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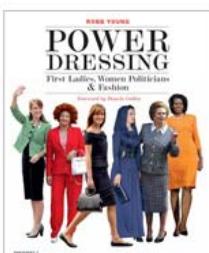
SATURDAY, 14 AUGUST 2010

## TIFFANY ROWE DISCUSSES CREA-TIFF'S ARTISTIC NATURE WITH ANA FINEL HONIGMAN



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Ever since humans began adorning their bodies, nature has provided us with decoration. Yet few designers fully comprehend the symbolic and scientific significance of natural materials as well as Tiffany Rowe, the designer of Geneva's Crea-Tiff Bijoux.

Rowe's background in art and biology inspire her handcrafted pieces. The British-Swiss designer incorporates seeds, gold beads, pebbles, shells and other organic materials in her resin rings. And her eclectic interests expand past purely organic elements. She has also created collections inspired by fruit, family heirlooms and electrons. Her keen knowledge of contemporary art offers her a foundation for formulating an understanding of her work. Here, she explains her materials' intentions and associations.

Ana Finel Honigman: What is the inspiration for incorporating poppy seeds in your ring series?

Tiffany Rowe: Concerning the poppy seed ring : this ring is part of the Bourgeois series. I was inspired by Louise Bourgeois' strange, often phallic, sculptures which I had admired at the Tate modern some years back in London. Sadly she died recently, she who was a model for many women artists. Upon my return to Geneva, I decided to make high definition moulds (the same used in dentistry) of fruit (notably pine cones) to obtain the globular aspect of Bourgeois' Cumul sculpture. I then poured transparent resin into the moulds and frequently added small objects (gold leaf, seeds, spare watch parts) to embellish the piece. I rather like the idea of incorporating seeds because they are "little time bombs". Scientists have found seeds over 1000 years old that are capable of germinating. Using the same technique, I am also working on the Genealogy collection, in which I mould vintage cameo brooches - all whilst questioning the fact of heritage, transfer and transmission during the lifetime of a woman.

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AFH: Why express these concerns as accessories rather than through conventional art mediums?

TR: Isn't fashion a form of wearable art? Fashion (and ultimately jewellery) has always been associated with the social status of the wearer. What better way than to affirm your personality than by actually wearing the objects of your desires?

AFH: I definitely think that defines fashion perfectly. How did you decide to realize these influences and issues in the form of rings?

TR: Oh, I haven't only made rings! I have also created earrings, pendants, bracelets and brooches. It all depends on the size of the object I'm moulding.

AFH: Are you saying that the seeds might decay, mutate or develop over time? Or does the resin arrest their natural development?

TR: Once the seeds are encapsulated in the resin, I'm afraid they are not going to develop any further. However, we could imagine a "Jurassic Park" scenario in which the DNA of the seeds mutates over time and if we were to extract the seeds from the resin in some far future, we just might be able to grow a very strange plant!

AFH: But for the rings - were you mostly interested in the cultural associations of rings or in rings' inherent symbolism as circular forms?

TR: I'm afraid I'll have to be pragmatic here - I enjoy wearing voluminous, eye catching rings. It's as simple as that.



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AFH: How do the Janus rings function together?

TR: Janus, according to Roman mythology, is the god of gates, doors, beginnings and endings. He is most often depicted as having two faces looking in opposite directions : one to the future and the other towards the past. My Janus rings are designed to be worn alone or in tandem (in matching or contrasting colours) and can even be separated and thus held open by using a simple metal band.

AFH: Were you also influenced by Louise Bourgeois's rather striking dress sense?

TR: No, I can't say I was because during the Tate Gallery exhibition my eye was really caught by her sculptures. Only after did I read about her career and way of living.



AFH: How does your work fit within Geneva's fashion community?

TR: Does it have to fit in? All the jewellery that I create is genuine in that it stems entirely from my imagination and that I love to wear my own creations. I think my clients in Geneva realise this and they have been faithful and supportive of my work ever since the beginning. Geneva is a beautiful, small city to which I am very attached. Being British, I must admit I do have an eccentric streak and I seek an originality that may at times not be very commercial. Although the potential market here is small, I have always been encouraged by the fashion press and contacted by many photographers who, very flatteringly, want to collaborate with me. This just proves the point that one should always try to follow one's passions, because it is precisely in these domains that we excel.

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AFH: Why did you include watch parts in the work? Was that another means of addressing "time" or a play on the Swiss luxury industry?

TR: I found the watch parts in the Geneva flea market, I just thought they were pretty and I rather liked the "mechanical" aspect of these miniature machine parts. I'm neither a brand nor a luxury fanatic, preferring to encourage independent artists and their handicrafts. The watch industry here is revered, but so it should be. Traditionally, a watch is made up of thousands of parts, each painstakingly made by highly trained artisans, each with their own specialty. I continue to encourage our local talent by hosting radio and television programs on the subject.

AFH; Do you consider these rings a form of memento mori?

TR: Oh no please, I studied biology which is a homage to life not death! However as I women, I must admit that now I'm in my thirties I'm having lots of intense discussions about ovules, childbearing and motherhood. The seeds in the rings may be symptom of this, on the other hand I just happened to have some poppy seeds in my kitchen !



AFH: What was your work with Zoological department of Oxford University and how has it influenced your aesthetic, symbolic or technical concerns?

TR: At Geneva university I studied biology, specializing in ethology (animal behaviour). I was actually interested in the spatial navigation of hamsters. Please, no laughing now ! In Oxford I was a volunteer helping decode the social strategies of badgers. I love fundamental science, it serves nothing else but to increase our curiosity, knowledge and ultimately respect of the life forms around us. But rest assured, I made sure that most weekends were spent in buzzing London to divert my attention to equally futile but oh so pleasant other activities in the realm of fashion and art.

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