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**THE
SCULPTRESS
ADORNS**

Jewellery by Women Artists

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INTRODUCTION

The *Sculptress Adorns* is our first catalogue devoted solely to jewellery created by female sculptors or artists. They are all strong women who have made their names in a male dominated world and while some jewels have overtly feminist connotations, others do not. The sixty pieces presented here are typical works by the twenty-four individual artists; together they display a wide range of different artistic styles that have developed since the end of the Second World War. Before 1939, the number of female artists designing jewels was extremely limited, one of the first being the Scottish illustrator and designer Jessie Marion King (Fig. 1), while at this time there were also a number of artists working in Boston, MA, who produced a few pieces including most notably Josephine Hartwell Shaw.

After the War and from the beginning women were included in exhibitions devoted solely to artists' jewels or in joint exhibitions with artistic or craft jewellers. In *The First National Exhibition of Contemporary Jewellery* held in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1946, the work of Anni Albers was exhibited alongside pieces by artists such as Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia, and José de Rivera, as well as artistic jewellers including Madeleine Burrage, Gertrude Karlan, and Paul Lobel. In *The Second National Exhibition of Contemporary Jewellery* held two years later in the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, the work of Claire Falkenstein (cf. 9-16) was exhibited for the first time alongside pieces by Margaret de Patta and Art Smith. In 1950 Falkenstein moved to Paris, which was a Mecca for many artists and especially for those from Russia and Eastern Europe: Sonia Delaunay (6), Natalia Dumitresco (7-8), Nadia Khodassievitch Léger (27), and Marie Vassilieff (59-60). To these may be added the Argentinian-born Leonor Fini (17) and Alicia Penalba (44-8), while on the other hand Louise Bourgeois (2) moved from Paris to New York.

The first European exhibition with artists' jewels, *The International Exhibition of Modern Jewellery 1890-1961*, held in the Goldsmith's Hall, London, included 901 works, a small proportion of which were by artists, only a dozen of whom were women including Claire Falkenstein and Elizabeth Frink. Women sculptors had a more dynamic presence in the international travelling exhibition, *Jewelry by Contemporary Painters and Sculptors*, organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1967, with the wood and gold earrings by Louise Nevelson (36) appearing on the front cover (Fig. 4). In

addition, there was the original silver shackle necklace by Louise Bourgeois (cf. 2), which she was photographed wearing at dinner with her father in c. 1948 (Fig. 2), and other pieces by Alicia Penalba (cf. 44-8) and Guitou Knoop (cf. 19). The *Jewelry as Sculpture as Jewelry* exhibition in the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, in 1973, organized by the pioneer dealer in artists' jewels Joan Sonnabend, included many pieces by women such as Guitou Knoop, Barbara Locketz, Phyllis Mark (28), Louise Nevelson, Alicia Penalba, Beverly Pepper, Amalia del Ponte (52), and Niki de St Phalle. Most of the jewels were produced in small editions with the exception of the Nevelson's that were all unique and made by the artist.

All of these women mentioned above made jewellery for different personal reasons, although the need or desire to decorate their partners with their art is considerably less than with male artists. Notwithstanding this, we have had cufflinks made by Louise Nevelson, Alicia Penalba (46), Beverly Pepper, and Niki de St Phalle. While wearing a piece of jewellery by Alexander Calder, according to him, turned the wearer into a 'living



Fig. 1. Gold and amethyst unique necklace designed by Jessie Marion King for Liberty & Co., London, c. 1903

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Fig. 2. Louise Bourgeois wearing her original shackle necklace (cf. 2 on p. 7) while dining with her father, c. 1948

Fig. 3. Portrait of Louise Nevelson smoking while in her living room taken by Ugo Mulas in which she can be seen wearing the wood and citrine earrings (38 on p. 35), c. 1965



work of art', for a woman artist to wear her own creations is a way to promote her own art outside the confines of a gallery. So much so that even today we have recognized the author of a jewel without realizing initially that we were speaking to the sculptress herself (with apologies to Parvine Curie and Hedva Ser).

Some artists made jewels to raise money for a specific cause. In the case of Marie Vassilieff (59-60) it was to raise funds for the care home, La Maison Nationale de Retraite des Artistes de Nogent-sur-Marne, where she spent the last four years of her life, while for Niki de St Phalle (57-8) it was for her Tarot Garden in Tuscany. In other cases it was simply to make money on which to live as with the early pieces by Claire Falkenstein (10-16) while working out her ideas in miniature in less expensive materials. Inexpensive materials used by other artists include plastic or Perspex: a clear bangle and ring by Louise Nevelson (39-40) and a black plastic bangle by Amalia del Ponte (51); *papier mâché*: a bracelet by Yayoi Kusama (20); bronze both gilded and left plain: various pieces designed by Claude Lalanne in larger editions for Artcurial, Paris (21-4), a constructivist pendant by Nadia Léger (27), gilded aluminium: a pendant and torque by Phyllis Mark (28), and unique, playful, and very colourful pieces in resin by Federica Matta (29-32).

One noticeable feature of all these jewels is the lack of precious gemstones or diamonds. If a stone is included it is more likely to be a found agate pebble as with a pendant necklace by Monique Rozanes (52), while the *objets trouvés* incorporated into the pieces by Louise Nevelson include the base of a rusty tin can (31) and a variety of wood mouldings (34-8, 41), while a recycled leather brooch by Marie Vassilieff includes a zip and small beads (59). The only piece that uses semi-precious stones is the *Husch, Husch, der schönste vokal entleert sich!* necklace by Méret Oppenheim (43). This necklace had a special significance for the artist as its form was taken from a once lost painting of the same name she had painted in 1934 for her lover Max Ernst, but which was left behind in Paris as he escaped the Nazis in 1939. The painting subsequently turned up in the Paris flea market in 1970 with Oppenheim acquiring it a decade later and restoring it. She then designed the necklace in 1985. Another necklace that bears witness to a war is the shackle necklace by Louise Nevelson (2) that she created in 1947 to remind her of the prisoners she had seen being strangled in shackles during the Spanish Civil War.

Some artists or their dealers, however, are inter-

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ested in the purity of the material used, preferring to produce pieces either in gold: *Tender Buttons* by Janine Antoni (1), *Colerette* by Parvine Curie (5), *Objet en or* by Leonor Fini (17), ring by Guitou Knoop (19), *Bouche* by Claude Lalanne (25), all the pieces by Alicia Penalba (44-8), or in silver: butterfly necklace by Judith Brown (3), abstract pendant by Parvine Curie (4), brooch by Claire Falkenstein (9), *Parapapillon* by Méret Oppenheim (42), comet and scorpion brooches by Kiki Smith (54-5). For the most part the gold pieces, with the exception of the necklace by Claude Lalanne, were produced commercially in small editions with the intention of being sold rather than being kept by the artist or given away as gifts.

Another feature specific to jewellery by women rather than by men is that there is no exploitation of the female body in a sexual way. Instead, when the body or part of the body is reproduced the jewel focuses on its beauty and invokes the sacredness of a woman's body. This can best be seen in *Tender Buttons* by Janine Antoni (1), which are two gold brooches using casts of her nipples, and *Afrodite* by Patrizia Guerresi (18). Nature is another important theme as epitomized by the work of Claude Lalanne who uses butterflies (21-2), mistletoe (23) and even cabbage leaves (24) in her jewels, casts of the latter in silver also being used by Judith Brown to create, ironically, a butterfly collar (3).

The pride of this catalogue of jewellery by sculptresses are the pieces by Louise Nevelson which she made and wore herself (Figs 3, 5 and on p. 32) before having them mounted and highlighted in gold and sold through the Pace Gallery New York in the mid-1960s. The black painted wood and gold earrings on the front cover of the MOMA exhibition catalogue (Figs 4-5) were lent to the exhibition by the renowned collector of sculpture Mrs Albert List, who having run out of room turned her attention to collecting artists' jewels in her later years. Indeed the Louise Nevelson necklace (37) and bracelet (34) as well as the brooch and cufflinks by Alicia Penalba (45-6) and the amber and gold bracelet by Amalia del Ponte (52) come from her estate. Furthermore, we find that most of the collectors of artists' jewels today are women, who are strong, confident and secure in themselves, and for whom the artists' work has a personal resonance, possibly even a talismanic significance.

Martine Newby Haspelslagh
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Fig. 4. Front cover of the 1967 exhibition catalogue, *Jewelry by Contemporary Painters and Sculptors*, Museum of Modern Art, New York with the Louise Nevelson earrings (36 on p. 34)

Fig. 5. Photograph of Louise Nevelson wearing the same earrings (36) although back to front, early 1960s



Janine ANTONI

b. 1964, Barbados



1. *Tender Buttons*, 1994

Diameter: 3.4 cm

Unmatched pair of 18ct rose gold brooches modelled from the artist's own nipples, presented in a black velour box. Produced in a limited edition of twenty with ten artist's proofs by the Anders Tornberg Gallery, Lund, and manufactured by Bo Nilsson in Malmo, Sweden.

Marked on the reverse JA L or JA R, 9/10, GSHN 18K

Exhibited: *Bijoux d'artistes, une collection*, Clo Fleiss Collection, Galerie du Crédit municipal de Paris, 2012 (no. 13 from the edition).

These brooches were cast from the artist's left and right nipples when she was thirty year's old and are all the more poignant as several years later she suffered from breast cancer. In this work Antoni can be seen to further develop her acknowledgement and celebration of the feminine body.

2. *Collier barre de métal*, 1948-1998

Dimensions: 17.5 x 18 cm

Solid sterling silver necklace in the form of a shackle designed by Louise Bourgeois in 1948 and then produced in an edition of thirty-nine with the Spanish artistic jeweller Chus Burés in 1998.

Stamped with LB monogram and numbered 12/39

Exhibited: *Jewelry by Contemporary Painters and Sculptors*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, travelling exhibition (original version)

From Picasso to Jeff Koons. The Artist as Jeweler, Museum of Art and Design, New York 2012 (no. 37 from the edition with later silver and crystal chain)

This necklace was originally designed by Louise Bourgeois in c. 1948 as a personal statement against the violence she had witnessed against prisoners during the Spanish Civil War.

In 2008 she donated the original design drawing of this necklace in pencil, ink and with cut out additions to the Museum of Modern Art, New York (inv. no. 1128.2008).

Louise BOURGEOIS

Paris, France 1911 - 2010 New York, USA



Sonia DELAUNAY

Ukraine 1885 - 1979 Paris, France

6. *Abstraction*, 1979

Torque: 12 x 11 cm

Pendant: 7 x 5 cm

Sterling silver pendant decorated in bright polychrome enamel on a silver torque, design by Delaunay at the end of her life and produced by Artcurial, Paris, in a limited edition of 350.

Marked *Delaunay* under the enamel to the front and on the reverse, ARTCURIAL 287/350

A co-founder of the Orphism art movement, this pendant displays the same colourful movement she captured in her paintings and textiles.





Louise NEVELSON

Kiev, Russia 1899 - 1988 New York, USA

34. Bracelet, c. 1965

Length: 17.2 cm

Largest element: 5.5 x 2 cm

Smallest element: 3.9 x 2.2 cm

Unique bracelet comprising eight segments with different wood mouldings, painted in matt black, highlighted and mounted in 14ct gold.

Provenance: Mrs Albert List, acquired through the Pace Gallery, New York, in June 1966 for \$2,000

Published being worn in a 1965 photograph by Ugo Mulas of Nevelson in her living room, illustrated to the left. It would appear that the addition of the gold on this bracelet and the necklace (37) was done before they were sold through the Pace Gallery the following year.

35. Bar brooch, c. 1965

Height: 2 cm

Length: 9.8 cm

Unique bar brooch formed from a rectangular piece of wood on which are stuck a variety of small moulded wooden elements, painted in matt black and mounted in 14ct gold and with a gold sphere.

Signed on the reverse: NEVELSON

36. Wood earrings, c. 1965

Earring 1: 7.4 x 3.2 x 1.8 cm

Earring 2: 7.6 x 3.5 x 2 cm

Unmatched pair of unique earrings decorated on both sides with scraps of wood mouldings, painted in matt black, and edged and highlighted in 14ct gold.

Provenance: Mrs Albert List, New York, acquired through the Pace Gallery, New York, in June 1966 for \$1,200

Exhibited: *Jewelry by Contemporary Painters and Sculptors*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967 (illustrated on the front cover, no. 81)

37. Necklace, c. 1965

Diameter: 10.5 - 13 cm

Largest element: 6.5 x 3.4 cm

Unique necklace comprising fifteen elements, nine circular, eight with a 14ct gold centre and the other covered in gold, and six formed wood mouldings painted matt black, edged in gold, and all attached to a woven gold chain.

Provenance: Mrs Albert List, New York

Published being worn by Nevelson in the 1965 photo by Ugo Mulas illustrated to the left.

