

## Six Containers, No Rules

By Alicia Bell

*Medium: Acrylic paint, canvas, textile beads, wire, thread, dice*

*Dimensions: Variable (2025)*

***Six Containers, No Rules*** is a project shaped by chance, intuition, and the limits of the materials I worked with. Using acrylic paint, canvas, beads, wire, thread, and a basic dice, I followed a process inspired by John Cage's chance theory. Instead of planning each step, I let randomness guide my decisions, how long I worked, which colors I used, which beads to choose, and even how the final pieces were placed on the background. I used six containers filled with mixed beads from past projects, each one unpredictable in size, color, and texture.

As I stitched, I learned how much the physical structure of each canvas affected the outcome. Some canvases had very little space for the needle and thread to pass through, and the beadwork began to rise upward, forming small sculptural shapes. Canvases with more open space stayed flat. These limitations became part of the meaning of the piece, showing how form can emerge from constraint.

I also noticed how my body responded to the process. With music playing, my hands moved more freely and made choices without overthinking. Without music, I slowed down and placed only one or two beads at a time. Sharing the work with relatives who are beaders brought mixed reactions, some saw emotional weight in the piece, while others outside the beading world simply saw artwork. These responses reminded me how materials carry different meanings depending on who is looking.

Letting the dice make decisions helped me release control and trust the process. Setting time limits kept me from getting lost in the beadwork. This project pushed me into new territory, and it taught me how intention, intuition, and chance can work together to create something I could not have planned.



Alice Ann Bell  
1914-1994  
Six Constellations, No. 10  
Mixed media, acrylic, ink, and gold leaf on paper, 1988  
Dimensions: 10 x 10  
Artist: Virginia Commonwealth University, 2005

Description:  
This artwork is a collection of six constellations, each represented by a different color and pattern. The constellations are arranged in a circular pattern around a central point. The colors used are blue, red, yellow, green, purple, and white. The patterns are intricate and detailed, featuring various shapes and designs. The artwork is made of mixed media, including acrylic, ink, and gold leaf on paper.



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