

# Wearable Sculpture

## Contemporary Studio Jewellery from the Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection

The exhibition *Wearable Sculpture* features sixty art objects that will charm and surprise you by their shape and the diversity of materials they are made from. This studio jewellery was created by artists over the past few decades.



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Jewellery-making must surely be one of the oldest arts in human history, and it is practised everywhere in the world. Well before they decorated pottery or clothing, certain peoples adorned themselves with objects found in their natural environment, such as shells, pebbles and flowers, believing that such ornaments could transform them or endow

them with a quasi-magical character or power. The past three decades have seen an unprecedented revolution in the jewellery world. Innovative materials and processes and original concepts have given jewellery a new shine.

Today's studio jewellers use a wide range of natural and synthetic materials. The development of synthetic materials, from the first experiments with Bakelite to the use of ColorCore (a plastic laminate permeated with colour), have had a major impact on jewellery design. Whatever the material, whether costly (gold, precious stones) or not (old telephone directories, bicycle tires), the artists perceive it as something valuable they can use in their creations.

Nel Linssen and Janna Syvänoja have made paper their medium of choice, while Vannetta Seccharran le Coadic and Verena Siebet Fuchs work with materials that have been discarded or thrown

away. Alyssa Dee Krauss has created a necklace in which she incorporates beads that can be read by touch, like Braille. By assembling duck feet made of orange synthetic fabric, Felieke van der Leest has created a wearable work of art rich in humorous associations.

There are two usual approaches to creating jewellery as sculpture. In the first, the artist treats the piece as an autonomous entity: a piece of sculpture pinned to a bodice becomes a brooch. It is wearable sculpture. The brooch by Dutch artist Michiel Teunen is an example. In the second approach, the jewellery is designed from the outset to be wearable: it is indissociable from the body and is worn like an article of clothing. It is body sculpture. Canadian Kai Chan's wooden neckpiece, which clasps the torso like a breastplate, illustrates this approach, as does Thea Tolsma's rubber collarette. These pieces lose much of their effect if they are not worn.

Museums devoted solely to jewellery are rare. Jewellery is generally collected, whether on a small or a large scale, by museums specializing in the decorative arts, history, crafts or costume. If museums set themselves the goal of recording society's changing tastes and technological development, they must broaden their collections accordingly. Manufactured objects reflect social, cultural, political and economic developments and their influence on a given society. Studio jewellery such as you see in this exhibition reflects both conti-



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nuity and change in many facets of daily life, in fashion, social codes, mores and customs. When a piece of jewellery enters a public collection, it becomes a work of art, a means of expression, a wearable sculpture.

The exhibition was organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts with support from the Montreal Urban Community Arts Council. It has toured Montreal exhibition spaces through the "Exposer dans l'île" programme. We sincerely thank all those who helped make this exhibition a reality.

**Hélène Nadeau**

adapted from Luc d'Iberville-Moreau

**October 24, 2001, to March 24, 2002**  
**StudiO, Level S1**  
**Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion**

1 Barbara Stutman (born in 1945)  
*It's a Girl (2) Ring*, 1998  
Gold, silver and magnetic wire, 6.5 x 3 x 2 cm  
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts  
Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection  
Photo Denis Farley

2 Felieke van der Leest (born in 1968)  
*Duck Feet Necklace*, 1996  
Synthetic fabric, 50 x 24 x 5 cm  
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts  
Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection  
Photo Denis Farley