

Ware/ Wear

Throughout the 1970s, feminist artists sought to extend the categories of art to encompass materials and practices that speak to the experiences of women, including themes of beauty, domesticity, and sexuality. Contemporary feminist jewelers concerned with consumerism and sustainability build on previous ideas through purposefully reframing and refashioning everyday objects into art jewelry. These artists reclaim found items from thrift stores and dumpsters, seeing in them the potential for artistic expression and social commentary that work to unsettle constructed notions of gender and high art.

Informed by her interest in femininity and materiality, artist Harriete Estel Berman assembles wearable art jewelry from found tin containers to explore the complicated relationships between women's social roles and consumer culture. She graduated from Stanley Lechtzin's Master of Fine Arts program at the Tyler School of Art, near Philadelphia, in 1980, as artists were seizing "second wave" feminism as a method to rework feminine associations with ornamentation. As a feminist, Berman developed her decorative aesthetic in response to commercial representations of women in print and television advertisements. By repurposing designs from consumer goods, her artworks make visible the cultural ideals of the original products and the society that made them.

To create the pieces in her ongoing series "Bracelets," Berman meticulously culls colorful patterns and branding from found tin cans and containers manufactured by popular consumer goods companies. By cutting her imagery with pinking shears to create a sawtoothed edge, she alludes to feminized craft traditions, such as quilt making. *Bracelet* (1997) features a patchwork of three contrasting patterns fixed with gold rivets.

The inside of the bracelet, hedged within a cornucopian pattern of colorful fruit, exhibits insignia from an Oreo cookie tin. Here, Berman cleverly references the pet name "Cookie" to comment on sexist innuendo that reinforces gender norms.

Gésine Hackenberg challenges society's familiarity with decorative domesticity through formally and conceptually restaging antique ceramic dinnerware in her contemporary jewelry. Before she began to explore the aesthetic possibilities of everyday materials, Hackenberg trained as a goldsmith in Germany and earned her degree at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, in Amsterdam. She conceives of her wearable ceramic jewelry in alliance with and respect for the original ceramic object by maintaining its integrity: insisting that the two distinct objects be united when the necklace is not being worn.

A clever play on ceramic "ware" and "wear," the title of *Kitchen Necklace* (2008) both references the original context of the found object from which the piece is made and announces its new existence as wearable art. Made of discs drilled from a Belgian earthenware plate, the necklace preserves and parades fragments of the object's decorative blue-and-white motif. The pierced plate emphasizes movement through its spiraling row of holes, which ghostly mirrors the form of the necklace itself. Hackenberg's ceramic jewelry explores the territory between ornamentation and functionality, infusing tradition with modern techniques that conceptually reappropriate femininity's associations with decor and European cultural heritage.

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Harriete Estel Berman United States, b. 1952

Gésine Hackenberg Germany, b. 1972



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