

UNITY: WHEN THE TWO BECOME ONE

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Jewelry has been used as a gift exchange between lovers for many centuries. It has been conveyed in a variety of forms to symbolize the meaning of love. This body of work is associated with glory of love, of sexual experience between lovers representing the idea of unity when two parts become one unit, not only in the physical sense, but also in the psychical sense. The works were divided into three series including three pair of rings, two pair of locket, and five pair of necklaces. The erotic expression has been addressed on every piece in an abstract way counting design motifs, material used, and interaction within the piece itself. Moreover, each piece has romantic meanings and essential aspects as a symbol of love.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Jewelry has been used as a gift exchange between lovers for many centuries. It is employed as a sign of commitment and is a perfect format to depict the deep relationship between lovers. Since time memorial, jewelry has been conveyed in a variety of forms to symbolize the meaning of love. The image of Aphrodite, who presided over love and beauty, was used in ancient Greek jewelry. In Renaissance jewel work, Cupid was portrayed in many guises. During Victorian times, people wore hairwork jewelry from their beloved, as it was a romantic and meaningful gesture . . . keeping a physical element of the person close to them always. Nothing demanded covert expression more than the allegory of love.

The idea of love in jewelry is not only portrayed in image but also in material. For example: The incorruptibility of gold has symbolized the enduring qualities of true love while the color of precious stones has always been associated with the intensity of passion. Pearls are the feminine symbol of refinement. Ruby represents a love that not even death can destroy.

As mentioned in the beginning, jewelry and love have been closely associated since the dawn of time. It is just a short step from love to eroticism, the art of lovemaking. The pleasures of the flesh belong to the entire world and all forms of art have exalted them everywhere, sometimes surreptitiously, sometimes openly and

frankly. Since eroticism is human it is universal and characteristic of all civilizations. For instance, Greek eroticism can be adduced to the pleasures of the flesh and the mind, which were combined in the cult of beauty. The Gods set every kind of example, disposing men and women towards a sexuality without complexes. Eroticism in Roman times was more imbued with the influences of the east and the mysteries of religion but perfectly normal, even in its wildest excesses. During the Renaissance, eroticism was in full flower in all the arts and certainly made a mark in the creation of jewelry, which enjoyed great elaboration and detail.

Beyond representations and descriptions of activities, human sexuality is not simply the satisfying of our animal instincts. It contains thoughts, feelings, religious ideas and beliefs as well as shifting social evaluations of amorous relationships.

#### Statement of Problem

My desire to design erotic jewelry was inspired by the idea of unity not only in the physical sense but also in the psychical sense. In this context, I believe a depiction of erotic love is the perfect vehicle to express the sexuality of lovers. Therefore, Eastern erotic images, philosophical and mystical features, the use of jewelry format and materials are all elements based on my concentration. I anticipate to produce a series of works associated with the glory of love, in terms of sexual experience between lovers representing ways of expressing love and a very deep feeling of intimacy. The jewelry in this series should reflect the idea of unity. While in the process of creating these artifacts, I will attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) How can I make a connection between romantic antique jewelry and the

erotic expression of love in my work?

- 2) What will be the perfect material besides metal that I should add to my work which will help to convey the amorous meaning of the piece?
- 3) What erotic images will I use to present the idea of unity and make some connections with Eastern culture and my own heritage?
- 4) How can I add some essential aspects from sociology, philosophy, or psychology into my work that will be beneficial to the viewer?

### Methodology

I have completed three series of works in jewelry forms representing the idea of unity in an abstraction form of eroticism. All the pieces were constructed by using both traditional metalsmithing material and technique combined with some other alternative material to express conceptual aspects of the pieces. These pieces refer to the idea of unity, the point at which two parts become one unit. The process of creating these pieces has been documented in a journal in which the technical properties, design concerns, material uses, and concepts were recorded, along with answering all specific questions I had proposed in this paper. I have had an exhibition of the pieces, as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Fine Arts degree at Cora Stafford Gallery, 1120 W. Oak Street, Denton, Texas, 76201 from September 23 thru 27, 2002.



## CHAPTER 2

### ANALYSIS OF THE WORK

During the process of creating my pieces, I investigated a variety of jewelry styles that were a perfect format to depict the idea of unity between lovers. I also used traditional and nontraditional metalsmithing material that is symbolic and meaningful for the pieces. Moreover, I wanted to create a connected set of jewelry in which a couple could share the two parts. As a result, I have created three series of works, which include three sets of rings, two pairs of lockets, and five collections of necklaces.

I had several ideas in mind when designing this first series. First, I created a set of rings that were constructed of two individual parts; one as male and another as female, then the two were put together to become one. Second, I used material that depicts the differences between the opposite sexes. This first series is called *The Unitized Rings Series*, which include *Unitized rings #1, #2, and #3*.

For *Unitized rings #1*, I used very soft material to represent the female and hard material to represent the strength of the male. Fluffy and weightless feathers were used on the female ring while the reddish solid forging copper rod with randomly inlaid silver dots around the bottom was fashioned on the male ring. The shape of this solid copper naturally depicts the male/penis association. On the female ring, there is an opening at the bottom, so the male ring can be inserted and set in place. When looking at them unintentionally, they are as one ring. On the outer side of the female ring that holds

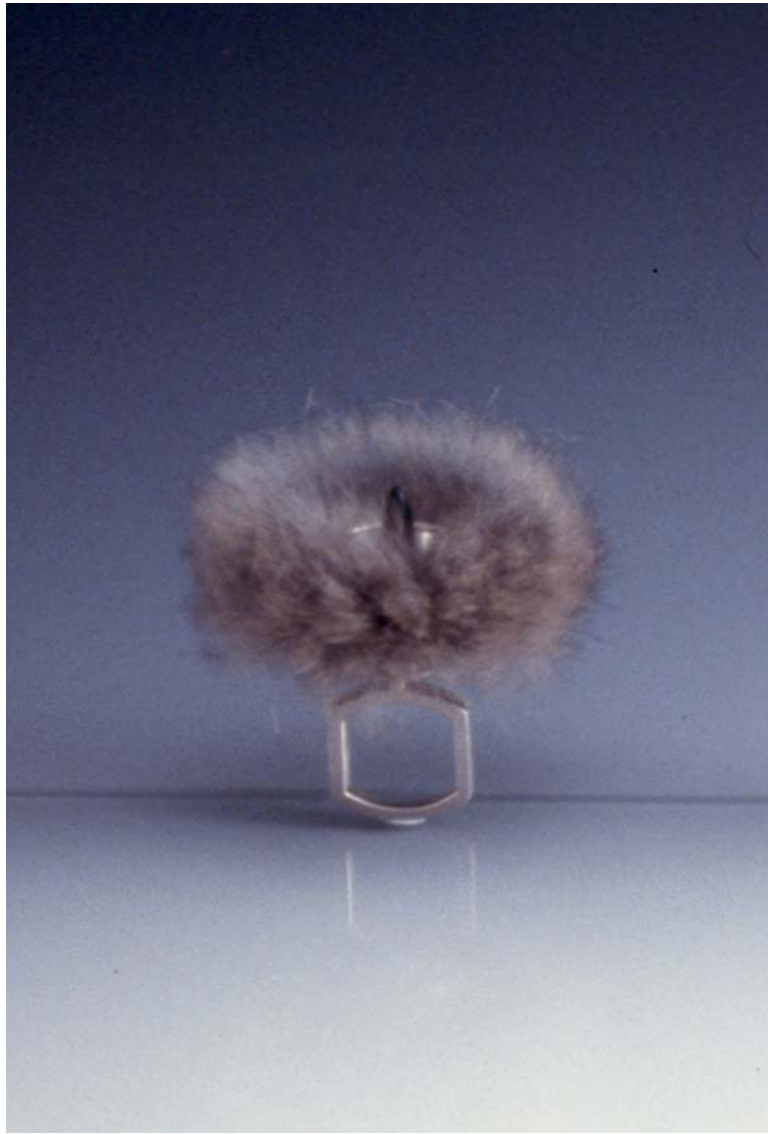
the feathers, is a hollow silver form of a cutoff cone shape that has a piercing design base, which has the word “Eve” going around it. The rings themselves are a pear shape outline, constructed from sterling silver square wire. Both rings are fitted together perfectly.

Fur was used on *Unitized Rings #2* to represent female warmth and the black onyx bullet shape was used to represent male rigidity. Similar to #1, there is an open space at the bottom of the female ring so the male ring can be inserted in and set in place to make those two parts come together as a single unit. For the silver construction of the female ring, there is a piercing design base in which the word “Warmth” is etched and the fur is wrapped around this hollow piece. The significance of this piece is that man will be receiving the warmth from his woman in both physical and psychical senses.

In *Unitized Rings #3*, I used white felt which is arranged around a hollow silver cylinder. Cable lines go around the cylinder to hold this felt in place on the female part of the ring. The fluffiness of felt can depict the feminine side while the rich red enamel solid cylinder represents the aggressiveness of the masculine side. Around the hollow silver cylinder of both rings, I used curvy piercing designs based on the word “Downy” for the female ring, and linear piercing designs based on the word “Brawny” for the male ring. On this set of rings, the female ring is hollow, so the male ring, the smaller cylinder, can be slid in from the bottom and set in place to complete the unit.



Unitized rings #1



Unitized rings #2



Unitized rings #3

The locket series includes two different sets of lockets, with two lockets in each set. For this series, I purposely created two individual lockets that can be joined together as one, but can also be worn separately. The concept of creating these lockets was to give a couple the opportunities to keep something that represents one another with them all the time even when they are apart. This would help them feel close to one another or it could be one thing he/she would hold on to during a difficult time. This concept then leads to the idea of using a locket format because he/she can put some sentimental object of the other inside to have a part of each other in memories. Also, the locket can be an essential piece that can be passed on from generation to generation as a family heirloom. Some of you may remember seeing your grandmother's locket that has a picture or photograph of your grandfather inside or for grandfather to have a pocket watch/locket with grandmother's picture or photograph within. This traditional practice is a classical way to express love between two people.

*Embraced locket* is the first pair of lockets in this series. This pair includes a large locket with a smaller one inside. They are of sterling silver hollow construction. The inside shape of the larger locket opens up to represent the vagina. Red suede was a great choice of material to use on this inside because of its color, texture and tactile properties. The form of a smaller locket that fits inside the larger one represents an abstraction of the male penis. It is a silver hollow construction with the red dots that go around the perimeter. These red dots come from the red suede liner that sticks out from the holes of the piece. The larger female representative piece is for the man to wear while the smaller male/penile locket is for the woman to wear. This exchange of lockets idea is for the

couple to carry representational objects of one another with them always. Each wearer will be able to have and treasure some meaningful object in honor of their beloved inside each locket. This pair of lockets is supposed to hang at the same level as the heart and in the middle of the chest as this is where talismans were normally hung. It makes it easier for one to hold the special locket in their hands.

The second pair of lockets is called *Counterpart Locket*. The Chinese motifs were used for this pair of lockets because I wanted to create a piece that is related to Eastern culture. Some say “Nothing in the world is single, all things by a law divine in one another’s being mingle.” The inspiration for this piece was based on that idea. Each locket is part of one big shape being divided by a backward S-curve into two sections, similar to the Chinese symbol, Yin-Yang. Two pieces of jade were set in the middle of each piece, because in Chinese tradition jade is associated with a whole spectrum of virtues which include moral purity, justice, courage, harmony, loyalty and benevolence. The use of material on each locket is different based on the symbolism of metals. Silver is lunar, feminine and cold, while gold is solar, masculine and hot. The piercing cloud motif was used on the male side to represent the father of the sky while the mountain motif was used on feminine side for the mother of the earth. When the two lockets are put together, it creates a complete scene. In contrast with the green jade, the red satin cords were used in place of the traditional chain. In China, red is the luckiest of all colors, associated with life, wealth, and energy.



Embraced locket





Counterpart locket



Counterpart locket – separated view

The last series in this body of work is the M'AMOR necklace series, which consists of five pair of necklaces, which I've entitled Myrtle, Aster, Mallow, Orchid and Rose. Each pair has two separate necklaces, male and female, following my intended course of designing with two parts to make a whole. The designs on the pendants of the female necklaces are associated with abstract images of the vagina. The pendant shapes for the male necklaces are associated with the abstract images of the penis. The enamel technique called "Plique-a'-jour" was used to add a variety of color based on the hues of the flowers listed earlier. Throughout the ages flowers have played an important role in expressing feeling and sending a message based on their meaning and symbolism. For example, in marriage the use of flowers in the bridal bouquet has symbolic value. In investigating certain flowers, I found they have very essential aspects for the marriage couple. Myrtle means love and constancy while aster is a symbol of loyalty. Mallow is a symbol of healing and forgiveness. The orchid means fertility whereas the rose is a sign of love and affection. When a couple wears each representative segment of a necklace, they will have all those symbolic meanings with them in their promises to one another.

My hope in creating this whole body of work is to have these jewelry pieces be symbolic of love reflecting the idea of unity. These pieces were created to be exchanged as love objects that each partner can have with them to hold their loved one close.



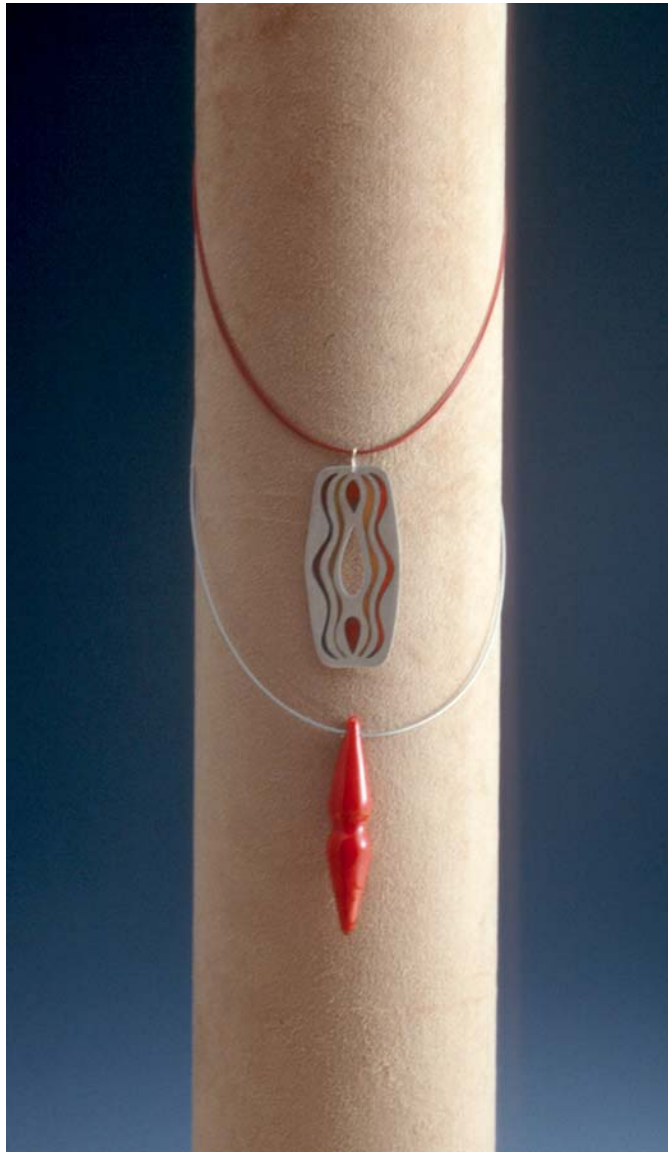
M'AMOR #1 - Myrtle



M'AMOR #2 – Aster



M'AMOR #3 – Mallow



M'AMOR #4 – Orchid



M'AMOR #5 - Rose



## CHAPTER 3

### CONCLUSION

A number of issues motivated me while completing this body of work. The most challenging issue was to create a body of work by using a jewelry format that embraced the glory of love. My own sense was that this had to be in terms of the sexual experiences between lovers representing the idea of unity not only in the physical sense but also in the psychical sense.

All the questions I proposed have been answered within this body of work. The erotic expression has been addressed on every piece in an abstract way. This helps the owners/wearers to be more comfortable wearing the jewelry. The use of alternative materials was successfully achieved, as it helped to increase the essential meaning of each piece and represented the symbolic value of the pieces in The *Unitized Rings* Series, *Embraced Locket*, and the *M'AMOR* Necklace Series. The eroticism aspect of Eastern culture was the main inspiration for *Counterpart Locket*. Moreover, the meaning and symbolism of the flowers in the *M'AMOR* series represents the essential aspects of romance that are beneficial for both the viewer and the wearer.

After judging the reactions I received from the presentation of this body of work, I believe that jewelry is a perfect format to depict the sexuality and the deep relationship between lovers.

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