

MARY DONALD Artist Statement

With the eye of a jeweler, I practice the art of hunting and gathering. Like an urban aborigine, I collect a variety of materials and even detritus plus remnants and miscellany from natural and other resources, carrying it back to the studio where it's examined and then used to create body adornment, objects and sculpture. It's hard to say sometimes, exactly, what this work is all about. It's about so many things and nothing at all; I've come to think of it as a meditation on aesthetics, with a particular regard for the natural world. It's an exploration, motivated by the tension and interplay between value and values, materials and materialism, consumption and waste, the decorative and the conceptual, nature and culture, permanence and ephemera, art and craft, rich and poor, mind and body, organic and synthetic, personal and political, work and play, the precious and the banal, the crude and the refined, the tangible and the spiritual. It's about dancing the fault between human nature and the natural world. Yet ultimately, this work is a lyrical response to the world around me, embracing both the simplicity of pure form and the more engaging, conceptual aspects which drive the work.

Specializing in a sub-field which is often defined by the use of precious materials such as platinum, gold, diamonds, and sapphires, I'm frequently faced with the baggage that goes hand in hand with those materials. This includes unethical mining practices and human rights violations, to mention only the most glaring examples. Words such as "precious" and "value" are constantly part of the language surrounding jewelry, which I use as a point of departure — the springboard into my own creative process.

I've discovered a kind of poetry in every day materials, images and objects that is completely absent in commercial jewelry. The subversive act of rescuing materials destined for the dumpster motivates me further or simply repurposing various found goods. Taking the time to craft orange peels, cheap plastics, spent inner tubes and other odds and ends into "gems" intended to adorn the human body -- where gold and diamonds are a big part of the tradition -- or sometimes combining these ordinary and/or waste materials with traditional precious materials, brings tension and interest to the completed works.

The search for and collecting of a range of unorthodox materials that fits into this rubric but also stimulates an aesthetic response, plays a significant role in my process. Simultaneously, it satisfies a curiosity regarding the material world, a penchant for experimentation that sustains my creative impulse and a sensitivity to the natural world.