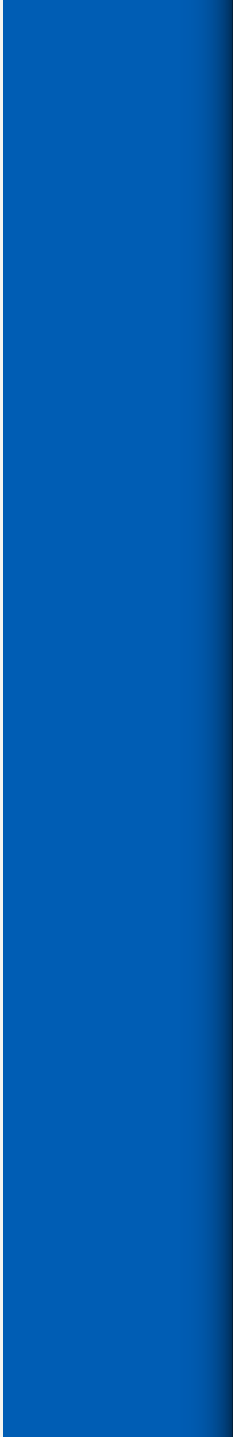


An unreliable guidebook to jewellery by Lisa Walker



Edited by Kate Rhodes and
Nella Themelios



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let's see what happens
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Day by day, piece by piece,
let's see what happens

An unreliable guidebook to jewellery accompanies the retrospective exhibition *Lisa Walker: She wants to go to her bedroom but she can't be bothered* at RMIT Design Hub Gallery. Lisa's vast body of work can be thought of as a career-length conversation with the question 'What is jewellery?' So much of what we want to say about the medium and the discipline of jewellery can be found in Lisa's work: it is simultaneously wearable and unwearable, precious and non-precious, skilfully and not skilfully made; it is in dialogue with jewellery's past as well as current social and political issues and, sometimes, it strives to be meaningless. Lisa's jewellery is controversial in many of the moves it makes, but now, nearly thirty years after she began creating work, her radical gestures have become the establishment. The exhibition tracks how Lisa continues to query the tools, methods and materials for making jewellery, and how her work appropriates and transforms its influences. Lisa's research practice – circling around the history, future and limits of jewellery – takes us into the realm of extremes, with the aim of making jewellery, and our encounter with it, more alive.

To coincide with Lisa's exhibition at RMIT Design Hub Gallery we have curated a parallel show entitled *All the jewellery* (*All the jewellery* is accompanied by a separate book, to be published at the end of 2019 by the Bowen Street Press, Melbourne, Australia.) This exhibition of workshops tackles key questions about contemporary jewellery. It brings together a community of jewellers, gallerists, collectors and those

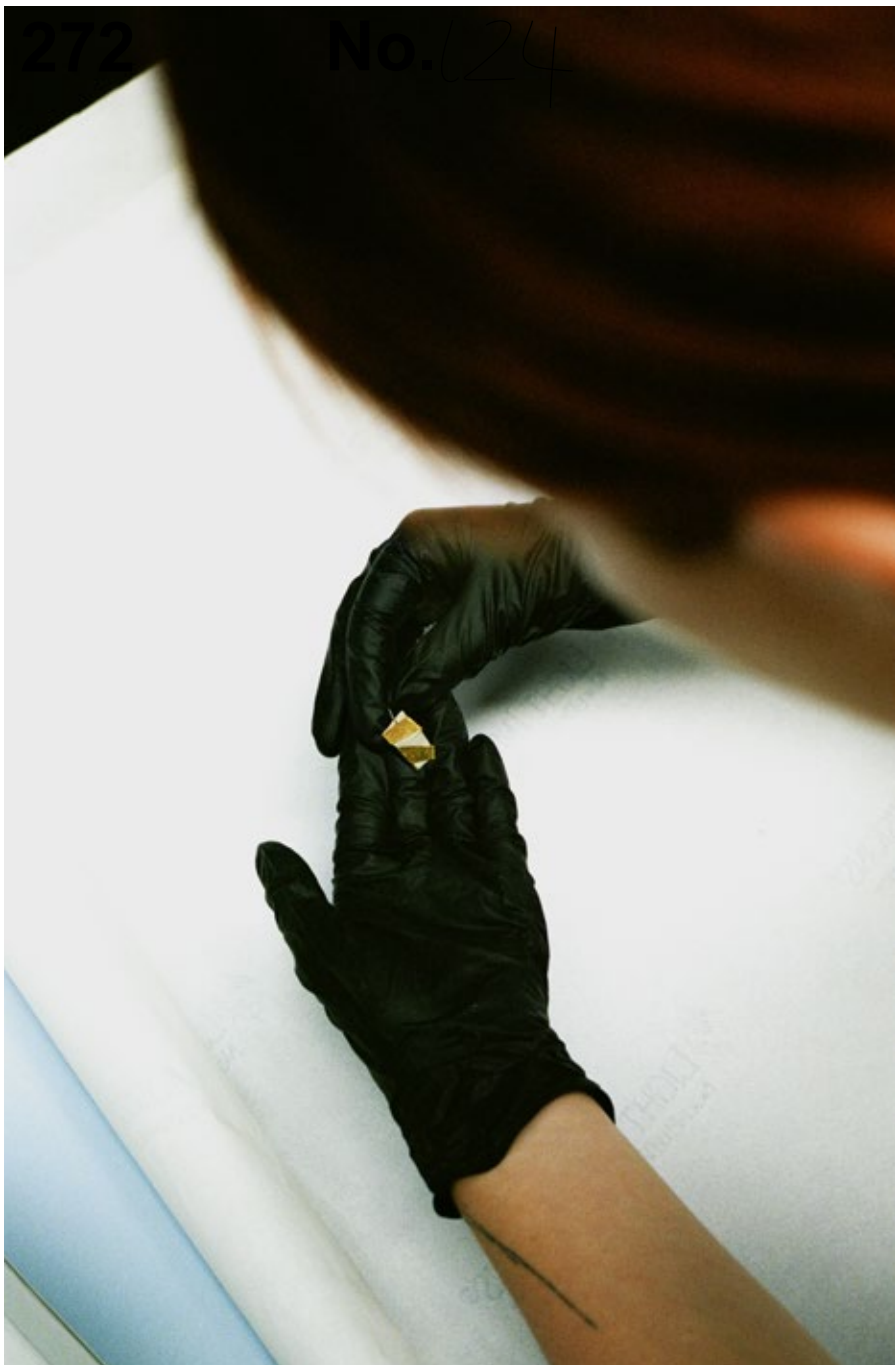
in the professions that support jewellery-making into a weekly conversation. Each week a different question will be publicly debated and the structure of the workshops will take multiple forms: a discussion, a masterclass, a performance, a seance, for example. *All the jewellery* is an expansive equivalent of Lisa's show in the vast terrain of ideas and perspectives we intend to uncover over the period of both exhibitions, which have questions at their core.

Questions are also core to this book. The text that follows weaves together three streams of writing: a meandering, poetic reflection on her own practice by Lisa, a series of interview questions posed by us and Lisa's responses. Lisa's reflective text – as reproduced here and differentiated by a large, bold typeface – has evolved over thirty years and at times forms the basis of a lecture that she gives about her work alongside images that scroll randomly. It is made up of statements, diary-like entries, manifestos, quotes from other artists and ongoing self-reflection. We pose questions to Lisa through this constantly forming text, drilling down into her work and her life as an artist. We also ask her questions about her questions to herself and the wider domain of jewellery. Within these pages, the occasional physical overlap of Lisa's texts with our interview is intended to emphasise that this is an intertextual conversation. Lisa's answers are a generous insight into her working processes but are also not the full story. In contrast to this overlap, Lisa's texts sometimes assume an oblique relationship to the images they accompany, suggesting a gap, ellipsis or space. There remains an element of Lisa's practice that exceeds her words. *She wants to go to her bedroom but she can't be bothered* is an exhibition of all of Lisa's

jewellery and this book is a collection of all of her words about her work – a complementary retrospective in text form.

We've called this book *An unreliable guidebook to jewellery* because we want to foreground the act of asking questions and the pleasure and importance of the 'as yet understood'. Asking questions is fundamental to Lisa's practice and to our own curatorial work, which researches the nature of creative practice. There is, we hope, the quality of a workbook to this volume; a place where notes, thoughts, references and images are archived and returned to frequently. A retrospective can often feel like a closed narrative, a totalising answer to the question 'What has this all been about?' The narratives that emerge within this book offer an open-ended reflection on Lisa's work, moving across different time periods, going off on tangents but returning to the many concerns of the field in which Lisa has so firmly embedded herself. To ask Lisa questions about her practice is to have a conversation *within* her ongoing conversation about jewellery.

Kate Rhodes and Nella Themelios
Curators
RMIT Design Hub Gallery



No. 124

273

Pendant

2006

Leather, gold (24ct)

25 × 15 × 3 mm

Martin Kippenberger – I liked how his invitation cards and posters were like artworks and souvenirs of where he was at.

KR/NT

If you are always showing where you are at, what does progress mean to you?

LW

Progress is everything I do – it's process, development, discovery. 'Always showing where I'm at' is how I prepare for exhibitions. I don't 'make an exhibition' – I'm continuously working, whether an exhibition is round the corner or not.



An unreliable guidebook to jewellery by Lisa Walker, edited by Kate Rhodes and Nella Themelios, is published on the occasion of the retrospective exhibition *Lisa Walker: She wants to go to her bedroom but she can't be bothered* at RMIT Design Hub Gallery, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, 29 January – 4 May, 2019.

Lisa Walker: She wants to go to her bedroom but she can't be bothered is conceived and designed by Lisa Walker and presented by RMIT Design Hub Gallery, RMIT University.

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An earlier iteration of the exhibition (entitled *Lisa Walker: I want to go my bedroom but I can't be bothered*) was presented at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand, in 2018.

Lisa Walker: She wants to go to her bedroom but she can't be bothered will travel to CODA Museum, Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, in June 2019.

A previous version of Lisa's text was printed in *The Journal of Modern Craft* under the title 'Seep'. Full reference: Lisa Walker, 'Seep', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, Volume 9, Issue 3, November 2016, pp.333–344. Reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com

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RMIT Design Hub Gallery is a progressive exhibition environment. We exhibit creative, practice-led research and are open to everyone. Our exhibitions visualise, perform and share research ideas and make new research connections.

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our work.

Location

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