

# love addiction

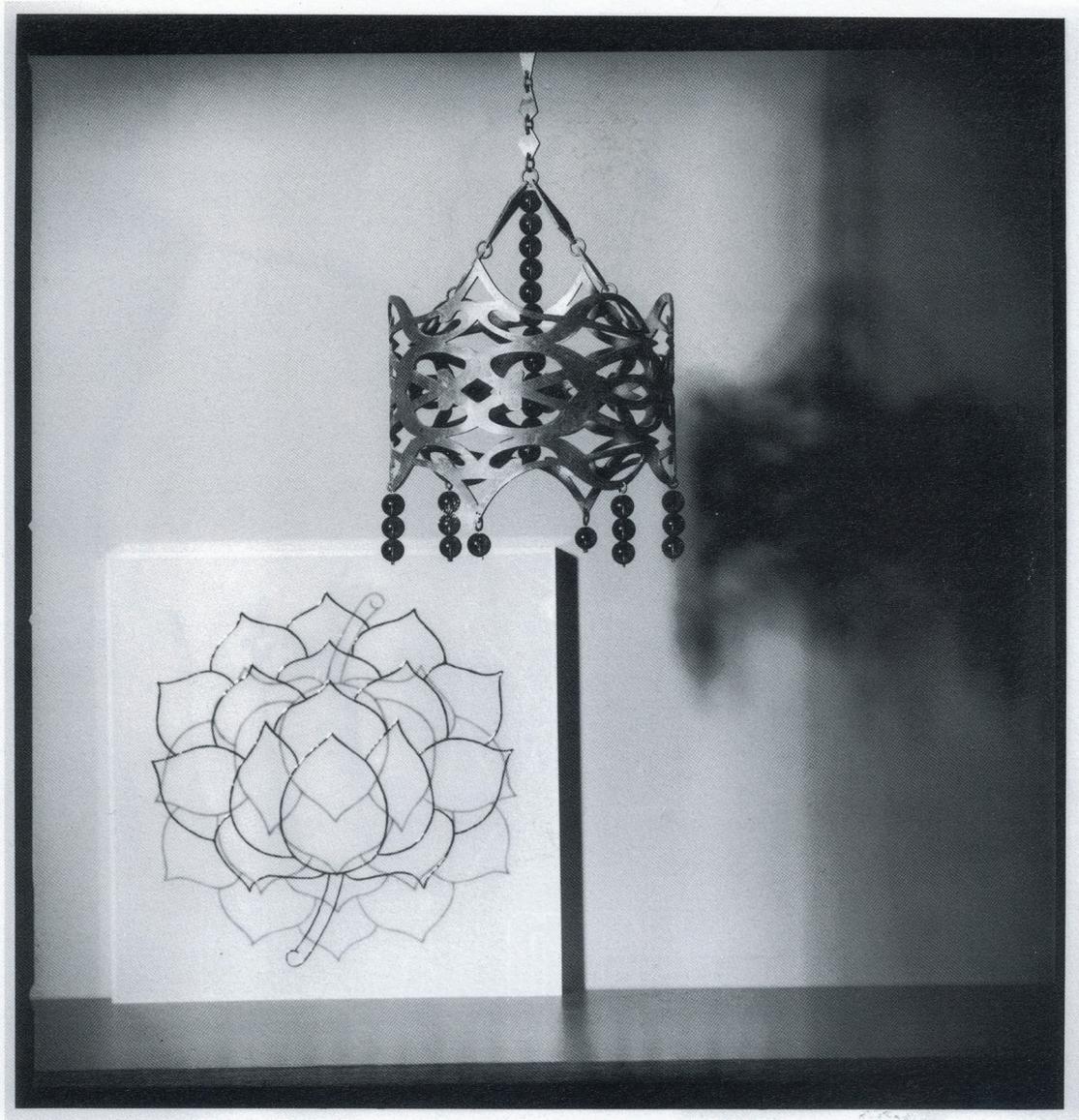
Photography: Andrea Higgins

A selection from Kirsti's Simpson's collection of Barbara Heath commissioned and production jewellery.

## In our regular series, **Rhana Devenport** explores the very personal collection of interior designer **Kirsti Simpson**

KIRSTI SIMPSON IS AN INTERIOR DESIGNER AND PARTNER WITH THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN FIRM HASSELL, who's RIAA award for interior design was announced just weeks ago and their work with the Olympic Railway station at Homebush has drawn much praise. Kirsti has also created a dynamic partnership with her architect partner Paul Owen. The two have recently designed and transformed a modest Brisbane home into an airy, elegant, contemporary dwelling featuring generously scaled spaces and outdoor zones that have already graced the pages of Italian and Australian design mags.

Over their bed is Barbara Heath's Crown Guardian, a suspended sculpture of cut copper and smoky quartz that casts filigree shadows on the alcove created especially to house it. Other collections include paintings by June Tropicoff, Helga Groves, Robert Moore, Robert Morris, Scott Whittaker and Rodney Bunter; sculptures by Krista Berga; and furniture by Arne Jacobson, Eames, Aalto, and Chris Connell. Yet, in the true spirit of a devoted collector, when speaking of her commissioned and production pieces by Barbara Heath, the words 'addiction' and 'love' fall easily from Kirsti.



Barbara Heath's *Crown Guardian* and a work on perspex from Helga Groves.

"I was thinking about how I first noticed Barb's work... and it was on the wrist of my first boss. She had the most wonderful charm bracelet (if you could call it that). It was this fantastic recycled thing that I thought was the most wonderful project that I had ever seen. Barb had recycled Katherine's whole life—old rose shaped rings transformed into discs covered in fantastic arcs. I wished that I had more than a mere 20 years of living at that point... so that I too could have such a delicious summary."

Kirsti's first official encounter with Barbara Heath was eleven years ago when the designer commissioned the

jeweller to create bronze door handles for an interior fitout. The first jewel of Barbara's that Kirsti owned evokes a somewhat more romantic story. It is a breathtaking, square diamond ring—a constantly worn engagement gift from her now-husband, Paul. The suitor's brief to Barbara was clear. Paul wanted the curve of the golden band to echo Kirsti's softness, and he knew she wouldn't say 'yes' unless it was 'big!' It had to be 'push button' contemporary. The ring reflects the intimate relationship between collector and maker and hints at the tales told by commissioned jewellery. Another tale—when Kirsti knew her two sisters were returning from Europe



Kirsti Simpson wearing Barbara Heath.

for the briefest time, she commissioned Barbara to make four rings for the four women in the Simpson family. They incorporated gems and gold rescued from a host of rings Kirsti had emotionally outgrown. The four monogram rings, each formed in white or yellow gold to reflect individual personalities, suggest the family's Scottish heritage and are today worn by her mother, her sisters and Kirsti herself. Later, Kirsti's father felt a little neglected, but was soon blessed with cufflinks by Barbara for his 60th birthday featuring the same family monogram. Kirsti's collecting extends to gifting. The story continues—a short time after the family rings were

received, Kirsti's sister discovered hers had slipped off her finger during a beachside wedding in Scotland. Unbelieving of the loss, she retraced her steps (the next day!) through the sand in the rain and miraculously found the golden escapee. Proof, says Kirsti, that magic does exist in the realm of commissioned jewels.

**Rhana Devenport** is Senior Project Officer, Asia-Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.