



Acquisitions: The Marjan and Gerard Unger Collection

For Marjan (22 February 1946-27 June 2018)

• SUZANNE VAN LEEUWEN •

With the publication of the book *Jewellery Matters* (2017) and an international three-day symposium held in November 2017, art historian Marjan Unger made yet another major contribution to this international field. On the occasion of the new publication, Marjan and her husband Gerard Unger (1942-) gifted a second part of their collection of jewellery to the Rijksmuseum. This time it was a collection of jewellery dating from the early nineteenth century to 2017. The Ungers had already donated a large collection of twentieth-century Dutch jewellery (492 pieces) to the Rijksmuseum in 2010, at the time Marjan gained her doctorate with her thesis *Sieraad in context* (Leiden 2010). The new gift includes works by Marjan's former students at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and the Sandberg Institute, prize-winning jewellery from various international exhibitions, works commissioned by Marjan and Gerard, a group of fashion jewellery and individual purchases. As well as the jewellery, Marjan also gave the museum her entire library and jewellery archives. Accurate provenances for the pieces have yet to be established on the basis of these archives.

On 27 June, we received the sad news of Marjan's death. Although she did not work at the Rijksmuseum, we all considered her to be part of the family. Those of us who had the pleasure of working with her admired her for her expertise and her warm personality. She will be sorely missed.

I ANONYMOUS (Rome)

Bracelet, c. 1860-70

Gold, 6.8 x 5.4 x 2 cm

Marked on the clasp: crossed keys below a mitre in a shield (Tardy *Les poinçons de garantie internationaux pour l'or*, Paris 1967, pp. 218; Rome assay mark), re-assayed on the clasp: 750 in a rectangle (Nederlandse Verantwoordelijkheidstekens sinds 1797, Gouda (Waarborg Holland) 1997, no. NN098), 1955-present

Inv. no. BK-2018-2-15

In style, material and subject this bracelet is typical of work from the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The rigid, two-part, eighteen-carat-gold bracelet has a cylinder clasp. The clasp and hinge are in the shape of a parchment scroll holder where the two pieces of the bracelet as it were unroll. On one half of the bracelet is the inscription ROMA in capital letters and on the other there are stylized palmettes. All the decorations were executed in fine gold wire attached to the bracelet with a minimal amount of solder.

The use of gold, without the addition of precious stones, is one of the characteristics of the 'archaeological style' jewellery of this period. Excavations in Europe, Egypt and the Near East – official and unofficial – at the end of the eighteenth century fuelled immense interest in the gold jewellery of Antiquity.

New discoveries were often transformed into exact copies or provided inspiration for jewellery in a similar style. The Roman goldsmith Fortunato Pio Castellani (1794-1865) and his sons, Alessandro and Augusto, are perhaps the most renowned exponents of the archaeological style. Their work was too expensive for most people, however, and the popularity of these pieces prompted other goldsmiths to produce simplified interpretations. Bracelets like these were mementos of journeys through Europe and popular souvenirs of visits to towns and cities.

LITERATURE:

M. Unger and S. van Leeuwen, *Jewellery Matters*, Amsterdam/Rotterdam 2017, pp. 472-73, fig. 494

2 FRANS ZWOLLO Sr (Amsterdam 1872-1945 Amstelveen)

Brooch, c. 1919-30

Gold, rhodonite, d. 3.9 cm

Marked on the back: F. Zwollo with a chasing hammer in a rectangle (Molen, J.R. ter, *Frans Zwollo sr. 1872-1945 en zijn tijd*, Rotterdam 1982, maker's mark B; 1909-30), re-assayed on the pin: 750 in a rectangle (Verantwoordelijkheidstekens 1997, no. NNO98), 1955-present

Inv. no. BK-2018-2-7

Amsterdam-born Frans Zwollo Sr is regarded as one of the Netherlands' greatest workers in precious metals in the early twentieth century. He was extremely skilled at embossing and chasing precious and base metals, endeavouring to follow in the footsteps of his favourite seventeenth-century predecessors, Johannes Lutma and the brothers Paulus and Adam van Vianen. At the end of the nineteenth century, a period when mechanized manufacturing techniques for jewellery were the norm, Zwollo and his contemporaries concentrated on the traditional goldsmith's art. He was passionate about the craftsmanship and mastery of the goldsmith and gave many lectures on the subject in the Netherlands. When he was appointed lecturer in the gold- and silversmith's trade at the Arts and Crafts School in Haarlem in 1897, he was able to pass on his professional knowledge and enthusiasm to a new generation. During his time

as a lecturer in Hagen in Germany between 1910 and 1914, chasing and embossing metals were key elements of the curriculum.

As a theosophist, Zwollo was very interested in the physical and metaphysical properties of the materials he worked with. He saw pure gold as a symbol of divine life and ascribed specific meanings to precious stones. The scalloped and chased gold surround of this brooch holds a round cabochon cut rhodonite. According to theosophical doctrine, the choice of this mineral, with its characteristic pink and black colours, was not just a question of aesthetics or rarity. Rhodonite is traditionally regarded as having an emotional healing effect. The wearer of rhodonite as a heart chakra gem supposedly experiences inner peace and calm that can be passed on to close friends and family.



- 3 FERDI (Ferdina Tajiri-Jansen, Arnhem 1927-1969 Baarlo)
 Necklace, 1953-55
 Iron, glass, 8.6 x 6.8 cm (pendant)
 Inv. no. BK-2018-2-23
 © Tajiri heirs

In 1950, the free spirited Ferdi left Arnhem and went to Paris to focus on the arts. There she studied under the famous sculptor Ossip Zadkine (1890-1967) and others. In 1952 her future husband, the sculptor Shinkichi Tajiri (1923-2009), taught her to weld and to work in metal. Using the welding skills she had learned, she began to make her characteristic sculptural jewellery and objects from iron and glass. The material was key in her designs; the jewellery or object took shape as she welded. Many of her pieces look like insects, and this purple glass beetle-like pendant is typical. In Paris much of her work was bought by Americans and her jewellery was also sought after in Japan.

In 1956 Ferdi was allowed to weld jewellery at her stand at the Home Exhibition in the RAI in Amsterdam, to great press interest. In this period Ferdi was frequently photographed with her own jewellery by Eddy Posthuma de Boer, Ata Kandó and Ed van der Elsken. In the Netherlands there was a small number of devotees and collectors who purchased her jewellery or exchanged it for other objects. Until now Ferdi has only been represented in the Dutch national collection with her *Horti-sculptures*, including the *Wombtomb* in the Rijksmuseum.

As well as this necklace, the gift includes an iron bracelet by Ferdi (BK-2018-2-24).

LITERATURE:

- M. Unger and S. van Leeuwen, *Jewellery Matters*, Amsterdam/Rotterdam 2017, pp. 294-95, figs. 289, 290 and 291
 S., G. and R. Tajiri (ed. and compilation), *Ferdi: Horti-sculpture*, Baarlo 2008, vol. 2 (*Ferdi: Hortisculpture*), p. 84



- 4 DAVID BIELANDER (Basel 1968)
Pearl Sow, 2003 (1/12)
 Gold and saltwater pearls, 8 x 7.3 cm
 Inv. no. BK-2018-2-125
 © David Bieler

This brooch in the shape of a pig's head occupies a special place in the Unger Collection. In the words of Marjan Unger, the little pig had the honour of 'accompanying me on 17 March 2010, the day I defended my doctoral thesis in Leiden'.

The brooch was made by the Swiss goldsmith and jewellery designer David Bieler. He incorporates everyday subjects in his jewellery with a playful, humorous twist. Animals are a recurring theme in his work, appearing in materials of all kinds. Two well-known examples are the silver slug brooches (2004) and the anodized titanium and silver boa constrictor chain (2011). The CODA Museum in Apeldoorn holds a copy of this necklace in its collection.

Between 2011 and 2013 Bieler supervised students at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam as an external examiner. In recent years he has won many prizes awarded by panels of expert judges, including the Françoise van Den Bosch Prize in 2012. Following on from this, the Museum for Modern Art in Arnhem staged a retrospective of his work entitled *Demiurg* in 2013.

LITERATURE:

- M. Unger and S. van Leeuwen, *Jewellery Matters*, Amsterdam/Rotterdam 2017, pp. 540-41, fig. 567
 F. Hufnagel et al., *David Bieler: Twenty Years 2016-1996*, Stuttgart 2017, pp. 54-55



- 5 EVERT NIJLAND (Oldenzaal 1971)
Rococo Brooch (from the series *Naturae*), 2009-10
 Porcelain and steel, l. 8 cm
 Inv. no. BK-2018-2-59
 © Evert Nijland

In 1995 Evert Nijland graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy with a series of necklaces and two years later successfully completed a master's degree at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam, where he was one of Marjan Unger's students. They shared a love of historical styles, and in his work Nijland often takes inspiration from chiefly sixteenth- and eighteenth-century jewellery and paintings. He does not allow traditional material choices to constrain him in his work. Nijland and a team of glassblowers, ceramicists and other specialists realize his designs with a combination of traditional goldsmithing techniques and the latest technical developments.

The painted porcelain brooch is part of the 'Naturae' series in which Nijland explores the meaning of flora and fauna in western art history. Necklaces with names like 'Waddenzee' or 'Wolkenlucht' are complex in both their symbolism and execution but totally wearable. This white brooch clearly echoes eighteenth-century design idiom and colour preferences. In the same series there is also a *Rococo* necklace built up from three similar porcelain elements.

In 2016 the CODA Museum in Apeldoorn put together an exhibition of Nijland's work from the last twenty years. In *Vernieuwd Verleden* the jewellery was combined with work by other contemporary artists who also use the past as their source of inspiration.

LITERATURE:

W. Schrijver, *Evert Nijland: Jewellery*, Stuttgart 2016, pp. 78, 307



- 6 CHRISTIAN ASTUGUEVIEILLE (Paris 1946)
 Necklace, c. 2005-07
 Velour and chromium-plated metal, 30 x 22 cm
 Inv. no. BK-2018-2-177
 © Christian Astuguevieille

With a background in law, sociology and education, it was not obvious that the French designer and artist Christian Astuguevieille would end up in the world of fashion jewellery. Between 1967 and 1992 he designed many pieces of jewellery for well-known French fashion houses and he also worked on the development of perfumes for Maison Molinard and Maison Rochas. In 1992 he entered into a collaborative venture with the Japanese fashion label COMME des GARÇONS, where he still oversees the development of fragrances. The bases for these perfumes are anything but commonplace. For instance, he developed a scent based on freshly cut cedar wood and another inspired by clothes that had just been dry cleaned. As well as designing jewellery and developing perfumes, Astuguevieille also designs furniture.

Typical of his jewellery is the use of tactile materials such as linen, cotton, hemp, wood, velvet and silk. In all his work he tries to include scent, the tangibility of materials and the associations that they evoke. In 2006 Astuguevieille designed two children's chairs as decorative objects for the London boutique Couture Lab. One was covered in soft toys in the shape of white and brown manta rays, the other with red crab and lobster toys. This necklace may have stemmed from this commission, since Couture Lab also sold jewellery by Astuguevieille.

In spring 2018 a selection of jewellery featured in an exhibition in the Collectors' Gallery in Brussels, titled *Zero Carat: Jewellery by Christian Astuguevieille*.

LITERATURE:

M. Unger and S. van Leeuwen, *Jewellery Matters*, Amsterdam/Rotterdam 2017, pp. 161-63, fig. 154



