

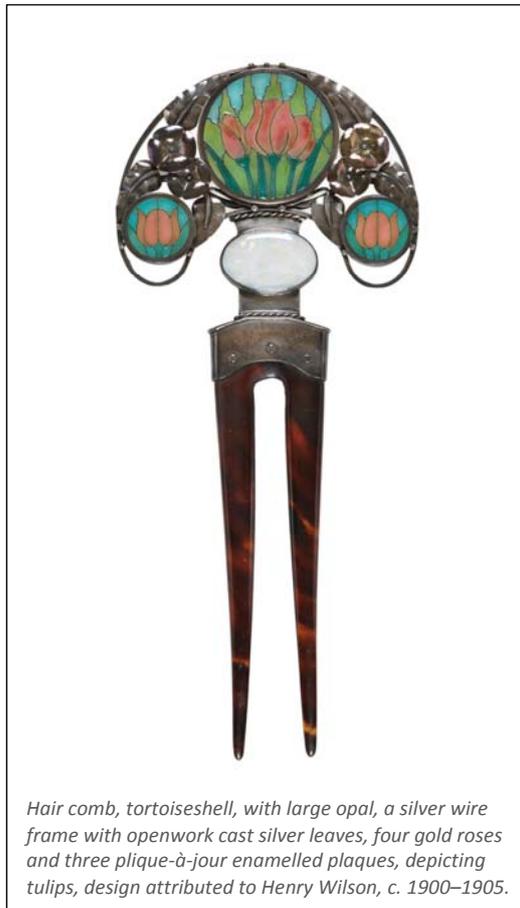
Designers & Jewellery 1850 – 1940

Jewellery & Metalwork from the Fitzwilliam Museum

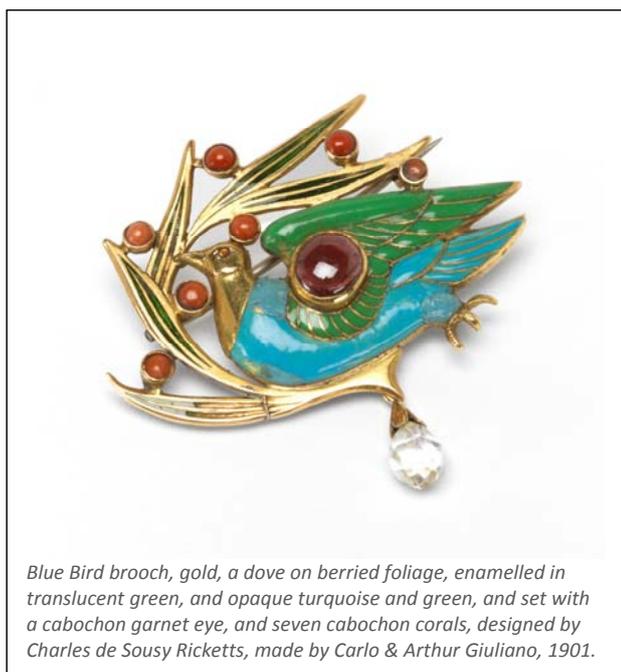
Press View: Friday 27th July, 10am – 1pm

Seventy exquisite examples of jewellery and metalwork dating between 1850 and 1940, will go on show this summer, 31 July - 11 November, largely from the outstanding collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum. Many will be on display for the first time.

The jewellery and metalwork created during this popular period represents an intensely productive and exuberant phase of design from the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the Second World War. On show are pieces made by some of the most notable craftsmen to work in precious metals during this time. They span a range of styles, encompassing the intricate historicist and neo-Gothic (Castellani, Giuliano and William Burges) the naturalistic Arts and Crafts, (C.R. Ashbee and Phoebe Traquair), the sinuous curves influenced by the European Art Nouveau movement and the structural modernity of the 1920s and 1930s (Omar Ramsden and H.G. Murphy).



Hair comb, tortoiseshell, with large opal, a silver wire frame with openwork cast silver leaves, four gold roses and three plique-à-jour enamelled plaques, depicting tulips, design attributed to Henry Wilson, c. 1900–1905.



Blue Bird brooch, gold, a dove on berried foliage, enamelled in translucent green, and opaque turquoise and green, and set with a cabochon garnet eye, and seven cabochon corals, designed by Charles de Sousy Ricketts, made by Carlo & Arthur Giuliano, 1901.

Exhibition highlights include several pieces of unique jewellery designed by the artist Charles Ricketts for the couple Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper, known collectively as the author Michael Field. Bradley and Cooper, aunt and niece, ignored the social mores of late-nineteenth-century England and embarked on an intense romantic relationship and life together that was to last until their deaths. Their friend, the artist, Charles Ricketts was also in a relationship with the artist Charles Shannon. The two couples socialised often and the diaries of Michael Field (in the British Library) reveal a full and close friendship,

symbolised by the rich and fantastic jewels that Ricketts designed especially for the two women. These one-off pieces hold an iconic place in the history of queer art in Britain.

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The majority of the objects included in the exhibition were given to the Fitzwilliam by Mrs Anne Hull Grundy née Ullmann (1926-1984), who between 1982 and 1984 gave over 150 pieces of jewellery and some metalwork to the Museum. Mrs Hull Grundy was one of the first collectors to take jewellery seriously as another avenue of art history, and to study what it could tell us about the lives of those who made and wore it.

An eccentric figure, she was born in Germany to a wealthy Jewish industrialist family, who emigrated to England in 1933. A precocious child, she collected objects from the age of 11, driven around the fashionable antiques shops of the West End by her chauffeur. After being disabled by a respiratory condition at the age of 21, she was confined to her bed for the rest of her life. However, this did not dim her passion for collecting, and from her enormous bespoke bed, surrounded by cabinets of jewellery, she corresponded with dealers via the post in order to continue collecting.

Describing herself as a 'large spider sitting at the centre of a web of dealers, salerooms and museums', she liked to 'outwit them all' and sent letters, postcards and jewellery back and forth constantly. Unlike most other jewellery collectors, who were interested in specific types of jewellery or gemstones (described by her for 'call girls and rich dumb wives'), Mrs Hull Grundy was interested in pieces made from

unusual materials such as cut steel, coral, jet and paste and those that were signed or marked, or in their original cases and therefore told her something about the history of the piece, or its place in the history of jewellery design.



Gold brooch in the shape of a ring with a stylised ram's head and ornate twisted horns, a small vase suspended inside the ring from its collar, made by Castellani in Rome, c. 1860–70.



Sabbatai ring, gold, the bezel in the form of a mosque with tower-like buttresses, four pierced doorways the dome formed by a cabochon star sapphire, containing a loose emerald, designed by Charles de Sousy Ricketts, made by Carlo & Arthur Giuliano, 1904.

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Towards the end of her life, Mrs Hull Grundy began to portion out her collection and send pieces to different museums around the UK, She preferred 'virgin' museums, those that did not already have substantial collections of jewellery, and tried to suit the gift to the museum; sending the best Scottish pieces to Glasgow, jet to Harrogate, seaside jewellery to Weston-super-Mare, and the best and largest gift to the British Museum, which she presented in 1978.

From delicate gold work inlaid with Indian *theva* work, to a fantastical decanter covered in gemstones and beasts; from a pared back modernist letter rack to enamelled and jewelled pendants, the range of artistically-designed and handmade pieces included in the exhibition are representative of the numerous ideologies of those who designed and made them. They tell a story of industrialisation and trade; of travel and exploration and the effect of other cultures on British life and design; of the striving to discover or invent a national 'style' and identity; of religious beliefs, social values and etiquette; and, as jewellery has always done, they reveal the personal and emotional artistic lives of designers, makers and wearers. Like all art forms, jewellery and metalwork provide a means of self-expression. In the words of artist Charles Ricketts, spoken at the close of the nineteenth century,

'It seems such a pity to seek visions when you can make them...'



An accompanying catalogue, *Designers & Jewellery 1850-1940: Jewellery & Metalwork from The Fitzwilliam Museum* by Fitzwilliam Museum Research Assistant, Helen Ritchie, will be published by Philip Wilson in late July.

-Ends-

Notes to editors:

For all enquires please contact the Fitzwilliam Museum Press Office: +44 (0) 1223 332941 | press@fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

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About the Fitzwilliam Museum

Founded in 1816 the Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Major Partner Museum programme, funded by The Arts Council. The Fitzwilliam's collections explore world history and art from antiquity to the present day. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, masterpiece paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of coins, Asian arts, ceramics and other applied arts. The Fitzwilliam presents a wide ranging public programme of major exhibitions, events and education activities, and is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research and conservation.

www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB | Free admission

OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00; CLOSED:

24-26 & 31 December, 1 January, Good Friday

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