



MyJewel

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Introduction

PRECIOUS; All 100 stories and pictures I received for MyJewel. 100 Stories bringing jewellery to life; moving, surprising, emotional, endearing, sad, beautiful, intense, gentle and raw. In some cases, it was possible to peer through the narrative and catch a glimpse of a life story the jewel symbolises and to understand why preserving it is so meaningful. The importance of passing on precious jewellery with its story to the next generation was another theme, something that made the pain felt by others who have lost their legacy through theft extra poignant. In such cases it is the emotional value of the jewellery that makes the loss so difficult.

Some people never take off their jewellery because of the strong emotional bond they share with the giver. Others cannot bear to wear their jewellery because it is too moving for them. Sometimes just looking at it or holding it is enough. Many people were surprised by the memories, images and feelings evoked by writing about their jewellery and almost everyone felt constrained by the 150-word limit! I completely understand this as my own jewellery holds special and long stories that I would find difficult to condense into a few words. This is precisely why I cherish them.

Thanks to you all for the beautiful and candid contributions to MyJewel. Deborah Pettengell has translated all the texts of the first edition into English. I am very grateful to her for that. Without this generous offer, this English edition would not have been possible.

Karin van Paassen

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My mother is a darling....

I grew up in a creative family. I have two younger sisters and my father and mother were unique and beloved. My father was an architect and sculptor and my mother drew and studied at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague.

When both my parents died unexpectedly a few years ago, we became parentless and had to learn to cope with a great loss. Both had collected art and design throughout their lives and now we are surrounded by all their treasures.

The thing most special to me is that I wear my mother's jewellery.... the way she did, every day. She had very small hands and fingers and I am privileged to have inherited her hands.



Back in 2003 I photographed victims of the advancing AIDS epidemic in Indonesia. I spent time in the slums of Jakarta as well as in the beautiful Baliem Valley in Papua, a sparsely populated green valley through which a wide swirling river flows. A completely different world, the inhabitants of which were only discovered in 1938. The area is sparsely populated in small settlements. Some of the men are naked except for a penis holder hung from their waist. Some of the women I came across had severed fingers. It is customary for a woman to cut off one of her fingers if a close relative such as a husband or child dies. This she does herself using a sharp stone and some of the women I encountered had almost no fingers left.

I saw many people wearing these types of strings made of pigs' bones and dried fruits around their neck or wrists.

They are simply decorative and have no inherent significance.

I could buy the necklace from one of the men. It hangs in my home.



It was around 1998 that I first visited West Africa; a 6-week trip from Ivory Coast to Ghana, Burkina-Faso and the Dogon in Mali. It was a magnificent, unforgettable, remarkable tour. A long period of work followed, one in which a connection with the African continent is apparent. With the help of a friend, I applied to the municipality of Dordrecht for financial support for the trip. In Burkina Faso I bought a beautiful bronze bracelet of a couple lying on their backs, heads almost touching, looking dreamily up at the sky. Made using the lost wax technique, it is a beautiful symbol of a man and woman intimately connected. Back home, I somewhat reluctantly gifted this bracelet to my friend, but she deserved something special as it was thanks to her that the trip had been possible. After all these years, it still lives on her and her husband's bedside table.



My diminutive Indonesian grandmother, the granny who could read my mind, whose name I was given and who used to take my child's chin in her hand before placing three deliberate kisses on one cheek, gave me this watch in the last century. As things go, I lost her and then the watch. My love gifted me a new similar watch, one I always wear. Now, a love lost, and a love found later, we have changed and yet still the same. As time goes on, everything changes and everything returns, time goes on and time goes around. Upside down, simply because it reads more easily.



These are three sacred cords that I always wear on my left wrist, the skin underneath being a little pale as a result! The most faded one was blessed by the Dalai Lama and I have worn it since 2008. The red one I acquired from a monk from the Hemis Monastery in Ladakh and the yellow one Johan gave to me earlier this year. It is from Suktse Rinpoche and Johan brought it with him from Sikkim. They are all Buddhist cords that protect one from disease and harmful influences. Are they jewellery? They look colourful worn together but are not necessarily beautiful. I am interested in what they represent. They are a daily reminder of the Buddha's words: do no harm, do good and tame your mind. The blessings are of course not literally in the cords but in myself!



Annual Rings

Grand Canyon, 1980, our ages together counting short of a hundred. We, two couples, friends from Hoek van Holland, were driving from East to West in a big, green Pontiac Grand Prix.

At an Indian reservation, we stopped at a stall selling 'authentic' Navajo jewelry. Ella and I bought identical rings, Corinne a slightly different one and Arjen, our 'driver of the day', drank his Budweiser....

Sunday, August 26, 1984, Corinne and I slid the rings around each other's fingers, in Las Vegas, in the then unique authentic Elvis Presley wedding chapel.

At the time I could never imagine it could cost me a finger if our relationship did not last: goalkeeping during a soccer game I sustained a broken ring finger which healed in such a way that I cannot remove the ring without damage ..

But luckily, more than 35 years later, there is absolutely no reason to want to do that!

Klaas Degeling, 'Lord of the Ring'

Klaas Degeling, Hoek van Holland





I have a very deep connection with this bracelet because it is practically the only item I can remember my mother wearing. I never saw her without it.

The bracelet is the sole gift passed on to her by her grandmother during her rite of passage from a girl to womanhood. I remember having a conversation with her about the beads when I was about 10 years old. I was especially curious about how they had been made. She explained that special types of sand could be melted into glass-like-rods that are then cut into pieces. The most impressive aspect of the process is how the stems of cassava plant leaves are placed in the mould to form the holes!

My mother is wearing the bracelet in the photo taken in Ghana 1934-1936. She was 18 years old. The image has been reversed: generally, one wears the bracelet on the left hand but my mum was left handed and she wore hers on her right arm.



In my memory, my grandmother always wore this round silver brooch. Neither left nor right, she wore it centre front. She called it her 'Sister Anna, do you see someone coming?' brooch. Grandma loved to tell stories and although I do not remember the fairy-tale of the bloodthirsty Bluebeard, this passionate plea comes from that tale. The relief-form brooch with a beautiful border of leaves is a meticulously cut-out representation of a woman on the lookout. She is standing with a dog at her side in a landscape with a house and trees. With its almost 5-centimetre diameter, it was an eye-catcher on her bosom. When she died in 1977, I had the opportunity to choose a keepsake and did not hesitate for a moment. I am not a jewellery wearer and live a life devoid of rings and bracelets.... I never even had my ears pierced. But I do often wear brooches. Centre front, like my grandmother.



My father's name was Wilhelmus, my mother's Antonia although she was called Tony. My name is Antonius Wilhelmius Maria but I am known as Ton. The addition of Maria or Jozef are standard baptismal names in Catholic families

An engagement was not customary in the middle-class families my parents belonged to, so they only ever exchanged wedding rings. They were married in a civil ceremony on July 2, 1936, my mother's birthday, and exchanged vows in a church service on July 8. My mother gave my father a gold signet-ring on which their initials intertwine, the letters curling in typical Art Deco style. After my father died, I suggested the ring should come to me rather than to any of my four brothers. Why? Because my initials are A and W, the latter an M when turned upside down. It was for me. The surface had worn away after 80 year's wear, but an engraver has restored it to its former glory.



The Naga people live partly in Myanmar and partly in India; the area they inhabit is called Nagaland. They celebrate New Year's Eve with impressive ceremonies one of which we attended in 2016. Held in Myanmar near the Indian border, the dancing, partying, and ceremonies lasted for several days. Men, women, and children came from far and wide, all dressed in beautiful traditional clothing and with wonderful accessories. The men wore enormous head-dresses. It was hard to take it all in, I had never seen anything like it. This jewellery was bought there: glass beads, bells and a shell. The Naga people frequently use shells for their jewellery, etching beautiful primitive images on the surfaces. The images applied onto large ostrich eggs for my first collection of TiNiK were inspired by Naga etching. In fact, their clothing, totem poles, houses, accessories, attributes AND especially their jewellery have been a major influence in my own jewellery designs.



As the eldest son in my family, my mother gave me this ring after my father passed away. I keep it in a drawer in my study. It is so nice to come across the ring every now and then, hold it, put it on and pop it back into the drawer again. It was again very important to me when my mother died. I could not travel to the Netherlands for her funeral because of the Corona crisis. My cousin took my place next to the coffin. He wore a ring that belonged to my mother and I wore Dad's ring. In this way we were all connected, and it was a comforting feeling to feel close to them all.

Soon my mother's jewellery will be going into that drawer as well, and I, the same way as with my father's ring, will come across it occasionally, look at it and cherish it even though I don't wear it.



If I remember rightly, I was given the necklace on my 6th birthday. The ladybird charm was my favourite because it was colourful. The rest of the charms I found quite boring but the fact they were animals atoned for much. I thought the little clog was stupid and although I was allowed to take it off, my mother disapproved so it stayed on after all.

I'm not much one for jewellery, but I do wear my charm necklace. People often notice it and like it, many remembering having had one once and not knowing what became of it. I'm glad I have always been careful with mine.

I do not remember where the charm bracelet came from, but I find it very pretty and it is special to me. It is however not so practical to wear to work!



Dogon necklace

For about a year from September 2018 onwards, I helped an older lady sort out and digitize her enormous collection of ethnography. She was once upon a time my teacher, but our renewed contact came from our shared interests.

Her large house, stacked from top to bottom, contained objects from many places, but mainly from Africa. She has for example, the largest collection of Nigerian Yoruba work in the Netherlands. Every now and then she gifted me something from her collection, including this so-called Dogon necklace. It is named after the Dogon people of Mali. I did not know much about it but understood that the beads were old. By enquiry, an expert informed me that they date to the 17th and 19th century and were at some stage used by Europeans to barter with in Africa. They were made in Bohemia (Germany, Czech Republic) and after who knows how much wandering about, have now ended up with me in the Netherlands.



This antique crystal ring is an heirloom, worn by my grandmother and then by my mother and now by me. Always, I never take it off. I hope my daughter will do the same when I am gone and after her my granddaughter.

The ring is a symbol of our blood ties, it is a family ring.

Knowing it was worn by my grandmother and mother during their singular lives makes me feel connected to them and strengthened by them.

The ring has a modest, delicate appearance; two larger crystals, each at the end of a wavy loop studded with smaller ones, converge in the middle of the ring.

For me, the ring is symbolic of relationships; my connection with my mother and with the world around me.



When my grandmother moved to a nursing home, I was given her coral necklace. A beautiful long string with a gold clasp that unfortunately made the whole thing look rather fuddy-duddy. I decided it would be nice to change the clasp to something that would be a memento of my grandma and a symbol of our bond. In consultation with Ageeth Keyser (goldsmith and friend) the transformation came in the form of an encasement with a portrait of my grandmother on one side and of me at about the same age on the other.

I never wear jewellery, but because of this modification it has become a very precious necklace that has pride of place in my home.



This golden ten-florin coin with the 'the queen with flowing hair' and dating from 1897, is the most surprising gift I ever received from my husband.

It was in the winter of 1972.

I was stirring a pot of hearty green pea soup when he said, 'Wait a moment, don't look' and hung the chain around my neck. The reason why this piece of jewellery is very dear to me.



Celtic cross

A combination of the Christian cross and a pagan sun wheel, created during the Christianization of Ireland and Britain during the 5th and 6th centuries AD.

Missionaries allowed many pagan customs and Celtic symbols to be assimilated rather than banishing the culture altogether.

My only sister bought this in Ireland as a gift for me and it is my most important piece of jewellery.

The symbolism of the combination of pagan and Christian beliefs is very personal.

I was baptized and raised a Christian but have a strong bond and connection to older or different cultures. My great-grandmother was a local healer.

In the world we now live in, I believe that technical and economic considerations have predominance over those relating to the real source of life: the earth and our contact with it. I hope that when this tough corona period is behind us, we realize what is most important in this world and treat it with love and respect.



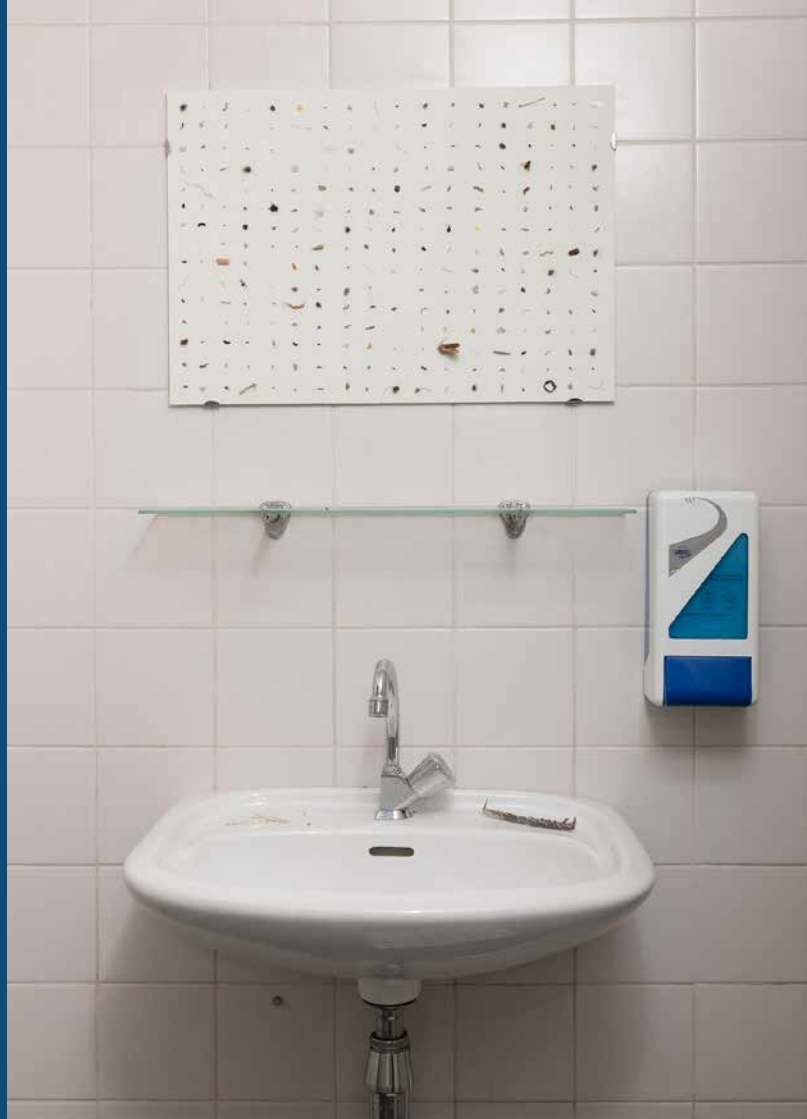
The golden charm shows a clenched fist with the thumb protruding between the index and middle finger (figa). It is in fact an obscene gesture representing the sexual act. In the Cape Verdean community such a charm is worn by a child from birth to school age. The amulet provides protection against the evil eye and negative forces. It is the tradition that it is gifted by a grandmother to her grandchild, but given to the baby by his or her godmother. The round charm protects against the evil eye as well but worn by children and adults alike. Together they remind me of my Cape Verdean grandmother who partly brought up my family because my mother had to earn a living.



Small red corals and heart-shaped beads made of pressed aromatic amber, strung on a string and a piece of wire. Not my most beautiful or most valuable piece of jewellery, but certainly the most precious. The necklace was a welcome gift from Keetje, in Tunis in 1961. She, an experienced expat and we, fish out of water. She teaches us about Arab ways and customs with enthusiasm and empathy. We go on a bead hunt in the south of the country and are frequent guests in the silver shops in the Souk. She is not looking for the sparkly, expensive showpieces, but rather glass, clay and wooden beads from all over Africa. The silver sellers love her not only because she speaks their language, but also because she brings in many customers. Keetje strings friendships together like beads. At her funeral in 2012, all her expat friends are wearing necklaces Keetje had made. She keeps us together.



This 20th century necklace comes from the Kutch region of Gujarat, India. I bought it a long time ago at Karma, a well-known store in The Hague. They sold beautiful jewellery from many different cultures and I often went there just to look at and enjoy all the treasures. I really could not afford to buy it then, but when the owner realised, I was so in love with this piece of jewellery, he allowed me to pay for it in instalments. Such jewellery is called a Vadlo or Vaidlah and is worn as a bridal ornament. It is drawn from one long silver thread: what amazing skill and knowledge this requires! It is fascinating to know it is worn by women from different ethnic groups such as Vaishnavite and Rabari Hindu, Megal, Bhil and Mutra Muslims from Gujarat. It is my favourite necklace and I wear it on special occasions.



~ golden hairpins ~ installation Odyssey 2016 ~

.....when you walk through the last hallway leading towards the exit in the former gate house, you will find yourself at 'Odyssey 2016': a kitchenette and next to it a toilet with handbasin, all once made of low cost materials and shabby and dirty after years of abandonment. Instead of the mirror that once hung above the handbasin is now chart displaying litter, dead insects, dust and grit that the maker found there. On the edge of the washbasin lie two gold hairpins drawn from gold thread made of two heirlooms: the golden wedding ring and tie clip of the maker's long-dead grandparents. To the left is a silver comb with, its teeth bent

~ former gate house, Het Industriegebouw, Goudsesingel, Rotterdam ~



My mother gave me this stud that came to her from my grandmother Dina Polak Jacobs (Grandma Dien). It is made of gold inlaid with antique rose cut diamonds. It is part of a set of jewellery that has been divided between myself and my two sisters.

The story goes that it has been handed down from mother to oldest daughter. My grandmother received it from her mother who in turn was probably given it by her own mother. It was so dear to my Jewish grandmother that she hid it at the first signs of the outbreak of the Second World War . She carried it in a pouch tied by a ribbon around her body and hidden under her breast.



My first husband -Frits Smits- made beautiful jewellery from plexiglas. He glued it together layer upon layer: it was a huge amount of work.

Although he was a constructivist in heart and soul and exhibited in numerous exhibitions, he did sometimes design jewellery to go with clothing I made myself. A number of these 'Marianne / Frits clothing-jewellery sets' have been purchased by Museum Rotterdam and displayed on occasion.



How time flies became clear to us during our daughter Norah's first year. There she is, a fresh new-born baby lying in your arms and then, almost in the blink of an eye, she is crawling, standing, talking. We thought it would be nice to capture each period of her growing up to the age of 18 in a piece of jewellery. Dennis' niece Sarah, who lives in Canada, made a bracelet that can be enlarged with extra links. Each year a new charm that goes with will be added. For now, these are her birthstone (an amethyst) and an image of a deer that symbolizes her cheerfulness and innocence. The next charm will relate to breastfeeding and Norah's little sister Elske will have the same on her bracelet as well. This jewellery will only be 'finished' when the little owners are adults.



In 2003 I was invited to participate in the first Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam.

The theme was Mobility. An exciting challenge! I was allotted several spaces in the gallery and was looking for other artists to work with this theme. The result was a new media installation that reacted to the movements of visitors, an artist who moved around and captured this in drawings, a designer displaying light-weight portable versatile furniture and an architect and artist who together created a fantastic mural 'Upwardly Mobile' especially for us. The artists were Marjolijn van de Assem and Ilona Lenard, the designer was Matali Crasset and the architect William Alsop who worked together with Bruce Mc Lean. I invited Thea Tolsma to exhibit her jewellery simply because it fitted the theme wonderfully. Her chains were made from the rubber inner tube of a wheelbarrow wheel. The photo shows a chain made of rubber together with gold leaf. Two were sold to the Design Museum in Paris. It is my favourite necklace; I always take with me when I go on a trip.



For me, softness and flexibility are the characteristics of this piece of jewellery.

Repetition of the simple, ingenious basic form is the central idea of the chain, it is made of folded two-tone Japanese paper that can be processed like textile. The individual pieces are machine sewn while the connection between elements are handwork.

I bought it from designer Luis Acosta (1952) in 2006. I visited him while doing research for my book *Dutch Quilts-Quilts in Beeld*. The core concept of the book - to provide an inventory of layering in textiles – was what led me to him. Captivated by his work, I chose him to be included in my book and bought a few pieces, including this item. It is my favourite my 'jewel'; I not only love the colours, its softness and its flexibility, but also its link with Japan and the memories it holds to the preparation and publishing of my book.

Although a singular object, it is above all a very accessible ornament.



We found this beautiful pendant and chain at an antique shop in Rotterdam. My husband dislikes shopping and is certainly not one to browse around antique shops but after we discovered and bought this necklace together, he began to appreciate antique jewellery more. The necklace is beautifully made. The scales of the fish are exceptionally fine, the body moves effortlessly, and the mouth opens to reveal a secret compartment. I fell in love with it and my husband bought it for me more than 10 years ago. In Chinese culture fish are regarded as a source of well-being and prosperity; the reason almost every Chinese restaurant has an aquarium with fish in it. I think the coloured eye makes it even better because red stands for happiness and celebration and of course for love. We have been married for almost twelve years now and have two beautiful children.



This cross (2011) is designed to help someone bear a loss. I asked myself if I could find a way to make grief bearable. This conundrum gave rise to the idea that a cross with a wheel in its base would make everything a bit lighter.

A silversmith in Den Bosch made me a silver-plated porcelain cross with a wooden wheel attached.

A second variant was made by means of 3d printing.

This jewellery is an example of the way I give form to intense events. It makes bearable wearable.



In 1993 I approached musician and performer Marien van Oers to compose music for my graduation project. During our preliminary conversations, I told him that my collection was partly inspired by my father, who was suffering from severe Alzheimer's. He died seven weeks later while we were still working together. Non-verbal communication becomes increasingly important as the effects of Alzheimer's disease increase. My collection included prints of brain structures and this object was given to me by Marien after my graduation in 1994. The encasement shows two mirrored halves of a brain. Once opened it reveals a cord with a pendant of a similar shape; you can wear it around your neck, but you can also make sound/music with it. I cherish this jewellery as a warm memory of my father but also of Marien who passed away in 2013. It was at his funeral I met my current partner and love Marthy.



I wear this necklace nearly every day. All three items hanging on it have a family connection. The most striking is the silver key used to bleed air from a central heating element. It was designed by Martine Viergever. My father was director of a large heating company when he died at the age of 59. His work was very important to him and he was very important to me. The key stands for the way he always took care of me. The item is a conversation piece. My father gave the gold ring with the pearl (Lapponian) to my mother and she gave it to me. The little worn-down gold ring belonged to my great-grandmother. I didn't know her. Her rubbed ring tells a story of a life of hard work. Together the rings show the lineage of my mother's Friesian heritage. My mother's name is Hinke Tacoma, that of her mother was Sjoukje Bosma, and it was her mother, Anna Kingsma, who wore the ring.



A beautiful tradition to precious memories

Every year on their wedding anniversary, my father Blom surprised my mother Suzy with a suitable gift that he had chosen with great thought and love. Given my mother's preference for striking jewellery, he had no difficulty in finding inspiration.

During their 52-year marriage, my parents travelled all over the world and lived in various countries. As a result, my mother amassed a special collection of rings, bracelets, brooches, watches and necklaces.

Despite having so much to choose from, after my father died, my mother usually wore the same necklace.

A classic and simple design, purchased from The House of St Eloy, this necklace was the gift that marked their tenth wedding anniversary. Unfortunately, I never got to know exactly why the choice fell on this particular necklace, but for me it is not only a very precious memory of my parents, but it also represents a very loving tradition.

Rosy van der Vlies, Carlton, Victoria (Australia)



My father, who was a policeman in Gothenburg, repaired Chinese porcelain as a hobby. It was fascinating for me to see him drilling through the porcelain with an antiquated diamond tipped bit to mend the broken pieces. Riveting them, as the experts say. The scent of Prussian blue, ultramarine and turpentine mingled with names like Qing, Kangxi, Song.

Today I am an artist working in Jingdezhen, the porcelain city in China whose craftsmen once created the porcelain that my father used to repair sitting at the kitchen table.

For several years I was looking for masters who were able to do 'Riveting', like my father did. An 'age-old technology' I was told. Happily, I found Luo Yundang, a trained jewellery artist.

From that day an artistic collaboration started and grew over the years. One day Luo Yundang showed me a ring he had made in which a signed shard of porcelain from the Ming dynasty was encased in a silver collar. As you can guess, the ring stayed on my finger!



It was about 20 years ago that my husband and I were on holiday Cavalaire-sur-Mer. We stayed in a hotel near the sea. During a walk along the beach I found a pretty shell. I took it home as a memento, placed it in a little box that I probably put away in a cupboard or drawer. And didn't think of again. My birthday came around several months later and to my surprise my husband handed me a box from a silversmith in Schoonhoven.

In it was the shell, silver plated and hanging as a pendant on a chain.

What a wonderful gift.

For some time now I have once again been wearing it daily. It is a precious memory of that time and of my husband, who was sadly killed in a helicopter crash 10 years ago.



My mother-in-law was a real Zeelander, born in 's Heerenhoek in the enclave of South Beveland. She was a simple country woman; I never saw her wear jewellery made of anything other than artificial material or plastic. Her parents had always worn traditional folk costume and my mother-in-law kept the accompanying lace cap, five-strand red coral necklace and a gold locket in an old cardboard box in her wardrobe.

Unfortunately, my in-laws were robbed in their old age by two women who chatted their way into their home on false pretences. This incident troubled them ever after. After they died and we found the box with jewellery, the only thing of worth among my mother-in-law's imitation pearls was this pretty brooch. It measured only 5 x 3 cm and is enlarged in the photo. I love to wear this sweet silver piece of jewellery in memory of my dear in-laws.



A piece of jewellery says something about the person who wears it as well as the person who made it. I make chains and brooches that I like to wear myself. I want them to be striking, their shape and material eye-catching. Each day I enjoy choosing a nice necklace that matches whatever I am wearing and that has its own story to tell. Jewellery reflects your personality; it has intimacy and adds to the identity of the wearer. My view of the world is also mirrored in what I make. Sustainability and the creative reuse of materials are my core interests and I often combine rubber and plastic with various natural materials, such as silkworm cocoons, wool, paper and pearls. In this necklace, I have used jet beads from an old chain of my mother's and combined them with pearls and recycled rubber from China. My designs are innovative, different, sometimes colourful and always quirky.



Jewellery is emotion

Having run Galerie Guthschmidt for more than 30 years, it was difficult to choose one single piece of jewellery.

Should it be a piece of jewellery from my childhood, the beautiful bracelet Grandma gave me not long before she died or perhaps the ring with pearls on the inside that my husband gave me as an engagement ring?

Or maybe that distinctive object / necklace made especially for my send-off from the gallery after 31 years: 'I never promised you a rose garden ...'

'Jewellery is emotion' has been my motto through all those years. It is not so much about its value, but rather what it adds to the value of the occasion for which it has been chosen and given. For here I have selected the first necklace I made, a warm-coloured gold necklace made of playfully dancing circles. It moves as you do, mirrors your actions light-heartedly, emphasizing your contours and following your steps.

As life does.....

Marleen Guthschmidt, Den Haag



My grandmother passed away in 2019, having lived a very long life. She loved beautiful jewellery and left hers to the family. My mother sorted it out and dispersed everything of emotional value among family members. Even so, there were many items left; worn, out-dated, not particularly special or of sentimental value. My mother had kept the wedding rings of my grandparents and thought about the best thing to do with these and the other left-over gold. She embarked on a secret mission having come up with the idea to use the wedding rings and residual gold to have a ring made for each of the granddaughters. A jeweller melted down the gold and made 4 beautiful timeless rings. On Christmas Eve 2019, when we raised a glass of champagne together before Christmas dinner, my mother gave the rings to her granddaughters. What a surprise. I was so very touched.



I bought this costume jewel at an outlet store in The Hague. It is designed by John Galliano, who among other things created a flamboyant collection of haute couture for Dior. Galliano now designs for Margiela.

The jewel is like a bird of paradise and luckily for me, was heavily discounted!

'It's for me' I concluded.

The brooch was probably part of one of his own collections because it is initialled JG. It is quite heavy because of the glass imitation, so it has a safety ribbon.

The design, with its chequered black and white centre, the surprising cluster of seemingly randomly shaped stones in disjointed colours and sizes set in a kind of coral reef, really appeals to me.

The brooch has been tweaked and repaired over time and even though it cost € 450, it is still only a factory-made product.

Even so, it brightens up my wardrobe and I am often complimented with it.....and it always makes me happy!



My grandfather was a fisherman in Den Oever. As a child I often played in the old fishing shed where nets were knitted, repaired and tarred. When the barn was cleared, an original wooden casket containing tar and an old boiling kettle were found and donated to the Wieringen Island Jan Lont Museum. This casket of tar, a resin extracted from the trunk of the Asian Acacia Catechu tree, became the inspiration for my investigation into finding new ways to use this traditional product. The Zuiderzee Museum asked me to develop a project incorporating one of the many Zuiderzee crafts. As part of this, I looked at tar in its solid form. In this state it has a stone-like appearance with an intense, shiny deep brown colour and you can hardly help but associate it with a semi-precious stone. I used the tar to create jewellery that allows the material to speak for itself.



'Perhaps we are little more than collisions with the remnants of what still exists of our ancestors within us and from which shrapnel and caresses now and then become loose.'

Erwin Mortier *The Immaculate*.

April 2020, a beautiful springtime, but with the world in turmoil because of the corona virus. A time for introspection: Twenty five years ago, when she was 40, my mother gave me a gold pendant with 5 diamonds. Simple, but beautiful. Her mother, the youngest of a farming family of 16 children, was born in 1900 and was only 10 years old when her mother, my great-grandmother, died. The necklace was given to my grandmother on her wedding day in 1925. It has endured many crises; two world wars, the stock market crash of 1929 and the loss of loved ones. Now my mother lives alone in her room in a nursing home. Her world is closing in but she feels blessed. I will pass the necklace on to my daughter when she turns 40.



Teardrops on Iceberg

The conversion of material from paper and porcelain was what I was interested in during a Dutch ceramic residency. I produced some experimental pieces and brought them back to China with me. I made some hand-made porcelain pieces in Shanghai and Jingdezhen and sold them with the fashion brand Peien in Tokyo. Later on, I joined a Venetian master lamp-work glass training class in Jingdezhen in order to be able to add glazed bead elements to the series. The objects I then decorated with handmade sterling silver filigree and metal collars as auxiliary decorative elements. Some of my inspiration came from far-away travels; until last year, I experimented with different forms in various cities. I think that the porcelain part of my creations reflects my body and mind: bound by beautiful glass and silver decorations which are not actually needed and are graceful, but not free. Keeping life simple is not so straightforward, but during a my long and distant travels I did feel happy and peaceful..



Teething ring

In China it is the tradition for a grandmother to give jewellery to her new-born grandchild. My grandmother gave me a silver anklet and bracelets. At that time, there were no jewellery shops in China and the set was made especially for me by a local silversmith. One of the bracelets hold a silver pacifier on a red cord, red symbolizes happiness in China. As a baby I was given the pacifier until I started cutting teeth. Pure silver is not dangerous for a baby. On it you can see little dents made by my new appearing teeth.



Steel Masterpiece

My mother, Regien van de Laar, out shopping with her sister, bought this necklace at the age of 85. However much she loved it, she worried the necklace may be a little too brash, but I said 'Buy it' when she rang from the shop for advice.

She wore it with pride, and it suited her beautifully. In addition to the classic and more expensive jewellery she wore, she regularly surprised me with her modern taste. She died a few months after her 90th birthday and I was tasked with distributing her jewellery to our family members. One of her granddaughters received the gold bracelet given to her by her husband, my father, and the other the gold chain my mother had received from her own mother. The rest of the family could choose for themselves. The process was healing for my grief. In the end this modern metal chain was all that was left, and I was more than happy to 'adopt' it. I have it hanging on a wall, a small work of art symbolizing my mother, her modern taste and the moments I gave her a little nudge.



My native country is New Zealand and we return to this beautiful country regularly. Our trips are always combined with a visit to my precious sister in Australia. When she moved to Melbourne, she discovered the wonderful Heide Museum of Modern Art and going there to enjoy the always special exhibitions has since become a tradition during our visits. On one such occasion I bought a beautiful brooch designed and made by a local artist - it evokes fond memories of Heide and of the bond with my sister and her family. I wore it with great pleasure until last year when our house was burgled. All my precious jewellery was taken, brooch included. However, the story does not end here: we were recently again on a family visit to New Zealand and Australia and of course went to Heide with my sister while in Melbourne. The brooch was no longer available but imagine my surprise and joy when a package containing a new brooch was delivered about a month ago.



We go on holiday to Canada every other year and we have built up quite a few friendships there. Among our friends is a violinist. One day he told us that he was having a violin custom made for himself. The violin maker was also a jewellery designer. She had decided to combine the two professions because it was too intensive to work on violins all day.

She uses waste material left over from violin making in her jewellery.

And because I love singing and my husband makes music with the violin player, this is the perfect jewellery for me.



Portico of the Treasury

Covered in brilliant gold, call it perfect beauty. A gem from a legend or poem. The neck..., upwards...,
the face. Follow it downwards to the enthroned curvature, the eye feasting on emeralds, sapphires, diamonds; a girl's best friend. A silver necklace, a crown, a brooch, a pin. Exhibition notes mention 'typical Art Nouveau'. At the time a great gift for those used only to the very best, now safe behind glass.

The other side of the story is a far cry as Rubens recounts. Gold, more powerful than lightning: the slogging child pays, the winner his boss.

The harsh and dangerous work conditions tarnish gold's myth. And because of the child sacrificed to dig, grind and polish, for me sapphire belies her blue, ruby her red and emerald her shining green.

The dreadful conditions in which gemstones and precious metal were mined are now talked about, but in 1635 already depicted by Peter Paul Rubens.



This necklace was a gift from a friend who thought herself 'too old' to wear it. Given with the words, 'It is a rebellious chain and I want to pass it on to another rebel', I wear it with a sense of an honour, her words making me feel strong and powerful.

At first glance, people often think it is a pretty butterfly. It is only when they take a closer look, they see the mirrored pistols.

This always makes them laugh and I like the way it makes people happy.

However, I always issue a warning, 'Be careful, I'm in a recalcitrant mood'.

My daughter met her current boyfriend through this necklace. She had posted a photo of me wearing the chain and with the caption 'COOL MOM' on Instagram. He commented and the rest is history.



This brooch holds memories of the annual jazz festival I was at in Edinburgh about 30 years ago. I saw it in the window of an antique shop and was given it as a gift from my brand-new boyfriend. Although the brooch was not quite to my own taste, it now had new significance. It adorned my festive evening jacket and together we enjoyed the jazz concerts.



This silver pendant with the onyx stone was a gift following the birth of my son Tijmen, a little boy with Down's Syndrome. The pendant, precise and beautiful, was handmade by my Spanish brother-in-law with the words, 'Especially for you and your special child'. This created an emotional bond between him, the jewellery, Tijmen and me. Tijmen lived only one year and my brother-in-law died 10 years later. The jewel has a special place in my heart, it comforts me with the thought that all is well, consoling and loving. I always think of Tijmen and my brother-in-law when I wear it.

I wrote this poem at the time and it is in my new collection AHA.

*There you are,
complete
in your imperfection
crystal interior
forever
lucidly different
unexpectedly beautiful,
a stranger
from the far east
wanders slowly through your eyes*

Wies de Bles, Heinkenszand



Red coral

Jewellery never played an important role in my down-to-earth maternal South Holland family. For my grandmother, the daughter of a family where hard work was the way money was earned, jewellery was no ordinary thing. Later in life she lost her heart to red coral jewellery and my mother inherited that love for coral with its deep red or sometimes orange-red colour. One piece of jewellery was her soulmate from the start. An elegant ring with oval red coral set in gold still adorned her finger in old age when she moved to a nursing home. One of the sisters suggested that the ring would be safer elsewhere seeing the amount of people coming in and out of the home. That is how it moved to my house. Every now and then I put it on my finger. I then admire its beauty and reflect on how precious it is. How unfortunate that this daughter is unable to wear jewellery because of an allergy, but luckily it remains a gem to look at anyway.



The shock was immense the emotions intense.

The distress of discovering that all the jewels of my life had been stolen without me even noticing.

And not only my jewellery, all the family heirlooms passed down for generations and left to me by my mother had gone as well.

Taken from my house while I was home, just like that. Everything of value taken with cool precision from my mother's jewellery box, gold and with diamonds etc.

The jewellery box I still have but it now contains only one item: a long necklace of beautiful old Japanese pearls. My mother did not wear the necklace often, but I love beautiful pearl necklaces. So, I'm happy with what I have.



My mother loved jewellery. She usually bought it from Lyppens & Schipper Juweliers on the Heiligeweg, Amsterdam, a well-known jeweller in the capital city. She usually bought fairly ordinary things but there is something I inherited from her that I find special. It is a necklace made of small white shells. I often wear it.

I am unsure of its origins. My parents lived in the Indies in the 1930's before I was born, and she may have bought or been given the necklace then. There is also a possibility that the chain comes from Venezuela. As a girl, I lived on Curaçao for a while with my parents and they sometimes visited friends in Venezuela. Curaçao is located off the coast of this country. I was never allowed to go with them as, even then, it was dangerous there.



Grandfather's gold wedding ring

After his father died, my father inherited his wedding ring. Years later, after my grandmother had passed away, my father proposed to have 'Grandpa's chunky gold wedding ring' melted down and made into 2 pieces of jewellery. Something for my sister and something for me.

In consultation with a goldsmith, we chose to have 2 understated rings made only of the gold of the original wedding ring.

For years now, each of us wears our ring in combination with other rings; in the meantime our own wedding rings included.

We feel it is special to have a piece of history with us and very happy to wear a ring that for decades flaunted grandfather's hands, a piece of gold that has gone through a lot!



I love jewellery. Boxes full of ethnic bead chains, Victorian mourning jewellery, floral and animal brooches, contemporary sleek or exuberant jewellery designs are stacked in my wardrobe. Every now and then take lids off the boxes and enjoy looking at the contents. Doing so prompts memories of why I bought this or that necklace, bracelet, brooch, or pair of earrings: sometimes for the craftsmanship, sometimes for the shape, colour use of material, and sometimes because of the bold or simple design. But to which piece of jewellery am most attached, which piece do I wear?

With these questions in mind, I choose from the multitude I possess. My choice is the chain made of yellow links, picked up off the street by my darling and adapted to fit my neck.



This piece of jewellery has been in our family since 1886.

My great-grandmother Anna Maria received the brooch for her 18th birthday on 4th December 1886 from her parents.

After she died at the age of 98, it was passed on to my grandmother Mientje (Wilhelmina).

The clip was unfortunately worn, and that was when an eyelet was made so the brooch could be worn as a pendant instead. The next to receive the jewel was my mother who had been named after her grandmother Anna Maria.

On my 50th birthday, my mother gave the brooch to me. What a huge and emotional surprise.

I am incredibly happy the piece has remained in our family for several generations already and I intend to pass it on to my daughter too later.



I was given this charm bracelet by my very strict grandmother when I was seven. Once, when I had just learned to write, I wrote her a sweet little letter which was promptly returned with the mistakes underlined thickly in red. This is the sort of person she was. To begin with the chain had three charms hanging on it, but each time I went to stay with her a new charm was added. Woe betide me if I had forgotten to bring my bracelet with me, if I didn't notice she had secretly taken it to the jewellers, or didn't spot the new charm immediately. I was always terrified I would lose it and hardly dared to wear it. However, in hindsight Grandma's approach has proven successful because I still have my charm bracelet and now, polishing away at it, I forgive her. I only wish I had not been so scared of her because I know now that she certainly did not mean to be so terrifying.



Confetti ring

I bought this ring about 20 years ago. The Confetti ring designed by Paul Derrez in 1993. Until recently Paul owned Galerie Ra, a 'temple' of modern jewellery. It is now closed unfortunately.

I wear the ring - on my little finger - nearly every day.

People often notice it and comment about it. The design is innovative; simple, striking and dramatic.

An interchangeable disk of varying material and colours can be clamped inside the ring. The disk remaining perfectly in place while the ring is on your finger. I have 4 different centres; one silver and three of cut plexiglass. I wear the red one most often.

This ring not only suits me, it also goes with my views on form and functionality. I like the way it can be changed with a simple action.

This too ties in with my work as a designer.

Its design is sublime!



My mother who would now have been 107, died just before she turned 80 in 1992. I can't show the ring she always wore because I wanted her to wear it when she was cremated. This was apparently an unusual request and the undertaker rang 3 times to check about it. I will never know for sure it happened, seeds of doubt sown by distrusting people, but I always prefer to believe in the integrity of people.

Now instead, here is the charm necklace that belonged to her. Although at the time not particularly to my liking, it is still something of hers that is close to me. I wore the necklace often. It stood out and was a popular topic of conversation. Once, when someone at the Ro-Theater commented that the watch (top right in the photo) no longer went, I replied much too smartly 'No, my mother neither'. The conversation froze and I regretted saying what I had.



In 2014 my wedding ring slipped off my finger. It had been made together with that of my husband from my great grandparent's wedding bands. It was irretrievably lost. I was devastated.

My mother's hand became thin as she grew older and in her 95th year she gave me her rings to safeguard. When my 99,5-year-old father's rings fell off his fingers, he gave them to me too. One was a silver ring that bound my parents together before they went into hiding during World War II. The second ring dates to their religious wedding ceremony after the war.

I started to wear my parent's rings before my dad died. It pleased him.

Now I wear not only the wedding bands of my parent's, but those of my parents-in-law and of my mother's father as well. He handed it to my father just before he was deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland where he was gassed.

These rings, worn daily as 'one piece', are a constant reminder of my family's history.

Greta Cune, Den Haag



The snake is a powerful symbol of transmutation found often in jewellery across time and place.

In this necklace the real vertebrae transmute into silver ones, reminding us of our continuous metamorphosis as we evolve and adapt to the worlds around us. From natural to handmade, organic to technique, imagined to experienced. The snake medicinal necklace (60cm) is an amulet that empowers its wearer. It is embedded with magic, inspired by one of Chloé's shamanic breathwork journeys; it is a physical fragment of a metaphysical dimension.

Python snake vertebrae, silver.



It was springtime in the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. We were sitting on the lawn enjoying a sunny day out. Jesse gave me a beautiful wooden Japanese puzzle box. Inside were seven gold-lustre porcelain rings. He proposed and I accepted. He had made the rings by hand, one for each day of the week. However, Jesse had also anticipated that I may break some over the years given the fragile nature of the material. Porcelain brought Jesse and me together – we met in a ceramic studio and have worked together on ceramic projects ever since. We are both ceramic designers and artists. The rings are beautiful in their simplicity and honesty: a smooth ring fits the finger nicely contrasting with a raw, untouched break in the clay for the head, each one unique. The design exemplifies the nature of porcelain and our love for this material.



Love in a single ring

The Grusons have large hands
My father had a big and bold wedding ring designed
In 2 colours; white and rose gold
As a child fascinated by white gold
Gerard gives me a diamond as a token of his love
A wedding ring?
Gerard doesn't like to wear a ring
Then Tin Tin is born
We design a wedding ring for ourselves
Engraved with the initials G, TT and E
The diamond inlaid
In white and yellowy rose gold
The diamond fell out somehow while on holiday in Ireland; lost!
Mattresses upside down, shell sand path sifted: gone!
Two days later, Tin Tin, then 4 years, comes: 'I have found a piece
of glass'
Miracles still happen!
Big hands, design, making things, chunky rings and the loves of my life ...
Everything I love in a single ring

Edith Gruson, Rotterdam



I found this piece of antique bronze by chance. It is a fragment of a large tri-pot, used in ancient China during ceremonial rituals. It is amazing how fine and delicate the pattern is, knowing it was made by craftsmen more than 2000 years ago.

I used it to design a necklace. It immediately became the necklace I cherish most and wear most frequently. The reason is perhaps because owning this hidden beauty makes me feel I discovered treasure in the long rushing river of history.



Summer, a porcelain whistle

I spent most of my childhood playing in the forest along a river; a wonderland with green willow trees and cicadas singing through the heat all summer long. I made this cicada shaped whistle in 2015, a special porcelain souvenir that evokes the simple joys of childhood.

Zaiyun Huang, Jingdezhen (China)



Noppyism

I was given this beautiful cross 30 years ago by my parents' neighbour.

She was working as a nurse in a care home and had been given the cross as a thank you gift by a priest of the Norbertine Order.

As my given name is Norbert, she gave it to me.

With the beautiful burning heart in the middle and the quirky skulls, I loved it and have worn it for years

My mother was less charmed I learned later ...

While I was at college, I was leader during introduction camp.

Wearing my cross around my neck, I converted all the new first-year students to Noppyism for fun. They all had to kiss the cross.



Telephone

In a sad, difficult period in my life, thoughts of a boy I had met before kept popping up in the back of my mind. My heart told me to go and find him. I only knew his first name but after some searching, I had his phone number. What did I have to lose? I called the number and my heart skipped a beat when I heard his voice. We talked for hours. We hadn't even seen each other again but he proposed, and I said yes. It was a week later we met up, but we have never left each other again since. We are now married, have two daughters and are incredibly happy together.

As an ode to that one phone call – the call that transformed my life from ink black to shining white – this is the pendant he gave me.

Daniëlle Mercx - Schaffelaars, Tilburg



Indian talisman

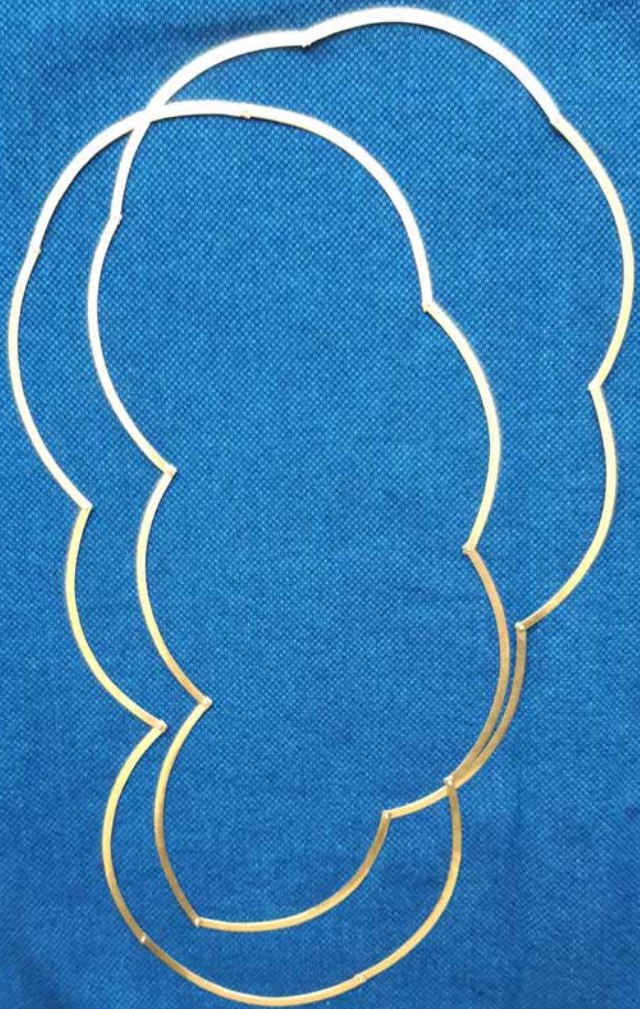
My very good friend Ebe gave me this pendant late 2003. We had spent 2 years working together in the field of Development Cooperation in New Delhi and she gave it to me shortly before she left.

We had built a strong friendship during our time there, travelled together and shared incredible and unforgettable moments. Our friendship is still strong.

The pendant represents Lord Krishna and the Goddess Radha, a talisman considered to bring luck in love but only if received as a gift.

Touched by her gesture, I put it on straight away and have worn it ever since. I too left India a few months later and was assigned to Kabul, Afghanistan. New work and life, new colleagues and eventually new friends. Through a common friend I met the man who was to become the love of my life.

Alessandra Mignardi, Tilburg



What piece of jewellery is closest to my heart? Despite having a great deal of it, the choice was easily made: the double gold necklace made by Annelies Planteijdt. Having lived together for a long time, Henk and I decided to get married in 1990. I was to choose a special piece of jewellery for the wedding and during a visit to the KunstRAI, I saw this necklace by Annelies Planteijdt in the Marzee Gallery. It was love at first sight, both the shape and its construction. I wore it on our wedding day. Originally, the curves of one of the two necklaces faced outwards. This was not so practical to wear so Annelies adjusted the hinges so that the curves of both necklaces face inwards. I still enjoy wearing on a special occasion and appreciate the compliments it gives rise to.



Jewellery is probably more often a gift than a personal purchase and the association it has with the giver adds to the value it has for the wearer. My azorite engagement ring (± 1950), belonged to my husband's mother and to her mother before that. I never knew my mother-in-law. She died much too young and the ring was an important memento to my husband. Even though he had had other relationships, with me he felt I was the sweetheart who should wear the ring. He arranged for a girlfriend of mine to pack my bag and kidnapped me from work. To Rome, the place I had saved to visit with the man of my dreams. And there, on a bridge near Castel Sant'Angelo, he proposed. On our wedding day, I wore not only this ring but also one that had belonged to my grandmother and worn by my mother for ever and a day.



My first trip to Senegal was in 2001. The country touched my heart immediately; the people, the countryside and culture touched me deeply. I was always on the look-out for unusual things, utensils, beautiful fabrics but especially jewellery. This silver chain was bought at the market in Kafountine, a fishing village in South Senegal. The pendant is a silver cylinder with a cap, originally designed to contain Quranic texts. Instead I have lockets of my daughters' hair along with something they have written especially for me. This makes this piece of jewellery especially precious to me.



My most meaningful jewellery item was a gift from my grandfather who passed away several years ago. He had been a soldier in the 'Red Army' from the age of 12. When I was a child, he told me many stories about the Long March. The object he gave me is a 24k golden pin with Chairman Mao's portrait on a background of sunrays. It is a special object that reflects the ideals of the revolutionaries of my grandfather's time. I don't share his fervour but I find the comparison of the present value of the metal and the then value of the leader in people's mind interesting. Anyway, the old-fashioned design is beautiful!



This piece of jewellery consists of rock crystal icicles, braided together with a very thin leather cord.

My sister Anja Adolfs of the Nio-Lifestyle brand had this necklace made in Bali.

It was a unique and precious item and not intended to be produced for the collection. It was more of an Anja statement.

The theme of her 2016 collection related to nature and spirituality and made use of rock-like structures, stones, amulets and fossils.

I exchanged a painting of mine for this piece of jewellery in 2020.

Aware that I have quite a collection of crystals and that I meditate every morning with a crystal in one hand and a rose quartz in the other, she knew very well how happy I would be to own it.

Nice, two artistic sisters.



The differRING

The black coconut ring bought at the flea market. The silver Esprit ring bought at VeD together with Daniëlle. The gold ring with brownish-red stone from grandma that is not really my taste – but given to me by Grandma so special anyway. The grey, diamond shaped synthetic ring from the Design Week. The ring with the bird bought in Amsterdam together with Anke. The ring I found in Berlin but didn't buy because I thought it too expensive to give myself but that landed up in my letterbox a week later anyway. Bought by my dear friend Lenny. The ring for two fingers, worn over two fingers with wings like the one I had. The fragile glass rings that didn't last. The gold-coloured square-shaped Space Invader ring bought in London together with Anna. And finally, the aluminium foil ring made by my bonus children.

THE Ring, it does not exist.
However, many uARyING memories do!



This Bedouin face veil dates from the period I lived in Egypt in the mid-1980's. An authentic piece on the cutting edge of clothing and jewellery. I purchased it in an 'antique shop' during a holiday to EL-Fayoum, an oasis in western Egypt. Is it old? Not important, for me it has always been a special keepsake, because such holidays were infrequent problem-free periods. I bought it on one of the few trips when it was safe to be on my own - able to enjoy that free independent feeling I missed so much. A feeling that fitted the story the seller told me about the piece so well; the coins and beads are not only intended to be decorative, but because of their monetary value, they are also a way to give the wearer a little independence and self-esteem. The decoration reveals the status and origins of the wearer.



My son Luc was very keen to visit China. His favourite cuddly toy was a panda bear and I had told him that that was where pandas lived. Our trip took us from Beijing to Hong Kong and we saw many beautiful places. The most authentic part we experienced was Huangluo near Guilin. Home to Yao people, we could only reach their home by van and then on foot, carrying a backpack. We climbed the mountain to the village and found ourselves in an oasis of peace - although homemade souvenirs were for sale. The higher we climbed, the more women we encountered wanting to sell us their necklaces. Finally, at 153 meters my eye caught this carefully crafted piece of jewellery. The vendor was a woman whose hair was 1.5 meters long. She lived in a village where it is customary for women to cut their hair only once just before they get married. It was a special experience to be there.



Grandma's beads

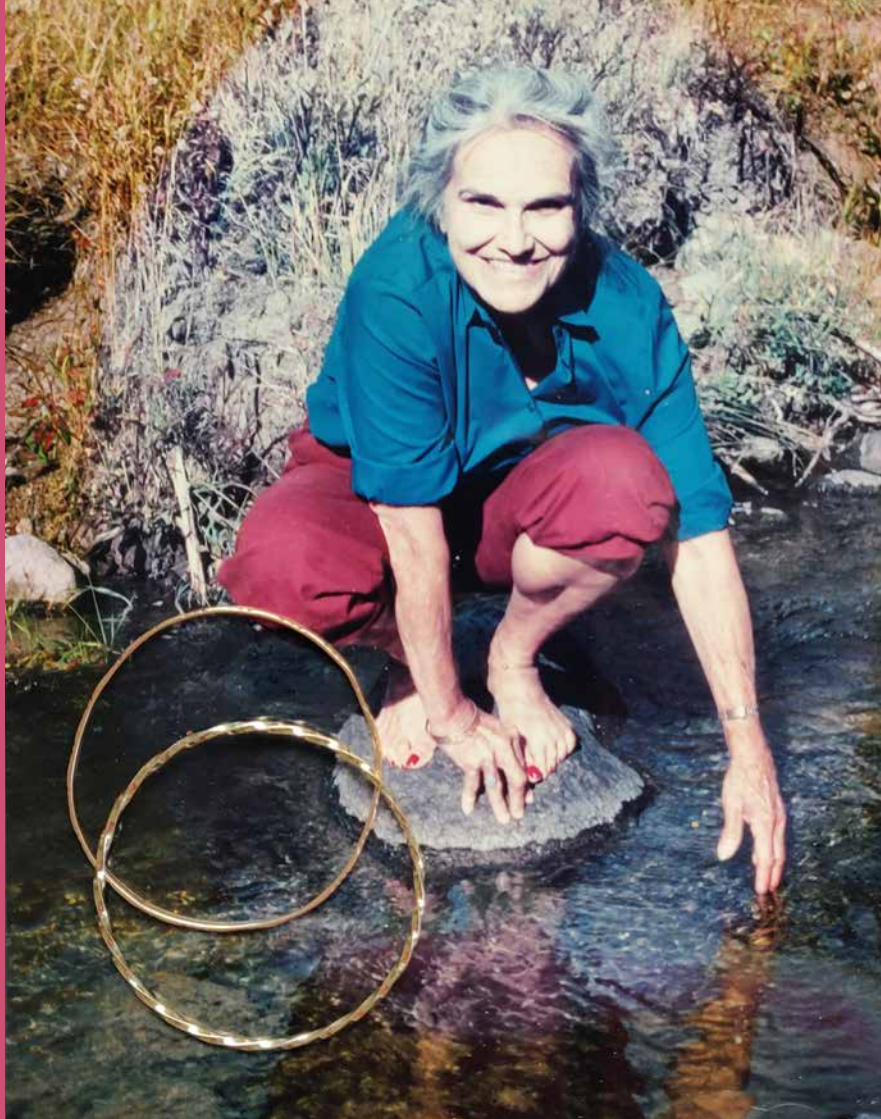
As a child, I was mesmerized by my grandmother's necklace. Made of iridescent beads, it was inextricably linked to her. Grandma was already very old when the necklace broke, and the beads were put in a box.

After she passed away, that box of beads ended up with me. What a gift! I was incredibly happy!

And in their box together with my jewellery, the beads remained for 30 years. I often looked them and enjoyed the memories. I decided it was time to string them again.

Part of the beads are strung knotted the way pearls are usually done, this is how Grandma's necklace used to be. The rest I have done the way I like beads to be with space between them so they hang more freely. The three porcelain beads I made myself and there is also a brass bead from Ghana, put in randomly because I like ethnic beads and jewellery.

It has become a necklace with a memory, but one that goes with me.



The remnants of her life; five narrow gold bracelets left with us. Our father had given them to our mother, one just for her and another to welcome each of their four daughters. She wore them day and night, and with every movement of her arm they jingled and tinkled.

Each of us chose one and I wore mine always.

Nonetheless, I missed something: the sound that accompanied my mother and that for me is inseparable to her.

I wanted to add a bracelet to jingle and tinkle together with my mother's one. This second bracelet forged from gold jewellery belonging to my family has brought back the familiar precious sound back - but now with every movement of my arm.



As a jewellery maker and enthusiast, I have many favourite pieces of jewellery: my first gold bracelet with my name that Grandpa gave me, my Sally Marshland brooch, in a box with multiple African jewellery and given to me by Marjan Unger with the message to wear them with pleasure in memory of her. And this I am happy to do because it reflects my love of beads. Ultimately, my choice is the ring I love to wear; my faceted rose gold wedding ring, made by a dear friend and colleague from gold forged from various pieces of jewellery originating from both my husband's and my family. The ring represents our connection as an interracial couple. There are many stories and events contained within it and it not only symbolizes the way we share our lives but shows, in its simplicity, the power of jewellery.



This ring was a gift from my mother who in turn had received it from a friend. It came with a certificate from the maker, but this has unfortunately gone missing. The ring has a rock crystal set in silver, now somewhat lustreless around the edges. I love the starkness and austerity of the ring. Even as a child I felt a connection to the ring. The ring is striking and compelling; rock crystal protects and transforms energy. This I found out later, I didn't know that then of course. I was explicit about wanting to have the ring and my mother gave it to me a few years ago. It still needs to go to the goldsmith to be polished, but I love the fact you can see the ring has been worn.

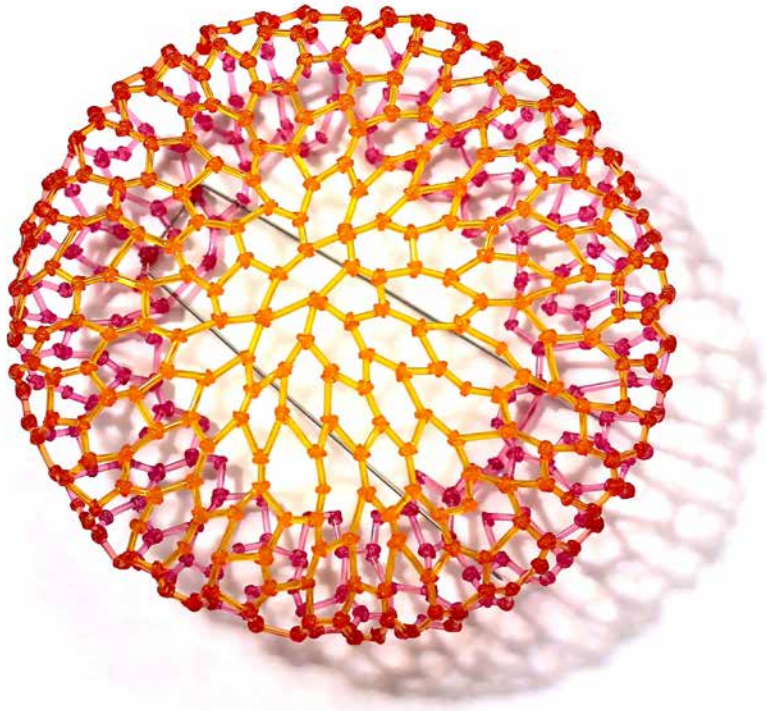
I always had a clear sense that this ring was destined to become mine.



My grandmother owned a tea service of 'Lange Lijs' ceramic wear (Mosa, Maastricht). It was decorated with flowers and Chinese figures – well they looked Chinese anyway. Grandma passed away and the set ended up with my parents. Cups and saucers disappeared into the sideboard or the cupboard. The teapot did not even have the honour of ever being used, but yes, it was still part of Grandma's 'Chinese' tableware! After my mother died, my father decided to get rid of lots of stuff, including Grandma's 'old junk'! But ... my cousin's wife, a silver and goldsmith, thought the porcelain deserved a better fate. It was during a birthday party the idea was born to somehow recycle the teapot and cups and saucers in a beautiful way.

We liked the flowers and found the 'tall Susan' figures very distinctive. I asked my cousin's wife to make earrings using the 'tall Susan' figures. She has elaborated this to use the flower motives as well.

Look here to see the result!



My heart does not beat faster when I see diamonds. Classic rings, bracelets or necklaces with diamonds are not to be found among my favourite pieces of jewellery. Whereas I did once to like to wear gold jewellery, in recent years I have preferred large, striking and colourful, modern necklaces and bracelets.

This brooch is very precious to me; received on my 65th birthday, a milestone year. It is a generous sized brooch, designed by Floor Mommersteeg.

Even though it is a striking piece of jewellery, it does not look garish because it is transparent.

Made of nylon thread, it is indeed fragile and as light as a feather. I love to wear it and funnily enough, because of the gradation in colours, it goes with lots of things. On the days it stays at home, I keep it in a transparent container, on display next to another piece of art.



Tangible lightning

I bought this piece of jewellery while I was artist-in-residence in Mali in 2009. I was fascinated by the shape of the beads. They seemed to have just grown, like the termite column that had appeared next to my bed at night. I discovered from a post on Marc Volger's Facebook page that it is solidified lightning. A piece of jewellery with a story.

SKY

'Lightning comes and goes. You don't really know what it is or what it is you are looking at. Fascinating and terrifying. Sometimes, under the right conditions, it leaves a trail of melted sand. Then, walking through the sand you will hear a kind of tinkling sound under your feet. That is when you have literally struck lightning - the imprint of old lightning. A violent natural force reduced to a handy size.

This happened to me in the Algerian Sahara.

A gift from heaven.'

Marc Follower (Facebook, 2013)



As an adolescent with an interest in history, I became extremely curious whenever routine digging took place in the city centre of my former hometown Woerden. My interest in archaeology had ignited after finding some old shards. I made two friends during my hunts and we formed a threesome.

We often helped at official digs.

We sifted through mountains of already excavated soil again for ourselves and regularly found Roman antiquities.

One day while the three of us were digging close together, we saw something of a somewhat bright blue-grey colour. It was a Roman medallion with the head of Medusa in relief, made of powder glass. It was such a special find and because we didn't know who should keep it, we decided to entrust on loan to the Stadsmuseum Woerden. It still is my most special find.

I still search regularly but find seldom anything other than plain old shards.



The healing power of nature

In nature, everything is connected to everything else. The more you look at it, the more you discover creativity and intelligence. The diversity and beauty of 'All That Is' can deeply move, amaze and delight me. I find it healing.

Humanity has become far removed from nature and we, as individuals part of nature as well, have lost touch with ourselves. Our body has a self-healing ability that we are generally unaware of.

This necklace is a symbol of the love I feel for our so incredibly rich Earth.

A small symbol designed to create more awareness of the effect our beliefs, thoughts and emotions have on our body so we can learn to use them consciously.

Driftwood with gold leaf, under wings of cicada, metallic parts of an Asian beetle, separated by little round seeds from Africa.



Bracelets

How happy I was when I graduated from high school in 1958! Freedom, university and student digs! My parents gave me a present of 150 guilders. Fifty of these I spent decorating my student room and with the rest I had a wide silver bracelet made inscribed with my name and school graduation date: *Marian de Bruin 16-6-'58*. During an exhibition of work by Emmy van Leersum in Amersfoort in 1966, a photographer approached me assuming I was wearing an Emmy bracelet.

Unfortunately my wrist expanded, but my husband had a new bracelet made, now inscribed: *Marian Conrads 4-6-'83*

Our daughter Olivia received my own bracelet after her graduation in 1993 but with an inscription added to the old one: *Olivia Conrads 18-6-'93*. She lives in a jungle in Peru, so I have her bracelet for safekeeping.

I often wear them together as cuffs.

Maybe until her daughter Kayla finishes high school!



The ring

I lost my wedding ring. It had become too tight after fifty years of marriage. Put somewhere. But where? One day, a few years ago, I step into a restaurant and notice a woman drinking coffee. My eye falls on her hand, on which she is wearing a wide, white ring. On closer inspection it turns out to be made of the ear of a cup. I tell a friend who designs jewellery about it. For my birthday she designed this ring that slides around two fingers. As far as symbolism goes, no wedding ring can match that.



Kite

The latest 'kite' series aims to evoke the freedom of childhood.

The city of now is crowded and it never ceases to move. Its heart is of steel and concrete, a luxury purse, or the engine of a luxury sports car.

The fond memories of childhood are hidden in the long string of a kite.

The combination of metal and recycled wood is natural and simple, reflecting the uncomplicatedness and lightness of childhood.

The outline of the free flying kite is a perforated pattern in natural wood. The collection was selected for the New York Design Week (2019) and the Beijing International Jewellery Art Exhibition.

'I believe that every work has life and special significance and hope to convey this to jewellery lovers through my designs.'



This is my special piece of jewellery.

'He doesn't know my taste. He knows nothing about me. He is a selfish father; he does not know what love is.'

One day, about 30 years ago, he bought me this necklace of freshwater pearls as a souvenir. It is not my taste at all. I have never worn the necklace, but I brought it with me from Japan to the Netherlands 14 years ago. Maybe my taste will change as I get older, but unfortunately not yet. He, in Japan, is now almost 80 years old. I miss him and I would like to see him as often as possible, wearing this necklace around my neck.



Jewellery Connection

For 2 years now I have become a real jewellery person. I got married relatively young and even gave my gold wedding jewellery to my mother in law as a thank-you gesture. This is how little jewellery meant to me until I started my contemporary jewellery collection. I became hooked, having witnessed how a piece of contemporary jewellery on one person can look plain, even unsuited, yet when worn by a different person, both the jewellery and the wearer are enhanced and their hidden qualities become visible.

This brooch is from the Chinese contemporary jewellery artist Chun CHENG's Connection series. I love the artist's beautiful vision of human relationships. All the pieces are inter-connected with sturdy elastic strings, so the pieces 'move' gracefully with the wearer's body movements. Each small piece is independent while still connected to the others, its shape moulded to fit the pieces surrounding it. The look is modern, but I believe that traditional Chinese social values are very well-depicted in this series.

Patricia Chang, Shanghai (China)



This story relates to my life in Guangzhou, China, from 1997 to 2001. My husband's work had already taken me to Kenya, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Japan and Switzerland and in all these countries I managed to do voluntary work. This was no different in China. When after four years I returned to the Netherlands, what now??? I searched ... and found: the WEB.foundation, run by 2 enthusiastic and committed women who developed 'memory games' about HIV / AIDS in several countries with the aim of opening up this difficult subject. Open to discussion? In China too? I said YES, we'll make it work. And we did!!

This beautiful piece of jewellery was a farewell gift when I said goodbye to the WEB.foundation. It will always be a reminder of the wonderful time working together in China.



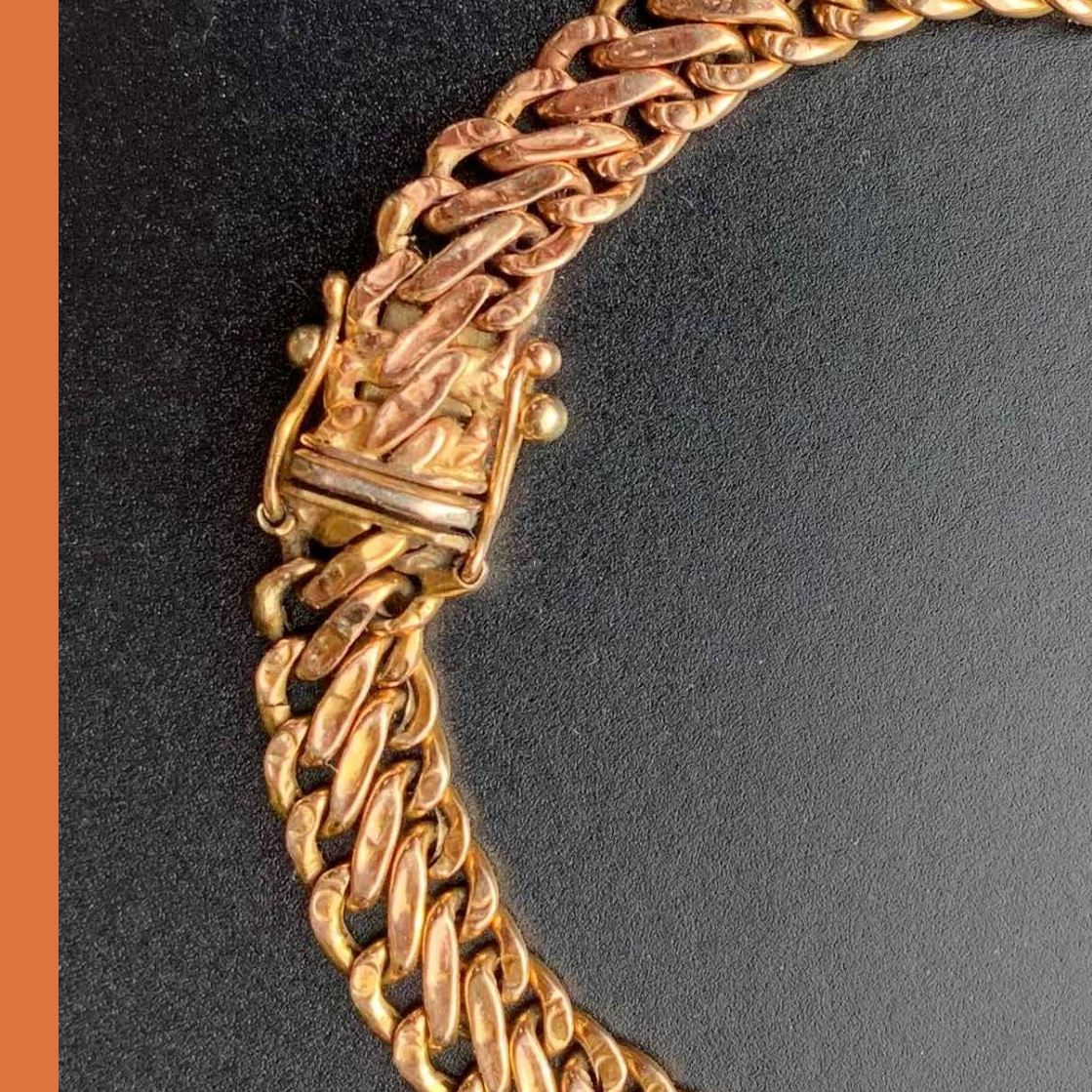
I love jewellery, especially my own silver jewellery. However, I am attracted to watches as well with a partiality for Swatch watches. I have a few but prefer wearing a black and white one. I dream of buying a Cartier Tank watch someday. However, my favourite piece of jewellery is an antique, silver necklace with two hands. I bought it with my husband 50 years ago. It was a kind of farewell gift after a stay in Menorca, Spain. The jewel symbolizes my hands, that had worked so hard there. I told a friend who admired my necklace about its story, and he asked, 'Are you sure that man really loves you?' I was taken aback and asked what he meant. He said, 'Look closely, they are two left hands.' I hadn't ever noticed this but since then wear the chain with even more pleasure.



My husband was employed as a chef in Suriname in 1962/1963. He had loads of fish delivered all the time and this he cleaned and prepared. In one species of fish, the koebi fish, pieces of bone are found behind the gills (see photo). These are otoliths that aid balance and hearing. The native population use them to make jewellery with. Jos collected quite a few and before he returned home, he had a pendant made for his Mother and cufflinks himself. Unfortunately, I never knew Jos's Mother because she died before I became part of the family. After she died the otolith pendant went to a daughter-in-law. She made me incredibly happy later when she passed the pendant on to me. She put it this way: the pendant should, in her opinion, belong to me as I was Jos' wife. I have worn it with great pleasure for years.



This Elephant brooch is the first filigree work I did. I did not major in jewellery but I'm still very fond of it, so I went to Guizhou Province during the summer in 2016 to learn the filigree technique. The 'Elephant' is sort of my mascot. To me it means luck and peace and I gave this to myself as a gift just after I had graduated from university. It is now my favourite piece!



My Grandma's bracelet

I inherited this bracelet from my Grandma. To me it is the prototype of a gold bracelet, it looks exactly as it should and for that reason alone beautiful. My father claims that the flattening of the links surrounding the clasp was a result of my grandmother leaning, in old age, on surfaces and edges to support herself and stay on her feet. I don't share this opinion but think that the irregularities are more likely to originate from the manufacturing process. I find it impossible to believe that the weight of an elderly lady could dent the gold like this and wear and tear to something as hard as gold would take much longer than a lifetime. No matter, it's a nice story that makes the bracelet especially linked to my Dearest Grandma in the Whole World.



Although subtlety is what I usually look for, in the field of jewellery I go for extremes. It is all or nothing. I have no time for *'less is more'*. In my case it's *'the bigger, the better'*. Jewellery must be BIG. OUTSPOKEN. It's fine for it to be fun, it must make me laugh. For a long time, no one could imagine me without my gigantic bright yellow mushroom-shaped ring, made of an old wooden toy. I alternated it with a bright blue plastic one - with a built-in flashlight - that I once bought from an Asian street stall. Of course, as a genuine bling lover, I do have pieces from Real Designers. One of whom is Bruno da Rocha. A lovely man; we met years ago at the Sieraad Art Fair. My favourite creation of his is an architectural ring in silver and black rhodium, inspired by the Concert Hall in Porto, Portugal. A beautiful piece of design made with love and worn with great pleasure.



I made this necklace myself and I wore it to the opening of the painting exhibition in New York. Its components come from all over the world and each part tells a story connected to me emotionally. Cinnamon and spice are from my homeland China. The cypress branch and dove feather come from an old monastery in Brooklyn. The shell and wood are from a painter in Hoek Van Holland. The bell is used in Indian Kathak dance and I put sand from the Ganga River in the small conch shell. This is worn to protect and guard positive energy.

This necklace represents my love for nature, and it is also a reminder to cherish the people around us, because life is short and fragile.



I don't know where my fascination for square rings and rectangular shapes comes from.

If someone has a square or round ring, if the top is cut straight, I'm captivated.

I have made rings together with a goldsmith before now and have given into the temptation of buying square rings when on holiday, so it is difficult to choose one to show in this booklet.

However, it's this one from India. I gave a friend who travelled through India the assignment of finding a simple square ring for me. She always brought a lot of silver back with her from India, but that time it included this square ring that I have been wearing continuously for 18 years now.



This necklace is the first piece of jewellery my mother gave to me. She came to see me in Jingdezhen in October 2019 and bought it for me, because 2020 is the year of the rat, my animal sign. According to Chinese astrology, the year of your birth sign is believed to be one of the unluckiest years of your life, so my mother bought this golden necklace with my Chinese zodiac sign to bless me. On one side of the necklace is my animal sign, the rat, and on the other side is the Chinese character '福'. It means good luck. Mum gave it to me on the first day of the 2020 Chinese calendar. I can feel my mother's deep love for me.



I choose a watch. Perhaps not really a piece of jewellery, but that is something I don't wear. In fact, I no longer worn a watch either for a long time since I used my mobile to check the time. But in December 2018, my sister Eleni died: diagnosis, chemo, improvement, relapse and funeral followed at a dizzying speed all in the space of three weeks.

In Greece, women in mourning traditionally dress in black. Men wear a black band around their upper arm. I had worn a black band for my parents for six months. Although this mourning sign was not recognized as such in the Netherlands, it made it clear that there was something significant going on with me at the time. I have my sister's watch every day for the last two and a half years now. She loved this one even though she had many watches. This intimate token of mourning is here to stay. I gladly carry a symbol of the greatest good we have; time, that in this case is a memento as well - to those who no longer have it.



I spent the last day of the last century, December 31, 1999, in India. I had gone there to participate in an archaeological excavation and had topped this off with a tour. As now, 20 years on, the media was full of Doomsday tidings, but then it rained predictions about the catastrophic effects the millennium would have on mankind. I decided to spend the turn of the century in a Muslim community with a different calendar and thus avoid the gloomy predictions of my own. Mahabalipuran was a village of stonemasons but at a stall tucked away I noticed a necklace of which I particularly liked the decorated silver slide-clasp. The canny seller knows how to clinch the deal. He holds up a mirror for me to see and says, 'Now you look like a queen.'
That was my beautiful start to the 21st century.

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Naga (Myanmar/India) etched conch shell belt, green glass and wire

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