

REVIEWS

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Colin Martin reviews the vibrant works of seven Western Australian artist-jewellers shown at the Lesley Craze Gallery at Clerkenwell Green, London during the London Design Festival. The exhibition, *Cinderella Stories: Contemporary Jewellery from Western Australia* reflects the colloquial name for Western Australia, 'Cinderella of the South', coined when gold was discovered in the 1880s. Invited to exhibit at the ball, so to speak, are Dorothy Erickson, Carlier Makigawa, Felicity Peters, Gillian Rainer, Brenda Ridgewell, Christel van der Laan and David Walker, who sent their finery to London in a survey pushing the boundaries of jewellery design as part of contemporary craft and design.

Colin Martin

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Exhibition details: *Cinderella Stories: Contemporary Jewellery from Western Australia*

- [Beaver Galleries](#), Canberra, ACT 16 June – 5 July 2011
- [Lesley Craze Gallery](#), London, UK 9 September – 14 October 2011
- [Artsite Gallery](#), Camperdown, Sydney, NSW 4 November – 20 November 2011

Cinderella of the South - seven Western Australian artist-jewellers

The illuminated windows of Lesley Craze Gallery at Clerkenwell Green were a welcome sight on a wet, early autumn afternoon. More vibrant still were works exhibited within by seven Western Australian artist-jewellers. The exhibition takes its title from a colloquial name for the state, 'Cinderella of the South,' coined when gold was discovered in the 1880s. Invited to exhibit at the ball, so to speak, are Dorothy Erickson, Carlier Makigawa, Felicity Peters, Gillian Rainer, Brenda Ridgewell, Christel van der Laan and David Walker, who sent their finery to London.

Curated by Dorothy Erickson, *Cinderella Stories* has already been exhibited in Canberra and will be shown in Sydney in November. She developed the survey of contemporary work to complement the international launch of her encyclopaedic history of gold and silver smithing in Western Australia, published in 2010. The exhibition is showing in London during the London Design Festival 2011.

David Walker - geometric forms and open frameworks

Born in the UK, David Walker has exhibited internationally for thirty (30) years. The geometric forms and open frameworks of his jewellery derive from his design background. Although his works in silver and stainless steel wire appear light and delicate, their formal strength ensures that they have great presence, without overwhelming wearers' personalities. The inorganic, triangular shape of *Fish Rack* (undated) contrasts with the organic, juvenile leaf shapes of *Eucalyptus 2011*. *Memento Mori 1 (bushfires)* 2007, Walker's pendant of carved and painted wood encircled in a brazier, is among the strongest works in the show.

Dorothy Erickson - homage to Klimt and botanic species, kinetic sculptures

Erickson's works include rings, a brooch and a bangle whose titles acknowledge the influence of Gustav Klimt's paintings and jewellery manufactured by the Wiener Werkstätte. *Bewegtes Wasser / Homage to Klimt* (undated) includes an outline reminiscent of a taut archer's bow or a Cupid's bow mouth. Also impressive are works, mounted on Perspex stands, whose fine strands of 18-carat gold and stainless steel tremble when disturbed by movement, evoking ripe wheat rippling in a breeze or a kinetic sculpture. A third strand of work, which includes three necklaces, a ring and a bracelet, is named after botanical species. The largest of these, *Smoke Bush Necklace* (undated), is characterized by Erickson's dramatic tendril-like extensions to its primary circular shape.

Carlier Makigawa - cohesive, irregular and amorphous

Carlier Makigawa exhibits a cohesive group of geometric necklaces, brooches and rings in oxidized sterling silver. Her four brooches incorporate irregularly shaped, amorphous fragments of red and pink coral. They contrast with and appear imprisoned within the linear geometry of her oxidized silver forms. This entrapment is acknowledged in the titles of two brooches. *Nature in Structure* (undated), one set with pink coral and the other with red coral. These small pieces of jewellery, with their refined design and incorporation of coral, evoke 17th-century cabinets of curiosities, given a modern twist.

Felicity Peters - 'attached' metals

Born in South Africa, Felicity Peters is an acknowledged expert in kebum boo, the Korean technique for applying surface decoration using 'attached gold.' *Use & or Lose & 1* (undated), a sterling silver brooch set with a disc of softly burnished 24-carat gold kebum boo, a disc of vibrant lime green enamel and a shallow square box filled with deep blue lapis lazuli crystals, is particularly covetable. She works in a variety of styles, including her *Kopernik Daisy* cut-out forms, *Windows* rectilinear patterned rings, *Cobblestones* beaded rings and bulbous-shaped rings. The form of *Wave* (undated), a sterling silver and 24-carat gold kebum-boo bangle, evokes the corrugations of Australia's ubiquitous and iconic iron roofing and building material.

Gillian Rainer - intriguing counterfoils

The Shadows Cast Their Flowers is the title of an intriguing series of botanically inspired works exhibited by Gillian Rainer. *Granatum* (undated) is a sterling silver pendant suspended on a thread of superb garnet beads, whose dark red provides a counterfoil to the reflective surface of the silver. Its title derives from the Linnaean binomial for the pomegranate, *Punica granatum* and Rainer's choice of beads refers to the fruit's colour. Also impressive is a sterling silver and emu eggshell pendant, *Eremophila maculata* (undated), which is the Linnaean binomial for a flowering shrub known colloquially as Spotted Emu Bush. *Fringed Lily* (undated) is a curious bifurcated sterling silver, 9-carat gold and red ceramic enamel pendant. Suspended on a silken thread it has the appearance of a Lilliputian prosthetic limb, the billowing lower arm, which contains a single pearl, slashed longitudinally like a Renaissance velvet jacket and the upper arm pierced with tiny holes.

Brenda Ridgewell - inherently spatial with abstract linearity

Brooches, necklaces, a pendant and a ring exhibited by Brenda Ridgewell are inherently spatial, as signaled by her use of the word *Space* in the titles for all works exhibited in London. 'These are not merely decorative ornaments,' wrote Rainer in her review of a 1996 Ridgewell exhibition. 'They are extrovert pieces of jewellery.' ¹ Of all the works shown in *Cinderella Stories*, these would have gained most by being seen worn, with their abstract linearity of her jewellery animated by the wearers.

Christel van der Laan - from minimalism to a collaged riot of form and colour

Christel van der Laan exhibits a spectrum of works ranging from quirky brooches to minimalist earrings. *Holy Smoke* (2011) is a collaged riot of form and colour, incorporating painted silver, ceramic honeycomb, clay pipe (which gives the brooch its name), vintage plastic beads and gold. In contrast, *Reflex* (2010) is a pair of earrings in pale pierced 18-carat gold of pared-down design, with a concave tear-drop shape suspended from a concave semi-circle. They are so classical that one could be substituted on for the pearl depicted in Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.

Plurality of designs in a unified survey pushing the boundaries of jewellery design

Cinderella Stories provides an excellent survey of the diverse range of work produced by Western Australian artist-jewellers, all of whom regularly exhibit abroad. The selected work is unified by their shared commitment to pushing the boundaries of jewellery design to its limits; and the plurality of designs found within the oeuvres of several of the exhibitors.

For those unable to view the exhibition, Erickson's *Gold & Silversmithing in Western Australia: A History* provides biographies for each exhibitor (with the exception of van der Laan) and is well illustrated with examples of their work. Purchasers can avoid the expense and jet lag associated with visiting London; and it is a bargain compared with the cost of domestic travel to Canberra.

Colin Martin is a London-based Australian writer with an interest in contemporary craft.

Related Links

- Dorothy Erickson, [Kinetic jewellery - interacting with light and land](#), Craft Australia, interview, 2011
- [Carlier Makigawa](#)
- [Felicity Peters](#)
- [Gillian Rainer](#)
- [Brenda Ridgewell](#)
- [Christel van der Laan](#)
- [David Walker](#)
- David Walker, [Anatomy of the object](#), Art Gallery of Western Australia, 2009

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References

- Dorothy Erickson *Gold & Silversmithing in Western Australia: A History* UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2010 \$89.95

Footnotes

¹'Space Defined,' *Artlink*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1997, p.80

