



BACK TO BLACK

Text: BO MADESTRAND Photos: SEBASTIAN JANSSON

Jung's theory on archetypes meets the latest 3D technology in Katrin Ólína's new jewellery project. "It's fascinating to go into the digital world and come out with something that feels so ancient, familiar and unknown at the same time," she says.

– **I've wanted** to unite the occult with high technology.

That is how Icelandic designer Katrin Ólína explains her latest project *Talismans*, a collection of jewellery based on a simple basic shape that can be connected into endless combinations.

One could perhaps liken the little worm-like archetype to a molecule that Katrin Ólína weaves together into complex patterns on the computer. Katrin Ólína herself describes it as a coil with a round sphere at each end. She calls it *Primitiva*.

– Eight years ago my life changed dramatically, and following that I embarked upon an inner quest. A few years on, I had peeled my world down to a little shape, like the letter S, but to me it represented a condensed form of truth. Through the *Primitiva* shape I was able to generate a whole universe of shapes.

The project began when Katrin Ólína took part in an artistic residency programme at the Aalto Digital Design Laboratory in Helsinki. Here, she created her basic shape in a computer programme that is otherwise mainly used for game design and

architecture. The finished form is printed on a 3D printer, and then cast in bronze with a black patina by jewellery company Kalevala.

It gives the necklaces a gothic, mysterious character, says Katrin Ólína:

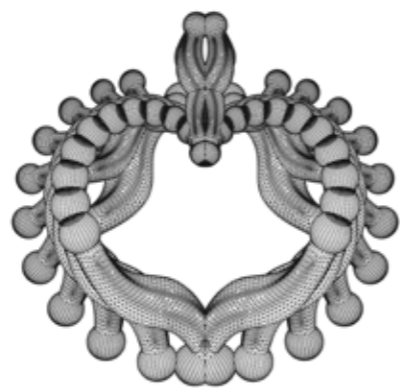
– It's fascinating to go into the digital world and come out with something that feels so ancient, familiar and unknown at the same time. The talismans remind me of the lava in Iceland, it feels as if they could come from the ocean floor, like fossils or artefacts from a shipwreck. They speak on many levels, they refer both to nature, philosophy and natural science.

The entire collection consists of 40 pieces, each produced in editions of 200. They are also presented in the book *Primitiva – Book of Talismans*, in which Ólína has created her own system of personalities, partly inspired by Carl Jung's theory on archetypes.

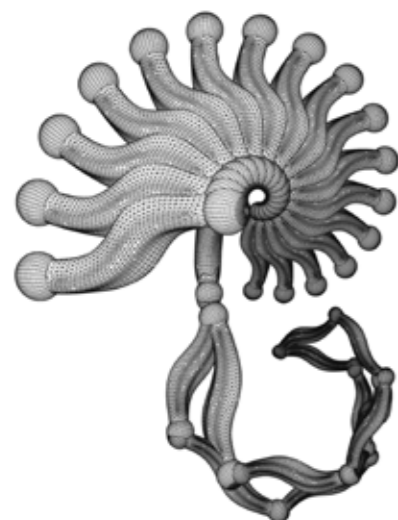
– I see life as a theater where we are all actors, we should try as many roles as we can in life. I've learned a lot from ancient wisdom,

Katrin Ólína at the Aalto Digital Design Laboratory in Helsinki.

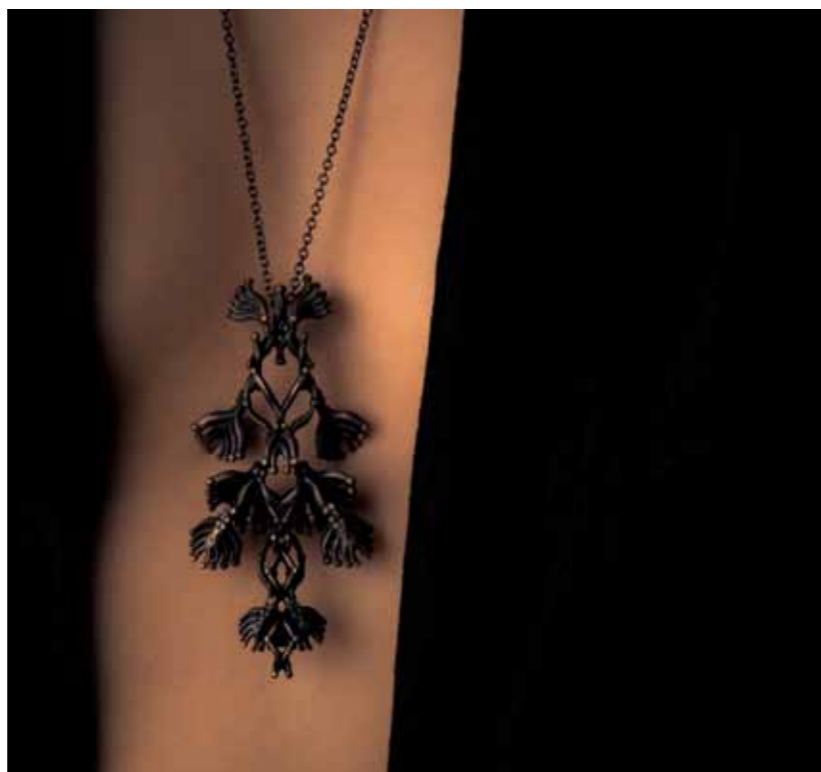




The 40 pieces represent different personality types.



Primitiva can be varied infinitely, like a fractal pattern.



The black surface relates to the lava in Iceland, it feels as if the talismans could come from the ocean floor, like fossils or shipwrecks.

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norse, greek and the Eastern masters. Also from Jung, Joseph Campbell and other theories on the archetypical, in combination with storytelling. We are each and all on our own epic journey.

Subsequently, she has created a talisman for each of these personalities. She sees them as a kind of pharmacy for spiritual needs, she says:

– They are objects for conversation and for consciousness. Everyone who has seen them creates their own associations. When I showed them in Helsinki, it was nice to see how astronomers and mathematicians related to the project. The objects speak to something deep inside of us where words have no meaning. I think you can be both logical and spiritual at the same time, the need now is to expand knowledge from the head into the body and see ourselves more holistically.

So are these talismans design or art? With this project, Katrin Ólina seems to be somewhere in between:

–This project is not about the occult as in being secretive and hidden. It's about the exact opposite, about giving form to knowledge that we all have. Nature and love are the biggest teachers about life, but artists can also be powerful reminders of things we know but tend to forget. When we see a piece of art that speaks to us, it's that reminder, that connection to something we already know but forgot about. The way I see the objects, they come from the bottom of the sea of knowledge. I'm bringing ancient wisdom into our contemporary world, because I think this wisdom is so relevant and important today. I benefit in this project from my designer background in that it urged me to be explanatory, to clarify as much as I could. ☺