The Nature of beads

Michele D. Miller
THE NATURE OF BEADS

By

Michele D. Miller

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APPROVALS

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Date: Oct. 29, 1993
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my professors Leonard Urso and Mark Stanitz for their guidance and support through my two years at Rochester Institute of Technology.

I would also like to thank my friends and family for their encouragement and personal support, and of course, my stay at Rochester, New York, was invaluable to the theme of my thesis.
PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the various qualities of nature through the concept of the bead. A series of beads has been created whose aesthetic elements enhance the essence of nature and the spirit of the individual. With these pieces I wanted to express my sensitivity and feelings about nature relating to seasons of the year and personal memories. It is my hope that this body of work will heighten an awareness of nature and arouse thought and curiosity about beads.
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INTRODUCTION

Beads have always intrigued me. Even as a child, I remember owning beads of one sort or another. They were collected from relatives, neighborhood garage sales, and flea markets. I loved taking them apart and restringing them into my own creations. I also remember believing some beads were more valuable than others and some were even magical. In fact, as I became more knowledgeable, I learned that some beads can be valuable and that others are believed to possess magical and medicinal powers. When I review my undergraduate work, I see references to the bead, and this exploration has been continued in my graduate body of work.

I am also enchanted by nature. My family and I have traveled and camped throughout most of the East Coast and have made one trip out west and to the Grand Canyon. I have always explored, looked, walked, and hiked to experience and discover new things about the world. I am fortunate to have lived in an area where one could experience all four seasons of the year and the transformations of everything surrounding and within it. So through my travels and walks into the woods, fields, or wherever, I have observed many images to recreate in my jewelry. Some of my inspirations in my bead work have come from curled leaves, seeds, and flower buds.

I have dovetailed my two interests into one undertaking -- transforming images of nature into jewelry through the use of beads. I
hope that those who see or wear my jewelry find personal significance in the pieces.
CHAPTER ONE

What exactly is a bead? Must it have a hole in it? Does it have to be strung? Does it have to be round? My goal in this thesis is to answer these questions through my creative manipulation of the bead.

As part of my work on this thesis, I have experimented with the concept of the bead in necklace, ring and bracelet assemblages. I have attempted to break from the typical round decorative bead form. Beads have been used for trade, adornment, ritual and functional uses since the beginning of time. My intent is to create and use the bead in a new form and to fashion stories and significant meanings in relationship to these pieces.

I have researched the definition of the bead from various sources. Most of the explanations were very similar. Some of the common characteristics of beads are that they are usually small objects pierced for stringing together for decorations and other purposes. Although beads are usually described as spherical, the earliest known beads were generally tubular, barrel, and disk-shaped, thus reflecting the technologies and availability of materials of the times. For example, the earliest known beads were discovered in Laquina, France, from the Neanderthal period. Dated at 38,000 B.C., they were well-made from grooved animal teeth and bones and were worn as pendants. Other primitive beads were thin-walled shells or other soft materials that were easy to chip, grind, and pierce. Common materials used in making
beads over time include shell, bone, stone, wood, metal, glass and plastic, as well as a variety of other substances. Sometimes these materials were also carved, painted, or enameled with designs.

As technology advanced, spheres became the most common bead shape and remained so for thousands of years thereafter. Other common bead shapes include squares, flowers, and animal shapes, among others.

Beads are primarily used in making jewelry adornment and other kinds of ornamentation. Not only have beads been worn around the neck but also around the waist, over the ears, through the nose and even attached to the eyelids. They are also used in garments and headdresses and have been worn by the superstitious and for curative powers connected with them.

The history of the bead has woven its way through almost every culture and every period of time. They have reflected the cultures of which they were and are a part of and tell us a great deal about social, political, economic, and religious lives of the people who have made and worn them. Since beads are such durable and portable objects, they have been considered important personal possessions. They have been ideal vehicles for conveying cultural information from generation to generation, sometimes with the stories and symbolism changing by situation and time.

The significance of beads throughout time has not always been one of pure adornment. In many cultures, people are superstitious about the colors of beads and ascribe magical powers to them. Their possession is thought to bring good luck, ward off evil and attract the attention of certain deities. They are also used in ceremonies and
rituals. When strung together in some religions, they help the faithful count their prayers. Indeed, the word bead is derived from the Middle English word bede, meaning prayer. Some other interesting uses of beads include the Filipino practice of placing two beads in a cup at a wedding ceremony to bind marriages. In Ancient Asia beads were scattered like seeds beneath temples to induce bountiful harvests.

Beads were also used in commerce. They have been worn to communicate wealth and diplomacy, and in most tribal cultures, jewelry is a sign of a woman's status. Beads have also been used as peace tokens as well as for barter and trade. Whether the material be precious stone, silver, or glass, beads have been used to purchase spices, land and even slaves. Beads, made from materials native to specific countries, have been traded and carried over various trade routes in many lands due to their light weight and portability.

Since these ornaments have such a vast history and have had intimate associations with their owners over time, it is only natural to wonder who previously owned the known antique beads and where they came from, both in terms of area and time. Without the history and knowledge of beads and the vehicle of communication they provide, a wealth of cultural information would be lost.

So, then, what is the definition of a bead? Because of the varied aspects of their development and use, it is likely that a true definition of a bead will always be controversial. It seems the important traits of a bead are form and function. The composition of a bead seems to be one of mass, the shape infinite, and the function is one of adornment in one way or another. Throughout time they have been
used for personal and cultural expression and are symbolic of commonly held beliefs and practices.

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In my work with beads, I wanted to challenge the smaller traditional scale and chose to create larger pieces. I consider these beads to be sculptures used to function as adornment in relation to the human figure. Each bead was created individually and is extraordinary in and of itself. When combined, the beads create a visually unique piece of art. My goal was to create a series of beads contrary to the usual -- to create beads that had three-dimensional qualities and mass.

Three dimensionality and sculptural forms are important factors in my work, as is the stimulation my beads can arouse in the senses of sight, feeling and sound. I wanted to create beads that could be held in the hand and played with. They are in a sense intimate extensions of ourselves, a feast for the eyes that offers a range of sensations to the touch. I wanted to give the wearer the opportunity to explore a multitude of textures, to feel the subject matter and to enjoy the materials by their warmth and coolness, hardness and softness, lightness and heaviness.

I wanted to challenge the conventional boundaries of the typical bead. I envisioned beads of various sizes and shapes that are functional, usually in the form of a neck piece. Using certain techniques and ideas (discussed in the next two chapters), I feel I have created some unique and successful pieces.
CHAPTER TWO

I have often looked to tribal and ethnic jewelry for inspiration, not only for materials and techniques, but also because that type of jewelry serves as an outlet for expressions and beliefs. The most dominant influences in my work are the legends and stories of African jewelry, the techniques and constructions of the Bedouin jewelers of Saudi Arabia and the images of the Art Nouveau movement. I felt these influences combined could make a very interesting body of work.

In East Africa, body adornment has always been the main outlet for artistic expression. The colorful jewelry emphasizing movement is used to accentuate and highlight this form of art, creating dramatic effects. Not only does this form of decoration convey a wealth of information about the wearer but also about East African history. Until this century the East African nomads used natural substances for their ornaments such as bones, skins, shells, etc. These basic elements were used with great imagination to create ornaments both striking and beautiful. I would like my jewelry to possess these qualities as well -- movement and expression and be comfortable to wear.

Jewelry from the Sahara has always been characterized by protective symbolism. The people of the desert who can afford to wear silver do. This metal is said to be blessed by the prophet, as opposed to gold that is of the devil and is feared and believed to bring bad
luck. This is interesting, since I have always preferred silver to gold. Copper is worn for its supposed medicinal powers.

Shells and glass beads are also valuable for their association with fertility and protection. Different colors of glass beads represent certain beliefs. Blue symbolizes the purity of the sky, white the health of servants, and violet the dove, symbol of love and gentleness. Color is an important aspect of my jewelry. The variations achieved by shades or tones of color give my pieces a sense of mystery, especially when a patina is applied to the silver. Color also seems to lend passion to jewelry, another reason why I work with color in my work.

These craftsmen from the Sahara make all their material belongings. They see themselves as a part of the universe as a whole, and their all-embracing vision is expressed in every piece of work.

The jewelry and traditions of Morocco and Ethiopia also lend themselves to my work. The people from southern Morocco use bold, colorful and flamboyant designs. The women collect quantities of valuable jewelry of silver, coral and amonozite. Use of these elements and a love for natural forms have resulted in rich asymmetrical designs. One of the interesting and important pieces of jewelry from Morocco is a bridal or dowry necklace that over time becomes a generation necklace. When a young girl is married, she is given a single strand of beads. She then hands this strand to her daughter on her marriage and another strand is added, a practice that lasts for generations. Like a family heirloom, I would like the jewelry I make to be passed on and appreciated through time.
In Ethiopia the craftsmen are best known for their silver beads of numerous and beautiful designs. Small beads are made by cutting cross sections from tubes of silver, whereas most of the larger beads are cast in halves. Strands of these beads can be up to eight feet long. They are worn around the neck, and shorter ones are worn on ankles and wrists. Some of these necklaces are purely decorative, but others with a long, central bead and woven tassels are known as musbahak, Islamic prayer beads. This was an inspiration for my addition of fibers to the jewelry.

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The Bedouin jewelers of Saudi Arabia have probably had the most impact and effect upon my work. Their multiple units, chain-making techniques and surface embellishment have all influenced my jewelry. Most of the jewelry is characterized by symbolic and abstract shapes. The designs are often intricate in geometric and floral motifs.

Body adornment is an ancient art form in Saudi Arabia, where the Bedouins have adorned themselves with necklaces and head ornaments for thousands of years. Bedouin jewelry is unique in its boldness of design, substantial size and the distinctive hand-crafted appearance that resembles ancient ornaments. This jewelry is characterized by chains, bells, coins, and strands of irregular sized, multicolored and silver beads.

As in my work, silver beads are often a major element in Bedouin necklaces and are usually the largest types of beads on the strand if other types are used. The silver beads are placed at regular intervals for relief. The terminal mace-shaped bead, also made from silver, is
fashioned from a piece of folded metal that is a more economical method of production and is lighter for the wearer than drilling solid silver. Many of the smaller beads are made this way also. Larger beads, sometimes up to two inches in diameter and larger, are constructed in two halves using embossing and embellishment techniques before being soldered together. These bead shapes can be annular, bulbous, cylindrical and spherical.

Silver beads of specific styles have special names. The largest central bead in most neck pieces is called a heikal. This bead is a sealed, cylindrical, rounded-end charm case that sometimes supports other charms, balls, bells or coins.

Each side of the heikal is met with spherical beads called jauz that appear again halfway down the strands. Two more are placed at each end before the mace-shaped terminal bead called a mizmar. Another interesting bead, called a tut, is a small, five-sided bead constructed of clustered mulberry spheres.

Another type of Bedouin necklace I admire is called an iqd. The metal centerpiece of this necklace ends at the sides of the throat, and plaited cotton or a bound red cloth continues around the neck to be secured at the back. This necklace was another of the sources that inspired me to incorporate fibers into my jewelry.

It may seem that this finishing technique was used to spare the cost of metal, but in fact, it is used because it is more comfortable for the wearer, since a typical Bedouin necklace is usually made of large ornaments and many components and, therefore, is heavy.
Another inspiring Bedouin necklace, called the kirdan, is an elaborate meshed collar. The main variation in this type of necklace is length. They can range from a choker to a piece that can extend from the neck to the waistline. The beads used in the kirdan are funnel-shaped terminal beads connected by a fine silver-plaited rope. White cotton is also threaded through two levels of the necklace in and out of links. This thread work is common. Sometimes coral beads are added as well. The kirdan may also have a piece of cotton backing designed to support the piece. It is said that the silversmith who designed the original kirdan may have been inspired by the armor of crusaders, as the intricate meshwork definitely resembles chain mail.

Characteristics of Bedouin necklaces are combinations of various color and sized beads to form the major part of the strand with larger beads occurring now and then in consistent relief. Graduated strands are uncommon. To trace the actual sources of Bedouin beads is difficult, since many of them have been rethreaded time after time and are very old.

The chain-making and surface decoration techniques used in Bedouin jewelry are very interesting and appealing. Wire has a long history as a decorative element in their jewelry. It is used in both chain-making and surface decoration. It is variously plaited, twisted, or woven in loose or tight weaves, or used to accent the shape of an object. Wire is also used for fine filigree work and chain-making. Wire may also be wrought, cast, fused or soldered. Combinations of one or all of these techniques can be seen in a single piece.
Handmade chain called silsilah is a principal element in Bedouin jewelry and can often be the major part of the ornament. These chain assemblages are fabricated in different ways using links, spacers and baubles. Filigree, granulation and sand-casting techniques are also sometimes combined. The plainer uses of chain, such as the loop in loop and other simple connections of linkages, have been with the Bedouin since the earliest uses of wire in jewelry.

Bedouin jewelry has always fascinated me both in style and technique and has been my greatest inspiration. Not only does my work follow their traditions of assemblage, but I also use the same processes of turning a sheet of metal into a beautiful three-dimensional object of adornment. Annealing and hammering sheet metal are the initial processes of making Bedouin jewelry. These are followed by cutting and shaping a piece in preparation for embossing, repousse', chasing and engraving techniques that give decorative relief to flat surfaces. This embellishment is used on most of the hollow objects in the round such as large beads and bracelets. These ancient methods of decoration have been popular throughout the ages, given the amount of metal necessary and the weight of solid-cast objects.

In this modern age, handmade objects are desired and appreciated. Man's desire to return to a simpler life closer to nature may be the reason for this revived interest in handcrafted objects. Bedouin jewelry is created in the tradition of the ancient styles, decorations, and techniques. It is appealing today because it is decorative, valuable and wearable.

* * *
The Art Nouveau movement was an outlet for artists' needs to observe the outside world. I wanted my jewelry to have the same awareness of nature. Like the artists from the Art Nouveau movement whose motifs and decorations were inspired by the stylization of branches, leaves and flowers, I, too, draw upon these forms for the elements in my jewelry. Art Nouveau jewelry also produced a deeper relationship between nature and the wearer with its force and sensuality. This movement created a renewed appreciation in the love of nature.

The Art Nouveau artist who has inspired me the most is Rene' Lalique. Not only were his jewelry objects intriguing, but his renderings of leaves, flowers, etc., are also fascinating. He is described as the true innovator of that time. He turned over old barriers and traditions and created a new language of art. Nature was an important energy in Lalique's work. He drew from plants, countryside fields, flowers, wild roses, grasses, wheat, insects and birds. He borrowed from these sources to create pieces of his own visions. Lalique brought such a romanticism, fantasy and mystery to his art form. I find myself, like Lalique, to be a curious observer of nature as well as people and whatever is around me.

In addition to studying the countryside, Lalique also brought flowers and other specimens into his studio to study, as I often do. He never looked at illustrations, photographs or other reproductions for his images. He observed the evolution of flowers as they bloomed and died before his eyes. Lalique seemed to favor winter images.
Lalique was not only an original and innovative artist, but one who has captured a new atmosphere of nature and art to bring us emotionally charged works of art. Nature was his life-long passion.

The hibernation of nature in winter does not mean death any more than fallen petals or leaves do, but rather a temporary suspension of vitalities, suggesting surging growth and rebirth of life. I think this is why I choose to work with fall and winter images for my concentration. Not only were the Rochester winters an intense time for self-reflection, but they were also full of new and changing experiences for me. The processes of nature are symbolic of those of real life and the passing of time.

This information of other cultures and how they perceive the concept of jewelry has had a very significant effect on my work. The impact that jewelry can have on a culture or single person creates an urge to produce special pieces of jewelry. The influence and incorporation of these ideas into my pieces have been very beneficial in letting me express myself through my work.

With these outlets as my inspiration, I was able to take a new and unique approach in my work by combining elements and energies from these cultures. My forms are mostly asymmetrical nature motifs that use decorative surface techniques and artistic expression in a form of body adornment that reflects those influences.
CHAPTER THREE

Most of my thesis work was stimulated by the last two years spent in Rochester. The pieces represent a passing of time. The jewelry was created as the result of thoughts, visions and feelings that often came from long walks, by myself and with others, the changing seasons, moods of people, and personal experiences.

Most of the pieces were fall- and winter-oriented. It seems that most of my inspiration came from the fall: the long walks in the woods and sitting for hours just looking and listening, feeling the breeze and playing in the leaves. Trees and leaves were so unique and beautiful, they were my biggest inspirations, whether standing alone or together in a group, they are quite a sight. Each has its own distinctive qualities, color, texture, size, and so on, but when seen together, they become a different and new beauty as a whole. Even a barren tree is fascinating, the pattern of the naked branches, the positive and negative spaces it creates, the line qualities and tapering limbs.

I am enchanted and inspired by the music of the breeze blowing through the trees and the fallen leaves as they roll and bounce across the ground, by clouds, the sunset, the brilliant Rochester sunset. To me, the colors of the fall are incredible. The burgundy copper leaves are my favorite. The bright oranges, yellows and the brilliant reds, their different shapes, colors, and sizes and how they curl and bend
around themselves are so sensual. In the winter I love listening to the tinkling sound of falling snow as it hits the ground.

This is how I feel about my jewelry. Each element is special on its own, but when combined as a whole, creates a new uniqueness. As in nature, line, space, structure and texture are important to create a totally resolved statement.

My work comes from my heart, what I see and feel. Rochester was the final inspiration for my work. The open fields, forests, the privacy one has walking outside fascinate me. I wanted my jewelry to bring a new appreciation of nature that I feel a lot of us have forgotten about and lost. I hoped my thesis work and paper would encourage people to get reacquainted with nature by taking walks, smelling flowers, playing in the leaves and so on. Like so many before me, I use jewelry as an outlet for expression and belief. The story I would like to convey is one of movement and sound. Although each piece conveys themes and stories through my vision, I want each observer to have a personal interpretation of the imagery of the jewelry's form and surface decorations.

Most of the pieces are deeply felt personal narratives, private emotions that are nevertheless common to human existence and therefore can be shared intimately. I wanted to design pieces of curiosity that prod the viewer to look closer at the piece, almost like the details in nature. I like to think that my pieces inform and invite intimacy.

Technically, I fabricate my forms from sheet metal such as silver, copper, etc. My forming and chasing techniques to abstract the forms and surfaces of the metal are similar to the Bedouin's. During
the process of making this jewelry, many unexpected but exciting things occurred. As I worked with the metal, it often created its own form. Many of the beads conveyed a characteristic quality I had not anticipated.

The patination processes also produced exciting results. Through chemical and heat applications, the reactions I achieved produced some very vibrant and/or unexpected colors. I would like to research patinations further, especially environmentally safe and natural patinations.
CHAPTER FOUR

Instead of a string of beads just hanging around the neck, I wanted these pieces to accentuate the wearer's body. The jewelry should be a statement piece by enhancing the wearer and working with the body, a personal involvement. A piece should embrace the wearer and adapt itself to the body lines.

1. Dancers -- Sterling silver necklace
   Length 29", beads 1" - 4"

   The first piece of this series, the necklace represents experimentation with shape, mass, texture and color. I felt this piece was a celebration of sound and movement. It was about meeting new people, being in a new place and being excited. These beads have a figurative quality that I think transposed from these new experiences while I was making them. I wanted to create forms to be applied and worn as an extension of one's physical self. I have an interest in line, color and the use of movement to the effect of a musical quality in the work.

   This was my first exploration of the bead form. I wanted to keep the form hollow and to see how the metal would move. Instead of piercing and stringing the beads in the usual way, I suspended the beads and strung them in a linkage system in a Bedouin tradition.
The color and noise the piece made were important. As noted previously, color has always been important to my jewelry. It enriches the subtlety of form and detail. The colors in this piece were created by means of liver of sulphur and hot water on a fine silver surface. The multiple beads make a wonderful noise when moving with the body; the sound is almost ritualistic like an African chant. I like my jewelry to be statement pieces; large, noisy and colorful qualities are effective ways of achieving this. At this point I began to realize the wearer's movement adds to the drama of the jewelry, and the wearer becomes a participant.

2. Fall -- Copper, bronze, brass and sterling silver necklace

Length 30", Width 3"

This next experiment in joining beads was inspired by nature and the walks I took. Since I was working with the ideas of nature, I also wanted to experiment with more environmentally safe patinas. Along with the variations of metals, the colors in this piece were achieved by heat coloring and an ammonia fuming process. To retain these colors, I had to use cold connections to link the beads together, since additional heat would alter the color.

This necklace was an important experiment in form, color and connections. I think the color investigations were very successful, but the bead forms were not. Through this piece I concluded that the bead forms should be more round, hollow and massive in reference the Dancers' beads. The stick connections were sterling silver wire that was then reticulated that produced a realistic effect. Although these elements
and the other connections were successfully decorative, they were too rigid in movement. This area required further investigation.

The beads' forms did inspire some interesting surface ornamentation. In the first piece I experimented with marks and pattern. The details in nature are so fascinating that I wanted to incorporate this idea into the jewelry. The fusing techniques of mixed metals on the surfaces gave the forms more three-dimensional and textured surfaces. From the details in the jewelry I hoped to encourage people to pay more attention to nature's beautiful details.

3. Pod -- Sterling silver and bronze brooch  
   Height 3", Width 1/2 "
   Beads are usually used in strands of necklaces and bracelets, but are rarely used alone. I choose to work with one bead in a brooch fashion. This form was created like the Dancers but was 'strung' with a pin mechanism. Like the previous piece I worked with texture and fused bronze shards onto the sliver for some depth. This interesting concept led me to other uses of the bead.

4. Sticks and Stones -- Sterling silver, bronze and jade bracelets  
   (#1 and #2)  
   Length 9", Width 1"
   With the winter approaching I began to look at fallen leaves and the positive and negative spaces in the trees and fallen sticks. The sticks were very intriguing: how they laid on the ground and the sound they made when stepped on. The images of winter are symbolic, with the
holidays approaching I became interested in wreaths. I thought the combination of these two ideas could create an interesting piece.

The sticks were made by cutting tubing that was then formed by hammering recesses. The same procedure for surface texture as on the brooch was utilized. Instead of stringing these beads end to end, I strung them through the sides, therefore enabling them to be twisted in a wreath-like fashion. I created two of these bracelets, the first without stones, the second with. During the construction of the first bracelet, I was testing natural patinas, and the most successful and surprising was the pomegranate fruit. I broke the fruit open and crushed the insides, then put the fruit and bracelet in a coffee can for two weeks. The results were astounding. The patination was rich with subtle variations of reds. Stones were used for the color on the second bracelet. I wanted them to be subtle and somewhat hidden, almost secretive, like a new budding leaf or flower. I think this piece was very successful in all aspects: form, texture, color, connections and concept.

5. Wreath -- Copper, bronze and sterling silver necklace
   Length 30", Width 1.5"

The bracelets led me to a more complex wreath piece that took the form of the leaf shape again, but also combined other elements as well in an evergreen, Christmas holiday spirit. I thought the beads were stronger in form than the Fall necklace, because they were more massive. The various metals were fused within each other and other elements were used to represent the variations in the holiday wreaths I
was seeing. I tried using color applications like the Fall neck piece, but was not as successful, because the forms overlapped one another and I could not use cold connections as easily. Therefore, fused-end techniques were used for connections that caused a loss of the bright colors.

In this piece I also began to think more about the whole entity. Like the first necklace, I wanted to draw attention to the entire piece rather than just the front, but at the same time, I wanted it to be comfortable to wear. In the three-dimensional nature of my work, as in nature, the whole is so important, and no aspect of the whole should be overlooked. This piece represented the comfort and warmth of home and friends and the welcome keepsakes of handmade wreaths on doors.

6. Pick up sticks -- Copper, brass and bronze body sculpture
Length 16" Width 9"

Winter was the inspiration for this piece. The beads were positioned in the neck piece according to the positive and negative spaces I saw in the bare trees of this season. Just as the season's fashions become warmer and heavier, I thought it could be interesting seeing this effect created in jewelry. I envisioned a body sculpture that reflected the winter and its subtle colors.

This piece is actually very comfortable to wear. It feels very protective and secure, which is the feeling I wished to convey. The piece also moves well, and, again, I wanted the back to be an important focal point.
The composition was also inspired by the large beaded bodices of Africa, in which the beads are applied in patterns that indicate the family's prosperity and cowrie shells are attached to promote fertility. These beads were connected in the same fashion as the Sticks and Stones bracelet. The colors were mostly achieved by heat patination, but, again, I lost some of their brilliance when they were connected using the fused wire.

I think this piece was very successful as beads and is an interesting sculptural piece.

7. When the Ice Breaks -- Sterling silver and 18 kt. gold necklace
Length 21.5", Width 4"

This necklace closely represents my feelings and expressions. Winter was just about over and spring anxiously awaited. One night I was watching a television show that takes place in Alaska, and everyone felt tense and was waiting for something to happen. They blamed the monotony on the winter and were waiting for the ice to break to awaken the spring. I was feeling the same way and wondered how I could create a piece awaiting spring. One day when I was sad, I cried, saw a teardrop fall and thought what a beautiful form. I thought of rain washing away the winter and bringing a rebirth of the beautiful elements of spring.

This is how the elements were formed for this necklace--from a tear and rain drop to the anticipation of blooming flowers in the spring. The flowers not only contributed to the bead forms but were also the inspiration for the bright color patina and the touches of gold.
represented the sunshine. The intense color mirrored the intense feelings of the blooming season, awakenings and new times. The open forms were about looking within and self discovery. This piece also has a beautiful sound that is more delicate than the Dancers'. The sound is like falling raindrops or the tinkling of leaves.

These bead forms were less contained but were successful in that they worked well together. This piece is also very sensual when worn, again reflecting the emotions of the piece. The linkage system was again inspired by the Bedouin jewelers.

8. When the Ice Breaks -- Sterling silver and 18 kt. gold earrings.
Length 10", Width 2"
I liked the result of the necklace and wanted to pursue it further. With the ideas of the bead brooch, the body sculpture and the previous necklace combined, I wanted to experiment with a different piece of jewelry. This became more of a theatrical piece. The ear wires were a new concept that I found to be successful as well as a sensual extension of the ear.

9. Blossoms -- Sterling silver, 820 silver, 18 kt. gold and hand-dyed fibers necklace
Length 24", Width 2"
This piece was inspired by the new buds of leaves on the trees. I wanted to focus on the whole necklace again. I used a white fine silver surface to represent the purity and freshness of the spring. The reticulated stick forms versus the smooth leaf forms were very
appealing. The assemblage was inspired by some of Rene' Lalique's necklaces.

Since fibers is also my minor, I wanted to begin incorporating this medium. While this piece is strung in a more traditional manner, it does have some variations. I choose brown fibers because of the color association with sticks and wheat. Fibers were also chosen because they are a natural material. The goal was to string beads with fiber in a new, decorative way. I realized while creating this piece that I chose to expose all of my stringing techniques to accentuate the stringing in a decorative fashion, since it is in fact such an important element when dealing with beads. I think this piece is very successful in bead form and construction. The contrast of color and form is also complementary to the sticks versus the leaves.

10. Tied Up -- 820 silver, hand dyed cotton and rayon fibers choker
Length 42", Width 1.5"

I wanted to design something sensual and tight around the neck. These beads were fashioned after sticks. Using the texture that is characteristic to reticulated metal with a darker patination in the recesses and a polished apex, and using the dark red fibers made this a very rich-looking piece. In addition to stringing these beads vertically I incorporated tying techniques that achieved an ethnic quality I liked. The necklace is fastened by tying two end strands at the back of the neck. These tying strands have more of the same decorative beads. Again, I wanted the back to be as interesting as the front. This was probably the most traditional piece in bead
representation and string techniques. It is a very successful piece with a twist.

11. Cascade -- Sterling silver, 18 kt. gold ring

   Length 6", Width 2"

   Like the brooch and earrings, I wanted to take the concept of the finger ring further. I wanted to create magic from the fingertips, an extension of sensuality. Cascading waterfalls and flowers were the inspiration for this piece. The bead forms are lily-shaped.

   I feel this is a very interesting piece, but after I finished it, I would have liked to have changed some things. I love color, and therefore am not thrilled with the white fine silver surface. This piece was about movement and magic and therefore should be sparkling with color. The cascading beads are also rigid and stiff and do not move the way I would have liked them to. I would have liked to string the beads with colorful fibers, using knots in between, so the beads would move more freely and the fiber could extend past the beads as tendrils.

12. Cattails -- Sterling silver arm band

   Length 12", Width 4"

   This was the last piece I made for the show. I wanted to do something different, fun and noisy, a celebration. I was done! This piece is theatrical and has a pleasant noise. The forms were fashioned after cattails and stalks. This had an ethnic and fun quality, but I think was my least successful piece. The bead forms were not massive enough.
13. River -- Sterling silver and hand dyed rayon fibers choker  

Length 30", Width 1"

This is the last piece in this series. I wanted to make myself a special piece representing the calm after the storm. I was finally relaxed and felt good, just like a warm, gently flowing riverbed. I love to watch flowing water; it is very relaxing, meditative and peaceful. That is what this piece was about. The beads were simple, smooth and shiny forms, strung with a rich green fiber. The back tied like the other choker with beads on the ends. The beads were successful and strung in a simple, traditional way with a decorative fastening utilizing the fiber.
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to find versatility in the typical bead form. This research and process helped me discover how many thoughts and insights I had about an idea and provided me with new challenges.

The bead forms encouraged working three dimensionally, which was inspiring. The design problems of stringing these beads led to exciting results. I learned to shake off inhibitions and restrictions with tradition and expand my own concepts and ideas.

Rochester, New York, was an incredible asset and inspiration. I love the outdoors and the wilderness and felt so strongly about it that I had to portray them in my work. The forms and elements of nature are incredible. The details, tree bark, the veins in the leaves and flowers, the colors and everything else, were my inspiration.

I think this thesis was very educational and successful, and, hopefully, it touched the viewers in a special way. In future pieces I hope to incorporate many new and different elements. I still want to work in a bead format and will always incorporate silver, but I also want to include more natural materials such as stone and shell, etc. Since myth and mystery are involved with certain stones, I would like to incorporate titles and/or stories with jewelry using these gemstones.

I also am excited by a new bead concept that is a variation on the Bedouin heikal. This new bead will have a secret compartment that
will open. The compartments will also be visible sometimes. The wearer will be able to create a personalized story based on whatever is hidden in the piece.

I would like to work in an ethnic and tribal fashion like the artists of Africa and Saudi Arabia. I have always been interested in fibers and hope to keep this medium in my work, both for color and texture. Color through patination has also intrigued me. Over time, I hope to experiment with more natural patinas as well as environmentally safe ones.

In the future I will continue my work to express life experiences, memories, symbols of substance, images of the past, present, and future. I would like to work with decidedly progressive jewelry. I want to continue to take structures that have evolved through craft tradition and evaluate and reassign the standard values to what I consider a more appropriate timely or personal content that is both new and exciting.
REFERENCES


Francis, Peter, Jr., "When Is a Bead Not a Bead?" *Ornament Magazine* 1988 (Vol. 11, No. 3, Spring).


