



Vicky Shukuroglou: *Bird* (left), sticks, copper wire, 180(h) x 105(w) x 70(d)cms. *Loop Neckpiece* (right), electrical wire, 190Ømm. *Object* (far right), electrical wire, feather, 95(l) x 40(w) x 50(h)mm.



Earth, Wings and Wire

24 Hour Art Space, Darwin
5 – 20 March 1999

UPON ENTERING THE EXHIBITION SPACE MY EYES WERE ATTRACTED TO A LARGE, BIRD-SHAPED CONSTRUCTION which appeared to float in front of a sheet of paper suspended from the ceiling. Closer investigation revealed the piece to be a back-lit photograph of the sculpture and its shadow. This moment of perplexity prepared me for the subtle interplay between space, form and material that I would encounter in the jewellery and objects created by Vicky Shukuroglou.

The majority of pieces were the product of Shukuroglou's 1998 Honours year in Gold and Silversmithing at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). Early last year Shukuroglou undertook a four-month residency in the Northern Territory, two months of which were spent in Manyingkarirra (Maningrida), an Aboriginal community in North Central Arnhem Land. Here she learnt the technique of loop weaving from the women of the community who traditionally use this method to make grass bags. Shukuroglou skilfully adapts these weaving techniques in *Earth, Wings and Wire* to create three-dimensional forms constructed mostly of sterling silver, copper or electrical wire, with the inclusion of found natural materials such as feathers, seeds, pods, shells and leaves.

Loop Neckpiece is a striking piece made out of loop-woven red electrical wire. The piece clung snugly around the neck, jutting out approximately 5cm with both ends bent slightly away from the rippled, flat plane. Shukuroglou interrupts the uniform pattern of the weave in many pieces, such as the ripples in this one, by stretching or compressing its component parts. Although she is predominantly concerned with the form of her pieces rather than their utility, the flexibility of the simple loop weave is well suited to wearables.

A hexagonal weave was also used in many pieces in the exhibition. *Mani Mani Neckpiece* for example, is composed of a woven sterling silver wire tube, packed with red seeds from the Red Bead Tree

The work of Vicky Shukuroglou

(*Adenanthera pavonina*) and joined to form a circle, around the outside of which is a flamboyant fringe of wire. A distinctive element in many of Shukuroglou's pieces is the way in which she allows the ends of the woven wires to occupy space outside the confines of the form, further dissolving the division between the handmade and the organic, and the object and its space.

The close link established by Shukuroglou between organic elements and the hand-worked material was evident throughout. A non-wearable woven copper piece, *Object*, is a cylindrical form that narrows towards the centre and has a domed 'lid'. A feather rests within the vessel, in a way that suggests it has just fallen in. The combination does not seem contrived or constrained as the spaces formed by the weaving allow the enclosed object to 'breathe'. Whether the organic element is encaged, threaded or used as a mould, Shukuroglou achieves a remarkable harmony between the natural and constructed materials.

Two related pieces, *Red Lip with Feather* and *Red Lip with Leaf*, balance a constructed metal pod-shaped object with a large feather and decomposed leaf respectively. Shukuroglou's predominant use of red, along with the less startling white, silver and black, adds another layer of suggestion. The red lips painted on these pod forms act as an invitation to the dark hollow within, in much the same way as a splash of colour will attract a mate or prey in the natural world.

The small scale, the surface quality, the fluid forms and flawless manufacture of Shukuroglou's pieces made *Earth, Wings and Wire* a sensitive and harmonious exhibition.

Emma Davies is Curatorial Assistant, Craft, at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin.

Carried by the Body:

Melbourne – Sydney

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Sherman Galleries Hargrave, Sydney
8 – 29 May 1999

CARRIED BY THE BODY SHOWCASED THE WORKS OF EIGHT CONTEMPORARY JEWELLERS FROM MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY. Curated by Carlier Makagawa, with assistance from Mark Edgoose, the exhibition was initiated as an official event of the Mercedes Australian Fashion Week Festival. The objective in staging this exhibition was to create a fusion of fashion and contemporary jewellery, a platform whereby adornment met fashion and fashion entered the realm of the contemporary gallery space. But did it—or rather can it?

In an event of this nature, where the most innovative and daring of designs are presented by both the doyens and the up and coming of the fashion clique, one must question the connection to contemporary jewellery practices. If jewellery is in any way to be linked to the world of fashion, then tradition would dictate that it is but an accessory, to simply complement and adorn an outfit. But contemporary jewellery is far more than that. It is a powerful tool able to express a plethora of emotions, ideas, reactions, reflections and memories. For this reason *Carried by the Body* could not be viewed as an exhibition about accessorising fashion. If Fashion Week's agenda is about pushing the boundaries, then so too this exhibition was about shifting the perception of what jewellery is, or can be.

Much contemporary jewellery sets out to investigate and explore relationships to the body, best illustrated in this exhibition by Vanessa Raimondo's, *Wraps* and Kelly McDonald's, *Wrap*—a self portrait. Both artists present wearable pieces, yet both works remain cloaked in ambiguity in terms of function. Only McDonald offers a



visual clue as to her pieces' application to the body—but I would be very surprised to find this item worn, as the black and white photograph depicts, draped across a naked derriere. *Carried by the Body* served to challenge jewellery's pretentiousness and preciousness—in being viewed as a symbol of status and wealth—and offered an opportunity to re-think and challenge established beliefs.

Where traditionally it might have been appropriate to use gold or silver, this exhibition proffered materials such as human hair, plastic and sequins. Take for instance the works offered by both Karin Findeis and Janet Watts. Findeis presented a series of neckpieces, whose relationship to the body was immediately apparent, however she combined somewhat unorthodox materials such as lead and silver, and hair with pearls and silver, to create pieces that were as confronting as they were beautiful. Findeis' work presented a quirky twist on society's preconceived notions of preciousness. Similarly with Watts' neckpieces, which, constructed from silver, thread and sequins, displayed an obvious user-friendliness.

Carried by the Body in correlation to fashion, presented objects that didn't just fulfil their function, but served to elicit a response from the wearer, asking them to question, to ponder; and to dig deeper than simply complementing the new season's clothing.

Ingrid Mills is a jeweller who is currently working in Arts Administration.

Top: Janet Watts, 5
Brooches, 1998, fine
silver, sterling silver, silver
bullion, enamel paint,
cotton thread, largest 35
x 25 x 20mm, smallest
15 x 12 x 12mm.

Above: Vanessa Raimondo,
Scarf, 1998, stainless
steel, mesh.