

## “The core & the shell”

*“Guiding methods for independent jewellery makers.”*

**estela saez vilanova 2011**

*To my friend Natalya*

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# 1. Background

I was born in Spain in 1977. Currently I live and work in Amsterdam and have been making jewellery for 15 years. Since 2001, I have exhibited and sold my work in international art jewellery galleries, and since 2009 assisted Ruudt Peters in his Summer School (Netherlands) and taught jewellery workshops all over the world.

My first educational encounter with this discipline began when I studied jewellery in the “Escola Massana” in Barcelona (1996-2001) under the guidance of Ramon Puig Cuyas, a well-known jewellery artist. After finishing my studies I worked in the jewellery industry as a junior designer and performed bench work at several ateliers in Spain, where I was able to utilize and improve my technical skills. In 2005 after a short residency in the “Hochschule fur Gestaltung” in Pforzheim, I understood that I wanted to explore more deeply the artistic side of jewellery. So, I left behind the commercial jewellery work and moved to Holland to begin an apprenticeship of two years with the master jewellery artist, Ruudt Peters. Since my move to Holland, I have been involved in this niche art jewellery world, developing my own jewellery series. In 2009, I moved to Germany to pursue a Master of Arts in Jewellery Design and Stone Cutting.

I wrote this guide without any pretention of thinking that my opinion is the only way of directing professional growth. Understand this text as my personal point of view that any one of us can deduce to its own needs. This guide does not pretend to reveal mystical truth or give compulsory instructions on approaching life after professional studies. From now on I would like to wish you a comfortable reading. I hope that you will take advantage of my experiences and passions that move beyond making tangible work.

# 2. Introduction

At present the jewellery maker is not just a person who is enclosed in the workshop concentrating on the process and production of jewellery making for a client. Today a jeweller develops the necessary skills to promote and manage him/herself in the international context. Strengthening these two core principles of the practice will provide those just entering the field a valuable help and opportunity in achieving success on international arena. The two core principles consist of making work -jewellery or else- within the studio and creating a connection with the outside world.

The purpose of this proposal is to present potential steps and decisions a young jeweller can make in order to successfully begin their career. These results are based on my personal reflections from the past fifteen years of studio explorations, professional involvement with art projects, jewellery galleries and the industry. There are two main sections of this guide. First section focuses on the creative process itself and my development as a jeweller. Second section is devoted to the engagement with the professional world outside of the studio and educational environment.

In addition, I include quotations from seven interviews conducted with emerging and established jewellers. The goal behind the inclusion of the case studies is to elucidate that there are diverse paths to successful and meaningful participation in the art jewellery scenario. It is important that the reader realizes that this guide is a cooking recipe whereon the ingredients came together from several years of experience while travelling from one country to another and distilling the best of each tradition and artist met during this travel.

### 3. Making work

[Vilhena Manuel, "Do you speak jewellery? C-Choice]"*Jewels make jewellers*"

Indeed the pieces we make are what acknowledge us as jewellers despite of the time we spend to create a connection outside of the studio. Through our work we get to know ourselves better and, as a result, reflect the inner voice within the pieces. Our character and interests have to be reflected within the jewellery we produce, everything counts and dictates the authenticity of each maker.

[Vilhena Manuel, "Do you speak jewellery?" I-Individuality]"*We, as artist jewellers have no conscious control whatsoever over what we do. The sooner we accept this, the sooner something really new can happen. In this manner we can overpass any compromise, be it technical or ideological.*"

Especially since a vocation in jewellery is a lifelong process it is vital that we begin questioning why we perform it early on. How does our work reflect upon, questions and connects with the circumstances we live in? What do we make? Why? For who do we make? These should be the basic questions that any jeweller asks her/himself.

The question of quality differs from one person to another. Good pieces of jewellery should have a balance of form, material and concept according to the chosen aesthetics. Judgement of quality, of course, also varies according to the taste of the maker.

However, quality work proves to be timeless to the future generations while still reflecting the circumstances it was created in. Finally, what we want to make and show to the world is a personal choice and besides being a sincere effort, there are no frontiers to define what is best or worst.

As Ramon Puig Cuyas mentions in one of the personal interviews performed, "*to be a good sailor, a good doctor or a good jeweller, commitment with what one makes is central*". Our attitude and commitment towards the work always determines the contribution we make to this discipline and our very own development. By accepting these compromises we fulfil a vision of our choice, creating a world with its own logic. From being consequent to being rational, to taking the craziest of paths, the sincerity and intensity of these choices counts and dictates the authenticity of each maker.

### 3.1. The time spent in the workshop

According to the interviews done during my research, it became apparent that after finishing school it is essential to find our own or shared atelier and work in it daily; this will encourage us to go on. In the book *“The craftsman”*, Richard Sennett suggests that the workshop is the craftsman’s home. This cannot be more real. Which maker hasn’t spent more hours in the workshop than home? In fact, a certain dependency develops towards the space we work in. Is a room next to the kitchen as good as a studio outside the house? You should judge for yourself, of course. Working “home” is a good solution to start with for many; it feels comfortable and it is cheap. However, working at home can make one become less productive in contrast to working in an external space. An external space allows us to have full concentration and thoughts concerning the work. The possibility of taking mental and physical distance when we finish a day of labour is highly recommended and healthy. If this can be achieved in a private home, fantastic!

The time spent in the workshop is one of the most exciting parts and, in my opinion, probably the most intense of the whole process of becoming a jeweller. Not just because we have to create, experiment with materials and research a subject matter, but rather because we need to understand how we grow as persons and how we create a language that moves beyond any verbal communication.

The time of intense enclosure in the studio while conceiving and developing work, whether one-of-a-kind or production, is the necessary foundation that gives character and essence to our jewellery. The work is our presentation card and will speak for us in the future. Today, when we think we are discovering something original and new, we are indeed rediscovering and giving new values to what is already there. But to achieve that is not easy; there does not exist a universal formula to implement.

[Sennett Richard *“The Craftsman”*, (191)] *“The artist is one instance of the risk of depression entailed by the workings of the human body solitude”*

During the time spent in the workshop, all kind of thoughts pop up in our minds. From one second to another, we can jump from happiness directly to real sadness or frustration. This is the feeling of emptiness as well as the sensation of achievement. The ones who already stepped into the world of making have experienced the loneliness of the studio and recognize how easy it is to avoid the commitment to it. Yet solitude is a valuable tool that enables us concentrate and go deeper within our work.

[Eichenberg Iris, Personal Interview 2] *“When there is confusion you have to sit in it and not run away from it. Something like learn how to travel without knowing where the train stops because the travel might be much more intensive that the destination itself”*

When developing a body of work, there always comes a time when we find ourselves totally stuck; it feels as though we are trapped in a black hole. A

moment like that brings us to a stop. When this happens, it is significant to develop procedures that will help you move beyond this feeling of entrapment. For example, you may change the materials of your work, try new techniques and move to another room or a new corner of the studio. In my latest work after an exhaustive period I finally reallocate to the wooden workshop and freed myself to working on a large scale. (Fig.1)



(fig.1) Working in the wooden workshop 2010, Estela Saez

[Paz Octavio, *“El Laberinto de la Soledad”*, (72)] *“We born alone, we die alone, and we spend half of our life time searching for company”*

The persistence and the concentration while working in the studio alone in silence or working grouped, dividing tasks and exchanging ideas (Fig.2-3) gives us the necessary tools to begin achieving something unique and innovative. Yet we also must learn to make decisions about what we make and sift through many possibilities. Being able to judge the level of quality and self-comfort within the work further enables us to take steps forward and make breakthroughs. The process is slow; do not be afraid when facing 7-10 years normally required achieving the ripeness in your personal work.

To make things themselves is not difficult. Rather putting us in the condition to make it and finding the right state of mind is the difficulty. But it is amazing to experience this moment when working with our hands, the moment at which the world around us stops, the moment when we happen to be more fragile as persons, the moment when we come back to the very beginning of human history, the moment when we create something from nothing, the moment when we find the essence of our environment.

[Gimenez Carmen & Gale Mathew, *“Constantine Brancusi, The essence of the things”*, (12)] *“In order to make free and universal art one must be good to create it, a king to control it and a slave to make it”*



(fig.2) One-person atelier Estela Saez



(fig.3) Atelier Ted Noten

### 3.2. Learning new techniques

[Unger Marjan, Lindemann W. & FH Trier/Idar Oberstein *“Thinking Jewellery/SchmuckDenken”*, (311)] *“Many jewellery-making techniques are basically the same as they were thousands of years ago.”*

Within the jewellery discipline the majority of techniques had not radically changed for hundreds of years until the recent developments in computer-aided printing and laser technologies. Should we continue to use age-old techniques or embrace the innovative, fresh possibilities of technology, which have no direct connection to the history of our field? Should we be sceptical of going beyond the tradition when making art jewellery or, on the other hand, sticking to traditions too strongly?

[Borgegard Sara, Personal Interview 7] *“(…) As a good example, Ted Noten works very conceptual and questions tradition and materials, but in his work you see the sensitive work of a goldsmith, the final touch.”*

Creating and finding our own techniques is essential. This goal applies not only to material techniques but also to conceptual.

[Vilhena Manuel, *“Do you speak jewellery? I-Individuality”*] *“Some artists develop a technical approach, others prefer the symbolical path, others the conceptual intellectual approach, others, follow the transformation of two dimensional sketches or drawing into three-dimensional pieces of jewellery, some look forward into the future by experimenting with newly developed materials or techniques, most combine some of this or others features in the creation of their finished work. All of them are valid if they fulfil the scope they are used for - making jewellery.”*

Learning as many techniques as possible gives us both professional versatility as well as the ability to better express that which we wish to communicate through our work. The development of fresh skills, both conceptual and technical, must become an essential part of our practice. This could be approached in several ways.

For example I chose to acquire new skills by physically relocating to cities and towns with their own distinct histories, outlooks and traditions towards jewellery, moving to Idar Oberstein allowed me to learn the history and technique behind the cutting and polishing of stones. (Fig.4)



(fig.4) Cutting stones workshop, Fachhochschule Idar Oberstein, Germany



A local and original technique linked to our own culture and roots can be enough to go on in order to produce a good piece of jewellery. However it is essential to be open to new ways of making, which are radically different from our own. Working in many different workshops, broadens the range of techniques and knowledge. Being able to do so opens a whole new world of possibilities, challenges and we well train mind and hands to problem solving. Without any doubt, both choices -local and global- are equally good but the combination of our own cultural techniques and the fresh *modus operandi* will allow us to reach our goals, find great results and make a difference within an exploding field.

In the book *"The Craftsman,"* Richard Sennett pays special attention to medieval goldsmiths who were mobile and entrepreneurial in spirit. Out of many medieval craftsmen goldsmiths were the only ones who learned from place to place, from workshop to workshop the most valuable secrets of their discipline and their masters. Flexible workers who move where the work is forge a strong sense of community.

It is strongly recommend to any student to spend time during their development making an internship or apprenticeship. Institutions offer us with invaluable connections with established jewellers and companies. Besides learning new techniques and methods, these opportunities enrich our creative process because we enter a room where we are encouraged to think from another perspective.

And now a little about materials... Investigating a new material is not easy, especially since some materials speed up the working process while others slow it down. Every material needs to find its place, balance within the form and concept. Experience helps us recognize the capacities and limitations of a material. Materials talk and, in fact, we have to let them talk. Successful investigation is always a combination of utilizing a material to its extreme while revealing its hidden possibilities. We can appreciate this verity in the work of Rut-malin Barklund from Sweden. The cardboard in her pieces is totally unrecognizable; she brings the material to another level, not revealed in its usual state. (Fig.5)



(fig.5)Pendant "Untitled" 2007, MDF, iron, Rut-malin Barklund

[Vilhena Manuel, "Do you speak jewellery?" C-Choice] *"(...) Suppose however, and this is my belief, that this choice of materials is actually a choice of the materials, that is, the materials themselves choose the artist they see fitter to forward their qualities and splendour (...)"*

Sometimes the material randomly falls into our hands. Maybe we like it. Maybe we hate it. Or we end up working with it just because there is nothing else around. The taken steps can be intuitive and this is essential; it is a working symbiosis. Breaking the hierarchy of materials is in fact a breath of fresh air for the hermetic relationship jewellery has with precious materials.

### 3.3. Apply critical thinking towards creation

From the beginning of our practice we often analyze the work and thoughts we generate during the creative process. Why do we do what we do? How can we do it better? Are we really at the point we want to reach?

[Eichenberg Iris, Pinchuk Natalya, Peters Ruudt, Noten Ted, Borgegard Sara, Personal Interviews 2,3,4,6,7] *“How can we improve the question of jewellery?”*

*Why don't we question about life?*

*Why should we be adding more objects to an already fully world?*

*Are the objects we make dialoguing with other objects, daily life?*

*What role takes jewellery within the world?”*

It is very important that as we develop our studio practice we give space to critical thinking and decisive actions. We need to acknowledge our positions towards the jewellery we make. When making decisions, we should know why and be aware of choices available to us. This may sound logical but in reality it is not that easy to integrate this line of thinking into practice. In addition to learning to be critical about our work, we must also be able to talk and write about it. In this way the jeweller will document his or her story and place it within the history of the field. Educational institutions should provide the necessary tools and framework that improve the level of critical discourse amongst students and consequently the field. This may be accomplished by creating a protective environment that encourages analytical thinking and the asking of hard questions. Especially today, when Master of Arts and PhD in jewellery are becoming exceedingly common worldwide, a good combination of theoretical and practical work will professionalize the makers and the discipline itself.

[Kapuscinski Ryzard, *“Viajes con Herodoto”, (308)*] *“So Herodotus, with the passion and enthusiasm he had since he was a child, goes in search of these worlds. He discovers something fundamental: that there are many and each of them is unique (...). Thus we need to know them all, because their cultures work like mirrors where we can reflect our own. Thanks to that, we can better comprehend ourselves, since we cannot define our identity unless we confront it with others first”.*

Previously we discussed how important it is to fly away from the nest. At the end of the day, it is not only the techniques we learn that matter but also the fact that we learn to be open to new ways of thinking and conceptions of working. This allows our brain to stay active when exposed to new cultures, languages and priorities—all positive aspects that give perspective and hold a mirror against our work. Therefore the capacity to self-criticize, while changes the angle of analysis, allows us to gain better grasp of the things we make.

Also, an exchange of knowledge and opinions with other makers, outside or within the field, will help us survive these personal battles in the studio. After we finish school, it is important to stay in touch now and then with the group of people we exchanged ideas with during our studies. Sharing our process, doubts and positions will keep us grounded and provide a good context for critical analysis. This can be done in many ways—we can share a studio together with other jewellers or artists, generate public discussion groups, invite into our studios friends, professionals from other disciplines, or even people unrelated to the arts.

### 3.4. Peripheral projects beyond jewellery

Participating in peripheral projects beyond our discipline widens the scope of our expertise and gives fresh perspective on our work. Additionally, peripheral projects create a bridge between inside (personal, creative space) and outside worlds. Peripheral projects should not be regarded as art projects only, of course. Painting, gardening, cooking, dancing, for example, are healthy and honest to others and us. Believe it or not these other interests will reflect upon the work we make. Independent art jewellery discipline, in reality, is still a fairly small world. Sometimes we do not look beyond it for inspiration. We are conscious about what others do within it to the point where the developments within the field become like a drug. Therefore, because this world can entrap us, it is good to step in and to step out of it by doing other projects. Maybe the result of this endeavour will not be immediately tangible in our jewellery work but rather kept in the unconscious, ready to pop up the moment we expect it the least.

[Peters Ruudt, Personal Interview 4] *“If you are good in making jewellery, you are able to participate in bigger constellations; be good in one subject and step out to another one, this is a good way to be open-minded.”*

In that way by doing external projects everything we perform is a change on society. We are jewellers in our body and mind, but why not make a step outside of what is familiar? Every adventure will find its way, challenging us along the path and bringing us in closer contact with the surrounding culture. Some of us will end up working with jewellery full-time while others will sustain themselves by engaging with projects and events on the periphery or even outside the jewellery scene. Learning how to creatively problems solve in many different situations is essential in the contemporary world. Creative processes are universal and what we experience, learn in one set of circumstances can be carried into another discipline.

I had performed an Art project last year called MITSUKO. This project had nothing to do with jewellery. For one month together with the group Mejzo and I, opened a shop in the middle of Figueres, Spain with the peculiarity that during that month the shop was open to the public but the goods never arrived. Our project created small moments of confusion within the daily life of people who came into the empty store. This confusion is something that we, as makers, encounter during the creative process over and over again. (Fig.6-7)



(fig.6) Photo detail MITSUKO 2009  
Mejzo & Estela Saez, Spain

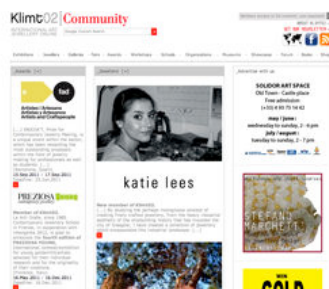


(fig.7) Photo detail, MITSUKO  
2009 Mejzo & Estela Saez, Spain

Some of us are going to end up working full time with jewellery, however for others, projects and events outside of the jewellery scene will be as most important for their sustainability, but this peripheral projects will persuade us since everything we make is our own. Imagine for example, that at some point we decide to become educators, in this position we also need to open the extent for our students or followers, then we have to improve several skill such as writing, organizing, constantly finding things that might evoke or intrigue them. Create other possibilities that at the end of the day reflect on us, the creative process are universal and can be applied to other disciplines.

## 4.Connection with the outside world

Besides studio work, jewellers must also develop the necessary skills to promote and manage their work within the international context. There are diverse paths to successful and meaningful participation in the art jewellery scenario. It is recommended to participate in symposiums and jewellery related events in order to start a bridge with other makers while enlarging our own scope of knowledge. Central to our development is public presentation of work via solo and group exhibitions. Yet, another kind of sharing happens through the Internet (Fig.8)



(fig.8) Web Platform [Http://www.klimt02.com](http://www.klimt02.com)

Blogs, Facebook and Instagram for example, provide jewellers different opportunities in contrast to physical spaces. Today there are many makers and when people recognize our work it helps, even if only in a short term. All these activities make up a larger process that allows jewellers to create a connection outside of the studio; however, the jewellery works themselves always remain the very essential catalysts for things to happen.

[Puig Cuyas Ramon, Personal Interview 5] *"(...) If we do not make visible what we do it is a waste of time, one needs a minimum of connections."*

Robert Smit mentioned in his interview that 30 years ago there were virtually no art jewellery galleries in existence. As a result, networks were built through parties, letters and few international exhibitions like "Schmuck " in Munich. These were the only platforms to see the works of independent jewellers around the world. At present the biggest shift in how we present our works has been the prevalence of the Internet and a growing number of jewellery galleries opening up throughout the globe. It is easy to contact these galleries through the Internet, however, in order to receive an invitation for an exhibit of work in physical space, meeting with gallery representatives in person will be more productive. Internet and low cost airlines (Fig.9) make a difference in smoothing travel around the world, allowing us to show up in person to exhibitions and jewellery related events for little money. Due to this international network we have the possibility to reach and collaborate with professionals of our discipline worldwide. More and more people are successfully manoeuvring this globally connected jewellery discipline and this is certainly a part of our professional existence that is here to stay.



*(fig.9) Ryanair, Low cost Airline, Ireland*

Being part of this jeweller network makes us feel good and gives us comfort. We share with our fellow members our works and thoughts as we recognize that we belong to a larger movement. Some countries have better conditions for successfully starting a career as an independent jeweller. Holland and Germany are good examples. These countries have a very specific cultural climate in which artists are protected and have many possibilities to take risks and invest in promoting their work all over the world. They have strong communities of independent jewellers, galleries and museums and the governments support the artist and even galleries financially. While this climate is a good starting point there are at times secondary affects of, for example, problems of quality. Wherever one lives and whatever opportunities are available, it is still the artist who starts the process of promoting ones work and takes the responsibility to do so.

#### 4.1.Exhibiting

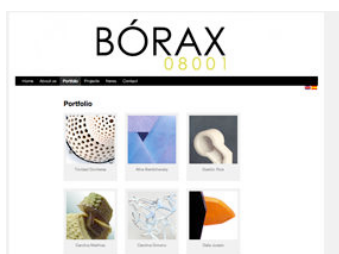
It is essential that during our development as jewellers we receive feedback to what we produce in the atelier. Participating in group and solo exhibitions offers this opportunity.

Most of the time during our studies, we start to show our outcomes internationally by participating in grouped. Our educators teach us to promote our work and support us as we develop an identity of a maker. Curators and artists themselves organize exhibitions; some of them want to reach a specific audience like museums or build up their own story. They make plans that sometime the artist cannot fulfil. But does a curator hold a social position, a new sophisticated intelligence? Sometimes makers that act like curators in fact express a personal bias. Nevertheless throughout the history of contemporary art, artists have selected their fellow friends and colleagues to show work with.

Solo exhibitions in contrast speak differently. They are the result of one maker's long and deliberate investigation of a body of work to be shown in one grouping. Normally this is a dream for any maker. For the spectator this is an opportunity to view a unique vision and be challenged by it. Solo exhibitions are performed less frequently and therefore it is important to put the best and most professional care into these occasions. Yet solo presentations should not be the only goal, especially for those who recently conclude their education. Keep an open mind for new possibilities and opportunities outside of the established paths.

[Noten Ted, Personal Interview 6] *"Who told us that we were not allowed to work with others, either jewellers or professionals from other disciplines?"*

After finishing school one can also form a collective of jewellers. The advantages of a collective are great in the beginning because it is easier to speak about the work of others than just your own, plan exhibitions together as a group and approach galleries for representation. Working in a group binds people together and allows for the sharing of information. Jewellery groups have existed for a long time. *"Peu de Reina"* and *"Borax"* (Fig.10) are good examples both from Spain, of jewellers who decided to stick together after their studies (both are no longer active). Although working as a group in a collective is absolutely worth it and offers many rewards, after years of collaboration the power of the group weakens and eventually the individual contributors re-direct their strategies to independent and diverse positions.



(fig.10) Spanish Jewellery Group

It is not only in galleries and museums that our work should be seen. Several new settings are becoming slowly yet continuously popularized. For example

“Op Voorraad” was an initiative of three Dutch based jewellers that brought the work of about 200 independent makers from all over the world (Fig.11). Blogs, Instagram and Facebook are also challenging the standards of dissemination. However the possibility to look closer at the pieces in real remains unique, offering an experience impossible to duplicate within any other circumstance.



(fig.11) Ineke Heerkens, Jantje Fleischhut, Jeannette Jansen [Http://](http://)

When choosing to participate in exhibitions, it is important to have a set of criteria that direct your decision-making. Knowing answers to simple questions can be very helpful in establishing or understanding your goals. Why do you want to participate in an exhibition? What are the costs and goals behind your participation? Do you get inspired when grouped together with other artists? Do you like the subject matter and would like to expand your work in that direction? Are you open to taking risks regarding new propositions? Are you learning to say ‘no’? Why do you want to participate? Do you want to sell? Does the concept of your work fit within the proposal? Do you sympathise with the organizers and that is enough? Do you participate because you want to enlarge your resume?

[Pinchuk Natalya, Personal Interview 3] *“I wanted to participate in everything. I was a little bit stupid. Later on I became pickier. I tried to select exhibitions with the kind of people and ideas I wanted to associate myself with. I also went for more prestige. Working in academia taught me to be calculating. I am not naïf about how the art field works. Having a career in teaching you get to learn all those things.”*

Especially at the beginning of one’s career, makers tend to participate in everything that comes their way. This is totally understandable and, in fact, this is how the wheel in the discipline works, galleries and makers have mutually agreed on this structure. But it would be wise to question our excessive eagerness and ask of it to have patience. We do not have to be afraid of missing out on an opportunity if saying no to it is the right decision. After over participation in exhibitions, there may be negative consequences, the quality of the work we produce can suffer and we may be left stressed and burnt out.

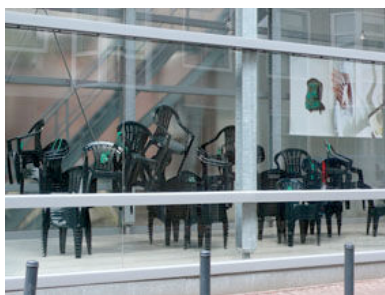
[Eichenberg Iris, Personal Interview 2] *“To learn how to say no is important especially in the beginning of your career. If your work is not mature, depending on the step you make, it can damage you forever.”*

After the initial excitement about participation in shows wanes, it is essential to understand that exhibiting work publicly is an excellent way to obtain feedback. The feedback may be either negative or positive but it is vital towards recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of ones creations, learning how to put

together an exhibition, and reflecting the outcome of these performances. The requirements and standards that our discipline employs to move the field forward need to be balanced with the needs and abilities of the maker so as to avoid excessive stress and fatigue. Of course we need a certain amount of exposure to share our results but I am talking about over exhibiting without much care beyond that. We can become unfocused and driven by negative energy while satisfying expectations that are an outcome of a stupid dynamic. It is as if we stopped working for ourselves but rather began working for others. There must be a balance and plenty of patience. I had experienced myself some of these outside pressures and expectations. Now I hang a big poster with the following words above my working table: "Learn to say 'no' and be patient. There is a long, long way to go..."

[Borgegard Sara, Personal Interview 7] *"Simple exhibitions can be fresh where you meet the jewellery and there are no extras."*

It is not easy to analyze what makes a good exhibition since it is a matter of individual taste but we can start by talking about some important ingredients such as passion, intelligence, originality and dedication. An exhibition can be simple or complicated but encountering something we did not expect and could not predict according to our aesthetics is remarkable. It can be the best 10 pieces you have ever made or a series of 100 works made with the same intensity. A body of work that reveals many layers, that teaches us, surprises and, why not, connects and concerns the everyday life is interesting looking for opportunities to get new thoughts and run to the studio to begin making. But what makes a good exhibition is not only about the work it is also about the setting. How does the jewellery relate to the larger context of its presentation setting, to the colour of the room, the light of the space? For example in the exhibition *"Groenplaats"*, the jeweller Ineke Heerkens contextualizes her jewellery throughout the installation. (Fig.12)



(fig.12) Installation *"Groenplaats"* 2007 Ineke Heerkens, Gallery Marzee, Holland

I would like to end this chapter by also emphasizing how important it is to exhibit your work outside of the jewellery scenario. Besides challenging ourselves to present our work in unfamiliar circumstance, going outside of our field also has a positive effect on the surrounding society. Unfortunately, most people around us today do not know that we exist since the jewellery on the streets by and large is very conservative. The public has difficulty to recognize that there is an intellectual thought behind crafts. Explaining our process and



collaborating with more people outside of the field will help. When people are able to understand what we make, as makers, we have to feel very fortunate.

## 4.2. The gallery system

[Peters Ruudt, Personal Interview 4] *“The ideal world would be to have only one gallery, that represents your work, gives a salary to the artist and buy the pieces. They would take the risk and this is the concept that I like the most that they commit to. I do not like to be a wall papers in the gallery.”*

As Marjan Unger mentions in the book “Thinking Jewellery/SchmuckDenken,” the works of independent jewellers are mainly distributed via galleries that exist within the cultural sector.

Today, a number of independent jewellers believe that some jewellery galleries are becoming more professional and are beginning to function closer to how an art gallery does. Galleries invest in the jewellers by compiling catalogues, hosting openings in their galleries, selling pieces to collectors etc. And this has been happening to established jewellers already for a long time. Jewellery galleries are good in generating symbolic value for artists, closer to ego building than real financial investment for the future. They build recognition for the jewellers and a feeling that a certain kind quality control has been achieved.

Yet, the work of jewellery galleries is central to an artist’s career, an opinion shared with the majority of the professionals I based my study cases on. Their function continues to be extremely important as physical platforms for the jewellers to present their work. They are podiums on which we can showcase our work in physical space and real time. Seeing work on the computer screen is something totally different. Would you ever buy something unique and precious, an art piece, for example, via the Internet? The work we make has to be touched and seen in person.

Galleries promote jewellers; they present the work at fairs, make publicity contacts with magazines and other organizations. By doing so, they relieve the task of making our work visible to the world. Should these tasks be different and, perhaps, done with more intensity? Without any doubt it is always possible to do more, but it depends on the needs and possibilities of the galleries and the innovative proposals of the makers themselves. Many jewellers agree that galleries should expand their scope of dissemination and take more risks in order to bring our discipline into a higher level.

[Puig Cuyas Ramon, Personal Interview 5] *“The work of the galleries today is very important...however there are many shops, which are called galleries...a gallery should have a good selection of artists, a good space, make promotion, and diffuse the work. They should create good criteria to the public and most of them confuse the spectator.”*

In fact, there have been some repeated rumours that we are approaching the end of the jewellery gallery era because many begin resembling shopkeepers with no

bigger goals than simply trying to survive and stay afloat. Well, I believe, there is a part of truth in that.

[Noten Ted, Personal Interview 6] *“The work of the Galleries is 10% of my importance with the exception of my gallery in the United States, which puts my work into another perspective, Design Basel and Design Miami fair. (...) What is the meaning of participating within the jewellery field exhibitions if they already know me?”*

Due to this discontent on the part of the jewellers, the matters have improved. In recent years, galleries strengthened their directions and choices of work. Indeed, a few jewellery galleries recently began presenting the works of independent jewellers in Design Miami and Design Basel (Fig.13). The risk is taken. It might seem like a little step but it is certainly a big one for our practice. We need to recognize that we still are very much a small and closed in community. This is clearly demonstrated by a normal occurrence of nearly everyone in attendance at an opening being a jeweller. Presenting our work at big art fairs is the beginning of a new era with an opportunity to let the world know that we exist.



(fig.13) Design Basel, Installation "Anima Platina" 2010, Ruudt Peters, Gallery Caroline van Hoek, Belgium

At a time when we decide that our work is outstanding, it is very likely that we will start a professional collaboration with jewellery galleries. This connection can be done in many ways. First, research all of the existing galleries and analyze where your work fits best. Are the other artists represented in the gallery speaking the same language as yours? Is the space adequate? You need to question if your work fits well in the context of the gallery. All this questioning should be done before you approach and begin a relationship with a gallery. Once you find the best matching galleries, you can start to approach them, show your work and keep them updated. This kind of relationship can already start while you are a student as you attend exhibitions of other jewellers and meet gallery owners and representatives.

[Eichenberg Iris, Personal Interview 2] *“Everyone has a preferred gallery. It is good to know which gallery you would like to work with. (...) While representing the artist there should be no division between the gallery and the work.”*

The relationship we establish with the person who runs the gallery has to be special because, after all, the gallery owner is the one who communicates to the potential buyers the passion we put in our pieces. There must be a special connection without forgetting, of course, that at the end of the day it is a business relationship. But if your work is rejected for the time being, it is worth to ask for

feedback. Asking why your work was not chosen can help you understand what is missing. Sometimes galleries themselves approach the makers. Typically, the gallery owner spots the work at an exhibition such as “Schmuck” in Munich, where the work of established jewellers and students from all over the world can be seen annually (Fig.14).



(fig.14) “Schmuck” 2010, Handwerkerse Munich, Germany

Furthermore, especially at the beginning of our professional involvement with galleries we might doubt the high commission, questioning whether the risk the galleries take is as high as compared to ours. However, we need to understand that their work is valuable and is in balance with their pay. They spend time and effort establishing connections with collectors and museums (an impossible mission for some of us), invest into the gallery space itself, participate in art fairs and promote artists via publications, advertisements etc.

To learn in detail about working with galleries, especially when you may have no experience at all, speak freely to established jewellers on the subject matter. While in school is a perfect time to ask questions to your professors or professionals who visit your departments. Unfortunately, once more, there is no unique formula and everyone’s situation is different. Mainly, we figure things out through positive experience and mistakes.

To end up this chapter I would like to mention the subject matter of prices since it is very important and difficult to find the right recipe for it. How much we want to gain apart from the hours and materials we invest into the work? Do we want to reach a larger market and therefore price the work on the cheaper side? Should our prices be compatible with other disciplines such as painting or design?

[Noten Ted, Personal Interview 6] *“I use to price it per hours at the beginning and I compared it with my colleges within the jewellery field. Now I compared with designers otherwise I would not sell it, because people would not take my work seriously.”*

Most often, when pricing their work, jewellers try to achieve a balance between the hours they put into the jewellery and, of course, the cost of materials. Iris Eichenberg, on the other hand, spoke to me about the possibility of pricing first the core piece of a collection and the rest of the series around that number. It is also important to take into account the market prices by comparing your prices to other jewellers who are in the similar career development as you. Others

suggest that it is all about the quality of the piece and prices should be dictated by heart.

It is definitely hard work to balance content, poetry and find connection with the work we make. What is the non-economical value of our work: the invaluable and priceless condition of the pieces, artistic aura, sculptural qualities, conceptual ideas, emotional investment or aesthetic value? Ted Noten asserts that there are always individual reasons why people buy our work; they like it or they do not like it being the most simple.

[Peters Ruudt, Personal Interview 4] *"I am pricing my pieces by heart, not the hours nor the material. (...) The emotional value of my work comes 2 or 3 years after the conception of the piece emerges, little by little understanding what, why, where... when I am already ahead with another collection I am able to look over it from a better perspective."*

We need to face the reality that we may sell our works here and there but not necessarily live entirely off of the profits at the beginning of our careers. Finally taxes should be also taken into account. And if you are using gold, count it totally apart from the final commission price. This should be a regular practice amongst jewellers, especially with the prices of gold today, but for some reason galleries on a regular basis do not endorse it.

### 4.3.Symposiums, lectures & workshops

Our discipline offers us many possibilities to travel around the world and participate either as opponents or supporters of numerous symposiums, lectures and workshops. It is a fundamental part of our practice in terms of networking, gaining knowledge, transferring experience while meeting with the audience. The symposium event in April of 2010 called "Gray Area" in Mexico is an example of such an event (Fig.15).



(fig.15) Lecture "Encounters & lost encounters" Estela Saez & Franciska Kweitel, Gray Area 2010, Mexico

These events offer an opportunity to earn money, challenge ourselves with new ideas, extend our capacities towards organization and leadership, learn, transfer information and, very simply put, communicate with others. Communication with people is important since part of our work is dedicated to the solitude of the workshop. In addition such events professionalize our practice and build a reputation for the makers. When we are able to change position, by becoming a teacher or a student for a week, for example, we see ourselves from a different perspective. These events allow us to overview our work, organize things

chronologically and put our creative process into words. It is good to challenge and find new ways to present our ideas while keeping the audiences curious and interested.

When asked to participate in such events, we need to value our efforts and dedication while performing the required tasks. It is very important that we are rewarded monetarily for the execution of a lecture or workshop. As our professional careers progress our expertise changes along with the type of compensation we are offered. It is normal in the beginning of our careers to contribute ourselves to events in exchange of gaining knowledge. However, we must not forget that our discipline requires professionalism and compensation in the same way as other fields.

[Borgegard Sara, Personal Interview 7] *“In my BA I went to a workshop in Boston and since then I took all my money and holidays to work to seminars, workshops, to get to know other students and start a connection”*

These venues are excellent opportunities to create networks of future colleagues; there we will meet other jewellers, students, collectors, galleries and art historians. Taking part in these seminars or workshops during our studies allows us to meet jewellers with whom you can grow, develop and perhaps even collaborate in the future. Residences are also a good example of how to extend our knowledge, expand our network and focus our thoughts towards jewellery in a fresh way. They function as a kind of study trips and we learnt how to deal with life as jewellers, makers and artist. These opportunities enable us to research in a free way, discover new materials that can be broadened back while in the studio. Or they simply offer an opportunity to break out of our daily routine. Such experiences should not be missed. Yet as mentioned in the chapter 4.1, we have to take care not to over participate in these events as well because we may feel overwhelmed as a result. And as anything else in life, we need time to digest any excess of information, especially since our final destination is the studio and everything is reflected there.

#### 4.4. Teaching & education

At the very end of writing this thesis, I decide to include a chapter about education and teaching since both subjects are central to learning, development and sustainability of our practice. When put in a position of a teacher, it is important to question what do we want to transfer to our students, what are the goals behind our approaches and if we really are capable of appreciate students as individuals.

[Peters Ruudt, Personal Interview 4] *“I am constantly listening to myself; teaching the others is teaching myself. It is a mirror for me. Questioning questions I cannot avoid.”*

To have experience with the creative process of our work gives grounding for the central points we want to transfer to students. Some jewellers find balance in life when teaching, especially since makers' life can be pretty lonely and,

consequently, the combination of studio activity and teaching can be perfect. Teaching is interaction. It necessitates a continuous effort in understanding the choices you and others make, teaching us how to speak about our work and definitely keeping us abreast with what is happening within the field. This interface with other people's work triggers new thoughts, new ambitions and an exchange of energies.

[Smit Robert, Personal Interview 1] *"I like to teach about 15 days a year, not longer. To me it is very special and if I do it every day then you can forget about your own work. I like to give some advices to younger people. I recognize indeed the difficulty when you teach full-time, sometimes there is a loss in your jewellery making."*

In fact it is very interesting to share your development with other people on a daily base. Iris Eichenberg thinks that there is a portion of altruism in it; we feel part of something bigger than our own world, which enables us to make things happen on a larger scale. Yet, it can also drain your creative energies when not done in balance.

As instructors we must create discussions, help students discover themselves and show that there are many ways to be an artist. We have to encourage students to find their own way in thinking, intuition, choice of materials... As teachers we need to recognize what troubles a student in terms of concept or technique and give an accurate suggestions to overcome their particular situation. We should ask of students to find interesting ways to express their thoughts and to know their position towards jewellery.

Each student is different, of course. Some make slower steps, others faster. Recognizing the possibilities and talents of each student is the best way to proceed in the transfer of knowledge.

The next point I would like to touch upon concerns the fact that nowadays there are many MA programs while PhD in jewellery (Fig.16) is a relatively new situation within our field, especially in Europe.



*(fig.16)Necklace "1986 days" 2010, natural hair, PhD Kristina Spanihelova*

[Unger Marjan, Lindemann W. & FH Trier/Idar Oberstein *"ThinkingJewellery/SchmuckDenken"*, (304)]" *"(...) Too few people have studied for a doctorate in the applied arts and jewellery in particular. Nowadays, that forms a bottleneck for students and professionals who want to do a PhD, because there are almost no standards and no people to tutor and examine them."*

Even if we have doubts about the necessity of having MA and PhD programs in jewellery, we have to accept the fact that they professionalize our field, bringing the discussion amongst our peers to a higher level. Those who set out to work

towards these diplomas choose to spend time on focused research and, thus, have greater chance of achieving more interesting and in-depth results. At the same time, this focused period in our lives gives an opportunity to learn subject matters we would have never thought of or been interested in otherwise. It opens new ways to research and thinking. Within institutions, we have space to develop. This space is protected where we can try things, experiment and build up a foundation for our future.

[Noten Ted, Personal Interview 6] *"(...) There should be more quality, quality control. And there should be a selection of students."*

However these programs are not always perfect; there are problems within them that desperately need to be resolved. The jeweller, Natalya Pinchuk, points out that sometimes the craft programs in academia within United States are out of balance with realistic demands and needs of the world, promising and supporting activities that have very little meaning and connection to the non-academic environment and art milieu. Lots of programs need students to cycle through their programs to both bring income and raise prestige for the program itself but while doing aggressive recruiting fulfilling the set out quotas, teachers do not always acknowledge the realities of our field and the small market associated with it.

[Smit Robert, Personal Interview 1] *"The government organizes. I think art cannot be organized; it kills the freedom. Everything has to be systematized; academy, good teachers... Definitely to learn a technique you need an education but to develop your content you need to be free."*

Ramon Puig Cuyas believes that the system is perverted, tending to neglect the person, individuality and creativity. It is as if the system wants to domesticate the free spirit of a creative individual. And it is hard to disconnect from these systems once you are within them. However, there is a large group of educators that tries to maintain an educative process that stimulates people to have their own criteria.

During my interviews I asked participants in the case studies what would be the optimal master's program in jewellery. Below you will find a selection of the answers I received.

[Smit Robert, Personal Interview 1] *"Invite good artists so that students can get to know how they stand in front of the world... Empower the values of jewellery, discuss with them and encourage them to find their own solutions in jewellery and the world."*

[Eichenberg Iris, Personal Interview 2] *"Time and specially care. Experience in a certain life quality. To develop some charm as persons, learn how to think independently, be informed of what is going on in the world but at the same time have allergy to trends. Create a spot where they feel enough trust to take risks."*

[Pinchuk Natalya, Personal Interview 3] *"Create an environment where students will feel free to be creative problem solvers wishing to contribute meaningfully to the"*

*community, when necessary, see beyond jewellery and, at the same time, understand it for what it has been and is today. An ideal program would, first and foremost, embrace the everyday needs, problems and difficulties of individuals and societies at large, looking beyond the narcissistic art and jewellery worlds for inspiration and audience. Jewellery is the home base--nothing more, nothing less. It is not the world but rather it is part of it."*

[Peters Ruudt, Personal Interview 4] *"Similar to the 'Rijks Academy' in Amsterdam... have a studio and have talks with the best artist ever."*

[Puig Cuyas, Ramon Personal Interview 5] *"Flexibility; adjust to all necessities, stimulate better reflexion about what is art, craft, creativity etc."*

[Noten Ted, Personal Interview 6] *"More research; historical context, social context and find a system:*

*1-Reserarch like scientist 2-analyze the research 3-conclusion; 4-start designing, illustrating your research conclusions."*

[Borgegard Sara, Personal Interview 7] *"A good Master program is to have time to go deeper in to your own subject, give depth towards your working process and how you communicate it with others. It starts from where you are; either if you have been already working as a professional or while coming from your Bachelors (...)"*

## 4.5.Fame

Definition:

1.a. *Great renown*

*b. Public estimation; reputation*

2. *Archaic Rumour.*

["Fame", [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)]

I wanted to briefly mention the topic of 'fame' because it may be the consequence of your efforts to connect with the outside world. Today we are told that marketing is everything. Yet it is important to recognize that if good work is not present behind marketing, it can be a bit irritating as well. Is being famous the same as being successful? In order to be successful as an artist one needs more than one talent. Unfortunately it is not only about the work, which has to be of high calibre, but also about people skills, wardrobe, charm, friends and how we manoeuvre in our surroundings. There are definitely a lot of talented artists who make incredible works but they are in the dark and almost no one knows about them.

[Eichenberg Iris, Personal Interview 2] *"Selling air promoting oneself it is a different talent."*

Sure, we can create fame but perhaps it will be there for one day, a month or a year only and that is a pity. Nowadays the phenomena of 'fame' within our field can be understood as the result of the Internet era but it is not entirely true. If we recognize the history of art and crafts, fame has always been there. For



example, during the Renaissance if you had a merchantman representing your work, it was not necessary for an artist to have good quality work because the right connections and fame of the merchantman would bring in the best commissions.

[Pinchuk Natalya, Personal Interview 3] *"Fame becomes more important than the work. Today it is all about the noise rather than the quality of your efforts, its meaningful relationship and prodding of our cultural messes."*

Maybe if these strategies were to be directed towards meaningful production within or field and beyond, being famous may have more positive connotations. Rather than viewing 'fame' as something that adds extraordinary worth to our careers perhaps we should view fame as a metaphor for heavy empty luggage we must lug around with us. And this is not the end of it. The ones that want to be famous will have to work double hard in order to stay in the spotlight. Is that really healthy? Does that really add any value to our field? Well, judge for yourselves.

[Qtd. "Vauvenargues", www.quotationspage.com] *"You are not born for fame if you don't know the value of time."*

## 5. Case studies

In this chapter, I include a short bio of each jeweller I interviewed as well as the answers to two questions performed I find most important to share:

*Why do you make jewellery?*

*How did you start creating a connection with the outside world?*

### 5.1. Robert Smit

Born in Delft, The Netherlands in 1941. Lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

41 years making jewellery. Currently working as independent jeweller, external teacher at Alchimia Jewellery School in Florence, Italy.

[Smit Robert, Personal Interview 1]

Why do you make jewellery? *"I do not know how to do anything else. It is very simple."*

How did you start creating a connection with the outside world? *"After I finished school there were no jewellery galleries, so I did everything by myself. In 1968 I had international contacts in Hamburg and London. After being invited to Munich, a very famous rich family that owned an art gallery were interested in my work. They came, visited me in my studio and invited me to make a jewellery exhibition in England."*

## 5.2. Iris Eichenberg

Born in Gottingen, Germany in 1965. Lives and works in Detroit, USA.

23 years making jewellery. Currently working as independent jeweller, head of the Metalsmith Department at Cranbrook Academy of Arts, Bloomfield Hills, USA

[Eichenberg Iris, Personal Interview 2]

Why do you make jewellery? *"I never thought I was a jeweller. At the Rietveld Academy I saw the way people worked, the material freedom and conscious decisions was different from other departments. (...) The directness of the process... The way my work is made is more like drawing. It is testing something out, going back and forth, gaining territory..."*

How did you start creating a connection with the outside world? *"It was during school. I went to the openings to look at the work in person and meet the artists (since I do not trust looking at the work through the Internet). I was not strategic in building up a network. I was interested to know the people that surrounded me and we became "colleagues". There were no politics. I was interested in the work; I learned what was there and in which world I existed."*

## 5.3. Natalya Pinchuk

Born in Chelyabinsk, Russia in 1978. Lives and works in Pittsburgh, USA.

11 years making jewellery. Currently growing plants.

[Pinchuk Natalya, Personal Interview 3]

Why do you make jewellery? *"It happened that way. I was very shy around other students in high school and the only class I felt comfortable in was the jewellery course. The teacher challenged me while protecting me from others."*

How did you start creating a connection with the outside world? *"During school while finishing my Bachelors of Fine Arts degree. I sent postcards of my work and two galleries contacted me. The positive responses I received pulled me towards jewellery and gave a "blow job" for my ego. It seduced me. I felt special."*

## 5.4. Ruudt Peters

Born in Naaldwijk, The Netherlands in 1950. Lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

41 years making jewellery. Currently working as independent jeweller, teacher at Alchimia Jewellery School in Florence, Italy.

[Peters Ruudt, Personal Interview 4]

Why do you make jewellery? *"I have always called myself a bad jeweller. I have a love and hate relationship with jewellery but I am made to make it. I can express myself better in jewellery than in other disciplines. (...) I am the master of my hands. I do not need any other people to guide me."*

How did you start creating a connection with the outside world? *"It went too fast. I made one piece, a very successful one, and I sold hundreds. I asked myself what is next?"*

### 5.5. Ramon Puig Cuyas

Born in Mataró, Spain in 1953. Lives and works in Barcelona.

36 years making jewellery. Currently working as independent jeweller, Professor at Escola Massana Barcelona, Spain.

[Puig Cuyas Ramon, Personal Interview 5]

Why do you make jewellery? *"I was a painter and I wanted to be an artist. There was a whole new world to explore within the jewellery and I realized that it could perfectly be a new way for artistic expression. It is a way to approach contemporary art to a daily life, to the people in the street, without being excluded as it happens with art. Be able to comprehend the object..."*

How did you start creating a connection with the outside world? *"It was in the 80's. A gallery from Munich--not a jewellery gallery--asked me to make an exhibition. Then a jewellery gallery from Munich followed. That experience gave me international projection."*

### 5.6. Ted Noten

Born in Tegelen, The Netherlands in 1956. Lives and works in Amsterdam.

30 years making jewellery. Currently working as independent jeweller/ Atelier Ted Noten, teacher at the Design Academy in Eindhoven, Netherlands.

[Noten Ted, Personal Interview 6]

Why do you make jewellery? *"I am a masochist... there are 30 kind of reasons why I make jewellery. (...) It was a switch in my life. (...) I started in the streets of Athens. (...) I realized that I wanted to do more. "*

How did you start creating a connection with the outside world? *"After school I was for 5 years isolated like a monk, fighting with my work and trying to find my own identity, until the mouse came up. At the same time I made some group exhibitions."*

### 5.7. Sara Borgegard

Born in Sweden in 1976. Lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden.

6 years making jewellery. Currently working as independent jeweller.

[Borgegard Sara, Personal Interview 7]

Why do you make jewellery? *"The format fits me very well. I am interested in sculpture, but compared to sculpture my jewellery does not relate to the surface of the world rather to the body. Also when I think about traditional jewellery it annoys me. Everyday in the city people wear very small jewellery to make them beautiful. (...) I do not react to this jewellery. I want to enhance the meeting of the*

*body and the jewellery. Within my interest of the sculptural world I found my fire, the fire of why I make jewellery.”*

*How did you start creating a connection with the outside world? “It was during school. The outside world is other jewellers. So while studying for my BA I went to a workshop in Boston. Since then I took all my money and holidays to participate in seminars, workshops, to get to know other students and start a connection. In 2003 a Dutch gallery helped a lot and my professor suggested me to another gallery in the United States.”*

## 6.Conclusion

I believe that developing intriguing, high quality work and creating a connection with the outside world are the necessary ingredients for a successful professional career. It is very important to generate within our works a language that moves beyond any verbal communication. This will be our presentation card and will speak for us in the present and in the future. Being honest through our work and reflecting our inner voice within the pieces is also essential. During our careers as makers we will create our own techniques involving not just technical approaches but also conceptual. Learning new methods and modus operandi will enrich our creative process and allow us to think from another perspective. These steps will dictate the authenticity of each maker. Yet, we must acknowledge that there are diverse paths to meaningful participation in the jewellery scenario and these paths may differ for each person.

As we define our creative process, analysis, criticism and discussion add value to the results we achieve. We learn how to be critical of ourselves by exchanging knowledge and opinions with other makers, outside or within our field. We have to recognize our positions towards jewellery and be aware of our own acts. In addition, doing peripheral projects beyond our discipline widens our understanding and creates a bridge between the studio and the outside world. If we do not reach outside of our studios, there is a chance that we become narrow-minded in our thinking and making.

As part of our professional existence we have to promote ourselves. Today there is far more information about the field than ever before and it is global. Due to this international network we have the opportunity to reach and collaborate with professionals worldwide. However looking at each other’s work and careers can have negative results, a good example being the tendency to make variations of variations of each other’s work. We must find the balance between being unique and original.

I believe that the work we make has to be exhibited and the act of exhibiting itself is part of the process of becoming a jeweller. Collaboration with galleries gives us different opportunities. Accepting their work as important is central. Galleries are one of the best podiums to show our work in physical space. Yet, we must also question the traditional venues of dissemination, expand into new territories and take more risks in showing the world that we exist. It is not only

in galleries that the work should be shown and we should not hold a solo exhibition as the only goal. New ways of distribution (The Internet, new fairs...etc) have to be taken into account as well.

It is obligatory to reflect on the exhibitions we participate in and not treat them as merely an opportunity to enlarge our resumes. Equally crucial is to explain the process we embrace to others and involve more people from other fields to collaborate with our discipline. It is also fundamental to participate in symposiums, lectures and workshops in order to create a network of colleagues. During these kinds of events, compensation for the work and effort we do is required in order to maintain professionalism within the field.

Central to this paper is the idea that education and teaching are vital aspects of development and sustainability of our practice. We have to experience first hand the creative processes if we are to teach others. We have to accept the possibilities of each student and the many different ways of being an artist. Schools, academies and universities provide us with time, space, equipment, resources and community to develop our work. However, there are many things that we will figure out through experience and mistakes and, so, we need passion, intelligence, originality and dedication. As we develop, we should stay patient and not be afraid of missing out on an opportunity. We must be careful in choosing the kinds of activities and events we participate in, ensuring that they do not distract us from what really matters—achieving high quality of work. Taking things slow and not running after fame only will lead us to making less rubbish. In order to become successful, we will need to fully engage our creative skills as well as other talents, such as people skills and networking etc.

The title of my thesis, “The Core and the Shell,” reflects what I believe is the essential strategy for success as an independent jeweller, creating a strong connection between the studio/the core and the outside world/the shell. The independent jewellery scenario is growing exponentially, yet the world at large barely knows that we exist. It is essential for the survival of our discipline to connect our practice to the society in which we live, while embracing critical discourse and applying it to the work the jewellery world produces.

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