

## **Curatorial statement of Dr. Jurgita Ludavičienė, Curator SCHMUCK 2025**

### **What I think of when I think of jewellery**

First of all, I think about the honour I have been given this time and the responsibility that comes with it. Every year, when I look at the main curated exhibition of contemporary jewellery at the Handwerkermesse, I not only curiously follow the stories told by the artists' works, but I also try to see with respect and admiration the curator's idea that connects the selected artists' works. It always seems as if there is something more behind the works. That is always the case with a good exhibition. A good exhibition is something other than just an accumulation of works, but this is a banal and well-known truth. This time the answers have to come from me - and they come from many conversations with artists, gallerists, and viewers, and, above all, with myself. So. When I think about contemporary jewellery, the thing that scares me the most is knowing that we know what it is. More precisely, I would be most scared of knowing what it is and what is good about it. Even more specifically, what I would be most afraid of seeing in this field of art is stagnation, a general saturated agreement and a safe rolling on comfortable rails. When I think about it, I feel short of breath, as if I had been in a closed room for too long. In contemporary jewellery I look for courage and life. Something that makes you take a deeper breath, raise your eyebrows in amazement, look again, admire and feel something. It's not always clearly expressed in words, it hits you in the solar plexus and takes your breath away. Or it quietly sneaks up on you and whispers in your ear in a way that you can't forget, day or night. It's something that is intuitive, instinctive, unexplainable, but it works. It has agency and we can see it, feel it, touch it and be fascinated by it - jewellery, after all, has always been close to magic. It is that effect, that quality of influencing the environment and, above all, us, that I am looking for most. Of course, it's also the precision of technique, it's the subtlety of execution, it's the craftsmanship. All this has not gone anywhere, and when I look at an object, I see and appreciate it. But what I appreciate even more is the mystery, the spark of life that is hard to touch but always visible, the breath that pulsates from the work. Its form may be strange, unconventional, defiant or barely visible, but agency and life are something that is felt immediately and cannot be mistaken for anything else. Artists create forms and keep them alive, but it continues in the eyes and minds of viewers and curators. That's why it's important for me to have something that lasts, that works even when we move away from the work and the initial surprise remains in our memory. Therefore, it doesn't matter to me how well-known the artist is or how impressive the work is. A quiet voice is as important as a loud scream.

When I think of contemporary jewellery, I see an incredibly wide panorama, a sea of objects, with enough space for all shapes, colours, materials and surfaces. I think that I still

don't know what it is - because it could be anything. But what I'm looking for is a certain quality of the work - the material, the emotion, the meaning, the form - which affects my perception immediately and which doesn't disappear when I move away from it. Which remains there, in the exhibition space and in my memory. To quote Bruno Latour: "Texts, artefacts and objects of any kind, when they are created and brought into the scene of interaction by people, take on a meaning and an effect of their own<sup>1</sup>". Therefore, perhaps those looking for a clear narrative and a clear, unifying concept will not find one in this exhibition. The spark of life can take many forms and continue in the viewer's memory beyond the exhibition, and it is this spark of life that encourages surprise and provocation. It is what encourages to continue and multiply, ensuring the vitality of the whole field. And that is what I think about when I look at jewellery.

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<sup>1</sup> Latour, Bruno. 1996. "On Interobjectivity." *Mind, Culture and Activity* vol. 3 (Nr. 4): 228–245.