

**CONTEMPORARY JEWELLERY  
PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF DISPLAY  
IN ADDRESSING CRAFT VALUES  
WITHIN THE CREATIVE PROCESS**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this research is to investigate the role of display within contemporary jewellery, defining an approach that informs both jewellery practice and critical discourse. Conventional structures such as the display case, plinths, frames and mounts operate as communicative platforms from which jewellery is presented, often negating the interactive nature of an object that is designed to be touched, worn or owned. My practice takes the form both of writing and making to explore presentational methods that promote the emotive qualities presented, produced or prompted by a craft object as a means of engaging the viewer within the gallery space.

One area of my investigation involves looking at strategies used by craft makers to communicate their work to a wider audience beyond the gallery space. Developments in digital media and an increasing emphasis on audience participation or collaboration offer interactive potential. These methods present an alternative form of communication compared to the conventional display case that tends to hinder such a socially-led approach to contemporary jewellery. Another significant departure from the taxonomic mode of displaying craft collections is the exploration of bodily processes. This ethos inspires a growing number of contemporary jewellers who seek actively to engage an audience with their work using various strategies. This creative drive demonstrates a move away from the presentation of the craft object as an autonomous artefact towards an approach based on social interaction.

The impetus of this study arises from Nicolas Bourriaud's notions concerning relational aesthetics. Bourriaud is known for his analysis of late 20th century artists who investigate ways of engaging the individual within a community-based collective through their work. I will show how collaborative practices and the investigation of 'new formal fields' are informing the crafts today. This paper describes how relational aesthetics informs my own practice by focusing on four areas of enquiry. These consist of: an examination of the relationship between maker, viewer and the craft image; the social relevance of patina in the re-presentation of an exhibition object by the use of macro photography; the recording and presentation of social and bodily elements that relate to the worn object; and the role of display methods as a narrative tool. These areas of investigation are developed in symbiosis with my practice, concluding in an exhibition that is rooted in the theoretical framework of relational aesthetics from which the concept of immersive aesthetics is defined.

# **Table of Contents**

Abstract	02
Acknowledgements	05
Declaration	06
 <b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
1.1 The research, its aims and objectives	07
1.2 Analytical frameworks	10
1.3 Outcomes	13
1.4 Methodology	14
 <b>Chapter 2: Defining jewellery</b>	
2.1 Jewellery	16
2.2 Contemporary jewellery	22
2.3 Locating my research	29
2.4 Contemporary jewellery and the critical object	38
 <b>Chapter 3: On display</b>	
3.1 Jewellery and display	42
3.2 Reviewing the existing literature	47
3.3 Craft and the gallery space	56
3.4 Case study: Victoria and Albert Museum	64
 <b>Chapter 4: Practical investigation 1</b>	
4.1 Made to be worn? The contemporary display of jewellery and the body	76
4.2 Contemporary jewellery: a transient concept	89
 <b>Chapter 5: Craft and the relational</b>	
5.1 Relational aesthetics	99
5.2 Relational aesthetics and contemporary jewellery	103
5.3 Defining relational practice in craft display	115
 <b>Chapter 6: Practical investigation 2</b>	
6.1 Immersive aesthetics	121
6.2 Displaying a critical jewellery object	130
6.3 Necklace, Bracelet, Brooch	130

6.4 Re-present	136
6.5 The embodied object	141
6.6 The jewellery image	146

## **Conclusion**

7.1: Research summary and evaluation	150
7.2 Presenting a critical jewellery object	153
7.3 Contribution to knowledge	153

<b>Appendix A</b>	156
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1.1 Lisa Walker	
1.2 Joanne Haywood	
1.3 Maud Traon	
1.4 Sato Michihiro	
1.5 Zoe Robertson	
1.6 Vicki Ambery-Smith	
1.7 Lynne MacLachlan	

<b>Bibliography</b>	180
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<b>List of figures</b>	189
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## **Declaration**

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

**Signed:**

**Dated:**

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 The research, its aims and objectives**

Plinths and lockable cabinets have become a definable feature in the display of jewellery, providing a presentational format that is responsive to the gallery's conservational efforts, security needs and the space available for presentation. Conventionally, craft collections arranged in a display case are presented in groups with shared characteristics such as function and material content. Methods used to contextualise objects presented in this way include chronological and geographical structures. This encyclopaedic approach is prevalent in discipline-led craft galleries and museums, using a format that helps to create knowledge and understanding for the viewer.

Another example of a conventional form of display is to showcase the work of an individual or small group of designers. Makers such as Karl Fritsch regularly exhibit their work as a collection, presenting multiple pieces within the display case. This format is used to encourage the viewer to make comparisons between each object, thus establishing a narrative that focuses on the objects' form or materiality.

The taxonomic mode of displaying craft collections removes the object from its expected function. Jewellery's conventional mode of being, for example, is when worn on the body, providing a mobile form of display. The body allows the context and conditions in which a jewel is viewed to change, informing a continuous dialogue between wearer, object and the viewer. The interaction between the wearer and the worn object is then altered once the object is presented behind the glass display case. This presentational format enables jewellery to be observed and interpreted as an object of contemplation, where artistic or sculptural value is brought to the forefront. The role of the conventional showcase has and will continue to provide an effective form of jewellery display in terms of security and conservation, as mentioned above. Additionally, this approach also finds significance in the display of artist-led jewellery which has seen jewellers' work correspond with trends in art and society. The varied names accredited to such work, including 'author jewellery'; 'auteur jewellery' and 'narrative jewellery' define a sense of objectness that

carries the voice of the maker and embodies responses to display methods found in the arts. This approach to contemporary jewellery will be discussed in chapter 2 in order to locate my investigation within current practice. It is the problematic notion of wearability and ownership in jewellery display that provides the foundation to this study, which begins by looking at methods of display that explore the relationship between body and object.

Wall mounts and domestic furnishings are among the presentational strategies that are designed to contextualise the jewellery object within an everyday narrative, and may also be illustrative of ownership. Methods such as these are built upon the structures and techniques commonly associated with jewellery display, as documented in handbooks such as *On display: A design grammar for museum exhibits* (Hall 1987) and *Collecting and displaying* (McAlpine 1998). Margaret Hall describes these techniques used in the design of museum exhibitions as 'props and backgrounds' (Hall 1987). Similar supporting material is also evident in the development of digital technology and database systems used for exhibition design. Digital screens, access to a museum's website and mobile phone 'apps' are all part of a network of communication that aims to support the viewer's learning experience. The digital format allows the public to source information in the exhibition space and beyond, providing contextual information that includes information about its history and its relationship with the wearer. This helps to place the object in everyday life, and enables the viewer to understand an object when it is in use.

An assessment of jewellery and craft display methods reveals scant practical or theoretical effort to address the relationship between jewellery and the body. In response, this study draws on key theoretical and practical discussions in craft and the work of others to define display as a critical tool in contemporary jewellery. This involves the exploration of existing display strategies used in galleries and museums; looking at the work of contemporary craft practitioners who actively consider the presentation of their work; and identifying parallel strategies within the arts in order to provide this study with a supportive framework.

Pivotal to this investigation is the role of the viewer, and the work of contemporary jewellers who seek to actively engage an audience with their

work. This ethos became evident in the early 1990s, when jewellery makers began making installations to show their work in the gallery space or in site-specific locations. Ruudt Peters recognizes the interactive potential of the viewer by removing his work from the display case, with the intention of creating an interactive dialogue with his audience. Projects such as *Picasso* (1998), involve work suspended from the ceiling, with each pendant presented in its own tent made of transparent violet material. The audience is encouraged to investigate, touch and feel each object on display, presenting an interactive ideology that also informs exhibitions such as *Beyond the Body: Northwest Jewelers at Play* (2005) and *Touching Warms the Art* (2008). These exhibitions actively encourage bodily interaction from the viewer by inviting them to pick up and wear the jewellery objects on display. This approach is a significant departure from the display case, but is of necessity restricted to the display of objects made from cheap, durable materials that are designed specifically for physical interaction.

The use of interactive display techniques that correspond with trends in art and exhibition design is characteristic of a small group of contemporary jewellery practitioners who look to develop a system of interactive encounters. Makers such as Yuka Oyama, Ted Noten, Suska Mackert and Naomi Filmer aim to create an environment or space that allows for human interaction and social engagement to provide the content of their work. In a different way, the role of digital technology and the worldwide distribution of jewellery images, ideas and interactive discussions via the internet reinforces the growing importance of an empowered viewer. This in turn raises questions regarding the intended destination of a jewellery object, how contemporary makers are presenting their work to a wider audience and what impact this has on jewellery practice. This brings us back to this study's original objective: to address the relationship between body and object within jewellery display. This project proposes to develop a form of art jewellery that considers the role of display within the creative process as a means of locating ideas from within craft. This includes investigating issues regarding the body, its materiality and its humanising power, which can inform both practice and critical discourse.

## 1.2 Analytical frameworks

The meaning of jewellery, and its associated definitions, will be addressed in chapter 2, providing a contextual review that locates my research and its significance within the field of art jewellery. The review identifies current concerns among craft writers such as Glenn Adamson, Benjamin Lignel and Monica Gaspar who observe the diverse meaning of contemporary jewellery and the consequential effects when defining jewellery's position in, or alongside the visual arts. These observations define a desire within the crafts to be understood and experienced by a wider audience. In addition, I discuss the way that curator Cindi Strauss highlights the current value system placed on contemporary jewellery, identifying a preference toward ideas over function among contemporary jewellers and galleries. An approach that has increasingly become a trend among jewellery practitioners is to move away from the gallery space, opting to use alternative, interactive platforms to distribute their ideas. An investigation of this trend is supported by an assessment of current display techniques in the crafts and is documented in Chapter 3. Both chapters will identify gaps in existing design and literature in support of the proposed aims and objectives detailed above.

Chapter 4 will seek to question methods of display in jewellery by presenting a practical investigation based on two themes: the body and materiality. This chapter begins by addressing the absent body in relation to jewellery display by exploring the existing work of others and assessing these findings in my own practical outcome. Jewellery's role as a social signifier will be discussed in terms of the individual and social body, by defining the bodily processes that are evoked via the relationship between body and object. This demonstrates a socially-led approach to contemporary jewellery, because the wearing of, or engagement with an object can influence how the body behaves and functions. It is also illustrative of the choices that can be made by an individual and the personal, bodily experience of wearing or using an object, which reveals the role of the individual body in craft. In addition, the learnt behaviour of the social body can be seen in the bodily actions of the user in response to an object and its cultural function. Researcher Margaret Boden explains how previous experience and socially learnt behaviour towards craft's material content, form

and function can dictate ‘bodily’ processes such as eating and drinking. This presents a relationship that is also informed by ‘social’ affordances such as stroking and hugging (Boden 2000: 297).

In response, my practical work develops ways of recording the reactions of the body when wearing an object within the creative process. The use of video is employed to document the ritualistic behaviours of the body by gathering visual material which is then interpreted to create a piece of jewellery using craft techniques. The aim is to develop an approach that references the absent body of the wearer by exploring the behavioural intricacies of an object in motion.

The outcome of this practical investigation directs discussions toward the theme of materiality, dealing with concepts of transience, the tangible and intangible and patina. This is again developed through my own practical experiments, culminating in an ephemeral piece that explores audience participation. The aim of this project was to develop an interactive process that actively alters the appearance and form of an object. This process would then allow for the investigation of photographic and auditory methods to record and re-present the material consequence and provide permanence to the original display. This defines a creative strategy that considers the conservational concerns of the gallery space by using presentational methods in order to evoke the senses of viewer and to engage an audience.

The research and practice detailed in my first practical investigation highlight the work of Suska Mackert, Lin Cheung, Laura Potter, Maisie Broadhead and Ted Noten. These contemporary practitioners use their work to address the system of actions and exchanges that exist in and beyond the making process. Spaces designed for social interaction are created by the maker in order to explore the conception or application of a jewellery object, and thus to empower the viewer. Communal engagement can be seen in projects such as Yuka Oyama’s *Schmuck Quickies* (2006), which offer a social commentary on the jeweller’s relationship with the wearer. Oyama works directly with the wearer’s body, allowing audience members to become participants in the construction of each jewellery design. The focus of her work is the use of jewellery as a vehicle by which to address modern isolation, in which mass production and the instantly available disposable product limits awareness of construction and

handmade skills. Her pieces are made from recyclable material and found objects, and the intended wearer becomes instrumental in the construction and design of their own piece. The strategic rejection of precious material reflects social and environmental concerns and is a reaction to generic and mass-produced commercialism. The interactive nature of the live performance draws the making process away from the maker's bench, thus creating an inherently social structure in jewellery design that pays homage to DIY craft culture and the more political stance of Craftism. Material available for construction is donated or collected at each 'performance' location, so the design and material content of the work produced also reflects geographical influences. This collective engagement is illustrative of an approach that is rooted in the arts, and provides a framework that informs my methodology. Nicholas Bourriaud's theories on relational aesthetics have been drawn on in order to construct a socially-led approach to contemporary jewellery that empowers the viewer.

Bourriaud's definition of the relational is 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space'. (Bourriaud 1998: 113). This artistic strategy offers an alternative approach to artwork that derives solely from the individual views of the artist, by embracing the interactions of audience members. This is a strategy that is intent on facilitating the social interaction and connectivity that informs the theoretical and practical content of relational artwork. Chapter 5 will explore the importance of intersubjective relations and the open-ended nature of human interaction within relational art, by using a method that is designed to 'represent, produce or prompt' a bodily experience (*ibid.*). It will develop a practical approach to the display of jewellery that investigates not only the inclusive rationale of the 'work in progress' exhibition, but also the emotive qualities represented, produced or prompted by a craft object as a means of engaging the viewer.

The collaborative principles established between relational aesthetics and the crafts will be discussed in terms of communal craft activities such as knitting circles and pottery workshops. This will identify current craft practices that engage with the communal production of objects, thereby enabling craft skills to be learnt and shared, as well as exploring the social meaning embedded in such strategies. In Chapter 6, which outlines the second practical investigation,

this theoretical argument will be applied to my practice. This approach is designed to engage the viewer of jewellery by using presentational methods to evoke the senses or memories of audience members. The aim is to present a body of work in the exhibition space that is rooted in the theoretical framework of relational aesthetics, and from which the concept of immersive aesthetics may be defined.

### 1.3 Outcomes

Four practical outcomes have been produced in response to this definition of immersive aesthetics, each of which represents a practical response to my research and signifies a point of reflection within this study. The second practical investigation, as documented in Chapter 6, will be presented in an exhibition that is designed to engage the viewer by representing a stage or concept within the crafting process.

The first of the four practical projects, *Necklace, Bracelet* and *Brooch*, comprises three large-scale images of jewellery pieces constructed using photography and Photoshop. The intention of this project is to investigate the role of the craft image, exploring the relationship between craft photography and the maker and the ways in which the craft image is interpreted by the viewer. The second outcome, *Re-present*, explores the social meaning of patina in the re-presentation of a museum object using macro photography. Large scale photographic images portray a landscape of colours, scratches and dents that detail an object's history. The third, *The Embodied Object*, is an extension of the *Made to be Worn?* project developed in the initial practical investigation and outlined in Chapter 4. It presents a method of recording and presenting the social and body politic within the worn object by filming an object on the body. It focuses on the use of film to detail the ritualistic behaviour and actions of the body that reveal the individual and social relationship between body and craft object. The final project, *The Jewellery Image*, uses audio recordings to explore presentational techniques as a narrative tool in jewellery display. In this, a selection of voice-over artists and volunteers read descriptions of specific pieces of work that have been provided by a selection of contemporary jewellers. The jeweller's original descriptions are therefore presented to an audience in the gallery space using the voice of another person. This action

obliquely refers to the open-ended stream of interpretations that are placed on the craft object once it has been removed from the jeweller's work bench. All four outcomes illustrate concepts within craft discourse that are part of an immersive strategy designed to present, produce or prompt a bodily engagement between the viewer and contemporary jewellery.

## 1.4 Methodology

My research partly takes the form of writing, through which I assess current display techniques, as well as significant histories associated with the body and materiality in jewellery and the crafts. This contextual research is then developed through parallels made between contemporary jewellery and relational aesthetics, from which immersive strategies in craft display have been developed. Additionally, my research continues in the form of making, resulting in two initial practical outcomes and an exhibition, providing a showcase for the project's visual outcomes. The relationship between my writing and my practical work involves developing parallel explorations of the same issues. The resulting thesis and exhibition document an exploration of ideas concerning methods of display and its theoretical and practical implications in contemporary jewellery practice.

This strategy is employed to define a growing number of contemporary jewellers who seek actively to engage an audience with their work using various strategies. This approach can be seen in the growing range of platforms employed by craft practitioners in order to engage a wider audience, including the internet, pop-up sites, craft fairs and community-based projects. These offer a wide range of interactive outlets, in comparison to the limited aegis of the conventional display structures associated with the museum environment. The approach I have developed is representative of the practical developments currently taking place within jewellery, and will define a contemporary practice that moves away from the autonomy of the craft object and focuses instead on the relational processes and social interactions involved in the making and application of that object.

This investigation recognizes that craft's value resides within the material content and physicality of an object; it does not propose to replace or override

the importance of the physical object in the development of jewellery practice or its role within the gallery space. Rather, it aims to illustrate a concept of display, embedded within an immersive strategy, as an emerging area of critical investigation in both theory and practice.

In this thesis, my work has been represented through images. In order for it to be fully understood, however, it is important that the final work is seen in the context of an exhibition. The illustrations included represent a selection of what will be exhibited in the final exhibition and thus complete my body of research. The thesis includes a DVD containing a three-dimensional scan of the exhibition space, visual imagery and audio recordings that are presented in the exhibition.

## **Chapter 2: Defining jewellery**

### **2.1 Jewellery**

By definition, jewellery is usually associated with preciousness and personal adornment. Historically, jewellery functioned as a carrier for gemstones and precious material; it is commonly perceived as a signifier of wealth (Dormer and Turner 1985: 24) in the form of small-scale objects attached to, worn by, or related to the wearer. This understanding of jewellery places it in a role that is primarily associated with fashion and commerce, and has hierarchical connotations because of its function as a symbol of status. From this perspective, jewellery tends to be diminished to a standardized functional form such as a necklace, bracelet or ring (Derrez 2005: Turner 1991).

Since the 1960s, jewellery makers, writers and critics including Peter Dormer, Ralph Turner, Bruce Metcalf and David Watkins have explored what jewellery means in order to challenge pre-conceived notions. Surveys such as *The New Jewellery: Trends and Traditions* (Dormer and Turner, 1985) and *Europe and America: New Times, New Thinking* (Turner 1996) offer a theoretically-grounded discourse that addresses the definition of jewellery. Turner defines his text as an 'eclectic rummaging through symbolism, mythology, metaphor and ethnic cultures' to define a collection of work in a way that runs 'parallel to conceptual idioms' (ibid., 1996: 8), thus introducing a concept of jewellery that is influenced by craft as well as art and design.

Dormer and Turner define jewellery as 'a shrewd monitor, reflecting the ups and downs not only of money and fashion, but also of political, social and cultural change' (Dormer and Turner 1985: 178). This interpretation identifies a structural shift from the ornamental interests of the jeweller to the exploratory concerns of the contemporary maker, and a desire to challenge and extend preconceptions of the notion of jewellery. In both texts, analyses of contemporary jewellery designs from the 1960s–1990s reveal a plethora of making strategies that reflect cultural and social changes. The creative development of contemporary jewellery has been shaped by this interrogation of the validity of jewellery as an art form, and the role in this of art school training. The jewellery is used as a vehicle of expression for the jeweller, who is

able to engage with the subject area's anthropological undercurrent by the use of symbolism and conceptual exploration.

After the end of the Second World War, cultural and social attitudes began to make an impact on the way in which jewellers approached their designs, creating a contextual backdrop that initiated a new way of thinking. Makers, determined to depart from the material essentialism and clichéd understanding of existing modes of manufacture, began to develop individual 'signatures' not previously associated with commercial jewellery (*ibid.*, 8). The new, democratic approach to jewellery design was influenced both by modernism and by developments in technology and industry. The use of precious materials was reassessed, informed by concerns about affordability. The most notable period of expression and creative exploration, which took place in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s, became known as the New Jewellery Movement (Turner 1976; Dorner and Turner 1985; Metcalf 1989; Dorner and English 1995; Turner 1996; Gaspar 2007). Jewellers began to reject the elitist expressions of the past and instead to define a new concern that allied inexpensive, mass-produced material to a conceptual ideology. The quest for materials and meaning that departed radically from conventional ornamentation and its monetary significance informed the way in which jewellery-making was taught. In the UK, this ethos was embraced by art schools and a generation of jewellers and their practice became known as Contemporary Jewellery. Alternative names for the movement in the rest of Europe and America included Creation Jewellery, Art Goldsmithing and Studio Jewellery.

Work from The Netherlands was hugely significant, and Emmy van Leersum and Gijs Bakker were leading figures in this creative revolt. Art historian Liesbeth den Besten claims their quest was 'against the cult of status and costliness and for industrial and mass culture developments' (Besten 1987: 36). At this time, an exploration of mass production and a minimalist approach led to simplistic, affordable pieces that grasped current industrial and cultural developments. Conventional jewellery aesthetics and their association with wealth and status were rejected in favour of a new freedom of style. Makers such as Frans van Nieuwenborg, Nicolaas van Beek and Françoise van den Bosch stripped away the ornamental connotations of previous decades with

collections of collars and bracelets formed from lightweight, malleable and inexpensive materials such as aluminium.



Figure 1. *Shadow Jewellery/Schaduwssieraad* (1973)

The impetus towards artistic expression and conceptual awareness was informed by developments in modern art and art education during the 1950s and 1960s, thus taking the exploration of new techniques to extremes. Under this approach, a focus on the body was heightened by exploration and exploitation of the qualities of the human form, influenced by the artistic movement of reductivism. Jewellers including Claus Bury and Gerd Rothmann

drew on their goldsmithing education and challenged tradition by engaging with *Pop Art* imagery. These jewellery artefacts referenced the skill and technique acquired from their academic background, while incorporating alternative materials such as acrylic and the visual perspective of artistic expression through form and colour.

In the next decade the common principle of minimalist forms and the body inspired many jewellers. A significant development was the notion of conceptual jewellery. Gijs Bakker's 1973 *Shadow Jewellery* (Turner 1991; Koplos 1994) involved binding a length of gold wire round an arm, leg or wrist then removing it (Figure 1, above). The removal of the gold left the imprinted skin as the focal 'jewel', symbolizing the current disregard for precious metals. This visual image is reinforced by the imagined physical sensation of pulsating, pinching, tingling and relief in the imagined experience of wearing the piece.

Another approach was demonstrated by the collaborative group Bond van Oproerige Edelsmeden (BOE) or 'the League of Rebellious Goldsmiths' (Dormer and Turner 1985; Falkenhagen 2004). Though short-lived, the movement's pioneer Marion Herbst was joined by a number of jewellers who supported the socio-political ethos of the time but strove to find a less inhibited approach than that described by Bakker and Van Leersum. In *Gold + Silber, Schmuck + Gerät. Von A. Dürer bis zur Gegenwart*, an international jewellery exhibition held in Germany in 1971, contemporary goldsmiths embraced a new-found freedom through the influence of technology and fine art (Turner 1996).

Paul Derrez, founder and director of Amsterdam's Galerie Ra, defined this return to handcrafted precision and depth of design as a new 'goldsmith sensibility' (Derrez 1987: 16). In 'The New Jewellery. Death of a Movement' (1987), he summarizes the limitations of New Jewellery principles, citing the ready availability of cheap material that resulted in an output of similar designs using recognizable forms: 'The trends in form and material had been so easy to pick up and imitate that a mass of superficial works was the result' (*ibid.*). His observation marks the drive for individualism that took hold during the late 1970s and the need to readdress the minimalist stance of the previous decade: in essence, to question and challenge what defines jewellery as a discipline by exploring methods that went beyond the exclusion of precious materials. Self-

taught jeweller Wendy Ramshaw extended the conceptual and craft parameters of jewellery by turning her work on an electric lathe. This choice of form was an individualistic expression that combined tradition with innovation, and took a stance against handmade craft practice.

The 1982 exhibition *Jewellery Redefined* at the British Crafts Centre aimed to demonstrate why the notion of jewellery should be redefined. Creative practitioners were invited to respond, but few entries were received, a fact bemoaned by Hermann Junger: 'The entries from painters, sculptors, glass and ceramic artists, photographers, fashion designers and so on did not materialize' (Junger 1982: 44). Despite this lukewarm response from practitioners outside the field, makers within the discipline began to push at the boundaries that defined the notion of jewellery. During the 1980s they began to draw on fashion, textiles and performance-based work as means by which to challenge traditional ideas of jewellery design and extend its framework. This development paid homage to jewellery's relationship with the body and established the importance of photography in capturing the transient quality of bodily movement and the worn object.



Figure 2. *Light Projection* (1979)

British contemporary jewellers including Susanna Heron, Caroline Broadhead and Pierre Degen began to address preconceptions surrounding the notion of jewellery. Heron's 1977 *Jubilee Neckpieces* demonstrate how she embraced the ideology of working with the body, a principle further encompassed by her series of light projections. Heron developed ways of attaching rigid circles of Perspex to various points of the body, thus dividing and vibrantly adorning it. For her light projections (Figure 2, above), an array of abstracted shapes was projected on to the surface of the body and captured in photography, highlighting the body's role in jewellery and the concept of adornment. Sarah Osborn describes a performance between the two that is: '...strangely inhuman yet so obviously flesh and muscle grabbing twisting harsh light' (Osborn 1980: 4), thus indicating a collaboration between material – in this case light – and the body, both of which react, activate and highlight to capture the preciousness of the projected shapes and the body in motion.

Broadhead's bracelets demonstrate the influential role of clothing. Her 1984 work *22 in 1 (arm piece)* is a concertina of cotton and nylon that extends along the entire length of the arm. Pamela Johnson observes: 'These body-scale works are not bounded, discrete objects, rather they dissolve the boundary between jewellery, garment, skin, subject/object' (Johnson 1999: 22). Broadhead's approach noticeably envelops the body, blurring the boundary between where the body stops and where it begins, and with it carries the cultural and metaphorical significance of garments and fashion. The body's ability to convey a message is also demonstrated in Degen's 1992 *New Work*. Degen explores the full extent of jewellery's definition through his use of the body, addressing construction, movement and material. The enlarged scale of his work interrogates the limits of the space which jewellery can inhabit. The large construction, attached to other limbs, is designed to frame the body. The piece, which suggests scaffolding, responds to the body's movement and offers a performance-based challenge to the wearability of jewellery. This engagement with art, design and craft practices has prompted alternative approaches to jewellery's traditional clichés, and highlighted an ability to challenge the existing boundaries in Western European jewellery that has influenced the categorization of contemporary jewellery.

The final chapter of Ralph Turner's *Contemporary Jewellery: A Critical Assessment 1945–75* outlines the creative potential and freedom embraced by jewellers in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Turner 1976). 'Jewellery Without Boundaries' concludes with a selection of images that communicate a loosely-defined notion of jewellery design, presenting face painting and ballet dancers alongside Bakker's *Shadow Jewellery*. These multidisciplinary examples, accompanied by a brief description giving only name, date and material content, are unified by a performance-based narrative and a conceptual exploration of ornamentation and the body. These principles are represented in the images, which move away from the idea of jewellery as 'ornament containing precious stone[s]' (Turner 1976: 196). Turner suggests a German word that might be used to illustrate jewellery's expanding boundaries:

Schmuck: ornament: decoration, adornment; trimmings, trappings  
pl. finery, adornment, get-up; jewel(le)ry, jewels pl; unechter –  
imitation jewel(le)ry, trinkets pl; fig.; flowers pl. (of speech etc.): ..  
potential f. jewel(le)ry (Turner 1976: 196).

The potential range of interpretation encompassed by this definition suggests the difficulty in pinpointing a primary definition or explanation of contemporary jewellery. As critics such as Derrez have suggested, no classification seems able to identify and encompass all positions from which the makers of new jewellery operate. Thus, the term 'contemporary' not only refers to a temporal definition of designs produced in reaction to the ideological stance of the 1960s, but also engages with the development of perspectives and attitudes that have been, and continue to be, formulated since the New Jewellery Movement.

## 2.2 Contemporary jewellery

Exhibitions, conferences and publications offer a disparate array of definitions that aim to dissect jewellery's 'contemporary' label. These indicate that there is a gap or a need to redefine the various classifications that exist within the field, including fine, fashion, costume and commercial jewellery. The need to address the roles of technological development and material investigation along with the skill-based traditions of the goldsmith is implicit. Events such as 2010's *Gray Area* symposium at the Biblioteca de Mexico in Mexico City demonstrate the questions now being asked within the field of jewellery. The symposium's

website introduces the concept of a ‘gray’ (grey) area as a descriptive summary to illustrate contemporary jewellery’s current stance:

Grey area: [grey air-ee-uh] an intermediate area; a topic that is not clearly one thing or the other. A grey area is a term for a border in-between two or more things that is unclearly defined, a border that is hard to define or even impossible to define, or a definition where the distinction border tends to move; something that is open to interpretation (*Gray Area* symposium 2010).

The grey association here signifies a subject without a clear structure and with an ambiguous identity, and is symbolic of jewellery’s interdisciplinary involvement with a diverse range of subjects, techniques and materials. It chimes with the symposium’s primary aim to provide an interactive platform in which questions can be raised, allowing common concerns within jewellery to be highlighted rather than placing prominence on conclusions or solutions. The intention is to bridge the gap between makers from across the world, and to endorse the relationship between jewellers, researchers, writers and promoters. Questions featured on the *Gray Area* website include: ‘What is contemporary jewellery?’, ‘What does it mean for different cultures?’ and: ‘Does it really have the powerful force that helps to shape our attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours?’ These questions are fundamental to current discourse that attempts not only to define jewellery but to identify its current cultural and social impact. They are questions that have historically been asked and presented in the work of the individual jeweller. Critical reflection is extended by questions such as: ‘Is it necessary to redefine the way contemporary jewellery is shown, perceived and consumed?’ which reveal awareness of audience, whether this hopes to gain an introduction to the subject or to undertake a contributory role within jewellery discourse.

This notion is also reflected in analytical discussions that aim to define jewellery globally, as seen in geographically driven exhibitions such as 2010’s *Jewelry as We Know it*, formulated on Thailand’s history of jewellery, and *Think Twice: New Latin American Jewellery*. Attitudes within French jewellery, summarized as ‘undergoing a spectacular evolution’, were similarly shown in the 2009 touring exhibition *Also Known as Jewellery*. This showcased 17 contemporary French or France-based jewellers, who aimed to address jewellery’s

contemporary meaning, and was intended to provide a platform for an under-exposed community of jewellers to a worldwide audience.

Publications including *On Jewellery* (Besten 2011) and *Thinking Jewellery: on the Way Towards Theory of Jewellery* (Lindemann 2011), demonstrate the theoretical implications of jewellery's 'grey' period. Both draw on alternative definitions that have gained popularity, such as studio jewellery; art jewellery; author jewellery and auteur jewellery, and are used to grapple with jewellery's contemporary definition and unified by the engagement with artistic practice in order to provide jewellery with a supportive framework. Auteur jewellery is defined by Liesbeth den Besten with reference to 'auteur cinema', or films that are characterized by the filmmaker's creative style; a creative vision that informs and develops through the author's body of work. This definition is also used by Wilhelm Lindemann with reference to a small, autonomous group of contemporary art practitioners in the latter half of the 20th Century. Following the general trends of contemporary art, the auteur jeweller is able to undertake a process of introspection in order to question jewellery's assumptions. This demonstrates a critical approach to their work, questions their choice of discipline and informs a personal design language. Lindemann claims:

Auteur jewellery represents a reflection with artistic means on the social conditions to which it is subject and, for instance, also addresses the societal implications of jewellery, the uses of 'noble' or 'base' materials or the social distinction conferred by jewellery (Lindemann 2011: 12).

Material content has been identified as a tool that can address political and social concerns regarding the affordability and accessibility of jewellery, a radical departure from its previous engagement with monetary and symbolic value. This principle has since become associated with current social and environmental concerns regarding the handmade, sustainability and ethically-sourced materials. This depth of critical reflection can also be seen in the ways in which jewellers are addressing questions such as why we adorn ourselves and the impact that this has. Physiological, ethnological or psychoanalytical analysis has also been used as a means of addressing the theories proposed by Dormer and Turner that see jewellery as a social and cultural signifier. Theoretical framing devices such as psychology and philosophy have led to the identification of various types of social behaviour, using subjectivity and

intersubjectivity as a means of critically examining the notion of jewellery (Hushka 2010). Jewellers including Ken Cory, Don Friedlich and Lisa Gralnick explore the non-verbal interplay between viewer, wearer and object, which was examined by Jack Cunningham with regard to narrative jewellery. He defined a triangular relationship between ‘the maker – the originator of the artefacts statement, the wearer – the vehicle by which the work is seen, and the viewer – the audience who thereafter engages with the work’ (Cunningham 2009). These examples consider the unconscious and conscious placement of jewellery on particular parts of the body, as well its power of provocation in turbulent political and social circumstances.

Gralnick’s 2007 piece *Military Brooch 1940* from the *Gold Standard Part III* series was designed to reflect the brutality of World War II and is inscribed with the legend ‘work makes free’. It comprises a circular arrangement of gold teeth and blood-red garnets, alluding to the painful historical impact of concentration camps and the removal of gold teeth from prisoners’ mouths. It is a poignant reminder of the freedom that never came for the Jews who were forced to make jewellery. Its placement within a gallery setting rather than on the body offers a meaningful context to Gralnick’s work. Rock Hushka notes: ‘The brooch is forever removed from the body and fulfils its new assignment as a museum-ready statement of identity filtered through a metaphor of jewellery’ (Hushka 2010: 49). This dialogue investigates the complexity of human interaction, whether of negative or positive emotions, using jewellery as a vehicle by which theoretical and subjective concepts can be explored as an artistic statement. The separation of the jewellery from the body reinforces Gralnick’s commentary, and the gallery environment presents the object as one to be studied and preserved, allowing the jewel to be assessed as an artefact. Such work demonstrates a form of jewellery design that engages with the viewer through contemplation and interpretation. The jeweller’s abstract approach to the object enables metaphorical or symbolic meaning to be deduced.

The 2005 exhibition *Maker, Wearer, Viewer, Contemporary Narrative European Jewellery*, curated by Jack Cunningham, demonstrates the role of narrative within jewellery by presenting a collection of designs that capture a figurative narrative. Here, material and form engage to evoke layers of meaning that is revealed by the imaginative power of the viewer, thus allowing personal

meaning and associations to be attached to the displayed object. Exhibitor Helen Britton, for example, uses the small scale of her jewellery objects to invoke the vastness of physical and environmental spaces. Britton's *Two Brooch Structures* (2003–04) use silver, paint and plastic to create an interlocking form of floral patterns and interwoven shapes to create a miniature world of nature. This form can also encourage the viewer to contemplate alternative spaces from the constructed complexity of cityscapes to the planetary system of the universe. Cunningham's association between jewellery and narrative can be viewed as a characterization within the art-led definitions of jewellery. This principle is evident in the number of makers who invest a jewellery object with the symbolic and emotive capabilities of storytelling. Jivan Astfalck explores jewellery's symbolic value to create work that is illustrative of a personal history (Astfalck, Broadhead and Derrez 2005). The work of Melanie Bilenker, Lin Cheung and Rory Hooper uses recognizable forms such as cameos and keepsakes in a practical and conceptual engagement with jewellery's function (Cheung, Clarke and Clarke 2006), in order to analyse concepts of adornment. These practitioners demonstrate a focus on the jewellery object as one of contemplation that remains unworn and is presented away from the body. The marketing, distribution and presentation of art objects through galleries indicate an alternative art structure that has become influential within the discipline. As Lindemann notes with regard to auteur jewellery, this form of working 'has, above and beyond the artistic message specific to it, also adopted to a greater extent the distribution forms and response modes of the art sector' (Lindemann 2011: 13). Jewellery has become collectible, thus replacing its primary function as an object to be worn.

Amsterdam's Galerie Marzee is one place where jewellery is celebrated as an object to be collected. Established in a former granary on Nijmegen's waterfront, it offers a large gallery space in which contemporary jewellery and silverware are promoted. Spread over four floors, the building houses a warren of display cases and plinths, including a glass-fronted room at the front in which jewellery installations are presented. This allows jewellers such as Hilde De Decker to present larger scaled, sculptural pieces in a neutral environment.

Jewellery with a narrative content is not a recent phenomenon, as noted by Turner: 'Jewellery as a means of self expression is by no means a new

departure. It is possible to trace its development from man's early beginnings right up to the present day' (Turner 1973: 1). The desire to adorn the body can be described as an anthropological staple, revealing social and cultural systems that inform our understanding of humankind. The choices made when decorating the body and the object's symbolic value are illustrative of the individual characteristics of the wearer and the collective constructs that shape a social collective. This perspective, which links jewellery with concepts of the body, will be further discussed in Chapter 4. Of contemporary jewellery, Hushka notes: 'Jewellery becomes an object that mediates and bridges an artist's intent to the wearer, who then carries the artist's statement into the world' (Hushka 2010: 46). The body may thus be seen to activate the jewellery object, with the wearer as a mobile form of display. Jewellery's wearability invests the object with meaning, showing how a narrative can alter according to the context in which it is viewed, from display case to worn object. The adorned body can thus be described as the theatricalization of the self. Amanda Game says:

The power of jewellery to explore issues of identity and personal narrative is second to none. Every time we put on clothes, and select a piece of jewellery to wear, each one of us makes a very conscious statement about ourselves and the society to which we belong (Game 1997: 15).

This principle illustrates the social standing of jewellery throughout history from the ostentatious display of royal regalia, to the clay plates placed in the lips of people in tribal societies. Body modification, including implants and scarification, rests on the boundaries of jewellery as a method of representing the self and continuing historic cultural rituals (Pitts 2003). Jewellery's portrayal of meaning reflects human dynamics and has the power to generate a response: it communicates at an emotional level, revealing the choices made by the wearer and the ways in which the viewer interprets such meaning. Social and cultural significance is communicated through the body's reactive response to an object, whether emotional or physical. Margaret Boden's psychological analysis suggests that a response to jewellery and other craft objects can be evoked by factors such as social context. Her examples range from jewellery worn by Viking chiefs to the heavily-laden, jewel-encrusted adornment of the British monarchy. The precious nature of the material and the detail of the workmanship emphasize jewellery's ability to signify the status of the wearer, and the influential role of objects in provoking a physical or psychological

response. Boden says: ‘They arouse affordances of many different kinds, both ‘bodily’ (such as drinking or sitting) and ‘social’ (such as stroking, hugging, fearing, or respecting)’ (Boden 2000: 297).

Boden’s ‘psychological mechanisms’ refer to craft’s intimacy with the body and its ability to evoke bodily movement. This quality links the crafts to everyday processes such as eating and grooming, thus grounding the craft object in human history. Biological references can also be made as a way to explain natural behaviour and curiosity towards such objects, for example the desire to run hands over textile fabric. Bodily habits integral to an object’s identity reflect jewellery’s ability not only to symbolize the character of the wearer and to reflect cultural considerations, but also to make an impact on the viewer or wearer. This observation is reinforced by Sandra Flood’s suggestion: ‘Objects are not passive in their impact: they came into our lives, changing habits, provoking emotions, and trailing social meanings’ (Flood 2002: 99).

Jewellery’s connection with the human body, through bodily response and personal adornment, signifies this discipline’s ability to communicate to a large audience (Metcalf 1989). This accessibility allows an intimate connection between jeweller and wearer or audience, both physically and through interpretation. The viewer is able to identify with aspects associated with jewellery such as working with the hands and understanding of materials: sensibilities that may be deemed a felt experience and can be imagined because of our everyday experiences and prior knowledge. Maker and writer David Watkins claims that the emotive qualities embedded in the handmade, and the social importance of the jewellery object, allow it to become: ‘a testing ground for questions, provocations, emotions and allegory’ (Watkins 2002: 92). This assessment of jewellery design reinforces the relationship between the object and those who make, wear and view it, and defines a platform of artistic contemplation that aims to question, challenge and provoke, and a discipline that is fundamentally engaged with the body. It is this assessment of the body, established in a narrative of wearability, that distinguishes jewellery from the arts. Besten highlights the contextual placement of jewellery as a prevalent way of establishing meaning. In ‘Reading Jewellery. Comments on Narrative Jewellery’, she claims: ‘Jewellery is quite different from fine art while being

mobile, wearable and therefore semantically changing according to the context and conditions under which it is viewed' (Besten 2006).

The examples of narrative jewellery given describe objects that are presented in the gallery space and predominantly follow the structural set-up of the display case. These offer a potential area of investigation regarding the presentation of wearability, the body and social or symbolic consequence within the gallery or museum space. As Besten says: 'a conventional showcase exhibition cannot handle this phenomenon' (*ibid.*). The function of wearability, and its engagement with social behaviour, interaction and the felt experience, presents a problematic approach in the gallery environment. This issue defines my area of study, which questions how the relationship between viewer, maker and wearer may be addressed in terms of display methods. In terms of auteur jewellery, Lindemann notes: 'Traditional jewellery in public spaces has until very recently been kept and exhibited mainly in palace and cathedral treasure chambers or ethnographic collections'. He goes on to describe how 'the adorning function of jewellery as decoration worn on the human body has been obscured compared to the art object as such with the content of its message' (Lindemann 2011: 13). In response to this concern, an assessment of existing display methods within the jewellery and the wider field of craft will be carried out in the next chapter, giving prominence to the theme of display, changes in contemporary craft practice and what these mean for the presentation of a craft object.

### **2.3 Locating my research**

This chapter documents the varying discussions surrounding the contemporary definition of jewellery, the influential role of art practice within the discipline and the limited discourse that actively discusses promotional and display techniques as a practical and theoretical structure within jewellery. These observations demonstrate a growing interest in presentational methods that diversify from the artistic strategies currently outlined in auteur, author and narrative jewellery. The voice of the jeweller is replaced by that of an audience, allowing the viewer to inform both meaning and content in their work. Cindi Strauss, curator of modern and contemporary decorative arts and design at the Museum of Fine Art, Houston, emphasises the emergence of jewellers who are exploring an

intellectual territory of ideas, alongside those of aesthetics and technology. In a talk ‘Crossroads of trends and traditions: Emerging American jewellery artists today’, delivered at the 2010 conference of the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG), Strauss compares the value system currently in place in contemporary jewellery with the hierarchical classification of value in the art world. She asks whether idea-driven or theoretical concepts are considered more important than practical use within contemporary jewellery, observing that, ‘jewellery about ideas seems to be the dominant style of work being made today. It is also the type of work that museums, galleries, and collectors are gravitating towards displaying and collecting’ (Strauss 2010). This response derives from Strauss’ conversations with leading American jewellers and academic figures, and reveals that educative programs are encouraging artistic expression and contemplation. Lectures from visiting practitioners and courses immersed in art, craft, design and material culture are factors which lead students to question the field in which they work, informed by theoretical structures and systems from established fields such as the arts. As a consequence, Strauss observed:

Emerging jewellers are also considering issues of design and presentation in relationship to their ideas and the execution of those ideas. Culture, history, handwork, emotional connections and context all factor into today’s teaching methodologies (Strauss 2010).

The contextual placement of ideas informs the work of contemporary jewellers. This awareness that has also led to consideration of the object’s life after the design has been completed. Venues including galleries, pop-up stores and alternative websites reveal an awareness of how their designs will reach and feature within the public sphere. These communicative platforms bridge the gap between the jeweller’s workshop and the wearer’s body to highlight the importance of the viewer. They influence the type of work being produced and also reflect the issues of presentation that emerging artists consider across a range of disciplines.

A clarion call for improved communication is evident among the varied discourses surrounding the concept of contemporary jewellery. Monica Gaspar says: ‘the current strategy is to overcome the limited definition of innovation understood as simply a break against a background of a supposed evolution in

time' (Gaspar 2007: 15). Gaspar believes that innovation that is based solely on the New Jewellery Movement's rejection of tradition can limit the ways in which jewellery is explored. Instead, she promotes the idea of 'creating space' in which to become comfortable, to gain the ability to reflect, and to define and explore the definition of contemporary jewellery. She supports the need to explore alternative platforms for discussions, including the internet and other forms of public space: an engagement reflective of technological developments that indicates a desire to reach, engage and expand into a wider audience.

Benjamin Lignel notes contemporary jewellery's subsidiary connotations and lack of clear definition alongside the arts. He feels that reluctance to devise 'assertive promotional strategies' is a cause for concern (Lignel 2006). In a 2010 blog entry 'CCTV' he says: 'I do not believe that our practice will ever find public recognition unless we cater to people other than ourselves.' His argument is a response to the *Gray Area* symposium (2010), which asked how contemporary jewellery is presented and discussed with audiences beyond those directly connected to the field. He concludes that such symposiums, conferences and exhibitions provide a creative, discursive and growing platform for discussion, but that this form of discussion has yet to fully reach an outside audience. Lignel's observations suggest that methods of communication such as display could provide a fresh viewpoint among the continual re-evaluation and re-definition taking place within the contemporary jewellery field. The purpose of this text is not, therefore, to provide a detailed analysis of the varying methodologies and distinctions under the umbrella of contemporary jewellery but to observe a potential consequence of jewellery's diversity.

A small number of autonomous contemporary jewellers use the gallery space as an investigative area in which to address display methods and the role of the viewer. The theme of collaboration runs through the work of makers including Yuka Oyama, Ted Noten, Suska Mackert, Maisie Broadhead and Naomi Filmer, who use it as a way to engage actively with an audience. Since 2002, Oyama has worked with people in Europe, Australia and Japan for her project *Schmuck Quickies*, and Noten swapped his own rings with those of visitors in *Wanna Swap Your Ring?* in Tokyo (2011). This approach allowed Noten's work to evolve and change shape, from the initial set-up of a wall installation to a menagerie of jewels, each accompanied by their own story. These examples

demonstrate a move towards empowerment of the viewer that relies on audience participation to activate or complete the work. The jeweller facilitates a set of interactions between work and viewer, amongst audience members and between jeweller and viewer by providing a practical environment that invites dialogue and/or physical interaction. This is in direct opposition to the conventional display of a craft object in a gallery environment that evokes an individual experience, a principle that has led to a growing number of contemporary jewellers staging ‘interventions’ in public spaces (Besten 2011: 107). Collaboration is also evident amongst these practitioners in terms of combining disciplines, working with other makers, designers, writers, photographers and theorists, as may be seen in the number of jewellers and curators who use the expertise of filmmakers. Create 3D and BluLoop helped to produce the animated image used in Naomi Filmer’s *Lenticular Series 1* (2007), and multimedia production company The Light Surgeons produced an animation for Angela Jarman’s *CraftCube Collection* (2009). Collective making is also seen in the group 60/40 that was established in 2008 and involves the production of ideas formulated by ceramist Claire Twomey, silversmith David Clarke and bookbinder Tracey Rowledge, as well as the collaboration of Lin Cheung, Laura Potter and Ted Noten who worked as part of *Museumaker* in 2011, a national project to explore the creative potential of museum collections.

This collaborative approach can also be seen as an investigative strategy in the contemporary field of research jewellery; a systematic investigation into and study of materials, techniques and concepts in order to establish ideas or reach new conclusions within the jewellery discipline. This definition can be seen in the work produced at the Royal College of Art (RCA), as part of the Centre for Jewellery Research (CJR): ‘The ability to find answers to questions about the behaviour of materials and technologies in the production of artefacts is a key area of applied arts research’. The RCA website describes a process of investigation that is intended to explore the impact of digital technologies on the function and context of jewellery. Liesbeth den Besten concurs with this definition of the artistic process, observing that the definition of research jewellery suffers from obscurity because it is primarily located in Italy (Besten 2011: 10).

This form of investigative study has led to research projects that have explored collaborations with parallel subjects such as science and technology, thus investigating the meaning of contemporary jewellery and its impact on other fields. For example, the experimental project *Biojewellery* (2003) was initiated as a response to an interaction design brief set by the RCA. Students were encouraged to ‘produce provocative objects which would generate a debate about how we perceive the benefits and problems associated with biotechnological advances’ (*Biojewellery* 2003). This collaborative alliance between scientific researchers and interactive design was an investigative approach to growing bone outside of the body, a process initially developed to repair damaged bone tissue for transplantation into patients. Bioengineered bone tissue was developed from cells extracted from two participants, and attached to a bioactive scaffold on which the cells were encouraged to grow. The resulting organic material was then crafted into a ring. The joining of two people’s bone tissue became a metaphor for the joining of two people in marriage. The ‘marriage’ of science and jewellery design allows scientific processes to be illuminated in terms of something more familiar.

Further evidence of what Gaspar describes as ‘cross-pollination’ between disciplines (Gaspar 2007: 15), can be seen in the 2007 research work of Jayne Wallace. She investigated the potential of integrating digital technology and contemporary jewellery as part of a reaction against mass-produced gadgets and digital objects that carry little emotional meaning. Wallace approached their design and development from the perspective of contemporary jewellery, and the project led to the development of digital jewellery that is invested with personal and emotional significance.

By assessing the role of the viewer it is possible to define an area of contemporary practice that operates between art jewellery and the process-led investigations of research jewellery. The work of Ted Noten and Naomi Filmer demonstrates ways in which jewellers are exploring craft values through their interaction with an audience. Filmer’s 2007 work *Lenticular Series* at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Figure 3, below) uses digital presentation to engage the viewer in an embodied experience. Her exploration of auditory and visual methods emphasises the importance of the body in her own work, and successfully communicates the concept of wearability within the gallery

environment. Her use of multi-sensory methods such as the sound of a person breathing is designed to provoke awareness of the audience's own bodily actions. This auditory strategy is supported by the presentation of holographic imagery depicting a moving body. Filmer's use of technology to explore alternative ways of symbolizing the body, from visual to auditory methods, is used to activate the objects on display. Other representations of the body are used alongside the static object to build a sensory portrayal of the absent body.

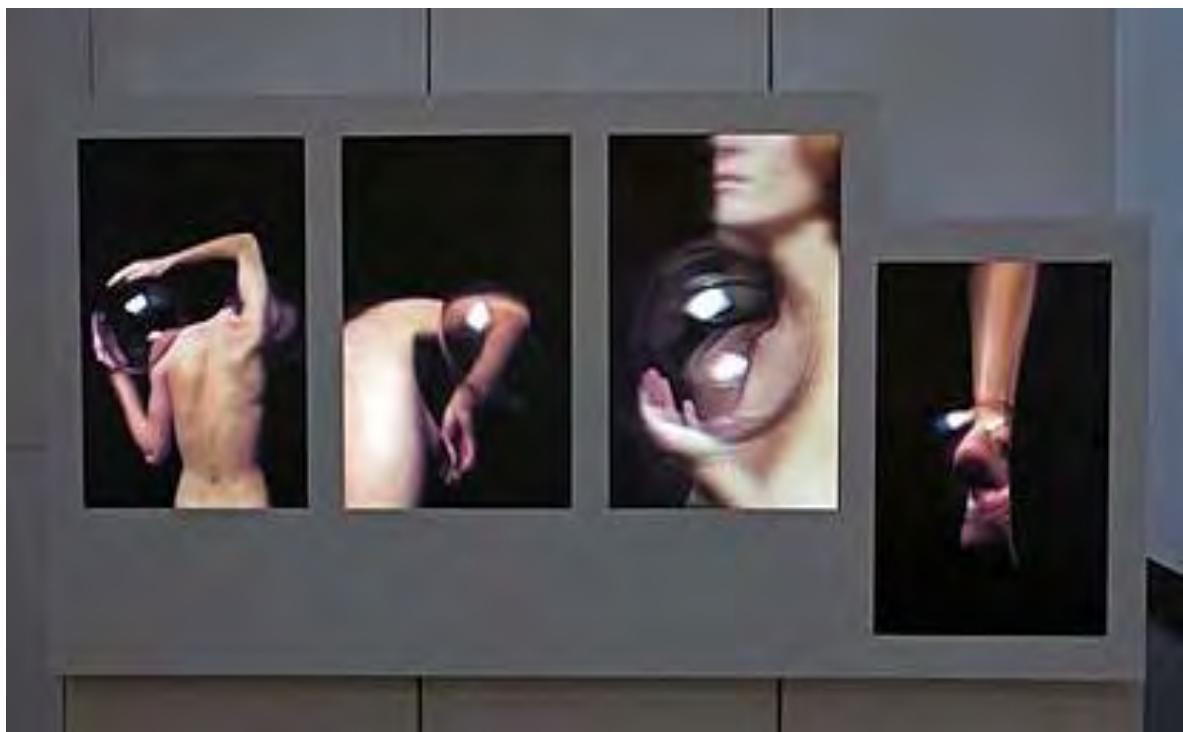


Figure 3. *Lenticular Series* (2007)

Recordings of breathing, the stroking of hair and clearing the throat are heard, helping to create what Filmer describes as a 'body-esque' environment (Filmer 2007: 13). It thus explores what Drew Leder terms 'a series of impersonal horizons' as a means of engaging the viewer (Leder 1990: 2). These impersonal bodily actions, such as the rhythms of breathing, are automatic processes that do not intrude upon our conscious thoughts. Filmer describes the process:

Out of the ordinary...what is more ordinary than being in your own skin, being in your own body, the sound of your own breath? But as soon as you take it out of context of inside your head or

standing next to someone... you've removed it from the context, it becomes quite incredible, it comes quite surreal (Filmer 2007).

This approach demonstrates a progression from Filmer's earlier work, such as the rigid structures of *Mouth Piece* (1996), which dictate the positioning of the wearer and contort the body to the jeweller's specification, and her use of ice and chocolate to create wearable objects in *Ice Jewellery* (1999) and *Chocolate Mask* (2001). These refer clearly to the conceptual work of Gijs Bakker and other performance-based jewellers of the 1960s and 1970s. Filmer uses the physical form of an object as a tool; a component that actives a process that reflects bodily behaviour and comments on the notion of preciousness. She draws the viewer's attention to areas of the body not normally associated with jewellery and decoration by, for example, using the concept of ornamentation to highlight the inside of the mouth or armpit. Filmer's *Lenticular series* is distinguished from her earlier work by her investigative approach to recording such movements or interactions. The works interrogate how an audience may experience the wearability of the displayed object despite having no physical contact with the work. This method addresses the psychological or social engagement of an object through what is conventionally the unmediated experience of an object. It also uses an approach that investigates display, using visual and auditory methods that are audience-focused and reactive to the gallery environment.

Ted Noten also uses a collaborative approach as a way of exploring new digital technologies and engaging an audience. He is led by a desire to break away from the traditional gallery route and become an independent curator of his own exhibitions, and has organised events such as *TedWalk* (2008), which presented his work using a catwalk show. In 2011, he used taxi drivers as ambassadors of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) in his project *Art Rehab*, part of the exhibition *The Modern Jewel in Time and the Mind of Others* (Figure 4, below). Their cabs became mobile sites for the location of his jewellery in a bid to bridge the gap between gallery and outside world (2011).

Noten has also developed an interactive website from which his work can be distributed, as well as unusual methods for producing or dispensing his jewellery in a theatrical or symbolic way, such as a robotic arm or vending

machine. The work of Dinie Besems, who studied at the same art school as Noten, also reveals an independent approach: both have explored ideas through series or batch production. Noten, who is known for his acrylic bags, encloses mundane or unexpected objects in a resin outer shell, thus offering a symbolic commentary on the nature of ownership and preciousness. Examples of Besem's jewellery, however, have been designed using a mathematical tool developed by Luna Maurer following the principles of Delauay and Voronoi. The complex patterns produced by this mathematical approach raise the question of whether a computer programme can give form to beauty.



Figure 4. *The Modern Jewel in Time and the Mind of Others* (2011)

In later work, Noten began to focus on serial projects in order to reach a wide and varied audience. Besten describes him as 'one of the few jewellery makers who have succeeded in bridging the gap with their audience and who are recognized in the fine art world as well as in design and fashion' (Besten 2011: 112). Noten's multidisciplinary approach to jewellery explores the value of participation in order to establish meaning. For *Chew your own Brooch* (1998), participants were invited to buy a piece of chewing gum, chew and make a form from the pliable gum, and return it in the supplied box. Noten cast the returned

gum in silver, attached a pin and returned it to the participant. The process symbolized the transformation of an everyday, worthless material into something precious, in a process developed and experienced by the participant. Value was thus placed on the making process and the sensory experience of chewing the gum, thereby loosening the control of the jeweller and empowering the viewer. Noten also collaborated with a video artist to make a film of a woman chewing gum, in order to present the principle behind the project. He thus ensured that the project engaged with an audience beyond that of the gallery space and was transferable into varying digital formats as a means of presentation. Such consideration of ways in which to connect with an audience, as well as the notion of giving permanence to the process, reveals the open-ended potential of collaborative projects. Similarly, Noten's *Silver Dinner II* (2003) involved a solid silver bar that was sawn into pieces during a live event. Each section was weighed, sold, and made into a pin. The context in which each piece was sold draws attention to various processes of jewellery production, including construction, selecting, buying and selling. The audience was thus integrated in the practical processes that underpin the often-intangible processes of jewellery and consumerism.

The work of Filmer and Noten is distinguished from the artistic explorations of jewellers previously mentioned, in that their work displays a shift away from the physical object that places process above final outcome. In her discussion of their work, Besten says it is:

best understood in a jewellery context, even though the street is an alluring ‘playground’. Their work does not often look like jewellery, but it makes jewellery understandable as a language (Besten 2011: 114).

Besten goes on: ‘their crafts background succours their work and at the same time determines the content’ (*ibid.*), thus illustrating the fact that the conceptual and non-functional expressions of contemporary jewellery demonstrate a wide and varying freedom for practitioners. Such work seemingly detaches itself from the conventions of jewellery, yet it can be argued that such jewellers still operate within the parameters located in jewellery discourse. This effectively defines a new specificity within contemporary jewellery that looks to

collaborative methods of engaging an audience within the societal perspective of the discipline.

## 2.4 Contemporary jewellery and the critical object

This study has identified a range of developments in contemporary jewellery practice: within these, it can be seen that digital media increasingly inform the way jewellery is presented, functioning as both tool and material in the making process. Photography, video, audio and visual installations, and even the internet and social networking are involved. The introduction of alternative methods of expression within contemporary jewellery in the last decade, in both public and virtual spaces, will be investigated in terms of the shift of focus from the craft object, towards group collaboration and ways of presenting the making process. This has led to the production of jewellery work and representational methods that are compatible with the digital age. This area has been discussed by Besten, whose uses the description 'on the fringe' to explore the work of practitioners who engage with the social and critical investigations of the author or auteur jeweller, but are not bound by the need to produce a final, tangible object. Such practitioners thus explore the conceptual freedoms and open-ended questions of art jewellery and research jewellery.

The value of placing prominence on a process rather than on the crafted object must be interrogated, as must the investigation of ways of recording and presenting the tangible and intangible, in the light of Lindemann's observation that jewellery can be anything (Lindemann 2011: 13). There are those who regard this strategy as a loss of self within jewellery, by removing the essence of materiality that locates jewellery within the crafts. Yet this is not the first time craft's core principles have been challenged in order to instigate critical discourse. Just as the New Jewellery movement rejected the use of precious and semi-precious materials, examples of studio craft challenged the functionality of the craft object, as documented by Howard Risatti in *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression* (2009). This examines how craft practitioners considered the conceptual role of the body within the static object. The function of an object is deemed a pivotal aspect in the identity of craft. Risatti says: 'it is around function that form, material, and technique revolve as a constellation of elements necessary to bring the craft object into being' (Risatti

2007: 281). This comment highlights functionality as the fundamental principle that drives craft practice, which may be challenged by the artistic expressions of a new generation of craftspeople. In *New Ceramic Presence* (1961), Rose Slivka suggested the term ‘painterpotters’ to describe makers who regarded function as a secondary concern, realigning their approach to avoid ‘immediate functional associations’ (Slivka 1961: 36).

The idea of function can be addressed through conceptual means as an exploration of crafts identity, reflecting a shift in attitudes within contemporary craft practice. Yamaguchi Ryuun’s 1990 *Tide Wave* is an interwoven form that reflects both Japanese basket-making traditions and modern abstract sculpture, for example the work of Naum Gabo. The fluid structure exists on the margin between the non-functional aesthetic and the handmade qualities of basket weaving. Howard Ben Tré’s *First Vase* (1989) is an oversized glass vessel that retains the form of a container or everyday object, but at more than 55 inches merely *implies* function.

The term ‘Studio Craft’ reflects the shift from workshop to studio practice that was influenced both by academic thinking and by art’s own conceptual endeavours within minimalism. Creative developments during the 1960s and 1970s encouraged craft practitioners to explore metaphorical meaning and abstract concepts that proposed critical objectivity as a way of separating craft from fine art. The diminishing concern with function was replaced by engagement through conceptual means with what Risatti calls ‘critical objects of crafts’ (Risatti 2007: 285). This notion is informed by critical discourse within the arts that explores the parameters of craft. The resulting conceptualization stems from a knowledge rooted in craft principles, including an understanding of material and traditional hand-making techniques.

An alternative critical reflection will be defined by a comparative study of studio craft objects, including Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917). Risatti cites Duchamp’s ready-made urinal as an example of the establishment of meaning due to the act of insertion, thus provoking critical discourse surrounding sculpture that remains outside the field of craft and defining a critical discourse primarily associated with the crafts.

The conceptual exploration of function in Risatti's 'critical objects of craft' reflects on the work of Margaret Boden. Risatti referred to her 2000 article 'Craft, Perception and the Possibilities of the Body', by describing 'objects whose aesthetic/artistic potential is concentrated in their exemplary but "unfulfillable function"' (Risatti 2007: 285). This echoes Boden's observations concerning the relationship between the craft object and bodily actions. Psychological mechanisms of the body that respond to the craft object are highlighted, indicating both human biology and craft's associations with domesticity and the everyday. Everyday actions including drinking and stroking can be used by the contemporary practitioners to initiate critical dialogue by bringing unconscious processes to the fore. Examples including a water-bottle made of icing sugar and a perforated vase chime with Boden's definition of a 'useless' artefact. This concept plays with the user's expectations of the craft object in order to establish functionality within the object's conceptual narrative.

This study's aim is to develop an area of contemporary jewellery that considers the role of display within the creative process as a means of locating ideas from within craft. By focusing on themes such as the body, its materiality and its humanising power, the intention is to develop an approach that can inform both practice and critical discourse. This approach will remain embedded in craft attitudes and processes, while investigating digital media as a means of communication that does not, and should not, replace the importance of the made object in craft exhibitions. Risatti's exploration of the critical object in relation to finding new ways to engage the viewer with craft theory through practical means is important to my own study. For this reason, the term 'critical jewellery object' will be used to define my own output, and that of other makers who actively look towards presentational methods in order to engage the viewer. The critical jewellery object is developed from a practical investigation of display, focusing on visual and auditory methods to make, record and immerse the viewer in jewellery discourse. This is an art-led approach to contemporary jewellery that moves away from making a physical object and looks toward palpable ways of presenting jewellery as a language. This approach is responsive to the development of distribution methods and communicative platforms currently being used in jewellery beyond the gallery space, including the internet and an increasing number of interactive public spaces. As noted, it

may be said that makers who operate on jewellery's 'fringe' are actively exploring or reacting against jewellery's comparative isolation from the art or design world. This comment helps to define a strategy that both recognizes the role of the viewer and introduces practical and theoretical frameworks from the arts, such as relational and immersive aesthetics which are addressed in chapters 5 and 6. This collaboration, as seen in studio crafts, is designed to engage an audience within concepts of craft, including materiality, and the individual and social body. In order to establish such a structure, a contextual study that investigates existing display methods in jewellery and craft is needed to locate my argument.

## **Chapter 3: On display**

### **3.1 Jewellery and display**

The usual definition of a museum is: ‘an institution that is a repository for the collection, exhibition and study of objects of artistic, scientific, historic or educational interest’ (The Chambers Dictionary, 2003). This conventional definition relates to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill’s description of the ‘mythical museum’, a term that encapsulates common notions of the museum setting and its associations of ‘preservation and conservation, of scholarship, and of displays based on aesthetic approaches to the layout of knowledge’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2004: 557). It also informs the presentation of many craft exhibitions (*ibid.*). The role of the museum is problematic, as noted by Sir John Pope-Hennessy:

...the whole museum situation is inherently an artificial one. The works exhibited were intended for a vast variety of purposes...the only purpose for which we can be confident they were not designed was to be shown in a museum...they have been wrested from their setting and alienated from whatever role they were originally intended to perform. This is the museum dilemma.  
(Pope-Hennessy 1975: 717).

Pope-Hennessy, a former director of London’s Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and The British Museum, who was also director of European painting at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, began to consider the alienation of objects from their original context and question the role of design in museum display. In a 1975 article ‘Design in Museums’, Pope-Hennessy discusses the 19th century method of presenting objects in collections, thus facilitating comparative observation of aspects such as development in form, decoration and construction techniques. He reveals his appreciation for uniformity within the display case, a form of presentation that allows the viewer time and space to contemplate each object in succession ‘with unremitting interest’ (*ibid.*). The collection establishes conformity of layout and pieces, and its unifying function allows the viewer to engage with the material content and aesthetic detail of each object and to observe their differences. Pope-Hennessy describes the ideology that validates exhibits by allocating each a contextual narrative as ‘frequently conceived as a kind of cultural gloss on the works of art’ (*ibid.*). As

an example, he cites the example of a display of classical vases at Munich's Staatliche Antikensammlungen museum in 1973, which presented a collection of objects from varying styles and periods in order to provoke a dialogue based on aesthetic conclusions. Under such conditions taxonomy, chronology and geography are used as ways of organization and communication, but the cased objects remain detached from functionality and bodily involvement.



Figure 5. *The William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery* (2008)

This consequence is problematic in terms of jewellery display, as objects within the display case are seemingly wrested from the body of the wearer. The first *International Exhibition of Modern Jewellery* at London's Goldsmith's Hall in 1961 presented designs spanning the years from 1890–1961. Pyramid-shaped display cases housed the work on display, which was curated to illustrate the varying styles and periods of jewellery over the 70 years covered. Display based on the principles outlined by Pope-Hennessy can still be seen in jewellery exhibitions, craft galleries and museums. The V&A's William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery (Figure 5, above), which was opened in 2008, is arranged in sections covering periods from the ancient world to the present. Many international galleries also place emphasis on the display case. *Elegant*

*Armor: The Art of Jewelry* (Figure 6, below), a 2008 exhibition at New York's Museum of Arts and Design, reflected the display methods used for the *Modern Handmade Jewelry* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1946. These exhibitions presented the work in collections, drawing on developments in form, decoration and design as a way to contextualize objects. Collections are usually presented using conventional structures such as plinths and lockable cabinets. These aim to provide a neutral and contained setting for these relatively small objects, and also respond to the gallery's conservational efforts, security issues and the space available for presentation.



Figure 6. *Elegant Armor: The Art of Jewelry* (2008–9)

Manuals such as Margaret Hall's *On Display: a Design Grammar for Museum Exhibitions* (1987), and *Collecting and Displaying* by Alistair McAlpine and Cathy Giangrande (1998), summarize conventional structures of display recommended for jewellery exhibitions. Display methods are catalogued under subcategories including cabinets, frames and mounts, plinths and shelving; elements that can be altered depending on the choice of lighting:

Sculpture and other three-dimensional objects often need plinths or stands to be fully appreciated. Even when an object can stand freely on a table or shelf, a plinth draws a visual line between the object and the display surface, giving it special prominence (McAlpine and Giangrande 1998:137).

There is a focus on the benefits of these conventional structures, such as how a plinth may draw the viewer's attention to the proficiency of an object on display, by providing a platform that works with its proportions and presents no distractions. Hall comments on the arrangement of artefacts and the subtleties of design and meaning that are achievable in the display: 'if objects are placed to emphasize the wealth of the users, the effect can be intensified by close grouping of the pieces' (Hall 1987: 173).

Observations of the V&A's approach to jewellery display reveal a conscious effort to create a dynamic, intimate viewing space in the design and layout of the display cases. These combine architectural creativity with sculptural grandeur, directing the viewer round a gallery space that has a backdrop of neutral materials and colours in order to emphasize the objects on display. Among examples of the intricate detailing necessary to create a pleasurable viewing environment is the use of non-reflective glass and acoustic rubber flooring. These aspects are drawn from the experience and knowledge of architect Georgina Papathanasiou of Eva Jiricna Architects (EJA) combined with the expertise of the V&A's curatorial team. Veronica Simpson, who considers the methods used by architects to display craft, says the V&A gallery was redesigned to 'fine tune the collection and the displays so as to maximize impact, giving as much emphasis, through spacing and positioning, to each gem as possible, and grouping them into logical, as well as chronological themes' (Simpson 2008: 36). The pragmatic overview offered by the likes of Margaret Hall offers only simple advice through universal templates rather than reflecting the art-led designs of contemporary jewellery. It seems rudimentary

compared to the creative solutions and developments revealed by the actual objects.

The role of the display case, which reflects Pope-Hennessy's promotion of 19th century display methodology, demonstrates a perspective embedded in the history of the 'cabinet of curiosities' or 'cabinet of wonder'. These terms were used to describe the objects that were exhibited as an expression of the interest in accumulating collections that developed from the 17th century (Putnam 2001). Intellectual curiosity influenced this drive to amass objects including scientific instruments and preserved animals and plants to create the first examples of collections, leading to the development of present day museums.

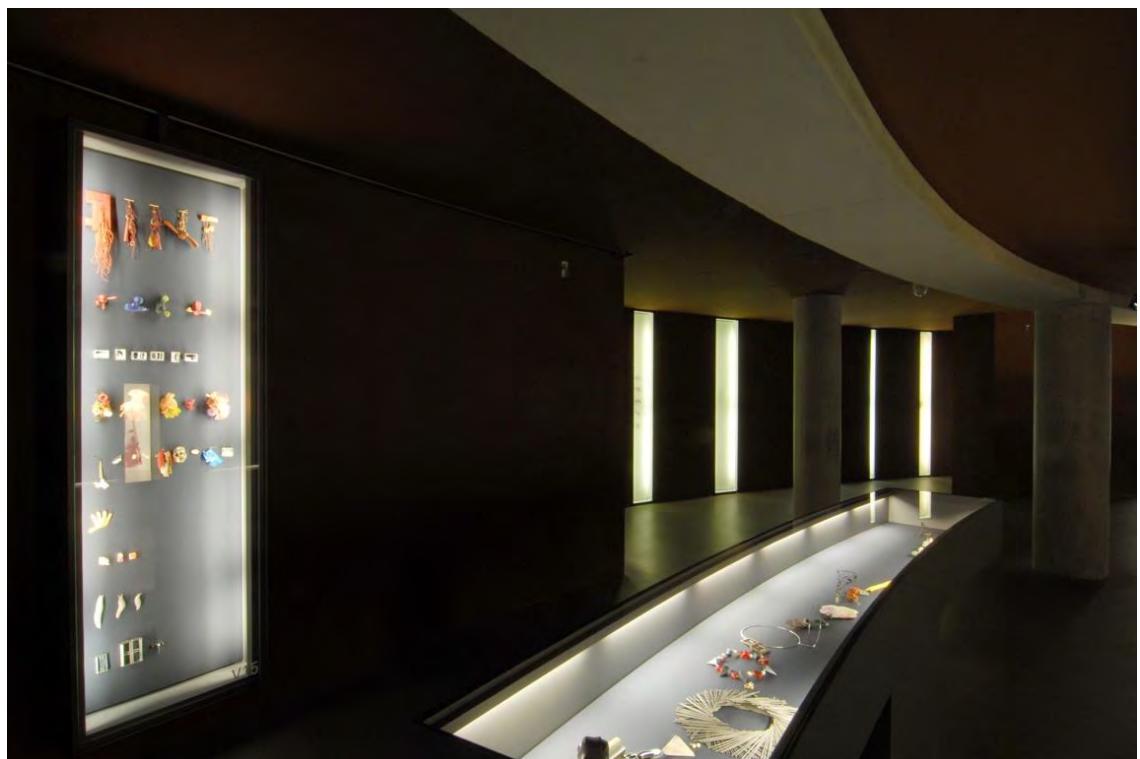


Figure 7. *The New Exhibition* (2010)

A contemporary example of this methodology was seen in *The New Exhibition* (Figure 7, above), a vast collection of contemporary international jewellery at Munich's Pinakothek der Moderne in 2010. Curated by contemporary jeweller

Karl Fritsch, this reinterpretation of the museum's permanent collection featured more than 100 jewellery objects, reflecting a multitude of artistic approaches. It demonstrated the collective method of display, which presents an array of 'specimens' to illustrate the diverse techniques, material content and concepts surrounding a particular form. The creation of meaning thus relies on subtleties established by placing objects next to each other to create a narrative by comparison. Carla Yianni argues that this arrangement of objects symbolizes the fact that 19th century knowledge lay within rows of specimens (Yanni 2005). Fritsch's choice of objects was formulated to reflect the collection's diversity, and exhibited within the setting of the glass-fronted display case. He explained: 'I display many pieces from different people to form one big picture about, for example, what a ring or a necklace can be today' (Fritsch 2010).

### **3.2 Reviewing the existing literature**

In her article 'Curatorial Conundrums: Exhibiting Contemporary Art Jewelry in the Museum' (2010), Namita Wiggers describes various styles of exhibition practice that inform how craft is displayed. The contemporary, academic and media-specific museum is compared to the 'encyclopedic museum' (Wiggers 2010) which uses chronological modes of jewellery display. The role of this style of exhibition is identified by presenting 'examples of works that are agreed upon by many curators, scholars and artists to be the finest examples of particular visual works' (*ibid.*) The presentation of contemporary collections in this format is highlighted in the exhibition *Kiff Slemmons: Artifacts into Art* (2008) at Chicago's Douglas Dawson Gallery, which was designed to present a range of objects in a practical exploration of jewellery's history. Wiggers compares this approach with that of regional art museums such as the Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina and Washington's Tacoma Art Museum, as well as of craft-based museums such as the Museum of Contemporary Craft in Portland, Oregon. She shows how the institutional setting can influence craft display by employing a regional narrative or by presenting craft-specific objects in order to create an alternative dimension to the larger, encyclopedic museum.

As noted in Chapter 2 with regard to the 'museum dilemma', the use of the display case removes the objects from the body and the interactive nature of their original design. Alternative display methods such as wall mounts and

installation of domestic furniture within encyclopedic exhibitions exemplify techniques that attempt to embody and contextualize the jewellery object within an everyday narrative. Ceramist Carol McNicoll's exhibition in Norway's Bergen Kunsthall (2001) presented ceramic objects on tables against a backdrop of decorative wallpaper in order to emulate a lived-in environment. This technique was also seen at the Galerie Sofie Lachaert stand at the Crafts Council's 2010 *Collect* fair at London's Saatchi Gallery (Figure 8, below), for which domestic furniture had been adapted to function as a display case and plinth, thus demonstrating the use of environmental settings within the gallery space. As noted by Hall, these 'props and backgrounds' are illustrative of ownership and are an informative tool in conventional display methods. They are commonly used to bridge the divide between displayed object and the body, by providing visual cues as to how the object is worn or used and by whom (Hall 1987: 174).



Figure 8. Galerie Sofie Lachaert (2010)

In terms of museum presentation, additional visual, audio or text-based information can provide a substitute for the museum docent, in order to guide the viewer and to mediate the sense of ownership and wearability with which

the exhibited work is associated. The concept of ‘props and backgrounds’ may also incorporate interactive devices such as guided tours, demonstrations, digital wall panels and workshops that are introduced within the museum structure in order to provide a memorable experience for the visitor, while protecting work for future generations. Representational methods such as these equate to a layered method of communication within display methodology. For example, the development of dynamic environments within the gallery space has led to the exploration of experience and multi-sensorial engagement in exhibition practice. This is based on change, and dynamic display methods are illustrative of two or more different states of communication from those used in a static exhibition, thus demonstrating the creative role of narrative and ecological display types (Mensch 1992).

As a response to the museum’s educational function, new design strategies have engaged with the importance of ideas or concepts. The conceptual identity of an object or collection of objects is thus established as a narrative: an approach informed and structured round a storyline in order to contextualize the objects on display. A narrative pattern is used as an abstract dialogue in the design and formulation of an exhibition, and is developed in order to support understanding and provoke an emotional response through engagement.

The notion of a dynamic environment in terms of jewellery display offers an alternative approach to the encyclopedic approach to the display case. In terms of the display of American jewellery, Wiggers outlines the differences between conventional approaches and those that address the artistic developments evident in contemporary jewellery. As an example, she highlights the 2009 *Equilibrium: Body as Site* at the Rubin Center, University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). This ‘exhibition-in-print’ which became an ‘exhibition-on-view’ was designed to reflect the artistic content of the work on display, referring to concepts such as conceptualism and minimalism. An artistic environment was used, employing the stripped-down format of the white-walled gallery space: a design format that is associated with theoretical and analytical consideration. A sensory narrative was used to engage the viewer with the absent body, supported by a slide show available on the exhibition website. Caroline Broadhead’s *Necklace-Veil* (1982) comprises a nylon cylinder that sits on the shoulders, towering above the head so the wearer becomes cocooned. This

design, which exists between jewellery and garment, was presented to explore the performative aspect of the sensory experience of sight alongside a collection of images that documented the body's physical interaction with the piece. The white-walled presentation space allowed the viewer to contemplate the conceptual meaning of an object, thus addressing the interdisciplinary relationship between jewellery and fashion and implying a sensory experience that is evoked through the object's form and function. This emotive performance is thus both experienced by the wearer and perceived by the viewer, and supported by the visual documentation of photography.

The role of conceptual narrative and dynamic display methods has had little impact on jewellery discourse to date, and there are few examples of presentation in which the relation between jewellery and display is considered beyond the accepted structures outlined in Wiggers' encyclopedic and art-led structures. One such example may be seen in the observations of Ellen Lupton, who addresses the concept of representation and display as a framing device within contemporary jewellery. In 'Collect, Connect, Protect, Display: Framing the Art of Jewelry' (2007) she refers to Jacques Derrida's critical thinking on deconstruction and the importance of framing in *The Truth in Painting* (1987). Derrida defines framing as a marginalized form of artistic expression that is secondary to the primary artwork. Yet, Derrida argued, framing devices and their supportive structure are necessary in understanding the central work. Lupton identifies processes of construction and the subtleties of material that hold and support a jewel as significant constructs in an object's meaning. She cites elements such as glue, or techniques that acknowledge the function of the mould and are recorded in the subtle suggestions of seams, air bubbles and deformities that are vital to the object's being. She continues this line of thought by discussing jewellery's ability to frame the body, thus drawing attention to the body's role through adornment and its associated social and cultural meaning. Lupton concludes by addressing the ways in which jewellery can also be framed in cases, cabinets and the gallery space for the purpose of protection and display. Her selection of objects is unified by 'the fundamental act of transforming materials and images by setting them apart from the realm of the ordinary' (Lupton 2007: 29). In a press release produced by the Museum of Contemporary Craft, Wendy Miller describes 'framing the art of jewelry' as:

one component of a multi-faceted investigation of the art of jewelry that, at once, acknowledges the growing independence in the visual practices of art, craft and design, and poses theoretical questions about the way contemporary art jewelry is presented for the public experience (Miller 2007).

This observation reinforces the focus on display as a growing area of interest that aims to inform previous discussions on the triangular relationship between maker, wearer and viewer. It focuses on jewellery's relationship with the body, in terms of both the worn object and one that is viewed, contemplated and experienced outside the realm of ownership, thus questioning how forms of presentation such as the museum setting and printed matter may establish bodily relationships between object and an audience.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, figures including the architect Frederick Kiesler and the photographers Herbert Bayer and El Lissitzky helped to create dynamic, interactive environments for the exhibition of art work, thus influencing the role of public experience within the gallery space. The viewer's ability to move through the exhibition space and interact with display structures encouraged active participation, as demonstrated by Kiesler's development of the *Leger und Träger* (L and T) free-standing display system of 1924. The creative use of lighting and inclusion of moveable panels allowed the audience to control the appearance of the artwork in Lissitzky's architectural project *Abstract Cabinet* (1927–1928). Bayer's creations *Diagram of Field of Vision* and *Diagram of 360 Degrees Field of Vision* initiated the use of ceiling, floor and wall space in the exhibition environment (Staniszewski 1998). This methodology recognizes the exhibition as a representational space that is responsive to the time and place in which the exhibit is experienced.

As noted by Mary Anne Staniszewski, creative practitioners of the time tended to 'reject idealist aesthetics and cultural autonomy and to treat an exhibition as a historically bound experience whose meaning is shaped by its reception' (Staniszewski 1998: 27). The reactive relationship between audience and designed space is informed by the wider social political context that shapes the interpretations of the viewer, thus indicating an emphasis on the role of the viewer and the potential to embed meaning through collaborative engagement. This principle has gone on to inform methods of participation in art and display as well as the area of audience development in museum methodology. A

separate study would be necessary in order to document developments in new museology, but highlighting this movement in exhibition design history shows how display methodology can be integral to the design and construction of an artwork, rather than simply a compliant form of post-production presentation. Jewellery designed to be worn on the body or displayed as a static object may now be informed by the interactive intent seen in artistic practice. This interrogates the notion of how jewellery's display may impact on the viewer, thus informing how it may be experienced and understood in the gallery space.

Approaches to viewer engagement, whether physical, emotional or intellectual, seem to view communication as a dual process, which both demands input from the viewer and requires display in the museum's exploration of interactivity. Multimedia and interactive principles, as a response to an increasingly media-literate society, present ways of developing engaging environments in which the audience can be crucial to the production of meaning. Bonnie Pitman-Gelles suggests that interactive exhibitions:

provide a sense of discovery or direct experiences with objects.  
They appeal to a variety of senses and generally require the adult or child to handle materials, play roles, day dream, operate equipment and participate in play or work (Pitman-Gelles 1981: 35).

Pitman-Gelles investigates elements ranging from physical activity to the value of imagination and conceptual involvement, in order to address the process of contemplation and empathetic response in addition to the physical consequence of touch as a form of interactive experience. As Dormer notes on the relationship between jewellery and wearer: 'you need to wear it, or, when not wearing it to leave it where it can be seen, or pick it up and turn it over in your hands' (Dormer and Drutt 1995: 15).

Accessibility informs both the understanding and meaning of jewellery. The gallery space must be an area of consideration, because of the limitations conventionally imposed on physical interaction by concerns of security and conservation. A few contemporary jewellery designers and curators have addressed this consideration. At the beginning of the 1990s, jewellers began showing their work via installations and alternative venues as a way of creating an interactive dialogue as opposed to the encyclopedic approach seen in museums. Besten's 2004 article 'Beyond the Showcase' documents the

experimental steps taken during the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting on the presentation and representation of contemporary jewellery in accordance with these changing attitudes. Besten observes the changing image of jewellery over the last five decades, in terms of photography as tool that has allowed jewellers to create a context for their designs. She looks at the 'clean, beautiful young girls, looking upside, in the future' of the 1960s as a means of photographing the oversized, industrially inspired designs significant to the time (Besten 2004), presenting an approach which resulted in a body of striking images that reflected social attitudes aimed at the upcoming, youthful generation. Besten also explores the playful explorations of wearability and function with regard to the body of the 1980s and the impressionistic exploration of 1990s photography. These approaches were achieved collaboratively, by drawing on both the creative interpretations of the professional photographer and those of the jeweller.



Figure 9. *Passio* (1992)

Alongside her observations on jewellery and photography, Besten discusses the work of Ruudt Peters and the use of installation to submerge his audience in the context and ideas surrounding his work. The interactive environments in which his jewellery pieces were presented derived from his belief that jewellery should be touched. In *Picasso* (1998), tents suspended from the ceiling each housed a pendant that the viewer had to uncover (Figure 9, above). Viewers were invited into an individual viewing area segregated from the rest of the gallery space, thus offering a personal dialogue. Similarly, in *Ouroboros* (1995) Peters used the height of the gallery space by pinning brooches to the ceiling, providing access to each via a wooden step-ladder. Though the safety of the audience was compromised to too great an extent, meaning that the invitation to climb the ladders was often declined, Peters' installations established a link with the dynamic environments and display structures that were explored in art during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Among contemporary exhibitions that pursue a similar interest in physical interaction is *Touching Warms the Art* (2008), curated by Rebecca Scheer, Rachelle Thiewes and Namita Wiggers at the Museum of Contemporary Craft (Figure 10, below). Formulated as a practical response to Lupton's theoretical considerations, this exhibition was also a reaction to Scheer's review in *MetalSmith* magazine of the 2005 exhibition *Beyond the Body: Northwest Jewelers at Play* at Florida's Tacoma Art Museum. The review attempted to address the lack of bodily interaction between jewellery on display and the viewer. The interactive display encouraged visitors to try on work created by sculpture students but was described by Scheer as a 'petting zoo'. Concern over the loss of craftsmanship because of this approach to interaction raised doubts over the value of first-hand experience in the gallery space.

In *Touching Warms the Art*, the conclusion to her survey of curatorial practices in jewellery display, Wiggers documents its development as a means of promoting physical interaction supported by contextual reasoning in the museum setting (Wiggers 2010). In this, Hilde Hein's observations of phenomenological values with regard to changing approaches to museum objects are significant (Hein 2000). Despite the theoretical approval of the value of touch in the exhibition space, the notion of the 'petting zoo' remains problematic. This is because the objects are purposefully made with touch in

mind, so choice of material and construction techniques are guided by the intended form of display. This necessarily implies the use of durable or inexpensive material, thus offering only a limited view of jewellery construction techniques and meaning. The notion of wearability, as noted, is just one of many principles encompassed by the overarching concept of contemporary jewellery. As a result, Wiggers' approach to introducing physical experience to the gallery space may be viewed as making a limited contribution to the quest to solve the curatorial conundrum of exhibiting contemporary jewellery.



Figure10.  
*Touching Warms the Art* (2008)

Earlier attempts to activate the jewellery object in order to demonstrate ownership, wearability, materiality and scale were evident in the performative demonstrations of Gijs Bakker and Emmy van Leersum, as seen in their exhibition of experimental clothing at London's Electrum Gallery in 1972. The clothing's structure, which reflected the minimalist forms and construction techniques used in their aluminium jewellery, offered the wearer freedom of movement and a sensory experience that was marked by the use of models to wear the clothing. More recently, this principle was explored in Ted Noten's *Tedwalk* (2008), which featured a catwalk show and used models to wear the

jewellery and to interact with the audience. This exhibition strategy provides a momentary glimpse of the activated jewellery piece in the artificial environment of the catwalk, or a movement within the gallery space that is directed by the jeweller. The jewellery object is often returned to the safety and permanence of the display case after a period of time.

Consideration of the materiality of an object uncovers a conflict between the conservational ideology of the gallery space and the interaction implied by the concept of jewellery. Christoph Zellweger demonstrates the contradiction between display and materiality by embracing the transitory nature of rubber, his choice of material in *Chain* (1994). The material inevitably disintegrates over time, suggesting the transient materiality of an object through illustrating its life cycle, and embedding within its surface a record of its history and the impact on the object of those who have come into contact with it. The material progression towards the unwearable sits uncomfortably with the notion of the white-gloved hands of the gallery conservation team, revealing the practical limitations of the technique of touch within display methodology. This format explores interactivity with an audience but does not fully explore the theoretical or practical content of such engagement regarding the embodied object.

### **3.3 Craft and the gallery space**

The gallery space provides a challenging environment to investigate when exploring methods of display in jewellery. As indicated, conventional methods of display can offer little in terms of wearability, and overlook the contextual information that supports how a jewellery object is experienced or understood. Similarly, the personal ownership, function and everyday framework in which craft operates is what distinguishes jewellery and the crafts from fine art. Exhibits which explore display methods beyond that of the display case, and which place craft within a white-walled environment of an art institution, reveal the unsettled nature of the relationship between the arts and craft.

In *Craft in Transition* (2009) critic and maker Jorunn Veiteberg documents the difficulties she experienced in curating a craft exhibition at Norway's Bergen Kunsthall contemporary arts centre. Veiteberg considers the comments made by critic Eva Furseth, who asked whether exhibiting craft in a contemporary art

arena was too problematic, claiming: 'the pieces do not seem to feel properly at home in the institutional context' (Furseth, 2001). The large white walls of a gallery space and expanse of the room, she felt, strip all contexts from the craft object. As a response, Veiteberg reflects on the implications of the gallery space for fine art and the effect on craft when introduced into this environment.

The home... has been seen as a dangerous arena for art because it is a place where one does not have control over how art is presented. In the home, art is at risk of being trivialized and rendered 'invisible'. This has led to greater ambivalence *vis-a-vis* craft in artistic contexts (Veiteberg 2004).

Critical assessments such as this underscore the importance of display and the way in which art is revealed to the public. In the gallery space, control over the way art is presented may be achieved by employing a neutral format. Reference to craft's association with domesticity, in which craft is predominantly produced for interaction within the private sphere, presents a further problem: allusions to such an origin sit uncomfortably with the 'please do not touch' signs seen in the gallery or museum, as well as with the 'art gaze' that is associated with the white walls of the gallery space (Foucault 1970).

The implementation of a domestic setting in which household props and wallpaper backdrops are used in the gallery space offers a limited view of the presentational approaches open to craft display and the critical discourse with which craft is associated, in line with the concerns raised by Veiteberg. Craft, like contemporary jewellery, has been informed by the arts, resulting in works that explore the notion of functionality by symbolic or conceptual means in order to engage or subvert viewers' expectations. As with jewellery, craft exhibitions are often associated with encyclopedic methods of presentation; objects are arranged in groups in accordance with function, discipline or age to allow them to be observed in terms of craftsmanship and form. The lack of development within craft display may be explained by its decrease in popularity compared to that of the arts. This is reflected in the fact that the term 'craft' is associated with confusion and preconceived notions.

The difficult relationship between the arts and craft was played out publicly when in 1986 The British Crafts Centre was renamed Contemporary Applied Arts (CAA), thus removing any reference to craft. Similarly, New York's

American Craft Museum became the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) in 2002. Other museums have adopted the term ‘contemporary’ in an attempt to relinquish or challenge pre-determined notions of craft tradition, including Portland’s Museum of Contemporary Craft and Houston’s Center for Contemporary Craft in the US. Global financial pressure has also had an impact on the crafts, affecting the structure and availability of craft-based courses in a way that will continue to influence craft discourse. Over the last 10 years limited resources and the cost of facilitating and running craft-based courses in the UK has led to many course closures, as documented by the Crafts Council. These factors also influenced the closure of the Crafts Council’s gallery space in 2006.

In addition to economic factors, the interdisciplinary blurring of the boundary between craft and fine art has led to the integration of applied practice within more broadly based art or design courses (‘Craft course closures’; Crafts Council, 2009) and has been blamed for craft’s subsidiary position. This is an indication that institutions are under financial pressure to retain the traditional approach to craft exhibits. As a result, discussions concerning marginalization and the relegation of craft to the parameters of contemporary art and design has led to what Glenn Adamson describes as craft’s ‘stumbling block’ (Adamson 2006: 109), which alludes to the desire of many practitioners and writers to erode the art-craft boundary within craft theory. The current status of craft display within the fine art context is encapsulated in Adamson’s observation: ‘When the climate is so militantly hostile to an intelligent handling of craft, how is a curator who is interested in craft to navigate the shoals?’ (Adamson 2006: 110). This problem has caused recent ripples among curators and institutions who seek ‘rejuvenation’ and ‘new possibilities’ for craft both in terms of how the subject is understood and the environmental settings in which it exhibited (Simpson 2008; Charny 2011). New spaces such as Middlesbrough’s Institute for Modern Art (MIMA), which opened in 2007, provide adaptable spaces that allow art and craft to cohabit. The institute’s gallery, with its emphasis on space, light and scope, offers flexibility between small and large-scale displays. The three-year closure of Belfast’s Ulster Museum allowed for a dramatic redevelopment of the museum’s applied arts gallery, which was reopened in 2009. Head of Art Kim Mawhinney notes that the new space has provided a permanent display for the museum’s craft collection, saying that the

gallery now has ‘a lot more flexibility both in terms of the size of exhibit we can display and how we display it’ (Simpson 2008: 34).

The Crafts Council’s strategies and plans document highlights the focus on craft and its display between 2008–2012. Public awareness and engagement was put forward as an objective, and the need for:

opportunities for the public to engage in contemporary high quality craft – both as attendees and participants – and to develop a robust evidence base to influence decision makers and funders (Crafts Council 2008: 16).

This comment illustrates a dynamic initiative that aims to address craft’s current profile within a wider cultural context and will support and engage those in and around the crafts now and in the future. This response reflects the optimism and interest that has been developing round craft in recent years. As Dormer and Turner previously observed: ‘There have been occasions... when it has been fashionable to set ‘craft’ on one side on the assumption that ‘craft’ is boring and plodding and somehow prevents the Phoenix of creativity from rising’ (Dormer and Turner 1985: 32).

Though craft has been deemed a subject that facilitates the creation of art and design practices, there is a continuing need to develop curatorial methods that engage with it as a subject in its own right. Alternative modes of communication have been developed beyond the gallery walls. This has been assisted by advances in digital and internet technology: forums including blogs, websites and crafting groups are creating multiple levels of perceptual space that respond to social and cultural changes. These avenues of communication offer makers access to their audience. In her survey of emerging American jewellers Cindi Strauss recorded the following comments from jewellery lecturers:

‘Our students like street fairs, clubs and underground exhibitions. I took students to Munich one year for Schmuck and they were completely fascinated by the guerrilla exhibitions in storefront spaces. They were really taken by their casual and brilliant methods of display, utilizing whatever means necessary to enable speed and accessibility within their resources, while maintaining a level of sophistication’ (Strauss 2010).

‘They are interested in alternative ways of presentation, which includes the internet as a way for visibility. Well, they are far more

informed, with dozens of blogs, websites etc. for them to participate in, and these sources provide both desire and community. They like looking at work on Klimt02' (Strauss 2010).

Many examples depict a generation of makers who are aware of their potential audiences and how to reach and engage with them. Political and social issues can therefore be addressed through a collaborative stance that responds to the technological capabilities of the internet and digital media. These examples range from the individual blog or web page such as Helen Carnac's 'Making a Slow Revolution' (2009); the journalistic reflections of jeweller Laura Potter documented on her website (2003); and community-style databases such as the Art Jewelry Forum and Klimt02 (Cappello 2008) that were created to facilitate the exchange of information between the private and public spheres.

Re-evaluation of the nature of craft has also tended to view its marginalization in favour of art and design as a bonus. As a result, curatorial techniques have moved away from a previous tendency to categorize craft within disciplines of a single medium. This departs from the observations of Glenn Adamson, who in *Thinking through Craft* argues: 'the limits embodied by craft are not only psychologically comforting, but also conceptually useful' (Adamson 2007: 5). Adamson goes on to recognize the material and technical specificity of craft that is imposed by techniques, tools and the properties and characteristics of particular materials. These elements result in a form of 'friction' that informs craft dialogue and maintains craft as a 'form, category, and identity open for further investigation' (Adamson 2007: 5). This understanding of craft tradition offers a basis from which critical and conceptual understanding can be developed, rather than limiting the grounds in which craft operates. The exploration of this notion of friction in terms of 'new museology' curatorial methods was seen in Fred Wilson's 1993 installation *Mining the Museum* for The Contemporary and Maryland Historical Society. The artist combined structuralist methods of display with irony to emphasize a political and social agenda. The intention was to critique the institutional context of the museum using an unexpected narrative, by exhibiting objects from its permanent collection alongside objects of emotional significance. The exhibit *Metalwork 1793–1880* set ornamental silver vessels beside iron slave shackles. The difference between the material function and the construction techniques used to make these objects alludes to the indifference of Baltimore's high society to

the slavery on which its position was built. In this way, curatorial practice and exhibition design were actively used to establish an initiative in the display of the craft and art objects. Adamson's response to the difficulties faced by the craft curator was to 'treat craft as a subject, not as a category' (Adamson 2006: 110). This indicates the need for dialogue and debate surrounding the approach to craft display, rather than keeping to the conventional modes of display that categorised craft.

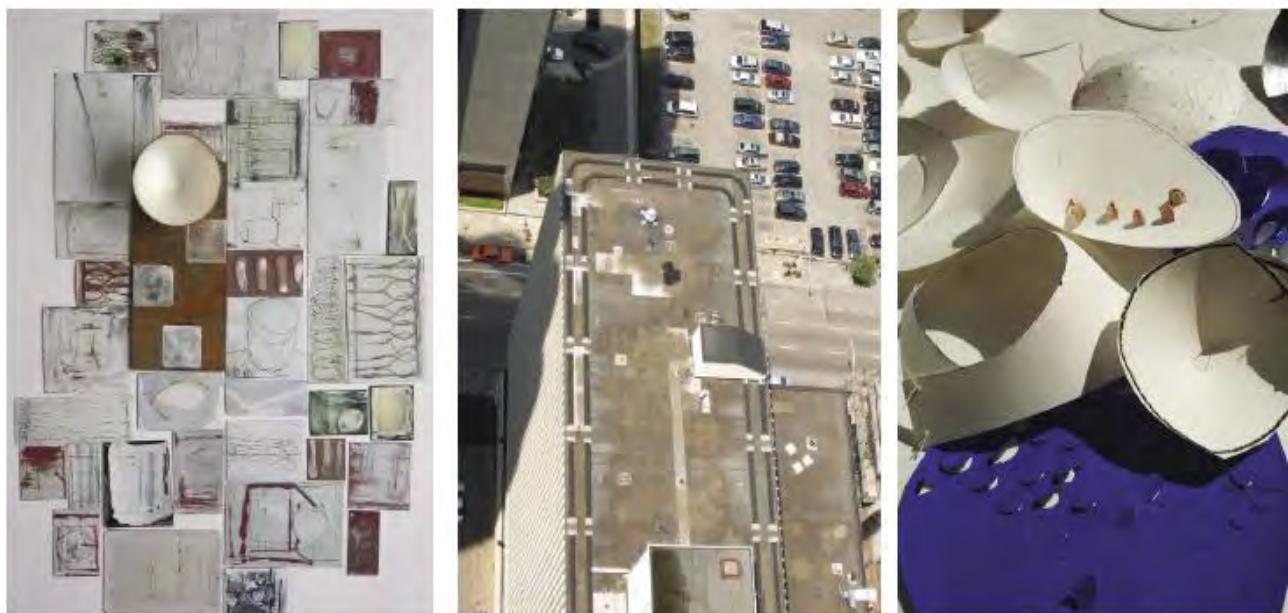


Figure 11. *Process Works* (2007)

Contemporary developments in the presentation of craft can be seen in the exploration of narrative, which involves the presentation of craft objects as a process. The varying approaches of a number of makers to practical enquiry and development can be seen in exhibitions such as *Process Works* (2007) at the University of Hertfordshire Galleries. Materials selected for this exhibition demonstrated both design development and the ways in which different makers approach their work. Helen Carnac and Lin Cheung (Figure 11, above, and 12, below), present two very different ways of thinking. In the representational image of a row of books, Cheung refers to her ability to visualize rather than record ideas. The spine of each book features a well-known title, altered slightly to contain a reference to jewellery. This suggests that design ideas can be

found everywhere and that jewellery principles have the ability to occupy a jeweller's every thought. Carnac's abundance of maquettes and illustrations, however, reveals a more systematic approach to design. The communication of thoughts and feelings experienced by the maker during the process of developing their work is documented in the exhibition catalogue (Harper 2007), which includes interviews, conversations and references to a number of their designs rather than the final object. The text that accompanies the exhibition argues that the development of a concept is a valuable part of a jewellery object; in communicating their disparate developmental methods each designer offers the viewer an enriched view of how jewellery is created.



Figure 12. *Jewellery Library* (2007)

Ruth Rushby refers to the completed work as a momentary pause in an artistic process, thus tacitly alluding to 'work-in-progress' exhibitions:

The completed body of work can be seen as a temporary conclusion giving an opportunity to pause for reflection. This may be perceived as a time to take stock, to question, to sift and generate ideas, to move forward in the cyclical process of the creative life and work of the artist (Rushby 2007: 7).

This structure is used by educational establishments as part of an institutional assessment practice that encourages students and teachers to measure progress towards a goal. This evaluation procedure gives students the opportunity to revise their work, reflect on current developments and receive feedback. It also allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and capability and becomes a showcase for their developing work. This approach is seen at the Royal College of Art's annual *Work in Progress* exhibition. The curatorial approach of *Process Works* similarly builds on the didactic communication of the 'how-to' craft manual, illustrating the design and construction process as a personal pursuit, individually styled to suit each maker. The viewer is also given insight into the contextual reasoning behind each design and invited to observe what is normally a private process experienced only by the makers.

The Crafts Council initiative *CraftCube* (Figure 13, below), continues the curatorial investigation of process in a project that 'presents new and exciting ways of displaying, interpreting and accessing contemporary craft with a focus on new technology' (*CraftCubes* 2010). The *CraftCube* is a free-standing, transportable unit that provides, according to the Crafts Council website: 'a complete, experiential display environment containing objects and dynamic interpretation' that can be exhibited at various locations. The three-metre-square cubes, which are divided into two types, are used to present objects from the Crafts Council's permanent collection and also to engage the viewer with practice-based research projects from across the UK. The visual portrayal of the workshop environment and the digital narration in each cube reveals the skills and processes involved in an object's construction. The immersive environment is created to present and provide accessibility to a number of contemporary craft practitioners, thus promoting craft to a broader audience and exploring craft's relationship with digital technologies. Audio-visual methods are used to represent the environment of the maker's studio and their process of working alongside made objects such as Angela Jarman's *Nap*, a sculptural glass object inspired by the stigma of a flower. Jarman's interest in biology and

nature combined with casting techniques is shown via a combination of a large-scale projection and tabletop mounted screens that feature a documentary of the making process. Merete Rasmussen's *Twisted Grey Loop* is displayed with a video that documents her working process, revealing how such fragile, yet architectural qualities are achieved within the sculptural ceramic form. Both *CraftCube: Collection* and *CraftCube: Research* portray an inclusive method of communication, demonstrating aspects of an object that may be ambiguous or only implied in the final form. This challenges the importance of the physical object in contrast to the time-based narration that contextualizes an object through multimedia.



Figure 13. *CraftCube* (2010)

### 3.4 Case study: Victoria and Albert Museum

Periodic changes in craft display can be observed by exploring the strategies used by the V&A between 1973–2012. The V&A has held two major craft exhibitions in partnership with the Crafts Council in recent years: *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft* in 2007 and *Power of Making* in 2011. These show a return to an ethos that has not been at the forefront of museum policy since

1973, when it staged *The Craftsman's Art*, a survey of contemporary crafts. This exhibition was a response to the government's formation of the Crafts Advisory Committee (now the Crafts Council) in 1971. It drew together objects from a range of disciplines including bookbinding, ceramics, furniture and textiles, in order to raise awareness of the talents of the contributors and demonstrate developments in craft over the previous century. The accompanying catalogue explored the concept of the 'artist-craftsman'; 'the craftsman' and the 'industrial craftsman'. These concepts involved work influenced by artistic expression, the tradition and skill of workmanship and collaboration with industry. This ethos sprang from The Arts and Crafts Movement, which developed as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and a desire to reinstate respect for the materiality and aesthetic pleasure of handwork. This led to a generation of craft makers who claimed autonomy within the arts, informed by material and technical knowledge.

At the time, the V&A regarded the alliance between craft and design primarily as an industrial presence that informed craft makers such as furniture designer Gordon Russell. His disillusionment following the destruction of war led him to embrace the integrity of material common to Arts and Crafts, but to explore the potential of machine production. The influence of Russell's 'Utility' designs is reflected in the work of Wendy Ramshaw, a jeweller discussed in relation to the New Jewellery movement, who used batch production methods in the craftsmanship of a single piece of jewellery.

In line with its 2008–2012 objectives, the V&A has hosted a series of projects structured to present a survey of contemporary craft within its institutional setting. These exhibitions provide an insight into the attitudes and approaches being applied to craft and its display in Britain today. The V&A and the Crafts Council began working collaboratively in order to exhibit craft works of high quality. The move was inspired by a sense of disillusionment over the infrastructure available for craft with regard to available opportunities for exhibiting. It aimed to challenge perceptions associated with craft and most importantly, to bring contemporary craft to a wider audience. Craft curator James Beaton, noting that the closure of the Crafts Council's own gallery was an underlying premise to *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft*, described the period as 'sink or swim' in terms of the exhibition of craft (Beaton 2008).

As part of the desire to promote nationwide interest in the crafts, several exhibitions were held before *The Craftsman's Art*. These included a series of two-person exhibitions, comprising the textile work of Peter Collingwood, the pots of Hans Coper (1969), the jewellery of Gerda Flöckinger and glass by Sam Herman (1971). In the catalogue that accompanies the Coper-Collingwood exhibition, Pope-Hennessy acknowledged the need to provide a platform for crafts within the art gallery:

It has long been clear that artist-craftsmen in Britain are suffering both from the indifference of commercial galleries to their relatively low-priced wares and from the absence of exhibition facilities in the larger museums. The series of exhibitions, of which this is the first, is intended to offer to outstanding craftsman the same opportunity for exhibiting their work that is enjoyed by successful painters or sculptors (Pope-Hennessy 1969).

Since the days of Pope-Hennessy the issue of how to present and contextualize craft objects in terms of the museum 'dilemma' has remained problematic for the V&A. The handling of this issue is influenced not only by the sense of confusion and the preconceived ideas associated with craft's definition, but by financial implications and the closure of gallery spaces.

Alongside the introduction to *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft*, Tanya Harrod reviews the steps taken by the V&A since *The Craftsman's Art* in 1973. She observes: 'the chief point of comparison between the two exhibitions is ambitiousness – of scale, of the design of the exhibition space and the content of imaginative accompanying catalogues' (Harrod 2007: 209). *The Craftsman's Art* attempted to show a huge and eclectic selection of objects, from the wood-carving of David Pye, to the industrially-produced jewellery of Wendy Ramshaw, along with rural crafts including shepherds' crooks, baskets and fishing rods.

Harrod says:

It was big and ambitious, but to all but the informed *The Craftsman's Art* must have seemed an eclectic muddle, taking in biomorphism, caprice and whimsy as well as simplicity and mathematical rigour (Harrod 2007: 209).

Her remarks indicate that in 1973 the definition of craft and its associated objects had yet to find a clear narrative within the fine art context. This dilemma continues with *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft*, which aimed to document

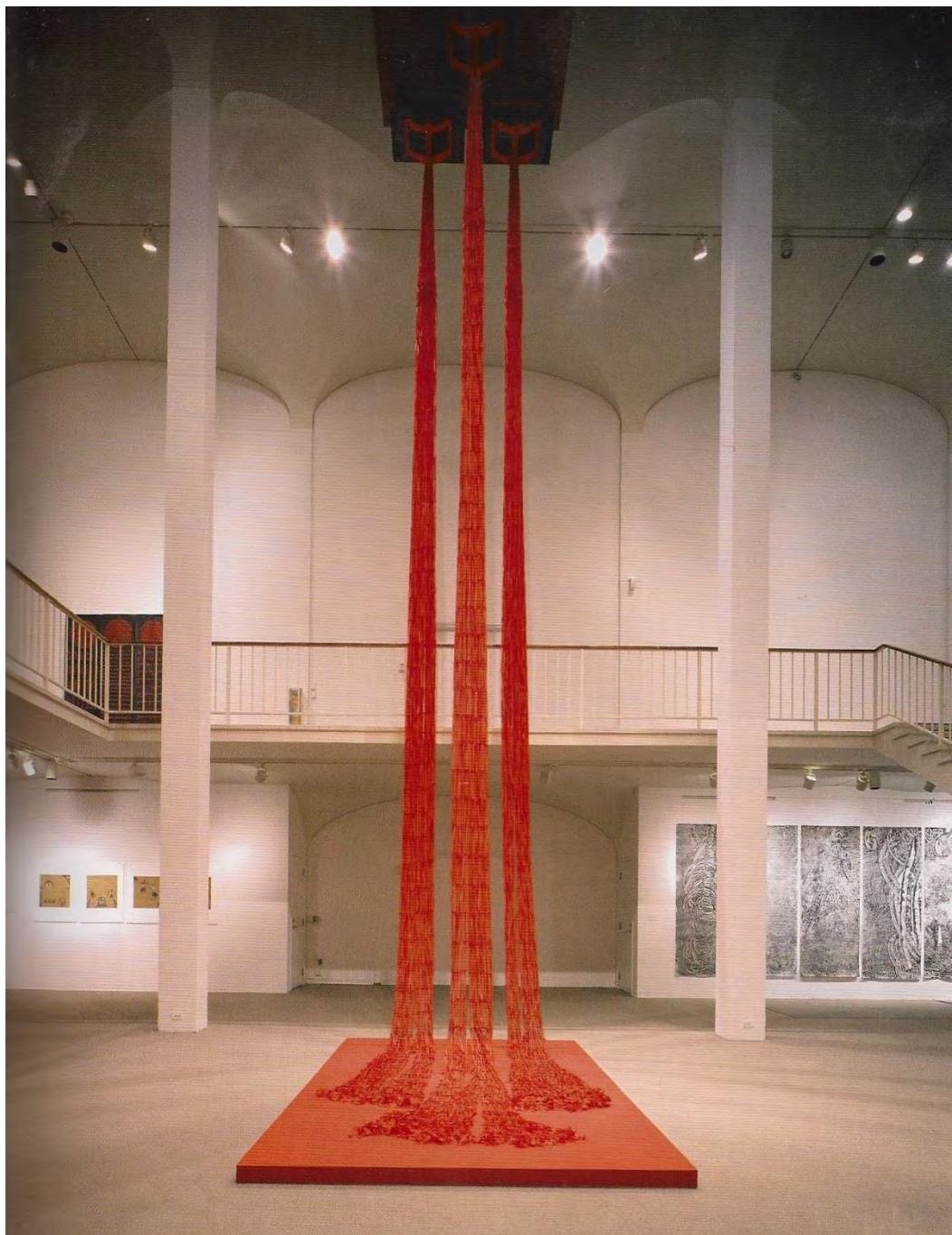


Figure 14. *The Book of Humanity: The Empty Book* (2005)

the process of making which transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. It did not set out to offer a contemporary survey of craft disciplines and objects, as this is an objective already addressed in the V&A's discipline-specific galleries. Instead, curator Laurie Britton Newell approached craft as something that can be used by artists in their work, rather than treating it as a category of objects or

processes. The exhibition covered a range of traditional and new technologies including crochet, carving, glass-blowing, animation and laser-cutting. The work of eight contemporary artists demonstrated the common thread of transforming the ordinary to the spectacular in works such as Lu Shengzhong's hand-cut installation *Little Red Figure* (2002). Shengzhong's work consists of a vast collection of figures, individually cut from red tissue paper, that consume the artist's allocated exhibition space (Figure 14, above). The collective outcome represents cultural meaning in which colour, material and process play an important role. In China, red symbolizes luck, and the traditional technique of paper cutting embodies vitality through repetition and variation, reflecting constant renewal as each outcome is different. The meditative repetition and precision of skill places value on the hand-wrought process, which allows the artist to incorporate both negative and positive forms from each sheet of paper, representing a conceptual whole.



Figure 15.  
*The Oyster's Our World*  
(2004)

By contrast, Susan Collis' allocated space contains a decorator's table, dust-sheet and stepladder (Figure 15, above), which at first glance seem to have been overlooked in the setup of the exhibition. On closer inspection the splattered paint and work-related staining is revealed to be inlays of precious material including opals, diamonds and gold; intricately-stitched patterns decorate these mundane objects. The detailed surface is inlaid with meaning, documenting the life-cycle of the objects and those who interact with them. The work, *Made Good* (detail) (2007), depicts value within the everyday and what Newell calls 'humble', as principles of craft worth celebrating.

This exhibition defines developments in curatorial approach since the 1970s. It references craft's influence within the field of fine art rather than portraying the work of the craft maker, a principle that seems to reinforce the perception of craft as subsidiary to art and design. Emmanuel Cooper's review in *Crafts* magazine (2008) noted the dearth of ceramic work and questioned the extent to which artists were involved in the fabrication of their objects, thus emphasizing the dichotomy between conventional categorization of material and process-led disciplines and the traditional portrayal of the handmade in relation to craft.

Newell's curatorial approach opens craft practice to various subjects such as anatomy, neuroscience and mimesis, a premise Tanya Harrod summarized as: 'a show about craftedness rather than craft. All the work selected is characterized by a hyper-scrupulous attention to detail that manages to be both spectacular and unsettling, both ordinary and rare' (Harrod 2007: 24). This approach plays on Glenn Adamson's discussions on 'friction', whether or not this was purposefully woven within the exhibition narrative. Newell's depiction of makers provokes and portrays craft's insecurities and challenges in its relationship with the art world, engaging the viewer on the discursive margin between the two. It depicts craft that is built on a foundation of handmaking and skill, informed by the artist's social statement that is reflective of current contemporary craft dialogue. For example, Yoshihiro Suda's skillfully-carved wooden flowers and weeds are driven by realism and the artist's desire to perfect his craft and create a copy of plants commonly found in the city. The pieces are scattered in surprising or forgotten corners of the institutional setting, enabling Suda to signify beauty within the overlooked. The desire for realism is thus supported through methods of display. The inaccessibility of the objects

prevents close inspection, so the ‘makers mark’ is replaced by the illusion that the objects are real. Though skill and technique, aspects conventionally celebrated within craft, are fundamental to the creation of his pieces, Suda’s work is site-responsive, a premise which allows it to operate in a space between that of art and craft.

The frictional premise of this exhibition operates round dichotomies, highlighted by Harrod’s choice of the phrases ‘spectacular/unsettlingly’ and ‘ordinary/rare’. This juxtaposition is extended to the exhibition’s layout, which involves its division into eight spaces separated by partitions with white walls and no architectural decoration. This display aesthetic offers a neutral setting, enabling the viewer to focus attention through the act of contemplation, free from distractions. This is in contrast to the collective portrayal seen in *The Craftsman’s Art*, and the everyday associations of the craft object. The theme is continued in use of the word ‘spectacular’ in the exhibition title: it is laden with theoretical connotations in terms of the arts. Emma Barker, a senior lecturer in art history, says: ‘the spectacle finds its typical expression in the image that serves to promote consumption’ (Barker 1999: 18). This concept is embedded within Marxist cultural criticism surrounding increasing commodification during the 20th century, a contradiction of the theoretical heart of the Arts and Crafts movement that places value on the handmade.

Martina Margetts also voices concern for what Newell deems as ‘ordinary’. As noted, Shengzhong uses the tradition of paper cutting, a process illustrative of cultural heritage and personal struggle that is described in the catalogue as a ‘folk art tradition that is mainly associated with illiterate peasant women’ and the artist’s own ‘lonely struggle along a desolate path’ (Newell 2007: 91). The work is an emotionally charged stream of consciousness through the ritualized production of paper cut-outs, embedded in the lives and traditions of China. It demonstrates the conflict between preconceptions of, and the continually debated position between, craft and art. The artist’s portrayal of the spectacular uses the traditions of craftsmanship as an investigative tool that is located by genre. As with Shengzhong’s larger scale installation, cultural ritualism and the variations of a life cycle are symbolized in the repetitive and meditative process of paper cutting. Similarly, exhibitor Naomi Filmer explores the value placed on decorative ornamentation and its relationship with the body by encapsulating

the negative areas of the wearer through the technique of glass blowing to produce an outcome that is defined as jewellery. Whether addressed in the context of craft, art or a collaboration of the two, *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft* illustrates a curatorial approach that opens both 'ordinary' and the 'spectacular' for further discussion.

Martina Margetts takes her lead from Richard Sennett, who in 2008 published *The Craftsman*, and predecessors including John Ruskin, William Morris and Peter Dormer who have considered the cultural and social value of the craft object, remarking: 'that making things defines our culture and humanity and that tacit knowledge and manual skill underpin them' (Margetts 2008: 301). This comment reinforces the notion that the craft process of making, reducible to material content and learnt technical processes, is embedded within humanistic concerns. This sensibility encapsulates and extends the functionality of form in relation to material culture. The sculptural scale and concept-driven installations of *Out of the Ordinary...* can also be seen in the work of those happy to define themselves as contemporary craft practitioners such as ceramicist Clare Twomey and jeweller Caroline Broadhead. These makers are from a generation of practitioners who look towards representative methods that evoke an emotive response from an audience, an approach that refers to the relationship between the artefact and the social relationships that underline their craft. Such social statements are reflective of interactive and performance art seen in the 1990s, an observation that drives discussions on the display of craft in Chapters 5 and 6. For example, Broadhead's suspended clothing embodies a social narrative and is projected within the fabric form of her work. *Stress* (1993) is constructed to suggest the absent body while life is reflected in the manipulation of the fabric. The body's outline is contorted by stretching the fabric of a dress over wooden rods that are placed at erratic angles. This alteration of the body's silhouette reflects the inner turmoil of distress and anxiety. The objects are designed, not to be worn, but to be presented as sculptural forms; Broadhead herself is defined as a jeweller. Both illustrate how craft makers use principles of art practice such as theatrical spectatorship and emotive symbolism in order to explore their discipline, engaging with traditional function and distinctions surrounding the everyday and ornamentation through critical dialogue and artistic expression.

The most recent presentation of contemporary crafts at the V&A was *Power of Making* (2011). Curated by Daniel Charny, the exhibition is described in the promotional text that accompanies it as ‘a cabinet of curiosities’ (*Power of Making*, 2011). The collection of objects draws together the diverse practices and processes that currently apply to contemporary craft, demonstrating the skilled craftsmanship seen in *The Craftsman’s Art*. The exhibition is extended to include progressions in technology and rapid prototyping and combines the display of craft objects alongside craft production, processes and technical equipment (Figure 16, below). The collection is tightly displayed, using every inch of the gallery room. Not all objects are presented in a conventional display case, a method that is reserved for the more fragile objects such as Jacquy Pfeiffer’s sugar sculptures. The barriers are then perforated using



Figure 16. *Power of Making* (2011)

demonstrative films, audio soundtracks, moving objects and descriptive panels. A panel reading: ‘Types of Making’ is followed by descriptions such as ‘Learning a Skill’; ‘In the Zone’; ‘Making New Knowledge’ and ‘Thinking by Making’. Each

short introductory text provides the exhibition with a dialogue, underpinned by craft discourse as an act of engaging the public with the process of making that is accessible and identifiable. Statements such as: 'When you are absorbed in making, things can happen that you didn't plan. The experience is intuitive, like playing sport, and it can be meditative, like making music,' (2011) are provided under the heading 'In the Zone'.

This experience of making reflects Dormer's *The Art of the Maker* (1997). In this, Dormer explores the context of making through two types of knowledge: theoretical knowledge, which is formulated through conceptual understanding and descriptive language, and tacit knowledge, or understanding developed through experience and 'know-how'. The term 'tacit' describes the experiential, felt experience of the craft process in terms of learning. Dormer says: 'tacit knowledge is practical know-how, and it exists in people. Consequently tacit knowledge is learned and absorbed by individuals through practice and from other people; it cannot usually be learnt from books' (Dormer 1997: 147). This notion suggests that craft is a process of self-discovery and experience, of feeling one's way through the materiality of a discipline and learning through trial and error. This is 'an activity of self-exploration in the sense that one learns about oneself through searching for excellence in work' (*ibid.*, 219).

Margetts addresses this concept in the exhibition catalogue in her essay 'Actions not Words'. Margetts describes making as a creative process as 'a revelation of the human impulse to explore and express forms of knowledge and a range of emotions', that ultimately provides 'an individual sense of freedom and control' (Margetts 2011: 39). *Power of Making* addresses craft, as did previous V&A exhibitions, through the contextual evolution of craft's contemporaries. In terms of the exploratory stance of craft in the last decade, *The Power of Making* covers a vast field of medical innovation, entertainment, social networking or artistic endeavour as well as considering craft's role within the art gallery context. What differs is that Charny approaches craft in terms of making, associating the ability to make with power. In particular, he questions what making provides us with as a society and as an individual. The collection of objects is formulated to illuminate human achievement in terms of skill development and methods of making, illustrating how these have progressed by referencing digital capabilities, scientific evolution and personal achievement.

It concludes with what Charny described as ‘ingenious experiments’ as a reflection on contemporary attitudes to making (Charny 2011: 8). This is defined in terms of Bruce Sterling’s discussions on the future of making and the progression towards a ‘mashup’ culture (Sterling 2011: 68). This development has seen technology and hand processes combine, resulting in a generation of hackers and hobbyists who are responsive to a scene of global social networking.

Where *Power of Making* differs from the collective portrayal seen in *The Craftsman’s Art* and others such as what Wiggers refers to as ‘encyclopedic exhibitions’, is in its approach towards inclusivity. The presentation of finely tuned craftsmanship such as of gun and saddle making, alongside the technological advances and possibilities of craft demonstrated by 3D printing, engages the audience through recognizable forms, informative film and dialogue. As part of the exhibition the Crafts Council requested the submission of an original short film between 10–120 seconds long, focusing on any aspect of the making process. This request signified an erosion of the aura of mystery surrounding making, and was reflective of the ‘work-in-progress’ exhibitions that offer audience insight into the making process. The films were incorporated as a celebration of craftsmanship and skill by allowing non-practitioners an insight into the maker’s world. The breaking down of such barriers reflects an era in which consumers can design their own products through digital software. The jewellery company Nervous System (2007) uses computer simulation to generate designs and digital fabrication, providing the public with a simple tool to design their own jewellery. This process has been enabled by the internet and rapid prototyping methods such as laser cutting and 3D printers, as discussed by Ele Carpenter in her 2011 essay ‘Social Making’ which notes the development of alternative communities of practice within the world of craft. The approach to engagement is supported by a split-screen film that focuses the intent of the exhibition by depicting the work and processes of ten different makers. The interjection of images depicts bodily movements that locate the making process within everyday actions, such as the filing of a metal object and the filing of fingernails. In this way, it connects a skilled process with a grooming process that is recognized universally.

The use of digital media goes some way towards the exploration of the making culture surrounding craft within the gallery space. As noted by creative director and experience designer Nelly Ben Hayoun: ‘the challenge in presenting the “making culture” resides in the understanding of the context in which the maker makes: its community, its peers, its communication tools’ (Hayoun 2011). Hayoun’s observations imply that there is room for engagement in the social framework in which craft is embedded, and in which the maker operates. This accords with the emancipation of the public in terms of producing their own objects that has been made possible through the development of rapid prototyping. It can also be seen in the social role of the internet in relation to craft communities and communication, which runs alongside the thematic exploration of function addressed in fine art practices. An investigative stance that looks towards the conceptual interactions of the collaborative and open-ended practices of art established in the 1990s is thus demonstrated. This discourse is embedded in the relationships established between neighbouring practitioners, and the relationships between maker and audience and viewer and the object. Hayoun says: ‘I expected to see the making of the future revolution, the power and the people behind it!’ (*ibid.*). By this statement, she implies that within the current rejuvenation of craft and the approach to its display, it is the makers themselves who are deciding how their objects are to be seen, approached and discussed in the gallery environment.

## **Chapter 4: Practical investigation 1**

### **4.1 Made to be worn? The contemporary display of jewellery and the body**

This chapter documents my own practical response to contemporary jewellery and craft display, offering a point of reflection within this study. As identified, the body is of central importance in discussions of display within the crafts. The first practical investigation explores theoretical discussions regarding the body, considering developments in human culture, society and physical evolution that affect the sense of self and community in the area of jewellery. The practical implications of the body are also identified in the works of contemporary jewelers, and I explore how such notions of the body may inform my own practice as a jeweller when addressing the theme of display.

Theoretical discussions on the body reveal a commonality between each of us, observing that every individual body shares a natural, physiological unity.

Marcel Mauss' observation: 'The body is the first and most natural instrument of man' (Mauss 1979: 104), illustrates the common bodily functions of everyday life; the body's technical capabilities are the fundamental tool available to the human race. The individual body, however, reveals an awareness of what distinguishes one person from another 'understood in the phenomenological sense of the lived experience of the body-self' (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 7). This notion of the embodied self introduces to the natural body the idea of individualism, to which physical and social variations can be applied.

Social theorists recognize that the human condition is constructed from the material and cultural conditions in which people are located. As a consequence, variations in how we conduct our bodies, from how we eat to how we walk, are subject to environmental influences. Mauss's 'body techniques' theory suggests that common activities such as walking require a natural, biological grounding, but that these activities are also socially learnt and altered culturally across societies (Mauss, 1979). Jewellery, as discussed in Chapter 2, works as a social signifier to represent the wearer's individual tastes and desires as well as projecting the jeweller's creative expressions on to the world. Each is shaped by, and representative of, cultural factors that illustrate the relationship of jewellery to the social body. This construct of the body has been described as 'a

natural symbol for thinking about relationships among nature, society, and culture' (Schepers-Hughes and Lock 1987: 6), thus indicating that the reasons why and how people adorn themselves are embedded in both the individual and social framework of human personality.

The multiple theoretical discourses that build on Mauss's 'body techniques' are reflected in the performativity of body art, which recognizes that 'the body is a process, not a fixed object' (Jay 2002: 65). The body's close relationship with jewellery implies a correlation between the worn object and bodily processes. The process of dressing, a specific activity engaged in by the body, can thus be seen as something that extends beyond the simple notion of covering the body with clothing (Entwistle and Wilson 2001). The adorned body should not be seen only as an object or site of display; memories, body rituals, tastes and preferences draw body discourse towards the mind and behaviour. The sociological perspective on 'dress' may be seen as an embodied activity that is informed by the environment. This relates closely to analysis of the meaning of jewellery, because the theatricalization of the body is revealed both in our choice of decoration and our bodily reactions to the objects that decorate us. The relationship of the body and the crafted object is subject to cultural and material influences. Objects, Sandra Flood observes: 'come into our lives, changing our habits, provoking emotions, trailing social messages' (Flood 2002). Objects can influence human life, as bodily responses accommodate their function and physicality. Attachment to and sentimentality towards the material content and symbolic meaning of an object may develop, as when the choice of whether to use a mug or a teacup and saucer is influenced by occasion, environment or social protocol. The performance of the body can be integral to ritualized forms of tea drinking, from the tea ceremonies of China and Japan to the Victorian era's tea culture. All depend on the use of the correct objects in order to carry out ceremonial or socially-driven behaviour. The vessel's form may also direct the body's behaviour, as when the delicate structure of a cup and saucer demands that the drinker should adopt a certain posture.

In terms of domestic art in pottery, Dormer claims that these 'familiar forms' can be described as an anthropological constant (Dormer 1986: 24). Following this principle, objects that annex the notion of function in favour of 'self expression'

and ‘delight’, are seen in the creative expressions of studio craft (*ibid.*). Despite these developments, contemporary pottery retains an element of familiarity. Teapots still have a spout and a handle, and are primarily displayed in terms of both function and appearance. Such objects retain their historic familiarity with the body, and also evoke bodily movement reflective of Boden’s notion of ‘enactive’ (non-indicative) psychological mechanisms’ (Boden 2000: 297).

In terms of regulating the natural and social body, Foucault defines a third bodily influence: the body politic (Foucault 1979, 1980). The social struggles faced by the individual and social body and the unequal division of power informs a new level of analysis, referred to as ‘the regulation, surveillance, and control of bodies (individual and collective) in reproduction and sexuality, in work and in leisure, in sickness and other forms of deviance and human difference’ (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987: 7). This form of regulation is enforced in order to stabilize the political body and to provide social well-being by asserting control over the social and individual body. The shift from natural to social and political body consists of ‘physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions’ (Mauss 1979: 85) that immerse such actions in cultural history. These individual mechanisms combine with habitual processing to complete Mauss’s notion of the ‘total man’ (Mauss 1979: 101). Such theoretical debate illustrates the complexities of the body and reveals it as a vehicle for expression that underpins the body’s involvement in the arts.

Artist François Pluchart describes the reflective nature of the body and its ability to mirror the life experiences that mould an individual:

What it is: the body is the fundamental ground. Pleasure, suffering, illness and death inscribe themselves on it and shape the socialized individual in the course of its biological evolution (Pluchart 2006: 218).

The portrayal of both individual and social constructs in terms of the body locates body art in the everyday, thus bridging the gap between life and art. For the viewer, the body is a recognizable form with identifiable expressive and sensory capabilities; further, our individuality provides ‘open-endedness of interpretation’ (Jones and Stevenson 1999: 1). The body is involved in the creative world not only as a form of expression but as a key element in how the artwork is perceived: in performance art, the artist’s body becomes a tool of

communication that uses the subjectivity and physicality of the performer to reach their audience. The body can therefore be an emotive tool of expression, whether such experiences have left a trace on the skin's surface, made emotional marks or altered the body's behaviour.

In jewellery, the object is often materially or spatially separate from the body, and is not necessarily worn by the maker. The jeweller may draw on the viewer and/or wearer to play an integral role in the communication. Our opinions, tastes and desires are shaped by experience of the world in which we live, thus influencing the ways in which we interpret creative works. In *The Artist's Body* (2006), Tracey Warr and Amelia Jones document the body's multiple capabilities with regard to art and performance by exploring the processes and gestures that shape the expressive body, and discussing how these can be seen in the technical and ritualistic actions of creating artistic work. In this light, the body's physical and mental complexities and the various applications of the artist's body can be used to support the notion that jewellery's association with the body is an extension of the making, wearing and viewing process. Among questions raised is the subject of how such involvement can be expressed in a gallery context.

Concepts associated with the living body alter constantly, which can render the surrounding theoretical discourse problematic. The body's physicality and mentality has no universal template, so it has become common to refer to the plurality of the body in respect of its differential qualities (Fraser and Greco 2005). Another significant area is the distinction between body and mind, which has its origins in Cartesian dualism. This derives from philosopher René Descartes' theoretical separation between consciousness and reason (the mind) and emotion and material (the body). Descartes prioritizes mind over body, a notion that further reinforces the idea of the differentiating nature of the body among individuals. In order to understand social activity, or the body's 'everyday routines, conditions and requirements' (Turner 1992: 3) the lived body – an assimilation of both body and mind – is necessary. The challenges in terms of display of incorporating the 'lived' body within the museum or gallery environment are compounded by considerations of space, conservation and security.

Paul Sweetman discusses the disembodiment of the display case in a fashion context, suggesting that the body's 'corporeality comes into play only implicitly, as an inert or unfeeling frame to be decorated and adorned' (Sweetman 2001: 59). Such detachment is manifested in the use as a display method of the mannequin, an inconsequential mount on which clothes are presented so the influence of the body is absent. The movement of everyday living is integral to clothing and registers on its very fabric, yet this mode of display is devoid of such life. Elizabeth Wilson captures the importance of the body within fashion and the ineffectuality of the mannequin in the costume museum:

We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening, the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life (Wilson 1985: 1).

Set apart from the complete body, the displayed dress provides only a suggestion of the garment that focuses on its construction and history. Such a representation, lacking factors such as way the fabric moves or sounds as a reaction to the active body, can only be seen as incomplete.

Jewellery also has a strong link with the body, so similar claims can be made of current methods of jewellery display. As discussed, conventional display methods such as cabinets, frames, mounts, plinths and shelving place importance on the static rather than the lived object. Objects of an aesthetic nature may benefit from such time-honoured forms of display: McAlpine and Giangrande note the plinth's ability to draw the viewer's attention to the proficiency of the work, which is presented in a manner that complements object's proportions and is devoid of distractions. Jewellery's association with the body and the use of the glass case in which to display it are as problematic as the shop window dummy in terms of clothing display. In the museum, historical motivations and the need for preservation influence the display of jewels previously marked by the body. In *Jewellery Moves: Ornament For The 21st Century*, Amanda Game notes the problems this presents:

Static and put out of reach behind glass in a case, jewellery loses much of its power. It is meant to hang from an ear, rest against

skin, encircle a wrist, move and turn, be run through the fingers  
(Game 1998: 7).

Game shows jewellery as an interactive form, made to be worn or caressed – a notion important to both historic and contemporary work. A piece of jewellery can become an experience, whether in material or metaphorical terms.

Exhibitions such as *Beyond the Body: Northwest Jewelers at Play* (2005) and *Touching Warms the Art* (2008), as noted in chapter 3, have responded to this notion by developing interactive environments that foreground wearability. These offer a phenomenological response to jewellery, bridging the gap between object and viewer.

With regard to the mind/body divide, the absent body is an influential area of discourse in association with jewellery display. The body is not merely an inert object on which jewellery is hung; it responds to social influence, personal experience and processes that are intrinsic to jewellery design and development. The preferences, desires and concerns of a specific culture can be articulated through jewellery and its function. As a site of human experience, the body is an inherent, palpable presence yet may also be signified by its absence. Noting what he sees as a general unconsciousness of our own bodily presence Drew Leder says: ‘one’s own body is rarely the thematic object of experience’, (Leder 1990: 1). He cites the process of reading, during which attention shifts to the imaginable concepts evoked by the text, so that the body becomes unthought-of and metaphorically absent.

As the body is primarily absent in traditional methods of museum or gallery display, body awareness depends on the viewer’s understanding of jewellery and ability to imagine the object when placed on the body. The absent body, however, plays a significant role in contemporary jewellery display. The replication of body parts and representation of the human form through material and construction methods provides reference to the body’s integral role in jewellery design. This process can be seen in Gijs Bakker’s *Photo Fragments* (1990–92) where coloured photographs of various parts of the body are used to represent the intended function of his jewellery designs. Gerd Rothmann’s *Von Ihm für Sie* (1990) is a disembodied wrist cast in gold, which both creates a wearable object and signifies the idea of detachment from our own bodies. The lack of bodily presence other than the wrist allows the viewer to replace it with

their own experience, directing thought to the viewer's own wrist. This area is fundamental to the actions of everyday life but is easily overlooked. It is doubtful whether anyone would even recognize their own wrist if it were to be cast and presented in a similar method to Rothmann's bracelet.

The notion of the absent body is also seen in the contemporary works of Naomi Filmer, specifically her 2008 *Lenticular* series, and Christoph Zellweger's body piece *IE4* (1997) as discussed in Linda Sandino's *Studio Jewellery: Mapping the Absent Body*. Zellweger's design aesthetic, as the title suggests, represents an inner portrayal of the body, simulating valves and arteries in polystyrene and nylon tubing. These works suggest an alternative way of presenting the body as 'an externalization of the inner body, of that abjection which has formerly been hidden in applied arts; the secret body which has finally emerged' (Sandino 2002: 107). The recent progression from outer to inner body reflects scientific developments in prosthetics and bioengineering over the last 20 years, and is symbolized in the replication or abstract reference of the biological body. The resulting wearable objects are displayed in a traditional way, whether by photography or in a display case, yet somehow signify the static object's ability to refer to the absent body.

The role of the body in craft is also one of construction and design. The body is a tool that facilitates the shaping and transformation of raw material. The making process is a felt experience involving visual and tactile processes that allow the maker to become 'lost' in his or her own creativity. Such experience is not always transferred to the viewer by the finished object, but may be alluded to by traces left on its surface. Andrew Lord's ceramics have a rough, imperfect finish that captures the relationship between maker and craft. The object's surface becomes a form of interaction; a surface of the handmade. Maker and writer Julian Stair describes how the tactile characteristics of the handmade can evoke an unconscious affinity between the craft object and the body, and thus between viewer and maker:

Craft objects communicate by triggering associations or a sense of recognition in which the viewer or user is drawn into a shared experience with the maker through certain tactile qualities, or a particular detailed care in making or a sense of time invested (Stair, 2000: 78).

Stair highlights the ability of an object to ‘arouse a felt recognition’ that connects the observer through the visual representation of the making experience.

Similarly, the unfinished edges and visible solder lines of silversmith Vladimir Bohm’s square vessels in *Famosa* (2005) encapsulate the making process: their imperfections visually represent the hand of the craftsman.

The observations of the absent body documented in this chapter have informed my own practical aim as a jeweller, identifying an area of contemporary jewellery that considers the role of display within the creative process. My practical response to this research follows the conventional modes of jewellery display that makes use of the presentational function of plinths or glass cases that prevent contact with the displayed artefact. The intention is to develop a practical approach that locates ideas from within craft such as the body, ownership and wearability that will inform the way jewellery is presented and experienced in the gallery space.

My practical approach began by observing jewellery on the body. People wearing jewellery were photographed in different locations, producing a collection of images that captured the moving body as snippets of information that provides momentary glimpses of worn jewellery as flashes of metal or plastic. As discussed, the notion of ‘dress’ is an everyday process that is informed by the individual, social and political body. The way jewellery is placed on and off the body, for example, is responsive to an object’s form and material content, often becoming ritualized in its repetition. This form of behavioural response is continued throughout the day, creating a dialogue between body and object. The use of photography emphasized the interaction between the body and the worn object, capturing within a still image gestures or movements that go unnoticed from day to day.

As a response to this exercise, I documented bodily behaviour and jewellery in an everyday environment in two films (see DVD, *Earring in Motion* and *Pendant in motion*). One film focuses on an ear and the earring that adorns it, while the other focuses on a necklace (Figures 17 and 18, below). Filming took place only when the participant felt comfortable in front of the camera, allowing the natural movements established between body and object to be recorded. By reducing the speed of the film and projecting the moving image to a large scale on a

gallery wall, the gestures or movements created by the body become exaggerated. The process creates a visual portrayal by magnifying the interactive quality of an object that might have been overlooked in real time. The moving image commands attention so that viewers are directed to notice the blurred outlines of the slow-moving jewellery and heightens the viewer's awareness of their own jewellery.

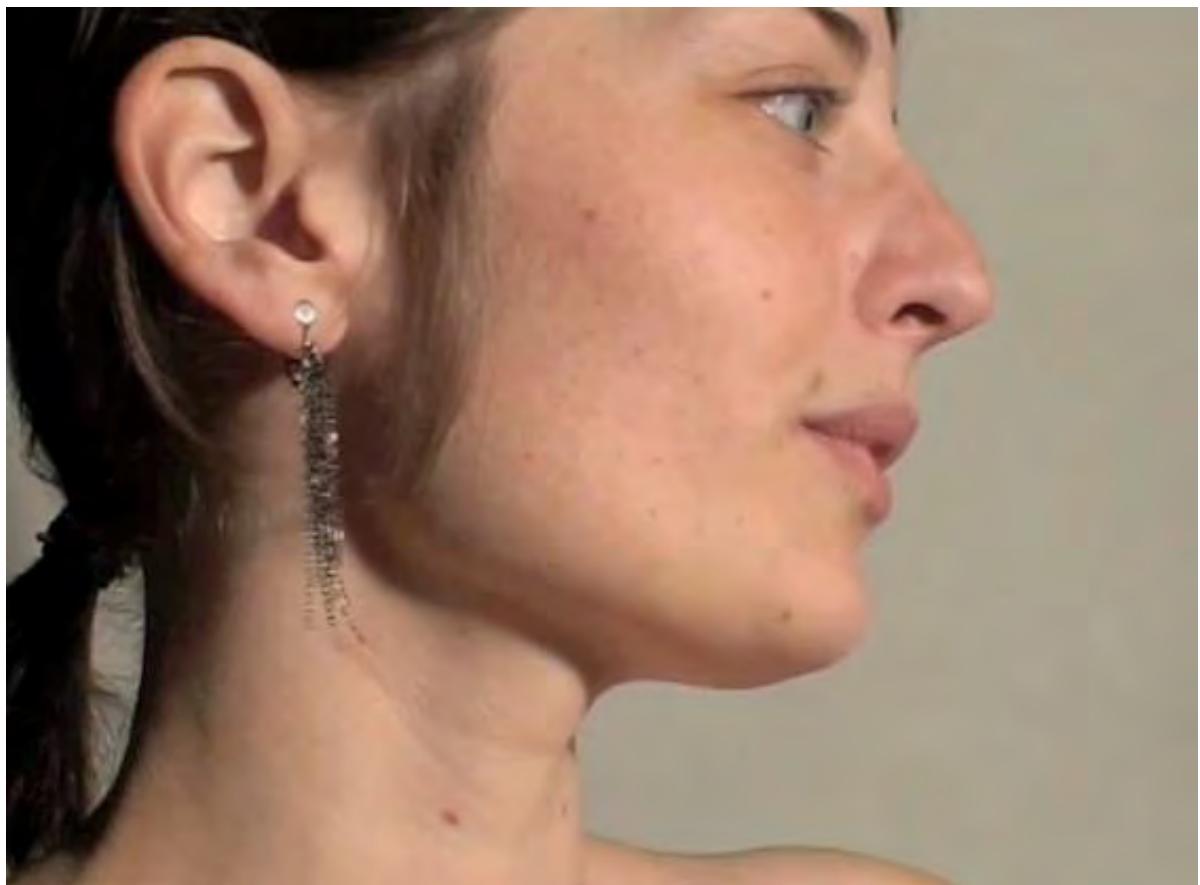


Figure 17. *Earring in Motion* (2010)

The film's function is similar to that of the exhibition props promoted in Hall's guide to jewellery display, which was used for reference. Hall describes 'contemporary portraits' as a space-saving device that adds a historical context to the objects presented (Hall 1987: 174), but in this practical outcome the supporting material becomes the focus, thus raising questions about the relative

importance of context and physical object. In the films, the design of the jewellery does not impose and it is not defined by fashion due to the fact that they are seen only as shifts of shape, light and shadow. It thus serves as a template by which the viewer can consider their own jewellery's relationship with the body.

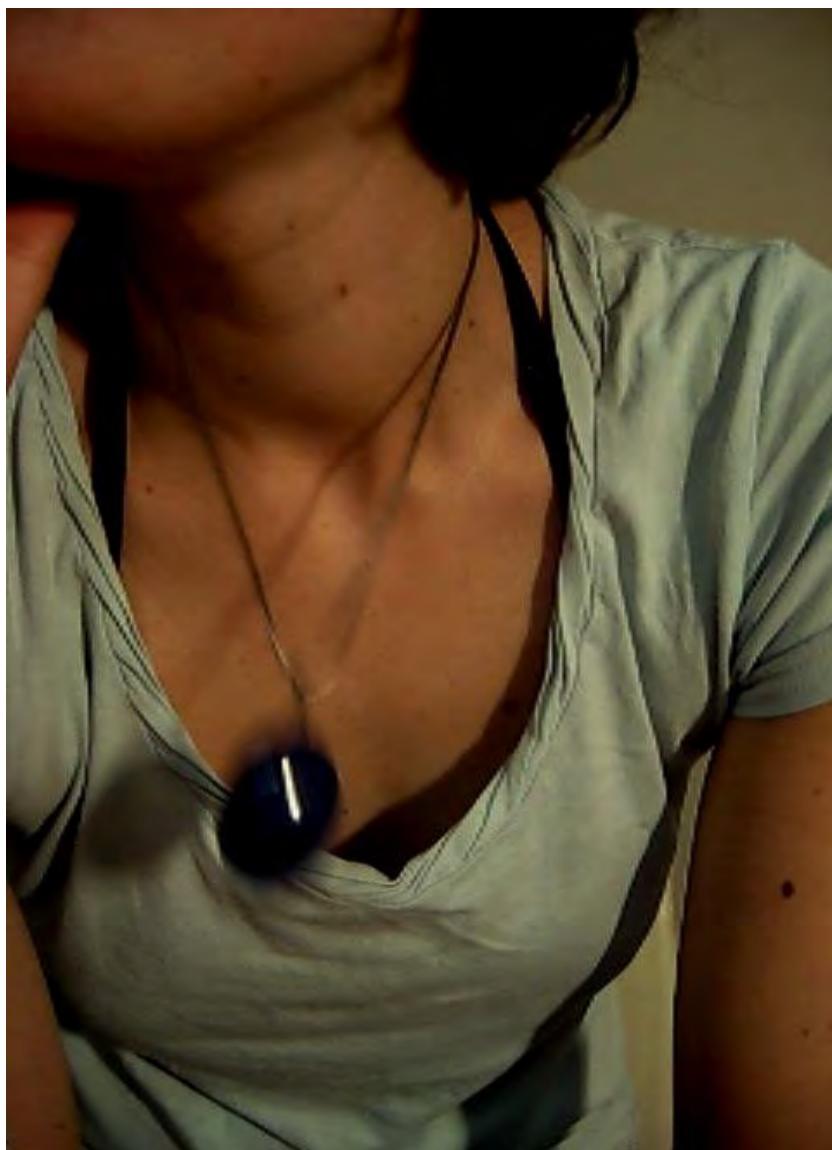


Figure 18. *Pendant in Motion* (2010)

The moving imagery continues to inform my practical work, and is used as a template on which an item of jewellery may be based. The resulting form is intended to capture the transitory relationship between the body and the worn object. Silhouettes of the moving object taken at intervals from frames of the film were transferred to pierced silver (Figures 19 and 20, below), thus retaining the visual information gathered in the observational film. The preciousness of the metal alludes to the traditions of jewellery's history to produce an object that can be displayed in a conventional glass case. The silver outcome, devoid of decorative detail, alludes to the piece's wearability rather than to its aesthetics and craftsmanship. This creative exploration illustrates the potential effect of the absent body on conventional display methods and confirms that display can influence jewellery design.



Figure 19. *Earring in Motion* (2010)



Figure 20. *Pendant in Motion* (2010)

Contemporary jewellers are investigating ways by which to provide a tangible display of the unmediated relationship between object and the body. These presentational methods are used to evoke a memory or sensory experience, leaving a lasting impression on their audience. Dinie Besems explores the processes of the social and individual body as a means by which to activate a jewellery object. *Tearbucket* (1995), a ring with an upturned dome, functions as a container for a single tear. The captured tear, recorded in a photograph, represents a bodily process and evokes human emotion. Similarly, Besems' *Chalk Chain* (1994) actually records body movement by leaving chalk marks on its wearer's clothing after it is removed. This practical exploration of bodily behaviour and the notion of 'dress' aims to capture the unconscious movements of the body through the wearing process. Each chalk trace signifies the ritualistic movements of the body. Thus, Besems uses jewellery as a vehicle for her ideas, exploring the relationship between jewellery and people in order to establish a lasting impression. Liesbeth den Besten describes these 'conceptual jewels' as 'jewels for the mind; once you have seen them you carry them with

you as an imprint on your memory' (Besten 2011: 109). In an interview with Besten, Besems said:

Actually I don't think jewellery is really interesting. I don't want to make a chain or something else. It is just that I have an idea, an image, something I want to explore. And then it turns out that you can reach people by adapting it to the body. So therefore I work on the skin, but also under the skin (Besten 2011: 109).

Jewellery's association with preciousness is documented in the memories and associations the wearer or owner of an object places on it. The work of Mah Rana focuses on providing the viewer with information about the wearer and wearability. Rana establishes a sense of 'being' by the portrayal of memories and personal attachments to jewellery and the objects we wear, detailing an emotive response within the project rather than focusing on the physical object. In *Meanings and Attachments*, photography is used to document ownership and sentimentality by listing the reasons behind the wearer's choice of adornment. Images of the wearer and their jewellery are accompanied by a written description that provides the work with a personal narrative. The work is not about a design made by the jeweller, but offers insight into the body's relationship with a personal possession. Both image and text form a descriptive methodology from which the independent viewer can learn, and to which they can relate. Rana's work has the ability to contextualize an object and offer informative layers within its presentation so that 'a memory-trace lingers like a scent upon our possessions long after they are lost and decontextualized' (Casely-Hayford 2002). This remark illustrates the emotive power of the jewellery object and shows how supportive documentation can provide context and meaning in terms of memories and experiences associated with an object. The wearer's choice of jewellery has the ability to unveil aspects of their personality and can be used to create or change body image. In the gallery environment, detached from ownership, the viewer is able to project their own perceived personality on to the displayed object.

Marie-José van den Hout explored this concept in *Jewellery, the Choice of Schiedam* (1997), which was created in order to introduce contemporary jewellery to a wider audience. Twenty-five women were invited to select a piece from the collection of Nijmegen's Galerie Marzee, and explain their choice. Photographic portraits of participants wearing their chosen item line the

exhibition wall, with the relevant piece displayed on a table in front of each image. The exhibition catalogue offers explanations such as:

The necklace I chose in the end is bold and cheeky, as well as being sturdy and very distinctive. It's made from thick, felted wool – a ship's rope in the shape of a collar (Valk 2005: 26).

Such descriptions provide insight into the way in which others view the displayed objects, offering a comparative format to which viewers' own perceptions can be applied. This process is characteristic of the contemporary jewellers identified in this study who use a collaborative style of working.

My own use of participants signals an ambiguous approach to jewellery design that is informed by the involvement and interpretation of others. It is achieved by a combination of mediated methods including film and the physical object, in order to explore the relationship between the body and object in a way that is compatible with the gallery space. This method uses a body-esque narrative to engage the viewer within the wearing process, even though they never come into contact with the displayed object. This narrative incorporates the role of the individual wearer and the contextual principles that relate to the social body.

## 4.2 Contemporary jewellery: a transient concept

As a response to the practical outcome with regard to capturing bodily movement within an object, it was necessary to consider the implications of the body and the object's material content. Wearing or engaging with an object can influence how the body behaves and functions, dictating bodily processes such as eating and drinking, as well as socially learnt gestures such as stroking and hugging (Boden 2000: 297). The second part of this practical investigation aims to consider the impact of such processes on the material content of an object. This will unpack the transient implications of material properties and processes as a practical consideration in terms of display methodology.

The concept of jewellery was traditionally based on materiality and the symbolic communication of permanence, preciousness and power. The De Beers diamond company's 1947 advertising campaign *A Diamond is Forever* encapsulated the physical durability of a diamond and its eternal symbolism of unity and wealth. It is a notion that no longer defines the discipline of jewellery

design. The exploration of jewellery's conceptual content initiated in the 1960s was instrumental in the dematerialization of the jewellery object and contemporary concerns surrounding the craft process. This chapter continues by looking at transience in terms of a jewellery object's materiality and the importance of process to the creation and consumption of jewellery. It will begin with a historical account of jewellery's materiality and the museology of conservation, taking into account the discordance between principles of display and the ideology of contemporary arts and crafts. The notion of the dematerialized object and the inclusion of representational modes of multimedia will be explored in order to address jewellery's transition from the tangible to the intangible.

With regard to silversmithing, goldsmithing and jewellery design, the notion of transience can be explored by addressing the symbolic nature of patina (McCracken 1988; Sandino 2004). Metal is prone to visible decay when the material interacts with the environment, causing a tarnished appearance. Patina is the oxidized surface that appears on metal over time, as seen on coins. The discolouration of each coin is seen as a new layer or film that overlays the coin's surface. The environmental impact of patina symbolically refers to ageing, allowing an immediate judgment to be made about whether coins are recently minted or have been in circulation for some time. Sociologist Grant McCracken observes that in the 18th Century, patina's implicit reference to ageing signified the heritage and prestige of an object. He describes patina's transience as a representation of the object's experience, noting: 'as they come into contact with the elements and other objects in the world, their original surface takes on a surface of its own' (McCracken 1988: 32). Thus, involvement with the world and the body can alter the material surface of an object, as evidenced by scratches, dents and corrosion acquired during its lifecycle.

The emphasis on permanence and preservation that surrounds the tradition of the gallery space sits uncomfortably with this transient form of materiality. As theoretical considerations of patina suggest, the material content of an object will inevitably alter over time. Christoph Zellweger's work shows the effect of time on certain materials. The latex tubing of *Chain* (1994) has deteriorated badly, so the object now inhabits a metaphorical 'no man's land' between an object to be worn and a something that is too fragile to touch, set against the

gallery's concern for preservation. This work, which ironically is part of the Craft Council's permanent collection, encapsulates the challenges associated with displaying transient design in the gallery space. The tentative approach now taken when handling this piece drew this rueful comment from its designer while in conversation with the Crafts Council's Director of Programmes, Claire West:

I was amused by the footage of everyone touching it with gloves. It was not my intention that it should ever be touched with gloves. It has a life and life creates a patina (West 2009).

Zellweger's response signals acceptance of the transient nature of material, and seems to contradict the notion of permanence in the gallery space. Objects that reflect states of transition, whether in terms of the creative process, function, observation or time-based performance, can present a challenge for the gallery space. The notion of transience will be explored, and issues surrounding the contemplative environment of the gallery space will be opened up to consider various alternative mediums by which tangible forms of presentation may be provided.

The notion of transience in contemporary design provokes the exploration of concepts and ideas that challenge notions concerning jewellery as an object and its material content. Bodily involvement and artistic expression have prompted a migration from the traditional sites of neck, wrist and ears to explore the creative freedoms seen in contemporary jewellery. This development challenges communicational methods of display that involve viewer or wearer interaction, because of the use of ephemeral material that may substitute representational media for the crafted object. In the art world, the term dematerialization is commonly used to describe concept-based work with little material content that may rely on photography and other media to record it (Lippard 1973). The term has been criticized as being inaccurate, and the use of photographs to record such work sits uncomfortably with those who view a photograph as an object in itself. The materiality of an object and the ephemeral principles that surround the making process will be explored, in order to illuminate the representational methods used to present such a process in the gallery space, and to assess their value.

As noted, the work of contemporary jeweller Naomi Filmer focuses on the role of the body in jewellery design and in turn addresses the notion of transience. *Ice Jewellery* (1999) takes transient design to the realms of dematerialization by using ice to form a wearable piece. The body and surrounding environment creates a tangible impact on the worn object causing the material to melt. This is seen in the disintegration of the object's form, the dripping of liquid and the final smash as the last of the ice breaks away from the body and hits the floor. An impression is also left on the body in the form of goosebumps, traces of liquid on the skin's surface and the lowering of body temperature. This process suggests that transient design can be a bodily experience for the wearer, showing that an object's life cycle can be felt as well as seen. Linda Sandino describes how the work as 'an eclectic approach to materials in a practice unhampered by functional requirement allows jewellers to pursue materiality to its limits in terms of meaning and substance' (Sandino 2004: 290). Sandino suggests that there is a contemporary push for creative freedom within jewellery design as makers relinquish functionality in favour of transience. It is not, however, accurate to assert that functionality is absent from Filmer's work. The ice is shaped into a wearable form and displayed on mannequins that suggest its wearability, if for only a short time. This wearable function is not permanent, yet its intended relationship with the body is implied.

In the 2007 MIMA conference, *Alternative Presence: the Collection, Display and Interpretation of Contemporary Craft Collects*, Filmer suggests photography is an inappropriate method for capturing this time-based piece. She is concerned that the drips might be mistaken for resin and the sense of material lost in this static form of representation. Instead mannequin hands were used to provide an abstract indication of how the ice sits on the body, and the melting water was collected in bowls at the base of the display. Ralph Turner says:

as the cold liquid circumvented the body's protruding bone, it discovered channels in the skin's surface, filling deep hollows of the shoulder blades before cascading over the arms and torso (Turner 2000: 55).

The sounds created by the dripping liquid are what holds the interest, though Filmer herself admits that this aspect of the piece was overlooked. The sound of dripping water symbolizes the ephemeral nature of the jewellery, and highlights

an alternative approach available when displaying this piece of work. Filmer's ice pieces are designed as an intimate experience. The frozen forms are not only a source of decoration for the body, but can become part of the wearer as their senses are evoked. This material quality might have been developed to establish a tangible way of presenting an ephemeral interaction with the body that can be experienced by the viewer, and to establish a methodology that reflects the notion of wearing.

The maker's involvement with the made object is the subject of frequent discussion within the crafts. The maker's mark contains information about the making process and suggests the unique quality of the handmade, often revealed in impressions left on the object's surface such as handprints on a handmade brick. A contemporary extension of the maker's mark is evident in the narrative principle of exhibition methodology that involves the communication of craft objects as a process. As discussed in Chapter 3, the presentation of varying approaches to design in *Process Works* (2007) and the portrayal of the workshop environment in *CraftCube* (2010) reveal the skills and processes involved in the object's construction. Both draw on an inclusive method of communication that shows aspects of an object that are only implied in the final form. They challenge the relative importance of the physical object and the time-based narration that contextualizes an object through multimedia methods. It is the juxtaposition between preservation and conceptual or functional intent that directs this investigation towards exhibition design and alternative display methods.

The notion of approaching display in terms of movement and interaction challenges conventional attitudes to museum design and provides new strategies for communication and the learning experience. Methods of electronic communication that contribute to the physical state of an exhibition may displace or support the displayed object (Witcomb 2003). As discussed in the contextual review, technology may contribute to dynamic modes of exhibition design. At this point of the investigation, my own approach is developed to explore in practice the implications of materiality and dematerialization within craft display. I have created a delicate piece of wearable jewellery inspired by an Elizabethan ruff to visually represent the curatorial challenges of addressing preservation and ownership when

presenting a craft object (Figure 21, below). The design, crafted from lace soaked in porcelain slip, is extremely fragile and disintegrates when touched. Its appearance or physical state, which is intended to embrace the transient quality of the material, is designed to evolve over time due to its delicate form and interaction with the audience. A steel framework that supports the delicate form is set over a hidden speaker connected to a microphone. This detects and amplifies background noise and the approaching footsteps of the viewer. Over time, these auditory vibrations effectively destroy the piece, producing an interactive demonstration of material transience (see DVD, *A transient concept - film*).



Figure 21. *Untitled* (2010)

This approach typifies the approach of contemporary craft practitioners who actively explore the role of the audience and the contextual environment in

which their work is displayed. Clare Twomey's ceramic work illustrates how craft can use group interaction to destabilize the material content of an object.



Figure 22. *Trophy* (2006)

Her use of porcelain in *Consciousness/Conscience* (2003) explores an ambiguity between the object and the body, embracing the individual and their reactive response. Twomey invites the public to walk over, and therefore break, a floor covering of porcelain tiles. The connotations of preciousness that surround the material lock the participant in a struggle with conscience: they do not know whether to experience the deconstructive qualities of the work or to step away in order to preserve the display. Importance is placed on public interaction, combining Twomey's knowledge and expertise as a ceramicist with themes of time, space, dialogue and preciousness. Twomey works with other makers to realize installations that involve the production of thousands of multiples, such as the V&A installation *Trophy* (2006) (Figure 22, above), and *A Dark Day in Paradise* (2010), which was shown at Brighton's *Royal Pavilion*. Her work has moved from the confines of the workshop and studio to fill and interact with the artistic arena and public spaces. It operates amidst the concept of transience in terms of materiality, in which work can be destroyed in order to allow the viewer to interact physically with its material properties and tactile implications. It is a notion of ownership in which creative control can cross from the artist's vision to an area influenced and directed by the viewer. One example is when people are invited to take objects away with them, demonstrating a relinquishment of control after an art or craft work enters the public domain. This establishes an interactive process which explores the collaboration between maker, viewer, curator and owner in terms of authorship and their relationship with gallery. Twomey says: 'Some of these works have taken years to make, moments to destroy, disappear or be stolen or become somebody else's possession' (Sterling 2009). Thus, as she notes with regard to her contemporary approach, in terms of craft display the gallery can shift 'from container of objects to context' (Twomey 2007: 33).

My practical aim is to define an approach that continues the work of contemporary craft practitioners who actively explore the interactive role of an audience within their work. In continuing my observations of materiality, I propose to explore methods of display providing permanence to the live performance that conform to the gallery setting. This approach is investigated by developing a presentational system that documents the changes that occurred during the porcelain ruff's deterioration. The taxonomic association

with the photography of jewellery is used as a classification tool to record historic jewellery design and material content. Photography, which is also demonstrative because of its ability to communicate construction techniques visually, has conventionally been used in teaching manuals and jewellery source books. This method of communication offers the pupil step-by-step references that support an instructive text. In my own work, this didactic approach to photography has been adapted to provide a practical way to capture and record the stages of a live performance as an alternative to film. The series of static images allows the viewer to study the object's material content and contemplate the changes in each image. Photographs showing the porcelain's deterioration are arranged in a chronological line directing the viewer's movement across the wall space of the gallery (Figure 23, below). In accordance with dynamic methods in exhibition design, I introduced two auditory clips to accompany the visual information, which are played separately at each end of the wall display. At the beginning of the sequence, the sound of footsteps and other accompanying noises from an audience is heard. The sound, which is taken from the original performance, represents those involved in the porcelain's destruction. As the viewer progresses along the row of images the sound of smashing ceramics begins to replace the sound of footsteps. The emotional reaction to this cacophony of destruction further reinforces the performative aspect of my work (see DVD, *A transient concept – audio recording*).

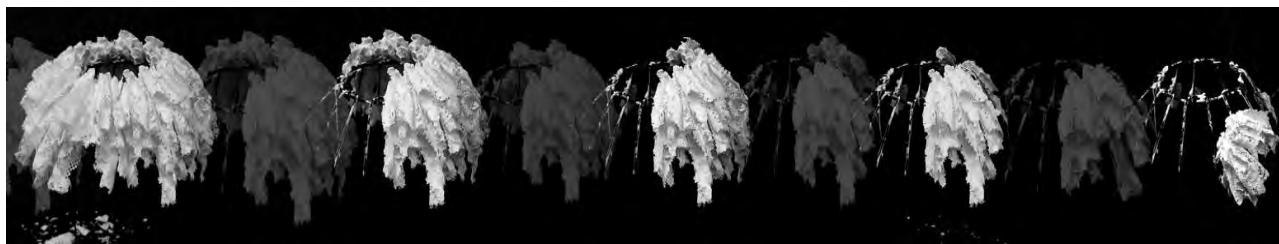


Figure 23. Contemporary jewellery: *A transient concept* (2010)

My intention, informed by current craft exhibitions that use didactic methods to communicate the making process, was to portray the transient qualities of materiality using a similar narrative. This notion was developed by considering the progressive state of the completed jewellery object, using a combination of auditory and visual modes of communication. The alteration of the object's form and material appearance resulted from viewer interaction, symbolizing the everyday wear and tear that is integral to the lifespan of jewellery, and illustrating the dilemma surrounding preservation and the intended function of the displayed object. The result was a division between the original performance of the object and the representational material. The exhibition method questions the integrity of the presentational material and its ability to replace the physical object in an attempt to replace material transience with permanence. Both practical outcomes demonstrate alternative ways of suggesting bodily involvement using multimedia methods and display principles in the construction and presentation of my work.

Thus far, my methodology has drawn on my practice to provide responsive realizations at pivotal points of my research, in order to contextualize and reflect on my findings. As a result, my initial practical experiments have suggested that digital media is a key tool when making and presenting contemporary jewellery. As observed in Dinie Besems' discussion of 'conceptual jewels', an approach is taken by the jeweller to create a lasting impression on the viewer by using jewellery to represent or create a bodily reaction. Digital modes of presentation also enable the jeweller to engage the viewer. The use of audio and visual forms of communication has emerged amongst contemporary jewellers, who, over the last decade, have considered how their work is presented to an audience, as seen in the representational methods of Mah Rana to the site-specific installations of Clare Twomey. These practitioners, who address the body and transience of materiality, are linked by the audience participation that informs their work. This carries the current dialogue concerning craft into the wider field of the visual arts. The practical strategies used by contemporary craft practitioners via their investigation of social and cultural meaning highlights the relational practice within the crafts that will inform the next stage of this study.

# **Chapter 5: Craft and the relational**

## **5.1 Relational aesthetics**

The methods used to present crafts in the exhibition space can be seen to reflect changes in attitudes and techniques associated with the field throughout craft's history. Over decades of deliberation, attempts to define the concept of craft have pushed and pulled it between the handmade skills and traditional craftsmanship advocated by William Morris as part of the Arts and Crafts movement and the countless provocations and definitions that insist on or deny process and content as part of an interdependent relationship. These debates challenge the hierarchies and boundaries of art, craft and design, and have raged while craft has evolved from the skill-based profession of the rural artisan to become a pursuit of the middle classes. Craft thus entered the home to become an activity that is supported by other means of income (Harrod, 1999). The apprenticeship-based knowledge of the 'journeyman' or 'connoisseur', whose ability was gained from experience and training, was replaced by amateur enthusiasm driven by passion rather than technical understanding. This development transformed notions of the process of making from that driven by necessity and function to the luxury of a leisure activity or hobby. This in turn informed a contextual understanding of the crafted object that is underpinned by the satisfaction or value placed on the ability to transform and understand materials.

In craft display, such contextual reference is established via curatorial methods based on technique, materiality and function. Craft objects are housed in display cases: conventional structures that present items according to discipline. The consequence may be an eclectic collection of objects reminiscent of the collections of wonder or curiosity that so intrigued past generations. The rise of a group of art-educated individuals during the 1960s and 70s began to inform the creative development of jewellery as a personal statement. This approach gave rise to the dichotomy between the preservation and celebration of traditional, skill-based techniques and a developing contemporary language that insists jewellery should be placed at an equal footing to the arts. As a result a small number of individual jewellers have instigated creative strategies for the presentation of their work, a process which

informs the critical meaning that is central to their practice. This development has informed the way in which the viewer of jewellery design is approached, placing emphasis on collaborative projects that explore social spaces and the relations that take place within them, as a means of activating the audience. These are supported by media-based methods by which craft objects and concepts are portrayed within the exhibition space, and which demonstrate a relational awareness of craft's contextual background. A major element of this contemporary drive is the need to address the social interactions and perspectives in what is conventionally an unmediated process, and to facilitate immediate discussion in order to portray an embodied craft object.

The element of ambivalence and confusion surrounding craft and its display, as discussed in previous chapters, suggests that public perception of craft remains connected to traditional objects and rural trades, but is increasingly infused with the notion of the enthusiastic but unskilled 'amateur'. These apparent contradictions feed into the challenge of demonstrating an appreciation of skill through display, alongside the theoretical or conceptual content that is intrinsic to the contemporary genre of craft. Paul Greenhalgh attempts to unpack the various attitudes associated with the definition of craft:

something which is (or is not) art, is (or is not) design, as technophobia as an anthropological signifier, as a protector or apparent traditions, as old (or new) age lifestyle, as patriarchy, as airport trinket, as ethnic iconography, as communist Utopia, as eco-protest, as redundant technology, as aromatherapy, and most emphatically as victim of an unloving world (Greenhalgh 2002: 1).

In his somewhat exasperated exploration of contemporary craft's discursive framework, Greenhalgh portrays a set of practices and positions in craft as a form of expansion and inclusivity, as opposed to conventional definitions that have been restrictive and defensive in nature. He covers its history over two world wars, the development of industrial design and increasing associations with 'hobby' craft that is made and sold by organizations such as the Women's Institute, through church bazaars and in amateur craft fairs. Greenhalgh depicts a craft tradition that has been 'a history and philosophy of excuses and apologies rather than a confident striding out of a vital part of visual culture' (*ibid.*). This observation coincides with the concerns of contemporary jewellery critic Benjamin Lignel, and the 'what is jewellery?' questions that now direct

many conferences, exhibitions and texts concerning jewellery. Though he confesses that his comment is ‘an overstatement’, Greenhalgh’s notion of an ‘unloving world’ seems to define a culture that is characterized by anonymous, technological structures and the instant and readily available.

With ‘hostile shoals’ facing the craft curator, as noted by Glenn Adamson, the challenges confronting current craft exhibitions have prompted a growing trend towards presentational methods that extend beyond the gallery space (Adamson 2006: 110). These embrace a cultural desire for the physicality of handmade processes that counteract the dematerialized and impersonal implications of the modern, technologically informed world. This move is further influenced by the fluctuating, but often limited, availability of funding which means that craft exhibitions are often forced to remain within existing display structures, such as those categorized according to discipline. As a consequence, a new generation of practitioners is becoming increasingly aware of its potential audience by exploring technological developments and methods of communication. Practitioners are engaging actively with the internet, digital media and public venues in order to create social space in which to communicate and produce their work. As discussed in Chapter 3, this includes venues such as pop-up shops, fairs and underground exhibitions, utilised in order to engage with a wide and varied audience. Locations such as these have highlighted the social implications of craft practice, portraying interactivity and perception as practical and theoretical principles that inform a growing methodology within contemporary craft. Jewellers including Yuka Oyama, Ted Noten, Suska Mackert, Dinie Besems and Naomi Filmer are examples of those who adopt a collaborative approach to their audiences in order to inform their work. It is this strategy of signifying the importance of the viewer, in order to establish an embodied experience between contemporary jewellery and its audience within the gallery space, which draws this study towards the relational.

In support of this methodology, this chapter addresses the concept of relational aesthetics and encompasses key artistic principles that can provide comparative links to the presentation and communication of contemporary jewellery. One of the earliest texts to discuss artistic interest in audience participation was Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics* (1998). In this, the collaborative and social concerns of artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, Philippe

Parreno, Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe, Maurizio Cattelan, and Vanessa Beecroft are discussed in terms of their aim to engage the individual within a community-based collective through their work. Bourriaud analyses art works that provide the viewer with a social interstice in which interactivity and discussion can take place, and defines relational aesthetics as:

a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space (Bourriaud 1998:14).

This description illuminates the nature of art that aims to move away from portrayal of an individual viewpoint and instead to interrogate the visual contemplation conventionally associated with the gallery space. This approach replaces such convention with the ambiguous interaction of the audience, in order to establish engagement and meaning that focuses on key principles such as 'interaction' and 'connectivity'. Bourriaud highlights concern surrounding the reception of art, focusing on the site in which art work is exhibited and the role of collective engagement as a means of exploring art's position within society. As an example, Rirkrit Tiravanija's work for *Aperto '93* at the Venice Biennale encouraged visitors to help themselves to dehydrated Chinese soups that were stored in boxes round the exhibition space, and provided the hot water needed to prepare the food. The social codes and complexities embedded in the cooking and consumption of food identify forms of knowledge and behaviour that are culturally recognizable. In Tiravanija's work, the active engagement of the viewer is intended to break down not only the distinction between social spaces and those of the gallery, but also that between artist and the viewer. The humanized process of eating is a universal activity, so the intricacies of cultural behaviour and understanding can be shared in the social space provided by the artist.

Artists have often used the presentation and consumption of food because of its sensory and symbolic capabilities. Such artists include Alison Knowles, a member of the Fluxus group of the 1960s and 70s, whose work addresses simple actions, ideas and objects from everyday life, re-presenting them as an interactive performance. Knowles' performance *Make a Salad*, which premiered in 1962 at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), explored the notion of

collective activity by using the sound of food preparation alongside the visual spectacle of salad being thrown from a height. The salad was dressed, prepared and finally eaten by the audience. A continuation of such work is *Make a Soup* (2012), a performance by Knowles at Chicago's Jane Addams Hull House Museum. Sound was introduced as a stimulus in *The First Supper* (1997), part of *The Sonic Catering Cookbook* at the University of Reading's Fine Art Department. This revealed the creative development of a recipe during its preparation for consumption. These examples are unified because they place the individual experience of food preparation and consumption in the social context of the gallery space. This recognizable process, which is evocative of memories and sensory experience, facilitates immediate discussion and interpretation from the audience, thus providing a participatory experience that is embedded in the social and cultural meaning associated with food.

## **5.2 Relational aesthetics and contemporary jewellery**

The jewellery making process provides comparisons with such interactive exhibitions. The independent and private space of the jeweller's workbench is brought into the gallery space, thus expanding jewellery's characteristics from individual adornment related to a single body, to work that is reflective of whole communities. This notion of exploring communalities in the making and wearing process is addressed in events such as Yuka Oyama's *Schmuck Quickies* (2005). In a process initiated as a social commentary, the jeweller works directly on to the body of the wearer, allowing the audience to become participants in the construction of each jewellery design (Figure 24, below). Her work uses jewellery as a vehicle by which to convey modern isolations, a situation where awareness of construction and handmade skills is hindered by mass production and the instantly available, throwaway product. The pieces are made from recyclable material and found objects, and the intended wearer becomes instrumental in their construction and design, instructing Oyama on material choice and offering design input. The material available for construction is donated or collected at each location, so geography influences the design and material content of the work produced. The significant rejection of precious material reflects social and environmental concerns, and is also a reaction to genetic and mass-produced commercialism. Its nature as a live performance

allows interactivity to draw the making process away from the maker's bench, creating an inherently social structure within jewellery design that reflects DIY craft culture and the political stance of Craftism. A further consequence of this will be drawn on and expanded later in this chapter.



Figure 24. *Schmuck Quickies* (2006)

As noted by Bourriaud, relational practice aims to break down and address divisions between artwork, artist and the viewer, operating within social connectivity. The relation between artwork and the viewer has become interconnected as a responsive process, revealing that:

It is no longer possible to regard the contemporary work as a space to be walked through (the 'owner's tour' is akin to the collector's). It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion (Bourriaud 1998: 15).

Focusing on the social content of an encounter or happening has opened up the optical convention of the white-walled gallery space, towards collective engagement as a means of generating meaning. The relational ‘space’ to which Bourriaud refers allows artwork to become a spatial experience, encouraging individuals to come together and partake in an activity that extends beyond a fleeting visual engagement. It offers members of the public the opportunity to react, exchange and contribute to an artwork, or as Bourriaud says, to engage with ‘a period of time to be lived through’. This idea works on a system of experience and interactive encounters, investigating the central theme of inter-subjectivity and the collaborative role of social exchange within the arts. In terms of craft, these tenets signify an alternative approach to the display case methodology that segregates the displayed object from the everyday object. Instead, it promotes the exploration of relations between object and viewer to provide the potential for embodiment, or at least experiential engagement that actively immerses the viewer in the craftwork on display. As an example, the similarity between the work of Tiravanija and a potential relational approach to an activity such as a tea ceremony, locates the relational in craft within the physiological mechanisms of the body through materialism and process. In line with Bourriaud’s observations, a relational response to a tea ceremony would allow the audience to experience such ritualistic processes by actively partaking in this cultural activity. A relational approach would therefore provide an environment that allowed audience members to experience tea drinking, thus providing a tangible means of engaging with the socially-laden and tactile properties embedded in the crafted cup, saucer and tea pot. This is what Devon-based potter and artist Sandy Brown has done with her two-part installation *Ritual: The Still Point* and *The Dance*. This was part of the 9th *Appledore Visual Arts Festival* in 2006 and was shown at UCA Farnham’s Crafts Study Centre and the James Hockey Gallery in 2008. *The Still Point* is based on the Japanese tea ceremony, and visitors are served tea in order to experience the meditative nature of the ceremony. Brown designed and made the pots used for the installation, which features a recreation of a traditional tea house. The second part of the installation, *The Dance*, uses large-scale ceramic pieces to represent the energy that comes from *The Still Point* through colour and movement. The contrast between the two parts demonstrates parallels between the calm ritual of the tea ceremony and her discipline. The viewer is

able to experience a process that reflects the methodical steps taken by the ceramist when creating a clay form. The creative ideas born from this craft process are represented in the vibrant expressions of *The Dance*.

The origins of relational practice can be found in the work of late 20th century artists who aimed to theorise human interaction in the arts. Such practices responded to the increased social exchange and mobility afforded by developments in telecommunications and growing transport infrastructures. This expansion led to the formation of social communities, signifying 'the birth of a world-wide urban culture' (Bourriaud 1998: 14). Bourriaud's analysis of relational work is a response to the internet boom, considering the implications of technological communication in the arts. It explored the role of the artist and the ability to produce communal events and scenarios by which to address social meaning, rather than exploring the isolation of an individual experience. Bourriaud's contextual reasoning aimed to establish a refined framework from which art in the 1990s could be understood, and to provide an alternative theoretical tool to modernism. His work reflects artistic concern for the loss of authentic social interaction in a post-industrial age by describing the artistic desire to emancipate the individual. Bourriaud cites the work of artists such as Liam Gillick, who focus on projects that enable human exchange in a bid to re-establish sociability within their work. Gillick's investigation of the boundary between sculpture and functional design is seen in his *Pinboard Project* (1992) which featured in the Hessel Museum of Art. In this, bulletin boards are placed throughout the museum to explore the production of social relationships in his work. He invites others to add material from books and magazines along with exhibition information, which in this case is added by students and graduates from The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (CCS Bard). The artwork enters a dialogue with the audience, questioning the position of the individual artist and their authorial role in art. Similarly, Gillick's Plexiglas and aluminum structures, such as *Discussion Island: Projected Think Tank* (1997), enable a space or context in which human relations are established, forming a practical backdrop that facilitates activity or discussion from the audience. This adaptation of social spaces is reminiscent of the collaborative work of Ted Noten, as discussed in Chapter 2. Noten's interactive projects often use his audience in order to construct meaning within his work, focusing on the

conceptual space in which relational exchanges take place. These include the maker's studio in *Chew Your Own Brooch* and the commercial environment of *Silver Dinner II*. Whether engagement is encouraged through the artist's choice of objects and activity or spatial exploration, the collaboration between relational aesthetics in art and those in craft foregrounds intersubjective relations and the open-endedness of human interaction. This approach references the concept of 'work in progress', rather than the completed object, as a structural premise of the construction and presentation of a relational project.

The focus on social spaces and the relations that take place in them informs the collaborative approach taken by the autonomous group of contemporary jewellers whose practice is explored in this study. This principle is discussed in terms of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics as 'new formal fields' (Bourriaud 1998: 28), which summarises a structure within the conception and construction of relational art that is addressed by other disciplines. These fields are based on the processes and interactions that are intrinsic to the production of an artwork, such as meetings, encounters, events and collaborations. Bourriaud explores these interactive scenarios, which provide practical platforms in which relations can take place and be discussed:

The sphere of human relations have now become fully-fledged artistic 'forms', indicating that the processes in which art work is constructed or exchanged is what informs the 'material' content of the work (Bourriaud 1998: 28).

Thus, Bourriaud locates human exchange as a material-based concept that can inform and direct artistic enquiry, observing that 'the contemporary artwork's form is spreading out from its material form: it is a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutination. An artwork is a dot on a line' (*ibid*: 21). This description locates art as a linear field that reaches beyond the artwork itself, a fact that illustrates the importance of contextual principles prior to the artwork's realization and the effect of the artwork's subsequent existence. Examples of this involve the enactment of institutional systems such as visiting cards, appointments and openings, as seen in the work of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Liam Gillick and Jeremy Deller.

Such models of communalities expand the potential content of the 'artwork' and can be seen in craft initiatives and activities such as knitting circles and craft

clubs that engage with the practice of social making. Craft's association with relational art is embedded in social and cultural relationships, and can be understood in terms of the theoretical and practical discourse surrounding concepts such as Craftism, DIY and the slow movement. Artist, maker and curator Helen Carnac's blog *Making a Slow Revolution* engages with principles of the slow movement by embracing craft as a process. The use of a blog as a communicative outlet allows participants to discuss the concept of slowness in relation to their own practice, not only through the written word but in shared activity and participation. This has clear links with the activist stance of craft practitioners within Craftism, a term coined by writer Betsy Greer in 2003. This draws together principles of craft and activism, allowing the craft skills to be adapted as a practical means by which to voice political and social concern. It is the consequential effect of craft within society as well as for the individual that holds a relational value. This sense of empowerment is often seen in the educative methods of contemporary craft initiatives, such as *Craft Club* and *Firing Up* organized by the Crafts Council. These facilitate the production of craft while encouraging social engagement and development of skills, as well as promoting craft activities to a wider audience. The 'formal fields' that enable collective engagement with the crafts can also be seen in community-based initiatives such as the collaborative action research project *The Meeting of Hands and Heart* (2004). This was held in Birmingham in conjunction with the exhibition *Self*, a collaboration between Craftspace Touring and the Midlands Refugee Council. This initiative aimed to establish dialogue that challenged social boundaries by bringing together communities in an environment in which skills can be learnt, developed and shared. It offered a platform from which areas of social commonality and distinction could be addressed by group dialogue and by the objects being made.

Describing the relational in terms of social practice, writer Dustin O'Hara claims that when discussed as a political project:

It can often be considered pedagogical, be seen as weakening or challenging perceived hierarchies, or bridging spaces previously divided, developing or presenting shared resources, or enacting a performance of community (O'Hara 2009).

This observation emphasizes the multi-faceted consequence of engaging with a relational principle that is embedded in the materiality of everyday life and is a production of humanizing practice. This principle places the communal impetus that underpins the examples given within the ‘do it yourself’ ethos. By definition, such DIY practice adheres to the principle of seeking out knowledge in order to enable a participant to carry out a task by themselves. Bourriaud discusses this principle with regard to virtual networks enabled by the internet and globalization, stressing the value of face-to-face interactions that inform and engage the individual as part of a collective experience, but he also documents the artist’s shift towards creating their own ‘possible universes’ (Bourriaud 1998: 13). Artists such as Tiravanija and Gillick exemplify immediacy similar to that first encountered during the 1960s, in which performance art placed value on the first-hand experience between viewer and the artist’s body. Bourriaud, however, used the DIY concept to define clearly the relational from performance and installation art. Art historian and critic Claire Bishop observes that, rather than employing the ‘utopian’ attitudes of the past, Bourriaud defines a ‘DIY, microtopian ethos’ as a political concept that drives relational aesthetics (Bishop 2004: 54). This concept considers how contemporary artists ‘seek only to find provisional solutions in the here and now’, and observes how we relate to our neighbours rather than creating idealized versions of the world (*ibid.*).

The establishment of Bourriaud’s ‘microtopian’ relations can be seen in social initiatives that aim to draw together communities, using handmade activities, shared knowledge and skills in a range of communicative environments that aim to blur the division between the craft maker and viewer. In recent decades, collaborative structures have included open sources and social networks that involve and empower the viewer in the design and making process. In ‘Craft Hard, Die Free’ Anthea Black and Nicole Burisch investigate the far reach of community activist Grant Neufeld’s knitting circles and the role of craftism and DIY practices. Calgary’s Revolutionary Knitting Circle focuses on the educative and communicative nature of craft and involves the sharing of tacit knowledge and techniques within a collaborative environment. The group’s manifesto has resonated across the craft community with its non-violent promotion of textiles and other handcrafts as a means of dispersing craft traditions through social engagement (Black and Burisch 2011: 611). Marianne Jørgensen’s *Pink Tank*

(2006) collaboration of knitters made 4000 squares to cover a World War II combat tank as a protest against the Iraq war. Canadian artist Wednesday Lupypciw's craft-based workshop for the artist-run gallery TRUCK (2006) was based in a converted motor home (Figure 25, below). Her performance and



Figure 25. *Handi Crafts, Handy Cats* (2006)

video work involves group demonstrations and activities using a variety of materials such as pipe cleaners and wool, in order to challenge the distinction of 'fine craft' work by exploring the properties of materials normally associated with DIY, hobbycraft and the kitsch. Her work continues in the curatorial project

*Cast Off*, which looks at the performance of craft and was presented at the Mountain Standard Time Performative Art Festival Society (M:ST) in Calgary, Canada. This organization's website describes how the society looks at projects that explore handcraft while considering 'ideas of competition, conflict, and self-interest'. The performative aspect of such projects involves the live creation of new work, offering the viewer access to the normally secluded process of making and craftsmanship and thus blurring the division between private and public spheres. Lupypciw's *Ladies' 500-meter Challenge* (2010) is a platform for competitive weaving that explores traditional concepts of domesticity and gender. Two teams weave against each other for three hours, in a project that creates engagement evoked by the competitive structure that involves both audience members and competitors with the charged environment. The creative method of this project evokes group mentality, whether an individual participant is supporting, challenging, learning or is just a spectator.

The sharing of craft skills and communal making relates to Dennis Stevens' discussion of craft's 'communities of practice' (Stevens 2011: 46). Stevens describes the division of social groups under the umbrella of craft, which are unified by a communal vocabulary, style and concern. Resembling the activist stance of Craftism and the DIY mentality, specialist fields such as glass, ceramics, woodwork and textiles are communities that are defined by a common sensibility. The dialogue between each community, which is activated during conferences, workshops and exhibition openings, has been exposed to new variables. Stevens recognizes the implications of new forms of communication through digital means:

makers are using the democracy of the Internet and its nonhierarchical and decentralized format not only to market their work but also to express their views and to debate and exchange ideas beyond the tight knit, medium-based enclaves with which their work might conventionally be associated (Stevens 2011: 47).

The merging of conventional craft structures and digital communication reflects various interdisciplinary approaches to craft in the modern era. These take place against the growing body of technological techniques that inform craft production in the form of digital objects. Consideration is being given to the digital environment and methods in and by which craft is consumed;

events such as the Handmade DIY craft fair that was part of Manchester's 2011 FutureEverything initiative. The fair involved a community of craftsman, hackers and makers who empower the viewer by allowing direct involvement in the making and design of an array of interactive and tactile work. Writer, researcher and event curator Karen Yair says: 'a new maker community is emerging, connecting the culture of traditional skills and materials with modern-day digital production, distribution and interaction techniques' (Yair 2011).

The implementation of digital technology as a communicative platform allows dialogue to flow between craft communities and the viewer via methods that encourage viewer participation. Despite Bourriaud's concerns, technological communication has assisted the distribution and acquirement of craft knowledge: 'how to' videos on networks such as YouTube and Vimeo and step-by-step instructions for craft projects are readily accessible via the internet. As a reaction to audience participation the boundaries between amateur and professional practice have become blurred: the use of blogs, websites and online video streaming allows users to become involved in projects, gain access to programs and online tutorials and record and share outcomes and ideas with a universal community. Designer Becky Stern has instigated a novel approach to knitting by using a reformatted knitting machine that can be connected to a computer in order to knit craft pixel art created in Photoshop. A how-to manual available online, along with coding and patterns, allows this process to be shared with other users. Melanie Bowles' *The People's Print* (2011) engages the consumer in the design process of digital textiles and print, addressing the concept of sustainable design through emotionally durable and relational design systems. Bowles' work is also entwined in an open source community by which ideas, skill, events and experiments can be shared via a social networking site. This platform aims to address the transition between digital and the handmade, and between slow and fast-paced processes.

The influence of digital media on the production of craft and its communication differs from the first-hand experience of process and material content explored by a collection of people in the same room. As in contemporary art, the communalit y generated by the internet differs from material communalit y in praxis, which involves coming together and collaborating in real time on a single piece. Bourriaud discusses the suitability of art, in terms of work such as

painting and sculpture that are presented in the form of an exhibition, as a platform for relational encounters. Art, in comparison to TV and literature, is noted to be an expressive form that ‘tightens the space of relations’, offering a shared space for consumption in which discussion can take place immediately (Bourriaud 1998: 15). This view overlooks, however, the developing capabilities of communication and experience enabled via the internet, which offer instant access to a far-reaching audience and to a rich and diverse database of information that can be referenced at any time. On the capabilities of art Bourriaud says: ‘I see and perceive, I comment, and I evolve in a unique space and time’ (*ibid.*). He presents the gallery space as a valuable environment in which to establish and observe the potential relations between viewer and object, which is separate from current development in digital communication within craft.

Relations that exist in real time have influenced museum methodology in a bid to extend first-hand experience. The V&A’s ‘Late Friday’ includes live performances, debates, one-off displays and installations as well as special guests, food, drink and guest DJs. With late-night exhibition opening times the museum is able to consider an audience different from the daytime visitor. Similarly the role of the artist-in-residence provides a link with the current relational premise of art venues such as Gateshead’s Baltic Centre and the Palace de Tokyo in Paris. These exemplify a collection of European art venues that aim to move away from the conventional collection-based structure by removing permanent collections and providing instead a space for artistic expression through project-based works-in-progress and artist-in-residence schemes. This approach is expressed in the interior of the Palace de Tokyo, designed by architects Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal. The stripped back concrete and steel shell-like interior aimed to reconceptualize the ‘white cube’ model of art display and reflect instead the fresh and continually evolving curatorial ethos of co-directors Jérôme Sans and Nicolas Bourriaud. The museum houses a collection of art exhibitions, live music and performance, and employs a range of presentational and interactive formats in order to reach a wide and varied audience. Formats such as Tokyo TV, radio and book collection offer differentiated forms of communication and interaction. Designed to function as a laboratory rather than a museum, the Palais de Tokyo and its

exhibiting artists aim to involve the viewer within the ‘process of construction’, rather than establishing a conventional, walk-through experience (Bennett 2001: 2).



Figure 26. *Pas de Deux* (2010-11)

Similarly, Lin Cheung, Laura Potter and Ted Noten worked with Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) on the Museumaker initiative to investigate ways of ‘unlocking the creative potential of museum collections’ (2011). Cheung and Potter’s project *Pas de Deux* (2010–11) was a collaborative partnership between makers, museums and visitors (Figure 26, above). Local people

produced a collection of objects based on their visits to MIMA, The Dorman Museum and the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, accompanied by discussion concerning their own lives and likes. The project incorporated participatory workshops involving the process of cuttlefish casting in pewter, during which skills, ideas and dialogue were formulated and documented. The exploration of social systems allowed residents to interact and engage with their local area, including alternative craft and institutional communities through a repertoire of communal resources, artefacts, vocabularies and handmade skills. Such projects function by empowering the viewer and aim to highlight social networks through craft practice by drawing on individual input and experiences to assemble a collective portrayal of meaning. It is social relations that form the content of such projects, rather than placing value solely on the crafted object.

### **5.3 Defining relational practice in craft display**

The properties Bourriaud identifies that separate relational art from the closely proximate performance or interactive art reveal a need to distinguish between relational practices in craft and the process-led interactions seen in display design, such as the Craft Council's *CraftCubes*. Work-in-progress exhibitions allow the viewer insight into the developmental structures within the crafting process, informed by educational principles embedded in fluxus techniques. As Hannah Higgins argues: 'Fluxus experience has particular value, promoting as it does, first and foremost, experiential learning, but also interdisciplinary exploration, self-directed study, collective work, and the nonhierarchical exchange of ideas' (Higgins 2002: 189). This identifies the potential of a fluxus-inspired pedagogy as a possible application of experience in teaching and learning afforded by the arts. The educative approach to craft display communicates the attitudes and techniques of the maker; it empowers the viewer by allowing access to a creative process by communicating what is normally contained within a displayed object. For example, design sketches, notes and a how-to mentality reveal a craft narrative by unpacking the making process as a direct concern, whereas a relational project becomes focused on the social context and implication in which skill, functionality and materiality may operate. Thus, an alternative approach may question who the maker is, rather than demonstrating the progression and methods used. In addition to analysing the relation between jeweller and audience, it might explore the impact of such

work on the individual or collective, and how it relates to or represents the social context in which it functions.

Social concern of this nature can be seen in exhibitions such as *Ceremony* (2005) at London's Pump House Gallery which looked at the relevance and application of craft skills in contemporary society by exploring the performative relationship between ritual and object. This interactive project consisted of a diverse range of practices including stone carving, cake decorating, knitting and quilting, and participation was encouraged through a number of workshops, demonstrations and screenings, as well as demonstrations and audience participation. The exhibition and the jewellers taking part aimed to use the social setting to encourage their audience to consider the cultural role played by craft, and how handmade objects inform bodily behaviour and processes. The wedding ring, christening shawl and funeral wreath are examples.

The approach taken by Palace de Tokyo and those contemporary galleries which establish a work-in-progress methodology is a close association with the studio or experimental laboratory as a model for the display of contemporary art work. This resembles the principles established in the early 20th century Bauhaus, a German art school that employed experimental learning, cultural exhibition and production to allow students to work alongside and interact with artists and designers. This established the 'laboratory' as an approach in which collaboration and experimentation play an important part, creating a forum of ideas and open-ended expression within exhibition practice. In terms of the relational in art and craft practice, this definition may be seen to have negative connotations.

Claire Bishop considers the ideology of the laboratory setting promoted by curators including Bourriaud, Hans Ullrich Obrist and Barbara van der Linden. She suggests that artwork which operates within relational aesthetics 'seems to derive from a creative misreading of poststructuralist theory: rather than the interpretations of a work of art being open to continual reassessment, the work of art itself is argued to be in perpetual flux' (Bishop 2004: 52). There is a suggestion that an unstable identity renders this form of practice difficult to define; a problem which when applied to craft may compound the current communicative challenges faced by contemporary jewellery and craft and its

relation with public perceptions. It also emphasizes the proximity between the concept of a ‘laboratory’ and the area of leisure and entertainment that reflects a shift in modern exhibition practice towards the leisure market. As David Dernie notes: ‘What is now fundamental to contemporary exhibition design is the creation of an ‘experience’ that is engaging, multi-sensorial and rewarding’ (Dernie 2006: 13). The museum is effectively pressurised to offer an educative, worthwhile experience, as opposed to an industry that is dedicated to pleasure and consumerism (Hooper-Greenhill 1994: 2). This may be seen as an influential concept that looks to establish relations with new audiences and enrich the experience of existing audiences via sensory experience.

The concept of the laboratory and the relational within the crafts proposes an element of risk to the interdisciplinary and discursive subject of contemporary jewellery, which has yet to find confidence beyond the presentational techniques of the display case. Bishop continues her discussions on the contemporary significance of collaboration and direct engagement between social collectives. In ‘The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents’ (2006) she engages critically with the assertion that relational practice has become driven by rewards associated with collaborative activity rather than by the social and political principles that ground relational aesthetics. She claims that artists are adopting the tactic of ‘working with pre-existing communities or establishing one’s own interdisciplinary network’, thus implying that no clear revolutionary stance is being taken (Bishop 2006: 179). Her comments seems to suggest that the political and aesthetic radicalism which formalized relational work has been diluted, and is now driven simply to further practical or conceptual art practice. Bishop’s 2004 article ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’ interrogates the value of Bourriaud’s relational examples, suggesting that Gillick and Tiravanija represent a ‘feel good’ approach to social harmony (*ibid.*, 79). Bishop puts forward the notion of ‘relational antagonism’ in order to expose the true or consequential effect when sustaining such harmony, suggesting a weakness in Bourriaud’s assessment of relational aesthetics.

Grant Kester’s *Conversation Pieces* (2004) also addresses the quality of Bourriaud’s theory, describing the significance of the dialogical as a contemporary outcome of relational aesthetics. Kester considers artwork that engages with social and political thought via conversations as an act of artistic

activism. He discusses projects in alternative venues such as a car park in Oakland, California and a pleasure boat on a Swiss lake. Operating outside the gallery and museum space, these projects are formulated to investigate collaboration with diverse audiences and communities, in which emotive dialogue and information are exchanged as a key principle of dialogical art. This approach unites artists such as Newton Harrison, Suzanne Lacy and Stephen Willats in their desire to address issues such as gang violence and political conflict through community-based dialogue. Prominent examples that illustrate the structure of the dialogical are Lacy's *The Roof is on Fire* (1994) and the work of Austrian arts collective Wochenklausur. Each was established with social intervention in mind, involving alternative social groups such as politicians, journalists and sex workers in the Wochenklausur project *Intervention to Aid Drug-addicted Women* (1994–5), and 220 high school students in *The Roof is on Fire*. These performance-based projects provided a neutral setting in which to establish conversation, with the aim of addressing the issues of cultural stereotyping and public complaints and support in response to social problems. Kester suggests: 'These projects require a paradigm shift in our understanding of the work of art; a definition of aesthetic experience that is durational rather than immediate' (Kester 2005: 78). The evolving platform on which conversations are established encourages the role of art to be questioned alongside the cultural identities, stereotypes and common attitudes to which such dialogues aim to dispel.

As with relational art, Kester's concept of dialogical art is informed by the installations and performance based work of the 1960s and 70s. Influences include Jackson Pollock's process-led paintings, which are mediated through the dripping and splattered movements of paint and body and captured by Hans Namuth's film making, and Allan Kaprow's 'happenings', which foregrounded the importance of process over the outcome of a piece of artwork, reflected in the dematerialization of performance art. In order to illuminate the dialogical in performance work, Kester uses a description of the work of video and performance artist Nancy Angelo by Cheri Gaulke, a fellow member of the group Feminist Art Worker: 'Moving beyond simple theatricality and [incorporating] elements of networking, working with a real-life environment, and communicating with a mass audience' (Kester 2004: 125). This description

notes the subsidiary position of the artist in terms of the work's development and outcome; its development depends on the input of participants and the environmental and cultural factors in which it takes place.

The concept of 'networking' and mass communication is also significant to the activist expressions of the 1980s, in which artists created comparative links to government initiatives and social reform in recent community art practice. To describe this, artist Suzanne Lacy coined the term 'new genre public art' in which the relationship between artist and 'real-world' audiences is considered and the implications of art on the public changed (Lacy 1995). Like Bishop, who is concerned about the quality of relations established in Bourriaud's concept of relational art, Kester considers the authenticity of the relationship between artist and participant:

community art projects are often centered on an exchange between artist (who is viewed as creatively, intellectually, financially, and institutionally empowered) and a given subject who is defined *a priori* as in need of empowerment or access to creative/expressive skills (Kester 2004: 137).

Concern over the need for a balanced relationship between artist and community gives rise to questions about the authority of the artist and their involvement in an area of complex ethical issues which requires an understanding of the political and social complexities embedded in such communally based practice. There is a need to tackle relations that contain a network of meaning that is difficult to define and navigate, including the traditional teaching model in the institutional structure of art schools. Kester questions the authority of such relations in terms of the artist's background knowledge of such micro-communities. Works such as *The Roof is on Fire* and projects by Wochenklausur investigate groups that are segregated from society. This principle considers the 'antagonism' or negative relations in society as theorized by Bishop, but in turn open up dialogical art to criticisms of authority, asking what qualifies the artist to become involved with such sensitive issues. The political and ethical consequence of such discussions directs my own observations of the body and craft in order to define an approach that is intrinsic to contemporary jewellery discourse. This method does not imply a need to alter or enforce relations, but to present information in a relational or accessible way.

With regard to the role of interaction, it is important to make a distinction between the concerns of the contemporary art museum and those of the jeweller. The subjective views of the individual artist, which may be primarily political, and those issues intrinsic to the body within contemporary jewellery discourse, must be defined. As previously discussed, the relationship between the gallery space and craft is balanced precariously between aesthetic contemplation and the everyday, utilitarian associations of the craft object. It is the humanizing ideology of relational aesthetics that ideally locates the gallery space as a challenging and potentially rewarding area of investigation. These aesthetics draw on craft's humanistic principles and hand-wrought processes to unify the viewer and the displayed object. The gallery's institutional structure is thus employed to refine a concept of relational aesthetics that is intrinsic to craft practice. In a way that chimes with Kester's concerns about authority, my own experience as a contemporary jeweller will enable me to present a view that differs from that of a curator or exhibition designer when addressing forms of display. The major question will be how contemporary jewellers can engage with their audience in the gallery space, informed by the relational craft practice already evident beyond the museum.

## **Chapter 6: Practical investigation 2**

### **6.1 Immersive aesthetics**

This chapter is a response to the first practical investigation, which considered the role of the body and materiality in the presentation of contemporary jewellery in my own work and the work of others. Additionally, an understanding of the social concerns now prevalent in art and craft discourse has introduced the concept of relational aesthetics as a means of activating the viewer, and of exploring potential relations between an audience and craft display. In order to define a strategy intrinsic to the crafts, subsequent practice may be defined as ‘immersive aesthetics’.

Many writers have discussed the importance of immersion in terms of installation art, including Claire Bishop, who distinguishes the strategies used from those employed by conventional, ‘disembodied’ forms of art display:

Instead of representing texture, space, light and so on, installation art presents these elements directly for us to experience. This introduces an emphasis on sensory immediacy, on physical participation (the viewer must walk into and around the work) (Bishop 2005: 11).

The first-hand immediacy experienced by the viewer of installation art is different from the experience of the viewer exposed to the work of those who address immersion by the use of digital media, such as video and sound artists. This distinction highlights the role of art practices that emphasize sensory engagement with the viewer but do not rely on physical participation in order to create an embodied experience. Art critic, journalist and artist Polly Ullrich discusses the handmade techniques of video artists who aim to address the decentering and dematerializing effect of electronic media via techniques that are demonstrative of the body, and that locate their work in the everyday. She summarizes the aesthetics of immersion as ‘an event of the body or in life’, focusing on digital artists who engage with bodily processes in order to invest in ‘the visceral aspects of human perception and consciousness’ (Ullrich 2004: 211).

The immediate interactions and collaborations identified by Bishop have been discussed in terms of craft and contemporary jewellery, under the umbrella of

relational aesthetics, in which a correlation between an autonomous group of contemporary jewellers working in and beyond the gallery space has been made. By locating this study in the institutional setting, the focus has moved away from the physicality and immediacy of relational practice towards representational methods. This locates immersive aesthetics as a means of establishing an embodied experience, which is designed to address the division between the viewer and jewellery when on display.

The work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, a key artist for Nicolas Bourriaud, illustrates how relational concepts can inform both art and craft practices. This principle can be illustrated by comparing Gonzalez-Torres' work with that of contemporary jeweller Suska Mackert, in which immersive aesthetics can be defined. Gonzalez-Torres' 1993 work *Untitled (Placebo-Landscape-for Roni)* consists of multiple sweets wrapped in gold cellophane that are spread across the floor of the gallery space. This arrangement evolves over time as visitors take away their choice of sweet and stocks are replenished in order to retain an ideal weight of 1200lbs (544kg). The work embodies the concepts of identity and mortality that run throughout Gonzalez-Torres' work, engaging his audience with themes of violence, US domestic and foreign policy, homophobia and AIDS. Here, the weight of the candy refers symbolically to his partner and those who have lost their lives to HIV and AIDS. It also refers to the discomfort of the artist: as the sweets were dispersed, 'he felt that it was an invasion of his self, like the demise of his own body' (Rosen 1997: 46).

The active engagement of the audience in order to establish and evoke meaning contradicts the learnt etiquette of the museum environment in which the 'do not touch' mantra is representative of conventional protocol. This engagement emphasizes the importance of audience in the activation of the work in terms of symbolic meaning through the involvement of their senses. The material presence of Gonzalez-Torres' sweets and the participation of his audience explores not only the corporeal effect of relational aesthetics but also evokes memory and the sensory connotations that imbue the objects on display. The crackle and glint of the cellophane wrapper and the sugary sweet taste has the power to summon up childhood memories, past experiences or desires. This sensory experience can also be distasteful because of the title of the piece, which refers to the placebos used during drugs trials organized in the

development of cures and antidotes for AIDS. This understanding suggests pain, loss and grief in every sweet.

Suska Mackert also uses viewer participation within her practice, which engages with relational principles. Though she is described as a jeweller, there is a distinct absence of made jewellery in most of her projects. Mackert relies on symbolism and conceptualism, using photography, typography and installation to represent the haptic aspects of making, viewing and wearing contemporary jewellery. Her work exists among images of jewellery distributed through mass media and advertising rather than in a physical form. In her site-specific work *Middlesbrough* (2005), Mackert adorned the floor of a low-cost jewellery shop with gold leaf lettering (Figure 27, below), investing hours to create the statement: 'Materials with a shiny surface reflect light, while elsewhere the light is fully absorbed'. The commercial setting of a shop is not one normally associated with the display of art or the conceptual portrayal of contemporary jewellery, unlike the gallery space that housed Gonzalez-Torres' mountain of wrapped sweets. The live space of Mackert's work and its position on the floor means that the text is mainly overlooked because of the everyday shopping needs and behaviour of the consumer. As the space is occupied the gold lettering, and symbolically the time spent creating it, is slowly worn away by the viewer's shoes. The value of the lettering and its message becomes blurred and tarnished, reflecting the continual stream of advertising and mass media; it thus becomes part of the network of visual information that is received on an everyday basis, often remaining within the subconscious. Those who notice the glittering addition to the shop floor also become aware of their own detrimental effect on the work.

Critic Love Jönsson describes Mackert's approach:

Making use of a variety of media, she underlines that jewellery's complex grid of relationships between maker, object, message, wearer and spectator cannot be analyzed solely from the viewpoint of the physical encounter (Jönsson 2005).



Figure 27. *Middlesbrough* (2005)

Though Mackert's lettering is not something the audience can take away to enjoy or experience in their own time, the installation is informed by the sounds, smells and bodily behaviour associated with the shopping experience because of its setting. Whether this triggers excitement or dread, the visual portrayal of consumer jewellery evokes the processes of finding, considering, buying and owning. Mackert's use of photography to capture this allows the work to become associated with 'an imagined sense of consumption', as noted by Deborah Cherry in her discussions of the body's role in relational aesthetics

(Cherry 2007: 22). Cherry suggests that this presents a perceived experience, in which the embodied viewer becomes immersed.

The common theme addressed by both artists is the material gold and its ability to offer sensory engagement. Gonzalez-Torres' candy represents an aesthetic dialogue between himself and artist Roni Horn. In 1990, Gonzalez-Torres encountered Horn's sculpture *Forms from the Gold Field* (1980–82) during her solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. The work involved a single gold sheet laid directly on the gallery floor. Gonzalez-Torres responded to its preciousness and the subtle possibilities that it proposed, suggesting that the piece was 'a new landscape, a possible horizon, a place of rest and absolute beauty' (Gonzalez-Torres 1996: 68). The experience evoked by both artists pays homage to the complex meaning of gold. Nancy Spector, chief curator at New York's Guggenheim Museum, describes this as a form of poetry reflective of symbolic materiality: 'The fragile beauty of the works suspends commonplace meanings attached to gold as a source of wealth and extravagance, inviting instead a kind of poetic reverie on its materiality and symbolic resonance' (Spector 2009).

As with jewellery, the connotations of preciousness and wealth run through the history of adornment, provoking the claim that Mackert's use of gold is 'a disrespectful, somewhat extravagant way of handling the material' (Jönsson 2005). This comment suggests that the material content of relational projects has the power to evoke memory and incite dialogue, drawn from personal, subjective and emotional associations with a jewellery object or material. Jeweller Mah Rana recorded the humanizing comments of the wearer in *Meanings and Attachments* (2007), a pre-launch exhibition commissioned for the opening of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art. The off-site exhibition documents the personal relationship between wearer, object and image when two participants, Sarah and Kendra, are asked to comment on their own gold jewellery, their response reflects current trends and fashion, and also signify the variations in personal association towards material content:

'Silver's more for going out'.  
'And what's gold for?'  
'Common; for knocking about on the streets.' (Rana 2007)

Bourriaud claims that Gonzalez-Torres' collaborative work explores 'differing aspects of the monumental: the commemoration of events, the continuity of memory and the materialization of the intangible' (Bourriaud 1998:55). This approach takes account of the identifiable relations established between artwork, artist and audience through sensory engagement and memory, as well as physical interaction which encourages the viewer to pick up and touch displayed objects in the gallery. It signifies a move from the monumental and public – such as the mediation of HIV and AIDS – to the personal, intimate encounter suggested by the fact that the weight of the pile of sweets corresponds to the body weight of Gonzalez-Torres's dead partner. The result provides a trail for the viewer to follow, thus permitting direct immersion in the politics of the body. In Mackert's piece, the viewer, whether participating directly or viewing the photographic images that document the work process, is drawn from the wider cultural arena of commercialism and society shaped by mass media, to the ritualistic performance of shopping and bodily behaviour in which the actions of the individual have a direct impact on the gold lettering and represent a progressive experience of immersion.

The critical jewellery object, as outlined in chapter 2, defines an area of contemporary jewellery that is informed by the arts. The intention of this approach to jewellery design is to move away from making a physical object and look towards ways of presenting jewellery as a language. This approach is responsive to the observations gathered during this study when investigating the display of contemporary jewellery. Immersive aesthetics presents a practical strategy that can be used to evoke a bodily engagement between audience members and the jewellery on display. This is done by embracing the sensory or memory-led responses of an audience to craft and its relationship with the body. The result is embedded in principles such as materiality and form, which provoke certain bodily behaviour, as previously discussed. Activities such as wearing or making provide a contextual framework to inform jewellery practice, and offer accessible, bodily processes from which to consider how jewellery is communicated to an audience. Such methods are informed by work-in-progress exhibitions that provide an inclusive presentation of craft practice and offer parallels with relational art. As Bourriaud notes: 'formal fields' allow the maker to consider spaces in jewellery design in which interaction and collaboration take

place, thus providing platforms for practical enquiry that critically address contemporary jewellery and its role in society. The commercial environment, as seen in Mackert's work, offers a practical commentary concerning the jewellery shopper and the venues they may inhabit. This creates a body of work that can be recognized by the viewer because of the familiar setting of the shop, and as a result encourages further dialogue.

These 'spaces' or 'fields' can be explored by the use of presentational methods such as photography, film or audio-commentary, which supply a tangible reference to craft processes and facilitates immediate discussion of the relations they depict. The work of Maisie Broadhead, for example, is an illustration of the kind of collaborative approach that is the focus of this study. Broadhead replaces the first-hand interactions of practitioners such as Ted Noten and Yuka Oyama with photography, as a means of engaging the viewer and challenging their perceptions. Her work is informed by studio craft practitioners who challenge function as a means of critical interpretation, an approach that saw the creation of 'unfulfillable' objects such as a dissolvable vessel or a vase covered with pinholes. Broadhead uses presentational techniques to activate her own critical interpretation of jewellery through the process of image making. In *Jewellery Depicted* (2009), Broadhead uses photography to capture re-staged historical paintings as an embodied backdrop for fabricated jewellery objects that are appropriated from the original artwork. Broadhead thus investigates the role of representational methods in the development and presentation of contemporary jewellery. For example, her contemporary reinterpretations of classical paintings, such as *Nipple Pinch* (2009) and *Keep Them Sweet* (2010), explore the photography of jewellery as 'a collection of distorted and hidden half-truths' (Broadhead 2010). This method engages the viewer with the concept of value, immersing them through their own discovery and perception of the jewellery object and its material content. *Keep Them Sweet* (Figure 28, below) is photographed against the backdrop of a scene that is a reworking of Simon Vouet's 1640 painting *Allegory of Wealth* (Figure 29, below). It contains an item of jewellery, *Sweet Necklace* (Figure 30, below), which in the reinterpretation is seen as a length of silver beads, though the actual object itself is partly formed from sweets. This aspect of the piece, which is kept hidden from the lens of the camera, replaces the monetary value

of precious metal with the symbolic value of childhood memories and the sensory experience of smelling and tasting the edible beads.



Figure 28. *Keep Them Sweet* (2010)

The emotive content is continued because Broadhead calls on her friends, family members and associates to stage her images, so the actual relationships of real people to the jeweller and to the subject matter contribute to the layered narrative. Broadhead thus demonstrates an investigative approach that highlights the potential of what Glenn Adamson sees as: 'the nebulous marginal space between the image of craft and the craft object' (Craig, 2011). Dialogue within this space engages with concepts such as appropriation, replication and



Figure 29. *Allegory of Wealth* (1640)



Figure 30. *Sweet Necklace* (2010)

forced perspective as a theoretical framework, allowing Broadhead's choice of representational media to explore and exploit the consequence of presenting jewellery by photographic methods. It also challenges the viewer's understanding of the photographed piece, thereby offering a tool for display that allows both jeweller and viewer to consider moments of production, distribution and consumption within contemporary jewellery discourse.

## 6.2 Displaying a critical jewellery object

This chapter considers the role of the craft image in a jewellery exhibition and its impact on my own practice as a jeweller. The headings below detail four practical projects I have developed as part of this study. The process employed in this investigation was not rigid or reductive but formed an exploratory response to my theoretical understanding as well as formalizing key aspects of my practical research. As a result, each outcome is designed to be exhibited in the gallery space in order to demonstrate the critical value of the craft image as a presentational tool. The outcomes are developed to explore in practice the use of props and backgrounds within display design, in a way that introduces a facsimile, as well as considering the digital capabilities of macro photography, the portrayal of the worn object and promotional imagery.

## 6.3 Necklace, Bracelet, Brooch

Liesbeth Den Besten has discussed the jeweller's use of presentational media with regard to photography and its ability to establish a contextual narrative with the object it depicts. In addition to her article 'Beyond the Showcase' (2004), Besten's *On Jewellery: A Compendium of International Contemporary Art Jewellery* (2011), dedicates a chapter to the practical developments that have taken place between jewellery and photography since the 1960s. One of the elements she considers is the notion of 'functional photography', which is defined as an object-focused approach involving jewellery that is photographed alone, abstracted away from the wearer. Besten summarizes this minimalist and popular method by which 'the artistic integrity of the piece is not obscured by any circumstantial intrusion' (Besten 2011: 34). Techniques such as lighting or style of backdrop offer the photographer the potential for variation, and the object itself may indicate an aesthetic influence that derives from the time in

which the image is produced. This object-led method has predominantly been in evidence from the 1970s to the present, and was in stark contrast to the prevalent use of young models with heavily made-up faces to present the large-scale pieces being made between 1967–1970.

Besten also considers ‘art photography’, a label she primarily associates with the 1980s, which involved photographs commissioned by the jeweller. Ruddt Peters is among those who asked art photographers to make their impression of his jewellery collections for publication. Besten discusses the role of photography as a compositional element within jewellery, in that it is used for its imagery or material content within the object’s making in order to establish symbolic or layered meaning. Most notably, photography is discussed as a research tool for jewellery artists, and this notion is intertwined with this study. This approach was formed as a way by which ephemeral ideas and concepts could be documented, recorded or presented, in response to the conceptual works being produced from the 1970s onwards. Examples of this technique range from the capturing of the dematerialized marks made by Gijs Bakker’s ‘invisible jewellery’, through the abstract light patterns that adorn the body in Suzanna Heron’s light projections, to the recent works of Lisa Walker. Walker likes to capture casual snapshots that reveal the questionable quality of her pieces, which in turn reflects the concept of value that is being addressed in her practical work. In the light of these distinctions, and the notion of the craft image, the role of photography is significant in the presentation of contemporary jewellery in terms of technique and visual language. As part of this ethos it is important to consider the technological and social developments in both photography and contemporary jewellery, and also the wider cultural context, particularly with regard to the internet and the diverse, relational platforms from which craft is mediated.

Comparisons to commercial jewellery can be made, with regard to the capabilities of digital manipulation and doctoring techniques open to current photographic technology. These include methods such as the ability to retouch images that are afforded by digital programs, for example the removal of blemishes and red-eye reduction, as well as various tools that enable alteration of an object’s scale, texture and colour. These manipulation techniques carry implications of directing the viewer’s attention to specific aspects of the image,

and are evident in the development of pictorial advertisements. By the early 20th century, according to writer Raymond Betts, the consumer was ‘dazzled and compelled by contrived images that transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary’ (Betts 2004: 62). This approach has become instrumental to advertisement art, in which the styles of communication have evolved in order to seduce and inspire the consumer. This is art that incorporates manipulation afforded by technological advances in digital photography and programming, and it is also influenced by computer aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM). There are processes by which the lens of a camera may distort the object’s surface when capturing light reflection, as well as the various means of selecting a camera angle, framing, shutter speed and aperture size. It is therefore questionable whether an image can now be regarded as a true representation of a jewellery product.

No less than the photographer or computer-aided designer, the jeweller now possesses the technological tools by which to emphasize a polished surface or the reflectivity of a gemstone. This process can enable the refinement of an object’s form to the extent that it becomes a complete transformation.

Technological capacity also extends to the placement of the jewellery image on the body of a photographed model using Photoshop techniques, computer aided design and recent developments such as Holition. The latter is described as a creative service agency in which augmented reality platforms are developed to create 3D digital experiences for retail. This form of retail experience has the capacity to project products on to the viewer through digital applications that can be used both in store and online, thus serving as a virtual reality mirror. The resulting images can allude to the notion of wearability, and the jewellery essentially becomes a worn object despite never coming into physical contact with the wearer.

The role of photography in jewellery is symptomatic of the importance of visual imagery in today’s culture. A photographic image is easily transferable, and can be shared and presented through a range of internet sites, groups and organizations as well as in publishable formats such as books, magazines and business cards. The affective qualities discussed in relation to the craft image, also indicate that an object’s narrative or meaning as constructed by the jeweller is not completed in the final coat of varnish or the buff of the polishing

cloth. Photography is thus a part of the ‘crafting’ process by which meaning can be shaped and refined in the form of presentational techniques. My first practical investigation, *Necklace, Bracelet, Brooch* (2011), consists of three images. Each contains a physical component made using conventional craft methods commonly associated with jewellery such as a bead, a link and a setting. This is photographed and repeated to produce an image that suggests a wearable jewellery object, in a method that looks to the process of transforming traditional forms of jewellery via photography into digital, malleable components. The photograph of the bead, for example, provides a repeatable template so that each unit or ‘bead’ can be adjusted in size and digitally strung together using Photoshop (Figure 31 and 32, below). Both the physical object



Figure 31.  
*Necklace*  
(2011)

and the photographic manipulation of the object are thus combined to create a mixed-media presentation of contemporary jewellery that sits between craft image and craft object. The resulting imagery considers the role of digital technology against the tradition of handmade crafts. The single physical component, made using the conventional materials and techniques associated with a traditional jewellery outcome, offers the foundation from which the craft image is produced.



Figure 32. *Necklace*, detail (2011)

The practical outcome therefore explores the alternative techniques and technologies that are available to today's craft maker. The conceptual 'space' in which I operate addresses the conventional structure by which craft practitioners photograph their work in order to document, promote and

ultimately sell it. The imagery I have produced in this project provides a creative exploration of Besten's 'functional photography'.



Figure 33. *Necklace, Bracelet, Brooch* (2011)

In the crafts it is standard practice to create business cards, postcards and presentational imagery using a digital format. This is a process usually put into operation only when a craft object has been completed, and functions as a communicative tool in terms of publishing a design in the public sphere. My intention, by actively engaging the viewer in this process, is to establish a dialogue that considers both the jeweller's and viewer's relationship with the craft image. The digital construction of jewellery, established through both photography and the physical object, aims to interrogate the viewer's understanding of the jewellery images they may encounter every day. As with the work of Broadhead and Mackert, the recognizable is employed to draw in the viewer. Standard forms, such as a brooch or necklace, are easily identified,

presenting a universal template by which critical evaluation can be applied to alternative jewellery imagery. After inspecting the work and discovering the means by which the image is constructed, the viewer is encouraged to consider the wider context of mass-produced imagery in jewellery and its potential to inform or mislead, to promote or construct meaning. The large size of each image is designed to reflect the oversized posters used in commercial jewellery advertising campaigns in order to draw a connection between the jewellery image that is seen shop windows and the object's they depicts (Figure 33, above). The project identifies a visual means of presenting to an audience the making process that exists between craft and digital media, using a method that in turn questions the value of the facsimile as a means of exhibiting contemporary craft. The deliberate play on authenticity in the construction of this work intends to create an analytical assessment of an object's materiality and technique, within the craft image, that throws light on existing and potential developments in representational tropes within jewellery display.

#### **6.4 Re-present**

Photography's capability of portraying a certain aesthetic or of reinforcing the social or symbolic meaning of an object sets up the camera as a creative tool. As noted, photography can be instrumental in the process of crafting an object and its meaning. This second practical outcome therefore aims to explore the craft image and photography's immersive capabilities in terms of re-assessing display methods within the encyclopedic museum. This involves re-presenting an object which would normally be displayed in a museum display case and instead by its use to reveal a particular narrative embedded in an object's materiality. The use of photography can be employed to focus on concepts such as the maker's mark and patina in order to investigate an immersive strategy towards the crafts. No less than supportive text, imagery and props that can be used to construct an account of an object's life cycle, photography can also become a curatorial tool, recording and communicating its history or lifespan from craftsmanship to ownership.

Modern digital technology can be used to unveil aspects of an object that are not normally seen by the viewer in the conventional museum setting of the display case. Macro photography offers the potential for engagement with the

visual narrative that can be deduced from an object's surface. This extends Besten's discussion in terms of photographic capabilities, as well as suggesting a merger with science: the macro lens can produce a larger than life-size or close-up image, revealing detail invisible to the naked eye. Macro photography is now regularly used by the medical and forensic professions to capture and record the finest of details of a specimen for further study. Its potential to uncover a visual layering of meaning in the form of patterns, textures and colours on an object's surface, suggesting a pre-existing narrative, is what drives this enquiry. A jewellery object was selected from the V&A archive and photographed, with the intention of re-presenting it in close-up images. The magnification of the object's surface reveals a landscape of colour within the polished and, in places, tarnished metal (Figures 34 and 35, below). Scratches, indentations and scuffs gathered over time are brought into focus, alluding to the time when the object was worn and handled. Marks, or scarring on the surface of the metal, offer visual clues to the crafting process, thus enabling the viewer to assess the level of skill required for its construction and finish. The macro lens is thus able to operate in the same way as the critical eye of a jeweller, during the process of achieving the required standard of finish. In this process, the composition of intricacies becomes the focus of my work and highlights the object's relationship with craft, materiality and wearability. The aim of the re-presentation of a conventionally displayed object was to highlight the value of exhibition methods in contemporary jewellery and enable recognition of the vicissitudes of its history through a visual narrative (see DVD, *Re-present series*).

It is important to note that photography is not used to replicate, digitizing the original object in order to preserve its physical state in a way that resembles the traditional approach to archiving, but to uncover its contextual information. As Walter Benjamin notes with regard to the replica: 'in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens' (Benjamin 1936: 299). This in a sense becomes a journey for the photographer as well as the viewer; there is an element of ambiguity and discovery in capturing imagery through magnification as each photograph is able to uncover an untold story.



Figure 34. *Re-Present series* (2011)



Figure 35. *Re-Present series* (2011)

The resulting imagery stands for the object's life cycle, documenting each knock, abrasion or discolouration to reveal aspects of its material content, how it was made and how it may have functioned in everyday life. These additional pieces of information have the power to immerse the viewer in the object's social background by referencing the absent body. This works in a similar way to the 'felt recognition' of Andrew Lord's ceramic series *Breathing, Biting, Swallowing, Tasting, Smelling, Listening, Watching* discussed in Chapter 4 (Stair 2000: 78), where Lord's choice of material and form are symbolic of the bodily process of making, revealed in the surface of each object. The fingerprints or teeth marks left on the ceramic forms relate to Lupton's 'framing devices', providing a visual portrayal of the maker's presence in the appearance of the piece. The value placed on the handmade, or the aesthetic of the handmade as opposed to the 'perfection' of technology, recognizes the importance of the marks made by the marker, or what Dormer describes as 'warm fallibility or friendly flaws' (Dormer 1990: 166).

The material properties of an object, for example the marks made by the maker, tool or machine, can also have symbolic meaning. The value of an object's material content is often associated with its rarity, and is particularly seen in jewellery which is made from precious metals such as platinum, gold and silver as well as with precious and semi-precious stones. The 'eternal' connotations surrounding a diamond, and gold and platinum's resistance to tarnishing, both signal permanence of value and materiality. Silver, and base metals such as copper, brass and bronze, are prone to visible decay caused by oxidization, a principle that can be discussed in terms of symbolic value in respect of their reaction with the environment. The conceptual significance of patina, which in line with Grant McCracken's sociological observations provides an object with historical currency, signifies heritage and family lineage in the signs of ageing. McCracken's theory of patina involves 'suggesting that existing status claims are legitimate. Its function is not to claim status but to authenticate it. Patina serves as a kind of visual proof of status' (McCracken 1988: 32). His comments illuminate the value system in place during the 18th Century, which considered both the physical and symbolic properties of cultural goods. This observation illustrates how the involvement of an object with the world can physically alter the appearance of a material's surface. This alteration is evident not only in

corrosion, but in the scratches and dents that represent the life cycle of the object. In relation to his analysis of authenticity, Walter Benjamin considers the auratic stature of an object:

The authenticity of the thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced (Benjamin 1936: 299).

Benjamin's view suggests that an object's visual narrative may project a felt experience that reflects the time and techniques used in the construction of the object, as well as the way in which its existence and placement in history are represented. The contemporary work of Lin Cheung investigates the relationship between an object and the body by documenting the scratches and scuff that have been acquired by an object in use. *Wear and Tear* (2008) comprises of multiple locket-shaped pendants, each bearing their own tarnish or mark. Each provides a visual reference of the scuffs, scratches or dents that are gathered on an average item of jewellery during use, or the marks produced during the making process. These indentations, however, are purposefully made by Cheung, and offer a symbolic value rather than portraying a natural accumulation of patina. This process provides permanence and significance to the concept of patina, as each mark becomes a unique, decorative addition to each locket silhouette. Similarly, contemporary silversmith David Clarke engages with the patina found on discarded or unloved silverware in order to juxtapose the old and the new, as seen in his series of modified teapots. Clarke dismantles second-hand teapots and recombines their elements, resulting in a transformation of form that often leads to the creation of new objects. This deconstruction and formation of silver components, soldered together with the rough and raw contrast of lead, redefines the decorative functionality of the original object. The result is a patchwork of patina and finishes that challenges the notion of status and documents the object's journey from its origin through to its reinvention.

This perspective of course sits in contention with the views and work of conservationists, and with jewellery's historical association with the everlasting as demonstrated in the use of precious, often hard-wearing metals and stones in order to signal the permanence of value and materiality. Patina can be seen as undesirable for an object or artwork, resulting in strategies that are employed

to preserve artefacts from its effects. For example, it was necessary to halt the darkening of Theodore Gericault's paintings in the Louvre, caused by the tendency of oil paintings to accumulate dirt and suffer from yellowing of the original vanish, or the image would no longer have been visible. The documentation of a similar process of change using macro photography feeds into the discourse surrounding materiality in terms of museum conservation strategy. It interrogates what may be revealed or overlooked in the display case by identifying and signifying aspects of materiality and craftsmanship through microscopic observation and abstraction.

The large scale of each presented image in the exhibition will reflect the approach seen in the majority of virtual realities. This creates an artificial world 'that renders the image space a totality or at least fills the observer's entire field of vision' (Grau, 2003: 13). This presentational technique encloses the viewer within a visual space, thus allowing them to become immersed in the large-scale medium. It may readily be applied to a wide variety of objects, offering a multi-faceted narrative through each magnified landscape, and portraying a scene that is normally kept at arm's length behind the glass of the display case.

## 6.5 The embodied object

The conceptual content of patina and the maker's mark is demonstrative of an active object. The wearer of jewellery provides an informative narrative, in addition to that proposed by the making process and the transitory nature of materiality. The jewel as a worn object becomes enveloped in the performance of the body. In terms of contemporary jewellery, this principle has caused a number of jewellers to investigate ways by which they can provide permanence to an object in motion. This practical investigation will explore moving imagery in order to document and provide tangibility to the behavioural mechanisms induced when wearing a jewellery object. What is being recognized here is an object's ability to become embedded in a network of gestures, movements and ritualistic behaviour that instigates a social narrative between object, wearer and the viewer. For example, a series of processes are carried out when dressing the body in preparation for the day ahead. This may involve bathing, combing hair and the application of beauty products, which can be described in terms of ritualistic behaviour. Joanne Eicher classifies the dressing of an individual as a

collaborative process between both ‘body modifications’ and ‘body supplements’ (Eicher 2000). This collaboration includes enhancements or alterations to the body such as tattoos, piercings or choice of hairstyle, as well as additions such as perfume, clothing or make-up. Taken together, these processes can be seen as a system of bodily actions that provide ‘a total sensory system of communication’ (*ibid*: 4). There is no need for verbal explanation, because observers are able instantaneously to assess any bodily modifications and supplements, at the same time remarking associations or differences between individuals.

In the context of jewellery, such body modification or supplements can be historically traced. Traditional associations conflate jewellery with a significant announcement or the celebration of an event, whether it is an engagement, wedding or anniversary. A ring, for example, can carry multiple connotations; the preciousness of the material and its circular construction symbolises an eternal quality, while the type of ring – engagement or wedding – signals the status of the wearer. Jewellery thus has the ability to contribute a layer of communication to the body through aesthetic expression and symbolic representation. Throughout history, this has been used to illustrate social standing, from the ostentatious display of royal jewels to body adornment rituals of tribal societies. Body modification such as implants and scarification are still, as previously noted, used as a means by which to represent the self (Pitts 2003).

The notion of ‘dress’ as an everyday process that is ritualistic in the way it repeats and is performed by the body, activates additional layers of meaning in the design and function of an artefact. This principle was outlined by jeweller Esther Brinkmann, in an interview with Roberta Bernabei:

Jewellery influences our gestures, our way of moving; and it can change our silhouette and our behaviour.  
Complementing oneself with an object, with a piece of jewellery, causes a change in our attitude, induces a different kind of self-awareness and calls for a more intimate relationship with the body (Bernabei 2011: 81).

This intimacy with the body can be revealed by a collection of unconscious movements, signals and habits made in response to the wearer’s environment

and the object that adorns them, whether by twisting a wedding ring round the figure during a conversation or running a pendant up and down its chain while deep in thought. These are a system of actions that respond to an object's materiality and the social context in which it is worn.

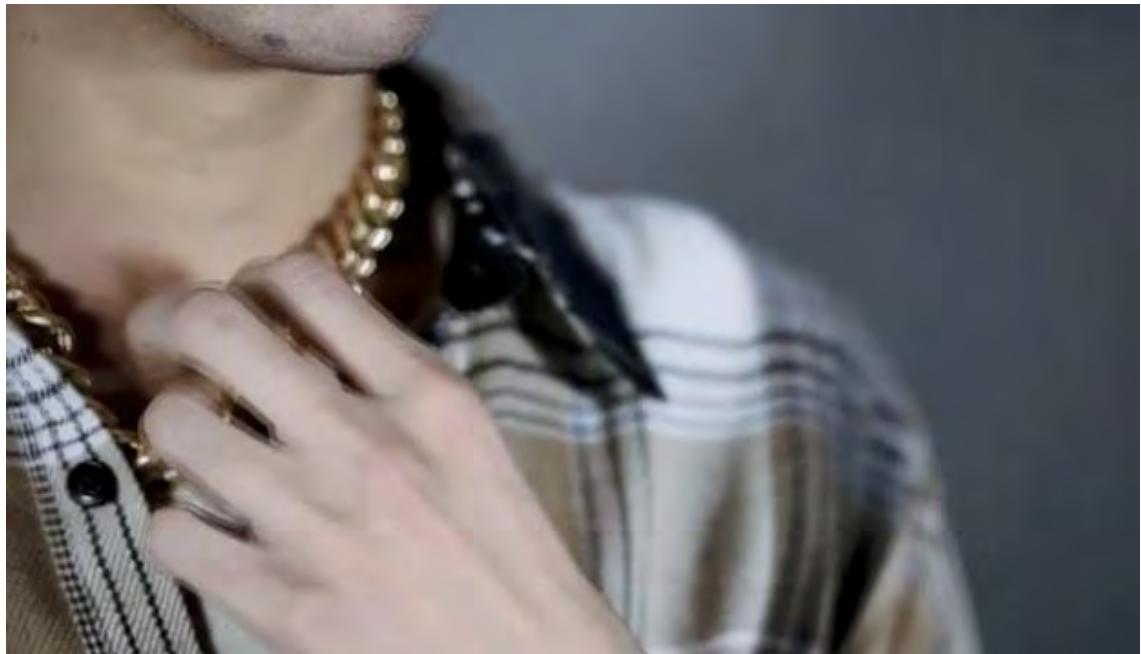


Figure 36. *The embodied object* (2013)

The aim of this research, therefore, was to generate an approach to jewellery display based on the observed interactions between wearer and jewellery that is part of their everyday adornment. Based on the practical outcome produced in the first practical investigation in Chapter 4, the challenge was to develop a system that gave permanence to the movement of worn jewellery, rather than producing a physical object that reflected movement through its form. This was carried out by focusing on the recording and presentation of moving imagery that depicted a range of gestures and the movement of a jewellery object. I was able to achieve this by filming a number of different people wearing their own jewellery (Figure 36, above and 37, below). Each participant was engaged in conversation in order to put them at ease and thus capture the natural

behaviour and movement of the body. The camera is focused on the jewellery object so that such movements of the wearer could be captured during the recording of each conversation. A gesture or unconscious movement is thus identified, reduced in speed and presented on an I-pad or digital picture frame. Within the resulting film, the viewer cannot physically interact with or control the object's movement, but is able to immerse themselves in another wearer's bodily experience. The intention behind this approach is to enable the viewer to become aware both of their own bodily gestures and of the jewellery that is worn from day to day, as a response to the visual information gathered within the project (see DVD, *The embodied object – film 1 and 2*).

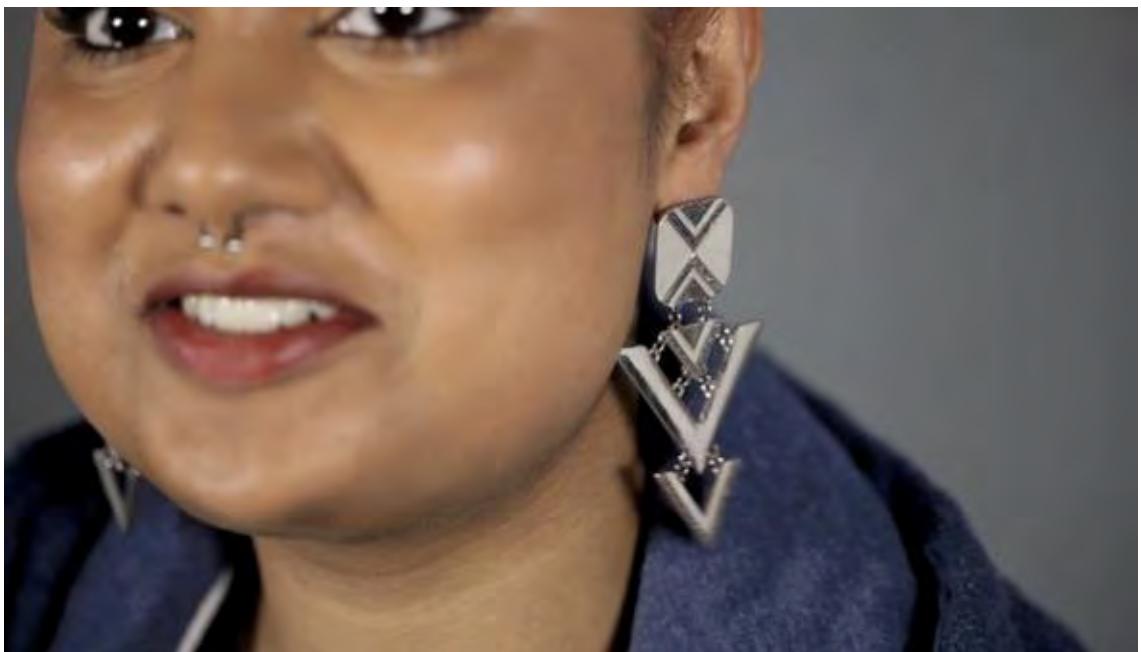


Figure 37. *The embodied object* (2013)

The immersive qualities that affect the viewer's state of perceptual engagement with the recorded movement are developed by reducing the speed of the film, in a method that uses visual techniques similar to those of Bill Viola and Bruce Nauman. Within their digitized imagery, a relationship between viewer and artwork is established, often through sensory perception. As with Viola's video installations, the references to human life are established by the use of

techniques including extreme slow motion, contrasts in scale and multiple or layered screens. This is another approach seen in Nauman's work, in which he used an industrial, high-speed camera to chart his performance of simple activities that could later be reduced in speed. These 'slo-mo' films were often shot in black and white and captured Nauman manipulating parts of his body, perhaps stretching his lips with his fingers or pulling a length of gauze from his mouth. *Poke in the Eye/Nose/Ear* (1994) uses a close-up of Nauman's face as he methodically pokes himself in the eye, nose, and ear. The enlarged image, reduced in speed, enables the audience to focus on the feature he is manipulating, thus exaggerating the brutality of such behaviour. The process transforms a straightforward, almost mundane action into a visual portrayal of human vulnerability that aims to heighten viewers' awareness of their own bodies.

My own films are reduced in speed and presented on a small sized screen. The use of the I-pad or digital picture frame, hung on the wall of the gallery space, is intended to suggest the presentation of a photography exhibit. Owing to the film's slow movement, their format is not immediately obvious. The audience is encouraged to investigate and observe the images to realize they are films not photographs, to interpret their purpose, and in turn, apply the same level of attention to the viewer's own body and jewellery. The humanizing techniques of sensory engagement discussed here accord with the notion of the 'aesthetic of immersion' discussed by Polly Ullrich within digital art. It is by encouraging spectator introspection concerning the material or human relations in everyday life that the gap between viewer and artwork is bridged, generating a heightened sense of self-awareness amongst audience members. This is similar to the principle that operates in Marie-José van den Hout's photography and the accompanying descriptions that detail the choice made by the wearer in the project *Jewellery, the Choice of Schiedam* (1997). A dialogue signifying the aspects of the wearer's personality, tastes and style can be established, illuminating characteristics of the wearer that can also be gleaned from the varying movements captured in this project. It is thus demonstrated how jewellery display can record the non-verbal interplay between body and object, wearer and viewer. By focusing on bodily behaviour, the 'ordinariness', as shown in Filmer's use of an audio recording of breathing as part of her

installation *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft* (2007), reveals how the familiar or mundane can take on a new life when it is abstracted from the body or, in terms of this project, slowed down in movement. This results in a new importance or meaning that identifies and redirects the attention of the viewer towards their own body.

## 6.6 The jewellery image

As discussed, the ubiquity of the replicated image within the public domain provides a wide audience access to a growing body of jewellery designs and images that can be found in photo stores, on the designer's web page and in the exhibition catalogue. My fourth practical outcome considers the role and availability of the jewellery image, using duplicate copies as a raw material from which to construct alternative approaches to jewellery display, and to continue the exploration into immersive and narrative structures. Among the visual catalogue of jewellery images available in the commercial field, a subconscious and often detached relationship is established between the representational image and that of the viewer or consumer. This responds to the visual mass of promotional and semiotic material that forms part of everyday experience, and incorporates a network of advertising, logos and branding. Promotional images of commercial jewellery that portray the ornamental object both on and off the body are designed to seduce and entice in a way that enhances its appearance, often in a particular style or set-up that supports branding used by the jeweller or jewellery company. The affective properties of craft-as-image have led this study to uncover a narrative that investigates the relationship between makers, object and craft image. Consideration has been made of how this chronological process, from designing through to documentation, can be perceived and understood by the viewer. This chapter has defined how the craft image can be seen as a continuing stage of the craft process, and is often used as a research tool or defining outcome of a jeweller's work. This, rather than the actual object, may command the viewer's attention. The documented portrayal of artistic jewellery objects remains, however, predominantly within the confines of Besten's 'functional photography', thus removing the jewellery object from the body and providing a promotional or presentational tool that is widely used because of its capacity for mass reproduction and easy circulation to a wide audience.

As a response to this ‘functional’ portrayal that is derivative of artistic jewellery promotion, this project uses alternative presentational methods in the form of an audio recording to depict a personal anecdote or aspect of the making process that is not evident in the replication of promotional imagery. The material for this investigation was gathered by requesting the participation of a select number of contemporary jewellers. These were drawn from jewellers exhibiting in various London galleries through the months of July and August 2011. My approach produced a diverse selection of jewellers with different backgrounds, techniques and experiences to form the basis of this investigation. The intention of this project was to explore presentational methods that attempt to engage the viewer through a combination of display, curatorial and practical methods. With this in mind, each jeweller was asked to submit an image of their work in digital format, plus a written text of between 10–500 words. The call for submissions was designed to gain a collection of stories in association with the image provided by the jeweller. It aimed to provide a personal insight into the design, making, wearing or documentation process experienced by the jeweller in relation to the photographed object, and was designed as a counterfoil to exhibitions such as *Process Works* (2007) that use a display strategy which researches and illustrates varying attitudes, approaches and styles to making.

This project explores the narratives embedded in the craft image, with the intention of humanizing the mass-produced imagery that is increasingly evident in the crafts. The subjective descriptions offered by Vicki Ambery-Smith in response to her client’s brief, for example, contrast with the sparse prose summaries made up of lines of a single word (‘Twelve texts’, by Stephen Bram), which were submitted by Lisa Walker to accompany her work (see Appendix A). This reveals aspects of the jeweller’s approach to making and their creative styles, to which my own choice of presentational method is added with the aim of engaging or influencing the viewer’s interpretation of these descriptions.

Three of the narratives submitted by the group of jewellers who participated has been selected for the exhibition and is re-presented to the audience using a recorded soundtrack (see DVD, *The jewellery image – audio 1, 2 and 3*). The audio stream aims to present the jeweller’s text not only in an alternative format but also as a means by which to reinterpret the narrative. This was done by using the skills of a voiceover artist adopting a range of vocal styles and

accents, alongside a selection of volunteers from alternative professions. This device is intended to introduce a new layer of meaning and additional characteristics to the submitted narrative, thus establishing a narrative trail from the original image, through the description submitted by the jeweller, to its display. Each step provides an alternative interpretation that is symbolic of the varying attitudes, opinions and conclusions applied to a mass-produced image as it circulates in the public sphere.

This layering of presentational methods can be seen in *Who's Afraid of Representation?* (2006) by the Lebanese artist Rabih Mroué. In this, the audience is confronted by a series of presentations that depict the work of 1990s performance artists. These acts are not performed live to the audience but are read aloud, using a narrative taken from *The Artist's Body* (2006) by Amelia Jones and Tracey Warr. This text is a discussion of body art and performance during the 1970s and 1980s by artists including Barry Le Va and Chris Burden. The readings derive from descriptions of the artists' actions and have been reformulated for the purposes of the work to be heard as a first person narration. This extract assumes the persona of artist Gina Pane:

I pinch myself. I punched myself. I made myself bleed. I got this ladder and put sharp nails and razors on each rung. I took my shoes off and climbed the ladder barefoot. I slashed myself. Once I ate raw meat... (Mroué 2005).

The dispassionate delivery contrasts strongly with the often shocking content acts to enhance the horror or violence that featured in many of the artists' investigations of the body. Though this approach does not mediate the emotive experience of seeing, hearing and perhaps smelling these acts first-hand, the abstracted, retold version takes on its own layer of meaning. This sets up an array of questions and interpretations from a new audience, such as: 'Who are these artists?'; 'Why are they doing this?'; 'What is that look on their face?' and 'Did they cry out or were they controlled?' The process has thus gone from the body of the performer, to the documentation of text and image and finally to the voice of the reader, questioning what impact the process has on the artist's original intention. Does the role of representation dilute the artwork's content or signify the importance of audience interpretation? Could the layering of presentational methods go on, or is it a case of 'Chinese Whispers', in which the content will eventually be altered completely?

The intention of my practical project is to confront the role of display using representational methods in different media in order to immerse the audience. It operates within the dialogue between jeweller and the mass-produced imagery of their work, providing contextual information that initiates understanding between jewellery and viewer. Information regarding the jeweller's decision-making process, craft, style and personality has been volunteered, and is in turn exhibited in relation to my own investigation of display and presentational techniques. The style and delivery of the audio recording provides a different interpretation of the original text, influencing how its content may be perceived. The consequence is left open-ended; it is for the viewer to experience and to project their own visualization of the original image on to the wall space, which is lit and deliberately left bare (Figure 38, below).



Figure 38. *The jewellery Image* (2013)

# **Conclusion**

## **7.1 Research summary and evaluation**

The intended destination for contemporary jewellery once an object has been made or an idea has been realized varies, as observed throughout this study. The artistic explorations of jewellers from the 1960s to the present day have introduced a range of designs and concepts destined for the display case, an approach to jewellery display that utilizes the art environment to showcase designs that are to be observed away from the body of the wearer. This investigation into craft display identifies an area of art jewellery that aims to address the distance between the object and wearer by engaging the viewer. The investigation has resulted in a body of work, both written and practical, that uses presentational methods to create an emotive experience for the viewer in order to communicate the role of the body and notions of ownership. This thesis and accompanying exhibition look toward ways of making and presenting contemporary jewellery that inform both theory and practice.

The body plays an integral role in the design, application and meaning of a jewellery object and signifies the distinction between jewellery and Fine Art. The actions of the wearer enable an object to become mobile, thus altering the meaning of jewellery according to the context and conditions under which it is viewed. The choices made by the wearer when selecting an item of jewellery, their behaviour towards that object and the environment in which they live, all inform a social narrative through which the jewellery object can be understood. This narrative reveals that jewellery can be a powerful and effective means of communication while it is on the body, a message quite different from that which is projected when the same object is presented in a display case. This socially-led investigation of jewellery display methodology has been driven by the phenomenon of ownership and wearability.

This research began by exploring common methods of display used to present contemporary jewellery in the gallery space. Chapter 3 outlined the practical and theoretical efforts that were undertaken in a bid to address the relationship between object and viewer. This investigation directed my enquiry towards

modes of display that communicate the role of the body in contemporary jewellery and are designed to engage an audience.

As my research progressed, two key areas of investigation were used to access both existing and potential ways by which to represent jewellery and the body in the gallery space. The first of these areas identifies strategies used by contemporary jewellers in order to communicate their work to a wider audience. This involves collaboration between jeweller and audience in order to emphasize the importance of the role played by the viewer in the construction and display of contemporary jewellery, and engages the viewer by enabling physical interaction during the making and application of an object. It can be used to establish knowledge of the viewer's tastes and prior knowledge, thus informing a social narrative within the crafting process. The investigation reveals how contemporary jewellers are creating interactive spaces in which an audience can experience and engage with the crafts, offering a contrast to the display case as a socially-led tool for jewellery's presentation.

The second area of investigation is the exploration of bodily processes as a means by which to contextualize the object on display. This considers the ways in which the individual and social body is explored in contemporary jewellery, with the aim of developing methods that delineate its anthropological foundations. This area of investigation marks a move away from the display of the craft object as an autonomous artefact, and towards the presentation of an interactive process. Developments in digital media over the past decade have led to an increased emphasis on photography, film and auditory methods as alternative modes of expression in the crafts. This approach is informed by developments in communication in both public and virtual spaces, including the internet and social networking. Display methods that are compatible with the digital age have been explored in order to identify viable ways of presenting the movements made by the body, with the aim of establishing a critical discourse.

The methods employed during this study enabled me to draw on my own practice as a means of establishing ways of representing the individual and social body that are compatible with the gallery environment. The initial practical investigation, as detailed in Chapter 4, focused my enquiry on audience interaction and bodily processes. As a response to my contextual findings, a

combination of digital media and traditional craft techniques were used to record and represent the absent body in the gallery space. This resulted in two practical outcomes that were intended to provide a permanent display of the transient relationship between the body and jewellery. Observations were made of jewellery while on the body, using digital media to capture and present the detailed movements and behaviour of the wearer. This approach was developed to incorporate audio and visual methods; these were intended to represent the implications for the craft object of audience participation. Digital methods of presentation was used as an alternative mode of interaction to touch, and allowed viewers to experience the materiality of an object through a combination of sensory methods. Both outcomes were designed to present or prompt an emotive reaction from the viewer in response to jewellery on display.

The second practical investigation, as outlined in Chapter 6, represents my main practical response to this area of enquiry. The final four outcomes continue to explore the role of digital media and the creative potential of presenting a craft process in order to investigate social interaction and bodily processes in jewellery design and display. This approach is developed by introducing relational practice as a supportive framework that informs my theoretical and practical enquiry.

Relational aesthetics were used to discuss current social strategies evident in contemporary jewellery and to examine how these have informed the conception and display of contemporary jewellery design. This approach also helps to assess the ways in which contemporary jewellers are creating meaning in their work through the use of social interaction. Audience participation and live performance allow the viewer to inform the outcome of a jeweller's work, which draws the crafting process away from the maker's bench and makes it accessible in the public arena. The approach I have developed explores Bourriaud's ideas to construct an alternative method of display that is informed by the social context of jewellery design. The distinction between the relative concerns of the contemporary artist and those of the jeweller has been located in the role of the body. The subjective views of the individual artist have been defined as primarily political in comparison with those of the jeweller, whose concerns are intrinsic to the body. This distinction informs a strategy of display

that considers the relevance of the body in the crafts but is nevertheless compatible with the gallery setting.

## **7.2 Representing a critical jewellery object**

The development of immersive aesthetics focuses on relational strategies that evoke a sensory response or trigger a memory from the audience. This process uses digital media to provide a permanent display of the social interactions and bodily processes that are evident in contemporary jewellery which considers the role of viewer in the gallery space. The presentational techniques chosen in this study provide both material and concept in my work. The use of photography, moving imagery or audio recordings invite the viewer to apply their own understanding or experiences to interpret the works on display. This is an approach that references the visual language that is emerging in the work of a number of contemporary craft practitioners. The result demonstrates the importance currently being placed on the craft image and its ability to engage the viewer in concepts of materiality, form and function.

This immersive approach to jewellery display is not intended to replace the craft object, but proposes an alternative approach to craft display in the gallery space. It reveals how the display of jewellery can be used both as a creative strategy and as a research tool by implementing methods that are reflective of the creative freedoms seen in art jewellery, but is not restricted to the creation of a final piece. Instead, this approach demonstrates the open-ended development of research jewellery in which process is foregrounded in order to inform jewellery discourse. This method extends the inclusive approach seen in the work-in-progress exhibition by exploring the relationship between maker, wearer and viewer. The use of digital media to communicate concepts of the body in jewellery display thus invites audience members to reflect on and reinterpret their own relationship with contemporary jewellery.

## **7.3 Contribution to knowledge**

The future value of this study lies within the practical and theoretical consideration of the role of the viewer in the conception and presentation of contemporary jewellery. This enquiry is located in the wider context of relational art, which has allowed a small group of contemporary jewellers to develop a

strategy that places increasing emphasis on audience participation. This rationale has been extended to encompass concepts of the body in jewellery display that promote the perceptual engagement of the viewer. This has in turn revealed the emergence of a visual language in contemporary jewellery that is compatible with the digital age. The enquiry is therefore designed to inform craft discourse by providing a coherent discussion of modes of jewellery display that are designed to support and communicate craft concepts.

This is not the end; potential areas for further investigation have become evident throughout this study. For example, the impact of an exhibition on the viewer could be analysed by gathering and reflecting on audience feedback. This insight into audience perceptions could then be used to inform the reinterpretation of the work in question. Another area that could be further explored is how display techniques may be developed and applied outside the gallery space. It has become clear that the internet, social networking and alternative collaborative environments, whether physical or virtual, are a widespread and evolving means of communication in contemporary jewellery practice that offer enormous potential in terms of contextualizing my argument. The role of immersive aesthetics within alternative modes of presentation also holds the potential to inform this line of critical discourse, by exploring the social relationships afforded by digital media and how they change according to the context in which jewellery is presented or experienced.

This thesis and accompanying exhibition have illustrated methods of communicating the affective qualities of the craft object and its relationship with the body through the craft image. In answer to my original research question, which sought to consider ways of presenting the tangible and intangible in contemporary jewellery, I have shown how visual language can establish a dialogue between object, viewer and the maker. Further, though the wearable narrative of an object focuses on presentational methods of display rather than the presence of the physical object, I have shown the perceptual possibilities of digital media. This has demonstrated the creative potential of immersive aesthetics by considering the jeweller's involvement in display practice. This is a strategy that places importance on the viewer rather than the wearer in order to inform the design and wider presentation of contemporary jewellery. In doing so I have demonstrated how the body-centric context of contemporary jewellery

can inform the way in which jewellery is presented in the gallery space. As a result of my investigations into the recording and presentation of the intimate human relations that inform the discourse concerning contemporary jewellery, I have uncovered and presented an alternative way of viewing jewellery that effectively opens up the display case.

## **Appendix A: Image and text submissions**

### **1.1 Lisa Walker**



Figure 1, Walker, Lisa (2011). *Wearable* [Photograph; Neckpiece, plastic]

## Twelve texts by Stephen Bram

1.

W.W.  
skidding  
window  
camp  
house  
from  
minutes  
him  
to  
dripped  
truck  
and  
into  
dock  
when  
and  
now  
quivering  
W.W.  
guard

2.

In  
mountain  
leaving  
toward  
through  
the  
a  
mountains  
and  
night  
fingers  
so  
dishes  
what's  
it'll  
and  
than  
as  
and  
ten  
herself

3.

Mercury  
his  
union

white  
named  
there  
thick  
down  
laughed  
was  
white  
o'clock  
opened  
and  
then  
bed  
of  
in  
and  
and  
dry  
house

4.  
went  
Peabody  
they  
behind  
desk  
down  
were  
room  
elevators  
the jacket  
behind  
beside  
quack  
the  
boxes  
took  
away  
waiting  
day  
and  
pond  
rode  
waited  
came  
duck  
for  
stand  
they  
who  
negro  
the

their  
chief  
his  
thought  
them

5.  
It  
began  
when  
they  
were  
paper  
convict  
had  
whom  
even  
some  
though  
twenty  
few  
and  
that  
and  
and  
houses  
and  
but  
convict  
horse  
at  
sandboils

6.  
of  
in  
men  
selves  
coarse  
stories  
reading  
shot-guns  
slipping  
hurl  
turn  
watched  
and  
elephants  
watched  
gardens  
wardens

those  
seem  
Memphis  
Governor

**7.**  
the  
eight  
of  
satin  
glittering  
filled  
in  
in  
life  
he  
pantomime  
or  
he  
or  
joint  
almost  
glitter  
and  
species  
leading  
some  
which  
region  
eleven  
they  
bench  
a  
ten

**8.**  
held  
what  
together  
so  
warm  
arms  
from  
teeth  
her  
reached  
moving  
it  
the  
with  
of

and  
the  
the  
dude  
opulent  
city  
London  
African  
read  
Cambridge  
and  
elects  
bitten  
savages  
her  
included  
sometimes  
the  
sometimes  
they  
to  
Charlotte

9.  
through  
specialists  
dental  
dressed  
come  
the  
power shovel  
sand  
time  
stage  
starting  
wave  
top  
studied  
well  
between  
beforehand  
25  
our  
above  
for  
of  
on  
with  
the  
man  
neck  
who

ailments  
on  
healthy  
the  
he  
to  
work  
above  
alert  
come  
an  
on  
around  
their  
mean

**10.**  
they  
lights  
out  
trotted  
dry  
asleep  
none  
never  
for  
over  
speak  
part  
time  
didn't  
put  
left

**11.**  
you  
done  
fathers  
have  
gringo  
hard  
Three  
under  
other  
favoring  
bluff  
came  
two

**12.**  
of

everything  
keeping  
into  
string  
and  
his  
lights  
and  
and  
could  
adjusting  
was  
to  
somebody  
business  
sitting  
the  
you  
too  
all  
lights  
were  
dispatch  
the  
came  
cardinals  
quickly  
spent  
never  
night  
together

**13.**  
he  
yards  
the  
fireplugs  
enclosure  
at  
berry  
the  
town  
he  
burning  
the  
little  
he  
draw  
on  
could  
were  
he  
little  
timber

his  
in  
the  
painted  
green  
and  
perforated  
and  
over  
hour  
the  
dent  
the  
dead  
of  
watched  
white  
at  
trains  
conductors  
always  
the  
a  
whoever  
there  
to  
alone  
engineers  
through  
great  
run

## 1.2 Joanne Haywood



Figure 2, Haywood, Joanne (2009). *Subterranean Garden Neckpiece* [Photograph; Neckpiece, Hand dyed crocheted cotton and oxidised silver. Size: 80 x 80 x 5cm approx]

Gardens are a reoccurring theme in my work. Gardens and different types of gardens; secret gardens, underground gardens, parallel world gardens, gardens that we might visit in our dreams or remember from our childhood, a perfect garden or an overgrown garden. This particular piece had its origin in the myth Proserpine in Roman or Persephone in Greek Mythology. The Goddess is stolen away to the underworld where she eats pomegranate and it then transpires that she has to stay in the underworld for half the year and is allowed to return in spring hence the spring time myth. I like to imagine this subterranean garden we cannot see when she returns during our winter. Is there a mutated parallel version of "Spring" that happens elsewhere and in which case would the flowers be the same or a version of it?

### 1.3 Maud Traon



Figure 3, Traon, Maud (2007). *Les Villes Invisibles/The invisible cities* [Photograph; Ring, clay, synthetic stones. Size: 3.5 x 2 x 2cm approx]

I made this ring in 2007, after graduating from the Royal College of Art. At the time I wanted to work in colours and as I could not use the facilities of Uni any longer, I started to simply work with fimo clay, which has since become a material of predilection in my work.

After graduation time was also a particular time in my life. Having yet to build up a life, being French, in London, despite the evidence it had always been to me, started to become a real questioning.

I named this ring after Italo Calvino's novel, the Invisible Cities where the author imagines cities that unable us to travel in some other worlds.

This ring encapsulates the Eiffel tower which, in such a context could be in any other capital or world with no time or space. Building up this little world unable me to leave the horizon open to remove some pressure of being somewhere, for good, for real.

I have chosen this ring since it was on tour for nearly 2 years now. It seems to me that because of its scale, such a ring is really difficult to display and one can see the details only if he comes very close to it. So somehow, I have always been asking myself, if the picture of it did not give it a chance to be looked at, a second life or maybe just a life.

## 1.4 Sato Michihiro



Figure 4, Michihiro, Sato (2001). *Tree with Datura Blossoms* [Photograph; Brooch, telephone book, stainless steel. Size: 18 x 1.5 x 1.5cm approx]

### Encounter with paper

I used to make paper model for architecture. One day I happened to find a fragment of wasted paper in trash can, and felt it interesting so that I left it on my working desk and saw it every day. It was the wasted paper that caused me to come to be interested in the paper as forming material and to think the way of how I could make plastic body by use of it without bending or paper mache technique.

Trying to make many test pieces, I gradually came to think about, to say nothing of forming technique, the connection of my personal imagery coming from the idea or description in the Lotus Sutra of Buddhism, to my artwork.

I was interested in such sentence of the Lotus Sutra; many Datura blossoms fall down from the sky like it is raining. And an explanation about the description was shown as following. This beautiful scene always exists in innermost depths of everyone's heart just like the sun continues to shine over the cloud regardless of the weather, and we can envisage the scene in every moment if we want.

This brooch is made from a telephone book, which is published in Dusseldorf in Germany, where I lived in former days. The book was for me the symbol of equality, because every name, address and telephone number of many citizens is printed in the book what they want, though the registrants' profession, age, and sex were various. And the printed information concealed in my artwork is for me the symbol of Datura blossoms in one's heart.



Figure 5, Michihiro, Sato (2011). *Simultaneity* [Photograph; Pendant, book review, silver. Size: 10 x 5 x 5cm approx]

I was interested in the idea of birth and death in Buddhism; to be alive is the manifest form of life, and to be died is the latent form of life. There is only the difference of visual performance like the front and the back of a coin, so that life would seem to exist ad infinitum. I'm not sure if it is true or not, but the idea helped me at least to heal my vague anxiety about death.

I integrated two formative elements into an artwork, the one is something enfolded associated with seed and the other is something born associated with sprouting to represent the simultaneity of concealment and revelation.

## 1.5 Zoe Robertson



Figure 6, Robertson, Zoe (2011). *From The Sublime to....* [Photograph; Neckpiece, sublimated inks, plastic, stainless steel]

Work work fizzy busy bang bang  
Twenty-five hours a day

Feels like working on a chain gang  
And never seems to get away  
Money to earn, money to burn  
A black noon call for show  
Where does it go, how should I know?

And it's two way traffic  
On a one way street  
All the voices in the air  
Are stuck on repeat  
It's a two-horse race  
In a one-horse town  
Like a house of cards  
It's gonna fall down  
War plays out  
Getting ready to rumble  
Survival of the fittest  
The law of the jungle  
Fold back, hold back  
Get yourself a seat  
The two way traffic on a one way street

Superman, where are you?  
We need you to pave the way  
Feels like an alien invasion  
Trouble coming everyday  
War of the worlds  
You get the girl  
They really don't  
Sound that mad  
Fighting the snow  
Way to go

And it's two way traffic  
On a one way street  
All the voices in the air  
Are stuck on repeat  
It's a two-horse race  
In a one-horse town  
Like a house of cards  
It's gonna fall down  
War plays out  
Getting ready to rumble  
Survival of the fittest  
The law of the jungle  
Fold back, hold back  
Get yourself a seat

The two way traffic on a one way street

And it's two way traffic  
On a one way street  
All the voices in the air  
Are stuck on repeat  
It's a two-horse race  
In a one-horse town  
Like a house of cards  
It's gonna fall down  
War plays out  
Getting ready to rumble  
Survival of the fittest  
The law of the jungle  
Fold back, hold back  
Get yourself a seat

The two way traffic on a one way street

Two way traffic  
On a one way street  
All the voices in the air

Are stuck on repeat  
It's a two-horse race  
In a one-horse town  
Like a house of cards  
It's gonna fall down  
War plays out  
Getting ready to rumble  
Survival of the fittest  
The law of the jungle  
Fold back, hold back  
Get yourself a seat  
The two way traffic on a one way street

Two way traffic on a one way street  
Two way traffic on a one way street  
Two way traffic on a one way street  
Two way traffic on a one way street

Status Quo , *Two Way Traffic*

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAWvkfDN6No&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAWvkfDN6No&feature=player_embedded)

## 1.6 Vicki Ambery-Smith



Figure 7, Ambery-Smith, Vicki. *London ring* [Photograph; red gold, yellow gold and silver]

This ring was commissioned by a woman who worked for many years in the City of London. Due to long term poor health she retired and cannot easily get to the City.

She knew my work from previous exhibitions and talked about a ring design at Goldsmiths' Fair in October 2009.

She was a delight to work for with clarity in her vision of the ring. The starting point was her 'wish list' of buildings to be depicted: St Paul's, Guildhall, Mansion House and the spire St Stephen's Walbrook. The challenge for me was to work out how these buildings could be arranged in rough relative size to each other and a balance of silver, red and yellow gold. It was important too that it stands up as a small sculpture when not being worn.

While the buildings are recognizable, they are greatly edited for clarity while, I hope, retaining their character.



Figure 8, Ambery-Smith, Vicki. *Letchworth ring* [Photograph; silver]

This ring also began with a wish list of landmarks of the town of Letchworth where the owners live, and with which they have a connection. It includes their house (out of view in this picture), the town hall, the Settlement (a local arts centre), an art-and-crafts building called the Towers and.....their local branch of Morrisons!

I love the grandeur of the formal buildings and the witty inclusion of their supermarket, which is after all *most* important. A uniquely personal present for a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The comments at the end of the above paragraph also fit here too: challenge, balance and editorial control.

## 1.7 Lynne MacLachlan



Figure 9, MacLachlan, Lynne (2010). *Bubble Neckpiece* [Photograph; Neckpiece, silver, quartz, pearls]

This piece was the focal point of a small collection made for the Labcraft exhibition, a touring Crafts Council exhibition. It is larger in scale than most of my work and a culmination of a lot of thought and knowledge gained from previous pieces made in this collection. Despite using some slightly new processes, nylon rapid prototyping and silver electroforming the making of this piece went very smoothly, which any maker knows is not always the case. The beautiful satin texture left by the electroforming required no further processes and so I was delighted not to have to spend hours hand polishing with the peril of something going wrong. Simply strung with some quartz beads it came together nicely and finished with a catch that would be likely to break if worn much – but at the moment this is a show piece so that is a challenge for another day. Happily, the piece has generated much positive attention and comments throughout the exhibition. It's nice when it just all works.

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## List of figures

Figure 1. Bakker, Gijs. (1973) *Shadow Jewelry/Schaduwsieraad* [photograph; yellow gold wire.] At:

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Figure 2. Heron, Susanna. (1979) *Light Projection* [photograph] In: Osborn, S (1980) *Susanna Heron: Bodywork Exhibition*. Crafts Council. p.5.

Figure 3. Filmer, Naomi. (2007) *Lenticular Series* [photograph; installation shot, animated images, produced by Create 3D and BluLoop.] At:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturepicturegalleries/3675491/Out-of-the-Ordinary-Spectacular-Craft.html?image=7> (Accessed October 2012).

Figure 4. Noten, Ted. (2011) *The Modern Jewel In Time and the Mind of Others* [photograph by Steve Philip Brown.] At:

<http://www.visitmima.com/exhibitions/pastdetail.php?id=75> (Accessed November 2012)

Figure 5. The William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (2008) [photograph] At:

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/r/jewellery-gallery,-room-91,-level-3/> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 6. Barnes, Richard. (2008) *Elegant Armor: The Art of Jewelry* (2008–9). [photograph; exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York.] At:

<http://www.artjewelryforum.org/articles/curatorial-conundrums-exhibiting-contemporary-art-jewelry-museum> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 7. Fritsch, Karl. (2010) *The New Exhibition, Pinakothek der Moderne*, Munich [photograph] At: <http://www.artjewelryforum.org> (Accessed June 2011).

Figure 8. Galerie Sofie Lachaert. (2010) [photograph; exhibition stand at the Crafts Council's Collect fair. Saatchi Gallery, London.] At:

[www.artjewelryforum.org/blog/category/fairs-and-shows/\\_](http://www.artjewelryforum.org/blog/category/fairs-and-shows/_) (Accessed June 2011).

Figure 9. Peters, Ruudt. (1992) *Passio* [photograph; silver, black pearl.] At:

[http://www.klimt02.net/forum/index.php?item\\_id=919](http://www.klimt02.net/forum/index.php?item_id=919) (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 10. *Touching Warms the Art* (2008) [photograph] At:

<http://www.artjewelryforum.org/articles/curatorial-conundrums-exhibiting-contemporary-art-jewelry-museum> (Accessed November 2012).

Figure 11. Carnac, Helen. (2007) *Process Works* [photograph] In: Rushby, R. (2007) *Process works: An Exploration of the Creative Inspiration and Developmental Works of 5 Contemporary Jewellers*. Site Projects. p.27.

Figure 12. Cheung, Lin. (2007) *Jewellery Library* [photograph; books and paper, 250 x 30cm.] At: <http://jerwoodvisualarts.org/3084/Lin/493> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 13. Deleu, Sylvain. (2010) *CraftCube: Collection: Merete Rasmussen.* (2010) [photograph; exhibition at Ceramic Art London, Royal College of Art.] At: <http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/collectionandexhibitions/exhibitions/craftcubes/view/craftcube-collection-merete-rasmussen/objects?img=a0697224a62b3f65> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 14. Shengzhong, Lu. (2005) *The Book of Humanity: The Empty Book* [photograph; paper-cut, glass, metal screws, Chinese traditionally bound books.] In: Newell, L. (2007) *Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft.* V&A Publications and the Crafts Council. p.93.

Figure 15. Collis, Susan. (2004) *The Oyster's Our World* [photograph; wooden stepladder, mother-of-pearl, shell, coral, freshwater pearl, cultured pearls, white opal.] At: <http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/images/394889> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 16. *Power of Making.* (2011) Victoria and Albert Museum, London [photograph] At: <http://www.droog.com/news/2012/02/godogan-table-victoria-albert-museum/> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 17. Jessop, Michelle. (2010) From: *Earring in Motion* [Film still.] In possession of the author.

Figure 18. Jessop, Michelle. (2010) From: *Pendant in Motion* [Film still.] In possession of the author.

Figure 19. Jessop, Michelle. (2010) *Earring in Motion* [photograph; silver.] In possession of the author.

Figure 20. Jessop, Michelle. (2010) *Pendant in Motion* [photograph; silver.] In possession of the author.

Figure 21 Jessop, Michelle. (2010) *Untitled* [photograph; stainless steel, porcelain.] In possession of the author.

Figure 22. Twomey, Clare. (2006) *Trophy.* Victoria and Albert Museum, London [photograph; Wedgwood Jasper Blue clay.] At: <http://www.claretwomey.com/profile.html> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 23. Jessop, Michelle. (2010) *Contemporary jewellery: A transient concept.* [photograph; stainless steel, porcelain.] In possession of the author.

Figure 24. Oyama, Yuka. (2006) *Schmuck Quickies* [photograph] At: <http://www.dearyuka.com/sq1.html> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 25. Lupypciws, Wednesday. (2006) *Handi Crafts, Handy Cats* [photograph; workshop.] At:

[http://www.truck.ca/events/99?cms\\_page=previous-events-exhibitions](http://www.truck.ca/events/99?cms_page=previous-events-exhibitions)  
(Accessed December 2012).

Figure 26. Cheung, Lin; Noten, Ted and Potter, Laura. (2010–11) *Pas de deux* [photograph] At: <http://www.laurapotter.co.uk/index.php?/ongoing/museummaker/> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 27. Mackert, Suska. (2005) *Middlesbrough* [photograph] At: <http://www.galerie-spektrum.de/mackert04a.htm> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 28. Broadhead, Maisie. (2010) *Keep Them Sweet* [photograph; digital C-Type print.] At: <http://www.maisiebroadhead.com/jewellery-depicted-part-ii> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 29. Vouet, Simon. (1640) *Allegory of Wealth* [painting] At: <http://www.maisiebroadhead.com/jewellery-depicted-part-ii> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 30. Broadhead, Maisie. (2010) *Sweet Necklace* [photograph; silver, sweets.] At: <http://www.maisiebroadhead.com/jewellery-depicted-part-ii> (Accessed December 2012).

Figure 31. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) *Necklace* [photograph and Photoshop image; porcelain, silver.] In possession of the author.

Figure 32. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) *Necklace, detail* [photograph; porcelain, silver.] In possession of the author.

Figure 33. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) *Necklace, Bracelet, Brooch* [photograph; silver, porcelain, quartz.] In possession of the author.

Figure 34. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) *Re-Present series* [photograph by Dominika Ciemira; girdle of silver gilt, with the mark of Martinus Regis of Sibiu, Transylvania, ca. 1730. Maker unknown. Held at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum number: M.17–1953].

Figure 35. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) *Re-Present series* [photograph by Dominika Ciemira; girdle of silver gilt, as previous figure.]

Figure 36. Jessop, Michelle. (2013) *The embodied object* [film still; model's own jewellery.] In possession of the author.

Figure 37. Jessop, Michelle. (2010) *The embodied object* [film still; model's own jewellery.] In possession of the author.

Figure 38. Jessop, Michelle. (2013) *The jewellery image* [photograph] In possession of the author.