

A Diamond Is Forever (...But So Is A Digital Archive)

By YAËL KSANDER
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Australian jewelry designer Sim Luttin has evolved from using silver to using wood and paper, ephemeral materials that humbly assert "These Moments Existed".



Event Information

These Moments Existed: Sim Luttin

An exhibition of a new collection of wooden and paper jewelry by Melbourne-based jewelry designer Sim Luttin, a 2008 MFA from IU's Hope School of Fine Arts.

Grunwald Gallery of Art, 1201 East 7th St., Bloomington, IN 47405

October 18-November 21, 2013, Tuesday-Saturday 12-4 pm; opening reception Friday, October 18, 6-8 pm free

[Grunwald Gallery of Art](#)

These Moments Existed: Sim Luttin

[Zoom: The Future of Craft](#)

This weekend on the IU-Bloomington campus, the **Zoom** symposium promises to examine nothing less than **The Future of Craft**.

One of nine exhibitions being mounted in tandem with **Zoom** features the work of Australian jewelry designer **Sim Luttin**, a 2008 MFA from IU's Metalsmithing and Jewelry Design department. Her show at IU's Grunwald Gallery of Art— *These Moments Existed*—reveals how five years have increased her ambivalence about the materials she uses, and even the art object itself.

While receiving traditional training as a silversmith at IU, Luttin began incorporating found objects into her pieces; but didn't abandon silver as her primary medium until economically motivated to do so.

The credo that life is short but art sticks around seems particularly appropriate to the field of jewelry design, where precious objects are regularly called upon to stand in for fleeting moments and sentiments. In her current work, Sim Luttin is interrogating this standard operating principle.

Beyond Silver

"Given that silver is so expensive now," Luttin reflects, "I decided to push myself out of my comfort zone and try something else."

Using different materials, Luttin's new series—showcased in the Grunwald show in its diaristic approach. She created a piece of jewelry each day for that project five years ago.

"It was about trying to find those moments in the every day that are worth noting," she explains, "that could be reflected in jewelry."

One Day At A Time

With fewer resources and fewer hours in the studio—she works full time now as a gallery manager and curator at **Arts Project Australia**—Luttin improvised on the piece-a-day approach, by posting a photo on Instagram each day, that would ultimately inform a new collection made of paper and wood.

"They're not direct representations of the everyday thing," Luttin says of the pieces displayed in *These Moments Existed*, "but they're more reflective of the mood of the year. They're almost the things that get left behind, the traces."

Using scraps of Australian hardwood recycled by a furniture making friend as raw material, Luttin sought to reinforce the melancholic mood of the black and white photographs she had been posting daily.

Traces Of A Ravaged Landscape

The environmental associations of the wood amplified the theme of impermanence. "A lot of [the Australian landscape] has been burnt by brush fire," Luttin adds, "and there are always debates about logging." The very day of Luttin's opening—October 18th—nearly 100 active wildfires were reported across New South Wales, Australia's most populous state.

Luttin dyes and hand-colors the hardwood scraps, carves them into shapes that look like asymmetrically faceted gemstones, and glues them together in irregular groups. In a more direct application of the photographic source material, Luttin has punched discs out of some of her printed pictures to string delicate paper beads on cotton thread.

Precious Moments, Non-Precious Materials

The idea of making an impermanent object to record the impermanent human condition flies in the face of the time-honored artistic conceit *ars longa vita brevis*. The credo that life is short but art sticks around seems particularly appropriate to the field of jewelry design, where precious objects are regularly called upon to stand in for fleeting moments and sentiments.

In her current work, Luttin is interrogating jewelry design's standard operating principle.

"When I created the piece-a-day project five years ago it was very much about things lasting, knowing that in the future, because they're made out of metal, they'll still exist," Luttin recalls. "But I made a conscious decision this time to work in wood and paper for it to have that ephemeral quality."

Metaphysical Jewelry Box

One reason Luttin chose to use less durable materials acknowledges the the role another artist plays in her work. "My photographer does beautiful documentation of the objects," she concedes.

"We're amassing, culturally, this digital archive of images about life—they might be monumental things, or they might, thanks to social media, be seemingly insignificant things. But that digital archive almost becomes the permanent object; it's almost superseded the object itself. It's almost freeing, because the idea can be more monumental than the object itself."

Sim Luttin's exhibition *These Moments Existed* is on view at the Grunwald Gallery of Art October 18-November 21, along with two other metals shows—*Shift*, and *Metal, Incorporated*. The exhibitions coincide with the symposium **Zoom: Examining the Future of Craft**, taking place October 17-19 in IU's Hope School of Fine Arts.

Raised in Alexandria, Virginia, Yael holds a MFA in painting from Indiana University, an MA in art history from Columbia University, and a BA from the University of Virginia, where she studied languages and literature. She joined WFIU in 2000, where she hosts music and talk programs, and produces features on artists, writers, musicians and other creative people for *Artworks*. Yael co-hosts *A Moment of Science* and writes essays for *A Moment of Indiana History*. She enjoys getting to know WFIU listeners—from those who submit commentaries for *Speak Your Mind* to those who provide the comments she reads on Saturday mornings.

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 Thu, May 29, 2014, 10am
 Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6th St. Bloomington, IN

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 Thu, May 29, 2014, 11am
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Kinsey Institute Art Exhibits: "Creative Minds" and "Artistic Types: Test in Visual Art" April 14 through September 12, 2014
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