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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

The Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary Studies

"THE ART OF SECRECY"

HIDDEN SPACES IN JEWELLERY

by

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FOREWORD

"The devices of visual seduction are like a door, and it's the room beyond that's ultimately more interesting. In other words, an object which is merely decorative will delight until the second or third viewing but decoration should beckon its viewer on to more subtle enjoyments, meditations and secrets."[1]

INTRODUCTION

For centuries there have been many complex motivations for the wearing and the making of jewellery. It has always had connotations of wealth, power and status. "To beautify, beguile, intimidate and impress".[2] I feel jewellery can serve a purpose other than a simply decorative one. There needs to be an added dimension, a dimension of curiosity and intrigue.

I couldn't pinpoint exactly what I felt this was until a visit from some contemporary Dutch jewellers to the College during the Spring of 1992. The Netherlands is firmly on the map of international jewellery design as a result of the revolutionary work done there in the 1960's. This new generation of the 1990's, though by no means as revolutionary, I felt, was more expansive, expressive, elaborate, colourful and above all, more personal. I realised jewellery needs to be very personal and human because of its relationship to the body. Although she wasn't amongst them, the group felt it was important to include the work of Peggy Bannenberg in their slide show. One of the slides was of an early piece of her work, a chain of small steel boxes each with its own separate key. I felt it cleverly conveyed the complex layers of a personality. It had a very human feel to it, as if each box was like a fragment or layer of mystery and by unlocking each one, this intrigue and mystery would melt away. It was as if you felt somewhat wiser when the boxes were open. Bannenberg's work has been described as having "an ageless rather than contemporary quality, implying a continuity rather than a break with the history of jewellery".[3] It occurred to me that the piece was an old, particularly English idea, rejuvenated. Georgian heart-shaped pendants of the early 19th century came equipped with miniature keys for locking away secrets.[4] This type of sentimental ornament lost favour with jewellery designers after it had reached its pinnacle during the turgid sentimentality of the Victorian era.

> "Interesting or not, Victorian sentimental jewellery represented a new low in Western jewellery design and craftsmanship and in England it was a situation which took several decades to rectify".[5]

Bannenberg, however, ignores all the vulgar decoration and sentimental symbols and strips the idea to its bare essence, highlighted by her use of steel which gives the piece an almost Calvinist feel, along with enigma from the past. Perhaps this was a reaction against the innovative Dutch design team of Gjis Bakker and Emmy Van Leersum, who in the 1960's and 70's made large-scale, flamboyant works in aluminium and plastics "to produce forms relevant to an industrial society".[6] In contrast with a celebration of technological advancements, Bannenberg initiates the viewer to an exploration. Her fine craftsmanship and attention to detail is highlighted by the viewer's participation.

What I find so exciting about jewellery of a secret nature is its scale. The pieces which will be discussed are small and wearable. There is an intimacy between the wearer and the object. Often contemporary conceptual jewellery takes its form in large-scale theatrical work. For example, the Life Cycles Exhibition which was held in the Irish Crafts Council's HQ Gallery in Dublin last year. Although I admire this kind of work I have often thought does it alienate people from becoming aware of the design process, from concept to finished piece? Wearability I believe is fundamental. A small-scale piece of jewellery creates intimacy and therefore invites the wearer to look closely.

According to Lynn D Park, metalworker and co-ordinator of Secrets, a recent theme exhibition in Scotland, an object can transform the onlooker into a participant.[7] Questions have to be asked and answers sought in the field of contemporary jewellery. The 'secret' element of a piece of jewellery can provide a vehicle for such a discussion. Objects of a secret nature are not what they first seem, and to merely look does not reveal everything. The aim

of the aforementioned exhibition was to raise awareness of the design process in relation to craft, as "visitors were encouraged to touch, explore and discover the many intrigues within".[8] The response by the artists to the exhibition's brief was imaginative and innovative, "comprising of collapsible rings, paper knives with concealed blades, kinetic pieces with surprises and various puzzles, not a locket in sight!"[9] The secrets were so subtle and well concealed the public had to really ask about these "beautiful objects which went beyond what they seemed to be, to be capable of extending themselves into other dimensions".[10]

Grainne Morton, a recent graduate from Edinburgh and the Kilkenny business skills course, made beautiful copper, silver and brass brooches for the Secrets Exhibition. Morton has fashioned little compartments in her brooches for the wearer to fill with his or her own secret mementoes (Fig. 1). Her inspiration for these pieces comes from the phrase "Tout ce qui m'est chere au monde; (all that is dear to me in the world)". The Romantic melancholia of this work mirrors that of the past. Jewellery of a secret nature probably has and always will be made. It has been highlighted by certain periods in history, and more recently by exhibitions and the media. Contemplative pieces were often produced in periods of particular civil strife.

During Elizabethan times, hidden portraits were popular, "those love besotted ladies and gallants of that age to be shown in their plight mostly private by the idolised knight or lady".[11] Secrecy of thought was paramount and many love tokens were secretly inscribed. Aries writes that love and death are similar.[12] The Elizabethans were particularly preoccupied with death as well as with love so the Memento Mori was prevalent; as was the generation after this period, when Charles I was executed in 1649. Wearing jewellery which commemorated the deceased king proved to be very dangerous in the political climate of that time. It was not surprising that the idea of the locket captured the jeweller's imagination during the 17th century.

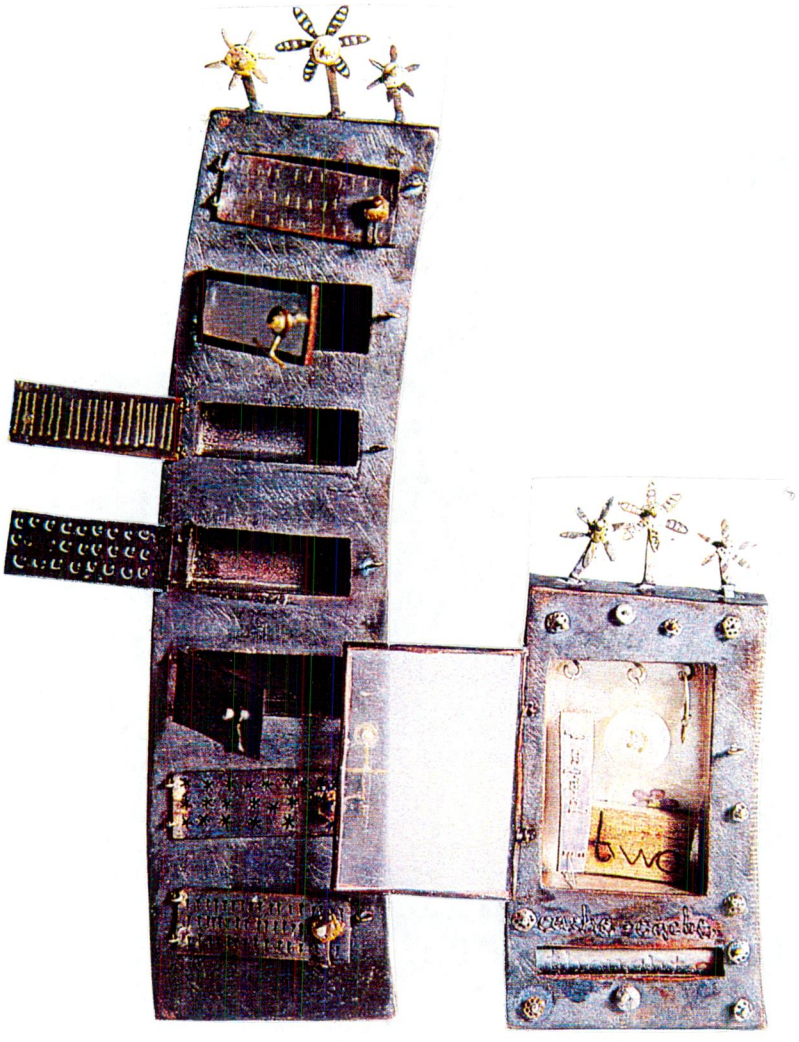

Fig. 1 Two Brooches, 1994, Grainne Morton, copper, silver, brass.

Historical pieces, I feel, provoke curiosity simply because their intent is so mysterious. The unusual ring (c.17th) (Fig. 2) hides the full-length figure of a man in workman's clothes with a rope and a flower, which, according to Diana Scarisbrick, appears to be a gardener. Inside the cover is the mysterious portrait of a gentleman.[13] It is hard to ascertain if this ring is indeed a memorial ring, however, it is clear that the ring is a very personal and secret reminder of someone.

These historical works are 'time capsules' of sorts. Their secret nature ensured their safety. It would be interesting to note what people in two hundred years' time would think of the idiosyncrasies placed in Grainne Morton's work. Her adulteration of precious metals (silver) with base metals (copper, brass) ensures that they could never be melted down, although I am sure the owner of such delicate work would want to treasure its secrets forever. The secret nature of the historical work I have reviewed is only a fragment of the past yet is can reveal a lot about human nature, life, death, hopes, beliefs and dreams.

Variations on the locket theme form the basis of my research although other pieces have hidden elements without necessarily being locked away from view, such as reliquaries, which became fashionable during the Crusades. The Church and the Royal courts played an important role, as they had tremendous influence as patrons on style and taste. Many of the pieces which will be discussed are well documented in books, catalogues and museums and have survived due to their safety in royal and private collections. Due to access of information I have taken an English bias. I feel this is appropriate as England chose to isolate herself from the rest of Europe during certain periods in history such as the Reformation.

Fig. 2 A Gold Ring with Enamelled Figurine, circa 1653, English.

During the Victorian era the locket reached its pinnacle. "Information from jewellers' catalogues and fashion magazines of the time show that 1878 was the best year for the silver locket".[14] It really lost its magic, I think, when the locket became manufactured due to popular demand by the Victorians.

As I have traced the origins of jewellery as a vehicle for containing secrets, I realise that although the motives for creating pieces of a similar concept may be different today, the need to create intimate personal objects remains the same. Ikonen states,

> "The abandonment of memory and tradition has significantly increased the use of external artefacts that are lacking in depth, now in the 1990's jewellery art, in almost a neurotic manner, has become filled with a renewed interest in memory, narrative and tradition".[15]

This is very apparent in the last chapter dealing with 20th century jewellery. "The current tendency to shrink back and seek refuge in a new inwardness is a late reaction to the necessarily radical experiments of the 70's".[16] Traditional assumptions about jewellery are also assessed, particularly in the work of Otto Künzli. Künzli has been described as "somewhat of an enfant terrible"[17], for using jewellery to make comments about the conventions and taboos surrounding the wearing and the making of it. I have illustrated each chapter with examples of this work. He takes preconceptions about jewellery and turns these on their heads, which is necessary for the modern jeweller to produce consistently fresh work without ignoring the past. Generations to come will look at the work of the 20th century jewellers and establish that they had dreams, hopes and beliefs. These contemporary pieces which are talismans of sorts can help us on our own personal crusades and struggles through the perils of modern life, such as greed and mass production. The jewellery discussed will not be about ways of disguising portable wealth, or about pieces which are concealed by clothing. They are pieces of jewellery

which hint to the viewer that there is more than beauty or face value, or which give the wearer the intimate satisfaction of knowing something that the world around doesn't know.

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CHAPTER 1: LOVE AND BETROTHAL

The Ring

The ring is probably the most significant of all love tokens. The very shape of a ring suggests the eternal, its simplicity is invested with great private and personal significance. The Romans, by the 2nd and 3rd century AD were the first to use the ring as a sign of betrothal. "The Annulus Pronubis[1] was a very public affair, a seal of the household goods, an entrusting of material possessions, rather than a sign of love. The two are not to be confused"[2].

The simple gold band has remained in favour as a form of betrothal or marriage ring for centuries. Yet originally these simple bands were tokens of love. The Greeks had love rings; as Kunz wrote - "The Roman poet Ovid described it as a ring soon destined to encircle the finger of a beautiful girl, a ring having no worth except the love of the giver".[3] During the Middle Ages no gift between two lovers was complete without an accompanying verse or motto and perhaps a small bunch of flowers. The motto declared to the loved one was called a posy.

Inscriptions on rings bring us in closer contact with the thoughts and feelings of their former wearers than any amatory inscriptions found on marriage rings and other love tokens. Several 15th century English rings are engraved with rhymed mottoes. A ring found in Godstow Priory has a secret inscription, within its shank, "Most in mynd and yn myn herrt, lothest from you ferto depart".[4] Mottoes of the 16th century became shorter, coinciding with the development of the posy as a literary form (The Art of English Poesie was published in 1589). The use of French was popular in England such as "Joie sans fin", although English was still engraved, such as "Love true, tis joye". Although these bands are quite plain and perhaps usually uninteresting, the pieces with inscriptions on the inside are wonderful insights into 16th century romance.

"The posies on your rings are always next to the finger, not to be seen of him that holdeth you by the hand".[5] The posy inscription gradually went out of fashion at the end of the 18th century, yet the plain gold band has always remained in favour. The Ladies Monthly Magazine of 1799 stated,

> "Always wear your wedding ring for therein lies more virtue than is usually imagined, if you are ruffled unawares, assaulted by improper thoughts or tempted in any kind against your duty, cast your eye upon it and call to mind who gave it to you, where it was received and what passed at that solemn time".[6]

Künzli takes the idea of the wedding ring, and plays on our primeval fears of all that is symbolic in that tiny gold band. In the chain entitled "48 wedding rings" (1986), (Fig. 3), each link once bonded two human beings together. Künzli acquired these rings through advertising in various Munich newspapers; the rings span a hundred years (1881 -1991) and range from 9 - 18 carats. Previously, women donated their gold rings only for some idealistic cause, such as war, to provide funds. Indeed the simple gold band was always accorded immense respect, as a symbol of an intense emotional union; "till death do us part". The piece is obviously not wearable but intensely provocative. Although Künzli is Swiss and now lives and works in Germany, to me the necklace has connotations of death. In its German context I immediately thought of the Holocaust and the removal of personal effects. Indeed it caused immense controversy and displayed just how poignant the wedding ring can be.

As well as collecting rings of significant worth Künzli collected many personal stories. If he had melted them down for their intrinsic value he would have destroyed their history, the individual sizes, personal inscriptions or reasons for parting with the ring. "He was a brutal dog"[7] was an explanation which accompanied one ring which epitomised a whole story of love and marriage, filled with cynicism and, perhaps truth.

Fig. 3 Wedding Rings, 1980, Neckpiece, Otto Künzli, gold.

Each ring embodied the human destiny of a particular individual, which highlights how emotionally charged this neckpiece is. Künzli has made something which is essentially private, very public.

Wendy Kamshaw believes that the finger ring is the most personal of all types of jewellery, often concealing a hidden meaning for the wearer and sometimes for the maker: never having been a fashion accessory it has proved a consistently independent development.[8] The symbol of the hands clasped in faith (fede) and the gimmel ring (from Latin gemellus = twin) was revived during The Middle Ages.[9] These combined elements became more elaborate during the 16th century when the two rings united, the hands interlocked as in (Fig. 4) or were simply gimmel rings which fitted together but were separated and worn by the bride and groom at their marriage ceremony. An inscription was usually put on the inside of the ring which could be concealed when the rings were reconnected. "They were very popular in Germany and Italy".[10] The gold ring, when opened (Fig. 5), reveals figures of a baby and a skeleton, symbolic of the impermanence of life. Two views of a gimmel ring dated 1631 can be seen in (Fig. 6). This elaborate example has a double bezel with a ruby and diamond setting, held by hands each clasping a heart, again revealing cavities with a baby and a skeleton. Venetian blackmoor rings, dated around the 18th century and inscribed "Tal Qual Mi Miri/Fui Sempe Per" translated "As you see me, so I have always been for you", seem to be associated with a group of so-called carnival rings from Venice, which carried emblems of love or death.[12] In (Fig. 7) a carnival mask design houses a secret heart.

> "There is a heart we show to the world, the happy side that we want others to see. Then there is the secret heart, the one we keep hidden away, sometimes even from ourselves, only the maker and the wrongdoer know exactly what this hurt is".[13]

Fig. 4 Gimmel Ring, 16th century, gold, enamels, precious stones, British Museum, London.

Fig 5 Gimmel Ring, Baby and Skeleton, 16th century, Italian, gold.

Fig. 6 Gimmel Ring, Baby and Skeleton, 1631, English, gold, enamels, precious stones, Christies, London.

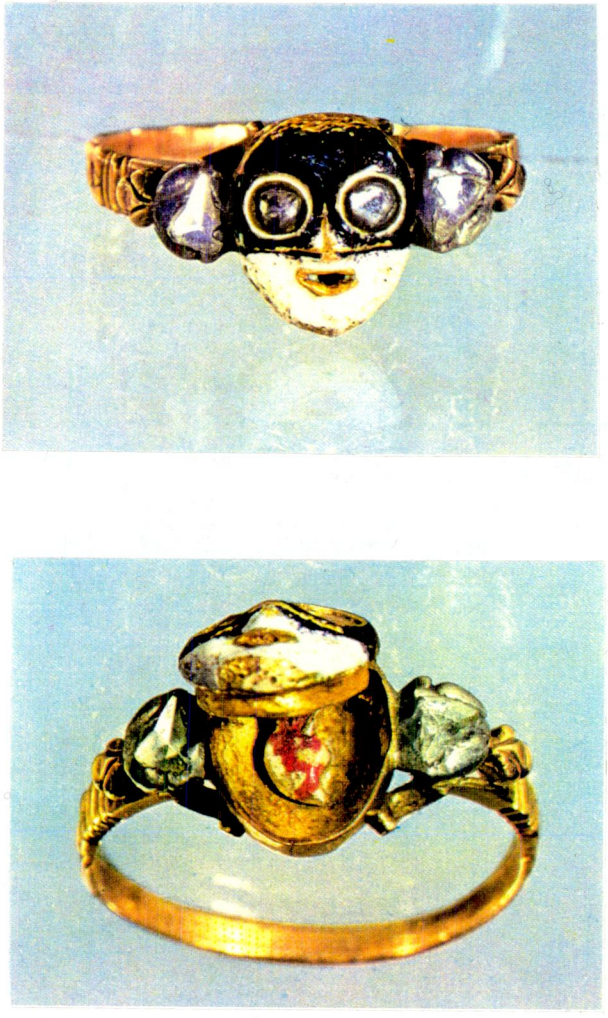

Fig. 7 Carnival Ring, 16th century, Italian, gold, enamels, diamonds, 2.2 cm, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan.

The heart, however, will always have connotations of secrecy: "Cross my heart and hope to die". A "heart to heart" talk is a frank conversation between two people. It is still regarded as the very centre and essence of being, from one human to another.

Discussing the various talismans which could console lovers when absent from one another, The Spectator in 1711 dismissed them all and declared, "I never found so much benefit from any as from a ring in which my mistress's hair is plaited together artificially into a kind of lovers knot".[14] These were often enclosed in a locket bezel. Retaining a tress of a loved one's curl signified a union, here and beyond the grave, which is why a lot of mourning jewellery contained hair. Indeed, the gift of a hair bracelet or a lock of hair between lovers (Fig. 8) has been described as an act of surrender and faith.[15] Hair has also been regarded as the "secret power of woman"[16], symbolising their freedom, enabling them to work magic, cast spells and have power over men. Even today, in many cultures women must keep their hair covered so as not to 'tempt' men.

The Portrait

As with most jewellery of the 16th century, the Royal Courts dominated tastes and fashions which its courtiers, if they could, followed. Holbein, who primarily reigned as Goldsmith under the patronage of Henry VIII, painted both portraits and miniatures, yet it was Nicholas Hilliard (1547 - 1616) under the patronage of Henry VIII's daughter Elizabeth who thoroughly embraced the technique of portrait miniatures or limning. Limning was a contemporary term for miniature painting, and by 1570 was still regarded as a secret and aristocratic art.[17] Hilliard's financial difficulties ensured he would paint miniatures for anyone who could afford them. They were often seen as love tokens, their delicacy protected by jewelled cases and prying eyes. Hilliard, through various symbols and inscriptions that he employed, gave layers of secret meaning, perhaps only known to the sitter,

Fig. 8 A Tress of Hair from a Silver Locket, circa 1870.

Fig. 9 A Woman Known as Mrs Holland, 1593, Hilliard, 2.25 x 1.8 cm, V & A.

Fig. 10 A Young Man Among Roses, circa 1593, Hilliard, 5 3/8 x 2 3/4 cm, V & A

as seen in Fig. 9, his portrait of a "Woman known as Mrs Holland" or in his enigmatic portrait of "A Young Man Among Roses" (Fig. 10) which has since been deciphered as Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, believed to have been the Queen's lover. The "Virgin Queen" as she was known, gave many images of herself to her favourites. Strong describes this portrait of one of them as,

> "The supreme artistic expression of one of the greatest and most passionate romances of the age, that between a lonely ageing female ruler in her middle fifties and a dashing aristocratic youth of twenty".[18]

The Tudors of the 16th century possessed small jewels kept in a small jewelled cabinet or "wrangleshank".[19] A treasured pendant may have been taken out on occasion, to show a personal friend. The piece was beautifully finished both inside and out; it was completely personal, often secret. It would open up to show a concealed portrait of a sweetheart, child or husband. The friend would discuss and admire it and then it would be returned to its velvet-lined box. Lockets in the form of pendants and rings were very popular although their secret nature often brought sour circumstances.

> "On the deathbed of Madame Du Chatelet, her lover Voltaire asked the valet to bring him the ring, thinking that it concealed his picture, only to discover it had been replaced by her last lover's".[20]

They were also increasingly popular during the 18th century.

Hugo Vickers has written, "Proust had a point when he wrote of the 'Act of Physical Possession' in which paradoxically the possessor possesses nothing".[21] Perhaps that is why a lover feels they should have something inanimate, a reminder of someone special. The personal token is a secret bonding between two people, a kind of ownership as in "What's yours is mine and what's mine is yours"[22] kind of philosophy. It is no surprise that this kind

of sentiment manifests itself in the form of jewellery, durable and everlasting, a sign hopefully of what the relationship will be.

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CHAPTER 2: HEAVEN AND EARTH

The subject of death throughout history brings with it many rituals in all kinds of societies. No matter how cathartic a public of communal display of grief can be for the bereaved, there is also a need for a private death ritual. Jewellery, by its very size and closeness to the body, has in the past provided an excellent vehicle for reminders of a lost loved one. Mourning jewellery can be traced from the late 16th century to the early 20th century, which, with the advent of W.W.I, "made the world a much wider stage"[1] and a time when grief became much more outward in expression. The evolution of remembrance jewellery, according to Aries, started with the Memento Mori and ends with the souvenir.[2] All types of mourning jewellery, although they differ from century to century, are intimate, personal and contemplative objects. Although they were worn, they have an immense feeling of privacy.

Memento Mori

Memento Mori, meaning literally "remember you must die", was an abstract warning of the impermanence of life; this describes in particular the jewellery which has survived from the 16th century. In Europe during this time the Christians viewed death as a mere gateway to eternity. A silver medal by Quentin Massys depicts Erasmus "who was associated with death. On the reverse side is Terminus (Fig. 11) who represented the Christian belief that new life lay beyond".[3]

The Medieval symbol of the skull became the reminder of the transience of life to Europeans of the early 16th century. Erasmus's contemporary, Hans Holbein, whose own life was taken by the Black Plague which raged through London in 1543[4], played on this medieval reminder in the cleverly distorted skull, in his painting of The Ambassadors (Fig. 12).

Fig 11 Medal, depicting Terminus, 1519, Quentin Massys, silver, Historiches Museum, Basel.

Fig. 12 The Ambassadors, Holbein, 1533, oil on canvas.

Fig. 13 Gold and Enamel Coffin, 1600, English, V & A.

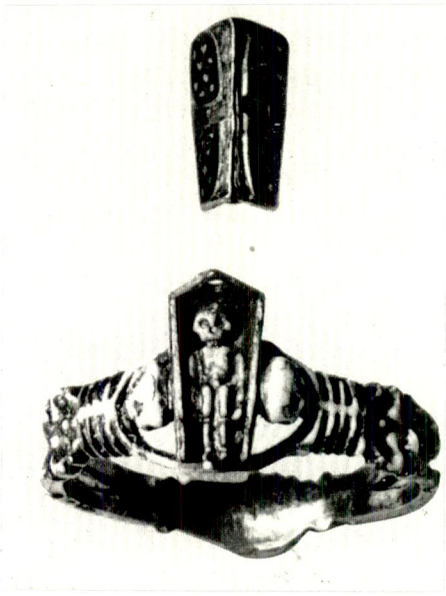


Fig. 14 Gold and Enamel Ring, 16th century, English, width of bezel, 1 cm, Londesborough Collection, British Museum.

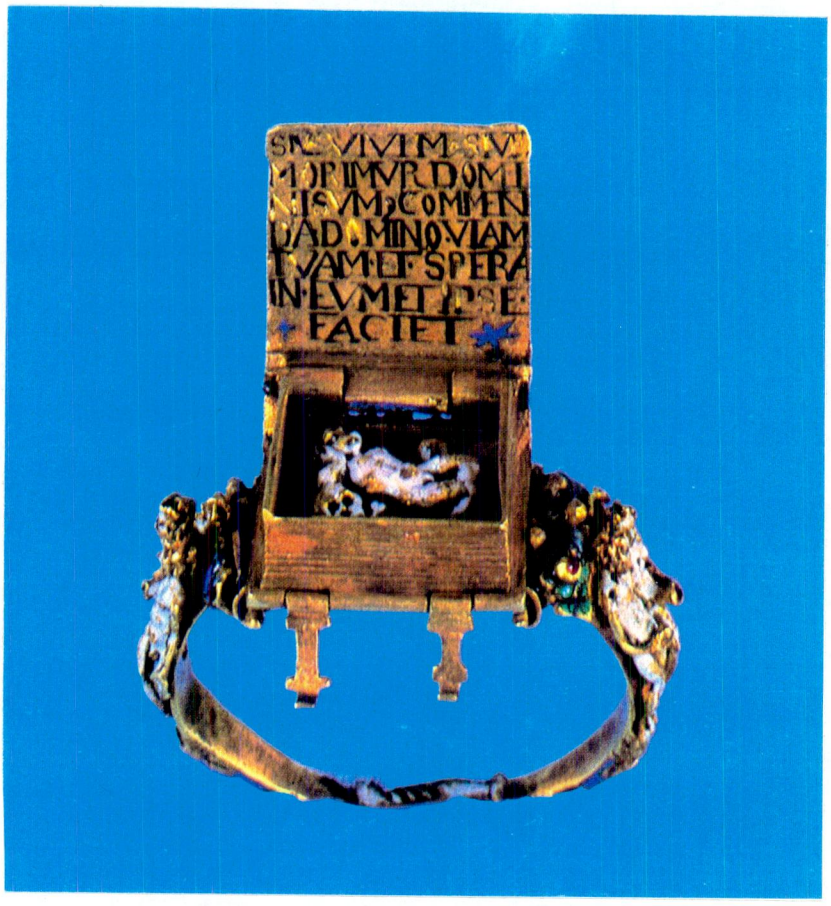
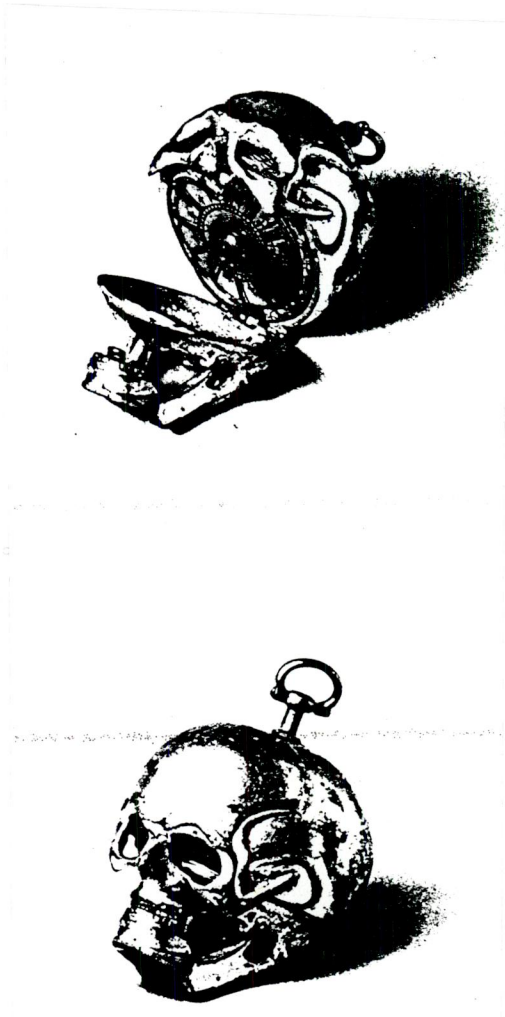


Fig. 15 Ring with Figurine, German, 16th century, gold, diamonds, 3 cm, British Museum, London.



(fig 15),

Fig. 16 Watch with Skull Motif, 17th century, German, gold.

People were preoccupied with death throughout Europe. In England, the passing of the Act of Supremacy in 1534, brought plenty of destruction in the form of the Reformation. We can only imagine the hardship people endured; poor sanitary conditions and the lack of medical knowledge meant that death was no stranger. "Pensive gloom pervaded Elizabethan and Jacobean society, also psychological introspection was the order of the day".[6] This affected all the Arts, including jewellery, which because of its very scale became a portable meditation device. According to Armstrong, one of the oldest pieces of English Memento Mori jewellery dates from the Elizabethan period.[7] It is a small, well-made gold coffin, the size of a snuffbox, containing a white enamel skeleton. The inscription on the outside bears a Latin phrase as well as its translation: "Disce Mori, Learn to Dyi", sound advice, perhaps, to those whose lifespan was considerably short. A similar version of this coffin can be seen in (Fig. 13) 1600, inscribed "Through the Resurrection of Christ we will be sanctified".[8] More portable versions of the symbol of the skull or full skeletons were contained in rings which, as the gold and enamel English 16th century example depicted in (Fig. 14) shows, could often be very minute, here the width of the bezel is 1cm.[9] The shoulders are formed of skeletons and the back of the hoop depicts clasped hands in "fede". This combination of the symbols of love and death was not uncommon at this period. This can be seen in a German ring (Fig. 15), which shows that the fashion for Memento Mori was not exclusively English during the 16th century. The cover depicts the death's head with the snakes of corruption on it with Adam and Eve on the shoulders of the ring. The inside of the bezel takes the form of a book and contains a figure.[10] Mary, Queen of Scots, no stranger to the notion of mortality, "Possessed a watch in the shape of a skull".[11] Perhaps not unlike this German 17th century version (Fig. 16), its very compactness (height 4.8 cm) meant it could be suspended or readily concealed. Inside was a secret watch, which, on reflection, is not surprising as time and death are regularly associated. It is, I feel, difficult for us to imagine the image of a skull or skeleton inspiring meditations on the fear of death. In the 20th century, the symbol of a skull has more connotations

with a heavy metal band! Yet, when the image relates to a particular person rather than a general warning of death, I feel it can still, today, send shivers up the spine.

Commemorative Jewellery

Examples of what I mean by this are two Italian 17th century wax pendants in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 17). Penny states that one shows a young girl with an elaborate hairstyle, holding flowers in one hand and pressing a naked breast with the other. The other shows the same woman known as V. Franchoshina (written on the portraits) as a gap-toothed old hag holding a skull and the nipple of a now pendulous breast.[12] During the period, death was a heaven-sent opportunity for frightening the worldly into a more religious frame of mind. I think Becker's view, on similar pieces of jewellery, that they chastise vain beauty[13] suggests a more probable motive. The shift from jewellery depicting the general notion of the transience of life to the particular remembrance of one person begins to take shape in England with Charles I's death in 1649, which gave the fashion for mourning jewellery, as it was then known, a new impetus. During the Middle Ages, the jewels that belonged to a dead person were left to members of the deceased family and friends. As numbers of mourners increased this meant a vast difference in the value of jewellery for distribution. To avoid embarrassment or jealousies, it became customary to have rings specifically made, to be distributed according to the Will. "Samuel Pepys, the great diarist of the 17th century, left 123 rings to be given out when he died in 1703".[14]

Hair Jewellery

> "Princess Amelia, the favourite daughter of George III, on her deathbed, ordered a ring to be made, enclosing a lock of her hair so that she could give it to her father while she was dying".[15]

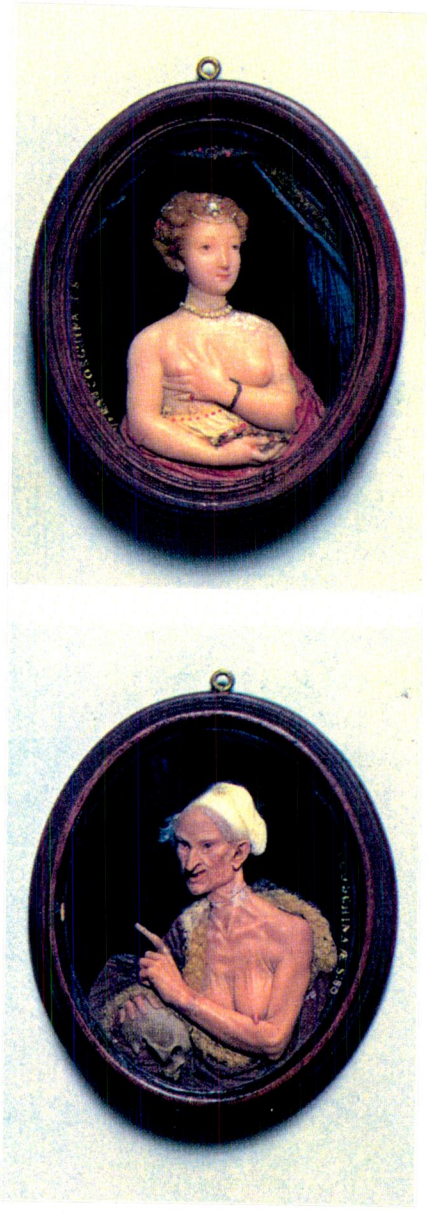


Fig. 17 Wax Portraits of V. Francoshina, 17th century, Italian, V & A.

Certainly the use of hair became increasingly popular as reminders of the deceased. Commemorative jewellery employing the use of hair, particularly in relation to Charles I, is discussed in Chapter 3.

The 18th century brought about the neo-classical style. Symbols used in mourning jewellery included the urn, the weeping woman and/or child, the small dog and a background which utilised hair fashioned into a delicate weeping willow (Fig. 18). This style was a peculiarly English phenomenon but was much admired and became fashionable in France.[16] The pieces have a rather genteel, calm look which reflected perfectly the discomfort educated people of the second half of the 18th century had with the idea of decay. This discomfort is still with us today. In an era of progress the emphasis is on living and the preservation of life. Historically, jewellery reflecting the theme of "the Beautiful Death" is regarded highly and is seen as having more intrinsic value "than the grisly subromantic genteel way of keeping a relic in the 19th century".[17]

The Victorian period also experienced high mortality rates. Yet in this curious age of propriety and the religious revival, "where poverty and death were closely linked, death was considered a social advancement".[18] Queen Victoria was regimental in her ideas on mourning attire and what were considered appropriate lengths of time to be in mourning, which affected the whole court, even children. After her own coronation in 1837, she went into deep mourning for King George IV whom she had succeeded. A London shop Jay's founded in 1941 sold nothing but mourning attire.[19] The Queen was not a fashion leader, according to Gere, but had a taste for all things sentimental and was imitated by her contemporaries of all classes.[20] Women especially had to openly display grief, even if it wasn't felt (Fig. 19). They had to wear what was considered proper. Jewellery fashioned from a deceased relative's hair was considered appropriate. "Just as women bore the signs of wealth and servitude it was on them that the external signs of grief were hung".[21] It was a social rather than a personal response to death. Yet

Fig. 18 Neo-classical Pendant, 18th century, English, private collection, Dublin.

Fig. 19 Fashion Plate showing Mourning Dress from La Belle Assemblee, November 1817.

men did wear mourning jewellery. I saw a rather macabre example of Victorian 19th century crystal-covered hair cuff links and buttons in Farrington Antiques of Drury Street, Dublin (Fig. 20). The craftsmanship could not be faulted, but the overall effect could only be described as grisly. I also came across a man's buckle ring of the same period which had a secret hair compartment (Fig. 21). The secret nature of the ring perhaps better indicates privacy and genuine loss.

An enormous sense of relief was felt when Queen Victoria relaxed her rules after the Silver Jubilee of 1887, "anything vaguely memorial or funereal in character was totally rejected and mourning jewellery was itself sent to eternal rest".[22]

The onset of W.W.I. brought sentimentality and inwardness into perspective. Death somehow became more heroic. The photograph took over as a reminder of a loved one, living or dead. Whether what was produced in the past was good or bad - "Our ancestors made a much braver imaginative effort to come to terms with their mortality"[23], - Midgely states, however, that anthropologists are unlikely to discover any society which has dispensed with all mourning rituals. Yet in the age of technological advancements, miracle cures and the constant update on the quality of life, death is a taboo subject in the Western World. To think of the afterworld is considered morbid. Künzli reflects this in his "Eye" ring, reminiscent of 18th century portrait jewellery (Fig. 22). The eye was and still is seen as the mirror of the soul. Künzli fits actual mirrors into his ring series (Fig. 23). The wearer of the pieces is in the role of the voyeur, secretly observing himself. The ring is an instrument of self-observation, and self-reflection, perhaps a reflection of our self-obsessed society (Fig. 24).

It could also be seen as the living eye, in contrast to the inanimate portrait of the deceased and reminder to live for the moment and not to dwell on the past.

Fig. 20 Hair, Cufflinks, Buttons and Bracelet, circa 1860, Belfast, Farrington Antiques, Dublin.

Fig. 21 Gold Buckle Ring with Compartment for Hair, circa 1879, English, private collection, Dublin

Fig. 22 Gold Pendant with an Eye painted on ivory, circa 1789, English

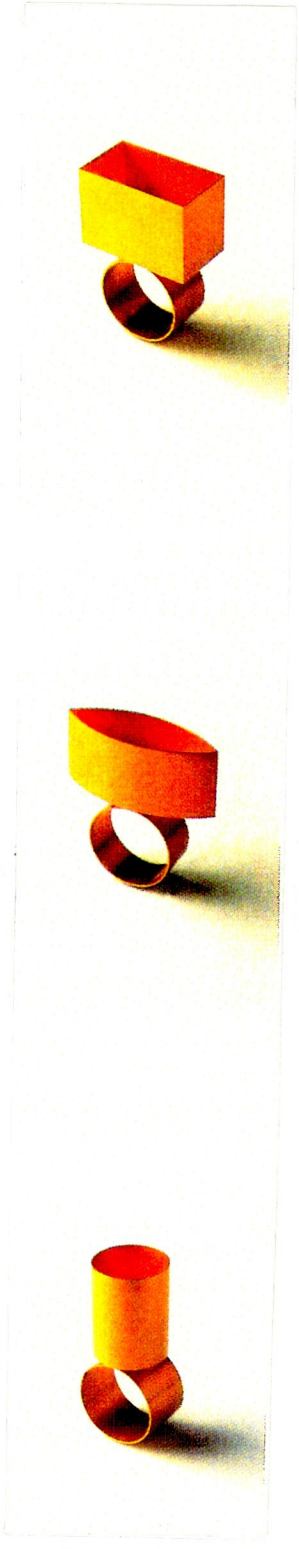


Fig. 23 Series of Eye Rings, 1980, Otto Künzli, gold, mirror.

Fig. 24 View of Eye Ring, 1980, Otto Künzli, gold, mirror.

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Fig. 25 Gold Makes you Blind, 1980, Otto Künzli, rubber, gold.

CHAPTER 3: LOYALTY REVEALED

A civilised society has always been a complex social structure. People, however, have always followed a leader, whether they be monarchs, political figures or heads of the Church. From the earliest times in the Roman Republic, a Senator sent on an embassy received the honour of a gold ring. Romans were fond of social labels, yet what if these symbols of rank attracted unwanted attention form enemies or unguarded jealousy from comrades? "The gold ring was a sign of free birth",[1] - and to the Roman highly valued to such an extreme that some free men used to coat their gold rings with a dark coating, so that they looked like iron. Although they did not have the gratification of wearing a symbol confined to the freeborn, they had the intimate personal satisfaction of knowing that gold really was on their hand. The contemporary jeweller Otto Künzli treats the idea of gold in the same way, although he is sceptical of the material: "Gold is used for crowning kings and the toothless".[2] Künzli designed a black rubber bracelet with a hidden gold ball, "I wanted to achieve detachment in order to reappraise the material".[3] The bracelet is worn in the cave of the armpit, itself a very private part of the body. In the centre of the rubber tubing is the shape of a ball. Künzli entitled the piece Gold makes you Blind, 1980 (Fig. 25). The concept is mysterious and relies on faith. If you were to purchase the band, you must really believe that the concealed ball is made of gold. This 20th century version of the Roman ring idea is more of a social comment on Künzli's environment in the midst of mass consumerism; the idea of buying gold but never actually seeing it, is a backlash against the importance of visible wealth to the contemporary German. Park believes this type of conceptual work is regarded rather suspiciously by the public as they have preconceived ideas about 'precious' jewellery.[4]

Fig. 26 Charles I Memorial Gold Ring, circa 17th century, English.

Jewellery of a Political Nature

From what I have seen in books and catalogues, signs of allegiance and chivalry such as the English Order of the Garter dating from the 14th and 15th centuries[5], were openly displayed. Jewels that had to be hidden when worn, or those which have concealing properties, are the most intriguing. The giving of portraits, popularised by the Elizabethan Court, was no doubt a well-established method of encouraging loyalty to the Crown. A generation later, the execution of Charles I in 1649 provided ample scope for the jeweller to produce politically significant pieces. There were two motives for wearing these: "It acted as political propaganda in the Royalist cause and it gave mourning jewellery a new impetus".[6] The King's supporters saw his death as a kind of martyrdom and used its imagery in the royalist cause.

Amongst the commemorative jewellery of Charles I are many concealed wisps of his hair. It is perhaps significant that when his coffin was opened in 1813, during the construction of George III's tomb at Windsor Castle, the hair at the back of his head had been cut exceptionally short.[7] An exquisite ring in (Fig. 26) has a hidden door in the inside bezel to house the hair of Charles I, while the outside is floral cast. The secret nature of the hidden element makes it most intriguing. Some rings containing miniatures of Charles I were apparently presented to supporters of the exiled Monarch by his wife Henrietta Maria, in return for financial support for the cause. They acted as a form of security for the loan of cash which could be redeemed after the Restoration, on production of the ring. Therefore, the very secret nature of the jewellery ensured its survival. After the execution of his father, Charles II became the focus of the Royalist cause.

Secret jewels also meant loyalty to the Stuarts. It is hard to believe that something as harmless as a jewel could lead to execution if it was seen by the wrong people. This idea continued with the deposition of James II in 1688, when a vast array of rings were produced with little scope for open

Fig. 27 Napoleon Commemorative Gold Ring, 1830, French, 1.9 cm, British Museum, London.

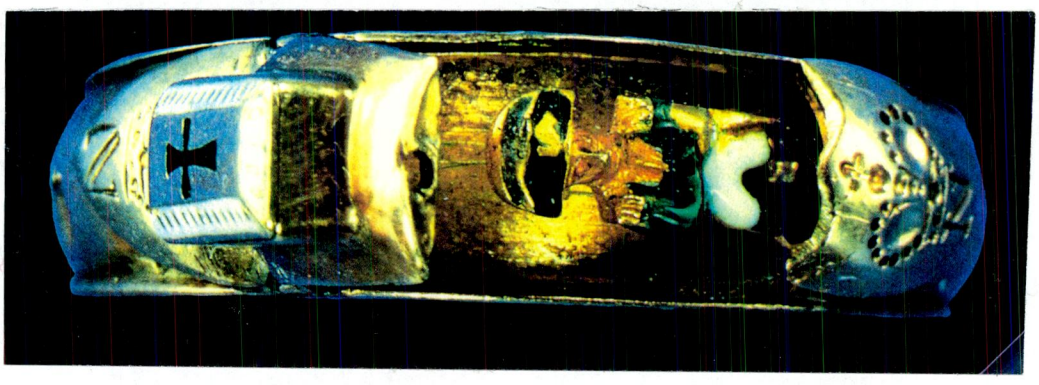

Fig. 28 Napoleon Commemorative Ring, 1830, French, gold, enamels, The Chatworth Settlement Devonshire Collection.

display. Napoleon (1769 - 1821) was fond of giving commemorative or loyalist jewels. The ring in (Fig. 27), according to Gere, had been one of those given by Napoleon I to the French officers who had assisted him to escape from his voluntary exile on the Island of Elba.[9] The image, a tiny metallic portrait-head of Napoleon, had to be concealed when the new regime usurped the old. The portrait is covered by a hinged lid, enamelled on the surface with three flowers within a wreath, to hide Napoleon's profile. In this dramatic example, (Fig 28) a coffin opens to reveal the figure of the Emperor in General's uniform. The design is not unlike the Memento Mori jewels which were popular three centuries earlier.

The Language of Symbols

One of the most famous 16th century jewels in Great Britain is the Lennox of Darnley jewel[10] now in the possession of HM the Queen (12.5" long). Lady Douglas, it is believed, commissioned the jewel in memory of her husband Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox. It is also believed that the jewel was commissioned as a form of communication with the exiled Earl. The background and motives for the piece remain hazy and complex. Many art historians agree that there is a layering of significance. It could be considered as religious, loyal, a Memento Mori and love token all in one, due to its many secrets and symbols (Fig. 29(a)).[11] The gold pendant is long and shaped as a heart (Fig. 29(b)). One side is set with a large heart cabochon sapphire between wings enamelled in red, blue and green, beneath a jewelled crown. This conceals two hearts united by a gold knot, with the motto and cipher of family name. The sapphire opens up to reveal two hands clasped and other emblems and mottoes. The reverse of the "Pendant is enamelled with the sun in glory and the moon, a crowned Salamander in flames, a pelican in her piety, a Phoenix and the figure of a man between a sunflower and a laurel bush".[12] The meaning of all the emblems is lost to us with the secret history of Margaret Lennox; many believe they were related to her secret intrigues and hopes that her son Darnley would marry Mary, Queen of Scots. The

Fig. 29 (a) The Darnley or Lennox Jewel, circa 1571, English, gold, enamels, precious stones, collection of HM the Queen of England.

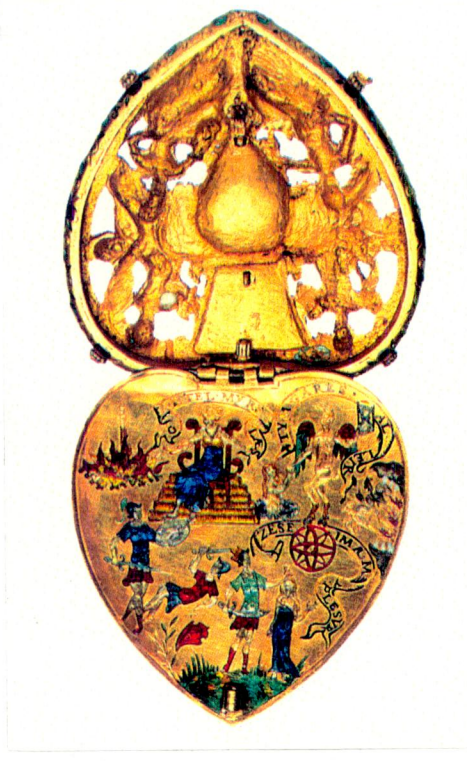

Fig. 29 (b) The Darnley or Lennox Jewel, circa 1571, English, gold, enamels, precious stones, collection of HM the Queen of England.

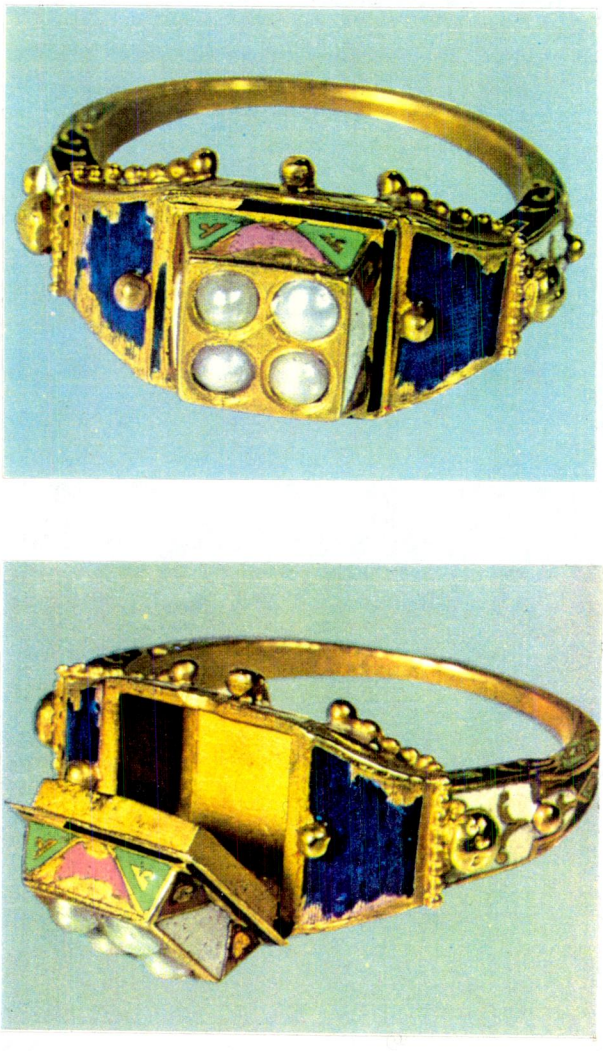

Fig. 30 Finger Ring with Secret Compartment, late 16th century, Italian, gold, enamels, pearl.

(Fig 33)

Fig. 31 Soviet Spy Camera Ring, 1950, gold, Lady Victoria Leathem, Burghley House.

inscriptions on the inside are no less enigmatic, but they do show personal references to Lady Margaret Douglas and her husband in a true legacy of that troubled era.

Jewels of Deceit

Kunz refers to jewellery of a more nefarious nature which was commissioned by the Borgias. Some of the poison rings of the early 16th century exist[13], similar perhaps to the ring in Fig. 30. Although this may be a somewhat romantic notion, the motto of Cesare Borgia was "Fays ce que doys avien que pourre" (Do your duty, happen what may). Beneath the bezel there is a sliding panel and when this is displaced there appears a small space where poison is kept. Other rings simply afforded a ready supply at need. It is Gregoretti's belief "that the mere possession of a locket bezel does not suffice to lend romance to a ring, which was perhaps intended to contain harmless perfume".[14] A more contemporary version of deceitful jewellery has incorporated a miniature camera (Fig. 31). The rivalry between the East and West during the Cold War meant jewellery did not escape the inventions of "spy equipment", although "in the 1880's a number of manufacturers in Europe and America produced miniature models, so the aspiring photographer could skulk about unnoticed, to achieve more natural looking shots".[15] Such devices have come in every imaginable form, disguised as cravat pins, handbags, even revolvers. We today find the "spy" jewellery of the 1950's and 60's almost laughable and reminiscent of the James Bond generation. Since then, post sci-fi society has discarded all its trappings. Otto Künzli's witty Wolpertinger - 007 (Fig. 32) revives them (The Bavarian Wolpertinger is a creature put together from various parts of different species). Innovation, reproduction and transitoriness are central to Künzli's work yet I suggest he is mocking the modern jewellery who tries to fit many functions into an object without taking into consideration the overall design aesthetic. This piece can be worn as six different types of adornment - as a ring, necklace, bangle, earring, brooch, whatever you want it to be. Again, Künzli attacks our

consumer society with his wit. Talking about the piece, Künzli asks "Does it transmit and receive signals? Does it shoot? Does it spew fire and explode? Or is it only the egg of a new fantastic species from outer space?"[18] Künzli does not make anything that is not potent with covert meaning. "No pendant without politics, no neckpiece without nihilistic nuances, or brooch without banter".[17]

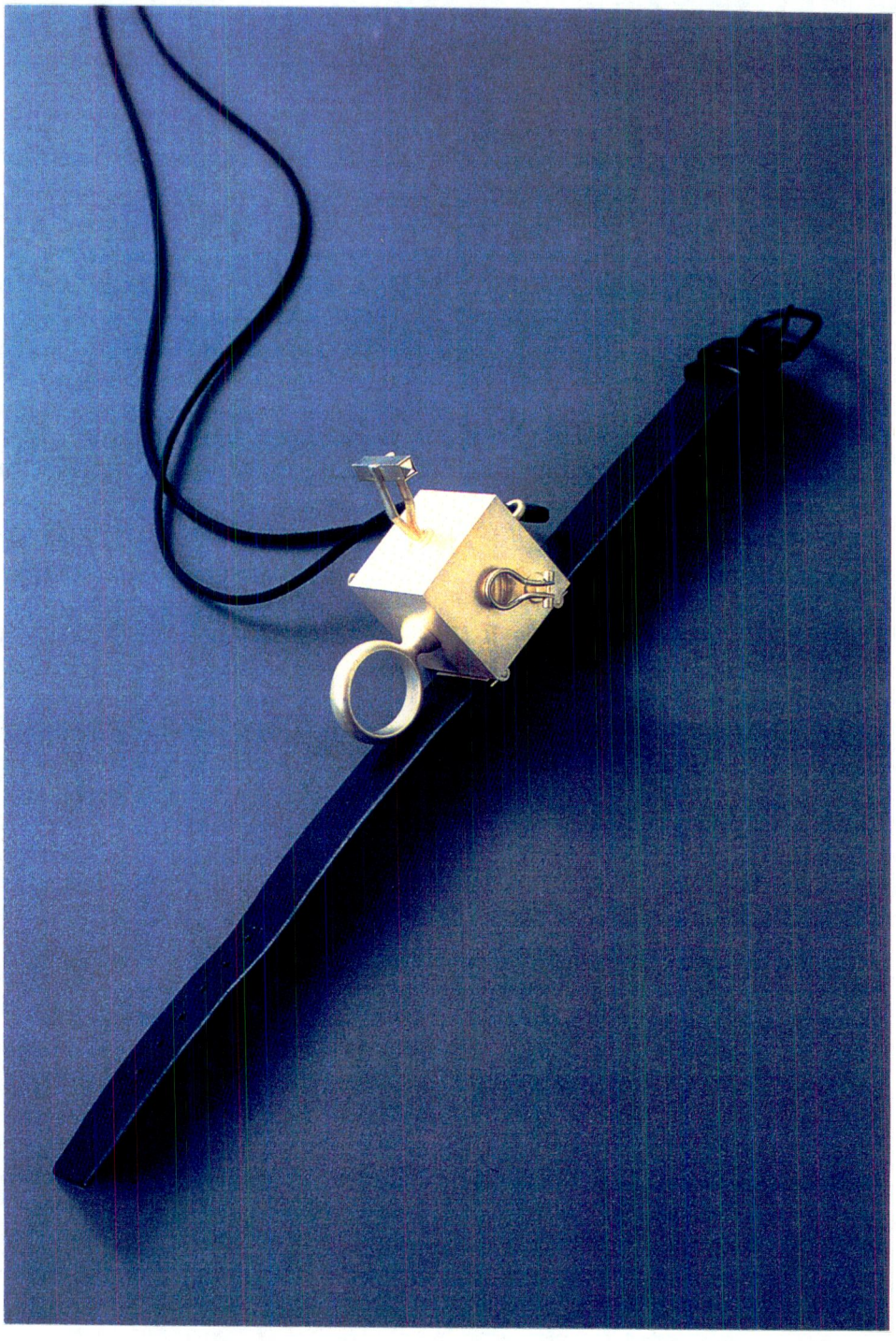

Fig. 32 Wolpertinger, 1985, Multi-Purpose Jewellery, Otto Künzli, silver, leather, cotton.

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CHAPTER 4: RELIGIOUS AMULETS

It is hard to assess exactly when religious iconography took its form in jewellery. It is evident that an abundance of goldsmithing was done during the flourishing of the Byzantine Empire from the 6th to the 15th centuries. This period was one of complex religious struggles for all of Europe, due to the first Christian Empire in the eastern sector.[1] These struggles led to many crusades, the first of which set out in 1096. Secrecy was paramount, according to certain religious preferences but small objects of reverence could be worn for personal beliefs. It is important to remember when looking at religious jewellery at the upper end of the scale that much of it was melted down due to the monetary drain of these crusades and, later on, due to the Reformation in England and Calvinism in some part of Europe.

Reliquaries

During the Middle Ages the relic became increasingly popular. Three major religions have attached importance to relics; "Buddhism, Greek Paganism and Christianity".[2] Adoration of inanimate matter became a great catalyst for the jeweller. It became necessary to possess relics for consecrating a Church, signing treaties, swearing oaths, and surprisingly they were even built into sword hilts or carried by merchants in cash boxes. To the faithful relics were a powerful support on every important occasion. Hence the need not only to house them in a Church but also to contain them, often secretly, in jewellery. Wearing the relic was recognised by Christians as a means of "direct communion with the Saint".[3] From the top end relics were contained in crown jewels and insignia to objects of religious veneration on the humblest level, boasting a huge trade for pilgrim badges.

Reliquary jewellery mainly contained fragments of the True Cross, cloth that touched the body of a saint or crowns from the True Crown of Thorns. One of the most famous reliquaries had been buried with

Fig. 33 Charlemagnes Talisman, with relic of the True Cross, gold, precious stones, Cathedral Treasury, Rheims, France.

Fig. 34 (a) Thorn Reliquary, 14th century, French, gold, enamels, coloured crystal, The British Museum.

Fig. 34 (b) Thorn Reliquary, 14th century, French, gold, enamels, coloured crystal, The British Museum.

Charlemagne (the Emperor of Europe) in 814 (contrary to his own decree). Its jewel contained relics of the Virgin's hair and fragments of the True Cross (Fig. 33). It was recovered by Otto III and was preserved as a Cathedral treasure until 1804, when it was presented to the Empress Josephine at her coronation.[4]

Another noteworthy reliquary attributed to French craftsmanship contains a holy thorn purchased by St Lars from Baldwin, the Emperor of Byzantium. The setting dates from the second quarter of the 14th century. Six scenes of the life of Christ envelop the thorn coloured with translucent enamel (Fig. 34 (a) and (b)). The crystal exterior is coloured from the back to create the effect of an amethyst, as purple has always had connotations of piousness. Stones also had religious or magical properties and were often open set so that the wearer could touch the stone from the back.[5] The compactness of this piece (height 3.8 cm) meant that it could be readily concealed by clothing. Indeed ecclesiastical work influenced more personal jewellery: a form favoured was the cross and jewellery of this type became popular in the medieval period.

The relic, however, lost favour with Church patronage when questions arose as to whether the contents were bogus.

The Enseigne

As the Italian goldsmith acquired many new skills, particularly "en ronde bosse", a technique for enamelling reliefs, he became more proficient at detail. With the advent of the Renaissance, jewellery became influenced by classical sculpture and painting. An example of this can be seen in the two views of a 16th century enseigne (hat badge) (Figs. 35 (a) and (b)). The design takes the form of a miniature altar which opens to disclose the veil of St Veronica with the head of Christ: on the outside are the Angel of the Annunciation and the Virgin; around the border runs the legend "Sola Amo

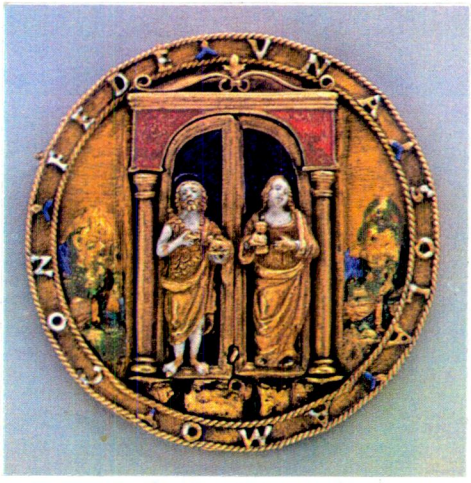

Fig. 35 (a) Enseigne, 15th century, Italian, gold, enamels, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 35 (b) Enseigne, 15th century, Italian, gold, enamels, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Con Fede" (One alone I love faithfully). According to Hackenbroch, it is reminiscent of the style of the Milanese painting and sculpture particularly of Tullio Lombardo the sculptor and Bernardino Butino the painter. Enseignes were popular from medieval times, they were bought by pilgrims at the shrines to which they made pilgrimages. Popular enseignes were made of lead, pewter or brass which formed memento bells with tiny ampullae to fill with holy water.[7]

The triptych form flourished before and during this period. From the 15th century several reliquary pendants have survived as master pieces of the miniature. A scene from the Nativity or the Crucifixion could be executed in enamel or cameo, protected by two small doors to hide the scene, much in the same fashion as the present day locket. The 15th century Burgundian triptych in Fig. 36 is a typical example of the subject matter. Reliquary triptychs are however rare. The Franco-Burgundian engraved gold reliquary triptych in Fig. 37 with a free-standing gold group fashioned in relief and enamelled "en ronde bosse" is a remarkable example; below this group are two compartments which can be concealed by two crystal panels or 'doors'. The only known comparable reliquary of this period or quality is "The Man of Sorrows" pendant triptych, believed to have been commissioned by Jean, Duc de Berry in Paris and dated 1380 - 1420.[8] Perhaps others have been destroyed or they were a mixture between reliquary and triptych. As the goldsmith had an itinerant streak, many styles filtered throughout Europe. The only known example of an iconagraphical ring in triptych form from the 15th century is believed to be English, depicting George, Catherine and Edward, the Black Prince (Fig. 38). Engraved inside the band is "Joye Sans Fin".[9] This miniature secret triptych, which was easily carried on the finger, could provide quiet moments of contemplation at any time.

Fig. 36 Triptych Pendant, 15th century, Burgundian, gold, enamels.

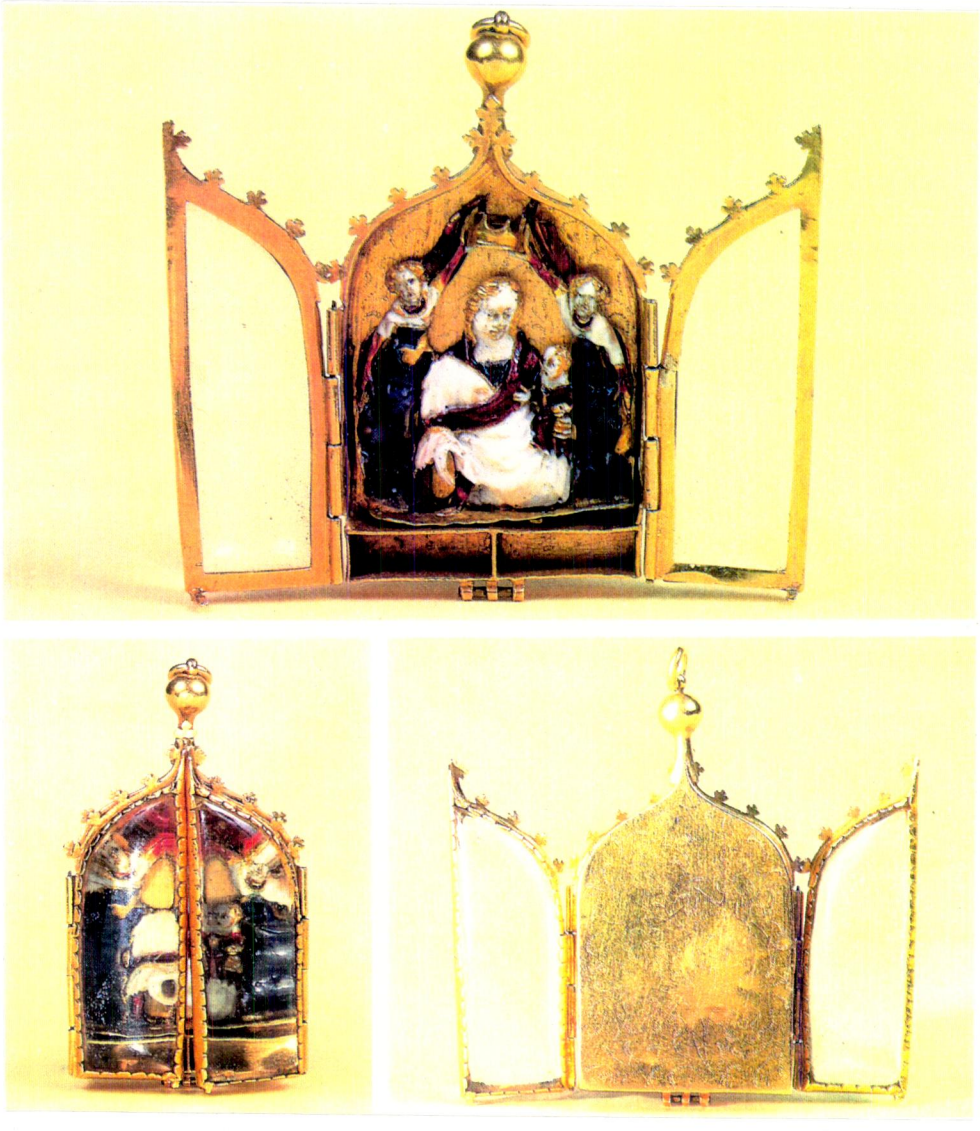

Fig. 37 Reliquary Triptych, 14th century, Franco-Burgundian, gold, enamels, crystal, Sothebys, London.

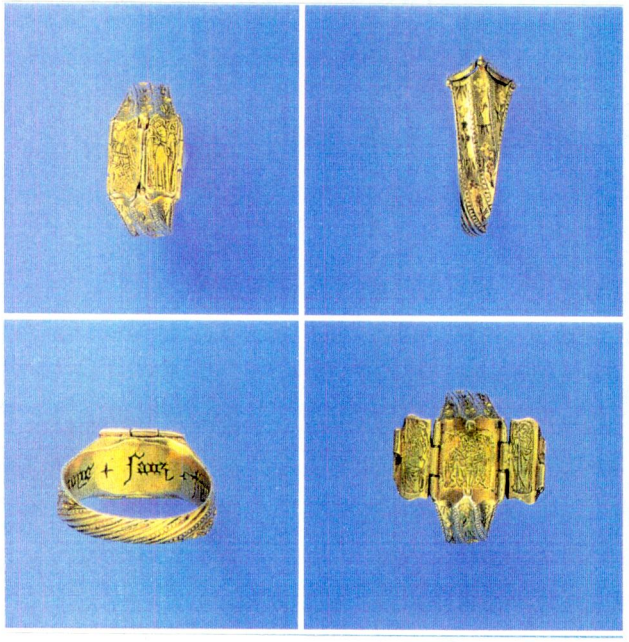

Fig. 38 Triptych Ring (unique surviving), 15th century, English, gold, Sothebys, London.

Fig. 39 Rosary Beads, 15th century, Italian, gold, enamel, Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 40 Prayernut, 16th century, English, agate, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection.

Rosaries

During the latter half of the 15th century the English began to wear rosary beads around their necks, the word "bead" being an old English word for prayer.[10] Some exquisite examples from the late 15th and 16th centuries survived the melting pot. The formed beads open up like reliquary pendants and are carved or enamelled on the inside. The earliest recorded are in the "Duke of Savoy's inventory of 1498" known as the beads of Chalcedony, opening up to show figures in silver gilt protected behind crystal plaques. A splendid surviving example, probably Italian, is now housed in the Louvre (Fig. 39); its agate beads open to show enamelled reliefs of the life of Christ. Another example documented is made from onyx beads which when opened illustrate the Life of the Virgin, also Italian.[11] The use of the rosary dates back to the old practice of counting prayers. The prayer nut in Fig. 40, made of one large agate bead (1534) depicts the Adoration in the interior and the Annunciation on the wings. This small intimate object is English, was perfect as a kind of portable altar, and is a beautifully made piece which must have given its owner moments of peaceful veneration.

Today, the making of religious jewellery is left in the hands of manufacturers, which strips them of the mystery and awe of those made in the past. Images of devotion do not primarily concern the contemporary jeweller who tries to reach out to all cultures and creeds. The question of faith can often be quite political. Jewellery artists are not afraid to draw inspiration from the past and from their own faith to create serene, highly personal pieces with a fresh contemporary feel. Although Künzli has not touched upon images of devotion in his own work, his visit as a guest lecturer at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1989 resulted in work which showed that his students were concerned with this aspect. The project he set was,

> "A significant piece of jewellery for a significant person, with the intention of unifying and preserving both in single portrait photography."[13]

One of the students, Peter Keppel, wanted to make a piece of jewellery from his girlfriend, Sarah Shay's inheritance - her grandfather's large, golden dental bridge. The result is entitled "Grandpa's Third Teeth", which now rest in peace in an iron reliquary vessel, attaining an almost amuleic character (Fig. 41). The piece is quite humorous, treating the teeth as a relic, perhaps as a fond reminder of a good-humoured man, or perhaps as a safe-keeping of expensive dentistry! Another student, Rebecca Batal, sawed the letters of the alphabet from A to Z from lead and connected them by steel cable to create a delicate necklace resembling a rosary with the letter "T" hanging like a crucifix. The piece was made for the poetry professor at nearby Brown University. "The letters used allude to movable type, and the words they combine are these which a poet counts between his fingers."[14] From looking at Batal's final portrait (Fig. 42), I sense religious awe exudes from someone Batal obviously respects. This typifies Batal's work:

> "Each jewellery piece has its own hidden reality. Hidden tubes, secreted away in boxes and forever saved in the construction of a ring where deeper secrets are dormant, a truly modern exorcist."[15]

Fig. 41 Grandpa's Third Teeth, 1989, Peter Keppel, copper, silver, leather, glass.

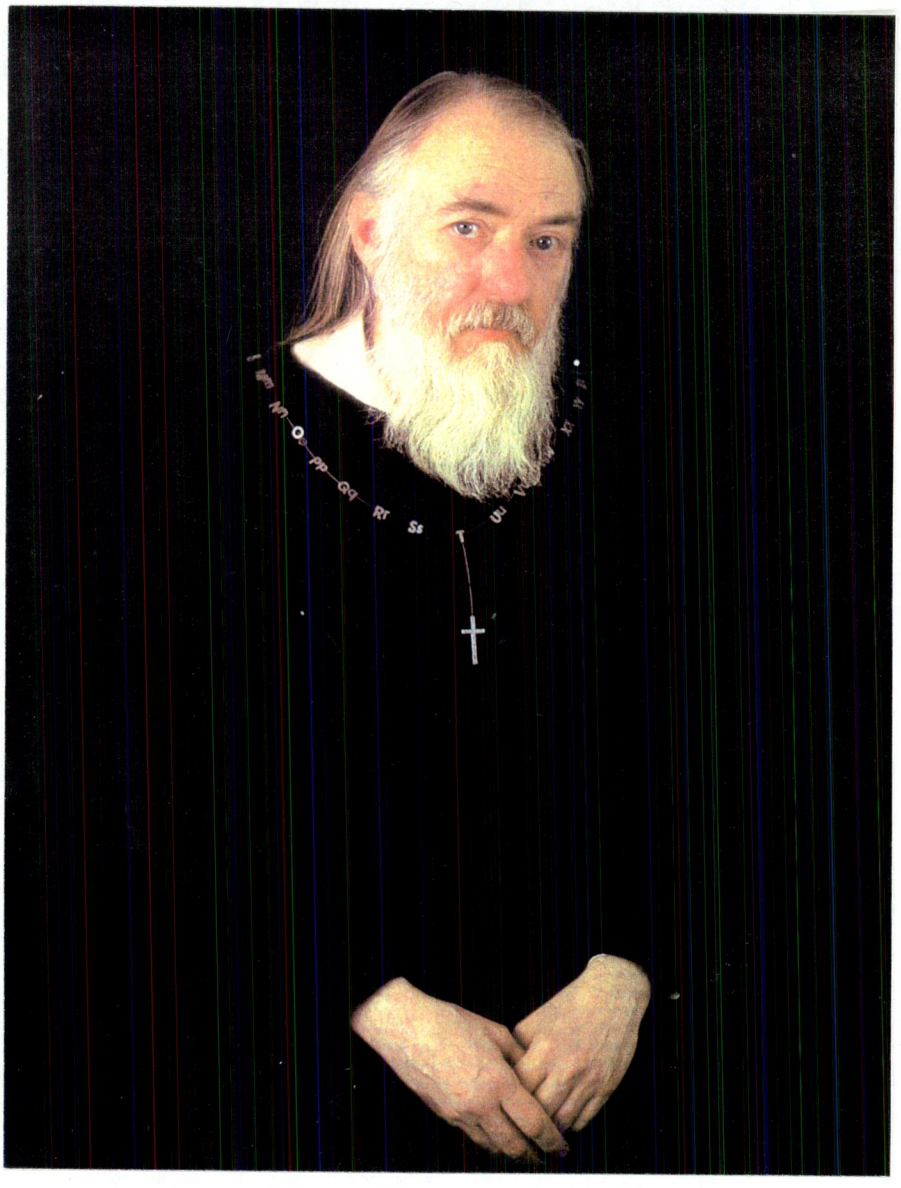

Fig. 42 Necklace for Bernard K Waldrop, 1989, Rachel Batal, lead, steel.

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CHAPTER 5: THE SECRET CONCEPT

> **SECRET** adj. 1. backstairs, camouflaged, cloak-and-dagger, close, closet (*Inf.*), concealed, conspiratorial, covered, covert, disguised, furtive, hold-and-corner (*Inf.*), hush-hush, reticent, shrouded, undercover, underground, under wraps, undisclosed, unknown, unpublished, unrevealed, unseen 2. abtruse, arcane, cabbalistic, clandestine, classified, cryptic, esoteric, mysterious, occult, recondite 3. hidden, out-of-the-way, private, retired, secluded, unfrequented, unknown 4. close, deep, discreet, reticent, secretive, sly, stealthy, underhand -*n.* 5. code, confidence, enigma, formula, key, mystery, recipe, skeleton in the cupboard, 6. **in secret** behind closed doors, by stealth, huggermugger (*Archaic*), in camera, incognito, secretly, slyly, surreptitiously.[1]

The Work of Twentieth Century European Jewellers

Although jewellers in the past have created secretive work for reasons of sentiment, religious, political or profanity, the modern jewellery artist is primarily motivated by a concept. Whereas the conceptual work of Otto Künzli "subverts the status quo",[2] the contemporary jewellers discussed in this Chapter use the concept of secrecy as a starting point. As a result they create unusual, witty or complex work. This work can be seen as highly personal as it is the artist's own interpretation of "secrecy" which emerges in the creation of an object from source through to the finished piece. All the jewellery which I have chosen to review conveys elements of sentiment, concealment or surprise. The beauty of the pieces is that people can easily identify with at least some of them. Their narratives trigger memories in the viewer and a relationship is formed. "Every ornament conceals what it adorns", wrote Nietzsche.[2] With these pieces, you feel that the artists are revealing something of themselves by the very fact that they feel something in the piece should be hidden. The scope for jewellery has never been so broad. For example, in the kinetic work of Louisa Carter,[4] the physical movement of the wearer gives a bracelet "sound". This secret only becomes apparent through movement, which is not evident until the piece is worn. The

object reveals an added dimension when a relationship is formed between it and the wearer.

Peggy Bannenberg, the Dutch jeweller who first interested me in this type of work, makes highly personal pieces with a very distinct "you don't have to wear your heart on your sleeve" train of thought. Her very unostentatious work is perhaps part of the Dutch phenomenon of working in base materials such as steel. Yet she cleverly gilds the reverse sides of brooches (Fig. 43): "The hidden gold creates a surprise for the wearer, a secret they and the piece hold".[5] It is not only the hidden gold which makes the brooches precious, the whole idea is precious in Bannenberg's Northern European world of its "embarrassment of riches".[6]

Bannenberg's colleague Rian de Jong visited the N.C.A.D. during November 1993. Paul Derrez describes her work as pieces which invite you to look at them closely to explore them; placing the ring on the finger completes the ritual, which is also fun to hold and handle as functional beauty.[7] I love the way she camouflages her pieces when they are not being worn, as if they should not be seen when they are not on the body. In Fig. 44 a simple gold band is the setting for a "fossil". The secret detail inside the fossil can only be seen by its wearer. The stand for the ring which is made from wire hides the form and its function, to become a miniature sculpture.

Just as the ritual during the 16th century of wearing ostentatious jewellery shifted from male to female due to the ascension of female monarchs to the thrones of Europe,[8] the 20th century has seen the rise of the female artist and the emergence of the female jeweller. In fact, there are about equal numbers of male and female jewellers at the moment.[9]

However jewellery designers who are concerned with hidden elements, I find are more than likely to be women. In the recent Glasgow Secrets Exhibition referred to in the Introduction, "technique and excellence in design

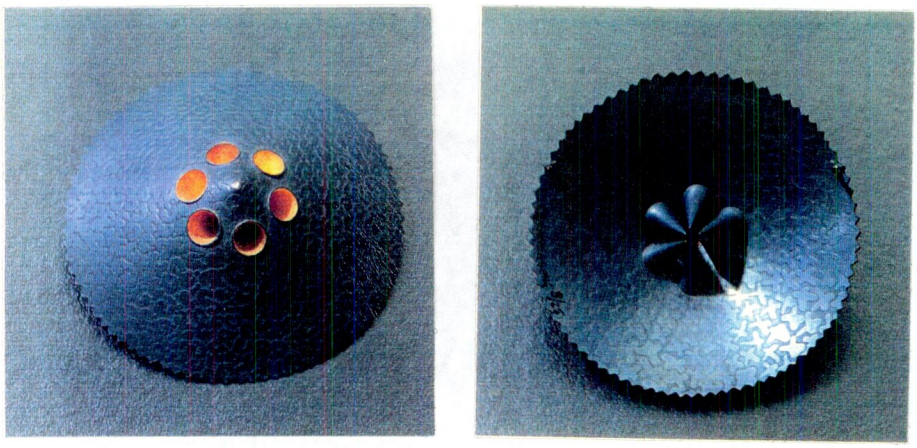

Fig. 43 Brooch, 1989, Peggy Bannenberg, silver, gold, 7 x 2 cm.

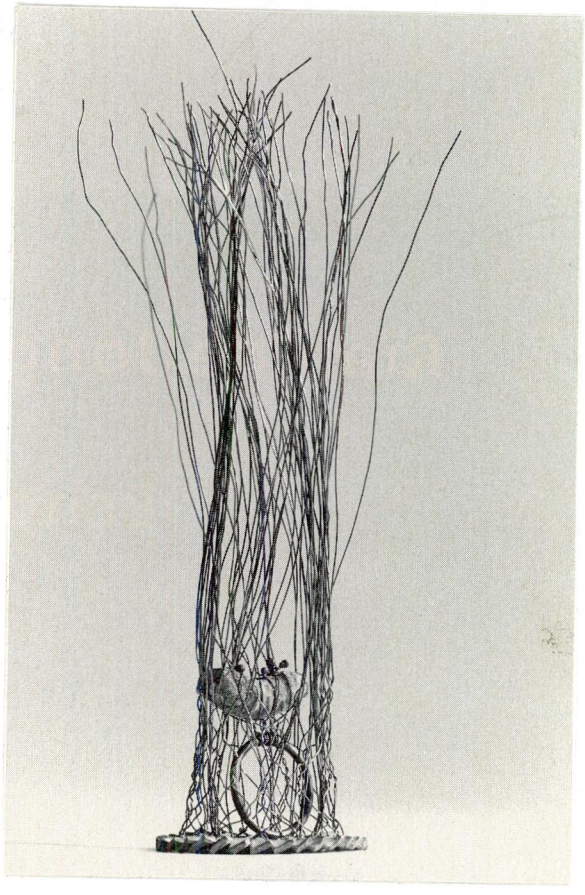

Fig. 44 Links, Ring with Stand, 1992, Rian de Jong, zinc, copper, gold, fossil, 8 cm.

and craftsmanship not gender, played an important part in the selection process".[10] Twenty-seven female jewellers were exhibited, whereas the number of male jewellers represented was seven. Previously the home had been the only creative environment for most women, so it is not surprising that domesticity, the decorative and the trivial, usually considered too mundane for creative material,[11] have become a source of inspiration for many. Jewellery by the English designer Barbara Cartlidge entitled Things Remembered are directly inspired by the domestic environment. Her brushed silver and gold pendant in Fig. 45 depicts a door, which can be opened to reveal a tiny living room, complete with rocking chair, mantlepiece mirror and potted plant. Perhaps this is a childhood scene remembered, or a symbol.

In symbolism, the house has a female character and because of its secret enclosure it is said to be the repository of all wisdom. In the interpretation of dreams it represents security. The symbol of the "Living Room" with a closed door without windows, could be seen as a symbol of virginity, something which is in essence a secret.[12] Perhaps Cartlidge is conveying this message. The naivety of her Living Room pendant exudes innocence.

Women have been described as secret creatures as opposed to men. Women's sex organs are hidden, the womb is a hidden receptacle. The young British jewellery designer Mah Rhana, plays on the idea of woman as a receptacle. She chose the image of the teacup as a theme "its shape, its form as a vessel, its long history, its connotations of home".[13] Clark has described the Victorian icon of the cup as an exclusively feminine one[14] symbolising comfort and sympathy. Rhana's work comes across as contemplative and playful. In her piece The Pregnant Teacup, 1991, (Fig. 46), a round silver pendant hides gilt silver teacups which can be rattled around, displaying the artist's playfulness. This sense of fun can be seen in the work of another young jeweller, Maria Wong. Her forms are inspired by such mundane things

Fig. 45 The Living Room, Pendant, 1973, Barbara Cartlidge, brushed gold and silver, 8 x 5 cm.

Fig. 46 The Pregnant Teacup, Pendant and Charms, 1992, Mah Rhana, silver.

Fig. 47 Turnip Pendant, Squid Pendant, Pebble Ring, 1994, Maria Wong, mixed metals.

as carrots and turnips. The pieces are small vessels in tactile, organic shapes, hammered and manipulated in silver and base metals (Fig. 47). These pleasing and highly personal objects only reveal their hidden function when picked up and handled. The top comes off a pot and out comes a chain and a vessel becomes a pendant. Similarly, a smaller "pebble" form can be prised apart to reveal hidden shanks and it is transformed into a ring. Wong restricts herself, she has to take into account the size and shape of a piece so that it can conceal the necessary jewellery fitments and remain wearable.

> "Wong has decided not to make earrings, as hiding ear wires and butterflies can make a piece clumsy. Neither has she found a satisfactory way of hiding brooch pins in her work".[15]

Nonetheless it is a wonderful surprise to find out these intimate sculptures can be worn.

Katie Gayle, who also works in Britain, makes brooches and bracelets with secondary practical features in the time-honoured tradition of poison rings or the Victorian vinaigrettes containing smelling salts (Fig. 48). Some of her brooches have cleverly constructed hidden compartments to house the modern woman's necessities such as condoms, perfumes or pills (Fig. 49).[16] Gayle's work focuses on the purpose of secret compartments in the past, and puts them in a refreshingly modern context. Another artist who relies heavily on the traditions of the past is one of the small percentage of male jewellers who produce work of this nature. David Hensel, also British, has made several "pomander" rings which open up to reveal miniatures of his family carved intricately and inlaid in wood, mother of pearl and silver (Fig. 50).[17] Such sentimental pieces are reminiscent of the times when people kept concealed miniature portraits of their loved ones.

The modern jeweller, although unprompted by politics, religion or fashions for sentiment, in essence has rediscovered an old idea with a sense of fun, which lifts us out of the sombre constraints of a materialistic and technological age.

"Jewellery that is viewed as an object is fragmentary. Behind it is a wearer and a maker, a world they move in, the clothes they wear, the places they go, people met and city streets walked. I would like in a thousand years for someone, while glancing at something I had made, to speculate on the strange society that gave it birth."[18]

Fig. 48 Victorian Vinaigrettes, circa 1840, glass, silver, Farrington Antiques, Dublin.

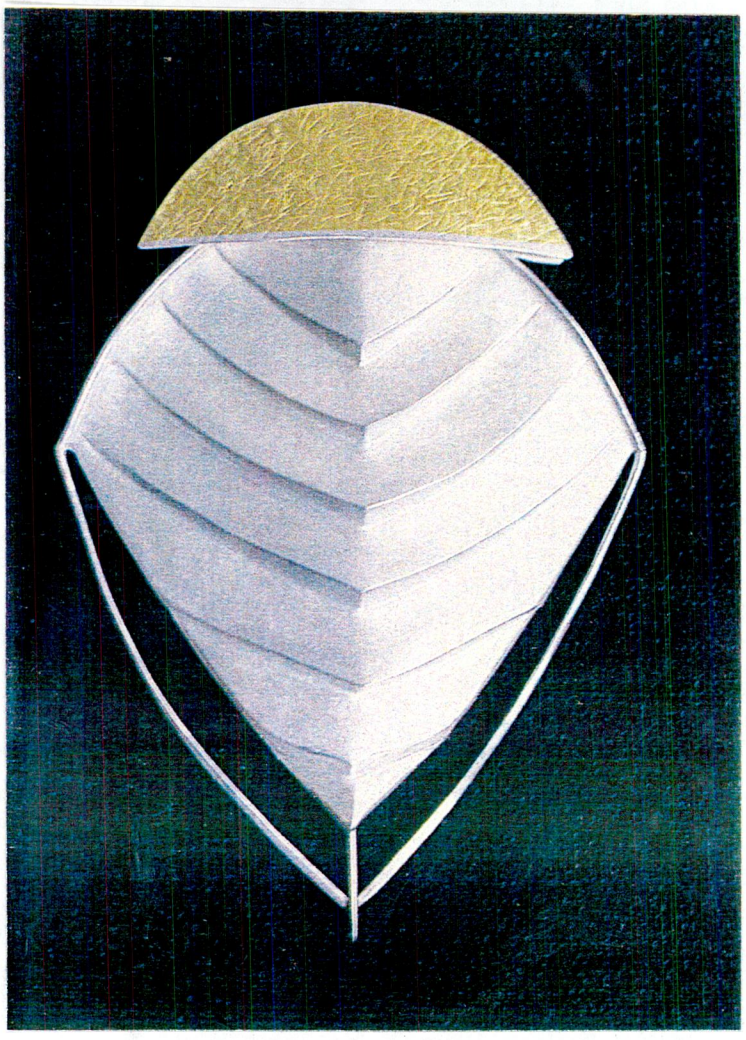

Fig. 49 Box Brooch, 1990, Katie Gayle, gold and silver.

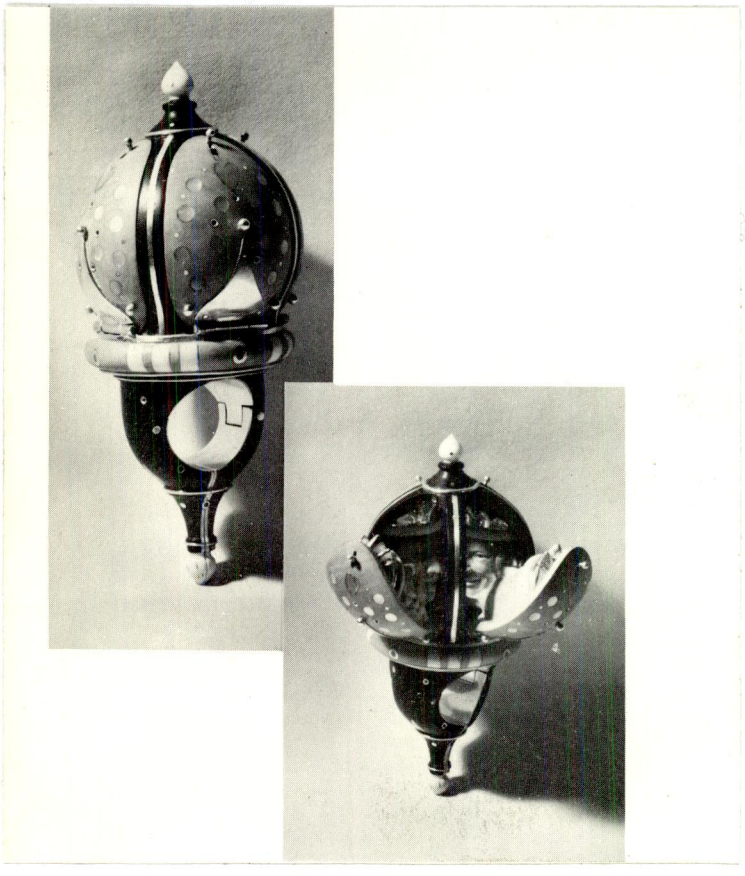

Fig. 50 Family Ring, 1978, David Hensel, wood, silver, ivory, mother of pearl.

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CONCLUSION

All the jewellery which has been discussed could be described as cathartic. The pieces have a special dimension other than wealth or power. The contemporary jeweller provides this with his/her strong regard for tradition. "The history of jewellery is far longer than the history of painting and far richer than the history of sculpture."[1] The knowledge of the past enables the jeweller to delve into the recesses of this tradition, to find forgotten classics and to give them a modern treatment. Yet, because the objects they make are small and intimate, it does not mean they cannot enlarge our vision. "By intensifying the space we are observing, the viewer isolated from the active world and pulled away from the banalities of ordinary life."[2] Secret spaces in jewellery provide this intensification. The exploitation of these intimate and private spaces lets us slip away from a world which is self-obsessed to a miniature secret world of escapism.

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