

Migrant life in photos and jewellery

MARGARET.PHILLIPS

@theensign.co.nz

Time is needed to ponder and digest a multi-layered exhibition at the Eastern Southland Gallery created by German-born artist Johanna Zellmer.

The exhibition features two interconnected bodies of contemporary jewellery work. However, it is not jewellery as we know it — Zellmer has used her training to produce intricate pieces of art.

The exhibition comprises 60 pieces — 46 small “coinscapes” and 14 framed photographic portraits paired with passport booklets and jewellery.

In the process of working with commemorative coins, Zellmer became interested in the question of national representation; a topic that poses a considerable challenge for a nation such as Germany, with its particular history.

For the initial body of work she reconfigured a complete set of 47 commemorative coins into coinscapes, Zellmer said.

The second body of work explores how individuals construct their identities.

The jewellery forged from the coins displayed national emblems.

It investigated migration,



Thought-provoking . . .

Johanna Zellmer with one of her works in an exhibition at the Eastern Southland Gallery.

PHOTO: MARGARET PHILLIPS

identity and place, Zellmer said.

It questioned whether the many hybrid identities of contemporary culture could be embodied in a single object, she said.

Immigrants to New Zealand who are unable to obtain dual citizenship were interviewed and photographed.

Zellmer used her formal training in Germany as a jeweller to good effect when creating the small, intricate pieces.

“It [the jewellery training] has influenced me,” Zellmer said.

Fourteen people were involved in making the second body of work.

The photos of the participants were taken in profile and featured only part of the face.

They resembled passport photos because the ears were clearly able to be seen, she said.

Participants were from countries such as South Africa,



Observations . . . Johanna Zellmer has produced an exhibition that examines immigrants’ experiences.

PHOTO: MARGARET PHILLIPS

The Netherlands, Germany, Vietnam, Japan and Sweden, she said.

The passport booklets presented the participants’ transcribed interviews, she said.

The work has previously been shown as two separate entities at the German Goldsmiths’ House museum in Hanau, Germany, and in the Alchemia jewellery school in Florence, Italy.

It has been showcased on the TVNZ series *Neighbourhood*.

The exhibition is accompanied by an explanatory book, which is for sale.

Zellmer completed a master’s

degree at the Australian National University Canberra School of Art and undertook a formal apprenticeship as a goldsmith in Germany.

She is a senior lecturer in jewellery and metalsmithing and co-ordinator of the artist-in-residence programme at the Dunedin School of Art.

Her research interests are the construction of national identities and cross-cultural matters within contemporary jewellery and metalsmithing. She calls a small farm near Dunedin home.

The exhibition called “Forged” runs from April 16 to June 12.



Coin collection ...
Artist Johanna Zellmer spoke about her exhibition *Forged* at the Eastern Southland Gallery on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AMANDA CARRINGTON

Forging identity in NZ

AMANDA.CARRINGTON
@theensign.co.nz

A German-born artist captivated an audience of 50 during a talk at the Eastern Southland Gallery on Wednesday.

Johanna Zellmer, of Dunedin, is exhibiting *Forged*, a collection of 47 coinscapes and 14 photographic works based on how migrants build their identities after moving to New Zealand.

The coinscapes are made of 10 Deutsche Mark coins made in Germany.

Each coinscape was made with the indentations of coins

from 1987 to 2001, Zellmer said.

"They are the same coin renewed every year," she said.

The jewellery was inspired by her parents, who collected coins every year.

"They wanted to give their children something of monetary value when we turned 18," she said.

The photographic exhibition is accompanied by a passport for each person represented in the photograph along with a piece of jewellery imprinted with an emblem from their country of origin.

The countries include

South Africa, Sri Lanka, Germany, Sweden, Japan, Netherlands and Vietnam.

During the talk, Zellmer read from a book containing interviews she had conducted.

The artworks were created between 2006 and 2013.

Zellmer came to New Zealand as a backpacker in 1994 and became a permanent resident in 1999. She is senior lecturer in jewellery and metal-smithing and co-ordinator of the artist-in-residence programme at The Dunedin School of Art.

★ *Forged* is open until June 12 at the Eastern Southland Gallery.

THE ENSIGN 25/5/2016

Floor talk by artist and Te Papa curator at gallery

MARGARET.PHILLIPS
@theensign.co.nz

The Eastern Southland Gallery is hosting a floor talk by Te Papa senior art curator Sarah Farrar and Dunedin artist Johanna Zellmer early next month.

The public floor talk is being held at the gallery on June 1 at 2.30pm.

The talk was being held in conjunction with two exhibitions on at present, "Gordon Walters: Koru", which is on display until June 6, and "Johanna Zellmer: Forged", which is exhibiting until June 12, gallery programmes officer Marcella Geddes said.

"This is a unique opportunity to meet the curator and artist and gain a deeper understanding of the work in the exhibitions," Mrs Geddes said.

Walters' works combined a customary Maori symbol with European abstraction in seemingly endless ways, she said.

Developed as part of Te Papa's domestic touring



Jewellery creations . . . Dunedin artist Johanna Zellmer's *coin-scape* from the exhibition "Forged" is on display at the Eastern Southland Gallery.

PHOTO.SUPPLIED

programme, Walters' exhibition featured screen prints and paintings alongside preparatory studies and illustrations, and gave an insight into his approach not only as a painter and printmaker but also as a graphic designer, she said.

It was an opportunity to see works by one of the major figures in the New Zealand modernist movement. The

Gore gallery was the only Southland venue to be hosting the exhibition.

Zellmer's "Forged" was an exhibition of contemporary jewellery work, Mrs Geddes said.

The show comprised 60 pieces reconfigured from commemorative coins, which explored the question of national representation and how New Zealanders constructed their identities.