



BLANCHE TILDEN – MERRYLYN GATES

19.09.2011 – 31.10.2011

# A CHARM OFFENSIVE

19.09.2011

Collected package from Blanche at the post office in [REDACTED]  
Unwrapping the parcel was the most exciting thing: layers upon layers.



Immediately tried the charm on: it is so simple, honest and elegant. Sits low on the body.

Description: a single ingot of 18c gold, forged from all the gold Blanche had in her studio. On a dark slippery chain. It's opposite is a tungsten file: same dimensions as the ingot. They rub together.



The charm had started working even before it arrived. Years ago when I was doing a professional placement at the RCA in London and [REDACTED] was studying in Europe, I bought him a ring from the grad exhibition. A student, Manuel Vilhena made 365 heavy soft silver rings — one for each day of the year. The day of the year was engraved on the inside of each ring. People chose a day, and as they wore the ring the silver wore down. I gave [REDACTED] the ring 199 — my DOB (his date was already gone). In his move back to Australia the ring was lost. On Saturday 17th, he called me to say that he'd found the ring: he was surprised. It was in one of those boxes that never get unpacked from one move to the next. He has gone on to have a very interesting career.



20.09.2011

Wore the charm to a committee meeting. The [REDACTED] liked one so much he wants it in his suite.

The charm moves quite a lot: as the heavy gold weighs down the lighter file. But it's nice to have constant contact with it and not just forget it is on. I sprinkled gold dust on a friend.

21.09.2011

Working at home all day in daggy clothes, so decided not to put the charm on. Funny though, I was conscious of it's presence throughout the day. Decided that it does not like being in the box (lovely though the box be). Went into a funk, as I often do after an emotionally demanding event like yesterday's meeting.

22.09.2011

Working at home, and have the charm around my neck.

23.09.2011

When I sit still the charm does not move; when I walk around the heavy gold ingot works its way downward.

23.09.2011

Did not stop me getting a cold. I don't wear the charm in bed.

24.09.2011

Are there specific things I hope for? I need more work, and an application is due on 26 September. I am applying to start a PhD and will need a scholarship to take that on. It is due 31 October. I am gloomy that my sense of selfworth is so caught up in my work. Making time to do creative things is important: I have started to make collages again. Being an assistant in [REDACTED] workshop casting glass has given me a taste for the studio again.

25.09.2011

Feeling quite deliciously eccentric today as I carry the gold ingot round in my dressing gown pocket.

29.09.2011

Over the cold, and off 'we' go to a meeting today.

01.10.2011

Tucked the gold ingot in my shirt pocket and held it there for the day.

03.10.2011

I am finding there are some people I want to tell about the charm and others I quite like having it as a secret from.

04.10.2011

██████████ sees the charm for the first time.

06.10.2011

My charm meets Kay Lawrence's *Garlands of string* at Craft ACT. It was quite an outing. Shared the idea with lots of people, who all had a personal point of reference for the way some pieces of jewellery make strong connections with their lives. Kay's garlands were accompanied by short texts from the owner/wearers, not necessarily about wearing the work, but important moments in their emotional lives. The necklaces are made by Kay for friend's birthdays.





That reminded me of another necklace I have that I think of as talismanic: a string of pearls made up for me by [REDACTED] for my 50th birthday: the string counts out my date of birth, with pale pink pearls between white. Longer than opera length, [REDACTED] assured me it was like those worn by Princess Royal Mary... [in 1921-22] the 'Marys of the Empire' donated up to ten shillings to buy a gift for the Princess. That rope of 280 pearls was supplied by Carrington & Co. Kay collects and uses pearl buttons.

08.10.2011

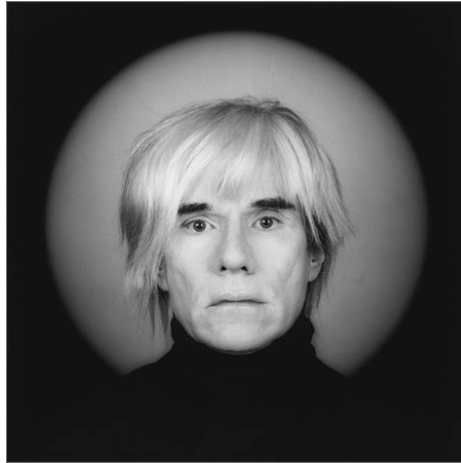
Reflection: there is a birthday theme going on. I realise that I don't wear jewellery just as decoration. For most of the pieces I have there is a story behind them: they are given to me by friends or family (pearls on our 18th birthday for both my sister and I, a piece of jet given to me by [REDACTED], a cut glass black poodle vintage brooch from my sister, a spirit level brooch from [REDACTED] inherited jewels from [REDACTED]); are made by someone I know (many by Blanche, a throat multiple by [REDACTED], a cloisonné earring by [REDACTED], a silver ring by [REDACTED] various orphan earrings from friends as I have only one ear pierced); or have been collected somewhere significant (precious early op shop finds, travel). I even tried my hand at cast silver in art school, and still wear a silver nectarine nut, made to hold a lock of my son's hair.

12.10.2011

Interview: maybe the charm kept me from making a big mistake?







25.10.2011

American director John Waters's *It's a filthy life* tour (a small audience on Canberra) in which he spoke about Andy Warhol's habit of wearing expensive jewels under his signature black polo. Something about this appeals to me, although unlike Andy, I don't think it is about a fear of losing wealth. Like Andy, I had a secret for a short while.

Maybe I am so conscious of Blanche's charm because it is the most gold I have ever worn or been responsible for?

27.10.2011

My son's birthday (there is the theme again!). Opened an exhibition at [REDACTED]: I read stories to the crowd, from books that the art reminded me of: *Little Red Riding Hood* to *The Swimmer*.

31.10.2011

The charm was once again in my pocket as I submitted my application. It was the last time.

Motto: "*be careful what you wish for, you just might get it...*"

sfa press

2011