

# ***Susan Kingsley***

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## ***Ethical Metalsmiths: Jewellers for Social and Environmental Responsibility***

Modern industrial mining is consuming wilderness areas, destroying local economies and devastating indigenous communities. Small scale mines in impoverished countries are exploiting labour, exposing people to toxic chemicals and ravaging environments. An ever increasing demand for gold has created well-documented and complex political, economic, environmental and humanitarian emergencies on nearly every continent.

Of the approximate 2,500 tonnes of gold mined each year, eighty percent is used for jewellery production. People who make jewellery by hand consume small amounts and cannot be held responsible for the rising world-wide demand. Yet the gold, diamonds and gemstones they use come from the same sources and at the same horrendous price.

Countless organisations throughout the world are responding to mining issues and are working to protect communities and the environment, promote fair trade and defend human rights. Feeling threatened, the mining and jewellery industries have joined forces to increase accountability and reinforce consumer confidence in their products.

Ethical Metalsmiths is a collaborative non-profit project started in 2004 by American metalsmiths Susan Kingsley and Christina Miller. We believe that well-informed jewellers are uniquely positioned to influence promote ethical sourcing. As design leaders they influence public taste and opinion. As industry insiders they can promote supply chain transparency and responsible sourcing.

We use a number of conventional approaches to enlist support. We maintain a website with information about mining and ethical sourcing issues for jewellers, metal smiths and the public. We have organised panels and made conference presentations. We have taken part in initiatives for fair trade, recycling and certification. We send e-newsletters and action alerts. We teach, lecture, network and have partnered with environmental organisations.

At the same time, we design projects that enlist support in unusual and creative ways. We organised two online exhibitions, bringing attention to the artists, the paradox of gold, "evil" habits and our informative website. In 2007 we made a road trip to Nevada, "Going where metal smiths have never gone before," learning more, firsthand, about hardrock mining.

Our biggest project has been producing a travelling community mining and recycling project, Radical Jewellery Makeover. It is an informed alternative to mining and traditional jewellery production and a reminder of where jewellery and metals come from. It is also an educational project, teaching students about materials and how to produce contemporary, innovative jewellery from recycled sources. It is also a lot of fun!

Jewellers from all over the world are subscribed to our mailing list and suppliers are taking note of the increasing demands for responsibly mined and recycled gold. As was our intention, our activities draw public attention to the skill and imagination of jewellers and metal smiths. In addition, participants work has been featured in numerous publications and reached new audiences.

Ethical Metalsmiths' vision is a world in which people can create and enjoy wearing jewellery made with materials from responsible sources that respect and protect the earth, its peoples and cultures. We must make the world we want to live in.