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Research Project Title: Green is the new gold but why has the jewellery industry been so slow to engage in ethical and sustainable practices? Could the Art Jewellery movement play a pivotal role in turning the jewellery industry ethical and sustainable?

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National College of Art and Design

School of Visual Culture

I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed: Áine Sreenan

A photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on a light-colored, textured surface. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads 'Áine Sreenan'.

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Abstract

According to the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO), the first ‘Fairtrade’ shop opened in the US in 1958 by selling needlework crafts from Puerto Rico, ensuring safe working conditions, workers’ rights and fairer pay for the makers, (WFTO, 2023). Yet, it wasn’t until 1998 that a group called Global Witness (GW), brought international attention to the ethical and environmental conflict surrounding diamonds (GW, 2023). Twenty years later, in 2018, the Human Rights Watch Organisation (HRWO) carried out an investigation entitled, “*The Hidden Cost of Jewellery*”, into 13 leading jewellery and watch companies, looking at their efforts to prevent and address human rights abuses and environmental harm in their gold and diamond supply chains. They followed up on this report in 2020, where these same companies were scrutinised and ranked for their efforts to improve their ethical and sustainable behaviours in their gold and diamond supply chains between 2018 and 2020 (HRWO, 2020). Despite some improvements, not even one of these companies was ranked ‘excellent’ by the HRW organisation. We really must ask why? Why, in the age of ethical consumerism and sustainability, is the jewellery industry so slow to turn green? What are the barriers? And could the art jewellery movement provide a solution? This, three-chapter, research essay is an investigation into why the jewellery industry has been so slow to engage in sustainable and ethical practices and demonstrates how the art jewellery movement has a pivotal role to play in turning the jewellery industry green.

Introduction

An analysis of the Human Rights Watch organisation investigation report, *The Hidden Cost of Jewellery*, reveals that the supply chains of a number of leading global jewellery companies continue to utilise slave labour, child labour, hazardous working conditions and environmentally destructive mining methods, despite the fact that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has developed “Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas,” (HRWO, 2020). *The Hidden Cost of Jewellery* focuses on the policies and practices of 13 major jewellery brands selected to include some of the industry’s largest and best-known jewellery and watch companies and to reflect different geographic markets:

Boodles (United Kingdom), Bulgari (Italy), Cartier (France), Chopard (Switzerland), Christ (Germany), Harry Winston (United States), Kalyan (India), Pandora (Denmark), Rolex (Switzerland), Signet (United States-based parent company of Kay Jewellers and Zales in the US, Ernest Jones and H. Samuel in the UK, and other jewellers), Tanishq (India), Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri Ltd. (TBZ Ltd.) (India), and Tiffany and Co. (US).

The report informs us that “Collectively, these 13 companies are estimated to generate over \$30 billion in annual revenue,” (HRWO, 2020). My hypothesis is that jewellery’s association with luxury, status and wealth has been a hindrance to green design in the industry.

Chapter 1 provides a broad synopsis of the attraction jewellery has had for man throughout the ages. Secondary research such as information from books, articles, and websites was utilised to briefly trace the connection between man and jewellery from prehistoric to contemporary times, and drill to the root of this long-established connection between man, precious materials, luxury, and status.

Chapter 2 addresses the question whether the art jewellery movement, a subset of the global jewellery industry, could play a pivotal role in turning the industry towards more ethical and sustainable practices. The rationale behind this question stems from the fact that it was the art jewellery movement that first rejected the use of precious metals and gemstones in their creations. This chapter opens by examining the origins of this movement in 20th century America, looking at the ideologies of two of the founding pioneers: Alexander Calder (1898) and Fred Woell (1934). The chapter continues by assessing the post-World War II pioneers in central Europe, looking at the work of Dorothea Pruhl (1938) and Otto Künzli (1948) and finally, coming closer to home to discuss the work and influence of two contemporary pioneers, Scottish art jeweller and educator Jonathan Boyd, and Irish award-winning art jeweller Clodagh Molloy. I wish to acknowledge here that there have also been many influential art jewellers in the east, particularly in Japan, and in Australia, New Zealand, and other regions around the world, however, the scope of this paper was too short to research on a global scale. While the impetus behind choosing alternative materials had less to do with ethics and sustainability, and more to do with laying emphasis on the precious concepts and minds of the artists, my research found that ethical and sustainable issues do in fact play a significant role when choosing materials for art jewellers today. These findings were arrived at through secondary sources such as web-based interviews, podcasts, and books as well as primary research through an email interview with Clodagh Molloy.

Chapter 3 looks at how this precious message can be spread to the wider audience, beginning first with the education of emerging art jewellers. Examples of how some educational institutions are embedding the culture of conceptual and green design are provided here, in the hope that it may influence other institutions to follow suit. This chapter also looks beyond the maker, to the wearer and the viewer, whom, art jeweller and professor Jack Cunningham

(2007) identified as valuable participants in the life and narrative of a piece of jewellery.

Leading me to conclude that art jewellers, as the instigators of the creations, indeed have a significant role to play in shifting the value placement from material to concept thus playing a significant role in turning the jewellery industry green; as do we the wearers and we the viewers.

Chapter 1: Precious Materials

Man, and Jewellery

“Since the dawn of civilization, jewels have compensated for three of man's basic insecurities: vanity, superstition and the desire for material wealth.”

(Black J.A., 1981, p.13)

A History of Jewellery by J. Anderson Black provides us with an insightful and succinct account of the relationship between man and jewellery throughout the ages, so far. Necklaces and bracelets dating from the palaeolithic period, c25,000-18,000 BC, consisting mainly of “objects trouvés, such as shells and bones” were, in Black’s opinion, “a conscious effort towards self-adornment” (1981, p.13).



Figure 1: Californian natural gold nugget

It was the discovery of gold, c4,000-3,000 BC, however, that marked a bittersweet milestone in the history of jewellery. “Gold has always held a unique fascination for man” Black exclaims, “he has worshipped it, slaved for it and died for it” (1981, p.18). The undeniable beauty, scarcity, and extraordinary properties of this metal, seen in figure 1, malleability, ductility, and relatively low melting point, quickly made it elitist, thereby establishing the

material-based value system that continues in the fine jewellery industry today. “Goldsmiths were always the élite of the artisans, patronised exclusively by kings, priests and the nobility” (Black,1981, p.18). The prestige, function and social significance of gold continued into the late 3rd century AD where “the right to wear gold rings was reserved for certain classes of citizens such as senators and knights and not simply determined by one’s financial ability to purchase,” (Bernabei, 2011, p.2). Cue, the age of exploration coupled with the Renaissance during the 15th century, when further exotic and precious gemstones hidden in far flung corners of the earth’s crust were discovered, raided, and crafted into wearables to adorn those on the top tiers of western civilisation, compounding the catastrophic abuse to human miners and the environment that continues to this day by the jewellery industry. Since their unearthing, many jewels were believed to have spiritual or magical powers and therefore became hugely coveted and symbolic. With the discovery in the second half of the 17th century of the Mazarin cut, the diamond has become the most precious and enduring of all gemstones (Black, 1981, p.194), a fatal popularity which continues to this day; fatal for those in the mines and the environment from which they are crudely extracted.



Figure 2: Rahim, 13 yrs. old, mining in Tanzania, Dec. 2012

The HRWO's Investigation *The Hidden Cost of Jewellery* reported in 2020 that "Globally, about 90 million carats of rough diamonds and 1,600 tons of gold are mined for jewellery every year, generating over US\$300 billion in revenue" (HRWO, 2020, p18). The same report estimates that "one million—and possibly many more—children work globally in artisanal and small-scale mining, in violation of international human rights law" meaning that these children, like Rahim in Figure 2, work underground, underwater or with dangerous and hazardous substances. Human Rights Watch has documented the use of hazardous child labour in gold or diamond mining in Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, the Philippines, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Other independent investigations have documented hazardous child labour in gold mines in Burkina Faso, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Indonesia. (HRWO, 2020, p22). Conscription and forced labour in the mining industry for both children and adults was found by this investigation in many countries such as, Eritrea, Zimbabwe,

Peru, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (2020, p23/4). The environment too has been abused by these mining companies in their quest for precious materials:

Gold and diamond mining operations have sometimes caused serious environmental damage and threatened people's rights to health, water, food, and a healthy environment.³⁰ For example, large-scale industrial mines have caused dangerous pollution through the dumping of tailings (mine residue), leakages, and accidents, (p 24)

The Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century provided the first rumblings of change within the jewellery and wider crafts industry. Based on a profound unease with the industrialised world, the Arts and Crafts movement “rejected the machine-led factory system - by now the source of most affordable [jewellery] pieces - and instead focused on hand-crafting individual jewels. This process, they believed, would improve the soul of the workman as well as the end design,” (V&A, 2023). And so, a new kind of crafting was born, *studio craft*. Curator Kelly L'Ecuyer classifies studio jewellery as an offshoot of the studio craft movement, adding that it does not refer to artistic styles but rather to the circumstances in which the object is produced:

Studio jewellers are independent artists who handle their chosen materials directly to make one-of-a-kind or limited production jewellery.... The studio jeweller is both the designer and fabricator of each piece (although assistants or apprentices may help with technical tasks), and the work is created in a small, private studio, not a factory. (L'Ecuyer, 2010, p. 17).

The studio craft movement and studio jewellers carved the way for a new generation of jewellers who, according to Lisbeth den Beston, were born just before, during or just after World War II. ‘They grew up in a period of reconstruction...Almost everywhere around the globe, this new generation of jewellers was looking for alternatives to precious materials, such as perspex, stainless steel and aluminium, often combining them with precious materials and discovering the sculptural possibilities of jewellery’ (Beston, pg. 8). This was the birth of art jewellery.

Defining art jewellery

It is important to acknowledge at this point that the term art jewellery triggers more confusion than clarification. There is much discourse on the relationship between art jewellery and contemporary fine art; and whether art jewellers are craft artists, fine artists, or both. Some practitioners value concept above aesthetic form. Some challenge the notion that art jewellery must relate to the body at all. Sigurd Bronger would argue that “the work doesn’t necessarily need to be on the body.” For him, attaching a commercial or wearable constraint to the creative process curtails the freedom to create “good art” (Bronger in Gali et al, 2013, p. 018). For Stephan Heuser “concept is also the most important thing”, however, over the years it has become increasingly important to him that the pieces are wearable, “Every piece I make I would wear...If I think it’s ugly and I wouldn’t wear it, I think nobody will” (Heuser in Gali et al, pg. 048). And others value all elements in equal measure. Eun Mi Chun believes that “The idea, the concept, the aesthetic form, the material - all these aspects are important,” (Chun in Gali et al, pg. 026).

For the purposes of this essay and my investigation, I am defining art jewellery in the words of Liesbeth den Besten as “jewellery that is differentiated from commercial or precious jewellery according to the fact that it is an artistic expression, and that its value is not determined on the material it is made of,” (Besten, p. 6). It is the repudiation of commercial production by art jewellers, and their rejection of the traditional precious metals and gemstones associated with commercial and fine jewellery, that has led me to question whether the art jewellery movement could play a pivotal role in promoting a more ethical and sustainable industry. Is it possible to envisage a future where the value and prestige of

mainstream jewellery would be placed on the concept of a given piece, and the design execution of that concept, rather than the rarity of the materials it is made from?

Chapter 2: Precious Minds

Founding Pioneers

“A beautiful material is not necessarily rare or precious. It is above all a material whose natural qualities or whose adaptability to industrial processes are pleasing to the eye and to the touch and whose value derives from judicious use.” (Uniones Artists Moderne in Bernabei, 2011, p22)

This manifesto from the *Uniones Artists Moderne* laid the foundations for a paradigm shift in relation to redefining value in the world of jewellery. Gerard Sandoz, one of the group’s founding members, was passionate about what determined the value of a piece of jewellery. He wrote himself in 1929, “Personally, I consider that before everything else, one must think of line and general volume of the piece to be created” (Sandoz in Bernabei, 2011, p.22). Bernabei correctly identifies this mindset as pre-empting one of contemporary jewellery’s core values that, “the object as an entity should guide the selection of its materials rather than any canonical or economic prejudices” (2011, p.22).



Figure 3: Calder necklace, 1930, brass wire, ceramic, and cord

Alexander Calder, one of the most iconic 20th century vanguards in redefining the value of jewellery, rarely worked with precious metal or gemstones, instead preferring to use non-precious materials such as brass, wire, pieces of broken glass, stones or crockery, his contribution to what he termed the “devaluation of old aesthetic axioms,” as recalled by his grandson, Alexander S.C. Rower, (2007, p 13). Calder’s use of found objects was first employed, according to Rower, in 1930, with the necklace pictured in Figure 3 above for his mother’s 64th birthday, fashioned from small pieces of ancient pottery, caging each piece in brass wire, while holidaying in Corsica. In a letter to his mother, Calder wrote, "I have been making wire jewellery — and think I'll really do something with it, eventually" (Rower, 2007, p13). And he certainly did. Toni Greenbaum, writing for *Art Jewellery Forum*, informs

us that Calder created over 2000 unique pieces of jewellery worn and loved by the rich and famous such as Peggy Guggenheim, Mary Rockerfeller and Angelica Heuston to name a few (Greenbaum, 2014). Making jewellery was a way of life for Calder according to collector and gallery owner, Louisa Guinness. She views Calder as “the greatest artists’ jeweller...He was passionate about his jewellery, he made the pieces himself, and he did it because he loved it.” She informs us how he was never without wire and a set of pliers in his pockets. Later, he often made jewellery for friends and clients within his artistic circle (Guinness, 2023). What is hugely significant about Calder’s work in relation to my research is that in the mid 20th century he was challenging the status quo that attached and equated value predominantly to the materials used rather than the form; a value system that continues to dominate the fine jewellery industry today, and is a barrier to transforming the industry into an ethical and sustainable one. Rower explains that Calder presented his jewellery as “an invitation to join him in eschewing the facile and pretentious,” (2007, p.17), and that he left the world “A body of iconic adornments combining craft, design, humanism, and sculpture that created an enduring taste for modern jewellery and continues to resonate with studio jewellers today” (2007, p.145), which validates Bernabei’s opinion that, “the value of jewellery could derive from the actions of a sensitive maker, irrespective of any intrinsic material worth” (2011, p.22).

While we look back in awe at the founding pioneers, their innovations were more often greeted with disdain by their own societies. Abandoning precious metals and gemstones was a bold move. In the 2018 documentary *J. Fred Woell: An American Vision*, Woell explains how when he was in Grad school he was working more with “the essence of the design, the shape” and his instructor told him if he put a diamond or a stone in his work “he could enhance the value of it by a thousand percent” (Woell, 2018) thus, turning Woell off ever using precious materials in his work. The art galleries of New York are also famously quoted

as telling Woell to “use gold or forget it”, but he felt so strongly that material should not determine a work’s value, that this triggered him to create what he termed “anti-jewellery.” (SAAM, 2023)



Figure 4: Fred Woell, *Come Alive! You're in the Pepsi Generation*, 1966, pin

Woell’s iconic piece *Come Alive! You’re in the Pepsi Generation* (Figure 4), now in the collection of the Smithsonian’s Renwick Gallery, is described by Robert Shetterly in the documentary as “subversive” because, as Rob says, “it’s really a medal given for imperialism that suggests the mask of America, all smiles and being young and being happy.” The use of found objects alone is a subversive act, not a precious material in sight. Glenn Adamson, former director of the Museum of Art and Design, explains to us in the film:

that what Fred did with jewellery was to make it completely horizontal using found objects such as soda bottle tops and bullet shells...making him an artist of supreme

democratic spirit...It makes jewellery into a politically progressive medium when of course that's precisely the thing that it wasn't, (Adamson, 2018).

Eleanor Moty correctly points out that Fred Woell was recycling, upcycling, and creating for the circular economy long before sustainability was 'invented', announcing in her 2012 tribute speech to him that "Today we make jewellery and wearable art from any material that we choose but it was Fred Woell who in the 1960s broke the rules and paved the way for us. Fred Woell pioneered the concept of using found objects and cast offs-and was into recycling long before that term was part of our vocabulary," (Moty, 2015).

Post-World War II Pioneers

As identified earlier by den Beston, people born just before, during or just after World War II grew up in a period of reconstruction. There was extremely limited access to precious metals and jewels. And as is often the case with limitations, innovation was born. This period in the history of jewellery saw an introduction of a myriad of new, non-precious materials.

Although the impetus for using these materials was not the ethical or environmental issues we have today with the mining of precious materials, the collective rejection of traditional precious metals and gemstones associated with commercial and fine jewellery, in my opinion, places the art jewellery movement in a pivotal position to promote a more sustainable and ethical jewellery industry.

In his introduction to an interview with Dorothea Pruhl for *Art Jewellery Forum*, Benjamin Lignel claims it is difficult to overstate the influence of Dorothea Pruhl on the field of contemporary jewellery or simply trace its bounds (Fischer, 2014). Born in 1937 Germany, and coming of age in the period of constructivism, Pruhl's jewellery is informed by her artistic expression rather than assemblages of precious materials that

adorn the body. “It is my lifelong attempt,” she tells interviewer and fellow jewellery artist, Benedikt Fischer, “to make jewellery and not lose my artistic aims... I have never abandoned that challenge, and I want my works to be applied works of art. Because that gives things a meaning”. She continues to explain that she does not wish to create for an informed clientele, that her aim is always to create beauty that is accessible to many. The materiality of jewellery is very important to her, “It also has to do with material, craftsmanship, and how a thing feels in the hand when you close your eyes” (Pruhl, in Fischer, 2014).



Figure 5: Dorothea Pruhl, Habicht (Hawk), necklace, wood

When Susan Cummins, Board Chair of AJF was asked to talk about her favourite piece of jewellery, she had a hard time choosing which of the eighth Dorothea Pruhl pieces to choose.

Hawk necklace (Figure 5) won out. She says of the piece:

Picking up the necklace and touching it produces the deep sound of the wood clanking together. The pieces twist and make themselves difficult to place around your neck, but once the necklace is in place the connection to nature in all its awkwardness is immediate and the weight of the wings is felt. I love the roughness of the wood. It represents real nature, not beautified nature to me. It seems to embody a spirit – a life (Cummins, 2012).

Imagine a world where we all valued jewellery in this manner, a personal, emotional connection informed by all our senses, including our sense of ethics.

A peer of Pruhl's, Swiss born, Otto Künzli, is also regarded as one of the most influential founders of what is classified as Art Jewellery. In her essay *All or Nothing in Otto Künzli: The Book*, Ellen Zilioli explains how Künzli established “new parameters...a paradigm switch and value displacement” in relation to the art form of jewellery. She writes how his works are ‘Singular and outstanding...consolidated by consistent refusal to pander to notions of good taste, commercial levelling and watering down the ideas for which it is a vehicle’ (2013, p16).



Figure 6: Gold Makes Blind, Künzli, 1980

His piece, *Gold Makes Blind* (Figure 6), illustrates this succinctly. In this iconic bracelet, made in 1980, Künzli encased a gold ball in black latex as an iconic work of art, the gold ball invisible to the world. “Gold”, Künzli exclaimed, “always comes out of darkness, out of stone, the mountain, while at the same time representing light.” (Künzli in Ilse-Neuman, 2014, p.22). This work symbolises the bittersweet discovery of gold, this metal man has coveted so much he has died for it or let others die for it. Künzli’s bracelet, Ilse-Neuman states, challenges the jewellery value system that depends on precious metals (2014, p.22). Not only did Künzli “push the existential question of what jewellery is across established boundaries” for himself (Zilioli in Künzli, 2013, p.16), but he also instilled the importance of

questioning the status quo in his students during his time as teacher and director in the Academy of Fine Arts Munich 1991-2014. Bronger claims that one of the most significant events in contemporary art jewellery is when Otto Kunzli became professor at the art academy in Munich, “As a teacher he manages to incite the students to think for themselves and not just be copyists” (Bronger in Gali et al, p. 018-023).

In her forward to Künzli’s monograph, Hufnagl’s words perhaps sum up precisely why he was, and still is regarded by many as the godfather of art jewellery. ‘His works do not adorn. But they are beautiful. They are wearable but they make a statement’ (Hufnagl in Künzli, 2013, p 16).

Contemporary Pioneers

And so, since the founding pioneers of the early 20th century there has been what Reinhold Ziegler calls an ongoing process of “emancipation” in the world of jewellery beginning with jewellery artists liberating themselves from traditional materials such as gold and silver, “a revolution” he says, “ that prepared the ground for what happened in the 1980s when jewellery artists began imbuing their works with a conceptual content that transcended the traditions of jewellery” (Ziegler in Gali et al, p 038-042). Art jewellery has developed as a means of subversion in relation to the value of art and elevating the value of idea, the art of idea. In addition to these values, we are now also seeing a shift into the socio-political and socio-cultural fields in many of the concepts behind contemporary jewellery artists’ works.

Sophie Burns discusses the idea of art jewellery being a vessel for communication with Jonathan Boyd who describes his jewellery as ‘*a socio-political art form*’ in the BAJ Podcast *Narrative Jewellery with Jonathan Boyd*. Boyd, a conceptual and narrative jewellery and

object artist and Head of Applied Art at the Royal College of Art London, studied under Jack Cunningham in the Glasgow School of Art in 2007/8 when Cunningham was undertaking a research PHD in Narrative Jewellery. Boyd recalls the impact the show ‘Maker-Wearer-Viewer’, which formed a large part of Cunningham’s PhD Research, had on him. It was here that Boyd saw the work of Hans Stofer and Mah Rana for the first time, where he met the likes of Otto Künzli, who came in-person to the show. The relationship Cunningham was highlighting between the maker, wearer, and viewer resonated deeply with Boyd who describes jewellery as “an act, a living with [an object], a being with” which is what differentiates jewellery making from other forms of art that reside in museums and galleries. For Boyd, Jewellery is “another party present in a dialogue, because of that it is hard for it not to be a socio-political tool”. He talks about how we wear things because they express parts of our thinking. Wearables, he feels, can often express thoughts that we can’t even articulate. (Boyd, 2022, 7:05-10:00). As a practice-led researcher, materials play an important role for Boyd. He, too, is of the opinion that we are in a time where direct consideration needs to be given to the materials used, expressing a keen passion for “how we engage with the multiplicities of possibilities that materials offer”. It is through working with materials, he feels, “we can find new ethical, sustainable approaches to working in a world where we need to have creative thought processes”. He believes we are at a junction where that creativity is essential in the battle against climate change (Boyd, 2022, 46:45).



Figure 7: Boyd, *The M8 Intersection at Charing Cross as a Metaphor for my Heartbeat*, 2016

The body of work, *The M8 Intersection at Charing Cross as a Metaphor for my Heartbeat* (Figure 7), demonstrates Boyd's reflective use of materials and indeed the materiality of his works. It is the culmination of a year spent researching and exploring the way language is used in urban settings. His artist statement on the work describes it as "a tool for social/cultural identity and toponymic reflection. The whole work consists of multiple overlapping and weaving narratives about our connection to place and how it influences and changes us". Using the act of walking as a meditative and reflective act, "like the flaneur ", he claims to record the unseen, the overlooked. The artefact itself is made from the cast chain, silver, orange paint, marbled paper, and leather (Boyd, 2023).

Clodagh Molloy is another contemporary art jeweller who is harnessing the power of jewellery to evoke socio-cultural conversation. She creates wearable narrative sculptures. Most recently, her ongoing body of work entitled *Shared Stories*, contains oversized chains, dog tags and necklaces inspired by individual stories of the entrapment in, and destruction of ill mental health. This work goes beyond the artist. She is essentially working within the socially engaged field of practice by inviting the public to share their personal stories with her through her website and social media. Where permission has been given to her, words from the stories are imbued into the pieces. Molloy describes her work as “an action against the prejudice and discrimination traditionally associated around the subject. I want to create an open and non-judgemental dialogue of education and understanding. The jewellery I am creating from stories shared with me can serve as a starting point for a conversation about its meaning and its context within society” (Molloy, 2023a).



Figure 8: Molloy, *Sound of Hope*

In relation to the question of whether art jewellers have a role to play in turning the industry green she says “I do believe I have a part to play in the preservation of my environment. When I use precious metals, I remelt old gold and silver whenever possible, and I use green gold and silver whenever possible” (Molloy, 2023b). In *The Sound of Hope* pearl neckpiece, in *The IVF Journey* series (Figure 8), she inserted silica beads to give the sound of time moving in. Molloy collected the silica bags that were being thrown away for the past four years from one small jewellery supplier’s industry waste. These deeply personal accounts are translated into body adornment using sensitively chosen materials. Materials which are often from, or relating to, geological places of abuse or trauma. In Figure 9 below, Molloy explained to me how she took impressions from the walls of St. Brendan’s psychiatric hospital at Grangegorman and etched them into copper, “copper gave the dark and foreboding tone that I wanted to portray within the experiences that were being shared”. Her use of materials is subtle yet evocative, familiar yet unusual in their context, universal yet intensely intimate. Materials which are ethical and sustainable.



Figure 9: Molloy, *Oval Grangegorman Brooch*, copper, enamel, steel pin

“I am continuously collecting stories and conversations, resulting in a continuing evolution of my design practice. The shared story, their fight. My goal is to give examples to others, showing that they are not alone and that they can come through tough times. This is important,” (Molloy, 2023a).

Chapter 3: Precious Message

“We must remember that one determined person can make a significant difference, and that a small group of determined people can change the course of history.”

- Sonia Johnson

Jonathan Boyd and Clodagh Molly are prime examples of contemporary art jewellers making a significant difference. Education is the key to continuing to unleash small groups of future generations of art jewellers determined to grow a movement interested in redefining the value of jewellery by challenging the traditional values bestowed on materials and challenging the unethical and unsustainable methods used in appropriating such materials. Art and Design colleges have traditionally placed high value on creative and critical thinking through a variety of design theories: critical, fictional, speculative, and discursive design, to name just a few. What all these schools of design have in common is that they teach design as a thought catalyst, valuing the concept as much as the outcome. Providing authentic opportunities to put these theories into practice, however, requires deeper curriculum engineering. An innovative example of an authentic opportunity comes from the Glasgow School of Art (GSA) who, in April 2021, launched its *Bus Stop Jewellery Conversations* project, the aim of which is to use jewellery to initiate discussions at the bus stop or other public domains. Speaking to Sam Lewis in an article for *Professional Jeweller*, Anna Gordon, head of silversmithing and jewellery at the GSA, explains that “Through the Bus Stop Jewellery Conversations project we want to explore contemporary jewellery as a stimulus for social interaction...Working with contemporary jewellers and students we will look at new ways to engage people with a wide range of important social and environmental themes” (Lewis, 2021). Corinne Julius, a visual arts journalist, critic and curator, who was central to the idea

behind the project explains where the conception of the project came from “Sitting at a bus stop I have had many fascinating conversations which only came about because of a particular piece of jewellery that I was wearing...The wonderful thing about contemporary jewellery is how it can be the catalyst for conversations with so many different people" (Lewis, 2021) . In a normal academic year, a project like this would be commendable, the fact that it was undertaken during Covid-19 pandemic social restrictions is a prodigious feat.

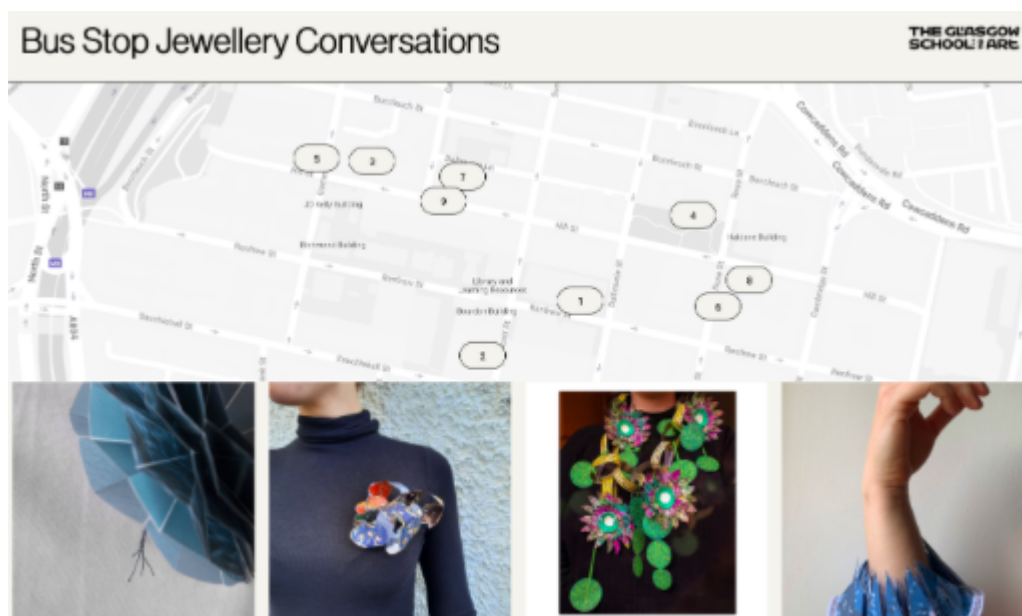


Figure 10: Bus Stop Jewellery Conversations, GSA, Location 6, CWIN

A website dedicated to the project explains how students met residents and members of the Garnethill community online. They discussed areas in the community that bore special interest or meaning. The students designed and created paper jewellery relating to these significant locations based on these conversations which were posted to the residents (Figure 10). The students also designed and created a personal piece. “The project is designed to bring the community together through the medium of contemporary jewellery and conversations" (GSA, 2021). The influence of an experience like this for design students, has

depth and breadth that cannot be achieved in the lecture hall or library. It would forever imprint the power of idea on its participants. Hopefully other colleges will follow suit.

The next vital step for art and design educational institutions is to place high value on the choices of materials used to create outcomes, not of course canonical or economic value but, in equal balance, the connection value to the concept of the piece and ethical and sustainable value of the materials. Scotland, again, are leading the pack in this regard. The Scottish Goldsmiths Trust, in conjunction with industry professionals advocating for more ethical and sustainable practices, including Ute Decker, Dr Peter Oakley, Dr Greg Valerio MBE, and Fair Luxury, developed an ethical making pledge which they describe as:

a collaborative and community-based initiative for jewellery and silversmithing educational institutions to embed practical and theoretical learning about ethical making across the UK to prepare the next generation of makers (ethical making, 2023).

In March 2018 this pledge was signed by the department heads from all seven of the art colleges in Scotland offering jewellery courses (figure 11). This is the profundity of awareness and commitment that is required by educational institutions, large organisations, and governments to shift the tide of value placement in the jewellery industry. When other countries support their art and design colleges to join this pledge, mountains could move.



Figure 11: Ethical Making Pledge, Scotland

Beyond the emerging makers, we must also educate the emerging consumers. Lisa Walker speaks of elevating jewellery artists to “compete in the market with the best fine artists...to see brilliant jewellery exhibitions in the great museum and gallery spaces...amazing exhibitions in amazing places...to broaden and educate our audience,” (Gali et al, 2013, p. 035). Thankfully this has begun. Platforms such as klimt02.net, founded in 2004 and art jewellery forum.org, founded in 1997 advocate for the field of art jewellery and provide members with access to information, opportunities and making connections with galleries and other makers. Galleries solely dedicated to showcasing art jewellery have blossomed since the first art jewellery galleries were founded in the 1960s. Galerie Sieraad was the first gallery to open in 1969 in the Netherlands which was solely dedicated to modern jewellery, with eighty galleries now listed between klimt02 and jewellery forum.org. Many influential collectives and organisations have also garnered local and global traction, educating through workshops, talks, events, and production. EthicalMaking.Org was founded in 2017 by the legendary Ute Decker “to bring together information about ethical making and to provide clear and practical ways for makers to engage with ethical making”, providing new designers with information, education opportunities and suppliers of sustainable and conflict free materials.

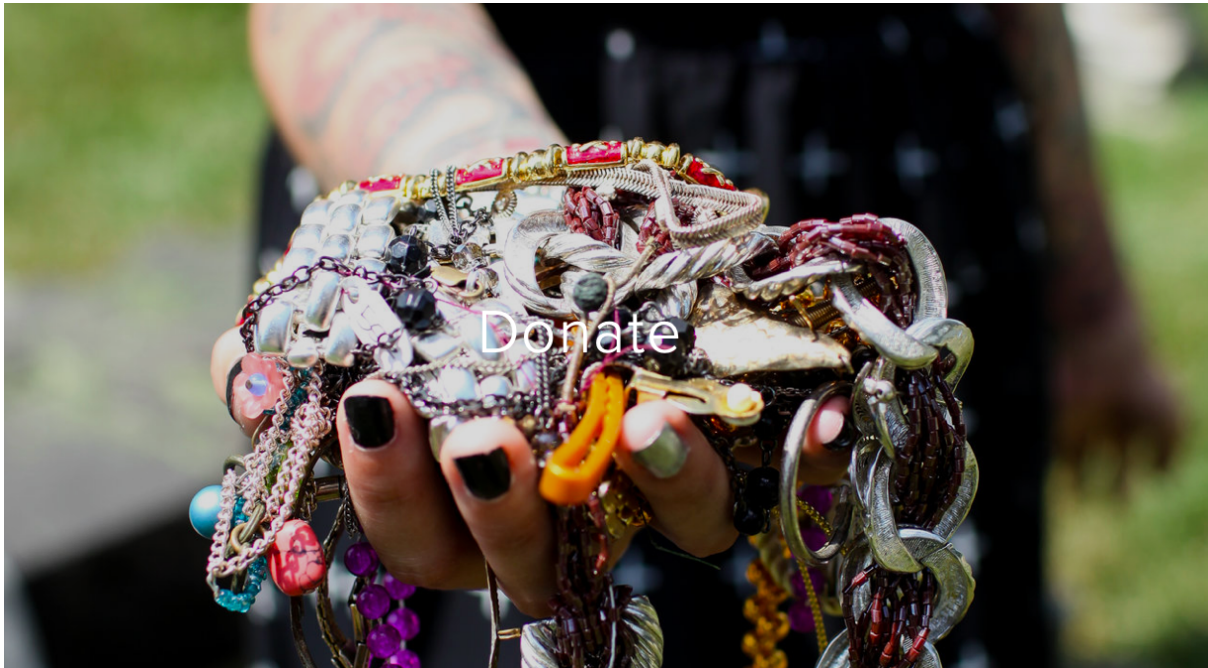


Figure 12: Radical Jewellery Makeover donation campaign

The Radical Jewellery Makeover (RJM) is another such example of a collective on a mission to educate the public, be they the next generation of designers or buyers. Posing pertinent questions such as ‘is there really a need for newly mined material?’ The brainchild of Christina Miller and Susie Ganch, the mission for RJM is to raise “awareness of the connection between mining, metalsmithing, activism, collaboration, and art. It involves volunteer "miners," "smelters," "refiners," jewellers, and metalsmiths working together to create a new and transparent supply chain”. The project calls for donations of unwanted jewellery, both costume and fine jewellery (figure 12), but not only the jewellery; they want to hear your connection to the pieces, your narrative. The donations are then reworked, reformed, recrafted into new pieces which are resold. “Running RJM lays bare the social and environmental destruction of mining, inspiring artists to shift their practices towards sustainable solutions, and asking communities to radically alter their habits of consumption” (RJM, 2023).

A further lifeline of an organisation for the art jewellery industry in the British Isles is the Association for Contemporary Jewellery (ACJ), established in May 1997. Its mission is “to promote greater understanding of contemporary jewellery, support jewellers’ creative and professional development and develop audiences for this lively field of contemporary craft and design (ACJ, 2023). Although it is UK founded and based, it reaches out to audiences beyond its shores to carry out this mission of connecting, educating, and elevating the art jewellery movement. It is interesting to note that they recently hosted a conference to celebrate 25 years in existence, entitled *Beyond Silver*. Speaking to Sophie Burns, of the British Academy of Jewellery Podcast (ACJ, 2022), Chair of the Association for Contemporary Jewellery, Terry Hunt, expands on the significance and meaning of the title of the conference, *Beyond Silver*. The ACJ, he explains:

has always been about something more than the traditional aspect of jewellery. We believe that contemporary jewellery should be much more than just that obvious traditional concept jewellery in terms of materials and use of materials. (ACJ, 2022)

A clever play on words the title, Hunt tells us, simultaneously asks the questions: what lies ahead after the ACJ Silver Jubilee? Where next for contemporary Jewellery and the ACJ? What do we want from Contemporary Jewellery and the ACJ for the next 25 years? Later in the podcast director of the ACJ, Linda Lambert, raises the idea that “The materials used are reflecting current concerns about the climate and what method that might be well tried is using too much of our natural resources and we should be thinking of something else.” (ACJ, 2022).

It is becoming clear then, that when the politics of educational systems turn to valuing the concepts, questioning the ethics of materials, and engaging the students in spreading the precious message, the wheels are beginning to turn green. It is

becoming clear also, when the purveyors of the art jewellery industry, through galleries, organisations and platforms are of the opinion that it has a humane and environmental responsibility to choose ethically and sustainably sourced materials, that the wheels are beginning to turn green.

Conclusion

Man's deep-rooted connection to body adornment stemming from prehistoric times, evolved into a language of its own with the discovery of precious metals and gemstones. A language of symbols denoting status, wealth, and power; a language of beauty and adoration. But also, a language of division and destruction. We cannot evade the mirror Black (1981) has held up, and must acknowledge our 'vanity, insecurities and desire for wealth,' have been appeased, in part, with gold and jewels. This deep-rooted association between precious materials, love and luxury has hindered the transformation of the jewellery industry into an ethical and sustainable one.

Does the art jewellery movement then have a role to play in creating a more ethical and sustainable jewellery industry? Yes. And it has predominantly done so since its conception, even if it was indirectly or accidental through its rejection of precious materials. Does the contemporary art jewellery movement acknowledge its role in creating a more ethical and sustainable jewellery industry? Yes. And more and more contemporary art jewellers are employing ethically and sustainably sourced materials to express their concepts and precious minds. More and more educational institutions are modelling this responsibility by signing the likes of the *Ethical Makers Pledge* and embedding the importance of material choices in project work. Additionally, more and more art jewellery organisations are spreading the precious message to educate the current and emerging consumers through galleries, exhibitions, conferences, and social media platforms.

"Art jewellery has been since its conception a place to explore issues that are not always palatable to the mainstream jewellery market. This is where the art form has its strength, in the education of the audience" (Molloy, 2023b), and herein lies the key; we must let go of our

attraction to gold and jewels, even if the idea is not initially palatable. We must let go of our unethical use of child labour and slave labour to feed our desire for gold and jewels. We must let go of unsustainable and environmentally destructive mining methods to feed our desire for gold and jewels. We must be educated makers, wearers, and viewers at the bus stop, at the party, at any public space; we all have a role to play to preserve our precious planet.

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- Figure 1 Californian natural gold nugget
<https://www.estatesconsignments.com/product/californian-natural-gold-nugget-13-3-grams-tested-22k/>
- Figure 2 Rahim, 13 yrs. old, mining in Tanzania, Dec. 2012 © 2013 Justin Purefoy for Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/02/08/hidden-cost-jewelry/human-rights-supply-chains-and-responsibility-jewelry>

Figure 3 Calder necklace, 1930, Brass wire, ceramic and cord

<https://calder.org/works/jewelry/necklace-1930/>

Figure 4 Fred Woell, J. Fred Woell, Come Alive You're in the Pepsi Generation, 1966, pin, copper, sterling silver, brass, found objects, photo, lens, paint, 101.6 x 101.6 x 6.4 mm, collection of the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, photo: artist

Figure 5 Dorothea Pruhl, Hawk necklace, wood,
<https://artjewelryforum.org/articles/sculptural-yet-wearable-0/>

Figure 6 Gold Makes Blind <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/495385>

Figure 7 Boyd, The M8 Intersection at Charing Cross as a Metaphor for my Heartbeat, 2016 <https://jonathanmathewboyd.wixsite.com/website-1/m8>

Figure 8 Molloy, Sound of Hope <https://klimt02.net/jewellers/clodagh-molloy>

Figure 10 Molloy, Oval Grangegorman Brooch, copper, enamel, steel pin
<https://klimt02.net/jewellers/clodagh-molloy>

Figure 11 Bus Stop Jewellery Conversations, GSA, Location 6, CWIN
<https://busstop.jewelleryconversations.com>

Figure 12 Ethical Making Pledge, Scotland <https://ethicalmaking.org/pledge>

Figure 13 Radical Jewellery Makeover donation campaign
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