



*The*  
**GOLDSMITHS'**  
*Company*

# Mindful of Silver

27<sup>th</sup> MAY -  
16<sup>th</sup> JULY

MON - SAT  
10AM - 5PM

**Vladimir Böhm** **David Clarke** **Rebecca de Quin** **Sarah Denny**  
**Grant McCraig** **Alistair McCallum** **Hector Miller** **Peter Musson**  
**Theresa Nguyen** **Michael Rowe** **Toby Russell** **Lucian Taylor**

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Summer Exhibition 2011

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# Mindful of Silver

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The journey of a vessel from conception to completion.

A dynamic and revelatory exhibition by 12 leading contemporary British silversmiths

At Goldsmiths' Hall

*"Mindful suggests a thoughtful awareness and respect; it also references a mind that is full of ideas and thoughts."*

Julie Chamberlain, Exhibition Curator

From Friday May 27 to Saturday July 16, 2011

Admission Free

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"Mindful of Silver" is an exciting and stimulating exhibition which challenges our perceptions of the modern day silversmith and illustrates the intellectual and practical design process involved in the making of innovative, design-led contemporary silver.

Twelve stunning, yet contrasting silver vessels form the core of the exhibition, each made by a different leading British silversmith. The participating silversmiths namely Vladimir Böhm, David Clarke, Rebecca de Quin, Sarah Denny, Alistair McCallum, Grant McCaig, Hector Miller, Peter Musson, Theresa Nguyen, Michael Rowe, Toby Russell and Lucian Taylor were chosen as they embody differing philosophies and approaches to their craft and demonstrate interesting, diverse making processes.



Theresa Nguyen

The exhibition curator Julie Chamberlain explains; “We are all familiar with the vessel as part of the technical heritage of the silversmith so each was challenged to design and make a silver vessel of their choice. This became the shared starting point for their individual thoughts. The silversmiths were also asked to keep a ‘metaphorical box’ into which they put anything and everything that contributed in some way to the intellectual and physical development of their piece.” The result is an energetic and honest reportage animated with a fascinating, disparate collection from tea stained scribbles, drawings in differing mediums, photographs, text, objects, models and material samples.

Creativity remains at the vortex of the exhibition but whirling round it are the complex, demanding and sometimes pragmatic elements of the design process. Hours of contemplation and practical experimentation are involved before an original, beautifully conceived vessel demonstrating the highest skill of the craft and individual intellect eventually emerges. Throughout the journey, which can be both playful and torturous, each silversmith

has to make numerous decisions and incremental adjustments - it is an insight into these decisions which makes the exhibition so fascinating.

One distinguished participant and Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths’ Company, is silversmith Hector Miller: “As a designer I am often asked where ideas come from. This exhibition presents some of the creative processes that prompt new work and illustrates the varied ways in which I, and my colleagues, arrive at our own unique solutions to the challenge of a commission. The exhibition is not just about finished silver vessels, it is about drawings and models, images and objects, because although it is often the logic of thoughts and words that start a design process, it is by embracing the material world with the intuitive use of eyes and hands that a new piece comes into existence”.

Hector has delivered a “tour de force” and pushed the boundaries both creatively and technically with his elegant silver vessels. At first glance the vessels look like stunning decorative silver sculptures but in fact the tops unhinge to form natural handles thus making a practical pair of jugs.





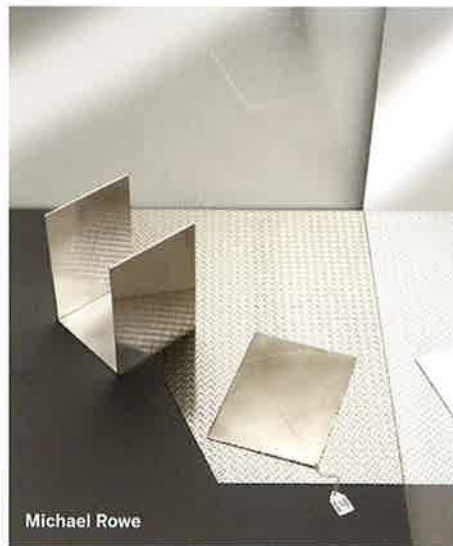
Inspired by the Dragon Tree, Hector's design sequence from its conception to completion is documented by a series of drawings and models.



David Clarke has a reputation for producing engaging, intelligent and challenging domestic objects. His take on a vessel was to start with a spoon: "I respond to spoons and see them as the beginning. In the background is the tradition of silversmithing. My reaction is to subvert the subject and place strange, odd or humorous objects back into this dull predictable and stiflingly conservative arena." In keeping with his design ethos David uses old squeeze bottles and mangled spoons to help him formulate his ideas. Despite his radical thoughts his resulting vessel, with its graceful narrow

shape and spoon on the top, serving both as handle and lip, is extremely sophisticated and elegant.

The design process can be more abstract and intellectual. Michael Rowe takes a radically conceptual approach looking at the relationship between containers and what they contain. The humble Ryvita provides the vehicle for an exploration of geometrical proportions in silver for the table. Ryvita is made to the golden proportion, a formula that is followed through in its packaging making for an economical use of space and this, together with other geometrical ratios forms the basis of his group of vessels, treated as a site-specific display. The textured silver foundation echoes the crinkly, grained surface of the cracker.



In order to produce his scored and sheet folded jug, Toby Russell had to overcome the challenge of converting his final design from a card model into silver. He explains: "Paper has its own unique quality and in some ways is less flexible than silver sheet. I never truly know how the design

will convert or how far the silver can be pushed". The image that inspired Toby throughout the design process was that of a prow of a boat cutting through water and as a keen swimmer and surfer, he is naturally drawn to images of waves.



Theresa Nguyen's "Spiritus", is a conceptual vessel for aesthetic effect. She has interpreted the notion of containment by producing an open and fluid form composed of multiple leaves unfurling from a tightly packed core. Theresa began by visiting some of the country's most renowned gardens and freely sketching the form, movement and overlapping patterns of leaves. The proportions and scale of the design then evolved three dimensionally through model making in paper, wire and real leaves.

The ancient Japanese metalworking technique of *Mokume Gane* (wood grain metal) is taken to new heights in a bowl by Alistair McCallum made using an incredible 128 layers of silver and gilding



Peter Musson

metal. The final bowl emerged after considerable deliberation, documented by numerous drawings and a series of smaller hand-raised bowls made with much fewer layers. The layers were then dramatically increased in scale and number, and finally the bowl was hand-raised to produce a simple form that harmoniously complements the random organic nature of the pattern.

While the results are totally different, both Peter Musson and Lucian Taylor like to fuse the precision of modern technologies with the unpredictability of traditional hand-raising skills. In contrast Rebecca de Quin's silver vase, its elegant lines echoed in a two-dimensional silhouette of blue aluminium, takes on the form of a still-life painting, while Sarah Denny's sculptural vessel "Plunging Form" seeks to express simple changes of movement within an object and celebrates the natural beauty of her native Yorkshire.

Sarah's vessel went through the physical process of pencil to paper, to plasticine and then papier-mâché models followed by hours of hammering to raise the form from a large single blank of silver.

Equally fascinating stages were also undergone before Vladimir Böhm produced his flat, rounded and textured dish which took its inspiration from the weight and solidness of a centuries old cattle trough in a village in his native Croatia. Likewise what complex thought processes and practical experiments did Grant McCaig go through before his vessel and associated beakers emerged?

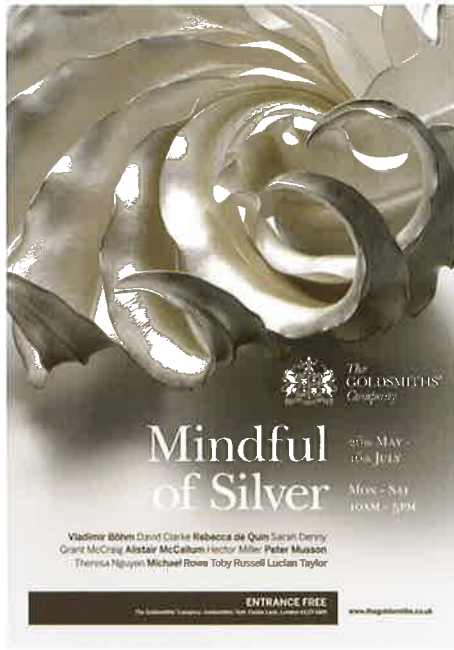
The exhibition is a journey of visual discovery for both the maker and the viewer – hence the title "Mindful of Silver".



Rebecca de Quin



## Note to Editors



### Exhibition Curator - Julie Chamberlain

Julie Chamberlain is a practising designer/silversmith and educator. Since graduating from the Royal College in 1984 she has pursued an individual exploration of design-led silver from functional tableware through to a more conceptual approach. Recognising the importance of the history and tradition of her craft, she works towards these within a contemporary context whether it is as a designer, maker, educator or curator.

Julie particularly values and enjoys the exchange of knowledge, skill and experience. As a lecturer in design she is able to regularly participate in this exchange with her students while encouraging and supporting an understanding of the value of both design and craftsmanship. As an active member and past Chair of Contemporary British Silversmiths, Julie has endeavoured to help raise the profile of contemporary silver, introducing it to a broader audience and increasing the understanding of the value and importance of design within the crafts. She freely admits to being "passionate about silver".

#### SILVERSMITHS

CVs and artist statements of all participating silversmiths are available on request.

#### MINDFUL OF SILVER

At Goldsmiths' Hall  
Friday May 27 to  
Saturday July 16, 2011

#### ADMISSION FREE

Monday to Saturday  
10am to 5.00pm

Goldsmiths' Hall,  
Foster Lane,  
London EC2V 6BN  
Tel: 020 7606 7010  
[www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk](http://www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk)

#### UNDERGROUND STATIONS:

St Paul's, Mansion House,  
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#### BUSES:

8, 11, 25, 100, 242, 521, 56

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#### [www.whoswhoingoldandsilver.com](http://www.whoswhoingoldandsilver.com)

The Goldsmiths' Company's online directory for jewellery, silver and works of art enables the public to browse on line to make contact with the maker of their choice. With more than 300 craftsmen, all approved by the Goldsmiths' Company, the website is the ultimate resource for any requirement in precious metal.