

**A CULTURE IN PAPER****Paper Jewellery: designer works of art**

**Paper can be folded, embroidered, braided, sewn, sponged, plissé, punched, recycled, glued, painted with water colors... But as jewellery, paper – a material considered impartial – takes on joyous and unexpected forms and décors.**

Perini Journal

The Gioielli di Carta – Paper Jewellery – exhibition organized by Alba Cappellieri and Bianca Cappello at the Triennale di Milano center focused on the “preciousness of the jewellery”. And today, this feature is entrusted not only to precious metals and stones but also to “vulnerable” materials, symbols of sustainability, ecology and territorial development. Paper takes on multi-faceted forms and we can certainly say that it accompanies us in our everyday life. But not everybody knows that this apparently “poor” material has an incalculable intrinsic valance. With paper, we can discover, cover, cut, compose, and its aesthetics assume a primary role because it interprets our desires, arousing emotions. Just like the paper jewellery presented at the exhibition.

Jewels, veritable works of art, designer pieces created through the intellectual, creative ability and manual dexterity of internationally renowned artists coming from every part of the world.

Perini Journal (PJL): Gioielli di Carta: a captivating and provoking exhibition. How was the project born?

Bianca Cappello (BC): The idea was born because Paper Jewellery constitutes a unique way of showing people the importance of design, technique and expression that go beyond the economic value of the materials. Paper Jewellery was born in the 1960s and since then, artists and designers worldwide have ventured into this realm of art, working with different techniques and expressions. And even though this realm grew in importance and diffusion, an anthological exhibition of this size and with such a large quantity of jewellery had never been organized before.

PJL: The exhibition has been defined as a perfect oxymoron: why?

BC: When we speak of a piece of jewelry we always think about its material value, gold and precious stones. Paper Jewellery daringly overturns this conception. Historically, it is born in the 1960s during the Cultural Revolution. A bit jokingly, a bit as a provocation, Wendy Ramshaw and David Watkins, two cornerstones in the world of contemporary jewellery working in London, produce and launch on the market a line of jewellery flaunting very bright colors, even fluorescent colors, made totally out of paper and called “Something Special”. And suddenly, with an almost playful gesture, the concept of jewellery breaks away from the material it is made of. And all one has to do is to think about the fact that many of the pieces on show were made with recycled paper and with materials that were discarded by society!

PJL: The concept of “value” assumes a predominant position within the exhibition: in what way? How does the object “jewellery” fit in and combine with the element “paper”?

BC: If we do not consider the intrinsic value of the materials, the true value is given by the concept, design, ethics and, last but not least, the surprising manual and technical dexterity that lies behind each of these pieces of jewellery and makes them veritable works of art and design. Paper Jewellery opens up a whole new way of considering working with “non-precious” materials, totally disconnected with the concept of costume jewellery. Paper Jewellery do not want to be a copy of luxury jewelry models made using poor materials; rather, they allow the latter to open up to new expressive and technical research, ennobling them and at the same time elevating the final product that thus becomes a veritable piece of jewellery.

PJL: Today, perhaps, we are living in a society where raw materials that were once easy to find are now becoming more and more rare. Paper is a good example of this. What role and what value does paper jewellery take on in this context? Why choose paper as the raw material for jewellery?

BC: The art world’s interest in paper goes hand in hand with the progressive devaluation that this material has undergone

## A CULTURE IN PAPER

with the development of the so-called “consumer society”. On the one hand we have the production and large-scale diffusion of ephemeral objects made with materials such as paper, plastic and aluminum, to be used only once and then discarded. On the other, we have an intrinsic ethical, expressive and ecological awareness, promoted by artists through Pop Art and “Arte Povera”, that underscores the importance of these materials by developing specific research on them.

PJL: How many artists have participated in the initiative? And can you give us a brief description of their work and their working experience?

BC: Over sixty artists participated at the exhibition. This figure illustrates how much interest the event has aroused also on an international level. Selection was based on scientific criteria and the idea was to create an anthological exhibition that could accompany the visitor to discover the genesis and development of the paper jewel, while at the same time leading him or her beyond the aesthetic aspect by illustrating its thousand historical, ethical, social and cultural aspects. A voyage in time but also in space, bringing with it testimonials from many countries in the world. And so it is that, next to the archetype jewellery by Wendy Ramshaw and David Watkins, we find the works of art of great masters such as Nel Linssen from Holland and Janna Syvanoja, Finland, together with sculpture-jewellery from Japan by Ritsuko Ogura or the symbolic jewels by Mari Ishikawa; jewels from China, America and Europe, Portugal, passing through Italy up to Yugoslavia where the paper ring by Noemi Gera won the European Design Award in 2002, and then over to Africa where the women of the Gulu tribe make necklaces using pearls produced from recycled paper that arrives at no cost from the garbage dumps of other countries.

PJL: What are the goals of the Exhibition? Do you think you will organize another one in the future?

BC: We are currently negotiating with several museums worldwide, from Korea to Australia but also with the Museo della Carta paper museum of Fabriano, Italy. The project is very appealing to them and thanks to the set-up by Daniele Papuli made using only paper, we have crated a “product” that is easy to transport and to recompose.

PJL: What are the main stops of the exhibition? Why export it abroad?

BC: This exhibition marks an unprecedented moment both for Italy and abroad, not only for the popular and scientific idea that lies behind it, but also for the quantity of jewellery and artists participating, making this a project born in Italy but not confined to it, a project that can be appreciated in every other part of the world. Furthermore, through the simple observation of this splendid paper jewellery, it is possible to train the general public to higher concepts such as reflection on the design, on the traditions of the various populations and, last but not least, on the potential ethical and ecological message that can be transmitted through Art.

PJL: What was the criteria used to choose the jewellery?

BC: Several were the criteria that led to the choice of the works to be exhibited. There was the intent to create historical stages, to define the milestones that would allow us to write – for the first time in the History of the Jewellery – about the development of this creative branch. Hand-in-hand with this goes the idea of crossing geographical confines by involving artists from every part of the planet and inviting the viewer to an ethical and ecological reflection. And last but certainly not least, a precise, high level aesthetic and artistic selection process, with works that can surprise the viewer and make him or her fall in love with it.

PJL: If you had to describe this Exhibition in three adjectives, what would they be?

BC: New, Surprising, Joyous.

PJL: Projects for the future.

BC: The field of contemporary jewellery is very vast and spans out in all directions, not just the conceptual or geographic ones. Being able to successfully create a valid project requires hard work and involves the effort and support of many people.

I hope that, starting from the basis of this exhibition, we can again create the proper conditions that will enable us to further the research and diffusion of this cultural aspect.

A special thanks goes to the Perini Journal – reference magazine in the realm of Culture in Paper, always attentive to novelties and to cultural initiatives – that supported the exhibition through its contribution. •