

A new show explores the process of eight artists, says Pamela Buxton

## Material research

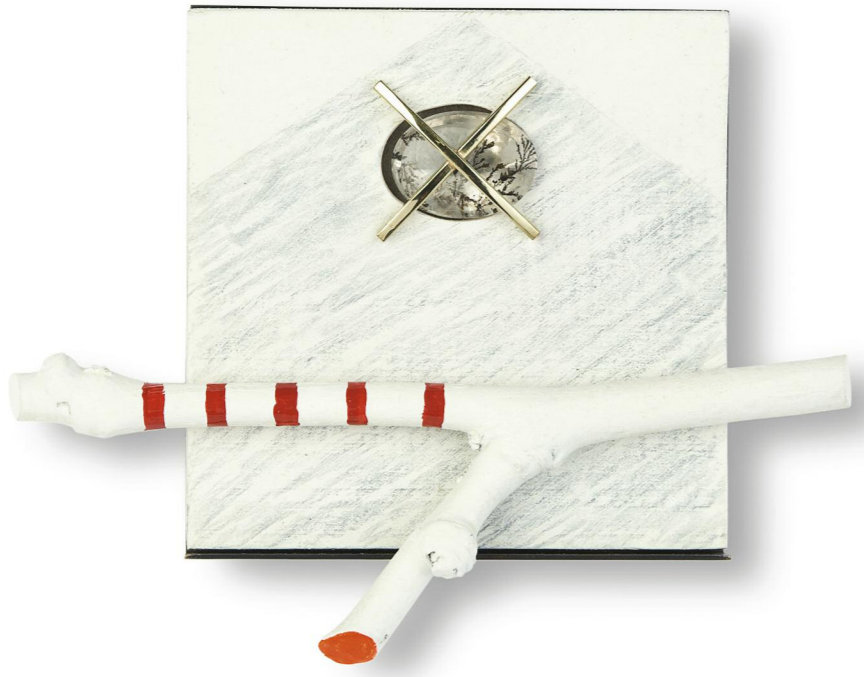
*Beneath the Skin* does far more than show work by leading exponents of contemporary metalwork and jewellery – though with makers including Jivan Astfalck, and Elizabeth Callinicos there'll certainly be plenty of that to see. Instead, the whole thrust of the exhibition, which opens on 24 March, is to reveal the thought processes and creative research underpinning the finished work.

The show is curated by Maria Hanson, reader in Metalwork and Jewellery at Sheffield Hallam University. She has assembled a group of eight academic practitioners and is using the exhibition systematically to explore their individual research methods, whether through their investigations into materials and the physical making process, or through drawings, writing, photography, found objects or film. The finished pieces these lead to will form a smaller part of the show.

She hopes this insight into the creative process will appeal to both the academic research community and to a general audience seeking to understand the finished work. 'I also want it to be just a lovely looking exhibition,' she says. 'I'm trying to get a balance between different scales of work and a mix between object work and jewellery.'

Both Jessica Turrell and Dr Cólín Ó'Dubhghaill's exhibits will focus on their research into materials and techniques and will include samples and test pieces. Turrell, an enamelling specialist, will exhibit two strands of research – theoretical text-based research on contemporary enamelling practice, and the physical outcomes of experiments with techniques more usually associated with industrial processes, and their application in her own jewellery. Electro-forming has allowed her to work in three dimensions for the first time, resulting in the *Hollow Form* series of tactile jewellery exhibited in the show. 'I'd been working in the flat, and 3D was the next step I'd always wanted to do,' she says.

Ó'Dubhghaill shows his research with a materials scientist into developing a Japanese technique for producing



Clockwise from left: *Pere Lachaise (series)* o, Jack Cunningham, mixed media; *Pendants- Hollow Form series 002*, Jessica Turrell, mixed metal with vitreous enamel; *Hoshi bowl*, Cólín Ó'Dubhghaill; *Oval Spoon*, Andreas Fabian; *Chalice*, CAD model, Chris Knight; *Vanitas - A Mediation on Beauty and Decay*, Jivan Astfalck, electro-formed silver, silk, organic materials, raffia



multi-coloured metalwork bowls. Maria Hanson is particularly interested in how the makers bring something intangible into the process so that the work embodies more than pure technique. 'There's something very interesting about moving between what might be seen as practice and what might be seen as research, and how these two things complement and contradict each other,' she says.

Chris Knight is displaying the silver and stainless steel chalice that recently won the National Metalwork Award, alongside computer-aided design drawings and a range of technical investigations into integrally cast components, including a cast object left in its raw state before completion.

Other exhibitors' contributions focus less on technical process and drawings and more on the intellectual ideas informing their work. Professor Jivan Astfalck will present her thesis, and other writing and video exploring her interest in the theory of interpretation and the ideas behind her highly conceptual work. She will show assemblages of objects and materials from her studio as well as five made pieces.

Professor Jack Cunningham's contribution will include his boxed PhD thesis as well as photography and video, which has recently become an important part of his creative process, plus his mixed media work.

*Beneath the Skin* is part of the *Galvanize Sheffield 2011* festival on the city's metalwork industry and is sponsored by Sheffield Hallam University's Art and Design Research Centre and Arts Council England. 'Beneath the Skin', from 24 March – 20 April, Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery, Sheffield. For details, see *Crafts* guide.