

# Threaded Vessels

Mixed media constructions

JANE CALLENDER

The water in the pool was gorgeously warm. Hydrotherapy was part of a recuperation programme following spinal surgery. It was during these quiet and restful days that the idea of the 'threaded Vessels' came about. This time of convalescence gave me the opportunity to embark on a new creative venture in which the vessels became a meeting place for past with present. As my movements became less inhibited, I concluded that I missed working in three dimensions; I started a papier maché project.

Pasted strips were applied to a suitably prepared bowl. As fresh strips were added, pattern sequences would dance then fade into the murky newspaper haze. These rhythmic swirls would prove to be inspirational. By dealing with shape, I gained further understanding of space and form. Time was available to ponder and consider these things while building up the layers. Once the correct thickness had been reached and then dried, the laminated paper cast was removed from the mould.

---

*"The dappled indigo markings seemed totally in tune with the shape of the bowl"*

---

Before going into hospital, I had been working on a collection of mixed media jewellery. I am not a jeweller but do enjoy intricate project work. Having chosen the circle to frame design ideas, I explored binding and wrapping techniques.



Cone 1993 65 x 32 cm



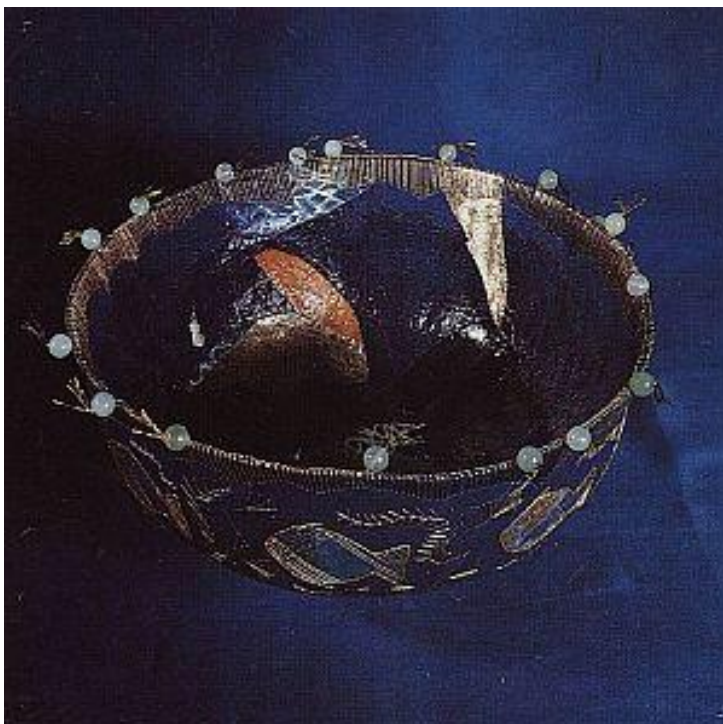
**Threaded Vessel I.** 1993 21 x 33 cm



**Detail**

My introduction to embroidered surfaces came in the practical study of indigo dyeing with stitch-resist as the means of patterning cloth. I look upon the preparation a stitch resist cloth as the unseen embroidery, for the threads are ultimately snipped and removed. The dappled, indigo markings seemed totally in tune with the shape of the bowl, tearing the fabric into pieces I applied them to the paper form.

Inspired by an African drum sitting on the window-sill, and continuing with the theme and working methods of earlier design projects, I was able to wrap and bind the top edge of the bowl. The unevenness of the rim emphasised the play of light on the gold threads which enhanced the liquidity of the indigo blue. As gold spoke of richness, so indigo spoke of a dignified simplicity.

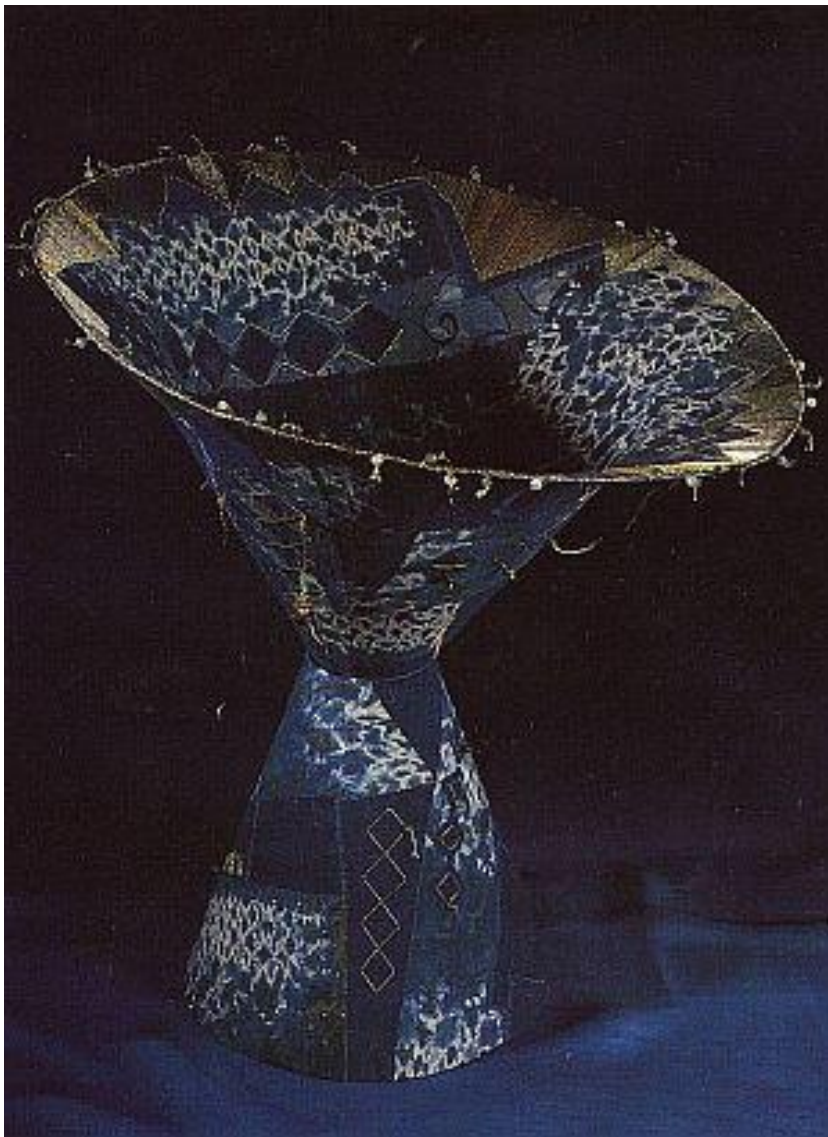


**Gold fish Bowl** 1992 11 x 27 cm



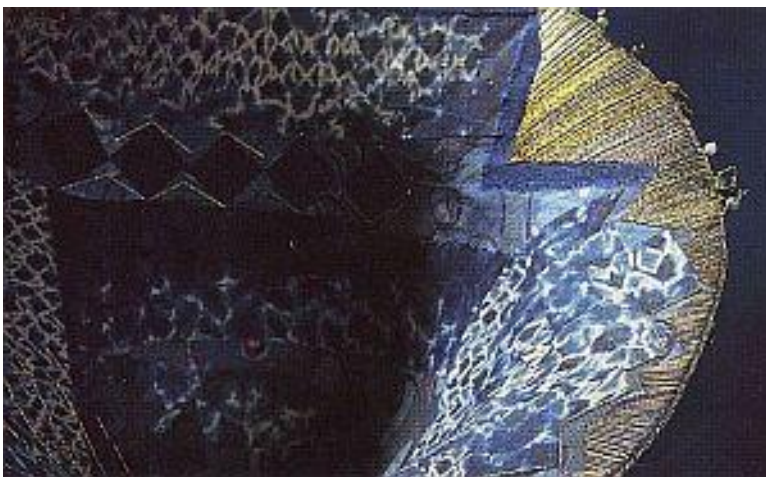
**Detail**

All designs and text are © Jane Callender. Photos copyright of John Ware. No reproduction allowed without express written permission.



**Water Vessel** 1992 40 x 34 cm

Enthused by all the possibilities, I felt thwarted by my inability to move with ease. The conversation had started and all the questions I was asking could only be answered through making. No bowl was safe from being scrutinised for its suitability as a mould. However, freedom to construct a form without reliance on an existing shape was essential. Visits to museums were resumed and African pots and Greek vases contemplated. Design and making procedures were explored. Interpreting thread in as wide a context as possible I looked for its every conceivable use and saw 'thread' in basket work, stringed instruments and ships' rigging. The native American Indian dress influenced the use of fabric. Observations of underwater scenes became fused with the paintings of Miró. Tree bark and roots gave of their textures and tensions while rock formations spoke of changing planes and slithery surfaces. The seasons themselves not only inspired colour themes but guided the actual use of materials.



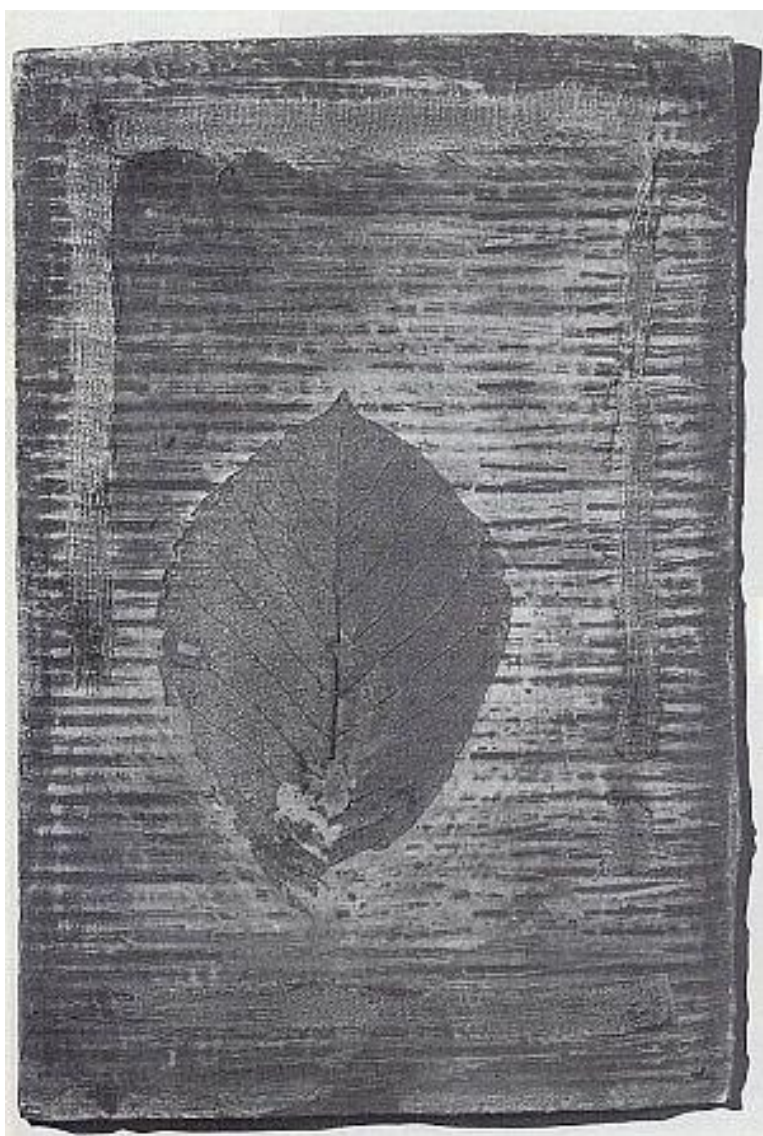
**Detail**

By applying textures freely to the forms, the stitchery was imbued with a sense of exploration. It was great to see how clearly visible the fine taut thread remained when it was hand stitched using straight stitches on a heavily textured ground. The eye was led over the form as light travelled across the threads and linear colour hovered and skimmed the surface. I liked to use thread in this way.

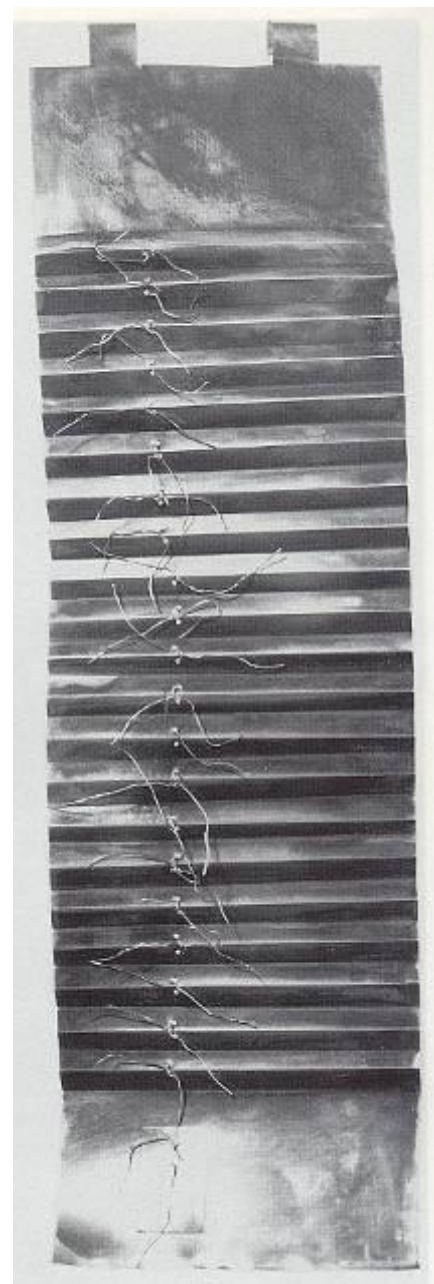
Stitched embellishments were often worked in immediate response to pattern in the cloth and in certain instances decorative units were designed to incorporate making procedures.

It was not always desirable to have the same stitch compositions on both the inside and the outside surfaces of the vessels. Further research was done on construction methods. Curved surfaces brought layout problems when dealing with larger shapes for collage but these were resolved with pattern-cutting skills. Each activity encouraged the next procedure. As answers were found, more questions were posed and so the ideas progressed.

I try to allow the behaviour of the material itself to instruct, be it paper, fabric, plastic etc. To gain an understanding of and sensitivity to their qualities, I need to work these various materials and become familiar with them in order to respond intuitively and with confidence while working. The commitment to develop skills which will illuminate their uniqueness is on-going. By designing with a specific material, I often gain insight into how best I can design with another. The pleated seas and thread tensions that appear momentarily while working stitch resist cloths hand led me on to a new phase of study. Becoming totally engrossed with the making process, I believe that what is finally expressed has a direct clarity. 'Water Vessel' in particular, tells of my absolute joy that an ordeal was over, and of new beginnings. It seems so right that, initially, these vessels were covered with a cloth that I have always associated with water.



Linear study with leaf 36.5 x 23.5



Metal study I 29 x 8.5

PHOTOS © JOHN WARE

*Jane Callender obtained  
A BA (Hons) degree in Textiles  
From the West Surrey College  
of Art and Design, Farnham  
and then gained a diploma in  
Pattern Cutting and Tailoring.  
She teaches indigo textiles,  
papier-mâché and related skills. A  
member of the Bromley Branch  
of the Embroiderers' Guild,  
she continues to develop  
and exhibit her work.*