

## ”soap skull”

BY CONSTANZE SCHREIBER / SELECTED BY LIESBETH DEN BESTEN

A bunch of soap and a bandaged skull, also made of soap. Experiments one could say, experiments with materials and form. However, this work is definitely not about experiments. It is part of the mature work of a young German artist jeweller who lives and works in Amsterdam (NL). Constanze Schreiber (b. 1977) was trained as a goldsmith in Pforzheim (Germany) before coming to Amsterdam to study at the Department of Jewellery of the Gerrit Rietveld Academy. Her work is a product of the Dutch applied arts culture which ‘functions at the interface of art and design’ (programme Dep. of Jewellery, Rietveld Academy).

Constanze Schreiber is fascinated by the manner in which people deal with their anxieties and fears. In her jewellery and objects she reflects upon the protecting values of jewellery as found in amulets and talismans. Universal symbols, like the anchor and skull, and rituals are the basis of her jewellery. She applies and transforms elements of traditional jewellery in her own designs. Her creations can be made from a wide range of materials, like copper, coral, leather, fur, silver, shell, acrylic, crushed car glass and soap. The materials are carefully chosen because of their inherent and symbolic qualities.

“The skull offers a confrontation with death that may help to defeat your own fears. It is used in amulets and talismans.” says Constanze Schreiber. In her work she transforms the skull into something fragile and natural: a skull may become a flower, carved in coral with a copper heart; triplet skulls in coloured acrylic form an enchanting tropical flower; and another skull carved in mother of pearl shell acts as the reflecting side of a hand mirror.

Soap Skull (2004) is a puzzling object, consisting of loose bits and pieces - the moment you touch it, it falls apart. The grubby pieces of soap, the reminiscence with bones, the vulnerable and variable character of the composition, and the non-aesthetic quality of the heap, are in total contrast to the delicately modelled soap skull triumphantly crowning the sweet-smelling heap of leftovers. The skull of a house cat is carefully cast in clear soap, the eyes and mouth are filled with pieces of soap of a different colour, and the whole is bound together by a silver strap as if it is a voodoo puppet. Soap Skull has associative powers, and is linked with ideas of purification and daily rituals like the washing of your hands.

Not only does Soap Skull attract you to its aromas, but it also makes you smile. This is the language of contemporary craft: the artist employing her technical skills, while thinking with the freedom of the fine artist. Preciousness of a new order - settled in a tiny installation.



Constanze Schreiber (b. in Germany 1977), "Soap Skull", 2004, soap, silver