



'Three Rings', 2013, oxidised silver, roller impressed with gold inlay, each 3.3 x 3.3 cm

SUSAN CROSS' ADVENTURES WITH LINE

SUSAN Cross' creative journey and exhibition history leads, with admirable directness, from a two-year foundation course at Herefordshire College of Art and Design in the early 1980s followed by a four-year degree course at Middlesex Polytechnic specialising in Jewellery, where she was awarded a first class honours. She then had shows, solo and as part of a group, in places as far apart as Auckland, San Francisco, Kyoto, Edinburgh and, among others, to the award of the Jerwood Prize in 2007. The following year she took up her Readership at Edinburgh College of Art. She and her work appeared in publications internationally from as early as 1989, and this underpins an ongoing history of inspiring teaching, lecturing and



'Pendant', 2008, oxidised silver and 18 ct gold, 63 x 10 cm



'Jasper Pendant' and 'Jade Pendant', 2000, oxidised silver and 18 ct gold, each diam. 6.1 cm

professional practice that has been equally busy, and just as international. The work is held in a number of major public collections, including the National Museums of Scotland and the Victoria and Albert Museum; her exhibition and publication history confirm a continuing presence among the key indicators of a developing applied artform. And, just as important, her jewellery is also displayed on the clothes and bodies of a large number of appreciative wearers.

Time, therefore, for an overview, and the exhibition at The Scottish Gallery, her fourth solo show there, gives us a fascinating opportunity



PHOTO: MICHAEL WOLCHOVER.

Series of three-dimensional model sketches made in 2012



'Earrings', 1999, oxidised silver, 18 ct gold inlay

to view the development of Susan Cross' work as the resolute learning and discovery process it is, right from the domestic learning process which began with knitting and crochet at home as a child. We are given the opportunity to see the work advance from the early wire-textile forms to the balanced suspension pendants and the current experiments with enamel, and see how they speak to each other and to us. Some of them demonstrate their maker's characteristic association of the consistently assured technique, foregrounded in her Jerwood citation, with courageous experiment, not least in precious metals: the silver and gold sequin and the *Ric-Rac* neckpieces of 1993 and 2010 demonstrate a sustained expertise and, interestingly, possibly a hardening aesthetic. The more recent pieces are bolder in form and colour: the *Rebel in the Soul* and *Seacliff* neckpieces, combining grey silver embossed oval forms and thread, are sizeable, busy, and noisy in their interaction with the moving wearer.

A very evident connecting thread that joins these pieces is the artist's enduring interest in drawing, and specifically in adventures with line, married to an enjoyment of the traditional materials and practices of other cultures, such as Chinese ink printing on bamboo paper. She has an active archive of drawings and workbooks which demonstrate a deeply embedded practice: she draws to think and to explore and play as well as to record, and her three-dimensional work takes that forward in her use of wire, thread, and fabric-reminiscent textures, especially in the more recent work, which is clearly going to develop further. Her fascination with linear shapes and constructions has a natural connection with her lifelong use of the handworked thread and textile idioms that often recur in Cross' working patterns. These are refreshed by travel and research abroad, not least in Korea, which provided the inspiration for some of the traditional thread elements



'Loop the Loop Series', 2004, brooch, silver, 18 ct gold, 8.5 x 8.5 cm



'Earrings', 1993, braided platinum and 18 ct gold 5.5 x 1.5 cm



'Looping the Loop Series', 2004, silver, 18 ct gold, textile

in the mixed-medium works. The extraordinary oxidised silver wire panel-constructed objects of 1988 do evolve into the metal and cotton combinations and the interlaced thread patterns in the enamel, via the wire-wrapped cylinders of the Jerwood period.

With the lines and threads goes a sense of connection, of complex interwoven forms, and of the interaction of shapes and colours: the *Concentration Brooches* coil paper cord and flash loose red cotton threads; the series of *Twist, Loop* and *Tangle Brooches* in gold and oxidised silver lead the eye around their twisted and coiled flattened pearl-wire. The *Enclosure Brooch* of 2009 draws this all together in its use of ric-rac wire which encloses a coiled pink thread lining. The sense of containment and security is strong: the garment to which it is pinned, and ultimately its wearer, form the base of the oxidised silver nest – which is both enclosed and transparent – and we might view this as an enduring characteristic of the artist's work. The wearer, a consistent priority from the outset, often, and by intention, adds an extra dimension to an object that already has a powerful presence rooted in the quality and innovation of its design and fabrication and the appeal of its colours and texture.

Prof. Elizabeth Moignard

'Looping the Loop Series', 2004, brooch, oxidised silver and 18 ct gold, 6.5 x 7.5 cm



'Seacliff (Shells)', 2010, necklace, oxidised silver, Korean braid, l. 52 cm



'Ring', 2013, silver and green gold, 3 x 2.7 cm



'Necklace', 1998–2013, oxidised silver, 18 ct gold



'Woven Chain Necklace', 2005, oxidised silver and textile, length 39 cm

'Sequin Necklace', 1997, silver and 18 ct gold, L: 47.5 cm, American walnut box

Susan Cross in her studio, Edinburgh 2013

