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Sewing and Reminiscence

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SEWING AND REMINISCENCE

by

Yukun Hao

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

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Spring 2018

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

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SEWING AND REMINISCENCE

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Traditionally, jewelry/metal artists were mostly limited to using enamel or patina to enrich their pieces. Nowadays, in the contemporary jewelry/metal art world, artists are free to bring new organic or synthetic materials and textures into their works. Throughout my experience working with metals, I have been interested in exploring this new approach; combining traditional metal techniques with updated, organic materials. This interest inspired me to create a project where I could incorporate threads with copper by using hand sewing, rather than modern techniques.

My plan for this project was to create a piece, which included hollowed-out geometric shapes in copper as foreground and a sewn layer with colored threads behind. First, I prepared two kinds of samples of copper for comparison; one polished manually, and one with purple transparent enamels on the top. Next, I prepared a base layer, which would be used to apply thread to the copper. Because of the nature of hand sewing, I needed a more flexible base material. It failed when I initially used unprimed medium weight cotton canvas, because there was not enough tension to support the threads. Then I changed to clear 0.005 Dura-lar, which was more responsive and supportive during the sewing process. In my first attempt to add threads, I used the polished copper sample, and chose magenta and varied shades of purples for threads. In order to get more obvious, organic and random texture, I sewed in horizontal, vertical, diagonal and mixed directions. For the copper sample with enamel, I used threads in different shades of blue. I began with some random patterns on top. For the bottom part, with the intention of mimicking water waves, I sewed from sides to centers. I adjusted the length of stitches based on the sizes of each section and the shape in general.

I'm satisfied with the outcome of these two pieces. I learned from the process that using Dura-lar as a medium allows for easier manipulation to incorporate thread and handmade touches rather than planning specific drilled spots on solid copper. Additionally, I found that it was important not to create sewing points too close together because they would connect and not be able to sew with shorter stitches again. In the future, to create more intricate textures and color changes, I will use finer needles and different weights of threads. I would also like to experiment more on materials like yarn and silk and combine them with dimensional design in a similar way.