



THE OTHER SIDE

JEWELLERY & OBJECTS FROM AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

2 MAY – 22 JUNE 2014

Gallery S O London

Private View Thursday 5 December, 6 – 9pm

Is there an identifiably 'other' side to jewellery practice from half a world away? As new cultural histories are being written to redress a longstanding Eurocentric view of the applied arts, do they identify distinct and valuable contemporary activity in the Southern Hemisphere which informs and enriches global practice?

Eighteen Australian and New Zealand artists are brought together here to highlight some current preoccupations and practices.

There is no singular 'movement' in Australian practice, but there are clear strands of shared interest demonstrated here, starting with a use of natural motifs primarily as a metaphor for a distinctive sense of place, and a place which is subject to change and urbanisation. There is a cultural specificity to flora and fauna, which gives rise to the convention of using natural forms as national symbols. According to Alex Selenitsch, "for Australians, nature is increasingly being hybridized with ideas of identity and history and hence cultural origins."¹

New Zealand Curator Damian Skinner has written of the dominance of the European jewellery scene and how it has maintained supremacy through being 'de-territorialised'; its proponents do not refer to origin or place, for they have no need to; their forum is the world. This is not quite the case with New Zealand, a small country half a world away from our own with a population half that of London, and a reputation sometimes overshadowed by its neighbour Australia. In New Zealand, some contemporary jewellery practitioners have forged an identifiable practice which is firmly located in place and national identity. And the notion of 'fusion' is well established here, as indigenous practices and imagery have been - relatively gently - merged with a contemporary European aesthetic.

Even a snapshot of contemporary jewellery from 'The Other Side' entails plurality: these practitioners are subject to diverse influences; they have a variety of attitudes to the European hegemony of the past, and very different approaches to origins and national identities. The strengths they hold in common are adventurousness in the assimilation of these influences and a manifestly strong belief in the value of creative fusion.

Sara Roberts
April 2014

EXHIBITED ARTISTS:

Australia: Julia Blyfield, Susan Cohn, Simon Cottrell, Kirsten Haydon, Marian Hosking, Sally Marsland, Mascha Moje, Catherine Truman, Manon Van Kouswijk,

New Zealand: Warwick Freeman, Karl Fritsch, Craig McIntosh, Julia Middleton, Alan Preston, Moniek Schrijer, Joe Sheehan, Lisa Walker

¹ Object, September 2001