



Comune di Padova
Assessorato alla Cultura
Settore Attività Culturali



PRESS RELEASE

Pensieri Preziosi 9. Contemporary Australian Jewellery **The Oratory of San Rocco, 30 November 2013 – 23 February 2014**

For decades the Department of Culture of the Municipality of Padua has been involved in promoting and enhancing the evolution and development of contemporary research jewellery from a historical-critical point of view, not just Italian jewellery but also international pieces, opening up debates and discussions on artists from different Schools and cultural environments. This year the Pensieri Preziosi exhibition, which has been designed and curated by Mirella Cisotto Nalon now reaching its ninth year, presents the Australian Goldsmithing School that trained at the RMIT University of Melbourne.

“This exhibition allows visitors to get to know, appreciate and examine highly original works created by eight specially chosen artists who have studied at the most important University of Design on the continent of Australia, under the guidance of Prof. Robert Baines”, notes Andrea Colasio, the Municipal Councillor for Culture.

Robert Baines is Emeritus Professor at the RMIT University of Melbourne, and together with Nicholas Bastin, Simon Cottrell, Kirsten Haydon, Linda Hughes, Christopher Milbourne, Nicole Polentas and Katherine Wheeler, they have created an exhibition with about one hundred works that will give the Italian public the chance to get to know and appreciate the styles of Australian research goldsmithing.

The works selected for this exhibition use poor materials alongside precious gold, with original and unusual working techniques that combine tradition and innovation: they are conceptually complicated pieces which aim to express each individual artist's thoughts, feelings and artistic reflection of both the past and the present.

According to Baines, the “poetry of making” needs a *tòpos*, a real and metaphorical “place” where you can create jewellery. In this search for the *tòpos*, the artist identifies and indicates four major areas for his students to focus on in order to design and create contemporary jewellery. The *tòpos* of the “found object”, namely remnants of industrial materials, discarded objects from everyday life, collected and reused by offering them a new dimension and new life; the *tòpos* of intimate space, personal and private, one's own body, the home, individual and subjective memories; the *tòpos* of public space, streets, exteriors and architecture; and the *tòpos* of history and culture which is inevitably linked to history and personal thoughts.

Australian contemporary jewellery is mainly conceptual, displaying skilful technical experimentation in its use of materials, with a keen focus on personal and collective history, as well as elegant forms with echoes linked to the past but also to modern daily life. At times this produces abstract, fantastical and poetic results which often have a veil of nostalgic irony.

This conceptual process often leads to interpretations that unwind like true stories, real or surreal tales where the works of art are the main characters within a careful and well-thought-out procedure of research and planning.

Robert Baines (1949) gives his works an essentially conceptual value. He uses ancient techniques, creating a galaxy of intricate work of gold, silver and other colours: as such, his brooches, necklaces and rings are a display not just of precise and complex working techniques with refined results, but also of precious evidence of personal and collective life, of stories from the past and present. The integration of “found objects”, small plastic figurines and the use of electrolytically treated coloured powder instantly bring his jewellery into modernity. For Baines, jewellery is a bearer of culture and thoughts, as well as collective and personal historical memory; it is a medium which explores and reflects upon the paths of tradition and innovation. His students create their works based on these principles, in turn producing individual interpretations with different results but which share the idea that jewellery is a means of communication and expression that is closely linked to a region, a story and a memory.

Nicholas Bastin (1968) loves to create completely “invented” objects, abstract and imaginative jewellery that seems to belong to fictional and fantastical characters that are outside of historical time, to toys and to Japanese Manga. He investigates desires and fears, playing in between alternative worlds of personal mythologies, combining creative expression with experimental figurative styles.

Simon Cottrell (1975) almost exclusively uses cylinders, sometimes flat like discs and other times elongated and tapered towards the top, with a smooth or faceted surface and protruding indentations that connect the shapes. Given his use of metal alloys, a monochrome colour defines the surfaces and unites the parts. Visual perception is linked to the values of volume, form, surfaces and colour. They are essential parameters that help to give meaning and visibility.

In his jewellery, the artist tries gradually to seize the elemental quality of things, not just as a banal simplification, but as an expression of his intuition which manifests itself in all of his work and which can only be offered by perception.

Kirsten Haydon (1973) is originally from New Zealand. She connects her jewellery to the simple yet complex concept of “souvenirs”, in particular giving voice to her own intense personal experience of the Antarctic. She channels her memory, research and technical experimentation into her works which tell of episodes and moments experienced around the ice. The snap-shots she took during her trip to Antarctica are revived and reinterpreted, transferring them into jewellery that creates a reflective optical illusion thanks to a specific experimental enamelling technique, which alludes to the play of reflected light as though it were powdered ice crystals or the dazzling white of the snow.

Linda Hughes (1953) turns geometry and abstraction into her own style, taking inspiration from everyday street signs, and by using sharp colours and precise lines. Simply by choosing and wearing her jewellery, it has the ability to change people’s attitude towards themselves, other people and the world. She works with new and unusual materials, using parallel stripes at regular intervals, generally of the same size and in various colours: black alternating with white or red, and yellow with black. She uses individual circular shapes that are touching or on top of one another, parallelepipeds and slender cylinders which she reassembles into deconstructed forms. The lines from every single piece create an additional playful geometric and chromatic effect.

Christopher Milbourne (1984) creates his works from recollections of memories: intricate mini-sculptures that sway between abstraction and representation, evoking modern ruins, architectural structures of abandoned buildings and neglected work machinery. Out of all the materials, he prefers Sterling Silver as it is the most suitable for crafting his ideas. Descriptive titles are always present in his works, revealing the artist’s complex imagination.

Nicole Polentas (1984) brings her Cretan origins into her jewellery, staying with the common factor of this Australian Goldsmithing School of emphasising the connection between culture, identity and a sense of belonging to a region. Polentas’s works are an assemblage of figures, photographs and texts; they are fascinating constructions made from different materials, such as plastics, glass, porcelain, steel and silver. The extracts of *mantinades* embossed on twisted metal strips are fundamental to each of her works.

Katherine Wheeler (1979) is heavily influenced in her work by the life of the sea. The artist mainly creates jewellery sculptures which combine materials such as thin silver, porcelain, paper and thread. Her works and materials are often ‘camouflaged’ by white paint to create original forms. Her images of marine animals are characterised by their semantic content and their iconicity, whose meanings belong to imagination, abstraction and symbolism. Rings are her favourite subject, big rings, hollow rings which have a connection with the body and when worn can be a continuation of the body; they come to exist or coexist with that person.

This exhibition is curated by Mirella Cisotto Nalon, with texts written by Luisa Bazzanella Dal Piaz, Mirella Cisotto Nalon, Alessandra Possamai Vita and Alessandra Zabbeo.

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INFO

Opening hours: 9:30-12:30, 15:30-19:00,
Closed Monday, 25, 26 december, 1 january
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