



Duration

00:42:54

Reference

OH1

Subjects

Jewellery / Clothing / Craft Revival / New Jewellery / Gender

Recording date

1 April 2015

Recording location

Central Saint Martins, King's Cross Campus

Interviewee

Broadhead, Caroline (CB – speaker, female)

Interviewer

Lin, Gloria (GL – speaker, female)

Synopsis

The artist Caroline Broadhead (b. 1950), a First Decade maker, discusses her groundbreaking jewellery designs of the 1970s. After graduating from college in 1972, Broadhead broke away from the rigid traditions of fine jewellery to experiment with lesser-used materials such as ivory, cotton and nylon. In this candid interview, Broadhead discusses events and experiences that transformed the way she created her pieces, which were intended to emphasise malleability and changeability as opposed to rigidity and finery. She talks about the changing trends of the 1970s, working with artists like Julia Manheim and Susanna Heron, her time spent in Amsterdam and Africa acquiring materials and how her thought process, along with her pieces, developed during the decade.

Recording

02:31 CB refers to the 70s as an 'optimistic decade' that changed and shaped her work, transforming her into a versatile artist.

02:55 CB talks of the importance of setting up a grant with the Crafts Council (CC), which she sees as an encouragement and validation of making.

05:30 CB remarks on the use of a camera for documenting and augmenting objects, and provoking the imagination.





06:15 Prompted by GL, CB describes the first memorable piece she made after leaving college – a carved ivory knot necklace that she sees as her first ‘wearable piece’.

07:00 The 70s were a time when jewellers began experimenting with different materials. CB talks about why she chose ivory and the process of making something wearable from it; she refers to using dental instruments.

09:10 CB describes her work as ‘malleable and changeable’, referring to her broken brooches in the CC Collection (**1976; J79**).

10:15 CB discusses how she progressed from ivory: she began to do things ‘together’ and ‘faster’, using other materials like cotton. CB speaks about her love of colours. She purchased her materials from the Embroiderers’ Guild on Regent Street, where she could buy a huge range of embroidery threads.

11:38 CB describes her thought process. At this time, her pieces did not come about through a self-conscious thought process. Rather, she suggests it was all about using her hands to make wearable things and instinctively playing with materials that could be handled easily.

13:40 CB discusses the 1977 exhibition *Fourways*, organised with Julia Manheim and Susanna Heron. The four women involved designed the showcases, cards and presentation of CVs and photographs etc. It generated a lot of interest. [CB and GL look at documents and photographs related to the exhibition].

17:39 GL and CB discuss press documents. Broadhead refers to the press as gendered: ‘Jewellery is [...] generally seen as a bit of a luxury and sort of unnecessary by most people. And I think, yeah, it was probably, you know, four girls kind of, doing something slightly silly. [Laughs] So it was always slightly patronising [...] the little kind of, newspaperly ones were slightly [...] derogatory really.’

18:40 CB discusses experiments in Amsterdam in 1982. In 1979 she realised that she could not make a living from jewellery design, so following a trip to Africa, she got a teaching job.

19:50 CB set up C&N Buttons & Jewellery Production, with Nuala Jamison. She began making tufted and woven pieces, and then went to Amsterdam.

21:50 CB describes how her thought process changed from instinctive doing to thinking in Amsterdam: ‘It was more about thinking [...] it was time to think [...] the



main bit was allowing things to lodge in a different place, somehow, in my head, so when I came back I felt I'd wasted time and hadn't done anything [...] but then I realised something had changed, and I started doing stuff.'

23:45 CB mentions that makers were creating large-scale pieces and extending the boundaries of jewellery.

24:50 CB talks about how she uses her body as a template. She discusses making things for dancers and performances now.

26:20 GL asks how CB feels about her early work. CB says it feels alien, as it was so long ago: 'I remember it more as a feeling of excitement and drive [...] doing things and finding things out.'

27:03 CB credits Bernie Forrester with her beginning to make jewellery (he was a potter in her boarding school). He urged her to do it. He was very calm and enthusiastic. 'I wanted to make earrings that nobody has ever seen before.'

28:26 CB talks about influences. She never thought of herself as a jeweller in the way her college course presented it; the norm was to do things in a refined way but she knew she would not be a 'fine jeweller' and did not have fine skills. When she left she realised she could 'go beyond the boundaries'

30:00 GL asks if the craft has become more rigid now or if it is still interdisciplinary and experimental. CB says there are now more possibilities to be fluid and experimental, whereas in those days it was traditional.

32:40 CB talks about materials and describes a bracelet in the CC Collection, *Blue Rainbow* (1978; J98).

35:30 CB refers to her time in Africa: its influence on her choice of cottons and colours, sourcing things from markets and seeing the Masai wearing their jewellery – their attitude to materials was 'whatever they could get' but 'decorative'. She discusses the authenticity of crafted objects in Africa.

39:30 CB talk about how the CC brought together what people were doing across the disciplines.

41:30 GL asks if there was a shift from intuition and the hand to cerebral theory. CB suggests that this developed in the 80s. She had to write a statement that made her think about what she was doing – 'how do you position yourself as an artist doing clothing?'