



Wall projection of *Satine*—Nicole Kidman wearing the diamond-studded necklace made for the film *Moulin Rouge* in 1999, with the stunt double displayed nearby



A Fine Possession: Jewellery and Identity

Dorothy Erickson visits a landmark survey exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney



View of the section 'Gold and Identity—Australian Style'



For those people interested in contemporary jewellery or those interested in its history you need go no further than the Powerhouse at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Here in *A Fine Possession: Jewellery and Identity* is laid out a survey of the international greats of contemporary jewellery as well as examples from earlier cultures across the globe. This spectacular exhibition of jewellery spanning cultures and millennia is presented as a series of themes using works collected by Australians, worn or made by, or made for Australians. There are spectacular works in all sections. There is also plenty that invites and rewards intimate engagement.

The exhibition is arranged with an antechamber where videos of some makers and collectors run continuously before you enter the main hall arranged in a U shape with the first allée having the themes Belief and Magic, Love and Death, Nature and Culture, Style and Revival, Gold and Identity, Status and Wealth, Men and Adornment and within them subthemes such as Australian Style. Then across the back wall is Modernity and Change with sub-sections including Art Nouveau and Art Deco bringing us almost to the mid 20th Century. The second leg of the U is entirely devoted to sub-themes within Evolution and Revolution showcasing the expressive and innovative work of studio-jewellers from the mid 20th Century to today.

Top: Caroline Broadhead, Arm-piece 1980s, cotton fabric, collection MAAS, gift of the Craft Board of the Australia Council
 Right: David Watkins, 'Triangular Bodypiece' 1976, gold and acrylic, Collection of Curtin University. Photo David Watkins
 Below left: Gjis Bakker, 'Dewdrop' neckpiece 1984, laminated photograph, MAAS Collection, gift of the Craft Board of the Australia Council, photo Dorothy Erickson
 Below right: Fiona Hall, 'Xanthorrhoea Tiara' 1990, made from sardine tins. MAAS collection, gift of Paula Dawson

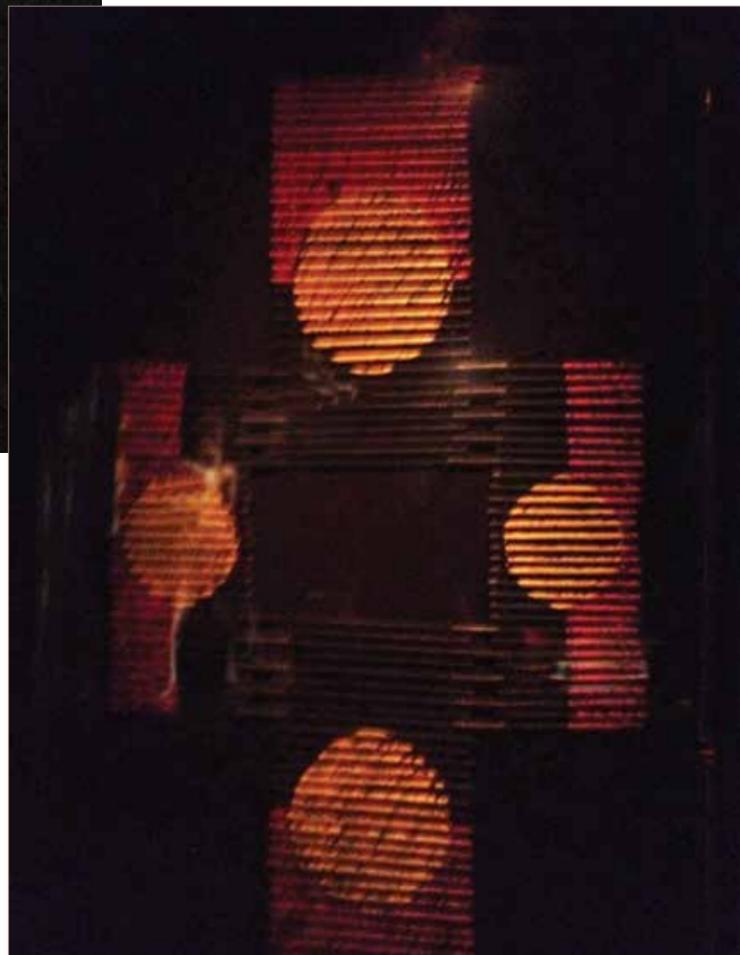




Clockwise from left: 'Blossom necklace' 2011, Joungmee Do, silver, gold and steel. MAAS collection purchased with funds from the Yasuko Myer bequest 2013, photo Sotha Bourn
 Neckpiece 1984, Therese Hilbert, red painted steel
 Land Rights tabard 1984, Lynne Tune, wood, rubber, Enamel, MAAS collection, gift of the Craft Board of the Australia Council, photo Dorothy Erickson
 "Too much sushi II" from 'Urban Lei series', 2002, Niki Hastings-McFaul, plastic soy sauce containers, silver, brass. Gallery of Modern Art Brisbane purchased with the Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund



"Sunflower", 1994, Yuri Kawanabe, anodised aluminium. MAAS collection purchased with funds from the Yasuko Myer bequest, photo Dorothy Erickson



There is much striking imagery to be encountered in the theatrically lit, cave-like vaults of the exhibition hall but as the show has 700 examples across 4000 years I will confine myself to describing some of the highlights of the fifty year span of the contemporary section Evolution and Revolution.

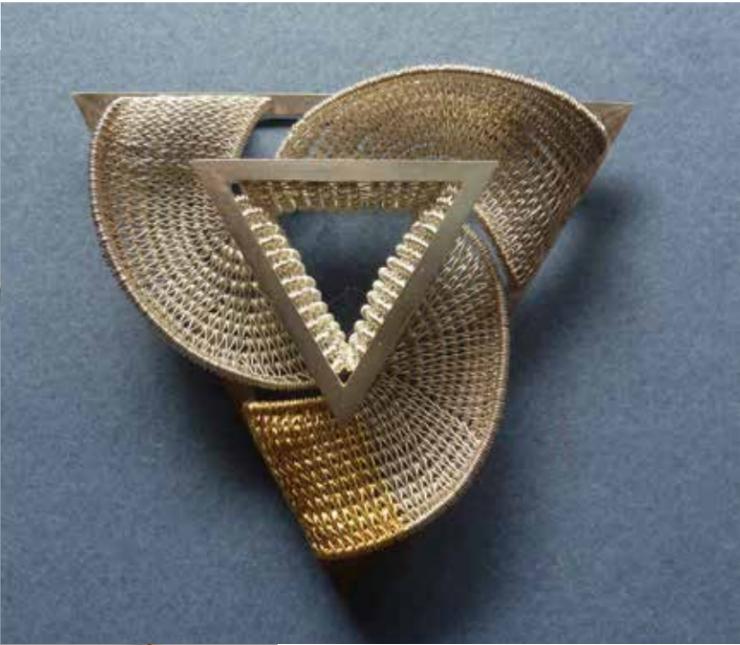
I would have reversed the order of the title myself as the early work was part of the contemporary jewellery revolution which commenced in the Netherlands in the 1960s and contemporary work has been evolving in often spectacular fashion ever since. Some pioneers of this revolution, Gijs Bakker, Robert Smit and Paul Derrez have works on display. Bakker's and Derrez' are not early works but those from the influential exhibition Cross Currents—Jewellery from Australia, Britain, Germany and the Netherlands which toured in 1984 and was later given to the Powerhouse Museum. Gijs Bakker's 'Dewdrop' laminated-rose-photograph collar was a comment on 'pretty' jewellery and Swiss Therese Hilbert's red painted steel and brass neckpiece were bold statements from this exhibition as was English woman Caroline Broadhead's sleeve bracelet.

Other members of the New Jewellery Movement represented include Austrians Fritz Maierhofer, pioneer of laminated acrylics, Germans Herman Junger, Claus Bury and Gerd Rothman with their experiments with found objects, various coloured golds, and prints of parts of the body. Junger and Bury both spent time in Australia in the late 1970s conducting workshops and were influential on the local scene. The iconoclastic Swiss Otto Kunzli is represented by his 1980s photographs

of people wearing photo-frames and a rubber bangle 'Gold makes blind' with a gold ball hidden inside. English couple David Watkins and Wendy Ramshaw have a major 1970s piece from David and later works from Wendy including earrings from her Room of Dreams collection currently touring Britain. Their six months in Western Australia had a powerful impact on the students at WAIT during their time there.

In a showcase of early works are those classed as being made by pioneers, others as artistic experiments from known artists, yet others are examples of Scandinavian modern together with works from early studio jewellers. The names include early pioneers such as immigrant to South Australia, the German Frank Bauer, German immigrant, Wolf Wennrich—a teacher influential in Victoria in the 1970s—and examples from his former students Rex Keogh, and Norman Creighton. Then there is the Dane Helge Larsen of Larsen and Lewers, influential as a teacher in NSW along with native-born pioneers of studio jewellery, Matcham Skipper Gary Bradley, Geoffrey Allen, Ray Norman and Dorothy Erickson.

The sub-themes in *Evolution and Revolution* include *Bold Statements, Identity, Values, Structure, Nature, Materials and Fantasy*. The *Bold Statements* section displays examples from the 1980s and 90s, when there was an explosion of creativity in the jewellery departments of art schools. Lyn Tune's 1984 'Land Rights', wood, rubber and enamel tabard stood out as did a 1994 yellow anodised aluminium 'Sunflower' collar from immigrant Japanese jeweller Yuri Kawanabe who extended her love of traditional Japanese origami into metal.



Left: "Neckband with pendant", 1981, Frank Bauer, sterling silver. MAAS collection. Photo Sotha Bourn

Above: Woven triangular brooch, 1996, Jane Bowden, sterling silver, 24 ct gold. Photo courtesy of Jane Bowden

Below: Brooch, 2002, Jacqueline Ryan, gold, enamel. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2010. Photograph courtesy NGA



With pressures such as the use of new technologies, globalisation, migration, rapid expansion of cities and the question of climate change, identity has become very complex. A number of jewellers sought to establish their artistic identities and aspirations by making jewellery based on personal journeys of exploration, local imagery, family history or to make comments on people or place. In the Identity section Peter Tully's striking 'New Age Business Suit' made from found objects is a fine example of this theme. As the artistic director for the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras from 1982-86 this 1988-9 outfit is an example of his playful urban tribal-wear. Artist Fiona Hall, daughter of pioneering woman radio physicist Ruby Payne-Scott made a tiara featuring xanthorrhoea (native grass trees) in 1990 from sardine cans for her friend the artist Paula Dawson while Linda Hughes 2009 'Advance 7, Red and white series' of laminated acrylic jewellery was inspired by cautionary street signs.

Contemporary jewellers who continue to be inspired by nature, abstract, simplify, redefine or exaggerate essential characteristics. Examples seen are the authoritative and complex enamelled brooch with intricate moving parts inspired by fungi of English woman Jacqueline Ryan. Alice Whish's imposing 'Milky Way Constellation' 1990s wall piece, Korean Australian Joungmee Do's 2011 'Blossom Necklace' utilizing Korean techniques and references, Marian Hosking's 'Gum buds' brooch of 2010 and Bethamy



Neckpiece with ivory epaulettes, 1985, Jacqueline Lillie, antique glass beads, ivory, silk, paper, ink. MAAS collection



Exhibition view including Peter Tully's New Age Business Suit, photo LATESSA PHOTO



Necklace, 'Crossbox (4), 2013', 3D printed SLS Nylon, designed and made by Bin Dixon-Ward
Photo Jeremy Dillon



Linton's 'Heel to Throat' titanium collar of 2010 which incorporates tics in its imagery. The artist had recently purchased land in a forest and was bedevilled by the annoying creatures and inserted them and other pests into a series of work for her first solo exhibition.



Searching for new ways of artistic expression some jewellers used their work to express or question social or political views often using humour or ironic comment to address topics such as greed, consumerism and environmental damage. A number recycle rubbish. In the category Values are to be found two of Susan Cohn's doughnut bracelets, Christel van der Laan's glistening wreath 'Priceless Necklace' which on close inspection turns out really to be priceless as it is made of polypropylene price tags no longer attached to a dress. However the 300+ hours taken to make the piece would also make it 'beyond price'—her intention being to challenge notions of preciousness in conventional jewellery and make people think and smile at the irony or humour. Another work in the Values section is the floral 'Too much Sushi II' from New Zealander Niki Hastings-McFaull, an artist of Samoan-European extraction. Her 'Urban Lei' series, incorporating many of the tiny sauce containers packaged with sushi, questions the impact of modern waste on Pacific Islands ecosystems.



Top: Pendant with interchangeable parts, Johannes Kuhn, aluminium, steel, photo Dorothy Erickson

Below: Bracelet 2004, Peter Chang, acrylic, polyester, polyurethane foam, paint, silver. MAAS collection



Top: 'Heel to Throat' collar, 2010, Bethamy Linton, pierced and coloured titanium incorporating images of tics. MAAS collection, photo Bill Shaylor
Centre: 'Red drop' neckpiece, Liv Blåvarp, 2012, stained maple and pallisander. MAAS collection purchased with funds from the Yasuko Myer bequest
Bottom: 'Correlation bracelet', 2012, designed by Lousje Skala, made by Ark Melbourne, acrylonitrile butadiene styrene, aluminium, two-pack epoxy tint. Collection of MAAS, purchased with funds from the Yasuko Myer Bequest, 2013, photo courtesy Lousje Skala

In the section entitled *Structure* modernist ideas and the principles of architecture and engineering are to be seen. Artists have utilized machine aesthetic, repetition and other parts of the repertoire to create complex one-off structures such as Frank Bauer's 1981 silver necklace, Jane Bowden's 1996 silver and woven 24ct gold



brooch, Brenda Ridgewell's dense but airy 1996 'Changing Form' steel neckpiece, Wendy Ramshaw's 1988 'Spinner' group of rings and David Walker's 1984 interchangeable 'Neckring Kit' of painted titanium and steel.

In *Material Passions* we see some of the extraordinary range of materials used in jewellery today. There is work in substances as diverse as metal, glass, wood, porcelain, pearl shell, paint, paper, plants, plastics, feathers and various other materials such as CD discs. Johannes Kuhn anodizes aluminium to provide a bright colour palette, [Fig 20] Dutch woman Nel Linssen delicately folds reinforced paper to recreate the rhythms of the natural world while Jacqueline Lillie in her flexible works utilizes tiny antique beads and clever catch mechanisms to make beautiful and extremely flexible pieces.

The extraordinary technical skill of younger artist Giovanni Corvaja with his fine hairs and graded colours of gold has to be seen to be believed. Also requiring considerable technical skill is the necklace of maple and pallasander by Norwegian Liv Blåvarp. She creates flexible shapes which seem alive when they reconfigure with the movement of the wearer. In the nearby section designated Alchemy there is change indeed as PET bottles are transformed by Japanese artist Rui Kukuchi into colourful combs reminiscent of seaweed. Other alchemy is achieved by Gilbert Reidelbauch and Bin Dixon-Ward using digital tools and the new 3D printers to

construct elaborate works using the new technologies. Another using computer technology to create stunning works is Lousje Skala whose manipulation of an ovoid shape creates objects of great beauty.

Some artists however just create from their own world of Fantasy. Three stalwarts who fit into this category are Sue Cohn with her condom-holder 'Safe no. 7' neckpiece resembling a large insect, Scotsman Peter Chang with his brightly painted bracelets which look as if they have escaped from an underwater Disney cartoon and Robert Baines who devises legendary cultures and constructs artefacts purportedly for them. And then there is the fantasy land of the film world exemplified by the stunt double of the 'Satine' necklace worn by Nicole Kidman in the film *Moulin Rouge* which is displayed beneath a wall projection of the actress wearing the original.

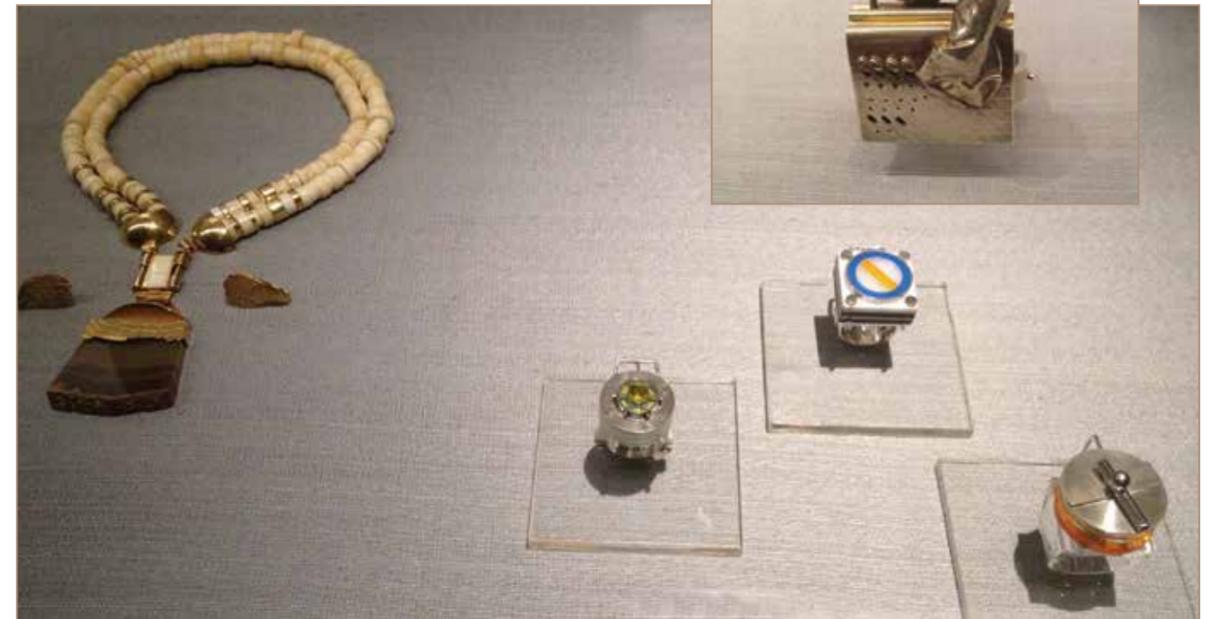
There is much more to see but space precludes further description. The labels in the earlier section are hard to read but there is additional information in the iPads positioned at the end of each showcase and I, like many others, find it incredible that there is not a catalogue that could preserve this valuable scholarship for wider Australian and international audiences. This is a 'must see' exhibition on display until September 2015.

Dr Dorothy Erickson is an artist-jeweller, critic and art historian based in Western Australia. She is represented in this exhibition.



'Bracelet Java-la-Grande', 2005, Robert Baines, from his fictional history series, turned silver-gilt wire, paint, iron, plastic, wood. MAAS collection purchased with funds from the Yasuko Myer bequest 2011

'Object 9" bracelet, 1974, Claus Bury, 18ct gold, sterling silver, copper, brass, nickel brass. Collection NGV photo Dorothy Erickson



Top: From left Ray Norman parure, 1976; Fritz Maierhofer ring, 1973; Wolf Wennrich ring, 1975; Rex Keogh ring, 1973, photo Dorothy Erickson

Below: Upper level Brenda Ridgewell's 'Changing Form' 1996, David Walker's 'Neckring kit' 1984, Centre : Wendy Ramshaw's 'Spinner ringset' 1988, Darani Lewers and Helge Larsen 'Hoyasala' two finger ring 1996; and Sean O'Connell's neckpiece 'Snakey' 2001. Front from left: Emanuel Raft three rings 1976-7 and Simon Cottrell's brooch 'Bulbs to Barn door?' photo Dorothy Erickson

