

BEAUTIFUL DISASTER

TOM BINNS REFASHIONS THE SYSTEM,
ONE ADORNMENT AT A TIME



"AMMO" COLLECTION

words | julia dinardo

FASHION

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Tossing aside all notions that jewelry design must be cookie-cutter and serious, Tom Binns and his cult following are proving that the time of "ordinary-matter-as-precious-objects d'arte" has come.

Born in Belfast, Ireland, Binns received a degree in Jewelry Design in 1981 before starting his own collection. Noted for his past collaboration with Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm MacLaren, Binns prefers to work alone, doing what he "feels" and working with what he finds. These "finds" range from diamonds to glass to vintage jewelry and "junk" items such as bent forks, zippers, and rusty keys.

His latest couture collection consists of elaborately made baubles while his new moderately priced "AMMO" collection has items for both men and women. AMMO, derived from the word "ammunition," includes motifs such as skulls, daggers, bombs, grenades, bullets, and rifles. This June, Binns won the prestigious CFDA award for his tongue-in-cheek and darkly humorous pieces that, unlike most homogeneous baubles out there, provoke more than a quaint compliment.

Who do you envision wearing your jewelry? Do you design with that person in mind, or do you let your creativity take control?

I just do what I feel. I would like cool chicks who know where it's at, that are thinking ahead, to wear my jewelry. It would be a person who would be discreet enough to wear the jewelry.

Where do you find your materials? Do you have a favorite place to search?

I use anything. A woman that I met at the flea market comes by and brings me

What would you consider your signature in regards to materials, design, or theme?

Well, a lot of people are knocking me off, but the difference between my designs and theirs is that theirs is not as refined. My signature is jewelry that says something; it has an attitude about it. It's not the value, it's the attitude. For example, the Mickey Mouse jewelry [coupled with grenades and bombs] says something about American culture. The AMMO line comments on the coming moment, the politics of the time. A dark mood paired with a fun side for the jewelry works with the politics of the times as well as the clothes, be it military inspired or whatever.

Would you consider designing in other areas? Any collaborations with other artists in the works?

I don't know what I am going to do. Something will come up and I'll go with it. I just do what I feel. I throw thoughts to the wind when creating. I am done collaborating with others! No more! But I would definitely like to do other stuff, other forms of art.

How do you think winning the CFDA award may impact your career? Are you concerned that you may receive such an incredibly high demand for your designs that it may lead to pushing your product in a very mainstream direction?

You think that this may lead me to becoming mainstream, but no. To me, my product is already mainstream since so many are already copying it. I need to just keep moving on. I can't even exploit my own designs since so many are already copying and exploiting them! I really just like doing what I do.

Who would you like to influence?

The whole industry has been influenced. There are so many [jewelry designers] that just knock off what is already out there. A lot of them don't think for themselves, they just copy. I'm trying to keep people thinking, to use their imagination. My advice is to love and enjoy what you do, and try not to do it like everyone else.

