

An interview with CoMA member Ashley Jay - November 2020



Tell us about yourself

I'm Ashley Jay and I am a Jewelry Artist and Metalsmith. I got my BFA in Metalsmithing from University of North Texas in 2013, where I took every metals class they offered. I was an Apprentice to Harlan Butt, Bench Jeweler at Jared the Galleria of Jewelry, Studio Assistant to Nancy Worden, and now I work as a Contract Metalsmith while developing my own jewelry business.

What brought you to metalsmithing and how long have you been doing it?

I have been making jewelry since I was a child. I still have the first necklace I made when I was around 8. It's purple and has a glass fish bead as the focal point. All of my life I would make myself necklaces or items of jewelry for special occasions. For example, when I went on my second trip to Japan, I made myself a special necklace to wear. I still have it and love it dearly. I learned about the profession of metalsmithing in 2009 and decided to go to school for it in 2010. I have been working with metal ever since.

Tell us a bit about your practice

I am very lucky to have a studio in my own backyard. It is the largest, most well-lit and cozy studio space I have ever had for my personal work. My walk to work during these pandemic days has been short and sweet. It takes me about 60 seconds to get to work or home, so I am lucky to have access to my cats and husband whenever I need to share or have a break.

The primary metal I work in is sterling silver. I sometimes work with copper and gold fill. I have recently developed a really fun and dynamic technique that revolves around resins and mixed materials that are suspended within the resin. I am 100% obsessed with color and light and those are my driving forces when I make my work. Wearability is also a significant factor. I like jewelry that is easy to wear and doesn't weigh you down. I work as a contract metalsmith for a boutique store in Littleton and for another local artist in town; these jobs help support the development of my business.



From the Darkness Comes the Light - Sterling Silver, Copper, Resin, Glitter, Patina, Faceted Glass, 2020

My creative process has changed a lot over time. In the beginning, I found it hard to stick to a cohesive theme and just made whatever I wanted. I've slowly found and focused on my favorite themes which are light and color. I feel like light and color should be an option in jewelry that doesn't have to be found in gemstones. I do simple and more repetitive pieces in a variety of colors and varieties for lower price points, but I prefer to develop unique pieces that I hope stand out to people as something new, different, and kind of magical. I do not typically do commissions anymore because they are time consuming, and I want to focus on developing and creating my artistic voice.



What is the most memorable thing you have made?

One of my most memorable pieces was the 2nd version of a grand idea I had to make a necklace resemble a river, flowing around the wearer's neck. The first version was a single, solid brass sheet I pierced and formed into shape during my time at UNT. The wearer had to bend the back of the necklace in order to get it on and off. The colors were two tones of blue nail polish that I painted and dripped all over the form to resemble a river rushing down into a pool around the wearer's chest. Harlan Butt, one of my professors at the time called it a "Shocker!" in his review which I always remember as a funny and proud moment. It was bold fun and crazy, but not a piece that would last. The 2nd attempt was much more sophisticated. I created a wire frame that continuously ran around the wearer, with a hinge in the back so the top of the necklace swung open to allow the wearer to get it on and off with ease. Within the wire frame I wove a multitude of 26 and 28 gauge blue enameled wires, creating a smooth flowing surface that emulated a calm, swift river. This was the first piece in a series of 4. "No. 2" from the series is a double layered lava flow necklace in the same style which is also very memorable.

River No. 01 - Brass, Enameled Wire, 2013

What do you love about working with metal?

I love working with metal because it is so strong and durable while also being completely malleable. I also love metal because there are no time limits when working with it. It can be recycled, up-cycled, unsoldered and soldered again. It is pretty flexible, absolutely gorgeous and as far as I can tell the only limitations are one's imagination and one's tools, of course.

Where can we see your work?

I am working on my marketing strategy and gearing up to get my work into shops. Currently, I am working on my new resin line and I am excited to finish up my Festivus Ornaments for the Balefire Goods competition! You can see my old work and some new work on my website (www.ashleyjayjewelry.com) and current work on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/ashleyjayjewelry/>). I'm also on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ashleyjayjewelry>).

Why are you a member of CoMA and what do you get out of it?

I am a pretty new member to CoMA, I am going on 3 years. I haven't been able to attend the summer conference yet but that is one of the main reasons I joined and to be a part of a metals society. It is good to be among like-minded individuals so we can enjoy each other's company and learn and grow, or just commiserate together. Also, I am a state hopper, and I have only been in Colorado for 4 years.



The Grand Play - Sterling Silver, Gold Fill, Swarovski Pearls, Hematite, 2017

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