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Scultura Aurea.

Artist Jewellery for a new Renaissance

Urbino, Palazzo Ducale, May 31 – September 8, 2019

Curated by Paola Stroppiana

This exhibition, held in the Renaissance halls of the Ducal Palace of Urbino, offers an overview of 20th and 21st-century art jewellery, a rare occasion that brings attention to the contribution of sculptors and painters in the realm of jewellery, considered a fully realized art form in and of itself, transcending the barrier between the major and minor arts – a process conceptually and aesthetically achieved in Federico's Palace. The exhibition path presents a wide selection of examples, over 140 pieces made by 46 international artists, highlighting both contributions and influences, all while emphasizing the revolutionary scope of exchange between the arts in the field of goldsmithing.

Curated by Paola Stroppiana, the exhibition begins by recalling the great goldsmith culture of the Marche region: the area is recognized internationally for its great technical skills and widely diffused schools and models.

The goldsmith culture of the Marche region regained prestige in the 20th century thanks to artists such as Edgardo Mannuci, Giuseppe Uncini, Valeriano Trubbiani, Eliseo Mattiacci, Giorgio Facchini, and Alberto Giorgi, who often combined their expertise and vocation for sculpture and goldsmithing with that of teaching, forming new generations of artists. The role of brothers Arnaldo Pomodoro and Gio' Pomodoro was also of utmost importance, whose international fame in the arts brought the region to be recognized worldwide: both created ornaments of great beauty (also re-proposing the ancient technique of cuttlebone casting)



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and simultaneously contributed to the critical reworking of art jewellery, at times confined to mere reductions in scale or impressive craftsmanship, re-evaluating the value, even in a museum context, of perfectly executed works of art, equal to design and sculpture.

Following these considerations, the exhibit examines the Italian masters (Afro, Nino Franchina, Gino Severini, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Umberto Mastroianni, Getulio Alviani, and Giorgio De Chirico) who, starting from the second post-war period, began to work with art jewellery, unique "signature" pieces, thanks to the enlightening commissions of merchants, gallery owners, and patrons, which included Mario Masenza and the Fumanti brothers in Rome. Parallel to this, in 1960s Milan, an exemplary venture had begun, that of Gian Carlo Montebello and Teresa Pomodoro, who together founded *GEM Montebello*.

Between 1967 and 1978, at the same time as Masenza and Fumanti's "one-of-a-kind pieces," the pair collaborated with over 50 artists, producing roughly 200 jewels in limited-edition multiples. Many artists were involved, starting with brothers Arnaldo and Giò Pomodoro, Fausta Squatriti, Piero Dorazio, Lucio Fontana, Joe Tilson, Lowell Nesbitt, Niki de Saint Phalle, Pol Bury, Jesús Rafael Soto, Pietro Consagra, Claude Lorraine, Man Ray, and Joy Tilson.

Following these works is a rare selection of examples and unique pieces by internationally renowned artists experimenting with goldsmithing since the 1940s, which include Alexander Calder, Salvador Dalí, Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Louise Nevelson, and Alicia Penalba, with often surprising works, concluding with jewellery by contemporary artists (Igor Mitoraj, Sophia Vari, Enrico Castellani, Giulio Paolini, Anish Kapoor, and Giorgio Vigna), who imbue the jewels with the poetics of research marked by a new awareness, one supported by enlightened commissions, new generations of gallery patrons, and a renewed critical sensitivity to the subject.



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The fusion of the major and minor arts is a theme that forms the base of the exhibition itself, exploring the conceptual and expressive potential of involving the Ducal Palace's architectural elements through virtual scenic sets.

Interactive projections and moving scenography mirror the artists' imaginative dimension, creating a fictional architecture in which art jewellery, painting, sculpture, and architectural elements converse, experimenting with the idea of a new Renaissance in a technological key as well.

The exhibition is accompanied by an Italian/English catalog published by Gli Ori, Pistoia

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