

MEDIA RELEASE

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Artful Defense: Protective Ornament at Tacoma Art Museum

(Tacoma, WA) – Have you taken comfort in wearing a locket with a small image of a loved one, pinned on a symbol reflecting your faith, or donned a special gemstone to draw the right kind of energy into your life? Have you wondered at the spike piercing the tongue of your favorite barista, or admired a passer-by's broad gold ring so large that it loops over multiple fingers? Cultures across time and across the globe have crafted armor and amulets, leaving behind evidence of humankind's ongoing efforts to achieve physical protection and spiritual security. Wearable metalwork forms range from the simply functional to elaborate, heavily ornamented designs, and the rich, complex traditions of jewelry-making and metalsmithing continue to inspire today's artists.



Discover how the legacy of historical and functional objects is being reinterpreted as contemporary jewelry and metal art at Tacoma Art Museum's *Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor*, on view October 18, 2014 through February 1, 2015.

"This exhibition had its origins during the 2012 Society of North American Goldsmiths conference in Seattle. We knew this was the right project for us because of the emotional impact of the works and their relevance to today's issues of gender, violence, and protection," says Rock Hushka, Chief Curator at TAM, adding "*Protective Ornament* continues our ongoing commitment to major jewelry projects at TAM and reflects our goals for building our collection of studio art jewelry by Northwest artists."

Approximately 80 unique works by some of today's finest regional and national metalsmiths and artists will be on view. Among them are 15 Northwest artists, including Flora Book, Andy Cooperman, Keith Lewis, Lori Talcot, and Nancy Worden. The array of helmets, brass knuckles, breastplates, aggressive and defensive jewelry, chain mail, amulets, talismans, and protective gear addresses issues of protection and empowerment in the face of everyday perils and social challenges, and underscores the important safeguarding function of jewelry and other wearable ornaments.

Visitors to *Protective Ornament* can also explore selected works from TAM's studio art jewelry collection, the largest collection in the world of jewelry by Northwest artists, on view in the Davis Gallery study cases. See the recently acquired necklace by Coralyn Pence, commissioned by Anne Gould Hauberg for the opening of the King Tut exhibition in 1979, and works by Mary Lee Hu, Ken Cory, Nancy Worden. Find more about metal arts and jewelry in the TAM Store, which carries catalogues from past exhibitions.

The *Protective Ornament* exhibition is timed as one of the highlights of Metal-Urge, Tacoma's city-wide celebration of metal arts. Metal-Urge takes place from October 1 through November 30 and focuses on local metal artists with displays of jewelry, artifacts, sculptures and home décor. Events include the Metal-

Urge Free Community Festival on October 19 in Tollefson Plaza across from Tacoma Art Museum, and for the first time ever in Tacoma, the Seattle Metals Guild 19th Annual Northwest Jewelry and Metals Symposium at the Washington State History Museum on October 18. See the Metal-Urge website for more information: <http://tacomametalurge.wordpress.com/>.

Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor was organized by the Metal Museum, Memphis, TN and curated by Suzanne Ramljak, Editor of *Metalsmith* magazine. The exhibition is supported in part by a grant from the Washington State Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, and received generous support from ArtsFund and the Guendolen Carkeek Plestcheeff Fund for the Decorative and Design Arts.

TAM Events for *Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor*

Lunch & Learn with Rock Hushka, Friday, October 10, 11 am

Hushka speaks about the art and artists of *Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor*. Free with museum admission.

Member's Opening Celebration, Saturday, October 18, 6-9 pm

Enjoy refreshments in the museum's newly expanded lobby with guest curator, Suzanne Ramljak, and featured artists. Free for members, \$10 for guests.

Visiting Curator Talk with Suzanne Ramljak, Sunday, October 19, 1 pm

Meet the dynamic Suzanne Ramljak, who curated the exhibition *Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor*. Listen to her discuss her 2014 book, "On Body and Soul: Contemporary Armor to Amulets." \$15 for guests, \$10 members, \$5 students.

Visiting Curator Stephen Fliegel presents *The Technology of Art: Arms and Armor of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Sunday, October 19, 3 pm

Join Tacoma Art Museum as visiting curator Stephen Fliegel discusses the art and technology of armor from the middle ages to the renaissance period. Learn how armor and weapons were constructed with the greatest technical knowledge and skill, and how it became a process that often resulted in objects of great beauty. Fliegel is Curator of Medieval Art at Cleveland Museum of Art. \$15 for guests, \$10 members, \$5 students.



Image credits:

Top: Debra Baxter, *Devil Horn Crystal Brass Knuckles (mash safely)*, 2013. Quartz crystals, sterling silver, 5 x 4½ x 3 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom, left to right: Rebecca Barton, *Fairbairn's Armor*, 2006. Nickel silver, sterling silver, iron, 13 x 13 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Rebecca Barton.

Kristin Diener, *Talisman to the Center of the Earth*, 2011. Sterling silver, fine silver, brass, gold, steel flashing, steel wire, paper, eyeglass parts, synthetic ruby, pearl, hematite, moonstone, blue topaz, apache tears/obsidian, purple stone, soapstone, plastic toy, shell buttons, antique button, mica, gold foil, watch crystal, dirt ball, 15 x 6 x 1 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Margot Geist.

Lorena Lazard, *Mexico City Survival Vest*, 2007. Galvanize steel, sterling silver, copper, acrylic paint, 25½ x 17¾ x 11 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Paolo Gori.

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HOURS – Wednesdays–Sundays 10 am–5 pm, Third Thursdays 10 am–8 pm

ADMISSION – Adult \$10, Student/Military/Senior (65+) \$8, Family \$25 (2 adults and up to 4 children under 18).

Children 5 and under free. **Third Thursdays free from 5-8 pm.** Members always free.

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