

Blunt Blades: Award-winning ethical jeweller Arabel Lebrusan recycles police-confiscated knives for new art exhibition

Submitted by: Arabel Lebrusan

Tuesday, 23 November 2021

This month Lebrusan Studio (<https://www.lebrusanstudio.com/>)'s Creative Director Arabel Lebrusan (<https://www.arabellebrusanart.com/>) has lifted the curtain on her new contemporary art exhibition, Blunt Blades (https://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk/Exhibitions/Blunt_Blades.aspx). The body of work is the product of eight years of research by the leading visual artist, award-winning jewellery designer and ethical jewellery pioneer, spurred when Bedfordshire Police presented her with three crates of confiscated knives and other sharp artefacts in October 2013.

Hosted by The Higgins Museum, Bedford, the display functions to interrogate whether an object's meaning can be re-established through material transformation and contextualisation.

The show will present seven new works in a variety of mediums, including photography, audio, sculpture and, of course, jewellery.

On display are a set of 275 rings cast in metal recycled from the confiscated weapons. Representing the number of knife homicides in England and Wales from 2019 to 2020, the bands are also created in shapes and sizes that symbolise the percentage of these deaths that were men, women and children.

This poignant visual work ties into Blunt Blades Exchange (<https://www.arabellebrusanart.com/blunt-blades-exchange/>), a socially engaging art project organised by Lebrusan earlier in 2021. The programme saw more of the police-confiscated knives repurposed into rings, then gifted to nine women whose lives have been changed irrevocably by knife crime. Through a series of conversations, Arabel and the participants explored the meanings and associations of the rings, working together to personalize them with designs that draw primarily on themes of healing and empowerment.

The project was supported by the Women's Support Centre Surrey and Quiet Down There (<http://www.quietdownthere.co.uk/>), a not-for-profit organisation that encourages individuals to articulate their unique cultures through artistic mediums. Like the Blunt Blades exhibition, Blunt Blades Exchange questions the meanings associated with a material and explores what happens to those narratives when the material itself is transformed.

"Objects have the potential to hold memories. I'm fascinated by this idea that matter can vibrate, communicating with us as human beings; with the ways materials carry inherent meanings and how those meanings can be reshaped," Lebrusan explains.

"Since the day I received the confiscated knives eight years ago, my mind has been occupied with the idea of transforming the metal from these objects into works that could evoke other emotions. What makes a kitchen knife become a deadly weapon? What makes a deadly weapon become a one-of-a-kind jewel? What makes that one-of-a-kind jewel become a trophy or a tool for healing?"

Blunt Blades is now open to view in person and online until October 2022.

The exhibition's launch comes shortly after Lebrusan pledged to raise £1,000 in aid of the Global March Against Child Labour under her eponymous jewellery brand's fundraising campaign, Lebrusan Studio Against Child Labour (<https://gogetfunding.com/lebrusan-studio-against-child-labour/>).

“As an ethical jeweller, it's not enough for us to simply use sustainable materials and ethical practises. It's our responsibility to cast light on injustices, campaign for mandatory human rights diligence in supply chains, and strive for an industry free of exploitation.”