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ALUMINA





ALUMINA

RECENT WORK BY GOLD AND SILVERSMITHING WORKSHOP ALUMNI 2009



FOREWORD

The exhibition **Alumina** is a celebration anticipating the ANU School of Art Gold and Silversmithing (G&S) Workshop's 30th anniversary. Coinciding with a major survey exhibition of work by Head of the Workshop Johannes Kuhnén, the **Alumina** exhibition comprises recent work by 26 G&S Alumni who have graduated during the past 15 years. They have established themselves as professional practitioners in the ACT, interstate and overseas. Their work exemplifies the high quality of silversmithing and jewellery teaching and making at the School of Art and demonstrates a commitment to ideas, excellence and innovation. Personal biographies indicate the diverse career paths pursued by the graduates and the contribution they have made to Australia's contemporary visual culture. The excellent catalogue essay by Mia-Lee Ching, another graduate, elaborates further on the wide range and variety of work in the exhibition.

The word alumina is another term for aluminium oxide. It is the main constituent in the production of metallic aluminium and also refers to the hard, porous coating formed through oxidation that protects the lightweight, silvery-white metal from corrosion. Alumina appropriately lends its name to the exhibition as it plays on the word Alumni. In the hands of G&S Workshop and Alumni, alumina becomes the basis for the aluminium anodising process pioneered in Australia by Johannes Kuhnén and which has become notorious with the staff and student work produced in the ANU School of Art G&S Workshop. The exhibition **Alumina** reflects the diversity of the work produced by G&S Alumni, through its ability to take many shapes and forms. From vibrantly coloured metallic surfaces to precious gemstones (alumina in its crystalline state appears as sapphires and rubies). In another sense, alumina can be likened to a 'case hardening', a description relevant to the G&S alumni, who having completed School of Art studies, are developing their careers and coping with the rough and tumble of life in the wider world for which their visual art education has prepared them.

The Workshop terminology Gold and Silversmithing addresses the traditional origins for the design and production of wearable and utilitarian objects. The art of gold and silversmithing in its ancient origins, was often the initial training for some of the world's most respected artists. The use of precious material as indicated in the name, is not a limitation for the works produced by students and staff. It is an historical reference. The materials used in the Workshop reflect contemporary practice and encompass a wide range of plastics, synthetics, natural fibres and alternative metals including aluminium for both functional and non-functional purposes. The Workshop has facilities specifically set up for casting in various materials, cold and hot forging, machining and lathe work, toolmaking, metal finishing, polishing and anodising as well as design studio techniques including computer aided design and rapid prototyping. The work in the **Alumina** exhibition reflects use of all these processes and techniques to realise a wide range of innovative design ideas.

Since its establishment in 1980, the G&S Workshop has marked various milestones with significant exhibitions showcasing the work of its staff and graduates. To celebrate the 20th anniversary, the exhibition **31@20**, 31 graduates from the first 20 years were selected by School of Art historian Anne Brennan for a national/international tour to Canberra, Melbourne, Taiwan and the prestigious Deutsche Goldschmiedehaus in Hannau, Germany. To mark the 25th anniversary, the exhibition **In the Can** was selected by National Gallery of Australia Senior Curator Robert Bell. This was organised to coincide with the Jewellers and Metalsmiths Group of Australia JMGA conference in Sydney in January 2006. Since the Workshop's establishment, staff and graduates have been regularly represented in other significant national jewellery, metalwork and silversmithing exhibitions shown in Australia's National, State and

Regional Galleries. The **Alumina** exhibition demonstrates the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop graduates' talent and commitment to jewellery and silversmithing over an extended period. Their continued association with the ANU, the School of Art and the Workshop as Alumni is testament to the quality visual arts education and experience at the ANU. We are proud to present the exhibition **Alumina**, an exhibition of 26 graduates who continue their contribution to the profile of Australia's cultural life.

Emeritus Professor David Williams AM

ANU Research School of Humanities

Chair, ANU Foundation for the Visual Arts

(Director ANU School of Art Oct 1985 - June 2006)

SUNDAY IN THE WORKSHOP...

The title of this exhibition has been thoughtfully and appropriately chosen, certainly it made this particular graduate smile. For the uninitiated the word alumina refers to the oxide layer that begins to naturally form on the surface of the metal aluminium when it is exposed to oxygen. Though invisible to the naked eye it is of particular significance that this oxide layer renders the surface both air and water resistant, that it is particularly tough, that it withstands high temperatures and that it renders the surface of the metal more resistant to wear. It is common knowledge amongst the participants in this exhibition but also more generally of all of our Alumni that this layer of oxide [once deliberately cultivated to a thickness suitable through a process known as anodising] is also porous and able to be dyed vivid colours. Through this process the natural grey of the aluminum can become permanently and startlingly fire engine red, canary yellow or even regulation workshop blue. It is this quality of strength and quiet endurance with more than one or two flashes of brilliance that is also characteristic to the work and methodology of the Alumni of the Australian National University's Gold and Silversmithing Workshop.

The Workshop was founded in 1980 by Norwegian silver-smith and former head Ragnar Hansen. In 1985 he was joined by Roger Hutchinson, and in the same year by Johannes Kuhnen who was appointed head of workshop in 2001. The influence of the core and founding members of staff is far reaching and the threads of their teaching is evident in this exhibition, as is the more recent influence of Cinnamon Lee, a former graduate of the program who joined the teaching staff in 2003. Of the core staff members it is notable Hansen, Kuhnen and Hutchinson have all dedicated above twenty years each to the teaching of a slowly diminishing discipline, and the dissemination of a set of skills that are labour intensive to teach, time consuming to learn and to apply in a climate that demands continual economic justification.

This continuity of staff is a contributing factor towards evidence of certain uniformities in the work presented in the exhibition **Alumina**. The identification of a common quality in this varied group of work, does not refer specifically to an over arching set of aesthetic values but moreover to a kind of approach in the treatment and selection of certain materials and accordingly the use of appropriate and often innovative techniques. Indeed, the mediation of a diversity of precious and non precious materials represented in the exhibition include not only metal, but glass, jewels, porcelain, Perspex, polyester and even video. The use of these materials however, is closely linked by a consideration of materiality and technique.

It is my experience that the teaching came in many guises, translated through a deliberately prescribed course of trial and error, through the encouragement of repetition, experimentation and sometimes an adherence to the quality of a technique or series of thoughts. Details such as the integrity of a joint or the cleanness of a line would inform the making process and might be delivered over a cup of too strong plunger coffee scribbled ingeniously and progressively on the back side of a roll of paper towel.

Through the varied approaches of our mentors and teachers we learnt that for a gold and silversmith there is more than one way of skinning a cat, that the process of making is as individual to the maker as the finished piece. The Workshop encouraged the continual and systematic re-evaluation of the design, concept and execution of a piece, we were taught to question and justify our decisions in regards to the materials and techniques we chose to use, specifically in regard to the intention of the object that we were attempting to realise. Indicative of this approach, the resulting works within the exhibition are not so much unified by a style or purpose but by a sense of order and enquiry made tangible through the plastic reality of the finished object.

Utility is a concern of the work within the exhibition **Alumina**, but not specifically in reference to functionality, the wall mounted works of Yun-Hsiang Hu and Alexander Boynes employ both sculptural and painterly sensibilities respectively. These works however, still share a demonstrated and vigorous enquiry into the individual qualities of the materials chosen. Boynes' choice of Perspex as a medium for his illuminated engravings draws heavily upon both traditional techniques common to both the gold and silversmithing and printmaking traditions, but are innovative in their exploration of the light conducting properties of the material. Hu's manipulation of material form demonstrates a technical understanding of the properties of a brass sheet, metal can be 'moved' through a process of hammering.

This understanding of material properties and concept of fluidity is remarkable also in the work of Oliver Smith. Smith's hand-forged flatware is the physical manifestation of an ideology committed to quality and technique and is impressive in both the refinement and functionality of their design as much as the precision and care with which they are finished. This concern and understanding of technique and finish is notable also in Barbara Ryman's enameled vessels.

Robert Foster's distinctive Twisted Arsonist Vase also shows a characteristic and dynamic exploration into the properties of material and the boundaries of its technical limitations. Here, the surface of the aluminium is skillfully manipulated to create ripples, enhancing the perceived saturation and richness of colour and implying movement. Cinnamon Lee's work also shows an interest in pushing the traditional limits of technique, employing a valid and innovative use of computer aided modeling and rapid prototyping to enable her to create intricate forms only made possible through the appropriate use of these fabrication techniques. The subtle change in the shape of the individual extrusions that form the smaller separate units of the finished arm ring (transforming from square to round and back again) imply an impossible fluidity defying the static expectation created through the geometric rigidity of their gridded form.

Rohan Nichol's coffee set, Domestic Renewal is also a thought provoking meditation on the use of materials and reinterpretation of already existing objects. The sugar bowl directly references the mass produced stove-top espresso pot in form, but its obvious quality of newness and highly resolved finish is in direct contrast to the aged patina of the well used percolator. This relationship speaks directly about the life

cycle of objects, the creation of the sugar bowl reinvigorates and revitalises an object that has become perhaps invisible to its owner through constant use and transforms the ordinary and unremarkable into an object for contemplation. This process of enquiry can also be seen in re-purposing and recycling of material common to the work of Cesar Cueva, Jason Wade and Johanna Zellmar.

The use of feathers to create a delicate and ephemeral work by Gilbert Riedelbauch and the fabrication of components from polyester boning in the work of Vanessa Ward also demonstrates the use of alternative materials within the discipline of gold and silversmithing. Within the exhibition, the use of such a variety of materials in such a multiplicity of applications illustrates the capacity for this common skill set to be applied to many different materials allowing for the increasing production of diverse and original works.

The tendency towards a certain order of thinking is of course not only limited to a consideration of materials or technique. Sequential investigation can be seen in the multiple reconfigurations of forms in the sublimated aluminum brooches of Lauren Simeoni and the anodised General Assembly series by Studio Hacienda. Pam Core and Michelle Deady also explore multiple possibilities through variation of form and colour in their respective pieces. Blanche Tilden's Hope Necklace is also testimony to this process of continual evaluation, its multiple components harmoniously and rhythmically configured to form a balanced and uniform whole.

Whatever might be concluded from the work in the exhibition **Alumina**, whether it is evidence of an adherence to the considerations of materiality and technique, investigations of form and colour, or a sense of order in the enquiry of making, each graduate (represented here or otherwise) through association represents part of a larger whole. As a community and as peers we will always be affiliated with the school, with our teachers and with each other, linked through the same discourse of contemporary object making. **Alumina** is a celebration of this family and endeavor and an indication of the achievements of the workshop in recent years.

For many years hanging above the sink in the casting area of the workshop was a grimy poster, a relic from the prolific 'Life be in It' health and wellbeing campaign run during the 1980's. Scrawled across it in a lipstick font were the words 'Sunday in the Park', only someone had crossed out 'Park' and replaced it with the word 'Workshop' written boldly in black texta. With the recent refurbishment of the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop, I am sure I am not alone in hoping that there will be many more such Sundays.

Mia-Lee Ching

Gold and Silversmithing Workshop Honours graduate (2005).



SEAN BOOTH

Shoal Light 2009

Stainless steel, aluminium, LEDs
200x500x550mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2002, currently practicing in Canberra ACT.



ALEXANDER **BOYNES**

200 Motels Light 2009

Acrylic, aluminium, enamel paint, CCFL lighting system
400x250x60mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2004, currently practicing in Canberra ACT.



MIA-LEE CHING

To Know & To Believe 2009

925 silver, borosilicate, giant Rewood seed
35x55x55mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2005, currently practicing in Canberra ACT.



PAM CORE

Orange Cross Pendant 2009

Stainless steel, acrylic
70x50x12mm

Graduated with a Diploma of Visual Art 2008, currently practicing in Canberra ACT.



ROBERT FOSTER

Twisted Arsonist Vase 2009

Press-forged and hammered anodised aluminium

Height 370mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts 1981/Graduate Diploma of Arts (Visual) 1985, currently practicing in Queanbeyan, NSW.

Established manufacturing company Fink&Co, Queanbeyan NSW, 1993.



YUN-HSIANG (ERIC) HU

Arise 2 2008

Brass, shell powder and paint, plywood backing mount
680x680x120mm

Graduated with a Master of Philosophy 2005, currently practicing in Taiwan R.O.C.



ALISON JACKSON

A Drink for Two 2009

925 silver

Height 170mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2008, currently practicing in Queanbeyan, NSW.
Established Pocket Studio with Lan Nguyen-hoan, Queanbeyan NSW, 2008.



KATHLEEN JANZEN

Tick tick tick tick #1 2009

925 silver, recycled computer key, wood, paper
160x160x45mm

Exchange student from Alberta College of Art & Design 2004, currently practicing in Alberta, Canada.



ALINA JAY

Neckpiece 2009

Bone china, stainless steel cable
90x35x20mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2000, currently practicing in Canberra, ACT.

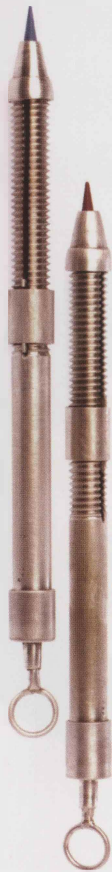


CINNAMON LEE

Transform Armrings 2009

Rapid prototyped ABS, automotive paint
Diameter each 100mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2001, currently practicing in Canberra, ACT.
Lecturer Gold and Silversmithing Workshop, ANU School of Art since 2003.

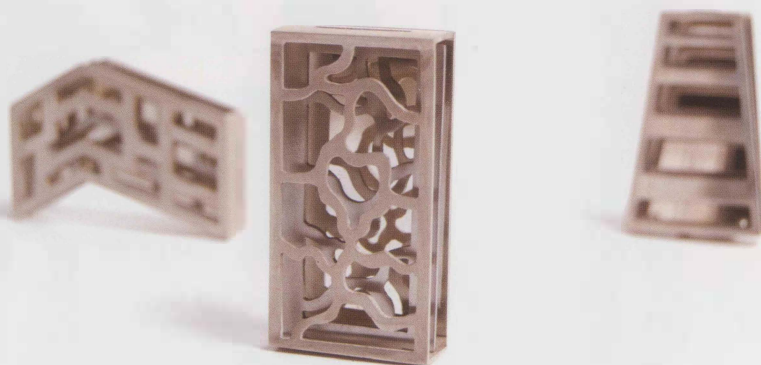


ALICE LEES

Travel Pencils 2009

925 silver, coloured pencil leads
Length each 110mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2002, currently practicing in Newcastle, NSW.
Established Shiny Factory, Newcastle NSW, 2004.



SAM MERTENS

Brooches No. 11, 12, 13 2009

925 silver, stainless steel

Each approximately 45x20x10mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2007, currently practicing in Canberra, ACT.



LAN NGUYEN-HOAN

Kip 2009

Powder-coated aluminium, nylon, steel, rubber
Standing height 1150mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2007, currently practicing in Queanbeyan, NSW.
Established Pocket Studio with Alison Jackson, Queanbeyan NSW, 2008.



ROHAN NICOL

Coffee Set - Domestic Renewal 2009

Existing coffee percolator "junior espresso", anodised aluminium, nylon, polyurethane, 925 silver
Coffee pot height 230mm, sugar bowl diameter 140mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts 1996/Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2003, currently practicing in Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Technical Officer/Lecturer Charles Sturt University since 2004.



GILBERT RIEDELBAUCH

Arc Light 2009

Brass, rubber, LEDs, feathers, power pack
500x100x100mm

Graduated with a Graduate Diploma of Arts [Visual] 1993, currently practicing in Canberra, ACT.
Lecturer ANU School of Art since 1994.



BARBARA RYMAN

Exploration - Doro Shippo 1 2009

Vitreous Doro enamel, 925 silver, copper

Approximately 60mm high

Graduated with a Graduate Diploma of Arts (Visual) 2006, currently practicing in Thirroul, NSW.



LAUREN SIMEONI

Lunacy Brooches 2009

Printed aluminium, acrylic, magnets
Each approximately 70x70x30mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts 1996, currently practicing in Adelaide, SA.



OLIVER SMITH

ONE Servers 2009

Monel

Length 260mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2000/Master of Philosophy 2002, currently practicing in Sydney, NSW.

Lecturer Sydney College of the Arts since 2006.



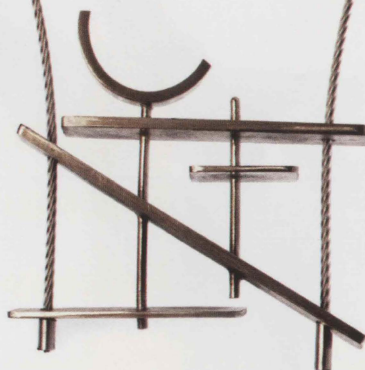
STUDIO HAÇIENDA

General Assembly Brooches 2008

Anodised aluminium, glass

Longest 90x16x10mm

Studio Hacienda was established by Phoebe Porter and Blanche Tilden, Melbourne VIC, 2005.

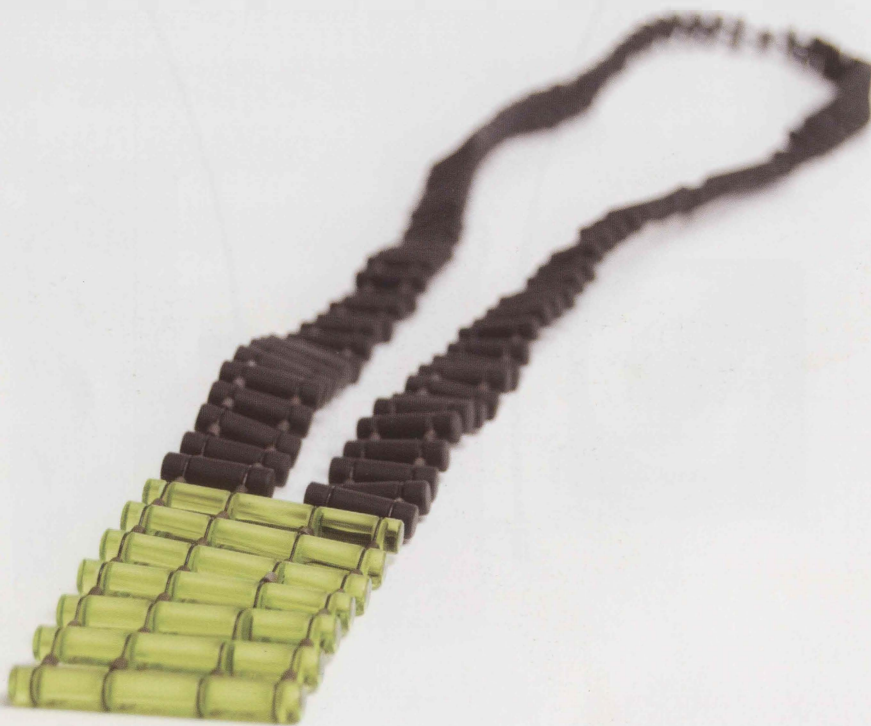


TANJA TAGLIETTI

Tier N1 Neckpiece 2009

925 silver, nylon coated stainless steel cable
50x45x12mm

Graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) 2005, currently practicing in Canberra, ACT.

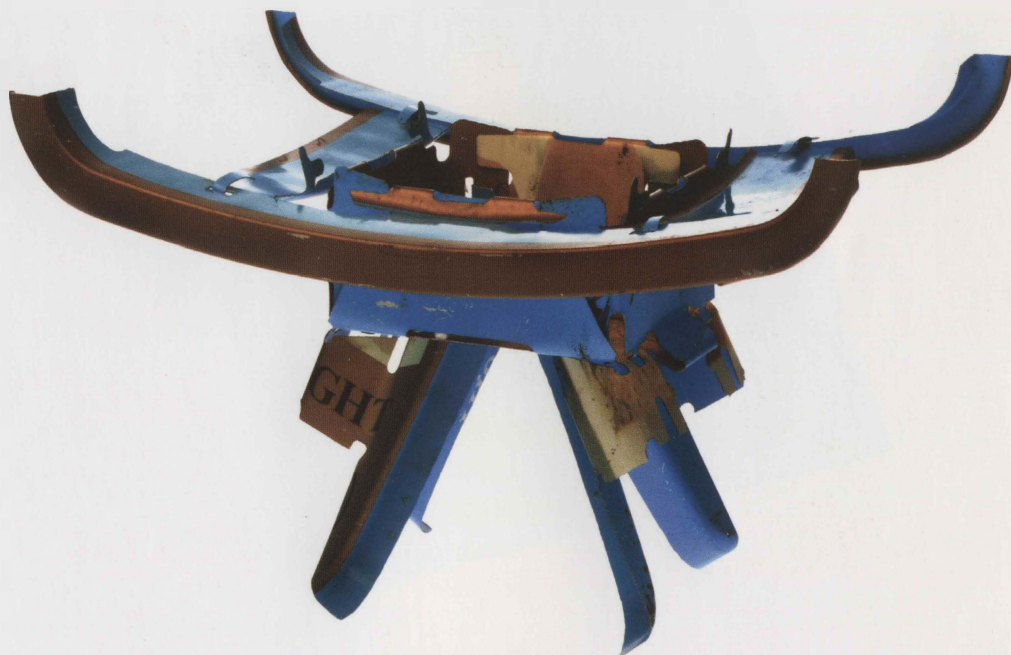


BLANCHE TILDEN

Hope Necklace 2009

Cold worked and acid etched glass, oxidised 925 silver, nylon coated stainless steel cable
Length 540mm

Graduated with a Graduate Diploma of Arts (Visual) 1995, currently practicing in Melbourne, VIC.
Established Studio Hacienda with Phoebe Porter, Melbourne VIC, 2005.



JASON WADE

Brazier 2009

Subverted collected object
220x300x240mm

Graduated with Bachelor of Visual Arts 1995, currently practicing in Melbourne, VIC.
Lecturer/Technical Officer Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology since 2002.



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An Exhibition of Recent Work by Gold and Silversmithing Workshop Alumni 2009

April 30 - May 30, 2009 School of Art Foyer Gallery
The Australian National University School of Art, Canberra ACT, Australia

The Gold and Silversmithing Workshop would like to thank the following people for their generosity and support in the production of the exhibition ALUMINA and the accompanying catalogue:

David Williams for accompanying Johannes Kuhnen as guest curator in the selection of exhibiting artists and for his continuing support of the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop. **Mia-Lee Ching** for volunteering her time to write the catalogue essay. **Gordon Bull** - Head of the School of Art and **James Holland** - Gallery Co-ordinator of the School of Art Gallery. **Roger Hutchinson** for being a Class-A Champion. All participating **G&S graduates** for their time in providing new works for this special exhibition.

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