

# Sensorial Sensibility

## Crafting Relational Strategies in Contemporary Jewellery Display

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### Introduction

Plinths and lockable cabinets have become ubiquitous features in jewellery displays, providing a presentational format that is responsive to the gallery's conservational efforts, security needs and spatial requirements. Conventionally, craft collections arranged in a display case are presented in groups with shared characteristics, such as function and material content. Methods used to contextualise objects presented in this way include chronological and geographical structures, and showcasing the work of an individual or small group of designers. This encyclopedic approach is prevalent in discipline-led craft galleries and museums, using a format that helps to create knowledge and understanding for the viewer.

The taxonomic mode of displaying craft collections removes the object from its expected function. Jewellery's conventional mode of being, for example, is when worn on the body, providing a mobile form of display. The body allows the context and conditions in which a jewel is viewed to change, informing a continuous dialogue between wearer, object and the viewer. The interaction between the wearer and the worn object is then altered once the object is presented behind the glass display case. This presentational format enables jewellery to be observed and interpreted as an object of contemplation, where artistic or sculptural value is brought to the forefront. The varied names accredited to such work- including author jewellery, auteur jewellery and narrative jewellery - define a sense of objectness that carries the voice of the maker and embodies responses to display methods found in the arts. It is the problematic notion of wearability and ownership in jewellery display that provides the foundation to this study, which begins by looking at methods of display that explore the relationship between body and object.

In the context of this paper, I examine relational aesthetics from a craft perspective to define display as a creative tool in contemporary jewellery. This involves the exploration of existing display strategies used in galleries and museums; looking at the work of contemporary craft practitioners who actively consider the presentation of their work; and identifying parallel strategies within the arts in order to provide this study with a supportive framework. The use of interactive display techniques that correspond with trends in art and exhibition design is characteristic of a small group of contemporary jewellery practitioners who look to develop a system of interactive encounters. Makers such as Yuka Oyama, Ted Noten, Suska Mackert and Naomi Filmer aim to create an environment or space that allows for human interaction and social engagement to provide the content of their work. In a different way, the role of digital technology and the worldwide distribution of jewellery images, ideas and interactive discussions via the internet reinforce the growing importance of an empowered viewer. This in turn raises questions regarding the intended destination of a jewellery object, how contemporary makers are presenting their work to a wider audience and what impact this has on jewellery practice.

The impetus of this study is to re-imagine contemporary jewellery, not as an autonomous object, but to explore the visual language and social interactions that inform the making, interpretation and experience of the worn object. This approach considers the influence of digital media and places increasing emphasis on audience participation or collaboration - demonstrating the creative potential of interactivity when presenting contemporary jewellery. These methods provide an alternative form of communication compared to the conventional display case and draw parallels to the theoretical framework suggested by French art critic, Nicolas Bourriaud. Bourriaud defined the term 'relational aesthetics' through his observation of the late twentieth century artists who sought to engage the individual within community-based collectives. This artistic strategy offers an alternative approach to artwork that derives solely from the individual views of the artist, by embracing the interactions of audience members. For Bourriaud, art was an interactive medium that enables the artist and viewer to explore the importance of 'intersubjectivity' and the open-ended nature of human interaction. By developing a method that is designed to 'represent, produce or prompt' a bodily experience (Bourriaud 1998: 113), I propose to develop a practical approach to contemporary jewellery and its display. This approach will not only investigate the inclusive rationale of the 'work in progress' exhibition, but also the emotive qualities represented, produced or prompted by a craft object as a means of engaging the viewer.

### Jewellery as a relational construct

The role of display in contemporary jewellery is a pivotal aspect of my doctoral research and ongoing work. This research has prompted varying discussions surrounding the contemporary definition of jewellery; the influential role of art practice within the discipline; and the limited discourse that actively discusses promotional and display techniques as a practical and theoretical structure within jewellery. My research identifies a growing interest in presentational methods that diversify from contemporary strategies that are embedded within the arts. The characteristics shared by auteur, author and narrative jewellery are structured around the presentation of an object that carries the voice of the maker which, in turn, is interpreted by the viewer. My own interest in jewellery display has led me to investigate those that are considering alternative strategies which replace the voice of the jeweller with that of an audience, allowing the viewer to inform both meaning and content in their work.

The definition of auteur jewellery, for example, is used by Wilhelm Lindemann with reference to a small, autonomous group of contemporary art practitioners in the latter half of the twentieth century. Following the general trends of contemporary art, auteur jewellers are able to undertake a process of introspection in order to question jewellery's assumptions. This demonstrates a critical approach to their work that questions their choice of discipline and informs a personal design language. Lindemann claims:

Auteur jewellery represents a reflection with artistic means on the social conditions to which it is subject and, for instance, also addresses the societal implications of jewellery, the uses of 'noble' or 'base' materials or the social distinction conferred by jewellery (Lindemann 2011: 12).

Material content has been identified as a tool that can address political and social concerns regarding the affordability and accessibility of jewellery, a radical departure from its previous engagement with monetary and symbolic value. This principle has since become associated with current social and environmental concerns regarding handmade, sustainable and ethically-sourced materials. This depth of critical reflection can also be seen in the ways in which jewellers are addressing questions such as why we adorn ourselves and the impact that this has. These practitioners demonstrate a focus on the jewellery object as one of contemplation that remains unworn and is presented away from the body. The marketing, distribution and presentation of art objects through galleries indicate an alternative art structure that has become influential within the discipline. Jewellery has become collectible, thus replacing its primary function as an object to be worn.

Jewellery with a narrative content is not a recent phenomenon. The desire to adorn the body can be described as an anthropological staple, revealing social and cultural systems that inform our understanding of humankind. This principle illustrates the social standing of jewellery throughout history from the ostentatious display of royal regalia, to the clay plates placed in the lips of people in tribal societies. Body modification, including implants and scarification, rests on the boundaries of jewellery as a method of representing the self and continuing historic cultural rituals.

Jewellery's portrayal of meaning reflects human dynamics and has the power to generate a response; it communicates at an emotional level, revealing the choices made by the wearer and the ways in which the viewer interprets such meaning. Social and cultural significance is communicated through the body's reactive response to an object, whether emotional or physical. Researcher Margaret Boden's psychological analysis suggests that a response to jewellery and other craft objects can be evoked by factors such as social context. Boden (2000) *Craft, Perception and the Possibilities of the Body*, cites examples range from jewellery worn by Viking chiefs to the heavily-laden, jewel-encrusted adornment of the British monarchy. The precious nature of the material and the detail of the workmanship emphasise jewellery's ability to signify the status of the wearer, and the influential role of objects in provoking a physical or psychological response. Boden says: 'They arouse affordances of many different kinds, both 'bodily' (such as drinking or sitting) and 'social' (such as stroking, hugging, fearing, or respecting)' (Boden 2000: 297). Boden's 'psychological mechanisms' refer to craft's intimacy with the body and its ability to evoke bodily movement. This quality links the crafts to everyday processes such as eating and grooming, thus grounding the craft object in human history. Biological references can also be made as a way to explain natural behaviour and curiosity towards such objects, for example the desire to run hands over textile fabric. Bodily habits integral to an object's identity reflect jewellery's ability not only to symbolise the character of the wearer and to reflect cultural considerations, but also to make an impact on the viewer or wearer. This observation is reinforced by Sandra Flood's suggestion: 'Objects are not passive in their impact: they came into our lives, changing habits, provoking emotions, and trailing social meanings' (Flood 2002: 99).

Jewellery's connection with the human body, through bodily response and personal adornment, signifies this discipline's ability to communicate to a large audience. This accessibility allows an intimate connection between jeweller and wearer or audience, both physically and through interpretation. The viewer is able to identify with aspects associated with jewellery such as working with the hands and understanding of materials: sensibilities that may be deemed a felt experience and can be imagined because of our everyday experiences and prior knowledge.

It is this assessment of the body, established in a narrative of wearability, that distinguishes jewellery from the arts. Besten (2006) highlights the contextual placement of jewellery as a prevalent way of establishing meaning. In *Reading Jewellery. Comments on Narrative Jewellery*, she claims: 'Jewellery is quite different from fine art while being mobile, wearable and therefore semantically changing according to the context and conditions under which it is viewed' (Besten 2006).

This sensorial sensibility embedded in a craft object offers a potential area of investigation in jewellery display regarding the presentation of wearability, the body and social or symbolic consequence within the gallery or museum space. As Besten (2006) says: 'A conventional showcase exhibition cannot handle this phenomenon'. The function of wearability, and its engagement with social behaviour, interaction and the felt experience, presents a problematic approach in the gallery environment. This issue defines my area of study, which questions how the relationship between viewer, maker and wearer may be addressed in terms of display methods. In terms of auteur jewellery, Lindemann notes: 'Traditional jewellery in public spaces has until very recently been kept and exhibited mainly in palace and cathedral treasure chambers or ethnographic collections.' He goes on to describe how 'the adorning function of jewellery as decoration worn on the human body has been obscured compared to the art object as such with the content of its message' (Lindemann 2011: 13). In response to this concern, an assessment of existing display methods within the jewellery and the wider field of craft can be carried out, giving prominence to the theme of display, changes in contemporary craft practice and what these mean for the presentation of a craft object.

## Jewellery and display

Cindi Strauss, curator of modern and contemporary decorative arts and design at the Museum of Fine Art, Houston, emphasises the emergence of jewellers who are exploring an intellectual territory of ideas, alongside those of aesthetics and technology. In a talk [Crossroads of trends and traditions: Emerging American jewellery artists today](#), delivered at the 2010 conference of the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG), Strauss compares the value system currently in place in contemporary jewellery with the hierarchical classification of value in the art world.

She asks whether idea-driven or theoretical concepts are considered more important than practical use within contemporary jewellery, observing that 'jewellery about ideas seems to be the dominant style of work being made today. It is also the type of work that museums, galleries, and collectors are gravitating towards displaying and collecting' (Strauss 2010). This response derives from Strauss' conversations with leading American jewellers and academic figures, and reveals that educative programs are encouraging artistic expression and contemplation. Lectures from visiting practitioners and courses immersed in art, craft, design and material culture are factors which lead students to question the field in which they work, informed by theoretical structures and systems from established fields such as the arts.

This awareness has also led to consideration of the object's life after the design has been completed. Venues including galleries, pop-up stores and alternative websites reveal an awareness of how their designs will reach and feature within the public sphere. These communicative platforms bridge the gap between the jeweller's workshop and the wearer's body to highlight the importance of the viewer. They influence the type of work being produced and also reflect the issues of presentation that emerging jewellers consider across a range of disciplines.

For the purpose of this text, I will focus on the work of Ted Noten and Naomi Filmer whose work demonstrates ways craft values are explored through the jeweller's and jewellery object's interaction with an audience. Filmer's 2007 Lenticular Series at the Victoria and Albert Museum uses digital presentation to engage the viewer in an embodied experience. Her exploration of auditory and visual methods emphasise the importance of the body in her own work, and successfully communicates the concept of wearability within the gallery environment. Her use of multi-sensory methods such as the sound of a person breathing is designed to provoke awareness of the audience's own bodily actions. This auditory strategy is supported by the presentation of holographic imagery depicting a moving body. Filmer's use of technology to explore alternative ways of symbolising the body, from visual to auditory methods, is used to activate the objects on display. Other representations of the body are introduced alongside the static object to build a sensory portrayal of the absent body.

Recordings of breathing, the stroking of hair and clearing the throat are heard to help create what Filmer describes as a 'body-esque' environment (Filmer 2007: 13). These impersonal bodily actions, such as the rhythms of breathing, are automatic processes that do not intrude upon our conscious thoughts. Filmer describes the process:

Out of the ordinary... what is more ordinary than being in your own skin, being in your own body, the sound of your own breath? But as soon as you take it out of context of inside your head or standing next to someone... you've removed it from the context, it becomes quite incredible, it comes quite surreal (Filmer 2007).

This approach demonstrates a progression from Filmer's earlier work, such as the rigid structures of *Mouth Piece* (1996), which dictate the positioning of the wearer by contorting the body to the jeweller's specification. Filmer uses the physical form of an object as a tool; a component that activates a process that reflects bodily behaviour and comments on the notion of preciousness. She draws the viewer's attention to areas of the body not normally associated with jewellery and decoration by, for example, using the concept of ornamentation to highlight the inside of the mouth or armpit. Filmer's Lenticular series is distinguished from her earlier work by her investigative approach to recording such movements or interactions. The works interrogate how an audience may experience the wearability of the displayed object despite having no physical contact with the work. This method addresses the psychological or social engagement of an object through what is conventionally the unmediated experience of an object. It also uses an approach that investigates display, using visual and auditory methods that are audience-focused and reactive to the gallery environment.

Ted Noten also uses a collaborative approach as a way of exploring new digital technologies and engaging an audience. He is led by a desire to break away from the traditional gallery route and become an independent curator of his own exhibitions, and has organised events such as TedWalk (2008), which presented his work using a catwalk show.

In 2011, he used taxi drivers as ambassadors for the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) in his project Art Rehab, part of the exhibition *The Modern Jewel in Time and the Mind of Others*. Their cabs became mobile sites for the location of his jewellery in a bid to bridge the gap between gallery and outside world. Noten has also developed an interactive website from which his work can be distributed, as well as unusual methods for producing or dispensing his jewellery in a theatrical or symbolic way, such as a robotic arm or vending machine.

In later work, Noten began to focus on serial projects in order to reach a wide and varied audience. Besten describes him as 'one of the few jewellery makers who have succeeded in bridging the gap with their audience and who are recognised in the fine art world as well as in design and fashion' (Besten 2011: 112). Noten's multidisciplinary approach to jewellery explores the value of participation in order to establish meaning. For *Chew your own Brooch* (1998), participants were invited to buy a piece of chewing gum, chew and make a form from the pliable gum, and return it in the supplied box. Noten cast the returned gum in silver, attached a pin and returned it to the participant. The process symbolized the transformation of an everyday, worthless material into something precious, in a process developed and experienced by the participant. Value was thus placed on the making process and the sensory experience of chewing the gum, thereby loosening the control of the jeweller and empowering the viewer. Noten also collaborated with a video artist to make a film of a woman chewing gum, in order to present the principle behind the project. He thus ensured that the project engaged with an audience beyond that of the gallery space and was transferable into varying digital formats as a means of presentation. Such consideration of ways in which to connect with an audience, as well as the notion of giving permanence to the process, reveals the open-ended potential of collaborative projects. Similarly, Noten's Silver Dinner II (2003) involved a solid silver bar that was sawn into pieces during a live event. Each section was weighed, sold, and made into a pin. The context in which each piece was sold draws attention to various processes of jewellery production, including construction, selecting, buying and selling. The audience was thus integrated in the practical processes that underpin the often-intangible processes of jewellery and consumerism. The work of Filmer and Noten is therefore distinguished from the artistic explorations of jewellers previously mentioned, in that their work presents a shift away from the physical object that places process above final outcome.

## Defining relational practice in craft display

One of the earliest texts to discuss artistic interest in audience participation was Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics (1998). In this, the collaborative and social concerns of artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, Philippe Parreno, Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe, Maurizio Cattelan, and Vanessa Beecroft are discussed in terms of their aim to engage the individual within a community-based collective through their work. Bourriaud analyses art works that provide the viewer with a social interstice in which interactivity and discussion can take place, and defines relational aesthetics as: 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space' (Bourriaud 1998:14). This description illuminates the nature of art that aims to move away from portrayal of an individual viewpoint and instead to interrogate the visual contemplation conventionally associated with the gallery space. This approach replaces such convention with the ambiguous interaction of the audience, in order to establish engagement and meaning that focuses on key principles such as 'interaction' and 'connectivity'.

Bourriaud highlights concern surrounding the reception of art, focusing on the site in which art work is exhibited and the role of collective engagement as a means of exploring art's position within society. As an example, Rirkrit Tiravanija's work for *Aperto '93* at the Venice Biennale encouraged visitors to help themselves to dehydrated Chinese soups that were stored in boxes round the exhibition space, and provided the hot water needed to prepare the food. The social codes and complexities embedded in the cooking and consumption of food identify forms of knowledge and behaviour that are culturally recognizable. In Tiravanija's work, the active engagement of the viewer is intended to break down not only the distinction between social spaces and those of the gallery, but also that between artist and the viewer. The humanized process of eating is a universal activity, so the intricacies of cultural behaviour and understanding can be shared in the social space provided by the artist.

This adaptation of social spaces is reminiscent of the collaborative work of Ted Noten, as mentioned above. Noten's interactive projects often use his audience in order to construct meaning within his work, focusing on the conceptual space in which relational exchanges take place. Whether engagement is encouraged through the artist's choice of objects and activity or spatial exploration, the collaboration between relational aesthetics in art and those in craft foregrounds 'intersubjective' relations and the open-endedness of human interaction. This approach references the concept of 'work in progress', rather than the completed object, as a structural premise of the construction and presentation of a relational project. The focus on social spaces and the relations that take place in them informs the collaborative approach taken by the autonomous group of contemporary jewellers whose practice is identified in this study. This principle is discussed in terms of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics as 'new formal fields' (Bourriaud 1998: 28), which summarises a structure within the conception and construction of relational art that is addressed by other disciplines. These fields are based on the processes and interactions that are intrinsic to the production of an artwork, such as meetings, encounters, events and collaborations. Bourriaud explores these interactive scenarios, which provide practical platforms in which relations can take place and be discussed: 'The sphere of human relations have now become fully-fledged artistic 'forms', indicating that the processes in which art work is constructed or exchanged is what informs the 'material' content of the work' (Bourriaud 1998: 28).

Thus, Bourriaud locates human exchange as a material-based concept that can inform and direct artistic enquiry, observing that 'the contemporary artwork's form is spreading out from its material form: it is a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutination. An artwork is a dot on a line' (Bourriaud 1998: 21). This description locates art as a linear field that reaches beyond the artwork itself, a fact that illustrates the importance of contextual principles prior to the artwork's realization and the effect of the artwork's subsequent existence. Examples of this involve the enactment of institutional systems such as visiting cards, appointments and openings, as seen in the work of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Liam Gillick and Jeremy Deller. Such models of communality expand the potential content of the 'artwork' and can be seen in craft initiatives and activities such as knitting circles and craft clubs that engage with the practice of social making.

Craft's association with relational art is embedded in social and cultural relationships, and can be understood in terms of the theoretical and practical discourse surrounding concepts such as 'craftism', DIY and the slow movement. Artist, maker and curator Helen Carnac's blog [Making a Slow Revolution](#) engages with principles of the slow movement by embracing craft as a process. The use of a blog as a communicative outlet allows participants to discuss the concept of slowness in relation to their own practice, not only through the written word but in shared activity and participation. This has clear links with the activist stance of craft practitioners within 'craftism', a term coined by writer Betsy Greer in 2003. This draws together principles of craft and activism, allowing the craft skills to be adapted as a practical means by which to voice political and social concern. It is the consequential effect of craft within society as well as for the individual that holds a relational value. This sense of empowerment is often seen in the educative methods of contemporary craft initiatives, such as [Craft Club](#) and [Firing Up](#) organised by the Crafts Council. These facilitate the production of craft while encouraging social engagement and development of skills, as well as promoting craft activities to a wider audience.

### Immersive aesthetics

My own practice defines an area of investigation within the gallery space that is responsive to key questions regarding the intended destination of a jewellery object, how contemporary makers are presenting their work to a wider audience and what impact this has on jewellery practice. This brings us back to this study's original objective: to address the relationship between body and object within jewellery display. This area of investigation is defined in order to develop a form of art jewellery that considers the role of display within the creative process as a means of locating ideas from within craft. This has seen a shift away from the educational or 'work-in-progress' approach to craft display. For example, design sketches, notes and a how-to mentality reveal a craft narrative by unpacking the making process as a direct concern, whereas a relational project becomes focused on the social context and implication in which skill, functionality and materiality may operate. Thus, an alternative approach may question who the maker is, rather than demonstrating the progression and methods used. In addition to analysing the relation between jeweller and audience, it might explore the impact of such work on the individual or collective, and how it relates to or represents the social context in which it functions.

My development of immersive aesthetics defines a creative response to such findings. Its definition is based on an art-led approach to contemporary jewellery that moves away from making a physical object and looks toward palpable ways of presenting jewellery as a language. The embodied experiences embedded in the wearable object are therefore explored through presentational methods to provide tangibility to the sensorial responses that occur between body and object and their social context. This schema focuses on relational strategies that evoke a sensory response or trigger a memory from the audience. This is enabled through the use of digital media to provide a permanent display of the social interactions and bodily processes that are evident in contemporary jewellery which considers the role of viewer in the gallery space.

### Displaying a critical jewellery object

This chapter considers the role of the craft image in a jewellery exhibition and its impact on my own practice as a jeweller. The headings below detail two practical projects I have developed as part of this study. The process employed in this investigation was not rigid or reductive, but formed an exploratory response to my theoretical understanding as well as formalising key aspects of my practical research. As a result, each outcome is designed to be exhibited in the gallery space in order to demonstrate the critical value of the craft image as a presentational tool.

#### Re-present

Photography's capability of portraying a certain aesthetic or of reinforcing the social or symbolic meaning of an object sets up the camera as a creative tool. As noted, photography can be instrumental in the process of crafting an object and its meaning. Re-present (2011) aims to explore the craft image and photography's immersive capabilities in terms of re-assessing display methods within the traditions of museum display. This involves re-presenting an object which would normally be displayed in a museum display case and instead by its use to reveal a particular narrative embedded in an object's materiality. The use of photography can be employed to focus on concepts such as the maker's mark and patina in order to investigate an immersive strategy towards the crafts. No less than supportive text, imagery and props that can be used to construct an account of an object's life cycle; photography can also become a curatorial tool, recording and communicating its history or lifespan from craftsmanship to ownership.

Modern digital technology can be used to unveil aspects of an object that are not normally seen by the viewer in the conventional museum setting of the display case. Macro photography offers the potential for engagement with the visual narrative that can be deduced from an object's surface. This extends discussions in terms of photographic capabilities when recording jewellery, as well as suggesting a merger with science: the macro lens can produce a larger than life-size or close-up image, revealing detail invisible to the naked eye. Macro photography is now regularly used by the medical and forensic professions to capture and record the finest of details of a specimen for further study. Its potential to uncover a visual layering of meaning in the form of patterns, textures and colours on an object's surface, suggesting a pre-existing narrative, is what drives this enquiry.

A jewellery object was selected from the Victoria & Albert museum archive and photographed, with the intention of re-presenting it in close-up images. The magnification of the object's surface reveals a landscape of colour within the polished and, in places, tarnished metal (Figures 1, 2 and 3 below). Scratches, indentations and scuffs gathered over time are brought in to focus, alluding to the time when the object was worn and handled. Marks, or scarring on the surface of the metal, offer visual clues to the crafting process, enabling the viewer to assess the level of skill required for its construction and finish. The macro lens is thus able to operate in the same way as the critical eye of a jeweller during the process of achieving the required standard of finish. In this process, the composition of intricacies becomes the focus of my work and highlights the object's relationship with craft, materiality and wearability. The aim of the re-presentation of a conventionally displayed object was to highlight the value of exhibition methods in contemporary jewellery and enable recognition of the vicissitudes of its history through a visual narrative. The resulting imagery stands for the object's life cycle, documenting each knock, abrasion or discolouration to reveal aspects of its material content, how it was made and how it may have functioned in everyday life. These additional pieces of information have the power to immerse the viewer in the object's social background by referencing the absent body.



Figure 1. Re-Present series (2011)



Figure 2. Re-Present series (2011)



Figure 3. Re-Present series (2011)

The material properties of an object, for example the marks made by the maker, tool or machine, can also have symbolic meaning. The value of an object's material content is often associated with its rarity, and is particularly seen in jewellery which is made from precious metals such as platinum, gold and silver as well as with precious and semi-precious stones. The 'eternal' connotations surrounding a diamond, and gold and platinum's resistance to tarnishing, both signal permanence of value and materiality. Silver, and base metals such as copper, brass and bronze, are prone to visible decay caused by oxidation, a principle that can be discussed in terms of symbolic value in respect of their reaction with the environment. The conceptual significance of patina, which in line with Grant McCracken's sociological observations provides an object with historical currency, signifies heritage and family lineage in the signs of ageing. McCracken's theory of patina involves 'suggesting that existing status claims are legitimate. Its function is not to claim status but to authenticate it. Patina serves as a kind of visual proof of status' (McCracken 1988: 32). His comments illuminate the value system in place during the eighteenth century, which considered both the physical and symbolic properties of cultural goods.

This perspective of course sits in contention with the views and work of conservationists, and with jewellery's historical association with the everlasting, as demonstrated in the use of precious, often hard-wearing metals and stones in order to signal the permanence of value and materiality. Patina can be seen as undesirable for an object or artwork, resulting in strategies that are employed to preserve artefacts from its effects. For example, it was necessary to halt the darkening of Theodore Gericault's paintings in the Louvre, caused by the tendency of oil paintings to accumulate dirt and suffer from yellowing of the original varnish, or the image would no longer have been visible. The documentation of a similar process of change using macro photography feeds into the discourse surrounding materiality in terms of museum conservation strategy. It interrogates what may be revealed or overlooked in the display case by identifying and signifying aspects of materiality and craftsmanship through microscopic observation and abstraction.

The large scale of each image when presented in an exhibition reflects the approach seen in the majority of virtual realities. This presentational technique encloses the viewer within a visual space, thus allowing them to become immersed in the large-scale medium. It may readily be applied to a wide variety of objects, offering a multi-faceted narrative through each magnified landscape, and portraying a scene that is normally kept at arm's length behind the glass of the display case.

### The Jewellery Image

The ubiquity of the replicated image within the public domain provides a wide audience access to a growing body of jewellery designs and images that can be found in photo stores, on the designer's web page and in the exhibition catalogue. The Jewellery Image (2013) is the second practical outcome which considers the role and availability of the jewellery image, using duplicate copies as a raw material from which to construct alternative approaches to jewellery display, and to continue the exploration into immersive and narrative structures. Among the visual catalogue of jewellery images available in the commercial field, a subconscious and often detached relationship is established between the representational image and that of the viewer or consumer. This responds to the visual mass of promotional and semiotic material that forms part of everyday experience, and incorporates a network of advertising, logos and branding. Promotional images of commercial jewellery that portray the ornamental object both on and off the body are designed to seduce and entice in a way that enhances its appearance, often in a particular style or set-up that supports branding used by the jeweller or jewellery company. The affective properties of craft-as-image have led this study to uncover a narrative that investigates the relationship between makers, object and craft image. Consideration has been made of how this chronological process, from designing through to documentation, can be perceived and understood by the viewer. This chapter has defined how the craft image can be seen as a continuing stage of the craft process, and is often used as a research tool or defining outcome of a jeweller's work. This, rather than the actual object, may command the viewer's attention. The documented portrayal of artistic jewellery objects remains, however, predominantly within the confines of Besten's 'functional photography' - thus removing the jewellery object from the body and providing a promotional or presentational tool that is widely used because of its capacity for mass reproduction and easy circulation to a wide audience.

As a response to this 'functional' portrayal that is derivative of artistic jewellery promotion, this project uses alternative presentational methods in the form of an audio recording to depict a personal anecdote or aspect of the making process that is not evident in the replication of promotional imagery. The material for this investigation was gathered by requesting the participation of a select number of contemporary jewellers. These were drawn from jewellers exhibiting in various London galleries through the months of July and August 2011. My approach produced a diverse selection of jewellers with different backgrounds, techniques and experiences to form the basis of this investigation. The intention of this project was to explore presentational methods that attempt to engage the viewer through a combination of display, curatorial and practical methods. With this in mind, each jeweller was asked to submit an image of their work in digital format, plus a written text of between 10–500 words. The call for submissions was designed to gain a collection of stories in association with the image provided by the jeweller. It aimed to provide a personal insight into the design, making, wearing or documentation process experienced by the jeweller in relation to the photographed object.

This project explores the narratives embedded in the craft image, with the intention of humanising the mass-produced imagery that is increasingly evident in the crafts. The subjective descriptions offered by Vicki Ambery-Smith in response to her client's brief, for example, contrast with the sparse prose summaries made up of lines of a single word (Twelve texts, by Stephen Bram), which were submitted by Lisa Walker to accompany her work:

1. WW - skidding - window - camp - house - from - minutes  
- him - to - dripped - truck - and - into - dock - when - and  
- now - quivering - W.W.  
guard (Bram, extract from Twelve texts)

This reveals aspects of the jeweller's approach to making and their creative styles, to which my own choice of presentational method is added with the aim of engaging or influencing the viewer's interpretation of these descriptions.

Three of the narratives submitted by the group of jewellers who participated have been selected for the exhibition and are re-presented to the audience using a recorded soundtrack. The audio stream aims to present the jeweller's text, not only in an alternative format, but also as a means by which to reinterpret the narrative. This was done by using the skills of a voiceover artist adopting a range of vocal styles and accents, alongside a selection of volunteers from alternative professions. This device is intended to introduce a new layer of meaning and additional characteristics to the submitted narrative, thus establishing a narrative trail from the original image, through the description submitted by the jeweller, to its display. This layering of presentational methods is designed to trigger an array of questions and interpretations from an audience, such as: 'Who are these designers?' and 'Why am I listening to this?' to my own musings: 'Does the role of representation dilute the work's content or signify the importance of audience interpretation?' and 'Could the layering of presentational methods go on, or is it a case of 'Chinese Whispers', in which the content will eventually be altered completely?'

The intention of my practical project is to confront the role of display using re-presentational methods in different media in order to immerse the audience. It operates within the dialogue between the jeweller and the mass-produced imagery of their work, providing contextual information that initiates understanding between jewellery and viewer. Information regarding the jeweller's decision-making process, craft, style and personality has been volunteered, and is in turn exhibited in relation to my own investigation of display and presentational techniques. The style and delivery of the audio recording provides a different interpretation of the original text, influencing how its content may be perceived. Each step provides an alternative interpretation that is symbolic of the varying attitudes, opinions and conclusions applied to a mass-produced image as it circulates in the public sphere. The consequence is left open-ended: it is for the viewer to experience and to project their own visualisation of the original image on to the wall space, which is lit and deliberately left bare (Figure 4, right).

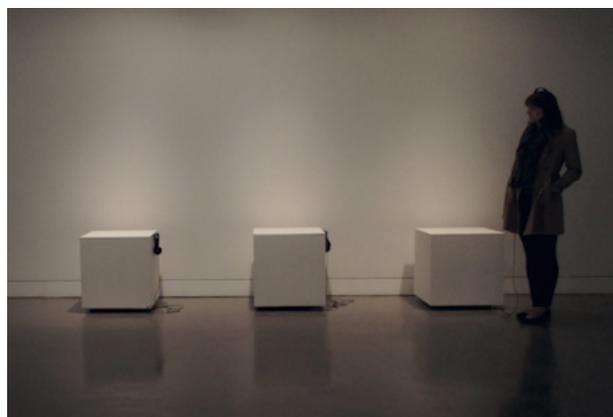


Figure 4. The Jewellery Image (2013)

## Conclusion

The development of immersive aesthetics focuses on relational strategies that evoke a sensory response or trigger a memory from the audience. This process uses digital media to provide a permanent display of the social interactions and bodily processes that are evident in contemporary jewellery which considers the role of viewer in the gallery space. The presentational techniques chosen in this study provide both material and concept in my work. The use of photography, moving imagery or audio recordings invites the viewer to apply their own understanding or experiences to interpret the works on display. This is an approach that references the visual language that is emerging in the work of a number of contemporary craft practitioners. The result demonstrates the importance currently being placed on the craft image and its ability to engage the viewer in concepts of materiality, form and function.

This immersive approach to jewellery display is not intended to replace the craft object, but proposes an alternative approach to craft display in the gallery space. It reveals how the display of jewellery can be used both as a creative strategy and as a research tool by implementing methods that are reflective of the creative freedoms seen in art jewellery, but is not restricted to the creation of a final piece. Instead, this approach demonstrates the open-ended development of research jewellery, in which process is foregrounded in order to inform jewellery discourse.

This method extends the inclusive approach seen in the work-in-progress exhibition by exploring the relationship between maker, wearer and viewer. The use of digital media to communicate concepts of the body in jewellery display thus invites audience members to reflect on and reinterpret their own relationship with contemporary jewellery.

The future value of this study lies within the practical and theoretical consideration of the role of the viewer in the conception and presentation of contemporary jewellery. This enquiry is located in the wider context of relational art, which has allowed a small group of contemporary jewellers to develop a strategy that places increasing emphasis on audience participation. This rationale has been extended to encompass concepts of the body in jewellery display that promote the perceptual engagement of the viewer. This has in turn revealed the emergence of a visual language in contemporary jewellery that is compatible with the digital age. The enquiry is therefore designed to inform craft discourse by providing a coherent discussion of modes of jewellery display that are designed to support and communicate craft concepts.

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- Figure 1. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) Re-Present series [photograph by Dominika Ciemira; girdle of silver gilt, with the mark of Martinus Regis of Sibiu, Transylvania, ca. 1730. Maker unknown. Held at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Museum number: M.17–1953].
- Figure 2. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) Re-Present series [photograph by Dominika Ciemira; girdle of silver gilt, as previous figure.]
- Figure 3. Jessop, Michelle. (2011) Re-Present series [photograph by Dominika Ciemira; girdle of silver gilt, as previous figure.]
- Figure 4. Jessop, Michelle. (2013) The jewellery image [photograph] In possession of the author.

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