

# Ethical Metalsmiths

Connecting People with Responsibly Sourced Materials

## Re: Source

Newsletter No. 4

December 2009

Why don't we don't publish a list of ethical suppliers? After all, we have used the tagline "connecting people with responsibly sourced materials." It is a good question.

Despite claims you may see, right now there is no way to know if precious metals, gemstones or diamonds are responsibly mined or if they meet fair trade standards. We will publish a list, but only when responsible mining practices can be independently certified and supply chain sources can be verified.

There is progress, but it takes time for mining interests, environmental watchdogs, governments, fair trade and humanitarian organizations to work out real solutions to complex mining issues. Countless organizations all over the world are working to protect people, communities and the environment, promote fair trade and defend human rights.



Our approach is to activate people who make and wear jewelry to demand and support real change that leads to responsible mining and supply chain transparency. We believe that skilled artisans, independent designers and makers, small businesses, educators, jewelry students and people like you who appreciate the value of hand-made jewelry can make a real difference. Our new tagline is "Jewelers for social and environmental responsibility." Lets all demand ethical sources and let the mining industry know there is a market waiting for change.

It is also reasonable to ask about our new website. Where is the virtual catalog for Radical Jewelry Makeover, San Francisco? The new searchable directory of studio jewelers and metalsmiths? The new material sourcing information? The comprehensive information library? What happened? Our answer is that it has taken much, much longer than we anticipated. At the moment we are beta testing and learning how to operate the dashboard of

our new content managed system. We will let you know when it is activated and thank you for your patience.

We are beginning our sixth year as Ethical Metalsmiths! Who supports us? [EARTHWORKS](#) provides us with advice (when we ask for it) and technical support. As our fiscal sponsors, they manage our funds, which enables us to operate as a not-profit, 501c3. We have received grants for general support from the [Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund](#) and a private foundation, and a grant from the [Rotasa Foundation](#) for an online catalog for Radical Jewelry Makeover, San Francisco. Other funds are raised by Radical Jewelry Makeover volunteer jewelers and donors, and **we welcome contributions from jewelers like you**. We thank all of you who have made a donation this year.

If you share our vision of a world in which jewelry can be made from responsibly sourced materials, please help us continue our work with an end-of-year donation. We aren't sending fundraising letters made from trees. We won't be calling you at dinnertime. We have made it convenient and easy to **donate online**, on our secure server. All donations, large and small will be put to good use and will be deeply appreciated. (Please note, your donation will be appear as "Democracy in Action" on your credit card statement.)

Susan Kingsley  
Christina Miller  
Co-founders, Ethical Metalsmiths

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## **Blood Gold**

Years ago, the jewelry industry banned the trafficking in so-called blood diamonds, but the same hasn't happened with gold. More than five million people have died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the deadliest war since World War II. CBS News program "60 Minutes" reported a campaign of rape and murder being funded largely by gold. It is mined in communities controlled by warlords and smuggled out of DRC, sold on the open market and exported to the world. Watch Scott Pelley's report, [Congo's Gold](#).

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## **The Real Cost of a Gold Ring**



David de Rothschild, host of Eco Trip, touring northeastern Nevada.

Eco Trip: The Real Cost of Living is an original TV series exploring the origins and environmental impact of products such as cell phones, cotton T-shirts and bottled water. It follows their life cycles from production to disposal, revealing the environmental, social and health effects along the way. The program is hosted by eco-adventurer David de Rothschild. For a reminder of why we are doing what we do, check out [ECO TRIP-103 Gold Ring](#).

### 1872 US Mining Reform

What do Levis, light bulbs, telephones, radios, penicillin, automobiles, television and basketball have in common? The same thing as 350-ton ore trucks, gigantic open pit mines, cyanide leaching, 500,000 abandoned mines and women's suffrage. None of these existed in 1872 when the General Mining Law was written. A lot has changed in 137 years!



The Carlin Gold trend in northeastern Nevada is one of the world's richest gold mining districts. It is about 5 miles wide and 40 miles long. Photo by Christina Miller

The General Mining Law of 1872 was written to promote mining and development in the west. The old law gives mining priority status to every other use of public lands. Even today, it is nearly impossible to prohibit or restrict mining, even if it threatens national parks, as [uranium mining threatens the Grand Canyon](#) today, or if it lays to waste lands sacred to Native Americans, as it is doing right now on [Mt. Tenabo](#). The old law also gives individuals and corporations, even foreign-owned corporations, the right to mine on public lands without paying any royalties. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that every year, \$1 billion of hardrock minerals are mined on public land, for free!

In January, Congressman Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) reintroduced legislation similar to the mining reform bill that passed in the House in 2007. In April, Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) introduced the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2009. Legislative action is very likely to take place in 2010.

**"There is a new administration in town, and we do want to get the 1872 mining law reformed. We are committed to that and are committed to deploying significant resources from the Department of the Interior to get this done." -- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, July 2009**

## Making Futures



Susan Kingsley, Sarah Zentz, Christina Miller and Dana Richardson at Jewelry Study at the Museum of Art and Design in New York on September 12, 2009.

In the fall, Ethical Metalsmiths took part in a daylong museum event focused on jewelry and two professional conferences that focused on materials and the future sustainability of crafts.

The museum event was [Jewelry Study Day](#) at the Museum of Art and Design in New York City. Ethical Metalsmiths took part in a panel discussion of jewelry makers about the role materials play in their work and its relationship to their personal concerns about social and environmental responsibility, global warming and sustainability. The program also featured Ethical Metalsmiths' screening the recently completed DVD, *Radical Jewelry Makeover: a traveling community mining and recycling project*.

Susan presented a paper about Ethical Metalsmiths at the conference, *Making Futures: The crafts in the context of emerging global sustainability agendas*. The conference took place in Plymouth, England. An international audience of academics, educators, artists, curators, entrepreneurs and representatives of arts organizations attended the conference. Its purpose was to improve understanding of the ways in which crafts and aesthetics intersect with the social, economic and political realities related to environmental and sustainability issues. The conference organizers plan to make papers available in an [open-access archive](#).

Ethical Metalsmiths attended the American Crafts Council conference, *Creating a New Craft Culture*, which took place in Minneapolis. Ethical Metalsmiths work and Radical Jewelry Makeover were featured in one of the lectures, titled *New Models of the Marketplace: Re-Crafting Capitalism from the Ground Up*. Lydia Matthews,



(professor of visual culture at Parsons) focused her talk on creative practice interactions with global economies and local cultures. She spoke extensively about Ethical Metalsmiths as one of seven projects from around the world that create multiple forms of capital and awareness. Read about the lecture on [Rubi McGrory's Blog](#). Scroll down to ACC Conference: Lydia Matthews (Thank you Rubi, artist/chef and excellent note-taker.)

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Morning tea and conversation at the Making Futures Conference, Mount Edgcombe estate on the River Tamar opposite the City of Plymouth, Devon, England.

## Radical Jewelry Makeover

The most recent Radical Jewelry Makeover took place last summer at the Penland School of Arts and Crafts in Penland, North Carolina. The two-week session enabled us (project directors Christina Miller and Susie Ganch) to provide participants with comprehensive information about mining issues. We also covered how to process donations and demonstrated useful techniques for working with recycled materials. Attendees, from beginners to advanced created surprising work, which we exhibited and sold at the end of the session. Additional work from Penland will be for sale on our new website.



Radical Jewelry Makeover exhibition and sale at Penland, July 2009.

Each time we hold a Radical Jewelry Makeover we are overwhelmed by the quantity of jewelry donated to the project. Our localized donation drives yield, on average, one pound of jewelry per household, totaling approximately 100 pounds of jewelry for each project.

If we received a jewelry donation from every household in the US, we would find ourselves with a waste pile of discarded jewelry weighing 52.7 tons!

A small percentage of the donated jewelry is gold, silver or other precious metals. These metals are 100% recyclable and jewelers can, as they have for thousands of years, melt it down to make new jewelry. Most precious jewelry is designed with that in mind.



Gabriel Craig and Kaitlyn Evans assessing jewelry donated for Radical Jewelry Makeover at Penland, North Carolina in June, 2009.

The majority of the donations are non-precious and were mass produced for the fashion industry. Mined materials include copper, lead, zinc, tin, nickel, cadmium, magnesium, aluminum and iron. Manufactured materials include plastics, glass, synthetic stones, adhesives, dyes, paint and metallic coatings.

Costume jewelry is made to be fashionable and disposable and is not expected to be recycled. Thrift shops may recycle it as jewelry, extending its life, but the materials are not recovered or re-used.

That is, until Radical Jewelry Makeover. Costume jewelry is disassembled and the parts reused. Precious metals are melted down and recycled.



Brooch by Stephanie Voegle made for Radical Jewelry Makeover at Penland, 2009.

The project is not, however, "radical" solely because materials are recycled. Jewelry is more than the sum of its materials. Radical Jewelry Makeover is radical because it creates an alternative and transparent supply chain (of jewelry donors) and an alternative process of making (in collaborative workshops with jewelers donating their time and skill). The resulting original, one-of-a-kind jewelry is then sold (with the donor's receiving a discount). Profits help Ethical Metalsmiths carry on, and the radicalness of the makeover is revealed both in the process and creative solutions manifested in the jewelry.

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### Radical Jewelry Makeover DVD

Video artists Dana Richardson and Sarah Zentz followed the project for the two-week class and produced a 12-minute film. It features interviews with artists, donors and jewelry from this and previous makeovers. Radical Jewelry Makeover: a traveling community mining and recycling project is [available for purchase](#). The price is \$15, which includes shipping.



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### News

**Exhibition:**

"In a world of diminishing natural resources and trillion dollar debts, when notions of sustainability are increasingly discussed and put into motion, ideas of luxury, consumption and excess deserve renewed examination." Ethical Metalsmiths will take part in *Adornment and Excess: Jewelry in the 21st Century*, an exhibition curated by Lena Vigna at the [Miami University Art Museum](#) in Oxford, Ohio. It will take place January 21 through July 10, 2010. The materiality of jewelry as a product of mining will be visualized as a stream of recycled content and jewelry produced in a Radical Jewelry Makeover.

**Visiting Artist:**

Christina Miller was a visiting artist in October at the University of North Texas in Denton, where she spoke about mining issues and her work with Ethical Metalsmiths. She also taught a workshop in which students learned Radical Jewelry Makeover techniques for designing jewelry with recycled content.



C is for Cow necklace by University of North Texas professor Harlan Butt.



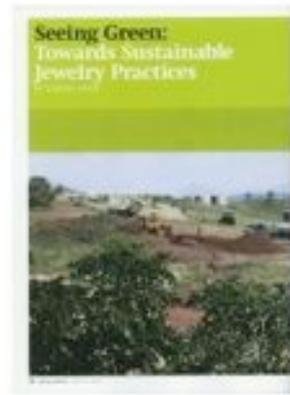
Necklace by University of North Texas graduate student Deanna Ooley.

Radical Jewelry Makeover was reported in **Metalsmith** (Volume 29, No. 2, pages 20-21), published by the [Society of North American Goldsmiths](#). *Radical Jewelry Makeover: Craftily slaying the Goliath of gold*. [Download pdf](#)

Radical Jewelry Makeover was also reported in the online version of **American Craft** (June 1, 2009), published by the American Craft Council, [Radical Jewelry Makeover](#) by Beverly Sanders includes several photos from past editions of the project.

### Sustainable Jewelry Practices Article in **Metalsmith**:

Just what is Green Jewelry? Gabriel Craig looked for answers and was surprised by what he found. "For all the buzz, very little concrete progress has been made. In this sense green jewelry production is both a very real and very fake thing." His thoughtful article takes the concept apart, both conceptually and practically, and provides detailed information about refining processes. He concludes by saying that "Ultimately it is the responsibility of the individual to determine the appropriate course of action." Read his article, *Seeing Green: Towards Sustainable Jewelry Practices* in **Metalsmith** (Volume 29, No. 2, pages 32-39), published by the [Society of North American Goldsmiths](#).



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### How You Can Help



While it is true that jewelry by hand use raw materials in very small amounts, it isn't true that this fact line can assist in unmask

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Many thanks for your support!  
Please send suggestions or comments to [mail@EthicalMetalsmiths.org](mailto:mail@EthicalMetalsmiths.org)

to influence public opinion or the mining industry. Your actions and increase the demand for ethical sourcing.

As a purchaser of precious materials, you have the right to know their origin. As a maker, you need the trust of your customers. As an ethical and responsible person, you need assurance that the jewelry you make, wear, or give as a gift reflects social and environmental responsibility as well as economic value and personal aesthetic.

EthicalMetalsmiths thanks our tireless webmaster, Robin Casady

for his many hours of volunteer labor and for making our website and this newsletter what they are.

**If you value the work that Ethical Metalsmiths is doing to keep you informed about developments in ethical sourcing, please show your support by making a contribution this year.**

**Your tax-deductible donation will help Ethical Metalsmiths continue working toward connecting people with responsibly sourced materials.** (Please note, your donation will be appear as "Democracy in Action" on your credit card statement.)

Here are some other ways you can help:

- [Add your voice](#) to the community of jewelers and metalsmiths who want ethically sourced materials.
- Talk with your colleagues, customers and students about your interest in having ethical choices for materials, and let them know about this website.
- Add a link on your website to [Ethical Metalsmiths](#)
- Speak with your suppliers. Make them aware that you are ready to change your buying habits when traceable, certified, responsibly-sourced materials become available.
- Sign the [No Dirty Gold Pledge](#)
- Join [EARTHWORKS](#)

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