Intimate ceremony: Ceramic bath accessories

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Intimate Ceremony: Ceramic Bath Accessories

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Forms for containers that serve specifically as accessories to the bathing ritual existed in nearly every early culture, the most recognized being those of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. The bath as an experience is warm and gentle. It is a decadence all its own, being at the same time a cultural imperative. The bath combines into one tidy concept, aspects of play, intimacy, cleansing, ritual and contemplation.

I intend to explore objects and forms from antiquity forward, adapting and personalizing them to supersede the disposable culture of modern beauty and hygiene. I propose to address the most pertinent forms; the bottle, the box and the jar. These are objects of leisure and luxury, on a very personal and intimate scale. As they are meant to be used, they are decorative, but durable.

The bath is not only a custom of cleansing, it is one of individual ceremony and reflection. Much may have changed over time, but the ritual of the bath remains along with its accessories.
PREFACE

When I was a small child, we had two bathrooms in our house. There was one for my father and one that my mother and I shared. My father's bathroom was blue and brown, and our bathroom was pink and white. This pink tiled shrine had a long counter under a mirror, with several drawers beneath. On this counter sat any number of bottles, boxes and small pots containing perfumes, lotions, creams and various other beauty preparations. These were my mother's treasures and I was in awe of them. I spent hours and days as a young girl playing at that counter, making myself pretty and perfumed. When we visited my grandmother's house, she had that same cluster of treasures, on a black counter, and first thing every morning, she sat at her mirror and "put on her face". When I was about ten, my parents bought me my own vanity dresser for my bedroom. Soon I had my own collection of miniature glass bottles and small boxes. I now realize that as a young child I began training in a ritual that women in our society perform throughout their entire lives.

As an artist, I find that I have a need and desire for my work to be interactive. It is important to me that people not simply look at my work, but that they handle it and use it in order to fully experience it. This is how I make my connection with my audience. When I found ceramics, I found a way to create interactive objects, specifically pottery. As my education progressed, I began to refine my ideas about these interactions. As I grew, I strove to discover why I make the things I make. As I found my voice, I found my motivations. I am a romantic at heart, and that has affected the nature of the work I create. I have returned to the rituals of femininity learned in my childhood. I want to create beautiful handmade objects, objects of leisure and luxury, things that could be bought cheaper if they were mass-produced. Too much of life today is machines and technology and ways to go faster and do more. I know I am not alone in my desire for things made by a person instead of a machine. This is why I am a maker.
INTRODUCTION

The ritual of the bath is one of cleansing, caring, renewal and rejuvenation, not only of the body, but of the spirit as well. This ritual has evolved from antiquity as a common ground across gender and class. There is a vast history of the ceremony itself, as well as of the objects associated with its performance. My work has been an exploration of objects and forms from antiquity forward, adapted and personalized in an effort to improve upon our disposable culture of modern beauty and hygiene.

It is the depth of this history that strengthens my work and endows each piece with a greater significance than exists in similar, mass-produced contemporary objects. Historical reference manifests itself in my work in a variety of ways. The idea, the concept behind the work, is the ritual of bathing and personal beautification. The ritual itself has roots in ancient history for both sexes. From antiquity, individuals of both sexes and all classes have collected accessories of varying quality for everyday use as well as for funerary provisions. The objects I have chosen to explore were selected from examples of accessories used throughout history. My forms are inspired by traditional forms such as the Greek aryballos and the Egyptian unguent jar, as well as nineteenth century European glass dresser sets. Even the materials used in creating the work demonstrate historical influence. Pieces were formed using a porcelain clay body, a ceramic material of profound tradition from China to Europe. Its inherent purity leads to an increase in expense, which has rendered it a luxury in itself. Porcelain is the ultimate material for these treasured creations. Other historical references are found in the surface details. Many of the earliest of these objects were executed in stone, such as alabaster or marble. My glazes were chosen for their subtlety and for their resemblance to the natural materials used in antiquity, and the gemstones were inspired by the stoppers on Chinese snuff bottles. These multi-cultural histories provide a richness of reference and
content to the work, a springboard for ideas and concepts as well as a backdrop against which to view the contemporary.

In a field with as much historical import and resource as we have in ceramics, particularly in regards to utilitarian and ritual objects, one must research one’s predecessors before making anew. Knowing our history gives us a better sense of our own place within the field. It gives us a context other than ourselves and our own time, broadening our perspective. As a student of the humanities, I am fascinated by the stories behind objects and their uses. As a student of ceramics, I find the history of my field invaluable as a resource. As a maker, I find inspiration in the artifacts of the many historic cultures we have discovered.
RITUAL

Webster's defines the word ritual as meaning 1. an established form of conducting a religious or other rite 2. any practice or behavior repeated in a prescribed manner. By these definitions, we all of us perform many rituals everyday, though in our native haste we have ceased to relish them and now tend to call them routines. Most people follow these routines as habits, such as the order in which we perform the tasks of getting ready for work in the morning or of going to bed at night. Some people have more specific moments set aside in their day to perform some ritual. Some of us sit down with a cup of coffee or hot tea at a certain point in the day, others have a quiet time to spend reading and most of us follow the daily ritual of checking and responding to email in an effort to maintain communication. These are only a few of the rituals performed regularly in modern society, but they are certainly not inherently contemporary.

In days past, at least amongst the wealthier classes, the routines of dressing in the morning and preparing for bed at night were highly ceremonial and required much more than the fifteen minutes I spend on these tasks. Before the advent of the phone, people once performed the ritual of letter writing as the sole means of communication over long distances, though now a handwritten letter seems inefficient and old fashioned. Prior to the Industrial Age, most beauty treatments were made at home by the same hands that used them, and the cleansing and care of the body was highly ritualized. In societies where bathing was not an everyday activity, hands and feet were washed as an act of hospitality and full body cleansing was reserved for religious purification and cleansing after illness. In cultures where bathing was a daily exercise, the event could become quite extravagant. The Romans developed the bath for men into a daily social excursion to the public houses, while the mistress of a Roman household had a specific servant whose sole responsibility was the execution of her lady's daily toilette.
The cleansing ritual is still performed today, but somewhat perfunctorily by most. The introduction of industrial production and plastics has somehow detracted from the environment of the bath, furthering the fast pace of modern life that leads the average individual to hasten the process without much thought. I intend, through my work, to bring a slowness and reflection to this ritual that I feel is lacking in our day. I want to create objects that soothe and pamper the senses. I would encourage the user to pause and appreciate the moment, the ceremony and intimacy of the act of bathing.
The bath is not only a custom of cleansing, it is one of individual ceremony and reflection. Forms for containers that serve specifically as accessories to the bathing ritual have existed in nearly every culture from antiquity forward, the most recognized being those of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Any attempt to catalogue these objects and the rituals they assisted would be a massive undertaking, so this will serve only as an introduction to the volumes of information available.

Much of what we know of antiquity is seen from the perspective of burials. Objects found intact were frequently found in graves and must be viewed with this in mind. The social status of the interred must also feature in evaluation of the objects, since well preserved burials are more likely to be those of wealthier individuals. Most of the available information on bathing rituals in antiquity focuses on the cultures of the Mediterranean, northeast Africa, and the Middle East. The Europeans do not enter into the picture as “civilized” cultures until the Middle Ages, and thus are not adequately represented for my purposes until medieval times. References are predominantly to Egyptian history. One must assume that this is largely a result of their funerary practices, which were relatively successful at preserving and protecting not only the burial, but also the written and pictorial records. There were a number of other cultures who were equally sophisticated in their hygiene and their vanity, but whose remains and documentation are simply not as well preserved.

The Far East is surprisingly underrepresented on the subject of bathing rituals and accessories. There, the focus has turned to other artifacts and aspects of society. The thought has occurred that one possible reason for this bias in cultural representation is the shift over time of centers of civilization, but this does not account for the lack of information on the Far East and South America, where early cultures were as highly civilized as those in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. In future, I would like to further research the regions that I have found to be inadequately described.
Bathing and cosmetics in antiquity began as religious preparations and preventative and reparative medical treatments. Initially, most bathing rituals were performed only after sickness or before war, or on a more regular basis by religious persons before performing any service to the gods. In religious ceremony, the statue of the god was often bathed by the officiant. Everyday personal cleansing was generally limited to hands, face and feet. Those with greater resources and leisure soon discovered the comforts and benefits of daily bathing and beauty treatment. Particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean climates, bathing and body oil were not luxuries, but basic everyday health necessities. While the basic product might be used by nobleman and commoner alike, the wealthy would distinguish themselves by the use of rare scent and by more elaborate containers, whereas the poorer classes may have used the more common base products. The resins and spices used to scent incense, perfumes, bath waters and moisturizers were harvested locally and supplemented and enhanced with others which came from as far away as Nepal and China. These ingredients were valued on the level of silver and gold, and were considered treasure. Conquering peoples frequently took these ingredients as tribute from the lands they controlled, and local products could be exported in exchange for those that did not flourish naturally in an area.

The industry producing perfumes, oils and ointments grew, creating a market for small beautiful containers to be used by individuals on a daily basis. These bottles, boxes and jars were made in alabaster, stone, faience, ivory, bone, bronze, glass and clay. Many of the forms were translated across cultural borders as a result of their common functions and uses, and are currently referred to by common names. As knowledge and product were traded between lands, different regions became known for different commodities (fig. 1). Some traded raw materials, some traded processed materials and still others traded the containers themselves. The Egyptians and Mesopotamians developed the glass industry early on, the South Arabians were noted for their successful perfume industry, and the Canaanites produced a number of popular basic ingredients.
Figure 1, Trade routes used in perfume and spice trade
Mesopotamia and Phoenicia lay in the region between the Mediterranean and Arabia. These cultures were in an excellent position to influence and be influenced by the powers surrounding them. Cleanliness was a high priority, as were cosmetics and beauty preparations. Both the men and women used cosmetics heavily, and the aromatic industry rivaled that of the Egyptians (Gunn 1973, 36). Perfumes were used for religious, medicinal and cosmetic purposes. Burials included favorite personal objects and scented substances used not only to supply for the afterlife, but also to relieve the atmosphere in the tomb.

One of the most frequently noted forms from the region is the alabastron (fig. 2) or perfume flask, which was an item of particular luxury when executed in glass (Tait 1991, 23). Many Phoenician glass perfume flasks have been found in other regions, leading one to believe that they may have used for export. As in many cultures, cosmetic paints were often mixed and stored in seashells, sometimes real and sometimes fashioned in precious metal. One popular daily use cosmetics shell was the Tridacna, which were real shells, elaborately decorated (Dayagi-Mendels 1989, 58). Also found were cylindrical metal box containers for cosmetics (fig. 4) and small glass jars for unguents (fig. 3).

Perfumes were manufactured with a base of sesame oil and unguents were generally based on animal fat. Cosmetics included white lead powders, antimony eye make-up and henna for lips and nails. Phoenicia was a major force in seagoing trade, exporting the highly prized Tyrian purple dye and importing many of the resins and spices used in the perfumes for which they were known.
Figure 3, Glass unguent jars 800 AD

Figure 2, Phoenician glass alabastron 600-800 BC

Figure 4, Sumerian cosmetic pot 5000 BC
The Egyptians are perhaps foremost in our minds when we consider bathing and beauty rituals in antiquity. Early Egyptian aromatics were developed by the priests for ritual and burial purposes. The priests bathed several times a day to maintain purity and performed bathing and cosmetic rituals for the statues of the gods they served. Because of the climate of the region, bathing and cleanliness were absolutely critical to all classes. Cosmetics were more than a luxury. They were used as moisturizers and soaps, as well as medicines and sun detergents. As such a pervasive element in society, there was a wide variety of options and quality levels available. The result of this accessibility was that the wealthy differentiated their treatments by the rarity of their scents and by the elegance of the containers they used. When glass became a viable medium, it was prized for its impermeability and formed into shapes that mimic existing forms in other media.

Unguent jars were small with a relatively large opening for retrieving the solid substance, while ointment and kohl jars had smaller openings that were easy to stopper (fig. 6). The jars were spherically and cylindrically shaped, or sculpted to represent animals or human forms. Unguent was made from nine parts animal fat to one part resin scent. It was massaged in as moisturizer or worn as a solid on top of the head, from whence it melted and cooled while it scented the body. The amphoriskos or alabastron was a familiar perfume flask shape. Perfumes were based on sesame, olive, almond or castor oils, depending on the ability of the individual to pay. Scents included iris root, rosewater, saffron, spikenard, cassia and many others. Many cosmetics were also mixed and applied from special decorated spoons, some of which had hinged lids. Cosmetic paints were made from galena, malachite, henna, antimony and red ochre. These substances were ground into powders and mixed with oil, fat or water to form a paste for application.

Many of the raw ingredients used in these preparations were exacted as tribute from the
Egyptians foreign subjects. Frankincense and myrrh were imported from South Arabia. Cinnamon and spikenard were brought from the Far East. Other important ingredients came from Sanai, Greece, Somali and Persia. To balance this import, the Egyptians exported their fine alabaster containers and finished products (fig. 7). The much-quoted Roman author Pliny describes the best scents in antiquity as originating in Greece and Egypt.

GREECE

From the Greeks, we begin to see the bath itself as a social rather than health issue. They derived their knowledge of bathing, perfuming and cosmetics from their trade activities with the Egyptians. They adapted this knowledge for their own uses, but did little to further the technology. The Greeks were consummate athletes, and the public bath evolved in the gymnasiuums where the men gathered. Following sport and the bath, the men would massage their bodics with olive oil based scented oils and perfumes. Though the baths originated as part of the sporting occasion, they developed into a more elaborate, social affair. They also bathed the hands and feet before their banquets. Women were for the most part restricted to the home and used very little in the way of cosmetics, except for courtesans who used quite a lot of make-up and perfume. Gifts and offerings of perfumed oils were used in religious, matrimonial and funerary ceremonies. One of the main contributions of the Greeks to the bathing and beauty rituals was in the area of containers.

The Greeks made the pottery alabastron the form of choice for ladies perfumes, and it is due to them that the form enjoys such endurance and fame. For cosmetics, women used ceramic pyxides (boxes) to hold rough, powder of white lead or jewelry (fig. 8). For the men, perfume and massage oils were carried in aryballoi tied to the wrist (fig. 9). The aryballos was derived from the smaller amphoriskos. Another popular form was the lekythos, a funerary bottle for scented oils. They were
Figure 6, Egyptian alabaster jars 3000-500 BC

Figure 7, Egyptian perfume bottle 1350 BC

Figure 8, Stone Cycladic pyxis 2200 BC

Figure 9, Greek aryballoi 600-800 BC
purely ceremonial, and the surface was not practical for everyday use. These forms were so beautiful and so well executed that they were exported all around the Mediterranean, along with the olive oil that formed the base of so many of the perfumes of surrounding cultures. For their own use, they imported the resins and spices to scent their oils and fill their containers.

**ROME**

The Romans as we think of them acquired their knowledge and customs of bathing and beauty treatments when they conquered the Greeks, and while they also did nothing to further these inherited Egyptian technologies, they did pursue their uses to new heights of decadence. Outside of religious occasion, the Romans brought the public bath to the level of daily social event, even opening it to women (though they were segregated). Cosmetics were also being used by wider strata of society than just the courtesans. Roman ladies had a maidservant called and *ornatrix* whose sole purpose was to oversee the lady’s toilette and men used a variety of perfumes that today would be considered overpoweringly feminine.

The forms used by the Romans to contain their precious oils, unguents and perfumes were the same as those used by the Greeks. Most were made in clay or glass, though metal was also popular. Roman ladies kept white lead powder or vermilion rouge in their *pyxides* (fig. 10). The *alabastron* was still a predominantly feminine perfume bottle (fig. 5), as was the *amphoriskos*, while the men carried the spherical *aryballos* or *ampulla* of oil. They primarily used olive oil for their bases, exporting the oil and importing resins and spices from Egypt, Ceylon, India and beyond. In order to transport their various small containers to the public bath, the Romans carried them together in a *ista*, or larger cylindrical box form (fig. 12), along with a metal *stregil* for scraping used oil off the skin (fig 11).
Figure 10, Roman glass pyxis 100 BC

Figure 5, E. Mediterranean glass alabastron 100 BC

Figure 11, Roman bronze strigils

Figure 12, Roman bronze cista 300-500 BC
ISRAEL (CANAAN)

Despite the comparative lack of pictorial records, there is plentiful information available from written records and recovered artifacts. The priests of ancient Israel brought ritual use of scent out of Egypt in the exodus, monopolizing aromatic technology in the process. The Israelites also brought the influence of Egyptian bathing and cosmetic habits with them into their new homes. Although bathing and cosmetics were initially limited to hand washing and foot bathing before food and prayer, or as signs of hospitality, these customs gradually expanded to more complete daily procedures, particularly under the later rule of the Romans.

Many of the forms employed by the previously discussed groups were also utilized in ancient Israel. Women kept their rouge and flour powder in pyxides inspired by those of Mycena and cosmetics were mixed in stone or clay palettes (fig. 14). Kohl in glass bottles resembling Roman perfume flasks. Perfume bottles (fig. 13) did take on some distinctly different forms, such as the candlestick bottle and the pomegranate bottle (which were occasionally found elsewhere). There was also significant import of containers from Egypt.

Olive oil and animal fat based unguents and moisturizing body oils were also considered necessaries of the day, and there are frequent literary references to people being "anointed". These ointments were scented with myrrh and frankincense from Africa and South Arabia, cinnamon from Ceylon and China, and spikenard from the Himalayas. Native produce included henna, saffron, balm and laudanum, all useful in perfumery, as well as the much-prized balsam that was exported to surrounding regions.
Figure 13, Eretz pottery bottles 200 BC to 100 AD

Figure 14, Marble cosmetic palettes 800-1000 BC
Figure 15, Southern Song incense box  
Figure 21, Sheng bao Chinese "fragrant pouch"

Figure 16, Northern Song cosmetic box
FAR EAST (CHINA & JAPAN)

The cultures of the Far East were isolated from the groups discussed up to this point. Though there was some contact through the spice trade, these cultures had their own closely guarded traditions, not all similar to those in the West. Indications are that bathing was a very spiritual practice, and that daily procedures were restricted to hands, face and feet. Some did use non-ritual cosmetics, and incense was used both in homes and religious arenas.

As many other cultures did, these people used shells and shell shaped containers for mixing and storing cosmetic paints made from charcoal or various flowers. Powders of white lead or rice flour were kept in small circular boxes similar to those used for incense (fig. 15). Indeed, one box might serve both purposes in its lifetime. Similarly shaped boxes with miniature pots fixed inside were also used for storing paints (fig. 16). For scenting the person, a tiny worked metal cage could be worn as jewelry, packed with cloth soaked in scent (fig. 21). These were the predecessors of the French pomander. Although there is little available information on imports to these regions, it is known that many scent resins and spices such as musk, civet, spikenard and cinnamon originated in this area.

EUROPE

Information on European bathing and beauty rituals begins for the most part with the spread of the Roman Empire. There it begins to increase by volumes. As always, the ruling classes set the fashion. The Romans introduced the public bath wherever they settled, and over time the locals adopted their customs. From that time until the Victorian era, the popular attitude towards bathing and cosmetics was on inconstant. Bathing was essential, bathing was dangerous to body and soul, and back again. Cosmetics were consistently denounced by the church, however the women (and men) of the aristocracy set their own mores with little concern for the opinion of the church.
Storage containers followed the basic designs, varying over time in levels sophistication and ornament in their fabrication and decoration (fig. 17, 18). The bottles, boxes and jars were filled everything from the standard ceruse (white lead powder) to any number of bizarre home recipes. In later years, white lead was replaced with ground pearls, rice flour and wheat flour. With the return of the Crusaders came a resurgence of interest in things Eastern, including perfumes and cosmetics. This opened up trade in musk, civet and ambergris (used in pomanders). By the twentieth century, the continent was holding its own in a roaring trade of bathing and beauty products. From this point, the focus shifts from the containers and their actual contents to the advertising of the product and its promises of miracles.

AMERICA

In the days of the Colonies, Americans generally followed the customs and trends of their European counterparts. There was still disapproval on the part of the Church, and those who could afford it still imported cosmetics and beauty preparations from Europe through the nineteenth century. The majority of literature available on bath and beauty rituals in America focuses on the manufacture and marketing of product (fig. 19), with an emphasis on youthful or exotic appearance rather than health. In the second half of the twentieth century, more and more people began to take showers rather than baths in an effort to save time without compromising daily hygiene. The sense of ritual began to diminish in the face of efficiency and technology.

With the coming of the twentieth century, cosmetics began to see widespread cross-class consumption. The results of rapid experimentation, scientific improvements and mass production were lower prices and greater accessibility (fig. 20). America took the lead in beauty products and packaging (Wykes-Joyce 1961, 93). As costs fell, so did the quality and precious nature of the packaging containers. In the age of plastics, most beauty accessories became disposable. Once
again, we as a culture began to lose sight of the aspects of luxury and ritual that the bath can bring to our lives.

There is a wealth of information available on the history of bathing and beauty if one is but willing to search. A greater proportion of this information pertains to historic Egypt, Greece and Rome, closely followed by other Mediterranean cultures. For the most part, the information I was able to locate was buried in larger works addressed to wider subject areas. The references to the subject for which I was searching were frequently made in passing, as mere elaboration on another point. The majority of the books I reviewed were focused on subjects such as the history of cosmetics, and archaeological studies including bath structures. I found only one book that was devoted fully to the history of containers and accessories to the bathing ritual in antiquity, *Perfume and Cosmetics in the Ancient World* by Michel Dayagi-Mendels. The main limitation of this work is its narrow geographic focus, discussing only objects from the Mediterranean region.

I was disappointed with the amount of information referencing the regions of Asia, India and North and South America. There is plentiful research on these regions, but very little available information on historic bathing ritual. This is something I intend to continue researching in the future, in addition to the various cultures in Western Europe. The available research on baths and bathing in Western Europe centers mainly on cosmetics trends and recipes, but little on containers, and in the United States the focus is largely on the cosmetic industry and its advertising. I find that there exists here a great opportunity, a niche to fill. In the future I intend to combine the research I have already completed with more extensive study on the aforementioned regions, with a view towards publication of my own book, though more cross-cultural and comprehensive than those I have identified thus far.
CONTEMPORARY

It is undeniably important for an artist to know the history of their field, but it is also necessary to be aware of the contemporary climate. What are the issues of the day, who are the other artists in the field and what are they making? What are the influential trends and how do you intend to address them?

The majority of my influences are historical in nature, but there are a number of contemporary artists whose works have affected my ideas and execution. While these are primarily ceramic artists, Jenny Holzer's work has influenced me over the longest period of time and possibly on the most fundamental level. Her public postings of "truisms" struck me with their removal out of the gallery setting and into a more everyday arena. Some of her other works were installations housed within a more traditional setting, but creating a distinct atmosphere of their own. These are important issues for me as a potter. My art must thrive in non-traditional surroundings (i.e. people's homes), and I endeavor, through my work, to create an environment therein.

Of the countless ceramic artists of our time, there are a few in particular to whose work I respond. These include, but are by no means limited to: Lucie Rie, Adrian Saxe, Eva Zeisel and Rosalie Wynkoop. One of the first great ceramic artists whose work I was introduced to was Lucie Rie. Her reference to historical ceramics is clear. Her forms are confident, distilled to purity. Her surfaces are intense, even in subtlety. I have been fortunate to see and touch a few of her pieces and am awed by their presence. They are objects of exceptional simplicity and elegance. The art of both Adrian Saxe and Rosalie Wynkoop evokes thoughts of preciousness, ritual and ceremony. They are pots and pot forms, exotic, richly decorated and adorned. The works of Eva Zeisel speak of pure form and utility, with nothing superfluous. These are pots, utilitarian forms, but of such beauty
that one might hesitate to use them for everyday. Preciousness, ritual, ceremony, utility, purity and simplicity. All are attributes I intend my work to embody.

It is difficult to imagine living and working and working in the relative seclusion of the past. Today, artists and their work are able to travel easily and global awareness is now standard. Through media and internet technology I can see work being made not only in my local community, but around the world. I am fortunate to be working in a time when access to seemingly limitless resources is so available.
THE WORK

In searching for a concept worthy of investigation, I felt that there were several points that needed to be satisfied by my selection of ideas. The first of these was utility. There is a facet of my creative self which can only be satisfied when the work I am producing is useful in a very literal and interactive manner. The second point I wanted to satisfy was that of historic relevance. As an academe, I am intrigued by the stories that surround personal objects of utility. I feel that discovering and sharing these stories brings a richness and a "rootedness” to the work that adds depth and dimension, without which the work would seem flat and frankly, boring. The details that history reveals impart to the work a life beyond its own moment in time. Another important aspect of my concept is that of ritual. I want the work to be not only useful, but purposeful and meaningful as well. The using of the pieces should expand the individual’s experience of their routine to the level of ceremony. These are not bottles and jars to be grabbed hastily and thrown in the trash when empty. Rather, they are to be handled with the same care with which they were created, and to be cherished over time. Thus the final point I needed to satisfy with my work was that of preciousness. By this I do not mean “adorable”. I intend for them to be uncommon objects, treasured for their uniqueness. These are individually handmade objects, meant to be used in the most intimate and personal setting.

Attempting to describe and analyze each piece in the thesis exhibition would be both repetitive and time consuming. A general description of the body of work and the display will suffice. All of the pieces created for the exhibition fell into one of six categories or families: bottles, boxes, jars, dishes, trays and vases.

Bottles were made with and without feet, the smallest ones, with no feet and having a pillow-like base on which to rest. The larger bottles were made with and without pouring spouts. All
bottles were fitted with their own stoppers, which were hand formed and carved in a flower form. These flower forms were adorned with one of a variety of precious gemstones after firing.

Boxes were made in one of two designs and a variety of sizes. The first design was a low round box for body powder, sizes ranging from three inches to six inches in diameter. The second design was a round cream box with a peaked roof-like lid, ranging in size from three inches to five inches in diameter. Both box designs were topped with a hand formed and carved finial or knob.

The third design family was comprised of jars for bath salts. Their form was based on the Egyptian unguent jars, walls flaring out at the top with a low, flat lid. Some of the salt jars share the same finials as the powder boxes, that being a three dimensional inverted teardrop form with an opening carved through one side to the other. Others are topped with a tall finial thrown and carved on the wheel.

The dish family included both dishes for holding small soaps or bath beads as well as the bases to support the footless bottles. These forms were shallow double walled bowls approximately three to four inches in diameter and not more than one inch high. The walls were pinched into points at three places giving an impression of draping fabric and pillow-softness.

The trays were based on the dishes, but enlarged in scale. The trays were intended to serve as “hosts” for groups of objects, creating a context in which the group would be viewed. Also double walled and pinch for the effect of fullness and draping, the trays were oval shaped and twelve to fourteen inches in length.

The final family of objects was the flower vases. This group was added late in the process to enhance the display environment. The vases all began as traditional open containers, and some had pierced lids added to create flower bricks. Open vases were displayed with white roses and greenery, while the flower bricks were displayed with white tulips.
Formal Issues

All work was glazed on the outer surfaces with barium/titanium glazes resembling stone. The small crystal formations created a speckled natural surface. Color was kept to a minimum in most sets, with only a vague tint of yellow, lavender, blue or pink. One set was treated with a darker blue/green surface. These stone-like surfaces are reminiscent of the natural materials used to create these containers in antiquity, namely alabaster and marble. Interiors were glazed with a food safe liner in muted white. All pieces in all groups were unified in manner, surface and detail. Forms were rounded suggesting containment and fullness. Lips were rolled hollow to make them softer and more generous. Feet were either rounded to mimic the rolled lips, or pinched to mimic the draping on the dishes and trays. For the exhibition, pieces were grouped in sets of three to seven objects. The pedestals were topped with twelve-inch square tiles of marble or granite in dark tones to offset the lighter colored pieces, and a creamy limestone to display the stronger colors. The most successful groups were arranged on one foot by three foot oblong pedestals that gave the feeling of an altar to the immediate environment. The addition of trays to some groups also enhanced the feeling of preciousness and belonging between the pieces.

The greatest strengths of the work were the unity of the body of work, the appeal and approachability of small-scale utilitarian pieces, and the historical references of form and surface. Areas that need improvement are easy to spot when looking at pottery, and my work is no exception. In future I would like to explore more color options, refine the trays and flower vases, expand the use of gemstones and luster, and most importantly I want to devote increased attention to detail and improve the consistency of that detail. Because of the small size and the intimate way in which the pieces are encountered, touch and form must be truly refined and consistent and craftsmanship must be beyond reproach.
The body of work created for this thesis is a beginning. I have made a strong start towards the goals I have set for the work. The progress I have made gives me confidence and motivation to continue with what seem to me infinite options.
CONCLUSIONS

I first began to explore containers for the bath out of necessity. I received a gift of homemade bath salts, packed only in a plastic bag, and needed a container to hold them. In evaluating my own needs, I came to the realization that bath and beauty treatments have seen significantly increased popularity in recent years. The unfortunate thing is that most of these products are sold and stored in disposable plastic packages. At the same time, more and more people are taking an interest in making these products at home, as is evidenced by the growing number of all-natural beauty recipe books on the shelves at the bookstore. The treatments themselves are easy enough to make at home, but then how do you store them? If the product is important enough to make by hand, the same should be true of the container.

As I began to research the historical aspects of bath containers and preparations, I found I was truly excited by the information I was finding. I began to see just how much possibility this niche holds. I discovered that I have something to say, and that I can use my art to say it. I found my place in a world of speed and efficiency. By creating these containers as accessories to the bath, I speak about intimacy and reflection, about ceremony and indulgence, about cleanliness and tranquillity. By creating these objects by hand, I speak about the value of the personal and of human touch as opposed to industry and mass production.

There is a multitude of facets to the ritual of the bath that I have only begun to explore. In the future I will continue to bring these objects to the home as utilitarian pottery, and I will take them to the next level by exploring the accessories and rituals of the bath in a more environmental format. I am also anxious to continue my research with a view towards a historical book of my own. I see a wealth of opportunity and ideas ahead of me.
**APPENDIX I: TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White Liner ^9/10</th>
<th>Porcelain Body ^9/10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kona F4</td>
<td>grolleg (ECC) 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custer</td>
<td>kona F4 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whiting</td>
<td>silica 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dolomite</td>
<td>macaloid 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>talc</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calcined EPK</td>
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<th>Paul's Blue ^9/10</th>
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<td>kona F4</td>
<td>Opals</td>
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<td>barium carb</td>
<td>Iolite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lithium carb</td>
<td>Garnet</td>
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<td>whiting</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>titanium</td>
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<tr>
<td>cobalt carb</td>
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<tr>
<td>OM4 ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zinc oxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>titanium</td>
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*All work was individually wheel thrown and altered by hand, all knobs and finials hand carved. Firing was to ^9 oxidation in a small gas kiln, fired down from temperature for approximately two hours before cool down.
APPENDIX II: COLOR PLATES

1) Full set w/ tray (maximum height 6")
2) Bath trio w/ tray (max. height 7")
3) Bath trio w/ tray (max. height 6")
4) Aryballos I (3"H)
5) Powder trio (max. height 4”)
6) Soap, salt & powder (max. height 5”)
7) Dark blue bath trio (max. height 5”)
8) Dark blue oil & powder (max. height 6”)
9) Oil, soap & salve (max. height 6”)
10) Crystal oil & powder (max. height 7”)
11) Ewer & two bottles (7”H)
12) Aryballos II (4”H)
13) Pink crystal oil & powder (max. height 7.5”)
14) Oil, soap & cream (max. height 7”)

Color Plate 1
Color Plate 2
Color Plate 7
Color Plate 9
PERSONAL GLOSSARY

Antiquity- broadly defined period of time extending from as early as 5000 BC up to the dawn of the Common Era.

Hygiene- practices or habits pertaining to bodily cleansing, beauty and personal health.

Interactive- the quality of an object to be touched, handled, used in some way, and in that capacity to affect the user.

Intimate- private or closely personal, intimacy occurs one-to-one, on an individual level. A sense of safety and security must precede intimacy.

Precious- of great value, dear or beloved, treasured, cherished.

Ritual- any practice or behavior repeated in a prescribed manner, habits or routines endowed with a degree of ceremony and importance.

Romantic- valuing ideas that are not necessarily practical, but that may be old fashioned or highly idealized, for example handmade pottery is romantic.

Routine- a regular, habitual or unimaginative procedure, dull or uninteresting.
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Figure 1 - Map
Figure 2 - a lacustrine
Figure 3 - superincumbent
Figure 4 - basin
Figure 5 - porphyry block
Figure 6 - dolomite Jasper
Figure 7 - porphyry boulder
Figure 8 - cycloidal dyke
Figure 9 - granite dyke
Figure 10 - glass pyxis
Figure 11 - cistae
Figure 12 - bottle
Figure 13 - clay bottle
Figure 14 - pitcher
Figure 15 - amphora
Figure 16 - cistae
Figure 17 - vase
Figure 18 - jar
Figure 19 - jar
Figure 20 - vase