

I Exhibited two of my Golden Gourds during the fall with LOD at “Konst&Design” TÄBY Kulturcentrum, Karby Gård Sweden. One of the pieces is part of a verbal nonverbal project with Philosopher and art critic Pravu Mazumdar. Pravus question and reflection to my nonverbal answer below.

QUESTION 3 “ANSWERING PRAVU”

Q 3. Some of you are jewellers. Is there any essential relation between corpus and ornament?

COMMENTS ON THE ‘ANSWERS’ TO QUESTION 3

A. ORNAMENT AND SURFACE

The term “ornament” is used in contexts as different as architecture, jewellery, rhetoric. Traditionally it is seen as a *supplementary* element, which is not essential, but instead something like a decorative addition or embellishment without relevance to a “real” function, contrary to a roof, a dress, a technical concept.

One of the meanings of the Latin verb *ornare* is “to equip”, implying the addition of something like a tool, a weapon, a fitting in the face of a danger, a threat or a problem of any kind. An ornament usually finds its place as a layer superimposed on an empty wall, the empty surface of an artefact, the plain and inconspicuous style of a sentence, so devoid of figuration that it would otherwise be hardly perceivable or retained in memory. In this sense, the ornament “attacks” and annihilates the emptiness of a surface, which is exactly what an answer does to the emptiness of a question. But ornamentation also involves *marking* a surface and making it ‘visible’. Without ornamentation, the surface would remain ‘less’ perceptible in its originally unornamented emptiness.

In a sense therefore ornamentation can be seen as a means of *masking* the *emptiness* of a surface, notwithstanding its different roles in corpus and jewellery.

1. TOBIAS BIRGERSSON (*NO TITLE*)

The piece at hand is an African bottle gourd (calabash), painted over with car lacquer and provided with a bronze knob that seems to indicate the opening of a vessel, through which water, grain or palm wine might flow. The larger bulb of the gourd is covered with a 24-karat gold leaf, the smaller patched with sterling silver. Like any hollowware, calabash can be used as a vessel for food or drinks, which are products of the earth, or as a resonating body for producing sounds, which are waves of air. Earth and air are their frame of reference. However, in premodern systems of thought, earth and air are often not only primordial elements, but also the first steps of a cosmic chain that ultimately leads on to the celestial bodies. Whereas the two bulbs of the calabash form a dyad, the bronze knob extends them to a series that is reminiscent of the alignment of planets in the solar system. Thus the calabash, a traditional channel for the flow of musical or material nourishment, becomes a metaphor for the cosmic order embedding the human body, which is adrift on the pathways of destiny and in permanent need of being nourished. The ornamental structure of the surface underscores the transformation of the calabash into a metaphor that connects the sublunar realities of earth and air flowing through it with the constellation of celestial bodies evoked by its bulbous form. In ancient Mesopotamian there used to be catalogues of correspondences between the metals and the heavenly bodies, defining gold as a symbol of the Sun, silver as that of the Moon, copper as symbolising Venus. Here, the calabash has been transformed into a symbol of the cosmic alignment of the Sun (gold), the Moon (silver) and Venus (copper, which is predominant in bronze) by reworking its surface with gold and silver and attaching the bronze knob. The silver patches on the surface of the smaller bulb seem to interrupt the otherwise immaculate surface of ornamentation to effect something like a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* that seems to say: "Look at this! This is not what it seems to be, it is not a symbol, but something that has emerged from the human hand with its futile attempts at transforming clumps of matter into art to make sense of whatever is going on around!"