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Saturated Memories:
Evoking Memories Through Scented Jewelry.

“One night, when I was 5, I was sitting on the couch playing with a ring I had got from a toy vending machine. I was flipping it in my mouth when suddenly I began choking. My dad, attempting to stay calm, began the Heimlich maneuver. When it did not work, he handed me a glass of juice and told me to drink. The ring went down and a couple of weeks later I was in surgery having it removed after it had caused ulcers in my stomach. At least I got to eat as many popsicles as I wanted after that.”

Traditionally, lockets have been used to keep precious objects, photos, and even deadly potions. They have been storage for special objects that remain close to the owner. Lockets have taken the forms of pendants and rings and although their contents are precious to their owners, usually the form of the locket maintains a fairly universal shape, like an oval or heart. For my senior thesis project, I am reversing the roles of the inside and outside of the lockets while designing jewelry pieces that hold a narrative. In order to do this I am forging lockets whose shapes are based on specific memories and filling them with a universal scent that both pertains to the memory on display but will also bring each viewer or “smeller” to a different place in the past.

Each piece will be based one of my positive memories. I am focusing on positive memories because each locket takes a while to make and I want to work on pieces that

will brighten my day every time I see them instead of being drawn back to a dark memory. The shape and form of the outside of each locket will hold a special meaning to me that will take me back to the memory I am forming, but I am doing this while still maintaining a form that others can find attractive since these are also jewelry pieces. The smells act as an enhancement of the memory for me but also provide intrigue to the viewers, asking them to question why the smell relates to the locket.

In general, jewelry pieces usually have a story behind them or are associated with a story in the receivers' lives. I want to push the idea of a jewelry piece having a story to tell by making pieces that provoke narratives. Because each piece will be directly related to my own memory, I am hoping that the shapes and smells will provide interest to viewers. At the same time, I hope to evoke a viewer's own memories through the scent and provoke dialogue between others.

Each piece will be made out of traditional jewelry materials, such as silver, in order to contextualize the piece as jewelry. While I could be very literal with each memory by inserting some kind of object that directly relates to the memory, I am hinting at the memory without giving up the wear-ability aspect of the piece. The objects



Figure 1

I am inserting are both natural materials, such as spices or bricks, and synthetic, which provide an important detail to the memory. From afar many of these inserts are hard to make out, but by getting close and examining each piece one will be able

to see the details and maybe make a connection to the story.

One artist who also incorporates background stories into their work is metal smith David H. Clemmons. Clemmons pieces have a way of getting the viewer to want to know the background story behind the piece.

One of his series is based on the slave trade and each piece within it is so compelling as a piece of art that you cannot simply walk away without at least reading the title and try to imagine what they represent. My goal for my work is to get people to want to



Figure 2
The Trees We Construct to Conceal Our Strange Fruit, 2007, sterling silver, fine silver, mild steel

know the stories behind the forms and become curious about why certain objects have such meaning. (Metal Museum).

I have researched other jewelers, such as Lisa Gralnick, who uses metal and jewelry to tell stories and give meaning to a specific event or time. One of my favorite

pieces done by Lisa Gralnick is based on the idea of marriage. The locket, made of silver, contains a wedding ring, sugar and salt in order to make a statement about the sweetness and bitterness of



Figure 4

married life. Her piece, beautiful just as a simple jewelry piece for adornment, would have been beautiful without everything it contained, but by adding simple but well thought out details, Gralnick takes a locket and transforms it into a memory and a

Figure 3

statement. I want my pieces to draw questions out of viewers and get them interested in the story behind the “ring”/locket. (Gralnick, Lisa).

Andy Cooperman’s work has also caught my attention, but for different reasons.

One of my favorite pieces from him is a neckpiece that illuminates a tiny diamond to look



Figure 5
Bling Bling

like an “unaffordable jewel”. Using metal to contain a tiny stone that enlarges when you look at it up close makes me think of the ways in which I am using metal to contain something that would normally permeate through large spaces. My lockets are small and contain very little substance, but the scent is strong and overpowering.

Cooperman is using his piece to make something small look larger while I am taking something usually uncontainable and forcing it into a small space intended for one person. (Cooperman, Cooperman Jewelry).

I have chosen to work with smell because of its strong mnemonic abilities, contributed to the olfactory system. Scents trigger memories or alert you to the fact that you have smelled a scent before. Lockets are designed to hold a keepsake or precious object, something to help the owner remember the past. Smells fit into the parameters of being something that will aid the owner in remembering, but unlike objects, a scent is not usually contained. This obstacle, the containment of a scent into a tiny locket, has proved to be both difficult and fun. It has extracted the majority of my research time from me, and is the main topic of discussion among people when they encounter my pieces.

Fortunately, I have come upon a recipe to contain scents in a waxy form. This method of combining jojoba oil with beeswax over a pot of boiling water and then adding the desired scent has succeeded with the scents that I wish to contain, some a lot easier to achieve than others. Scents such as curry and garlic are much easier to work with and adhere to the jojoba oil and beeswax combination quite well. These spice scents last a long time and stay quite potent where as natural scents, such as grass tend to fade. Knowing that the use of spices works well with the waxy substance, which stays in the lockets, I have experimented and came up with ways to make more natural scents, such as grass, by combining other scents in order to produce a strong and lasting aroma. Smell is such an important aspect of my pieces and it is imperative that I produce a smell that can be contained inside a locket and be potent enough to jog one's memory.

Each locket is made out of sterling silver sheet metal, tubing and wire. They have been cut, soldered, formed and finished to the desired texture and color. I begin each piece with a basic shape that I cut out with a jeweler's saw and then heat the metal in order to form the sheet into the shape that I desire. To connect two pieces together and make a hollow form, I used the hot connection technique of soldering. To finish each piece, the locket must be filled and sanded down to 600-grit sandpaper before being either polished or colored with a patina. Being made of precious metals, my pieces will require careful handling but at the same time, in order for the public to fully engage in the experience of each piece, viewers will need to hold and handle each piece and be able to

smell them. For this reason, each piece must be carefully constructed so that it will be strong and capable of being handled by multiple hands.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

I am interested in the kinds of interaction these pieces will force people to engage in. It is quite an awkward movement to open another's locket, while they are wearing it, to look at what is inside, but by making the viewer get even closer to smell the locket the movement becomes even stranger and more awkward. What happens to the relationship between two people when they are engaged in the act of smelling the other person's jewelry? I am interested to see the reactions of those who encounter my pieces and hope to document some of these moments of "sharing".

I am arranging the pieces around a small circular table, accompanied with chairs, and printed out memories so that people can sit and read the stories. Another reaction I am interested in capturing is the conversations that arise from these pieces. I am always intrigued to hear the memories that are triggered in others when they encounter a piece, whether it be from the smell or the form. The conversations that come about can be funny, insightful, or sad, and they are all worth hearing. At this point, the display of this series will hopefully aid in capturing these reactions. Typically, jewelry is displayed in a

case, separated from the viewer by a piece of glass and then is very carefully and deliberately brought out and presented to an interested client in a very formal fashion. I have been thinking of ways in which I could possibly display this series to viewers so that they will know to smell each piece and be able to read into the memory behind them. I want to present each locket with a written out version of each of the memories. By providing a comfortable environment to engage in the pieces, people will hopefully overcome the unwillingness to read text and will engage with others around them. This untraditional display will hopefully feel friendlier and allow for conversations to arise and curiosity to be provoked. From what I have seen so far from viewers, people will read the text without hesitation, but are not sure whether or not they are allowed to actually smell the pieces. It is great to see people's reactions when they realize that the lockets each smell different though; they get so excited.

Working with memories to make jewelry forms that contain smells has been a fun and exciting project that I wish to expand upon after graduation. To keep the thesis project concise and manageable I have limited myself to working strictly with my own memories but it would be exciting and interesting to expand my work to incorporate the memories of others. I love working with people and listening to their stories, and I feel that this project could be a great way to get to know others and hear exciting and meaningful moments while providing a solid object that will help remind them of the story. One of



Figure 9

my favorite things about each piece is that every time I look at one and smell the scent contained inside, I remember another detail from the memory associated with it. Others seem to get a kick out of the lockets I have made already so I wonder how they would react towards their own locket. I am excited to see how far this idea can take me.

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Photographs

Figure 1:

Garcia, Annie. "Lawn Mowers and Bricks." 2009-2010.

Figure 2:

"The Trees We Construct to Conceal Our Strange Fruit." *David Clemons*.

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Figure 3:

Gralnick, Lisa. "The Tragedy of Great Love." Photograph. Turner, Ralph.

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1996, 95.

Figure 4:

Garcia, Annie. "Grandma's Countertop." 2009-2010.

Figure 5:

"Bling Bling." *Cooperman Jewelry*. Web. 9 Jan 2010.

<<http://www.andycooperman.com/neckpieces.php>>.

Figure 6:

Garcia, Annie. "Curry n' Spice." 2009-2010.

Figure 7:

Garcia, Annie. "Excuse Me Miss." 2009-2010.

Figure 8:

Garcia, Annie. "25-cents Ring." 2009-2010.

Figure 9:

Garcia, Annie. "Ol-ive-juice." 2009-2010.