



JAMES THURMAN

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ARTIST STATEMENT

For over twenty years, I have been exploring a process of using eco-resin to create a composite material made of layered recycled paper, now called “Thurmanite®.” Throughout human history, we have adorned ourselves with materials found in our surroundings and I am interested in continuing that tradition through the use of recycled materials. Even before my work began with Thurmanite®, I was drawn to creating rotational and radial forms in my studio work, eventually leading to my Certification as a machinist. I’ve continued to utilize lathework in my studio, creating either entirely lathe-made finished vessels and plates, or smaller components that are incorporated into my wearable jewelry.

In 2016, I began a series of work that combines lathe-turned jewelry with spun metal vessels. When the jewelry component is not being worn, it visually recombines with the vessel to continue to adorn the environment where the vessel is displayed. I also regularly use belt buckles as a means of creating a wearable artwork that serves as a tableau for a particular conceptual narrative.

My newest body of work, the “Morality Series,” is based on the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Heavenly Virtues. It features the most narrative approach I have taken in my work in many years. Previously, my work has more subtly addressed themes of societal responsibility, especially related to environmental impact and capitalism as an essentially exploitive system. The events of 2020 pushed me to be more direct and explicit with my content.

For me, use of aquatic imagery is both a plea for environmental responsibility but also a guide towards harmony and peace, modeled after the denizens of the oceans living in sync with their habitat. The monstrous is a way that we reconcile Otherness while the fantastical embodies escapist or aspirational emotions. Much of this comes from childhood experiences that continue to impact me. The first art award I ever won was for painting fantasy miniatures. I continued with this hobby into my teenage years, even creating a custom chess set of them. Returning to painting them decades later is soothing but I feel vulnerable as I expose previously hidden personal experiences. The use of miniatures reinforces my narrative interests as well as historic symbolism used in decorative arts.

