



Handshake 5: In Dialogue

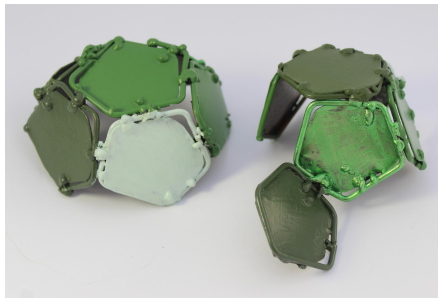
Emerging Contemporary New Zealand  
Jewellery at Coda Museum, Holland

by Roseanne Bartley

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Neke Moa, '*Ki a wai*', to who?, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Nadene Carr, *2.45 oz and 2.30 oz*, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Sarah Read, *Chain of Shame/Sinnepop doll SWEET AS* (detail), 2019. Courtesy CODA Museum.



Caroline Thomas, *WYSIWYG*, brooch, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Becky Bliss, *Play Fair (series 1)*, (detail), 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.

Invited by New Zealand-based jewellery organisation Makers 101 to attend and engage with the contemporary jewellery exhibition *Handshake 5: In Dialogue*, on show at Coda Museum, the Netherlands, I arrive in Amsterdam in early November 2019. I plan to travel to Apeldoorn in a couple of days, where Coda Museum is located. In the meantime, I attend several events scheduled under the banner of the Dutch Jewellery Festival. In the broadsheet-style newspaper publication accompanying the festival, I'm pleased to see *Handshake 5 (HS5)* listed amongst other high-profilers on the calendar. At two separate festival events I attend in those first days, I overhear

and partake in conversations praising the merits of the New Zealand jewellery exhibition at Coda Museum, which pleases me even more.

Handshake is an innovative contemporary jewellery project devised and managed by Wellington-based creatives Peter Deckers and Hilda Gascard, co-directors of Makers 101. Handshake supports emerging jewellery artists from New Zealand, offering one-on-one mentoring relationships, masterclasses, national and international exhibitions, and networking opportunities. Supported by Creative New Zealand Toi Uru Kahikatea Arts Development Funding Programme, the principles of Handshake are essentially ecological: it aims to nurture the foundations and interconnectivity of creative practice so that individual artist profiles strengthen and robust networks flourish both nationally and internationally.

The exhibition at the Coda Museum is its most recent iteration. The induction of artists took a regenerative turn, with twelve artist jewellers selected from the grove of previous participants. The artists were invited to make work that “responded and is in dialogue with” artefacts drawn from the Coda Museum’s permanent collection. Guided in their selection process by subcategories of ‘innovation’, ‘the body’ and ‘rough and raw’ artists could select up to three pieces from one or more artists. The project provided the artists with ‘coaches’: mentors strategically integrated at different stages of the creative process throughout the year. I was fortunate to be invited into the *HS5* fold, principally to lead a master class and then to follow up on developments as an online coach. I was one of three intermittent advisors who engaged with the *HS5* cohort throughout the year. The final works produced by *HS5* artists were then to be exhibited at Coda, alongside the works of the collection they were referencing.



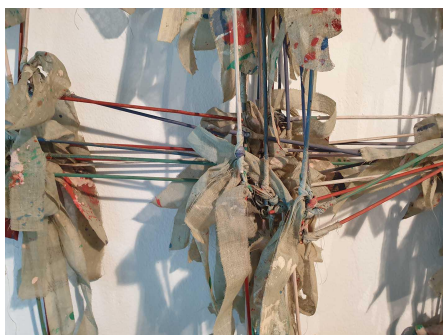
Vivien Atkinson, *Knitting* (detail), armbands, vintage knitting needles, scraps of wool thread, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



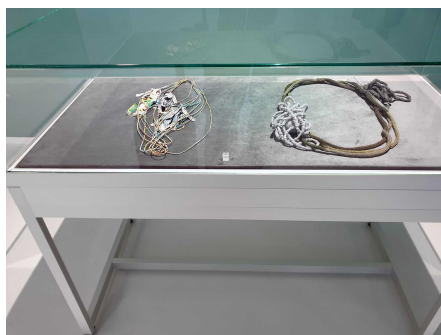
Vivien Atkinson, *Knitting*, armbands, vintage knitting needles, scraps of wool thread, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



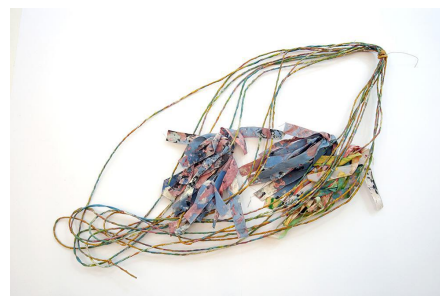
Lam de Wolf (left), *Wandobject*, 1992; and Vivien Atkinson (right), *Knitting*, 2019. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



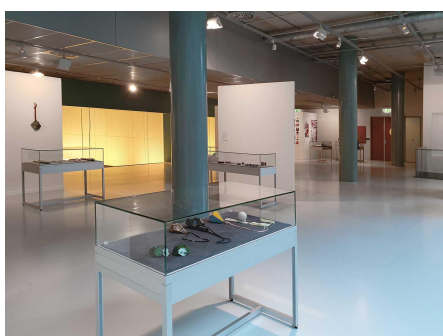
Lam de Wolf, *Wandobject* (detail), textile, paint, wood, 1992. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Lam de Wolf (left), necklace, iron wire, textile; and Vivien Atkinson (right), *Encoded*, vintage knitting needles, wool scraps, thread, 2019. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Lam de Wolf, necklace, iron wire, textile. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



*Handshake 5*, CODA Museum, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands – 14 October 2019 until 19 January 2020. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



*Handshake 5*, CODA Museum, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands – 14 October 2019 until 19 January 2020. Image courtesy Handshake Project

I'm curious to see how *HS5* artists rise to the challenge of working in response to or in dialogue with pieces from the Coda collection. Not only do these modes of exchange effect different kinds of

discourse, but the *HS5* artists have been mediating their engagement from a distance: not only from the other side of the globe, but also working from images rather than engaging directly with the artefacts themselves. The festival is the first time the *HS5* works can be viewed directly in dialogue with the artefacts that inspired the pieces.

At the entrance to the exhibition space, where the work is held at Coda Museum, a text panel in Dutch and English gives visitors a run-down of the *Handshake* project, and briefly mentions the themes used in the matchmaking process. In walking through the exhibition, I can tell the *HS5* artists have been highly inventive in their modes of engagement with the collection, but also in their approach to material, social and spatial practices of jewellery. For instance, Vivien Atkinson's striking wall installation, *Knitting* (2019), consists of a grid formed of the criss-cross of knitting needles supporting open-mouthed woollen cuffs or bracelets. The piece is a commanding and humorous dialogue with Dutch artist Lam de Wolf's eccentric textile work *Wandobject* (1949), installed alongside. In *Knitting*, Atkinson follows a 1915 Red Cross pattern distributed to "amateur yet skillful" female and male knitters to make socks for the war effort. Atkinson, however, deviates from the pattern by stopping before the turn of the heel, an absence of footing that allows room to slip in the hand. Initially, this deliberately incomplete proposition is enticing: the wool appears smooth and comforting, but the needles remain in play to remind us of the unfinished trauma suffered by many. In this piece, Atkinson works with op-shop wool remnants in khaki and grey and reminisces on the lines of wartime song, *Knitting*: "knitting with a smile, knitting with a sigh". The pathos of these words echo within the billowing and gasping-like gestures of the woollen 'bracelets', an effect that is particularly moving.





Ruudt Peters, *Dedicated to*, object, steel, 1988. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Neke Moa, *'He Mea', a thing*, hanger, pounamu, metal, terry toweling, coconut fiber, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Neke Moa, *'Ki a Wai' to who?*, hanger, pounamu, coconut fiber, paint, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum



Sarah Read, *Chain of Shame/Sinnepop doll SWEET AS*, necklace, candy wrappers, curling ribbon, 2019. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Yasar Aydin, *Layers of Pink*, necklace, porcelain, leather, 2011. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Neke Moa, *'No whea koe', where are you from?*, pounamu, bone, paint, coconut fiber, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum



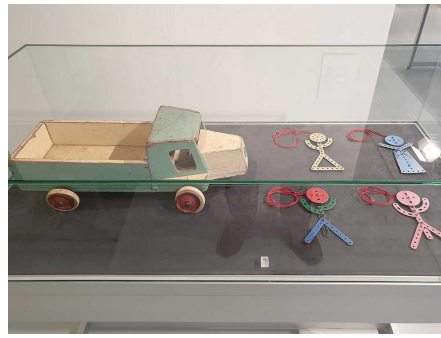
Neke Moa (far left, left and far right); and Yasar Aydin (right). Image courtesy Handshake Project.

Another dynamic approach is taken in Sarah Read's social project *Chain of Shame/Sinnepop doll SWEET AS* (2019). Over the course of a year, Read made jewellery with members of the public out of sweets from around the world at her local library in Reading (Read is currently working out of the United Kingdom). Wrappers of lollies eaten during the process were collected and later twisted into what she describes as the *Chain of Shame*. The temporality and sociality of this project are where Read intersects with another work by de Wolf, who over the course of a year made improvised dolls clothes and gifted them to friends in exchange for a bottle of champagne. Instead of champagne, Read requested a photo of her participants wearing their jewellery in exchange for taking the jewellery home. The photographs serve to document the work, and provide an interesting insight into the diversity of Reading.

Artist Neke Moa offers an interesting perspective through which to consider the colonial implications of the dialogue between New Zealand artists and works in a Dutch museum. Her three bold and decisively worked Pounamu (nephrite), 'pendants' resonate with her lived connection to culture and place. It's a curious experience to see this work sitting alongside the three European artists Moa selected, as these works do not appear to have much in common, nor refer to any one place. In response to Coda artist Yasar Aydin's ceramic work *Layers of Pink* (2011) Moa boldly juxtaposes a striated piece of pounamu with what looks to me like chenille, or pink dressing gown material. The incongruous pairing of these two materials is disarming, and it reminds me of how social and cultural behaviours are patterned in material and by language. The function of one work is translated in the catalogue as 'hanger',

which I find to be quite apt – as craft historians Damien Skinner and Kevin Murray have pointed out, the word jewellery itself has colonial overtones.<sup>[01]</sup> Moa’s desire to redress colonialism through adornment is reiterated in the titles of her works, all of which are poetically poised as questions. In response to a work by Dutch artist Ruudt Peters titled *Dedicated to* (1988), Moa respectfully but boldly titles her work with the provocation, ‘*Ki a Wai?*’ to *who?*





ADO melkauto (left), 1953; and Becky Bliss, *Play Fair (series 1)*, hangers, steel, paint, rope, 2019. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Becky Bliss, *Play Fair (series 1)*, (detail), 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.

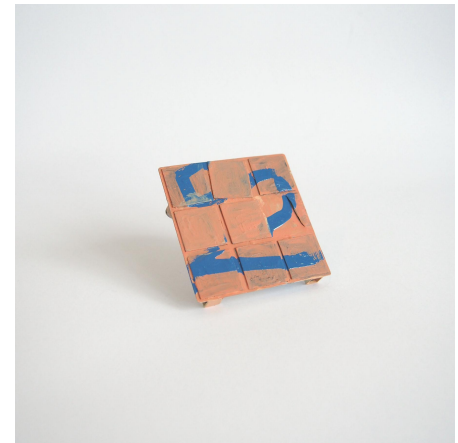
Lucy Sarneel, *Food for Joy 1*, 2011. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



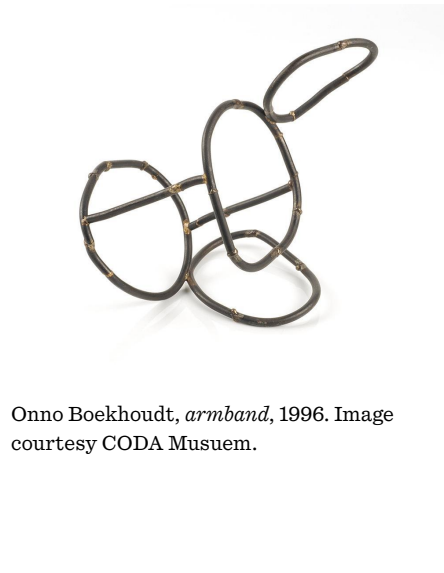
Vanessa Arthur (left); and Onno Boekhoudt (right). Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Vanessa Arthur, *Line forms*. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Vanessa Arthur, *Remnant inlay*. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Onno Boekhoudt, *armband*, 1996. Image courtesy CODA Museum.

Vanessa Arthur, *Wall scrawl*, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.

Becky Bliss also offers up thought-provoking work. Bliss is partnered with Dutch artist Lucy Sarneel, and her work is placed alongside an Ado wooden toy truck (1953) from the Coda collection. In her series *Play Fair* (2019), Bliss reflects on the gender stereotyping of children's toys by reworking pieces of Meccano into pendants. Her Meccano family contradicts social and economic patterning of gender by inventively twisting normative coding of colour and sign, gainfully illustrating the ridiculousness of stereotyping children's play according to their genitalia. This toying around takes on a queer quality when placed next to the graphic delights of Sarneel's painted zinc necklace *Food for Joy 1* (2011), in which bright colours and abstract forms playfully interact without giving the name of the game or the player away.

A slightly more obscure approach is demonstrated by the three abstract pieces presented by Vanessa Arthur. The rectangular postcard sized panel *Wall scrawl* (2019) is a hybrid object, the surface of which is roughly painted off-white with a contrasting clay brown paint smear and an energetically hewn piece of wire (earring) attached below. This work reflects the artist's interest in trace making: indexing marks, processes, materials and forms that in their familiarity appear to defy definition and leave us wanting more. Even though Arthur's three works sit next to three gestural and somewhat ambiguous pieces by Dutch artist Onno Boekhoudt, her works don't seem overly concerned with entertaining a

dialogue. That is not to say Arthur is indifferent or disrespectful and I quite like the work's nonchalance. It's like Arthur is communing with Boekhoudt on another level, metaphorically taking a leaf from Boekhoudt's book and then returning it, and responding with process-led making of her own.

Sarah Walker-Holt, on the other hand, whittles out her response to three Coda artists through the materiality of wood. Surprisingly, she does not work with rare or precious hardwood best left growing in the ground, but garden variety plantation pine: four by two pallet pine commonly used in the transport and building trade. Walker-Holt cuts, chips and saws into her source material. She files, sands and lacquers; rivets, paints and curls. Due to her industrious activity and the care given to her benchwork, an industrial material is made precious, given a new life through which to express or to impress on the body as a brooch or necklace would. I can tell that Walker-Holt has looked intently at her selection of Coda pieces, closely observed their form, pattern and rhythm. Her work titled *Earthly Ship* (2019) echoes the organic and angular refrains of another piece by Lucy Sarneel, *Nachtlucht* (1998), an example of where the hard graft of making align with maker's intention.



Sarah Walker-Holt (far left and right), Réka Fekete (left), and Lucy Sarneel (far right). Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Lucy Sarneel, *Nachtlucht*, 1998. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Sandra Schmid, *Seedpods*, 2019. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



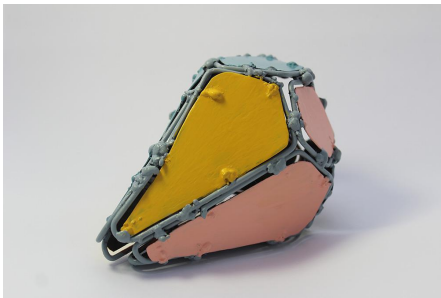
Sandra Schmid, *A Dance with the Star*, brooch, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Dorothea Prühl, *Tiere*, necklace, alder wood, rope, 1999. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Nadene Carr (far left, left and right), Paul Adie (middle), and Lucy Sarneel (far right). Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Nadene Carr, *6.50 oz*, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Sarah Walker-Holt, *Earthed*, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.

Sandra Schmid also works expressively in silver, stone and wood, although she appears to open up a new conversation with each response. There is limitless potential within these investigations, but I found I was most engaged by Schmid's response to Dorothea Prühl, a jeweller who in carving forms made of wood seems to get



right down to the core meaning of things. Schmid responds by carving and scorching the series *Seed pods* (2019) a title that suggests a groundedness in this approach to making. Prühl's slow and deep elemental practice operates on a different energetic platform to the conceptual approach of Otto Künzli, the maker of one of Schmid's other reference pieces. I would suggest that Prühl's work is inherently feminist, which makes me wonder what else might have been had Schmid been able to dive in and dialogue with Prühl's work on its own.

Working in steel for this exhibition, Nadene Carr presented quirky patchwork pendants and brooches. Even considering the three artists' works Carr has responded to, it wasn't immediately apparent to me why Carr chose to step away from her familiar material milieu of the found object, textiles and enamelled copper. It is well known that objects can provoke us, even make us do things we would not normally do. While I appreciate Carr has taken a risk in trying out something new, the exchange between these works is similar to a tentative chat in order to scope out the promise of something new in the future.



Caroline Thomas, *GSOH*, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Caroline Thomas and Beppe Kessler. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Caroline Thomas, *WYSIWYG*, brooch, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Brendon Monson, *Svenja; imitation is the sincerest form of flattery*, 3D printed nylon, nylon thread, 2019. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



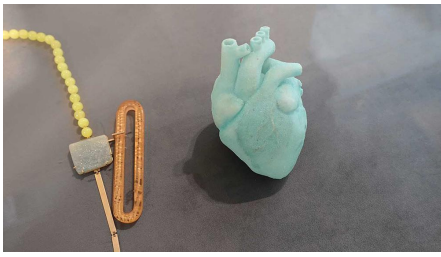
Brendon Monson (left), *Svenja; imitation is the sincerest form of flattery*, 2019; and Svenja John (right), *IMOLA*, armband, plastic, 2018. Image courtesy Handshake Project.

There were similar issues in Caroline Thomas's work, although I was pleased to discover a more focused articulation contained within a small wall mounted cabinet. Here, an intimate and humorous conversation occurred between Thomas and the intuitive work of Dutch artist Beppe Kessler. In the silhouette of Kessler's brooch, the quirky playfulness of Thomas' work is revealed both literally and metaphorically. Out of the series of five brooches by Thomas, there are two in particular that look like faces. They could, however, also be read as orifices, and I took

pleasure in not being able to decide. In this moment of indecision, I looked back at Kessler's brooch more intently and comprehended her piece in a different way. A dynamic effect of dialogue in action, perhaps?

In viewing the exhibition, it seemed that the themes that initially underpinned the selection process weren't particularly transparent once the works were placed in situ together. As such, I could only assume the digitally fabricated pieces selected from the Coda collection by Brendon Monson and Nik Hanton were related to the theme of innovation. I was particularly taken by Brendon Monson's blue nylon 3D printed necklace titled *Svenja; imitation is the sincerest form of flattery* (2019) in reference to Coda artist Svenja John. Here, Monsoon crafted a materially evocative piece, in which the subtly hand-coloured nylon plastic beads retain the surface effect of something intricately woven. The catchiness of this piece is in the way Monson aggregates the springiness of the material to link the beads together. It synthesises the novelty of a toddler's snap and pop necklace with the satisfying pastime of popping Neptune's pearls, a native seaweed endemic to New Zealand and Australia.

Nik Hanton produces a curious dialogue through her assemblage of bracelets, brooches and necklaces, and her use of a mix of technique, palette and material. Viewing the work is like putting together pieces of a puzzle. The pattern at work here only reveals itself when unique characteristics of the individual are considered in relation to the whole. The incongruity between Hanton's pieces *Constantinople* (2019) (a collar made of wood, coated in sand and ornamented with cubic zirconia), and *Rielloc* (2019) (a 3D printed brooch in the shape of a human heart), only begins to make sense when I think of the works in the context of the developments of human civilisation, the history of ornament and invention of biotechnologies. Who would have thought something as small as jewellery could speak to a topic so big? But then again, jewellery has been with us, or we have been with jewellery, since we began to assert our upwardly mobile selves.



Nik Hanton, *rielloc* (right), 2019. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Nik Hanton (lower left), Evert Nijland (above left), Jantje Fleischhut (middle left), Nik Hanton (middle right), Nik Hanton (above right), Terhi Tolvanen (lower right). Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Kelly McDonald, *It should be something like breathing*. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



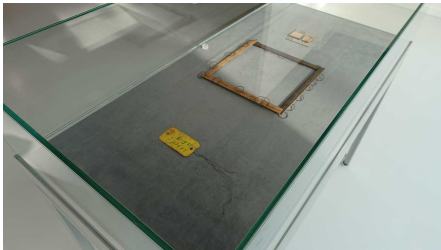
Kelly McDonald, *It should be something like breathing*. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



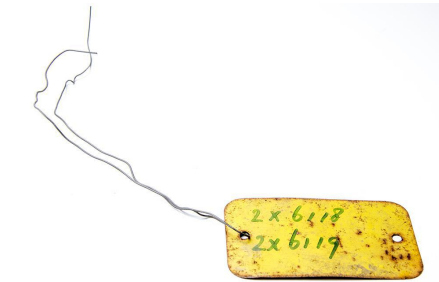
Kelly McDonald, *It should be something like breathing*. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Kelly McDonald, *It should be something like breathing*. Image courtesy CODA Museum.



Onno Boekhoudt. Image courtesy Handshake Project.



Onno Boekhoudt. Image courtesy CODA Museum.

I've left the work of Kelly McDonald until last, maybe because her evocative installation *It should be something like breathing* leaves me grasping for words that won't smother or extinguish the poetic sensitivity of her work. McDonald selected three pieces from artist Onno Boekhoudt, whose work and studio artefacts are a feature of Coda Museum's collection. Her installation invites the viewer into a speculative dialogue on the capacity of vernacular materials to become jewellery through an episodic rendering of holes, gaps, voids and frames made of found and fabricated steel. Installed as a triptych, McDonald's works aesthetically echo the rusty



abjectness and fascination with holes in the assigned Boekhoudt pieces, while sustaining a conceptual focus on playful making; a principle she derives from Boekhoudt, who championed process over the end result. There is an engaging sense of relentless questioning within this work, the feverish energy of which is palpable. This concise and evocative work was a gratifying conclusion to my viewing of *Handshake 5: In Dialogue*. McDonald's installation is pleasantly breathtaking.

In this essay, I have endeavoured to offer an account of the *Handshake 5* project while being transparent with regard to my provisional involvement in the project's most recent iteration. I'm interested in impressing the vitality and generosity of *Handshake*, as there is immense value to be gained for the artists involved, but also for contemporary jewellery practice as a whole. *Handshake* continues to innovate and develop its programme, and I am extremely grateful for having had the opportunity to travel to the Netherlands to see the finished product, and to think through my experience of the exhibition and the work of the *HS5* participants.

### Footnotes

01. Skinner and Murray note the word jewellery refers to, "western practices of making wearable items and thus involves western values and concepts." Adornment, on the other hand, is a "meta category of wearable objects" and has "the advantage of suggesting a particular association with indigenous objects." (2014, 8) Damien Skinner and Kevin Murray, *Place & Adornment: A History of Contemporary Jewellery in Australia and New Zealand*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014.

### Biographies



Roseanne Bartley is a New Zealand-born Melbourne-based artist, jeweller and writer whose hybrid practice encompasses studio practice, social process and performance.

