

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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EXHIBITION OF MODERN HANDMADE JEWELRY OPENS AT
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

In its new exhibition Modern Handmade Jewelry, opening Wednesday, September 18, 1946, the Museum of Modern Art shows that today's jewelry need be neither the princely luxury of precious stones and metals nor the dubious glitter of production-line gadgets sometimes appropriately referred to as "junk jewelry." In addition to silver, the variety of materials used by the twenty-five craftsmen-designers whose work is shown in the exhibition includes brass, chrome-nickel steel, plastic, native stones, marbles, pebbles, red, yellow and green jacks, hardware and even safety pins.

Broken bits of colored glass are set like jewels in the fantastic forms of hammered brass out of which Alexander Calder, sculptor of mobiles and stabiles, has wrought his "sun" pin, his necklace "on two planes" and his other inspired pieces. The exhibition will be on view in the Auditorium gallery of the Museum through November 10.

The types of pieces shown include bracelets, necklaces, pins, earrings, belt buckles, rings and pendants, but the forms are seldom conventional even when the material is as familiar as silver. Free forms are used and designs are usually abstract. The enameled safety-pin necklaces and bracelets by Izabel M. Coles of New York City, formerly of Tiffany's, are suggestive of ancient Egyptian adornments. The hardware jewelry by Anni Albers and Alex Reed of Black Mountain College, North Carolina, composed of washers, screws, angles, curtain rings, with a necklace combining a sieve, paper clips and a key chain, have the elegance of good design. The heavy square collar of hand-wrought silver by Hurst and Kingsbury has a medieval quality not incompatible with the abstract clip in two planes of silver attached to one corner. The patina of age seems to bloom on Ward Bennett's necklaces and pendants of brass hammered to the thinness of a shell, somewhat reminiscent of Pre-Columbian ornaments.

Painters and sculptors and a motion picture director are among the twenty-five craftsmen-designers whose work is shown. Julien Levy, art dealer, has achieved the effect of a stone-setting by the device of hammering silver in a simple concave pattern. The near-abstract form of a bird raised on hammered copper overlaid with molten silver forming itself into irregular patterns is one of the pieces of hand-wrought jewelry that have come from the fingers of Julio de Diego, noted modern painter. A small selection of Navajo jewelry has been included to show how forms which have remained traditional for centuries may be re-employed in new ways by imaginative craftsmen.

The exhibition has been directed by Jane Sabersky, Supervisor of the Museum's Circulating Exhibitions. Charlotte Trowbridge, Designer in the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions, has created the special installation for this traveling exhibition. In her introductory note to the exhibition Miss Sabersky writes in part as follows:

"Jewelry, once the especial possession of kings and princes, has always been thought of as luxury. As leaders of styles and tastes, they commissioned the individual craftsman. Jewelry today is available to a far greater public through mass production.

"Today the individual artist or craftsman who executed the precious object especially for his patron has gradually been supplanted by the wholesale manufacturer. Eager for the fruits of large-scale production, the manufacturer clings to a 19th century pride in the ability of his machines to reproduce anything and everything. Such an attitude brings in its wake an irreverence toward individual craftsmanship, a lack of appreciation of materials as such, and discourages to a large degree any creative designing. The market thus abounds with highly-polished, over burdened gadgets, hardly to be called designs.

"To call attention to the fact that modern jewelry need not be thought of exclusively in terms of either expensive precious jewels or the mass-produced object, this exhibition presents a selection of handmade jewelry of contemporary design. Although excellent designs are sometimes to be found among mass-produced 'costume jewelry,' in general it is the individual craftsman or artist, less restricted by commercial standards, who makes new contributions to the art. The exhibition has therefore been confined to the work of individuals though it does not represent a complete survey of the work of such designers throughout the United States but has been selected from sources accessible to the Museum.

"No restrictions were followed with regard to material except that the high cost of insuring precious jewels in a traveling exhibition dictated their omission. Our criterion of selection was simply: those designs which showed that the artist had considered the characteristics of the materials used and made us aware of their intrinsic beauty in contemporary terms."

The following craftsmen-designers are represented in the exhibition:

- Anni Albers and Alex Reed, Black Mountain College, North Carolina
- Ward Bennett, New York City
- Harry Bertola, Los Angeles
- Madeleine Burrage, Kennebunkport, Maine
- Alexander Calder, Roxbury, Conn.
- Izabel M. Coles, New York City
- Julio de Diego, New York City
- Fred Farr, New York City
- May Gay, Portland, Oregon
- Alexander Hammid, New York City
- Fannie Hillsmith, New York City
- Hurst and Kingsbury, New York City
- Adda Husted-Anderson, New York City
- Gertrude Karlan, New York City
- Hilda Kraus, New York City
- Julien Levy, New York City
- Jacques Lipchitz, New York City
- Paul A. Lobel, New York City
- Richard Pousette-Dart, New York City
- Margaret de Patta, San Francisco
- José de Rivera, New York City
- Ellis Simpson, New York City
- Annette M. de Stephens, Mexico City
- Madeleine Turner, New York City
- Caroline Wagner, New York City