

## [A Diamond in the Rough: Developing a Discourse on Contemporary African Jewellery](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

September 30, 2021

Location:

South Africa

Subject Fields:

African History / Studies, Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Fine Arts, Anthropology

ONLINE CONFERENCE

30 March - 1 April 2022

This is a call for papers, a selection of which will be identified for further development into a publication. The conference will take place online and is under the ambit of the African Contemporary Jewellery Association (AICA) and the SARChI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture at the University of Johannesburg.

### **THE THEME**

Historically, the positioning of African jewellery design as a “craft” has diminished opportunities to engage with this discipline in more meaningful ways. This may owe something to its function as adornment and beautification, which has in many ways reduced the possibilities of deeper readings. In the twenty-first century, there has been growing exploration of contemporary jewellery through the creative practices of communities and academic institutions in Africa. What is lagging, however, is a recognised discourse on those practices.

In 2017, the University of Johannesburg hosted the first national gathering of jewellery practitioners and educators in South Africa, under the newly formed Contemporary Jewellery Forum - now the African Contemporary Jewellery Association (AICA) -- to discuss the theme “The Status Quo”. Subsequently (in collaboration with

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visiting craft historian Kevin Murray) focus was placed on understanding the potential of “Jewellery as a Social Object”. These ACJA events established a network of practitioners, paving the way forward for desperately needed research and scholarship.

This envisaged conference expands and develops this work by encouraging a critical engagement with this underexplored yet widely used form of material culture. How do we reframe African jewellery beyond its over-simplified definition as a “craft”? What kinds of alternative meanings and significance might be found in contemporary African jewellery? How does contemporary jewellery in Africa resonate with local social and political issues?

## PROPOSALS

The conveners of *A Diamond in the Rough* invite scholars and practitioners to explore selected examples (or series) of contemporary jewellery from Africa in light of these questions. The call is open to both established academics and graduate students.

Papers must be on material that has not already been published. A prospective presenter must be willing to develop the proposed paper into an article, should it be selected for inclusion in the publication that will be developed after the conference. Papers must be in English.

Please submit your proposal with “A Diamond in the Rough” in the subject line, and send it to the conveners, Farieda Nazier ([fnazier@uj.ac.za](mailto:fnazier@uj.ac.za)) and Brenda Schmahmann ([brendas@uj.ac.za](mailto:brendas@uj.ac.za)), and copied to the administrator at the offices of the Research Chair of South African Art and Visual Culture, Neelofir Nagdee ([nnagdee@uj.ac.za](mailto:nnagdee@uj.ac.za)), by **30 September 2021**. Please submit a single WORD document with the following information:

1. a title for your paper
2. an abstract between 350 and 500 words in length for a 30-minute paper
3. a short biography, including your current institutional affiliation (about

200 words)

4. your contact details, i.e. e-mail address, postal address, telephone number/s

Applicants will be notified of decisions by no later than 30 October 2021.

Please note that presenters will not be charged a conference fee.

Contact Info:

Farieda Nazier, Head of Department, Jewellery Design, University of Johannesburg.

Brenda Schmahmann, Professor and SARChI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture, University of Johannesburg.

Contact Email:

[fnazier@uj.ac.za](mailto:fnazier@uj.ac.za); [brendas@uj.ac.za](mailto:brendas@uj.ac.za)