

## Chelsea Hoard: Integrative Project Thesis

### **Discarded Beauty:** A collection of contemporary jewelry inspired by found objects

My contemporary jewelry explores the idea of preciousness and value. Inspired by antique objects, I am pushing the conventions of jewelry by replacing the traditional decorative stone with alternative objects. By reusing the antique objects in my contemporary jewelry pieces, I am making them beautiful again in a new and modern way, therefore giving them a newfound value and preciousness.

The aged and historic aesthetic of the antique objects creates an interesting juxtaposition when combined with the more modern sterling silver. The antique objects I am using in my pieces have been passed down through family members, though no one can place a specific story with them. They are forgotten and discarded objects, though they were once beautiful and appreciated. By designing pieces of jewelry around them, I am, in a way, allowing these discarded objects to be reborn, to once again be beautiful and valuable.

Within my series of work, I strive to make the antique objects ambiguous. There is an element of discovery in my work when the viewer realizes what objects have been incorporated into my pieces. The clean lines and shapes in my designs create a modern aesthetic that disguises the discarded objects, while at the same time emphasizes their unique beauty, proving that the conventional stone is not always needed to make a piece of jewelry precious and beautiful.

My Integrative Project experience has provided me with time to figure out where my passion really is. This time has allowed my concept to evolve and improve a lot since the beginning of the year. Design and quality of an object are my first artistic concerns, but by thinking through and working out my ideas, I've come to realize a lot more about myself and my interests as an artist. As my ideas and concepts progressed, I learned more and more about what aspects of my project really mean something to me. I sifted through old ideas and found new ones and ultimately came up with a concept that I am very happy with and excited about.

In the beginning, I decided that I would incorporate found objects into my jewelry designs. This went along with an eco-friendly theme I was trying to follow. Metal work is very difficult to make environmentally friendly but the found object aspect did support the recycling of untraditional objects into jewelry, which was a step in the eco-friendly direction I am interested in. These recycled materials ended up replacing the conventional stone in my designs, also making a small nod toward improving the way jewelers work. Stone mining is both harmful to the environment and to the people who mine the stones. By removing stones from my work, I am demonstrating a way to create beautiful jewelry without the traditional stones that have to be mined in order to use.

Motivated by my concept, I went looking for the found objects that were going to move my designs forward. I came across many antique objects and trinkets that my mother had in the house. They had been passed down to her through generations of our family. They weren't exactly the found objects I had in mind when I first came up with the concept but they were a nice revelation for me. The antique, decorative objects were much more interesting to me than any of the other objects I had considered. And I really liked that they were a part of my family, and therefore a part of myself.

In the end, I came to the conclusion that what was most important to me in what I was doing was the antique and decorative nature of the discarded familial objects I was using in my designs. The aesthetic they provided inspired me and I realized I wasn't just using "found objects" as I had referred to them in the beginning. I was using antique objects, which had somehow been forgotten about and tossed aside before they found their way to me through generations of being passed down by my family. I also came to love the mystery of the heirloom-like objects. I didn't know exactly whom in my family they had belonged to, why they had once been precious, why they weren't anymore, but imagining was most of the fascination. By reusing and bringing focus back to them in my jewelry pieces, I was bringing life back into these objects whose lives had been forgotten.

I wanted to explore this concept of rebirth while at the same time proving I could create precious pieces of jewelry without the conventional stone. The ties to my family and the concept of rebirth really helped to emphasize the preciousness of my pieces. Sentimental value played a big part in my designs. The objects I chose to use may not be worth as much as a stone monetarily, but they make up for that in other, more emotive ways.



## Spoon Earrings

Sterling Silver, Antique Spoons

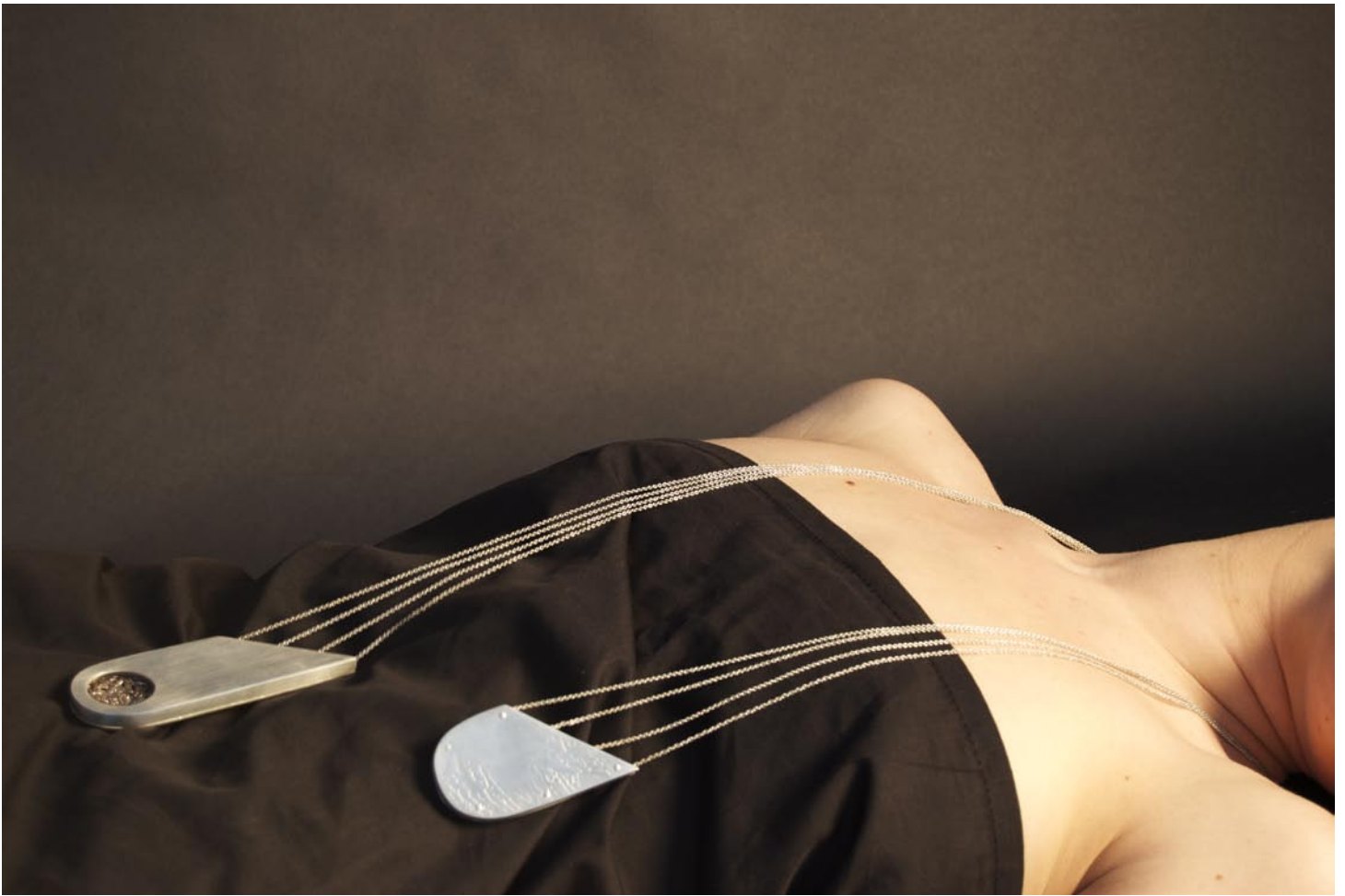
The last rays of dusty daylight shone through the window onto the gleaming silver sugar bowl. The sterling metal seemed out of place on top of the faded red tablecloth, surrounded by the modestly-worn wooden furniture in my great grandmother Birdie's small dining room. The sugar bowl had always been there, in the house that my mother loved so much to visit as a girl. It moved around a lot, sometimes it resided in the kitchen, sitting proudly among the old assortment of ceramic jars that were filled with things like flour and brown sugar. Today, it sat in the center of the dining room table. It was an incredibly beautiful and unique sugar bowl, made with enough grooves around the lip to hold eleven spoons. Eleven spoons, my mother always thought, why in the world would a sugar bowl need eleven spoons? But she gladly sat gnawing on the rhubarb her grandfather had brought in from the vast gardens surrounding the little farmhouse, carefully sprinkling sugar on the sour vegetable, one spoon at a time.



### **Vintage Bead Necklace**

Sterling Silver, Vintage Bead

My great grandmother Velma stood, middle-aged, in front of her oval mirror that sat on top of her oversized dresser. She stared at the image of herself in the glass as she clasped a necklace behind her. Small, black faceted beads formed a choker accented by larger, hollow beads that held together the tassel-like adornments that hung down from the necklace. It was her favorite piece of jewelry. She had bought it in 1926 and it had remained since then the necklace she reserved for special occasions like today. Today, her son John, my grandfather, was getting married. John and Ruth were so young. They had graduated from high school a few short months ago. She took one more glance at herself, satisfied with the effects of the necklace, and turned to leave her bedroom. As she made her way to the kitchen door to leave for the church, she stopped to look at a black and white photograph of John and Ruth, both of them smiling comfortably, leaning against a bulbous and shiny car. She smiled to herself as she played with the black, beaded tassels between her fingers as she got into the car.



### Button Necklace

Sterling Silver, Antique Button

My great grandmother Birdie sat in her wooden rocker behind the old farmhouse. She was hunched over her sewing, as she often was, enjoying the soft summer breezes and occasionally glancing up to watch her daughter, my Grandmother Ruth, hang the damp laundry on the clothesline. My great grandmother Birdie kept all her sewing supplies in an old cookie tin. There was an ice skating scene painted on the lid and it was sitting at her feet as she sewed the last button onto Ruth's dress. It was the dress Ruth was going to wear to her high school graduation the next week and my great grandmother Birdie wanted to make it special. She once wore the same beautiful lattice buttons she was sewing to Ruth's dress on a dress of her own. She used to wear that dress while she was pregnant with Ruth. It was the only dress that had been comfortable enough to wear during the last months of the pregnancy. Birdie believed the dress had been good luck and she wanted to pass a part of it onto Ruth as she graduated and began a life of her own.



### **Belt Buckle Necklace**

Sterling Silver, Antique Brass Belt Buckle

A fire burned red hot in the wood stove across the room from my great grandmother Birdie. She looked out into the old snow-dusted pine tree through the frosty window as she waited for my great grandfather to come home. She was dressed in a rich cobalt wool coat, belted at the waist and fastened with an ornate brass belt buckle. She had her arms crossed in front of her, hugging herself, and an eager glimmer of anticipation in her eyes. It was almost Christmas and my great grandfather was on his way home to take my great grandmother Birdie out on their annual winter date. She only wore the beautiful blue coat once or twice a year. Each seam fit her perfectly, complimenting her petite figure, the belt buckle cinching her waist in just the right place. The coat made her feel beautiful, and so did the excitement she still had to see her husband after so many years of marriage.



### **Doily Necklace**

Sterling Silver, Antique Doily, Resin

The blinding glints of sun reflected and flashed off of the lake as my grandfather skied gracefully across the water's surface behind the small red motor boat. My mother sat blank-faced in the back of the boat watching her father ski through the wind-blown curls of her sister's hair, unsure of what to think. Grandpa John was talented and you could tell he really loved to waterski. My mother's brother, my Uncle Mike, was driving the boat, looking very focused and serious. None of the siblings were sure why they were there. They and their three other brothers and sisters saw their father twice, maybe three times a year and they couldn't bring themselves to forgive him for it. Mike pulled the boat into the dock and the four headed into the house through the door off of the deck my grandfather had built himself. Inside, my mother sat down silently on the couch, which smelled of cigarette smoke. She couldn't wait for the weekend to be over. The only comfort she found was in the doilies that were laid over all the tables in the room, under lamps and candle holders and the occasional ashtray. She sat there next to her brother, her gaze downward, looking at her hand, which fingered the delicate white lace that reminded her so much of her grandmother's crocheting. Touching the fabric and feeling her brother's presence at her side, she could close her eyes and imagine she were back at the farmhouse, waiting for Grandma Birdie to finish crocheting another elaborate doily so that she could find the perfect place to put it.



### **Button Earrings**

Sterling Silver, Antique Buttons

There were 294 buttons in the old, rusty paint can. Summer rain pattered on the windows of the farmhouse. My mother was sitting on the living room floor surrounded by the buttons. Her grandmother Birdie collected them and was watching from the kitchen as she ran her hand through the colorful scattering. Some were violet, others gold; some red, some blue. There were sets of buttons, strung together with string, and there were buttons without any matches at all. My mother loved sorting through them. The harmony of clicking sounds she created as they moved among each other under her fingers was satisfying. Among the 294 of them, she always looked for her favorite six. They were a pearly light brown set, and in the middle of each round button there was a rhinestone. She liked to imagine the beautiful piece of clothing they would someday be sewn onto. It was a white, flowing blouse, just pretty enough to make a girl feel special and just practical enough to wear outside in the gardens. Someday, she thought, she would ask Grandma Birdie to help her make it.



### **Bracelet Link Earrings**

Sterling Silver, Antique Bracelet Links, Resin

My mother looked down the old farmhouse's front yard at my father. She was 20 years old and her perfectly straight, long brown hair fell around her in the same grace that her white dress did. My father was nineteen, smiling-eyed and crazy-haired in a corduroy suit. They were separated from each other only by an aisle of green grass, formed by white wooden folding chairs full of friends and family. Joy seemed to emanate from my father as he watched my mother walk slowly toward him. As she came into focus, he could see the intricate bronze-colored jewelry adorning her neck and wrist. Her grandmother Birdie had given her the jewelry just for this occasion. The tiny swirls and curves of the matching necklace and bracelet linked to frame cameos that mirrored my mother's delicate and classic beauty. As she reached the end of the aisle and stood next to my father, she turned to look at my great grandmother Birdie, who was beaming at her, delighted, from her seat among the guests.