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Reincarnating the micro universe

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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Reincarnating the Micro Universe

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ABSTRACT

My “Reincarnation Series” traces the meaning of life, rebirth and the cycle of transformation. It is an outcome of my quest to bridge the internal and external worlds of human experience, rich with polarities and full of complementary forces and opposite energies, properties, and attributes. This blending of contrasts in our world creates beauty. My work stems from my belief in Buddhism and portrays the full engagement in the world of a person’s unreserved presence, including mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual energies. My work reveals how each individual is in a fluid web, within and without consciousness, receptive to growth.

While investigating my own inner landscape, I sought to portray perpetual metamorphosis by drawing, sewing, weaving, coiling, crocheting, soldering, and electroforming. I worked with glass frames, enamel, and inlays; spun metal yarn; and incorporated a variety of materials into my work, including fabric, strings, copper, brass, silver, gold, stone, paper, glass, charcoal, pencil, crayon and Conté crayon. Lines, shapes, layers, colors, and textures emerged to express interconnection, interdependence, fluidity, growth, and rebirth. My perceptions, emotions, memories, experiences, dreams and inspirations were the basis of this work.

I attempted to challenge my artistic and technical vocabulary and integrate diverse media to create works full of dynamic energy. The process of creating these works was as significant as the end products themselves. By being open and present, without attempting to over-control outcomes, I was able to create a space in which my ideas could breathe and be translated into works of art.
STATEMENT OF INTENT

Reincarnation is an integral part of the Buddhist belief system, and so greatly influences the way Buddhists view life. The belief that life re-emerges in perpetual metamorphosis is an important and enchanting concept that is incorporated into my work. Having the concept of reincarnation as the basis of my work gives it a direction moving towards freedom, spontaneity and uninhibited expression.

My work expresses my emotions and recreates past experiences, childhood memories, dreams and inspirations. I am able to express my vision by climbing through my stream of consciousness and mapping out what I see as I look into the past, face the familiar and unfamiliar, and reflect upon my life. During this process, every curve, every line, every color hue, and every shape is alive, and becomes a sort of “reincarnation” of my inner self.

In many ways, beauty is mysterious. I was fascinated by the unfamiliar beauty of natural forms during my childhood, when I spent countless days on the beaches of Jeju Island in South Korea and spent hours studying my grandfather's elaborate rock collection. These experiences and others taught me the value of the “circle of life” and the interconnectedness of natural things.

My work is a micro-universe created with interconnected pieces and shapes that co-mingle. Layers, textures, inlays and colors blend to portray the concept of endless metamorphosis. Spun metals grow to make one fluid line. The process of spinning the metal represents an endless search for truth, and curvatures symbolize episodes in life that lead to reincarnation.
In a very real way, searching for the forms that would express my own “reincarnation,” and then creating them, enabled me to revisit my past and construct a visual path following my own life’s story.
INFLUENCE / INSPIRATION

Determining the most important influences on my art was a difficult task indeed. After all, what artist hasn’t been influenced by the great masters such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Monet, Picasso, and Matisse? And artists influenced by these masters, in turn, have influenced others who followed them, extending and providing a continuity of artistic idea and form.

While many artistic moments, episodes and experiences collectively laid the subconscious groundwork for this thesis, perhaps Kadinsky’s approach to art was foremost. He expressed “internal truths” and explored emotional landscapes, believing that these internal expressions contained seeds for the future. His soaring lines and swirling colors portray a profound feeling of life. I wanted to follow his approach, using dynamic movement to express my own internal landscape (Kandinsky, 1977).

One theme common to all of the artists who influenced me is the importance of observation to the creative process. Sean Scully was devoted to the phenomenology of walls. He observed and was attracted to the walls of Chichen Itza, Palenque, Copan, and Uxmal, walls that had a mystical presence. He was fascinated by the way they changed color as the light changed from one time of day to another. “… a yellow in the morning will be pale and it will be deep orange in the afternoon” (Phillips, 2005).

Scully cites a wide variety of artists who influenced him, including Mondrian, Cezanne, Velasquez, De Kooning, Rothko, Kline and Still. He felt that he was influenced by their “palettes, densities, brushwork, structures, light and auras” (Scully, 2006). Scully was able to
convert coarseness into vulnerability, to express the material world in abstraction, and to
counterbalance power with emotion, all the while leaving an underlying tension. Sean Scully
inspired me to strive for the unification of the tangible, metaphoric, and metaphysical in my
work.

Albert Paley’s use of stance and gesture has also affected me. Some of his pieces, while large
and authoritative, still remain graceful. He observed that all life is constantly changing and in
motion (Fariello, 2005), and his sculptures embody these qualities by following the natural
evolution of forms and materials. His work expresses fluidity and malleability. The motion is
not quick, but rather steady and determined, producing a graceful quality. His lines flow,
embedded with emotion. His creative process reveals a commitment to allowing the work in
progress to emerge in its own way; in other words, he doesn’t have a specific finished product
in mind but lets the metal move him. Flowing lines move in and out around a piece, “much
like a vine finding its way from darkened forest to sunlight” (Fariello, 2005).

Another major influence has been Cynthia Cousens, one of Britain’s foremost jewelers.
While she works mainly in metal, the two factors that have always guided and nourished her
art have been drawing and landscapes. Her habit of constantly observing and recording has
been the key that shaped her creative process (O’Day, 2004). Like Albert Paley, Cousens
rarely concentrates on the end product, but rather investigates process. She works with
precious metals, and chooses not to be restricted by cost. This attitude allows her to be free to
experiment, to push metal around like clay and treat it as tactile and fluid. This fearless
approach enables her to be intuitive, spontaneous and direct (Margetts, 2003).
The direct observation of landscapes informs Cousens’ understanding of the appropriate relative densities of lines. The outlines and structures of landscapes cause her to delight in linearity (O’Day, 2004). Cousens believes that no experience should be wasted, including mistakes. As work becomes increasingly conceptual, aesthetics are certainly important, but so is the integration of new ideas from previous follies. “But what is a mistake,” Cousens asks, “if not, perhaps, a change of direction?” (O’Day, 2004) This adaptability and acceptance of life unfolding inspires me and reminds me of karma and reincarnation.
PHILOSOPHY

Reincarnation, meaning “to be flesh again,” is a theme that has been found in diverse cultures throughout the history of mankind. From Buddhism to Norse mythology to Native American religions, reincarnation is a metaphysical belief that the spirit or soul survives death to be reborn in a new body or form (Stephenson, 1980).

The concept of self has a direct bearing on the Eastern religions’ beliefs about reincarnation. There is a wide range of understanding among Eastern philosophies regarding the nature of the soul. For instance, the Hindu religion claims the existence of an eternal self, whereas some schools even deny the existence of self. These various beliefs affect the way that reincarnation is viewed.

According to Hindu religions, the idea that the spirit reincarnates is intimately connected to karma, which literally means “action.” Karma is the sum of a person’s actions and is the force that drives and determines the next reincarnation. The ultimate goal of reincarnation is to achieve salvation. This salvation comes when, after much spiritual practice, a person realizes that the true self is the immortal soul rather than the body or ego. For such a person, the pleasures of the world are no longer of interest since they seem useless in comparison to spiritual salvation. When all desire has vanished, rebirth will cease since salvation will have been attained (Rinehart, 2004).

According to Buddhist scriptures, there is no permanent and unchanging self. All compounded things (such as the self) are subject to dissolution. At the death of one
personality, a new one comes into being, much as a flame of a dying candle can serve to light
the flame of another. Buddhism teaches that what is reborn is not a person but a moment, and
that one moment gives rise to another; this momentum continues, even after death. It is a
subtler concept than the usual notion of reincarnation, reflecting the Buddhist concept of
personality existing without a ‘soul’ (Edwards, 2000).

Art to me is an attempt to describe the divine and to continue the momentum of life. The
Buddhist tenet “what is reborn is one moment giving rise to another” is the driving current in
my creative process, because it is through being fully present in the moment that one is able to
transform oneself, and give rebirth to oneself through each successive moment.

This concept of “artistic reincarnation” is seen in the work of Paley and Cousens, who allow
creativity to flow from the natural evolution of their processes and materials. Without having
a specific final product in mind, they can discover new forms and be transformed themselves
in the process. Artists who go beyond a strict, detailed exploration of ideas about design and
aesthetics can achieve such creativity.

A profound scripture of Taoism, the Chuang Tzu from the 4th century BC, sums up, in effect,
what I hold to be the central theme in my Reincarnation series:

Birth is not a beginning; death is not an end. There is existence without limitation;
there is continuity without a starting point. Existence without limitation is space.
Continuity without a starting point is time. There is birth, there is death, there is
issuing forth, there is entering in. That through which one passes in and out without seeing its form, that is the Portal of the Divine.

— Chuang Tzu

My goal is to keep my artistic vision open, while being inspired many artists.
BACKGROUND

Every person has his or her own unique way of perceiving things when looking at an object. I have a tendency to look at drawings as 3D, not 2D. I like to incorporate textures, patterns, and lines to add the third dimension to my drawings. Even in my daily life I mentally add various lines, textures and patterns into what I see. Looking down at the ground from an airplane, for example, the roads and landscape transform into something different in my mind. I then attempt to transform these images into something unique through my hands.

Many of my drawings are pattern- and texture-oriented and are deeply influenced by certain episodes I remember from my childhood. My grandfather had a special room for his huge stone collection, and we were hardly ever allowed in this room. When we did get to see his stones, we were not allowed to touch them, but only observe them from far way. Perhaps because of these restrictions, I found myself desirous of observing stones in their natural settings, noting their textures and shapes. For example, when my family went to the beach, I would observe stones, a direct result of being prohibited from access to my grandfather’s stone collection.

As time went on I started to observe my environment in a more active and creative manner. I found myself observing many things the way I had observed stones. I became very interested in textures, patterns and the lines mingling with them, and I enjoyed expressing and re-creating these images through my hands.
Maybe in some sense I was freeing the unanswered desires of my childhood by making these images in my mind. Through this habit of looking and expressing, I experienced how ideas and designs can undergo continuous change and progression. Experiences and objects that I remembered from my childhood became the foundation of my work.
WORKING PROCESS

The process involved in this thesis project greatly influenced the artistic outcome. After time, energy and thought were poured into my initial concepts, smaller designs and details spontaneously emerged. I wanted to find a balance between structure and freedom, concept and detail, internal and external forces and ideas, and thought and feeling. I attempted to let these opposites co-exist, allowing them to grow with the process itself.

My works contain several layers of ideas and aesthetics. Common underlying processes are quilting, melting glass rods, and spinning metal yarn. The quilt, an important underlying concept in my work, comes from the Latin word *culcita*, which means stuffed sack or pocket. Much of my work is filled with different materials, shapes, and designs, like a quilt. I filled three dimensional spaces with different objects, piece by piece, as if making a quilt. This technique is also reminiscent of reincarnation, wherein a culmination of experiences leads us to grow, give birth and return.

Glass is fragile and delicate, almost untouchable. It is a container that defines form but also an object one should handle with care. I wanted this coexisting vulnerability and strength to be reflected in my work. Melting glass rods to create frames was a freeing and transforming process. Space and time became my experimental canvas: the speed of my hands, the temperature, and the heating time intervals became the tools I worked with to create interweaving lines. Some lines are clear and other lines are white opaque, because I wanted to convey two different temperaments. My aim was to arouse a child-like curiosity in those who would look through these glass frames. The frame puts a distance between the viewer and the
piece itself, yet at the same time it invites the viewer to study the work, making it more mysterious. There is a mysterious and interesting dichotomy at play, then, between distance and invitation. Through the frames the rocks are transformed into apparently more precious gems.

Spinning metal yarn became a technical process of my own creation. The spun metal visually unifies my body of work and its underlying techniques. I began by combining two different metal wires, fine silver and copper, constructing a metal yarn through the use of soldering and sanding. Sending this yarn through a rolling machine made it into different thicknesses. Through trial and error, I discovered that only soft metals worked well. Brass, nickel silver, and sterling silver tended to break after the rolling process. It is best to use 24K gold and fine silver. This process required meticulous attention to detail and full concentration.

While fashioning a batch of spun metal yarn took about 12 hours, I usually used it up in about 3 minutes. The process required a lot of patience, itself embodying the concept of reincarnation. In the finished work the metal yarns intermingle and impart a sense of movement. These yarns unify my work and express my innate desire for rebirth and growth. Spinning metal yarn became a materialization of my artistic experiences.

Although technique and materials in some ways define a body of work, bringing the two together faithfully was the more difficult challenge. I wanted to create works that expressed fluidity, spontaneity and authenticity. I wanted my lines to move through the piece and create an impression of fluid connection. I wanted the viewers not only to be able to see how my
design was inter-connected and growing dynamically, but also to be able to decipher or imagine its meaning. Most of all I want them to see that my work is flexible, adaptable, and transforming.

This working process enabled me to liberate my own dormant ideas, unanswered questions, and unfulfilled desires. By fully immersing myself in the process of creating my thesis work, I desired to undergo a change in myself, to find something meaningful returning to me, and to grow.
THE REINCARNATION SERIES

My perceptions, emotions, memories, experiences, dreams and inspirations were the basis of this series, giving it a sense of rhythm, fluidity, and spontaneity. The work emerged as a result of being open to possibility and discovery. I fully engaged myself in the process of creating and let each moment guide me. By being open and present, without attempting to over-control outcomes, I was able to create a space in which my ideas could breathe and be translated into works of art.

The work is interconnected, and the viewer will discover that ideas, concepts, aesthetics, techniques, textures, materials, colors, and lines fluidly transform and manifest themselves again and again in various pieces. Each work expresses a part of the internal truth that I experienced in a moment in time, but all the works collectively communicate the process of transformative discovery. My artistic and technical vocabulary was challenged as I attempted to integrate diverse media to create works that were nevertheless harmonious and dynamic.

a) Incubating Memories

There is a beginning to everything, and this particular work became an important stepping-stone in creating the rest of the Reincarnation series. The memories of moments are mysterious since they change through time, affecting our perspective. It is a challenge to express this mystery of memories, since it ultimately is inexpressible: neither words nor silence can adequately communicate a memory. Incubating memories is expressed like poetry, which is neither silence nor narration. It has to be felt through time, space, rhythm, and intuition.
“Incubating Memories” (Figure 1) not only embodies the philosophy of my thesis work but also demonstrates its working process. The various techniques employed in its creation are used repetitively throughout the series. The central techniques used to express the conceptual frame of the work are enameling, inlay, heating glass rods to create an outer frame, and spinning metal yarn.

In the enameling technique, glass powders are interspersed on the surface of copper or silver, which is then baked at a high temperature in a kiln. The end result is a metal surface with a fused glass surface composed of different colors. One can view it as a painting technique on metal. This technique became central to creating the work, especially in places where an image has been drawn on the stone-like base figure.

Inlay is a decorative technique in which materials such as metal, shells, or woods are fitted into a recessed design in an object. I decided to apply the concept of drawing to the inlay technique by inserting metal wires into designs I had chiseled. The appearance of a drawing was created by using contrasting colors, sizes and thicknesses of metal.

The glass frame signifies a separation of the inner world and outer world. The viewer is invited into my own inner world, suggested by the object inside the transparent barrier. I heated the long glass rods and shaped them, not according to a definite plan, but by following my senses and the direction the rods seemed to be taking, like manipulating paint on an empty white canvas.
The glass frame has an interwoven look, reflecting the layers of meaning it imparts. As mentioned previously, my grandfather’s stone collection had a huge impact on my development as an artist. Being confronted with the glass cases in my grandfather’s collection room made me feel separated from an object of desire, and was perhaps the first time I was conscious of such a separation. The transparent separation was bewildering to me, creating an intense curiosity and becoming the subject of an extended reverie. The glass encasements around my grandfather’s stone collection have been recreated in this work’s glass frame.

Glass appeals to me because it is beautiful yet very fragile and delicate, almost unapproachable. It requires great care in handling; and I wanted this quality of glass, its vulnerability, to be reflected in this work. The glass frame allowed me to express the indescribable feeling that a transparent separation had created in me so long ago, while simultaneously allowing openings and therein even an invitation.
Figure 1. Incubating Memories, 2007. Copper, silver, enamel, and glass. 11 x 14 x 9 inches.
b) Walnut

The history of a tree lies in a tiny seedling. From the heart of the seedling there slowly unfolds, in response to nature’s influences, a mighty tree. “Walnut” (Figure 2) signifies the germination process of this thesis project and expresses the immense past and future of the evolutionary growing experience in the present.

The image and texture of nuts, imprinted on my mind since childhood, was incorporated into this work using copper. The meaning of this work, however, is not intended to be taken as literally as the title suggests.

I also wanted to give this work a frame, and although initially I hesitated to use a glass frame, doing so blended this work in with the rest of the series, and subsequently the glass frame became an underlying theme of the series. Some lines on this glass frame are clear and others are white opaque. The two different types of glass are reminiscent of the mixture of copper and silver in my other works.

The glass frame is designed to be interconnected and yet fluid. There is freedom and open space within the frame. This open space counter-balances the complexity of the walnut inside, interwoven with copper wire. Both the walnut and its frame signify limitless possibilities.
Figure 2. Walnut, 2008. Copper, silver, and glass. 11 x 10 x 10 inches.
c) The Web of Life

Life rarely follows one direction; we are always standing where several pathways meet. The unwinding of the path of each life is never-ending. “The Web of Life” (Figure 3) is a collage of my emotions, experiences, memories, dreams, and inspirations, coming together to form a grand circle of life that is continually being inter-woven. Every individual is a part of something greater, and is connected to everything that surrounds him or her. This is a metaphor for life, a collection of individual moments, encounters and experiences, which are becoming a part of each other and growing with meaning.

This work was created in an attempt to explore spontaneity and freedom, which is especially evident in the glass section. The irregular shapes, contours and thicknesses are interwoven to symbolize the circle of life, with every aspect of life combined and dependent upon the whole.

After experimenting with electroforming, I made glass cocoons by melting glass rods. In this process, the glass expands and transforms into a thin thread. Connecting these threads became the basis of forming each cocoon, using a process similar to making cotton candy. The faster I moved my hands, the thinner the glass became. Controlling the thickness of the glass thread through the movement of my hands felt remarkably like drawing.

I then used electroforming to give the surface a metallic feel by painting copper over the glass. The colorful cocoons were added to the main electroformed piece inside the frame and woven copper lines were also added to create a visual pathway. It was difficult to attach these to the copper piece because the front and back were not accessible.
I aimed for simplicity and wanted to avoid busyness, since the overall size of this work is rather petite. I decided to use more earthy tones for the color of the cocoons inside the glass frame, and attached other sky-blue cocoons onto the outer frame to achieve contrast and give dimension and distance. Every cocoon symbolizes a rebirth, waiting to happen, through the perpetual weaving of life.

This work was an adventure of self-discovery. It pushed the limits of my inner self as I sought to visually express this journey in a non-traditional format. The design is inter-connected and fluid, and serves as a metaphor for the web of life that we are in, which is flexible, adaptable, and transforming.

Figure 3. The Web of Life, 2008. Glass and copper. 11 x 12 x 6 inches
**d, e, and f) Landscapes**

Drawing is the freest and most creative process in art making. The artist can allow his or her instincts, emotions, and even soul to dictate the process. The rhythm of drawing, involving the fluid movement of the arms, connects with the brain and sets the artist’s creativity in motion.

My three “Landscapes” (Figures 4, 5, and 6) became a unique and essential addition to this series both because of the techniques used to create them and the way they communicate my underlying thesis. They portray the aesthetic significance of my art form most freely as the boundaries between each medium are simultaneously blurred and interconnected.

The Landscapes are in fact three-dimensional drawings, embodying the aesthetic groundwork for the entire thesis. They are quilts made of paper and fabric, incorporating pencil, colored pencil, Conté crayon, charcoal, wax crayon, copper, brass, string, and fabric. It was challenging to achieve the right balance in order for the very different materials and textures to blend in as one piece.

However, the most difficult part was making the outer frames for these drawings. Departing from the glass frame covering format, I decided to create a frame that would seamlessly merge with the work. This was difficult to achieve. After much trial and error, crocheting was chosen as the best medium to create an outer frame. I stuffed the crocheted pipes with cotton balls to make them into circular shapes. The stuffed crocheted-frames merged fluidly with the drawings and made the pieces more three-dimensional.
This work carries a dynamic energy, generating a dialogue between the different textures and the techniques and materials used to create them. Every curve, every line, every hue, and every shape in this set of quilts recreates the freedom, spontaneity, and uninhibited expression of the inner self, giving the work a sense of anticipation, surprise, and excitement. I was able to look back into the past, face the familiar and the unfamiliar, and reflect upon my life during the process of creating these three pieces.

Figure 4. Landscape I, 2007. Paper, fabric, copper, and string. 20 x 21 x 3 inches.

Figure 5. Landscape II, 2008. Paper, fabric, copper, and string. 14 x 15 x 2 inches.
Figure 6. Landscape III, 2008. Paper, fabric, copper, string, copper, brass, and glass.

19 x 19 x 3 inches.
g, h) Bittersweet Moments

Life is about development and evolution and is composed of moments of interchangeable duality through which we are transformed.

The two “Bittersweet Moments” (Figures 7 and 8) are an inseparable pair, like twins, but with different natures. Although both are placed on copper pedestals, are similarly designed and employ comparable techniques, they are made with different materials and therefore carry a different tone. These works speak through each other when placed together.

My aim was to capture the duality of the bittersweet moments in life by employing a variety of techniques in these mini-sculptures. Among other materials, I used enamel, sewing fabric, crocheting, and “spun metal” (one fluid line of metal made by spinning a “yarn” made of copper and silver). Each piece resembles a stone tower—as if one is looking at a stone tower through a microscope.

I utilized glass techniques to create the main two pieces and applied cast silver and copper over them. While the technique I used was similar to the technique for creating the glass “cocoons,” this time I varied the thickness of the glass by adjusting the heat levels as well as varying the speed of my hand movements. I went through a meticulous process of calculating heating times, down to the second, and recording the thicknesses they produced, in order to have a palette to work with. I also experimented with shape in order to start weaving and fusing the transformed glass. I used the inlay technique to draw a line on the copper pedestals...
so they would have a sense of boundary both to balance them and connect them aesthetically with the mini-sculptures.

Although the techniques were carefully controlled, I approached this work with an open mind since I was working with glass. By not expressly controlling the specific shapes that were emerging from the process, I was able to create a space in which the designs could flourish. By not planning too much, I was able to open myself up to greater possibilities.

Figure 7. Bittersweet Moments I, 2008. Copper, fine silver enamel, glass, and fabric.

6 x 7 x 2 inches.
Figure 8. Bittersweet Moments II, 2008. Fine silver, gold, enamel, glass, and fabric.

6 x 7 x 2 inches.
i) Stone Tower

“Stone Tower” (Figures 9 and 10), almost as tall as I am, employs a compilation of techniques: detailed sewing, crocheting, stitching, coiling, weaving, dye forming, and wrapping. Stone Tower was conceptualized as a three-dimensional, quilt-like sculpture with a fluid line, although it is mainly composed of metal.

I formed the frame by making shapes with thick wires to create the different sections of the tower. The aim was to find the right balance between the frame and the materials inside each section of it, interconnecting them to coexist harmoniously.

The original inspiration for this piece again came from my childhood, recalling a time when I desperately wanted to build a stone tower. I had had feelings of closeness and spontaneity in the great outdoors. At first I wanted to capture these feelings and memories in the form of a drawing, rather than a sculpture, making it more transitory and in motion. The resulting work combines elements of both art forms. I accentuated the feeling of a drawing in the piece by using red and black lines throughout.

This piece is a composed puzzle of my own micro-universe that continues to grow, embodying every idea that was germinated during this thesis process. I wanted to portray a rhythm of volumes in space and perhaps even discover a new art form through my awareness of the working process. Viewers can discover their own stories through this work.
Figure 9. Stone Tower, 2008. Copper, silver, enamel, glass, fabric, and mixed media. 46 x 19 x 19 inches.
Figure 10. Detailed Views of Stone Tower
j) Itself

The work “Itself” (Figure 11) is a piece that stands alone, a solitary identity. It is a spherical dome, made of a quilt, interwoven and interconnected with diverse elements. It is simple, and this lack of complexity opens up a creative space that is filled with possibility.

Itself was initially intended to be part of the Stone Tower, but instead evolved to become independent and to complement it. While it too is composed of various textures reflecting different artistic techniques, unlike the multiple levels of the Stone Tower this strong figure has but a single level. It also expresses a different meaning from the other works in the series: “Itself” signifies independence and solitude.

I employed a variety of enameling techniques to create a stone-like texture, using enamel and glass together to create a quilt-like quality. Both the form and texture of the resulting interconnected shapes symbolize my own cultural inner territory. The singular circle indicates a cyclical understanding of the wheel of life and the various textures are my inner awareness of external experiences.

I wanted to depict the individual as being made up of interconnected, overlapping spheres, pointing to the domains of my mind, body, spirit and heart, which are linked and surrounded by an energy matrix. We are composed of our past experiences, all that we remember and all
that we’ve forgotten, as well as our present and the myriad of futures we imagine. Our relationship with ourselves is formed by genetics, upbringing, and experiences. It’s an amalgam of beliefs, assumptions and values.

My own artistry is composed of fantasy and reality, dancing with deep desires, and is permeated by needs and challenges. My creations are an inherent part of who I am and all that makes me uniquely me. I chose “Itself” to be the last piece, to symbolize myself.

Figure 11. Itself, 2008. Copper, enamel, glass, fabric, and mixed media.

11 x 17 x 13 inches.
CONCLUSION / FINAL REFLECTION

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an Hour.

—William Blake (1757–1827)

The meaning of eternity in the traditional Irish sense is not time that is ongoing, never ending, but rather an open spacious present. A moment, or a life, experienced in this spacious present is a priceless gift. There are two different kinds of time according to the Greeks: chronos, or “clock” time, and kyros, inner time. Inner time is mutable, malleable as in a dreaming state. One can live for years in a nano-second, an hour, or a night. Many people claim that they will see their whole life pass in a flash right before they die. However, clock time, or chronological time, can also be plastic, depending on what we do and where we place our attention.

In our time, with constant chaos and new information bombarding us on every side, we can easily wander away from being fully present in the here and now. We may tend to spend our time dwelling in the past or planning the future. As a result, we may not have the time and energy left to ponder our own experience and fully live our own lives. This tendency can leave a person powerless in the moment. One’s future is a manifestation of what one does
with present moments. One’s position of power, renewal and rebirth lies in the present, and one’s attention in each unique moment is essential for a passionate presence. The key to reincarnation is fully embracing the present.

I have explored time and space, internal and external realities, light and shadow, thought and emotion while creating these art works, which required me to be fully present in the moment. Practicing being in the present is the passageway to transformation, rebirth, and reincarnation and it will be an ongoing theme of my artistry.
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