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IP Thesis

To Expand the Possibility of Jewelry

The intent of my project is to expand the possibility of jewelry. All of my works have a common concept: interchangeability. I always felt that typical jewelry is inflexible since it has only one purpose and usage. I wanted to expand the possibilities of jewelry, so I created the jewelry pieces that let you choose different usage for various situations.

Through the last six years, I have been working with metal in my pieces, and I gained enough knowledge and skills to express my concept. So I felt that metal is the best material for me to work with in this project. Moreover, I like to actually using my hands to make things. I wanted to work with tangible pieces rather than working on a computer. I decided to make jewelry when I started to think about the project.

The process to reach to this concept took some steps. I started with three primary ideas. I was strongly interested in incorporating my Japanese background to the project because living in the United States for about a decade and being in touch with the western culture makes my interest to the home country much stronger. So, my two primary ideas were, either using Japanese traditional metalsmithing technique called “Mokumegane” to make jewelry, or to express the four seasons by using Japanese symbolic flowers. And my third concept was to combine ancient jewelry and modern jewelry. I was strongly interested in the deep meaning of the ancient jewelry

However, none of these concepts were fascinating enough. I wanted to put much

more unique ideas into shape. So, I started to ask some questions to myself, and came across one big question: “What do I feel when I wear jewelry?”

After I came up with this question, I thought about why typical jewelry has only one use or purpose. Why is a necklace worn just as a necklace? Why does a bracelet work only as a bracelet? Why does a ring have to be put on a finger? Then I started to think that it would be interesting if jewelry were to be changed in style to suit various situations and atmosphere. There are many different situations to wear jewelry, such as casual daily scenes, pop nightlife parties, and formal and fancy dressy events. Yet, typical jewelry can only be worn in a particular type of situation. I believe many people face situations where they want to wear their favorite jewelry but it is too casual for a dressy party, or too formal for everyday life. These problems are the starting point of my projects.

Through this project, I also analyzed the purpose of wearing jewelry. This step helped me to understand the relationship between the type of situations and jewelry worn, and then to expand my concept of interchangeable jewelry. I found that there are three major reasons: One purpose is to show the wealth of the person. Secondly, it is worn as one’s fashion to express oneself, or to send out some message. Thirdly, people often wear it as an important charm, like an engagement ring, or as a representation of an important person or a religious figure. These days, most of the reason for wearing jewelry may be the second one.

So why do people wear jewelry as a fashion statement? When people want to make themselves look good and different with fashion, they are trying to give a unique identity to themselves by wearing something that others do not have. So that is why

people decorate themselves with jewelry. The thing can be said when they put an accessory on their purse, for example. By decorating their ordinary bag with an accessory, they can turn it into something extraordinary.

When I actually started making a piece, I faced some difficulties. The most difficult part about this project was the designing of the piece. In the concept of interchangeable jewelry, the mechanism of connecting the pieces together becomes extremely important. Because these connectors in the end will constitute visible part of the piece, it is also very important that these connectors do not ruin the aesthetic quality of the piece. So, I tried to get the inspiration from some different sources, such as metalsmithing magazines, books, advertisements, architectures and sculptures. Also, metalsmithing textbooks were helpful as well. However, getting the inspirations from these commercial sources limited the quality of my designs. Because I kept looking at the production design jewelry, it caused my own designs to be far from being unique. Moreover, the fact of my personal preference for simple elegantly designed jewelry made my designing process slow, too. I forced myself to design a creative piece, but at the same time I wanted to make sure the piece would be wearable. I wanted to avoid making the kind of piece that is too flashy and is not realistically wearable in any situation.

Finally, I created six totally different kinds of interchangeable jewelry. Each project is designed with different criteria and mechanisms to make it function in a unique way. By exploring various types of interchangeability, I attempted to further expand flexibility of the pieces.



My first piece was flower bracelet-necklace. This piece of jewelry can be a bracelet or a necklace depending on which chain you choose. This primitive idea of interchangeable bracelet and necklace was the starting point of this project. The most important part in this piece is how the connection between the two works. Usually, a regular necklace has only one clasp. However, this piece has a slide clasp on each end of the chains and the on the center piece as well. To have two connections on the centerpiece allowed it to be placed on the necklace chain and on the bracelet. (Slide clasps are one kinds of the clasps which can be used to hold several objects together, as with chains.)

Next pieces are textured necklace. There are three same-shaped cast pieces, two of which are made with brass, the other one with sterling silver. Each of those pendants has three equally spaced, vertically aligned holes of about three millimeters for the chain



to go through. . One stone is set to the bottom of the textured surface. Those stones are hardly recognized from a distance, but they give a character to each metal piece.

The chain that goes through the holes can be threaded through whichever hole one chooses, making a big difference in how the necklace look. Also, by changing the number of metal piece can easily create many different effects with this necklace.

The third piece is six sets of ornaments with ring and beer bottle necklaces. There are six different ornaments can be screwed into the screws on the ring or beer bottle necklaces. One can chose any of the ornaments to attach to the ring. They differ considerably in design and create very



different effects when attached to the ring. These ornaments can be use as the necklaces for beer bottles. Each necklace and ring has a screw for mounting the ornaments. This



idea came from wine glass markers. However, beer is a more popular drink in the United States, so accessories for beer bottles can be more useful when people gather and drink together. Moreover, a wine glass accessory may just be a marker, but my piece is meant to give an identity to an

ordinary beer bottle. The reason for making six attachments is because usually beer bottles are sold in a pack of six.



The fourth piece is a necklace with four stones set into it. An ornament on a chain can be attached to the back of each stone's setting. Because the back of each stone setting has holes, that hole lets the chain attachment to hang on. The necklace itself is a simple form and can be worn casually. But when the dangling ornaments are attached to the necklace, the necklace suddenly becomes fancier and more elegant.

The fifth piece is a tic-tac-toe game charm. There are five circle-shaped pieces and five square-shaped pieces with which to play tic-tac-toe, but the pieces also can be used as charms on a chain to attach a purse. As there are five pieces for each side, I made five hangers with clasps, which can connect the purse chain and the tic-tac-toe pieces. The number of pieces attached and their layout give many variations. The tic-tac-toe pieces are constructed of colored panels and silver wire that frames them, leaving a seven-millimeter space for the double-ended clasps to be attached. Therefore, the mechanism works as the connectors, which become a part of the design to the piece. Of course, they can be used to play tic-tac-toe as well. So this piece



has two functions, game markers and purse ornament. One could also think of other things to which they could be attached.

The last piece is a flower garden. There are three rings and six pairs of earrings. There are wooden stems with leaves to which all of them can be attached. So, when people don't wear them, they can sit on the stems. The stems for the rings have openings of the



same size as the ring and they hold the rings by the tension. The stems for the earrings are also made of wood and each has calyx made by silver or brass. Those have tubes



soldered. Each calyx has a tube on the back in which the earring can be stuck. Primary colors of red, blue, and yellow are used inside of the flower rings. The colors of earrings are those found in the real flowers and are subtler. All of these flowers can be placed in a vase or other

container as a room ornament.

I could expand these concepts infinitely. Everyday life of experience gives me lots of ideas for future work. I see things and think, "I could change this just a little and make something wonderful out of it." The world is full of possibilities for interchangeable jewelry.