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Safe Haven

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SAFE HAVEN

By

KOREY ELISE BURNS, Bachelor of Fine Art

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2018

SAFE HAVEN

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KOREY ELISE BURNS, Bachelor of Fine Arts

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## ABSTRACT

Safe Haven is a body of work that reflects my interest in different cultures that have similarities to my personal background. Recreating familiar symbols, colors, textures, and finishes, I create wearable sculptures that communicate memories based upon historic imagery from areas that have impacted my life. By being able to clasp a necklace or pin a brooch on, the viewer physically engages with the work. This interaction resembles my own experiences within the areas I traveled and artists that I have met. With the combination of different metalworking techniques and personal experiences, I am able to developed work that adorns the body with memories.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The final outcome of this body of work would not have been successful without the guidance from my committee members: Lauren Selden, Wesley Berg, Candace Hicks, and Juan Carlos Ureña. In addition, I would like to thank my family who has supported me throughout my studies, allowing me to accomplish my goals. I am extremely grateful for my friends who have inspired and encouraged me through my journey here at SFA.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Table of Figures.....	iv
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Influences for Content.....	4
Chapter Three: Artistic Influences.....	12
Chapter Four: Process.....	17
Chapter Five: Individual Works.....	19
Conclusion.....	47
References.....	48
Vita.....	50

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: “Legacy Collection” (White-I brooch series of 7).....	20
Figure 2: “Legacy Collection” (White-II brooch series of 7) .....	21
Figure 3: “Legacy Collection” (Teal-I brooch series of 7).....	22
Figure 4: Heirloom IV.....	23
Figure 5: Vieux Carré.....	24
Figure 6: Surrounding Hope.....	26
Figure 7: Embrace.....	27
Figure 8: Fracture.....	28
Figure 9: Fiore.....	30
Figure 10: Firenze.....	31
Figure 11: JoAnne Collection (earring set I).....	33
Figure 12: JoAnne Collection (earring set II).....	34
Figure 13: JoAnne Collection (earring set II).....	35
Figure 14: JoAnne Collection (earring set IV).....	36
Figure 15: JoAnne Collection (earring set V).....	37
Figure 16: JoAnne Collection (earring set VI).....	38
Figure 17: JoAnne Collection (ring I).....	39
Figure 18: JoAnne Collection (ring II).....	40



Figure 19: Safe Haven, Gallery I.....	41
Figure 20: Safe Haven, Gallery II.....	42
Figure 21: Safe Haven, Gallery III.....	43
Figure 22: Safe Haven, Gallery IV.....	44
Figure 23: Safe Haven, Gallery V.....	45
Figure 24: Safe Haven, Gallery VI.....	46

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Louisiana has and will always be the place that I recognize as my foundation and my home. I come from a family of makers; each member has their own special skill set and interests. Growing up among them, I learn that to be a true maker it took hard work and dedication. Throughout my undergraduate studies, I searched for that feeling of belonging through different media. I began my studies in theatre, which led to set design. My interest in set design led to studying drawing and sculpture. From there, I ventured into ceramics and printmaking. Unfortunately, jewelry and metalworking were not offered at the university until my last semester. I do believe that having experience in different media has broadened my use of materials, designs, and processes in current work.

Jewelry has a sense of familiarity, establishing the feeling of comfort that is created by the reminiscence of a loved one. This feeling relates to a memory from after my grandmother passed away at a young age. I remember my mother and her sisters laying all of their mother's jewelry on their parent's bed. The variety included large gold chains, pendants, bracelets and earrings, each item sparkling in diamonds, sapphires, and rubies. They then drew numbers to decide which order they would be allowed to choose one item. I witnessed my mother

and her sibling's reactions to the jewelry worn by their mother. Each family member had a particular item in mind that triggered a memory they cherished with their mother. This connection to memory and value made a permanent impression on me.

Throughout my graduate studies, I have focused on creating wearable sculptures that explore the idea of home being a place of refuge while also considering the consequences of what happens when that home is destroyed. After prolonged rainfall in August 2016, southern parts of Louisiana flooded, submerging thousands of houses and businesses under water. This event caused my friends and family to evacuate and made it necessary to bond together to survive through the destruction of the floods. During that time, I had been traveling to Salvador, Brazil and Florence, Italy. The impact of these travels turned my work into a focus of familiarity versus home. With this in mind, I began to focus on my own background along with historical references that connected my designs to my influences.

In this body of work, I focus on the following themes: culture, family, and familiarity. These three topics venture out into different sections of collections and series. With the consideration of family heirlooms, memories of home, and the sense of belonging my journey in metalworking, began. International inspiration, religious background, and emotional weight of an object pushed me

to venture into new creations that could adorn the body. These designs are based off my own experiences, but by creating them as wearable sculptures, I am allowing the forms to inspire new memories for the wearer.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Influences for Content

#### Heirlooms and Objects of Sentimental Value

Heirlooms are typically valuable objects that have belonged to a family for generations. An heirloom transmits the memories made along with the history of the object. Upon receiving an heirloom, one can feel a sense of belonging, comfort, and familiarity. In contrast to most objects that are replaceable, individuals create a sense of value to these objects. When one of these objects is misplaced, it causes the owner to feel sadness, loss, and grief. This can lead to the idea of sentimental worth which is the connection to its emotional association rather than its material worth. *How Jewelry Becomes Singular* states that objects that are commercial, branded, or advertised can seem valuable, while the meaning behind receiving objects or the memories made while wearing it can create a real connection to the item. This connection then causes a new value to the object that cannot be priced or replaced. (Ahde-Deal, P32)

Beyond heirlooms, there are family objects that I have held onto that hold personal sense of value. While visiting my grandfather he gave me a copper plant box he had build, with the intent that I might use the copper. Instead, I kept the object intact to preserve the memory of him. My grandmother's last

Christmas gift to me, a string of pearls, also produces this same feeling. These two examples connected objects with the recollections of past events or lost love ones. To create many of my finished works, I am redesigning old jewelry into new heirlooms. Most of my collected jewelry consists of silver and gold from my grandmother's collection. The jewelry I collected has collected sentimental value influenced by the previous owner but the design of the jewelry is not appealing to the new owner. Therefore, by recreating the jewelry into a new design that the current owner would wear allowing the object a chance to inspire new memories.

#### Collection Created by Repetition

The use of repetition as a design strategy can be way subtracting or adding elements to each installed work. This designing technique is the building block to creating to creating a collection of work that can stand alone or be viewed as a larger "whole". Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has acquired a collection of pins over the course of her eventful life. "Secretary Albright's collection has grown organically over the years in response to the changing circumstances and opportunities of her life and career. This is a collection that has been amplified and enriched by the events that have engaged their own, providing a visible record of past experiences and future hopes." (Albright, pg 10) This collection inspired me to build upon my own body of work.

My process includes repetitively using visual forms or patterns, to rebuild, improve, or support a current design.

## Louisiana

Louisiana is known for its colorful heritage evident in its architecture. Unfortunately, the state has sustained several hurricanes causing southern parts of Louisiana to be flooded, submerging thousands of houses and businesses under water. The destruction of the flooding caused it necessary for friends and families to bond together to overcome the disaster and rebuild. During this time, I began using recycled materials to create new forms from something that was previously destroyed. "There is an attraction in the redolent beauty of the trash heap. It is a place free of restraint, rich with possibilities, laden with discovery, layered with old meanings and associations, and tinged with voyeurism." (Cerny , pg33) Picking up fragments of debris from the floods and my surroundings, I started experimenting with combining the different elements into my designs.

Inspiration developed further from textures and colors created from the effects of the hurricanes and flooding. The fading color and designs of graffiti that decorates the buildings in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lake Charles served as inspiration for the monochromatic color palette in my work. Among these buildings is ironwork that surrounds many of the homes in Louisiana. I find it interesting how creating boundaries around a home can somehow feel comforting instead of imprisoning. The Vieux Carré's cast iron in New Orleans is

a unique blend of cultural influences. Enslaved African blacksmiths created early ironwork, inspired by the aesthetic tastes of the French and Spanish colonizers. (Asbiry, pg. 43)

### Folk Art

In Louisiana, I discovered through local festivals a broad category of objects that fall under the wide classification- folk art. The effect of folk art is hard to explain, "Folk art is not descriptive because it is typological. It seeks a different power."(Glassie pg. 128) These local creations bind artist to families and communities. Being involved in these festivals, I have become more aware of the strength a community has to offer. Studying to be a professional artist in jewelry, I am continually asking myself, "Where is the boundary between folk art and fine art?" You could say the "richness of folk art lies in its entailment of philosophy, while the richness of fine art lies in its incorporation of the sensate world" (Glassie , pg128), but perhaps the answer is more complex.

### International Travels - Salvador, Brazil and Florence, Italy

In 2016, I traveled to Salvador, Brazil where I stayed with a host family and learn about the local culture, religion, and art. I was unsure of what would become of the journey and of what would affect me the most. I found many cultural similarities between Brazil and my home in Louisiana. Salvador a blend of European, Portuguese, African, and Amerindian, was largely build with slave labor. (Lima, pg56) The city is full of brightly colored houses decorated with fine



stuccowork along with many preserved historical buildings. Two religions that I study while in Salvador were Roman Catholic and Candomblé both of which are practiced and full of symbolism. The area is rich with culture and history that reminds me of Louisiana. While connecting with my host family, I found similarities with my own, allowing me to feel comfortable in this new area. "I do believe the right symbol at the correct time can add warmth or needed edge to a relationship" (Albright, pg 20). What connected me the most to the areas was my host family, they provided that the feeling of belonging and home. This was a feeling that I had only felt previously with blood relatives. My studies in Brazil opened my eyes to more possibilities in my craft and design choices that have helped influence me to develop my own style. After visiting Brazil, I began applying color to metal fabricated objects. By applying color, I was remembering the colorful buildings that were worn down by weathering. I applied layer after layer of color by using spray paint. After the works were dry, I scrapped and sanded off the layers creating my own effect of weathering on the objects.

In the summer of 2017, I had the privilege of traveling to Florence, Italy with a diverse group of artists. Here we studied the architecture, artwork, and the history of Italy, providing a better understand of the symbolism and style of the Renaissance and the Baroque period. Roman Catholic cathedrals decorate the city, most notably the Duomo. Tourists flock to the area to view the breathtaking, uniquely designed cathedral. I was mostly drawn to repetition of pattern in the

design of the Duomo. By reworking these patterns, I am able to deconstruct the designs and incorporate the new pattern into my process. *Fiore* is a necklace that is inspired directly from the Duomo. By using positive and negative space, I recreated the patterns of the windows. I then halved each circle to recreate the idea of piecing together a memory.

The place that had the most impact on my work was the Palazzo Pitti. In 1549, the Medici family bought the palace. (Goldberg, pg 30) The Grand Duchy of Tuscany created the Palace as an archive for paintings, plates, jewelry, and luxurious possessions the collection continued to for years. I am interest in how the interior contrasted with Napoleon's governing, it was said to be "efficient standardization and efficacious references to antiquity" (Kirk, pg110) Exploring the palace and all its treasures renewed my interest in chasing and repoussé, a technique used throughout ancient and contemporary craft.

### Roman Catholic

My family was very active in the Roman Catholic Church. My brother and I attended church with my mother every Wednesday and Sunday. All that remains of my connection with the church is a sense of familiarity. I recall the designs and shapes of the stained glass, the sounds of the community coming together, and the detail of the metal embellishments on the altar.

In my current work, I am focus on the monstrance, a vessel in the Roman Catholic religion that exhibit an object of piety, such as the

consecrated Eucharistic. (McKenzie, pg. 80) This event only happens during Eucharistic Adoration or Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. My travels reconnected me with childhood memories of the church resulting in the incorporation of the motifs of the church into my artwork.

The *Legacy Collections* of brooches take on the shape of the monstrance. Their symmetry is balanced throughout the design while the middle of particular brooch is left empty or full. The brooches without a central piece could indicate an incomplete design. This relates back to the monstrance during the Eucharistic Adoration. When the monstrance holds the host, it represents the presence of the body of Jesus versus, and when the monstrance is empty the symbolism shifts.

### Material

Throughout my processes, I create work primarily with sterling silver, silver carries significant value this value. "Silver represents the unselfish regard for or devotion to others that characterizes the best impulses of the human spirit. Many personal types of presentation silver-those identified here with friendship, weddings, birth, baptism, anniversaries, and even deaths-reflects this willingness to give to others in honest appreciation and without thought of return." (Warren, pg19).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Artistic Influences

Developing my interest in jewelry and metalworking strongly began by receiving *Jewelry Contemporary Design and Technique* by Chuck Evans. Evans has been a major contributor to metalsmithing and American art. I was able to expand my knowledge of other artists like: David Pimentel, Dale Wedig, and Mark Knuth. Each artist uses traditional metalsmithing to create forms with organic patterns. Many of my early works were experiments that evolved studying the technique developments by these artists.

## Robert Ebendorf

Robert Ebendorf utilize rustic designs and incorporates found objects. He views his work as creating trash into valuable treasures. This style has appeared in my work several times either through color or found objects. While exploring areas within hurricane relief, walking trails, and passing though everyday routines I obtained broken plates, glass, ceramic, and metal. By doing so I am making connections to Robert's idea of how trash can be like gold depending on personal attachment to it. This idea relates back to the subject of sentimental value that appears within the use of jewelry.



## Demitra Thomloudis

Most of my influences come from interacting with the person; I find that I am impacted more by personally meeting an artist. I had the privilege of meeting Demitra Thomloudis while she gave a demonstration and presentation at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. Demi is a studio artist and professor who presented techniques that explored how to create light weight hollow constructions. After her demonstration, I began experimenting with concrete and wooden designs created with the laser cutter.



## Cappy Counard

Cappy Counard creates jewelry and vessels that honor detail and interconnection. In her work, she reflects upon memories and exalts the items that we hold and the things that hold us. I have always admired the amount of detail in her work and the industrial feel her objects portray. Cappy was able to participate as a visiting artist at Stephen F. Austin State University, being able to personally witness her demonstrations allowed me to further practice forming techniques. The key to my motivation and design process is directly related to personal interactions with artist.



## Nash Quinn

Nash Quinn states that he does not just make one type of artwork but many types, crossing boundaries between ideas, formats, and techniques. I admire his work, especially for his craftsmanship with the chasing and repousse technique. I am also inspired by his finishing techniques where he unitizes patinas and burnishing. Nash also fights the idea functional jewelry versus statement jewelry. As an artist, I tend to make large necklaces that one would only wear on special occasions. I call these statement pieces, as they make an impression for a specific time and place. Nash is doing the same by making a ring but also making it bulky and large.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### Process

#### Fold Forming

Fold forming a technique where metal is folded repeatedly and then forged, annealed, and unfolded. By doing so you are able to create a dramatic new three-dimension form. Charles Lewton-Brain an English-born goldsmith perfected this technique in the late 1980s. He focused on the idea of metals natural reaction to being annealed and work hardened, based on his understanding of the metals elastic and ductile characteristics. (Lewton-Brain, pgs. 2-10) To achieve some of these forms you are able to make marks in the metal by using a square or triangle file. This is called scoring which is the act of removing metal away to create a bend. By making this groove you are able to create sharper lines during folding. Using steel stakes and various hammering techniques, the correct bend and shape is formed.

#### Casting

During my studies, I have found it difficult to achieve particular forms with fabrication. Carving wax allows for a larger variety of form. Lost-wax casting is a manufacturing process in which metal is liquefied and then poured into a mold. Investment is poured into a flask constraining a wax pattern. Once the wax is eliminated, a hollow space of the desire shape is available for molten metal to fill.

## Chasing and Repoussé

Chasing and Repoussé is a metalworking technique in which steel tools are utilized to hammer metal on both sides to create a low relief. The metalsmiths again utilizes the ductile qualities of metal. The idea of being able to form my own symbolism into sheet metal allowed for further design freedom.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Individual Works

#### Legacy brooch Collection

The idea of creating the Legacy brooches into a collection was based off community, which involves a diverse group of individuals to come together to form one. The texture, color, and finish are appropriated from the buildings throughout Salvador, Brazil and Louisiana that have been weathered down over time. The sterling silver elements that embellish the brooch are loosely based on ironwork fencing in each city.



Figure 1

“Legacy Collection” (White-I brooch series of 7)

sterling silver, copper, and enamel paint

3.5 x 3 x 1 inches

2017



Figure 2:

“Legacy Collection” (White-II brooch series of 7)

sterling silver, copper, and enamel paint

3.5 x 3 x 1 inches

2017



Figure 3:

“Legacy Collection” (Teal-I brooch series of 14)  
sterling silver, copper, brass and enamel paint

2 x 1.5 x .5 inches

2018



Figure 4:

“Heirloom iv”

sterling silver, copper, and enamel paint

18 x 2 x 1 inches

2018



Figure 5:

“Vieux Carré”

copper and enamel paint

18 x 2 x 1 inches

2018



### Burns Property Series

During my childhood, visits to my father place of work were memorable in that I had an opportunity to study several aerial photographs of the local area. The patterns that the land makes inspired me to seek out the design of our own land. By taking aerial views of my family's property, I was able to abstract and design shapes based off of the trails and tree lines. During undergraduate studies, I created necklaces that I called "shoulder drapes". They hugged and wrapped the body of the wearer giving them a sense of weight and warmth like a blanket.



Figure 6:

"Surrounding Hope"

copper and enamel paint

18 x 3 x .5 inches

2017



Figure 7:

"Embrace"

copper and enamel paint

18 x 1.5 x 25 inches

2017



Figure 8:

"Fracture"

copper and ceramic plate

18 x 1.5 x .5 inches

2018

## Firenze Set

The Firenze set inspired from international travels to Florence, Italy. The designs of the Duomo directly influence the patterns and shapes. By using positive and negative space I recreated the patterns of the windows of the cathedral. Although, shapes of the windows are completed circles I chose to half each circle recreate the idea of piecing together a memory. By assembling the necklace in different fragments, I am able to give the allusion of a memory being pieced together to become a whole.



Figure 9:

“Fiore”

sterling silver and copper

20 x 2 x .25 inches

2018



Figure 10:

“Firenze”

sterling silver and copper

20 x 2 x .25 inches

2018

### JoAnne Collection

The ironwork that surrounds the homes in Lake Charles, New Orleans, and Brazil inspired this collection. By melting 10k gold chains, pendants, bracelets, or rings from my family members, jewelry collections, I was able to use lost wax casting techniques to produce new pieces of jewelry.





Figure 11:

“JoAnne Collection” (earring set I)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

2 x 1 x .15 inches

2018



Figure 12:

“JoAnne Collection” (earring set II)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

1.5 x .75 x .15 inches

2018



Figure: 13

“JoAnne Collection” (earring set III)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

1.5 x 1 x .15 inches

2018



Figure: 14

“JoAnne Collection” (earring set IV)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

1.5 x 1 x .15 inches

2018



Figure15:

“JoAnne Collection” (earring set V)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

1.25 x .5 x .15 inches

2018



Figure16:

“JoAnne Collection” (earring set VI)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

1.25 x .5 x .15 inches

2018



Figure17:

“JoAnne Collection” (ring I)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

.5 x .5 x .15 inches

2018



Figure18:

“JoAnne Collection” (ring II)

10k yellow, gold lost wax casted

1 x .5 x .15 inches

2018





Figure 19:

Safe Haven

Statement and Firenze Collection wall

Gallery view I

2018



Figure 20:

Safe Haven

Pedestal and brooch wall

Gallery view II

2018

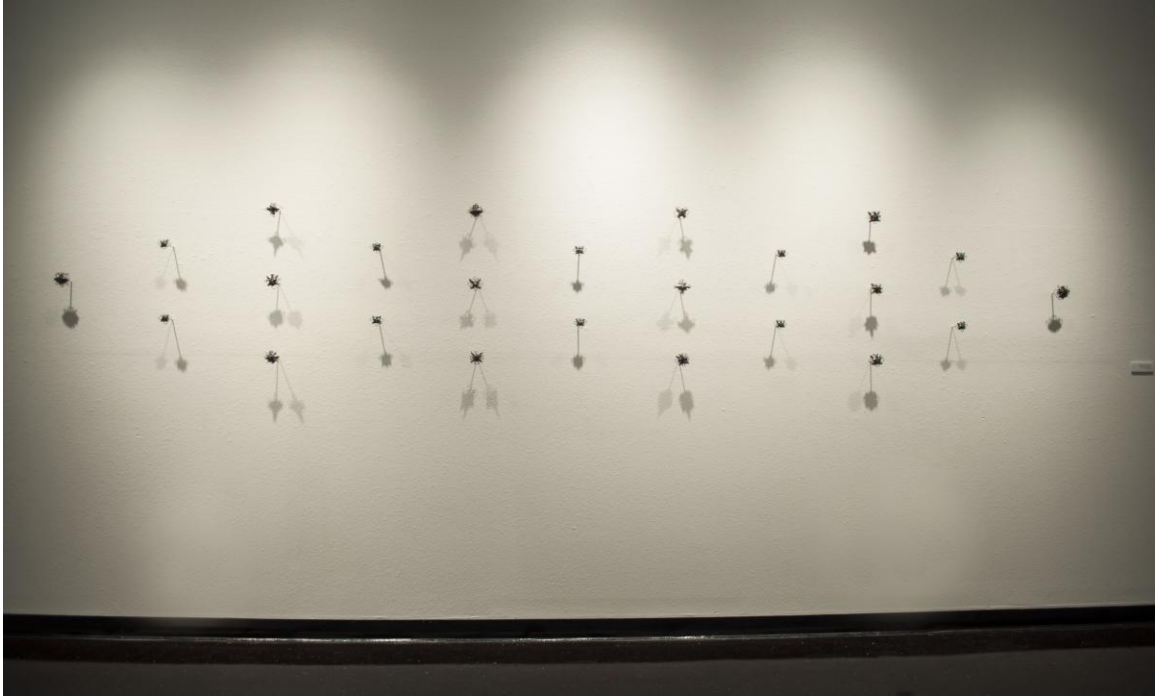


Figure 21:

Safe Haven

Legacy Collection, brooch wall

Gallery view III

2018

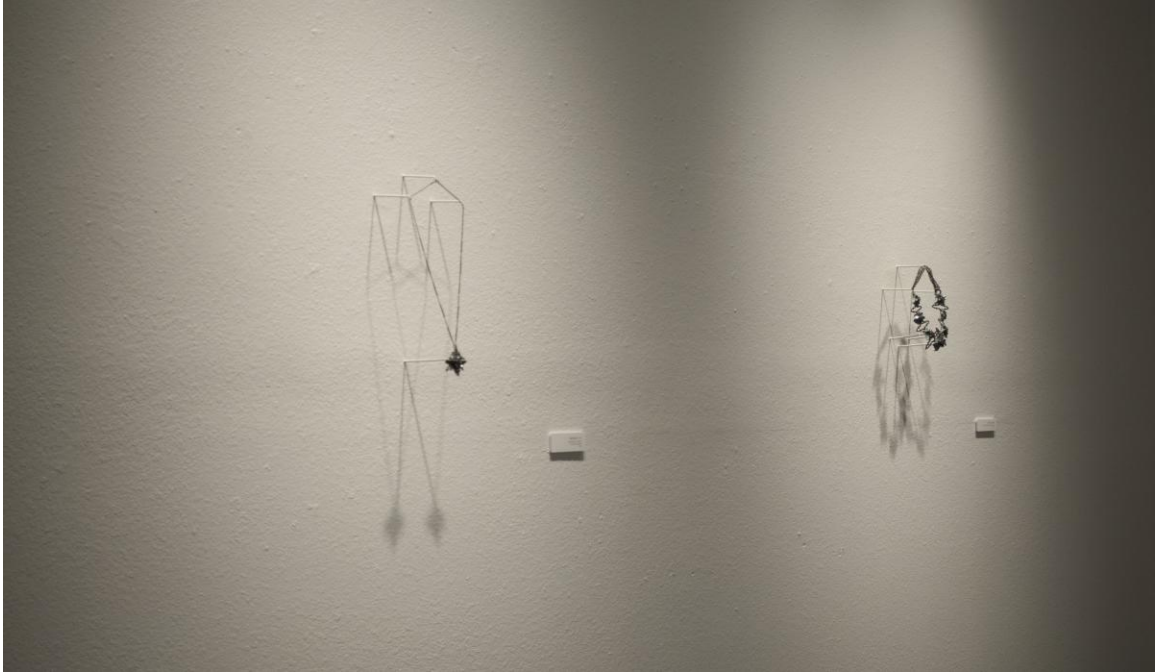


Figure 22:

Safe Haven

Heirloom IV and Vieux Carré wall

Gallery view IV

2018



Figure 23:

Safe Haven

Burns Property and pedestal view

Gallery view V

2018



Figure 24:  
Safe Haven  
Pedestal view  
Gallery view VI  
2018

## CONCLUSION

Safe Haven is a body of work that reflects my interest in different cultures that have similarities to my personal background. Pulling from memories of childhood and recent events including international travels, memories of Louisiana, and interactions with other artist, I am able to develop inspiration that I then transform into wearable sculptures. The viewer can make and create their own while wearing the work.

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Nash Quin, <https://www.nashquinn.com/>

Cappy Cournad, <http://www.cappycounard.com/work/>

Demi Thomloudis, <http://www.demidemi.net/>

