

Lam de Wolf

Aspects Gallery, London
January 4–February 1, 1986
by Deborah Norton

Over the past two decades, several European artists have rejected the conventional notion of jewelry as decoration in favor of the idea of wearable objects or body sculpture as a means of conceptual expression. The experimentation that resulted from this new approach proved that the boundaries of jewelry are limited only by the designer's imagination. But today, many would agree with Caroline Broadhead's statement in her catalog essay for the exhibit "New Tradition, the Evolution of Jewellery 1966–1985" that, "The last twenty years have nearly exhausted this exciting and important phase of questioning the fundamental nature of jewelry." It is now time for these artists to reassess what they have learned from their investigations and to refine their ideas.

Dutch artist Lam de Wolf's most recent exhibition has proven that she can handle this new challenge with ease. Aided by the fact that her formal training was in textile art, not jewelry, she continues to bring new dimensions to body ornament. Her latest work explores the territory between jewelry and clothing in a far more subtle manner than her earlier outrageous and often shocking inventions. Now, it is the decorative element—her sense of color and movement—that is paramount to her carefully formulated conceptual ideas.

Her neckpieces are a perfect example. From her earlier experiments, de Wolf ascertained that wearable objects could occupy the space around the body, not just on it. Her new neckpieces fill the area between the shoulders and neck. Although her purely conceptual work seemed to challenge the wearer, these pieces flatter her. They are made of three sections of irregularly folded cotton which form stacks of material that are brought together to create a triangular-shaped neckpiece. Twisted streamers of the same fabric, plus some glue, are used to join the ends together, giving the piece firmness but not rigidity. The simplicity of construction reinforces de Wolf's conceptual idea of relying on form, not technique, for expression. The fabric has been sensitively painted in subtle shades so

that as the various hues come together they appear to evolve from one another. The resulting sense of movement, enhanced by the flowing streamers and the soft folds, adds vibrancy to her work.

Another highlight of the show was her *Object—Coat*, which builds on the idea of ornamenting parts of the body ignored by conventional jewelry. This piece consists of tubular forms that cover the arms and shoulders, ending at the neck. It is made of a cream-colored fabric with orange and blue stripes, resembling a porch awning. This time, the movement comes from the flowing lines of the stripes and the form itself. Like all of her new work, this piece is soft and feminine yet possesses the same understated humor that was a hallmark of her earlier work. Along with the coat and neckpieces, de Wolf has included several hats in this show that seem more fashion-oriented than anything she has done before.

Standing in the midst of a gallery filled with Lam de Wolf's work, one gets the impression of being on a film set waiting for the action to begin. Because there is such a strong interdependence between the object and the body, her pieces are not fully complete until they are actually worn. Rather than detract from this exhibition, this adds an intriguing element of tension. De Wolf has recently been commissioned by a film director to make costumes for a new movie. This could prove to be the best format yet for displaying her work.

Anne Krohn Graham

Worcester Craft Center, Worcester, MA
October 16–November 16, 1985
by Curtis K. LaFollette

From the exterior, the Worcester Craft Center reminds one of a 60s Polynesian restaurant; missing only the flaming torches. Consequently, it's always a surprise to discover serious studios and gallery spaces inside. Anne Krohn Graham's work was unfortunately crowded into the smaller of the two galleries and several of the cases provided inadequate display.

Graham's work, however, was intensely powerful and prevailed over the limitations of the gallery. It was, in fact, refreshing to witness such intelligent use of color. Her colors fit the form and structure of her objects. Color was not used as arbitrary decoration but as an integrated element in the totality of the object.

Her mechanically-joined anodized aluminum and sterling-silver cuff exemplified Graham's stunning integration of modern and traditional materials, as well as a breadth of ingenious solutions in joining them. There is a subtle interaction between modulated pink through red-violet matt aluminum and thin mirrorlike sterling silver. Another drastic departure from traditional jewelry was *Diamond Back*, a very large piece which remains wearable because of its light weight and its ability to interact benignly with the anatomy.

This body of work is in no way the tentative experimentation of an immature worker searching for a trivial, technical substitute for imagination and intelligence. Graham's work is the mature investigation of color, form and structure. Their interdependence powerfully asserts her sophisticated understanding of materials and the social purpose of jewelry which compels her to make art.

Below left: Lam de Wolf, *Neckpiece*, painted cotton. Photo © Hogers/Versluys. **Below:** Anne Krohn Graham, *Diamond Back* torso and waist ornament, anodized aluminum. **Bottom:** *Roseate* calfpiece sculpture, anodized aluminum. **Opposite page, above left and right:** *Headpiece/neckpiece*, anodized aluminum. **Below left:** *Flamingo* cuff, anodized aluminum, sterling silver. **Below right:** *Mongoose* neckpiece, anodized aluminum



