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The Artist as Jeweler: Pedro Cabrita Reis' Industrial Sculptures Made Precious on the Wrist

BY MICHELLE TAY | OCTOBER 15, 2015



Pedro Cabrita Reis' B7, gold plated iron with oxidized silver band bangle, 2015
(Courtesy Elisabetta Cipriani)

(/artists/247-pedro-cabrira-reis) [Pedro Cabrita Reis](#) (/artists/247-pedro-cabrira-reis) is an artist used to large-scale canvases. When Blouin Lifestyle caught up with him earlier this month, he was in the midst of preparing a piece for the 2016 edition of Unlimited (Art Basel's section for gargantuan art works) that visitors could walk through and interact with.

But an exhibition of his latest work, opening October 17 at [Elisabetta Cipriani](#) (<http://www.elisabettacipriani.com/>), a London gallery renowned for carrying wearable sculptures made by contemporary artists, shows off his dexterity with the (relatively) minuscule: jewelry.



“There is no difference in doing a jewel, a sculpture or a drawing. At least not for me. I’m a painter that, after all, does many other things but always with that strange but intense emotion of the first moment,” says Lisbon-based Reis, who is known for his use of industrial materials, and for highlighting the process of construction, joining elements in a way that can sometimes seem provisional or unfinished.

Titled *B* by (/artists/247-pedro-cabrira-reis) [Pedro Cabrita Reis](#) (/artists/247-pedro-cabrira-reis), the collection will feature seven unique bracelets reflecting these signature characteristics, made in iron and 18 karat yellow gold. Blouin Lifestyle caught up with the Portuguese artist on what motivated him to take part in the project.

You said you’ve never been attracted by jewels. What prompted you to make this collection?

It’s a domain that intrigues me, and the challenge is undeniably exciting. I’ve always wanted [jewelry I make] to deny whatever level of preciousness they might have. They must look strange and powerful in their form, but at the same time be enigmatic and attractive — and must be wearable. They must be loved for the fact that they are rough... for being an object that seems to be unfriendly but at the same time very appealing. It is this combination or tension between hard and soft, delicate and dangerous, that I’m interested in. I wanted them to carry beauty in themselves, but not to be a beautiful object or commodity.

How did you make the jewelry?

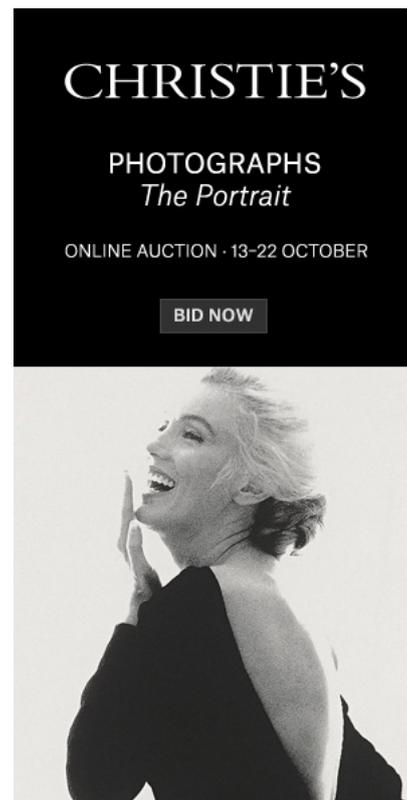
By hand, one by one, and very quickly — as refusal of the delicacy of the process. I started with iron, which I bent and twisted, and burned with lasers, then torched. In the end, they are objects that could be done with skills required in a foundry.

What, if anything, has this project taught you?

It’s obvious that I do prefer to work on a larger scale. But one of the reasons I accepted this challenge is that it implied a radical and dramatic change. Instead of working with my arms wide open, I was introduced a whole new perspective on how my hands teach myself to use them. While I was clear that I didn’t want to work with precious metals, I worked with a jeweler in Rome to see how they could be integrated.

How do you think the pieces turned out?

I’m very happy with the result. I don’t like art that has tricks, that leaves people asking, “How the hell did he do that?” I want them to see how the gold was obviously welded to the iron. That’s it. It’s bluntly simple.

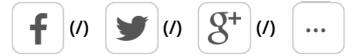


Who do you envision wearing this jewelry?

Mostly women, I suppose. Anyone who is magnanimous, wild, and unique.

Will you make jewelry again?

Not in the next five years. This was something new and I'm enjoying the flavor of that for now. If I come to this field again, I might be interested to make jewels in objects that are impossible to wear. Conceptually, I like this idea: a sequence of impossibilities that are in fact a territory of a real object.



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