

ARTICLES OF HOPE, ADORNMENTS FOR JUSTICE

Royal Exchange Mezzanine Gallery, Manchester

2nd July-21st August

Reviewed by Charlotte Verity



Caroline Royal: Bangle, 'Shackle', Article 29. Silver, copper, brass, found and reclaimed materials. Photograph Jonathan Keenan.

'Articles of Hope' is the fourth non-commercial exhibition from the Manchester Jewellers Network, and was inspired by the 60th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations' General Assembly in 1958. The catalogue begins by explaining the intentions of the exhibition, and giving a brief history of Campaign Jewellery, from campaigns such as the Woman's Social and Political Union's implementation of the three colours, purple, white and green, worn as ribbons or badges, in 1908, to the red poppies, launched in 1919 and worn every November to this day as a tribute to war veterans. These campaigns, and others, have all fought for the rights, freedom and dignity of man through the medium of body adornment and this exhibition follows the tradition.

Eleven jewellers from the MJN participated in the exhibition, and each jeweller selected one of the thirty UDHR Articles to interpret. Though the UDHR is now over 60 years old, the fundamental themes and issues addressed are perhaps more poignant today than ever before. For example, the brooch 'Represented' by Tara Kirkpatrick is an interpretation of Article 21, 'Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country...'. This is a right which women fought for in many countries, including this country, over a century ago, and a right which is currently being fought for in Afghanistan.

The brooch by Rowena Golton, 'A Prayer for Tibet', was inspired by Article 15, 'Everyone has the right to a nationality...', and has a similar global significance, as it highlights the plight of the Tibetan people under China's rule. Other jewellers chose Articles with more personal significance, for example, 'Working Class Hero', a medal by Samantha Mills, is an interpretation of Article 23, which sets out human rights with regards to employment, and is dedicated to 'those who have died from an industrial disease'; her father died from asbestosis.

My personal favourite piece is 'Apothecary Ring' by Anne Hawley, an interpretation of Article 27, 'Everyone has the right freely to... share in scientific advancement and its benefits'. The piece is designed around the concept of balance; a green cross on one side of the ring represents the pharmaceutical industry, while a red cross on the opposite side represents access to essential medicines for all. Along the top of the ring, figures representing the people of the world slide one way or another, tipping the balance.

All the pieces on display were well designed and crafted with in-depth explanations, showing great understanding of the subject matter. A central feature of the exhibition was the life size photographs by Jonathan Keenan, which showed the jewellery in context, being worn. The jewellery pieces themselves were on display in purpose built stands, created by Lazerian, from breeze block, steel rod and Perspex.

Though the exhibition does not seek to collect funds to donate to any specific cause, it does encourage the viewer to question her or his own allegiance and support any of the many Human Rights organisations who work to make justice, fairness and freedom a reality. The exhibition will be touring nationally and internationally in venues to be confirmed, for the next two years. After this time, the intention of the MJN is to auction the pieces of jewellery from the exhibition, and donate the proceeds to charity.