



centric 56 **Kim L. Cridler**

UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
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centric 56: Kim L. Cridler

John Berger's poem, entitled *Ladle*, included in his book *Pig Earth*,¹ offers a poignant point of entry into the sculpture of Kim Cridler. She takes her forms from domestic objects, like Berger's ladle, imbued with generational history and functionality—items passed down from mother to daughter that never tarnish because of continual use and care—and she reduces the intimate object to a spare steel grid while increasing the scale to monumental proportions.

As a young girl growing up on a hog farm in western Michigan, Cridler learned her family history through countless hours of mending and polishing the household's heirlooms. This attachment to individual/comunal history through objects is an expression of the way in which we know, remember, and honor those who came before us. It is part of the reason why we don't throw away our ancestors' trinkets, and why we have so many historical museums filled with items used, made, or worn by people like Paul Revere, George Washington, or Jacqueline

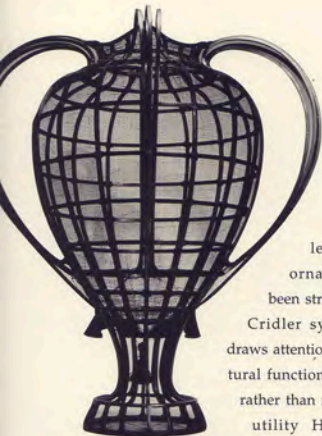
Kennedy Onassis. It provides a hand-held historical, social, cultural, and emotional structure for memory. These notions/objects of preservation, commemoration, and tradition inspire and inform Cridler's process and work.

For this artist, the sketchbook is where that process begins.

Once Cridler has found a form and determined her scale, she begins researching the history of the form as well as key words connected to her ideas. She also explores materials—steel, tapestry, leather, horsehair, silk, gut, velvet, resin, and charcoal—until she finds the appropriate media. She always makes models to assist her with her working drawings—the mathematics of the structure—and she continues to make large drawings while constructing the object. The eight-foot high *Untitled (Large Vessel)* with the articulated garland that she created specifically for this exhibition is a hand-shaped, exterior steel-grid reflection of a three-handled cup, more like a vase or an urn. By using the grid as

Pewter pock-marked
moon of the ladle
rising above the mountain
going down into the saucepan
serving generations
steaming
dredging what has grown from
seed
in the garden
thickened with potato
outliving us all
on the wooden sky
of the kitchen wall

John Berger



a type
of residue
left after the
ornament has
been stripped away,
Cridler symbolically
draws attention to the cul-
tural function of a vessel
rather than repeating its
utility Her skeletal
structure cannot con-

tain or hold the physical, but it does encapsulate the idea of
containment, of offering, and of remembrance by its very
reference to the cup. The cup is more than just a container, it
promises nourishment, comfort, warmth, and safety to those
who partake; it also holds the potential to be an historical
and social recorder for an individual or community The
particular shape of *Untitled (Large Vessel)* has a long tradi-
tion, and is a form associated with presentation ware—hol-
lowware made and inscribed to honor a person or an event.

there is no evidence to suggest that these small beakers
and bowls, no matter how trite they seem to a disinterest-
ed party hold any less meaning for their recipients than a
larger and more ambitious commissioned work. We must
not forget that in many cases the act of presentation and
the thoughts, sentiments, beliefs, and emotions that encir-
cle the act matter more to the individuals involved than
the physical qualities of the object itself.²

Cridler is consciously aware of the aesthetic traditions pre-
ceding her, especially with regard to the never-ending
debate between fine art and craft. Cridler was originally
trained as a silversmith before embracing steel on a grand
scale and, while she has been influenced by the objects of
utility, she has always indulged herself in the making of
non-functional objects she calls “luxury” items—luxury not
in terms of the art market, but luxury in terms of having the
means to accomplish her artistic vision. She sees the imprac-
tical nature of her artwork as contradictory to the practical-
ity instilled in her from her days on the farm, a contrast
which mirrors her conflicted participation in the craft/art
debate. Yet, she is compelled to make eight-foot high, grid-
ed-steel sculptures of vessels, teapot spouts, and decorative
patterns. When she expands her scale beyond human pro-
portions—to Lewis Carroll-like proportions—she compli-
cates her connection to the transference of personal history
via hand-held objects. Her sculptures lose intimacy by mov-
ing into the public arena. They no longer refer to an individ-
ual’s history, but refer to the cultural structure of remem-
brance; they act as markers for the memorial process.

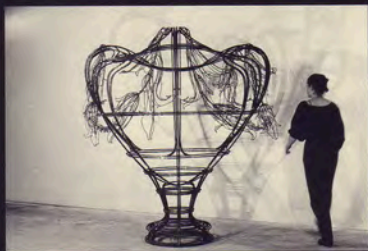
Meg Linton
Curator of Exhibitions

1. A stanza selected from the poem “Ladle” by John Berger, printed in *Pig Earth* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), pp. 22-23.

2. David Warren, Katherine S. Howe, and Michael K. Brown, *Marks of Achievement: Four Centuries of American Presentation Silver* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts and New York: H.N. Abrams, 1987).

biography

Kim L. Cridler received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and her Master of Fine Arts in metals from the State University of New York at New Paltz. She attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine in 1993. She has exhibited at the Art Museum at the University of Akron, Ohio; Claremont College Art Gallery California, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery; The Arkansas Arts Center Little Rock, and Institute of the Humanities, Ann Arbor, Michigan. She has received numerous awards including a WESTAF/NEA Fellowship in 1995.



The artist with *Untitled, (Large Vessel)*, 1997

acknowledgements

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exhibition checklist

Dimensions are given in inches; height precedes width precedes depth. All works are courtesy of the artist.

Lip, 1997
Steel, mica; 30 x 60 x 30

Curtain, 1996
Steel, paint, and satin; 108 x 84

Untitled (Loving Cup), 1997
Steel, hair; 28 x 26 diameter

Untitled (Large Vessel), 1997
Steel; 96 x 84 diameter

Spout, 1997
Steel, silk, wax; 57 x 30 x 44

Pendant, 1997
Steel, 72 x 12 each (6)

Untitled Drawing, 1997
Charcoal, graphite, pigment, wax, and hair; 67 x 36

Untitled Drawing, 1997
Charcoal, graphite, pigment, and silk thread; 77 x 77

Untitled Drawing, 1997
Mixed media; 72 x 42

Untitled Drawing, 1997
Ink, pigment, graphite on leather; 18 x 12

Untitled Drawing, 1997
Mixed media on cotton velvet; 18 x 12

Untitled Drawing, 1997
Charcoal, graphite, salt, and gold on paper; 18 x 12

Maquette for Lip, 1996
Wire, 24 karat gold
5 x 8 1/2 x 5

Maquette for Spout, 1995
Wire; 6 1/2 x 3 x 5

Maquette for Untitled (Large Vessel), 1997
Wire; 6 x 5 3/4 diameter

Sketchbook, 1995-96
10 1/2 x 9 x 3/4

Sketchbook, 1996-97
10 1/2 x 9 x 3/4

Sketchbook Sheets (2), 1996-97
10 1/2 x 9
9 x 10 1/2