

# Understanding the making of beautiful things

A new exhibition challenges our perceptions of today's silversmiths. By **Corinne Julius**

LONDON IS one of the creative capitals of the world, but where does that creativity come from?

A new exhibition at the Goldsmiths' Hall, *Mindful of Silver*, looks at what lies behind the finished product, not in terms of how something is made, but how the designer or maker finds an idea.

"I hate the word 'inspiration'," says the show's curator, Julie Chamberlain. "Intellectual development takes as long as the actual making, so we are showing the processes behind an idea. There is little understanding of the considerable time and thought that contributes to the final object."

The result is a show that, bizarrely, not only includes some very beautiful silver, but also bleach bottles, a Ryvita, an Ethiopian oil can and a sketch on the back of an envelope. Twelve makers with very different aesthetics, making processes and ways of developing an idea, were invited to produce at least one new vessel – and to supply a very detailed account, with evidence, of how they got there: everything from tea-stained scribbles to models.

## THE RESULTS ARE FASCINATING

Most silversmiths allow for an element of serendipity in the final making. There are surprisingly few sketchbooks, but lots of models. **Rebecca De Quin** has a whole table top of them in all kinds of different materials including copper, mesh and tissue paper, to demonstrate how she gets to the final pieces in her "Shape and Form". She looks at the components of a vessel such as the

rim, neck, and base, reflecting her consideration of still life paintings.

**Lucian Taylor** in his "Superabundant" inflated forms, also looks at paintings (17th-century Dutch still lifes), as well as stuffed animals, inflatable toys and gourds. He uses software to draw, then makes paper models, before experimenting in metal models that he inflates with high-pressure water. The inflation adds an unexpected element in the final silver pieces.

**Peter Musson** uses computers. He's even built his own Computer Numerical Controlled Machine, but firstly works his ideas out on paper, drawing on such unlikely sources as Japanese radish grater. Then he makes multiple models using the computer as a tool.

Nothing could be further removed from **Vladimir Bohm's** approach. His huge black rough platter comes heavily influenced by a stone trough from his family's village in Croatia. He experiments with surface and texture through sketches and paintings and investigates form in copper models.

**David Clarke's** experiments for his series of spoons include manipulating old bleach bottles, and drawing. He has gone back to drawing, which allows time for reflection. "It's not about documenting your work, drawing makes you think more. It makes you analyse. It's very intense," he says.

The show came about at the suggestion of silversmith **Hector Miller**, Prime Warden of Goldsmiths, whose own bending tower jugs in the exhibition are supported by a sketch on a torn envelope and a

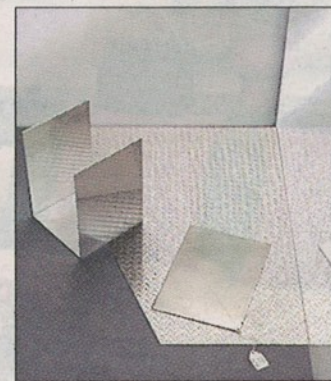


RICHARD VALENCIA



■ *Mindful of Silver* runs from Friday to July 26. Monday-Saturday, 10am-5pm, The Goldsmiths' Hall, Foster Lane, EC2 (020 7606 7010;

**Getting crafty:** (clockwise from top) Spiritus, fold-formed, hammered and soldered by Theresa Nguyen; "Pre-genus 10" by Michael Rowe. card



aluminium plate, with hand fabrication and finishing techniques; Shape and Form – preparatory models for sterling silver and printed and annealed