

A Diamond in the Rough (Johannesburg, 30 Mar–1 Apr 22)

University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa, Mar 30–Apr 1, 2022

Deadline: Nov 20, 2021

Brenda Schmahmann, University of Johannesburg

A Diamond in the Rough: Developing a Discourse on Contemporary African Jewellery

This is a call for papers, a selection of which will be identified for further development into a publication. The conference will take place online and is under the ambit of the African Contemporary Jewellery Association (AICA) and the SARCHI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture at the University of Johannesburg.

THE THEME

Historically, the positioning of African jewellery design as a “craft” has diminished opportunities to engage with this discipline in more meaningful ways. This may owe something to its function as adornment and beautification, which has in many ways reduced the possibilities of deeper readings. In the twenty-first century, there has been growing exploration of contemporary jewellery through the creative practices of communities and academic institutions in Africa. What is lagging, however, is a recognised discourse on those practices.

In 2017, the University of Johannesburg hosted the first national gathering of jewellery practitioners and educators in South Africa, under the newly formed Contemporary Jewellery Forum - now the African Contemporary Jewellery Association (AICA) – to discuss the theme “The Status Quo”. Subsequently (in collaboration with visiting craft historian Kevin Murray) focus was placed on understanding the potential of “Jewellery as a Social Object”. These ACJA events established a network of practitioners, paving the way forward for desperately needed research and scholarship.

This envisaged conference expands and develops this work by encouraging a critical engagement with this underexplored yet widely used form of material culture. How do we reframe African jewellery beyond its over-simplified definition as a “craft”? What kinds of alternative meanings and significance might be found in contemporary African jewellery? How does contemporary jewellery in Africa resonate with local social and political issues?

PROPOSALS

The conveners of A Diamond in the Rough invite scholars and practitioners to explore selected examples (or series) of contemporary jewellery from Africa in light of these questions. The call is open to both established academics and postgraduates.

The term “contemporary jewellery” is being used in its broadest sense. It refers to wearables or objects that allude to wearability, and that are created to convey meaning or associations. It includes but is not limited to more commonly known categories such as “art jewellery”, “author jewellery”, “studio craft” and “designer jewellery”. Topics include, but are not limited to:

Jewellery as a social object

Politics of jewellery

Jewellery and identity

Techniques, approach and meaning

Revivalism in contemporary jewellery

Materiality and its roles

Papers must be on material that has not already been published. A prospective presenter must be willing to develop the proposed paper into an article, should it be selected for inclusion in the publication that will be developed after the conference. Papers must be in English.

Please submit your proposal with “A Diamond in the Rough” in the subject line, and send it to the convenors, Farieda Nazier (fnazier@uj.ac.za) and Brenda Schmahmann (brendas@uj.ac.za), and copied to the administrator at the offices of the Research Chair of South African Art and Visual Culture, Neelofir Nagdee (nnagdee@uj.ac.za), by 20 November 2021. Please submit a single WORD document with the following information:

1. a title for your paper
2. an abstract between 350 and 500 words in length for a 30-minute paper
3. a short biography, including your current institutional affiliation (about 200 words)
4. your contact details, i.e. e-mail address, postal address, telephone number/s

Please note that presenters will not be charged a conference fee.

Reference:

CFP: A Diamond in the Rough (Johannesburg, 30 Mar-1 Apr 22). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 17, 2021 (accessed Apr 30, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/35107>>.