TRANSPLANTATION

A SENSE OF PLACE AND CULTURE

British and Australian Narrative Jewellery
Dedicated to Elsie Cherry (1922 – 2008) who, without realising it, inspired this exhibition.
INTRODUCTION

NORMAN CHERRY

LINCOLN

This exhibition has its genesis in the Jewellers and Metals Guild of Australia Biennial Conference held in Melbourne in 2004, at which I presented a paper. That was my first experience of the country and I was immediately taken by the extreme climate, the quality of light, the fusion of historical and contemporary architectural styles, the food, the straightforward, no-nonsense approach of the people I met, and the extremely interesting work they were creating. Several of them had Scottish names, a reminder of the centuries of emigration undertaken by my countrymen and especially of many of my primary school classmates and their families in 1950s Scotland. The common history and culture of Britain and Australia naturally opened many conversations and the subject of a personal sense of place and culture soon became a recurring and dominant theme.

A few of my newfound colleagues were not in fact of British descent, their families having immigrated from Europe during the post-World War Two years. Some had simply embarked on a personal adventure to test out the opposite end of the world, and stayed. More recent immigrants were from South East Asia and they had clearly brought a very different kind of cultural experience with them.

During the two years preceding this visit I had, as the then Head of the Birmingham School of Jewellery, hosted two Australians as part of The HaT (Here and There) project: an exchange programme which enabled several British and Australian jewellers to spend some months as artists-in-residence at a number of centres in both countries. The School was also the first venue for the exhibition of work which toured the UK and Australia for more than two years at the culmination of the scheme.

During 2004 I had also been reading Niall Ferguson’s book ‘Empire’, a critically acclaimed revisionist history of the centuries of British imperialism. In this, he provides a fascinating, detailed, and reasonably objective account of the social, political and economic factors which fuelled the rise and ultimate demise of the Empire. His section on the Antipodes runs to only thirteen pages but, coinciding with my own exploratory voyage of discovery, fired my imagination and encouraged me to develop the concept of Transplantation as an exhibition theme.

Between the early 17th Century and mid 20th Century more than 20 million people left Great Britain to begin new lives overseas. Many of them did so unwillingly, sometimes as unwitting players in the game of Colonisation. Originally perceived as the answer to the problems of attempting to “civilise” Ireland, the policy of Colonisation was known officially as Plantation. This horticultural metaphor was intended to signify the transplantation of good plant stock to improve what were considered to be the inferior native varieties, something we might think of today as ethnic cleansing.

A similar policy was applied later to the North American colonies with the additional feature of the transportation of criminals across the Atlantic, initially to clear British prisons of felons who had committed crimes against property and, perhaps coincidentally, to provide a more or less slave workforce for the entrepreneurial Britons abroad.
After the American War of Independence, however, a new destination for this group was required and, from 1787 onwards, Australia provided one which was so far from the mother country as to be perfect for the purpose. Although forced to work in undeniably harsh conditions in an alien environment, redemption was nevertheless possible for many. At the end of their sentences they were entitled to sell their labour as free men and women and were able to cultivate their own allotments. During the Governorship of Macquarie (1810 – 1821) newly freed prisoners were given grants of thirty acres of land. Many prospered as a result of this and were the nucleus of a novel form of “Nouveaux riches” which in many ways became the basis of much of Australia’s later prosperity.

During the latter part of the 20th Century Australia experienced a much wider range of immigrants transplanted from all parts of past World War Two Europe, although the largest group was the “$10 POMS” of 1950s Britain (POM was originally PoliM – Prisoner of His Majesty) encouraged to make a new life in this most far flung part of the Commonwealth by the provision of heavily subsidised passages by ocean liner. More recent immigrants have arrived from a far wider geographical spread, most notably from South East Asia. Perhaps not always universally welcomed, they seem to have established themselves through extreme hard work and determination and have not only contributed to the mainstream economy but have greatly influenced and shaped modern Australia as a centre of international “fusion” cuisine.

Britain itself has been host to almost continuous waves of immigration for several centuries. Amongst those conquerors who successfully transplanted their bloodlines and culture were the Vikings, Angles, and Normans. More peaceful assimilation has been offered to Huguenots fleeing religious persecution in France, Irish peasants escaping famine, Jewish refugees from 19th Century pagrams and 20th Century Nazi Germany, not to mention those fleeing from post-Second World War communist oppression. More recently the influx of Commonwealth citizens has contributed well over a million to the current population of around 60 million. Workers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Caribbean have all become assimilated with varying degrees of success, and not always without difficulty, over the past sixty years or so. As in Australia, success has not only been economic: the cultural influences are often underestimated. Our vocabulary has been enhanced (think of bungalow, jodhpurs, verandah, pyjamas, shampoo, yoga, thug, chutney, curry); cooking from the subcontinent especially has greatly influenced the revival of British cuisine in the past 20 years, eg. Birmingham, with nearly 50% of its one million population from a non-European background is the “home” of the Balti – a form of curry served directly to the table, sizzling in an iron pot. Bhangra music, it is claimed, was “invented” by second and third generation Asian musicians living in Birmingham. Calypso, Steel Percussion, Reggae, Ska, and 2-Tone have all been major influences on the British and international music scenes for more than two generations.

As a consequence of such varying forms of Transplantation both nations have much that is common as well as alien to each other. The visual and performing arts are cases in point. Britain’s international reputation for performance, exhibitions, and education in the arts has continued to grow in recent years, while Australia’s recognition as a cultural hothouse has become increasingly manifest over the last generation or so. Interest and activity in contemporary jewellery seems to have almost exploded in both countries over the past forty years. The medium of jewellery, probably the most exciting of today’s applied arts, offers an artform which, like all, provides a means of recording memory and experience which is both portable and wearable. Through jewellery it is possible to express ideas, thoughts, experiences, and concerns which may not be achievable in other ways.

For this exhibition I invited a carefully selected group of 12 contemporary jeweller artists from the UK and Australia and asked them each to create a body of work which would articulate the notion of Transplantation as outlined here. Each has their own experience of cultural, familial, and artistic Transplantation of one sort or another. Each has drawn on those experiences to create work which is engaging and thought-provoking and which we hope will encourage viewers to reflect seriously on the topic and consider how it relates to themselves. I hope that each of you visiting the exhibition or reading this catalogue will be engaged, challenged and, in your own way, delighted by the experience. I hope that you will think about your own cultural sense of place and perhaps re-evaluate it. I hope that you will come to think about jewellery in a different way too: not simply as something decorative to wear, to indicate personality, status or wealth, or to match the day’s outfit, but an eminently portable, wearable form of art with its own stories, histories, and metaphors.

Professor Norman Cherry
Lincoln
February 2012

Notes
2 ibid. p 102.
3 ibid p. 106.

http://www.nationalcraftanddesign.org.uk/touring-exhibitions
The history of Australia as a nation began with the importation of 160,000 convicts, the dregs of British society. By contrast with the manifest destiny at play in the American colonies, this great southern land began its history as a modern nation that was nothing more than a sewer by which Britain could dispense its human waste. Transportation was not transplantation, it was disposal.

Despite these ignoble origins, the early colony did attract some hopes for betterment. Even in 1838, it was possible to consider that New Holland might transcend England and offer a fresh state to civilization. On visiting Sydney, Erasmus Darwin conjured a ‘green-haired beauty eminent’ that would rise up ‘From the Pacific’s billowy loneliness’. This Neoclassical vision offered the young colony a short-lived dream that it might renew the Empire’s energy.

Australia was sometimes seen as a country that could fulfil a lost ideal in English society. There were anxieties about the corrupting influence of industrialisation:

His heart yearned for the vision that the Industrial Revolution was banishing from England; pastoral Arcadia inhabited by sturdy forty-acre yeomen. He believed this paradise of the common man could be revived in Australia, by emigration. There are thousands in this country pining in indigence, who if removed from a suitable colony would be able to attain decent independence. 1

Much of early Australian culture makes virtue of the necessity of self-reliance. With an unreliable supply of readymade goods from Britain, settlers had to ‘make do’ with improvised goods, such as the recycling of kerosene tins as furniture. While this may indicate a lack of sophistication, it can also be seen to demonstrate a spirit of initiative that is otherwise missing in Britain.

There is sometimes uncertainty out of poor craft. It can seem like making virtue of a necessity, in drawing on the tyranny of distance that situated Australia from the famous jewels of Europe. But there is a way in which absence of traditional materials can reinvigorate a creative discipline. The Dogma Manifesto of Danish film-maker Lars von Trier banned all external props such as sound-track and editing devices. The emphasis was on a return to acting as the cornerstone of narrative. In a way, the Australian practice of poor craft does have a primal value in returning to the basics of craft practice.

Transplantation can engage the inner contradictions in each culture. In the case of Britain, there was a proud tradition of democracy that championed freedom of expression and meritocracy. Yet at the same time, its social conservatism preserved a class system, in which particular opportunities were limited by birth.

In the mythology of British history, this contradiction was the result of the Norman Conquest in 1066, when the Normans overrun the Anglo Saxons. Disraeli’s 1845 novel, Sybil, or the Two Nations depicts the divided nature of English society, between rich and poor, which has its origins in the story of a Norman aristocracy whose wealth is built upon the plunder of Saxons reduced to factory hands.
This story surfaces in Australia with the composer Percy Grainger’s attempt to develop a language of “blue-eyed English,” purified of its Latin corruption.

This story of frustrated freedoms is a common element in national histories. In Russia, stories such as Rimsky-Korsakov’s The Invisible City of Kievan Rus imagine the creative splendour of Kievian Rus that might have survived the oppression of the Mongol hordes. It is as though each culture has a dominant and recessive gene—the sad reality and the lost promise.

Migration offers the promise that these historic yokes might be overthrown, that the submerged imaginary half of culture would have the opportunity to reveal itself, and demonstrate the cultural richness buried within. It is as if a culture withering on the vine might gain fresh strength from being transplanted to new stock.

As a thematic through which to view the works in this exhibition, this idea of transplantation as Renaisssance offers a distinct narrative framework. It alerts us to the possibility that a new culture might recover the lost potential of an older culture.

This is ultimately a liberal cosmopolitan narrative that celebrates positions, where combinations might seem ridiculous, such as incorporation of Chinese gods into Western consumer packaging. Here the intention is more critical. This narrative can be judged a ground for works of art.

The recurring issue with narrative in art is the transformation of a literary form into visual medium. Why tell a story through jewellery, when you could write a book? After all, jewellery is a static medium, that does not have the temporal dimension of narrative. Telling the story of an object does not acknowledge its thingness—the material creativity, including craft and design, that grants the piece an aesthetic value.

But the opposite can also be said. Even the most formal work of art must find a narrative if it is to have a place in the world. In visual art, this framework is often a biography of the artist, such as the heroic intensity of figures such as Jackson Pollack. In jewellery, the conservative narrative rests on values of mastery, praising the skills of the metalsmith. At its most universal, narrative provides a container for the work, offering a secure and familiar space in which we can enjoy the art.

Works such as those in this exhibition take one step further, and provide a touchstone for a specific story. One sign of success in this venture is to find a story that is otherwise homeless. Objects that provide a home for narratives include reliquaries, museum artefacts and keepsakes. Books house stories not just in their pages. Many of the books on our shelves will never be read again, but are testament to the story we once absorbed. The value of a family bible is not just the stories it contains but also its trajectory across generations. The flux of events in our lives can be broken into chapters according to the life of objects, such as cars, houses and pets.

Constructing an object can be a matter of creating a story, sometimes on a grand scale. There is the case of the mijuki Nakahara hoped to express their creativity freed from the play of desire. The plastic replica of the Eiffel Tower…

So in the case of an exhibition of narrative jewellery such as this, our interest is in the way objects have been made to give presence to otherwise ephemeral stories.

Contemporary jewellery emerges in Australia very much as a transplantation. This was evident in the post-war migration from northern Europe and Asia. Figures like Nilna Ots, Helge Larsen, Ragnar Hansen and Wal van Heekeren sought a freedom in Australia to realise their ideas that were constrained in Europe. And Japanese migrants like Mari Funaki, Yuri Kawanabi and Miyuki Nakahara hoped to express their creativity freed from a patriarchal culture.

This renaissance story of migration resonates with the development of contemporary jewellery as a movement. From the 1990s, contemporary jewellery has developed around the critique of preciousness. This was initially concerned with the artful approach to jewellery making, as in the painterly brooches of Hermann Jünger. This then led to the introduction of non-precious materials, such as acrylics by artists such as Claus Bury. In a postmodernist vein, this developed into the use of fake materials, such as photographs of real jewels by Gijs Bakker. At each step, the primacy of artistic value was asserted over the literal monetary value of materials. But also surfacing occasionally was the democratic story that sought to undermine the elitist nature of jeweller as symbol of social class.

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Constructing an object can be a matter of creating a story, sometimes on a grand scale. There is the case of the mijuki Nakahara, a guitar produced in response to the near separation of Quebec from Canada. Jowi Taylor commissioned a luthier George Rizsanyi to make a guitar using unique elements sourced across the country, including former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s canoe panel and a piece of hockey stick from the famous game with the USSR in 1972. This guitar was then played by Canada’s musical celebrities, such as Gordon Lightfoot. The resulting object powerfully consolidates the idea of Canada as an entity.

The key in this is the role of the object as witness. One important way of making sense of the confusion around us is to focus on those unique objects, like stray branches in a river around which fish will congregate. It is not only humans whose consciousness of the world provides an index of reality. Objects also observe and testify to what they have witnessed. President Obama signs important documents such as treaties with several pens, so that one might be given to each of the parties.

As well as locating these stories, part of the object’s power is the space they provide for narrative performance. As Susan Stewart remarks about the souvenir:

The souvenir is by definition always incomplete. First, the object is metonymic to the scene of its original appropriation in the sense that it is a sample. If I save the ribbon from a corsage, the souvenir is, in Eco’s terms, a homomaterial replica, a metonymic reference existing between object/part and object/whole in which the part is of the material of the original and thus a ‘partial double’. Second, the souvenir must remain impoverished and partial so that it can be supplemented by a narrative discourse, a narrative discourse which articulates the play of desire. The plastic replica of the Eiffel Tower…

So in the case of an exhibition of narrative jewellery such as this, our interest is in the way objects have been made to give presence to otherwise ephemeral stories.
Most leading Australian contemporary jewellers use non-precious materials. Susan Cohn developed her métier around aluminium. Margaret West explored the poetry of materials such as stone and lead. Rowena Dough has worked with paper constructions. Only Marian Hosking seems to consistently use a precious metal, albeit silver.

An interest more particular to Australia is the use of rubbish. This is not just that which is of low value, but more what is without value entirely. Mark Verwerk spins leftover plastic bags to make elegant rings. Ari Athans creates jewellery from the quartz thrown away in gold prospecting. Marcus Davidson polishes up old Bakelite. Australian artists in Transplantation demonstrate the creative possibilities of worthlessness. Roseanne Bartley started working with discarded typewriters, making jewellery from keys and fragments of the past to reflect the alternative cultures invisibly at play in the Victorian gold rush. Jack Cunningham looks at Australia’s sun-kissed nature, particularly the Great Barrier Reef, from afar under brooding Scottish skies. And Jivan Astfalck conjures up the antithesis of transplantation in work around the concept of Heimat, the particularly German value of rootedness.

Transplantation is not merely the growth of a species into new territory, extending its domain. It can also have a dialectic potential in giving space for the lost promise of a culture to be realised. Objects in this exhibition have the power to bear witness to this revival. But as visitors to the exhibition, it is our duty to activate those objects as we read the works. Every object tells many stories.

Dr Kevin Murray
Melbourne
2012

Notes

Jewellery is uniquely placed to tell stories. Like other art forms it has the capacity to communicate on several levels, perhaps combining a more generally understood narrative with a more private meaning specific to its maker. However, what principally distinguishes jewellery from those 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.

And jewels are not just passive portable objects. They have been handled and caressed; they have rested in or on intimate areas of the human body like the back of the neck, the earlobe or the ring finger; they have eavesdropped on personal exchanges of love, passion and displacement. When a jewel changes hands, it carries with it the accrued memory and experience of human interaction. Jewels can thus provide an ideal creative medium through which to explore deeply personal issues such as cultural identity.

The jewellers in Transplantation all work with narrative and metaphor. Each has approached the overarching theme of the project in their own way, reflecting the particular trajectories of their own life stories. The six representing the ‘British’ contingent are linked by their current residence in the UK, but their cultural and ancestral roots, like those of most people in Britain, are diverse and eclectic.

But what does it actually mean to be, or feel, British? Can British jewellery be defined? While at this particular moment the work of these artists forms part of the canon of British narrative jewellery – at its simplest, jewellery with a story to tell – it is clear they each have quite different ideas of what that might be.

Narrative jewellery has a history in Britain, albeit often less sophisticated or conceptual than in its present manifestation. That history has rarely been articulated – or perhaps it is more accurate to say that its past has rarely been connected to its present. In earlier centuries, narrative jewellery has been used most obviously in the cause of politics, romance and mourning; and it has been used both overtly and cryptically, employing devices such as metaphor and symbolism. 18th century jewellery associated with the Jacobite cause (to restore the Stuarts to the thrones of Scotland and England) was often used secretively and concealed its true meaning. However, there is a gold and enamel jewel known as the ‘Four Peers’ ring in the National Museums of Scotland that openly mourns the four Jacobite lords, Balmerino, Derwentwater, Kilmarnock and Lovat, who were executed in 1746 and 1747 for their role in the Jacobite Rising of 1745. It also bears the image of an executioner’s axe and the initials of seventeen other Jacobites who met a similar fate.

Narrative jewellery was used to promote another strongly fought political cause in the early part of the 20th century: that of votes for women. From 1908 to 1914, the Women’s Social and Political Union (militant activists for the vote, who were popularly known as ‘Suffragettes’) used both colour and symbolism in their jewellery as a potent means of political communication. The chosen colours (a combination of purple, white and green, signifying dignity, purity and hope) were exploited by sympathisers of the cause in much the same way that football supporters use colours today. Their imagery included symbols such as arrows (as used on convicts’ clothing), broken chains, prison bars and portcullises, all...
referring the imprisonment that many suffragettes underwent in support of their cause. This jewellery was worn openly and provocatively, and wearers were often subjected to violent antagonism as a result.

A very literal example of the use of narrative in British jewellery can be found in the tightly encrypted ‘language of stones’ employed at the beginning of the 19th century. Personal messages between lovers were spelt out using the first letter of each gemstone in the jewel: coded words such as (ruby, emerald, garnet, amethyst, ruby, diamond), (lapis lazuli, opal, garnet (under its old name of amethyst), emerald, or (diamond, emerald, amethyst, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz) were common. The middle of the 19th century saw a vogue for the language of flowers in jewellery, where the forget-me-not denoted true love and ivy stood for fidelity. Other motifs were often used to express messages of affection too: the serpent biting its own tail (the week-end) was a fashionable symbol of eternity, while padlocks and keys made obvious reference to the key to a lover’s heart. Mourning jewellery using sentimental neo-classical imagery such as broken columns, funerary urns or weeping willows was popular in the decades before and after 1800.

In Arts & Crafts jewellery of the early part of the 20th century, enamel was often employed to tell the story. The remarkable silversmith and enameller Alexander Fisher was responsible for the revival of painted enamels as an important element of metalwork and jewellery design in Britain in the late 19th century. He personally taught hundreds of students the technique, many of whom went on to teach others. Where Arts & Crafts designers and jewellers like Archibald Knox and Arthur and Georgie Gaskin used abstraction or stylisation in their work, Fisher was passionate about the potential of painted enamel for depicting the innermost thoughts and ideas of the human mind and, passionately about the potential of painted enamel for depicting the innermost thoughts and ideas of the human mind and, memorials to significant events. Fisher’s work in jewellery include the extraordinary Wagner Girdle now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, elaborately set with enamel plaques depicting scenes from Wagner’s operas. Fisher’s style was much imitated. The multi-talented artist Phoebe Traquair (who created, amongst other works, paintings, murals, book illuminations and embroidery) learnt enamelling from Fisher’s pupil Lady Gibson Carmichael. Traquair’s fine enamelled jewels have a strong narrative content, depicting religious, spiritual or allegorical subjects including Piedàs, Cupid as the Earth Upholder or in other guises, Endymion, and ivy stood for fidelity. Other motifs were often used to express messages of affection too: the serpent biting its own tail (the week-end) was a fashionable symbol of eternity, while padlocks and keys made obvious reference to the key to a lover’s heart. Mourning jewellery using sentimental neo-classical imagery such as broken columns, funerary urns or weeping willows was popular in the decades before and after 1800.

By the 1930s, however, interest in the use of narrative for jewellery had waned almost to extinction. The brave new world of the machine age influenced all aspects of creativity. For jewellery this meant an emphasis on new materials like chrome, with forms and motifs inspired by Cubism, geometry, architecture and machines. Even in the post-war period there was no return to narrative jewellery to lift the spirits or reflect hopes for the future; austerity still prevailed. In Britain, it took a brave, pioneering exhibition of international jewellery in 1961, curated by Graham Hughes and staged in Goldsmiths’ Hall, London, to kick-start innovation in British jewellery styles. A particularly influential element of this show was new work commissioned from major contemporary visual artists and sculptors such as Lynn Chadwick, Elizabeth Frink and Terry Frost; these pieces eloquently demonstrated how jewellery could be a powerful means of creative expression. This one exhibition was to have tremendous influence on emerging British jewellers in decades to come.

During the 1960s, narrative work by artist jewellers remained scarce; the focus was firmly on materials, forms and surface. But storytelling cannot be suppressed for long. Soon Maverick young voices appeared who cared little for prevailing fashion, amongst them highly talented individuals of the calibre of Malcolm Appleby, Edward de Large and Kevin Cooke. In the following decades, such jewellers continued to plough a somewhat lonely furrow. In 1975, David Poston’s eloquent Manacle of forged mild steel inscribed with silver, ‘Diamonds, gold and slavery are Forever’, shown that year in both Electroplating and in Ralph Turner’s touring exhibition Jewellery in Europe, demonstrated a new way for jewellery to address important social and political issues. The influence of ‘The New Jewellery’ on British work of the 1970s and 1980s led to an increased awareness and appreciation of the power of concept and narrative. While figurative work remained somewhat out in the cold, jewellery re-discovered its capacity to tell stories, albeit in a very different way. Before the end of the century the pendulum had rather swung in the other direction. Within studio jewellery, it was now jewellery as pure ornament that was regarded as somehow less; serious work was expected to have conceptual rigour, even if that was at the expense of its wearability.

Narrative has long formed an important and highly characteristic strand of North American studio jewellery, but few actual examples had been seen in the UK. In 1996, the Shipley Gallery and the Society of North American Goldsmiths co-produced an important exhibition curated by Richard Mawdsley, American Revelations: New Jewellery by members of the Society of North American Goldsmiths. The exhibition coincided with the pioneering Jewellery Exchange ‘96 conference, the first international contemporary jewellery conference held in the UK, organised by Norman Cherry at the University of Northumbria. (The conference later formed the foundation of the North American Transplantation Association for Contemporary Jewellery). The SNAG exhibition was well named. It was indeed a revelation to the British delegates who saw it as part of the conference activities, many of whom had never seen so much narrative jewellery before. The exhibition toured to further UK venues including Birmingham School of Jewellery where Cherry had just taken up his post as Professor and Head of School. Another influential exhibition, Attitude and Action! North American Figurative Jewellery, followed at Birmingham in 2000, this one curated by Gail Brown. Again, the content was challenging but revelatory to British eyes.

During the early years of the 21st century, Professor Jack Cunningham, one of the British jewellers involved in the conference, played a significant role in changing perceptions about contemporary narrative jewellery in the UK and especially in developing an intellectual framework for assessing it. His practice-based PhD at Glasgow School of Art on ‘Contemporary European Narrative Jewellery’ was completed in 2007. As part of this, he organised an important exhibition and symposium, Make Water Flow, which contextualised and defined narrative jewellery as a genre within studio jewellery. Projects such as these, carried out within a
higher education context, have done an enormous amount to raise the profile of narrative jewellery amongst those who will become the next generation of studio jewellers. Transplantation will undoubtedly continue that process: all its six British artists are very actively involved in jewellery education.

Transplantation focuses on narrative jewellery from Britain and Australia, two countries that have long enjoyed links in the field of jewellery. The distinguished Australian jeweller, Rhoda Wager, was born in London in 1875 and trained at Glasgow School of Art from 1897 to 1903. She left for Sydney in 1918, and her work provides a direct link with the jewellery of the British Arts & Crafts movement. Jewellers have physically moved from Australia to the UK and from the UK to Australia (and sometimes back again): Stuart Devlin, Natasha Dahlberg, Rod Edwards, Ian Ferguson, Bridie Lander (a Transplantation exhibitor) and John Pearce (Johnny Rocket) in one direction; Joan Atkinson, Roy Lewis, Rhoda Wager and David Walker in the other. At the present time, there is a vastly increased awareness of and interest in Australian jewellery in the UK. This has been fostered partly through projects such as The HaT Project (Here and There), an exchange programme involving 17 residencies between Australia and the UK; the subsequent exhibition toured widely in Britain in 2003-4. Australian work is also becoming more visible in the UK through its regular appearance in events such as Collect and through gallery exhibitions at, for example, Lesley Craze Gallery in London. In 2012, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Design Museum in London plan to show Unexpected Pleasures: Art and Design in Contemporary Jewellery, an exhibition co-curated by the Australian designer/jeweller Dr Susan Cohn. The introductory abstract of Cohn’s 2009 doctorate for the University of New South Wales, Recoding Jewellery: identity, body, survival, notes ‘... jewellery is a way of thinking and connecting which is strongly embedded in the activities of managing identity that define cultures and epochs. In the process, the instinct for adornment becomes an integral means of survival.’

Exhibitions like Transplantation offer an opportunity to reflect on the changing relationships – personal, cultural, political, social – that connect people, place and object. Through the eyes and work of twelve perceptive and creative artists, Transplantation demonstrates the power of jewellery to tell complex stories around identity and to go on telling them in different contexts. Above all, it reminds us of our shared humanity, our similarities as well as our differences: as Horace observed more than two thousand years ago, ‘Change the name and that story’s about you.’

Dr Elizabeth Goring
Edinburgh
November 2011

Notes
1 [Change the name, and that story’s about you] Horace, Satires bk 1, no 1, line 69.
2 H.N.U 154.
3 The notion that suffragette jewellery was used as a hidden means by which sympathisers of the cause could recognise each other is a myth, and quite erroneous.
5 A letter from Yeats to Lady Gregory written on 16 June 1906 and quoted in Elizabeth Cumming, Phoebe Anna Traquair, (Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1993), 9.
6 There are few British jewellers included in Peter Dormer’s chapter on ‘Jewelry as Image: mainstream Figurative Work’ in Dormer and Ralph Turner’s book The New Jewelry. Trends and Traditions (1985). The four illustrated are John Plenderleith, Sophie Chell, Catherine Mannheim and Gary Wright.
7 http://www.jackcunningham.co.uk/jack_phd/index.html
8 Glasgow School of Art, 2005. The exhibition was accompanied by a publication with essays by Elizabeth Maignard, ‘Narrative and Memory’, and Amanda Game, Adventure and Power – jewellery and narrative in the 21st century.
9 The HaT Project – Here and There Australia/UK, edited by Johnny Magee (The HaT project, 2003).
10 Cinderella Stories. Contemporary Jewellery from Western Australia, (September/October 2011).
‘Transplantation’. Is this simply a process of being relocated, to take root, flourish and remain unchanged, in a different context? Or instead, can it include the possibility of withering and dying as unfavourable conditions work against it? Sometimes, as with hearts and lungs, a ‘transplant’ can be an effective alternative to an original. But can something transplanted equally become a destructive replacement, in the manner of a noxious weed, a foreign predator or a corrupt colonial administrator? Equally, whether object or idea, can the process of ‘transplantation’ retain part of what was, and yet assimilate part of what is now, to explore, evolve and discover something new?

In particular, what might be held in common or defined by difference, between these two groups of jewellers from the United Kingdom and Australia? All have, in some way, been down this path before, but as each one explores in the ideas for their works, when ways of thinking and working, and the forms themselves, move from person to person, custom to custom, culture to culture, age to age and place to place, how do the memories and meanings attached to them remain or change?

The process of transplanting something is – to me, at least – generally associated with plant life, often as a reminder of a place left behind: gum-trees for Australia, pohutukawa for New Zealand, heather for Scotland. Transplanting is also a characteristic of work in gardens, farming and forestry. It is expected that the plant will thrive and multiply in its new location, sometimes being crossed with indigenous stock to ‘improve’ it. From this reasoning, as Norman Cherry notes, from the 17th century British governments relocated people to Ireland in small colonies and on confiscated land, through what was known as the ‘Plantation’ policy, with the purpose of civilising or pacifying the Irish people. Britain itself represents the amalgamation of many transplantations following centuries of invaders and conquerors. In Australia, a more familiar word was ‘transportation’, a term associated from the 18th century with off-loading undesirable people as convicts (many of them skilled artisans) to a distant and usually inhospitable and inaccessible place, while – as was also common practice elsewhere at the time – displacing and often annihilating indigenous inhabitants.

Colonial development was largely prompted by a need to increase sources of raw materials, often grown in plantations, for an expanding British industrial empire. The development of trade between countries in the Americas, Asia and the Pacific was instrumental in introducing the experience of different cultures through, for example, importing Chinese porcelain and Indian textiles, as well as tea, spices and rubber.

Meanwhile, ‘migration’, as the consequence of a desire to seek a new life with better prospects, was generally more of a matter of choice, but even so, the reality has been both voluntary and involuntary. Some migration was part of planned shifts of population to inhabit new colonies and provide not only new opportunities, but also labour, sometimes as slaves, to distant contributing industries – including those mining precious metals. In recent decades, a counter-migration has seen those from once-colonised countries transplanting themselves to their once-colonising host. Over centuries people have also migrated to flee from invasion, persecution, discrimination and starvation.
Both the UK and Australia have offered haven to refugees, and now, many of those seek asylum as stowaways in channel tunnel trains or covered vans to the UK, or through the hazardous form of transplantation as ‘boat people’ to Australia. By the late 19th century in Australia and New Zealand, both of which were established as British colonies in the South Pacific, British traditions, styles, technologies and values had been imported along with the transplanted people. Jewellers and metalsmiths were among the skilled artisans who found their way to these new places, setting up businesses to make functional, decorative and commemorative items while necessarily adapting their materials and processes, or ‘making do’, to accommodate the resources that were available. European jewellers and silversmiths migrated alongside the core of British migrants, and established thriving businesses in growing towns and cities, often associated with goldfields. And just as British art and industry had absorbed European, Scandinavian and Asian Influences, and vice versa, so ideas of Arts & Crafts, Chinoiserie, Art Nouveau, Japonisme and Art Deco, and various forms of Modernism, were transplanted to Australasia.

As in other ‘outposts of Empire’, familiar motifs from ‘home’, of oak leaves, lions, swords and roses, were increasingly replaced by those of ‘Australiana’: gum-nuts, wattle blossom, kangaroos, kookaburras and emus. Figures of Aboriginal people were by those of ‘Australiana’: gum-nuts, wattle blossom, kangaroos, kookaburras and emus. Figures of Aboriginal people were included in the repertoire of exotic flora and fauna. Distinctive in the early years were ‘convict love tokens’, made from reworked coins and inscribed to distant loved ones, and later, ‘goldfields jewellery’, sometimes depicting shovels and winches made in the mined materials. In the early 20th century, jewellers who had trained in Britain and elsewhere not only set up studios, but were often associated with Arts & Crafts Societies or as teachers in mechanics’ institutes, later to become technical colleges.1

In the years following both the First and Second World Wars, many Europeans arrived as political refugees and, of these, a considerable number brought their experiences of movements such as Expressionism and Modernism to Australia. The primarily British-based population was quickly supplemented with migrants from different countries, different culture, and in the case of jewellery and metalsmithing, different training, as many from those countries had undertaken apprenticeships characteristic of their origin. In particular, into the early 1970s, the incentive of assisted passages gave new opportunities to British migrants, known as the £10 Poms, as well as to others.

The idea of transplantation can also take the form of a reverse pilgrimage. In the post-war years many young Australian practitioners and teachers who realised they were not beholden to see new opportunities and further their careers, but often also to experience first-hand the countries of origin of previous generations. Having been brought up on reproductions of artworks and limited museum and gallery collections, they also wanted to see the ‘real thing’. They travelled by ship, or went ‘overland’ through Asia, and stayed several years at a time. Values were questioned, loyalties examined, relationships evaluated. They were increasingly acknowledged as independent, resourceful and dismissive of conventions such as class status, rather than as derivative colonial transplants.

In these post-war years of increasing education opportunities, prosperity and mobility, craftspeople made new professional links with the UK and Europe, often through connections made by migrant teachers; the work of entrepreneurial galleries; and opportunities that opened up through emerging crafts organisations. Darani Lewers and (Danish-born) Helge Larsen were invited, along with Rod Edwards, to exhibit in the First Biennial Exhibition of Modern Jewellery at Goldsmiths’ Company in London in 1961. Stuart Devlin trained in Australia, then set up a workshop in London in the 1960s, where he designed Australia’s decimal coinage in 1964. He was appointed as goldsmith and jeweller to the Queen in 1982, and elected as Prime Warden of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths in 1996–97. British, European and Scandinavian jewellers and metalsmiths arrived as migrants, often with backgrounds in a Modernist aesthetic, to establish workshops and to teach in courses that were training the next generations. They joined the increasing numbers of Australian practitioners and teachers who realised they were not beholden to any specific traditions.

During the 1960s the contemporary crafts movement that developed in the UK and the United States also encompassed Australia. Separate craft associations formed in all Australian states and in 1971, the Crafts Council of Australia was formed as a national body and operated for 40 years until its closure in 2011. From 1973, the establishment of a Crafts Board (until 1987, when it was amalgamated with the Visual Arts Board) in the newly-formed Australia Council provided unprecedented funding opportunities for craftspeople: enabling workshop establishment, travel to other places, and invitations to visitors to exhibit, teach and talk. Specialist groups in all crafts media had been emerging from the 1950s, and in 1980 the Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group of Australia (JMGA) was formed, developing as an affiliation of state branches.2

Education and training opportunities which had been largely located in technical colleges until the 1970s, developed further through different higher education institutions, and by the 1990s, jewellery and silversmithing courses were also offered in university art and design schools. Australians had also extended their studies overseas including in British education institutions, as well as in Germany and the United States. From the outset visitors provided stimulus through workshops, lectures and residencies, and membership of the World Crafts Council brought closer contacts not only with the UK, but now also with America. For example, in 1975 both Californian-based Arline Fisch and British jeweller Gilian Packard gave workshops throughout the country. British jewellers and silversmiths Wendy Ramshaw and David Watkins came to Western Australia as artists-in-residence in 1978. But the reach was wide: from Germany, Claus Bury gave workshops in 1979, followed by Hermann Jünger in 1982; in 1981 Won Ho Chong in Adelaide organised a visit from Japan’s Satoshi Ando; while jeweler Yuri Kawanabe came to Sydney from Japan in 1984, and stayed. British authors Ralph Turner and Peter Dormer included Australians in their publications, and galleries such as Electrum in London and Paul Derrez’s Gallerie Ro, in Amsterdam, exhibited the work of Australian jewellers. Within Australia, from the 1970s to the present, galleries specialising in jewellery have been established in all major cities, and Australian publications have documented jewellery history and practice.3
Jewellers took advantage of the strengthening infrastructure to ‘graft’ new twigs to the stems of their experience. They followed up opportunities to travel, study and undertake residencies and internships not only in the more familiar centres, but also in Asia. In recent decades, education programs in Australia have also been a preferred destination for foreign students, and many universities have not only increased intakes of these students, but have established campuses and courses off-shore. Today, workshops such as the JamFactory and Gray Steel Workshop in Adelaide, F!NK in Queanbeyan, the Midland Atelier in Perth and Metalab in Sydney, also provide access or training opportunities.

Important within the notion of transplantation has been the opportunity to exchange ideas through exhibitions. The first overseas exhibitions to tour Australia were, in 1977, On Tour – 10 British Jewellers, selected by Ralph Turner, and 20th Century Jewellery 1900–76 from the Pforzheim collection. Ten Australian Jewellers went to Southeast Asia in 1977–78 as part of Australia’s cultural exchange program, while Heige Larsen put together Objects to Human Scale in 1980 and six Australians were represented in the British exhibition, Jewelry Redefined, in 1982.

The 1970s had been a time of radical reassessment of jewellery in Britain and elsewhere, and similar innovation, questioning the role and value of jewellery and introducing the use of non-traditional materials, was occurring among practitioners in Australia, fuelled by the excitement of the social reforms of the period, and an interest in a new nationalism. A major expression of the new work was developed in Australia as an international travelling exhibition, Cross Currents, in 1984, which included work from Australia, Holland, Germany and the United Kingdom. Jeanne Keefer suggested in that year that the search for a personal or collective theoretical base was now made more complex by ‘the plurality of backgrounds, influences, preferences and training ... and the influx over the past 10 or 12 years of people, touring exhibitions and catalogues’.

As part of the development of the contemporary Indigenous Australian art movement, where traditional stories are translated to canvas, paper, textiles and ceramics, a number of those in different language groups developed traditional practices of shell and seed stringing into contemporary works, and sometimes incorporated metals and other materials.

Into the 21st century, Australian jewellery continues to reflect the many consequences of this history, and the transplantation of ideas takes more the form of exchange rather than of adoption. The founders of many of the links between the UK and Australia remain active, and new generations extend the various narratives in their own ways. JMGAr serves continue to run workshops, develop exhibitions and invite significant speakers (such as Normand Cherry, whose ideas for projects linking UK and Australian jewellers started here); universities encourage practice-based research, with an international reach; and the marketplace supports its makers. The National Museums of Scotland’s international exhibition Jewellery Moves, in 1998, included Australians; The Hill Project: Here and There, in 2003-2005, offered residencies and a touring exhibition to 17 jewellers across both countries; while Unexpected Pleasures, the art of contemporary jewellery, will take Australian work to the Design Museum in London in 2013.

Given this history, the idea of an exhibition on the theme of ‘transplantation’ is a perceptive assessment of what underpins so much of the jewellery made in both countries. Through both their work and what they have to say about it, the jewellers in Transplantation show that they are very aware of the complex nature of what they are dealing with. Most have in some way considered their origins in particular countries and cultures, alongside experiences in new, or sometimes imagined, places. They variously consider the topic in relation to belonging, settling, revisiting and acclimatising, or to being manipulated or stereotyped, while several have invented fictions and mythologies associated with it.

Some of the Australians refer to British and other origins, while some from the UK wonder what happened to those of their own ancestors and friends, transplanted to Australia. Others consider how their understandings of different cultural meanings come up against one another, as with the rabbit as both auspicious Korean symbol and as Australian pest. Valuing skills as well as ideas, they recycle or ‘transplant’ both motifs and materials, drawing on their own memories, as well as from objects as diverse as old biscuit tins, human hair and plastic toys.

These jewellers are keenly concerned with making meaning for themselves through their work, but they are also interested in the relationships that might be formed between their jewellery and its wearers, and the ways in which meanings and values might be transferred – or even transplanted – from one wearer to another. Moreover, their work may well also encourage those who visit the exhibition to consider how their own senses of cultural identity and place can be understood through objects such as these.

Dr Grace Cochrane
Sydney 2012
Grace Cochrane is an independent curator and writer based in Sydney; author of The Crafts Movement in Australia: a History, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1992; and Visiting Professor, University of Lincoln.

Notes

2. Jewellers and Metalsmith Group of Australia: JMGAr Queensland: www.visualartist1st.info/JMGAr; JMGAr South Australia: www.jmgasa.net.au; JMGAr New South Wales: www.jmgansw.org.au; JMGAr Western Australia: www.jmgawa.com.au
THE ARTISTS

Jack Cunningham
Birmingham
50

Jo Pond
Haunton
70

Jo Pond
HauTon
70

Jivan Astfalck
London
28

Laura Potter
London
74

Nicholas Bastin
Melbourne
36

Norman Cherry
Lincoln
40

Sherridan Kennedy
Sydney
62

Anna Davern
Melbourne
54

Bridie Lander
Birmingham/Sydney
66

Lin Cheung
London
44

Laura Potter
London
74

Joungmee Do
Sydney
58

Roseanne Bartley
Melbourne
12
I am interested in wearable and decorative objects that exist at the boundaries of a recognised design culture, which are signified by a continuous dynamic of rediscovery, re- and up-cycling of material and meaning and of appropriation. These objects resonate with intimacy and passionate investment, rather than a functional design agenda. It is body adornment that exists in stark contrast to the overwhelming standardisation generated by mechanised commodity production, a ‘folk-art’ of our own culture.

The exploration of the relationship between the finding, collecting, re-working and conceptualising of marginalized artefacts and their meaning motivates my studio practice. And within the area of metaphorical symbolisation I am interested in jewellery pieces that map out the demarcation lines, where body meets world, a place, or idea of a place, where narratives are invested in objects with the aim to negotiate that gap, complexity, confusion or conflict in relation to private and subjective mental experience. My aim is to achieve an imagery of the unconscious and address symbolisation by using metaphoricity to cross-map emotional investments conducive to new creative articulation and representation.

In our contemporary and increasingly global culture we might regard any attempt to re-connect with a personal or cultural point of origin as nostalgic, we find ourselves much more in a world of shifting, flexible frameworks in which our origins, bonds, traditions, our sentiments and dreams, exist alongside other stories, other fragments of memory and traces of time. In contrast, Heimat is where we come from never to return, an imaginary place, yet real to everybody.

*Heimat* is a German word that has no simple English translation. It is often expressed with terms such as home or homeland, but these English counterparts fail to encapsulate the deeper meaning of the word. Heimat is a German concept; people are bound to their *Heimat* by their birth, their childhood, their language and their earliest experiences. Heimat refers to a belonging and identity rather than signifying nationalistic insularity. It became an important notion when in an increasingly alienating world Germany’s, Austria’s and Switzerland’s population made a massive exodus from rural areas into more urbanised communities around the countries’ major cities. Heimat was a reaction to the onset of modernity, loss of individuality and intimate community. Arguably it is an important idea yet again in a global culture with its large-scale economic migration, nomadic urbanite life-styles and erosion of cultural difference (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heimat_and_me)

*Heimat* is an assemblage piece that consists of six pieces of jewellery, each one a wearable object in its own right and individually titled (*remember you… after the fact, in foreign lands, heimatlich, atoe, a wing is the extension of a home*), but only together and in sequence can the overarching ‘storyline’ be read. Romantic yet suggestive of serious issues like the myth of childhood, the pains of growing up, and the grander myths of gender, belonging and transcendence, my objects are sites of memory and fiction, history and thought, visible traces representing connections with the invisible and imagined.
in foreign lands.
Sterling silver, resin.

a wing is the extension of a home.
Sterling silver, 18ct gold, feather, wax.
I don’t know why I’m inclined to pick up stuff when I walk, it feels instinctual something I don’t think about too much I just do it, although there are times I wish I didn’t have such a compulsion.

I’ve thought it might be hereditary, I know my Nana did it and I now witness my children doing it. It’s not like I am driven by a moral impetus to pick up litter or that I lead an impoverished life, it’s more like a genetic quirk, perhaps a remnant link to a hunter gathering past.

In walking and collecting I observe, through patterns of distribution or seasonal frequencies, things about the way people inhabit space. I am often conscious of the increasingly fractured relationship between humanity, nature, and locality, and through this process I reflect upon the limits of my own attitudes and understanding of place.

Most recently I’ve directed my focus towards hard plastics. Historically heralded as the first truly democratic material, (i.e. every one can have one) plastic is now one of the most prevalent environmental pollutants. I’ve had to restrict the plastic I collect, otherwise it becomes overwhelming, but I also respond according to the work I am producing. Sometimes the walking leads the work and other times the work leads the walking.

The objects I created for the series I Wander are cartographic in intent. The journey referred to isn’t depicted in accurately plotted points, rather these objects work like a mnemonic prompt, something that might be contemplated before departure and/or considered upon return. Like the examples of Stick Maps traditionally crafted in the Pacific Islands, these objects require the navigator to interpret or perform the journey through engaging with memory and sensory perception. Sometimes, in order to know when you’ve arrived, it’s necessary to perceive the journey in its entirety.
Lapel Pins.
Plastic (handles, takeaway spoons, bottle caps, bottle tops and base), sterling silver.

Brooch.
Plastic (handles, takeaway spoons, bottle caps), silk thread.
Although I was born and have lived in Australia for most of my life, I have ashamedly never been particularly interested in its history. To pursue the subject matter of early non-indigenous Australian history was one with which I felt ill at ease. The transplantation of immigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia at the end of the 18th century is one that can be viewed as tumultuous. At the outset the initial European settlement was primarily a displacement of people imprisoned in a remote land that was harsh, unfamiliar and remote. It incited the invasion of an indigenous culture that would be decimated and dispersed.

The subject matter for my work has always focused on the notion of fantasy, not the real world, and how the jewellery object can function as a corporeal manifestation of artefacts from an imagined place. I have delved into the fabricated histories of science fiction and fantasy with an interest in how these narratives are also portrayed in the popular culture artefact, particularly through the merchandise of the action figure toy.

But the real world has also been important through the crucial influence history has played in shaping these futuristic narratives. George Lucas’s science fiction Star Wars™ film franchise combines the mythological with the futuristic and is filled with countless historical references, from architecture to costume and from various different epochs in human history, reworked and situated into a setting that is science fiction.

For this collection of works I have considered how the European immigrants could have first viewed the unfamiliarity of the Australian landscape as strange. This land would have offered a myriad of the new in both the grandiose and the minuscule. Unexpected forms would have been found in the flora, with vivid colour combinations that hinted at the surreal. In considering a feeling of otherworldliness this new land may have evoked, I have drawn comparisons to Japanese anime. Anime strips the details of objects and stylises them into flatness. Colour becomes heightened. In translating these elements into a jewellery object, I have considered how plasticity and form can reproduce this sense of flatness and heightened representation of colour. Specifically, I have produced forms, primarily botanical, inspired by that Australian landscape, that are lurid plastic objects that could be interpreted as tacky souvenirs or a materialisation of objects from an imagined animated version of this real history.

Through hand-carving, moulding and casting in polyurethane resin, I have created a library of plastic components which I have reassembled and reworked to create jewellery objects that appear as though they are part broken toy, part precious ornament, to capture the essence of a real history reinterpreted as an animated telling in physical form.

Charcoal Mushroom
Brooch
925 silver, stainless steel, polyurethane resin.

Pearls in a Turtle Shell
Brooch
925 silver, stainless steel, polyurethane resin.
As a member of the Scottish Diaspora I have twice crossed the border into England for professional reasons and have now spent much more time living and working in England than Scotland. Yet my Scottishness is as important to me as ever and I have managed to retain a studio (and therefore a stake) in my homeland.

As a young schoolboy in 1950s Scotland I was very conscious of mass emigration. Classmates would regularly announce their impending departure for a new life in various parts of the Commonwealth. Many of them had moved to Australia and New Zealand, the latter very much the antipodean Nova Scotia. Nothing was ever heard from them again and I still occasionally wonder what became of them. Had their families found the success and financial comfort so lacking in Britain? Did they thrive in their new surroundings? Would they now still think of themselves as transplanted Brits or had they “gone native”? 

In my teens I discovered that towards the end of the Second World War my mother, Elsie, had been engaged to an Australian airman who tragically was shot down on active service. While she had a very happy marriage to my father, Max, and a perfectly normal family life, I have always supposed that there were still lingering memories and regrets about that tragic loss. Just before she died unexpectedly in 2008 I had the opportunity to talk about this with her and discovered his name for the first time. To my surprise, when we went through her effects, there were no surviving documents, or letters, or any other trace of Ron James.

When I graduated from the Glasgow School of Art in 1970 I was offered a job in Melbourne but turned it down on the grounds that, even although the exotic nature of the place appealed to me, most of the cultural traffic of the time was travelling in the opposite direction, a very different situation to today. Undoubtedly, these aspects of my personal history will have, in some small way, influenced who and what I am today.

All jewellery has its own story, more often than not untold. For me, at a time of life when, Janus-like, I look backwards as well as forwards, narrative and metaphor have assumed greater importance in my work, and Transplantation seemed a very appropriate vehicle to develop this further. I had intended to use this exhibition as an opportunity to explore some aspects of my own personal history to consider inter alia “what might have been” and “what if?”. However, after the project began, I moved to take up a new post at the University of Lincoln and was surprised to learn of the number of city and county connections with the colonisation of Australia. Joseph Banks, “The Father of Australia” and botanical taxonomist par excellect, who gave his name to some 170 varieties of Banksia, owned a substantial country estate at Revesby near Lincoln; Matthew Flinders, the first man to circumnavigate Australia, came from Spalding in the bulb-growing south of the county, known as South Holland; and Lincoln Castle housed a prison from where many unfortunates were transported as criminals to Van Diemen’s Land.

This inevitably led me to research some of these links and consequently my contribution has unexpectedly turned out to be more overtly concerned with those relationships than personal introspection. The project has been genuinely inspiring and has turned up much more material than I can comfortably use for just this one exhibition. I rather think that the subject of Transplantation is going to engage me for some time yet.
From Spalding to Kangaroo Bay.
Brooch.
Oxidised standard silver, 18ct gold grains.

Banksia Serrata Linneoii Caledoniensis
Brooch.
Oxidised standard silver, 18ct gold grains.
24 Carats of gold

In the course of researching for this project, I came across some convict love tokens mostly made in the 1820s and 1830s from coins that were defaced, smoothed and inscribed, either by stippling or engraving with personal messages. They were made by or for British convicts to give to loved ones before they were transported to Australia. They are beautiful, historic artefacts and the inscriptions on them of remembrance, loss of freedom and names not-to-be-forgotten are a moving testament to this dubious period in British history. To gauge the extent of this policy, that made space in both the prisons and in the queue for the gallows, it is recorded that, before penal transportation ended in 1868, 160,000 men and women were sent to the Australian colonies.\(^1\)

This work is not only a response to the poignant nature of the convict love tokens and all they represent but also a self-imposed test on my resources as a jewellery maker. Attempting to place myself in the position of ‘having’ to leave all I hold dear behind and start a new life in a strange and alien land, like the First Fleeters,\(^2\) I have invented my own currency formed from that most precious and practical of all elements: gold.

The idea of making my own coinage came out of a desire for taking something personal and practical that I could easily pocket and use. Essentially, these pennies are made of gold, a currency that is universally accepted – particularly in a country with a history steeped in the search for the yellow ore. The difference in alloy and colour of each coin recognises the multicultural make up of modern Australia. Before leaving the home country I could leave some as tokens of remembrance and upon arriving, I could use them to buy goods and services. But this approach is not peculiar to my imagined situation or that of the original convicts. This is the universal experience of the traveller, immigrant, the diaspora and the displaced. Travelling with the gold you can carry, that can be traded or melted down and remade into new jewellery is as old as the jeweller’s trade.

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1 In 24 Carats of gold
39 pennies.
Fine gold, fine silver, copper and a leather purse. 24 coins, each approximately 15mm in diameter.
24 Carats of gold. A set of homemade pennies formed out of 3.4 g each of gold. The gold and silver used to create the alloys are melted down from some of the sentimental jewellery I have carried around with me for many years. Even though each piece is now 'destroyed' through the melting process, my own jewellery history can still be recalled by the colour and carat of each coin. I never paid much attention to the specific design of the jewellery pieces I kept, as they have existed in my mind in a purely symbolic way, each representing various periods of my life. As a child, I wore silver necklaces and in my teens I was given 9 ct. gold rings. I wore 18 ct. gold earrings throughout my 20s and in my 30s I inherited 23 ct. and 24 ct. gold items from my mother. The process of amalgamating all these jewellery pieces in this way does not alter my memory of them and the silver, resulting in a coin, mirrors much of the symbolism of the original convict love tokens that became one of the few objects through which the prisoner could express their hopes and fears for the future and acknowledgement of the past.

2. Penal Transportation from Britain/Ireland to Australia between 1787 – 1868 [http://www.australia.com/about/history.aspx](http://www.australia.com/about/history.aspx)
24 Carats of Gold

24 Carats of Gold.
Fine gold, fine silver, copper and a leather purse. 24 coins, each approximately 15mm in diameter.

Coloured Gold

While pure gold is yellow in colour, coloured gold can be developed into various colours. These colours are generally obtained by alloying gold with other elements in various proportions, in this case an alloy of 50% silver and 50% copper was used.

For example, alloys which are mixed 14 parts gold to 10 parts alloy create 14 carat gold, 18 parts gold to 6 parts alloy creates 18 carat, and so on. This is often expressed as the result of the ratio, i.e.: 14/24 equals 0.585 and 18/24 is 0.750. There are hundreds of possible alloys and mixtures, but in general the addition of silver will colour gold white, and the addition of copper will colour it red. A mix of around 50/50 copper and silver gives the range of yellow gold alloys that can be seen here. The most common grades of gold, in addition to pure 24 ct. are 22 ct. (92%), 18 ct. (75%), 14 ct. (58%) and 9 ct. (38%).

Ternary plot of approximate colours of Ag–Au–Cu alloys (Wikipedia)
Family, relationships, place and memory, are factors of particular significance in the narrative dialogue present in the work of Jack Cunningham. Equally important in the process of communicating his ideas are the materials incorporated, most recently, found objects and ready-mades. Through the process of association and personal viewing methodologies, Cunningham is interested in the dialogue that is consequently established between the maker – the originator of the artefacts statement, the wearer – the vehicle by which the work is seen, and the viewer – the audience who thereafter engage with the work.

“The work of Jack Cunningham, provides very clear evidence of a personal commitment to thinking and travelling outside Scotland, his country of origin. His still-evolving mixed-media brooch form, often a highly individual jigsaw using found objects and mementoes of his journeys in Europe and the Far East with stylised fabricated elements, speaks from the maker’s life-experiences and emotional history. The wearer and viewer, whose display and reception of the piece will necessarily have their own motivation, continue the journey.”

Professor Elizabeth Moignard: Paradigma 2

Paradigma 2

On Transplantation:

Beyond the nuclear peripherique, at the extremity of one’s family tree, lie the hidden, the forgotten, and the unknown, even the ex-communicated. The Great Barrier series acknowledges the migration of family members to the New World. This courageous decision was common in the austere post Second World War of 1950s Scotland, where society was searching for a fresh start, better family prospects, a future.

In Glasgow, where great ocean going liners were built on the Clyde, one could sail from this city on a £10 one-way ticket to any part of the globe at that time. With its hope, promise and anticipated wealth, these pieces reflect on those committed to that new beginning in Australasia, often with unexpected consequences.

It is quite usual therefore, for Scots like myself to have family in Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, where the expectations of an exotic new beginning became, for some, a disappointing reality – but with sunshine!

One such uncle travelled to Auckland. His lifestyle became that of a Pa-ke-ha, white people who mixed with the indigenous Maori population. He subsequently married a Maori and had a family. This was considered too outrageous at that time and he was indeed ex-communicated by my maternal grandmother, the same grandmother who ironically, was born in Madras, India. Consequently, my uncle could not be traced for over 30 years.

The pieces titled The Great Barrier, made for this exhibition, are a celebration of the exotic nature, as viewed from the cooler climes of the West, of the environment of the southern hemisphere, but also the timeline and barrier’s created by the miscegenation of such populations.
The Great Barrier (series).
Brooch.
Found objects.
My practice involves an intervention into the iconography of the kitsch souvenir to question cultural identity. Issues of colonialism, multiculturalism and the indigenous are all tackled in a process of filtering, selecting, contrasting and reassembling images found on old biscuit tins, tin trays and confectionary tins. The use of recycled materials reflects a history of economy employed by the earlier European settlers of Australia. Recycled materials also contribute to the sentimental tone of the work. I like materials that have already had a history. I enjoy being able to play with the story of that history by reworking and repositioning the material. In my recent work I have begun printing images onto metal using a sublimation technique and have therefore expanded the repertoire of imagery available to me.

For *Transplantation*, I have constructed fantastical hybrid creatures that can be imagined to inhabit an alternative colonial dimension. These creatures appear to have been borne of an absinthe fuelled liaison between May Gibbs and Hunter S. Thompson. The resulting brooches are part Aussie folk craft, part comment on cultural intervention and part humorous acknowledgement of the hybrid nature of contemporary Australian culture.
The Duke of Devonshire.
Brooch.
reworked biscuit tin, sublimate printed steel, garnet beads, silk thread, copper.

A Knight Commander of the Most
Honourable Military Order of the Bath.
Brooch.
reworked biscuit tin, sublimate printed steel, garnet beads, silk thread, copper.
The notion behind my jewellery is ‘celebrating the settlement’, enjoyment and appreciation of experiences I’ve encountered through the exposure to two different environments. One is from my motherland, Korea and the other is from my adopted country, Australia.

I have chosen the theme of rabbits from one of Australia’s migration stories as a motif to represent myself. To further enhance this idea I have selected peonies along with other design elements from my own cultural resource of symbols, which to Koreans is a symbol of wealth and happy lives. In my case it represents a wealth and positive outlook of hope in a new environment.

The selected materials are steel, fine silver and fine gold, and I employed the traditional Korean metal inlay technique (lybsa) to articulate the richness of the metal surface. The metals are both robust (steel) and luxuriant (gold & silver) which symbolically represent the strength of my hope and appreciation of life in the present day where I live.

The pieces I’ve produced for this exhibition illustrate the story of my journey in Australia since I’ve made my home here. Through this work I’ve tried to depict a range of circumstances I have encountered from the beginning up to the present time. They represent a positive outlook for the future expressed through my own visual design language, which utilizes symbolic motifs from my Korean culture.

Each piece describes a specific event, and every element I’ve selected has a role in expressing my personal thoughts about encountering unfamiliar situations.

The reality of living away from my own family has affected me in many ways. Many of the challenges have been difficult, both physically and mentally however, the advantage has been gaining the capacity to communicate globally within the context of my professional practice. I feel the uncertainties I have encountered have provided opportunity for personal growth and hope that this collection illustrates an ever-growing perspective.

I have recently moved from one country to another, and then built and refined myself by exploring and observing the different environment and culture. Yet somehow within this new context I still feel compelled to maintain a unique form of expression, and that desire keeps me anchored to the essence of my own culture.

Overall my work is about celebrating my time in Australia. I hope my particular visual language and symbolic expression generates original and innovative ways of depicting this experience, and hopefully elicits positive responses from viewers from a diverse range of backgrounds.
Brooch.
Steel, fine gold, fine silver.
The work for Transplantative explores the after-effects of being transplanted by considering such effects in terms of evolutionary adaptations and genetic manipulation. I am thinking not only of the modern concept of genetic modifications occurring within the laboratory at the behest of science, but also of the less well observed and largely undocumented impact of our experiences on our genetic stock. Science considers the characteristics of natural forms (including human DNA) to be passively and randomly selected over a very long period of time (as was so eloquently explained by Charles Darwin). My doctoral thesis examined how this world view is the inevitable result of our pursuit of objectivity. I came to realise that it is only in the last 400 years (and specifically since Descartes’ formulation made objectivity possible) that the object itself has been thought of as passive to our intentions and measurements. Such thinking blinds us to the impact that the natural, and indeed, the man-made environment has on our bodies, minds, habitats, and ideas. The new field of epigenetics reveals that the individual’s experience alters the genetic make-up of their immediate offspring. We can see the natural and the social now inextricably entwined at the DNA level.

These pieces of jewellery are a collection of mutant creatures from a new world: a world where transplanted beings adapt to become hybrids, crossbreeding and re-combining a vibrant array of anomalies.

Some are made from found objects, which are reconstructed or reassembled, by addition of metal and other materials, into new creatures. Others are constructed from the usual materials that jewellers use (metal and gemstones) or hark back to the 19th century jewellery fashion for insects, but the idea is to transplant ways of wearing – to re-arrange our ideas about jewellery as passive objects.

Having made appropriate adaptations in order to survive in the world of wearable objects, these jewels retain the essence of their older selves and yet have become something else definitively new.
2
Abrazadis
Neckpiece
Stg silver, labradorite, ostrich feathers, seed pearls.

3
Boulder Beetle and its World
Object
Boulder opal, coral, prehenite, silver & 18ct gold.
I approached this exhibition as a person transplanted from one culture to another. I grew up in Singapore, returned to Australia as a teenager, and currently live and work in the UK, so this exhibition theme presented an ideal opportunity to reflect on my experience. I was initially baffled as to how to represent, even for myself, a clear sense of each national culture. Because of their shared colonial histories there is naturally a tangle of cross-pollinated decorative elements and symbols to be found in each of these. How does one make cultural distinctions while experiencing life in a contemporary globalised world? When I think of each city and country in which I have lived and consider the role of each environment in my life, it is the physical locale, the sensuous memories, the temperature, the humidity, and the smells, which clearly distinguish my personal sense of belonging and therefore, in some way, my understanding of culture and place.

I began by comparing the flora and fauna, the natural environment specific to each locale. I also examined the different national Coats of Arms, general emblems and heraldic symbols used to signify each country. These incorporate representations of plants and animals, and I was particularly intrigued by the various imaginary beasts involved. Singapore utilises a Merlion as its national emblem: a lion’s head transplanted onto a fish’s body. Many heraldic animals used in Britain are a metamorphosis of real and imagined beasts, eg Dragons and Griffins: those mixtures of winged and land creatures. These invented animals made me think of the first reactions to descriptions of the Australian Platypus which was originally thought to be a product of some fraudster’s imagination: a duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed mammal. Most eighteenth century European naturalists considered it to be nothing but a hoax.

It is quite fascinating how flora and fauna have been translated, transplanted, mutated, and metamorphosed: literally through their migrations across nations, and metaphorically through cultural mythologies and representations of nationality. I consider my contributions to this project to be like the imaginings and mutations represented by these emblems and heraldic arms in that they are layered recollections and stylisations of each place, using symbols of the environments, plants, animals and decorative architectural detailing. I have used memories real, created, idealised, assumed and presumed. Each piece is a construction of layers of visual elements. They are not literal derivations, rather assemblages of little snippets, parts of details remembered or imagined. Materials, colours, textures, forms, all suggest various analogies, and the combinations of these may tell a story. There are references to the plants specific to each locale, idealised, stylised, and simplified. There is a hint of beasts real and imaginary through the use of kangaroo fur, ermine tail, leather, mother-of-pearl and the representations of scales. There are backgrounds and frames which may be identifiable with local vernacular architectural forms and details.

I do not attempt a political or social commentary, or make any judgment of colonial history. This is a personal exploration of elements that come to mind while contemplating and remembering each space and place.
3 in
Brooch
Copper, gold plate, kangaroo fur, sterling silver, enamel.

3 in
Waratah Tree
Brooch
Copper, sterling silver, enamel, fur.
Whether by choice or through circumstance we all relocate throughout our lives and may be transplanted on occasion without option. The previous owners of Jo Pond’s twenty-fifth home, which was originally a vicarage and convent, the Sisters of St Joseph, remain in the village, now as her neighbours.

On the 3rd May 1905 three Sisters arrived in Haunton, Staffordshire; Sister Mary Magdalen (the only English speaker among them), Sister de la Trinity and Sister St Norbert. These Sisters of St Joseph of Bordeaux were driven from France by the anti-clerical laws aimed at the separation of the Church and the State. Father John O’Toole was looking for Religious Sisters to help with the evangelization of the people of his newly created Parish in a small village in Staffordshire and so this enforced relocation was very timely.

To begin with the Sisters of St Joseph opened a small Finishing School for young women to acquire a good knowledge of French and needlework. Over the years and due to the demand for places this developed into a Boarding School for girls from the ages of 5 to 18 years. During the 1930s English and Irish young women entered the convent where they first acquired a working knowledge of French prior to joining the novitiate in France in Bordeaux.

The Staffordshire village community of Sisters increased in 1940, due to the addition of a further nine sisters, obliged to flee France after the German invasion and the occupation of France.

This history of the Transplantation of twelve Sisters, imposed by historic events has been the stimulus behind my collection. Through materials with symbolic or visual associations I make reference to their religion and relocation as well as their working practice and commitments. Influences such as the scapular, communion, the rosary and the drawn-thread-work undertaken by the Sisters have influenced my ideas. In addition, the gold band of commitment is implied, circling the container forms.

This private but communal lifestyle has intrigued me. Although I have not felt able to ask what becomes of the pre-novitiate name, I have considered the relinquished identity of these women as they moved into a new life and the privacy and respect they require and deserve throughout their quiet and unassuming existence.

“promouvoir et modeler l’amour de tous, sans distinction, comme Christ a prié, ‘Cela peut tout être celui’.”

“To promote and model loving all, without distinction, as Christ prayed, ‘That all may be one’.”
The Promise
Neckpiece
Iron wire, tin, 18ct gold.

Fine Finishing
Brooch
Children’s thimbles, tin, steel.
I am a jeweller, even when I am not making jewellery. For me this describes an approach to the world, and to making objects, rather than a strict set of skills employed in the production of wearable things. Instead of considering jewellery as a defined subject, I try to poke around the edges of what it is, what it isn’t and what it might be. Issues around adornment, preciousness, craft and materiality remain central to my practice, and running parallel is a regard for the roles and responsibilities assigned to personal possessions in contemporary life. My work has contemplated many topics, and maintains no particular loyalty to any technique or substance; I employ whatever means I can to make a point.

In response to the themes raised by this exhibition, I have generated a set of speculative artefacts through research into a real historical scenario. My first direct action was to buy a series of original British newspapers from the mid 1800s, each of which contained some reference to the transportation of people (and other things) to Australia. This then led to further reading around the gold mining settlements, economic and environmental hardships, treatment of indigenous populations and the Victorian struggle to impose ‘civilisation’ upon what they felt was a coarse and uncultured landscape. As a maker who enjoys researching social and cultural histories, especially with regard to notions of preciousness and value, these subjects allowed me to tie a number of strings of interest into one collection of pieces.

Records of historical events are a form of legitimised story telling, and there is much fiction laid down amongst the fact. In this work I decided to create a fiction by stitching together what facts I could find: assembling them from my own point of view. I began with no plan, and by gathering together information from a variety of cultural sources and timeframes an idea took shape. The fact that this idea did not develop into anything wearable seems entirely appropriate according to my own internal logic; they are the product of a jeweller maker’s approach and they bear the hallmarks of this. European colonial mechanisms of power and control are collided with both Aboriginal and African forms of storytelling, giving rise to a curious (fictitious) measuring system for gold. The result is a series of small brass castings entitled Goldweights of the 19th Century Australian Colonists.
This collection of cast brass forms is conceived as an imaginary archaeological find from a specific historical and geographical context.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS
This exhibition could not have materialised without the contributions of many people. Thanks are due firstly to the artists who have engaged so wholeheartedly with the concept of Transplantation: without their creativity there would be no exhibition. The idea was long in developing for many reasons but Jo Bloxham and Jivan Astfalck were invaluable sounding boards at different stages. Jivan particularly when I was trying to flesh out the basic concept and define a selection procedure, and Jo as a champion for the project throughout the gestation period, providing curatorial assistance and advice, and enthusing the curators and managers of potential venues; she was especially encouraging when funding seemed in doubt. Arts Council England has kindly provided substantial funding and a number of ACE staff past and present offered useful advice and guidance at various times. The National Centre for Craft and Design, Sleaford, has been an excellent partner, providing much assistance with graphic design, exhibition, and touring arrangements. I am grateful to Clare Edwards, Laura Mabbutt, Jayne Olney, and Melanie Kidd for their contributions. Liz Cooper has been an energetic and enthusiastic touring manager, Phil Cosker, former Director of what was then known as The Hub, was the driver behind this partnership. The University of Lincoln has also been a benefactor formally and informally: my colleagues have been immensely supportive in assisting me with this undertaking. Special thanks must go to Lisa Elsender, my PA, who has been utterly unflappable no matter what exigencies have arisen.

The photographer of the exhibits, David Withycombe, has done his usual excellent job of work but, additionally, Dave Overton, technical specialist in the Lincoln School of Art and Design, undertook some of the initial photography used for publicity and promotional purposes.

The show itself would be incomplete without a suitable display system. My brief to Robert Cooksey was to design showcases which are undeniably contemporary, straightforward to set up, give a clear view of the objects, yet which would in some way allude to eighteenth century portable Campaign Furniture. This I think he has done admirably: they look good in themselves, the legs fold cleverly and allow them to be packed effectively for shipping, they complement the jewellery and offer a perfectly clear view of the contents. The catalogue and wall panels have been designed by SB Studio. The panels are clear and self-explanatory while the catalogue not only complements and explains the exhibition but is a delightful reminder of what we hope will have been an enjoyable, challenging, and rewarding exhibition to visit. Swaingrove Printers have made a fine job of this.

Norman Cherry

Supported by:
A Sense of Place and Culture

Transplantation

British and Australian Narrative Jewellery