



CRAFT IN AMERICA

JEWELRY: PURPOSE, PRESENCE, AND MEANING EDUCATION GUIDE

JEWELRY: PURPOSE, PRESENCE, AND MEANING

"I am passionate about jewelry. But when it came to making jewelry, I wanted it to be more than about decoration. My own work represents bigger ideas." – Harriete Estel Berman

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will view the work of contemporary jewelry artists Harriete Estel Berman, Gabrielle Gould, and Jesse Monongya. Through investigating these artists' approaches to jewelry making and the processes and techniques they employ, students will understand and discuss how these artists select materials based on personal choices, life experiences, and things they care about in the natural environment. Students will learn about their use of found objects and recycled materials, consider how jewelry is made, collaborate and brainstorm ways to design and create their own jewelry, and explore jewelry as art and as personal adornment. Students will create their own jewelry that has personal meaning and communicates a message that may go beyond the confines of traditional jewelry.

Grade Level: 7–12

Estimated Time: six–seven 45-minute class periods

Craft In America Theme/Episode: *JEWELRY*

Background Information

Craft In America's episode, *JEWELRY*, explores the history, artistry, and impact of personal adornment. The three artists featured in this lesson make choices about the materials they use in their work, based upon personal connections. One chooses materials because of their association with personally relevant social issues. Another chooses materials based on a close personal connection with the natural world and its "small wonders." The third artist has a personal desire to continue family and cultural traditions and chooses materials accordingly.

Harriete Estel Berman

"I love jewelry. Jewelry is a lot more than a decorative object that people put on. They create an identity for themselves by what they wear." – Harriete Estel Berman

Harriete Estel Berman pushes the boundaries of jewelry making by using found and recycled materials to address social issues and create an identity with jewelry. She finds materials that are discarded but have the potential for being incorporated into various kinds of jewelry. She states that the objects she finds are about the "messaging in our society" that is evident in the packaging we use. Those messages are often incorporated into her designs. Even as she explores unconventional materials, Harriete maintains the long standing jewelry making tradition in which exquisite craftsmanship is the norm.





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Gabrielle Gould

"My jewelry is an interpretation of the wildlife surrounding my studio and home, along the coast of Northeast Florida. I see my work as a figurative expression depicting my deep and abiding love of nature's smallest wonders." - Gabrielle Gould

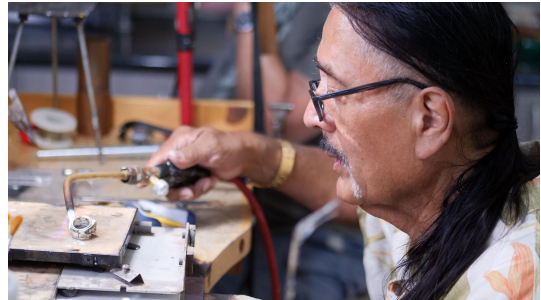
Gabrielle Gould uses found materials such as feathers, twigs, and seeds from the natural environment to create forms of personal adornment. She cuts, trims and ties feathers to create jewelry inspired by the indigenous peoples of Brazil and their use of feathers. She states that she is inspired by the beauty of nature and *"by studying nature, you see the character of every living thing come out."* Gabrielle says her work represents who she is as a person.



Jesse Monongya

"It was instilled in me by my grandfather to be perfect... Why do something wrong and do it over again? Everything I do, I make sure of all the possible ways of not making a mistake, that it is durable and strong." - Jesse Monongya

Jesse Monongya is a master Navajo/Hopi jeweler, living in Scottsdale, AZ. Monongya is best known for his night-sky designs inlaid into a bear shape, which symbolizes strength and power, as well as other forms. His bracelets, necklaces, pendants, bolo ties, and earrings inlaid with Acoma jet, sugilite, coral, turquoise, lapis, and ivory among others are complemented by the dramatic southwestern landscapes that inspired him. Jesse believes that being one with nature impacts his work in terms of jewelry subject matter, motifs, and materials. He sees himself as continuing a tradition begun by his ancestors. He references his grandmother, grandfather, father, aunts, and others who have influenced him as an artist. The bear story brings home the idea of living in harmony rather than in conflict with the natural world. Jesse believes spirituality is what is most important; the universe inside and outside.



Key Concepts

- Artists sometimes explore and use found objects and recycled materials when creating jewelry and personal adornment.
- Jewelry can help define who you are, including status, relationships, associations, and relationships.
- Jewelry and other forms of personal adornment can have content and convey a message.

Critical Questions

- What is personal adornment?
- How do jewelry and other forms of personal adornment convey status and identity?
- Why is the choice of materials important in jewelry-making?



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Objectives

Students will:

- Describe characteristics of and purposes of jewelry and personal adornment.
- Compare and contrast jewelry and other forms of personal adornment inspired by found and/or recycled materials.
- Articulate personal and symbolic associations with a range of materials.
- Create jewelry or other forms of personal adornment with personal meaning and that communicates a message.

Vocabulary

Personal Adornment, Non-Traditional, Recycle, Upcycle, Urban Environment, Ancestry

Interdisciplinary Connections

Environmental Science: This lesson explores aspects of recycling, upcycling and objects found in the natural world and urban environment. Each artist is inspired by place, geography, and the natural environment. Science classes can investigate recycled and upcycled materials. Science classes can also consider materials in the environment that could be repurposed rather than going to a landfill. Ask, *How do these materials make us aware of sustainability and urban waste?*

History/Social Studies: This lesson explores aspects of recycling, upcycling and objects found in the natural world and urban environment. Each artist is inspired by place, geography, family, and the natural environment. Students may investigate the history of jewelry making, materials and functions as related to various cultural traditions and regions. *What purposes did personal adornment serve in a particular culture or society?*

Language Arts: The activity in which students are encouraged to identify a message and/or story about their jewelry could be extended within a Language Arts context. *Write a story about your jewelry and/or an explanation of its purpose and message.*

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

This lesson addresses the following standards. The performance standards listed here are directly related to the lesson's goals.

- Anchor Standard #1, CREATING: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #2, CREATING: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #4, PRESENTING: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- Anchor Standard #8, RESPONDING: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #11, CONNECTING: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Resources and Materials for Teaching Resources

- Craft in America JEWELRY episode, craftinamerica.org/episode/jewelry and Craft in America's website, craftinamerica.org
- Harriete Estel Berman's website, harrieteestelberman.com
- Gabrielle Gould's website, gabriellegould.com
- Jesse Monongya's website, jessemonongyastudios.com



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Worksheets

- Worksheet 1: Exploring Personal Connections with Materials
- Worksheet 2: Reflections on Completed Jewelry and Personal Adornment

Materials

- Found objects such as plastic, twigs, seeds, feathers, stones, glass, shells
- Recycled materials such as newspaper, plastic, cardboard, tin cans, wire, beads, buttons
- A variety of feathers and beads
- Pencils, rulers
- Sketchbooks
- Tools for cutting wire and plastic
- Newspapers, cardboard, metal scraps, foam board, balsa wood
- Glue, double sided tape, wire, string, rope, staples, leather, twister ties, yarn



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

(one 45 minute class period)

Invite students to discuss the elements and defining characteristics of personal adornment and/or jewelry. Make use of these and similar prompts: Are there certain materials out of which jewelry must be made? Can something be jewelry if it is made from trash or recycled objects? Is there an optimal size or shape? What about how it “wears?” Should it open and close? Does it need to tell a story or communicate ideas and/or information? Does anyone in your family wear jewelry? Do you wear jewelry? What are you expressing with your jewelry?

As students address these and other questions, urge them to provide examples that they have seen or that are in the classroom.

Before Viewing

Prior to viewing the segment, tell students that they will view videos about American contemporary jewelry artists, Harriete Estel Berman, Jesse Monongya and Gabrielle Gould. Explain that each artist uses different sources for their materials, why they select the materials they use, and how they are inspired by different traditions and ideas of jewelry and jewelry making. Suggest that as they view the video segments, students keep in mind their discussion of the defining characteristics of a piece of jewelry or personal adornment and why these artists have chosen the materials they use.

After Viewing

(Video and discussion: one 45 minute class period)

Explain that since people tend to decorate objects and spaces around them, it should come as no surprise that people also decorate themselves. From early times, humans have found ways to adorn, or decorate, their bodies, focusing on the face, ears, nose, eyes, and hair, as well as arms, legs, hands, and feet. As with most personal adornment, materials and design have



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significance and meaning. Jewelry, head and hair pieces, sashes, badges and accessories are examples of personal adornment.

- What other kinds of personal adornment can you think of?
- In what ways do these artists have personal connections to what they make?
- In what ways does the artists' jewelry look familiar to what you have seen or worn?
- How does Harriete Estel Berman make her jewelry?
- How does Gabrielle Gould make her jewelry?
- How does Jesse Monongya make his jewelry?
- Review the jewelry making materials, tools and techniques observed during the video segments. (The artists use found and/or recycled materials from their natural environments of different objects, sizes, textures, colors, and origin).
- Review the process each artist engages in when creating their jewelry. (While planning and designing, each artist allows their ideas to evolve and change; they create sketches of the separate pieces and then put them together for the completed piece.)
- Refer to what each artist says about working with ideas. Help students understand that the artist often begins with an idea, is inspired by traditions or personal experiences and allows for their ideas to change during the process of working.
- What seems to be important to the artists in creating their jewelry?

If necessary, review the segments where they describe their jewelry, how each piece of jewelry is made, and how it is inspired. How did the artist incorporate traditional and nontraditional materials and techniques in the process?

Studio Experience

(five or more 45-minute class periods)

Provide students with their studio challenge: *Create a piece of jewelry or another object that can be used for personal adornment, uses found and/or recycled materials and that conveys an idea or message.*

Ask students to collect and bring in found and/or recycled materials to add to your art room collection and use for their project.

Students will need to identify an idea or message with which they will work and express through their jewelry.



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Remind students that their jewelry might feature something they care about deeply, like the environment, animal rights, social issues, politics, etc. Their jewelry can tell a story or convey a message. Suggest that they return to one of the artists' websites and pay attention to the ideas they have explored in their jewelry making. Ask students to brainstorm with each other for ideas and techniques.

Small sticks, buttons, beads, stones, shells, and other objects can be glued, sewn, or wrapped in place.

Ask students how they see the potential for beauty in ordinary objects/materials?

Provide students with **Worksheet 1: Exploring Personal Connections with Materials**. Once they've settled on an idea, have students sketch the form of their jewelry with notes about how it will be constructed.

Remind them to explore possible ways to construct their jewelry and to see how the parts will fit together. Provide plastic, metal and cardboard scraps, tape, glue, paperclips, wire, etc. Materials/objects can be layered or linked together. Remind them to consider what elements they will repeat within their artwork.

As students work on their projects, ask students to consider whether the various materials and design decisions support the meaning. Remind students that if they want to communicate ideas and/or feelings with their artwork, they will need to be aware of how the consumer/viewer might experience and wear it.

CLOSING STRATEGIES

Reflection

Provide students with **Worksheet 2: Reflections on Completed Jewelry and Personal Adornment**. Invite students to share their reflections. Are they pleased with how their jewelry turned out? What surprised them? Do they feel that every aspect of the object of adornment or jewelry contributes to its meaning?

Ask students, How might you display your personal adornment object/jewelry and those made by your classmates to show how they are part of a long tradition?

Invite students to work in pairs to "try on" each other's jewelry. Pairs should discuss what it is like to "experience" the jewelry. In what ways did the consumer's experience meet your expectations? What were you hoping for that did not happen?

Assessment

By the end of this lesson students should be able to:

- Describe characteristics of and purposes of jewelry and personal adornment.
- Compare and contrast jewelry and other forms of personal adornment inspired by found and/or recycled materials.
- Articulate personal and symbolic associations with a range of materials.



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- Create jewelry or other forms of personal adornment with personal meaning and that communicates a message.

Additional Resources

craftinamerica.org/artist/jan-yager

[vogue.com/article/sustainable-jewelry-brands](https://www.vogue.com/article/sustainable-jewelry-brands)

Extensions

An additional lesson could feature looking at the work of other artists, and finding out about the materials used in their construction and the meaning behind the materials and designs.

Authors

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Worksheet #1: Exploring Personal Connections with Materials

Artists often choose to work with materials because of their personal connections and associations with those materials. Use the following prompts to explore your own personal connections with materials. Write your responses to these prompts below or in your sketchbook.

1. Exploring Family Associations

Jesse Monongya has strong connections to his grandfather and the tradition of making jewelry that goes back to his ancestors.

- Who makes something in your family?
- Has this person taught you or others how to make it?
- Is this a family tradition?
- What family “making” traditions can you think of?

2. Exploring Associations with Ideas and Feelings

Harriete Estel Berman chooses objects from popular culture to express ideas about women’s issues, and plastic containers to emphasize our destruction of the environment. Gabriele Gould chooses feathers and natural materials because of her connection to nature—a life-long connection going back to her childhood.

For each of the following items, list your associations with them. Think about your immediate reaction, as well as the people, places, things, feelings, and ideas that come to mind. Add other items to the list and record your associations.

OBJECTS	REACTIONS & ASSOCIATIONS (your reaction; people, places, things, feelings, and ideas)
Pinecones	
Twigs	
Feathers	
Drinking straws	
Seashells	
Bolts, screws, washers, other hardware items	
Wishbones	
Acorns	



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Shoelaces	
Watchband	
Plastic bottles	
Plastic bottle caps	
Ribbons	
Velvet fabric	
Yarn	
String	
Wire	
Paper clips	
Pearls	
Brightly colored beads	

3. Create a list of materials you might use in your jewelry. Record the associations you make with those materials. What ideas or messages do the materials evoke?
4. Which are your favorites, and why?
5. What are some ways you might work with these materials? (wrap, bend, twist, sew together, paint, etc.)
6. Sketch some ideas here or in your sketchbook. Work out construction details as you imagine creating the piece.



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Worksheet 2: Reflections on Completed Jewelry and Personal Adornment

Working with a partner or on your own, discuss and record your thoughts about your completed piece of jewelry or other form of personal adornment.

Describe or draw your completed artwork:

What materials did you use to create this artwork? Why did you choose each?

Which materials did you find the most interesting to use and why?

How did you construct the piece? What problems, if any, did you encounter along the way?
How did you resolve them?

What do you like best about what you have created? Why?

What would you change? Why?

What would you want others to know about your completed work?

How might you present your work for public viewing and appreciation? What would include in a statement that viewers would read while considering your finished work?