For best view on your cell phone, turn to landscape.



## The Washington Guild of Goldsmiths

# Newsletter
# Fall 2024

**“Drifting Ashore, Treasures and Tradition”**. Who could have imagined that treasures of all kinds could be found along seashores or on the muddy banks of a river! This issue's “International Feature” showcases the very talented Liz Willis, who takes us on an adventure along the River Thames, where surprise after surprise creates one piece of jewelry after the other.

**Also in This Issue:** Alice Kresse, one of WGG METALWORK 2024 exhibiting members who were honored for their creativity and craftsmanship, tells us how her love for jewelry began and how her background was one of the key factors of her success. Not to be missed are Carol-lynn Swol's "Letter from the President," coverage of the METALWORK 2024 show, updates on WGG's workshops, and more!

Brooch by Artist : Liz Willis - Photo Credit: Lottie Keating Photography

## Letter from the President

**A Heartfelt Thanks to Our METALWORK 2024, Workshop, and Tool Initiative Volunteers & Exciting Opportunities Ahead.**

I wish to extend my deepest thanks to the incredible volunteers who made METALWORK 2024 a success. Your dedication, time, and effort have truly made a lasting impact on our community. It could not have been done without you! The reception was well attended, look for Nick's report of that evening later in this newsletter.



In August, the Guild hosted its first in-person workshop in five years! Thank you Estelle and Nil for coordinating such a wonderful event. Look for their report as well. I cannot wait to see what workshops will be offered next.

It is also wonderful that some of the tools the Guild has been collecting as part of the Tool Box initiative have been donated to a local school.

We are a tiny and mighty Guild and, as we look ahead, we are actively working to provide a broader range of opportunities for members to connect and learn, both in person and virtually. Our goal is to continue offering a diverse array of events that cater to the varied interests of our community.

To support these ongoing efforts, we are seeking additional volunteers. There are opportunities available to fit different levels of commitment, from occasional, event-based assistance to more sustained roles within the Guild. Your participation is vital to ensuring the Guild remains vibrant and successful, and we are confident that we can find a role that matches your interests.

One such event, sparked by member interest, is an in-person gem sale on October 26, open to Guild members and guests.

If you're interested in getting involved, we encourage you to reach out for more information on how you can contribute. Thank you for helping us continue to grow and thrive!

Please save the date and plan to attend the virtual all-member meeting and election on October 15 at 7 pm. We hope to offer candidates for vice president as Jan Solomon is electing to step down after a wonderfully engaged, multi-year term. Thank you, Jan, for your commitment to the Guild and your support of me as I transitioned in my role as president!

You will receive more information on the voting procedure soon!

WGG President
*Carol-lynn Swol*

## METALWORK 2024

**Click here to watch METALWORK 2024 reception reel, by Megan Barnes**



Photo credit: Jan Solomon

A lively and engaged crowd celebrated METALWORK 2024 at the show's opening reception on Friday, August 23, at Montgomery College's Sarah Silberman Art Gallery. Carol-lynn Swol, WGG President, welcomed everyone to the show and thanked the jurors, Pati Young (in attendance) and Ruby Lopez Harper, along with the volunteers who helped to make the show a reality. Special

thanks went to Montgomery College for hosting our biennial show and to Nick Barnes who orchestrated the numerous details that led to a beautiful and well-designed show.



Carefully designed by Jeff Bulman, the layout of the gallery was intimate and provided a seamless flow. In addition, Jeff's arrangement of the artworks in the display cases provided a terrific showcase for members' jewelry and metalwork. Visitors lingered over the members' work while enjoying soft drinks and light hors d'oeuvres.

Photo credit: Noha Nader

Nick had the honor of presenting this year's Educational Merit Scholarship awards, as well as the Juror's Choice awards. The merit awards honor student achievements in local jewelry classes and are funded through the sale of the "LINKED" necklace created by WGG members. In addition, Tevel Herbstman, owner of Allcraft USA Jewelry Supply, supplied the gift certificates for student awardees financed through "LINKED". The Guild's METALWORK 2024 scholarship student winners are:

- WGG Emerging Artist Award: Ashley Choe
- Jurors' Choice Award: Peyton Bradley-Ryder and Anna Nava-Liess

Following the student recognitions, Nick and Carol-lynn presented the METALWORK 2024 Jurors' Special Recognition awards. The following WGG exhibiting members were honored for their creativity and craftsmanship:

- Abby Schindler Goldblatt
- Anne Jordan
- Alice Kresse
- Nan Lopata
- Wayne Werner

**To check all the participating artists' work, please** click here**.**



Photo credit: Noha Nader

As always, Guild members and guests enjoyed seeing each other, reconnecting, and celebrating each other's work. The crowd slowly dissipated as the night came to an end, pleased with a very special METALWORK 2024 show.



Photo credit: Jan Solomon

## Third Tuesdays Virtual Conversations

Thank you for joining our educational and engaging virtual conversations! Be sure to keep the Third Tuesday of (almost) every month at 7 pm marked on your calendar. Keep an eye on your inbox to see who's next! We're also incredibly grateful to SNAG for featuring our Third Tuesday events in their newsletter and social media.

We took a break in August, but in June we had the pleasure of welcoming Don Friedlich, an inspiring contemporary jewelry designer who uses glass in new ways, and in July Ruby Lopez Harper, Executive Director of CERF+, gave us invaluable tips on how to prepare for studio disasters. Missed these sessions? No worries! Our Zoom events are recorded and shared exclusively on the members-only WGG YouTube channel—check your email for links about a week after each event.

We need YOU! The WGG is seeking a member to take the reins of our Third Tuesday virtual events. Want to get involved and help shape these incredible conversations?
Reach out to us at:
3rdtuesday@washingtonguildofgoldsmiths.com.
We'd love to have you on board!

**Acting Third Tuesday Coordinator,**
***Carol-lynn Swol***

cerf+ Craft Emergency Relief Fund

## Workshops

### Gold on a Budget, part 2

The Guild hosted its first in-person workshop in five years on August 23 through 25, 2024. Alex Boyd taught "Gold on a Budget, Part 2". Given the current price of gold, the workshop was designed to teach ways of using gold *economically* and yet to maximum effect.

We found Alex to be an excellent teacher. The workshop was compact, well planned, and full of useful information. It was received with great enthusiasm, and it ended with demands for more such workshops (especially from Alex Boyd). We, the workshop coordinators, are now in further discussions for more in-person workshops.



Photo credits: Nick Barnes

**Coordinators,**
***Estelle Vernon*** *and* ***Nil Van Order***









## Member Spotlight

Having earned a bachelor of fine arts (BFA) degree in painting and printmaking from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, **Alice Kresse** worked for many years in the news and publishing industries as an art director and graphic designer. She enjoyed her career, but still made time for her own work. With regard to jewelry making, her interest wasn't at all planned! Read on to learn more about Alice's fascinating artistic journey. To take a look at more of her creations, check out her jewelry website (www.akresse.com), printmaking and design website (www.alicekresse.com), and Instagram page (@alicekresse).

*****



Printmaker's Earrings Blue
Photo credit: Alice Kresse



Tinybook Pendant Solstice1
Photo credit: Alice Kresse

My entry into the jewelry realm was accidental. In 2004, I saw Robert Ebendorf's* retrospective show at the Renwick Gallery. I'd never heard of him and hadn't planned to see the exhibition; I didn't know there was such a thing as studio jewelry. I was stunned. I saw a necklace that seemed to be made out of gilded papier-mâché and newsprint. Later that year, the Corcoran School of Art + Design announced their new jewelry certificate program. I'd been taking continuing education classes there for years so I immediately signed up for Jewelry 101.



Metalwork was fun, but I found that working with alternative materials really spoke to me. After experimenting with all sorts of materials, I settled (mostly) on paper and epoxy resin as my favorite mediums.

The financial crisis of 2008 and a buyout offer from my employer suddenly made me a self-employed artist. I now work out of my home studio and do not miss the corporate world.

Printmaker.s Choker
Photo credit: Alice Kresse



A few years later I returned to printmaking. Again, this was accidental. I hadn't pulled a print since college graduation. A friend had found a printmaking workshop and thought it would be a fun thing to do together. I fell in love with printmaking all over again, even though she dropped out.

I figured that my jewelry and printmaking disciplines would eventually meet, and they have. I have a line of paper jewelry. I handprint my papers on an etching press at Pyramid Atlantic Art Center in Hyattsville, Maryland, and fabricate the jewelry in my studio in Bethesda, Maryland.

Three Sophies - Pink Collar- Monoprint
Photo credit: Alice Kresse

Having two disciplines keeps things fresh, I think. Common motifs in my printmaking find their way into my jewelry and sometimes my prints are about jewelry. A couple of years ago I began a series of book pendants, literally tiny silver and paper books on a long chain. In my previous career, I designed many newspapers, magazines, and books, so this seemed to make perfect sense. And now I've been inspired to make actual books from my printed papers.

*The June 2024 issue of *The WGG Newsletter* features some of Robert Ebendorf's work.

## International Feature

# Liz Willis



Portrait credit: Caroline Willis

As you read our interview with Liz Willis, be prepared for a deeply thoughtful and engaging essay about her creative path, providing us with an opportunity to reflect on our own creative journeys. Liz is a UK-based contemporary jeweler from Hertfordshire whose remarkable work incorporates silver and thread, as well as found objects from “mudlarking” on the River Thames and elsewhere. You’ll also learn a bit about what “mudlarking” is and its historical origins. (More about mudlarking appears further on in this issue.) Of course, be sure to check out Liz’s website at https://lizwillisjewellery.co.uk/

***WGG:*** *Please tell us a bit about yourself*



***Liz:*** I am a UK based jeweler, using textile techniques to combine silver and found objects to make little pieces of wearable history. I use silver and hand-stitched silk threads to add layers of color and texture to my work. I work with found objects that I collect from beachcombing, field walking, and especially mudlarking from along the River Thames. I live in Hertfordshire, about 40 miles north of London, in a beautiful old timber-framed house with my husband, one of my two grown-up children, and our lovely, but slightly eccentric rescue cat!

Oxidized Silver, Silk Threads & Found Object Brooch.
Approx 12 x 5cm
Photo credit: Lottie Keating Photography

***WGG:*** *You were a nurse and support worker. When did you first realize you wanted to change paths and pursue a career as a jewelry designer?*

***Liz:*** I originally trained as a nurse in the 1980s and have worked in various healthcare roles over the years. I would've quite liked to have gone to art college when I was young, but I grew up in a family that didn't consider art to be a suitable career choice for a young woman.

My creativity found different outlets over the years. For example, when I worked in an orthopaedic and fracture clinic, my patients had the most beautifully smooth and sculpted casts on their broken bones. My kids were lucky to have imaginatively decorated rooms and very elaborate birthday cakes as they were growing up thanks to their creative Mum!

When I was in my 30s, I was able to take advantage of a program to support mature students back into study. I enrolled at the University of Hertfordshire to undertake an art foundation course and

then a degree in applied art, which I did part time as I was still working nights as a nurse. The degree gave me the opportunity to try all sorts of different craft disciplines, but I really enjoyed the textile elements of the course. It was during the development of large sculptural wearable pieces that I started stitching over metal to enable a piece to hold its form. I finally graduated in 2008. My final degree pieces incorporated elements of found objects and stitched pieces of silver. They looked very different to what I make now, but it was definitely the start of something.

***WGG:*** *How did you come to use silver, silk threads, and found objects from "mudlarking" by the River Thames? And, for our U.S. readers, what is mudlarking?*



***Liz:*** In 2015, I spent some time on an art residency in Iceland, which inspired and informed the development of my work with found objects. I started combining the colors of the landscapes around me with the objects I found on the beaches and around the small fishing port of Husavik. I quickly discovered a love of rust and patina on old worn metal, combining those colors with the stitched threads and silver. A chance encounter on social media led to me becoming interested in the history of mudlarked objects from the River Thames. "Mudlarking" is the term used for the activity of searching the riverbanks at low tide for lost and historical objects. It is mainly used in relation to the River Thames in London, although can apply to any river.

While it is now an interesting hobby and pastime, a "mudlark" in the 18th century would have been someone who, driven by poverty and lack of skills, scavenged along the banks of the river in extremely muddy and unsanitary conditions for anything they could sell on. Nowadays, you have to have a permit to mudlark on the Thames. There are rules about declaring and recording valuable finds, as well as what can and can't be used or sold as art.

Photo credit: Ed Willis

***WGG*:** *What is your approach for transforming found objects you collect into what you describe as "little pieces of wearable history"?*

***Liz:*** I particularly like using found objects that are considered everyday items, things that are often overlooked and not considered "treasure" by others. Time and the river's flow wear these items down. The resulting patterns of erosion, distortion, or patina are things that really appeal to me. I often try to recreate these patterns when stitching the found object and silver together, blending the colors and textures of one into the other with silk threads. I always leave the object as I find it. Apart from cleaning it, I add a fine layer of Renaissance Wax to it to preserve the surface. Then I form the silver to fit around the shape of the found piece. The mudlarked pin and nail pieces allow for a little more freedom with the colors used.

The pins and nails that I use were all handmade before the process was mechanised in the 18th century and would've had a variety of uses. Before buttons were invented, pins were used to hold clothing in place over laced-on undergarments. They were considered a necessity and had considerable value. The more pins you had the better standard of clothing you could afford to wear and the higher up the social ladder you were likely to be. The term "pin money" comes from the allowance husbands gave their wives to buy the pins.

I love the idea of the humble pin being such a valued precious item. By transforming them into pieces of jewelry, I'm making them "precious" again and placing them back on the body to be worn once more. The copper nails are also handmade and would have been used for house building and boat construction in days gone by. Who knows? The nails may have been around the world in a wooden trading ship or have been used in floorboards walked over by our Tudor or Elizabethan ancestors! I use a wider range of colors for these pieces and enjoy embroidering the silks to look

"organic" in wave-like forms. Or, I use brighter, bolder colors to catch the eye and draw attention to the piece, possibly in the same way the pin would originally have held the clothing in place.



Silver, Silk Threads & Mudlarked Pin Brooch. Approx 3 x 1.5cm
Photo credit: Lottie Keating Photography

***WGG*:** *What is the most valuable thing you learned over the years working in the field?*

***Liz:*** I'm so very glad I learned to have the courage in my own convictions and keep going with making what I do. It can be very hard to trust your own judgment sometimes, especially when there's often pressure to conform or do things in a more usual way. I consider myself very lucky to have found a way of making jewelry that is perhaps a little unusual and different from a lot of other jewelers and jewelry techniques. It doesn't always work in my favor: I get some extremely odd looks and comments at shows when people realize they are looking at a rusty old nail stitched to a piece of silver! But, when someone does understand and appreciate what I make, it's a truly wonderful feeling. I've had some lovely and sometimes very emotional conversations with people who have connected with my work, from a woman who bought a piece made from an old hobnail boot, as it gave her fond memories of the sound her grandfather's boots made on a stone floor, to a necklace made from a lovely old nail found on a Cornish beach that went home with a customer who'd had many happy holidays in that area, to a necklace made from a tangle of old copper alloy wire that was used to make pins that is now owned by an archaeologist who specializes in copper alloy wire! My particular favorite, though, has to be the necklace bought by a lovely customer who had been recently bereaved. The piece reminded her of beachcombing and hunting for treasure with her loved one. There were a fair few tears involved with the sale of that piece from both of us!

***WGG:*** *Who have been your biggest mentors in this industry, and what is the best advice they have ever given you?*

***Liz:*** I think my biggest mentors in this industry are the friends and fellow makers that I've met over the years at various shows and events. It's always so helpful to see how other people do things and to hear about what does and doesn't work for them in terms of both work and in life! I belong to several craft and jewelry groups in the UK, similar to the Washington Guild of Goldsmiths. I find it very helpful to be part of a creative mix of makers. When I first started out, I joined a local group of the Association for Contemporary Jewellery (ACJ). With the support and friendship of a group of like-minded people, it proved such a help in developing confidence as a maker, managing my business, and learning how to sell at shows.



Mudlarked Pin Stud Earrings
Photo credit: Lottie Keating Photography

***WGG:*** *Where do you go for inspiration?*

***Liz:*** I'm inspired by so many artists and makers that it's hard to pick any one as a specific inspiration to my work. When I first started my jewelry business in 2010, I think my artist's statement said something like, "I'm inspired by things I see around me when out running and walking." Well, that still holds true today. Except these days, it's more walking than running, usually along the riverbank or a beach, and I annoy anybody I'm running or walking with by frequently stopping to pick things up! I'm drawn to anything that's a bit rusty and battered and worn out. Often, I can see how I can make it into a piece of jewelry as soon as I pick it up, although the technicalities of how to make it wearable often have me scratching my head for a lot longer. I have a number of larger found objects that are too big to be wearable, but I have plans for making wall pieces as and when time allows. My studio is full of boxes and trays of bits of old metal and "stuff." I can lose myself for hours picking bits up and thinking what they might have been used for and how I'm going to transform them.



Mudlarked Nail Brooch
Photo credit: Lottie Keating Photography

***WGG:*** *What advice would you give to new artists who want to start a career in jewelry design? Similarly, what would you advise artists, like yourself, who started in one career and want to transition to jewelry design?*

***Liz:*** I think I would advise anyone starting out making jewelry to have the confidence in their own work and ideas, even if they're being told to follow a more traditional path. Follow that path if necessary, but put your own stamp on it. I would also say that imposter syndrome is very real, but the chances are that the makers either side of you at college or at a show are probably feeling the same way, too. It's not always a bad thing, and I think it can sometimes make you more approachable and honest as a maker. If possible, have a studio space surrounded by other makers. It definitely helps with the creative flow and support, and you don't get distracted by having to put the washing in or sorting out everyday family problems or issues. My studio space is in my home and I speak from experience! Joining jewelry groups or craft organizations is also a really good way of meeting people and learning from them, too. Having had a previous career in nursing has definitely helped in the way I look at life and the way I connect with people. I hope this comes through in my work and my interactions with fellow makers and customers. Having been in a traditionally low paid career for many years has definitely made it harder for me to value my time and work. So, pricing is my nemesis! But I really do think that coming to jewelry from a different career is a good thing. You learn from all the experiences you have as you go through life, which can influence your creative decisions in so many different ways.

***WGG:*** *Is there anything else about your journey as an artist that you'd like to share with The WGG Newsletter readers?*

***Liz:*** This isn't really relevant to my journey as an artist, but writing this has made me reflect on how many friends I have that have gone on from nursing or other jobs that were once considered "appropriate" for young woman to go into. One retrained as a lawyer, another is now a senior academic in Shakespearean studies, and one is now a well-respected athletics coach who has trained and supported a young athlete who just competed in her first Olympics. I'm so proud of them all! It gives me a lot of hope for young women, like my daughter, that they can follow career

paths of their own choosing. They can go in whatever direction they want and can have the confidence to change that direction if they want to.

## Drifting Ashore, Treasures and Tradition

### Special Picks for Our Readers!

**"What is Mudlarking?"**
by Meriel Jeater, Curator at the Museum of London
Thames Festival Trust
https://thamesfestivaltrust.org/heritage-programme/foragers-of-the-foreshore/the-history-of-mudlarking/

What is "mudlarking"? What does it have to do with jewelry making? This issue's "International Feature" on UK-based jewelry maker, Liz Willis, offers a tantalizing idea. It's such a fascinating practice with a long history tied directly into our theme of "Drifting Ashore, Treasures and Tradition," that we thought you'd enjoy learning more.

**Myths and Legends: Discover the Ancient Link Between Amber and the Sea**
by Rona Bierrum, FGA DGA, GEM A Senior Tutor
GEM A, The Gemmological Association of Great Britain
https://gem-a.com/baltic-amber-gemstone-star-sign-taurus/

Did you know?…"Amber ranges from between 15 and 130 million years of age, making it one of our oldest organic gem material…Most of the amber used in jewellery is much younger than this, comes from the Baltic region and is between 15 and 40 million years old…The Ancient Greeks believed that amber was formed as a result of the death of Phaëton – the son of Apollo and a river nymph." There's more in this article about amber and related ancient beliefs about its powers. The article is a quick, fun read.

**"Ámber"**
American Museum of National History
https://www.amnh.org/research/invertebrate-zoology/collections/amber

Learn about the amber fossil collection at the American Museum of Natural History. Under the direction of its curator, David Grimaldi, the museum's collection of fossil insects "…is arguably the most important such research collection in the world…"
Worth visiting if you're in New York City!




**"I Found 2 Beautiful Medieval Artefacts on the Thames Mudlarking. Can You Help Me to ID One of Them?"**
Nicola White Mudlark – Tideline Art
YouTube, March 17, 2024

Watch mudlarks in action and find out about their fabulous finds, including a coin from the 1600s minted at the time of King Charles I and part of a medieval belt buckle. In the video, mudlark Nicola White also takes the time to show and talk about these and other objects that she's found mudlarking along the River Thames.

## Events in the Area!

baltimorejewelrycenter




HOLIDAY SALE 2024

Applications Open Now

baltimorejewelrycenter
Baltimore Jewelry Center



Kinetic Jewelry

Workshop

smithsoniancraftshowsswc
National Building Museum

INTERNATIONAL PARTNER



Smithsonian
Craft2Wear

GYEONGSANGBUK-DO

First Night First Dibs | Fri. Sept. 27, 5-8pm
Show Days | Sat. Sept. 28 - Sun. Sept. 29

National Building Museum | Washington, DC

The 16th Annual

JRACRAFT DAY

A Craft Artist Exhibition and Sale

Saturday, December 7, 2024
The Woman's Club of Chevy Chase

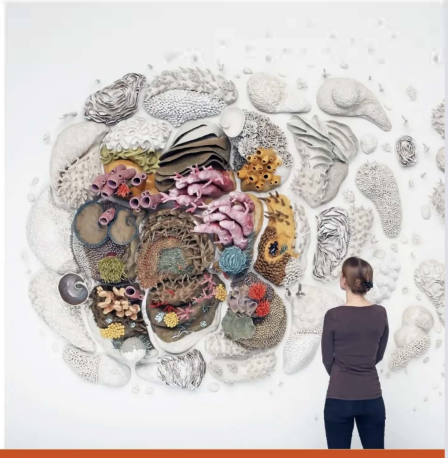


Join us for the 17th edition of JRACraft Day at The Woman's Club of Chevy Chase, 7931 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland.

JRACraft Day is a one-day showcase for artists who are members of the James Renwick Alliance for Craft. This event gives the public an opportunity to see and purchase work by artists in a variety of media.

jracraft and courtneycoral

COURTNEY MATTISON



OCT 22 & 26, 2024 | DISTINGUISHED ARTIST SERIES

# Workshopping With

SNAG |








## Learning Opportunities:

The WGG has compiled this list of locations that offer jewelry and metalsmithing classes in the DC-Maryland-Virgina region (aka, the DMV). We'd love to expand it! If you know of other venues offering classes and workshops, email us at: wggnewsletter@washingtonguildofgoldsmiths.com. Also let us know if you offer instruction and where you teach.

- **Baltimore Jewelry Center** https://www.baltimorejewelrycenter.org/classes-workshop
- **Jewelryclassdc** https://jewelryclassdc.com/
- **Joy of Glass** https://www.joyofglass.com/
- **Montgomery College Jewelry and Metalsmithing** https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/academics/departments/art-rockville/student-artwork/jewelry-and-metalsmithing.html
- **SilverWorks Studio and Gallery at Glen Echo Park** https://www.silverworksglenechopark.com/silver_works_glen_echo_park/home.html
- **The Art League** https://www.theartleague.org/
  **Wear Ever Jewelry** https://weareverjewelry.com/

*Copyright © 2024 Washington Guild of Goldsmiths, All rights reserved.*

If you don't want to receive these emails, click unsubscribe from this list.

INTUIT mailchimp