

Exhibition Highlights Jewelry by 45 Female Artists

Pieces by Yoko Ono and Louise Bourgeois lead the display, scheduled in Cologne, Germany, through April 26.



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By Melanie Abrams

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Yoko Ono may be best known as the wife of John Lennon, one of the Beatles, and as an artist. But she has made jewelry, too.

A yellow and white gold ring by Ms. Ono is one of the first pieces on display at a new exhibition of jewelry by 45 female artists at the Museum of Applied Arts Cologne, known as MAKK, in Germany. Bearing the shape of a vinyl disc labeled Imagine Peace, Ms. Ono's ring references the 1971 song "Imagine," which she and Mr. Lennon wrote.



A yellow and white gold ring by Yoko Ono that references the 1971 song "Imagine," which she and John Lennon wrote. Damian Noszkowicz

It is displayed alongside a Louise Bourgeois gold spider brooch and a silver shackle neckpiece that was also created by Ms. Bourgeois, a French American artist.

The exhibition is called “From Louise Bourgeois to Yoko Ono: Jewellery by Female Artists” as “they are two big names most people know,” said Lena Hoppe, who curated the show in collaboration with Petra Hesse, the museum’s director.

The show, which includes 101 pieces of jewelry from the 20th and 21st centuries, opened Nov. 11 and is scheduled through April 26. An accompanying book, edited by the curators, is scheduled to be published in Britain on Feb. 6 by Arnoldsche Art Publishers (39 pounds, or around \$51) and in the United States on Feb. 27 (\$60).



The show, which includes 101 pieces of jewelry from the 20th and 21st centuries, is on display at the Museum of Applied Arts Cologne, known as MAKK, in Germany. DetlefSchumacher.com

After the jewelry by Ms. Ono and Ms. Bourgeois, the remaining exhibits are arranged alphabetically by artist, “to be, kind of, neutral,” Ms. Hoppe said. It begins with a silver knot brooch and a silver and enamel bracelet by Lynda Benglis, an American sculptor and visual artist, and ends with a ring in layers of silver, bronze and porcelain by Zhou Yiyan, a Chinese sculptor working in France.

“The idea was to have a show about jewelry as an artistic medium,” said Ms. Hoppe, who began developing the exhibition with Ms. Hesse in October 2024. “All the big names are men like Picasso,” she added, but “there are so many female artists who have been a little bit under the radar.”

Ms. Hoppe said the curators chose exhibits by asking themselves questions about which artists were important, which works were available and what the geographic spread might be.



Objects include the 1936 fur-covered brass bracelet by Méret Oppenheim, a German-born Swiss Surrealist artist. Private Collection, Paris

Objects include a 1936 fur-covered brass bracelet by Méret Oppenheim, a German-born Swiss Surrealist artist, and a gold and enamel snake brooch accented with turquoise and diamonds, which can also be worn as a pendant, by the French artist Niki de Saint Phalle. Although Ms. de Saint Phalle was known for her voluptuous sculptures, “we focused on snakes because this is a big topic in her work as well but not that well known,” Ms. Hoppe said.

Also featured are drawings by the Australian artist Helen Britton that reference her jewelry on display and a silver sculpture of a hare by Leiko Ikemura, a Japanese artist based in Germany, that echoes her hare rings and ceramic brooch in the exhibition.



A brooch by the French artist Niki de Saint Phalle, which is on exhibit at the MAKK show. DetlefSchumacher.com

Some of the pieces were made with unusual materials, such as the dried potatoes that the Dutch artist Jacqueline de Jong coated with gold and accented with diamonds for the neckpiece in her Pommes de Jong collection.

And some of the fabrication processes were intricate. For example, the glass bead bracelet and necklace by Sophie Taeuber-Arp, a Swiss abstract artist, “took a very long time to figure out” the patterns and then weave small beads together, Ms. Hoppe said.