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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Fine and Applied Arts
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

LA BELLA DEL INTERNO

by

M. Renee Kroner

May, 1986

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
METAMORPHIS.....	2
THE INDIVIDUAL PIECES	
<u>Innocence</u>	4
<u>Pain</u>	8
<u>Healing</u>	13
<u>Emergence</u>	17
<u>Rebirth</u>	20
TECHNIQUES.....	23
CONCLUSION.....	26
STATISTICS.....	27
SOURCES CONSULTED.....	28

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Innocence.....	7
2. Pain.....	12
3. Healing.....	16
4. Emergence.....	19
5. Rebirth.....	22

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INTRODUCTION

My goal is to produce a series of five vessels which show a personal metamorphosis. Each vessel will contain a woven piece of fabric which will convey a particular emotion. The vessel itself will be made of plexiglass and vary in cubic form. My intention is not to create vessels that function in a conventional way, rather, each vessel will contain and communicate an emotion, and when shown in progression, they will represent my own metamorphosis.

THE METAMORPHIS

In order to understand this five piece series, which I have constructed to communicate my individual emotions, progression, and change, one must know my personal concept. I view myself as well as others as spiritual vessels. We all contain a personal history, woven within this history are feelings that have been exposed, hurt, healed, and changed. I believe that although I have expressed my own personal experience in this series, others will be able to relate to it as well. The Vietnam veteran or the battered wife understand the loss of innocence due to inflicted pain. They also understand that in order to continue living a full life, a spiritual healing must take place. It is important to remember that although the pain has been inflicted physically, it is the human spirit that has been damaged and must be healed.

Because this is an autobiographical statement, I can only discuss my own interpretation of these emotions and their relationship to my metamorphosis. Two aspects of this series to keep in mind are the roles of the fiber and of the plexiglass. The fiber is responsible for communicating an emotion to the viewer. The plexiglass vessels represent the walls I created in order to protect myself. In some cases the walls barely exist, allowing

the viewer to see and touch the fiber freely. While in other pieces the plexiglass restricts the viewer from touching the fiber, while still being able to view it clearly.

Each piece is intended to singularly communicate an emotion, and together show a progression and change. Therefore, I feel it is important to write about each piece individually, detailing the emotion, thoughts needed to be conveyed, experimentation of fibers, as well as manipulation and placement of the fabric. It is also important to write about each piece in the order of which it is placed in the series, so I will begin with Innocence and end with Rebirth, and in doing so, reiterating the relationships between the progression and the final change.

INNOCENCE

The word innocence evokes many different images: children, brides, virginity, clean, pure, and perhaps ignorance. I felt it was important to consider these images and find which of them best related to my own innocence. Because I felt that this innocence no longer existed within me, it took soul searching, and experimentation, in order to find this relationship.

As a young adult, I considered myself intelligent and perceptive. My innocence was not due to ignorance, but rather, a belief that because I knew of all the evil things that could happen to a person, they would not happen to me. In other words, knowledge would be my protection. I was also a trusting person, trusting people until that trust was violated. I believed that in order to be hurt, one had to allow it to happen. At this time in my life I was open and receptive to others, allowing people to get close to me. I was willing to accept others, while at the same time be giving of myself freely.

In order to create the first vessel, I had to consider all of the above. Solving the problem of the plexiglass was easy. I built a two sided structure leaving the top and two sides open. I felt that two walls had to exist in the beginning, in order to have the

instinctive reaction to build them later. It was also necessary to show that although the instinct for protection existed, I chose to live beyond the barriers.

At that point my challenge was to create the fiber piece. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to use silk, and the colors should be soft and gentle. I chose several different silks and cottons in my first warp. The colors ranged from tans to pale pinks. The tans represented the human aspect and the pinks represented the feminine aspect of my innocence. Using a ten harness damask pattern, I divided my warp into sections. I started in the center and worked outward, by varying the fibers and the widths of the sections I created a strong geometric pattern. For the weft I chose a cream colored silk, which was very soft and slightly shiny.

However, this pieced proved to be much too busy. There were too many different types of fiber and too many variations of color. These two problems combined with the geometric pattern of the damask ended up to be unsuccessful. I now had to reassess my design.

I decided to use a cotton warp and a silk weft. The warp consisted of a 20/2 pale pink cotton and a white Dureen cotton. By using a 2:1 ratio (two strands of white to one strand of pink) in my warp I was able to achieve a very subtle hue of pink. My weft was the same silk that I used in the first piece. I also wove the

same damask pattern in this piece as I did in the first, and this time it worked.

Between the subtle combination of warp and weft yarns, their colors, and the structured geometric pattern of the damask, I was able to create a piece of fabric that was soft to the touch as well as to the eye. The damask pattern created an illusion of order and strength. This strength had to exist now, like the walls, in order to be drawn upon later.

I finished the edges of the fabric by leaving a 1/4 inch of fringe around all four sides. Due to the soft fibers used in the piece, the fringe gave a soft and blurred illusion, further communicating innocence.

The placement of the fabric in the box was important. I did not want attention drawn to the plexiglass, only to the fabric. It also had to appear vulnerable and unprotected. At first I had it suspended between the two sides of plexiglass, hanging in a V-like shape. I felt that this was too stiff. Therefore, I gently draped the fabric across the plexiglass, allowing it to flow along the sides both inside and out. By doing so, I drew attention away from the plexiglass and onto the fabric. The fabric was totally exposed, thereby allowing the viewer to see and touch the entity of my innocence.



INNOCENCE

PAIN

Pain comes in many different forms, but the results are the same, it hurts. Pain can be inflicted physically, emotionally or both. Whichever way it happens, it causes a few different reactions to occur. One is accepting the pain, dealing with it (healing) and then going on. The other possible reaction is to constantly live with it and not let it go. In some cases both occur, this is the case with myself.

The pain I experienced was inflicted upon me by another person. At the time I felt I had allowed it to happen. If I had not been so open and trusting the pain never would have happened. The pain came without warning or hesitation. I felt at the time a part of me had died. In a short period of time a drastic personal change had occurred.

Recreating this pain was not difficult for me to do. I felt it was necessary for the plexiglass to remain in the same form as in Innocence. The only way the pain could have been inflicted was if the vulnerability still existed. Also, because the pain happened so quickly there was no time to construct the protective barriers. Therefore, the change in emotions had to be communicated solely through the fiber piece.

The most important aspects of this piece are the fiber texture and color, and the use of the steel pins. The warp was done in a coarse black linen and 20/2 red cotton. The fibers were chosen because of their textures. The linen was the overall fiber and the red was used as a highlight. The black represents the death of innocence, and the red represents the physical aspect of the pain. Black is the dominating color because the importance is placed on the spiritual aspect of the pain rather than the physical aspect. Therefore, after the piece was woven and off the loom, I used a black dye to block-out areas of the red yarn, resulting in only red highlights being seen.

I used a ten harness damask pattern in this piece as well. However, instead of having a one inch wide warp section in the center, it was 1/4 of an inch wide, gradually getting wider towards the edge of the piece. By using the same pattern in Pain as I did in Innocence, I established a connection between the two fiber pieces. The pattern was reversed to resemble change in organization and expectation. I chose a 10/2 black cotton weft, which allowed the damask pattern to be more visible.

The use of steel pins was done to represent pain as an outside force. At first, I tried weaving the pins into the warp. However, by doing so, it created a silver line in the fell line. This made the pins appear as an

outgrowth of the fabric, which I did not want. Therefore, I decided to weave the fabric, install it into the plexiglass vessel, then puncture the pins through the fabric. The pins were sharpened on both ends. Therefore, when they were seen stuck through the fabric they created a strong design element, as well as a strong emotional statement. There was a perpendicular line created by the pins, as well as a tactile contrast between the fiber and the metal.

In order to communicate a sense of shock and surprise, I wanted the fabric to be stiff. I starched the fabric using a spray starch and a hot iron. The first four applications of starch were applied while the fabric was flat, two applications per side. Then I folded the fabric in half length wise, and applied starch only on the fold. It is important to note that the fabric was left undisturbed to dry in between applications of starch. To finish the raw edges, I turned them under and blind stitched them into place.

After this process was done, the fabric was now ready to be put in the plexiglass vessel. I suspended the fabric between the two walls. In order to secure the fabric to the box, I had to glue the edges of the fabric to the top edges of the plexiglass. The fabric then hung in a sharp V-shape between the two walls. The steel pins

were then put through the fabric. I followed the damask pattern and put five pins per weft face block.

The end result was a drastically different piece with subtle similarities to Innocence. This piece was able to communicate vulnerability, pain and shock. All of these feelings I experienced and needed to express. This piece also acts as a pivotal piece in the series, without it the metamorphosis would not have occurred.



PAIN

HEALING

The first reaction to the pain was a need to lock myself away. Unfortunately, one cannot realistically do this. I did however, lock a deep private part of myself away. I kept the pain inside along with a fragile spirit. I was well aware that although people around me could see through the barriers of protection I had put up, they would never get close enough to touch or hurt me. I had made a conscious decision not to deal with the pain, but at the time I did not realize that by locking myself away I was healing and becoming stronger. My spirit had been torn and the spark of life was reduced to a burning ember. Essentially, my spirit was locked in a self imposed exile.

Recreating the essence of this healing was difficult. At first I approached the aspect of healing from a physical point of view. I wove a piece of cloth that was gauze like in texture. The warp was silk noil, and I airbrushed it with colors resembling a bruise. The weft was a thin silk which toned down the colors of the warp. However, this piece resembled a used bandage rather than communicating the emotional aspect of healing.

I then decided to weave a piece of fabric that gave the illusion of having been worn and aged. I did so by

using a Dureen cotton warp and a thick and thin cotton weft. The sett of the warp was eight, thereby allowing me to use beat control and manipulate my weft.

Two pieces of cloth were woven identically. By using a loose beat in the beginning and gradually packing my weft tighter. I was able to create two pieces of fabric that structurally became stronger. This was done to show that the healing process is done slowly. I started out fragile, but gradually became stronger.

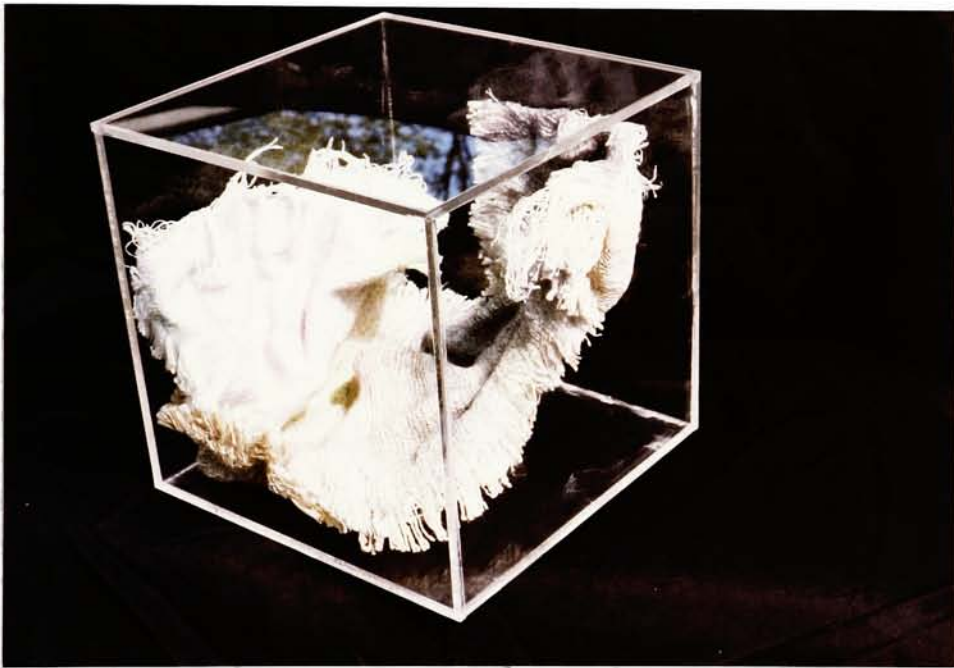
I used color in this piece very subtly. One piece was woven in pale tans to resemble the human or physical aspect of healing. This was because there were times when I did not allow people to touch me. The white piece was airbrushed. I began at one end with black and gradually faded into pale hues of pink, blue, and green. The black represented the pain, the other colors represented the smoldering ember of life and hope. The light colors were applied lightly because these emotions were not very strong at that point.

The plexiglass vessel was constructed as a solid cube. Allowing the viewer clear visual access to the piece but not physical access. I felt that the walls I had constructed to protect myself were inaccessible from the outside and the only way to create that was by a solid cube. Since I knew people could still interact with me in a removed way, it was important for the

plexiglass to remain clear. It was only necessary to create a physical barrier, not a visual one.

When installing the piece of cloth in the plexiglass box, I wanted it to appear collapsed and weak because that is how I felt at the time. In order to do that, I had to sew a piece of metal screen between the two pieces of cloth. This allowed me to manipulate the cloth until I achieved the form I desired, and have it remain in place. The edges of the fabric looked as if it may fall apart if put under too much stress. After finishing the fabric and forming it, I then glued it into place in the bottom of the box. That way it would remain in place during transport. Finally, the top was glued on sealing the fiber within the box.

I feel that sealing the fiber into the box helped create a strong emotional statement. This piece of fiber desires to be touched, the viewer can see its softness and delicacy, but is abruptly stopped from being able to touch it. I was then successful in recreating my spiritually self-imposed exile.



HEALING

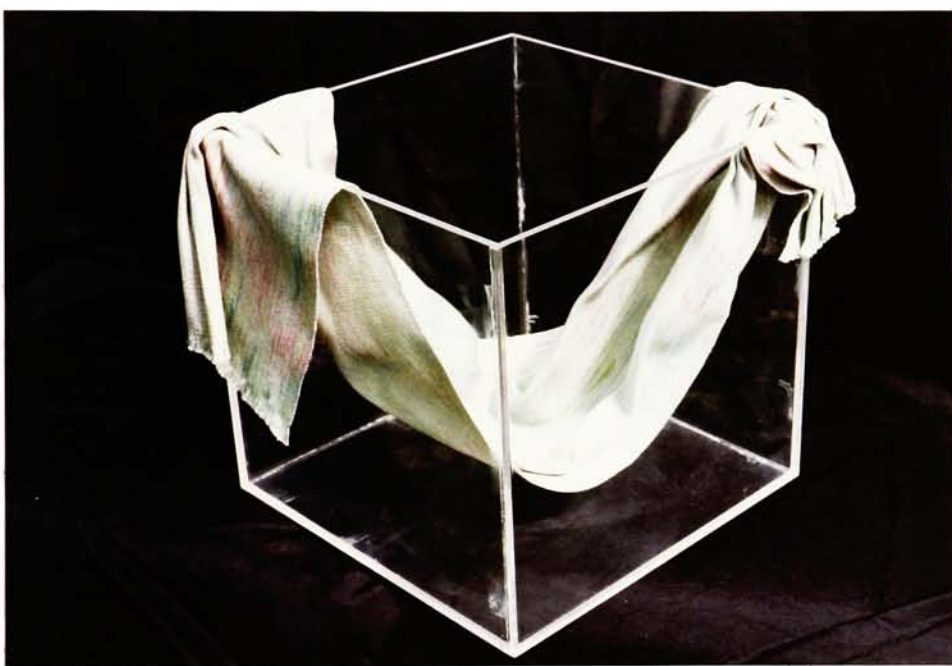
EMERGENCE

There came a time during the healing process when I no longer wanted to be alone. I needed to break down the walls I had so carefully constructed. I realized then that I had concentrated so much on keeping people out, that my own emergence from this prison would be just as difficult to get out of as it was for others to reach into. As much as I desired to relinquish my walls of protection, I still felt timid. However, the burning ember of life was becoming more of a flame and becoming stronger.

I decided to create a piece of fabric that was solid in its construction, and subtle in its coloring. By using a 5/2 cotton in both the warp and weft, and by weaving the fabric warp faced, I was able to create a piece of fabric that was not stiff, rather it draped easily and gently. In dying the warp, I layed it flat, soaked it with water and then painted it with dyes of soft pink, blue, and green. Then by suspending the warp from the ceiling, the colors were able to run together resulting in a very subtle blending of all three colors. After the warp was woven and off the loom, I painted with gentle brush strokes, small amounts of pink, and blue dye. This added a spark of color to the piece.

The plexiglass vessel was a cube with the top removed. The emergence was a slow process, therefore the four sides of the box remained intact. As a result, when the fabric was installed, the only vulnerable part was from the top.

The fabric was draped between two opposite corners of the box. It gently flowed across the bottom of the box and up along the inside corners. On the right corner, it came over the edge and down about two inches. On the left corner it came over the edge and extended down four inches. The folds were blind stitched into place and the fabric was glue to the top edges of the box. The two ends of the fabric were finished with 1/4 inch of fringe. This was necessary for the gentle flow of the fiber and color to continue throughout the piece and end gently. Between the plexiglass box and the design of the fabric, the timid act of emergence was created.



EMERGENCE

REBIRTH

Rebirth is an exciting realization of a new found strength and a burst of life. Realizing this strength made it no longer necessary for the walls of protection to exist. However, just because the walls are not physically present, the potential for them to return is still there, but before the pain occurs not after.

The first piece of fabric I created was not exactly what I wanted. I wove a piece of cloth in 3/2 cotton that was warp faced, thereby creating a heavy piece of fabric that did not drape properly. Also, I painted the warp with bright blue, pink, green and yellow dyes. The warp was layed out flat, and was dry when I painted it, and remained flat to dry. The results of the dyeing was not what I wanted, too much white remained and I did not blend the colors properly. Therefore, between the weight of the fabric and the colors, another piece had to be done.

The second and final piece of fabric was woven with a 20/2 cotton in both warp and weft. I sett the warp at forty-eight, which resulted in a warp faced weave. I created a mock satin weave (warp faced on one side and weft faced on the other) by the threading of the warp and the treadle tie-up.

I painted the warp before dressing the loom. It was dry, but I applied heavy amounts of dye allowing the colors to blend together. I used blue, pink and green dye. With the blending of these colors, purple, blue-green, and umber were also created. The warp was left flat to dry and then put on the loom. I used a 20/2 pink cotton that matched the pink dye in the warp as my weft. As a result the warp faced side was multi-colored, while the weft faced side was a solid pink.

The plexiglass vessel returned to the same two-sided form that appeared in Innocence and Pain. Total emergence occurred while at the same time, the ability to create the walls still existed by having two plexiglass panels intact. The fabric was draped across the plexiglass form, flowing out and around the vessel. Giving the illusion of having bursted out of a vessel. The folds were sewn into place with blind-stitching. The ends had one inch of fringe. This was done because a folded hem ended the painted side too abruptly, and this side was the focus of attention. The piece was then glued to the top edges of the plexiglass.

The painted side of the warp represents the burst of life, while the solid pink side represents the new found strength. This piece concludes years of pain and loneliness, but it also begins a new life of hope.



REBIRTH

TECHNIQUES

The weaving techniques I used in this series were: plain weave, twill, and damask. In two of my thesis pieces I also used a warp painting technique as the main design principle. These techniques were chosen for their design capabilities and the way they exhibited the qualities of the fiber or both.

Plain weave means that the binders are next to each other. This means that the weft yarn goes over every other warp thread in one shot and the opposite in the second shot. One way to alter the appearance of plain weave is to vary the sett of the warp, which means either increasing or decreasing the threads in an inch. In the piece Healing, the sett was eight and as a result, the number of shots per inch was greater than the sett, which resulted in a weft faced piece of fabric. In Emergence, the sett was forty-eight and because there were more ends per inch than shots per inch, a warp faced piece of fabric was created.

Twills, are weaves in which the binders are at a forty-five degree angle. In Rebirth, I set the warp at forty-eight ends to the inch, and the threading was a straight draw on eight harnesses. I used the following treadle tie-up:

Treadle 1	Harnesses 1 and 2
Treadle 2	Harnesses 3 and 4
Treadle 3	Harnesses 5 and 6
Treadle 4	Harnesses 7 and 8

The treadle sequence was 1, 2, 3, 4, repeat, resulting in the fabric being both weft and warp faced.

The third weaving technique I used was a ten harness damask weave. This technique is based on a five harness satin weave. Satin weave is a weave in which the binders do not lie next to each other, however, an angle is created in the weave that is greater than forty-eight degrees. The degree of the angle depends upon the number of harnesses used, and also determines the reflective qualities of the fabric. Satin weave also recreates a double sided fabric which is warp and weft faced.

In order to weave a damask piece, a minimum of ten harnesses was needed. Damask is based on a two or more block threading system. Block A was threaded on harnesses one through five and Block B was threaded on harnesses six through ten. The treadle tie-up used was for Block A to be warp faced and Block B to be weft faced. This particular damask structure created the geometric pattern necessary for my thesis works, Innocence and Pain.

The warp used in Emergence was wetted before I applied the dyes. After it was completely painted, it was hung vertically to dry, which allowed the colors to

flow into one another, making for a flowing overall series of shapes. The warp for Rebirth was dry when I painted it. I then left it flat to dry, resulting in darker and more defined color shapes. When both warps were woven, the painted design did not change except for a slight shifting of the warp threads. This shifting did not distract from the painted shapes, instead, it enhanced the overall design.

CONCLUSION

As a body of work, this series has successfully communicated a metamorphosis, while at the same time each piece is able to stand on its own and communicate an individual emotion. The ability to do both is important because the clear expression of each emotion is essential in order for the series to be understood.

Completing this series has resulted in an end as well as a beginning. This is the end of a personal turmoil, and the beginning of a boundless future. My work will continue to be intuitive; however, it will not always be personally representational.

STATISTICS

INNOCENCE Sett: 48 e.p.i.
Warp: 20/2 cotton, Dureen cotton
Weft: Silk
Finished size--width: 10"
 length: 34"

PAIN Sett: 48 e.p.i.
Warp: 10/2 linen, 20/2 cotton
Weft: 10/2 cotton
Finished size--width: 9½"
 length: 17½"

HEALING Sett: 8 e.p.i.
Warp: Dureen cotton
Weft: Thick and thin cotton
Finished size--width: 12"
 length: 50"

EMERGENCE Sett: 48 e.p.i.
Warp: 10/2 cotton
Weft: 10/2 cotton
Finished size--width: 12"
 length: 20"

REBIRTH Sett: 48 e.p.i.
Warp: 20/2 cotton
Weft: 20/2 cotton
Finished size--width: 12"
 length: 90"

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