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Pierced (blue) by Jean Blackburn



The piece is ceramics work made from colored porcelain and stoneware slip; it stands about 10 inches tall. The work could be classified as either realistic or abstract, depending upon the opinion of the viewer. I personally see it as an abstract. I interpret the meaning of the piece to be an encouragement to see things not as they are, but to see all of the possibilities. Any vessel had the potential to look as though this one does, but this one does not look like all of the others. It is possible to see through this vessel, if it were to have anything in it, it would not be hidden, but would be revealed to anyone who looked at it. The porcelain has a shiny finish that indicated that the vessel has a very smooth texture; even the orifices have been made shiny to appear smooth. The color of the piece is a very light blue, and white. The light blue appears where the visible part of the vessel should be and the white is what “should” be hidden from view. All of the lines of the vessel are curves, which add to the overall smooth appearance. With the amount of holes in the vessel it is but a mere outline of what it once was, it takes up very little physical space, but yet nothing else can fill the space that the vessel leaves empty because of the fact that the vessel lacks physical structure in which to hold any contents. The piece is able to remain standing by itself, so I assume that the piece is physically balanced and has about equal weight all the way around. In this piece the form and content relate to each other very well. In its essence the content is a vessel designed for carrying fluids that can not perform that function because it has holes in it. Unity is achieved in the piece between content and form in a very unusual way. The form almost does not matter, except for the basic outline of



the vessel, what the vessel “is supposed to be”. When this is matched to the content of what does exist, it is seen that the piece as a whole exists to reveal the inner as well as the outer beauty of the vessel. The color shows the difference between the realm of inside and outside, the observer no longer sees the vessel as a functional piece, but as a work of art used to reveal more about the piece than would have been revealed had it been left as just a whole vessel. Sometimes in art, less is truly more.

The vessel stands atop a plain white pedestal, protected by a glass cube surrounding it. This presentation of the vessel invites the viewer to see the piece as an object to be analyzed, viewed and contemplated. Any other presentation in a less sterile environment would allow the background to detract from the artistic value of the work. The neutral setting allows the viewer to look through the piece and see an unobstructed light hitting the piece, making the white interior very vibrant and clearly defined. There are very few shadows on the vessel, this makes the inside seem spacious and free from secrets. The vessel has nothing to hide and exposes its inner-most components to the world in the way it is presented.

I fell in love with this piece during Spring 2004 when I first saw it and have visited it several times since, discovering something else I like about it each time. The initial aspect that caught my eye and attracted me to the piece was the smooth and seemingly modern design of the piece. The next thing I noticed was the opposing forces in the piece; light and dark, filled and void, content and form. I selected this piece because it is not in the normal realm of art and I tend to enjoy the abnormal and the abstract. Paintings with very little history are not able to draw my attention, but pieces of art that stand out from “just another piece of art” catch my eye, intrigue my mind and get me started thinking about the meanings behind it. This piece was created by a local artist, which makes it even more interesting to me because there is very little known history



of the piece and no recorded artist's intention, leaving the interpretation of the piece to the viewer. In my most recent observation of this piece the handle in specific stuck out most to me, presenting itself as a deterrent to anyone who might wish to pick it up. The human thought pattern would have us believe that the best way to pick up a vessel with a handle is to grab the handle to lift, but in this piece we have to reconsider that and look for an alternative. The lack of a stable handle further removes the piece from being seen as something to be used (or even moved) and just something to be enjoyed. I was informed by my previous art instructor (Carol Whitman) that porcelain is very unstable and difficult to work with while in its flexible state, this makes the piece all the more interesting. Now when I look at the vessel I think about the many laborious hours the artist spent on this piece just to eventually give it to the museum, to be seen by many people who do not appreciate it or can not understand it. I am glad this piece exists, for me it is a well designed metaphor for the dynamics of human life and all things of natural origin.

After completing my most recent trip to the Mint Museum to visit my favorite resident I left just as enthralled with this piece as the first time I saw it. In my view "Pierced" is a masterpiece and should be acknowledged as such. The piece evokes emotion of the greatest depths when viewed in the proper mindset and allows the viewer to have a greater understanding of art as well as of life in general.

