

Images

- 1 Zoe Jay Veness, *Ribbon Brooch* 2007, grey and red paper, sterling silver, stainless steel
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- 3 Bibi Locke, *Nacre Series* 2007, sterling silver, freshwater pearls, silk thread
- 4 Eleisha Nylund, *Composition* 2006, sterling silver, cubic zirconia, blue synthetic sapphires
- 5 Emily Bullock, *Lucky Claw Series, Brooch*, 2007, taxidermy bird
- 6 Liana Kabel, *Red Rubber Necklace* 2007, rubber
- 7 Madeleine Brown, *Frivolite Series* 2007, sterling silver, oxidised silver, 9ct yellow gold
- 8 Zoe Jay Veness, *Oval Brooch* 2007, dark green and light green paper, sterling silver, stainless steel

Images courtesy of the artists

**Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland**

Cnr Middle and Bloomfield Streets,  
Cleveland Q 4163

Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm

Sunday 9am – 2pm

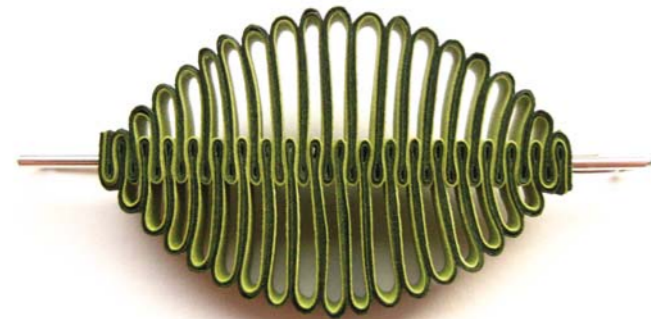
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Tel: (07) 3829 8899 or  
gallery@redland.qld.gov.au

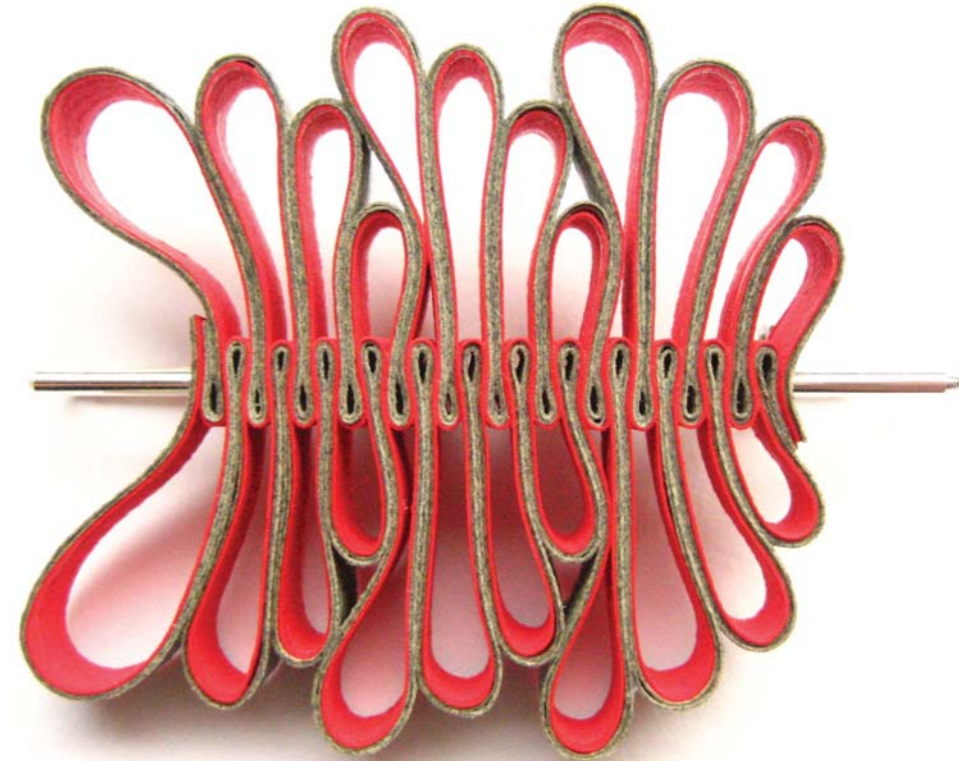
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Redland Art Gallery is an initiative of Redland Shire Council,  
dedicated to the late Eddie Santagiuliana



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curio

A CONTEMPORARY  
JEWELLERY EXHIBITION

Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland, Gallery 2, 3, 4  
Sunday 19 August – Sunday 23 September 2007



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*Curio* is an exhibition which challenges our preconceptions of jewellery. A curio is something unusual, which is valued for its oddness or its rareness. Curator Kellee Uhr's premise for this exhibition was to bring together a range of contemporary work that is deliberately not what we expect jewellery to be.

Jewellery is one of the oldest of the decorative arts. Throughout the ages, it has satisfied an instinctual human impulse for body beautification. Jewellery is often, however, categorised merely as decoration. This selection of work from seven contemporary Australian practitioners shows us that jewellery can be a fine-art form that offers us much more.

As images increasingly dominate our world, material expression has become something of a rarity in fine art. Jewellery is all about materiality. Its inherent tactility and association with sentiment provides us with the opportunity to explore our physical and psychological relationships to objects in an intimate way. Jewellery is also about the three dimensional form – it is sculpture on a small scale and people react differently to it, because it is made unique by its wearability. These personal connections with the material world are explored by the artists in this exhibition, who exploit the expressive potential offered by a wide variety of media in some surprising ways.

In this exhibition, the aim has been to show the variety of work that is currently being produced by emerging and established contemporary jewellers. In *Curio* we have the opportunity to see the exciting ways in which this art form continues to evolve, and to appreciate why its curator believes such objects belong in a fine art setting.

Apart from its astounding inventiveness, what is immediately apparent in the exhibition, and what separates such work from any commercially manufactured and serially-produced counterparts, is its high level of craftsmanship. The intricacy of these 'one-off' pieces, combined with their meticulous levels of finish, the robustness they require to withstand day-to-day wear-and-tear, and their miniature scale, is an achievement often overlooked in the fabrication of hand-made jewellery. Perhaps this is because our attention is diverted by the intelligent, often witty, approach of such artists to the creative process, where meaning and form coalesce so satisfyingly to produce such aesthetically pleasing objects.

Confident of the quality of their artistry, no curatorial restrictions were imposed on these artists, preferring to give their talents free-range. Instead, the approach has been to devise an exhibition design that rises to the challenge of displaying such work in a way that is sympathetic to the impulse that created it. Thus, the work has been liberated from traditional methods of display to create a

three-dimensional experience that foreshadows the way the work will eventually drape, swing from, or encase the body. These works, which unfashionably and emphatically reject ephemeral art's unsubstantiated logic, revel in their materiality – in the spaces they occupy, shadows they cast, and their unapologetic pursuit of beauty.

Madeleine Brown's work, which is from her recent *Frivolite* 2007 series, embodies these qualities. Brown's work is process-oriented – actively reclaiming and re-presenting craft work traditionally associated with women. She hand-makes pieces of lace from cotton thread before casting the forms into silver. This method of shuttle lace making is centuries old, and known as 'tattooing' to the English, 'frivolite' to the French, and 'chiacchierino' to the Italians – which comes from 'chiacchiere', meaning to gossip. Cleverly exploiting the expressive potential of texture in precious metals, Brown's rings, earrings and necklaces superbly evoke the inestimable value of intimate personal relationships.

Emily Bullock's quirky collection of *Lucky Claw Brooches* 2007 carries a more confrontational message. While the work refers back to the Lucky Rabbit Paw brooches popular in the fifties and sixties, Bullock's intention is to draw our attention to society's treatment of animals and birds, and to attitudes regarding the wearing of animals and birds parts. Process is also an important part of Bullock's work, and using her own techniques and style, she

collects brilliantly coloured feathers to use as 'paint'. Knowing that her materials are often salvaged from roadsides can accent the work with a sharp poignancy. However, any sombre undertone is immediately relieved by the wicked humour that permeates the work, and inspires us to participate in its on-going and edgy dialogue with nature.

Liana Kabel, like Brown and Bullock, has an established art practice. Kabel's funky, glamorous wearables are eye catching not just for their looks, but for their serious 'green' credentials. Created from recycled materials, her *Knitwit* retail range of refashioned vintage knitting needles, and her range of melded, fused and shaped plastic, are each finished with silver to form part of her distinctive oeuvre. Kabel tags her jewellery with a label that reads 'If it looks like a lolly, I like it!' – the perfect aphorism for her beguiling work.

Bibi Locke's works in this exhibition, from the *Nacre* 2007 series, exhibit a sophisticated understanding of sculptural form. The delicate refinement of their design contrasts with the pieces' underlying architecture to produce an interesting tension within the miniature structures. In addition, in Locke's freshwater pearl and silver necklace, this compositional frisson is echoed by the juxtaposition of the dense materiality of the precious beadwork with the ethereal web-like structure that dangles from it. One can only wonder whether the space about us will be captured or liberated by this delicate silvery lattice.

Eleisha Nylund's work, by way of contrast, consciously references architectural modes. This recently graduated artist finds inspiration in the modernist design principles of the Bauhaus school and De Stijl movement, and her bold use of line, shape and patterning reflect these influences. However, it is clear in this work that any influences are mediated by Nylund's determination to underpin design with a high level of craftsmanship, and her willingness to experiment with combinations of unorthodox materials and finishes – perspex, wood, oxidized silver, precious stones. Such alchemy cannot help but produce exciting art.

Anna Varendorff takes her inspiration from her environment. She looks to the fall and flow of materials in nature – the sweep of a vine or a branch, or the folds in draped cloth – to inform the creation of her work and its articulation with the wearer's body. As an artist, she is interested in the interaction between her wearable art and the body it will adorn – how they will react to each other. Worked mostly in silver, but also in gold, bronze, copper or stone, Varendorff's work records the poetry of chance encounters with the natural elements – producing work that is similarly ever changing and enchanting.

The work of Zoe Jay Veness is driven by a cool aesthetic sense. In her creations we find the beauty of principles, perfectly applied. Strips of paper in pure colour are measured exactly, and woven onto stainless steel wire or cable: in this work, meticulous calculations become

part of the creative process. Veness's brooches are worn close to the heart, like personal name tags. Each one encapsulates the understated beauty that results from the perfect balance of technical finish and creative flair, that is, of craft and art.

Text by Susan Rothnie, July 2007  
Curated by Kellee Uhr

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