

Press release

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Interview with Chequita Nahar

The Dutch female artist Chequita Nahar is known far beyond the borders of her country as an excellent connoisseur of the worldwide jewellery industry. In her role as the curator for SCHMUCK 2020, she selected the participants for the special exhibition at the Internationale Handwerksmesse. We talked to the artist about the role of her mentor, the famous Dutch art historian and jewellery expert, Marjan Unger, within the selection, the importance of the special exhibition for the scene, and the outstanding role of the city of Munich.

Munich, 12/12/2020 – *From the 11th to 15th of March 2020, the jewellery world will again meet in Munich for its annual reunion at the SCHMUCK special exhibition. 802 artists from 61 countries filled in their application, 63 from 29 countries were finally chosen. Jewellery artists from Germany are most strongly represented, followed by Korea and the Netherlands, Australia and the Czech Republic. The SCHMUCK special exhibition is regarded as an important platform to further establish oneself within the industry, make contacts and, last but not least, attend the highly acclaimed Herbert Hofmann Awards Ceremony.*

Ms Nahar, you have been chosen as the curator for the SCHMUCK 2020, the special exhibition at the Internationale Handwerksmesse in Munich. What does that mean to you?

I was first introduced to SCHMUCK back in 1998 by Marjan Unger, my mentor who passed away last year. She taught me a lot about the field of jewellery, about design, a broad perspective – and about the significance of SCHMUCK. So, when I received the call from Munich, I felt numb for a second, but, of course, deeply honoured to get the chance to do this.

The SCHMUCK has continually been a starting point for new trends in the field of contemporary artist's jewellery. What trends can be observed this year?

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It seems that the current world around us is influencing especially the young ones. They are searching. They are touching on technological aspects, innovation, cultural diversity, but they don't dare to go deeper. Besides, I saw that they are in search of their own process, which resulted in very individual works. In the past, an artist's work would show where he or she is from. This is seen less and less. And therefore, the pieces are much more about integrated ideas and thoughts from all over. Sometimes it was a bit much in one piece. The established artists, of course, already have their own rhythm and their own way of creating, so I saw them reviving themselves. And I saw a lot of animals, which made me think: What is it about animals? Do they say something about the present moment? A lot of the applicants are going back to creating, so there is an emphasis on craft and on how things are put together. But all in all, individuality is what the selection is about. As jewellery is connected to emotions, to people and to individual persons, I loved to see so many individual approaches amongst the applicants.



You originally hail from Suriname but were trained as an art designer in the Netherlands. Is there a direct link between your jewellery creations and your country of origin?

Yes, there always is. I use substances as well as forms, but for the most part, it's the symbolism of Suriname that I process in my work. We use things for rituals, for example balls for washing and protecting our jewellery as it is said that the jewellery we wear will help us in sickness, in health, and during all kinds of life circumstances. This way of cultural symbolism always resonates with me. I translate this symbolism or ritual into tools or forms. When I use material like silver with its white colour, it always points back to the way we interpret it in Suriname. I often reflect upon that with my grandmother. When I create a new piece, I show it to her and she often says: "Ah, you made a new ...", and then she tells me the word for this old, traditional thing and I suddenly see the connection.

What helped you in the process of finding your own way of creating?

When I first met Marjan Unger many years ago in the context of my master's degree, I was totally stuck. I had an artist's block and I was desperate to make really authentic artistic jewellery. One day, Marjan came over to my house and saw all the pictures of Suriname, all the things I had from there and all the jewellery. She called me into my bedroom and she said: "This is what you should do! This is where your starting point is!" In the following months, I created a piece which was then selected for TALENTE 1998, another special exhibition focused on young artists, also taking place in Munich. Later on, I took that piece with me to Suriname where my grandfather still lives. He hung it up in his tree in the courtyard, saying: "Oh, you brought it home again." And ever since then, I have stayed with my roots.

Robert Baines is this year's "Classic of Modernism" at SCHMUCK and is thus honoured as an outstanding jewellery designer in the retrospective. What significance does he have for you?

Every time I talk to my students about technical layers, Robert Baines always comes up. I'm always mesmerised by the stories Baines tells. With his words and his work - and how he combines historical backgrounds and interpretations into it. The way he is able to make pieces is mind-blowing. I constantly look at his work and ask myself: How does he do this? His craftsmanship is great - you can love his pieces or you can hate them, but you can't deny the fact that he is extraordinarily skilled. Baines knows what he is doing and where he comes from, and that can be seen in his work. And that's what I tried to find in the collection for SCHMUCK 2020: I looked for people who have skills on many different levels. For me, that's a very beautiful connection to Robert Baines.

Munich is regarded worldwide as the centre of artist's jewellery. What are you particularly looking forward to when travelling to Munich from 11 to 15 March 2020 for SCHMUCK 2020?

Of course, I am looking forward to seeing the entire collection exhibited in one place. For the jewellery scene, Munich is the place where everyone comes together: museums, collectors, young talents, the established artists. It's like a get together of this whole industry in one moment and one place and it's continually growing and getting more interesting for other disciplines, as well. For this one week, if you are in artist's jewellery, it's your place because so many things are happening: discussions, talks, lectures, the presentation of new works, some new talents are literally born here. And, of course, I'm excited to meet all these special talents!

For more information about the exhibition: www.ihm-handwerk-design.com.

About «Handwerk & Design»

As part of the Internationale Handwerksmesse the «Handwerk & Design» arose in 2008. The idea behind it was to combine outstanding performances in crafts, art handicrafts and design at the Internationale Handwerksmesse. During the Internationale Handwerksmesse, everything is about the incorporation of craftsmanship and good design in hall B1 on the Fairground Messe München. The «Handwerk & Design» is made up of numerous special shows such as EXEMPLA, SCHMUCK, TALENTE or MEISTER DER MODERNE. You can find further information at www.ihm-handwerk-design.com.

Note to the editors:

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