

Bettina Speckner

Courtesy of Sienna Patti Gallery

Bettina Speckner began her studies in the painting department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. After a few years she moved to the jewelry department under Professor Herman Junger receiving her diploma from Professor Otto Kunzli. Bettina has received many awards and accolades for her work including the prestigious Herbert Hoffmann Prize, commendations for the Danner Prize and The Prize of the State of Bavaria. Since her first solo exhibition in 1995, she has shown internationally, both in numerous solo exhibitions and group shows including Brooching it Diplomatically, curated by Helen Drutt English and Micromegas curated by Otto Kunzli.

Selected Public Collections

Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas TX, USA
Danner Foundation, Munich, GER
Design Museum, Helsinki, FI
Jewellery Museum, Pforzheim, GER
Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Berlin, GER
Museum of Applied Art, Neue Sammlung, Munich, GER
Museum of Art and Design, Chicago, USA
Musée de l'Horlogerie et de l'Emaillerie, Geneva, CH
Museum für Kunst u. Gewerbe, Hamburg GER
Mint Museum of Art and Design, USA
The National Gallery, Cranberry, AUST
Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum Trondheim, N
Röhsska Museum of Decorative Arts, Gothenburg,
Rotasa Foundation, USA
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, NL
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, GB

About

Bettina Speckner's work affirms the difficult balance between the subjective and the objective. A pioneer in utilizing the photograph itself as raw material for jewelry, Speckner's use of nineteenth century tintype (or ferrotype) portraits has been noted for evoking the idea of narrative without indulging any one particular story. By obscuring the identity and, in essence, the psychology of the portrait's subject, Speckner's prior work has harnessed the inherent "historical" quality of found photographs to elicit a new experience of time—an experience that doesn't adhere to a single identifiable moment or place.

Speckner's latest series, *Things of This World Keeping Their Difficult Balance*, is the direct result of what the artist describes as "a revelation" for her work—the decision to master the tintype process herself in order to produce her own photographs. It can be considered a radical move for an artist in the contemporary digital age to turn to a nineteenth century photographic technique to produce images; it is also a major evolution in Speckner's process and approach to be able to direct the tintype imagery itself, and a further shift for Speckner to turn her focus in her self-produced tintype imagery to that of the still life.

The artist's newly acquired production technique is a romantic journey in and of itself. She travels into the Bavarian forest with a handmade camera obscura and a jerry-rigged portable darkroom to find her favorite stack of wood. She collects flowers on her way to the studio for her still life compositions, to complement her deliberate arrangements of otherwise ordinary objects—a glass, a set of keys, a laptop computer. She is fully immersed in the moment the camera captures, effectively recording her own experience of being there. She witnesses the emergence of the image on the plate—"A silent, melancholic, still result, but a thrill to see it appear," as she describes it. The image is developed in the same location that it was taken, every step of the photographic process sharing the same continuous sweep of time, echoing the same single, still moment.

The resulting image is rich and muted, fixed and foggy; a precise configuration of objects that seems about to fade from view. Speckner presents the viewer with the nebulous relationship of object permanence to subjective experience. The solid, concrete matter of the world is still open to interpretation, the static object still subject to how it is seen and experienced in the moment. Between the exacting and the ethereal, between gravity and weightlessness, the objects themselves have to negotiate their balance.



Brooch, 2014

Photo etching in zinc, silver, gold
2 5/8 x 2 1/8 inches



Brooch, 2015

Photo etching in zinc, silver, quartz
5 7/8 x 2 1/8 inches