

# TACOMA **ART** MUSEUM

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*Protective Ornament:  
Contemporary Amulets and Armor  
Self-Guided Handbook*

## Welcome to the TACOMA **ART** MUSEUM

Thank you for visiting the museum to explore ***Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets and Armor***. Included you will find some ideas for teaching points to facilitate discussion with your students.

As you enter the museum, please set all backpacks and jackets in the coatroom which is located near the Visitor Services desk. Have students gather at the benches and please begin by reviewing the museum rules with your students.

### **What DO you want to do at the museum?**

- Explore the exhibitions
- Learn about art
- Create art
- Have fun
- Respect each other and other museum visitors

### **What DON'T you want to do at the museum?**

- Don't touch the art (always stand an arm's length away from the art and never point)
- Don't bring food or drink in the galleries
- Don't use the flash on your camera.
- Don't bring pens or markers in the galleries, only use pencils to take notes with and use the floor as your table
- Don't yell or shout
- Don't run
- Don't wander off, stay with your groups in the galleries and museum

## ***Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor***

October 18, 2014 – February 1, 2015

*Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor* showcases nearly 100 works—including helmets, brass knuckles, breastplates, aggressive or defensive jewelry, chain mail, amulets, talismans, and protective gear—designed to address issues of protection and empowerment in the face of everyday perils and social challenges.

Ranging from protective hardware (physical fortification) and protective “software” (faith-based adornment), the array of contemporary works underlines the crucial safeguarding function of jewelry and other wearable ornaments.

Organized by the National Ornamental Metal Museum Foundation, Inc. The exhibition was curated by Suzanne Ramljak, Editor of *Metalsmith* magazine.



Parker Brown, *The Defense of Ignorance* (helmet), 2009. Steel, brass, bronze, leather, cotton, wood, 16 x 16 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Parker Brown.



Kristin Diener, *Talisman to the Center of the Earth*, 2011. Sterling silver, fine silver, brass, gold, steel flashing, steel wire, paper, eyeglass parts, synthetic ruby, pearl, hematite, moonstone, blue topaz, apache tears/obsidian, purple stone, soapstone, plastic toy, shell buttons, antique button, mica, gold foil, watch crystal, dirt ball, 15 x 6 x 1 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Margot Geist.



Debra Baxter, *Devil Horn Crystal Brass Knuckles* (*mosh safely*), 2013. Quartz crystals, sterling silver, 5 x 4½ x 3 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

## GALLERY DISCUSSION

*Protective Ornament: Contemporary Amulets to Armor* is comprised of four categories: *Second Skin*, *On Guard*, *Attack Mode*, and *Keeping Faith*. The provided prompts will help guide the gallery discussion as students explore the exhibition. Teachers are welcome to offer additional prompts.

## PROMPTS

- Why do you think human beings across centuries have made objects of ornamentation?
- What is the difference between decorative and protective ornamentation?
- Can we determine the purpose of the piece – is it for protection, ornamentation, both or neither?
- Reflecting on materials – how has body armor changed throughout time.
- What can we learn about someone by their ornamentation – for example a wedding ring, military dog tags, or gauges?
- There is a variety of jewelry on display, how do the artists make the pieces – and are there multiple approaches to creating the pieces?
- Is there a piece in the exhibition you are drawn to – explain why?
- How do you envision jewelry, amulets, talisman, armor, etc. of the future?
- Are you wearing any ornamentation – if so what are you wearing and what are you communicating about yourself?

## VOCABULARY

**Amulet** – an ornament or small piece of jewelry thought to give protection against evil, danger, or disease.

**Armor** – the metal coverings formerly worn by soldiers or warriors to protect the body in battle.

**Chain mail** – is a type of armor consisting of small metal rings linked together in a pattern to form a mesh.

**Jewelry** – personal ornaments, such as necklaces, rings, or bracelets that are typically made from or contain jewels and precious metal.

**Talisman** – an object, typically an inscribed ring or stone that is thought to have magic powers and to bring good luck.

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## RESOURCES

National Ornamental Metal Museum: [www.metalmuseum.org/](http://www.metalmuseum.org/)

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## COVER IMAGE

Nancy Worden, *Lunar Phase Amulet*, 1997. Silver, 18k gold, coins, carnelian, found object, 29 x 2¾ x 1 inches. Courtesy of Marion Faulk. Photo credit: Rex Rystedt.