

Sculptor Celia Eberle: Materials, Mythology and the Dallas Art Scene

By Jerome Weeks



Hero, 2015, ceramic, wood, music box mechanism, 16 x 6.75 x 17.25 inches

Longtime Dallas artist Celia Eberle opens her newest show this weekend called 'The Mythology of Love.' Eberle is known for her inventive use of different materials, different approaches to sculpture. Art & Seek's Jerome Weeks sat down with Eberle in the studio to ask, What's love got to do with it?

JW: The other day, I went to the Cris Worley Gallery, to see your new show, 'The Mythology of Love.' And I had an odd encounter with one of your sculptures. It played Elvis Presley's 'Are You Lonesome Tonight.' You put music boxes in two of your sculptures. Why?

CE: Well, it relates to love. Music boxes are kind of a traditional love token, and so that's why I decided to use music boxes.

JW: But I mean you could have used chocolates. Why music boxes in particular?

CE: Well, I just think they're possibly not that common in art. [Laughing.]

JW: Oh, this was a rare time when I could actually play a sculpture. You also created giant perfume bottles and then four perfumes — which you labeled individually, L - O - V - E.

CE: Yes, to be very obvious about it. I was thinking about the fact that, physically, love is a chemical reaction. So we've been using perfume to enhance that reaction before we even knew that it existed.

JW: What distinguishes the four? What does love smell like?

CE: I wanted to create a traditional floral perfume. There are types of perfume that are very common — a floral fragrance, a fruit fragrance, what they call a cipher and a woody fragrance. And that's how it turned out. I didn't consciously set out to create those four categories, I was just trying to create different effects.



Celia Eberle, *Secret Ceremony*, 2015, wood, metal, glass, snowflake obsidian, coral, found object, music box mechanism, 47 x 48 x 12 inches (This one plays Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata.')

JW: Now, it may seem unusual to include music boxes and perfumes in sculpture, but looking at your works, one is struck by the incredible range of materials. These include alabaster, wood, bone, copper, lapis lazuli, turtle shell, diamonds, newsprint, coral, brass – I can go on for quite some time. What leads you to all these different materials?

CE: Well, I do have a long-term thought process, and the materials I try to relate to the subject. So the variety of materials relates to, I guess, the variety of subject. But I only really know one big thing, and that is I think the basic nature of the human

experience hasn't really changed since we became aware enough to start creating history and religion and philosophy. I lump all these things together under the heading of 'mythology,' and I think that certain images and ideas are always compelling to us because we have this constant return to similar experiences.

JW: As a working artist who's been in the North Texas scene since the '80s, back with 500X Gallery — when you look back and you realize ten years ago, the Arts District wasn't complete, the Design District didn't exist the way it does, the Bishop Arts District, and so we often hear of this new energy, new activity, I was wondering what difference has all this made to you?

CE: Well, certainly, it provides you with more opportunities to show your work and to interact with other artists. And the larger the scene, the more activities there are, the more excitement and energy, and the more that feeds back to the individual artist.

JW: But do you see better sales for yourself? More attention for your work?

CE: Possibly more attention, I would not necessarily say better sales. I mean, if we want to talk commercially, I think my sales are pretty much what they've always been.

JW: So the effect on you as a working artist is more about the feeling of connection?

CE: Yes, much stronger sense of connection, less isolation. I mean, that was the complaint that artists had back in the '70s and '80s, that Texas artists were isolated. And now we're finally developing our own scene, and there's no need to complain about a sense of isolation. It's more about 'This is what we do' and 'This is what we're going to work with.'

JW: Well, Celia, thank you very much.

CE: Well, thank you.