

22.04.15 – 13.06.15

PRIVATE VIEW: WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2015, 6 – 8 PM

**BARE ESSENTIALS  
 ABSENTEES LIARS  
 BEASTLINESS ERA  
 AIRBASES NESTLE  
 BETAS EARLINESS  
 RABIES LATENESS  
 SATIABLE SNEERS  
 ARAB STEELINESS  
 RACELINE ASSERT**

Julia Muggenburg is pleased to announce *Bare Essentials*, an exhibition focusing on jewellery from the Belmacz archive through the eyes of May Cornet.

Artist May Cornet is selecting her favourite gems from the Belmacz collection of precious statement pieces. Ideally suited to scrutinise treasures Cornet has a long standing relationship with jewellery and heirlooms. There are jewels passed down in her own family that have stood the test of time. As a four year old Cornet received a pair of antique Greek gold earrings as a gift from her maternal great-grandmother, Lady Kathleen Epstein. They arrived posted by regular mail in a brown paper envelope as her first jewellery bequest. Connecting instantly with the ancient, hand fashioned, gold gems, this became a seminal experience for her.

A central piece in the exhibition is *Portable Garden* 2006, a box fashioned from oak containing a set of black sculptures, two geometric forms and a bridge all cut in ebony, three miniature ducks and a mono-print of green grass that folds into a silver leather case. Asked to talk about the origins of this piece Cornet says that “I was doing a residency, staying in rather a bleak B&B and I had the idea of needing something beautiful in my room

that I would be able to take with me anywhere. I chose to work with elemental forms that are reminiscent of children's wooden play blocks and to limit the palette, there are no flowers in the garden, I left that for the viewer. I always try to strip things back to allow room for the onlooker”.

Jewellery is traditionally steeped in emotion, affection, power and love. The Belmacz jewels are rooted in ancient gem craft traditions. Boldly contemporary, the pieces evoke a twenty-first century take on the status-affirming ceremonial adornments worn by tribal chiefs and patriarchs and all fashioned by hand in and around London, Julia Muggenburg creates 21st century artists' jewellery.

Inspired by Belmacz' jewellery archive (which goes back 15 years to the inception) Cornet has put forward art of her past as well as one piece especially made for *Bare Essentials*.

Cornet makes works on extreme scales from the minuscule and precise through to the magnificent and grandiose. However both feel entirely natural and convincing. *Feather Chairs* 2014, is an example of the



For more information please contact Rebekah Standing at Belmacz: [rebekah@belmacz.com](mailto:rebekah@belmacz.com) or call +44 (0)20 7629 7863  
 Belmacz ■ 45 Davies Street • London W1K 4LX ▲ England ■ TEL: +44 (0)20 7629 7863 ▲ [www.belmacz.com](http://www.belmacz.com)

delicacy characterising her work. “I wanted the chairs to be elegant yet modest at the same time. At first glance, it's probably not clear what they are made of, but then you realise that they are made from pigeon feathers and pins. As I made them I kept thinking of a William Morris chair I had grown up with”. “I ask myself endless questions about the work until what I am left with is what is essential. It is with these eyes that I am scouring the Belmacz archive”.

Cornet says of Muggenburg, “Everytime I visit the Belmacz treasure trove, Muggenburg puts something wonderful in my hand, whether it be an Ethiopian prayer bead, a hand-cut Cartier sequin made from coral or a carved Netsuke, she transports me to a whole world of story, scent and sounds. It is my London secret.”

*Perhaps everyone ought to have an indispensable jewel to behold and treasure which constitutes one's basic expression. Those precious gems are my expertise.*

— Julia Muggenburg



Belmacz, *Samson Sunrays*, Boxwood and Gold earrings



Belmacz, *Samson Medi*, Antique Ethiopian leather scroll and Jet necklace



Belmacz, *Samson Quartz*, Antique Ethiopian leather scroll and Quartz necklace



May Cornet, *Feather Chairs*, 2014, Feathers and pins, 8 x 5 x 5 cm

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