

## PINNED

Few people would question any of the widely held assumptions about what defines jewellery. Precious materials, high skills, luxury and adornment, personal expression and social conformity. Even fewer would consider contemporary jewellery as a space where many, if not all, such conventions are challenged and contested. The idea of jewellery as an activity, like any piece of jewellery as an object, is a construction. Yet jewellery as an idea, a term and a creative practice is often held in check, firmly defined, literally pinned down. But what if jewellery was to take back the idea of the pin – to unpin itself, so to speak. The twenty-three makers in this exhibition, who come together under the banner of the Association for Contemporary Jewellery and Silversmiths Northern Ireland (ACJ-S-NI), have done just that.

Looking beyond the common tropes, from display to desire, that so often pin down jewellery, these artists broach a wide range of new perspectives drawing conceptual as much as visual inspiration from the natural world, the built environment, heritage, tradition and culture. They mine the domestic and the corporeal, unpack concepts of embellishment and decoration, explore the geometry and mathematics of pattern, the obsolescence and transience of materials both found and forged, and even, in one case, the literal act of pinning itself. New and unexpected forms and meanings emerge and mutate from sterling, oxidised and recycled silver; yellow gold and rose gold; iron, copper, steel and tin; pearls, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds and garnet; gem stones and crystals; wood and thread; acrylic, polyurethane and vinyl. Each hybrid fusion of stuff is set onto a stainless steel pin which is then fastened onto a piece of the maker's clothing.

The spectral trace of each maker, in this inaugural show for the collective, invites us to see each object as an extension, or representation, of the person who made it; like a small self-portrait or a mini manifesto. The spectre of the maker returns the spectator to the very idea that binds this group together – jewellery as a dynamic space for individual expression. Speaking to our unique historical moment many of the objects in the exhibition suggest that 'making' is a way 'connecting' or communicating – not just ideas but feelings too. In a time when life has been stripped of the comfort of human touch – seeing something fashioned by the human hand, often still bearing its imprint, is more than just the consolation of things, it is a projection of humanity and hope. You may think 'you've heard it all before' but look closer, imagine what it would be like to try something on, or even make something yourself.