

RADICAL Jewelry
Makeover

Connecting People with Responsibly Sourced Materials

collaborative "mining" project



the excitement of the unknown

Radical Jewelry Makeover: Richmond, Virginia edition

Hardrock mining produces more toxic waste than any other industry in the United States. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, companies that mine metals and minerals produced 27% of all toxics released (in 2005). Eighty percent of all the gold that is mined is used to produce jewelry. On average, 20 tons of waste rock is generated for every gold ring.

These statistics speak of the removal of precious metals from the ground, however there is another source to consider.



*Would **you** be willing to donate old jewelry to be melted down, re-designed and transformed to explore an alternative kind of mining?*

The first ever **Radical Jewelry Makeover** (Winter 2007) brought together the Richmond community, students from Virginia Commonwealth and Millersville Universities, Quirk Gallery, supplier Hoover & Strong and the non-profit Ethical

Metalsmiths* to collaborate on an alternative supply chain. Donors contributed jewelry, students volunteered their skills, Hoover and Strong contributed supplies and the gallery gave 70% of the proceeds to Ethical Metalsmiths to support similar projects that work to increase awareness and secure responsibly sourced materials. The project thrived on the excitement of delving into unknown.

*What if people don't contribute? If students are not interested?
If we can't produce enough work in time?*

In the end, more than sixty people came forward and shared their personal stockpiles.



Ethical Metalsmiths was overwhelmed by the amount of material that was “mined” by the com-

munity. And the students were thrilled with the opportunity to apply their skills and imaginations to the “lode” of possibilities.



The Makeover began on a Sunday afternoon in VCU's jewelry and metalsmithing studio where tables were piled high with jewelry ready for transformation. Students could choose from a

variety of materials; costume jewelry, sterling silver, even gold and precious stones. Sentimental donations received special consideration because their accompanying stories add significant value of another kind. With just four days to work, decision-making had to be simplified and ideas were kept fresh. As expected, the artists' knowledge and creativity contributed the most

value to the radically transformed work.



Rarely does a gallery commit to exhibit a concept as raw and untested as this.

Susie Ganch, Head of Jewelry and Metalsmithing at VCU and guest curator for Quirk Gallery's *Vault* space for 2007 was pivotal in their decision to take on the project. Quirk's commitment was great incentive to students who worked night and day to produce 200 pieces of "Makeover" jewelry. Once installed, points and prices were assigned to the work giving it market value. Comments such

as, *"I donated that! That was from an old bracelet I hadn't worn in years,"* *"Look, it is the piece I made!"* filled Quirk gallery during the opening.



The Radical Jewelry Makeover will travel to new locations and will take on new unknowns specific to the host community, but the project's future is indebted to the enthusiastic support of everyone involved in making the very first one a success.

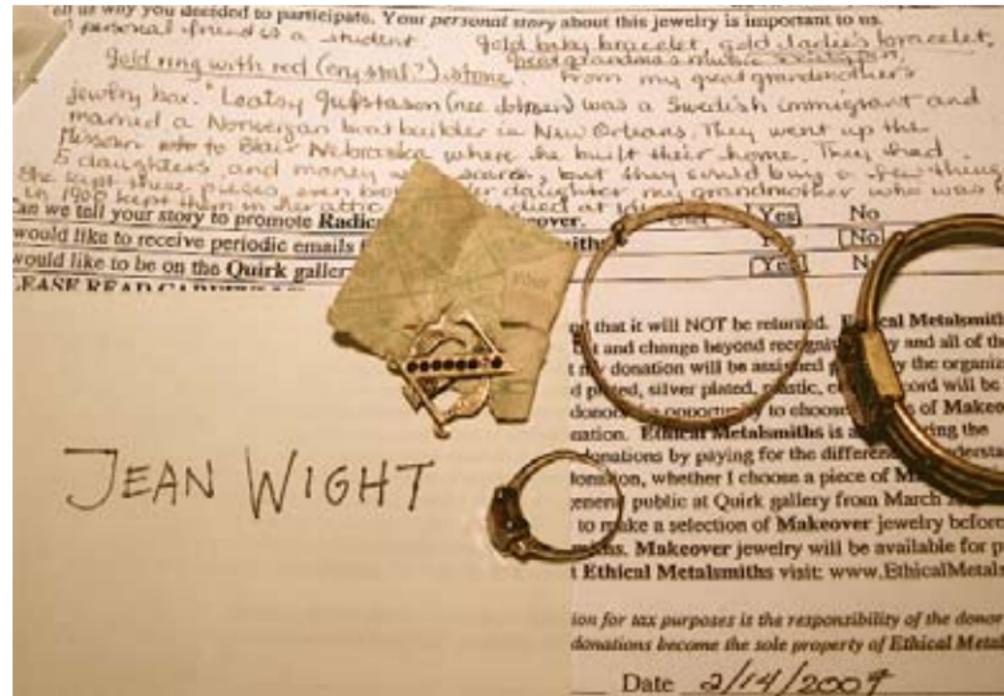
— Christina T. Miller



Christina T. Miller is the **Radical Jewelry Makeover** project designer and developed the event as co-founder of Ethical Metalsmiths along with Jennifer Horning and Susan Kingsley. Christina is also Assistant Professor of Fine Art Metals at Millersville University (PA).

* Ethical Metalsmiths has been actively working toward this goal since 2005.

For more information please visit www.EthicalMetalsmiths.org



it was an honor to use someone's past memories — give them a new life, new journey



The best thing about the donations is being able to look at jewelry out of its assumed context, of being personal, unique, and special. Due, perhaps, to jewelry's interaction and proximity to the wearer when separated it becomes a product. This is emphasized when tangled and bunched on a tabletop.

Anonymous VCU student



"It was really wonderful to see the entire studio filled and people working really hard toward one goal. I felt a sense of community. I put a lot of thought into my piece because I knew it was for something good."

Anonymous VCU student



Adam Whitney



Caitie Sellers



Meredith Nuckols



Jessicka Price



Meg Roberts



Sarah Holden



Kathryn Cole



Matt Jackson



Sidney Caldwell Deaghlan



Matthew Williams



Julcann Benkoski



Kathleen Kennedy

Participating Students:

Virginia Commonwealth University—

Adam Whitney
Amanda Costello
Amanda Douglas
Andi Harriman
Ann E. Drewing
Caitie Sellers
Carlene Bermann
Carlton Morgan
Claire Hackley
Dana Wright
David Choc
Erin Crettier
Erin Williams
Hillary Brown
Jenna Robinson
Jeremy Moore
Jessicka Price

Jill Rich
Kari Rinn
Katherine Williams
Kathleen Clabill
Kathleen W. Kennedy
Kathryn Cole
Katie Simmons
Keeley Yates
Kelly Morwood
Krystal Lemons
Laura Mae Lucas
Lenora Mesnard
Marie Sudduth
Marina Brock
Mark Holt II
Mary Cox
Matt Jackson

Matthew Williams
Meg Roberts
Meghan Reiff
Meredith Nuckols
Natalie David
Olivia de Soria
Robert Metzler
Sarah Holden
Sarah Kathleen
Warner
Sarah Schultz
Scarlett Coyler
Sidney Caldwell
Deaghlán
Susann Belflower
Tiffany Wiggins
Tracy Herman

Millersville University—

Juleann Benkoski Geena Corradi



all little steps eventually lead to dramatic change

Acknowledgements

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—Christina T. Miller, Ethical Metalsmiths

The logo for VCU Arts, featuring the text "vcuarts" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "vcu" is in red and "arts" is in blue.The logo for Hoover & Strong, featuring the words "HOOVER" and "STRONG" stacked vertically in a blue, serif font.The logo for Ethical Metalsmiths, featuring the text "Ethical Metalsmiths" in a black, serif font above the tagline "Learning Right with Responsible Treated Materials" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a light yellow background.

Project Designer

Christina T. Miller

Exhibition Curator

Susie Ganch

Catalog Design:

Art Director

Nancy Mata

Designer

Jolanda Dranchak