

Vault™

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AUS \$17.50 NZ \$25.00



OBJECT ARI ATHANS

VAULT meets Ari Athans, a jeweller whose creative practice extends into painting.

WRITTEN *by* ALISON KUBLER



- 01 ARI ATHANS
Luscious, 2013
22k gold
- 02 ARI ATHANS
Naxos keepsakes
brooch and cuff, 2017
terracotta and
sterling silver
- 03 ARI ATHANS
Agate pebble
neckpiece, 2015
agate pebbles and
sterling silver
- 04 ARI ATHANS
From the gemfields, 2015
sapphire crystals,
chrysoprase, 9k white
gold and sterling silver
- 05 ARI ATHANS
Arrival I, 2018
ceramic, glaze and
acrylic paint
75 x 25 x 45 cm
- 06 ARI ATHANS
White coral
brooches, 2016
white coral, sterling silver
- 07 ARI ATHANS
Ash fallout, 2017
enamel paint on
mild steel
30 x 70 x 5 cm



Ari Athans' jewellery is beguiling in the simplicity of its form and expression. The Brisbane-based artist's aesthetic – which might most basically be described as rough versus smooth, shiny versus matte – seems to describe the essence of the alchemy of jewellery making, to capture its transformative process. It speaks variously to any number of pagan rituals. The artist's heritage would seem to explain this aspect of her work, but Athans explains, "When I first started making jewellery circa 1994, I kind of wanted to keep away from it as far as possible because my name just screams 'Greek'. I was at that time in my life maybe trying to find an identity that just wasn't Greek, so I kind of avoided referencing anything Greek. But gradually, maybe when I had children, I started thinking about heirlooms and the longevity of things, about passing things on and religion, because I christened my children Greek Orthodox. It all crept in. There is definitely a reference to my heritage and I never stop myself from using Greek text or responding to those ancient pagan rituals."

Athans has a loyal customer base, although she observes that there is a relatively small collector audience for jewellery in Australia, and few state collections with dedicated jewellery collections. "Jewellery – modern and rare and collectable contemporary jewellery – always has a little bit of a problem because it sits within craft, within fashion, and then it sits within historical and archaeological objects. There are so many niche areas and a lot of people don't know what to do with it."

Athans lets the gems determine the design, oscillating between and across precious and semi-precious elements, from coral, sapphire, aquamarine and chrysoprase to citrines and mother of pearl. "I've been making jewellery for the longest time. It is such a beautiful medium to work with; you get to work with extraordinary materials that are from the earth. I'm always on the lookout for things, whether they're gravel or found pebbles. I keep fossicking for materials to transform into something that someone will love." She says, "Precious, as you know, can mean anything. You can find the most beautiful plastic on the beach. That's precious, and set into jewellery,

it locks in a time and a place in your life. It becomes a keepsake."

Painting is a central part of her artistic practice. "I've always ended up painting a little bit on the side, but it's only in the last 10 years that I've exhibited at Edwina Corlette Gallery every year." Her last exhibition with Corlette in 2018, entitled *Remains*, was an exploration of ongoing themes around iconic imagery and ritual. "[Painting] is a nice antidote to jewellery, because painting is sometimes never resolved," Athans explains. "With jewellery, there's a start and a finish, which is nice. You measure things; you can do this with these materials; you plan, you make it, you finish it. With painting you can explore other things on the canvas like colours and forms, shapes. It's two-dimensional, although when I'm working the surface it's sort of three-dimensional because I do a lot of sanding back and exposing of layers, and building up of rust because I paint on steel. So, that is a little bit of an extension of the jewellery in a funny way, too. I'm interested in all things geological!"

Ari Athans holds a Diploma of Arts in Jewellery Design from Sydney Institute of TAFE, a Diploma in Gemology from the Gemological Association of Australia, and a Bachelor of Applied Science from University of Technology, Sydney. She has exhibited throughout Australia and internationally, and her work is held in the Toowoomba Regional Gallery Collection and numerous private collections. Ari Athans exhibits with Edwina Corlette Gallery, and has a showroom in West End, Brisbane. edwinacorlette.com | arijewellery.com.au