

Featured Librarian

Each month a new “librarian” shares their favorite fixing publications and remembers their proudest fix...

My Proudest Fix...

I never thought much about the wearer of my jewelry. I drew inspiration from the body but I never considered the lives of my pieces. This was a self-fulfilling prophecy, because most of my jewelry doesn't have a life outside of the box under my bed. Even my brief foray into production work had failed to reach escape velocity and soon assumed their place, buried with my wool sweaters and dreams of entrepreneurship.

Two years ago they emerged when a friend expressed an interest in my jewelry, and when she liked them I gave her a pair of earrings—insisted actually that she take them. I didn't need them, having abandoned my practice for an MA in London. Soon I began receiving messages that she was wearing them, pictures of them on and relayed compliments. A week or two after I had moved back to New Jersey from London, I received a picture of them broken with a frantic apology—they'd slipped out with the quick removal of a shirt, and I replied that it would be no problem at all for me to repair them. I walked into my basement studio with them on an afternoon when I couldn't bear to start another job application, but was desperate to feel productive. My studio had become the place in the house where miscellaneous items mysteriously settled, and so I set about tidying up so that I could work. I mixed new pickling chemicals, cleaned the rust off my mandrels and put away materials I had purchased for idealistic projects long since forgotten. I found my college iPod and put on Robyn's Body Talk as I removed the broken earrings from their envelope and started working.

After graduating with my BFA I was tormented by my jewelry practice as I struggled with my work's relationship to a consumer, what Suzanne Ramljak would call *A Touchy Affair: On Contemporary and Commercial Jewelry*, but what I considered simply a personal failure¹.

I grew so discouraged by my work that my creative practice became so fraught I couldn't stand to even sit in my studio, eventually becoming so intellectually preoccupied with the question of what had gone wrong that I began an MA in History of Design just to gain the tools to find answers. Revisiting a piece of jewelry that I had considered a failure, knowing it was used and valued, forced me to sit with an experience that had been so emotionally and intellectually complicated for me and finally reevaluate. The act of repairing them—making small, thoughtful adjustments, for the first time able to learn from the piece's experience—felt fun and simple, and I began to feel like I knew myself and my abilities. As a graduate again, still unsure of my place in the world, this fix rescued me.

1. Skinner, Damian, *Contemporary Jewelry in Perspective* (Asheville, NC: Lark Crafts in association with Art Jewelry Forum, 2013) page 215.

November: Kara Bargmann

