

Adi Toch, *Wide Open*: a new silver commission for the P & O Makower Trust Collection at Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales)

In November 2013 Adi Toch was selected to produce the latest commission for the P & O Makower Trust's collection of contemporary silver that has been on loan at Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales) since 2006. The spectacular result is a large, double-skinned bowl form called *Wide Open*, made entirely in Britannia silver and covered all over with a gloriously multi-coloured patination.

The Trust initiated its first commissioning scheme with the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1979, with further collections begun in 1993 in partnership with the Crafts Council (now transferred to the National Museum Wales in Cardiff) and in 2007 with the Ashmolean Museum. Its aim has always been to stimulate early-career silversmiths to produce their most ambitious and innovative work.

There has, therefore, never been a specific brief, simply a given budget and an invitation to submit ideas for an object of museum quality of a kind that the artist aspires to make but might otherwise be unable to achieve.

The collection now in Cardiff includes important early work by star silversmiths like Chris Knight and Ndidi Ekubia and, since 2007, the Trust has commissioned exciting new work from Sarah Denny, Theresa Nguyen and Kevin Grey. Adi Toch's *Wide Open* is the latest in this distinguished series and, like its predecessors, combines great skill and a fearless imagination to bring to the collection a new perspective on the creative potential of silver.

Adi Toch was born in Jerusalem in 1979 and followed a BA from Jerusalem's Bezalel Art Academy (2000-4) with



Wide Open, patinated Britannia silver, London, 2014, maker's mark of Adi Toch
(All images © Adi Toch)



Wide Open, patinated Britannia silver, London, 2014, maker's mark of Adi Toch
(All images © Adi Toch)

an MA at the Cass, London (2007-9), where she was taught by Simone ten Hompel. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is included in the permanent collections of the Goldsmiths' Company, the Crafts Council, the Fitzwilliam Museum and National Museums Scotland.

Wide Open is the largest enclosed bowl Toch has made to date and, as we have come to expect from her, is not only precisely crafted but at the same time invitingly curvaceous and sensuous in appearance. In Toch's own words

Wide Open explores the shape of the bowl and a different visual language for silver with variegated patina. Made from two parts soldered together, the top is funneled inside and through the bowl shape leaving an aperture while creating a foot on which the piece leans. There was an interesting contrast between the meticulous process of calculating and executing the work in silver and the serendipitous procedure of the chemical colouring.

The technique of patination is a testing one requiring bold, swift action and producing an unpredictable, spontaneous result, although with practice, Toch learned to have more control. The finished object is first painted all over with an ammonia compound using rapid strokes of the brush. It is then heated briefly and left to 'develop' for a short while before stopping the process. In the case of *Wide Open* it took three attempts to achieve the right

effect, the patinated surface having to be removed with pumice each time before it could be redone.

The result is a vibrant, lustrous finish which ranges in colour from purple and blue to shades of coppery orange. Toch has been experimenting with patination on silver-plated gilding metal (brass) for several years and such a piece, *Large Reflection Bowl* (2012), has recently been acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum. *Wide Open*, however, is her first patinated vessel using solid silver.

The patination creates a dynamic counterpoint to the restrained form and makes it hard to believe that what we are looking at is truly silver. It does not quite extend over the entire vessel, however: the very edge of the rim has been polished to reveal a subtle but telling glimpse of the underlying silver.

Toch concludes that

the piece was both challenging and enjoyable to make – working on such a large scale in silver was really exciting and I am grateful to the P&O Makower Trust and Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales) for this fantastic opportunity.

Andrew Renton

Head of Applied Art, Amgueddfa Cymru (National Museum Wales)



Wide Open, patinated Britannia silver, London, 2014, maker's mark of Adi Toch; detail of the marks
(All images © Adi Toch)