

Brilliant is a new book that brings to life an extraordinary century of creativity, tradition and change engineered by generations of Australian gold and silversmiths.

A century of gold and silver brilliance

STORY BY EVA CZERNIS-RYL, CURATOR, POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

Brilliant: Australian gold & silver 1850-1950 reveals and celebrates one of Australia's earliest and most innovative creative industries, those of silversmithing and jewellery making. It showcases the Powerhouse Museum's renowned collection of jewellery, gold and silverware as well as some of the rarest survivors from public and private collections across Australia.

The first part of the book covers the period of 1851-1900, and tells the story of gold and silversmithing in goldrush Australia. It highlights the breakthrough developments of the 1850s as immigrant artisans from Europe arrived in Australia seeking gold but when unsuccessful, used their artistic skills to transform lucky finds of others into striking solid gold jewellery. Did you ever wonder how the uniquely Australian goldfields jewellery with miniature figures of diggers came into being? Or did you know that a pair of silver-mounted emu eggs made by a convict in Port Macquarie was used as the gift to welcome Governor Darling to Australia? This was the beginning of the fascinating history of mounted emu eggs – one of the most distinctive and enduring forms of colonial Australia's presentation silver which reached new design heights during the goldrush era.

Australia's 'exotic' flora and fauna inspired marvellous designs for jewellery, gold and silver sporting trophies, elaborate testimonials and massive silver-tree table centrepieces. These talented artists from countries such as Denmark, Germany and Britain were responsible for Australia's first national style in the decorative arts – long before the Federation! The book includes illustrations of recently 'discovered' objects as well as rare contextual material such as hand-tinted ambrotype portraits from the Museum's photographic collection.

The second part of the book covers 1901-1950 and fills in a significant gap in the

history of jewellery and decorative gold and silverware. This comprehensive overview unveils for the first time the developments in both handcrafted objects and jewellery and commercial jewellery and silver plating industries. Looking at multiple markets, competing industries and changing tastes and demands, it introduces defining themes, people and objects ranging from jewellery crafted by members of Arts and Crafts societies and by such legendary artists as the Lintons in Perth and Sydney's Rhoda Wager; to glittering Art Deco jewellery with black opals, processional crosses and mayoral chains. Trophies feature prominently including the extraordinary 1938 Big Game Angling Contest tableaux to the imposing Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race cup crafted in silver, to the modernist Sydney and Melbourne Cups fashioned in gold.

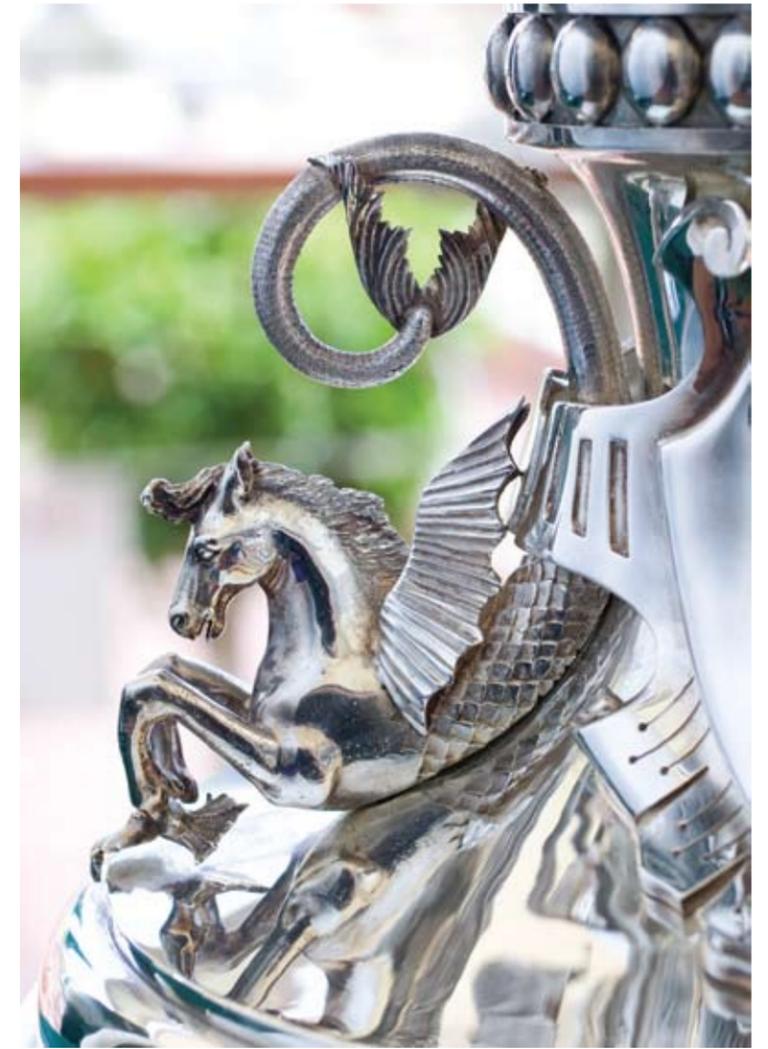
While one-off gold and silver items form the most appreciated part of Australia's gold and silver heritage, popular gold jewellery and domestic tableware are also highlighted. Not everyone was able to afford sterling silver, but many households had electroplated silverware—cutlery, sets of teaspoons, tea and coffee pots and serving dishes. Readers who remember the NSW Government Railways' dining cars and refreshment rooms at Gosford, Junee or Coffs Harbour in the 1930s, will recall the widespread use of elegant silver plated wares. Australian plated silverware was impressive in range and quality, successfully competing with imports.

Brilliant, edited by Eva Czernis-Ryl and co-authored with Dr Kenneth Cavill, is a significant new reference that brings to life an extraordinary century of creativity, tradition and change engineered by Australian gold and silversmiths.

Available from January 2011 at the Museum Shop or online at powerhousemuseum.com/publications RRP: \$65.95, Members \$59.35



'AUSTRALIA'S 'EXOTIC' FLORA AND FAUNA INSPIRED MARVELLOUS DESIGNS FOR JEWELLERY, GOLD AND SILVER SPORTING TROPHIES, ELABORATE TESTIMONIALS AND MASSIVE SILVER-TREE TABLE CENTREPIECES.'



LEFT TO RIGHT: SILVER NECKLACE, RING AND BUCKLE FROM A JEWELLERY PARURE, SET WITH BLISTER PEARLS, UNKNOWN MAKER, 'SCHOOL OF RHODER WAGER', ABOUT 1950. POWERHOUSE MUSEUM COLLECTION, 86/1537-5-9; MELBOURNE CUP MADE BY J W STEETH FOR W DRUMMOND & CO, MELBOURNE, 1924. AUSTRALIAN JOCKEY CLUB ARCHIVAL COLLECTION, SYDNEY; SILVER AND CRYSTAL BROOCH, UNKNOWN MAKER, 'SCHOOL OF RHODER WAGER', ABOUT 1935, POWERHOUSE MUSEUM COLLECTION, GIFT OF ANNE SCHOFIELD UNDER THE TAX INCENTIVES FOR THE ARTS SCHEME, 1986. 86/986. BROOCH AND EARRINGS IN 18 CARAT GOLD, UNKNOWN MAKER, ABOUT 1865, TREVOR KENNEDY COLLECTION. DETAIL OF SYDNEY TO HOBART YACHT RACE TROPHY MADE BY JOHN PRIORA FOR W J PROUD IN SYDNEY IN 1912, ACQUIRED IN 1946 BY GEORGE ADAMS (TATTERSALLS) FOR PRESENTATION TO THE OVERALL WINNER OF THE SECOND SYDNEY TO HOBART RACE. PHOTOGRAPHED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE CRUISING YACHT CLUB OF AUSTRALIA, SYDNEY.