

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Beyond Bling: The Artist As Jeweler

For over four millennia, artists have been considered bellwethers, those sought after trendsetters that play a leading role in style and design innovation. Historically one can trace prevalent trends in culture: fashion, literature, music, performance and fine art as precursors to societal change.

The social and intellectual position of the artist changed radically during the 16th century; the Renaissance brought a heightened interaction between patron and artist. Previously seen as tradesmen, occupying a relatively low social position, artists were not heretofore considered creators of important work with complex content and cultural message, persons who conversed with philosophers and negotiated with kings and popes. It was during this time that the role of jewelry and what are today considered more traditional mediums, such as painting and sculpture, bifurcated, the former gradually becoming known as "craft" and the latter deemed "fine art." This divergence did not dissuade many great painters and sculptors from continuing to create jewelry regardless of its perceived status.

Internationally renowned individuals from virtually every major artistic era over the last half millennium have created artworks that not only resonate on their own, but also transform the wearer of said work. A few examples of artists whose works have recently been included in major international museum exhibitions of the jewelry medium include: Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, Alberto Giacometti, Rene Magritte, Alexander Calder, Robert Rauschenberg, Man Ray, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Sol LeWitt, Louise Nevelson, Nam June Paik, Louise Bourgeois, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, Anish Kapoor, and Kiki Smith.

Historically, these innovative fine artists have shattered boundaries between the viewer and artwork, fashioning a fascinating new creative language. Bridging the disparate schools of practice, they reunite the detailed, material focus of "craft" with the conceptual depth and personal connection of "fine art." The wearer of these works of art extols a calculated message, their body not only a canvas or backdrop but rather an integral part of the composition and aesthetic appeal.

Recently, the line between craft and fine art has again begun a convergence: artists dance between the two with facility. This reconciliation has been examined by several important international art museums resulting in the display of jewelry in galleries traditionally dedicated to painting and sculpture. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, recently built a gallery and hired a renowned curator solely dedicated to the research, display, and preservation of the world's finest examples of works of art in the medium of jewelry. The Beyeler Foundation and the Guggenheim Museum have also recently acquired and held exhibitions of works in this medium. Reaching beyond diamonds and pearls, forward-thinking museums are celebrating jewelry's powerful and historical legacy as a tool of helpful insight into the psyche of an artist.

For two decades, Claire Oliver Gallery has proven itself to be an institution that champions a dedication to physical process, commitment to craft, and intensity of detail that is balanced with conceptual content. As such, the Gallery is uniquely poised to invite standard bearer and next generation talent alike to create a new work for an important exhibition of wearable artistic innovation – fine art in the medium of jewelry. With this exhibition, Claire Oliver Gallery continues its quest to knock down barriers between mediums and to foster and encourage artists to actualize ground breaking work.

In presenting *Beyond Bling, The Artist As Jeweler* Claire Oliver Gallery stays true to its commitment to challenge, dazzle and surprise the viewer with works of art that require examination, contemplation, and interaction; the intellectual connection between the observer and the work of art is of the utmost importance to the Gallery.

Beyond Bling: The Artist as Jeweler will feature over 40 established and emerging artists with works created specifically for this exhibition. While some will be unique objects, other examples will be produced in limited editions. Working in a wide variety of media, invited artists will utilize disparate materials including mirror, crystal, stained and blown glass, paint, stoneware, rapid prototyping, collage, photography, video, precious and semi precious metals to name but a few. This important exhibition will be documented with an illustrated catalogue and is planned to travel to public institutions throughout the country.