The celebration of the local, the regional, the private and the personal, and the value of experience and memory, is territory that many contemporary jewellery designers and makers seek to articulate and make real.

Jewellers preside over the manipulation of materials and the transformation of their meaning and value. Design involves working on a small scale in relation to the intimate site of the human body and exercising advanced craft skills to bring a variety of materials together as desirable and durable objects. The juxtaposition of materials, the recycling of objects and the subversion of traditions can also bring a new understanding to familiar forms and imbue everyday materials with a poetic presence.

This exhibition includes the work of 42 Australian jewellers exploring jewellery from a number of viewpoints within six broad themes: Romanticism, Interpreting the Vernacular, Encapsulating Nature, Technics, Social Message and Sculpture for the Body. All of the works are from the collection of the National Gallery of Australia.
THEMES

ROMANTICISM
The romantic tradition of jewellery has been reinterpreted by contemporary jewellers who make historical references, through imagery and narratives; use materials invested with symbolic meanings, such as gold and precious gemstones; or employ meaningful forms, such as lockets, necklaces and rings.

INTERPRETING THE VERNACULAR
Working within the intimate scale of jewellery, artists and designers find ways to investigate behaviour, question social constructions and reconsider the value of materials. Jewellers use a range of techniques and materials, from precious metals to recycled plastics, to create new visual effects and rework ordinary and unexpected materials into poetic narratives.

ENCAPSULATING NATURE
The power of Australia’s natural environment is a continuing source of inspiration for jewellery designers, who show how materials can intersect with new ways of considering the environment. Plants, organisms, minerals and metals offer jewellers new ways to interpret the natural world.

SOCIAL MESSAGE
Jewellery can act as a signifier of status or opinion. Some jewellers use graphic imagery to explore ideas, while others make reference to popular culture to build narrative and visual complexity into their work. By using non-precious materials and fragments of manufactured objects, jewellers consider design in a broader context.

TECHNICS
Since the 1960s, contemporary studio jewellery practice has engaged with new technologies and experimented with advanced materials. Contemporary jewellers have rewritten the rules about jewellery as a signifier of value through its precious materials, instead exploring the qualities of modern synthetic materials and approaches to design and construction through the use of computer-aided design and digital technologies.

SCULPTURE FOR THE BODY
Jewellery is an art form that uses the human body as a point of reference and departure from the expected roles and conventions of ornamentation. Materials such as reflective metals and glass are used by some artists to explore the relationship between light and the body. Some jewellers work to create a contrast between skin and material, while others explore the body’s inner structures and abstract these forms as jewellery.
GLOSSARY

TITANIUM
Discovered in 1791, titanium is an inert, silver-coloured, corrosion-resistant metal with a high strength-to-weight ratio that can be alloyed with other metals, making it suitable for small objects and jewellery. It can be anodised to produce various colours.

FILIGREE
A jewellery technique by which silver or gold wire is curled, twisted or plaited into lace-like patterns and soldered together to form patterns. Small metal beads can also be incorporated into the designs. Filigree can be open or soldered to another metal surface.

POWDERCOAT
A paint technique for metal by which dry, powdered polymer pigment is applied electrostatically to an object and cured under heat to form a hard finish.

AUTOCAD
A software application for computer-aided design that allows designers to draw three-dimensional objects on screen.

FRACTAL
A geometric pattern that is repeated at ever smaller scales to produce irregular shapes and surfaces. Fractals can be used in the computer-aided design of irregular patterns and structures in nature.

POLYPROPYLENE
A lightweight, thermoplastic resin used for making moulded objects.

DETRITUS
Disintegrated, eroded or accumulated material.
GLOSSARY

925 SILVER
An alloy of 92.5% of silver and 7.5% of other metals, usually copper. Also known as sterling silver.

POLYHEDRAL
A solid form with numerous flat faces and straight edges.

ALLEGORY
The representation of abstract ideas and concepts in narrative, dramatic or pictorial form.

ANODISED
The coating of metal, often aluminium, with a protective surface through electrolysis. This coating can be dyed in a wide variety of colours.

MONEL
A trademarked term for a silvery, corrosive–resistant metal alloy composed of nickel, copper, iron and other elements.

ALLOY
A composite fused material in which at least one element is metal.

BOROSILICATE GLASS
A type of glass composed of silica and boron oxide, forming a material that is durable and highly resistant to thermal shock.

FLAMEWORK
The technique of heating and melting clear and coloured glass rods and tubes with a burner to create small sculptural and functional objects.

OXIDISED (SILVER)
A permanent darkening of sterling silver for decorative effect, by immersing the object, or sections of it, in a solution of water and the chemical, liver–of–sulphur.
YEARS 9 AND 10: CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTENT ELABORATIONS SPECIFIC TO THIS RESOURCE

10.1 – Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to explore their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

10.1.1 – Developing representations by combining and adapting materials, techniques, technologies and art making processes.

10.1.2 – Exploring and applying ideas inspired by the style of other artists in their own artworks.

Considering viewpoints – societies and cultures: For example – Can you understand and explain why the artist has developed their representation in this way?

10.1.5 – Conceptualising how visual conventions can represent ideas in their artwork.

10.2 – Manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes and apply viewpoints to develop and represent their own artistic intentions.

10.2.2 – Using selected techniques, technologies and processes to explore personal representation of a theme, concept or subject matter.

10.2.3 – Experimenting with a variety of techniques and processes when exploring their intentions as artist.

10.3 – Develop and refine use of visual conventions, perceptual and practical skills, and selected techniques, technologies and processes to represent ideas and subject matter.

10.3.1 – Developing technical proficiency in the resolution of designed, fabricated and constructed artworks, using safe and sustainable practices.

Considering viewpoints – histories: For example – How has the artist appropriated an artwork from another time?

10.4 – Plan and design artworks that represent artistic intention.

10.4.1 – Analysing and documenting the practices of selected visual artists and designers, including their use of materials, technologies, techniques and processes, when developing their art and design intentions for representation.

10.4.2 – Developing an individual focus for a series of artworks based on a given theme, concept or subject matter.
Considering viewpoints – forms: For example – If it was made from different material or be produced in a different form, would the meaning of the artwork change?

10.4.3 – Applying their understanding of traditional art, craft and design practices to plan the use of materials, technologies and processes in a contemporary context.

10.4.4 – Being imaginative when applying a personal aesthetic, for example, when planning to manipulate and/or appropriate images, objects and spaces into new contexts and meanings.

10.5.1 – Visiting galleries, art museums and public art displays, in formal and informal settings, to research the role of the curator and the elements of good display/exhibition, which they then apply to their own ideas for an exhibition of their own or others’ artworks.

Considering viewpoints – philosophies and ideologies: For example – How does this artwork change your opinion on this issue? What art theory would you use to analyse this work?

Considering viewpoints – institutions: For example – Who sponsored this work? If you were commissioned to make an artwork for a commercial business, what would you want to know in order to produce what they want? Would you compromise your beliefs to complete a commissioned artwork?

10.6 – Evaluate how reflecting on and refining the connections in representations communicate artistic intentions in artworks they make and view so as to inform their future art making.

10.6.1 – Experimenting with, their own work between viewpoints, materials, techniques, technologies practices and processes.

Considering viewpoints – evaluations: For example – Who would you like to judge the success of your artwork? Why?

Considering viewpoints – meanings and interpretations: For example – Has the artist used visual metaphors to express meaning and persuasion? What metaphor/s could you use to express your ideas about persuasion?

10.7.1 – Analysing the role of visual arts as a means of challenging prevailing issues of traditional and contemporary relevance, for example, the availability of resources for future generations.

10.7.2 – Identifying how visual arts professionals embed their values and beliefs, and how audiences react and interpret the meaning and intent of their artworks differently.

Considering viewpoints – critical theories: For example – Do you agree with the artist’s point of view? Give reasons for your view.

10.7.3 – Considering the responsibilities of visual arts practitioners when making commentaries about social, environmental and sustainability issues.

10.7.4 – Interrogating the cultural and societal roles and responsibilities of arts industries and recognising the power of the visual arts in advocating for, and being a catalyst for, change.
Robert Baines references ancient Greek and Etruscan metalwork, mid 19th–century Estonian silverware and late 19th–century Chinese jewellery to develop complex jewellery using historical goldsmithing techniques. He uses the past as a link to the future with traditional use of materials and modern intrusions, which he calls ‘interventions’—Coca-Cola bottles, plastic, the odd toy car, filigree and powdercoat. The colour red is a recurring theme.

This pendant necklace continues the romantic tradition of the narrative locket, but instead of an inscription, its message is visual. It takes the form of a book that opens to reveal an apocalyptic scene in which a glowing ruby meteor hurtles to the ground on which structures seem to be collapsing against a scorched golden sky.
DISCUSSION
This brooch by Julie Blyfield references colonial and gold rush periods of Australian history and the idea of lockets, but much of her other work has as its subject Australian flora and natural forms that she delicately works with minute detail.

Do you think that there is a common element of playfulness across her subject matter?

RESEARCH
Examine how the colonial and gold rush periods in Australian history created a new genre of designs and motifs to express the growing interest in an Australian identity.

ACTIVITY
Collect an example from nature. Either draw it or photograph it. Isolate a small detail of interest and enlarge that detail to become your finished work in a medium of your choice.
Melissa Cameron’s work is integrated with the tenets of an ordered, analytical Cartesian geometry. Geometry and the beauty of pattern, both natural and human-engineered, underpin all her work. She says: ‘In geometry I trust.’

She thinks deeply about her materials and the wider impact of their use. The recycled objects that she uses are cut out and re-assembled to create something individual and new. There remains a delicate interdependence with the original.

This brooch is based on the Koch snowflake, one of the earliest fractals, in the form of the symbol for infinity. This reference relates to the life and work of Ethel Harriet Raybould, who lectured in domestic science in the 1920s to fund her later university studies in mathematics. In homage to Raybould’s achievements in areas from domestic science to pure mathematics, Cameron has cut this brooch from a steel baking dish.
Christel van der Laan works with a variety of found materials. She has always been interested in collecting, arranging and making things from materials sourced from second-hand shops, roadside vendors and the detritus of cultures. This interest evolved as a result of growing up in the rich and varied environments of the Netherlands, South Africa and Australia. She selects and masses the ubiquitous polypropylene price tags, ring-pulls and other ‘worthless’ materials of everyday life, setting them in precise frames and mounts to transform them into precious distillations of the contemporary world of functional materials. This bangle’s use of massed plastic price tag holders suggests the translucency and flexibility of marine organisms, or the tendrils of young plants.

**DISCUSSION**

Christel van der Laan says that there is a humour, sadness and even guilt in some of her work, while other works are a celebration of the beauty of individual elements transformed into a new setting. Which approach is she using with *Cut price red, bangle*, and how does this title inform our understanding of her work?

**RESEARCH**

In 2008, van der Laan discovered a new and exciting material, which had been sitting, right under her nose, on the soldering bench. It was a ceramic honeycomb block, used to distribute heat during soldering. She became captivated by its possibilities and started using it widely in her jewellery making. Find out what this material looks like. What modern art style does it remind you of? Explore how artists find inspiration for their work.

**ACTIVITY**

Borrowing on her idea of using found materials, e.g. price tags, ring-pulls etc, create an art work or body adornment using your own collection of similar items.

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*Cut price red, bangle 2011, Perth, Western Australia*
painted silver, polypropylene
11 x 11 x 3 cm
purchased 2011
HELEN BRITTON

Brooch 2011, Munich, Germany
925 silver, paint
11.4 x 9.5 x 2.2 cm
purchased 2012

Helen Britton draws inspiration from the industrial detritus that crowds urban life, using found manufactured plastic and metal sections of unspecified objects, and juxtaposing them in combinations that cause them to rise above their humble origins to suggest the intricate hybrid structures of plants and mechanical components.

She takes pleasure in watching building-site excavations, their construction processes and the finished structures themselves. She uses photography as a record of daily impressions of strong images referencing the fragmented debris of high density living.

In this work Britton uses plastics, painted and patterned metals and compounds in delicate, architectural matrices that have a sense of having survived some unspecified former use.

1 DISCUSSION
Helen Britton’s jewellery creates order out of the chaos of everyday living.

She is fascinated with the transformative process of reworking found materials. What processes does she use to make what she calls ‘these modest little machines and landscapes for wearing’?

2 RESEARCH
The sense of the precious can extend beyond the use of precious metals and jewels.

Research another artist who has used mundane materials and reassembled them in some way to make the resulting artwork have a sense of the precious.

3 ACTIVITY
Create a photographic collage with the title ‘The discarded transformed’.

ENCAPSULATING NATURE
Carlier Makigawa draws her inspiration from nature, often with elements that are based on seed pods and flora. She uses the format of a framework of interconnected polyhedral elements to suggest a natural system that drives outward, arranging itself into previously non-existent structures. Her works have both strength and fragility and the appearance of a simplicity that belies the detailed construction processes she employs.

This silver and coral brooch has an architectural presence informed by Makigawa’s research into the geometric structures of the natural world, the relationships between positive and negative shapes, the like and the unlike, the linear and the sinuous. Its oxidised grey interlocked vortexes of silver provide a foil for vividly contrasting branches of natural coral, a material that has long been associated with jewellery.
Pierre Cavalan draws from his large collection of old trade jewellery, precious and artificial stones, found plastic objects and enamelled souvenir spoons and badges to build complex, meticulously assembled jewellery, such as this brooch. He considers his assemblages as allegories for the lived experience—life to death—and as a means by which he can objectify emotions and personal experiences.

While each contrasting element of this work brings forth memories and associations with other times and places, Cavalan has created a new object with its own commemorative potential and, in doing so, he has blurred the borders between art and reality. The work has an element of the kitsch balanced with a contradictory notion of the precious.
Susan Cohn has had her workshop in the heart of the city of Melbourne since 1980 and uses this easy access to the laneways and streets of the city to closely observe people—the way they dress, adorn themselves, their behaviour, their interaction with others, what they carry. The richness and variety of the constant ebb and flow of humans, the rich cultural cross section of people is an important element in her work.

Everyday functional objects, equipment and materials, such as sunglasses, earphones and anodised aluminium were re–purposed by Cohn to create this hybrid insect. Resting on a circular aluminium container designed to hold condoms, when worn as a pendant it becomes an articulated sculptural presence on the body, reflecting the graphics and colours of street art, clubs and the rising techno culture of the end of the 20th century.

Systematic Gibsonia no. 2, condom pendant 1995, Melbourne, Victoria
anodised aluminium, Oakley black iridium sunglass lenses, Sony wind socks,
750 white gold, 925 silver, stainless steel, aluminium plate
186 x 150 x 45 cm, tile 30 x 30 cm
purchased 1995

Discussion
Susan Cohn’s hybrid insect Systematic Gibsonia no.2 extends jewellery’s boundaries in many ways. How does it reflect her interest in close observation of people, a sense of the humorous and a social message?

Research
Many artists throughout history have used social and political comment to make society aware of important issues from that time. Choose an artist who has done this. Discuss using examples to support your argument.

Activity
Design your own imaginative insect that can become a small or large container; something to be worn or something to be carried.

Social Message
Simon Cottrell’s work often hints at natural forms that are not immediately evident. His work embodies subtle paradoxes: simple yet complex, natural versus man–made. He often breaks up edges so that the defining outline becomes unclear and forms complex tensions. His processes are painstaking and have strong consideration for his material.

Cottrell fabricated this brooch from monel, a hard nickel alloy. In its technical and visual complexity, it demonstrates his mastery over a material noted for its intractability and dense lustre. Austere and monotone, it avoids the polish associated with precious metals, its subtle lustre and brushed surface emphasising the contrasting juxtapositions of its decisive technical elements. This architectural miniature engages the eye and hand while being moved about the body.
DISCUSSION
In this necklace Blanche Tilden is referencing her fascination with the 19th-century glass and metal structures of the Crystal Palace and the Palais des Machines. How has she transferred the idea of repetition of shapes and the way light falls through glass from architecture to jewellery?

RESEARCH
Research the work of German architect Bruno Taut and also the design and importance at the time of the Palais des Machines and the Paris Exposition of 1889.

ACTIVITY
Collect some clear rectangular plastic shapes. Make slots, drill holes and join with a series of repetitions to make the connections work. Create your own item of jewellery or a small sculpture.

Or: using a discarded chain (e.g. from a bicycle, photocopy machine, chain link from plug) change it in some way to make it into an item of jewellery.

TECHNICS
Robert Foster originally trained as a metalsmith and in traditional silversmithing. In 1994 he established his successful production company FINK + Co. where he combines his engineering and creative design skills to focus on producing hollow-ware, sculptural lighting, furniture and body-ware. Foster combines untraditional alloys of anodised aluminium, titanium, stainless steel and new ways of working with silver, plastics, stone, ceramics and glass to create beautifully functional art works.

**Bandaliero II**: To be worn diagonally across the chest, this work is a linked series of containers for equipment that needs to be carried on the body, such as a mobile phone, keys, sat-nav and wallet. Functional and making a dramatic visual statement for the wearer, the fluorescent acrylic lids of each container glow in the ultraviolet lighting of bars and clubs, while the webbing and metal reference the blunt functionalism of military equipment.

**Robert Foster**

*Backaliero II 2009, Queanbeyan, New South Wales*  
anodised aluminium, acrylic, stainless steel, plastics, synthetic textile webbing  
157 x 7 x 5.5 cm  
purchased 2009

**DISCUSSION**

*Backaliero II* has strong sculptural and performative qualities. It is functional and decorative at the same time. What makes this sculpture for the body appealing to both male and female? Where else in the history of body adornment can we see jewellery for men?

**RESEARCH**

Robert Foster says: ‘The strong driving force behind my creative practice is to explore and invent …’ How does his production company FINK + Co. reflect this belief?

*Ossalite* is a recent collaborative artwork with Frost Design. How does this art installation further extend Robert Foster’s art practice?

**ACTIVITY**

Transform a utilitarian object into an artwork for the body by adding to or subtracting from the original to create a personal response.

**SCULPTURE FOR THE BODY**
For Brenda Ridgewell the intimate, personal space on the human body becomes the framework for her jewellery. She works with the space both on and beyond the body surface. Her works are developed through a series of constructed, linear elements, which have a sculptural, web–like quality and remind us of the repetitive, sometimes uncontrolled, elements in our lives. Her use of precious and semiprecious materials support her ideas of the precious nature of life and its tenacity.

Brenda Ridgewell incorporates moveable components as an important structural element in her work, a technique that allows the wearer to customise the articulation of the work when worn. In this armband Ridgewell plays with oppositional notions of delicacy and aggression, making a deliberate counterpoint between dangerous and sharp thistle–like elements and the vulnerability of the skin at pulse points, such as the wrist.