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# From maker to wearer: the secret life of jewellery

LIN CHEUNG

We are familiar with contemporary jewellery as a vehicle for personal expression; designed and made to express artistic thought, material concerns, attitudes in society, belief, fashion trends, cultural viewpoints, customs and rituals, etc.. But despite these different forms of 'designed expression', all jewellery has in common a propensity for a secret life: the capacity to hold personal, unique meaning that ultimately defines the piece.

By wearing, owning and interacting with jewellery, we breathe life into it; a new life. We activate it and set it on a life-long journey to collect and absorb its surroundings—eventually becoming a distinct and unique piece.

Thoughts of the wearer, and potential wearer, have lead makers to consider the life of jewellery beyond their realm, addressing the interesting questions of what happens to it when it leaves the studio? Who buys it? Who wears it, and for what reason? How close are the intentions of the maker met with the values of the wearer (known and unknown)? And does it matter if ultimately there are "values of jewellery that we, as makers, have no influence on, and cannot take part in"? (Kim Buck, 2003)

This essay explores the means by which objects become emotionally valued, to better understand the user. It highlights examples of makers searching and questioning attachments and meanings beyond that of the finished piece in varying degrees; the relationship of use and purpose, jewellery as subject and beyond jewellery itself.

## EVA BAUER



Coloured by the notion that nothing is clearly defined—that events, actions, objects and emotions are in fact open to interpretation and unstable in character, the work of Eva Bauer is informed by concepts of flux and development, situating itself as a representation of the ambiguous. Inspired by the uncertain, 'liquid' aspects of reality, Bauer works with the indeterminate to create jewellery overtly reflective of growth principles and evolving concepts of sequence and process. Preoccupied by perceptions of continuous change and movement and by the multiplication of cells and organisms within the natural environment, she has formed a collection that mirrors, both aesthetically and conceptually, the precepts of nature. Via the manipulation and re-formation of amorphous silicone rubber, jewellery are cast, stitched and drenched in vibrant, piercing hues. Hybrid in their aesthetics, they remain indistinct, persistently contesting classification or definition. Appearing elastic, semi-transparent and soft to the touch, each piece, whether a bulbous ring or sprouting necklace, is defined by its colouring which, determining to a great extent the meaning and atmosphere of the work, plays a central role in its conception and reception. Painted onto the stained silicone, details are formed from layers of acidic greens and bloody reds, highlighting the formation and shape of the rubber itself. Other works form from a collection of silicone cells, mutating awkwardly into objects that defy conventional perceptions of jewellery design and wear-ability. Connected by delicate threads these cells are sewn by hand symbolising the eternal human attempt to create, mend, protect and reconstruct. Bringing together the modern (silicone) and traditional (the act of sewing), Bauer seeks to strengthen the impact, 'drawing' upon the silicone surface with the needle and thread to create 'veins, rivers, paths and scars'.



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*Praesent vitae diam. Mauris at metus. Phasellus sem. Quisque tempus eleifend pede. Aliquam blandit fermentum lacus. Integer eu diam nec augue egestas varius. Sed mollis elit a lorem. Nunc nonummy*

## ARTHUR HASH



Aesthetically unconventional, the work of Arthur Hash plays out a process of design development seeking to add to and extend the very definition of jewellery and to question the role and value of body adornment. Including unorthodox materials such as animal hair, cornflakes, cough drops, dust, pornography, and toilet paper, as well as coloured plastics and resins, Hash pushes design boundaries to their limits, experimenting with shape, size, wear-ability and conceptuality. Combining the everyday in a myriad of complex geometrics, he highlights the value of time and memory situating jewellery as an apparatus of commemoration and celebration. Seeking to preserve the smaller events in his own life, Hash covertly references the daily and mundane, preserving a tiny portion of his existence through a course of artistic expression and experimentation. As the value of jewellery constantly changes and the scope

for design concepts widens, Hash prioritises personal expression finding inspiration in materials that consistently evoke memory and emotion. Transforming that which is normally discarded or defined as defunct into sculptural objects of complex aesthetic beauty, Hash has developed a body of work formed from a deeper engagement with technological media and experimentation. Like expressive, conceptual sculptures his pieces stand as discreet mementos of the everyday breaking down precepts of traditional jewellery design, pushing them into the unknown and undefined. Pleasing to the eye, eclectically inspired reinvented forms appear difficult to place, stemming from the maker's experiences and emotions unknown to the viewer. Monumentally, they stand simple in form yet rich in meaning and personal symbolism.



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