

**AMERICAN JEWELRY: THE SUSAN GRANT LEWIN COLLECTION AT THE YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY**



Thomas Gentille, *Brooch*, New York, 20th century. Surell, synthetic resin, eggshell, pigment, nylon, and bronze. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Susan Grant Lewin

March 24, 2022, New Haven, Conn.—*American Jewelry: The Susan Grant Lewin Collection at the Yale University Art Gallery* presents over two dozen pieces of jewelry by artists and makers working in the United States. The installation provides an overview of the history of studio jewelry in the United States since the end of World War II and offers a glimpse into the relationships Lewin forged with many of the jewelers she wrote about in her 1994 book, *One of a Kind: American Art Jewelry Today*.

This collection was generously donated to the Yale University Art Gallery in 2021. Exhibited for the first time, it underscores Lewin’s commitment to promoting and preserving important advancements in the studio-jewelry field. Lewin’s collection complements and expands the Gallery’s significant holdings of American jewelry, which include examples from colonial America through today.

“The Lewin collection was thoughtfully assembled and conveys a collector’s deep interest in the craft of jewelry. It is an exciting addition to the Gallery’s jewelry collection. We are grateful to Susan Grant Lewin for her generous gift and her longtime commitment to the field,” shares Alexandra Ward, former Marcia Brady Tucker Senior Fellow in the Department of American Decorative Arts at the Gallery, who organized the installation.

The installation demonstrates how pioneers in the field across the country—from Art Smith, based in Greenwich Village, New York, to Peter Macchiarini, working in San Francisco—spoke to the experimental nature of midcentury design. It also illustrates the shift to increasingly conceptual jewelry, with examples like Lisa Galnick’s iconoclastic series *Black Acrylic* and a path-breaking brooch by Myra Mimlitsch-Gray.

Lewin has a particular interest in artists who challenge the assumption that jewelry must be made from precious or valuable materials. A necklace by Claire Dinsmore includes a fragment of the Berlin Wall mounted as if it were a gemstone, while a brooch by Thomas Gentille deftly mixes eggshell inlay and Surell, a synthetic resin. A complex neckpiece constructed by Kiff Slemmons from found and repurposed elements, including pencils and wooden printing blocks, was commissioned by Lewin specifically for the Gallery.

The installation also highlights the diversity and vibrancy of the jewelry field today. Both Arthur Hash and Joe Wood employ computer-aided design software to conceptualize and execute their designs, while Gustav Reyes applies new techniques to steam-bend wood into sculptural jewelry. While many of the pieces are based on abstract ideas or new processes, others explore narrative

traditions to respond to political, cultural, and social movements. Gayle Saunders's *Empty*, from the *Beach Stone* series, speaks to the intangible emotional sentiment imparted onto materials. Christina Smith's *I'll Get the Box* expresses frustration with the U.S. voting system. Finally, Aaron Decker's *Under Loud* uses visual metaphors to explore the pervasiveness of the military in American culture.

The installation is accompanied by an illustrated brochure with written contributions by Ward, jeweler Thomas Gentile, and Ursula Ilse-Neuman, Curator Emerita, Museum of Arts and Design, New York.

*American Jewelry: The Susan Grant Lewin Collection at the Yale University Art Gallery* is on view through fall 2022.

### **Credits**

Installation and brochure made possible by the Art Gallery Exhibition and Publication Fund. Organized by Alexandra Ward, former Marcia Brady Tucker Senior Fellow, Department of American Decorative Arts.

### **Yale University Art Gallery**

Founded in 1832, the Yale University Art Gallery is the oldest college art museum in America. Today, it is a center for teaching, learning, and scholarship and a preeminent cultural asset for Yale University, the wider academic community, and the public. The museum collects, preserves, studies, and presents art in all media, from all regions of the globe and across time, with a collection numbering nearly 300,000 objects.

### **General Information**

The Yale University Art Gallery is located at 1111 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut. For more information, please call 203.432.0600 or visit the website at [artgallery.yale.edu](http://artgallery.yale.edu).

### **Press Contact**

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