

An essay to accompany 'Twice Bitten: A group exhibition of earrings'  
April 1 – April 26, 2008

As a site for jewellery, the Ear is remarkable. Snaking its way into the skull, who would deny that its intricate sculptural form is an extraordinary place? And of course...there are two of them!

Ears are the outer limits of the Face, which hold great power and significance for us over other parts of the body. Making a pattern that is yours and no-one else's, by your face you are recognised. The most prominent feature of the face- its symmetry, is amplified by wearing a pair of Earrings.

Jewellery has been described as "the dot on the i". Just as when we are reading, a dot helps us to distinguish a little stalk from a forest of other stalky letters, so too, Earrings add to your identity. They can be a finishing touch to the self. At least for that day.

There is an intimate aspect to earrings - the sensitive lobe and the hidden, reverse side of the jewel hear whispers and hold secrets. As an art object though, the Earring is immediately viewable at eye level. They invite eye-traffic, like a billboard on a busy street. But be advised: look, don't stare!

They aren't easy; the making of Earrings presents several challenges for the maker. For one thing, Earrings are twins, which means double trouble and this raises questions: will they be identical or fraternal? two halves of the same thing? or two very very similar things?

They must defy gravity, and yet exploit that pull to brilliant effect: for Earrings, down is up. Then there are mechanical issues. If the Earrings are to swing or move, they might get caught in themselves mid-manoeuve or their wearer's Lovely Hair. Clever jewellers find simple solutions.

Being at once intimate and public jewels, few adornments are so beguiling and engaging as Earrings.

David Neale, February 2008.

