WUNDERKAMMER

THE COLLECTION OF SUSAN BEECH

Susan Beech, an esteemed Northern California art jewelry collector and philanthropist, began purchasing art jewelry pieces in the early 1990s and quickly became an ardent student and supporter of the movement. Over the next 30 years, Beech came to know and collect the work of renowned art jewelers such as Marta Mattsson, Evert Nijland, Ruudt Peters, and Terhi Tolvanen.

Today, much of Beech's revered collection has been donated to the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC and to the Museum of Art and Design in New York. *Wunderkammer: The Collection of Susan Beech* is a showcase of nearly one hundred outstanding works that Beech has kept within her

personal collection–the crème de la crème–pieces she wears regularly and couldn't part with.

The German word wunderkammer, meaning chamber of wonders, describes a method of collecting and displaying natural and artistic objects inside a cabinet or hutch. From the 16th to 19th centuries, European aristocrats housed objects that not only displayed their wealth but suggested their personal worth as a "gentleman scholar," one who valued science and humanist philosophies.

These collections functioned as object-driven pedagogies, with treasures encased in glass and hidden within drawers. Similarly, in her home, Beech displays her collection in elaborate bespoke cabinets and in uniquely thoughtful places, both public and private. This exhibition attempts to mirror her artful display technique, showcasing custom cabinets from her collection alongside the art jewelry contained within.

The historic cabinet of curiosities combined two categories: *naturalia*, the materials of the natural

physical world, and *artificialia*– 'human-made' objects, art, and antiques. The Beech collection spans both: mimicking forms and using materials from nature while exploring existential themes relating to beauty, religion, pleasure, death, and Victoriana.

Unlike a wunderkammer, or any other art form, art jewelry can be worn out in public, making a spectacle of both the artist and the wearer. David Bielander's bracelet of copper-plated sterling silver shrimp (*Black Scampi*, 2007) might be worn with a brooch by Daniel Kruger made with folds of silk and coral beads that borders on profane (*Brooch*, 2006), for example. The selection on view speaks to the tastes and delights of its collector, reflecting an eclectic mix of self-aware and sumptuous pieces that are at turns provocative, reverent, humorous, and elegant.

Curated by Natasha Kleit, MCD Curatorial Associate

Exhibition design by Gary Hutton. Graphic design

by Chad Symes.

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What is contemporary art jewelry?

Contemporary art jewelry, also referred to as "the new jewelry" or studio jewelry, emerged in the 1950's as a means to challenge traditional jewelry making. Early art jewelers explored unconventional materials and modern design focused on shape and form. Where fine jewelry might use precious metals like gold, platinum, or silver alongside show-stopping gemstones, art jewelers prioritize conceptual and narrative elements that reflect contemporary themes. Materials used within the contemporary art jewelry movement are often limitless. Plastic, industrial, and organic materials are used alongside base metals (copper, brass) to explore sculptural qualities and experiment with scale.

Object Labels

West wall to the left of entrance
Cabinet 1, Section 1:

Daniel Kruger
Brooch, 2006
Coral beads, silk, coral drops, gold

Daniel Kruger
Brooch, 2002
18k gold, silver, semi-precious stone bead, silk

Efharis Alepedis
Untitled (necklace), 2007
15k gold, coral, synthetic fibers

Daniel Kruger
Pendant 231, 2013
Gold, lemon seeds, silk

Cabinet 1, Section 2:

Monica Cecchi
Io sono infantile, 2017
Printed tin

Monica Cecchi
Il gioco dell'oca, 2015
Printed tin

Heather White van Stolk
Botanical Fiction: Black Eyed Susan

Corsage Brooch, 2004
Sterling silver, polyurethane

Cabinet 1, Section 3:

Doris Betz
Untitled, 2004
Plastic, silver, steel

Lola Brooks
Sacredheartring, 2015
18k gold, stainless steel, coral

Composed of stainless steel chains soldered together with gold, *Sacredheartring*'s hardy exterior is an expression of anguish and desire. Along the bottom half of the ring there is a

vertical opening outlined in gold and coral. The opening or slit may reference the wound of Longinus, found along the side of Christ's body at the time of his crucifixion. At the same time, it resembles a red parted mouth, which recalls Surrealist painter Salvador Dali's ruby encrusted jewelry design *Ruby Lips Pin* (1949.) Brooks is also inspired by Victorian jewelry motifs. Queen Victoria's own bespoke jewelry collection created trends throughout her reign, including devotional and sentimental symbols like hearts, snakes, and flowers that commemorated her love and mourning of husband Prince Albert. In *Sacredheartring*, the heart, while notably symbolizing love, affection, and fidelity, contrasts the fissured stainless steel material,

while its opening may connote pain or pleasure.

Ruudt Peters
CORPUS Tree, 2011
Aluminum, photo, polyester

Cabinet 2, Section 1:

Kiff Slemmons
Pharmacy of Wonder, ca. 1990s
Mixed media

Cabinet 2, Section 2:

Hanna Hedman
Loss 6, 2013
Silver, leather, copper, paint

Giovanni Corvaja
Untitled (brooch), 1998
18 and 20k gold, palladium

Jacqueline Ryan
Untitled, 1996
18k gold, enamel

Jacqueline Ryan
Untitled
18k gold, pearls

Cabinet 2, Section 3:

Jiro Kamata

Holon Necklace 3, 2021
Oxidized silver, camera lens with PVD coating

Kamata uses the glass from 12 camera lenses to form a necklace that reflects the viewer and its surroundings through technicolor shades of blues, purples, and greens. The necklace resembles a historical French *rivière* design, in which graduated gemstones of the same type are set individually on a single strand. This is the third necklace in his series with the title *Holon*, which refers to a term coined by 20th century English philosopher Arthur Koestler in *The Ghost in the Machine*, 1967. Holon comes from the Greek *Holos* (whole) and *On* (part), describing something that is part of a greater whole and

simultaneously part of its own system in its own right, such as a human cell. For the artist, the *Holon* series encompasses this circularity–Kamata began using camera lenses about ten years prior and has since revisited using lenses in his jewelry design and installations. Kamata explains that *Holon* is a culmination of all of his work, a part within the greater whole of his career.

Seulgi Kwon
In the Rain, 2015
Silicon, pigment, thread, agate

Red Corner:

Idiots (Afke Golsteijn and Floris Bakker)
Dermatologically Tested (Purple Beads),

2003-2009
Taxidermy, embroidery, beadwork

Idiots (Afke Golsteijn and Floris Bakker)
Dermatologically Tested (Pink Embroidery), 2003-2009
Taxidermy rabbit head, embroidery, beadwork

Idiots (Afke Golsteijn and Floris Bakker)
Dermatologically Tested, 2003-2009
Embroidery and beads

Ted Noten
Darling Bag, 2004
Starling cast in acrylic, steel, rubber

"I have to say that was the most effort I have ever made to acquire a piece of art jewelry," Susan Beech has stated, regarding her 2009 purchase of Ted Noten's *Darling Bag*. The acquisition involved plane hopping to Amsterdam, an all cash transaction, and hiding the piece through airport security for her trip home.

Rather than returning to the earth, a taxidermy starling bird is preserved in perpetuity, its organic material encapsulated in a clear acrylic rectangle with an industrial steel handle to form a purse. Like an open casket, the bird's talons, beak, and feathers are intact but also appear changed–more slender, missing one wing, and puppet-like–compared to its living

form in nature. Noten was inspired by the work of Damien Hirst whose conceptual artistic practice in the 1990s included suspending large animals in formaldehyde within clear glass tanks. Hirst's famous iteration is a great white shark titled, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1990). Unlike Hirst's work, Noten's hand bag is a portable reminder of humanity's consternation with life and death.

Wood Cabinet:

Kent Townsend
Jewelry Cabinet, 2008
Amboyna wood, ebony, narra wood, maple

North wall continuing to the right
Cabinet 3, Section 1:

Gijs Bakker
Munster da Vinci, 1998
Glass, silver, gold leaf, plexi

A pioneer in art jewelry design, Bakker was formally trained in jewelry and worked as an Industrial Designer in the early 1960s. He was initially informed by the modernist industrial aesthetic, but in the 1980s and '90s Bakker's work became more narrative driven and included depictions of famous athletes and art historical references. *Munster da Vinci*, part of his Holysport series, presents an athletic Christ-

like figure with arms spread and feet bound. The figure floats against a gilded background, reminiscent of Byzantine mosaics or Renaissance painting. The figure's face is obscured by his red soccer jersey, a common gesture to celebrate a goal, but a cautionable offense by FIFA rules. Bakker plays with historical references and religiosity by mixing old and contemporary world customs. *Munster da Vinci* allows the viewer to consider what figures are revered and idolized today.

Michael Becker
Untitled, 2002
Gold

Diane Falkenhagen
Scene from the Great Drama of the Human Race IV, 1997
24k gold plate on copper, egg shell, and polymer clay

Mary Lee Hu
Bracelet #54, 1998
18k and 24k gold

Cabinet 3, Section 2:

Vera Siemund
Untitled (Necklace), 2004
Steel

Salima Thakker

Untitled (Ring), 2004
Gold, silver, tourmaline

Evert Nijland
Byzantium, 2018-19
Sterling silver, glass

Cabinet 3, Section 3:

Ruudt Peters
Corpus Cauda, 2012
Polyurethane, silver

Heidi Nasher
Building Salt and Pepper Shakers, 1997
Sterling silver

Cabinet 4, Section 1:

Felieke van der Leest
The End II, 2011-2013
Textile, glass beads, plastic animal, silver, leather metalwork, embroidered

Whimsical and humorous, *The End II* depicts a toy horse's 'tail end' that protrudes outward against a flat but expansive beaded American Western landscape. The horse's back legs and tail are fragmented and dangle individually, swaying at the wearer's movement and making the horse appear in a gallop. The beaded landscape references traditional Indigenous North American beadwork, used to decorate clothing, shoes, gloves, and jewelry. Here, van der Leest merges

domestic craft techniques along with her fondness for horses and equestrian sports. As the sun sets and the black beads at the top of the brooch begin to descend on the landscape, the scene closes out like the end of a Looney Tunes cartoon, as if to say "thats all folks!"

Felieke van der Leest
Second Peleton, 2008
Textile, silver, plastic animals, glass beads, metalwork, beadwork

Cabinet 4, Section 2:

Iris Eichenberg
Birds of Michigan, 2011
Electroformed copper, glass beads

David Bielander
Black Scampi, 2011
Sterling silver, nylon

Cabinet 4, Section 3:

Barbara Paganin
Grande Sedona, 1999
Sterling silver, 18k gold, pearls, Venetian glass

Barbara Paganin
Melone, 1999
18k, 22k gold, sterling silver, pearls

Manfred Bischoff

Mantide Religiosa, 1999
22k gold, pink coral

Cabinet 5, Section 1:

Georg Dobler
Stag Beetle Brooch, 2007
Sterling silver, citrine

Veronika Fabian
TR1506LA-553-3178 Once Upon a Time, 2021
Brass and copper plate

Cabinet 5, Section 2:

Emily Cobb

Dry Up: Golden Snake Choker, 2017
Nylon, gold leaf

Tina Rath
Siphonopores I, 2007
African blackwood, ivory, whale tooth, 18k, mink

Tina Rath
Sea Urchin, 2008
African blackwood, ivory, 18k gold, mink

Cabinet 5, Section 3:

Petra Zimmerman
Untitled (Bracelet), 2014
Acrylic, vintage handbag clasp, silver

Jennifer Trask
Germinate, 2010
Cow and ox bone, antler, Nutria teeth, ivory, pigeon skull, diamond

Germinate is a reminder that what is left behind after death can also bring new life. Intentionally designed to rest on the wearer's collar bones– bones sit on bones– the piece acts as a wearable vanitas object. The necklace is composed of an array of wildlife remains including teeth from nutria, a rodent indigenous to South Africa. Trask creates a framework from deer antlers that seemingly sprout bones carved into floral designs, leading downward to a central pigeon skull pendant and

scattered diamond accents. While diamonds are taken from the earth, crafted to be sparkling and treasured to last a lifetime, fragile animal bones typically become part of the earth, enriching the soil–never to be seen.

East wall before MakeArt Lab
Cabinet 6, Section 1:

Bruno Martinazzi
Goldfinger II, 2012
20k gold, 18k white gold

Gerd Rothmann
Three Symbols, 2008
18k gold

Gerd Rothmann
Uber die Beruhrung bei Michelangelo, 2012
Gold

Gerd Rothmann
Rings on Finger From Susan, 2005
18k gold

Heather White van Stolk
Finger Ring, 2009
18k gold, pigment

Cabinet 6, Section 2:

Marta Mattsson
Cicada Brooch, 2017

Cicada wings, resin, cubic zirconias, lacquer, glitter, silver

Mattsson uses cicadas, beetles, slugs, and spiders in much of her work, challenging herself to create work with bugs she dislikes. For this brooch, part of her Wings series, she layers delicate preserved cicada wings into an elaborate butterfly-like fan shape. Cicadas, often seen as repulsive or a nuisance, undergo a dazzling transformation in Mattson's work. She enhances their naturally transparent glossy wings with resin, glitter and cubic zirconia adornments. For Mattsson, attraction and repulsion are fascinating dichotomies.

Marta Mattsson
Wing Earrings, Blue/Green, 2017
Cicada wings, resin, pigment, silver

Mirjam Hiller
Sirueta, 2019
Steel, paint

Cabinet 6, Section 3:

Marilyn da Silva
Second Nature: Family, 2004
Copper, sterling silver, gesso, colored pencils, printer ink, magnets

Idiots (Afke Golsteijn and Floris Bakker)
One Nest Brooch, 2010

Taxidermy birds, nest, resin

Marta Mattsson
Fossils Necklace, 2012
Cicadas, crushed olivine, resin, silver

Gold corner, South wall by MakeArt Lab entrance:

Sari Liimatta
Hopeless, 2007
Glass beads, pins, plastic (necklace)
Bear

Lucy Sarneel
Starry Sky Drive #2, 2014
Zinc, HP thread, lapis lazuli, acrylic paint, varnish, wood

South wall closest to MakeArt Lab
Cabinet 7, Section 1:

Sergey Jivetin
Untitled (Bracelet), 2007
Saw blades, steel

Evert Nijland
Michelangelo, 2021
Silver, glass

Ruudt Peters
Oculus, 2011
Polyurethane, silver

Cabinet 7, Section 2:

Vera Siemund
Untitled (Necklace), 2006
Enameled copper, sterling silver

Lauren Tickle
$160 Currency Converted, 2015
US dollars, silver, monofilament, surgical steel

$160 Currency Converted is composed of meticulously layered and cut pieces of US currency. With the help of friends, clients and local banks, Tickle uses bills that would otherwise be sent to the mint for shredding. Tickle describes this body of work as kaleidoscopes, where circular patterns overlap and interlock

to a central pinhole design. The artist intentionally cuts out numbers, letters, and words to reframe associations with value and labor. Instead she enhances the floral filigree and scroll patterns that are often overlooked along the edges of US bills.

Michael Zobel
Untitled (bracelet), 2019
Sterling silver, black diamonds, emerald, aquamarine, platinum

Cabinet 7, Section 3:

Mi-Ah Rodiger
Untitled, 2012
Resin, chrome plating, pink beryl

Terhi Tolvanen
Couronne Nacre, 2009
Mother of pearl, polyester, mixed wood, paint, silver

Mi-Ah Rodiger
Untitled, 2011
Silver, tourmaline, resin, chromium plated, silicon rubber

South wall closest to entrance
Cabinet 8, Section 1:

Peter Chang
Untitled (Ring), 2003
Acrylic, resin, silver, gold

Chang's surrealistic ring combines vibrant colors and otherworldly shapes resembling sea creatures, bodily organs, and molecular forms. This ring curves dramatically outward, featuring broad silver shield-like sections that contrast a golden bulbous underbelly striped with red and gold bands. Chang began experimenting with polystyrene foam and recycled plastic resin in the 1980's. Here, he has mixed his plastic techniques alongside fine jewelry metals. Like many art jewelers Chang sees his work as both sculptural and wearable, stating, "The pieces I create can be sculptures or they can be worn as jewellery. Each individual will have a different response to them and I like that."

Peter Chang
Untitled (Brooch), 2003
Resin, sterling silver

Sam-Tho Duong
Untitled (Brooch), 2012
Sterling silver, pearls, nylon

Tamara Gruner
Crystal Champagne, Date unknown
Oxidized steel pieces, bone, glass, silver, steel

Cabinet 8, Section 2:

Anya Kivarkis
Winona Ryder Lost Jewels, 2010
Sterling silver

Ruudt Peters
Anima Clareta, 2009
Aluminum

Cabinet 8, Section 3:

Hanna Hedman
Atelopus Various, Date unknown
Silver, powder coated copper, paint

Robin Kranistsky, Kim Overstreet
Puissant, 1999
Egg shell, copper, glass, micarta, fabric,

paper, paint, ivory, polymer clay, gourd, found objects

Marta Mattsson
White Beetles, 2015
Beetles, lacquer, cubic zirconia, silver

Steel Cabinet near gallery entrance:

Jonathan Maxwell
Jewelry Cabinet, 2009
Steel, glass

Inside Steel Cabinet:

Helen Britton
Bracelet, 2016

Silver, semi-precious antique and vintage stones

Kiff Slemmons
Electric Claws, 1999
Sterling silver, bakelite

Tanel Veenre
The Garden III, 2018
Stabilized wood, reconstructed coral, silver

Tanel Veenre
Phallus II, 2018
Glass, reconstructed mother-of-pearl, ebony, silver

Andrea Janosik
Untitled (Necklace), 2008
Leather, sterling silver

Terhi Tolvanen
Jungle Twins, 2014
Silver, wood, hawkseye

Nancy Worden
Forked tongues necklace, ca. 1990s

Marta Mattsson
Slices, 2014
Copper electroformed beetles, crushed pyrite, lacquer, silver

Teal corner to the right of entrance:

David Bielander
Krake (Octopus Candelabra), 2012
Cast bronze

David Bielander
Mamba, 2012
Titanium, gold

David Bielander
Python / Würgeschlange, 2011
Titanium