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PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS

Charnelle Denny Holloway

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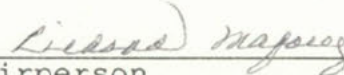
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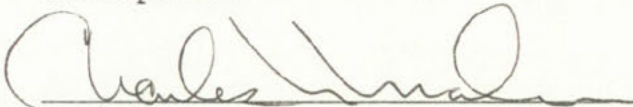
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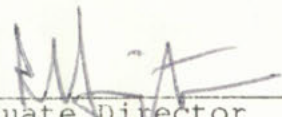

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I am involved in the history of practical, functional objects.

The balance of shapes and color

And indelible, soul-stirring lines.

Some people tell me that I am a craftsman, but not an artist.

A craftsman's job is practical while an artist's job is spiritual.

I object to this notion

No one can tell me that there's not something spiritual

in a beautiful, finely crafted object.

I am an artist / craftsman

Preface

I am an artist / craftsman.

One who designs with function in mind

One who translates the second dimension (drawings)

into the third (objects)

And makes the spectator

Become the participant in all aspects of

the third dimensional form.

I am involved in the history of precious, functional
objects,

The balance of shapes and color

And indelible, soul-stirring images.

Some people tell me that I am a craftsman, but not
an artist.

A craftsman's job is practical while an artist's job
is spiritual.

I object to this notion

No one can tell me that there's not something spiritual
in a beautiful, finely crafted object.

I am an artist / craftsman.

Introduction

Every artist should be a craftsman. Every craftsman should be an artist. For some reason, a line has been drawn. The invisible line between art and craft is a dangerous and unnecessary barrier. It is detrimental to the art field as a whole. It separates all visual artists, when there shouldn't be a separation. It encourages artists, some with great vision, to become lax in the use of their tools. It encourages adept craftsmen to compromise creativity for the sake of function. It has lessened the credibility of and respect for artists in the eyes of a public that used to admire and revere this field.

Thoughts and questions that I've had in the past few years have culminated into this thesis. I will show my personal perceptions and conclusions of what my art should be, according to what I've learned. And I will also explain my efforts to reach back in time and recapture an era when art and craft were one.

On Art and Craft

It never occurred to me that there was "supposed" to be a real division between art and craft. In my undergraduate studies at Spelman College, courses in African and Afro-American art were offered. We found that African art, for the most part, was craft. Every weaving, every sculpture had a function or purpose. Paintings had a function when they covered the body and turned humans into living creatures or gods for ritual dances or ceremonies. Patterns and symbols were painted on the body also to proclaim or protect. The Masai warriors, for example, still use stylized patterns to record acts of bravery and in Niger, Wodaabe women wear triangular tattoos on each side of their mouths as a defense against evil influences.

Additional studies of other non-western cultures also revealed that craft and art in each culture existed in one tangible form. The ancient warrior helmets of the Samurai (Japan) are grand, intimidating and magnificently crafted. Some of the helmets take on images of animated, grimacing beings or gods, while others use horns, antlers and other creative, even threatening forms. The colors are rich and dramatic. Visual beauty, however, did not compromise the function of the helmets -- protection. The base of each helmet was wrought in iron and the specific forms were built onto this base in lighter weight materials. Leather, wood

and/or substances similar to paper mache were carefully formed, sanded and laquered to look like metal. The overall effect is striking and, to me, one of the best examples of art and craft as one. Art was the creative, spiritual idea and craft was the technical and physical means to produce the idea effectively. One was never given more importance over the other. Each was used simultaneously to the enhancement of the other.

Before advanced industrialization (which dramatically altered the relationship between the craftsman and the public), Europe and the West enjoyed the same merger. René Lalique designed beautifully expressive pieces, sometimes using plants and nature as inspiration, but the craftsmanship of his glass was the vehicle that brought designs to life. Technical knowledge of glass and its properties made it possible for Lalique to plan the subtle effects of light and shadow on plain, etched or tinted glass. The silver and glass of Louis Tiffany, clocks and other embellished objects of Carl Fabergé also incorporated creative ideas and craftsmanship into one art form that would never be considered as just "crafts".

In each of the afore-mentioned cultures and periods in art, there was a wonderful integration of imagination, good design, and fine craftsmanship in an item that just "happened" to function. It is very difficult to successfully achieve all four of these goals in one piece. A work that is

powerful in its expression can be technically deficient. On the other hand, a superbly crafted piece can suffer from lack of imagination or a bad design. It is very easy for an artist to unconsciously push one aspect to the detriment of the others. But knowing that these aspects exist and are possible to integrate successfully prohibits me from ever purposely sacrificing one for any of the other three.

They are Also the On Design and Materials

During my studies, it took some time before I knew what exactly in a particular piece attracted me. Recognizing a tendency to admire certain design elements, I studied specific favorite works. It seems that I had always been attracted to simplistic styles of three-dimensional forms with a modest display of accents, if any. Appealing two-dimensional works or surface design, however, consisted mostly of intricate lines or patterns that gave a more subtle image from a distance. After studying many European, Western, and Non-Western cultures, I found the most stimulating artwork in Asia (particularly Japan), Africa (Ghana, Niger, Kenya), and the Art Deco Movement (which was, coincidentally, also partially inspired by African Art).

The goldsmithing and colorful Kente cloth of the Asante in West Africa; certain Peruvian ceramic vessels; holloware and magnificent warrior helmets from Japan; the crafted objects of these and other Non-Western cultures seem to have a sense of mystery about them. These objects, respected by their own cultures, at the same time give off an aura of importance (spiritual or otherwise) even to people who see them for the first time. I am strongly attracted to this type of art. Symbolism, a different cultural viewpoint or concept of propriety and the usage of materials, negative space and color seem to be the reasons for this attraction.

They are also the starting point in my efforts to capture an essence of mystery and/or importance in my own work.

These efforts can be seen in my repousse dolls and constructed candelabra (see slides no. 1, 2, and 3). The United States is a place of many cultures and backgrounds. The best way of conveying any important or spiritual feeling, for me, is in the usage of intercultural images, that is, images that have meaning to all cultures. For now, I prefer that my images provoke a mood or feeling rather than being a piece in a puzzle that no one can figure out. The dolls may mean different things to different people. They could be little people, baby angels, little Buddhas or just dolls -- depending on the background brought by the viewer. The candelabra is also intercultural and should stir a religious or reverent feeling.

Expression of a mood or feeling through metal is only possible after many experiments in various techniques and combinations of materials. The colors of metal are limited mostly to grays, browns and golds, but each metal color has characteristics or qualities that can convey certain sensations. For example, bronzes and golds convey warmth or sunlight, while silver and platinum can convey coolness or sterility. I prefer a soft luster finish that allows the colors of the metals to be seen. A high polish on metal all too often diminishes or even destroys the contrasting effects of details or changing metal colors on a piece. Even

brilliant stones almost disappear when they must compete with shimmering metals surrounding them. High polished surfaces are best used sparingly (i.e. to differentiate planes or edges).

I often use more than one metal in each piece (see slide no. 4). One metal usually makes up the dominant color while the other accents or embellishes. I think this produces a richer effect. Other materials are used, but they are picked carefully, considered for their texture, color and overall integral possibilities. It is important, however, that these other materials be used as the materials they are, thus allowing a maximum of performance or meaning to be extracted from them without violating their natural properties. That means plastic is used as plastic, wood is used as wood. Nothing is painted over or imitative of other materials.

Again, both design and the materials used are equally important in their relationship to each other. They should not compete, but compliment, with each design thoughtful of the properties and limits of the materials used. It is also my opinion, no matter what the medium, that the actual technique used in linking design and materials (craftsmanship) should be studied, practised and made just as important as the aesthetic ideas discussed in history courses or the scientific studies of the chemicals or elements used.

Closing Statement

Through my studies, it has been shown to me that the best example of any art is one where the artist shows knowledge of design and control -- but respect -- for the medium in development an artistic expression. True, lasting art makes no distinction between art and craft. The true artist knows that, in any work produced, one focus cannot exist without the other.

I can see now that the past few years of experiments have only served as a vehicle to get me started. My studies and the techniques that I have learned have provided a solid foundation from which to work. In the art field, metalsmithing is part of a group that I call "craftsman arts", where technical knowledge of the materials used is essential to creative expression. In this group I also include ceramics, glass working, photography, sculpture and weaving (to name a few). In a field such as metalsmithing, a great deal of time is spent learning the various techniques of the field. Experiments in the manipulation of metal and material are necessary. So much thought and energy is spent in the actual designing and making of an object. It is by no means wasted time and energy. Discoveries of personal taste, however, have just recently surfaced and any deep philosophical aspects of me and my work are in their embryonic stages at best. I anticipate that my ideas and

skills will continue to grow and change. But I hope that no matter what theme or thoughts have me in their grasp at the moment, my work will always reflect a strong design background, a good understanding and respect for the medium, and an open-mindedness to all cultures and varying points of view.

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Masterpieces of Primitive Art. New York:
Alfred A. Knopf, 1978

1. Teapot (top view detail). Silver, nickel, wood.
2. Sugar bowl and creamer. Sterling silver, nickel.
Construction and metal inlay techniques.
3. Untitled (sculpture). Rough bisque clay.
Construction and hand-building techniques. 7" x 12" x 1 1/2".
4. Untitled. Copper, brass, plexiglass. Construction
and hand-building techniques. 12" x 12".
5. Necklace. Porcelain, glass. Construction and hand-
building techniques. 17" x 27".
6. Pin. No-gold, plexiglass. Cold-joining and roller-
printing techniques. 2 1/2" x 1 1/2".
7. Rendering of Necklace Design. Fabric. 10" x 12".
8. Necklace. Copper, brass. Construction and metal inlay
techniques. 27" long.
9. Rendering of Necklace Design. Fabric. 10" x 12".
10. Necklace. Sterling silver, nickel, porcelain glass.
Metal inlay and construction techniques. 17" x 27" x 1 1/2".
11. necklace (detail). Sterling silver, porcelain

List of Slides

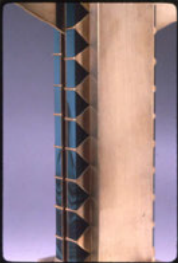
1. Copper Doll. Copper, bronze screen, fabric body. Die-forming and repousee techniques. Cast hands. 11" tall.
2. Brass Doll. Brass, fabric body. Die-forming and repousee techniques. Cast hands. 11" tall.
3. Candelabra. Brass, malachite. Constructed. Hand-cut malachite 8" x 12" x 3".
4. Candelabra (detail of side). Brass, malachite.
5. Bowl (untitled). Copper, sterling silver. Construction and raising techniques. 9" x 9" x 5".
6. Teapot (untitled). Sterling silver, nickel, wood. Construction and metal inlay techniques. 9" x 10" x 6 1/2".
7. Teapot (top view detail). Silver, nickel, wood.
8. Sugar bowl and creamer. Sterling silver, nickel. Construction and metal inlay techniques.
9. Untitled (sculpture). Brass, bisqued clay. Construction and hand-building techniques. 7" x 12" x 6 1/2".
10. Untitled. Copper, porcelain, plexiglass. Construction and hand-building techniques. 10" x 12".
11. Necklace. Porcelain, brass. Construction and hand-building techniques. 2" x 3".
12. Pin. Nu-gold, plexiglass. Cold-joining and roller-printing techniques. 2 1/2" x 1 1/2".
13. Rendering of Necklace Design. Pencil. 18" x 12".
14. Necklace. Copper, brass. Construction and metal inlay techniques. 22" long.
15. Rendering of Necklace Design. Pencil. 18" x 12".
16. Necklace. Sterling silver, nickel, tourmaline stones. Metal inlay and construction techniques. 15" x 7" x 1".
17. Necklace (detail). Sterling, nickel, tourmaline.

18. Box (untitled). Brass, copper. Construction and Japanese chiseling techniques (top of box). 5" x 4" x 4".
19. Toy Sculpture. Brass, nu-gold, stainless steel, citrine stones. Construction. 7" x 7" x 1".
20. Necklace, bracelet. Silver, copper, hematite. Constructed copper-inlaid beads. 18" long (necklace), 8" long (bracelet).
21. Display (untitled). Paper, metal. 18" x 24".
22. Earrings in Display. Silver, nu-gold, nickel, gold. Constructed. 1" to 1 1/2".
23. Belt buckle. Copper, nu-gold, plexiglass. Construction. 3" x 2".



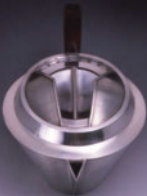










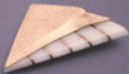




































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