



The Donna Schneier Collection Arrives at RAM: Art Jewelry of the 1980's & 1990's
September 4, 2009 – January 3, 2010

- The arrival of the Donna Schneier collection at RAM makes a substantial positive impact on the museum. It greatly expands RAM's ability to conduct educational programs about contemporary artist-made jewelry to better acquaint a broad public with the intellectual concepts and talents found in this field.
- The Schneier gift brings both new talents, for their first viewing at the museum, and fresh images of artists already familiar to RAM's guests. This introductory exhibition celebrates the arrival of this gift and the collection that it so positively impacts.

The Schneier Collection

- Donna Schneier's collection is well known throughout the world of Art Jewelry. Schneier owned a business from the late 1970s through the 1990s that commissioned mass-produced gold jewelry that she sold to large US chain stores, including Best Products and Kmart.
- In the early 1980s, Schneier began collecting handmade jewelry, created by contemporary artists, displaying pieces in her offices with the hope of introducing her customers to more adventuresome forms of body adornment.
- Schneier's early collecting efforts were in the area of costume and Bakelite jewelry. **Bakelite** is an early plastic formed by the reaction under heat and pressure of phenol (a toxic, colorless crystalline solid) and formaldehyde (a simple organic compound), generally with a wood flour filler. It was the first plastic made from synthetic components and was used in such diverse products as kitchenware, jewelry, pipe stems, and children's toys.
- In the 1980s, inspired by objects she saw in an exhibition in Europe, she began collecting Art Jewelry. Schneier was attracted to pieces created by European and American artists who chose to work primarily in non-precious and unconventional materials and who produced their own pieces by hand.
- Her collection, which eventually reached about 600 objects, became internationally known as one of the high quality documentations of the field of contemporary adornment.

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Gifting the Collection

- In 2002, Schneier made the first gift from her collection to an art museum. She presented approximately 80 pieces, spanning the 1960s through the 1980s, to the Museum of Arts and Design in New York. Following this gift, Schneier broadened her parameters and added adornment in precious materials to her collection. However, the works in her collection continued to feature non-precious materials, because many of the advancements produced by artists in the last quarter of the 20th century were not executed in expensive media.
- Schneier has recently made two more contributions to museums in 2007 – 2008. She presented a gift of nearly 200 objects to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and a second gift of 49 pieces was donated to RAM. Both museums have received examples in precious and non-precious materials. Each of these gifts has positively impacted the recipient institution, enabling it to continue interests already in motion, to document the achievements of the Art Jewelry field.

RAM's Jewelry Collection

- RAM has been building its Art Jewelry holdings since the arrival of an inaugural gift in precious and non-precious media from Karen Johnson Boyd in 1991. RAM has created a nationally recognized collection of contemporary jewelry that documents metalsmiths' careers with multiple examples of their work, allowing RAM to demonstrate how aesthetic concepts and bodies of work grow and evolve over a period of time.
- RAM's holdings in metals functions similarly to that of a print and drawing department in an encyclopedic art museum, where multiple examples of artworks are gathered in detailed selections to present a more complete record of the field.
- RAM's jewelry collection begins in the 1960s and the Schneier gift spans the years 1986 to 2000.