

SCARLETT JEWELLERY

Cobi Taylor



Figure 1. Rebecca Scarlett, outer rings from *Spectrum* collection, middle ring from *Absence*. Photograph: Juliette Pow.

Scarlett Jewellery Label melds innovative design and metalsmithing techniques to produce contemporary fashion jewellery collections.

Two collections to date have been released, and Rebecca is now working on the third. She says: "I feel that starting a brand is the best way to learn how to be a better designer and metalsmith. Often established jewellery brands will create collections that are aesthetically similar, and for a niche customer base. I am more concerned with learning new metalsmithing techniques and expanding my skill set. This is why the two collections I have released so far have been vastly different." Scarlett's current collection, *Spectrum*, is a gender-fluid range of sterling silver rings, bracelets, earrings and necklaces. Exploring – and rejecting conventional expectations of femininity and masculinity, which are still so prevalent within fashion jewellery design, she has created pieces that appeal to the contemporary wearer who prefers their accessories to be more ambiguously gendered.

Scarlett's previous collection, *Absence*, was released in late 2014. The aesthetic developed in this collection directly references the stone-setting technique frequently encountered within the canon of fine jewellery. Traditionally, the

metalsmithing component is skeletal, created to encompass and complement the precious stone. Little emphasis is placed on the structure that holds the stone in place. Paying homage to the art of working metal, *Absence* defiantly redirects the focus onto the form, which is ironically constructed around empty space, emphasising the absence of a gem.

All pieces are handmade by Rebecca in the Dunedin studio that she shares with Richie Boyens of local streetwear label *Clothes I've Made* and Henry Devereux, a fine-art jeweller. With each new collection, Rebecca challenges her metalsmithing abilities by learning new techniques and critically engaging with ideas present within the various subdivisions of jewellery. Each piece of sterling silver jewellery is cast from a mould and can be reproduced any number of times – a method frequently employed in the designer fashion jewellery industry. By adopting this model of production, *Scarlett Jewellery Label* aligns itself with other designer jewellery brands – labels that also utilise photography and branding as crucial aspects of their practice.



Figure 2. Rebecca Scarlett, *Eternity Ring 3*; trinity necklace and eternity ring from *Absence* collection.

In the age of the internet, an online presence is equally as important as physical stockists. Social media sites such as Instagram and Facebook are frequently utilised to reinforce a controlled brand image and to further the social reach of the label. This approach has already met with success – in addition to the online store, *Scarlett Jewellery Label* is available from *Company of Strangers Store* in Dunedin and *White Willow Fashion* in Balclutha. In the future, Rebecca plans to add more stockists throughout New Zealand and overseas while continuing to challenge customer expectations of designer fashion jewellery.

Rebecca Scarlett graduated from the Dunedin School of Art with a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 2013.

Cobi Taylor also graduated with a BVA from the Dunedin School of Art in 2013. In 2014 she won the New Zealand Art Show Emerging Artist Award.