

# FINDINGS

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The Magazine of the Association for Contemporary Jewellery

**Barbara Christie How We Began Lesley Craze Stephen Bottomley Unexpected Pleasures Beautiful Objects Material Value Diving for Pearls Suspend.ed in Pink Book Reviews and Reports**

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# CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



There is definitely a theme of 'change' throughout this letter, though as I write, there is unfortunately no change to the wintry weather we are all experiencing. Luckily there is plenty of work to do indoors though, especially regarding our members' exhibition, STAIN-LESS, which should be open when you read this.

This issue of *Findings* will be the last edited by Muriel Wilson. Volunteering to produce the first newsletter in 1997, Muriel has maintained the development of *Findings*, almost single-handed, ever since. For many members this magazine, with its aesthetic and intellectual consistency, has come to epitomise all that the ACJ represents. Thank you, Muriel, from all of us.

So, a hard act to follow for our new editor, Poppy Porter, who will be assisted by an editorial group and takes responsibility from issue 57. The Board welcomes Polly in her new role, offering their encouragement, support and best wishes.

The Association is represented in developmental work undertaken through the National Skills Academy, designed to provide eventual benefit to all sections of our 'industry'. Specifically the areas to be addressed are apprenticeships, careers advice and guidance, and continuing professional development (CPD). During the summer ACJ members will be invited to take part in an online survey which will help establish skills and training needs. Please look out for updates in the e-bulletins.

There have been many changes across all sectors, including ours, since 1997; financially, economically and socially. Changes which have, to a certain extent, been reflected by, and with, our members. Though our membership is currently numerically very strong, the Board feels it is time to address the Association's role in 'promoting the artform; supporting the maker; developing the audience in the UK and abroad'. We are planning a discussion day in the autumn to which all regional chairs, members of the Board and Advisory Group will be invited. Again, please refer to the e-bulletins for details of how you can contribute to the discussion.

*Terry Hunt*

## EDITORIAL

For those who knew her, Barbara Christie's passing was an occasion of great sadness, even if we had been braced for it for some time. Felicity Denby pays tribute on Page 3 to Barbara's achievement and Zoe Arnold has organised a memorial seat in Barbara's favourite garden at Chiswick House. Lesley Craze is the deserving nominee for Living National Treasure, and Janet Fitch has interviewed Lesley for this issue. We have also the usual collection of reviews and a report on an intriguing exhibition in San Francisco. There are now many younger ACJ members who may have wondered how the organisation was conceived and set up, and from the ACJ archive I have pieced together the story of the germination of a national membership association and our early days. It may be a revelation to some recent members and bring back memories for many more.

I have derived enormous pleasure since 1997 from the work as *Findings* editor, and I shall miss it, but feel that the magazine now needs a fresh editor, in tune with the latest developments and with the advantages of new technology. I'm confident that Poppy, my successor, will fit those criteria and bring a new sparkle to our magazine.

*Muriel Wilson*

Cover: Doug Bucci. Trans-Haematopoietic Neckpiece, 2010. 3-D printed acrylic resin printed as one interlinked piece. From 'Unexpected Pleasures'.

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# Barbara Christie

## Artist and Teacher

**My mentor and friend for three decades, Barbara Christie, died at home in London on January 2nd, 2013, aged 66.** Her husband of 41 years and their daughter Liza were beside her.

Born Barbara Crowel in Amsterdam in 1946, Barbara came to London in 1969 to work as an au pair in Greenwich. She met and fell in love with the architect George Christie and made London her home for the rest of her life.

Barbara's love of theatre and spectacle involved her in making props for a theatre company in Amsterdam after leaving school, and she could turn her hand to creating a pair of trousers or a tiara with equal skill – using found materials and whatever came to hand to assist the adornment. Once established in London, she began her training as a jeweller at the Sir John Cass School of Art, Design and Manufacture and began to make her own work in a shared studio, initially working as an apprentice with the artist Susanna Heron. Barbara preferred to sell directly to her clients, enjoying the dialogue and relationship between wearer and maker, and therefore did not often exhibit in Galleries. The touring retrospective of her work 'Light Seeping Through Windows' was shown at Ruthin Craft Centre in December 2012 and at Contemporary Applied Art, London until 3 March 2013.

Barbara was a remarkable artist and a generous and influential teacher. For more than 30 years she headed the Jewellery Department at Morley College, Lambeth, as well as nurturing first year students at Central St Martins School of Art, and establishing a loyal following at West Dean College near Chichester, where she would conclude her popular introductory slide talks with the words: "Fruit for Thought!" – A malapropism often echoed.

Visually eloquent, technically excellent, and characterised by curiosity, her work is in the collections of The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, The Liverpool Museum of Modern Art and The American Craft Museum, inter alia. There are pieces in prestigious private collections, such as that of Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State USA, and Prince Rainier of Monaco. Her pieces are illustrated in a number of books which are studied by students and makers at every level of learning, among them 'The Jewellers Directory of Shape and Form', and 'The Art of Jewellery Design', both by Liz Olver, and numerous other publications.

A challenge to categorize, impossible to imitate, never a 'brand', her work stands within the elitist niche occupied by contemporary jewellery, where works of art in precious materials are still made by hand. She exhibited at the annual Goldsmiths' Fair, for every one of the thirty years since its beginning. Fascinated by unusual gemstones, she was intuitively responsive to the message within materials,

and seldom repeated a piece – preferring to continue to investigate form, surface, technique and narrative in jewellery with the curiosity which informed and accelerated the momentum to develop her visual language and technical vocabulary until her very last days – all the while the work becoming more and more colourful as Barbara began to commission stones to be cut especially for her. The work was always wearable. Even her dramatic, larger pieces, such as the magnificent gold and druze quartz necklace made for the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths' fabulous 'Gold: Power and Allure' exhibition of 2012, are comfortable and have fastenings that are easy to manage.

A lifelong vegetarian, brilliant cook and fearless motorist – often very surprised to find that the Highway Code really did apply, even to her - her deep respect for the natural world is reflected in pieces where humorous figurative elements representing flora and fauna in the form of semi-precious stones often appear.

Formidably glamorous, Barbara's energy was legendary. As one of

Barbara Christie



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## FEATURES

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her Studio Assistants, I witnessed her uncompromisingly disciplined approach to her work from the privileged position of protégé. Her studio was in her home in West London, upstairs in the house which she and George had bought in a derelict condition and transformed into a beautiful home crowded with Barbara's collections of artefacts, George's wonderful paintings, and photographs of Liza and her two children: adored grandchildren Georgie and Joseph, now aged 8 and 6, who were a source of the greatest pride and joy, and whose attributes and achievements above all else meant everything to her.

I would arrive for work to find that she had cleaned the house, done the shopping, written five birthday cards, taken the cat to the beauty parlour, solved several problems on the telephone, had coffee with a friend, made lunch for later and arranged a dinner party – all before 9.00 am. Then she would get to her bench, with coffee, cake and beloved cats within reach, and work until 6.00pm with absolute concentration and ferocious focus. After six was family time. From this studio, as organized as an operating theatre, emerged work that has convinced the cognoscenti that she was a maker who truly could get blood from a stone. It is a testament to her fortitude that



Barbara Christie. Brooch 2011. 18ct gold, sterling silver, etched plates, green beryl. Private collection

she worked towards the success of 'Light Seeping Through Windows' to within days of the end of her life, and it is a comfort to her family and friends that she was so very thrilled with the acclaim and prestige surrounding the event.

As a teacher at Central St Martins, at Morley College, and at West Dean she

encouraged the progress of generations of students, many of whom are now successful makers and teachers. The long reach of her influence is a significant legacy.

Barbara's compliments to her students were to be cherished and were a powerful incentive to "just get on with it" – her familiar catchphrase.

Exhibition display at Ruthin Craft Centre, December 2012.



# HOW WE BEGAN

Muriel Wilson tells the story of the beginnings of ACJ

**In late May 1997 a press release was sent from the School of Jewellery in Birmingham, proclaiming that ‘The Association for Contemporary Jewellery was inaugurated at a meeting held in Birmingham in the School of Jewellery on Saturday 10th May 1997. At last, we hear you say!’** It was, of course, stapled to a blank membership application form.

This was the culmination of a long preparatory process and a great deal of hard work by a steering group, principally of jewellers, some of them academics, augmented by others with useful experience, following up a resolution recorded at the close of the conference ‘Jewellers’ Exchange’ held in Newcastle upon Tyne on 21 – 24 March 1996. This was an ambitious event, long in the planning and hugely successful. It was itself the outcome of discussions as far back as 1993 in Tyneside among the staff and associates then at the new University of Northumbria. Norman Cherry, then Head of 3-D design at the University, had been thinking of the need for a national organisation for jewellers since the late 1980s as a result of his involvement with the Society of North American Goldsmiths. He hoped to set up a parallel society here in Britain, with links to SNAG. His colleague Jan Hinchliffe-McCutcheon attended the 1993 meetings, at which, as ideas developed, it was agreed that a one-day symposium, or better still a conference, could be a means for sounding out the reaction. Norman felt that some kind of major event was needed as a catalyst, and he and Jan resolved to propose the idea of hosting an international conference at Northumbria University, using the SNAG events as a basic model.

A highly professional 20-page Conference Development Plan, prepared by external consultants a model of its kind, survives in the archives, and other archive papers demonstrate how these guidelines were meticulously followed. A Steering Group was gathered largely from the Design Department, dividing responsibilities and bringing in other experts for help over arranging the necessary infrastructure essential for a successful conference and the process of establishing an exciting conference programme with international speakers. Timandra Gustafson was taken on as the Administrator. Press releases and correspondence with heads of departments in other universities and schools of jewellery, societies such as the Society of Jewellery Historians (which sent 5 delegates) and silversmiths, resulted in over 150 eager delegates signing up for what was recognised as an unprecedented event in the UK jewellery world.

The programme, which included side trips to the many satellite exhibitions specially organised in other North East institutions in places such as Middlesbrough and Gateshead, fielded a glittering list of speakers, including Oppi Untracht (who overran his 45-minute slot by another 40 minutes of fascinating talk related to his recently-published book on Indian Jewellery – everyone remembers that), Onno Boekhout, Tim McCreight, Jane Adam, David Poston, Reiko Ichimura, among others, and a panel discussion on ‘Collecting’ chaired by Helen Drutt English, an American jewellery collector. Norman Cherry chaired the



Professor Norman Cherry, first Chairman of ACJ

proceedings and spoke informally to delegates over meals and drinks, sounding them out about his idea for an association. The programme wound up with a culminating party and dinner, where Andrew Logan and his group gave a riotous performance.

Everyone was fired up by the success of the conference, having learnt new things, made new friends and useful contacts for the future, discussed the art college situation, bought stones and beads from Marcia Lanyon and books from the Crafts Council stall, and much more. So it was a slightly surprising 60 bleary-eyed delegates managed to turn up for the final plenary session on the Sunday morning at which Norman presented his plan for a national organisation for jewellers. Other speakers reinforced his ideas with great enthusiasm, and when a vote was called, almost every hand shot up in affirmation. More than enough delegates volunteered from the floor to form a Steering Group to capitalise on this momentum and carry out the preparatory work. Everyone went home tired but happy, in eager anticipation of a forum for discussion and more conferences please, and an opportunity to build links between jewellers in the UK and around the world.

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In the wake of the many letters of appreciation and encouragement the hard work began, and there were meetings of the Steering Group, bringing in others with useful experience and knowledge. The core Group consisted of Norman and Jan, with Jane Adam, Ann Marie Shillito and Maria Hanson, and their initial remit was to discuss and develop the following list of aims for the future association, as contributed by the audience at the plenary session:

Communication; Inclusiveness; Publication of Documentation; Promotion/Exhibitions; Education; Stimulation/Experimentation; International links; Advocacy; Meetings – FUN!; Masterclasses; Market development; Scholarship; Product/Technical information.

These made up a daunting challenge. Maria Hanson submitted a perceptive paper on points from the meeting and its priorities, much of which guided the Steering Group at its first meeting on 18 July 1996, when it discussed the formulation of a constitution. It was agreed that membership should be inclusive - anyone could join, all that was necessary was a passionate commitment to jewellery: making it, writing about it, selling it, collecting it, and so on. The meeting went on to discuss a subscription structure for membership, and the size of the committee and its functions. Costings were estimated and fund-raising strategies considered. Lists of who's going to do what appear in the notes for this meeting, and a fresh list of Aims was produced, as follows:

1. Promote contemporary jewellery, body ornament and related fields of endeavour
2. Disseminate information on the above
3. Provide the means of communication and exchange among the membership by means of publications, exhibitions, masterclasses and any other appropriate means
4. Stimulate international exchange and debate
5. Provide a means of advocacy on behalf of the membership
6. Encourage scholarship, experiment, market development, provision of product and technical information
7. Encourage enjoyment of contemporary jewellery, etc.

During the following ten months, several intensive meetings were held and plans developed: the Steering group finalised the constitution, approached potential officers and committee members, calculated budgets, agreed subscription rates (covering the categories Professional, Student and something called 'Interested Other'), and fixed the date for an inaugural meeting.

This took place in Birmingham at the School of Jewellery on 10th May and was attended by over 40 people with apologies from another 25. The record of those who signed in contains the names of many who are still involved with ACJ in various ways, including its present Chairman, Terry Hunt. Norman Cherry took the Chair and summarised the work of the Steering Group. He stressed that the name, Association for (not just 'of') Contemporary Jewellery was intended to emphasize its inclusivity. The Constitution and Objectives of the Association were presented, discussed and agreed by the meeting, with a few amendments.

Then came the election of Officers and Committee and the following were nominated and confirmed as Officers: Chairman, Norman Cherry; Vice-Chair Jane Adam; Hon. Secretary Muriel Wilson; Hon. Treasurer Maria Hanson; Membership Secretary Ann Marie Shillito. Committee: Nick Aikman, Sally Andrews, Holly Belsher, Jane Dickinson (now McFadyen), Jan Hinchliffe-McCutcheon, Jacqueline Mina, Michael Pinder and Alison Richards. All of these went on to serve the Association loyally and to assist with the organisation of the subsequent conferences and other events, or with discussions on policy and future planning. The present generation of ACJ members owes them a debt for setting up and maintaining a securely-founded organisation.

Under the item 'Future Developments', the Chairman listed: an application for charitable status; a press release reporting on this launch event; a letter to potential members and an information leaflet on membership; a quarterly newsletter; and a programme of future events, including biennial conferences. The first of these conferences was proposed for 1998 in Edinburgh and was warmly welcomed, and the Executive Committee was urged to consider this a priority. A final agendum on subscription rates was accepted by the meeting.

Jane Adam



Jan Hinchliffe McCutcheon



Maria Hanson





Holly Belsher

Muriel Wilson



The rest is of course history and in spite of many fluctuations of financial and occasionally administrative problems ACJ has weathered storms such as the withdrawal of Arts Council support in 2008, and varying membership levels, and we have survived. I am proud personally to have been so closely involved in this story, and to have contributed something to its story. Since these early stages ACJ has held six international conferences and many other seminars, exhibitions and other events, all with the support of its members. As the Chairman's letter tells us, later this year a Discussion Day is to be held, to consider the future Aims and Objectives of ACJ, and this forum could be a significant milestone for the Association, in a world quite different from that of 1997.

## Living National Treasures LESLEY CRAZE

As part of our occasional series, Janet Fitch interviews Lesley on her imminent retirement.

**I have admired Lesley Craze ever since my own interest in contemporary jewellery evolved in the mid eighties, and over the years she has become one of my favourite people.** She is charming, warm and funny, elegant and articulate, but above all her passion for contemporary jewellery shines out, tempered with a keen eye for craftsmanship and design.

Lesley Craze Gallery, founded in 1985, has established itself as one of the leading contemporary jewellery galleries in Europe, and has a world-wide reputation, promoting individual work by over 100 UK and international designers and hosting four major exhibitions a year. In November 2010 the exhibition *La Crème* celebrated the Gallery's 25th Anniversary, with 25 distinguished makers each creating an original piece especially for the occasion.

But now it seems that Lesley has decided to retire gracefully, towards the end of this year, after two more exhibitions that will no doubt be remembered long afterwards by fans, buyers and jewellery designers alike.

Lesley Ann Craze came to London from Cardiff "aged 18 with £10 in my pocket." Lesley's early career was in teaching and in the theatre, until a chance but significant meeting with silversmith Sarah Jones in 1975 kindled her interest in jewellery making and led her to practical training with Sarah in her Clerkenwell workshop. Lesley then set up her own workshop in Old Street, and sold her jewellery and silverware part-time from stalls in Camden Passage, Islington, and New Apple Craft Market in Covent Garden.

As well as selling her own work, she also began showcasing the work of other makers, and quickly decided to establish a gallery where she could show the innovative pieces that she loved. "Our aim is to attempt to show work that is different from that shown elsewhere; displaying avant garde pieces, ranging from materials as diverse as concrete, paper, plastics, gold and platinum."

The first Lesley Craze gallery was opened in Essex Road, Islington, and moved to 34 Clerkenwell Green four years later, in 1989. A year later the Gallery expanded next door into 35 Clerkenwell Green, to enable the display of both precious and mixed media jewellery, and later 33 Clerkenwell Green became an added space, successfully selling contemporary textiles as well as jewellery.

The many exhibitions in the Gallery have been varied, imaginative and too numerous to mention all. They started with an exhibition of enamel jewellery in 1985. In 1994 the first catalogue was produced, to accompany 'Today's Jewels: From Paper to Platinum'. The first exhibition held abroad was 'The Best of British' at Facere Jewelry Art in Seattle, USA, coinciding with the SNAG (Society of North American Goldsmiths) conference there.

In 2000 the Gallery represented 18 British jewellery designers at SOFA in Chicago. The Gallery has held one international show annually, including 'USA Today' in 1996, 'Japanese Contemporaries' in 1997, 'Group Six and Guests', a Polish show in 2008, and 'Creative Heritage', featuring the work of Florence Edmonds from Martinique in 2010.

More recently the Gallery has shown at Collect in London, and has showcased new work by the distinguished Wendy Ramshaw CBE in 2010 and her lovely 'Drawings in Gold' in 2008. My favourite exhibition was last year's 'Take a Fresh Look at Diamonds', which featured fresh thinking in diamond jewellery design. Although Lesley herself is reluctant to name favourite makers, she admits to loving Wendy Ramshaw's work and also that of Nora Fok, whose solo retrospective exhibition 'Focus on Cloud Nylon' was

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held at the Gallery early this year after a year-long tour of UK galleries. The Hong Kong born maker “uses knitting, weaving, plaiting and knotting to transform nylon microfilament into intricate wearable forms. Her delicate structures push jewellery to a new level, transforming organic forms into wearable ethereal sculpture”.

Showing until 30 May in this year’s Clerkenwell Design Week, is ‘Special’ – “a way of exploring what’s special”, it brings together fifteen acclaimed artists using very different materials and techniques, from Tania Clarke Hall’s leather work to Kaz Robertson’s vibrant resin. At the end of 2013 there will be the final exhibition, ‘28 Years in the Making’, encapsulating the story of Lesley Craze Gallery, the many makers and work that has been exhibited over the years, and the story and development of contemporary jewellery over the 28 years.

Lesley Craze’s contribution to contemporary jewellery has reached beyond the Gallery, with sales to museum collections like the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Goldsmiths’ Collection, The Fitzwilliam

Museum and the Royal Museum of Scotland, among others.

Lesley’s extensive voluntary work includes the judging of many important awards. In 2000 she was made a Freeman of the City of London, and has lectured widely at home and abroad. She still loves theatre, film and dance, the Suffolk countryside, and has a son and daughter and two small grandchildren.

When asked about the future of contemporary jewellery she is not quite the optimist. “Twenty years ago there was so much innovative work coming through, now a lot of work is more safe – maybe the internet means a decrease in cutting-edge work which must be harder to sell without seeing and touching it. I think the momentum has gone. I have so enjoyed seeing people, including many customers from abroad, thrilled and intrigued by experimental work. I have, and have always had, a great staff, I have had a wonderful career, and overall, it’s been a great hoot.”

Let’s hope Lesley Craze will be around still to educate, amuse and charm us all with her knowledge and unerring eye for the best of contemporary jewellery.

### Lesley Craze in her gallery



Nora Fok. Neckpiece 2010. Rapid prototyping with resin. Photo: Frank Hills

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# STEPHEN BOTTOMLEY RETROSPECTIVE

## The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 7–28 November, 2012

Reviewed by Elizabeth Moignard

**It seems a bit early for Stephen Bottomley to be having a retrospective, or at least that another term for the show might be a more accurate descriptor: this is clearly an interim report on the outputs of an inventive 25 years or so, and there will surely be a lot more to come.** The Scottish Gallery exhibition tracks a pervasive interest in materials and technical skills in design and fabrication which are rooted in traditional practice but enhanced and stretched by new and developing methodologies. Stephen's own artist's statement (dated 1998) in the catalogue points to a strong conviction that the gradual dissolution of the boundaries between Art, Craft and Design over the previous few decades is both welcome and supported rather than negated by the use of emerging digital technologies. The show demonstrates the force of that conviction.

The earliest item here, the Layered Brooch of 1989, is a hard-edged titanium fan; one of the most recent, the Black Diamond brooch of 2012, is a perforated cushion of diamond-powdered aerospace material with shy red enamel dots hiding in the sparkle. The later piece is one of several recent items shown sitting in squares at the edge of a pair of spoked circles inscribed on the floor-panel of a central case on either side of a current artist's statement which reflects on his use of enamel. The spokes might be read as directing us beyond the case to the work in the surrounding displays, which point logically and chronologically back to the centre. The cases at the edge show us the interest in line and repeated pattern emerging early, along with related interests in surface and colour, which lead back neatly to the recent Patch brooches which reflect on the patterned fabrics observed on a visit to Seoul in 2010.

The photo-etched and scored ruffs and the spectacular alternative-panel Frame brooch of the late 1990s give us the intense commitment to delicacy and accuracy which also characterise their successors. The Drape neckpieces and bangle in silver-coated acrylic, of a decade or so later, came out of the Tech-Tile project between Sheffield and Venice, and show us formal patterning, achieved by digital design and manufacturing processes, which make that telling link between jewellery and textiles. The Matrici necklace adds three-dimensionality and colour, and the Star badges orient motifs and mathematical patterns to a mix which also includes a stack of bangles in coloured acrylics and variable relationships. A return to the Patch brooches then shows us a series of pieces which use

simple and clear forms to foreground some subtle enamels on textured metal; the blue and white striped brooch is an eye-catcher, as is its friend with a square of lemon yellow on a gently undulating base. It is worth adding that many of these pieces have as interesting a back as a front: they may have colour variants, or a different surface, and a view from a different angle will give us something new. And that, too, is a likely projection for Stephen Bottomley's next 'Retrospective'.



**Stephen Bottomley. Gold Square brooch, 2012. Silver, enamel, precious yellow metal, steel. 50mm square.**

## UNEXPECTED PLEASURES

Design Museum, London, 5 December 2012–3 March 2013

Reviewed by Poppy Porter

**Is this the right room? Oh yes, I think so - a bit hard to tell.** Entering 'Unexpected Pleasures' the visitor is confronted with an array of beautifully designed and clearly very expensive but otherwise blank table cabinets. They are black and circular with three massive domed bolts holding the glass down (they are real - I couldn't resist a tiny unscrew of one!). Inside, sorted into collections of about six pieces per cabinet is the jewellery displayed on black foam. I found myself peering down these wells trying to decipher what I was looking at and when looking at any piece that was also coloured black (there are several) I was reminded of Douglas Adam's spaceship with "weird black controls, which are labeled in black on a black background, a small black light lights up in black to let you know you've done it...". The lighting was not helping matters either. I felt the display did not show the jewellery off to its best, which is a shame. For example 'Steinhausen 2004' by Karl Fritsch, so prominently displayed in a glorious colour image on the Design Museum website was tucked away in a cabinet so it was hard to tell what colour it was or even that it was a ring. I suspect the design of the cabinets was intended to make the visitor feel as if they were discovering those promised Unexpected Pleasures.

The exhibition was in four sections, smaller works in the table cabinets at the front, a room-like historical section in the middle. Behind that were large neckpieces, then the 'Worn Out' photography section at the back, a slide show of images people wearing pieces and a video wall which seemed to be people wearing contemporary jewellery at a party, all of which attempted to address the conundrum of displaying jewellery without it being worn.

The range of contemporary designer-jewellery was excellent in an important exhibition that was the first of its kind at the Design Museum. As an introduction to artist-made jewellery it really tried



David Bielander. Bracelet, 'Scampi', 2007. Silver (copper anodised), elastics. 100mm diameter.

hard. The pieces were collected together in loose themes and came from artists all over the world, but were there enough from the UK? Does that matter in an international art form? The historical section covered the earliest emergence of contemporary art jewellery in the 1940s – 1960s.

The lack of human context so apparent in the front of the gallery suddenly changed once you had circumnavigated the 'historical room'. Here at eye level was an array of big necklaces from famous names such as Marjorie Schick, David Watkins, Caroline Broadhead and Lucy Sarneel. Behind them was a wall of photographs showing pieces being worn or images by jewellery artists that were purely two-dimensional works. Maisie Broadhead's now famous photographic piece 'Keep Them Sweet' is a gorgeous image but a problematic one in the context of this exhibition, its claim on showing a piece of jewellery was a sweetie necklace used as a prop.

As a personal tradition before leaving an exhibition I like to select the piece I would most like to take home with me. This time it is Sari Liimatta's 'Phoenix' 2010. A piece that, for me, embodies what artist-made jewellery should be; interesting technique, arresting beauty, expressing an intense emotion, with an undeniable ambiguity, exquisite craftsmanship and most importantly, wearable.

'Unexpected Pleasures' was an excellent new departure for the Design Museum, if somewhat disappointing in its display, and I hope the Museum will continue to champion contemporary jewellery and help raise its profile with the general public.

## BEAUTIFUL OBJECTS

### Aram Gallery, Drury Lane, 22 November 2012–12 January 2013

Reviewed by Lynne Bartlett

**For many jewellers the last three months of the year pass in a frantic blur of making and selling and many potentially interesting exhibitions have opened and closed un-viewed.**

Therefore I was very pleased to discover, thanks to the ACJ January e-bulletin, that I still had a chance to see the new jewellery exhibition at the Aram Gallery.

The Aram Gallery, a light and airy space at the top of the Aram Store in Drury Lane, is a new venue for jewellery exhibitions. What a treat to brighten the dark, cold January day; an afternoon looking at Beautiful Objects.

This, the gallery's first jewellery exhibition, certainly lived up to the curator, Héloïse Parke's desire to emphasise the design aspects of the genre. A carefully selected group of nineteen jewellers presented their work in juxtaposition with items that had provided the ideas and design inspiration. Each exhibitor also provided a written text explaining the relevance of the inspirational item to their finished piece. Although from varied geographic and artistic backgrounds, most of the exhibitors currently live and work in the UK. Indeed the majority are graduates of the RCA, showing what a magnet London is for creative talent.

The participants included well-established figures such as Hans Stofer and Caroline Broadhead, who are now both influential teachers, and recent graduates, Stephanie Bila and Lili Colley.

Inspirations ranged from an Argos catalogue; Lin Cheung: toys; Karola Torkos, Maud Traon and Katy Hackney: industrial artefacts; Eleanor Bolton: Mercerised cotton cone; Laura Potter: roll of lead; to found objects used by Zoe Arnold and Maria Militsi and photographs both personal and found, Mah Rana. The use of wood in her pieces reflected Simone Brewster's parallel furniture design practice. As a colour-obsessed viewer I was drawn to Eleanor Bolton's braided cotton necklaces and Lili Colley's Perspex and LED deco neckpieces. Although the focus of the exhibition was on the design process some information about the details of the making would have been welcomed.

The open layout of the gallery meant that, unlike many jewellery exhibitions, the objects were very accessible and there was a great temptation (resisted) to touch.

It is to be hoped that the Aram Gallery will be encouraged by the positive reaction to this exhibition to feature contemporary jewellery on a regular basis.



Installation view of the exhibition at Aram Gallery

## MATERIAL VALUE

### Constantine Gallery, Teesside University, 22 October–9 November 2012

An interview with curator Janet Hinchliffe McCutcheon,  
by Frances Julie Whitelaw

**In the early autumn of 2012 Janet was invited to curate an exhibition at the Constantine Gallery.** The exhibitors were Jan Hinchliffe McCutcheon, Jane Adam, Jessica Turrell, Yoko Izawa, Julie Whitelaw and Professor Norman Cherry.

*Tell us a little about the background to how this event came about, and the connection with ACJ.*

I was delighted to be invited by Prof Gerda Roper (Dean of Arts and Media) to curate this exhibition. I knew Gerda both in a professional capacity from my time teaching at Northumbria University and as a customer.

I was a founder member of the Association for Contemporary Jewellery, which grew out of the collective energy and enthusiasm amongst UK jewellers at the first International Jewellery Conference in 1996, which I helped to organise and which was hosted by the School of Design at Northumbria University.

In this exhibition there is a strong connection to the ACJ. Norman Cherry, Jane Adam & Julie Whitelaw have all served as Chair of the ACJ, while Jessica Turrell co-curated an important ACJ exhibition, 'Jewellery Unlimited' in Bristol in 2004. Each exhibitor was chosen to show the visitors a breadth of approach with materials from silver, aluminium, enamel, wood, and textile.

*You chose the subject and title of this exhibition, so what is the philosophy behind the theme?*

My idea for the title 'Material Value' for this exhibition is to evaluate our perceptions and to widen the appreciation of jewellery. It is one of the most ancient art forms expressing the human need for personal adornment with a variety of contrasting and accessible materials. Even in relatively recent history the Victorians elevated the status of everyday materials such as human hair, iron and Whitby jet. There is still a popular misconception that real jewellery must conform to stereotypes of material value and status.

The artists I invited for this exhibition have all had a UK design education, which encouraged a strong practical engagement with materials. I admire their work and appreciate their different underlying philosophies.

*The catalogue for the exhibition is a great success, and has been very thoughtfully put together.*

Yes, thanks for that go to Paul Dennison, principal lecturer in Design, and James Beighton, senior curator at mima (Middles-



Model wearing Jan Hinchliffe McCutcheon's pendant necklace, 2012. Silver, wood, cord. Photo-credit Teesside University.

brough Institute of Modern Art) for their thought-provoking catalogue essays. Both have touched on the elusive nature of contemplation and perception.

There are insightful contributions from all the exhibitors, explaining their choice of materials and how this has an influence beyond the purely physical properties of their jewels. Jane Adam observes that "In one sense, jewellery is not functional. However it fulfils a profound need for self-expression and as such is one of the most ancient forms of art."

On a purely personal note, for me jewellery is a powerful non-verbal communicator. The confidence it evokes in the wearer creates a true appreciation of value and this ultimately is what I wanted to capture in this show.

## DIVING FOR PEARLS

### The Scottish Gallery, 6–30 March 2013

Reviewed by Fran Baseby

**'Diving for Pearls' is not an exhibition about pearls, but about how different contemporary jewelers approach them as a material. Some are threaded together in a classic string of pearls.** Others are hidden beneath layers of precious metal or wax or enclosed within boxes.

The diversity of the participating jewellers is exemplified by Jane Adam's and Anna Gordon's use of pearls. Adam uses small pearls as seeds in scribed silver and bimetals pods. These pearl seeds appear in a state of flux: are they safe inside the pods, or are they about to fall out? When worn the pods move and sway with the wearer's motion. They reflect the constant motion of nature's seasonal changes. Whereas Adam's jewellery unifies pearl and metal in the form of each pod, Gordon's brooches play with, and amplify, the contrast between delicate mother of pearl and hard metal. Pieces of mother of pearl form branches from which oxidized white metal leaves and ruby red buds emerge. The metal has an industrial look that provides a balance to the ethereal quality of the mother of pearl.

The exhibition includes those makers who use mother of pearl in different ways, such as Grainne Morton and Jack Cunningham. Morton's necklace of mother of pearl buttons immediately prompts questions about memories and the potential of objects to contain them. Each button is unique: where did they come

from? Are they old or new? Have they ever been worn? Cunningham's 'Me and You' brooch elicits a similar response through the bringing together of different provocative elements: a heart-shaped mother of pearl button, a moonstone and an amethyst each carved with a face, and the end of a small wooden ruler.

In this group show two jewellers in particular stood out and challenged my preconceptions about the use of pearls in jewellery. In brooches from her 'Artery' series, Dorothy Hogg has placed delicate and minute pearls into the sterile setting of silver petri dishes. The visceral effect of the red pigment apparently oozing into the brooch destabilises the traditional associations of pearls. Beth Legg's jewellery is concerned with revealing and concealing. Here the exhibition includes two freshwater pearl necklaces; one pearl on each string has been completely covered with red sealing wax. In her large 'Silver Pearls' necklaces sections of pearls have been coated in silver, the bulbous forms of the pearls forming patterns on the surface of the metal.

*Exhibitors: Jane Adam, Marianne Anderson, Malcolm Appleby, Zoe Arnold, Stephen Bottomley, Jack Cunningham, Anna Gordon, Loekie Heintzberger, Dorothy Hogg, Hannah Louise Lamb, Beth Legg, Catherine Mannheim, Marlene McKibbin, Kazuko Mitsushima, Jacqueline Ryan, Ruth Tomlinson*

Anna Gordon. Mother of pearl spoon brooch, 2012.  
Silver, mother of pearl.



## SUSPEND.ED IN PINK School of Jewellery, Birmingham, 7–28 January

Reviewed by Hayley Beckley

**One of the luxuries of studying at the School of Jewellery in Birmingham is the regular exposure students receive to inspiring and challenging exhibitions.** A boon clearly displayed by 'Suspend.ed in Pink', shown at the school in January.

This exhibition, curated by Laura Bradshaw-Heap, presents a dynamic and absorbing slice of the current world of contemporary jewellery, not just through the variety and calibre of work featured, but through the engaging method of display. Each piece is shown suspended, affording an often longed-for opportunity to works without the barrier of a glass cabinet.

The primary drive behind the exhibition was to showcase a diverse range of work from worldwide artists. In suggesting a single colour as the theme, Laura hoped to allow for a cohesive collection without dictating the style of work. Pink was chosen both arbitrarily and deliberately, a colour for colours' sake, but one with a variety of positive and negative connotations to explore.



The forty-three artists featured in the exhibition were selected by jury from a clamour of international responses to an open call for submissions. One of the joys of this exhibition is this democratic approach as it promotes a vast range within the pieces and shows work from established and renowned jewellers alongside newly emerging names.

All visitors will surely find something that delights them in the diverse interpretations of pink. Pink becomes aesthetic eye-catcher, social commentary and even conceptual persona.

The delicate thread and silver necklace 'Ephemeral' by Lital Mendel, is an exquisitely fragile piece formed from a single layer of wound thread that could crumple on touch. It asks the viewer to question Society's rejection of the imperfect and appreciate each moment for what it brings. If your preference is more large-scale try Claire McArdle's 'The (kanga)Roo', a huge kangaroo head made from fluorescent pink leather that questions the Australian identity.

The interpretation of the colour is as wonderfully varied as the scale and range of materials. In Iris Eichenberg's 'Bend', the pink takes on subtlety to become tactile, probing flesh at once enticing and unsettling; yet in the 'Bird and Flower Crystal Cuff' by Kate Rohde, natural history and decorative arts aim to transform pink into sumptuous, ornate frivolity.

A raffle was arranged alongside the exhibition to enhance audience engagement with the work. A piece from the show was pre-selected as the prize and the winner drawn after the final date.

'Suspend.ed in Pink' was shown at Schmuck in March and will be at Heidi Lowe Gallery, DE, USA from 11 August to 8 September. Check the blog for further details or to buy the beautiful exhibition catalogue, or a raffle ticket:  
<http://suspendedinpink.blogspot.co.uk>.

Private View of 'Suspend.ed in Pink'  
at Birmingham School of Jewellery

## FROM THE COOLEST CORNER: NORDIC JEWELLERY

Ed. By Widar Halen. Arnoldsche 2012. £35. ISBN 978-3-89790-373-9

**Mark Lewis was impressed**

**What exactly is “Nordic-ness” in artistic terms? Many art and design writers suggest that the very idea is a fiction.** Those who are unfamiliar with recent developments probably envision a cultural landscape still resolutely in the grip of modernism and functional design. After all, “Scandinavian” has long been a byword for ‘good design’ and in the populist mind at least, a clean-lined Georg Jensen aesthetic firmly dominated the metalsmithing horizon. This observation, if indeed it was ever true, is now misplaced. This sumptuous book demonstrates that contemporary jewellery developments in the Nordic countries within the last two decades have moved on dramatically.

The global art movement has triumphed. What we now see emerging is jewellery that is diverse and pluralistic. The work portrayed is playful, colourful, often tinged with humour and irony. There is also mystery and despair in the work of Kadri Malk. There is clearly a preoccupation with deep human concerns as in the pieces by Finnish artist Janne Hirvonen and many others have explored themes such as urbanism, gender and sustainability. Some of the designers have revived traditional materials; so for example, the Nordic identity still abounds in the use of native wood and other basic materials, as seen in the five birchwood ‘trunks ending in a carved ring’ by Kim Buck from Denmark and the ‘traces of function’ brooches by Tobias Alm from Sweden. In a more playful spirit, Mervi Kurvinen from Finland uses material from rubbish tips, flea markets and Easter eggs. It is particularly interesting to see the work of Estonian and Icelandic jewellers whose work is relatively unknown in Europe. The four artists representing the latter country, use found materials as diverse as driftwood, rusted chain and rope as well as liquid porcelain and dyed nylon threads.

Techniques are equally disparate and edgy in their application. Crocheting, embroidery and knitting for example, are incorporated with more conventional materials in the post-feminist pieces by Elise Hatlo from Norway. However, traditional goldsmithing approaches are still to be found, notably in the dynamic forms of Peter de Wit and Margareth Sandstrom.

The book also contains excellent essays on the history of Nordic Jewellery and the wider development of experimental jewellery in Europe. It is also a catalogue accompanying an exhibition which includes work by the 61 featured artists, that will travel throughout Scandinavia and conclude in Munich in 2015. This is a long-awaited publication which demonstrates the true internationalist spirit that now prevails in Nordic jewellery. A vigorously experimental, risk-taking outlook is revealed where clearly the craft disciplines, their function and philosophies are being questioned; old meanings are challenged and new meanings are constructed. It looks like the ‘coolest corner’ has finally come in from the cold.



Nicholas Cheng (Sweden). Brooch 1, from the Wood series. Silver, veneer, rubber, cotton, polyurethane.

## THE NEW JEWELERS

By Olivier Dupon. Thames & Hudson, 2012 £24.95. ISBN 978 05005 16294

Reviewed by Karen Dell'Armi

**A fashion-led selection of contemporary jewellery from over 800 makers from around the world.** Presented in chapters with red carpet-esque, evocative titles such as *Avant Gardists* and *Viva Glam*. Dupon, an ex-Christian Dior fashion designer, leads us through these loose categorisations. He doesn't intend to place designers in boxes, as many would happily occupy several chapters. His experience is predominantly fashion and therefore he is well placed to present new, up and coming makers alongside established makers to us in this provocative way.

I first thought it may be a disappointing read as there wasn't much depth, more a pictorial fashion reference book. On closer inspection, I enjoyed the insights into the designer's inspirations and ways of working.

My favourite pieces include Isabel Dammermann's *Gigas I Ring* (silver, brush, 18ct gold, silicon & azurite). Beautifully sculpted organic, tactile shapes with rough, uncut, unpolished stones.

I found numerous references to trends we are familiar with in contemporary jewellery. For example, the macabre world of skulls, ravens, claws, thorns, feathers, animal bones and taxidermy. There is a firm nod to Mother Nature with highly literal references to animals such as rabbits, foxes, mice, bees, birds and insects, alongside plant-life such as acorns and roses.

That said, just as my heart was sinking a little, I came across the work of Marc Alary. A graphic designer by trade, he comes from Toulouse and also works as a fashion illustrator. His debut collection *Menagerie* features articulated pieces such as monkeys. A juxtaposition of intricately made fine gold jewellery with a sense of fun, joy and child-like wonder.

There was a plethora of mixed material jewellery pieces, lots of vibrant colour. Some Art Deco and almost talisman-like references. I felt these pieces were definitely in the fashion jewellery rather than contemporary jewellery stable, apart from Melanie Georgacopoulos, a Greek designer with an original take on the use of freshwater pearls in contemporary jewellery. She trained as a sculptor before discovering a love of jewellery and this shines through in her construction of pieces. I was especially struck by her *Triangle* necklace (freshwater pearls and oxidised silver chains). Simple, clean design exquisitely executed. This fresh take on traditional jewellery materials was refreshing such as the way she slices the pearls at jaunty angles.

I'm not being overly keen on the use of colour for colour's sake in contemporary jewellery. So the *Mandarin* (18ct gold, rose rutilated quartz and rose quartz) and *Mombassa* (chrysoptase, rock crystal and gold leaf) rings by Belmacz were a blast of fresh air. Simple, sculptural form with natural colour presented in a clean design. Bliss!!

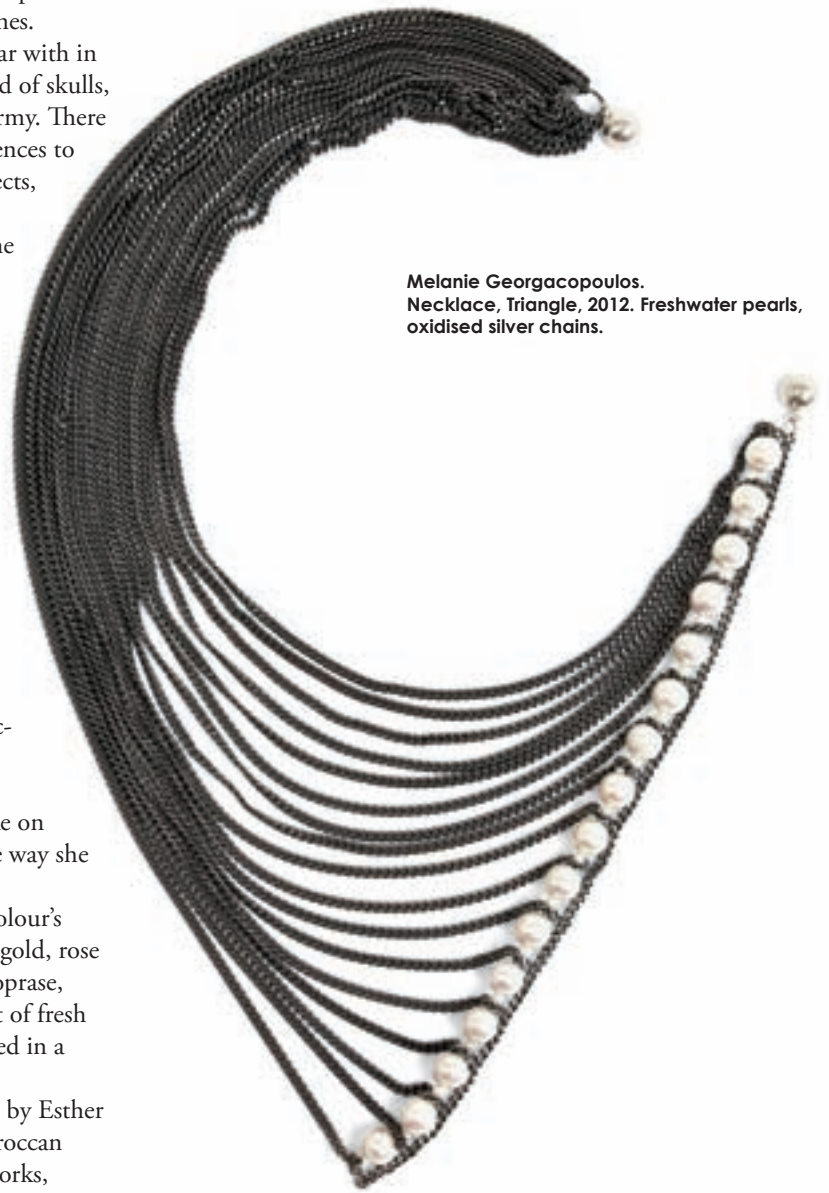
Perusing the 'Cool Luxury' section, I was captivated by Esther Assouline's chiselled soulful designs inspired by her Moroccan roots. Plus, Karen Liberman's Indian-inspired layered works,

where precious stones such as rubies and garnets are hand-carved and set with intricate traditional filigree work.

Last, but by no means least, Darcy Miro, a self-confessed metallurgy geek. The result is organic, tactile, textured sculptural creations – almost shield-like designs looking as if they could happily be worn as body armoury. These are epitomised by her "Porthole" trilogy of cuffs.

So while I would classify this as a 'light' read, it was a great round-up of fashion-led contemporary jewellery designers from around the world. A good reference book and I'm pleased to have been introduced to some new makers, so thank you, Olivier.

Enquiries: [www.thamesandhudson.com](http://www.thamesandhudson.com)



Melanie Georgacopoulos.  
Necklace, *Triangle*, 2012. Freshwater pearls,  
oxidised silver chains.



## ELEMENTAL JEWELLERY

By Vicky Forrester. Fil Rouge Press. £18.99 ISBN 0.978.0.956438.7.0

Reviewed by Melanie Pike

**Vicky Forrester has succeeded in producing a book that is both technically rich and warmly accessible.** It is written for developing jewellers who, familiar with the basics, are ready to go deeper into the relationship between idea, material and technique. The 'Elemental' of the title refers to the themes underlying Forrester's own creative process, which she deconstructs and shares so that we can use it to inform our own journey.

Her enthusiasm for all aspects of jewellery making, from the conceptual to the practical, oozes from the page. Referencing myth and legend at the start, in the 'Design Process' section, she reminds us of the timelessness of jewellery making, of how connected we are to global culture and in so doing emphasizes the quality that a conscious consideration of this can bring to our work. Throughout the book this sense of the universal is anchored in a wealth of workshop information.

The central section, 'Exploring Materials' neatly ties in with the book's title by including a look at the working practice of four diverse and well-known jewellers, one for each of the elements. Each contributes an intermediate level project. The final section, which comprises roughly half the book, gives detailed instructions for completing specific projects and outlines low tech techniques, which may be new to you and which can all be explored in a fairly basic workshop. It covers etching, forging, married metals, fold forming, sand casting, fusion, and batch forming from dies with

home made tools amongst others.

The author's tone is relaxed and informal and it would be a hard to resist feeling invigorated and inspired by the suggestions for enriching one's own creative practice. These are offered with no condescension or attempts to look clever. Forrester shares with us an openness and clarity about the evolution of her own jewellery journey and I felt as though I were being guided by a patient teacher - she does have 23 years' jewellery experience - and gently reminded of the relevance and indispensability of play rather than becoming stuck in ideas of outcome. "This kind of exploration leads to originality and personal authenticity in one's creative expression", she says.

This book is beautifully laid out. Written sections, easy-to-digest points and information in shaded boxes are brought to life with vivid colour photos on every page - of finished pieces as well as useful close ups illustrating the how-to sequences.

Vicky Forrester has packed a great deal into a book which combines the best aspects of a jewellery magazine (lively layout and page-turning readability), recipe book (projects complete with materials and tools lists) and reference manual (technical instruction, tips and tricks of the trade). If your introduction to jewellery has been of a mostly practical nature then Elemental Jewellery will be an invaluable companion in supporting the development of your own unique creative voice.

Vicky Forrester. Rock Pool Brooch.  
Cast in silver, with sea-glass.  
c.75 x 90mm. Photo artist.



## Jewellery Design

by Elizabeth Galton Galton. AVA Publishing, 2012. £24.99. ISBN 978-2-940114-94-8

Reviewed by Peter Bond



Entitled “Jewellery Design”, it might be expected that this book is focussed on the design of jewellery; in reality, the content is more geared towards the profession of jewellery designer than the process of design. As the book is part of an academic series on fashion design as a discipline, it consequently provides an overview of the business of jewellery design as

a subset of that - as opposed to its being presented in the context of a maker who designs their own pieces.

The book is split into seven chapters: A Brief History of Jewellery; Jewellery Styles; Essential Research; Design Creation; Design Development and Rationalisation; Marketing and A Career in Jewellery, with around 25 pages devoted to each.

Overall, the book is necessarily brief - trying to condense a subject that is both wide-ranging and means different things to different people into 170 pages is going to result in significant abbreviation and subjective gaps in coverage. There is a large number of interesting pieces shown throughout, all with excellent photography - although given the subject area it would have been nice to have seen more of the evolution of some pieces than an occasional concept sketch. Each chapter has at least one case study or interview with industry relevance, although I feel that a case study of an individual is in reality an interview by another name.

While there is much of interest in the chapters, the brevity is invariably frustrating - many of the topics require a far more in-depth treatment than this book can provide. There are occasional practical projects such as creating a moodboard, a lookbook or presenting a portfolio but there is little guidance beyond the Nike approach - “just do it”.

There is a brief section on ethics tacked on as a seeming afterthought, 4 pages not by the author inserted after the index - this seemed somewhat strange as there is also a discussion on the subject within the main text (covering the expected topics of the Kimberley Process and Fairtrade Fairmined gold).

There is remarkably little on the actual process of jewellery design within the book and nothing at all on design for manufacture; since the manufacturing process selected has an influence on how a piece should be designed, I would regard this as a major omission - but perhaps that is down to my engineering background. In the chapter on design development, the importance of understanding how a piece is made is mentioned, but there is no further consideration.

In conclusion, this is an interesting book, although it should be understood this is focussed on an industry where the designer firstly may not make the product and secondly is extremely specialised in overall nature. It is in no way a “how to” of jewellery design and should not be mistaken for one.

## RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

### Jewellery Design and Development: From Concept to Object

Norman Cherry. Bloomsbury, June 2013. £24.99

At last! A series of interview with leading international jewellers ISBN 9781408124970

### Otto Kunzli – The Book

Ed. Florian Hufnagel. Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2013. £55.

English edition.

ISBN 978-3-89790-383-8

Full-scale (5kg) survey of the work of this influential figure.

### Peter Bauhuis – Jewel.Vessel.Implement

Monica Gaspar, Pravu Mazumdar. Arnoldsche art Publishers.

2012. £25

ISBN 978-3-89790-361-6.

An artist experimenting with casting and melting metals.

### Space, Light, Structure: The Jewelry of Margaret de Patta

Ursula Ilse-Neuman, Julie M Muniz. Museum of Art and

Design, NY, and Oakland Museum, California.

ISBN 978-1-890385-21-1

Published for a major exhibition of work by this pioneering mid-20th century American jeweller.

### Munsteiner: the Young Generation.

Tom and Jutta Munsteiner

Wilhelm Lindemann. Arnoldsche Art Publishers.

£45. ISBN 978-3-89790-374-6

Son and Daughter-in-law carrying on the family tradition of jewellery designs incorporating unusually cut gemstones.

### The Woodruff Key

Ulo Florack. Arnoldsche 2013. £25. ISBN 978-3-89790-385-2

Outsider-style fantasy jewellery and objects, incorporating sculptural elements. Picture-book, no text.

### 21st Century Contemporary Jewelry

Marthe le Vau. Lark Crafts NY. Best of the 500 series.

ISBN 078-1-60059-521-9

An international selection of the usual names.

### Jewelbook: International Annual of Contemporary Jewel Art

Jaak van Damme. Stichting Kunstboek, Distributed in UK by Antiques Collectors' Club.

2013 £40. ISBN 9789058564108

As above, probably.

Image, top left: Victoire de Castellane. Neckpiece, Opium Veloourosa Purpra, 2010. Lacquered silver, white gold, rubies, diamonds, rhyolite. 119X119cm, with base, h 13x122x121.5cm. Gagosian gallery.

# California Dreaming - 'Ferrous' Velvet da Vinci, San Francisco, 1 March – 14 April 14, 2013

A report by Dauvit Alexander

**I stepped off the plane on the 4 March to a cloudy, damp, icy cold day in Glasgow, having boarded the plane from San Francisco at 18°C and brilliant sun.** There, the air was clear, here it is fugged with tobacco smoke. Everyone looks miserable. I look miserable. I had to get to work before 4pm for a meeting with the college Principal at which he told us about financial cuts to the education sector. Not a great return from what had been an amazing four days on the West Coast of the USA.

I am not really sure what has stopped me visiting San Francisco before. Even more than New York, SF seems to me to be the essence of everything I want my cinematically-tinged 'USA' to be: the beat poets, Chinatown, Harvey Milk, Jefferson Airplane... all so far in the past. Yet it feels as if little has changed. Not even the coming of the tech giants has removed the feel of a thriving alternative arts community. The buzz on Sunday was that someone very, very important in Tech had bought one of David Choi's bracelets from the show I was in SF to see.

Velvet da Vinci is a big, open gallery space on a busy commercial section of Polk Street but its grey front and austere red lettering don't prepare you in any way for the unpretentious friendliness of the staff and owners. The airy gallery was hosting the physical part of 'Ferrous', the joint show between Crafthaus craft-forum, and the gallery, in which I am pleased to have been included and which was my main reason for visiting the city in the first place. The show is thrilling. There is no other word for it.

The theme, as you might imagine, was all about jewellers who work in iron in various forms. I would never have thought that there would be so many other jewellers who make iron a material focus. We are all familiar with the work of Rob Jackson and Jim Cotter (who was not represented in the show) but it was fascinating to see how other jewellers use this material. There were new as well as old names using a new material and it was great to see a number of British jewellers and ACJ members represented, including Jo Pond and Jenny Laidlaw. The iron is used in many ways: powder coated, enamelled, pierced, forged; it is from found-objects, new sheet, cast lumps, rusted, polished and patinated. From the point of view of a jeweller who uses iron as a primary material, this was such an exciting show but I think also that from the point of view of the public, the customer, this show is an excellent survey of the possibilities of jewellery in an era of exorbitant precious metal prices. Indeed, Mike, one of the gallery owners, told me that a substantial number of pieces sold on the opening night.

Unusually, for such a large and varied show, there was nothing in it that I absolutely hated: perhaps that has something to do with iron being 'my' material. It is unmistakably an exciting selection, thoughtfully and skilfully curated. For me, the outstanding pieces in the show were work by an artist I haven't

encountered before, Jaclyn Davidson, who uses the massive form of blackened, corroded iron as a foil for tiny counterpoints of diamonds, silver and high-carat golds.

It was good to see that the opening was very well attended and there was a real buzz about the place, though an actor I spoke to told me that he would "never work again" after he asked about the 'Macbeth Brooch' that I was wearing!

I was absolutely stunned by some of the work in this highly varied and innovative exhibition. After the opening, I was taken to dinner: when visiting the gallery, I can recommend the Chinese restaurant next door! Thanks indeed to Mike, Elizabeth, Ariel, Emma and the rest of the team at Velvet da Vinci for making me so welcome and I highly recommend any ACJ member visiting San Francisco making contact with the wonderful people there.

*Links:*

*The online catalogue is available at -*  
<http://crafthaus.ning.com/group/ferrous>

*Velvet da Vinci website -* <http://velvetdavinci.com/>

*Crafthaus craft forum -* <http://www.crafthaus.ning.com/>

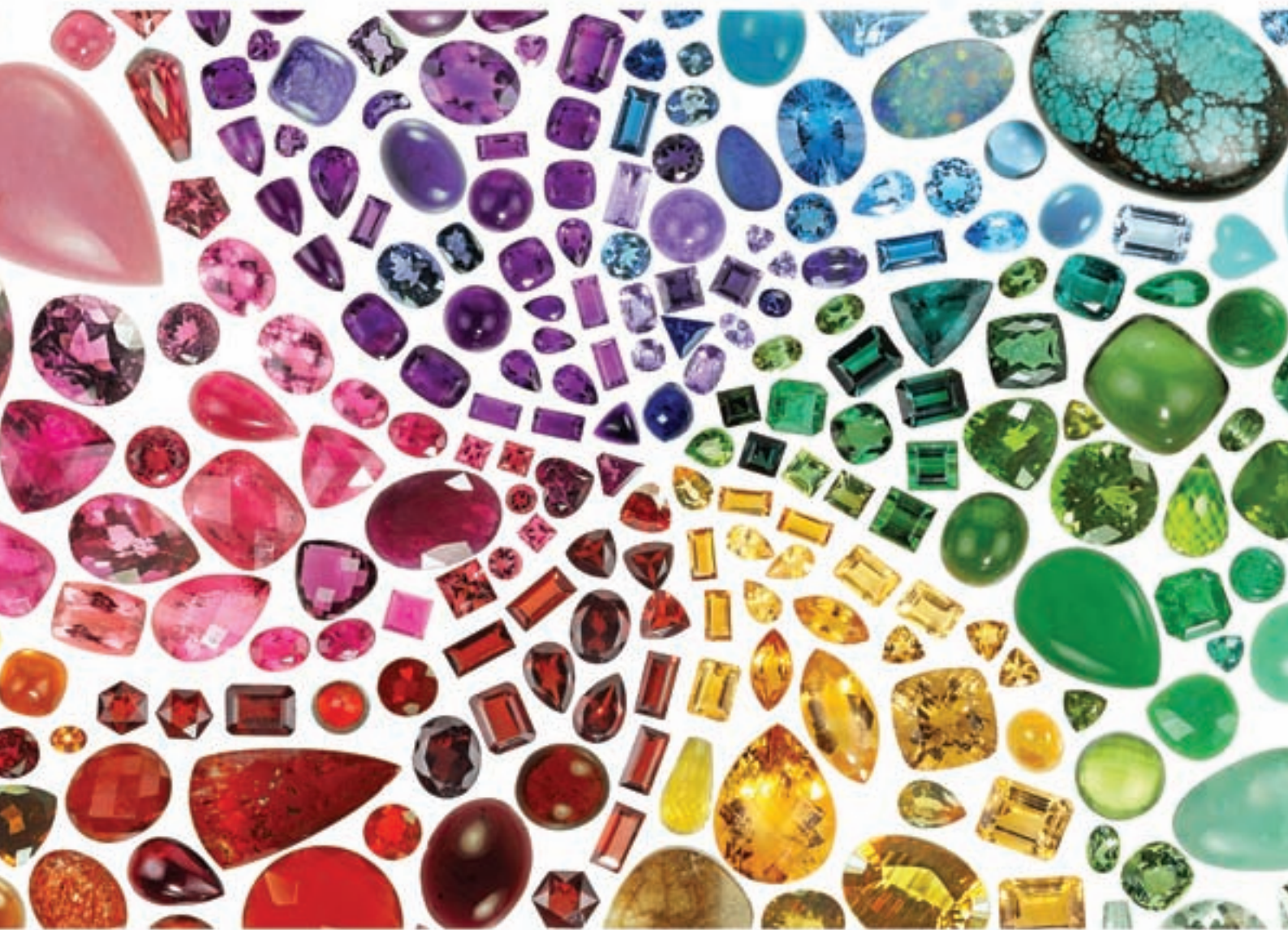


Dauvit Alexander. Three Post-Apocalyptic Cocktail Rings, 2009. Materials: Found corroded iron gas pipe and electrical circuit; silver; amethyst; pale citrine; lemon citrine; tourmaline; blue topaz; garnet; peridot; green quartz. Photo-credit Andrew Neilson.



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