

Text from personal catalogue by christoph zellweger published in 1999

Time warp...

Confronted with a person wearing one of Christoph Zellweger's brooches can be a startling experience. What appears to be a distorted, broken and corroded piece of metal pinned to a garment seems so incongruous, you are compelled to look more closely at this jewellery.

Christoph uses forms one normally associates with science and technology, such as tube shapes reminiscent of filters and medical equipment, anonymous 'machine-produced' components made for some very specific but now forgotten function. But as you look more closely you become aware of an unsettling beauty in these corroded fragments. The composition of the various parts is well judged, the distribution of the patterns, webs and other details is very satisfying; the pins on the backs integrate neatly with the forms. You begin to suspect that there is the discerning eye of an artist behind these pieces of engineered steel apparently in the process of being reclaimed by nature.

Christoph is skilful in setting up the sense of ambiguity that we experience when contemplating these objects. He is a consummate goldsmith able, ironically, to make forms that leave no trace of hand crafting, and he has an acute awareness of the visual qualities of materials and how to manipulate them in the service of the meanings he is trying to communicate.

For Christoph this work is part of a larger project, concerned with how we perceive and interpret the products of industrialised society, the relationship of the man-made environment to the natural world.

He says these pieces originate from the idea of unearthing the future. This poetic and paradoxical notion, that one can catch a presentient glimpse of a form literally from the future, in objects old enough to have become corroded, a time warp in more than one sense, carries strange and strong resonances. In these enigmatic works it is as though Christoph is discovering visual metaphors for the processes of his own creativity.

Michael Rowe

Silversmith and Senior Tutor, Goldsmithing, Silversmithing,
Metalwork and Jewellery, Royal College of Art, London