

# Collection Significance Report: European Decorative Art & Design: Jewellery

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## About this Document

This document is extracted from a report by Glasgow Museums submitted to the Scottish Executive's Recognition Committee as part of its recognition scheme for non-national collections.

## Overview

Jewellery has been worn for centuries by men, women and children. It is worn for personal decoration, for the meaning which it has for the wearer or for the message it gives to onlookers. Common or traditional forms of jewellery include earrings, rings, brooches, bracelets and bangles, waist buckles and belts, buttons, shoe buckles, hair ornaments, necklaces and necklets, badges and insignia.

## Collection Size

Approx. 900 items: bangles (23); belts (3); bracelets (55); brooches (470); buttons (100); earrings (30 pairs); hair ornaments (52); necklaces (40); necklets (2); rings (25); shoe buckles (135); waist buckles (40).

## The Collection

The collection of European jewellery dates from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. Jewellery worn by women predominates but there is also jewellery for men and children. The collection is predominantly British and continental European. Most of the jewellery was donated by Mrs Anne Hull Grundy. There is also a smaller group of items collected with, and complementing, the costume and textile collection. The types of items and their range is similar to those in the Hull Grundy gift. In addition, there is a group of small-scale accessories or *objets de vertu*, examples of European 'folk jewellery' (mainly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), and a small group of contemporary jewellery - costume and craft - dating from the 1970s to the 1990s. Makers included within this collection include Francois-Desire Froment-Meurice, Ernesto Pierret, Henry Wilson and Jean Muir.

## Collection Significance

The greater part of the collection was gifted from 1976 onwards by Mrs Anne Hull Grundy, a highly important British twentieth century collector and researcher. Mrs Hull Grundy gave collections to a number of museums throughout the United Kingdom. She argued that the historical importance of jewellery was greatly underestimated. Jewellery reflects the world it comes from, in miniature, and can be the means of showing changing tastes, fashionable obsessions and interests, technical and manufacturing developments, economic and social history and a myriad of other topics. The majority of the jewellery is English with some items from continental Europe, mainly France, dating from the later eighteenth century to the twentieth.

Sentimental themes - tokens of love, remembrance or of mourning - predominate. Tokens of love range from the earliest item in the Hull Grundy gift, an English mid eighteenth century tiny working padlock in silver set with chip diamonds with miniature gold key, to the commercially manufactured popular late nineteenth century 'Faith, Hope and Charity' silver brooches. There are a number of items made from plaited and woven human hair, including earrings, bracelets and a watch fob, which are mementos of a loved one, living or deceased. One fine example of mourning jewellery is the delicate late eighteenth century black enamelled gold brooch of a coiled snake holding a pendant heart containing a lock of hair. There is a large group of Victorian black 'mourning' jewellery, in jet or 'French jet' (black glass).

The natural world - animals and plants - is also a major theme. Examples include two delicate early nineteenth century textured and coloured gold flower brooches, a mid nineteenth century brooch and bracelet floral suite in carved coral and a pair of early twentieth century horn arum lily hairpins. Historical revival jewellery is well represented, such as a 'Gothic' pendant exhibition piece, in silver, gold and glass, by the important mid-nineteenth century French jeweller Froment-Meurice; a necklace and earrings suite in gold and green enamel in the style of Robert Phillips and a mid-nineteenth century seed pearl necklace and brooch suite in its original box.

An increasing awareness of other countries in popular culture is represented by souvenir jewellery, such as the nineteenth century Italian mosaic brooches, including one by Ernesto Pierret, a pair of bangles made from elephant hair and a large group of 'Scottish' jewellery (see Scottish Jewellery section). There is a small group of Japanese influenced brooches from the end of the nineteenth century.

The largest group of items in the collection are Art Nouveau and Arts & Crafts pieces, mainly silver brooches and waist buckles with enamels and semi-precious stones made in Britain, France and Germany. The most important items are a *pliqué a jour* enamel haircomb by Henry Wilson of England and a group of items designed by Jessie M. King of Glasgow, for Liberty of London. There are additional groups made of unusual materials, including paste, cut steel, watchcocks (inner workings of watches) and 'Berlin Iron'. The group of twentieth century costume jewellery includes notable items, such as strings of plastic 'poppets' and jewellery designed by Jean Muir, an internationally important twentieth century Scottish fashion designer.

The small European folk jewellery collection includes necklaces, hair ornaments, waist belts and buckles. Most date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. There is a group of Middle European beaded items and a group of silver Scandinavian folk items acquired at the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth

century.

The Hull Grundy gift to Glasgow is, after her British Museum gift, arguably the most significant of her gifts to museums in the UK. When the whole Hull Grundy gift to Glasgow is considered (see also *Scottish Jewellery and Decorative Arts 1860-1920*) the result is a nationally significant collection and an important resource for the understanding of jewellery design, design in general and the social history of the periods represented. The collection complements the excellent collection at the National Museum of Scotland, which has different strengths.



## Bibliography

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## How to Cite this Document

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