



# JEWELRY by ARTISTS

IN THE STUDIO 1940-2000

SELECTIONS FROM THE **DAPHNE FARAGO** COLLECTION



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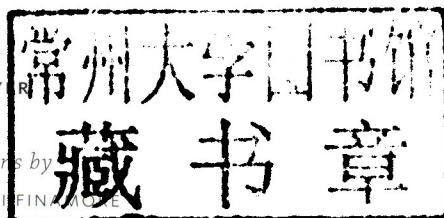
KELLY H. L'ECUYER

*with contributions by*

MICHELLE TOLINI FINA MOSE

YVONNE J. MARKOWITZ

GERALD W. R. WARD



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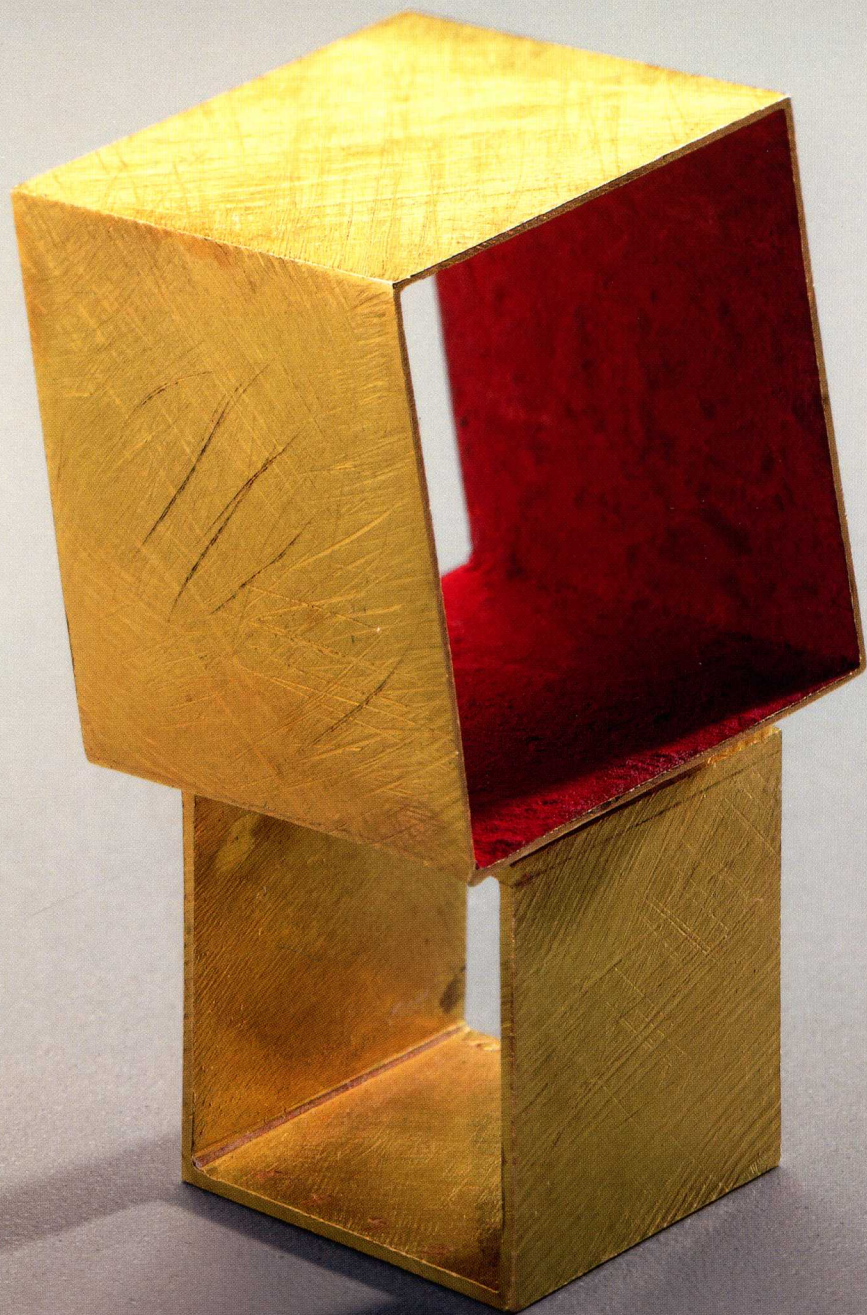
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# DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Malcolm Rogers

**THE GIFT OF THE DAPHNE FARAGO COLLECTION OF STUDIO JEWELRY TO THE MUSEUM** of Fine Arts, Boston, in 2006 was a defining moment for both the donor and the Museum. For Daphne Farago, the gift was the culmination of nearly twenty years of intensive effort to build a collection that would be, in her words, "worthy of a great museum." With an unfailing eye, she selected objects of superb quality and importance to represent the best of the studio jewelry movement in the twentieth century. Her extraordinary collection grew to include more than seven hundred pieces of jewelry designed and made by leading American and European artists, from about 1940 to the present. At the same time that she supported artists by purchasing and wearing their jewelry, she also gave their work even greater exposure by sponsoring a prestigious lecture series. The annual Daphne Farago Lecture on Craft Jewelry, held at the MFA since 1997, has featured prominent jewelry artists and scholars and drawn a devoted following. Giving the collection to the Museum was for Mrs. Farago a momentous beginning of new opportunities for sharing studio jewelry with a broad international audience. For the MFA, the acquisition transformed the Museum's holdings of twentieth-century jewelry, making Boston the site of one of the greatest collections of its kind in the world.

The American focus of the Farago collection makes it particularly relevant to the wide-ranging holdings in the Department of Art of the Americas. The MFA has collected contemporary American decorative arts and sculpture, including jewelry and metalwork, since its founding in 1876. In that year the Museum acquired its first piece of contemporary jewelry, an 1870 portrait cameo by the Boston artist John Crookshanks King. In the first half of the twentieth century, the MFA was given several ornaments by the contemporary artist Josephine Hartwell Shaw, and exhibited works by other metalsmiths from the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston. The Museum also acquired adornments from Native American, ancient American, and Latin American cultures, as well as examples of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century jewelry. Because many early benefactors and staff at the MFA were involved directly or indirectly in Boston's arts and crafts movement, the focus was on selecting handmade objects for their craftsmanship and artistic merit rather than their commercial potential. This interest in contemporary craft was renewed in the 1970s. Through dozens of gifts and occasional purchases through the next few decades, the Museum eventually amassed about one hundred examples of modern and contemporary jewelry by nationally renowned American artists, including Alexander Calder, Art Smith, Elsa Freund, John Prip, Merry Renk, and Arline Fisch. In the same years, the MFA acquired modernist silver hollowware, thus forming a core collection of American studio jewelry and metalwork. With this foundation in place, the addition of the Farago gift allows the MFA to represent American studio jewelry, with related European work, in extraordinary depth.

Such an exceptional and comprehensive collection deserves a significant, thorough, and visually gorgeous publication. The task of preparing such a book was ably



undertaken by an enthusiastic team of authors led by Kelly H. L'Ecuyer, Ellyn McColgan Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture, Art of the Americas, and including Michelle Tolini Finamore, curatorial research associate; Gerald W. R. Ward, Katharine Lane Weems Senior Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture; and Yvonne J. Markowitz, Rita J. Kaplan and Susan B. Kaplan Curator of Jewelry, whose varied backgrounds in decorative arts and the history of design, fashion, and adornment enabled them to contribute essays that place studio jewelry in a broad context. The judicious selection of objects illustrated in this volume reflects only a portion of the riches of the Daphne Farago Collection, and jewelry enthusiasts will find detailed records of the entire collection—in fact, the Museum's collection as a whole—available at the Museum's Web site ([www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org)).

Principal funding for this publication, including the cost of research, photography, design, and production, was generously provided by Daphne and the late Peter Farago, in order to further our appreciation of studio jewelry artists and their inventive work. The Rotasa Foundation, led by Susan Cummins, presented the MFA with a significant grant in recognition of this book's importance to the field of contemporary art jewelry, and the Windgate Charitable Foundation awarded the Museum a grant for a Windgate Museum Intern to conduct oral history interviews with several jewelers featured in this book. It is a pleasure to acknowledge with gratitude the substantial and essential support of these donors.

Jewelry today is a flourishing field of contemporary art. The superb objects in the Daphne Farago Collection enable us to appreciate the foundations of the modern studio jewelry movement in the last century, even as we look forward to the creative achievements of jewelry artists in the years to come. Those achievements can now be understood as part of the great continuum of the history of art. We extend our gratitude above all to Daphne Farago and her late husband, Peter, for choosing to place this magnificent jewelry in the care of the MFA.

Malcolm Rogers  
*Ann and Graham Gund Director*  
 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston





**NOMA COPLEY** *Pencil Bracelet*, 1999.  
22-kt gold, 18-kt gold, coral, wood,  
steel, w. 7.9 cm (3 1/8 in.).







# PREFACE

The Daphne Farago Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

KELLY H. L'ECUYER

FOR DECADES, DAPHNE FARAGO HAS COLLECTED ART WITH NATURAL CURIOSITY, intellect, and passion. Born in South Africa to a family she described as “more interested in politics than art,” she was nonetheless aware of and attracted to the African art that was all around her. She spent her young adult years in Europe, aiding refugees in the aftermath of World War II, and eventually moved with her husband, Peter, to Providence, Rhode Island, where they raised a family. Drawn to things that were handmade and that revealed the individuality of the maker, she assembled a major collection of American folk art, including painted furniture, decorated stoneware, weather vanes, quilts, needlework, and sculpture. Mrs. Farago’s early exposure to African objects and interest in contemporary art guided her eye. She preferred three-dimensional objects to paintings or works on paper, and she translated her appreciation for African art to collecting early American objects with a “one-of-a-kind, somewhat primitive air to them.”<sup>1</sup>

The transition from collecting folk art to contemporary craft was a natural progression. After Mrs. Farago sold her folk art collection in 1991 to benefit the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design, where the Daphne Farago Wing for contemporary art was built in 1993, she turned her full attention to collecting handmade contemporary decorative arts. She focused on three areas: studio craft (including furniture, glass, ceramics, and turned wood), fiber art, and jewelry. This diverse array of objects and materials is unified by characteristics in common with Mrs. Farago’s folk collection. Many of the objects have simple forms (spheres and fruitlike shapes are favorites) and bold colors, reflect sensitive and intelligent handling of materials, and convey the individuality, imagination, and, at times, sense of humor of their makers.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Farago began to collect studio jewelry in the late 1980s, captivated by the physical beauty of the objects and convinced of their artistic importance. She has said that she always sought excellence and works that give her “joy.” This sense of pleasure and personal connection to the work was her foremost criteria because she wore the jewelry as part of her daily life, sharing the work of these artists with others. Because she believed that wearing jewelry made it a kind of public art, she tended to acquire works that were comfortable on the body, at least for short periods. She generally avoided objects that veered into performance art, like some of the more radical experiments of the 1970s. This is not to say she rejected provocative jewelry — she collected daring pieces like Jan Yager’s *American Collar II*, a necklace made from crack vials (see fig. 136) — but a meaningful relationship between the jewelry and the wearer was important to her.

Quite early on, Mrs. Farago decided that she wanted to form a collection that a museum would want, and she acquired objects with the intense focus of a professional curator. She educated herself thoroughly, sought advice from expert dealers and scholars in the field, amassed an outstanding library of jewelry publications, and kept meticulous records of her purchases. She initially chose to emphasize American jewelry and to collect

**BRUCE METCALF** *Figure Pin # 135*, 1996.  
Maple, brass, copper, 23-kt gold leaf,  
h. 14.6 cm (5 ¾ in.).