

# 'blue skies and singing rings'

## digital technologies and jewellery of the future

Venue : National Museum of Science and Industry, London  
Location : The Dana Centre Studio  
Date : Thursday 26 October 2006

Many of today's artist-jewellers are seeking to understand and integrate new and innovative technologies into the design and/or manufacture of their work – from CAD and CAM systems to Virtual Reality-based tools through to virtual prototyping. What was once expensive and beyond the reach of individual artist-jewellers is now beginning to become financially viable and is serving to kick-start new conceptual approaches to jewellery, its design and its manufacture.

More significant for those working in the field, are changing attitudes and relationships between consumers and personal objects. Stand in any high street and watch how people interact with their mobile phones. They are often treated with a degree of preciousness and interactive preening previously reserved for items of jewellery. Has the Bluetooth earpiece become a generic item of jewellery creating a new sub-category of 'ear adornment'? This serves as a single example of a rapid cultural osmosis brought about by interaction with recently developed classes of objects.

This expert seminar presents a range of views and reflections on shifting and developing relationships within what can be broadly considered as jewellery. It brings speakers from directly within the field of jewellery together with those examining issues of contemporary social anthropology and those looking into possible future evolutions and will consider future patterns of development.

The seminar is organised by Dr David Humphrey, Deputy Director and Research Fellow, Centre for Jewellery Research at the Royal College of Art and is chaired by the writer and critic, Margot Coatts.

Its aim is to provide an opportunity for those at the forefront of training future generations of jewellers to engage with issues that may significantly change the nature of the field.

AHRC Methods Network Expert Seminar

*'blue skies and singing rings'*

The Dana Centre, Queen's Gate, London

10.00 - 17.30 Thursday 26 October 2006

**Programme**

10.00 - 10.15     **Registration. Tea and Coffee**

10.15 – 10.20     **Overview of the seminar**

Dr David Humphrey

Deputy Director and Research Fellow, Centre for Jewellery Research, Royal College of Art

10.20 – 10.25     **Introduction**

Margot Coatts

Freelance writer and critic

10.30 – 11.00     **Karin Paynter**

Assistant to Director Technology and Training, The Goldsmiths' Company

***New Technologies in Jewellery and Silversmithing Manufacturing***

There has been a significant increase in the use of new technologies such as rapid prototyping by manufacturing businesses in recent times. This paper will examine the impact of digital technology on a selection of UK jewellery and silversmithing businesses.

It will look at three or four case studies and consider how companies have integrated new technologies into their businesses and the effect on their production and marketing strategies. It will also identify obstacles that may prevent adoption of new technologies and perceptions of how these advances may affect business in the future.

11.05 – 11.35     **Jayne Wallace**

Sheffield Hallam University

***Emotionally Charged. An Exploration of Digital Jewellery***

Computing and digital technologies have increasingly become part of our everyday experience: we *live* with them, and as they become more ubiquitous in their conception possibilities of bridging digital devices with the human form are increasing. Developments already exist in wearable electronics and digital product design that have taken the body as a location, but in many cases it may be argued that such digital objects miss subtleties and inimitable qualities associated with jewellery. Central to this is a lack of consideration of the emotional value of our interactions with digital technologies and its associated artefacts.

This paper offers an overview of practice-centred research conducted by the author into the development of digital jewellery, from the perspective of a contemporary jeweller, where craft practice and digital technologies have been brought together to propose personally meaningful and emotionally rich forms of object and interaction.

Tensions, expectations and assumptions inherent in considerations of digital jewellery as an emergent category of object are discussed; detailing ways a perspective centring on jewellery can create an antidote to these anxieties through a vocabulary relating to attachment and personal significance.

The process of this research has focused on aspects of individuals' lives and personal histories that are emotionally significant to them. These shared fragments of experience have been responded to through an iterative and discursive making process resulting in digital jewellery of personal significance.

Digital jewellery has the potential to be an extension of contemporary jewellery in terms of experimental aesthetics and an enrichment of the relationship between person and object or person and person. Through this, the social implications of the rich human-relational context of jewellery suddenly expand, whilst previous constraints, such as physical distance between people, collapse. This paper argues for the appropriateness of contemporary jewellery as a creative strategy in the further development and potential of ubiquitous technologies.

**11.40 – 12.10**

**Dr Joan Farrer**

Business Fellow, The London Technology Network

***Jewellery and Sustainability: production, consumption and disposal in the supply chain***

A presentation and discussion of issues concerning people profit and planet and one of the oldest industries, in relation to materials, technology and craft processes.

**12.15 – 12.45**

**Ian Pearson**

BT Futurologist

***A Trip to the Future***

**13.00 – 14.00**

**Lunch**

**14.05 – 14.35**

**Stephen Bottomley**

Chairman, Association for Contemporary Jewellery

***Associated lives, meanings and shared directions***

The Association for Contemporary Jewellery (ACJ) was founded as a membership association in 1997. It consists both of the 'makers of objects'; practising jewellers, associated designers, educators and students, and some 'owners of objects'; collectors, curators and gallery owners. Together these members share interests and synergies between object and owner/ collector and historian / maker and viewer. These faces reflect not only the enduring popularity of this special art form, but also the growth of this specialist association.

Jewellery, possibly more than any other art forms, has the greatest propensity to form personal attachments and articulate silent messages. The subject has an ancient tradition of its work being treasured as a symbolic gift, or having its form invested with meaning and significance beyond its mere financial value or appearance. The jeweller transforms raw materials, (base or precious), into objects that may then pass on to a new owner to live with and to cherish. Traditionally jewellery may be passed from generation to generation, having several owners and more than one associated life. During this unknown future, as the jewellery change hands, it will once again be open to new re-interpretation and re-evaluation. However contemporary jewellery, sensitised of these significances, can be presented for the viewer and pre-imbued with values and messages before it even reaches an original *owner*. As the way we make jewellery changes, especially as new technology emerges, how will this affect the way we interpret and value the jewellery?

This paper will explore these themes through the work of the ACJ members from two referenced exhibitions, 'Jewellery Unlimited', Bristol 2004, and 'Heirlooms', London, 2006. By reflecting on these issues it may be possible to speculate how the new technologies and media available to the designer/maker may, yet again, influence future dynamics between wearers and makers.

**14.40 – 15.10**

**Leon Williams**

Doctoral researcher, Centre for Jewellery Research, Royal College of Art

***A future of technology, jewellery and medicine***

An insight into the benefits of developing virtual yet practical life saving devices ...

**15.15 – 15.45**

**Dr Jenny Tillotson**

Senior Research Fellow, Innovation Centre, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design

***Scentsor[ring]***

This paper explores the roles of Scentsor[ring]: digital jewellery embedded with wireless sensor networks and microfluidic devices for therapeutic, diagnostic and wellbeing applications. The development of this collection is inspired by the chemical language and interaction of organisms to dispense fragrance, triggered by sensors that react to an individual's body state (e.g. heart rate, temperature) and the environment (e.g. sound). Further sensors such as the 'electronic nose' will be introduced and unorthodox and innovative designs in jewellery will be examined.

There is increasing interest in the effect of the environment on wellbeing and symptoms of mental illness, but until now the focus of recent intervention in this area has been in the more distant or the interpersonal environment. This paper investigates intervention in the immediate personal air-space around the individual. Combined with other forms of support for improved mental health, many patients could welcome the prospect of jewellery that offers enhanced control of their emotional state, whether by conscious control or biofeedback. Several psychiatric disorders and symptoms will be investigated for an application of such Scentsor[ring] technologies i.e. the use of scents to enhance mood and improve psychological wellbeing. This scoping will be undertaken in collaboration with experts in the area of mental health and wellbeing.

The paper will conclude by proposing jewellery that mimics the sense of smell via electronic nose sensors in order to detect spoiled food, monitor pollutant chemicals in the air, or set the basis for revolutionary work in the diagnostic area such as pinpointing ovulation and diseases. By emulating a dog's sense of smell the jewellery could sniff out explosives and narcotics, or detect the early stages of cancer. Further examples include jewellery that is pre-programmed to detect a potential partner's pheromone profile and then send a sample of the users pheromones, or a mosquito repelling device, or an olfactive watch, or jewellery that offers wider-waves of feeling in (re)active environments.

**15.50 – 16.20 Dr David Humphrey**

Deputy Director and Research Fellow, Centre for Jewellery Research, Royal College of Art  
***Throw a few rocks and run away***

This paper will suggest a range of issues that need to be addressed in relation to the growing interrelationship between digital technologies and jewellery – from technical support considerations in academic environments, to potential osmosis with other fields of practice and the changing nature of consumer demands.

**16.25 – c.17.30** Extended discussion

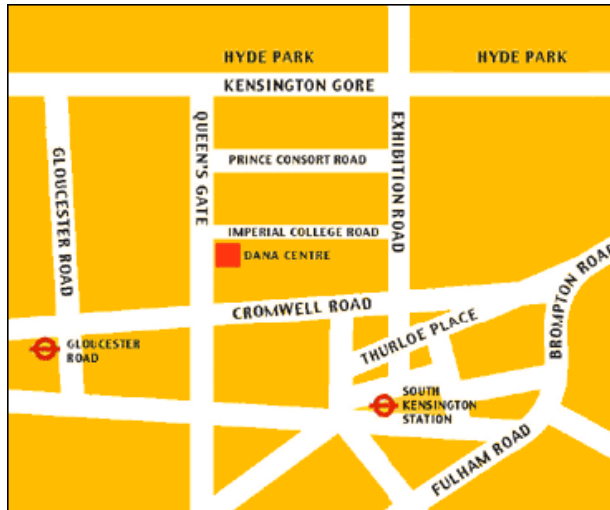
## The Dana Centre

165 Queen's Gate

South Kensington

London SW7 5HD

+0044 (0)207 942 4040



The nearest underground station is Gloucester Road, on the District, Circle and Piccadilly lines.

The following bus routes can also be used to get to the Dana Centre.

### Coming from the east/centre:

**#9 bus** can be caught at Hyde Park Corner, Green Park, Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square and The Strand. Alight at the corner of Queen's Gate and Kensington Gore, just after the Royal Albert Hall.

**#10 bus** can be caught from Hyde Park Corner, Marble Arch, Oxford Street, Gower Street, Euston Road and Kings Cross. Alight at the corner of Queen's Gate and Kensington Gore, just after the Royal Albert Hall.

**#14 bus** can be caught from Hyde Park Corner, Green Park, Leicester Square or New Oxford Street. Alight at South Kensington station.

**#52 bus** can be caught from Hyde Park Corner and Victoria. Alight at the corner of Queen's Gate and Kensington Gore, just after the Royal Albert Hall.

**#C1 bus** can be caught from Victoria. Alight at South Kensington Station.

**#74 bus** can be caught from Hyde Park Corner, Marble Arch and Baker Street. Alight on Cromwell Road outside the Natural History Museum.

**#360 bus** can be caught from Pimlico, Vauxhall and Elephant and Castle. Alight on Gloucester Road.

### Coming from the south:

**#49 or #345 bus** can be caught from Chelsea or Clapham Junction. Alight on Gloucester Road.

### Coming from the west:

**#9 or #10 bus** can be caught from High St. Kensington, Kensington Olympia and Hammersmith. Alight at the corner of Queen's Gate and Kensington Gore, just before the Royal Albert Hall.

**#49 bus** can be caught from High St. Kensington, Kensington Olympia and Shepherds Bush. Alight on Gloucester Road.

**#52 bus** can be caught from High St. Kensington, Notting Hill Gate and Ladbrooke Grove. Alight at the corner of Queen's Gate and Kensington Gore, just before the Royal Albert Hall.

**#70 bus** can be caught from High St. Kensington, Notting Hill Gate, Queensway and Westbourne Grove. Alight on Gloucester Road.

## **AHRC ICT Research Methods Network Expert Seminar**

The Dana Centre Studio, Queens Gate, London

10.00-17.30 Thursday 26 October 2006

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### **Invited guests**

Sandy Black

Reader in Fashion Design and Technology

London College of Fashion

University of the Arts, London

Caroline Broadhead

Reader in Jewellery and Textiles

Middlesex University

Katie Bunnell

Research Cluster Leader

The Design Centre

Falmouth College of Arts

Beatriz Chadour-Sampson

Curator

Metalwork Collection

Victoria & Albert Museum

Philip Delamore

Research Fellow

London College of Fashion

University of the Arts, London

Susan Fortune

Jewellery and Precious Metalwork

University College of the Creative Arts at Farnham

Frances Geesin

Senior Research Fellow

London College of Fashion

University of the Arts, London

Charlotte Gorse

Academic Leader for Design & Production

Sir John Cass Department of Art, Media & Design

London Metropolitan University

Maria Hanson  
Reader in Jewellery and Metalwork  
School of Cultural Studies  
Sheffield Hallam University

Heather Haskins  
Arts and Humanities Research Council ICT in Arts and Humanities Research Programme  
University of Reading

Lorna Hughes  
Manager  
Arts and Humanities Research Council ICT Methods Network

Tony McEnery  
Director of Research  
Arts and Humanities Research Council

Kezia Parry  
Knowledge Transfer Programme Manager  
Arts and Humanities Research Council

Laura Potter  
Department of Design  
Goldsmiths College, University of London

Hans Stofer  
Professor of Goldsmithing, Silversmithing, Metalwork and Jewellery  
Royal College of Art

David Turtle  
Freelance Technologist

David Watkins  
Professor and Director of the Centre for Jewellery Research  
Royal College of Art

Ann Marie Shillito  
Research Fellow  
Edinburgh College of Art

Peter Taylor  
Director Technology & Training  
The Goldsmiths' Company