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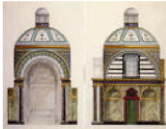
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18 June 2011 | by: **ANDREW LAMBIRTH** | [Comments \(0\)](#)

### The art of architecture



**Leighton House, studio-home of Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–96), is one of my favourite museums, and always a treat to visit.**

The Goldsmiths' Company Summer Exhibition is devoted to a dozen contemporary craftsmen working in silver. In a couple of rooms on the first floor of Goldsmiths' Hall in the City, their varied work is succinctly laid out, with a flat cabinet and a tall display case allotted to each. The exhibition is as much about how applied artists get their ideas as about the vessels they produce. To this end, the flat cabinets are given over to the actual process of designing, and contain drawings, models and all kinds of reference [material](#) that has influenced or inspired these makers. The result is a fascinating and revealing examination of contemporary silver.

Michael Rowe's display informs us that the British inch was defined by statute in 1324 as 'three grains of barley, dry and round, placed end to end, lengthwise'. Although this country has allowed this brilliant unit of measuring to be superseded by some ghastly European metric system that nobody I know either likes or wants, the glorious inch is still in use in the shoe industry (as well as in the Lambirth [household](#)). This encourages Mr Rowe to place a hand-made leather shoe in his display and to make much play with barleycorn textural decoration in his journey towards making a silver Ryvita holder.

Lucian Taylor makes 'skeuomorphic' pieces, flexible membranes inflated to make spheres like fruit or seedpods. Hector Miller's cabinet of models and preparatory drawings leads to rather over-elaborate jugs with handles like wizards' hats. Grant McCaig has made two groups of vertically pleated and seamed carafes, with cups and beakers, which refer (among other things) to the way a human [body](#) looks under the ribbed shadows cast by Venetian blinds. His beautifully made vessels have all the impact of a still-life by Morandi.

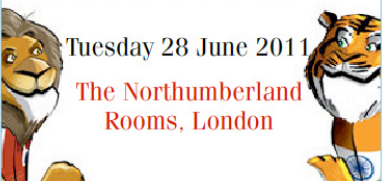
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