

BETTINA WERNER

SALT OF THE EARTH



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Bettina would like to thank her collectors Mr. Marco Fila and Mr. Mazen Jabban for their support and long time friendship.

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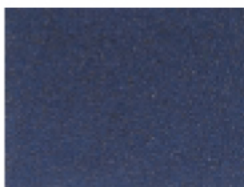
To all my collectors "con sale in zucca"!

Bettina

"The sacredness and dignity of Salt! This mineral has the power like the four elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. So universal, so necessary to life, it is the fifth element...Salt came to be as a symbol for life; and not only for life itself, but for the most desirable qualities in human personality. A person with particular worth, wisdom and knowledge, or lively wit, "ha sale in zucca" - "has Salt in the head"

Bettina Werner has dedicated this book to her many collectors who are the guardians of her art. Her works have been exhibited in many museums and galleries. Her art resides in magnificent homes and prestigious office buildings all over the world. This book explores these extraordinary environments while celebrating the nature of salt, the power of art and their unique integration in life and space.

<http://www.Bettina-Werner.com>



When Bettina Werner first started to paint she wanted to find a unique, particular material that would be her signature tool for artistic expression - something that would bring to her work its own inherent qualities of history, culture and symbolic meaning while at the same time be beautiful to look at. While studying at the Brera Academy of Fine Art in Milan, Werner found Salt to be just the element she was looking for - a wonderfully textural, transparent crystal that represents so much history, value and philosophic meaning.

Werner became intrigued by the value of salt throughout ancient history. A person of particular worth or wisdom historically had "Salt in the Head". In ancient Russia, salt was placed inside coffins to signify the incorruptibility of the dead, while in Scotland, the custom was to measure three handfuls of salt into a plate and place it on the breast of a corpse. Salt is burned as part of the Chinese New Year's celebration to determine the year's luck. And as the following ancient tale records, in cultures throughout the world, salt has held more worth than gold: "It is said that a desert robber broke into the palace of an oriental ruler and as he was hurriedly departing with his rich loot, he stumbled over a crock of salt in the pantry, at which point he threw away the treasure and took the salt instead".

Discovering salt to be her own treasure, Bettina Werner studied combinations of textures and colors with salt crystals to maximize different results and develop her art more completely. She would later patent her technique for processing and coloring salt.

Monday: mi sveglio assolata
Tuesday: e via via
Wednesday: affogo
Thursday: nella profondità
Friday: dei miei pensieri spremuti, 1992
 Bettina Werner's Salt Painting Copyright © 1992,
 Florida, Private Collection

Werner's admiration of the Bauhaus generation of artist and the philosophy of "less is more" is the other driving force behind her diverse body of works, taking the form of painting, sculptures and functional pieces of art, such as her salt bed and "Werisbety?" salt tables. Werner reinterprets the concept of minimalism with the warmth and texture she derives from creating with salt.

"Over the past fifteen years of working with salt, I have found that while my technique constantly takes me in new directions, my creations always retain the essential pulse and rhythm that emanates from this timeless medium".

The unique, personal language of Werner's salt paintings and her invention of the treatment of salt with color, quickly brought the "Queen of Salt" great acknowledgement in Europe. Her success in using salt in glorious colors led Werner to the U.S. in 1989 and one year later she started showing her artwork with Marisa Del Re Gallery in the Fuller Building, on 57th Street, from 1990 to 1997. Today, Werner's pieces are part of collections throughout the country, including the Chase Manhattan Bank, the Detroit Institute of Art, the Collection of Herbert and Dorothy Vogel at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Collection of Martin Margulies of Miami. She has received coverage in the "Arte Moderna", by Giulio Carlo Argan, an art textbook used throughout Italy's School, as an artist of The Twenty - first Century.



Campi marini di pensiero, 1993
 Bettina Werner's Salt Painting Copyright © 1993
 8 X 10 inches each
 Samporna Family Collection, Singapore

Salt more precious than gold!!!

Around the world and throughout history, salt has been cherished both as a healer, preserver and vital symbol of life and blood. It has been considered a token of love and a guard against evil. The Native Americans considered salt a gift of the deity and by keeping it safely in a box, it had the power to ward off evil; in Andalusia, salt is synonymous with grace and charm and to pay a lover a high compliment you call her your "salt box"; and in Morocco people carry salt with them for protection against evil spirits.

The great historic value of salt is also depicted in the following Czech fairy:



Cum Grano Salis, 1996
80 X 15 inches each panel.
Bettina Werner's Salt Painting Copyright © 1996
Calvasina Collection, Paris

The story begins with a king who had three daughters, each of whom were to seek suitors. The two oldest daughters found wealthy and powerful men who could show their wealth to the king. The youngest, however, had met and fallen in love with a young man in secret, who found her one day crying that she needed a man to show her father. When she explained, he said that she was not to worry, that he would appear before her father and show his wealth, she was very relieved.

On the fateful day, the two older girls presented their suitors and the King was very pleased. When he began to question his younger daughter, he was very upset to learn that she did not even know his name or where he came from. Suddenly he appeared, dressed well and presented himself to the King. When asked who he was, he said he was the Prince of Salt and he would inherit his father's kingdom of salt. When the father heard this, he grew very angry and yelled that salt was worthless and his daughter could not marry him. At that instant, the prince's father appeared and laid a curse on the kingdom because the King did not know the value of salt. From henceforth, there would be no salt in the land and every bit of salt would turn to gold. The prince would never be allowed to see the daughter of someone who did not value salt. In a whirl they both disappeared.

At the first the King thought nothing of the curse, but slowly the fields withered without salt, the people grew ill and left the kingdom in droves. The food had no flavor, and illness spread. In vain they tried to import salt from a neighboring kingdom, but the minute the wagons of salt crossed the border, the salt would turn into gold, which was now worthless. The wealth of the King's sons-in-law was to no avail.

Meanwhile, the youngest daughter was stricken with grief at the loss of her beloved. She vowed to try and find him. She left the castle and began her wanderings, searching everywhere for the kingdom of salt. After many trials, she finally found a deep cave and discovered the location of the kingdom of salt. The King of Salt was still very angry and at first refused to see her. Finally, when she begged enough, he told her that his son had become a pillar of salt. And sure enough, in the cave there she saw a life-sized pillar of salt. At first horrified, she finally succeeded in finding out that only the dew drops of all the flowers in the kingdom, which were in fact the tears of all the people who had suffered from her father's outburst and discounting of salt, had to be collected and brought back to the cave and poured over the pillar of salt to rescue the prince.

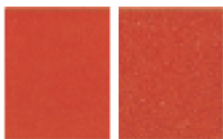
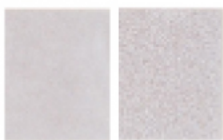
So the daughter went out and tirelessly collected the drops in a pitcher, working until she could not stay awake, falling asleep in the fields, and again and again persevering, until finally she collected all the drops in her pitcher and sneaked inside the cave. The King tried to stop her, but she was finally able to pour the pitcher over the pillar of salt and her loved one emerged. Finally, the king was convinced of her devotion to his son and salt, and he lifted the curse.

When they both returned to the castle with some salt, they found her father and courtiers all ailing. When she handed her father the salt, he told her he had been mistaken, that "**Salt was more precious than gold**", and with that, he embraced his daughter and future son-in-law and they all lived happily ever after.



TEXT BY PETER RYAN

She is called the Queen of Salt. This talented and beautiful Italian artist, known also as Bettina Werner, gained this title by devoting her artistic exploration to the possibilities of this mineral for more than ten years. Her brightly colored monochromatic paintings, made of panels encrusted with salt which have surface textures that range from that of fine sandy beaches to that of chunky quartz, have hung in galleries throughout Europe and the United States.



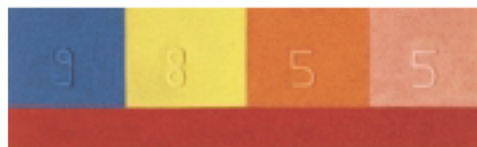
Nomadismo, 1992
8 X 10 inches each
Detroit, Private Collection



Bettina Werner, The Salt Woman Sculpture and Bobby Kennedy, The Paul Annacone Tennis Classic, East Hampton 2000

Werner says she was drawn to the use of salt by its incredible history, its importance to human development, and its metaphorical possibilities. When asked what makes salt so tasty as a medium she relates the numerous cases in which salt has added that extra flavor to language, religion and even international trade. Throughout history it has been important in the preservation of food. Salt has also assumed superstitious importance, as people throw it over their shoulder for good luck. Werner enjoys quoting a complimentary Italian saying that refers to salt, "sale in zucca", literally translated to salt in the head, which means someone possesses great intelligence and unique character.

Salt is equal to knowledge, wealth and power. The Moors rose to power in part through the trade of salt to wealthy European states. Werner cites the Bible as another example supporting her belief, in a passage in Genesis, Lot's wife turned around to look at the brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrah she was transformed into a pillar of salt. Woman was punished for her quest for knowledge, by being transformed to salt. In fact, Werner created a sculpture of a woman entirely made of salt (a metaphor for knowledge) to honor the woman of the new millennium, "who is no longer the object of desire, but the subject of knowledge". The sculpture titled Salt Woman features a tall, shapely, nude woman, assuming an erect, yet placid pose atop a pile of salt, all of which is the pure, natural white color of salt.



I Do It My Way, 1992
24 X 80 inches
Bettina Werner's Salt Painting Copyright © 1992



Cassetti Mentali, 1992
52 X 16 inches overall, 3 Panels
Bettina Werner's Salt Painting
Copyright © 1992



Verso l'alto, 1989
8 X 10 inches each
Bettina Werner's Salt Painting
Copyright © 1989
Canyon Capital Advisors Collection,
Beverly Hills, Los Angeles

Details Millennium Collection
for the Trustees Dinner
at The Whitney Museum



In her salt paintings however, Bettina Werner opts for vibrant, rich colors.

When asked about her technique in creating such deep, penetrating colors, she smiles and reveals only that it is her secret. Most of the pieces are explorations of texture and color, often including several panels in which both texture and color change in coarseness and value in each successive panel. Some works incorporate words or symbols that have been drawn in the salty surface with the artist's own elegant fingers.

Featured at the Trustee's Dinner at the Whitney Museum, Bettina Werner created a series of shimmering metallic colors of copper, silver and gold forming linear abstract shapes, which undoubtedly played upon and complimented the lines Marcel Breuer's, architecture brute design. Colin Cowie, celebrity party planner, and style consultant to mod parties and galas for the Hollywood elite, who planned the event, requested Werner's Artwork.

It was not the first time that Colin Cowie and Bettina Werner had collaborated. Cowie, who hosts a television show titled Everyday Elegance on the American Movie Channel network, featured the Salt Queen in an episode in her TriBeCa studio loft in 1998.



Doppio campo materico, 1989
150 X 204 cm
Bettina Werner's Salt Painting Copyright © 1989

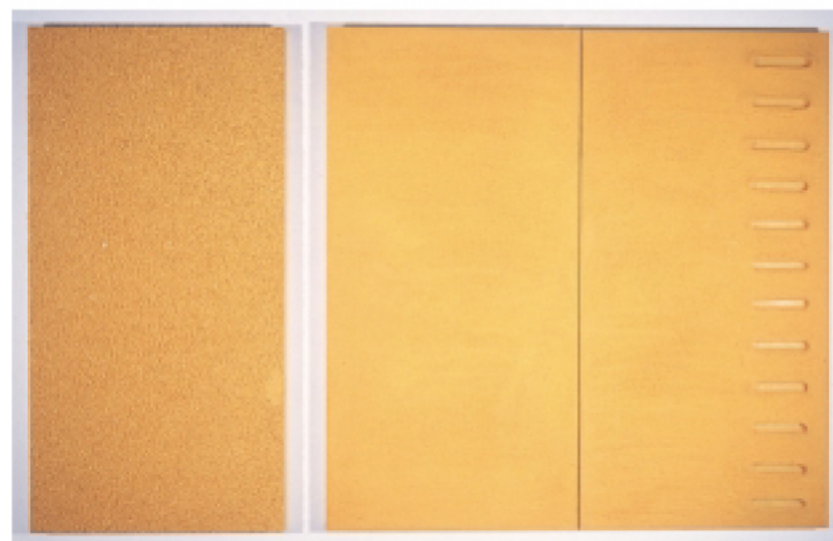


The Artist on her Salt Sculpture-Bed



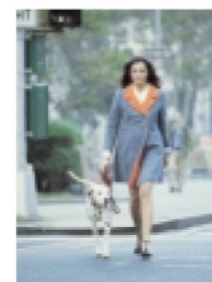
Bettina Werner's mix of life and art also extends to other states of consciousness. Her "Salt Sculpture-Table", converts into the functional piece "Salt Sculpture-Bed", by spreading beautiful sheets by Etro and a duvet across the bed of salt and lining it with a myriad of pillows. Werner says that she often had nightmares as a child and would wake up disoriented and facing the wrong direction. Now, she enjoys the large square bed because she can twist and turn, and roll in any direction without worrying about waking up facing there wrong way, as there is no specific head, foot or side of the bed. The salt she claims also protect against bad dreams and brings good fortune.

WerisBetty?, 1996
"Dinner with 'The Salt Queen', everyday elegance", a TV show with Colin Cowie produced by Romance Classics and Design TV, New York, 1998
Bettina Werner's Salt Sculpture-Table Copyright © 1996



Campo giallo con gradini di pensiero, 1992
47 X 47 inches
Bettina Werner's Salt Painting
Copyright © 1990
Nicos Vernicos Collection,
Athens, Greece

Walking her Dalmatian Tibino (to whom she dedicated 102 dalmatians Paintings) she happened across a book titled Salt: The Fifth Element, published in 1948. Inside the glories of salt were praised, and its importance to all life explained. This book became Bettina Werner's Salt Bible, and she encrusted the cover with coarse crystalline black salt and created a small altar upon which it sits, until she has an exhibition where the book is always prominently displayed. Perhaps you had a chance to see it at DKNY mega-boutique on Madison, as Werner participated in the event Madison Avenue: "Where Fashion meets Art", in the Spring 2000. Otherwise, you may cross paths with Bettina Werner as she walks her regal hound Tibino. If you make an impression, she may tell you that you have "sale in zucca", at which point you might feel akin to Sir Paul McCartney, or Sir Norman Foster who were knighted by Queen Elisabeth, because you have just been knighted by the Queen of Salt.



Bettina Werner with Tibino, New York 1998