





regine schwarzer **informing** facets

Pink tourmaline, amethyst, rutilated quartz, aventurine, aquamarine, chrysoprase, fossilised coral, prehnite, lemon quartz, Mexican fire opal...

The names of these precious and semi-precious stones are imbued with a poetic resonance that evokes their translucent natural beauty. Jeweller Regine Schwarzer obtains such stones when they are still raw, their luminous colours concealed within geological layers deposited over millions and sometimes billions of years. Painstakingly she carves into the layers to reveal the inherent structure of the stones and expose the glowing colours of nature's geological palette.

Traditionally when carving translucent, semi-precious stones the facets are cut at angles to enhance reflectivity and colour flashes. Schwarzer, however, works against this scintillating effect, faceting the stones in such a way that "their inner life, trapped within the form, is made visible". She seeks those gemstones that are regarded as of lesser value due to inclusions or natural impurities, and incorporates these imperfections into her design to accentuate their unique qualities of texture and pattern. Part of the allure for Schwarzer is to uncover patterns that are a memory or residue of ancient geological events, encapsulated within the microcosm of each stone. Sometimes these patterns resemble miniature landscapes that echo or allude to patterns in the larger macrocosm of the natural environment.

*"While cutting a stone I like to work from the outside in, taking off layer by layer to discover an internal secret life, often suggestive of landscapes. I bring these hidden treasures to the surface, carefully considering the final shape to enhance the stone's individual qualities."*¹

This fascination can be traced back to Schwarzer's childhood in Germany, when she used to accompany her father on fossicking expeditions in the Franken Jura to collect rocks and minerals. After migrating to Australia in 1993 to establish a studio in the Adelaide Hills, she travelled in the outback and started fossicking in Coober Pedy and Queensland. This continent's abundant resources of gemstones were a revelation, and became a profound influence on her work. She remains perplexed that Australia's gemstones and rocks, with their vast spectrum of rich hues and their ancient geological history, are so undervalued and rarely used by contemporary jewellers.

"The jasperoid used in the brooches was mined in the Pilbara, Parapadoo, an area in Western Australia owned by Rio Tinto. It was deposited in an ocean sediment in the Late Achaean-Paleoproterozoic, around 2.5 billion years ago."

Schwarzer was already a qualified professional jeweller when she migrated to Australia. She had worked as a studio jeweller in her native Germany for several years after receiving a rigorous traditional training in metalsmithing – four years apprenticed as a goldsmith at the Staatliche Zeichenakademie, Hanau, followed by contemporary design studies with Gunther Lorenzen and guest studies in silversmithing at the Fachhochschule Hildesheim.

It seems particularly appropriate that she currently works from a studio in Hahndorf with its rich German heritage. The influence of German-trained jewellers and goldsmiths in South Australia stretches back to the mid 1800s, with the Art

Gallery of South Australia collection including works by Henry Steiner, Julius Schomburgk and the Wendt family of jewellers. More recently the German-trained master metalsmith Frank Bauer arrived in Adelaide in the 1970s to establish a jewellery studio at the JamFactory. He continues to work from his Adelaide studio and to share his skills with South Australian jewellers. Bauer has been a mentor to Schwarzer during her research towards a Masters Degree in Visual Arts and Applied Design at the University of South Australia.

During her time in Australia she has established a reputation for jewellery that is beautiful, superbly crafted and highly wearable. In her initial body of Australian work she set smoothly rounded gemstones in silver and gold rings and neckpieces. This became a successful signature style that she pursued for several years. In this work she acknowledges inspiration from the eminent British jeweller, Wendy Ramshaw, who is known for her contemporary sculptural jewellery inlaid with precious and semi-precious stones.

It is rare for jewellers to process and cut their own stones, with almost all outsourcing to gem-cutters. At first Schwarzer sent out her stones to a professional cutter. However her dissatisfaction with the results of outsourcing, particularly her lack of control over the process, inspired her to undertake training in opal-cutting and gem faceting. She sources her raw stones, including some from overseas, both by collecting them in the outback and through suppliers. Her progressive acquisition of expertise in this painstaking and highly skilled process is at the heart of the creative evolution in her most recent work.

The collection of neckpieces, pendants, brooches and rings in her exhibition *Informing Facets* features superbly cut stones in refined settings designed to highlight the distinctive qualities of each gem. Large gemstones in glowing hues, each faceted at differing angles to reveal their limpid depths, take centre-stage in pendants and rings. Black spikes shimmer in the pellucid clarity of actinolite quartz, held by sleek gold prongs. A rubellite (pink tourmaline) ring has been carved with irregular facets angled to capture the light within so that it seems to exude an amber glow, in harmony with the ring's thick band of gold.

In several pieces Schwarzer creates complex structures of multiple elements where two or three different stones are juxtaposed. Here one of her primary influences is prominent German jeweller Hermann Jünger, who in his jewellery set up correspondences and connections through compositions mixing precious and non-precious media. In one piece she pairs the delicate patterns of fossilised coral with the muted green of chrysoprase. In another, the coral pattern forms a subtle counterpoint to the soft lustre of pure gold and the subdued grey-green tones of aventurine."

"The successful composition of different materials is achieved by observing design principles, colour combinations – creating tension between geometrical constraint and fractured exposed edges; setting contrast through opacity; strong colours next to lines which are the result of contraction and expansion in the formation process."

Schwarzer uses high carat gold and silver in her exquisitely detailed settings. These are not mere foils for the stones; they have a strong, aesthetically resolved presence in their own right, neither dominating the gems nor assuming a subservient, functional role. Getting the balance right is everything. This relies on the integration of her professional skills as both metalsmith and a stone-cutter. It is the distinctive mark of her jewellery in this exhibition, and is the culmination of a prolonged process of creative development both as a jeweller and stone-cutter over more than 25 years. Crucial, however, to the success of her work is her fundamental interest in the wearer as well as in the making.

"My aim for each piece I make is for it to be beautiful, wearable and to leave room for interpretation by the wearer. The site for jewellery is the human body, not the gallery showcase."

Margot Osborne
February 2008

¹ All quotes in italics are by Regine Schwarzer

a scatter of uncut stones offers the opportunity for transformation

through the rigours of cutting,
the intensity of the focus, a subtle shift occurs



Reflections, 2006
Ring, aquamarine, sterling silver, 22ct gold, 24ct gold, 20 x 25 x 9 mm



Reflections, 2006
Rings, aquamarine, sterling silver, 18ct gold, 31 x 22 x 26 mm
Prehnite, sterling silver, 28 x 22 x 7 mm



6 *Reflections*, 2006,
Necklace (detail), prehnite, sterling silver, 22ct gold, 24ct gold, 146 x 146 x 15 mm

to enter the life of each stone becomes an unarticulated goal



Reflections, 2008
Ring, lemon quartz, sterling silver, 32 x 26 x 20 mm



Reflections, 2006
Ring, rubellite, 18ct gold, 32 x 24 x 16 mm

cutting is dictated by the nature of each stone

there is an opening up; irregularities and inclusions
come to light



Dialogue, 2007
Pendant (detail), actinolite quartz, sterling silver, 22ct gold, 27 x 14 x 10 mm

Dialogue, 2007
Pendants (from left), actinolite quartz, sterling silver, 22ct gold, 27 x 14 x 10 mm; prehnite, sterling silver, 15 x 12 x 10 mm;
prehnite, sterling silver, 19 x 14 x 11 mm; chrysoprase, sterling silver, 22ct gold, 27 x 18 x 11 mm; prehnite, sterling silver, 21 x 21 x 11 mm



Dialogue, 2007
Pendants (from left), quartz, rubellite, sterling silver, 25 x 21 x 7 mm
Quartz, prehnite, sterling silver, 22ct gold, 40 x 14 x 9 mm
Quartz, scapolite, sterling silver, leaf gold, 33 x 16 x 8 mm

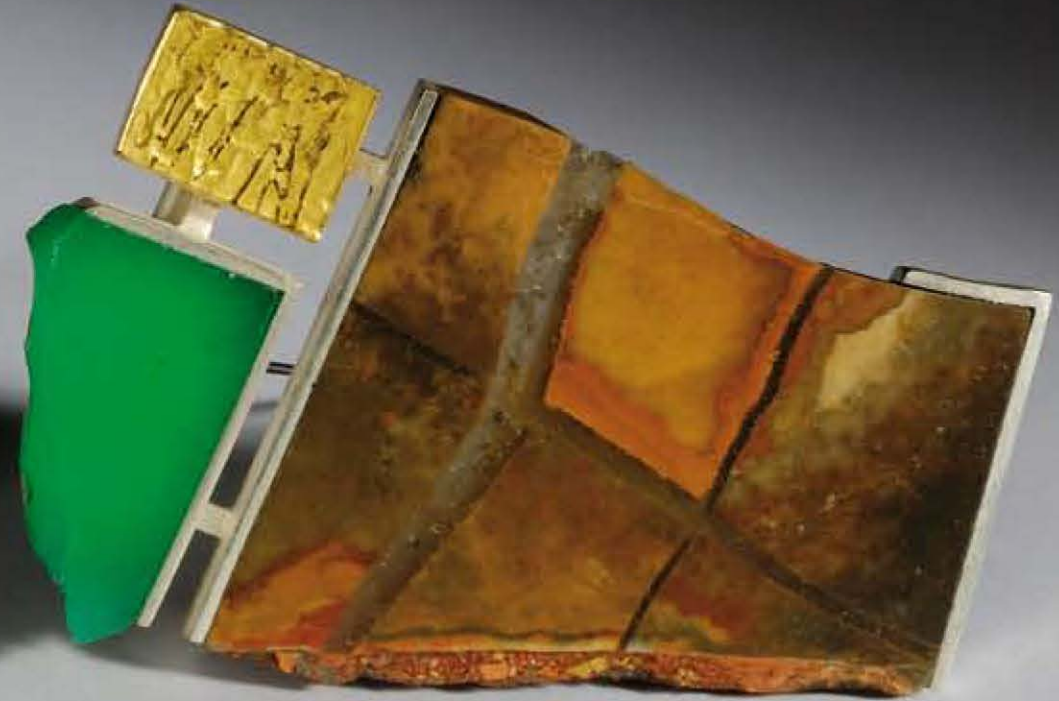
borders are lost, the settings minimal
in contrast to the architecturally balanced
structures of earlier pieces

it is the stones, unconstrained which fascinate



Making Manifest, 2007

Brooches, jasperoid, chrysoprase, sterling silver, 24ct gold, 56 x 36 x 8 mm
Jasperoid, chrysoprase, sterling silver, 24ct gold, 37 x 54 x 8 mm



slicing into the jasperoid elicits landscape studies – an aerial view
counterpoised by juxtaposition of vivid green chrysoprase and golden fields



Making Manifest, 2008

Brooches (from left), fossilised coral, aventurine, sterling silver, 24ct gold, 41 x 50 x 8 mm

Quartz, rubellite, sterling silver, 24ct gold, 34 x 35 x 12 mm

Chabazite in basalt, chrysoprase, sterling silver, 41 x 28 x 14 mm



ancient seas surrender the trceries of coral fossil, chrysoprase here echoing translucent seas giving up their secrets in shafts of sunlight, or aventurine conspiring to keep them hidden

Making Manifest, 2008

Ring, fossilised coral, aventurine, sterling silver, 29 x 31 x 21 mm

the three heraldic brooches resonate with notions of talismans guiding themselves into being

working with the hands fosters intuitive understanding of the material, encouraging subtle shaping in response

the idea is to allow each stone to speak freely



Approaching Immanence, 2008,
Rings, Mexican fire opal, sterling silver, 26 x 24 x 11 mm
Aquamarine, sterling silver, 28 x 25 x 14 mm



Approaching Immanence, 2008
Necklaces (clockwise from top left), amethyst, sterling silver, 17 x 19 x 14 mm
Honey opal, aquamarine, sterling silver, 23 x 28 x 10 mm
Rutilated quartz, sterling silver, 24 x 21 x 12 mm



Alpha/Omega, 2008
Rings, quartz, sterling silver, 28 x 24 x 26 mm
Rutilated quartz, sterling silver, 29 x 24 x 14 mm

at journey's end the stones declare their origins, minimal cutting
delineating crystalline forms



Alpha/Omega, 2008
Rings, aquamarine, quartz, sterling silver, 30 x 24 x 17 mm
Rubellite, quartz, sterling silver, 22ct gold, 25 x 25 x 14 mm