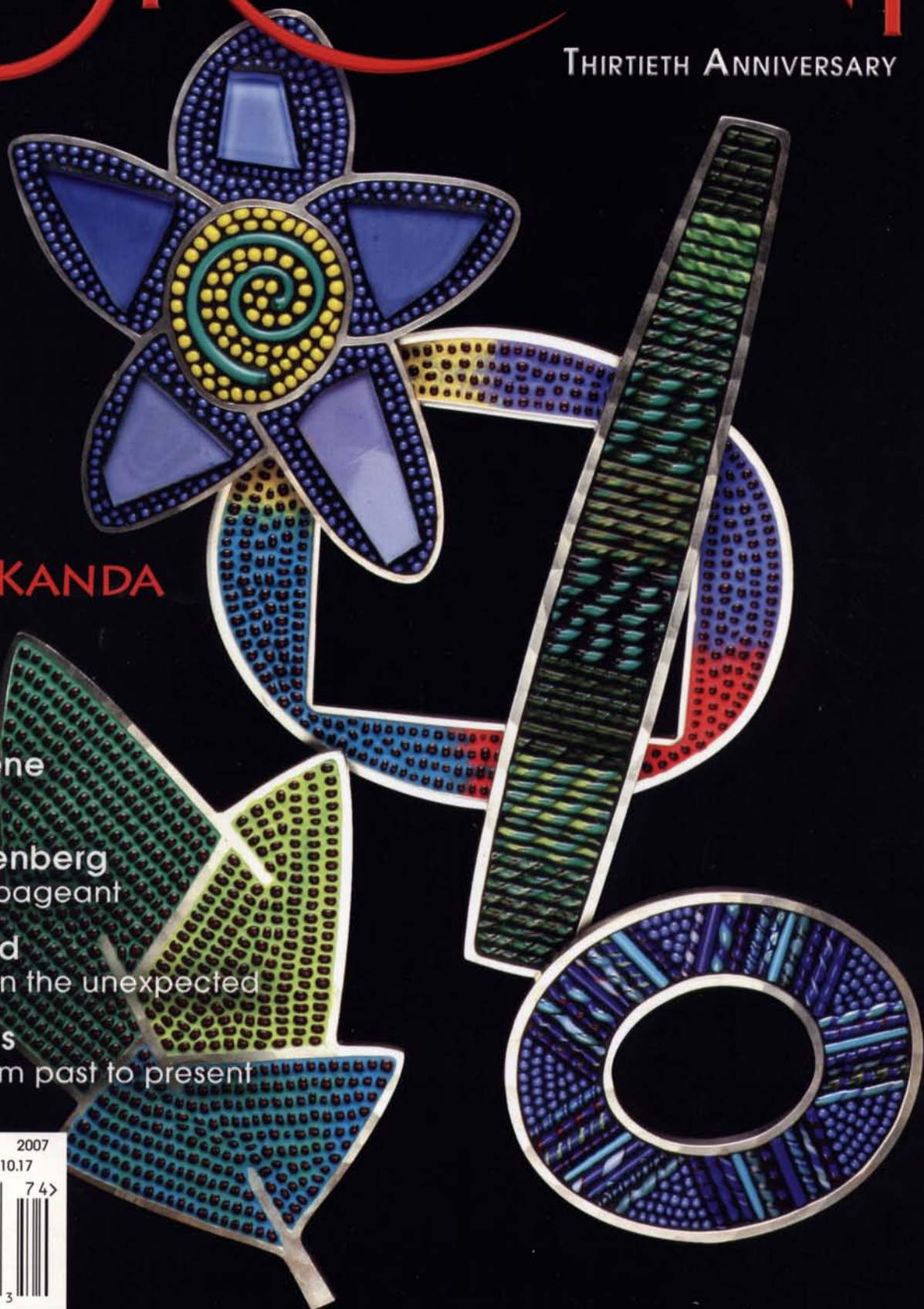


THE ART & CRAFT OF PERSONAL ADORNMENT

# ORNAMENT

THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY



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signs of life

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# WHAT LIES BENEATH



"When we look into a microscope, is it that much different than looking through a telescope? When we look into the night sky and see planets spinning around an energized nucleus, are we not struck by the similarities of the model that we have created to visualize how atoms look? When we look in, it is the same as looking out, when we look forward, it is because we can look back." —Sam Shaw

For *What Lies Beneath*, her first curated and thematically organized exhibition held May 4–June 3, 2007, at Patina Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, owner and metalsmith Allison Barnett invited fifteen jewelry artists to contribute a single brooch/pendant. She asked them "to explore the theme of layers, dimension, depth, and the mysteries therein." Like thoroughbreds put on their mettle, prize-winning metalsmiths from across the country and even as far afield as England and Germany ran with Barnett's idea, hitting their stride in a spectrum of interpretations ranging from quixotic to metaphoric. Some even departed from usual forms and practices to create something singularly new in their repertoire. The exhibit, handsomely lit and arranged in groups of two or three in wallcases, each piece displayed with an accompanying

artist's statement, brilliantly achieved its purpose of showcasing the conceptual creativity, originality and state-of-the-art craftsmanship in studio jewelry today.

The ringleader of the exhibit, and indirectly its inspiration, was a ring—not a brooch/pendant—from Atelier Zobel. A massive hemisphere of pale green beryl barely tethered in a brushed matte eighteen karat gold setting, its audacious size stopped short of rampant blingdom by a combination of finely judged proportions and the soft opaqueness of the stone. "The ring is like an atmosphere," Atelier Zobel's statement read. "On the outside, it looks rather plain. When you look inside the stone, you find the universe." Peer into the depths of the beryl, and suddenly a diagonal row of diamonds emerges in the green mists, set in a rough gold strip. "One of the artists who explores the idea of layers repeatedly and thrills me the most is Atelier Zobel—Peter Schmid, the proprietor, made the ring, though he frequently collaborates with Michael Zobel," Barnett says. "They often take a translucent stone and set diamonds or metal behind it. I love the confidence of their pieces." Andy Cooperman, another metalsmith intrigued with the theme of layers, designed *Polis*, a brooch/pendant built in the whirlpool shape of a paper wasp or hornet nest. Thin, delicate layers of textured, dark gray sterling with broken edges wrap around an unexpectedly bright golden core, a shining diamond nestled within. While celebrating nature's ingenuity, the piece also calls attention to the suppleness of the metals and the artist's skill in executing a technically complex piece.

The natural world took a starring role in many pieces—radiant rose quartz, simply wrapped in a handmade eighteen karat gold bezel in Petra Class's *Mi Corazon* necklace; and the ink drop agate and rutilated quartz, framed in a hand-fabricated eighteen karat classic pocket watch case of Phil Poirier's *Timeless Locket Watch*—both paid tribute to the aesthetic beauty of natural stones in themselves. Pat Flynn's unnamed but impressive brooch/pendant of blackened iron dusted




HAROLD O'CONNOR PIN of eighteen karat gold, sterling silver, olivine, New Zealand beach stone, 4.4 centimeters wide, 2007.

SAM SHAW PENDANT of eighteen karat gold, mud opal, quartz crystal, glass lenses; chain cast from twigs, 3.2 centimeters wide, 2007. Photographs by Bill Sandoval.

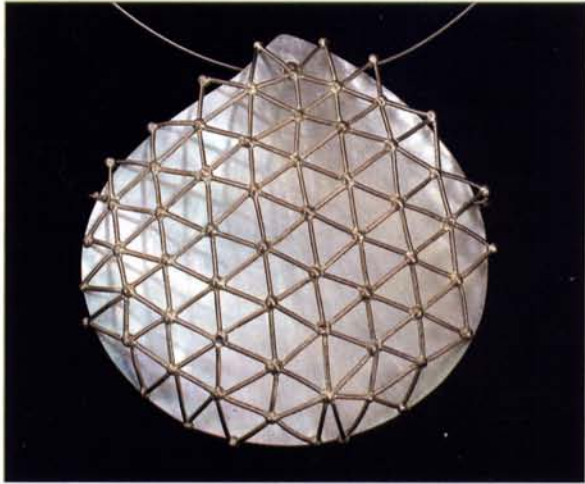
with twenty-four karat gold offered a more ironic commentary on cultural values and the power of nature. The rectangular piece, in three irregular rows of folds, intimates a hidden strength heaving up beneath the surface. "In building the piece, I was interested in geologic tensions—the pushing and pulling of plate tectonic forces ... distilling these forces into a jewelry scale," Flynn states. Only a second glance reveals two rows of tiny diamonds glimmering in the iron folds. They seem to suggest that only the earth itself can yield diamonds, while asking us to ponder what is truly more awe-inspiring: the majesty of nature, or the cut and polished art/artifice of stones socially encoded as "precious."

A joyous ode to nature and the sea is Harold O'Connor's untitled brooch, made from olivine and a stone found while walking along a New Zealand beach. The piece flows with the visual rhythms of a tiny shoreline, granulated gold eddying like foam on the green water rimming a gritty tawny-gray coast. A small magnum opus, the composition and interplay of textures merge in a timeless serenity. The sea again figures in Sandra Enterline's brooch/pendant. A white gold wire mesh encloses a thin curved abalone shell, like a fisherman's net cast into the water and bringing back a living treasure. The piece diverges from Enterline's more familiar work, of a perforated surface that invites the viewer to peer inside and glimpse a contrasting interior. Here, Enterline says, she was interested in the shadows cast on the surface of the shell, and in "elevating the kitsch of the mass-produced abalone piece into something unexpected." Despite the quiet palette of white metal and shell, the piece has a sculptural mass to it; as adornment it would dominate, but it answers perfectly to contemporary minimalist sensibilities.

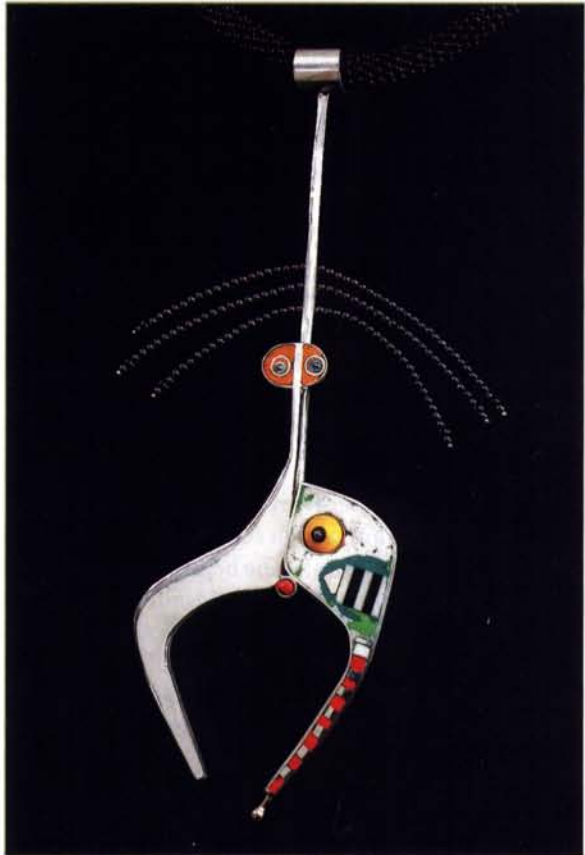
Two artists who had the most good-humored fun with Barnett's concept, Sam Shaw and Tod Pardon, created bold pieces, hopefully for a gregariously inclined wearer. Nature reigns once more in Shaw's long eighteen karat gold chain cast from twigs, and in the gold twig structure of the nearly three-inch-long microscope pendant. A gleaming glass lens at each end beckons the viewer to look closely at a mud opal and a quartz crystal suspended back to back in the middle. "When we look in, it is the same as looking out," Shaw states about his clever construction. "Thus, I have made a piece with two lenses to symbolize in and out, and to help release the beauty that lies beneath." Tod Pardon's gamboling figure, Blood Sky, fabricated of sterling silver, pigmented glass, onyx, and fossilized ivory, more frankly expresses his idea of the duality of the human condition, pirouetting between a veneer of composure and what he describes as the "inherent anxiety" that underlies modern life. Below a shock of beaded wire strands of hair and staring, cartoonish eyes, a body split in half between a slick sterling surface and a side containing wildly colorful abstracted shapes unites in a naked red protrusion above long tapered legs. At seven inches in height, the largest brooch/pendant in the exhibit, Pardon's piece speaks to our vulnerability with wit and compassion, a master artisan's candid, humane take on the theme of what lies beneath.

These works of art, Todd Reed's superb architectonic brooch/pendant built around a mouthwatering sixty carat natural mirror-faceted aquamarine, and pieces by Gill Galloway-Whitehead, Barbara Heinrich, George Sawyer, Alexandra Watkins, and Jeff and Susan Wise conclude Patina Gallery's excellent show. 

*Author Leslie Clark is a freelance writer based in Santa Fe, New Mexico.*



SANDRA ENTERLINE PIN/PENDANT of ten karat white gold, sterling silver, steel wire lattice, abalone shell, 7.0 centimeters high, 2007.



TOD PARDON BLOOD SKY PIN/PENDANT of fourteen karat gold, sterling silver, pigmented glass, onyx, fossilized ivory, 17.8 centimeters high, 2007.



ATELIER ZOBEL RING of eighteen karat gold, platinum, 192 carat Brazilian pale green beryl, diamonds, 3.8 centimeters wide, 2007. Note second image, showing diamonds set underneath.