

Thesis

Two-Valved Seed Vessel

Submitted by:

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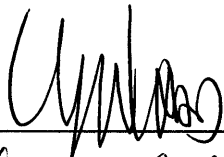
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Spring 2004

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

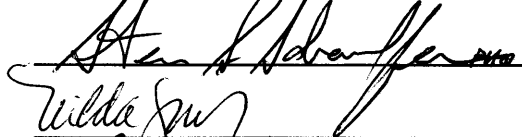
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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JONATHAN HUBBARD ENTITLED TWO-VALVED SEED VESSEL BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS.

Committee on Graduate Work



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Abstract of Thesis
TWO-VALVED SEED
VESSEL

My thoughts and artwork are inspired by my great admiration and attraction to nature and natural forms. In my artwork, I draw upon the strength of nature and its beautiful delicacies, to create forms that are strong and bold. All of my pieces of artwork that I create use a variety of traditional metalsmithing techniques. The media I have chosen to construct these pieces of art is mild steel. By using steel as the main media, I am able to transform its cold harsh surface into something that is inviting and natural. It is this manipulation of the material that I am also intrigued by.

I see all of my artwork as vessels or pod structures. These structures are studies that document the ever-changing stages of the media selected. Some of my pieces reflect strength and a solid volume, while others contain soft and fragile elements that portray the stages of growth followed by cracking, decaying, and death.

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My artwork is inspired by my great admiration and attraction to the architecture and line contours found in nature and natural forms. In my artwork I draw upon the strength of nature and its beautiful delicacies, and I then attempt to create forms that are strong and bold. Although I have experience and skills working with more contemporary techniques and materials, I have made the choice to use a variety of traditional metalsmithing techniques such as hammering, forging, and cold forming. The primary media I have chosen to work with is mild steel. With steel I am able to transform its cold, harsh surface into something that is both inviting and natural. It is this manipulation of the material that I find intriguing.

I see all of my artwork as vessels or pod structures. These structures are studies that document the ever-changing stages of the media I have chosen. Some of my pieces reflect strength and solid volume, while others contain soft and fragile elements that portray the stages of growth followed by cracking, decaying, and death. My work ranges from one to eight feet in length because I feel that this size provides the optimum scale for the intimate viewing I wish the observer to experience.

My artwork is inspired by this admiration and attraction to nature and natural forms. I create my pieces by constructing, deconstructing, and then constructing again, while attempting to parallel the natural cycle of plants and other living elements of nature. I look at the forms of trees and pods for inspiration. I explore their different shapes and their parts, as well as their

simplicity and complexity, and I learn from their construction. This learning enhances my sensitivity to form and process. This is the essence of my art.

My vessels are studies that document the ever-changing stages of the media I have selected. Some reflect strength and solid volume, while others contain soft and fragile elements that portray the stages of growth followed by cracking, decaying, and death. These aspects are represented by the use of natural materials such as grass, stones, and fibers, combined with what appears to be a type of exterior skin made out of forged and textured steel forms. I hope to enhance the audience's awareness of the preciousness and delicate balance of nature while exhibiting its enormous strength.

My work is created as a reflection of nature based on my admiration of natural forms. The elements of my work -- form, size, material and color -- are related to the desired expression within nature. The first piece (Figure 1.1) in my series has a pod-like form that could house a seed within its structure. The main chamber is constructed out of cor-ten steel, which is a material that is long lasting and durable. Because of its properties, cor-ten steel will never deteriorate even though its surface appears corroded. The orange rust color resembles earth, dirt, and other natural elements that are often perceived by the human eye. Fabricated out of a 1/2-inch rod and 14-gauge sheet metal, this structure mimics a broken or segmented pod that has fallen from a tree and has started to crack open revealing the seedlings inside. I chose to use the color green for the smaller seeds that are breaking loose from the main compartment, which is divided by spaced out bars to give the piece a segmented look. In my opinion the color

green indicates life or something that is opening its eyes for the first time. The idea of having an object that is slowly decaying as well as having an element of life is very intriguing to me. I hope to create the same effect for the observer.

Another concept I find important is movement in the structure. The piece is designed to rest on the ground. On some days, depending on how much wind there is, this piece will acquire some variable movement. This aspect presents a magnitude of viewing experiences for the observer. In the natural world pods and plants are always changing with the seasons. By using the metal cor-ten steel, I am encouraging, coercing, and allowing the piece to slowly bleed from a bright rusty orange in its early stages, to a darker color after being outside and exposed to the elements. The change seems essential to me with this structure, because it is representative of a natural form. Like any natural object that is exposed to the outdoors, it is constantly changing, which is how I perceive my art, changing with its surrounding environment.

This piece in Figure 1.2 is made up of three parts, which form a group. The main section symbolizes a stripped-down tree trunk that has been broken off and stuck in the ground, supported by very smooth rocks. The color of this piece is bronze-brown. The materials used are mild steel round rod, mild steel sheet metal, and found river rocks. The main trunk is fixed while the other two segments are broken off next to the trunk. My objective with this piece is to draw the observer in and interact with it by making the segments move or sway by a simple brush of the hand. The parts may also move naturally by the wind. The rocks transform the piece and offset the fact that it is constructed mostly out of

metal. I anticipate that this will make the viewer curious about the construction of the vessel.

The seed in Figure 1.3 is a fragment of a larger portion. It combines both solid and hollow shapes. These two shapes are supposed to appear as though they have been separating over a period of time. The solid membrane is the container of growth and still has its outer skin, while the rest of the vessel has withered away and now appears to be skeletal, like the form of a rib cage. When studying an old seedpod that has recently fallen from a tree one will notice the many different compartments that make up a seed. From a distance it may look like one continuous form, but the seedpods are far more complex. I want to draw the viewer's interest to the shapes and how the interior and exterior relate to each other. I find it important to use highlights and different patinas in reference to the changing of the form, from the growing process to the decaying seed, until it replenishes itself back into nature.

The pod in Figure 1.3 is also a container, or vessel, which has a compartment filled with hay and earth that protrude out of the top section. The materials are a combination of mild steel sheet and solid round rod. The top area has been textured by weather and age. As the viewer approaches this piece the segment still appears to have life left in its compartment. The earth and hay symbolize growth. The brown topaz color gives the piece a natural quality, like that of a plant that is slowly deteriorating into the earth's soil while the life inside is still holding on.

Another vessel (Figure 1.3) that is part of my two-valve seed vessel series has a combination of mild steel and natural fibers. The concept of this seed vessel is change. I chose steel so the color will change from a brown-topaz patina to a rusty red with the duration of time. The natural fibers that wrap around the compartment look as though it has been dissected and then reconnected to the seed again. The fibers I have chosen will eventually decompose over a period of time. During this process of change they will move from a golden yellow color to dark brown and green and will become rotten and slowly begin to fall away from the seed vessel. With my art I feel it is important to witness change. I want to portray a metamorphosis in all of the earth's elements, as we know them today. The scale of each different vessel ranges from as little one foot up to as much as eight feet long. The size depends on the form, how it is deconstructed and reconstructed to again become a vessel form.

Figure 1.3 portrays my thoughts and feelings of the aging and disintegration process of nature. It is my representation of an old weathered seedpod that has been slowly decaying by both the violent actions of man and nature's harsh elements; this is signified by the rough texture on the seed's skin. The deconstruction of this form shows what it has endured over the years. This seed has a natural and organic look. This indicates that, even though man and nature have injured it, it can still breed a new life. With this piece and others I hope to illustrate a message to the audience about the preciousness and delicate balance of nature and the need for its protection.

The five vessels in Figure 1.4 range in size from two feet to eight feet. They are arranged in random order as if they had fallen or been blown by the wind. They have been fabricated and assembled out of 14-gauge mild steel sheet. The rusty patina I have chosen gives the pieces a weathered look. The five seed vessels are in various shapes of a pod or bean shape. The pieces are three-sided and can rest on the ground on either their left or right side. This diversity exemplifies the possible different arrangements of these sculptures and indicates movement. The movement is enhanced as the vessels create a creaking sound when they sway back and forth. I want to elevate the observer's experience of these pieces by affecting their sense of sound.

My artwork explores the lives of plants and other natural elements found in the environment. My main objective is to bring the observer closer to the natural elements of movement, change, decay, and the overall cycle of life. Most of my artwork stems from the natural architecture of plant forms, simulating their internal and external structures. Some are studies of the chambers that are found in pods of seeds. In the process of creating my artwork I have also studied the forms of buildings and their contours. I use both mild steel, to achieve a rustic look, and stainless steel, which represents a sustainable future. I consider my work to be simple and elegant. Ultimately, I want the structures contained in the Two-Valved Seed Vessel series to attract the observer's interest in such a way that they are compelled to move in for a closer look revealing the complexity and beauty of the forms.

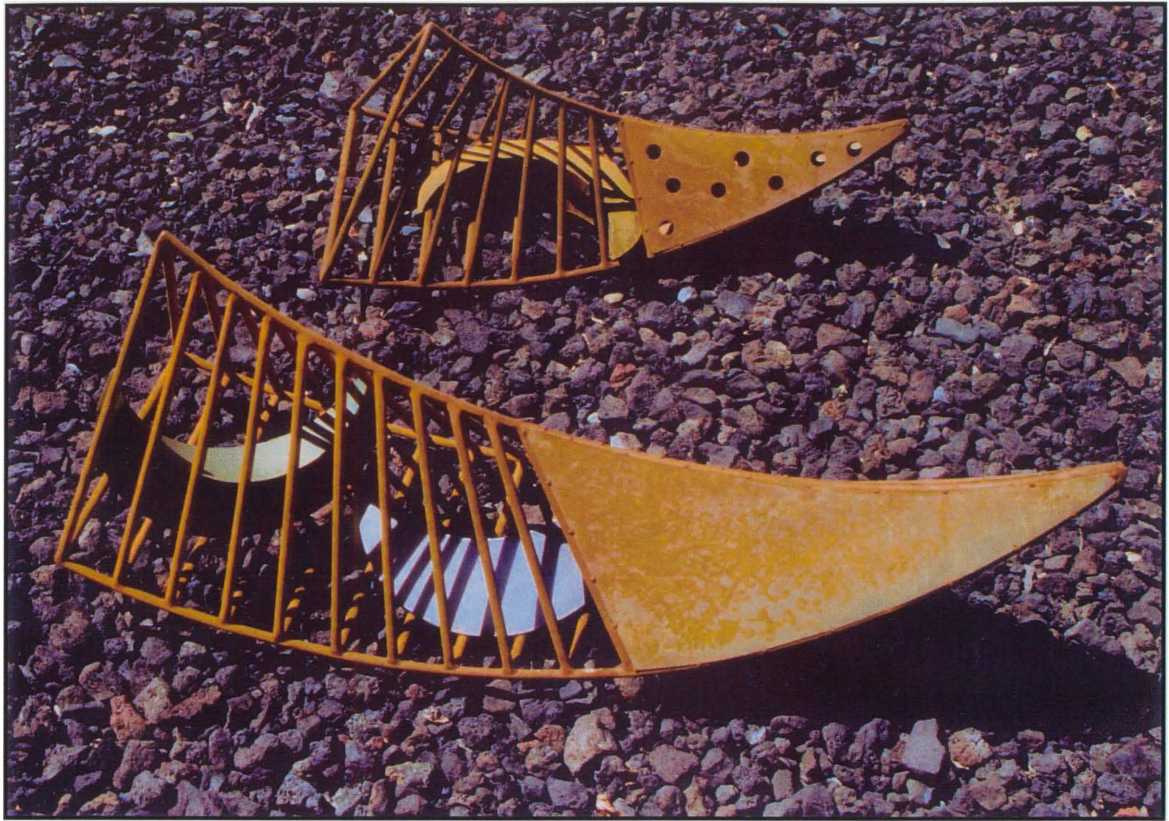


Figure 1.1

Two-Valved Seed Vessel

Forged and fabricated mild steel, cor-ten steel, and stainless steel

Oil, dye and rust patina

36" X 18" (Top)

48" X 20" (Bottom)



Figure 1.2 **Two-Valved Seed Vessel**

Forged and fabricated mild steel, river rock
Brown topaz patina
18" X 12" (Rear sections)
48" X 10" (Front section)

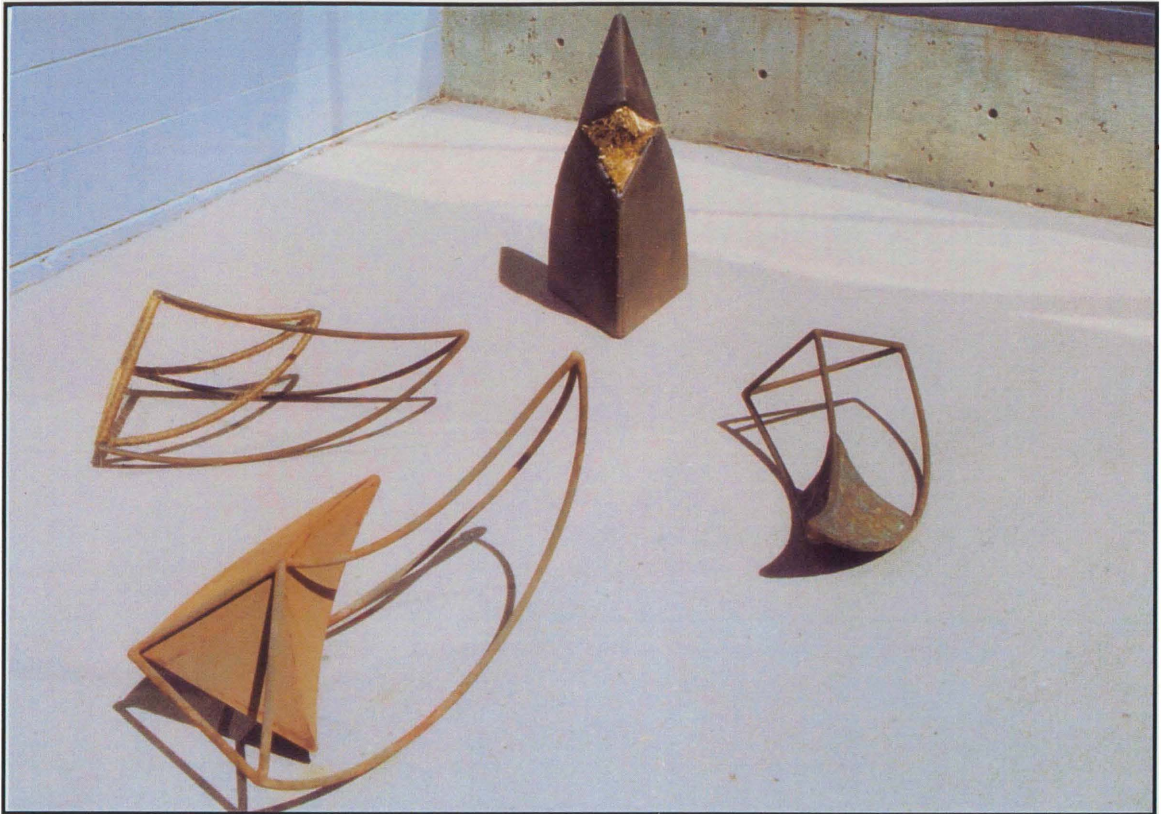


Figure 1.3

Two-Valved Seed Vessel

Forged and fabricated mild steel, cor-ten steel, natural fibers, and hay
Natural rust patina and topaz patina

24" X 10" (Rear)

24" X 10" (Left)

24" X 10" (Right)

30" X 18" (Front)



Figure 1.4

Two-Valved Seed Vessel

Fabricated mild steel and cor-ten steel

Natural rust patina

72" X 10" (Top left)

96" X 12" (Top center)

48" X 8" (Top right)

24" X 6" (Bottom left)

24" X 6" (Bottom right)