

Ethical Metalsmiths

Connecting People with Responsibly Sourced Materials

Re: Source

Newsletter No. 1

December 2006

Welcome to our first newsletter! We have been hard at work, building a network of concerned jewelers and metalsmiths who are demanding ethically sourced materials. An increasing number of us are realizing how our craft connects us to the origins of our materials as well as to human values, emotions and cultural traditions. Our acknowledgement of the social and environmental impacts of mining and our efforts to take responsibility for the metals we buy and sell are receiving notice and having an effect. We are pleased to report what we have accomplished, announce several new projects and keep you up to date on industry-wide dialogues and developments.

Jennifer Horning, Susan Kingsley, Christina Miller

You don't use much gold?

We are constantly asked how gold mining issues relate to other metals. Great question! The answer is that no matter what metal or gemstone you use, the underlying social and environmental issues are pretty much the same. [For more information, read the FAQs on our website.](#)

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SNAG Adopts *Resolution in Support of Responsible Mining*

Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) overwhelmingly approved a resolution at their 2006 annual conference in May, calling upon the mining industry to produce gold in ways that respect environmental, social, and human rights standards. Initiated by Susan Kingsley and Christina Miller of Ethical Metalsmiths, the **resolution** states that "the use of irresponsibly mined gold that harms people, communities, or the environment does not reflect our values," and resolves "to support and encourage the use of gold that is independently certified." Sam Shaw, president of SNAG, said, "I am proud of the organization for taking this step to communicate our desire for responsibly sourced gold. The resolution makes clear our care and respect for people, communities and our land." [Read more](#)

Association for Contemporary Jewellery Hosts Conference Addressing Issues of Values and Responsibility



In July, Ethical Metalsmiths organizers Susan Kingsley and Christina Miller made a presentation at the **Association for Contemporary Jewellery** (ACJ) conference in London, England. The conference was cleverly named *Carry the Can* after an old British expression. "Carry the can" means to take the blame for something in which others have also taken part and for which they are largely responsible. The entire conference addressed ethical issues, values and responsibility. Their talk was well received and resulted in the formation of a new Ethics Sub-Committee to work on a resolution for the membership to consider at their next meeting, among other things.

Golden Opportunity: A Global Collaboration to Understand Gold



Ethical Metalsmiths are proud to report on our successful first exhibition, **Golden Opportunity**, which opened in May. The call for entries asked artists to explore the paradox of gold:

Consider gold. It is a symbol of love, a measure of wealth and accessory to power. It is an element of nature infused with a history of desire. It is aura, allure and agent of catastrophe. Gold. Think about it.

More than 80 artists from 19 countries responded with images of their work in various media, from metal to digital, from precious to dirt, from performance to paint, from chocolate to wood.

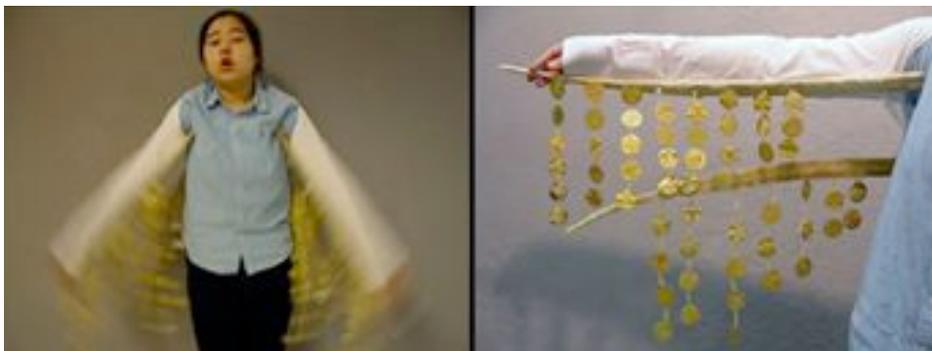
The personal statements that accompanied the pieces were insightful, provocative, cautionary, celebratory, conflicted and moving. Several artists told of specific communities that were threatened by irresponsible gold mining -- including, in one case, an artist's own. The entire virtual exhibition, accompanied by an essay, **Groundwork**, by Professor Ron Graziani, was posted on the Ethical Metalsmiths website in May. By popular demand, it has been extended through January 2007.

The Marx Saunders Gallery, a nationally-renowned gallery in the heart of Chicago's River North gallery district, donated its dramatic loft space for the exhibition's opening reception on Friday, May 26. A featured stop on SNAG's annual conference gallery tour, *Golden Opportunity* attracted over 400 visitors. In addition to excellent art, visitors could review news articles, reports and other background material on the key issues. As we had hoped, the event generated lively discussion.



Marx Saunders Gallery, Chicago

In July, Susan and Christina presented the exhibition once again in London, England after receiving an invitation to speak at the conference of the Association for Contemporary Jewellery. The theme of ACJ's annual meeting was ethics.



Icarus, Bo Sung Yoon

The press took note of *Golden Opportunity*, as well. The exhibition continues to reach a wider audience through coverage of the artwork and underlying issues in the **New York Times**, **Lapidary Journal**, **EARTHWORKS Journal**, **Policy Innovations** (an online publication dedicated to fair, ethical global development), **SNAGnews** and **American Craft**.

Ethical Metalsmiths is grateful for the participation of the artists, and generous support from donors and volunteers: the Rudolph Steiner Foundation; EARTHWORKS; Robin Casady; Ken Saunders; Rod Northcutt and his School of the Art Institute of Chicago assistants; Ron and Karen Horning; Carla Reiter and Alix Mikesell; Sam's Wine and Spirits and A New Leaf in Chicago.



Interior Dialog, Jessica Killpack

Status Report: Definition and Certification Standards for Ethically Sourced Metals

Jennifer traveled to Bentonville, Arkansas in September to meet with the representatives of major jewelry retailers, the electronics industry and nonprofit groups to exchange ideas on a standard for "recycled" gold. The label could be used for gold that is re-refined from scrap, and post-consumer products such as E-waste and old jewelry.

Jewelers have been using this term to describe products currently on the market, but there is no broadly-accepted definition or way to ensure that these claims are credible. With a standard in place, metalsmiths and others could be

recognized for ethical sourcing if they choose to purchase gold from refineries or manufacturers that recycle. The exact percentage of recycled content may vary but the plan is to facilitate the development of 100 percent recycled, labeled gold and products.

Along the same lines, Ethical Metalsmiths plans to take an active role in the **Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance** (IRMA) dialogue, which aims to agree on certification standards for the industry as a whole, from mine to consumer, and to determine what type of body will do the third-party certification. This is all happening quickly, with a target date of mid-2007! We will keep you updated and ask for your input as we move forward.

Ethical Metalsmiths Meet with EARTHWORKS in Washington and Attend Professional Conferences

This September, Jennifer Horning, Susan Kingsley and Christina Miller met with **EARTHWORKS** in Washington, DC to explore specific ways in which we can work together to bring ethically sourced materials to metalsmiths and jewelers. These include establishing a certification scheme for metals and encouraging all members in the hardrock mining supply chain to improve their environmental and social performance in the U.S. and abroad.

In addition, Jennifer attended the **Business Ethics Network** (BEN) conference this fall. Run by Corporate Ethics International and based in Portland, Oregon, BEN is a leading network of marketplace campaigners working to change corporate practices on issues including wages, health care, public health and the environment, treatment of workers, and impacts on local communities.

And Susan attended the **American Crafts Council** Leadership conference, *Shaping the Future of Craft*, in Houston. ACC is the only national organization representing all craft media and is interested in advancing a more innovative and expansive understanding of craft for the 21st Century. Ethical Metalsmiths is encouraged by the inclusion of dialogue about social, economic and political dimensions of craft production and the recognition that craft is a verb, a process rather than product.

Ethical Metalsmiths in the News

Ethical Metalsmiths and *Golden Opportunity* received mention and Jennifer Horning was quoted in an April **New York Times** article, *With this Ethical Ring I Thee Wed*.

Lapidary Journal published a feature article, *The Craft at What Cost?* in the August, 2006 issue that included several images from *Golden Opportunity* and quotes by Christina, Jennifer and Susan about the exhibition and our goals.

The fall, 2006 issue of **Earthworks Journal** ([download pdf](#)) contains a two page article about *Golden Opportunity* and features work and statements by four participants, Jim Bove, Rob Jackson, Rika Mouw and Jane Rainwater. It also announces passage of the *Resolution in Support of Responsible Mining* by SNAG.

Ethical Metalsmiths' presentation at the *Carry the Can* conference was reviewed by Shelby Fitzpatrick for the Association for Contemporary Jewellery's newsletter, **Findings** ([download pdf](#)).

The Ethical Metalsmiths Story, written by Jennifer Horning, was just published in **Policy Innovations**, an online magazine that features ideas for a fairer globalization. Sponsored by the **Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs**, the magazine aims to create a forum for pragmatic alternatives to the current global economic order.

Golden Opportunity received mention in **American Craft** (August 2006) in connection with the gallery tour at the SNAG conference in Chicago, and in the Director's report of the Winter 2006 issue of **Metalsmith**, together with the announcement of the passage of the *Resolution in Support of Responsible Mining*.

Passage of the SNAG resolution was reported in **Mineweb**, an international mining publication focusing on mining

finance and corporate news, with the headline [***U.S. Goldsmiths Demand Ethically Mined Gold.***](#)

Project: Radical Jewelry Makeover!

Have you ever heard someone say:

- *It's been five years since I lost one of my favorite earrings. I've been saving the other one just in case. What should I do?*
- *I used to wear anything that dangled or banged and now all of that stuff is tangled in a drawer. Is there a solution?*



Ethical Metalsmiths has an answer, "The Radical Jewelry Makeover!" It is a collaborative "mining" project that brings together a local community, a gallery and a group of jewelry and metalsmithing students to transform unwanted jewelry into exciting new work. The project is designed to raise public awareness about hardrock mining issues and material sourcing as well as to explore the potential of recycling, challenging taste and tradition, generating contemporary art jewelry created through collaborative effort, and offering a novel alternative to the usual retail jewelry marketplace. We also hope that it will draw attention to the amazing creativity and craftsmanship that metalsmiths are capable of.

Here's how it works. You need supporting groups of metalsmiths who want to have fun, a gallery to collect and then display the radical new jewelry, and the institutional support of a university, art center or craft school with jewelry making facilities. The surrounding community is invited to "mine" its drawers and jewelry boxes for pieces that they no longer want or wear. Precious or not, the donated jewelry is collected along with any personal stories and turned over to the metalsmiths. After its metamorphosis, the jewelry is exhibited at the gallery and donors get to choose a piece to keep. The remaining work will be sold to benefit Ethical Metalsmiths.

The first "Radical Jewelry Makeover!" will take place in Richmond, Virginia from February 25 through March 2, 2007. The project has been organized by Ethical Metalsmiths co-founder, Christina T. Miller. Participants will include the local Richmond community, [**Quirk Gallery**](#), jewelry and metalsmithing students from the sponsor, [**Virginia Commonwealth University**](#), Professor Susie Ganch and students from [**Millersville University**](#), Millersville, Pennsylvania.

Are you interested in hosting a Radical Jewelry Makeover in your town? [**Contact us**](#) for additional information.

Ethical Metalsmiths: Curriculum Development Project



Virginia Commonwealth
University
students at work

- *Are you an educator with concerns about the social and environmental implications of metalsmithing in a world increasingly dominated by corporate interests?*
- *Have you wondered how to introduce students to thinking about the connection between the materials in their hands and how those materials were obtained?*
- *Do you wonder how to prepare students for the realities of the 21st century, as the world economy and the future of craft come face to face with globalization?*

Staying informed about mining issues is, in itself, a daunting task. We hope that you will use the Ethical Metalsmiths website as a resource as you plan your classes, returning often for news, information, exhibitions, updates from stakeholders and reports of progress in bringing responsibly sourced and recycled materials to the marketplace.

We applaud the teachers who report that they are already integrating materials sourcing into their lesson plans. We would like to encourage and assist these efforts. In the coming months, Ethical Metalsmiths will launch the Curriculum Development Project. The project will be a unique collaboration among educators, students and the larger community of metal artists and jewelry designers.

The goal is to compile easy-to-use, downloadable materials that will foster a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between metalsmithing and mining. The Curriculum Guide will include historical and bibliographical information; images; individual, collaborative and interdisciplinary projects and more; and can be used by both teachers and students.

To facilitate collaboration we have set-up a monitored [Wikispace](#) so that you can work with, provide feedback on and develop projects along with colleagues. The Wikispace will provide a discussion forum for new curriculum suggestions and related materials, a central location for project assessment and outcomes, a tracking system and a space to highlight outstanding student work.

If you are already covering mining issues and material sourcing topics in your classes, let us know! If you are preparing a lesson and need help finding specific information, or if you need a project idea now, let us know! If you are interested in participating in the Wikispace, send an email to [Christina](#) and we will invite you to be part of the interactive space.

The WJ Referral List: Jewelers Willing to Recycle Old Gold for Wedding Rings

We receive many inquiries from couples who are seeking gold wedding bands that reflect their values. Wedding rings are the most important jewelry purchase most people make and it is understandable that they want the symbols of their commitment to embody the beliefs they share. We also receive inquiries from prospective customers who would like to recycle gold with great sentimental value into a new, unique style and prefer to work with an independent artist to design and fabricate the piece. Since Ethical Metalsmiths is dedicated to connecting people with responsibly sourced materials, we would like to develop a referral list so that people with old gold jewelry can recycle their supply rather than purchase newly-mined gold.

Here are a couple examples of recent inquiries:

Before our marriage last year, we asked several goldsmiths whether they would make our rings of old gold pieces we had accumulated. Universally, the answer was "no." They wouldn't do it for reasons I do not now specifically recall. What is your answer? What can I do with my "old gold?" —L.S., San Francisco

I would like to redesign my gold wedding set and I've spoken to three jewelers, all who say they either won't or highly discourage me from using the gold in my rings to redesign the new ring. I would like to be environmentally

responsible, plus I am sentimental about using the gold in the rings I wore when I got married. Do you know if there are jewelers who will use the gold in my rings to redesign a new ring? —A.C., Seattle



Because a certification system is still a year or more in the future and many couples need their rings sooner, we are creating a database to connect the people who contact us with jewelers who are willing* to redesign or recycle a customer's old gold. At this time we do not plan to publish the list. Instead, we will maintain a database and refer people to jewelers in their area.

* Willing when it is, in your professional judgment, reasonable and feasible, and of course mutually agreeable. We will only make a referral and will not make any representation of quality or guarantee that the artist will provide a service. In addition, we will explain to prospective customers that our referral is not an endorsement of the environmental or social performance of the artist, and all details of the transaction will need to be negotiated directly with the artist.

If you would like to be on our WJ Referral List, please enter your information here.

Virtual Community: EM_Dialog

The newly created Ethical Metalsmiths forum, EM_Dialog, has been created as a place for members of our community to discuss the intersection of ethics and metalsmithing. This replaces our previous Yahoo Group, and will provide a place for sharing innovative ideas and practical solutions for integrating ethics into everyday practices and the marketplace. **Everyone is welcome to join.**

Take Action: Your Help is Needed

One of the best things you can do to help us bring ethical materials to metalsmiths is talk to your suppliers, teachers and colleagues about these issues. Tell them that you are interested in purchasing ethical materials and refer them to our website or have them contact us to learn more about the ongoing dialogue on industry standards and certification. Whether they choose to participate or not, these issues will directly impact the future of our supply chain. We believe that it is better to participate and recognize that there can be significant benefits for our craft rather than sit on the sidelines and have no voice! For other ways you can help, please visit our **website**.

Take Action: Support Ethical Metalsmiths with a Tax-Deductible Donation

We appreciate your voices in support of responsible mining and of our efforts to unite ethics and metalsmithing. Over the past two years, we have volunteered our time and our money to raise awareness of the key issues and move toward a more ethical standard, and we are proud of what we have accomplished. But the time has come to ask for your financial support. Together, we can achieve results much faster.

Please help us continue our efforts to educate the public about metalsmithing and provide information to students, metalsmiths and jewelers about mining and recycling issues. We need your donation to continue representing the interests of our field at discussions with other stakeholders in establishing frameworks for responsible mining and the recovery of old gold for recycling. Your ongoing support will ensure that an internationally-recognized, third party certification system will be credible within our field and with the public, and friendly to small businesses and individual artists.

We have partnered with a fiscal sponsor in order to make your contributions tax deductible. We promise to use your donation frugally and wisely!

Save resources by making a **donation online**.

If you would rather send a check, please **contact us for mailing information**.

Ethical Metalsmiths first newsletter is dedicated to the memory of

Klaus Vittur (1948-2006)

the uncle who encouraged Christina to think about the mining of metals, and inspired the formation Ethical Metalsmiths.



Many thanks for your support!
Please send suggestions or comments to
mail@EthicalMetalsmiths.org

If you are not subscribed to
this newsletter please sign up.

Ethical Metalsmiths thanks our tireless webmaster

Robin Casady

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

Ethical Metalsmiths will continue our outreach to metalsmiths, nonprofit organizations and retail jewelers in the effort to build a consensus on ethical sourcing and establish a credible international certification standard for the mining industry. Stay tuned for future updates on the status of these industry-wide efforts.

You received this newsletter because you asked to be added to our mailing list or have otherwise expressed interest in our project. We invite your participation and feedback and appreciate your support.

*Jennifer Horning
Susan Kingsley
Christina Miller*

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