

WHY AI WEIWEI KEEPS PUSHING BUTTONS

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

COMPANY STUDIO ON FRUITFUL LABOURS

# CRAFTS

KILT TRIP: TARTAN'S LONG JOURNEY / CECILIA CHARLTON'S WONDERFUL WEAVING / SEBASTIAN COX SEES THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

SABYASACHI MUKHERJEE TAKES ON THE WORLD / QUEER CRAFT / HATS OFF TO HORSEHAIR / COMMEMORATING COVID / POTTERS WALK ON THE WILD SIDE



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ISSUE 296

THEASTER GATES ON METAPHYSICS AND MAKING

# NEW TALENTS

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## Kristina Merchant

Forget flowers, butterflies and other sometimes-saccharine motifs that often appear on jewellery – pieces by Kristina Merchant are designed to resemble cigarette stubs, crumpled bottle caps, chewed gum and other distinctly unlovely detritus. ‘I enjoy making awkwardly beautiful objects,’ explains the graduate of Glasgow School of Art’s Silversmithing & Jewellery course. ‘My aim is to

fossilise everyday items of the 21st century. I’m highlighting a message about the societal norms of littering, which I hope sparks a conversation about material preciousness.’

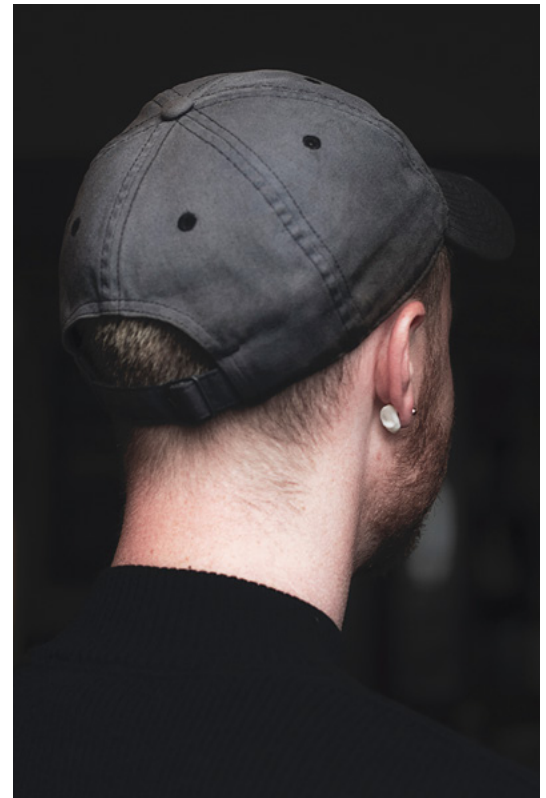
To create her jewellery, she started out by observing and collecting rubbish left behind during shifts in her previous job at a pub. Following a number of trial-runs using materials such as Pears soap and horn, she began making pieces out of amber and buffalo bone, ‘because of their organic quality and their history in traditional jewellery’.

Just last year, the recent graduate exhibited internationally at Galerie Marzee in the Netherlands. Now Merchant splits her time between working for a Glaswegian jeweller, interning at Dutch magazine *Current Obsession*, and completing an artist residency at her former university. It’s a marvel that Merchant still has time for making, but she’s brimming with ideas for other discarded objects she’d like to turn into tongue-in-cheek designs. ‘Jewellery makes me happy when it doesn’t take the subject too seriously. The fact that something recognisable can be worn on the body is a little confusing, but funny at the same time.’

[kristinamerchantjewellery.cargo.site](http://kristinamerchantjewellery.cargo.site)



ABOVE: from the *Vision of Beauty* collection, 2022, amber, bone, silver, gold and enamelled copper  
 RIGHT: *Gum Behind the Ear*, 2022, gold and bone



# Jacob Marks



ABOVE AND LEFT: resin lamp and platter from the artist's project, *Explorations in Pine Resin*

For London-based designer Jacob Marks, finding new ways to work with materials not only gives him a chance to feel like 'a bit of a mad scientist', but is also an opportunity to flip perceptions of those materials on their head. His latest project, *Explorations in Pine Resin*, sees him combine the naturally secreted substance with lard, hessian and other binders to create a series of vessels – when pine resin was last popularly used, back in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was largely for waterproofing naval ships. 'Being able to take something that most people aren't interested in or aware of, and turn it into something that's desirable is hugely rewarding,' he explains.

Marks' choice of medium is largely guided by intuition. Other pieces by the graduate of Kingston University's Product & Furniture Design course

include storage units fashioned from drywall, household hooks made out of discarded Christmas trees, and side tables crafted from lesser-known British timbers. 'I actually rarely approach a project with a specific end goal in mind. Seeing what the material or process lends itself to is, for me, a much more interesting and sympathetic way of creating.'

Going forward, Marks (who also runs JMakes, the popular craft channel on YouTube) has plans to work more with timbers coming from coppices or sawmill rippings, and he's just completed The Prince's Foundation's *Rethinking Wood* programme. But he's not done with pine resin yet: 'I often say to people that discovering the material feels like I've come across glass or ceramic for the first time; it's as though I've barely scratched the surface.' [jacobmarks.co.uk](http://jacobmarks.co.uk)



LEFT: *Sublime*, glass and metal  
 ABOVE: glass vessel from Zhao's  
*Non-existent Existence* collection

## Jinya Zhao

Since completing a BA in Product Design at the China Academy of Art, Jinya Zhao has pondered how she came to specialise in glassblowing. 'I guess the attraction first started when I saw a glass exhibition in Hangzhou,' she recalls. 'I was astonished by the unique liquid quality of glass, and the possibilities that arise from it.'

Now a full-time glass artist, Zhao is pushing those possibilities to the limit by creating shapely sculptures that aim to capture some of the most intangible – yet powerful – aspects of life. 'I draw inspiration from imagination, observation, memory and atmosphere, and then translate them into three dimensions,' she explains. Colour is also a key focus of Zhao's work. From the pillowy masses punctuated with egg-yolk yellow in her *Sublime* series, to the rainbow range of vessels-within-vessels of her *Non-existent Existence* collection: a whole spectrum appears and fades in her works.

'Colour gradation is important because it blends the different layers of glass into their respective spaces, and blurs the sense of boundaries,' she explains.

Zhao is still in the early stages of her career but has already stacked up a number of achievements, including a Stanislav Libenský Award (a prize given to exceptional graduate glassmakers) and an artist residency at Southern Illinois University. There's more yet on the horizon – she's currently working on a PhD at the Royal College of Art in London, exploring 'the creation of atmospheric phenomena within glass blowing,' and preparing for a summer exhibition in the capital with Ting-Ying Gallery (21 June – 1 July). 'After years of practice, I realise glass and I are growing closer,' she says. 'For me, art is a journey; I always look forward to seeing where life brings me, and the creations that come with it.'

[jinyazhao.com](http://jinyazhao.com)