

Newsweek

KEEPSAKES

Thinking Outside The Urn

By Roxana Popescu | NEWSWEEK | Nov 12, 2007 Issue

For nine years, Patty Gorman-Bishop kept her mother's ashes in a drawer, unsure how to display them. She wanted something evocative of her mother and didn't want a traditional urn. Then she discovered Art From Ashes, a Web company that incorporates a teaspoon of pet or human "cremains" into luminous artwork. Bishop ordered a cobalt blue paperweight, which catches the sunlight on her windowsill. "It's vibrant," she says. "It matches my mother's personality."



As cremation becomes a more popular funeral option, families are searching for personalized ways to remember their loved ones—and online businesses are emerging to meet that demand. Cremated remains can be used in almost anything now: in hand-blown glass ornaments, as Art From Ashes provides; in diamonds, offered by a company called Life Gem, or even in colorful coral reefs, à la Eternal Reefs. Prestige Memorials sells oil paintings containing flecks of ash, starting at about \$800. For one grieving husband whose wife was a "Wizard of Oz" fan, Creative Cremains constructed sparkling ruby slippers that double as an urn.

"Conversation piece" urns are growing in demand, says Mike Nicodemus of the Cremation Association of North America, and jewelry is a top seller. With a charm bracelet or pendant, often in shapes such as animals or crosses, a loved one's ashes can be incorporated into items for the whole family. If jewelry is too conventional, there are other options: wind chimes, picture frames, walking sticks—even stuffed animals that you can cuddle with at night. Whether you think that's clever or creepy, it beats the foreboding urn on the mantelpiece.