BETWEEN/SPACES

Jamie M. Scherzer

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Metal

State University of New York, New Paltz
Using metal as a drawing tool, my work expands the traditional vocabulary of mark-making. I strive to create aesthetic compositions with metal serving as both paintbrush and canvas, exploring and capturing the conversation I have with the material. With an ongoing dialogue with material and process, I create imagery in metal, then go on to use that metal as a tool for printmaking.

Through my work, I respond to the properties of metal through repetitive acts such as melting, drilling, and hammering. I explore the balance between the contained systematic nature of form and its transition into more unprincipled outcomes. Working through this process allows for maximum discovery and also encourages unexpected outcomes. These inquiries result in a body of work made up of jewelry, object, and print.

My research blurs the boundaries traditionally set between two- and three-dimension. Metal serves as my canvas. I see my metalwork as a surface to create abstract imagery and printmaking as a way to create sculpture in two-dimensions. By inking and printing experimental metal surfaces, I use objects as tools to transform and create new abstract imagery. These tactile works on paper further inform the context of the body of work. I know the print is final when it reveals a new understanding of the metal surface and the print feels palpable.

Within this work, I create boundaries and restrictions throughout my process which allows me to develop new work with directional control while leaving room for the unexpected. Encouraging chance within a set of parameters, these restrictions paradoxically create infinite possibilities.

/MATERIALITY/

For the purpose of my research, I define materiality as the significance of the material to the piece as a whole.

Working with materiality is to have a conversation directly with the material. I can manipulate the material as much as I’d like but only within the limitations set for me by the properties of metal. I find the points of stress and learn to collaborate with the metal while pushing the limits of the material. Then a
conversation ensues where, understanding these limitations, I then decide whether to work with or against the material properties, either way letting the material act as a guide.

My work tells a story of material, of where it’s been. It ultimately acts as a record of this conversation. Additionally, it traces the dialogue happening between myself and the metal. In the end, my work is a record of both sides of this conversation.

/METALSMITHING/

Metal is paradoxical: sturdy yet malleable. Its properties allow for countless areas of discovery. It can withstand brute force and pressure and then melt quickly under high heat. Metal becomes marked by what it goes through, and whether being dropped or hammered, it carries a testament of time.

Metalsmithing has a long history of perfectionism, of clean edges, of mirrored finishes. Through my work, I reject the typical notions of making “fine jewelry pieces.” Rather, I am attracted to final results that do not conform to traditional or expected outcomes. I enjoy finding the unorthodox nature of this traditional material.

The metal pieces I make can exist on their own or they can be used as a tool for another inquiry. I often start with a flat sheet of metal and begin to investigate how two simple actions — drilling holes and melting wire — can create a new understanding of the material at hand. From there, the question extends to what happens under added pressure? At first through hammering, then later through printing. Altering form through these simple processes shows the beauty of the repetition. Repetition allows for a small moment within a piece to happen again and again with the collection of simple acts creating an altered state — beyond limits — that bears little resemblance to the material origins. Repetition claims the purpose of small moments and makes sure they cannot be overlooked.

/SYSTEMS/

happens when you take something simple and obsess about its nature of being. Does it transform? Or does it remain the same? These actions create parameters for growth.

The importance of repetition in my work comes from how one single element can build into something much bigger than itself and create a new “whole.” Artist Yayoi Kusama is known for her use of obsessive repetition. In her work, repeated acts help eliminate intrusive thoughts and allow viewers to be fully immersed in Kusama’s accumulation, obsession, and repetition. (“Yayoi Kusama Artworks & Famous Art”). Speaking on her work, Yayoi says “with just one polka dot, nothing can be achieved. In the universe, there is the sun, the moon, the earth, and hundreds of millions of stars” (“Yayoi Kusama Artworks & Famous Art”). The repetitive actions of my processes additionally allow me to enter a meditative state while working. This meditative state allows me to clear my head while following a clear directive. It keeps me from overthinking the work.

I create the right settings and limitations to find these possibilities. The limitations that I put on my materials ask the viewer and artist to discover more possibilities within a confined realm. I find and create systems to contain chaos and breakage. Painter James Siena refers to these systems as “visual algorithms,” when discussing his own self-imposed constraints (“James Siena”). My algorithm gives me room to wander. To question the appearance of that small crack, dent, or bend —and to enhance it.

/PRINTMAKING/

My work has shifted from strict metal and jewelry outcomes to include printmaking as a critical facet of my practice. My system includes working in metal and then treating the manipulated metal as a printmaking “plate,” with the metal piece acting as a tool. This allows the print to reflect the processes the metal has undergone. Printmaking is a way to capture the conversation with material as it evolves. Bringing printmaking into my narrative of works allows the prints to act as an index of the metal objects that are often in a state of flux. There is an intention behind the print to find a further understanding of what the metal means. Printing ink gets embedded into all the metal crevasses and invisible scratches, highlighting these imperfections in the work on paper. The print can serve as a statement, or it can simply show the metal with all its small imperfections. Leaving the printmaking ink in my metalwork allows the metal to be
pulled out of traditional context and be placed into the realm of print, identifying the object’s usage as a tool. While the print is a two-dimension work on paper, it represents the object and drawing created in a three-dimensional world. I choose to only print in black & white to focus on the prints as objects on paper. This restriction allows for the form on the page to be front and center.

Lynn Batchelder is another metalsmith who translates “the quality of the drawn line into metal” as she creates jewelry, objects, and drawings (“About”). Lynn translates the qualities of hand-drawing into her metalwork. My work resonates with hers through the exploration of imagery in both two- and three-dimensions. The idea of drawing is at the center of Batchelder’s work and embraces being able to see the hand in the work (Campbell). Batchelder reveals processes of the hand through making as I try to show the growth and the stressors I enact on the metal.

/FORMAT/

I create a conversation between dimensions, between print and metalsmithing. Within my experimental processes in metal and print, I use the rectangle as a base. This is not arbitrary; I choose this starting point because it reflects the blank sheet or blank canvas.

At the same time, it is easy to notice that not one of my “rectangles” has proper 90-degree angles. I also choose to repurpose base metal from what is around me rather than beginning with a pristine sheet. I am attracted to repurposing material that has been used, or that was intended for something else. The imperfections in these sheets are like prompts, guiding my intuitive process. The end results have been put under significant force and pressure, with the original geometric shape now distorted, making evident material properties.

My work is both tactile and kinetic. The tactile nature of the pieces invites the viewer to want to touch and interact with the work. The kinetic aspect allows for the piece to take on a life of its own. The emphasis on both these tactile and kinetic qualities brings the importance of the connection to the hand when making and its interaction with the hand once finished. Because of this, it is important that these pieces be wearable and interact with the human body.
The final facet of my work comes down to absence. The work grows by the space between the smaller parts. These absences give volume to the pieces, allowing them to grow without being weighed down. The absences and lack of material create unique shadows and interactions when light is applied. The shadows represent simple drawings of the work and bring the conversation back to the metal’s relationship with the prints.
MOONLIGHT, INTAGLIO PRINT, 8” X 10”, 2019 / UNTITLED BROOCH, STERLING SILVER, COPPER, 1.5” X 4”, 2019

RACING STRIPES, COPPER, STERLING SILVER, INK, 4” X 5”, 2020 (FRONT AND BACK)
TWIN SHADOWS, COPPER, STERLING SILVER, 5.5" X 4" X 1", 2020 (FRONT AND BACK)

OPEN SPACES, STERLING SILVER, 4" X 3.5" X 1", 2020 / IMPRINTS, INTAGLIO PRINT, 12" X 18", 2020
MOVEMENT, STERLING SILVER, COPPER, 11" X 11" X .5", 2020

OPENINGS, COPPER, STERLING SILVER, 3.5" X 4.5" X 1", 2020
TOGETHER, COPPER, STERLING SILVER, 3.5" X 4.5" X 1", 2020

EXPAND I, INTAGLIO PRINT, 18" X 24", 2020
RELEASE, COPPER, STERLING SILVER, FINE SILVER, 3” X 5”, 2020

RELEASE (DETAIL)
CALL, INTAGLIO PRINT, 15” X 20”, 2019 / RESPONSE, COPPER, 8” X 8”, 2020

RESPONSE (DETAIL)
BENCH PIN, 2019-2020: THIS IS THE BENCH PIN USED TO MAKE EVERY PIECE, SEEN FROM ABOVE.


*Jessica Stockholder*. jessicastockholder.info/.


“Noam Elyashiv Artist Jeweler.” Noam Elyashib, noam-elyashiv.com/.


*Robert Smit*, www.robertsmitt.works/.


