



Essence [slide]  
by Sharon Francis Maxwell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
Montana State University  
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of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

April 1993

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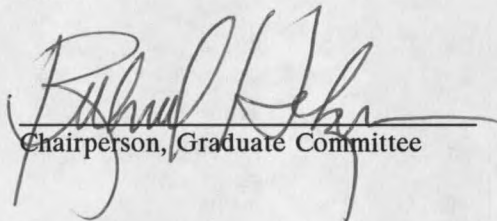
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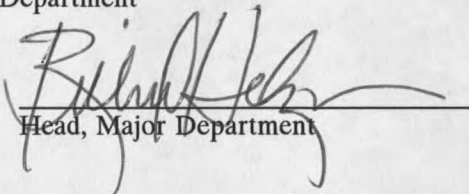
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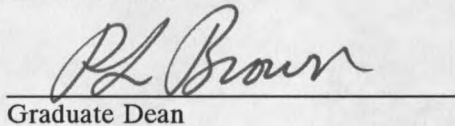
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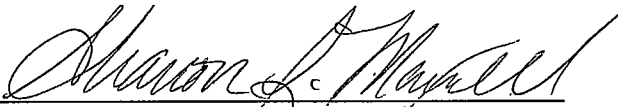
  
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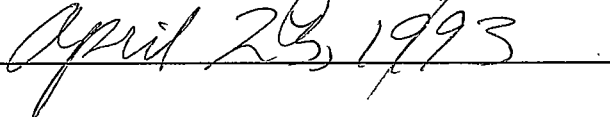
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## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Flowers have inspired mankind for thousands of years, providing a lasting and endless variety of motifs. Metal is enduring; it can represent images that will also endure.

The familiar representation of flowers has been refined over centuries of diligent production. Faberge, the great Russian goldsmith, saw flowers as a defense against the endless Russian winters. His floral studies in precious metal and gem stones have become renowned for their delicacy and elegance. Faberge used the delicate metalwork of the Chinese as an inspiration. The Chinese people also saw not only the beauty of flowers, but the spiritual significance of certain specific floral motifs, such as the lotus which represents purity, or the plum blossom signifying endurance and fortitude.

As a metalsmith I try to acknowledge in my own work the history and technical requirements which are inherent in the process. I work with flower motifs in response to the previous traditions of metalsmithing as well as my own fascination with the botanical world. The scientific study of plants, roots, genetics, soils, and plant structures is also an interest of my siblings. I am intrigued with the visual and sensual qualities of flowers. The fascination I have with flowers is longstanding and is matched by my love of adornment and decoration. As my interest in nature can be traced to my family, so can my interest in metalsmithing. My grandfather was a blacksmith in Germany, and as a child I stared with fascination at the molten lead my father, a plumber, used to seal pipes.

I try to create an image comparable to nature by using reticulation and fusing. Utilizing the technique of fusion, I heat precious metal beyond its melting point, causing the molecules to mingle. When cold the molecules solidify, leaving a permanent bond

between the metal pieces. Reticulation is a process in which heat liquifies and draws the metal into ridges and valleys. In the metal's liquid state the chaos of nature is unpredictable; when solid I can manipulate the metal to my satisfaction. With these I emphasize the essence of a flower's brief perfection.

In my last attempt to duplicate nature's beautiful pigments, I use permanent inks and translucent paints. The inks and paint stain the pieces, filling the pores of the metal while allowing the shimmering qualities of the precious metals to shine through the transparent colors.

As in nature, there is a function behind the beauty of my work. My botanical forms, which integrate organic shapes and texture, also function as perfume vessels. The intricate surface textures and colors compel the viewer, the same way flowers attract insects and animals, to examine the piece more closely. The hidden function of the flowers as a container is then revealed.

Flowers, shapes and colors are flags to the world, signaling that there is more present in the plant than meets the eye. Insects and animals noticing these signals help the plant in its pollination process, thereby bringing the flowering process to its literal fruition. I seek to produce similar results by representing the plant in its most attractive state of development. The removal of the stopper and the application of the perfume are the vessel's functional essence. This action creates an intimate interaction between the vessel and viewer.

Flowers are reminders of our own mortality. Briefly they are beautiful as a means for procreation, but quickly the beauty fades. I seek to endure and be remembered for the objects I create; if successful I will have captured a moment in nature.

## LIST OF SLIDES

1. Apple Blossom  
necklace/perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
2. Blackberry  
necklace/perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
3. Wild Rose  
necklace/perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
4. Wild Strawberry  
bracelet/perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
5. Dogwood  
bracelet/perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
6. Dogwood-ish  
ring/perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
7. Water Lily  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
8. Water Poppy  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
9. Sand Lily  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
10. Wind Flower  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
11. Yellow Bell  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver

12. Wood Violet  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
13. Western Spring Beauty  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
14. Glacier Lily  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
15. Poppy  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
16. Water Lily II  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
17. Hellebore  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
18. Liverwort  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
19. Love in the Mist  
perfume vessel  
Shibuichi/Sterling silver
20. Moth Orchid  
pin/perfume vessel  
Sapphire/Shibuichi/Sterling silver



Spring Beauty  
perfume vessel  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
5 X 3 X 2 inches



Olgaon Macdonell  
P.O. Box 6336  
Bosman MA 59371



"Blind Flower"  
Perfume Vessel  
Sterling Silver / Silver Copper Alloy  
7 1/4" X 8" X 5" →

DEC 28, 1992 13



"Water Lily"  
Perfume Vessel  
Sterling Silver / Silver Copper Alloy  
5 X 7 X 5 1/8" →

Wild Strawberry  
perfume vessel - bracelet  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
6 1/2 X 3 X 3 inches



Apple Blossom  
necklace - perfume vessel  
sterling silver - shibuchi  
18 inches



Glacier Lily  
perfume vessel  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
5 X 4 1/2 X 3 inches →



Yellow Bell  
perfume vessel  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
6 X 5 X 4 inches



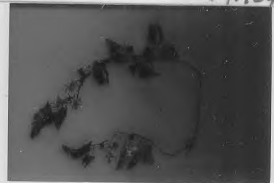
"Water Poppy"  
Perfume Vessel  
Sterling Silver / Silver Copper Alloy  
6 1/8" X 8" X 6" →



Dogwood  
perfume vessel - bracelet  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
9 1/4 X 3 X 3 inches



"Blackberry"  
Perfume Vessel / Neck Piece  
Sterling Silver / Silver Copper Alloy  
33 inches



DEC 28, 1992 27

Poppy  
perfume vessel  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
11 X 8 X 7 inches



Wood Violet  
perfume vessel  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
6 1/2 X 5 1/2 X 4



"Sand Lily"  
Perfume Vessel  
Sterling Silver / Silver Copper Alloy  
5 1/8" X 6" X 6 1/8" →



Dogwood - lot  
perfume vessel  
sterling silver - shibuchi  
size 6 →



Wild Rose  
necklace - perfume vessel  
shibuchi - sterling silver  
30 inches



Love in the Mist  
perfume vessel  
sterling silver - shubuchi  
12 x 8 x 8 inches



Water Lily 2  
perfume vessel  
shubuchi - sterling silver  
8 x 6 x 4 inches



Mock Orchid  
perfume vessel - pair  
sterling silver - shubuchi  
15 1/2 x 8 x 7 inches



Kallebore  
perfume vessel  
shubuchi - sterling silver  
8 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 6



Liverwort  
perfume vessel  
shubuchi - sterling silver  
8 x 6 x 5 inches















































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