

*Fig. 1. The winner of the 20th Silver Triennale International is „Vessel 2020“ by Markus Pollinger (Germany), 925 Sterling silver and steel. The silversmith was awarded a prize by the Ebbe-Weiss-Weingart Foundation for his artwork.
© Photography: Markus Pollinger.*



THE TWENTIETH SILVER TRIENNALE INTERNATIONAL AT THE GERMAN GOLDSMITHS' HOUSE HANAU, GERMANY: A SHORT REPORT OF CONTEMPORARY SILVERSMITHING

By Karolina Stefanski, Ph.D.

The *Silver Triennale International*, which presents the works of precious metal by contemporary silversmiths and designers from around the world, is in its twentieth edition. This edition received 121 submissions of silver artworks pertaining to table arts spanning twenty-one countries. The *Gesellschaft für Goldschmiedekunst* (Society for Goldsmiths' Art) and the *Deutsches Goldschmiedehaus Hanau* (German Goldsmiths' House Hanau) have organised the *Silver Triennale International* since 1965 with the purpose to promote contemporary silversmithing and thus encourage new ideas for the design of silver objects and flatware. Supported by the generous German prize donors, including the silver manufacturer *Robbe & Berking*, Flensburg; the *Hanauer Schmuckhalbzeug*; *Heimerle + Meule*, Pforzheim; the *Lions Club Hanau*; and the Foundation of Master Goldsmiths *Ebbe Weiss-Weingart*, Schwäbisch Gmünd, *The Silver Triennale International* inaugurated its twentieth exhibition opening with an international crowd and an awards ceremony at the *Deutsches Goldschmiedehaus Hanau* on October 30, 2022.



Fig. 2. The jury selected David Huycke's (Belgium) artwork "Cosmic Bubbles", Sterling silver, oxidized, as the second prize. The monetary prize was sponsored by German silver manufacturer Robbe & Berking. © Photography: David Huycke.



Fig. 3. Maja Houtman (Netherlands) was honoured with the third prize by the Ebbe Weiss Weingart Silver Prize for her objects, *Sphere I, II and IV*“, Sterling silver, 2020/2021. © Photography: A10design.

For the past several years, the jury has observed a captivating development in the submitted artworks of contemporary silver, which especially crystalized this year. Silversmiths, designers and artists have increasingly detached themselves from purely artistic craftsmanship in their works and have incorporated socially critical references and historical backgrounds in their subject matter of silver objects, among others including references to the war in Ukraine and its consequences, unequal distribution of world's resources and the COVID-19 pandemic. Creators focused on sustainability more than ever. Some of the objects set an example for the necessity of a circular economy, eliminating waste and pollution, circulating products and materials, and regenerating nature. Some participants were inspired during the pandemic to create pieces for themselves and their circle of friends and acquaintances.

Others processed psychological and mental stress through the creation of silver objects.

Most of the silver objects submitted had an obvious function, such as cutlery or water jugs. But there were also some works without a function per se. These works may refer to a function that is no longer fulfilled in today's society or has completely freed itself from a functional reference. These objects are representative of the new movement in the *Silver Triennale International*, a socio-political reflection and criticism.

The jury had a difficult time selecting the sixty-seven most innovative and convincing entries for the exhibition through masterful execution of material, and only eight of the creators were awarded prizes at the award ceremony. The jury was composed of three professionals in their respective fields: Dirk Allgaier, publisher of *Arnoldsche* art books who publishes the *Silver*

Triennale International exhibition catalog; Dr. Claudia Banz, art and design historian and curator of design at the *Museum of Decorative Arts* of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*; and JaKyung Shin, silversmith and assistant professor at *Seoul National University* in South Korea.

A formal prize ceremony was opened by the president of the *Gesellschaft für Goldschmiedekunst*, Hartwig Rohde, followed by an introduction of the Mayor of Hanau, Klaus Kaminsky, and a brief speech of the deputy director of the *Deutsches Goldschmiedehaus Hanau*, Dr. Christiane Weber-Stöber. The big number-one prize in the main competition was awarded to Markus Pollinger (Germany) through the *Ebbe-Weiss-Weingart Foundation* for his artwork "vessel 2020" (Figure 1). The vessel includes a turning handle made of steel as a contrast to its body made of silver. The object is characterized



Fig. 4. HyeSun Lee (Korea), Light object "Hand-Lighthouse", Sterling silver, brass, marine plating, 2022. 1st Lions Club Hanau Prize in the Young Talent Competition. © Photography: HyeSun Lee.



Fig. 5. Koichi Io (Japan) „Three legged vase“, 970/000 silver. 2nd place as Lions Club Hanau Prize. © Photography: Yosuke Otomo.

by deliberate prominence of soldering seams, a reminiscence of a type of scar. These scars or “joining lines are welds and are clearly meant to be a dividing line between the industrially produced parts and the handmade parts,” according to Markus Pollinger. He describes that a seam connects, and in this case, it connects the two different approaches. The silversmith likes creating unique pieces from mass-formed products.

David Huycke (Belgium), a multiple-times *Silver Triennale International* participant (1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2019) was awarded the *Robbe & Berking Prize* for his creation “Cosmic Bubbles” (Figure 2); The Cosmic Bubbles is a further exploration

of the silversmith’s interest in the sphere and in the natural behavior of a group of spheres. It is a sculptural object and reminiscent of various interpretations, including a branch of grapes in a dish, soap bubbles arising from a bath or bubbles of sparkling wine. One could also infer references to pop art or surrealism. The silversmith particularly likes the possibility of multiple interpretations. He explains, “This is my latest work and the first one of a new series, which will be more figurative than my earlier works. It is especially this edge between abstract and figuration that I am drawn to now.” Huycke continues, “I like to use the full potential of my material visualized by the contrast of the white and the black silver, of the playful

shiny spheres and the rough black box underneath.”

Maja Houtman (Netherlands) was honored with the *Ebbe Weiss Weingart Silver Prize* for her objects “Sphere I, II and IV” (Figure 3). Also a numerous-time participant in the *Silver Triennale*, Maja Houtman’s technique was to use recycled silver, so-called “rest material” from former artworks and jewelry construction. She begins creating without a clear plan as she likes to see what the project grows into: “I keep on working on a design until I tried every variation I can think of,” she explains. The three artworks on show consist of fourteen variations in this collection. The difficulty for the silversmith was to present the lightness of transparency and



Fig. 6. Merit Christian (Germany), „Born with a silver spoon“, silver, wood, 2022. Lions Club Hanau Prize. © Photography: Merit Christian.

the complexity of sturdiness at the same time.

HyeSun Lee (Korea) received the 1st *Lions Club Hanau Prize* in the Young Talent Competition for her “Handlighthouse” (Figure 4), and Koichi Io (Japan) the 2nd *Lions Club Hanau Prize* for his object “Three legged vase” (Figure 5), while Merit Christian (Germany) was awarded the *Lions Club Hanau Prize* for her work “Born with a silver spoon” (Figure 6). JaeHui Jeong (Korea) won the *Hanau Schmuckhalzeug Silver Prize* with her „Hidden Object“ (Figure 7) and Kazuhiro Toyama (Japan) the *Heimerle + Meule Silver Prize* for his creation „Biophilia“ (Figure 8).

Among the participants in the competition who travelled to Hanau for the opening was Susan Coddon from the

United States. Her artwork “On the edge” (Figure 9) features a rice bowl with base and chopstick rest. Coddon’s work calls attention to details that are reminiscent of origami, a Japanese art of folding paper into decorative shapes and figures. This look gives her artwork (base and chopstick rest) a light appearance despite the true heaviness of the metal.

Another paper-light appearance, however created in Sterling silver, was the sugar box filled with real sugar cubes (Figure 10), entitled “Sweet and Power” by Zhipeng Wang. Geometric in shape and without any soldering, the sugar box has been strictly folded into the object it is. Precision was the main ingredient for this construction. The word “power” in the title relates

to glucose, a form of sugar, which is the primary source of energy in our body’s cells. But the term may also be a pun on the power of sugar when sugar was king in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The interdisciplinary Swiss artist Anthony Bannwart, who learned the craft of design, jewelry and silversmithing more than twenty years ago with the renowned professor Franz Bette at the *Staatliche Hanauer Zeichenakademie* (Hanau State Academy), was also among the visitors. His Fibonacci plate (Figure 11) is part of the exhibition at the *Deutsches Goldschmiedehaus Hanau*. In accordance with a sequence of scales discovered by the acclaimed Italian mathematician Fibonacci in 1202, the artist designed

Fig. 7. JaeHui Jeong (Korea), „Hidden Object“, 999/000 silver, 2022. Hanau Jewelry Silver Award, 4th Prize Young Talent Promotion Competition. © Photography by: KC Studio.



Fig. 8. Kazuhiro Toyama (Japan), Vase "Biophilia; Ephemeral Vase". 970/000 silver, 2022. This object was awarded the Heimerle + Meule Silver Prize (5th prize young talent competition). © Photography: Shinichi Ichikawa.



Fig. 9. Susan Coddon (United States), "On the edge", Sterling silver. © Photography: Drew Stauss/ Departure Studio.



Fig. 10. "Sweet and Power" by Zhipeng Wang (China). Sterling silver, 2022. © Photography: Wanying Xie.



Fig. 11. The “Fibonacci” silver plate by Anthony Bannwart (Switzerland). Sterling silver, 2022, evolved from his porcelain Fibonacci plate (2017) © Photography by Anthony Bannwart. The artist has a timeless approach with universal themes and is known for his tributes to important personalities, including Fibonacci, Buckminster Fuller, Le Corbusier, Friedrich Dürrenmatt etc. He says: “The application of sacred geometry, the golden ratio, is highly inspiring and cultivates a bridge between art and gastronomy.”





Fig. 12. Tea caddy “Wisdom Lady” in form of a voluptuous women’s body, by Yuan Cheng Chang. Sterling silver, wood, 44 x 14 x 24 cm. © Photography by: Yuan Cheng Chang.

contrast between today’s advanced 3D technology and historic handmade tableware, when during the Renaissance one dined from silver plates before the discovery of kaolin, hence before it became custom to dine on porcelain plates. In the meantime, the Fibonacci plate, also an “innovation of design” award finalist at the *Tableware International Awards 2022*, has given rise to a whole series of other art objects in various materials, including a tableware series, a jewelry line and wall sculptures.

From geometric design to natural sculpture, the diversity of submitted artworks was endless. An impressively large tea caddy (44 x 14 x 24 cm) “Wisdom Lady” (Figure 12) by Yuan Cheng Chang is one of the largest artworks on display. It has been forged, raised and chased of fine silver with sandalwood. The sculpture represents a full-breasted female torso with the hair being the wooden lid to the tea caddy. There are many more stimulating and intriguing silver objects in this exhibition to be explored.

The *Silver Triennale International* showed at the *Deutsches Goldschmiedehaus Hanau* until January 10, 2023, and then traveled to *Inborgenta* in Munich, Germany from February 24–27, 2023; from there it went to the *Silberwarenmuseum Ott-Pausersche Fabrik* (Silverware museum Ott-Pausersche Factory), Schwäbisch Gmünd until August 13, 2023; the *DIVA Museum voor Edelsmeedkunst, Juwelen en Diamant* (Museum for silver, jewels and diamonds) Antwerp, Belgium, August 26 through October 8, 2023; and the *Museum Zons*, Dormagen, Germany, October 22 2023 through February 11, 2024.

his Fibonacci plate as a sculptural composition, using the Fibonacci proportions of the golden ratio, first in porcelain, then in silver. Bannwart’s design draws from historical reference with a contemporary and conceptual twist. It presents a creative challenge to dress the plate for most chefs in high-end gastronomy. The artist emphasizes the

Karolina Stefanski was awarded a Ph.D. in art history (decorative arts) from the Technical University of Berlin, where she studied under Prof. Dr. Bénédicte Savoy. Her dissertation analyzes the stylistic transformation of French Empire style in silver from Berlin, Warsaw and Vienna between 1797 and 1848. She received a Master’s degree in art history from the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art at Sorbonne University in Paris and a Bachelor’s Degree from Suffolk University in Boston. Contact: karolinastefanski@mac.com.



Founded 1996 for the study and appreciation of fine silver with a focus on education. Membership is open to all

Contact: South Carolina Silver Society
P.O. Box 50779
Columbia, SC 29250-0779

Email info@southcarolinasilversociety.org
Visit our website www.southcarolinasilversociety.org

ESTATE STERLING FLATWARE
Restored to “Like New” Condition
100% Satisfaction Guaranteed Place Settings & Serving Pieces
Low Affordable Prices Over 6000 Patterns in Stock

GORHAM • REED & BARTON • KIRK STEFF • LUNT • TOWLE • ONEIDA
WALLACE/INTERNATIONAL • WESTMORELAND • GEORG JENSEN

New Sterling & Stainless Also Available

Ask for a computerized listing for your pattern or, if you are choosing a pattern, our pattern guide brochure. We also carry candlesticks, Baby Gifts, Tea Sets, Goblets and other fine gifts.

CALL FOR FREE CATALOG

Our 29th Year

WE ALSO BUY STERLING

(800) 262-3134 • (727) 581-6827 • FAX: (727) 586-0822
1350 West Bay Drive • Largo, Florida 33770

WWW.SILVERQUEEN.COM