



Houston Metal Arts Guild Newsletter

Summer 2025

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Houston Metal Arts Guild
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Letter from the President



HMAG President Jessica Jacobi.

Hello friends!

We can count on the summer being hot, and HMAG is also turning up the heat on exciting plans for the year! Did you know that HMAG celebrates our 30th anniversary this year? How time flies when you’re having fun, and we look forward to honoring HMAG’s history and impact with an anniversary party this year, so stay tuned for more details this fall! This will be a joyous occasion to reflect on the incredible opportunities and connections this

organization has provided to so many metalsmiths and community members since 1995.

I am delighted to welcome two new Board Members to HMAG this year: **Midge Hirsch** will serve as our Membership Chair and **Drew Scott** will serve as our Special Projects Coordinator. We are thrilled to have their time and talents join the Board in our efforts to fulfill HMAG's mission to our community.

Since our last newsletter HMAG participated in **Craft Community Day** at the **Houston Center for Contemporary Craft**, where we led the public in a hammered bracelet making activity; we toured **Better Bling Studios** to learn what goes into running a jewelry shop; we hosted a Share-and-Tell event to catch up on what people are making; we saw amazing work from **René Henry** at her artist talk; we had a shopping excursion and Member Meetup at **Jemco Jewelry Supply**; and we were wowed by **Dongyi Wu's** artist talk. We enjoyed **René Henry's Linking the Chain** workshop, where participants explored both technical and design possibilities for chains to be a meaningful part of finished jewelry.

Our next workshop is just on the horizon – and space is still available – where **Dongyi Wu** will lead participants in incorporating fabric into metal for fashion-inspired jewelry. Dongyi will teach some sewing and embroidery techniques, as well as creative and technical approaches for securely joining fabric with metal. We are excited to bring more programs, workshops, and opportunities to our members and community this fall.

Charisma Design Studio will graciously sponsor the 9th iteration of the **HMAG Development Grant**, and applications will be open soon! I truly hope that each of our members will consider applying for this wonderful award, which offers \$500 to support your development/practice. Keep an eye out for e-blasts and social post reminders. The deadline to submit your application is September 30th!

Our Program and Workshop Coordinators work months in advance to plan and create events we can enjoy and learn from. We base these plans off input received from our members each year, based on the survey feedback you provide when you sign up/renew your membership. We

also welcome ideas anytime, as we want HMAG's efforts to have meaningful impact and reach the interests of our community. If you have an idea, feel free to share it with [me](#), [Cathy](#), or [Paula](#). Thank you in advance for contributing your voice, time, and interest to the betterment of this community!

Jessica Jacobi

HMAG President



Meet Your New Board Members!

HMAG is delighted to welcome **Midge Hirsch** and **Drew Scott** on to the board. We can't wait to see what these two talented and creative people will contribute to the organization!

Midge Hirsch: Membership



Midge Hirsch is a retired corporate lawyer turned jewelry artist. She trained in metalsmithing at the **Glassell School of Art** with **Sandie Zilker** and at **Houston Community College** with **Corey Ackelmire** and **Masumi Kataoka**. She

is a member of **Houston Metal Arts Guild, Houston Gem and Mineral Society**, and the **Art Jewelry Forum**. She works primarily with painted tin and is most recently experimenting with paper quilling, to make lightweight jewelry. Her jewelry vibe is funky, colorful and fun.

Drew Scott: Special Projects



Drew Scott is a multidisciplinary artist based in Houston, working across handcrafted metal art jewelry, beadwork, and painting. A native Houstonian, her creative path has taken many forms—from studying neurobiology at **Harvard** to working in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles, where she began at **WME** before becoming a creative executive at **Kendrick Lamar's pgLang**. She is currently both a student and instructor at the **Glassell School of Art** at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where she teaches beading and metalsmithing.

Rooted in myth and the natural world, Drew's practice bridges the seen and unseen, bringing invisible forces into form and inviting deeper self-awareness. Her jewelry line, **dos22**—named for her initials and the year she founded the brand—embodies an ethos of power, self-knowledge, and spiritual connection through natural forms, sacred symbols, and intuitive processes. With over 20 years of experience designing and crafting jewelry, Drew approaches each piece as a totem of ancient wisdom:

meaningful, intentional, and grounded in timeless methods that honor cultural memory.



As a reminder, HMAG still has a few open positions on the board, so if you're interested in hearing more, contact Jessica Jacobi at HMAGPres@gmail.com.

Membership Renewal Reminder!

June was Membership Renewal Month. If you forgot, don't worry—it's not too late. Renew at <https://www.hmag.org/membership>.

Professional Jeweler Confidential

By Britt Caffarena

Editor's Note: *It's always enlightening to learn where someone's creative journey began. For founding HMAG member and Stafford-based jeweler Britt Caffarena, it all started with a small blue stone, which became the centerpiece of her first ring. But let's hear the story in her own words:*

In high school, my mom asked me if I wanted a class ring. I said no. That Christmas, I opened a gift that was a little blue gemstone in a plastic gem pot. Surprised, I said, "It's beautiful! What is it?" My mom told me it was an aquamarine and that it was my birthstone. After the holiday, we made an appointment to go to an established jeweler in downtown Dayton, Ohio, and that's where I got to design my first ring (*below*).

I was fascinated as I watched the jewelers creating beautiful things with torches and tools, waxes and colorful gems. Basically, I was hooked! I was so full of questions that the head jeweler told me to contact the **Gemological Institute of America (GIA)** to study gemology.



Britt's first ring design.

Fast-forward to my senior year of college, I still had my heart set on going to GIA. I decided to try working at a jewelry store to get a taste for the business before investing in expensive continuing education. I quit my evening waitressing job to work for less money at a retail jewelry store at the local mall in Virginia Beach. Not surprisingly, I loved it!

The following March, my parents drove me to Santa Monica, California in their RV. They left me there with my suitcases and a bike. I moved into a furnished apartment near campus and began my six-month **Graduate Gemology** course. Financial aid and work-study in the library helped cover the costs. Additionally, I was thrilled to get to work occasionally at **Sotheby's Auction House** in Beverly Hills.

Upon graduation, I moved to Houston and landed a job as a retail store manager at the former **Gem and Stone World** at **The Galleria**. I arranged my work schedule so I could take jewelry arts classes at **Glassell School of Art** under **Sandie Zilker** and **Jan Harrell**. What a joy it was to learn so many techniques and meet cool metal arts people in this big city! I also joined the **Houston Gem and Mineral Society**. This was a great place to take workshops and have studio/shop time.

My passion grew as I worked in both antique and estate retail and later wholesale diamonds. I also transferred my studies to the **University of Houston** to study under **Val Link**. I remember that period fondly.

In 1995, I joined a group of Houston metalsmiths to attend the **SNAG (Society of North American Goldsmiths)** conference in New Orleans. It left a powerful impression on me as friendships were forged and people started talking about forming a **Metal Arts Guild** in Houston. That's how the whole thing started. Working together to form a non-profit organization and recruiting members was a great opportunity to learn. I realized the value of the experience even more as I established my own brand and retail store in 2017 called **Better Bling Studio**.



Vision in blue outside Britt's studio and shop.

Every day there are new scenarios and problems to solve at our custom jewelry shop. It's such a creative process to figure out the best way to repair or redesign. There is a great satisfaction to seeing something transformed and making clients happy! I admit the days are too short sometimes, because there are so many non-design aspects to running a business that need attention. It never stops! Administration, advertising, appraisals, equipment...supplies...you get the picture.

Thankfully I've been able to continue to hire people as the studio grows! I admit that even after seven years the business isn't showing a lot of profit, due to constant reinvestment in the business. We have expanded our space twice to capacity, and acquired equipment, software, and insurance. Plus, as all jewelers know, costs on everything have gone up. I don't let that slow me down. I'm in it for the long run! If I could give readers one piece of advice, I'd say don't even consider opening a retail store if you don't LOVE it. It's like having a perpetual toddler!



Britt with Houston-area jeweler Pilar Baker, whose work is carried at Better Bling Studios.

I really love doing custom design and have clients who come from all areas of greater Houston and even out of state. Building referrals through great service to the clientele has been essential. Even through Covid and all the ups and downs Better Bling has gained new loyal customers.

On those days when I admit I'm out of answers, I appreciate the community that we can access in Houston. I resource wholesalers and retailers for goods and services and sometimes for advice. I try to attend local jeweler meet-ups, breakfasts, and happy hours, and I have served for many years on the board of the **Texas Jewelers Association (TJA)**. It's been great to get to know other store owners and designers through the TJA. I am so glad that I plugged in to meet new mentors. Every artist

needs to try to stay plugged in to groups like HMAG at whatever level they can. Houston is a great place to do just that.

(Find Britt at Better Bling Studio, 2813 N Main St. Stafford, TX 77477.)

From Houston to Hollywood

HMAG Interviews Member Linda Grandstaff of Suarez Silver about Getting Her Work Onscreen

Editor's Note: *When I first learned that HMAG member Linda Grandstaff had her jewelry featured on the Paramount TV show Evil, I assumed that somehow the costume design team had found her, perhaps by scrolling Instagram. In fact, though Instagram was instrumental in this story, it was Linda who made it happen, by preparing herself, showcasing her work, and reaching out. It's a great reminder that these days, you don't necessarily need to wait for someone to pick you.*

HMAG: For those who don't know you, describe how you came to be a metalsmith and accessories designer.

LG: I have always had a love of fashion and a passion for working with my hands and creating things. At 14, I knew I wanted to go to one of the well-known institutions for fashion design in my home town of New York, but unfortunately, my father steered me in what he thought was a more "practical" direction.

Fast forward 30 years. Having relocated to Houston, at the age of 44 I took a beading class with my then 15-year-old daughter Alex at **The Bead Shop** in Rice Village (now closed). I was hooked. My daughter lost interest, but I went down the jewelry fabrication rabbit hole and never came out. I wanted to expand beyond beading, so I enrolled in a precious metal clay class. This was ideal for me, because it allowed me to work with metals at home without having fabrication skills. All I needed to turn the clay into fine silver components was a desktop beehive kiln.

As the jewelry-making bug really took hold, I wanted to make even more complex designs, so I enrolled in my first jewelry fabrication classes at the **Houston Gem and Mineral Society (HGMS)**. **Tom Wright** was the instructor at the time. Tom was extremely knowledgeable and patient. He was good friends with **Val Link**, and had learned a great deal from him. Tom took me under his wing and pushed me to expand my skill set.

I was a student at HGMS for about two years when I met **Patty Scott**, who was teaching an introduction to enameling class there. My first enameled dish happened to come out great, and Patty, impressed, suggested that I try **Jan Harrell's** enameling program at the **Glassell School of Art**. Over the course of a few years, I worked my way from beginning to advanced levels with Jan, but became increasingly frustrated by my relative lack of fabrication skills. Jan suggested that I try **Sandie Zilker's** metalsmithing classes at Glassell to round out my skill set.

I have never looked back and I am so grateful to all the wonderful, kind, knowledgeable, and patient instructors I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with along the way.

Editor's Note: *That's quite a tour of the Houston jewelry education scene!*

HMAG: In my opinion, although you employ a wide range of materials and techniques, your work has a strong underlying aesthetic. How would you describe your work?

LG: Well, it all depends on whether the design is for myself or something I plan on selling. I like to think my work is a bit like me: a little quirky, can have some edginess and shows some attitude, can be bold and loud with a sense of humor.

I do not enjoy making duplicates of anything. For me that removes the sense of fun and surprise I get out of creating. I also do not do repair work or custom work. I tried doing custom work and my personality just does not have the patience for all the changes most customers want to make, usually after the piece is almost completed or finished.



Collage of Linda's ring, as seen on The Orville.

Most of my work will have a stone or two incorporated into the design for aesthetic purposes but I also believe in the metaphysical properties of crystals and minerals. I am drawn to working with natural stones and crystals and I tend to gravitate towards stones that really should not be set in jewelry but I usually find a unique way to set them to be worn. In a nutshell, my work is quirky, edgy, odd, bold, and whimsical.

HMAG: You have run your Houston-based independent jewelry and accessories line, **Suarez Silver**, for a number of years. How did you make the leap to creating jewelry for television shows? What was the process involved? Did they find you or did you seek out the opportunity?

LG: Here's where the loud and bold part of me comes into play. As I mentioned, I'm originally from New York. We New Yorkers are not shy about speaking our minds or going after what we want. Over the years I have taken several online courses about how to sell, promote, and establish a brand. These include **Flourish and Thrive Academy**; **Launch Grow Joy**; and **Fashion Brain Academy**. These online courses forced me to ask questions such as, who is my customer, where do they shop, what aesthetic are they drawn to, what's their budget, and how can I meet all those criteria and provide the jewelry and

accessories they want? The courses included exercises such as developing a two-minute elevator pitch, creating a customer avatar, writing a bio and sales pitch, approaching shops, and making calls. A lot of that work made me uncomfortable at first.

After doing the work, gaining confidence, and identifying what I really enjoy creating, I joined **The Artisan Group (TAG)**. This is a juried group of artisans and makers who provide hand-crafted products for celebrity gifting and TV shows. That was my first venture into submitting my pieces to costume designers. For an annual fee of \$100, artisans have the opportunity to submit their designs through a facilitator at TAG who is in contact with various TV and movie set and costume designers. These designers submit their punch list and the artists send in pieces, hoping to meet the costume designers' needs and have their piece worn by an actor on the show.

I had a ring featured on Season 2 of the **Seth MacFarlane** sci-fi comedy-drama ***The Orville***, as well as a pair of earrings in a **Lifetime** Christmas movie. The maker is not credited, nor do you get your piece back, but the exposure was worth it. The lesson I learned from this experience was to keep it simple. Most of the work I submitted was a little too bold, but that was a choice I made. Those who know me would not be surprised by this.

HMAG: How did you find working with *Evil's* costume designer, **Dan Larson**? Were there any surprises or unexpected challenges?

LG: These days, most artists and makers have an Instagram (IG) account. (Linda's is *@suarezsilver*.) I usually post my work during the creation process and after a piece is complete. The platform provides a good visual record and summary of my work. Thinking back to the online workshops I took, where the instructors suggest that you reach out to shops, I thought it would be less stressful and painful to reach out to costume designers through Instagram, rather than trying to cold call them. (I can be loud and bold but I'm not great in social situations, and like many of us am terrible at promoting my own work.)



Actress Christina Lahti wearing Linda's cimaruta necklace on Evil.

First, I did some research. I identified costume designers whose work I admired and who seemed to vibe with my aesthetic, then looked up their IG addresses. Then I wrote a short paragraph explaining who I was, what I make, the materials I use, and the creation process. I said if they looked at my IG and saw something they thought would be a good fit for a production they were involved with, they should contact me.

I sent this out as a direct message (DM) to quite a few costume designers on IG. Responses were mixed. A few responded that they thought my work was really cool but they were in the middle of production. Some did not respond at all or even open my DMs. However, I had much better luck with Dan Lawson, the designer/stylist who worked on show **The Good Wife**.

The only reason I reached out to him was because *The Good Wife* was an extremely popular show and had a huge following. I thought what the heck, I've got nothing to lose. Dan contacted me pretty quickly after receiving my DM. He said he was working on a new show that was very different from *The Good Wife*. He thought my pieces would be a great fit for the character named Sheryl, who was the mother of the main character in this new series. He mentioned that the series was rather unique and, due to its supernatural and religious themes, could be controversial for some viewers.

After doing some quick research, I agreed to sell or rent them some of my work. Dan chose some pieces from my IG gallery and we negotiated pricing (very fair). In the case

of one item, I insisted that I needed it back because it was a meaningful personal piece. **Paramount** agreed to rent that piece and return it to me after filming.

One unexpected challenge is that they had to have a duplicate of each piece (which I needed to create), because the actor's stand-in must be wearing an identical outfit at all times. Dan also came back to me to purchase two additional pieces after the initial sale when he saw them appear on IG. One of them was a very complex design called a cimarruta, an Italian talisman. He agreed to purchase just the one piece because I said I could not replicate it in time for filming. My one regret is that I did not rent that piece to them rather than sell it. I would love to still have it.



Here, Lahti wears Linda's pyrite sun necklace.

HMAG: Your jewelry is worn by a single character, **Sheryl Luria** (played by **Christina Lahti**). What do you think your pieces help communicate about her?

LG: If you have watched the show, you know Sheryl is a very determined, complicated, strong character. I think the pieces Dan chose portray a bold, confident woman who doesn't put up with any nonsense.

HMAG: What would you say to fellow HMAG members who might be interested in seeking out such an opportunity? Was it worthwhile?

LG: Totally 1000%, go for it. You have nothing to lose but a little bit of time and everything to gain. It was profitable, fun, and looks great in your bio!



A collection of Linda's work from the show, along with a thank-you note from the costume department.

HMAG: Thanks, Linda! You've given members something to think about!

Recent Program Recap

HMAG continues to offer in-person and online opportunities for members to connect, learn, and be inspired. If you have any ideas for upcoming programs, please send them to HMAGProg@gmail.com, and we'll do our best to arrange them.

Member Share and Tell

In May, HMAG hosted the latest in an ongoing series of **Member Share and Tell** sessions at **Charisma Design Studios** in the East End. These popular informal events give members a chance to show and talk about their work and get a glimpse of what other members are working on. Participants enjoyed the chance to connect with other members over ideas and processes.



Janet Ross shares a selection of bracelets at the latest Share and Tell.

Tour and Social Hour with Britt Caffarena at Better Bling Studio

On March 29, a large group of HMAG members traveled to Stafford to visit the charming historic building that houses **Better Bling Studio**, Britt Caffarena's studio and shop.



Britt addressing HMAG members in one of her showrooms.

Britt and her team graciously opened their doors to HMAG as we explored the design, production, and retail areas of the business. Over cold drinks and snacks, Britt discussed the rewards and challenges of running a local business and the key role that customer service and repeat customers play in a jewelry business.

For more on Britt's story, see [Professional Jeweler Confidential](#).

René Lee Henry Artist Talk

On May 24, artist **René Lee Henry** discussed her work and artistic processes before a sizeable group of HMAG members and friends at the **Glassell School of Art** auditorium.



Focus on resin experimentation in René's presentation.

René's residency at the **Houston Center for Contemporary Craft** first brought her to Houston in 2016. Since then, she has settled here, expanded her artistic process, and now works at HCCC.

Broadly speaking, René's work is based on her observation of the tug of war between the natural world and humanity's interventions with it. As we see in the news every day, humans try to exert control over the natural world, but eventually nature takes that control back.

The artist's ongoing interest in this struggle has led her to real and virtual travels around the world, as she produces jewelry and other art pieces that explore abandoned human structures. Her gift is to make pieces based on decay into beautiful and compelling artworks.

In her talk, René covered different bodies of work that employ various techniques, including electroforming, die forming, plating, etching, textiles, decals, and resins, to name just a few. A spirit of experimentation and a commitment to less toxic materials and processes mark her ongoing work.

René also brought a selection of work for members to examine and discuss after her talk.

Jemco Visit

On June 14, several HMAG members met up at longtime Houston institution **Jemco Jewelers Supply** to tour the premises, chat with owner **Jim Dover**, and pick up some supplies courtesy of the 10% discount the store offers HMAG members.



Some of the treasures in store at Jemco.

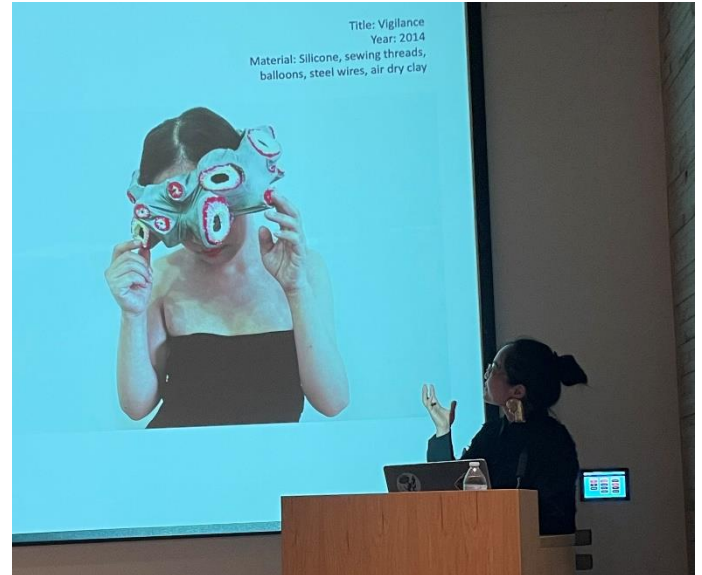
Members were impressed not only by the range of products Jemco offers, but also by the dedicated class space, where jewelry and metalsmithing classes are offered. Classes taught by local artisans enable beginners and more advanced students to learn or perfect a technique.

In an era of online shopping domination, it was a pleasure to return to a local brick and mortar jeweler's supply shop.

Dongyi Wu Artist Talk

On June 28, current **Houston Center for Contemporary Craft** resident **Dongyi Wu** gave a well-attended artist's talk at the **Glassell School of Art** auditorium. She shared images and processes as she traced her trajectory from the middle-eastern region of China to the capital city of Beijing for undergraduate school, to chilly Rochester NY for graduate school, and then on to various residencies and other programs across the United States.

Along the way, her work evolved from traditional, fashionable jewelry forms to more unique concepts,



Dongyi's presentation.

materials, and shapes highly influenced by emotions, memories, and dreams. Dongyi shared that she usually begins a new work or series by writing down her thoughts and feelings, and only then begins sketching and experimenting. This gives her work a distinctive lyricism. Her excursions into sculpture, as well as her extensive travels, are evident as well.

Dongyi brought a collection of work for members to look at and explore after her talk. Many pieces featured significant fabric elements, which ties in to the subject of her upcoming HMAG workshop [Stitched and Linked: Crafting Fashionable Fabric Jewelry](#).



Mixed-media brooch by Dongyi Wu.

Member Appreciation and Cultivation Party Plus Annual Meeting

On April 26, many HMAG members, along with friends and loved ones, gathered at a member's home in the Museum District to meet new people, enjoy a delicious meal from **Phoenicia**, play games, socialize, and catch up with friends.

At the beginning of the evening, President **Jessica Jacobi** presented the **Annual Report**, and the group reviewed the organization's progress over the past year. The results of board elections were also announced as we welcomed two new members to the board.



Members and friends celebrating another successful year!



Recent Workshop Recap

HMAG continues to offer local workshops to help members extend their skills. If you have any ideas for future workshops, please submit them to HMAGWkshp@gmail.com.

Workshop: Linking the Chain with René Lee Henry

On the weekend of May 31, René Henry presented the workshop **Linking the Chain** at **Charisma Design Studios** in the East End.

The premise of the workshop was that in a neckpiece, the chain should not be a generic afterthought but an integral element of the overall piece. Sometimes a prefabricated chain might be a good choice. However, this workshop encouraged students to approach necklace design as a cohesive whole, where the chain is an integral component contributing to the overall aesthetic and concept of the piece.



New member Amy Sledge working hard at the chain-making workshop.

On the first day, René gave a short presentation with design inspirations, followed by demos of a few chain-making techniques featuring bar and link chains. She demonstrated using a link-shaping jig as well as shape improvisation with things students might find in their homes or studios.

Participants had been asked in advance to bring a finished or in-progress pendant to develop ideas around. The group discussed ways of pulling elements from each pendant or focal point to create a unique chain that complimented the work. After that, students took advantage of studio time to get started on their designs.

The rest of the workshop flew by as participants got into the uniquely meditative process of chain-making.



Chain making is hungry work! The group enjoying a post-workshop Mexican lunch.

Upcoming Programs

This section lists programs coming up in the next few months. As more programs are added, HMAG will publish them via eBlasts and social media.

On the Horizon

Lots of exciting programs are coming up this fall but have not yet been scheduled. These include:

- An online program with **Jessica Jacobi** focusing on how to prepare artist's statements and resumes, in conjunction with the **2025 HMAG Member Development Grant**.
- One or more group tours of traveling jewelry and metals exhibitions on view at major Houston museums.
- Studio tours.
- Artist talks.

More information will be provided as the schedule firms up. Keep an eye on your eBlasts and other social media!

Upcoming Workshops

This section lists workshops coming up in the next few months. As more workshops are added, HMAG will publish them via eBlasts and social media.

Stitched and Linked: Crafting Fashionable Fabric Jewelry with Dongyi Wu

July 19 and 20, 10 am to 3 pm, at Charisma Design Studios

This two-day workshop is designed for students interested in creating fashion-inspired jewelry that combines fabric and metal, from design ideas to hands-on techniques.

On the first day, students will focus on developing fabric-based components. Using magazine clippings and collages as sources of inspiration, students will learn how to design and construct artistic fabric components with volume. Both hand sewing and basic embroidery skills will be introduced.

On the second day, the focus will shift to metal and discuss how fabric jewelry connects to the body. Dongyi will guide students through both conceptual and technical approaches to create connections in wearable design. Dongyi will demonstrate the joint techniques she has been developing since 2017, which are able to support secure and functional connections between metal and fabric components. Sawing, soldering, and cold connection metal techniques will be included. Students are encouraged to create wearable pieces of their own design during the workshop.

Registration is now open at <https://www.hmag.org/events-1/stitched-linked-crafting-fashionable-fabric-jewelry>.

On the Horizon

Coming up this fall but not yet scheduled is a workshop on *Image Transfers on Metal* with **Diane Falkenhagen**. More information will be provided as it becomes available.



Catching Up with HMAG Member Development Grant 2024 Recipient René Lee Henry

The winner of HMAG's **2024 Member Development Grant**, **René Lee Henry**, used her grant to acquire a new guillotine shear for her studio, hoping that this tool would significantly elevate the quality and efficiency of her work. Recently, HMAG checked in with René for an update after she had some time to work with the shear.

HMAG: Tell us a little about your career/work.

RLH: I got into metalsmithing while attending **San Diego State University**. I relocated to Houston in 2016 for the artist's residency at **HCCC** and have maintained a studio practice. I have taught workshops at **Jemco Jewelry Supply** and, more recently, with HMAG, as well as leading fold-forming sessions for summer camp kids at **MFAH Bayou Bend**.

My jewelry is inspired by abandoned architecture, with an overarching theme of the struggle for dominance between humans and the natural world. I have spent a lot of time exploring Houston, Galveston and beyond, searching for and photographing abandoned buildings, which I sometimes use directly in my work via photo transfers. Many of these buildings have succumbed to the elements and now have plant life growing throughout, which reflects the idea of how humans need to aggressively maintain buildings to keep nature from reclaiming the space.

I generally use materials that are found in the architectural realm, such as steel, copper, mortar, and wood.

HMAG: What motivated you to apply for the grant? How did you hear about it?



René's new Durston shear.

RLH: I've known about this grant since 2016, when I became an HMAG member as an **HCCC** resident artist.

Because my work is architecturally inspired, I use a lot of straight cuts and metal strips in my work. I owned a decent guillotine shear made by **Potter USA**, but it didn't include built in guides, rulers, or a back stop, so I could not easily cut straight strips of equal width on it. This inability was adding a lot of time and labor to my process. I needed a better shear.

HMAG: What specifically did you do with the grant? Our members love tools and techniques so feel free to mention the exact item you purchased and why you chose it.



Galveston Ghosts, brooch created by René Henry using her new shear.

RLH: I applied for this grant to help pay for a heavy-duty shear by **Durston**. The Durston shear not only has the ability to cut through steel, but also has a built-in stop so that I can make consistently wide segments.

The **Heavy-Duty 300 Guillotine Shear** from Durston allows me to achieve straight, even cuts on metal up to 300mm (11.75") wide. The precision-ground, hardened, and tempered cutting blade cuts non-ferrous metal up to 3.5mm thick (8 gauge) and mild steel up to 2mm thick (12 gauge). You can also turn the blades four-times before you need to have them sharpened. As a Durston product, it is extremely well made, and I expect it to be the last shear I purchase.

To learn more about this amazing tool, visit <https://durston.com/product/durston-guillotine/>.

HMAG: How is the shear? Did it meet your expectations?

RLH: Amazing! It cuts metal like butter. The only time there's been an issue with the cuts have been caused by user error while I was getting used to working with it. It's been time saving and has reduced the need to equalize my cut strips by filing.

HMAG: What's next for you professionally/artistically?

RLH: Right now, I'm focusing on working on limited production in my *Ghost* series, which consists of photo transfers on steel, with silver filled, brass, and/or silver accents. I will continue to work on art pieces in the same series, as well as on other side projects.

HMAG: What would you say to motivate other members to apply for the grant?

RLH: This grant was extremely helpful for me in making this very expensive purchase, which would have otherwise been out of my budget. Applying was very simple and there are a variety of options of how you can use the funding. The only thing required in return is writing a few lines about your experience. I'm extremely honored to have received this grant.

Editor's Note: Thanks as always to **Charisma Design Studios** for funding this grant. HMAG will be accepting applications for the **2025 Grant** soon—look for more information in eBlasts and on other social media.



Community News

Here are some cool things going on in the Houston metals community:

- Artist **Amanda Paige** is excited to share that she will be exhibiting four pieces at **Milan Jewelry Week** this October. Three of the pieces come from her ongoing study of defensive adornment called *In Defense*, and the fourth from a new series entitled *Poiesis*.



Work in progress: Dare to Touch from the In Defense series, prior to stone setting.

- In June, artist **Jan Harrell** taught a one-week enameling class at the **John C. Campbell Folk School** in Brasstown, North Carolina, and highly recommends the experience. In her words, "The setting is peaceful and beautiful, and the studios are truly exceptional. The enameling and jewelry studio is fully equipped, spacious, and filled with tools—an ideal place to create. If you're looking for a peaceful retreat where you can immerse

yourself in nature and learn something new, I highly recommend checking out their catalog.”



Jan's students hard at work at the Folk School.

🌀 **Currently on view:** On view through July 27, the **Glassell School of Art's** annual **Juried Student Exhibition** features work by several local jewelry and enamel artists, including **Paula Angeleri, Humaira Fazili, Kyle Hoang, Tammy Kuhar, William Luft, Debi Martin, Edward Lane McCartney, Marcela McLean, Kimberly Pacetti, Drew Scott, Christine Sigman, Nina West, and Bruce Wright.** Special congratulations to Edward, who received a Jurors' Award, and Tammy and Kimberly, who received Merit Awards for Jewelry and Enameling respectively. *At the Glassell School of Art's ground-floor Bucher Gallery, 5101 Montrose Blvd, Houston.*



Share Your News with the Community

We love to highlight what HMAG members and others in our local community are up to professionally. Do you have any artistic or professional news or achievements to share with the HMAG community? Upcoming online or in-person gallery shows? Sales or business milestones? Jury

awards or other professional recognition? Changes of address or employment?

Submit your community news to HMAGNews@gmail.com for consideration for the Winter newsletter.



Mission Statement

The Houston Metal Arts Guild, Inc. is a non-profit organization made up of people with varying interests and involvement in traditional and contemporary jewelry and metal arts.

The Guild was founded to provide for the exchange of ideas and information, as well as offer affordable educational opportunities to its members and the public. Our activities include workshops and programs on a wide range of aesthetic, technical, and commercial topics; exhibitions at leading local venues; social and volunteer events; and communications via our Web presence, social media, and newsletter.

The skills, energy, and enthusiasm of the Houston Metals Arts Guild, Inc. members promote and sustain its successful programs. We welcome and encourage participation by everyone.

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