



New York Silver, Then and Now
at the Museum of the City of New York



*Tiffany & Co., Goelet Prize for Sloops, 1889. Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Mrs. C. Oliver Iselin, M39.1.1;
Amy Roper Lyons, Women's Work #1, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of the City of New York*

The **Museum of the City of New York** invites everyone to *New York Silver, Then and Now*, a revelatory exhibition designed to create a dialogue between 25 contemporary artists, silversmiths, and designers and the outstanding New York silver in the Museum of the City of New York's permanent collection. The exhibition displays new works created for a modern audience by these artists alongside their historic inspirations, culled from the Museum's incomparable collection and presented in the Museum's Tiffany & Co. Foundation Gallery. The exhibition is organized by guest curator Jeannine Falino and will be on view from 28 June 2017 through June 2018.

Engaging contemporary artists with treasures from the Museum's collection allows the exhibition to illuminate the evolution of the ancient craft of metalsmithing and explore the expressive potential of silver as an artistic medium. As the 21st century artists open a discourse with the work of their predecessors, they weave modern interpretations of historic issues – including the role of women in society and use of slave labor to mine this precious metal – into an artistic conversation between past and present.

Some of these modern creations – made by artists like Kiki Smith, Chitra Ganesh, Laurene Leon Boym, Preston Jones, and more – seek to retain the function of their historical counterparts, while others are transformed to serve new purposes. Some contemplate abstract issues, including the mystery of life and death. All of these works probe the changing role and enduring appeal of a medium with a longstanding history of use, enjoyment, and value in New York households, and together they offer fresh ways of thinking about this lustrous and versatile medium in our own times.

New York Silver, Then and Now also presents a historical narrative on the use of silver as a reflection of time and culture. Silver was once at the center of a well-appointed home, with its beauty adding to the family dinner table and its material value providing its owners with financial security in uncertain times. It was the treasure lovingly bestowed at births, weddings, and funerals, marking important passages in life. The role of silver in daily life has evolved over the years as fashions and social usage have changed. This is especially true with the quickening pace of life in 21st century, where family gatherings have become less formal and happen more rarely, especially ones built around the dinner table. Even so, silver holds its fascination for consumers, collectors, and artists, suggesting something timeless about its liquid, shimmering surface – something the exhibition aims to communicate through an artistic dialogue taking place across time and space.

New York Silver, Then and Now showcases 20 treasures from the Museum's collection alongside 25 never before seen contemporary creations. Examples of historical silver pieces and the modern works they inspired include:

- Chitra Ganesh's beaker made to honor the more than one million people buried in the pauper's field on Hart Island, inspired by a 1708 beaker made by Hugues Lossieux and Joseph Leddel with anti-Catholic engravings
- A honeycomb bracelet by Kiki Smith, inspired by a Tiffany & Co. bonbonnière made of platinum, gold, pearls, diamonds, and sapphires
- A hand-wrought spoon designed by Sheila Bridges and based upon designs for ships used in the transatlantic slave trade paired with late 17th century silver spoon made by Cornelius Vander Burch
- A ca. 1750 John Hastier *porringer* and a 21st century *pillinger* reinvented for present-day medicinal purposes by Constantine Boym

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About the Museum of the City of New York

Founded in 1923 as a private, nonprofit corporation, the Museum of the City of New York celebrates and interprets the city, educating the public about its distinctive character, especially its heritage of diversity, opportunity, and perpetual transformation. The Museum connects the past, present, and future of New York City, and serves the people of the city as well as visitors from around the world through exhibitions, school and public programs, publications, and collections. To connect with the Museum on social media, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and visit our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY](https://www.facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY). For more information please visit www.mcny.org.

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