

# **Evolutions**

An Honors Thesis  
by

**Rebecca Zink**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat Nelson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Pat Nelson, Thesis Advisor**

**Ball State University  
Muncie, Indiana**

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## Abstract

My body of metals exhibition jewelry was made in two stages: a group of five exhibition pieces, each based on a different concept, and five additional pieces utilizing different design elements from the first five, but smaller, simpler, and better suited for production work.

In this thesis paper I have discussed how I got to this point in my metals work, as well as my art career.

## Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Pat Nelson for being my metals instructor for the past four years. She has pushed me and put up with me and helped me to improve as much as I could. She has taught me, stimulated my interests, and guided me both directly and indirectly through my studies.

I'd like to thank my family and friends for showing such interest in something that has been so important to me. Thanks for coming to see my show and being as excited about it as I have been.

Finally, I'd like to thank my parents. Without you guys, I wouldn't have been able to make it through college, for many reasons. Thank you for being so supportive of me deciding to be an artist. Thank you for allowing me to come home and steal supplies for my art projects. Thank you for really embracing my love of graphic design, and then my love of jewelry. Thank you for going out of your way to speak to jewelers while on your vacation to find something special for me. Thank you for helping to inspire my exhibition, and then taking the time to come to both of the receptions that were planned. Thanks for being there for me, because without you two, I would not be the *person* that I am today, let alone the *artist*.

I never realized what I had gotten myself into when I decided to become an art major. I played around on the computer a lot when I was younger, and then I applied to be on my high school's public relations committee. The thing there that interested me the most, however, was designing the brochures and posters that we were asked to complete instead of doing the press releases and anything from the journalism side. I had only taken a few art classes at the Indianapolis Art Center back in high school, so when I decided to become a graphic design major, I thought art was all fun and games. Little did I know that I was going to be exposed to a whole new world.

For almost as long as I could remember, I went with my parents every year to Penrod Art Fair, which is a large fair sponsored by the Indianapolis Museum of Art every year that not only has artists, but musicians and other activities as well. My grandmother was a member of the museum, so she got discounted tickets, and we went every year as a family. As I grew older, I became more and more interested in the art that was on display. My mom and I would wander up and down the aisles together and discuss what we liked and disliked. Through Penrod was probably the first time I ever showed an outright interest in art.

When I was a junior in high school, I became more and more interested in jewelry. I began purchasing glass beads anywhere that I could find them and then started making my own necklaces. I sold them to my friends and even to my parents' friends. During this time I began seeking interesting, more elaborate jewelry. Anything that was a little off the beaten path caught my eye, and I found myself spending large amounts on jewelry, even if I didn't have something to wear it with. By this point, I had decided to take my first metals class at the Indianapolis Art Center

and made my first pieces of jewelry. I fell in love with the process and began subscribing to *Lapidary Journal*, a magazine devoted to jewelry and gemstones. I vowed to learn as much as I possibly could about jewelry, so I was pleased to see that Ball State offered a major in metals after I enrolled there with the intent of being a graphic design major. Thus, one major became two.

I became immersed in the art world at Ball State. I took many classes in almost every discipline in the art department in order to fulfill both of my majors. In addition to these two majors, I also had a minor in German and participated on the Ball State Roller Hockey team, which was a club sport. And there was always the Honors College. People asked me how I was able to juggle my time between everything. I was left with little free time, but I don't know what I would have been able to cut out of my schedule; everything that I did seemed to be a vital part of my career. Graphic design kept my computer skills sharpened, metals satisfied my love of jewelry. German was a language that I enjoyed and became skilled at throughout high school, and roller hockey was the thing that helped to keep my sanity and relieve stress from working on the numerous projects that I accumulated.

The Honors College came to be a blessing in disguise. I had to take several extra classes in order to earn the diploma, but it became something even more. I was able to test my art skills with people that weren't trained in the arts at all. With many of my classes, a creative project was required at the end of each class. While it was difficult to think about being creative for yet another class, presenting these projects allowed me to learn how to speak about my art to those who had no idea what the inside of a studio looked like. They hadn't had the training that I had in my areas, so I

had to learn to convey what I was doing with my project without losing my audience in technical jargon. It's very hard to learn how to speak like that because you forget that other people might not know what soldering is, or they might not be trained to see the negative space in a piece. Having to present these projects to my peers enabled me to learn to speak to any audience about them. That has helped me to this day to be able to talk about my work, especially when it came to my senior metals exhibition and any time afterwards. I've presented the pieces that I created in my exhibition many times, and being able to speak to my family and my non-artist friends has been a godsend to me now.

For my senior exhibition in metals, I decided to do my work over two semesters. I was finishing up my graphic design requirements and had an extra opening for a studio class in the fall, so in order to keep my metals skills sharpened, I took an independent study. From there I chose to use that semester to create work for my show. My parents at this point had become very supportive of my interests in jewelry. They began to bring me back interesting gemstones from their travels for me to use in my work, sometimes asking me to create pieces for my mom. This is what caused me to choose the theme of my my metals exhibition.

I had always wavered back and forth between wanting to express my artistic side with my jewelry and wanting to create pieces that would be smaller and more traditional, therefore being more suitable for everyday casual wear. I don't tend to wear large jewelry, so I've always leaned towards creating pieces that are more conservative in both size and design. I know my mom doesn't wear large jewelry either, so when I tried to create a piece for her to wear, I had a hard time finding that

fine line of having fun with making a piece of jewelry and making it large and artistic, or making it smaller and more wearable.

In order to remedy this problem, I spent my first semester creating five artistic jewelry pieces. Each of the first five exhibition pieces was created with a distinct concept in mind. The chainmail piece is based on the concept of movement with the body. It was made to move with the wearer's body, as well as conform differently to each person who wears it. The fossil piece was made with positive and negative space in mind; both the forged pieces and the space in between begin to echo the lines in the fossil itself. The fold-formed earrings were based on line. The strong lines in the piece work well with the lines formed by the side of the wearer's face. The two-part bracelet was based on the traditional meaning of stones. This bracelet features garnet, once thought to help heal broken bonds between lovers. The brooch was created with texture in mind, utilizing silver granulation to create that feel.

My second semester working on my exhibition, I created five additional pieces utilizing different design elements from the first five, but smaller, simpler, and better suited for production work. The square bracelet was created with positive and negative space in mind, but in addition, it utilizes reticulated, or heat-textured silver. The two-part slide pendant echoes the concept from the two-part bracelet. As with the bracelet, both parts work well together as well as on their own. The chainmail earrings echo the chainmail necklace, but become a new piece when stones and a patina are added. The cage necklace also works with positive and negative space, but in a more three-dimensional way than the fossil neckpiece. The steel and silver ring also works with line in a unique way, like the fold-formed earrings.

In order to tie all of my college work together, I created a self-promotional piece for my metals work in my graphic design class. It is a folder that contains all of these ten pieces with a short description of each, and in the case of the production work, which works they were based off of. I am glad to be able to combine both of my skills in one small package, which one day could help me get a job, or perhaps even to sell my work.

Now that I have graduated, I plan to continue my studies in several different ways. I am applying for a Fulbright grant for the 2006-2007 school year to study in Germany. I have begun to research the German aesthetic in jewelry, and I have found it to be very appealing. I hope to study under a jeweler there in order to not only improve my skills, but also to study the world of contemporary jewelry and other arts. I plan to create a body of work based on my studies as well. I also plan to continue my work in jewelry on my own. My graduation money will be used to create my own studio where I will create and sell my own work, as well as participate in art fairs like the ones that I went to see when I was young. I will also make my own promotional materials using my graphic design skills.

My last desire in the area of jewelry will probably continue on in a jeweler's shop. I would like to work as a bench jeweler in order to hone my fine jewelry skills and stone settings. I would also like to go to gemology school in order to study more about the gemstones themselves, perhaps in order to work as an appraiser or a gem buyer. I have a lot of hopes and dreams for my future, and when I walked into the art world my freshman year in college, I had no idea that it would bring me to where I am now.