

BRIDGES

Keith
Lo Bue

January 23 –
August 22, 2015

Society for Contemporary Craft
2100 Smallman Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222
412 261 7003

www.contemporarycraft.org



Photo: Earl Zachery

KEITH LO BUE

Born: Fairfax, VA, 1964
Lives: Sydney, Australia

EDUCATION

B.F.A., State University of New York, Purchase, NY, 1986

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2014

Multiple Exposures: Jewelry and Photography, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY

2013

Wear It Or Not: Recent Acquisitions, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY

2009

Why the Wind Blows and Other Poular Delusions, solo exhibition, Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, Queensland, Australia

2007

Framing—The Art of Jewelry, Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, OR (traveling exhibition)

2006

City of Hobart Art Prize 2006, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania

Sighting the Past, Macleay Museum, Sydney, Australia

2005

What Is Not Forbidden, solo exhibition, Studio 9 Gallery, Chicago, IL

Sighting the Past, Macleay Museum, Sydney, Australia

Recollected/Re-Invented: The Narrative Craft Object, Lynn Tendler Bignell Gallery, Brookfield, CT

Concealment: Jewelry & Metal Arts, PostPicasso, www.postpicasso.com

2004

Assemblage 100, Gully Lounge, Auckland, New Zealand (traveling exhibition)

SELECTED GRANTS & AWARDS

2014—Artist-in-Residency Fellowship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

2012—The Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha, NE

2005—Master of Fine Arts Fellowship, Joan Mitchell Foundation, New York, NY

1998—Arts/Industry Program, The John Michael Kohler Art Center, Kohler, WI

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

(Measurements are height x width. Measurements are in inches.)

Photos: Keith Lo Bue, except where otherwise noted

Four, and What They Did, 2014
Spigot handle, tintypes, waxed linen thread, resin, beach worn soda can bottom, opals, 16th-century Ukrainian illuminated manuscript, 19th-century engraving and Asian text, brass wire, 19th-century Masonic embroidered ceremonial sash, paper, text, paint, soil
Pendant: 3 1/2" diameter x 1"; Sash: 30"

Life's Record (for Mira), 2014
Victorian 'pyralin ivory' serving fork, dichroic glass beads, Mira Lo Bue's baby teeth, resin, sea urchin spines, copper nails, opals, carved wood from a Lo Bue baby crib, waxed linen thread, 19th-century steel keys, 1920's elastic cord, camera lens and housing, mid-19th-century steel-point engraving and color lithograph, enamel pocket watch face, steel and bronze wire, paint, 16th- & 19th-century paper, text, soil
Pendant: 4 1/2" x 2" x 1"; Cord/chain: 17 1/2"
Courtesy of Mira Lo Bue

The Story of a Shadow, 2014
19th-century Japanese book, 1930's silver trophy plaque, mica, steel, engraving, rose thorns, opal, pitcher plant fragment, crushed glass, steel, brass and coral
Pendant: 3 1/2" x 4" x 1 1/4"

A Question of Taste, 2013
Victorian shirt-stud box, hors d'oeuvres fork, brass, paua shell laminate, lenses, steel engravings, screws, 1790 book cover, antique linen thread, seashell, horseshoe crab spines, crushed markasite, bronze, brass & steel wire, antique keys, silk thread, antique machine drive belt, copper, paper, soil
Pendant: 5" x 3 1/2" x 1 1/2"; Cord/chain: 31"

Canto 1, 2013
Victorian toy hand mirror, glass, brass coaster part, chains, steel, 19-century steel/brass scissor handle, waxed linen thread, pocket watch gear, amethysts, 19th-century glass-topped brass pin, steel keys, vintage elastic, 19th-century engravings and color lithograph, bronze, glass costume beads, mica, 18th- & 19th-century paper, soil
Pendant: 5" x 2 1/2" x 1/2"

Hidden Light, 2013
(Place saver materials, dimensions and courtesy line coming shortly)

Retrospect, 2013
Early 20th-century rubber teething ring, Art Deco mirrored glass cabochon, pearlescent shell bead, waxed linen thread, kiln-fused glass, 16th-century paper, tussah silk, Victorian steel key, bronze, 1919 St. Louis railway token, brass, paint, soil
Pendant: 4" x 2 1/2" x 1/2"

Reflections, 2012
Vintage ladies' compact case, resins, Victorian clay pipe, labradorite, beetle specimen, early 19th-century map, ruby, sea urchin spines, lock of Maureen Kistler's baby hair, velvet, photographs of Miss Australia 1955 (Maureen Kistler) fused to glass, 18th-century steel engraving, copper, sand, brass, steel, antique keys, leather, paper, text, pearls, soil
Pendant (closed):
4 3/4" x 2 1/2" x 1"
Cord length: 25 1/2"
Courtesy of Felicity Schubert

untitled (kitchen spoon), 2011
Wooden kitchen spoon, fork, seashell, waxed-linen thread, 18th-century Czech crystal bead, costume beads, 18th-century drawer-pull fragment, steel wire, steel-point engraving, copper, leather, Victorian scissor handles, paper, text, soil.
Pendant: 7" x 2" x 1 1/2"
Cord length: 25 1/2"
Courtesy of Ron Porter

The Diary of an Antiquary, 2009
19th-century wooden stereoscope lens housing, brass, fresh water pearls, engraving, unearthed glass, labradorites, steel key, 19th-century book end paper, New Zealand paua shell, steel, mica, 16th-century illuminated manuscript, pressed seaweed, harness element, soil
Pendant (incl. harness)
closed: 4 1/2" x 4 1/4" x 2"
Pendant (incl. harness)
open: 6 1/2" x 4 1/4" x 1"
Chain: 56 1/2"
Book, closed: 1 1/2" x 2 1/4" x .8"
Pages, approx: 1 1/2" x 1 1/8" x .1"
Chain from enclosure to book: 18"
Stand: 5 1/4" x 3 1/4" x 3 1/4"
Courtesy of Andrea Kinsley

Mesmerism, 2008
Victorian spoon and forks, brass, bronze artifact, raw opal, waxed linen thread, steel wire, leather, soil
Pendant: 5" diameter x 1 1/2"
Chain/cord: 34"

The Pearl That Worldlings Covet, 2006
Spigot handle, animal leg-trap jaw, brass clock key, watch gear, Victorian drawer-pull, glass mirrored droplet, Czech cubic zirconias, seaweed root, paper twine, Victorian steel-point engravings, steel, etched and oxidized brass, leather, 16th-century paper, soil
5" x 4 3/4" x 3/4"
Courtesy of the Artist

Celestial Objects Viewed with the Naked Eye, 2005
Embroidered goldwork beetle by Jane Nicholas in metallic thread and wire, WWII 'Original Bézard' compass, typewriter keys and rubber rollers, Victorian sugar tongs, marbles, lens, microscope objective part, seashore, opal, pocket-watch hand and winding crown, resin, hand-coloured 18th-century engravings, 19th-century colour and b&w lithographs, steel engraving, etched brass, armadillo armour (bony scutes), sea urchin shell, deer hoof, czech glass, glass buttons, peacock feather, velvet, steel, leather, paper, text, soil
Pendant: 4 1/2" x 3 3/4" x 1 1/2"
Cord: 26"
Courtesy of Jane Nicholas

What is Not Forbidden, 2004
Victorian sterling silver clock case, brass drawer-pull, mother-of-pearl, lenses, sea urchin and sea urchin spines, glass beads, steel, etched and oxidized brass, victorian green glass, victorian book-board and leather, steel-point engravings, end-papers, scissor handles, waxed linen thread, Czech glass cubic zirconias, antique papers, soil
Pendant: 4 1/2" x 5" x 1 3/4"
Courtesy of Izabella Enriquez

Cupid's Revenge, 2003 (Ring)
Sterling silver, Victorian scissor handle, 19th-century steel eyeglass frame segment, lenses, raw opal, etched and oxidized brass, drafting tool hardware, steel-point engraving, soil
1 5/8" x 1 5/8" x 1"
Courtesy of the Artist

Requiescat, 2003
Serving spoon, porcelain doll bust, upholstery tack, brass drawer plate, opals, steel wire, brass, sterling silver, 16th-century paper, marble, bead, leather, porcelain button, paper, text, soil.
Stand: Wood, etched and oxidized brass, steel, hardware
5" x 4 3/4" x 2"
Courtesy of Charlotte Valestra
Photograph: Camille Nuttall

Angels Unawares, 2001
Modified victorian display case, glass, iron wire, waxed linen thread, brass hardware, ambrotype, engravings, opals, tin ornamental studs, sea urchin spines, victorian ruby glass, leather, paper, text, soil
Pendant, open: 3 3/4" x 4 3/4" x 1 1/2"
Courtesy of Ginny Carter



Angels Unawares

Keith Lo Bue: Ministering Mystery

Suzanne Ramljak

Captivity is rarely a desirable state, except when one is detained by a marvel. Such is the aim of Keith Lo Bue, who seeks to capture viewers with intricately wrought objects of wonder. “I want to arrest people,” states Lo Bue, “to leave them spellbound.” To that end, he fashions labyrinthian jewelry, layered and glinting with hidden delights. Mystery is the bait, the trail of fresh bread-crumbs, that lures us into his artful mazes.

Lo Bue administers mystery as a means of countering our attention-deficient culture. It takes cunning to thwart the forces of distraction, and the artist meets the challenge with skills honed over the past 25 years. Having mastered the practice of accurate obscurity, he crafts fetchingly splendid enigmas.

While Lo Bue also creates sculpture and collage, jewelry is his prime agent of engagement. The format’s inherent properties of intimacy and wearability prove conducive to his aesthetic of enticement. Jewelry’s diminutive scale demands concentration, spurring greater attentiveness. And the direct physicality of jewelry further encourages interactivity and tactile exploration.

Although steeped in the traditions of metalsmithing, Lo Bue more aptly identifies himself as a “stuffsmith.” As found objects are his medium of choice, the whole material world serves as his palette. Organic and manmade, antique and modern, humble and rare, all become fused in his intriguing assemblages. Like three-dimensional spells or incantations, Lo Bue’s complex concoctions are designed to conjure magic.

Within Lo Bue’s encyclopedia of sources, one finds recurring items and motifs. Eyes or visages haunt most of his works, which seem inhabited by a human presence. Lenses are frequently enlisted to distort or magnify visual perception. And tantalizing gemstones often beckon us near.

A less tangible feature, history itself is a key component of Lo Bue’s art, and objects are selected for their historical import. Multiple eras commingle in each piece. *Diary of an Antiquary* (2009) is a wearable book that weds fragments from a 16th-century illuminated manuscript; an 18th-century brass fork; a 19th-century stereoscope lens; 20th-century thread; as well as other fabricated and natural substances. Lo Bue is a connoisseur of cultural remains, what he calls the “scattered shards of lives preceding our own.”

The disparate elements conjoined in Lo Bue’s work do not lend themselves neatly to a “script” or story. In their elusiveness, Lo Bue compares them to “vertical narratives,” similar to wisps of dreams that vanish upon waking. His jewelry offers symbols or scenarios, clues to a plot that we’ll never resolve. The suggestive titles—such as *Cupid’s Revenge*, *The Story of a Shadow*, or *What is Not Forbidden*—are often lifted from poetry books or scientific journals, and enhance rather than diminish the aura of mystery. Like signs at a crossing, they point in various directions and then leave us to our own devices.



Reveling in the poetic and incongruous, Lo Bue’s art is closely allied with that of Surrealism, whose spokesperson, Andre Breton, famously decreed “Only the marvelous is beautiful.” Lo Bue labors under this same creative banner and, like the Surrealists, is less intent on satisfaction than friendly provocation. Their works cultivate a fine unease, ensuring we remain alert, on the edge of our seats in the grip of suspense.

Ultimately, Keith Lo Bue’s jewelry is an invitation to see more intensely, acting as a catalyst for vision and discovery. Staging exploratory experiences in miniature, he both baits and rewards observation. Unlike many contemporary artists, Lo Bue guarantees a return on the investment we make when we pay attention to his art. And by shrouding his objects in a veil of mystery, he helps us to better perceive the wondrous spectacle that surrounds us.

Suzanne Ramljak, a writer, curator and art historian, is currently Editor of *Metalsmith* magazine and Curator of Exhibitions at the American Federation of Arts.



ABOVE LEFT: *Diary of an Antiquary*
ABOVE: *The Story of a Shadow*
BELOW: *Cupid’s Revenge*
BELOW RIGHT: *What is Not Forbidden*

