Also, with enameling, the metalsmith does not have immediate control over the process. It can be difficult or impossible to remove enamel. The gesso/colored pencil combination was much easier to remove, if I was not satisfied.

A Flexible, Expressive Means of Coloring Metal

I did not really know what kind of color treatment I wanted until I saw Marilyn da Silva’s pear teapots, *Harelquin Pair I*. To me, they seemed magical. Until then I did not realize that metal could be so much fun. The checkerboard pattern that she had applied onto their gold surface with gesso and colored pencils gave them a different layer that made them appear as harlequins. This surprise element added a lot to the forms. They would not have been as interesting without it.

I use color as an expressive tool for enhancing my forms. Copper tarnishes easily and I found the oxidized surface to be lacking in comparison to the beauty of silver. Choosing to leave the silver elements exposed with a bright or oxidized surfaces and burnishing the copper edges reinforce the fact that they are metal sculptures. However, my work references clothing forms that I find beautiful and sensuous. They are surreal because they are void of the body with its presence implied in the clothing, like living outfits- I am trying to reinforce that mood through use of color and texture. The moods that I tapped into suggested themes of childhood and adulthood. If I had not colored them I could have not gotten strong girl-hood or grown-up feelings. Imagine the *Cupcakes* without color. They would not have been fun and humorous. Without the textured icing like acrylic surface, they would not have been cupcakes. The very womanly, *Archetypal Sheath Dress*, would not be vampish or grown-up, like something from the smoky, adult nightlife.

Learning to color three dimensional metal forms was full of missteps. What I had envisioned for certain pieces did not look good after the color was applied. A two dimensional shape has its own needs for color, implying a form in space. Coloring forms that naturally have lights and darks as well as being a tactile object in space was tricky. For example if a crease in a skirt is brightened, the skirt begins to lose its form. Because I am drawn to the patterns on cloth, I have a tendency to make my work visually busy. These are clothes, so the temptation is to make them look like fabric. For example, when I first colored, *Mint Dream*, the bold lavender pencil marks did not work with the simplicity of the form. When I realized that it detracted from the form, I readdressed the piece with a solid color of acrylic paint and textured it which turned out to be the perfect solution.

The Technique

After reading about Marilyn I tried her technique, but it did not work. Marilyn paints her pieces with colored gesso, in earth tones, then colors the forms with colored pencils. It wasn’t until I worked with her that I succeeded. She is a great teacher and encourages experimentation instead of emulating her basic technique- In this body of work, I have adopted six variations of Marilyn’s technique. In each, the surface of the piece has to be roughened so it will hold the gesso or acrylic paint. The gesso acts as a canvas, covering the metal and allowing the

pencil marks to be consistent. Before each piece has been painted, they are oxidized with liver-of-sulfur and buffed back with steel wool to achieve the desired patina. The patinated copper holds gesso better than un-oxidized copper.

Acrylic paint. Acrylic paint can be directly applied to a roughened surface. PrismaColored pencils cannot be applied to the acrylic surface because it does not have the tooth that is required to hold the wax of the pencils. (Hurray!)

Colored Gesso. Dry gesso has the tooth that is necessary for holding the wax from the pencils. White gesso can be colored by mixing it with acrylic paints. Coloring gesso can be tricky because the mixture should mostly be gesso. Once two or three coats have been applied and allowed to dry, the form can be enhanced with the colored pencils. I have found that it is best to use the side of the pencil to prevent tears. (*Jewel Tones, Blue Princess Gown, Lil' Business Suit, Swimsuits, Fragile, Sex Starts in the Kitchen*)

Pre-mixed black gesso. When a dark, vampish mood was required the black gesso was a wonderful canvas for applying colored pencils. (*Archetypal Sheath, Solo, The devil in good girls..*)

Gesso/Acrylics. On certain works, colored gesso was applied and allowed to dry thoroughly. Acrylic paint was applied liberally and textured with a fork. (*Mint Dream, Cupcakes*)

Colored Gesso/ Pearlescent Acrylics- (Fairy Tales)

Gesso, colored pencils, and Pearlescent Acrylics. Pearlescent acrylics are thin and translucent, so they can be applied over a surface painted with gesso that has been colored with pencils. (*the angel in good girls, Marilyn*)

Rub 'n' Buff wax based metallic paints. These wax based paints can give a metal form the look of having been plated with gold and silver. They were used to paint the interiors of all the forms and to enhance the surfaces of *Lil' Rocker*. In the instance of a tear, there is the possibility of painting the small area with gesso or acrylic paint of the matching color. However, the paint will often not adhere to the waxy surface created by the colored pencils.

Repairing the Surface

If a surface needs to be removed from the form it must be stripped clean. A quick way would be with a sand blaster, but since I did not have access to one I had to come up with alternative methods. At first I would use a reducing flame and warm the piece several times until all traces of the gesso were gone. I was very careful not to overheat the piece, due to multiple solder seams and the use of low temperature solder where needed. The negative affects of this method are the loss of the burnished edges as well as losing the patina and surface treatment of the silver. Dissatisfied with this method of removal, I began immersing the pieces in a bowl of denatured alcohol. While wearing rubber gloves in a well-ventilated area, I scrubbed vigorously with a toothbrush to remove the paint. This didn't change the surface of the metal and removed all traces of oil from the piece.

Glossary of Fabrication Terms

Annealing. The process of using heat to relieve stresses in metal. Once the stress is relieved re-crystallization occurs allowing the piece to be malleable.

Aviation shear. A hand shear that cuts sheet metal like a pair of scissors cuts paper.

Air/Acetylene torch- Acetylene gas mixed with oxygen from the atmosphere.

Abrasive stone- A stone made of aluminum oxide used for sanding and smoothing the surface of the metal, as the stone wears down, it becomes smaller and easier to reach it tight spots.

Air-Cool- Allowing a piece of metal to cool naturally, after it has been heated instead of quenching it in water

Bi-shell- A structure made from two sections.

Bodice- The fitted part of a dress that extends from the shoulder to the waist.

Brass-brush- A wooden or plastic brush similar to a tooth brush but much larger, with many small brass wire bristles.

Burnisher- A hardened, polished steel rod, either straight or bent, used to apply pressure against a metal surface to push, smooth and polish.

Butt-joint- When two square flat planes of metal are soldered together, at joining edges creating 1 plane.

Casting- The introduction of molten metal into a mold.

Copper- In its natural state it is combined with many elements to form a variety of alloys. It is electro-conductive and extremely malleable.

Conical- Referencing the cone form

Cordate- Referencing the heart shape.

Dapp or dapping punch- A hardened steel rod with a polished steel sphere on the end. It can be used to form metal by hammering on the punch or as a small stake when clamped into a vise.

Delrin hammer or plastic mallet- A hard plastic carved into the shape of a hammer head that it used to raise and form metal while leaving minimal or no hammer marks.

Depletion Gilding- A process where silver is heated with a reducing flame until the yellow spots of fire scale appear. The piece is allowed to cool, pickle and is brass brushed with detergent. This process is continued until all traces of firescale no longer appear.

Domical- A shape that refers to a cone

Fabricate- To construct something from different parts.

Fire Scale- An oxide of copper that is brought onto the surface of copper bearing alloys when it is heated in an open atmosphere

Flux- A borax based paste that is painted onto metals to keep solder joints clean while the piece is being heated. Soldering is impossible without a clean joint.

Furrow- A long shallow, narrow groove in a wooden block.

Horn –Stake- A polished hardened steel stake that runs horizontally once it is held in a vise. One end is long and round, running into a tapered point. The other end is much wider as well as only being half-round. This surface is suitable for raising, forming, and planishing.

Kum-boo- A Korean metalsmithing technique where gold foils are bonded to silver without the use of solder.

Lap-joint – When two opposing parallel edges are filed at 45 degree angles. One on the interior, the other on the exterior, so when the shape is formed one edge laps across the other, for a stronger solder seam.

Liver-of-Sulfur- Potassium Sulfide, packaged in small chunks and dissolved in warm water to oxidize sterling silver and copper. Depending on the strength of the mixture and the time span that the piece is left in the solution it can make the metal go from gray to black. If ammonia is added a rich black is achieved.

Mushroom Stake- A hardened and polished steel dome that metal is formed over and planished on. When it is secured in a vise of bench plate it looks like a mushroom.

Mono-shell- A shell structure that was composed from one form.

Nu-Gold- A special patented alloy of copper and tin that has the look of gold.

On Air- When metal is hammered without the support of wood or tar pitch.

Orange-Peel-Surface- After the metal is formed and hammered, the smooth surface starts to appear bumpy, like an orange peel.

Patina- The chemically altered or aged surface on metal.

Pickle- A warm chemical bath used to dissolve surface oxidation and flux residue from a non-ferrous metal surface. It is made from Sodium Bisulfate and water.

Planishing- Smoothing metal with the springy overlapping blows of a flat, polished, steel hammer.

The metal is held on the appropriate stake and planished where the metal comes into direct contact with the polished steel stake. The planishing hammer has a slightly rounded face on one end and a smooth one on the other.

Pumice- A volcanic element that is ground into a fine powder and used as a mild abrasive.

Raising- Hammering flat sheet metal over a form.

Reducing Flame- A flame that has more air than gas. It is deep blue and bushy.

Riffler file- Files with special shaped ends for fitting hard to reach places.

Shell- The outer skin of a form

Snarling Iron- A long slender tool, one end is gripped in a vise. The smooth round end is slipped inside of the vessel. When it is struck the rebound of the blow alters the vessel's form from the inside, from the blow's repercussion.

Solder- An alloy of silver, copper, and zinc that flows below the melting temperature of the metals that are being soldered together.

Sterling Silver- The most commonly used alloy in jewelry making. The proportions are 925 parts fine silver and 75 parts copper per thousand parts.

Stump- A tree stump that has different shaped depressions carved into it, used for forming metals.

Sweet-Spot- The point of contact between a metal shape or form and a dapp or stake.

Copper- In its natural state it is combined with many elements to form a variety of alloys. It is electro-conductive and extremely malleable.

Tack Solder- A temporary solder joint usually tacked with a very small amount of solder.

Wooden Canal- A wooden block with a canal carved into it for depressing metal.

CHAPTER 6

DESCRIPTION OF THE PIECES

Mint Dream

While raising a bowl form, which I intended to hammer into a pleated skirt, I started to see it as a simple skirts, but full of volume, like a hoop skirt. This was the beginning of *Mint Dream*. It was the first piece that I attempted to color and it was very difficult. As in all of my pieces I filed the copper to give it tooth. I painted three coats of brown gesso onto the roughened copper surface. By blending a few different shades of lavender, the skirt graduated from light to dark. The brown gesso layer made the pale lavenders seem much darker than they were. I applied several layers of pencil trying to lighten the lavender. But after several layers the colored pencils could no longer be applied to the surface of the gesso. I used turpenoid to remove the pencil wax but this left a smooth oily surface, unable to accept any more pencil marks. This is when I decided to apply a pale lavender gesso to the surface of the vessel. This proved to be more successful, but this did not visually work with the form. It seemed too strained. Something was missing.



Figure 7. *Mint Dream*. 2000 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, gesso, acrylic paint, 4"x4".

Believing that the form had potential I sat it aside two years, until Summer, 2002. After many successes and failures with color application, I began to investigate the form in a new light. I removed all of the paint. The skirt was short and stubby with the heart-shaped bodice, a little offset to the back, as if she is standing with her chest sticking out. The form is womanly, but has a childlike quality of innocence, symbolic of a time when a girl is about to be a woman, and there is a bit of awkwardness about the transition.. I fabricated four small silver bows and soldered them in a vertical line down the center of the dress. It seemed perfect: the bows were the needed, frilly solution to pull the piece together. I started thinking about times when I wore funny dresses to events, “when I was no longer a girl and not yet a woman”. I had worn frilly and unglamorous dresses as an adolescent many times while being a bride’s maid. These were all a shade of what seemed to me an ugly teal green, a color that did not compliment the style.

I remembered how I felt when I wore them, wanting to be sexy because of my womanly body, but made to look like a child hiding my newfound sexuality. The more I reflected upon the vessel the more I thought of those shades of green and the way in which the skirt looked like some small edible cake or candies. I decided to apply an icing or candy-like texture to the piece, in mint green, a shade I find much more lovely than the bright teal, something almost the color of a party mint.

After mixing a mint green gesso, I applied 3 coats to the roughened copper surface. I was careful not to get any on the silver bows, sash or lining around the bodice. Once the piece was thoroughly dry, I mixed a mint green acrylic. Instead of using colored pencils I applied a liberal coat with a fork.

Cupcakes

These pieces were inspired by the texture that I had applied to *Mint Dream*. They were fabricated and colored the summer of 2002. I wanted to play on the sexual tension between the girl and the woman, so I made them smaller and gave them a provocative title. With small teacakes and pastries in mind, I raised 2 small stubby bowls. I started with a 6-inch and 8-inch disk, both of 20-g copper. I began both bowls by sinking them in a stump with a small mushroom stake.

After raising two courses, I stopped and planished the orange-peel surface that had started to appear, as well as the bumpy marks left by the plastic raising hammers. After I achieved the form that I desired for the skirts, I trimmed the edges with aviation shears to square up the domical skirt before cutting out the base.

I carefully planned the heart-shaped bodices to scale with Bristol board patterns. I shell formed them both in a stump with 18-g copper. After bringing the heart shaped form together and soldering the lap joint, I planished the form smoothly on dapping punches, then soldered 16-g sterling silver wire around the top edge of the bodices. I then drilled and cut small holes in the skirts where the bodices were to be soldered and filed the bottoms of the bodies to fit exactly onto the skirts.

To seal off the vessel, I soldered the annealed copper 18-g base onto the bottom of the copper skirt and allowed the piece to air cool. I filed the edge of the base down to a very faint lip extending past the bottom of the skirt to indicate that the piece was a vessel. After annealing and pickling the bodice and skirt, I positioned the bodice and soldered it and allowed it to air cool



Figure 8. *Cupcakes*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, acrylic paint, 4"x4".

Once the piece was clean and empty of fluids, I used a round chain saw file to enlarge the hole in the skirt until the bodice and skirt appeared as a mono-shell. I then drilled a hole in the lower back of the bodice with a #60 drill bit. Using 18-g sterling wire I formed a small nail head to slip through the fine silver sash that visually blends the two pieces together. The small silver pin held the sashes in place as I soldered them together. Then I soldered the sash bows as well as the vertical bows positioned down the center of the dresses with a low temperature solder, making sure that this was the last time that the piece was heated. After minimal cleanup I oxidized both pieces, removing the soft gray patina off the silver with fine steel wool.

I had envisioned one pink and one yellow cupcake, once again with an icing-like surface. After initial application of yellow and pink gesso, I generously applied the acrylic paint, texturing it with a fork. I applied it thicker than on "Mint Dream" and carefully paid attention to the patterns that I made with the plastic fork.

Blue Princess Gown

Blue Princess Gown was fabricated during the same time that I began working on the initial form for *Mint Dream*. I started by raising an 18-g, 8-inch copper disk. After planishing the form, I lightly sketched where I thought the pleats of the skirt would naturally fall.



Figure 9. *Blue Princess Gown*. 2000 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, gesso, colored pencil. 4"x4".

Carefully holding the annealed form onto the horn stake, I began hammering, with a medium sized delrin hammer, striking on air with consistently overlapping hammer blows. After all of the pleats had been formed, I held the annealed skirt over the end of a wooden hammer handle that was clinched up tight in a vise. I then lined up the flat oval on the end of the hammer with the middle of the interior of the bowl. This was the area where the bodice would naturally fit onto the waist. Starting from the center of the sweet spot where the wood met the copper, I began gently planishing that area, starting in the center of the point of contact working my way out until the meeting point for the two parts was established. I then drilled a small hole in the top of the domical skirt form to allow the air to escape when the vessel was soldered together.

This bodice was not heart-shaped, but ran straight across the chest, slightly curving in the back. Once again after forming the breasts, I soldered a 16-g sterling wire around the top edge of the bodice. The bottom of the bodice was filed square so it would fit onto the flat plane on top of the skirt.

The base was slightly formed on mushroom stakes. I formed it as much as possible to line it up with the bottom of the skirt. I tack-soldered the skirt to the base at all points of contact. Once the piece had cooled and pickled I gently tapped the 18g copper base to meet the bottom lip of the skirt. I repeated the entire process until both pieces were completely flush. Then I reflowed the entire solder joint with medium solder.

After the bottom portion of the vessel had been joined, I soldered the bodice into place. I had not yet learned how to stabilize the sash in the back of the bodice with a small silver nail, so I clamped the sash with third arm tweezers to hold it in place. This made soldering the sash extremely difficult.

I decided not only to solder a sash but also to solder a fine silver bow at the exterior point of every pleat. Because of the mass of the piece and the thinness of the fine silver bows, they began to melt at the same time the extra-easy solder began to flow. This is when I started using low temperature solder, as a final solution for specific solder joints.

I painted the piece with several coats of light gray gesso then colored it with pale shades of blue colored pencil. I started with a pale almost white blue, blending the pencil marks into a darker blue at the bottom of the skirt. With the white colored pencil I lightly shadowed the interior sides of the skirt pleats. I entitled it *Blue Princess Gown* because the form and color references Cinderella's gown in the Disney movie.

Archetypal Sheath Dress

The *Archetypal Sheath Dress* was my attempt to fabricate one of my favorite dress forms. This dress is sleeveless and form fitting through the bust and hips. The sensuous, pear like form of the woman is clearly stated to the viewer.



Figure 10. *Archetypal Sheath Dress*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, gesso, colored pencil. 5"x1".

This dress was made in three sections, a bodice, hips and a skirt. I decided to form a heart shaped bodice for the dress. I love referencing the breasts in the shape of a heart. It is very sexy because it is deliberately drawing more attention to the negative space that creates the presence of the body. I have always loved the heart or cordate shape, even in its triteness. I have always associated it with being a girl and girly-ness.

I formed the bodice out of 18-g copper. At this point, which also applies to *Blue Princess Gown* and *Mint Dream*, it had not dawned on me to begin dapping out the breasts in the stump before bringing around the conical shape and soldering it together. I was holding the conical form on the stump and hammering the dap into the breast area.

I then constructed a slightly tapered cylinder pattern, which would act as the hips. I worked with the pattern until the bottom of the bodice met the top of the cylinder. I transferred the hip pattern to the 18-g copper, sawing along the outside edge of the marker line to compensate for the thickness of the metal. I formed the slightly truncated cylinder, into a pair of hips, in the same way as the bodice, which proved to be quite difficult. I gently reformed both pieces until the bodice and the hip segment appeared natural.

I began a series of paper patterns for the tapered conical form that would complete the sheath dress. After cutting out the shape in 18-g copper I found it was too narrow to bend with my hands so I began furrowing the annealed metal in a grooved piece of wood. Once I had worked with the form enough to get the lap joint to over lap, I tapped it gently supporting it against the small tapered mandrel that extends from the horn stake.

After soldering the skirt at the lap joint, the form was round and needed to be formed into an oval to fit up against the bottom of the hips. I laid the annealed form in the sandbag and gently tapped the piece on both sides with a flat-faced, rawhide mallet. I did this with overlapping blows until the skirt was shaped into an oval.

I then annealed all the parts. After making sure they were thoroughly clean, I decked the pieces on a fire brick stationed on a lazy susan. After fluxing the entire piece, I began gently warming it until it was hot enough to stick feed the solder across the seams. I used whiteout™ on all of my previous solder seams. After the piece was soldered together, pickled, and air cooled, I soldered a small silver bow in the back of the dress where the bodice and the hips met.

I had initially planned to color the dress a rosy pink in reference to the Vintage Barbie gowns. After applying the pink gesso, it was apparent that there was an obvious transition between the bottom of the hips and the skirt. Frustrated in my error, I sat the pieces aside for 6 months until June 2002. Determined to solve the technical problem I began to reinvestigate the piece. I remembered that the dress had been fabricated out of 18-g copper. I was confident in how much of the surface that I could remove. I aggressively removed the transition between the hips and skirt with a heavy file.

The sheath dress conveys a lot of personal meaning to me as a woman. Three of my prom dresses were sheath dresses. The prom was a time when I shunned the notion of a full gown in exchange for the possibility of showing off my body. The form is very delicate and has always reminded me of a long tightly wound rose bud. There is something visually pleasing about a slender cone, that stands on its smallest tapered point.

Thinking back on the times when I wore a sheath dress reminded me of the rose corsage that I was presented by my escort. I wanted to enhance the dress with an unexpected element of sophistication much like a

wrist corsage giving a formal gown its final touch. I fabricated three, small fine, silver roses, accented with copper leaves. I soldered two on the front of the skirt and one on the back. The roses reference her as a sculpture in a garden, being slowly consumed by its inhabitants.

After oxidizing the entire piece, I began removing the patina from the silver areas with fine steel wool. I then applied three coats of black acrylic gesso. Though a beautiful form to look at, the piece did not come to life until I began making quick aggressive marks on the piece with different shades of red and purple pencils. The warm pencil marks contrasted against the rich black surface gave an air of elegance and sophistication.

Six Dior Inspired Gowns: Fairy Tales and Jewel Tones

After working on the smaller pieces which ranged 4 & 1/2 inches in height, I decided to fabricate six ball gowns that were a little more monumental in scale around 7 inches in height. Inspired by vintage Barbie and Bild Lili dresses, I wanted to construct glamorous gowns to capture the full swing and movement of Dior's new look. I was deeply intrigued by the classic vintage Barbie prom gowns, and the Barbie "Queen of the Prom Game". In this game girls can change boyfriend as well as clothes and drive different cars (Lord 134-137).



Figure 11. *Fairy Tales*, from *Six Dior Inspired Gowns* 2001 Copper, fine silver, acrylic paint, colored pencil. 6"x5" each.



Figure 12. *Jewel Tones*, from *Six Dior Inspired Gowns s.* 2001 Copper, fine silver, acrylic paint, colored pencil. 6"x5" each.

I started with a 12-inch disk paper pattern. I adjusted the pattern until I achieved a cone that was 6 inches in height. I then sawed the shape out of 18g copper. After forming and soldering the 6 separate cones I squared up their bottom edge with aviation shears and with a file removed any excess solder on the solder seams.

On each of the 6 annealed cones, I lightly sketched where the creases should fall. I individually supported each skirt on the horn stake and hammered the unsupported section with a plastic mallet using consistently overlapping blows. I tried hard not to replicate the same skirt twice.

After forming the skirts, I began making a series of paper patterns for the 6 bodices that would complete the gowns. This time after cutting out the copper blank, I began forming the breasts in the stump while the metal was still flat. I carefully planned the patterns so that I had enough room to get a dap into the bodice after the conical form had been brought together. Once the cone is brought together and soldered the preformed chest folds back in, but enough of the chest is left that I am able to reform the surface. When the bodice shape can no longer be worked from the inside, the annealed form is then planished over various sized daps.

I began the paper patterns with my favorite shape, the heart, but soon started working with more creative shapes, all originating from the heart shape: some of which had straps. After forming the various tops to the gowns, I began pairing them up with different skirts, until all bodices and skirts had been paired together. It was my version

of the “Queen of the Prom Game”. The final decision was made on which bodice and skirt worked best visually. After each dress was soldered together and given a rough surface, I soldered a fine sliver sash onto each one. I used a tiny bead of low temperature solder to adhere the bows to the sashes. Unsure of how I would color the dresses I sat the six gowns aside.

At the end of July 2002, I approached the gowns once again. I had initially thought about coloring them in pairs, using previously successful coloring techniques. Pondering over it for a couple of weeks, I decided that two groups of three would work together nicely. I have always enjoyed pearlescent surfaces, and I felt like it was time to integrate them into my work. So I decided that one group would be painted with Liquitex™ pearlescent liquid acrylics. I decided on three of my favorite colors, pale pink, sea foam green, and lavender. Working on all three simultaneously, using a heat lamp to speed up drying three coats of gesso mixed to match the color of the pearlescent paint. I did several practice swatches with the colored pencils as well as experimented with the application of pastels, I kept thinking about how successful *Mint Dream* and *Cupcakes* were. I began applying oil based metallic gold paints on the insides of the dresses to make them look like gold.

After the gesso was dry, I layered the pearlescent paints onto the pink gown. I began with a coat of pink paint, followed by a coat of silver, then pink, then white. Their surfaces turned out to be very beautiful, much like satin. I colored the other gowns the same way layering lavender and teal with silver and white. The three gowns were visually complete in color and form. I entitled these three, *Fairy Tales*.

The surfaces of *Fairy Tales* to me are especially radiant. They have a magical feel as though they danced right out of a romantic fairy tale about a beautiful princess and handsome prince falling in love, as in *Cinderella*, *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*. As a small girl I watched these movies one time in an era when children did not watch their favorite movies over and over again on the VCR, these movies made a great impact on me. I could feel the romantic tension in my chest as the two characters fell in love. I was overwhelmed with the desire to be the princess. It was a feeling of such pure innocence and I knew that one day my prince would come too. I was so full of passion that I felt giddy as I left the theatre with my small purse and popcorn in hand. The magical luster of these three copper gowns rekindles those emotions.

In the other group I wanted to be careful not to copy previous techniques. After using the colors of children’s fairy tales, I wanted to use a more serious palette, which reflected the realities of womanhood. The colors, plum red, royal blue and emerald green, suggest grown-up themes. These colors and their matte surface suggest thick velvet, like Scarlet O’Hara’s green velvet curtain dress in the movie *Gone With The Wind*. They are grown-up dresses that would be worn by queens at a formal ball. I entitled these three *Jewel Tones*.

Swimsuits

With *Swimsuits*, I wanted more of the body to show through the apparel. I started focusing more on the development of the hip and butt forms. Working with conical forms that were larger than the one I had used for the hips in *Archetypal Sheath* allowed me to give more detail to the form. These forms reference the lingerie and swimsuits of the late 50s and early 60s. The vintage swimsuit forms ended naturally right below the hips. They worked visually, but I doubted myself because they were the first pieces that I had constructed without referencing the full stature of the woman. In spite of the fact that vintage swimsuits were not as revealing as contemporary bathing suits, they were sexier because the torso-hugging suit made one wonder what was underneath.



Figure. 13. *Swimsuits*. 2001 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, gesso, colored pencil. 3" x 1" each.

It turned out that each of the three sets of hips in *Swimsuits* had its own personality. The way these forms developed influenced the bodice designs. For two, I shell- formed two cordate bodices, beginning with flat tapered heart shapes. The third one, the tank top, began as a tapered cylinder .I formed the straps out of a rectangle. I riveted a small fine silver ribbon at an angle on the left side, a small touch that made the piece more pristine.

The chests were preformed with a dap in the stump. After the bodice forms were soldered, the chest was reformed from the inside then planished on various sized daps. I soldered 18g sterling wire straps to both. When thinking about the colors that would best reflect them I went with three vivid retro colors, teal green, hot pink and tangerine orange. *Swimsuits* reference California starlets having fun at the beach, flirting with the cute boys and surfing the waves, like a scene from a fifties beach movie. I envisioned three friends being bubbly and vivacious like Gidget (a character from a T.V. show I watched as a child.) These three surfer girls were three inches in height and 2- inches in width at the widest point, the base.

Hurray!

The inspiration came from my personal style of dress, pairing t-shirts with jeans, skirts and dress pants. Both of the conical sterling silver skirts were 2 inches in height, with a 4-inch diameter. The sterling silver skirt started as a cone. The annealed cone was held over the horn stake and the areas I chose to pleat were hammered on air with overlapping hammer blows. I then made paper patterns for the 2-shirts. I wanted the forms to appear

like a mono-shell, instead of 2 separate forms. The t-shirts were fabricated the same way that the tank top part of the tangerine orange swimsuit. I started with tapered cylinders that the breast forms had been dapped into. I doubled over 2 rectangles with neck holes and armholes and soldered one onto the trunk of each shirt. The sleeves are copper tubing that was filed at 45-degree angles and tweaked as necessary for a tight fit.



Figure. 14. *Hurray!*. 2001 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, gesso, colored pencil. 3"x2" each.

After the tank of the t-shirts were soldered and pickled, I laid them face up in pumice rocks, allowing the rocks to support the sleeves against the shirts. The entire piece was fluxed. The fronts of the sleeves were tacked with medium solder. After the tack soldering, the pieces were pickled and all existing solder seams were protected. I re-flowed the entire contact point, where the sleeves met the shirts. The sleeves were filed to the appropriate length and the neckline was refined with a half round file.

I filed the points of contact between the shirts and skirts until they met perfectly. I decked and annealed the parts., covered it with white- out™, fluxed the entire piece, then slowly warmed the piece with the largest torch head attachment on the air/acetylene torch. Once the flux was clear, indicating that the piece was at annealing temperature, I focused on the solder seams, carefully stick-feeding them with medium solder. I use medium solder as much as possible because it contains the most silver, and leaves little or no porosity, in comparison to hard, easy

and extra easy solders, because they contain more zinc, which is prone to evaporation. After the pieces were air-cooled and cleaned they were filed on the inside, with a round file. This was to give them the appearance of being seamless when the viewer looked into them.

I textured both with the chain saw file texture, going in 3 different directions. This gave the copper tooth for the application of paint and a pleasing surface to the sterling silver skirts. It was impossible to get a file into some concave places, such as the pleats of the skirts as well as some places on the t-shirts. A curved riffler file was used in these areas. I oxidized both pieces to a soft gray, keeping the skirts dark. I decided to paint 1 of the copper shirts purple and the other lime green with acrylic paints.

When I go shopping for a shirt and find one I like, I usually purchase 1 in purple and one in lime green, because they are 2 of my favorite colors. *Hurray!* are surrogate pieces standing for the cheerleader that I never became. As a young girl I often had fantasies of being a cheerleader, fantasies of being a popular and athletic high school girl.

Li'l Business Suit

The *Day to Night* Barbie from the 80s subconsciously inspired this piece. Her form and pose is quite whimsical. The sleeves are smooth and unwrinkled as if her arms are down and she is showing off her outfit like a model. The copper jacket is colored a wild eggplant purple, a favorite color of mine. The skirt is sterling like the lapel. The bottom of the skirt is sealed off, so she too is a functional vessel. When I was in high school blazers and jackets were the trend. I had a navy pin-striped blazer as well as a fuchsia and a green one. I was a member of Future Business Leaders of America, because I thought it was the right thing to do. I usually wore my blazers with shorts or mini skirts.

Standing 4 inches in height, this vessel was fabricated in two sections. The blazer is copper and the skirt is sterling silver. The trunk of the blazer was fabricated in several parts. One piece forms the back and 2 overlapping pieces forms the front. The breasts were dapped into the copper blank before the 2 halves of the jacket were brought together and formed. The length of the jacket made it difficult to get daps into the neck opening to reform the chest. This was a technical problem that I could not get around. In the future if I were to construct a similar form, I would form 2 bi-shells. This would give me the freedom to work on the inside of the form as needed. I decided that the best way to solve this problem was to use a snarling iron to reform the chest.

After I formed the bust, I annealed the piece and reformed the cylinder where the actions of the snarling iron had distorted it. The sleeves were made from 2 pieces of copper tubing cut at 45-degree angles. I approached them the same way that I approached the sleeves for, *Hurray!*, tweaking the sleeves until they fit perfectly against the jacket. Planning the lapel, I placed short strips of scotch tape across the shoulders and around the neckline. With a pencil I sketched out the shape that I wanted for the lapel. I carefully removed the overlapping layers and stuck them onto a piece of Bristol board. I traced around the pattern, which gave me the shape that I needed to form the sterling silver lapel.

To attach the lapel, I laid the annealed jacket face up, nestled half way down in the pumice rocks, and laid the flat lapel on top, aligning it with the neckline. I then stick-fed the solder at the right side of the lapel to tack it down. This method worked, but was not the most efficient way of soldering the two pieces together. The lapel should have been sweat soldered onto the jacket. This method would not have produced any excess solder.

However, the color of the flux would have been the only indicator of when the solder flowed. After the lapel was tack- soldered to the jacket, I gently tapped the lapel until it lay naturally against the jacket.



Figure. 15. *Lil Business Suit*. 2001 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, gesso, colored pencil. 4"x1".

After forming the conical sterling silver skirt that fit under the jacket I soldered the sections together. I filed the neckline and sleeves to the appropriate length. As final accents I add a small copper flower on the right side of the lapel as well as 5 silver buttons. I fabricated a mini-skirt not much different in form than the trunk of the jacket. After the skirt was chain saw file finished and both parts were annealed and fluxed, I decked them in the natural standing position. I placed the solder pallions by using a small paintbrush and inserting them into the yoke of the jacket, carefully placing them onto the top of the silver skirt. I then heated the entire piece using the color of the flux as an indicator of when the solder flowed. This proved to be successful, because minimal solder clean up on the skirt was all that was required.

Li'l Rocker

I started by cutting up and closely examining a pair of Barbie doll pants. I traced both cloth patterns on Bristol board. The challenging part was creating a waist that was narrow enough to look natural and still be able to

get a dapping tool inside of the form to reshape it after the initial form was pulled together. After tracing the patterns on 20- g copper and sawing them out, I soldered the two blanks together, with the solder seam separating the 2 butt cheeks. I began pre-forming each butt cheek with a dapp in the stump the same way that I form breasts. I furrowed both pant legs into a wooden canal unit. The parallel seams formed a butt joint as well as a naturally overlapping fly. After the entire form was soldered together, I used a small snarling iron to reform the butt and hips. I then planished the entire form as much as possible over dapps and the tapered end of the horn stake. My original concept was to have a tight baby-doll- tee that seamlessly fit against the top of the copper jeans, the same way that I had fabricated, *Hurray!*. Fabricating a baby-doll-tee created a new set of problems. Baby-doll-tees are tight and tapered, naturally implying the curves on a woman's body. I was not sure of the best way to fabricate the midriff section of the t-shirt. The hip line of the low-rise jeans was much wider than the bottom of the t-shirts that I had previously formed. After making many paper patterns, I decided that a slightly tapered cylinder that would fit flush to the bottom of the t-shirt as well as to the hip line of the pants would be the best solution to the problem.



Figure 16. *Lil Rocker*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, nu-gold, acrylic, colored pencil. 7"x1".

After her entire outfit was decked and soldered together as a vessel, I began paper patterns for her Elvis inspired belt. A narrow tapered sterling silver cylinder was soldered into place as her belt. I reinforced the fact that

she is a rock star by soldering a whimsical nu-gold and sterling silver star onto the belt for the buckle. I painted her t-shirt pink and her jeans, navy. I applied silver and gold metallic paints to imply acid washed jeans and a gold lame shirt. She appears voluptuous and bold as if she is performing on stage.

Larger-than-life pop artists, such as Brittany Spears, Janet Jackson and my idol, Madonna, inspired this piece. As a young girl the music videos of MTV made a strong impact on my mind. I dreamed about being a powerful, sexy performer. Playing with *Barbie and the Rockers* dolls then as well as the *Jam N Glam* Barbie series of today still fosters that dream. *Li'l Rocker*, is a vehicle for my wildest rock 'n' roll fantasies.

Solo in the Spotlight

I decided that *Solo* would have a sterling silver heart shaped bodice and a silver ruffle tutu. I applied the knowledge I had gained in fitting the segments of *Archetypal Sheath* together in constructing this piece. I soldered the sterling silver bodice to the subtle hip form and used paper patterns to plan the copper sheath skirt the same way



Figure 17. *Solo in the Spotlight*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, fine silver, gesso, colored pencil. 8"x3"x1".

for the sterling silver ruffle tutu, which ended up being a shallow 20-g sterling silver cone, 6- inches in diameter. I formed the ruffle on air with plastic mallets, planished it on daps as much as possible with a small ball peen that I did in *Archetypal Sheath*. After the entire sheath dress was soldered together as a vessel, I began paper patterns

planishing hammer, then used an abrasive stone to make it as smooth. I filed the top until it fit perfectly at the bottom on the skirt, and then soldered it to the dress. I fabricated a small fine silver rose, and soldered it onto ruffle. After I raised the fine silver surface to cover the fire scale, I painted the copper skirt with black gesso. Going for a more grown-up feel, I made short marks on the black skirt with different hues of red colored pencils.

This vessel is my interpretation of Barbie's famous gown, *Solo in the Spotlight*. This vintage 60s dress was composed of a slinky black tube that clung to the bodice and entire figure until the ankles. Where the tube dress stopped it turned into a black screen tutu. On the tutu was a small red rosette of ribbon. A microphone came with the outfit. This was for her singing solo in the spotlight. I always projected myself into this spotlight knowing that one day I would do something great. When I first began raising, I kept having reoccurring dreams of a small sterling silver fish tale dress vessel. The fish tale is one of my all time favorite dress forms.

Fragile

Fragile was deeply inspired by the little woman inside of the perfume bottle for Jean Paul Gaultier's fragrance, *Fragile*. Gaultier designed the famous cone-bra costumes for Madonna's 1990 Blonde Ambition tour. I am a fragile woman. My sensitivity and passion for metal runs deep in my soul. Creating with metal is a very emotional and sometimes painful process for me. It consumes all of me and the art that I produce with it is an extension of the inner secrets of my soul.



Figure 18. *Fragile*. 2002 Copper, fine silver, gesso, colored pencil. 8"x1"x3" .

In the creation of *Fragile*, I applied all of the things that I had learned in constructing the vessels, *Archetypal Sheath* and *Solo*. I decided to fabricate this piece entirely of copper. Only slightly modified from *Solo*, this piece is more elongated with a tighter ruffle. She is wasp-waisted and appears to be very serious. The unlikely juxtaposition to this very grown-up gown is the 4 fine silver bows that are aligned vertically down the back of her skirt, as well as the bow on the right side of her bodice, and the one on the left side of her tutu ruffle. This girly-touch gives insight to the fragility of the woman wearing the dress..

The woman inside his perfume bottle is wearing a long black slinky gown. I am drawn to the surreal qualities of this bottle with the small woman trapped inside the perfume snow globe. The form that I constructed is elongated and rigid, almost transforming into a flower or fish. She stands upright and stiff with fragility falling into the bottom at the ruffled copper tutu. I painted her deep purple and applied long colored pencil marks of lavender and purple to enhance the form.

Good Girls go to Heaven Bad Girls go Everywhere

Using the heart shaped bodice pattern as a template, I began patterns for the angel and devil bodice. The devil's corseted bodice has points in the front and back that visually reference horns and flames. The angel's bodice is scalloped like a cloud. The hips were formed the same way that the hips were, in *Archetypal Sheath* and *Solo*. Like, *Swimsuits*, the overall forms are similar to lingerie. The angel's flat sterling silver base is scalloped like a cloud and the devils flat circular base has many tapered points like flames. The bodices and hips are 18 and 20-g copper.



Figure 19. *Good Girls go to Heaven Bad Girls go Everywhere*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, brass, 24-k Kum-boo, gesso, colored pencil. 4"x"x1".

However, the wings and halos are fabricated out of sterling silver, except for the angel halo, which is brass. The devil's tail was formed from a piece of 10-g sterling silver wire. 24-karat kum-boo, a Korean technique where gold leaf is overlaid onto sterling silver without the use of solder, was added to the tip of the tail as a final touch.

After applying red colored pencils onto the black gesso in *Archetypal Sheath* and *Solo*, I decided to color the devil the same way. I applied a baby blue gesso to the rough copper surface of the angel, followed by several applications of pearlescent paints as well as enhancing certain areas of the form with pink and blue prismacolors. By using red and black I wanted the devil to appear very grown-up and vampish. The wings and halos are removable, so they are similar to costumes. They can be interchanged, implying that there is a little good in evil and a little evil in good. On the other hand, I wanted the angel to appear pure and innocent. As a young girl growing up in church, I questioned “everywhere”, and wondered what it meant. When I grew-up I realized that it meant that being good is not always the “right thing to do,” and sometimes a girl had to be naughty. My idea was reinforced by popular culture images on TV and in the movies, where a small angel and devil would appear when someone needed to make a decision. The image of the good girl versus the bad girl is also reinforced in underwear, clothing and cosmetic advertisements.

Marilyn



Figure 20. *Marilyn*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencil. 3”x1”x5”.

The totem piece, the famous photograph of her taken in 1955 with her skirt blowing up inspired *Marilyn*. After creating removable wings and halos for the angel and devil in, *Good Girls*, I wanted to push my next piece even further as a functional vessel. *Marilyn's* body joins at the waist in two parts: the halter as a stopper and the

waist and hips as a small vessel for containment. The sterling silver skirt can be slipped over the hips to create the entirety of her dress or simply removed.

The hips were formed the same way the hips were formed in *Solo in the Spotlight* and *Fragile*. The skirt was formed out of an 8 inch 18g sterling silver disk. The pleats were formed the same way that I formed the pleats in, *Hurray*, *Fairy Tales* and *Jewel Tones*. I wanted to emphasize the beautiful silver surface of the skirt, so I planished it to as great an extent as possible, and continued to clean up the surface of the metal with an abrasive stone. Even though her original pleated dress was white I chose to color her halter top, hips and panties soft pink to accentuate her timeless femininity



Figure 21. *Marilyn*, disassembled. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencil.

Lil Sailor

“Li'l Sailor” was inspired by the September 11th attacks. I felt led to make a sweet patriotic piece in contrast to the somber memorials that were taking place throughout the country. This piece was formed the same way that, *Hurray!* was. The t-shirt is copper with a sterling silver collar and copper sailor’s knot tie and sterling silver skirt. I have always been an “*All American*”, girl and wanted to make a piece that conveyed my patriotism. “Li'l Sailor,” is voluptuous and full of life, like the images of Rosie the Riveter the symbol of workingwomen during WWII. (<http://www.filmstransit.com/rosie.html>) The shirt was painted with navy blue gesso and colored with navy,

red, and burgundy prismacolors. The sailor knot tie was painted with alizarin crimson acrylic paint and highlighted with gold metallic paint



Figure 22. *Lil Sailor*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencil. 3"x1"x2".

Sex Starts in the Kitchen

Extremely humorous in title, this cliché is actually a wives tale in the south. Young Christian girls are often taught this in church. We were taught to be loving in the mornings while preparing our husbands breakfast. During breakfast, young wives are supposed to be careful not to nag, but to hug and caress him, leaving him with nice thoughts of his wife all day, so he would be eager to make love that night. My initial thoughts on this cliché is of a haggard middle aged woman in a terry cloth robe and hair curlers, trying to spark some sort of interest in her husbands wandering eye, after many years of marriage. The phrase is so humorous, I could not help but to make an even more amusing piece. My version is like a sexy French maid. This ensemble would be a sure fire way to have sex, instead of working towards it.

Sex Starts in the Kitchen, is a functional piece that has 2 sections. The chest acts as a stopper while the hips are a small vessel for containment. Her breasts are covered with a lacy strapless 22-g sterling silver bra. On the bottom part of the vessel, she is wearing matching sterling silver panties. She wears a small red apron around her

waist. The hips were formed the same way as in *Solo, Fragile, Good Girls Go To Heaven, Bad Girls Go Everywhere, and Marilyn*. The entire piece was oxidized and the figure was painted pale pink to imply skin. I chose to paint the small apron red, to enhance the small silver heart on the right side of her apron and to reference the color of passion.



Figure 23. *Sex Starts in the Kitchen*. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencil. 3"x_ "x1".



Figure 24. *Sex Starts in the Kitchen*, disassembled. 2002 Copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencil.

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VITA
ALISON GREER PACK

- Personal Data: Date of Birth: February 26, 1976
 Place of Birth: Wilkesboro, North Carolina
- Education: West Wilkes High School, Millers Creek, North Carolina
 Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina ;
 Art Education, B.S., 1998, certification K-12
 East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
 Art, M.F.A., 2003
- Professional
Experience: Interim Art Teacher, Sullivan Central High School; Blountville,
 Tennessee, 2003
 Gallery Director, Slocumb Galleries, East Tennessee State University,
 2000-2003
 Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, College of
 Arts and Sciences, 1998 – 2000
- Publications: Susan W. Knowles, (2001). Review, “Transparent Things (Through Which the Past Shines).”
 Art Papers. Atlanta: Art Papers Inc..Vol. 25.6, November/December, 2001, 68.
- Honors and
Awards: The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi