



*Torn Pita*, 2012, copper, brass  
1 3/4 x 5 3/4 x 5"

incisive catalogue essay, curator Akiko Busch points out that “changeability has always been central to the work of Mimlitsch-Gray,” whose “material transfigurations are both raw and refined.” This dichotomy becomes apparent when contrasting the rough menace and materiality of the cast-iron pieces with more subtly transgressive items rendered in silver, copper, and brass. *Pair of Cups* (2005) reprises Mimlitsch-Gray’s iconic melting silverware trope, in which a gleaming luxury object (like a candelabra) appears to puddle on its way to extinction, an apt metaphor not only for impermanence, but for the mind in meltdown as it attempts to rationalize the irrational. Similarly, the handles of the copper *Strappy Vessel* (2011), seem to be metastasizing into an arterial tangle of ribbons, rendering it unfit for common use. *Clove Oval* (2010), an ambiguous container-like form, is equipped with both a slash mouth and impertinent tongue that taunts with a provocative silence. The copper and brass *Torn Pita* (2012)—misnamed, as it is smoothly cleft, not torn—is inescapably sexual, an object expressive of consumption and desire. Apropos of these images, Daniel Belasco, the Dorsky’s Curator of Exhibitions and Programs, writes in the catalogue that with such works Mimlitsch-Gray is “reinventing the Surrealist

object for the 21st century, provoking unexpected sensations and emotional associations to become portals to the unconscious.” This view—indisputable, I would venture—can find application as well in “Witness,” some of the artist’s current explorations using porcelain enamel over steel. *Grey White Swirly* (2014), borrows its sensual, softly pneumatic hot-water bottle shape from the earlier silver piece, *Something for the Table* (2013); but while the latter invites touch, with its gleaming surface and gentle contours, *Swirly* with artfully streaked and crackled enamel skin, seems more like a once-lovely artifact in a state of inevitable decomposition.

Mimlitsch-Gray states in the catalogue: “My work exists as homage and critique as it engages traditional objects, their purpose and presence in contemporary society.” The works on view embody the ways in which craft practice now seeks meaning beyond utility, discomfort beyond complacency, transcendence beyond the mundane. Aptly titled, *In/Animate* expresses the essential paradox inherent in these immutable metal objects, into which Mimlitsch-Gray has breathed the potential for mutability, as if to say “This is not what it is.”

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## Evert Nijland: Between Black and White

Gallery Loupe,  
Montclair, New Jersey  
10.15.16 – 11.5.16

by Ursula Ilse-Neuman

Gallery Loupe presented a welcome opportunity to view recent work by the Dutch jewelry artist Evert Nijland. Fifteen works were displayed at tabletop height, which allowed close-up scrutiny of his brooches, necklaces, chokers, and cuffs.

The exhibition’s title, “Between Black and White,” refers to two extremes: black,

an absence of color, and white, the blend of all colors. Indeed, these opposites may well be understood as a metaphor for the evolution of Dutch jewelry over the last 60 years, from the ultra-minimalism of the 1960s and '70s, with its shunning of precious metals and gemstones and any suggestion of ornament or narrative content, to the pluralism and unlimited artistic freedom in which Nijland thrives today.

Central to Nijland’s work is his interpretation of motifs from art historical periods, notably the baroque, and expressed through a bold multimedia approach incorporating cast silver, porcelain, textiles, leather, recycled wood, and the medium he exploits to the fullest: lamp-blown glass. When Nijland began his studies at the Rietveld Academy in the early 1990s, such direct references, unabashed celebrations of



*Shine*, 2015, porcelain, iron beads, textile, dimens

Medusa (cuff), 2016, laser-cut leather, hand-blown glass, diameter 4 1/2"



ornament, and comingling of diverse work processes broke new and fertile ground.

Nijland's juxtaposition of opposites in materials as well as techniques is frequently jarring. In *Medusa*, for example, a hefty black laser-cut leather cuff becomes precariously fragile through the addition of delicately blown glass curlicues, while in *Purple*, the S&M qualities of a constricting dark leather choker are mitigated by delicate lamp-blown glass segments. Nijland explains that these embellishments are inspired by small 16th-century Dutch "ringel cups," decorative metal rings that served as manual doorknockers. This fascination with glass in combination with other media also manifests itself in brooches in which cast silver twigs serve as armatures for tiny lamp-blown glass trumpets or irregularly shaped nodules.

In *Snake*, Nijland employs the centuries-old technique

of substituting glass for precious stones by applying miniscule glass droplets to the snake's patinated silver skin. Trumpet shapes resembling cornucopia appear on two other necklaces: *Trumpets*, made of silver and glass, and an untitled piece made in white porcelain, a material with a long and important history in Dutch culture, that the artist has embellished with rococo-inspired scrollwork and green silk ribbons.

Many of Nijland's works require technical expertise that can only be executed with the participation of skilled specialists such as lampworkers, silver casters, wood carvers, and ceramic and textile experts. This outsourcing approach is also employed by a small number of other contemporary jewelers and is common practice with several well-known contemporary painters and sculptors who enlist assistants

while maintaining sole authorship of their pieces.

In addition to the jewelry that Nijland recently made for the show, a number of highly reflective, mirrored glass brooches that the artist created a decade ago are noteworthy. While these brooches appear at first glance to be minimalist antidotes to the opulence elsewhere on display, the artist explains that 16th-century Venetian glass and the glittering waters surrounding Venice were the inspiration for their extraordinary reflective surfaces. Conceived as wall installations, these brooches were attached to enlarged Piranesi prints of antique ruins, creating an enchanting play with jewelry and glass, space and time.

The final surprise was a 21st-century rococo flight of fancy in the form of a fragmented, hollowed-out porcelain putto. Measuring no

more than ten inches in height, the figurine recalls 18th-century tabletop decorations, but Nijland places this archetypal sculpture in another universe by embroidering it with antique iron beads and hair-like silk threads. To Nijland, the object represents a combination of past and present, form and emptiness that suggests the ravages of time and draws an intriguing parallel to the Roman ruins in the Piranesi prints on the walls. While the figurine is not wearable, it embodies many of the qualities that Nijland wants us to appreciate in his jewelry: his celebration of opulent ornament, his elegant reveling in sensuality and eroticism, and his unique ability to interpret the beauty of ages past through his utterly contemporary eyes.

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