

# Jewellery History Today



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# The latest incarnation of the Museo dei Gioielli at Vicenza

*A report by Sandra Hindman*

In a restored Palladian building in the centre of Vicenza, the Basilica Palladiana, Alba Cappellieri oversees one of the few museums in the world entirely devoted to jewellery, the Museo dei Gioielli (opened 2014). With no permanent collection and no intent to acquire, the museum operates in a highly original way. In two-year cycles, Ms. Cappellieri, who is Professor of Jewellery Design at the Istituto Politecnico in Milan, selects nine different specialists to curate each of nine spaces on the following fixed themes: Magic, Symbol, Function, Beauty, Art, Fashion, Design, Icon, and Future. In subtitled videos that loop continuously in each room, each curator explains his or her subject. Extraordinarily beautiful display cases designed by the Spanish artist Patricia Urquiola are permanently installed.

In December 2016, crowds gathered for the unveiling of the second 'edition' of the Museo dei Gioielli. Along with the director, the newly chosen curators were present to explain their approaches to the nine themes, which the catalogue aptly calls 'microworlds'. I shall limit myself to a few general remarks and a sneak preview of select rooms. Curators are allowed considerable latitude in their approaches to the themes, and it is up to each curator to arrange the loan of objects – from private and public collections worldwide – that flesh out their subject. Helen Drutt English in the section 'Art' focuses on artists from the United States from around 1945 to today. She attempts to show how jewellery by artists 'joined forces with mainstream art', beginning with a key piece by Alexander Calder, his butterfly brooch dating from 1940. Stefano Piaggi treats 'Fashion' by concentrating on Anna Piaggi, the 'muse of fashion designers' and originator of the 'concept of vintage'. The fantasy world her jewellery reveals is simultaneously frivolous and provocative. One of her favourite jewels incorporates the Playboy bunny as a pendant, and another by Ugo Correani is in the shape of a pincushion. Odo Fiorovanti probes the 'Future' of jewellery as it transforms the subject. Fascinating (and disturbing) is a series of 'jewels' that distort rather than beautify the body, as a Facepiece called

'Terrifying Beauty No. 1', by the artist Burcu Büyükunal.

Hundreds of rarely seen objects await the visitor to the Museo dei Gioielli and will challenge him or her to rethink the past, present, and future of jewellery, which has never been more complex. A secondary display space on the ground floor is devoted to rotating exhibits of contemporary jewellery, usually with catalogues (Skin, Food, Voyages, Design). The bilingual catalogue of the present exhibit will be reviewed in another issue.

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*Alexander Calder. Butterfly brooch, brass, 1940. 4.5 x 4.75 cm. Lent from Makler Family Collection.*