

A HISTORY OF AMERICAN STUDIO CRAFT

MAKERS



JANET KOPLOS & BRUCE METCALF



FIGURE 11.9. Steven Ford and David Forlano, *Brown Big Bead Necklace*, 1997. Polymer clay; 22 × 1.75 in. (Courtesy of the Artists. Photograph by Ralph Gabriner.)

Ford/Forlano jewelry is colorful and decorative. Forlano did not use the bright colors of commercial polymer clay but mixed countless tints and shades on his own. While their patterns and shapes may have had correlates in the real world—glass canes, pebbles, scribbles—they relied on experimentation rather than historical quotation.

The typical reaction to marketplace success is to endlessly repeat a signature style, but Ford and Forlano made their open-ended editions in different color schemes. No two pieces are ever alike. Furthermore, they constantly add new designs to their line and eliminate old ones. Customers can see new work and also trace Ford and Forlano's growth and change. In the long run, this organic evolution has stimulated sales, and demand for their work has only increased.

BEAUTY IN JEWELRY: SHARON CHURCH AND SUZAN REZAC

After the wild gyrations of the New Jewelry, a number of American studio jewelers conducted their own reexamination of the form. Believing that the point of jewelry is to be worn, not to be an experiment in scale, content, or weird art supplies, and asserting that good jewelry must enhance the appearance of the person wearing it, they re-

asserted a traditional idea that was somewhat neglected in advanced jewelry circles. The train of thought led directly to the topic of beauty. Most importantly, they felt that jewelry works two ways: outward toward the people in the room and inward toward the wearer. Most of these jewelers were women, and as jewelers who wore jewelry, they believed that beauty has transformative power and can make women feel different about themselves.

Sharon Church (b. 1948) is among the most accomplished of these advocates for beauty. As a student, Church was inspired by John Paul Miller's granulated jewelry, but her sense of beauty is more attuned to the emotional lives of women. In Church's estimation, jewelry can act as a kind of psychological armor, because a woman who feels beautiful also feels strong.

Church, an avid gardener, sees the garden's cycles of growth, fruition, and decay mirrored in life. (This was made painfully vivid for her when her husband was killed in a bicycling accident.) Her jewelry often has a shade of darkness that is both seductive and disturbing.

A 1999 brooch, for instance, depicts a single leaf hanging from a vine. Not promising material, one would think. The leaf is carved from antler, which has a dry, papery quality. It is carved with meticulous attention to the withered surfaces and broken outlines of real things. The vine is made of silver, oxidized black, in startling contrast to the pale leaf. The final touch, which draws the brooch back into the realm of traditional jewelry, is a tiny diamond set in the middle of the leaf. The sparkle of light signifies the promise of renewal: Persephone emerging from the underworld, joy following pain. Church's poetry is not so much read as felt in the juxtaposition of materials.

Church offers a slightly more conventional version of beauty in her *Foliolate Harness* (1997). (Figure 11.10) Two



FIGURE 11.10. Sharon Church, *Foliolate Harness*, 1997. Sterling silver, leather; 11.5 × 10 × 1.25 in. (Collection of Lois Boardman. © Sharon Church. Photograph by Thomas Brummett.)