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Jewellery Studies

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The Society of JEWELLERY HISTORIANS

The Society was formed in 1977 with the aim of stimulating the growing international interest in jewellery of all ages and cultures by publishing new research and by bringing together those interested in the subject, whether in a professional or private capacity. The membership includes archaeologists, museum specialists, collectors, art historians, dealers, gemmologists, practising jewellers and designers, scientists and conservators.

The Society runs a programme of lectures from September to June, inviting speakers from different disciplines and many parts of the world. The lectures are usually held in London at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V OHS, and are made available afterwards on the Society's website. In addition, the Society arranges a variety of other occasional events including international symposia on aspects of the history and technology of jewellery, study visits to museums, and private views of special exhibitions.

For full details visit the Society's website at: www.societyofjewelleryhistorians.ac.uk or write to: The Membership Secretary, The Society of Jewellery Historians, Scientific Research, The British Museum, London WC1B 3DG

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Jewellery Studies is the Journal of the Society of Jewellery Historians, and is the leading academic journal on the subject. Articles cover all aspects of jewellery from antiquity to the present day, and include related material from archives, technical data, gemmology and new discoveries on collections and designers. All papers published in ***Jewellery Studies*** are subject to peer review.

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The Editor welcomes contributions of unpublished material on current research into all topics of jewellery history. See the Notes for Contributors at the end of this paper. Please email suggestions for articles to the Editor at js@societyofjewelleryhistorians.ac.uk

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Not So Hidden Messages

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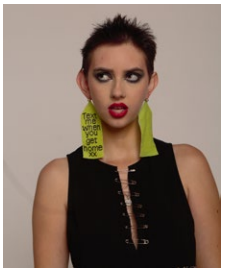

Front cover:

'Text me when you get home…', beads, nylon monofilament, by Bronia Kidd, 2021

Not So Hidden Messages

SARAH ROTHWELL

The written word is a powerful and persuasive tool that can inspire and revolt in equal measure. Equally, jewellery has the power to spread messages and has been used for generations to declare an individual's position of allegiance or defiance. By incorporating a message, slogan or symbol, a jewel becomes a provocative statement on societal and political issues, provoking both the viewer and wearer to think beyond the decorative aestheticism of adornment. Such pieces question both our emotional and intellectual relationship with language and jewellery. Many of those jewellery artists and designers whose jewels incorporate text seek to highlight the power of a word or statement. Some question the value society places upon brand names for instance, or draw attention to systems of oppression. Incorporating a message within a jewel can also be a more provocative statement about exploitation than any text pinned to a gallery wall. With this paper, I aim to explore a selection of contemporary artist jewellers who have used text to carry not-so-hidden messages which question how we perceive the world today.

The research behind this article started just prior to the 2020 Lockdown for a paper that was intended to be given that year at the Society of Jewellery Historians conference '*Jewellery in Texts: Texts in Jewellery*'.[1] It was therefore shaped by the series of events that took place at that time, both nationally and internationally, which affected our perception of society and called into question our position and cultural history in relation to others. Words of intent were used for good and bad, creating

Fig. 1.
'Jewellery is Life', badge of steel and paper, by Mah Rana, 2001, with postcard, London, England (K.2017.104) © Mah Rana; Image © National Museums Scotland

1 *Not So Hidden Messages* was delivered after the end of Lockdown at the conference in London of The Society of Jewellery Historians, *Jewellery in Texts: Texts in Jewellery*, rescheduled to 2 July 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

slogans that will reverberate as signifiers for this period in history. In the exhibition *Strikethrough: Typographic Messages of Protest,* which opened in 2022 in San Francisco, just after I delivered my paper, Silas Munro explores how text and its 'connection to the body, is a big reason why change happens.' Identifying 'typographical anger and agency as it is seen on the streets, on the printed page, and even on the bodies of demonstrators',[2] and was similarly inspired by the events which took place in 2020.

Jewellery and the very act of personal adornment are, as the artist and researcher Mah Rana states, 'an effective and concrete document that discusses an individual's thoughts and outwardly considerations on issues of value and communication, as well as being a reflection on personal, as well as our collective histories,'[3] and, importantly, *Jewellery is Life* (fig. 1). This is echoed by Dr Elizabeth Goring, former curator at National Museums Scotland, who gifted Rana's badge to the national collection, when she wrote that:

> jewellery is uniquely placed to tell stories. Like other art forms, it has the capacity to communicate on several levels [...] However, what principally distinguishes jewellery from other art forms is the underlying intention that it should be worn on the human body – often that of a person other than its creator. Once sited on that most individual of canvases, it attains the means to move through physical space and time, its story palpably connected to that of its wearer (Goring 2012).

Therefore, when combining this power with statements of intent, words of action, or recognisable slogans, worn jewels can become effective tools through which to spread messages about wealth and privilege, allegiance and subversion, identity and conformity. This allows both the wearer and the maker to advocate a message in a public sphere, be that declaring a position of solidarity or expression of defiance, reaching out and creating connections and recognition through not-so-hidden messages.

Socio-political expressions as adornment

In the spring of 2020, during the global crisis that COVID-19 brought, we all bore witness to a number of idioms and texts that will forever mark this period in our collective history. None more so than the call to Stay Home! That call was ostensibly intended as a statement of universal solidarity that would help protect ourselves and, importantly, others who were risking their lives on our behalf. However, this order carried an undertone of control that could be, and was, co-opted by those who wished to spread hate, shaming individuals or whole communities indiscriminately.

The subversion of these words was acutely felt by the then-student jeweller Sera Park Choi, whose final year project for Rhode Island School of Design in the US, saw her reclaiming this phrase and others to discuss issues of fear and racism within her home country (fig. 2). Using traditional, time-consuming bead-working processes, Choi created a series of body adornments, incorporating images and slogans to question if labour and beauty can deflect hate and make the wearer feel protected. Reflecting also on her anxiety as a young woman of East Asian descent living in America, a country that was supposed to be her home, where her parents had emigrated in hope of a better life.

Fig 2.
Sera with her *Stay Home*! protective vest in Rhode Island, 2020. *Stay Home!*, breastplate and backpiece, faux pearl beads, dyed nylon monofilament, by Sera Park Choi, Rhode Island, New York, USA, 2020. Collection of National Museums Scotland.
Image © Sera Park Choi.

2 Silas Munro interviewed by Emily Wilson for Hyperallergic https://hyperallergic.com/785033/the-typography-of-change-letterform-archive/. Hyperallergic is an online arts magazine, based in New York, founded by the art critic Hrag Vartanian and his husband Veken Gueyikian in October 2009, which aims to be a forum for serious, playful, and radical thinking about art in the world today.
And https://exhibitions.letterformarchive.org/strikethrough/exhibit/introduction [last accessed 09.12.2022]

3 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the National Museums Scotland, discussing her 'Jewellery is Life' series of works, 2022.

Fig 3.
Basic Bitch rings, porcelain, transfer printed decoration, Jennifer Ling Datchuk, Berlin, Germany, 2017.
© Jennifer Ling Datchuk; Photo: Ansen Seale

But because of the global pandemic and the political and social unrest witnessed within the United States and elsewhere, she felt threatened. Feeling that she would never be accepted due to her cultural heritage, or escape the taunts 'to go home'. Discussing the work, she explained:

> At the start of the pandemic, before COVID-19 was exposed in the United States, I took a train home from Providence to NJ to visit my parents. On the train ride, I coughed into my elbow several times. For the first time in my life, I faced an outwardly racist interaction. A tall, older, bald man sitting behind me told me that "this country doesn't need people like me" and that "I should go back to my own f***ing country." This was a time when Trump and the CDC[4] were emphasizing that masks are not necessary and different countries around the world started wearing masks to reduce the spread of Covid. I created a piece titled "A Mask for President Trump" to symbolize that hate is contagious as well. I thought about the representation and communication of text/symbolism for the first time in my work and felt it was necessary to include words that were spreading a message to many.[5]

As Choi demonstrated, the spoken and written word is a powerful and persuasive tool that can inspire and revolt in equal measure, and when words are used without care they can and do cut deep. Yet, by reclaiming words of control and prejudice, text can empower the wearer with a message of defiance. In the case of Choi's *Stay Home!* with its form reminiscent of the protective vest worn by peace workers and armed personnel, the artist has also created a jewel that provides both physical and psychological protection against those who would use language with the intent to harm.

On other occasions, the exploration and reconsideration of words used in prejudice have, and justifiably so, been reconceptualised as jewels that seek to confront rather than deflect. American multimedia artist Jennifer Ling Datchuk's ceramic rings *Basic Bitch* do just that (fig. 3). These knuckle dusters were created as part of her *Girl You Can* body of work

4 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the national public health agency of the United States.

5 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2020 – 2022.

which explored what she considers her layered identity – as a woman, a Chinese woman, and as an 'American'. Using what she calls a stereotypically Asian token of decorative identity, that of blue and white porcelain, in a form that references the phrase's origins in the American hip-hop music genre and the jewellery of the urban art scene.[6] Incorporating a slur that had been directed at her by a predominantly male section of society she encountered whilst on residency in Europe, who had used it whilst calling out her ethnicity, without consideration for and oblivious to what her nationality may have been. The phrase, which originated in her home country of America, is now used globally within certain sections of society, to judgmentally describe a woman's tastes in commercial or branded commodities, position in society, and lived experience.[7]

In this jewel, we see Datchuk seeking to question the global dominance of American culture and language, by confronting what we absorb without conscious knowledge of its source or cultural appropriation of this so-called identity. Furthermore, she is fighting back against the fact that these words have become part of an internationally common frame of discourse that extends beyond America in both political and socio-historic contexts, to marginalise and oppress women. She states that:

> the global migrations of language and how the context of phrases and colloquiums have culturally changed or keep being cycled in everyday vernacular without any knowledge of its origins. I reclaim Asian racial and ethnic slurs I've been called and popular culture sayings that continue to live on in their full insensitivities, racist tones, and misogyny. Often when these phrases are hurled at me, I become recognized as whole Asian and not half.[8]

The word Bitch has been used by patriarchal societies to suppress, trivialise and undermine women and their allies in order to limit social, political or economic advancement. When layered with a font that 'was maybe a sarcastic choice that celebrated being basic in its superficiality while also acknowledging the lack of depth and understanding beyond its surface,'[9] Datchuk's jewel, though created when the use of this insult was at its height in popular culture, is a powerful symbol of the current fight for women's rights. The counteracting of this word in our global lexicon, especially when we consider that one of the UN's current 17 sustainable development goals[10] calls for gender equality, is as relevant today as it has always been.

By reframing the language which is used in everyday speech patterns and placing it in the public sphere through personal adornment, an artist or maker has, as Datchuk demonstrates, an opportunity to undermine structural racism and bigotry in society. Some jewels, however, go a step further by seeking to overturn the dominance of western-centric discourse in an act of survivance, a term first employed in the context of Native American Studies,[11] allowing overlooked and sometimes forgotten indigenous voices to be represented. The multi-disciplinary artist and jeweller Catherine Blackburn, who is of

Fig 4.
Ms. Chief of Change, wearing *Language Link #2*, plastic beads, glass beads, pearls, nylon, wire, and horsehair, by Catherine Blackburn, 2018 © Catherine Blackburn; Photo © Tenille Campbell.

6 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2022.

7 https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Basic%20Bitch [last accessed 09.12.2022].

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. https://sdgs.un.org/goals [last accessed 07.12.2022].

11 The Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor first coined to term in his book Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance, explaining that «Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry". Simply, survivance is survival + resistance. https://qcc.libguides.com/KHC-survivance [last accessed 07.12.2022].

Dene[12] and European ancestry, and is an active voice within the English River First Nation of Saskatchewan, Canada, chooses to reposition and reframe language to explore her cultural heritage, creating powerful sculptural beaded jewels and body pieces that, as she says, 'become acts of reclamation and works of survivance in their refusal to be classified or minimised by an oppressive history of colonisation, and instead, celebrate the contemporary resurgence of Indigenous presence and identity.'[13] This is powerfully exhibited in her 2018 series entitled *Language Link* which was created for her solo exhibition *New Age Warriors*.[14] In these pieces, Blackburn has fashioned a personal language from multiple forms of writing and expression in English and Indigenous Canadian languages, including acronyms, syllabics, graffiti and American sign language into stylised banners of text that resemble early gaming graphics, challenging the negative western stereotype of Indigenous women and their choice of adornment (fig. 4). In her own words, she was:

> inspired by the visual excitement of superhero and pop culture aesthetics and how it affirms Indigenous presence in spaces and places that marginalize and erase us. And motivated by how this speaks to Indigenous futurism, and how our own presence in this space and time is the body as a vessel carrying time, story and history forward. This exchange extended into language and diversity within the 'language link' medallions and how various nations/languages are represented. [And that] the activation of the work, [when] worn on the body, merges fine art and fashion and speaks to the body as a vessel, and the work as regalia, art, and protection.[15]

By visually inviting comment and conversation, these jewels are powerfully courageous works of rebellion against a society that attacks and classifies these women. And in their construction they should be seen to be a protective amulet or barrier against the misuse of rhetoric and specific words that these individuals and their communities have been exposed to. The struggle for representation, inclusivity and equality for all, regardless of gender, race or sexuality, is a global issue, as these artists demonstrate, and one that we all should continue to fight for and be proud to advocate through our own choices in personal adornment.

Political activism written in jewellery

How an individual chooses to adorn themselves with slogans and statements of intent reflects the importance and power that text has in all our lives. If our voices are not heard or given the agency that they deserve, or we feel we are being excluded and not represented, we can and will shout louder, write words upon surfaces bigger, and adorn our bodies with clothing and jewels that explore, through peaceful activism, the message we want the world to acknowledge. The craft-activism movement,[16] and its continuing call for empathy and solidarity, with demands for a more community-minded society, seeks to bring together a wider spectrum of people, from different social classes, through craft. Jewellery and craft as a political vehicle is not a new phenomenon; however, it is a vehicle through which many felt that they could express themselves following the social and political unrest of 2020.

Bronia Kidd, a recent graduate from Central Saint Martins,[17] sees her practice as aligning with the ideals of the Craftivist

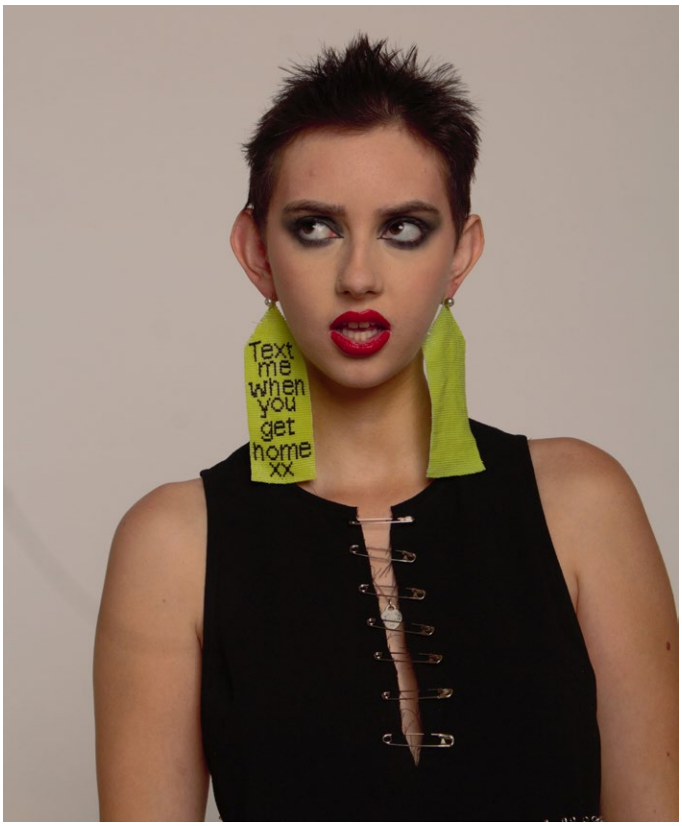

Fig 5a.
'Text me when you get home…', beads, nylon monofilament, by Bronia Kidd, 2021
© Bronia Kidd; Image © Central Saint Martins – University of the Arts, London.

12 The Dene people are an indigenous group of First Nations who inhabit the northern boreal and Arctic regions of Canada. https://teaching.usask.ca/indigenoussk/import/denesuline_dene.php and https://denenation.com/about/history/ [last accessed 08.03.23].

13 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2022.

14 https://www.theasys.io/viewer/5RelcL0OFWNgCyUZnL6ULcIQ8PtqLL/ and https://www.catherineblackburn.com/new-age-warriors [last accessed 02.12.2022].

15 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2022.

16 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/28/craftivism-protest-women-march-donald-trump [last accessed 02.12.2022].

17 https://graduateshowcase.arts.ac.uk/project/205904/cover [last accessed 07.12.22].

Fig 5b.
'Text me when you get home… I'm home',
beads, nylon monofilament, by Bronia Kidd, 2021
© Bronia Kidd; Image © National Museums Scotland

Fig 6.
William Clark (1942-2008)
Police State Badge, 1969
Sterling silver and 14-karat gold
27⁄8 x 215⁄16 x 315⁄16 in. (7.3 x 7.5 x 10 cm)
Collection Museum of Arts & Design, New York
Gift of Diane Kuhn
Image Courtesy of Velvet da Vinci Gallery, San Francisco, CA

movement in repositioning 'gendered' crafts such as beadwork by exploring their historical use as a vehicle for political commentary, despite the biases that have deemed them something less than fine art. She creates politically pointed text-driven jewels that respond to current events. Kidd's work *Text me when you get home* is a phrase said by colleagues, friends, and family to so many of us when walking home alone (fig. 5). These words, as Kidd states 'have incredibly dark and sinister undertones even though we use them frequently in our day-to-day lives,'[18] and when combined with the earring's clever use of font and colour to evoke a mobile phone screen, draws attention to why walking home safely at night can never be guaranteed. *Text me when you get home* was directly influenced by the death of Sarah Everard; a 33-year-old woman who was abducted and murdered by a police officer while walking home in South London on the 3rd March 2021. An event which affected Kidd's life in many ways, as she too was living in South London at the time, telling me that she and her friends:

> stopped walking at night and stopped walking alone… [and] began engaging in difficult and nuanced conversations about the everyday reality of assault… attend[ing] protests in an attempt to communicate with the government on the subject of male violence and female[19] safety… I [then] realised I needed to make my collection about this subject. So, my collection was a response to the events, both on a global and personal scale, that followed Sarah's death.[20]

Kidd uses the visual and provocative power of adornment to challenge the gender imbalances embedded structurally in our society. This work is a pair, one with a response and one without, (fig. 5b) 'to drive home the sense of how many times this text message has been sent and received,'[21] powerfully conveying the tension of waiting for that response, creating connections of empathy and solidarity. The use of adornment as a vehicle of protest by makers such as Kidd has strong links with the countercultural generation of the 1960s and 1970s who sought to challenge the cultural norms of the day and use their craft to highlight their frustration at the injustice of war and inequality at home and abroad perpetrated by those in seats of authority. Manifesting in the creation of charged and emotionally raw creative jewels, which often subverted the recognisable and every day, incorporating text or political jargon: the aim was that 'the people who wore their jewellery become their accomplices and supporters of their new jewellery "statements"' (Walgrave 2000).

William Clark, the American artist jeweller, also looked to subvert and satirise symbols and statements of authority and power with his *Police State Badge* (fig. 6). Clark, who had come to jewellery following military service, used his craft to express his views on political repression, the war in Vietnam, overpopulation, and environmental collapse, but with a strong sense of humour and satire (Cummings et al. 2020). This is clearly seen, not only

18 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2022.

19 Kidd would like me to make clear that when discussing the project she refers to 'women', she includes in that any person that identifies as female and any person who has felt threatened when walking home at night, regardless of gender.

20 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2022.

21 Ibid.

in the form but also in the text; at first glance, you would assume that what you are looking at is a normal token of civic authority but look closer and you will see that the text does not denote or honour a member of the establishment but is questioning said authority and its role in society. Clark created this work in response to the Vietnam War, the communist witch hunts conducted by the American government and the violence that the police inflicted at public protests and student rallies of the late 1960s (Cummings et al. 2020). He was even threatened with arrest for impersonating a police officer when wearing the work at a march (Holmes 2020). In Clark's subject matter and wordplay, unlike the pins that promote a political system, or the medals and badges that indicate an individual's rank and/or prestige within militarised and hierarchical occupations, *Police State Badge* projects a message of caution, a reminder that we should be ready to question and challenge institutionalised power if we find it at fault and if the system that we look to for protection fails to do so. It was worn on other occasions, before Clark's passing in 2008, when he felt that the American government overstepped their remit and needed reminding that the people could and did see through their duplicity.[22]

Clark's original *Police State Badge* is now held in a museum display case in the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, and is thus presented as an artefact of a particular time, place and protest, which, as his friend Mike Holmes feels, 'somewhat diminish[es] the ongoing power of the intention of the badge.'[23] Yet, regardless of its museum acquisition, *Police State Badge* continues to be a potent and relevant symbol of protest when we consider the unlawful killing of individuals such as Breonna Taylor a 26-year-old woman, fatally shot by police in her bed in Louisville, Kentucky on March 13, 2020, George Floyd a 46-year-old man who was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during an arrest on May 25, 2020, and others.

Another jewellery artist who did not want to be a silent witness to the socio-political issues of the day is the British metalsmith, David Poston. Following his involvement in student political activism Poston elected that he would no longer 'create conventional prestige and wealth-oriented jewellery,'[24] but evolve his own set of values in making to celebrate tactility and experimentation. Poston was one of the first in Britain to align himself with the *New Jewellery Movement*[25] and experiment and work with non-precious materials such as food packaging, textiles and steel. Described by Ralph Turner as having 'radical political beliefs... [that] show in much of his work,' (Turner 1976), Poston's 1975 work *Slave Manacle* can be considered to be the most politically explicit and powerful expression of his beliefs (fig. 7). Created to challenge us all, as consumers, to consider where precious materials originate from and how they came to this country. *Slave Manacle* contains the words *Diamonds Gold and Slavery are Forever,* directly referencing the

Fig 7.
'Slave Manacle', forged steel, silver, by David Poston, 1975 (K.2012.14)
© David Poston; Images © National Museums Scotland

22 An unpublished account by Mike Holmes of Velvet da Vinci Gallery, San Francisco, CA, on Clark from 2019 was shared with the author by Holmes. 'In 2004 Clark created a small edition of the *Police State Badge* in response to the tragic Iraq War. The official name of this war used by the U.S. government was "Operation Enduring Freedom". Clark ridiculed this State-sanctioned branding and made an anti-war medal titled "Operation Enduring Fiefdom" picturing the Liberty Bell with the crack in the bell, a swastika. The British Museum Department of Coins and Medals acquired this political piece of jewelry for their permanent collection'. (British Museum reg. no. 2004,0601.1).

23 Ibid.

24 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author 2019.

25 The New Jewellery Movement saw artist jewellers become far less concerned with the intrinsic value of their material choices and far more interested in what they could do and say with them. The movement celebrated the individual makers, working solo or sometimes in collaboration with another artist maker, making one-of-a-kind pieces, or small limited edition runs. Though they may have employed precious metals and semi-precious stones, more often than not they turned to non-precious materials such as plastic, paper, glass, wood, nylon, pebbles, grass, yarn and recycled rubbish. The pieces they created were not considered costume, but art jewellery that often explored complex narratives around beauty, society and politics or celebrated new material explorations.

marketing campaigns of the diamond and jewellery companies of this period, to expose that in reality the industry was linked to the environmental and human exploitation of thousands globally. And in another layer of provocation, when first displayed the piece was priced at the then value of 1oz of gold, drawing the viewer's attention to preconceived ideas around the value of material and labour (Goring 2014). Poston explained to me when I spoke to him just before the 2020 Lockdown:

> Some gallery clients who liked my work had been heard to grumble about the materials that I used, and that I did not use gold. With one valued Electrum client offering to buy everything I made if only I would do it in gold. But I had decided that I should not work in gold at all because it was the symbol and reality of apartheid and the then South African regime. For the show, it would clearly be necessary to make a statement to explain the absence of gold from my work, but I was very aware that even brief written statements pinned on the wall between showcases rarely get read. The only thing most visitors look at in an exhibition is the pieces inside the showcases. Consequently, the statement had to be *inside* a case ostensibly in the form of a piece of jewellery.

This work is contentious to contemporary eyes, but by creating such a jewel was he, in his own words, merely 'moving from the traditionally precious to an equally "precious" obsession, that of being "Art". [Thus]... exchanging a historic decadence for twentieth-century decadence?' (Poston 2014). In the very act of inscribing text upon an object that is emotionally loaded, linked to the subjugation and murder of thousands by western systems of oppression in the pursuit of material wealth and political power, and representing it as art jewellery, Poston has aligned his politics to the lived experiences of others that he himself had no link too. As a result, we cannot help but feel disquieted by his act of political protest when confronted by this work. However, what Poston hoped to and did achieve through the making and exhibiting of this work, was for those who saw it to evaluate where the materials in their own pieces originated and consider how the jewellery industry has been responsible for both the exploitation of thousands and the destruction of natural habitats over the centuries.

Jewellery satirists and activists

The very act of using jewellery as a vehicle through which to proclaim a powerful socio-political statement implies that wearing such pieces activates the text. The wearer is no passive bystander, but an active agent in spreading a chosen message. Though work like Poston's is very much case-bound, others such as the Australian artist Zoe Brand, explore the performative nature of jewellery as a device for communication, creating larger-than-life pieces in which an individual, instead of holding a homemade placard high, can grab our attention through proudly promenading the artist and their shared message. Brand, who almost takes on Poston's mantle for this generation, uses her jewels to compel her audience to explore and question their motivation and thoughts when justifying a purchase. Using the language that is found in sales catalogues and in advertising campaigns, she seeks to recontextualise the incorporated word or phrase to apply to the individual wearing the jewel, and not the jewel itself. Poking fun at the corporate machine in which we as consumers, and herself as a maker, are components, whilst reflecting upon pertinent issues of labour exploitation and the environmental impact of mass industrial production.[26] Stating that she is:

> concerned with finding language that can describe both the object or the idea of the object, as well as the person who might wear the piece. How the piece is read when it is hanging in a gallery or when it is worn out in public, and by whom, is paramount to my practice. I am interested in how a work is read both on and off the body.[27]

Will You (fig. 8), a comparatively small work for Brand, clearly nods to the gold and diamond rings exchanged to cement a level of commitment. In its positioning of one four letter word 'SOLD' as the centrepiece of this ring, she reminds the viewer that women were (and in some societies still are) chattels traded for financial or political benefit via the act of marriage. In the choice of typography and material, she looks to satirise the commercial environment and society's idea of commodities by recreating a known type of retail signage: the ring was created from a readymade commercial jewellery shop 'SOLD' place holder brass ring which would have been put in the shop window to replace a ring, once sold. And by the addition of a set (glued) fake, plastic diamond she establishes the jewel's 'commodity candidacy.'[28] In a similar vein to Poston, Brand eloquently states that though we may not be willing to acknowledge our complicity, we as consumers are very much part of unsustainable globalised consumerism.

26 See http://www.zoebrand.work/about [last accessed 09.12.2022].

27 https://australiandesigncentre.com/madeworncontemporaryjewellery/zoe-brand/ [last accessed 12.12.2022].

28 'Commodity candidacy' refers to the ability of an object to operate as a commodity in a certain situation in line with the needs and desires of buyer and seller, the cultural framework in which the exchange takes place, and other situational factors. The term was coined by Arjun Appadurai in his introduction to his edited journal *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* from 1988, and referenced in Shaw (2021).

Fig 8.
'Will You', brass ring, found box, by Zoe Brand, 2016
Image © Zoe Brand

Though this work, like Poston's, was created to be viewed in the context of an exhibition, it does not lose any of its agency by not being worn. As Brand stated, when discussing the work with me:

> when placed in a gallery setting this work is removed from its original context which [then does] espouse the object to new possible meanings. The diamond ring acts as a conduit for the promises and values associated with marriage, in the gallery setting it also elevated the work to question ideas of value, of commerce, and transactions in a far more cynical way.[29]

Thus, on this occasion, by taking what could be considered a mundane retail trade item, building it into a jewel and displaying it within the confines of the gallery environment rather than on the body, Brand's ring satirises and challenges the boundaries of art and contemporary jewellery through socio-economic protest as did those of the makers of the counterculture in the last century. And like her fellow craft activists today, is clearly proclaiming that the issues she platforms require us all, the consumer, trade and cultural systems, to take notice of the message delivered.

Political satire has for centuries been conveyed by a cutting written verse to ridicule, in a light-hearted way, the shortcomings of a person or a political or social group. Unlike Brand, not all have done this with an air of whimsy. There are others who create poignant works that ask us to question the social and political systems that we are embedded in. As Clark and others did, they recontextualise the language to highlight problems using the form of the ubiquitous lapel badge. Scottish artist jeweller Joanne Garner's research focuses on how badges create a public display of our affiliations and serve to bolster our feelings of connectedness and belonging whilst asserting pride in our associations. When we live through times of extreme disconnect and division in terms of our political allegiances, the type of accessories we choose to wear becomes even more loaded. Garner states that:

> my work aims to highlight a culture of confusion and separation which is accessorised by political propaganda. Focusing on the relationship between print and jewellery, badges become a loaded accessory portraying beliefs and ideals. I am interested in how the relationship between these two affects the construction of collective identity and feelings of individual belonging. [30]

As with Brand, she chooses to do this by not mass-producing objects that would usually be made this way, in the hope that, because of the value we place on jewellery, the wearer and observer will recognise the message she wants to deliver. *Crafting a Divide*, created during her master's year at the Royal College of Art in 2017, plays with the role of a name badge as a visual identifier, but instead of defining an individual through the printed name and/or position, Garner uses statements and questions taken from the UK Visa and refugee application forms that are designed to categorise us by age, income, country of birth, sex, etc (fig. 9). The work attempts to subvert and satirise the bureaucratic documentation that categorises without emotion, affecting our sense of belonging, alienating and leaving many to question their position within a societal construct that excludes them if they do not meet conventional criteria. Following the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014 and the UK European Union membership Referendum of 2016, she is also questioning who decides whether or not someone belongs. When discussing the work, Garner stated:

29 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2022.

30 https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/schools/school-of-arts-humanities/jewellery-and-metal/student-stories/joanne-garner/

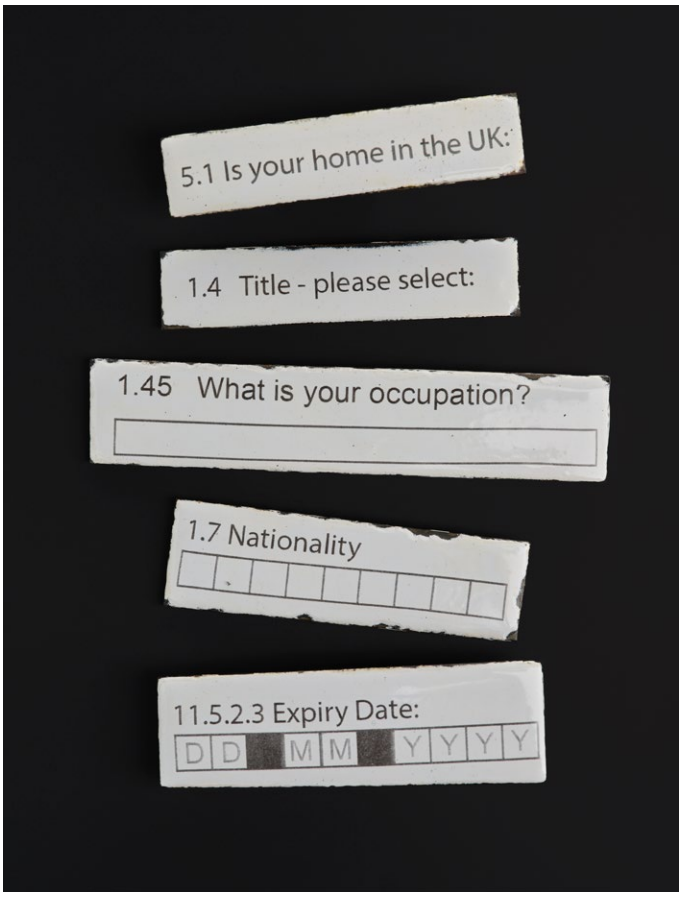

Fig 9.
'Crafting a Divide' brooches and badge,
stainless steel, enamel, by Joanne Garner, 2017
© Joanne Garner; Image © National Museums Scotland

> it was important to sort of copy the form, I wanted them [the badges] to look like part of the form, so people could instinctually respond to them as they are so familiar, even if you haven't filled in this exact form, you have filled in something similar. But also, that the material choices not only reflect that industrialisation of production, in terms of how many of these types of forms are issued, but as these [badges] were about people, so should also be available to people or most people to acquire if they wanted to.[31]

In wearing these snippets of forms, Garner also subverts the role of the badge as an agent of identification by including the blank categorisation boxes, highlighting that we are all permanent visitors on a planet that has given humanity a place to exist, so why do we still need to categorise and label ourselves and others. Interestingly, of those who have acquired one or a selection of her *Crafting a Divide* badges, the majority were of non-UK descent so must have enjoyed poking fun at the bureaucratic systems that they had been exposed to upon entering the UK. However, Garner does recognise that not everyone would choose to wear or display such a token of political satire; there were some she encountered whilst wearing her badges, who questioned their role and how easily they could be subverted, depending on how the wearer chose to brand themselves. In other people, the badges may trigger memories of trauma that such labelling has had upon individuals' lives.[32] This highlights the power that the combination of jewellery and text has to create an emotional as well as an intellectual connection, be that as an agent for change or a trigger to open a discussion.

As these examples demonstrate, text in the design of jewellery allows both the maker and the wearer to participate in performative political exchange which often goes beyond the confines of a display case and directly into the public sphere, to gain a reaction and should be considered equal to other creative outputs in this area.

The work of the London-based maker Jonathan Mathew Boyd expertly employs text and jewellery as a socio-political art form. His jewels explore the impact of language, narrative and communication in our lives, challenging perceived and inherent hierarchical constructs within the arts and today's society.[33] Saying that his jewels are:

> [a] type of 'concrete' poetry in that they are poetic artefacts but which have a physical dimension… we always wear our words and that our words always have a materiality including the spoken, which are sound waves shifting away from us consisting of various matters and elements - it is impossible to 'separate meaning and matter'… and the fact they are jewellery is really important- the reading of them is continually shifting, shifting between visual and textual, between form and meaning, with meaning changing as the words and different connections are made upon each worn glancing/move of the body/angle of sight etc.[34]

In what can be considered his most explicit protest series, for his 2019 exhibition *Thoughts between the Land and Sea; Raising the Doggerland*,[35] which the craft critic Martina Margetts

31 Unpublished correspondence between the artist and the author, 2022.

32 Ibid.

33 https://jonathanmathewboyd.wixsite.com/website-1/about

34 Unpublished correspondence with the artist and the author, 2022.

35 The outline of the exhibition held at Gallery SO (London) in 2019: *In the exhibition Thoughts Between the Land and Sea: Raising the Doggerland, Jonathan reflects on how our cultural identities are inflected and manipulated by language (both textual and visual). In this exhibition, Jonathan uses the idea of a newly raised Doggerland (a now-submerged land bridge between Britain and Northern Europe) as a viewpoint from which to look back on the UK. From this vantage, the exhibition sees the former island in dismay, cultural identities polarised, leaders unelected, a public overloaded by information, and mindsets blinkered. A global world, an isolated island. Visually, two significant metaphors are developed for exploring this concept: the sea as a reflection on the unknown, mortality, and the future; the land as a metaphor for what is known and the heavy weight of contemporary material culture and language.* https://www.galleryso.com/exhibitions/107/

Fig 10.
'Very Little Common Ground', created from two opposed conversations on Brexit, one from the Guardian newspaper, the other from the Daily Mail. Silver, silk, by Jonathan Mathew Boyd, Glasgow and London, UK, 2019 © Jonathan Mathew Boyd; Image © National Museums Scotland. Presented by the Contemporary Art Society through the Omega Fund, 2022/23

described as being a 'prodigious narrative of resistance and transcendence,' Boyd used words bandied about by politicians and the media during the UK referendum on Brexit, reflecting the conflicting and confounding rhetoric we are exposed to, and how our cultural identities have been manipulated by the language used by individuals in positions of authority during the Brexit campaign. Creating pieces that 'dealt with the issues of entering a post-truth era, and the ways media and politicians were inverting, subverting and in some cases blatantly lying.' This statement is powerfully exemplified in his work *Very Little Common Ground* (fig. 10) where:

> two texts rotate in helical spirals in cruel never-ending cycles: one from the Guardian [newspaper], one from the Daily Mail [newspaper]. Both outline the same thing (Brexit), but their viewpoints are so entirely different that they only meet in a small middle of language like a Venn diagram.[36]

This jewel plays on the anxiety and confusion that Brexit engendered here in the UK, by pointing to '[the] idea of the never-ending-ness of language and the increasing polarisation of British national media.' [37] Similar to Datchuk's use of a known font to create another layer of identity in her text, Boyd chose ones that directly reflected the character of the opposing political discourse - a more traditional serif to reflect the conservative tone of the Daily Mail, and a

36 Unpublished correspondence with the artist and the author, 2022.

37 Ibid.

modernist sans serif font for the liberal left-wing Guardian opinion. The result is a jewel that visually illustrates the United Kingdom today, a divided and fragmenting series of nations, struggling with its voice and how to articulate the UK's identity and place within a global community when society can no longer find any common ground.

By creating jewels tightly packed with text reminiscent of the type blocks employed by printers of political pamphlets and propaganda material before digital printing, Boyd is no passive observer. Like the countercultural jewellers before him, he can be placed within a lineage of satirists who challenge society by ridiculing the language used by those in positions of power. Within Boyd's 2019 Jewellery Manifest, he explains that 'as an object attached to the body (the actor of speech) … reach[ing] outwards from the body into any given environment: jewellery is the breakwater between person and space' (Boyd 2019), demonstrating that jewellery has the power to affect change equal to that of the printed word.

Conclusion

Throughout this discussion, I have highlighted those artists and makers who can be considered agents of change within art jewellery, choosing not to be silent witnesses to the socio-political situation of today, declaring their intent upon their and their collaborator's bodies. Though this discourse has been led by a majority using the English language, I do not claim that the use of text within jewellery as a vehicle for socio-political discussion is only the pursuit of those who employ English as their primary language. Or that this paper should be considered a conclusive investigation into the subject. The predominance of English text highlights its continuing dominance within our global lexicon[38] and that art jewellery is part of a western art historical construct that has shaped and verbalised how we categorise art, craft and design.

The Contemporary Jewellery movement, through its 'core mission… the critique of preciousness' and its democratic aspirations allowed countercultural makers of the 1960s and 1970s like Clark and Poston and their followers to actively contribute to the canon of political jewels through a 'relational paradigm [which had] the potential to tap popular energy similar to that found in public demonstrations' (Murray 2013). It can be argued that it was a combination of the established identity of a jewel as a conduit and the relative artistic freedoms that the movement created in the later part of the twentieth century, that allowed subsequent artists, such as the ones discussed, to view jewellery as an authoritative platform on which they could create works of social and political protest and discourse.

Historically, when jewellery was used as an expression of political and social views, it was seen to be a 'time-honoured means of making one's convictions known to others, either in a veiled form or in uncompromising utterances' (Unger and Van Leeuwen 2017). And when these utterances were expressed through jewellery, they were primarily signs of allegiance to a cause or political campaign; memorialisation of a lost love; statement of companionship or the commemoration of a significant individual or event. Later they adopted and satirized the aims and propaganda of governments, private organisations or commercial enterprises in the form of jewellery. By this act of transgression these individuals, both historical and contemporary, challenge the wider perception of the artisan jeweller as just a passive observer of the world and its troubles. Giving advocacy to future artists, designers and makers to do likewise: to create jewels that would disrupt the complacency of public, exhibition, and museum spaces.

This paper's aim is to bring to wider attention the declarations and statements that have been platformed through the use of text and the nuance of typography in recent years. Jewels such as these are symbols and signifiers of this generation and can contribute to socio-political change, annotating and documenting for the future how a person or even a whole community perceives the world and society, for good as well as for bad: how jewellery provides an active conduit through which to explore not-so-hidden messages.

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38 Online language tool Babbel reports that English is the most spoken language in the world, with a number of speakers totalling more than 1.4 billion in 2022, according to Statistics & Data. This combines both native and non-native speakers. https://www.all-languages.org.uk/news/what-is-the-most-spoken-language-in-the-world-2022/#:~:text=Online%20language%20tool%20Babbel%20reports,native%20and%20non%2Dnative%20speakers. [last accessed 02.12.22].

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