

Silent Protest:
Jewellery & Activism



**GOLDSMITHS'
FAIR**

Silent Protest: Jewellery & Activism

Silent Protest, guest curated by Dr Mahtab Hanna, marks the start of a new platform for political jewellery, that brings together jewellery artists and those who contribute to political debate through their work, defined by Mahtab as 'jewellervists'.

The art of jewellery has been honourably appreciated and supported by Goldsmiths' Fair for more than 40 years. *Silent Protest* illustrates the contribution of jeweller artists by encapsulating their political and social experiences through their work. Art jewellery challenges the consciousness structures we all have by allowing conceptual political issues to be raised by jewellery.

As artists, our personal experiences have driven us to analyse and challenge the art of politics, the impact of jewellery and its powerful messaging abilities on the wearer and observer. It explains the cathexis of how we agree with some things, yet not others.

The art of jewellery unlocks the singular and pluralistic imagination by inviting the viewer on the maker's journey, offering a path to diverse communication perspectives. This leads to not only an understanding, but an appreciation, of other viewpoints. *Silent Protest* is the conscience of the artist and their creation.

Dr Mahtab Hanna



Silent Protest: Jewellery & Activism

Guest Curator - Dr Mahtab Hanna

Dr Mahtab Hanna is a British jewellery artist with a Middle Eastern background who demonstrates true artistry in the field of marrying the indelible art of jewellery with the quasi-science of politics.

She studied goldsmithing, silversmithing, metalwork and jewellery at the Royal College of Art and Sir John Cass before undertaking her PhD at Central Saint Martins, specialising in political jewellery.

Mahtab defines political jewellery as the journey of making both a covert and overt statement of political views using body adornments and art jewellery. It epitomises every woman's right of equality in the form of political representation and ideology in

the post-truth 21st century. There exists a mass of beliefs that have been suppressed for generations by the borders of state ideology, prejudice, and fear.

Political jewellery has a multi-faceted role as a form of political messaging, jewellery as a response to political events and how it may be harnessed to address social and political issues.

This is a new segment of jewellery that pushes it in new directions, towards a language of protest and as a political tool. Jewellery is primarily an object of adornment, yet holds a powerful unifying language as a form of communication through which messages can be relayed.



Image © Farish Alborzkouh

Farish Alborzkouh, Iran

The Press, 2023

Necklace - Ready made, 200 x 142 mm, chain 480 mm

The realism and recording of history is created by the publication of daily news. News has an expiration date. As soon as it is published, it is burned and worthless. The news of the previous day has no value for the next day.

Valuing what has become worthless causes a new definition of value. Among the mass of headlines in newspapers, regardless of their factions and interests, some that deal more with everyday issues and events are placed together, and this combination of writings itself causes a new concept to those headlines. These headlines have no affiliation to any faction and independently perpetuate a new expression and cause a new concept in our collective memory. A new work is recorded in history.

Farish Alborzkouh was born in 1982 in Tehran - Iran. She undertook a Master's degree in painting, going on to participate in various visual arts such as sculpture, painting and contemporary jewellery making, exhibiting in Iran and other countries.

She received two prestigious awards from the Florence Biennale in the field of contemporary jewellery in 2015 and 2017. For Farish, contemporary jewellery making is the main medium for expressing ideas and creating a complete and perfect work like other works of art that are presented in other visual fields.



Mahtab Hanna, UK

Azadi (Freedom) in Cage, 2021

White Wednesday, 2023

Nest of Emancipation, 2023

Statues - Sterling silver, 100 x 40 mm

'Lady Liberty' is part of a series that encompasses the Statue of Liberty as a poignant illustration of how freedom is sometimes suffocated by its supposed guardians.

Mahtab Hanna's jewellery contributes to design discourse, and extends the concept of jewellery by creating both an outlet and arena to provoke social engagement - be it on a national or supra national level - of political ideas within the framework of the *realpolitik* of Iran.

'Azadi (Freedom) in a Cage' - Azadi Square (Persian for 'Freedom Square' or 'Liberty Square') was formerly known as *Shahyad*

Square. The name of the monument was changed after the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran and has been a beacon of freedom since that time, contrary to what many Iranians feel.

'White Wednesday' is representative of the women's movement in Iran where they protested having to wear a compulsory hijab. As a political and social message, women protestors placed their headscarves on a stick to represent an improvised flag, thereby in itself a creation of community.

The 'Nest of Emancipation' statue represents how freedom is trapped and encased by the power of politics.



Image Aaron Usher III

Boris Bally, USA

Brave 3, 2013

Necklace - 100 gun-triggers* (steel)
Mounted on stainless cord, 925 silver, 750 gold
*weapons courtesy Good4Guns Anti-violence Coalition, City of
Pittsburgh, PA
open 27 x 16 x 1-5/8"; double-looped 19 x 11 x 1-5/8"

Most aboriginal cultures, including the US's own native Americans, have adorned themselves with jewellery made of various animal parts such as feathers, fur, leather, claws, bones, or teeth. These served as talismanic charms and, in the form of the archetypal 'bear-claw necklace,' gave a hunter/warrior the spirit and strength of the animal whose disabled 'weapons' he was wearing. Such a necklace was perceived as a symbol of bravery, strength and respect. This contemporary necklace and Breastplate series is made of handgun components, cut and torn from the dismembered weapons reclaimed from the Pittsburgh city gun buy-back program

Goods for Guns. These urban 'mojos' protect the wearer from the gun violence so prevalent in today's culture.

Boris Bally is a Swiss-trained goldsmith working as a contemporary metalsmith and designer in Providence, Rhode Island, where he maintains his studio business, *Bally Humanufactured*. Bally's work is a disciplined body of objects which vary from eccentric through formal to humorous, provoking thought and reflecting on some of the distortions of our ordered world. For years, he has been organising major art exhibitions facilitating political activism to end gun violence.



Phoebe Waller-Bridge © Courtesy BAFTA

Karin Paynter, UK

ERA50:50, 2016

Badge and ring - metal, paint, 38 mm

The ERA50:50 campaign badge and ring designed by Karin Paynter, as a call for equal representation for actresses (ERA), gained global recognition in 2016 when actor James Nesbitt wore a badge while presenting the Best Actress award at the BAFTAs in London.

Since that pivotal moment, the simple design has graced red carpets, from the Oscars to the Golden Globes, earning the support of hundreds of actors, such as Olivia Colman, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Emma Thompson, and Emma Watson.

In 2020, the campaign was honoured with a *What's on Stage* award for services to the entertainment industry and is acknowledged for its significant role in enhancing the visibility of women on stage and screen. As founding member and

Creative Director, Karin co-curated and led the campaign's visual identity, and with the founders, harnessed its momentum to hold a landmark event at BAFTA. At the event, ERA brought together 200 leading industry professionals to confront them with the stark realities of the statistics and urged them to take a stand against inequality in the entertainment industry.

More than an accessory, these objects exemplify the transformative power of networks to convey a simple yet powerful message and effect real change. The campaign badge has earned a permanent place in the British Library's collection and has sold over 6000 units worldwide.

Karin Paynter is a designer and consultant. She trained at the Royal College of Art and UCA, and lives and works in London.



Ai Wei Wei, China

Rebar in Gold, 2013

Bracelet - 24ct yellow gold, 62 x 74 x 70 mm

Rebar in Gold takes root in Ai Weiwei's investigation into the devastating 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan Province, China, which killed approximately 70,000 people. Ai's concern focused on the distressing number of children who perished due to the poor construction techniques used to build government schools. On visiting Wenchuan after the earthquake, Ai found a mass of contorted steel *rebar*, left behind from the fallen school buildings.

Ai purchased 200 tonnes of the material from the scrapyards, where they were sent after the sites were cleared, for use in a bold body of work dedicated to the catastrophe.

For this piece, Ai Weiwei has chosen gold, a material traditionally reflecting eternity

and wealth, a direct contradiction to the sudden, tragic destruction caused by the earthquake and as a consequence of substandard government building regulations. *Rebar In Gold* therefore serves as a delicate memorial to the human life lost among the earthquake's rubble.

Ai Weiwei was born in 1957 in Beijing where he lives and works. He attended Beijing Film Academy and later, on moving to New York (1981–1993), continued his studies at the Parsons School of Design. Major solo exhibitions include Royal Academy of Arts, London (2015), Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin (2014), Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis (2013), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. (2012), Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan (2011), Tate Modern, London (2010) and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2009).



Image © Courtesy Mah Rana

Mah Rana, UK

Jewellery is Life, 2001

Badge - metal, plastic, 24 mm

As an ongoing body of work, *Jewellery is Life* highlights the ways jewellery is used to mark occasions and events, significant or the everyday. This includes *Meanings and Attachments* (2001-present), a global project creating a written and audio-visual record of people's personal connections to the jewellery that they wear. To date, over 2000 people have taken part across 11 countries. Host venues have included *Tate Britain*; *Kilkenny Arts Festival*; *Foment de Les Arts Decoratives, Barcelona*; *Röhsska Museum, Göteborg*; and *Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art*.

Mah is a practising artist, researcher and writer working in the fields of contemporary jewellery, well-making, creative health, creativity and dementia, and health psychology. Cross-disciplinary collaboration is a key aspect of Mah's

creative practice and writing. She has worked with a diverse cohort of peers including policy makers, community networkers and participants, public funding programmes, creative health stakeholders, and arts, culture and heritage partners. She is interested in how community assets can be used to reduce poor health outcomes for marginalised groups.

Mah is Tutor on the Royal College of Art's Jewellery & Metal MA. Mah's PhD study at Birkbeck College is a qualitative psychology study of the lived experience of daughters crafting with their mother who has dementia.

She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and co-editor of the Well-making special issue for the *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*.



Image © Rob Versluys

Ruudt Peters, Netherlands

Corpus Coax, 2011

Brooch - polyurethane, silver, 3.94 x 8.46 x 1.18"

Ruudt Peters is a classic artist of the jewellery world whose modus operandi involves shaking up audiences every couple of years with a completely new series. This is usually accompanied by an integral interior design concept and often, a manifesto-like book. Peters' power lies in his ability to integrate intelligence with emotion and produce an explosively effective mix.

His methods are alchemical and incendiary; they involve a game where you yourself are the stakes. Only a genius instinct keeps him from falling through the thin ice of big themes: in this case the symbol was the

crucified saviour. The matte grey sliced and plastic encased bodies of Christ speak the language of aloneness - a martyr's dead can liberate humankind but in a sense we all die alone. These pieces seem like desperate attempt to embrace oneself, and to understand that consolation and succour can only come from within. Tanel Veenre.



Image © Lin Cheung

Lin Cheung, UK

Delayed Reactions - Nonplus, 2018

Brooch - lapis lazuli, precious yellow metal, 53 mm

Delayed Reactions is series of carved stone brooches that reflect the mixed emotions Lin Cheung feels about the world around her. *Confused*, *Speechless*, *Fallen*, *Nonplus*, *Slightly Sad* and *Frowning Face* respond to the events since the EU Referendum and the continued debate over Britain's future in relation to Europe.

Pin badges are traditionally of the moment, cheap and quick to make and considered throw-away, lasting only as long as necessary to get the message across. Working in stone is the opposite: it is a slow process and an unpredictable material, often with a limited palette, but these limitations are a good test of what remains in the artist's memory, what surfaces in

thoughts after the dust has settled.

Lin Cheung is a jewellery artist, designer and Reader in Jewellery at Central Saint Martins. She trained at the Royal College of Art and lives and works in the UK. Her approach to designing and making questions the established and authorised uses and meanings of jewellery and objects. Her work is a personal response to everyday experiences and observations.

Lin works independently and collaboratively on private and public commissions, personal research projects and design projects. She has won several awards for her work and exhibits internationally in major museums and galleries.



Image © Ted Noten

Ted Noten, Netherlands

IDIDIT, 2020

Badge - metal, paint, 45 mm

IDIDIT is a simple badge based on hippy times when people wore badges with broken machine guns or peace signs.

Ted Noten lives and works in the Netherlands. His designs act as a critique on contemporary life and on the history of jewellery, as well as on the wider context of product design. Interestingly, his work equally relates to architecture. The underlying and recurring theme of his work is to challenge convention and processes of habituation, the familiar and the unusual.

By lifting symbols from their everyday surroundings and placing them in a new context, he doesn't so much query the symbol itself as our perception of it. Ted Noten looks for fixed meanings in the banal and the cultivated. He debunks

their essence, then reinvents them back into reality. In affecting and infecting symbolic values he actually reveals their unmistakable intangibility.

Many of his most recent works are parts of larger projects in which Noten investigates familiar themes like violence, mortality, greed, love and ageing. But he also turned his attention to the means of production that are not only influencing contemporary notions of mass production, but also the domain of craftsmanship. The attempt to include reproductions (and even reproductions of reproductions) into his body of work seems to point to a new direction in his designs, and in contemporary culture as a whole. Next to his design work Noten teaches and lectures all over the world.



Image © BYCHARI bychari.com

BYCHARI, USA

Vote, 2020

Necklace - Sterling silver, 18ct yellow gold plate
475 mm long, 6 mm letters

This piece of jewellery hailed from the creative minds at BYCHARI, a Los Angeles-based, black-owned fashion label founded by the visionary designer and creative director, Chari Cuthbert. The necklace was designed for powerhouse women to let their voices be heard, especially at the polls.

In 2020, the former First Lady Michelle Obama took to her social media platforms ahead of the November US elections, urging the population to 'have a say

and vote.' She wore her BYCHARI Vote necklace for her speech at the Democratic National Convention in a virtual address, that has been watched by millions.

According to *Tatler* magazine, 'hours after the release of Michelle Obama's impassioned speech, the 'Vote necklace' burst into the spotlight, swiftly ascending to become one of the most-searched terms on Google in the United States.'

Thank you

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