

VISUAL ARTS

BAUBLES & MOVING TALES AT BASS

Curated by the wife of French artist Bernar Venet, 'From Picasso to Koons' avoids common pitfalls of trying to combine fine art with popular design.

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From Picasso to Koons: *The Artist as Jeweler* could have fallen into a too-common hole, where museums attempt to combine fashion, design or crafts with fine art and come up with something not worthy of any of the disciplines. Many a respectable museum has done it. Fortunately, for the most part, the Bass Museum of Art has avoided this with a lovely exhibit that focuses entirely on wearable jewelry. All the pieces highlighted

qualify as noteworthy jewelry, without the strained inclusion of less-than-successful works from big names.

SIGNATURE STYLE: Brooch, 1957, is typical of Salvador Dalí.



The exhibit also reveals significant trends in Modern and contemporary art and highlights the remarkable skills and art-making of some of the world's best-known names.

Part of the reason the Bass pulled this off is French curator Diane Venet's unique, personal approach. After her own sculptor husband Bernar Venet proposed to her with a silver ring he made impromptu on her finger, she started to ask his artist friends if they had made jewelry not for sale or exhibition, but for family and friends. She then commissioned pieces from the likes of Frank Stella, Kader Attia and other artists whom she thought would not cheapen the process and would take the creation as serious as their art. Eventually she would collect items from artists no longer alive and from across the globe, but pieces that remained true to the initial venture.

What resulted is an array of works, 200 from 135 artists, arranged somewhat by themes or styles or eras. But what is amazing is how many of these pieces jump out immediately as announcing the hand of their creator.

Take for example one of artists in the title. The silver "Rabbit Necklace," with its big ears, is obviously as the work of Jeff Koons. There's



RING OF WOES: Work from Delphine Boel, 2012. Top, platinum rabbit necklace by pop artist Jeff Koons, 2005-2009.

the Dalí brooch, a gold spoon with a clock-face carved into the small shallow of the bowl — who wouldn't want to wear that one?

The list goes on. Anish Kapoor hangs a miniature version of his multi-reflective sculptural dishes from a chain. Yoko Ono spells out "Imagine Peace" in a yellow-and-white gold ring shaped like a record. Andy Warhol wove together a watch from five little frames of views of New York City, overlaid with red clock hands with five different times. Pendants on a chain that look like tiny computer or electrical grids, made from mixed metals and plastic — it's no surprise these were created by Nam June Paik.

There are works of gems and glass, gold and silver, acrylic and stone, textile and metal. Some are representational; one grouping includes jewelry with distinct natural life, flowers and spiders, from Roberto Matta and Louise Bourgeois. Others make a statement, such as Santiago Sierra's "Diamond Trafficking Kills," studded with diamonds. And still others are just fun to look at, such as Tom Sachs's "Polar Bear Club Necklace," which strings together quarters punched through the middle with small, white polar bear dolls.

A few pieces fall flat, in that they don't seem to represent a form, era, style or particular hand. Which is what makes the rest of the works so interesting.



SEA-INSPIRED: Bracelet by Michele Oka Doner, 2011. Top, brooch by Roy Lichtenstein, 1968.



MOBILE FOR THE THROAT: Necklace by Alexander Calder, 1950.

