

Association of Jewelers and Educators Calls on Mining Industry to Produce Gold Ethically

The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) approved last week at their annual conference a [resolution](#) calling upon the mining industry to produce gold in an ethical way that respects environmental, social, and human rights standards. 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." SNAG is the premier metal arts organization for jewelers, designers, and metalsmiths with 3,300 worldwide members.

"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," said Sam Shaw, president of SNAG.

The resolution was authored by two SNAG members who helped found Ethical Metalsmiths, an organization of independent metal artists and jewelry designers concerned about the harmful effects of irresponsible mining.

"We are individuals who want to make ethical decisions about the materials we use, and we want the gold we use to be consistent with our values and the high regard with which we view our work in the metal arts community," said Susan Kingsley, co-author of the resolution and an Ethical Metalsmiths founder.

Ethical Metalsmiths plays an important role in raising awareness about mining's impacts and in promoting the role of metalsmiths in achieving mining reform. In recent years, Ethical Metalsmiths members have organized educational events, served on a SNAG committee on responsible mining, and won the support of increasing numbers of SNAG members.

"How can we support safer studio practices for our own community and ignore communities around the world that are impacted by the resources we use?" asks Rob Jackson, a professor of jewelry and metals at the University of Georgia, making the comparison between responsible mining practices and safer studio practices that don't harm the health of metalsmiths.

According to Ethical Metalsmiths, there is a real demand for independently-certified gold that is produced in accordance with social, environmental, and human rights standards. The organization says it hears regularly from supporters who care deeply about the source of their materials and don't want their work tarnished by the socially and environmentally damaging actions of irresponsible mining companies.

"As a metalsmith and an educator, I long for the day when my students and I can use gold with a clear conscience," said James Thurman, a visual arts professor at Pennsylvania State University.

"As purveyors of the materials at the heart of this debate, we share responsibility, together with leaders in the mining industry and consumers, for moving toward accountability, transparency, and commitment to clearly-defined standards for environmental and social performance," said Jennifer Horning, an Ethical Metalsmiths founder.

"The responsible mining resolution passed by SNAG shows that we can cultivate a market for responsibly-produced gold. We want the mining industry to know that there is financial incentive and reward in doing the right thing," said Christina Miller, co-author of the resolution and Ethical Metalsmiths founder.

In an effort to increase understanding about gold, Ethical Metalsmiths has organized an exhibition entitled Golden Opportunity which features the work of over 80 artists from 19 different countries. Golden Opportunity opened with a digital projection and reception held in association with the SNAG annual conference in Chicago on May 26, 2006 and is also a part of the Association for Contemporary Jewelry conference, Carry the Can, which will be held in July 2006 in London, England. Golden Opportunity will be featured through November on the Ethical Metalsmiths website.