

# Wearable sculpture

By Leigh Patterson

In K. Jill Peters' world, the whorl of a seashell inspires a bronze belt buckle, a simple knobby twig is recast in a set of delicate silver earrings, and a cloud is the inspiration for an abstract pendant.

"I'm hugely influenced by nature and organic forms," the Winnipeg-based Peters says from her cozy home studio, where she works at a retrofitted old desk to create "wearable sculpture" in the form of chunky rings, unique and stylish textured bracelets, earrings, pendants and belt buckles.

Using mainly silver, gold and bronze, Peters makes her one-of-a-kind works of art often using an organic casting process which involves placing an object such as a branch, seed pod or shell into a mould, burning out the organic material and pouring molten metal into the void left behind. She also constructs modern, geometric form-inspired pieces.

In addition to the cues she takes from nature, a strong eco consciousness pervades Peters' work in the choice of metals and gems she uses in her designs. "It's important to me that I'm purchasing responsibly; that diamonds are properly sourced and other fine gems are untreated by radiation, heat or dyes," she says, adding she is able to recycle and repurpose used jewellery into new items.

Peters says she has "been making art as long as I can remember," a childhood pastime nurtured by creative family members who would



patiently string beads and do other arts and crafts with her. Later on, Peters says local artist Anne Johnson helped her "focus her artistic experience and journey" and encouraged her to apply at the University of Manitoba's School


of Fine Art. It was a big step in Peters' evolution, where she quickly learned she was a "three-dimensional artist," drawn to sculpture, metalwork and ceramics. After graduating, local goldsmith and jewellery design instructor Doreen Lapointe further honed Peters' talent. Peters continues to push herself to learn new things. "I'm the type of person who likes to do things that challenge or intimidate me – it's empowering," she says.

Giving credit to her mentors and teachers, and enjoying her art as a "full time occupation

and obsession," fully supported by husband Lee Klassen, Peters has come full circle by giving back to her community. She is mentoring young artists through initiatives such as the Quantum Arts Program and the Winnipeg Folk Festival's Young Artists Program, and has started a jewellery artists' collective to bring together others who are pursuing the craft.

Peters' first public foray was at the Winnipeg Folk Festival in 2009, where her fashionable belt buckles garnered a great response. Since then, word of mouth has been Peters' primary promotional vehicle. Poor Michael's Bookshop in Onanole now carries her work and she is pursuing additional boutique settings, while continuing to be rewarded by working with clients drawn to her creative aesthetic.

"I really enjoy doing custom work – it's so personal. People are entrusting you with something they'll wear their entire lives – it feels great when you get it right."

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