

# Infanta Project: Series II



DEBORAH FORBES 2001-02

## The Infanta Project: Series II

### Process:

The *Infanta Project: Series II* is a continuation of the investigations of imagery and matter set up in the *Infanta Project: Series I*. The work continues to use as a core image one that derives from the Diego De Silva Velasquez portraits (1653-59) of the Infanta Margarita, daughter of the Hapsburg King of Spain, Philip IV and Queen Mariana. It is not her visage but her apparel that marks her as a princess. Her dress has become an icon of “princess” that endures to the present.

The *Infanta Project: Series II* is a set of three welded steel sculptures that form a single installation. Each of the sculptures will be subjected to fire, water or air. The forms are taken from the farthingale or vertugado that would have been used as an undergarment supporting the Infanta Margarita’s elaborate gowns. The steel farthingales that have been constructed to conform to the actual measurements of a five-year-old girl, are balanced on stands that give the appearance of dressmakers’ dress forms.



**Infanta Project: Series II**  
*Infanta - Air* (5' x 3.75')  
*Infanta - Water* (5' x 3')  
*Infanta - Fire* (5' x 3.75')

*Infanta: Air* is a steel farthingale covered with white feathers.



The farthingales and bodices act as understructures and enclosures, and reference both cages and stable structures of support. They are at once beautiful and frightening. All the pieces have processes of time and physical transformation built into them, in their imagery and their initial and ongoing processes.



*Infanta: Water* has been constructed as a fountain with water running up through the central pole. On the top of the pole is a steel sphere that spins on a cushion of water due to the pressure that runs through the central pole.



*Infanta: Fire*, the third farthingale, had an 'Infanta dress' constructed on it. This dress and farthingale were subjected to a controlled burn.



Infanta Project: Series II  
*Infanta Dress - Fire* (5' x 3.75')  
Welded steel dress stand with farthingale and vinyl dress

I chose to use an industrial process (welding) and material (steel) to work with the Infanta dress in three dimensions because of the physical properties of the material and the potential for transformation through natural processes. The welded steel can be burned, subjected to water and wind, and still retain its original shape. I worked with a journeyman welder, Jill Timushka. We worked collaboratively solving visual, structural and mechanical problems.



The transformative event took place when *Infanta Project: Series II* was installed at Medicine Hat Clay Products National Historic Site (Medalta), July 2002. Medalta is being developed as a working museum and interpretive center concerning the clay industries that came and went through the history of Medicine Hat. The choice of site was linked to the idea of making history visible, transformation of cultures through work and “that which remains.” A video, documenting the event, was made by Rory Mahoney, Halfa Productions.





**Inquiry:**

A community of matter/evidence/process collides in a piece of visual work.

The process used is industrial (welding) as are the materials (raw steel).

The forms are familiar - a dressmaker's dress form.

The original farthingales would have been constructed from wicker and muslin. What happens when a familiar form (a little princess dress) is constructed from industrial materials?

What happens when a process from one period in history is used to depict an article/ image from another period in history?

How does the dissonance affect one's reactions?

What happens when these objects are subjected to natural processes of transformation/ decay/degradation?  
Air, Water, Fire.

How has an image that has endured in our cultural memory bank (a little princess dress) for centuries carry different content in different times?



Infanta Project: Series II

*Infanta - Fire* (5' x 3.75')

Welded steel dress stand and farthingale w/ vinyl dress (ignited)

*Infanta - Water* (5' x 3')

Welded steel dress stand and farthingale (fountain)





Infanta Project: Series II  
*Infanta - Fire* (5' x 3.75')  
Welded steel dress stand with farthingale and vinyl dress (ignited)



Infanta Project: Series 2  
*Infanta - Fire* (5' x 3.75')  
Welded steel dress stand with farthingale and vinyl dress (cooling down)



Infanta Project: Series II  
*Infanta - Fire* (detail)  
Vinyl bonded to steel form