

SERIOUS BLING: RADICAL JEWELRY MAKEOVER—THE ARTIST PROJECT

Radical Jewelry Makeover (RJM) is a community jewelry recycling project that draws attention to the creativity and skills of local jewelry designers. RJM reveals the stories behind our personal collections and encourages reconsideration of global consumption habits by bringing together volunteer miners—people who dig out and donate their old jewelry—with volunteer jewelers and students, all working together as refiners and designers.

RJM offers alternatives to mainstream consumer culture with made-over jewelry that is 100% recycled and low-impact to industrial supply chains. Instead of make-take-waste, RJM produces jewelry with an eye towards the future. It challenges cultural practices that cause environmental devastation while celebrating the meaningful narratives and impulses that drive people to make and wear jewelry. Similar to growing movements of “repair, borrow, and only then, buy,” RJM changes habits, reforms industry, and inspires people to make different decisions about what they wear.

RJM achieves its vision to change the way jewelry is consumed and manufactured by putting materials in makers’ hands for a transparent process—from jewelry box to designer to wearer. Furthermore, RJM teaches strategies to influence university curricula, emphasizing future-thinking design and the full lifecycle of included materials.

Serious Bling presents RJM’s Artist Project, a small group of international artists who were invited to dive more deeply into the motivations of the Project by creating a larger body of work using donated jewelry left over from previous RJM drives.

Since 2007, Susie Ganch has been directing this collaborative project, which is an outreach program of Ethical Metalsmiths, a nonprofit dedicated to bringing transparency to the jewelry industry and connecting people with responsibly sourced materials. Kathleen Kennedy joined RJM as co-directing partner in 2017.

