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Trademark ™

By Cathryn Jasterzbski

My father wakes up before the sun—beginning his day while others are asleep to get ahead. He lifts and lowers heavy boxes from places to place, fixes cars, delivers packages, takes orders, and gets home once the sun has gone. He goes through these motions each day and on the rare occasion that he is sick, he'll take off on Sunday. Most would describe him as a man who always uplifts the underdog and never procrastinates. To me, he is the epitome of diligence and precision.

—To My Parents

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"Can we respect the craft that lies unsigned and underfoot and which oxygenates our lives, giving us tactile joy?"

—Ezra Shales

Abstract

We are characterized by the assets which comprise our identity. These possessions provide us with numerous tools to navigate the social constructs that make up our lives. Growing up in a working-class family forced me to develop strategies to navigate various class structures as I engaged with them. This body of work redefines the value of the working class through a confluence of materials and techniques to bridge the two worlds that construct my identity—allowing me to coexist within both, yet bound by neither.

Above: Image of the woodshop at
3 Claverack Road, Clifton, New Jersey

The Body Shop

I was about eight years old. We were in my grandparent's backyard headed to the woodshop. Usually when I visited, I would hammer nails into patterns in the scrap wood blocks from the garbage bin. I would take my grandmothers green floral wire and wrap it around each nail head to connect the dots. On this particular day I desired more of a challenge.

I collected pieces of scrap out of the bin to make a sculptural eight-year-old creation. I was never much of planner and I loved the spontaneity of the garbage. My grandfather had a horizontal sanding belt and that seemed like the place to start. Looking back, I realize that there was no safety built into the design of this machine, and the spinning paper was probably 80 grit.

I was as tall as the machine and my weight was not enough to hold anything on that belt in motion, but I did it anyway. The wood scrap buckled from under my hands and in an instant, I sanded my knuckled down to the bone. My grandfather wanted to heal me with the new liquid bandage that had just come to market. He glazed my rupturing fingers with the paintable fluid, and I thought that my hands would never heal.

This was the first time that I understood the power of a machine and the terror and thrill of the shop. When we make things, we literally put parts of ourselves into them—the mind becomes the hands, the hands become the work, the work becomes the shop, and the body and the shop become one.

Above: Workers from Site Specific L.L.C.

Trademark, noun - a name, sign or indicator used by an individual, business, organization, or other legal entity to identify itself or its products/services in the market as being different from others. i.e. Blacksmiths in the Roman empire used a symbol to mark their craft. These were the first form of a trademark.[1]

Introduction

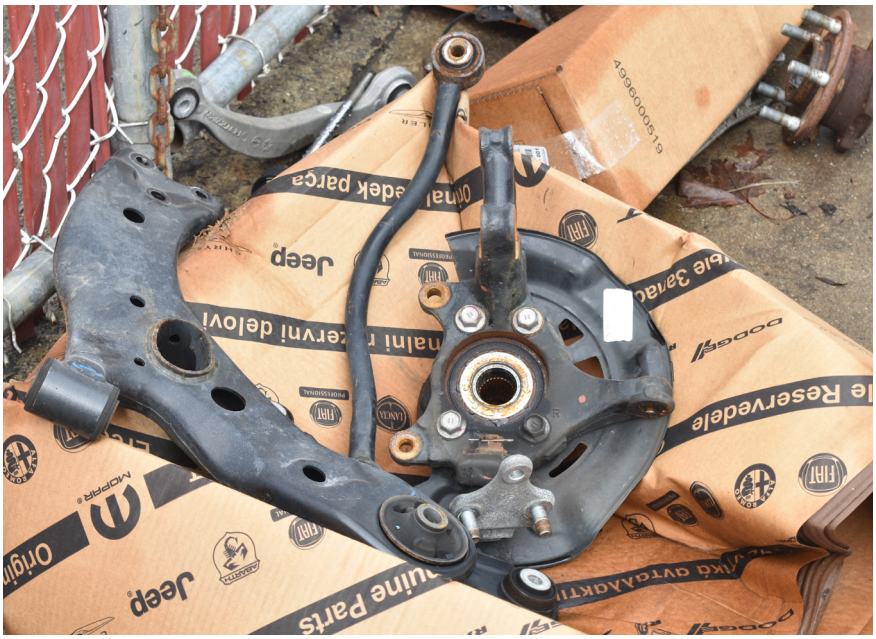
The working class, also known as the laboring class, encompasses those who participate in occupations that require varying degrees of manual labor, industrial work, and public service. These jobs are usually paid an hourly wage or sometimes a salary to perform their work.

Sociologists define the construction of class through three factors, "occupation, income, or education—and there is really no consensus about the 'right' way to do it."[2] Within this ambiguity comes great diversity in a class that is presently labeled by the conflated archetypes of its past.

"Trademark," is an investigation of working-class identities. This thesis demonstrates the impact that working-class labor has had on my life, my identity, and my current role as a contemporary jeweler. Within this project, I seek to redefine assumptions placed on working-class individuals and challenge these through the format of jewelry.

Working-class occupations are comprised of various collar-colored categories such as blue-collar, some white-collar, and most pink-collar jobs. Blue color jobs are defined by the nature of their manual work and hourly and sometimes salaried wages. White collar work that is considered working-class often revolves around the cubicle, and customer service industries. Pink collar positions were originally correlated to this color as these service industry jobs were predominantly held by women.

Today, many of these roles are multi-faceted and no longer kept within the bounds of a particular group or collar color. Many people traverse across these class expectations and participate in many lines of career. According to the interviews that I have conducted for this body of work, several laborers



maintained degrees in higher education while working on an industrial job site. Many of them have established businesses in their said trades while participating in the labor of that work itself. These individuals still considered themselves a part of the working class while they fulfill the roles of both skilled laborers and business owners. Many of these interviewees have expressed the strong financial reward that their jobs provide them with. Additionally, these individuals also find their work to be meaningful beyond any financial gain.

I am always walking the line between class structures, and I find myself reflecting on the ways I shift between them. Much like myself, jewelry is a shapeshifter that can transform on the body and can shift the existence of a body in different circumstances and environments. Within my jewelry, I adopt materials and processes that more commonly exist in industrial contexts such as auto mechanics, metal fabrication, and ironwork and create pieces that can live on various bodies that span the structures of class. Through welding steel in the format of jewelry, I aim to shift the barriers of access to my work beyond the setting of the gallery, and onto various bodies through which it can be worn and activated in the world.

"Blue Collar Work is not mindless and simplistic. It is a false dichotomy in theory that envisions mental work and manual work to be mutually exclusive, dichotomous categories."

—Jeff Torlina

Picture of jack stands


HYSTER

Right: My father's warehouse

Lineage +Labor

The Warehouse

My father ran his business from my childhood home. One side of the house was a standard residence and what should have been our garage became an automotive warehouse. It seemed like all the products in the world were stored there. Boxes were piled to the ceiling, filled with thousands of different automotive parts that varied in brand, size, and shape.

During the week there were always early morning deliveries. Drivers would come rolling down our narrow street and the immensity of their trucks would bring the neighborhood to a halt. The rumble of the engines would wake us up and the familiar smell of diesel would infiltrate my bedroom above the warehouse.

The drivers would always welcome us to roam the large caves in the back of their trucks and would lift us in to walk around. They insisted that we call them by their first names. They became a part of our daily routine, and shared their stories, history and dreams with us. To us, they were friends, or distant relatives, rather than workers. This made them feel like part of our family and we looked forward to their visits every day.

The pace of the shop was swift. Hauling heavy products and seeking corresponding parts—efficiency was everything. My dad and uncle were in-and-out all day on deliveries and fixing cars in the driveway. Sometimes they would let us help by gathering the small things for an order slip. They would never ask for help, but we could see the exhaustion in their eyes and wanted to lighten their load.

Large and greyish with dim lighting, the room was permeated with the smelled of old rubber, cardboard, and miscellaneous car fluid. I remember sticking my fingers in the puddles of oil on the ground and smelling them on

my fingertips. Over time, I learned how to differentiate these products through their distinct and varying scents.

The cool concrete floors were scattered with mysterious stains and rickety shelving units. Similar to the familial dynamic of the workshop, the shelves were built off of one another, distributing weight amongst themselves, and balancing the myriad boxes of parts and products. The shelves built a maze that we would wander through, hiding behind boxes, and playing with car parts, these were treasures for us to find.

The smaller findings sat in open containers allowing us to grab handfuls of greasy washers, nuts, or other little parts and play with them. They were our gems of the warehouse.

My sister and I would pile our backpacks and school supplies in my dad's work van each morning. He drove us to school in the same truck from kindergarten through senior year of high school. It was a Ford Econoline 350, eggshell in color, and falling apart at the seams.

Thick soot covered everything in the vehicle except for our seats, and shop tools covered the floors. The soot was so wonderfully thick that we could draw into it. Where the center console should have been was always a leftover cardboard box which was just structurally sound enough to hold his ledger and business papers and he would swing the box over his shoulder with grace. He used everything until it deteriorated and then taped it back together. That's just the way it was.

Each morning began with a route that had several stops at different shops and stations. We knew everyone, the owners, mechanics, and secretaries. They would let us roam and explore each space.

I spent these mornings before school exploring the Body Shops,

Repair Shops, and warehouses that we frequented and watched those around me lift, fix, organize, build, and restore objects, and tools to their most functional states. These individuals captivated me; each move they made was masterful—in sync with the rhythm of the shop. They were so in tune with the materials and processes of their trade and always knew how to bring something back to working order even though no two repairs were ever alike.

I remember watching the mechanics complete the same repetitive steps over and over again and complete the task better and more quickly than the time before. The thrill of problem-solving kept them going and they always welcomed me to watch and when it was safe, participate. When I would get to school, I would think about the shop and wonder if our custodian, who was wearing the same grey coveralls worked there too.

Above: Picture on route, Montclair Motorwerks, Montclair, New Jersey


T&R AUTOMOTIVE
WAYNE, N.J.

Picture of my father, Richard Jasterzbski

in front of his work van

Left: Picture of Tire Rims in the yard

Survival Training

My process is like survival training. I come equipped with my tools, and skills from many disciplines which transfer into surviving—getting from point A to point B. I find that the spontaneity of what I salvage from others waste to be thrilling—it prevents me from having expectations for any piece much like a repair. I come to the material and navigate the road to completion.

Often, I experience stress that I may not be well equipped enough to get there. Regardless, I continue on knowing that what I have will have to be enough. Out of that constraint comes the work. The steel often signals its limitations to me and within that, I make it to the end of the journey. I am motivated by how resourceful I can be with what I find while still accomplishing the goal of each piece.

Right: Picture of scrap metal piled in scrap yard

The Scavenge

Sustainability and ethical metal sourcing drive the choice of material found in my work. I utilize discarded steel that no longer serves a purpose and reconstruct this stock into intricately joined surfaces and structures that adorn the body. This delicate resuscitation of material elevates its perceived value and identity in the format of jewelry.

The scavenge for material initiates at the bottom of a bin. Here lie discarded steel remnants that have been abandoned for more valuable segments of stock. Cast aside and overlooked, these prejudiced scraps are as equally integral to the making process as those for which they were abandoned. Scrapped pieces are unpredictable and vary in shape, size, and weight. They present themselves as individual opportunities waiting to be seized. Once chosen, the piece is examined. Scratches, bruises, and soot cover its skin and each imperfection gives rise to how it is manipulated throughout the process of making.

Bricolage, noun – the construction or creation from a diverse range of available things[14]

Repair as Making

Repairs are contradictory to smart business practice. They are unpredictable, irreplaceable, time-consuming, and come with no guarantee. Jewelry repairs are especially just "trying." You can never be sure in knowing who fixed it previously, and to what degree this occurred - yet, it was our specialty. I inherited the majority of these jobs in the shop because I worked fast and most importantly, I thrived off of them. Jewelry repairs are living, breathing creatures. They maintain a balance of old and new; two time periods coexisting in one object.

I spent almost four years at Hudson Valley Goldsmith working under master goldsmith and stone setter David Walton. In my time there, I performed skilled manual labor to develop production lines, design custom jewelry, and execute complex jewelry repairs. Much of the business revolved around the trust and credibility which our open studio setting provided. People from all over the country would bring us their prized possessions and allow us to bring their heirlooms back to life. Incredible relationships were formed around saving a precious piece of someone's history. For this reason, the role of the jeweler often melds with that of a historian and therapist.

In her novel "Repair: The Impulse to Restore in a Fragile World", author Elizabeth V. Spelman describes bricolage, a specific mode of repair, through the lens of the local auto mechanic.

In chapter two, she discusses how "in Willie's shop there is very little routine repair: standard responses to standard failures or damages are not the order of the day. As Willie sees it, part of the challenge of the work is that 'no job's the same'; there are contingencies and anomalies that can't be anticipated by the computer programs and instruction manuals. 'If you had a

thousand jobs in a year, not two of them would be the same. Even the ones that are supposed to be the same aren't. Things are broken or worn in different ways - they each have their own characteristics.'"[15]

Much like Willie, I grew to understand repairs in an intimate way. Each job became a procedure with delicate steps to be followed such as beginning a jewelry repair with a thorough condition report. You have to examine every crevice, mark, and stamp. A written description and photographic documentation should accompany each job. From there, you have to plan your route from point A to point B. You can only rely on your skill as no two repairs are ever alike.

There's nothing like fixing a hollow gold chain soldered with lead solder. This really was the epic repair scenario at work. The metal thickness of this type of chain was similar to that of paper. The lead solder embedded in its surface contaminated the gold and ate it away as it heated up. The trick was to use the smallest breath of a flame in order to get the chain back to a functioning state. You had to be able to decipher torch heat so sensitively that you practically placed yourself inside the chain link to feel it. Similar to Willie, I relied on "knowledge not only of how something is supposed to function but of how things feel: 'It's just like your fingers got eyes... you've got to be able to reach it, feel it, and tell.' From head to toe, Willie is alive to the sources of information in the objects in his hands and at the far end of his tools."[16]

Midway through my time at Hudson Valley Goldsmith, we received our first laser welder which changed the way that I understood jewelry and repairs from that point forward. The laser welder is a microscopic TIG welding system that can fuse a wide variety of metals and alloys at the touch of a button. This piece of machinery is designed to precisely connect small parts in a way that evidences none of the work that was done.

Over the course of two years and several trainings later, I developed a deep relationship with this piece of machinery. I grew to have a very thorough understanding of laser welding and because of this was able to push it to new limits and applications.

Looking back, I realize that working in this shop taught me what it means to be a jeweler. The attention and skill that the most delicate of repairs requires is the lens I look through every time I sit at my bench.

Above: Construction workers, Site Specific L.L.C.

Brooch, noun - an ornament fastened to clothing with a hinged pin and catch, verb - to skewer[17]

Site Specific

The format of the brooch, badge, and pin have a long history tied to identity, community, allegiance, and to systems of belief. During the middle ages, brooches were initially used for their functionality. The pin found on the back of a brooch was used to skewer and hold large pieces of fabric together when wrapped around the body to be worn. During this period, the brooch also evidenced different social classes; minimal brooches were found on members of lower classes while more elaborately ornamented brooches signified wealth and power.[18]

Once the tailoring of clothing came into use, the brooch was no longer relied upon as a necessity for dress. It has since evolved, still attaching to clothing but functioning as a means of communication in myriad settings. Brooches have played a role in religious pilgrimages as a marker of completing a journey. They have signified familial relationships, power, and even royalty in the format of the livery or heraldic badges. We can find them on uniforms as name tags, and in military regalia as representations of rank. These signifiers have also made their way into society through more accessible means such as political support pins, pins created for environmental protests, and even pins to support musical or artistic interests. Presently, brooches, badges, and pins act as mobile indicators of belief or affiliations to be displayed on the body. [19]

Throughout this body of work, I predominantly utilize the brooch which is a ubiquitous format in the field of contemporary jewelry. This format maintains strong ties to the way that individuals and communities have expressed themselves throughout history. Italo Calvino, author of Six Memos for the Next Millennium, describes the power of jewelry as "an outward

Left: Detail of construction workers, Site Specific L.L.C.
Right: Construction workers, Site Specific L.L.C.

visible sign that reveals the connection between people or between events."[20] This description is further echoed in the book, Read My Pins: Stories from a Diplomat's Jewelry Box, while describing the power of the brooches in former Secretary of State, Madeline Albright's brooch collection. Albright's use of brooches:

"as communication devices once recognized, they were then inducted into service as diplomatic aids; sometimes demure and understated, sometimes outlandish and outspoken, they became gentle implements of statecraft." "Of modest intent and manufacture, Secretary Albright's pins are a kind that anyone could possess and wear. They are truly a "pin of the people," and part of Secretary Albright's pleasure in wearing the pins come from her recognition of their democratic nature."[21]

Much like Madeline Albright, I see my brooches as wearable tools that are designed to connect people across various social structures while disrupting expectations of class. I strive to make my work accessible across these structures in order for the pieces to be activated on bodies that infrequently share common ground.


3
MUSEUM
CONTRACTOR

Above: Scar Brooch-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-2.5”x5”

Above: Portrait Brooch 1-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-3.25''x5.5''

Above: Portrait Brooch 2-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-2.75”x3”

Above: Unionize Brooch-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-3.5”x5.25”

Above: Unionize Brooch Back-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-3.5”x5.25”

Above: Pinstriped Pocket Brooch-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-2.5”x3.5”

Above: Pinstriped Pocket Brooch Back-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-2.5”x3.5”

Above: Soft Things Brooch-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-3.25”x4.5”

Above: Soft Things Brooch Back-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-3.25”x4.5”

Above: V-6 Brooch-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-3.75”x4”

Above: V-6 Brooch Back-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-3.75”x4”

Above: Support Structure Brooch-Reclaimed Steel,
Stainless Steel, Silver-2.25”x4”


MUTANT

Patterning

We pattern fabric to make it fit - bringing form to fabric is not a simple thing to do as fabric moves and bodies are ever changing. I begin each brooch with a paper pattern. I create these patterns from my knowledge of quilting, shoemaking, and making clothing. (quote about medieval times, gendering the body through clothing). I draw on paper with pencil and ink to map out a form that I then bring to life from a 2-dimensional sheet. In my process, my paper patterns lead me through my understanding of a form. I deconstruct to reconstruct; I challenge myself to do this without a pattern reference.

Each pattern has many iterations - I fold and dart, cut and alter, and generate forms that transfer onto sheets of steel. Sheet metal patterning is very similar to fabric but requires a different sensitivity to allow it to take shape. In their completed states, these brooches maintain a strong connection to both metal fabrication techniques as well as fabric patterns.

Patterning is magical and brings me to a similar state to that of forming metal. With a tap, bend, or cut in the right place, the object transforms. Making jewelry demands our attention to an understanding of the body, whether it is through size, weight, shape, or fit. My use of the pattern allows me to build each piece while bringing my understanding of both metal and fabric together as one.

Mirjiam Hiller, a German Jeweler, uses large sheets of steel colored with power coat to construct dynamic pieces of jewelry. Likewise, Hiller uses the creation of paper patterns to transform industrially sized sheets into flowing, blossoming, and wearable pieces that draw inspiration from the natural world. She takes advantage of the rigidity and strength that the steel provides in such a thin sheetmetal state. It enables her to create highly detailed, sawed lines, patterns, and forms in her work. The strength of the material also allows for her cold connected forms to literally hold themselves together, through her use of patterning, folding, and tabbed construction, without the need for additional supports. Much like Hiller, I use the paper pattern as an integral tool in my making process. Through the constraints of forming through folding, I translate these patterns onto sheet steel to create the brooches in this body of work.

Above: Brooch by Mirjiam Hiller,
Stainless Steel and Powder Coat

Picture of paper pattern for Pinstriped Pocket Brooch

Left: Image of fragments of iron ore

History of Ferrous Metal

The preciousness of iron was once similar to pure gold. When iron was initially unearthed by the Egyptians in the late 14th Century B.C. it was referred to as "metal from heaven"[3] because it was derived from meteorites that fell onto earth from the sky. The Egyptians' use of iron demonstrates its beauty, innate ability to take shape, and versatility which can be seen throughout their ancient relics, and brilliantly created pieces of jewelry often accompanied by gold and precious gemstones. Iron has since evolved, taking on various forms, alloys, applications, and associations. Today, pure iron is predominantly incorporated into a variety of steel alloys, which are used throughout construction, machinery, and various lines of industrial careers. Ferrous metals, or metals containing iron such as pure iron and steel, also play an important role in the making of jewelry and can most commonly be found as the mechanisms—allowing jewelry to move or a fastening device, for example, a pin or earring wire.

Why though, are ferrous metals not sought after for creating the jewelry itself but rather used most often for findings and moving parts? Ferrous Metals possess many desirable qualities for the creation of jewelry which have been demonstrated throughout history. Like other precious metals, steel and iron should be considered as more highly regarded materials to use within this capacity.

Iron derives from Germanic origin meaning vigorous, strong, and holy metal.[4] Additionally, steel is derived from the words, stay, stand, to place, and be firm.[5] Therefore, it is no surprise that these metals were utilized and designed to withstand great levels of wear, corrosion, weight, and pressure. With their incomparable scope of applications for making, ferrous metals

are most recognized for their role in construction, and machinery. These materials have grown to be one of the most universally accepted industrial resources that exist today. We expect to see steel and iron displayed throughout industrial applications in welded and riveted buildings, bridge construction, and the construction of small and large-scale machinery but they have been used in many other capacities that we may not expect to find them.

Contemporary jeweler, Sophie Hanagarth takes advantage of many of the properties found in ferrous metal. Specifically, she finds inspiration in the body itself and translates that through clay and forged iron. She values the relationship her body has when she is "in direct contact with the material" while forging iron in the making process. She claims that she can "attack the material directly, brutally, but with the right gestures." Her pieces of jewelry are "imbued with the character that [only] forged iron can have . . . these are things that are difficult to get into shape, but when iron is heated, it has a sort of softness."[6]

Her work is centered around developing pieces that show her energy and is translated from the act of forging into the work itself. Similarly, in my practice, I use ferrous metal because of its ability to move when heated, and for its strength. Through welding steel, an iron and carbon alloy, I am able to evidence myself in each piece of jewelry, much like Hanagarth but through the more industrialized process of welding.

Above: Process shot of brooch in scrap pile

Image of Sophie Hanagarth's Trap Bracelet Forged Iron

History of Welding

15th through 19th century	Origin of welding—Blacksmithing in early middle ages and welding in late middle ages, bronze lap joints and forge welding.
1881	Auguste De Meritens, working in the Cabot Laboratory in France, used the heat of an arc for joining lead plates for storage batteries.
1890	1890, C.L. Coffin of Detroit was awarded the first U.S. patent for an arc welding process using a metal electrode This was the first record of the metal melted from the electrode carried across the arc to deposit filler metal in the joint to make a weld.
1900	Strohmenger introduced a coated metal electrode in Great Britain—provided a more stable arc, resistance welding processes were developed, including spot welding, seam welding, projection welding and flash butt welding, gas welding and cutting were perfected during this period as well.
1919	Origin of The Wartime Welding Committee, began to play a large role in war, American Welding Society founded
1920	Automatic welding introduced, external shielding gasses introduced.

1930	Stud welding was developed at the New York Navy Yard, specifically for attaching wood decking over a metal surface. Stud welding became popular in the shipbuilding and construction industries.
1940	Gas tungsten arc welding GTAW or TIG had its beginnings from an idea by C.L. Coffin to weld in a nonoxidizing gas atmosphere, which he patented in 1890.
1948	The gas metal arc welding GMAW or MIG process was successfully developed at Battelle Memorial Institute for nonferrous metals under the sponsorship of the Air Reduction Company.
1953	Lyubavskii and Novoshilov announced the use of welding with consumable electrodes in an atmosphere of carbon dioxide gas. Co2 welding process was MIG welding with a shield of Co2.
1960	The use of inert gas as shield in welding came into process as well as friction and inertia welding.
1970's-present	Laser welding is one of the newest welding processes. The laser was originally developed at the Bell Telephone Laboratories as a communications devices. Because of the tremendous concentration of energy in a small space, it proved to be a powerful heat source. It has been used for cutting metals and nonmetals. Continuous pulse equipment is available. The laser is finding welding applications in automotive, jewelry, and medical operations.

* See endnote 22

Above: Brooches on the bandsaw in the jewelry studio

Steel, noun - a hard, strong, gray or bluish-gray alloy of iron with carbon and usually other elements, used extensively as a structural and fabricating material. verb - used as a symbol or embodiment of strength and firmness[23]

Unwelcome Material in a Precious Space

Adapting to the constraints of the jewelry studio guides the way that I manipulate the material. Steel is a type of metal that is not typically welcome in these environments as it poses risk to surfaces that are designed for precious metals only. This is made evident through signs scattered around the shop stating - "No Steel". In a traditional studio space, ferrous metals are unable to be cut, formed, and cleaned through the same processes as other metals, yet these limitations make way for more industrial processes that I bring to the bench.

Large scale cutting and fabrication techniques coupled with welding act as the main methods of construction throughout this body of work. Laser welding is the most recent development in welding technology and is designed for the creation of medical instruments, small-scale technology, and jewelry repairs. In my work, the presence of the weld and the material itself is an embodiment of my working-class identity.

Through laser welding, I bring the weld into jewelry, recognizing it beyond just a means of repair, but as a way to fabricate in and of itself. I use the process of welding to bring independent pieces into a whole while simultaneously evidencing each tack. These joints appear as stitches along each surface and edge, enticing the viewer to follow their path.

I take inspiration from industrial forms found throughout trade-based industries such as auto mechanics, metal fabrication, and ironwork. Whether the form of an engine or the fabrication of a bridge, I observe the structures that too often go unnoticed in the public eye. These structures inform the modules I make which act as building blocks to create dimensional assemblages in the format of a brooch.

These two characteristics, being

inherently unwelcome in a traditional studio space, and the often unnoticed industrial prominence, are what draw me to steel. Within my practice, I view the spectrum of metal types found at a jeweler's bench as a metaphor for social order. Steel, which is inherently tied to industrial applications is present in most tools that a jeweler uses. Ferrous metals infrequently play a role in the work itself and other materials such as base metals and precious metal occupy this realm more frequently. These materials such as copper, brass, bronze, silver, and gold are sought after for their malleability, and lack of corrosiveness. Unlike these materials, steel is more sensitive to corrosion and is much more challenging to manipulate.

I see these boundaries as a representation of the restriction that I experience within different class structures. Certain behaviors, ideals, and traditions are acceptable in one location and not the other. Through the adoption of various tools, and techniques, I find myself taking unconventional routes to get through both my life and my process. Out of that constraint comes my work. Despite these constraints, ferrous metals have been successfully used to make jewelry in the past.

Above/Left: Brooches on the jump shear and bandsaw in the jewelry studio


No
steel

Ferrous Jewelry

Throughout history, there have been several instances in which ferrous metals have been used as the predominant material in jewelry making. In England during the 1700s, steel cut jewelry developed as a symbol of patriotism and was worn as mourning jewelry.[7] These pieces were comprised of many-faceted steel balls either riveted or screwed to the surface of a plate of steel or sometimes other base metals.[8] These pieces existed as earrings, brooches, bracelets, necklaces for women, and for men as closures or buckles for shoes and clothing.

Each individually faceted piece of steel had approximately fifteen facets and appeared much like we know the style of pavé today.[9] This use of ferrous metals demonstrates the transformative quality of steel and its ability to create a similar sparkling quality to a stone set surface.

Following this, in the early 1800s, Berlin Iron jewelry also known as Fer De Berlin became a popular form of mourning jewelry in Germany. This work featured patterns ranging from neo-classical botanical patterns through gothic patterns. It was categorized by its fine detail, cast elements, and smooth jet-black surface. German citizens traded in their precious metals and gemstones to fund the liberation from Napolean and in turn, received pieces of the Berlin iron jewelry inscribed with "Gold gab ich zur Wehr, Eisen nahm ich zur Ehr" which translates to "I gave gold for iron, iron I took for honor."[10] These pieces acted as both mourning jewelry and became a symbol for patriotism. This type of jewelry was made at a royal foundry in Silesia and showcases the ability that iron has to be cast into highly detailed forms through the lost wax casting process. Berlin Iron jewelry also depicts the deeply blackened surface that only ferrous metals

Right: Picture of Cast Berlin Iron Work Necklace

Right: Picture of Silesian Wirework Earrings

can acquire.[11]

The last type of ferrous jewelry that developed during this time period was referred to as Silesian Wirework, which developed alongside Berlin Iron jewelry. These pieces were created out of individual iron wires, forming a mesh and filigree-like surfaces which were occasionally adorned with sequins. This type of mourning jewelry was known to incorporate glazed ceramic "gems" which were encapsulated by the wire work. This type of jewelry demonstrates the ductility, and strength of steel which are desirable qualities in the jewelry making process.[12]

These historical jewelry movements were born out of an obligation for change. The materiality of these pieces, cast iron, and fabricated steel, effectively serve the function of jewelry and allow it to be wearable, highly detailed, and as beautiful as any precious metal. Yet, we consistently return to silver, gold, and platinum to help our audience classify "good quality" jewelry. Ferrous metals provide beneficial properties to their users and possess qualities that other materials do not. Despite these qualities, ferrous metals are not predominantly used in the making of jewelry both commercially and in the fine arts. Jewelers need to reconsider the applications of ferrous metal in order to reveal the true potential of this material.

One of the most promising aspects of this type of metal is its environmentally friendly nature. Steel is one of the most recyclable types of metal and is constantly being recreated through scrap collection and refinement.[13] Steel scrap can come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and can be an effective material to create jewelry directly from. Made almost entirely of iron, this metal is still in great supply and is easily retrievable from the earth, unlike other metals such as copper, silver, gold, and platinum. The great supply of iron and steel scrap allows these materials to be substantially less expensive compared to others, and more environmentally friendly for jewelry today.

Above: Picture Christopher Sancomb

Badge, noun - a distinctive emblem worn as a mark of office, membership, achievement, licensed employment, etc., a feature or sign that reveals a particular condition or quality, emblem, crest, insignia, device, shield, escutcheon, trademark, logo[24]

The Interview

The process of interviewing members of the working class is a core element within this body of work. The interview functions as a way for me to expand and deepen knowledge about the breadth of working-class identities that are present in my community at Rhode Island School of Design, as well as around the greater providence region. Each interview begins with a brief introduction of myself and my project and I accompany this introduction with examples of my work. In this setting, I see my work as a mediator between myself and the interviewee.

Each piece's evidences material and processes that are commonly found in many trade-based lines of career. Whether a plumber, carpenter, HVAC technician, or fabricator the familiarity of these techniques establishes a sense of trust that serve as the foundation for open conversation to build off of. Each individual participating in this process has given me permission to use their words, anecdotes, and experiences in this document. Instead of speaking on behalf of the value that I associate with the working-class population, the responses to these interviews provide a space for participants to speak for themselves.

"It's hard to describe how different it was. Thinking about it as an artist, it was what you do to make your art, which in a way could be how you make a living. But it also serves a much more self-satisfying part of you; it makes us whole in a different way. I think when I was in the metal shop welding things, there was definitely a level of satisfaction with having done a good job, and worked with a crew of respected people. Being a problem solver, that was something I sought in my own artwork, but

I also really acknowledge how important it is in this trade; on the fly problem solving, I really like that. And so I found people who are very good at that, and they were not trained as artists. In fact, many of them didn't graduate from high school but were still brilliant makers, thinkers, and engineers. I really enjoyed that work and I really liked that it wasn't "Art" in that sense. It was more humble, and it was much more real and it wasn't so full itself."

—Christopher Sancomb

Christopher Sancomb
Rhode Island School of Design Faculty - Sculpture, TLAD
Metal Fabricator
Mold Maker
Mount Maker

CJ: Can you speak to the skilled manual work that you've done prior to your time teaching here at RISD?

CS: So a lot of my skill training started here at RISD, and then upon graduating from school, I went to find applications for that training. I quickly recognized that everything I was learning at art school in terms of skill-based making translated into a lot of industrial design, which was based on more trade-based applications. I was a metal fabricator, so I could go out and work as a metal fabricator in the world, however, I quickly realized that art school was the very watered-down and simplified version of the reality of those things. When I first got out into the world, I got shit for it because a lot of people who grew up in the trades or came from a trade training base would think "oh you went to art school... well we know the real thing." I quickly acquired skills from a very different standpoint, and it was very exciting to think I'm getting all this additional training I can bring this back into the studio. But there was also the divergent path of learning to make in a different way and with a different intention, like working from a more industrial trade-oriented side. I worked in tradeshows, I worked in scenery, I worked in general fabrication where we were repairing truck bodies or trailers and creating sets or stages that would hold new cars being debuted at tradeshows.

CJ: Would you say that you found one of these roles more important than the other? Life in the studio in comparison to your life in the trades?

CS: No, but I grew to think about them a little bit differently because some of it came out of practicality. For instance, I realized that I was very employable if I applied my skills, and as an artist employment is good. I also recognized that many of these opportunities gave me things that I didn't have access to. So if I was working in a metal shop, I now had

Interview

access to a metal shop and saw that also served the purpose of being an artist where I could go and work on my own stuff at night. Or if I was working in a cabinet shop, I now had access to those things. It gave me skill building and fulfillment, but it also gave me things I didn't previously have.

CJ: Was it the skill building and employability that led you to pursue these things outside of Art school?

CS: That's what started it definitely but I also grew to really enjoy the work. As I got better at it, particularly metal fabrication, I could be pickier about what I was working on. I could leave the shop that was working on trailers and then build sets that supported cars, the exhibit for Stonyfield yogurt, or whatever it was and take on higher-end work. I grew to see the skill set in a very different way. It's hard to describe how different it was. Thinking about it as an artist, it was what you do to make your art, which in a way could be how you make a living. But it also serves a much more self-satisfying part of you; it makes us whole in a different way. I think when I was in the metal shop welding things there was definitely a level of satisfaction with having done a good job, and worked with a crew of respected people. Being a problem solver, that was something I sought in my own artwork, but I also really acknowledge how important it is in this trade; on the fly problem solving, I really like that. And so I found people who are very good at that, and they were not trained as artists. In fact, many of them didn't graduate from high school but were still brilliant makers, thinkers, and engineers. I really enjoyed that work and I really liked that it wasn't "Art" in the sense. It was more humble, and it was much more real and it wasn't so full itself.

CJ: What are some unspoken skills in this type of work?

CS: Well, adaptability, and problem-solving, which I started to talk about a little bit. Planning and sequence also became much more important because of the order of operations. That certainly found its way back into my studio. For example, the more engineering and the more

work that I did as a fabricator increased my skill level and awareness of certain things that would make my artistic practice better. So there was a lot that got funneled back into my art practice. Some other skills are negotiating space with people and finding ways to work in large noisy environments with a lot of people and with a lot going on, as well as being able to focus and really being able to dial in your attention to something. Also being diplomatic, because people are working long hours in frustrating situations so you have to be careful how you navigate that.

CJ: Can you describe some of the sensory engagement you had in the environments you were working in?

CS: Well, the metal shops were always very big rooms, very noisy, lots of machines, and lots of areas where people are doing particular tasks. You were always on guard with something moving past you or someone shooting sparks in your direction. It also depended on the shop and the shop culture. There may be a culture where people are really looking out for each other and one might be very conscious of your actions. Or other shops where you need to be looking out for other people because they're not looking out for you, and you could be standing there and someone could be shooting sparks at you and it's your fault for not being attentive. So work culture was definitely a big part of the experience. Some other things were how it was a very cold environment. I remember the quality of light always being very blue. You have high bay rooms with mercury vapor lights or fluorescent lights and I remember very specifically the bad lighting that just made things colder. A lot of the time I was on the floor kneeling down doing layout so I was cold. Cold is the sensation that comes through a lot with metalworking in particular. I transitioned out of doing a lot of metalworking and I was a professional mold maker for a number of years. I did a lot of architectural stonework and a lot of architectural restoration and that intersected a lot with the building trades and high-end architecture in particular. I was living in the south where there was a lot of carved limestone, and we were doing a lot of limestone restoration and that was a totally different process and facility; very loud and wet. Because they were doing concrete everywhere and everything has to stay damp during the curing process there are always fans that were just blowing water into sections of the room. There was no dry surface in this building and we were just always wet all year round.

Interview

Every day when I got home I wanted to be around soft and quiet things, and even with hearing protection you just feel like your head is vibrating all day. The transition of the shower was fucking magic. Just get in the shower and not only wash the day off and have that calming space, but also the warmth and the softness. Even the clean clothes just felt so satisfying; being comfortable again.

CJ: Can you describe your relationship to the materials and tools that were essential to your work?

CS: I started to get used to whatever it was that I was working with as a medium. Going back to metal, it can cut you and it can bite you, but I never took it personally. I grew to really understand and respect its boundaries but also with increased skill and increased awareness I understood when I could push those boundaries and what it does—and even ways to use it that are counter-intuitive to the way you would normally think about it. For example metal is very springy, so when can you use this "springiness" to your benefit, or when do you have to fight against it to make it do something you want it to do? And from an artistic side that can create tension but from a trade side we just need it to do what we want to do.

CS: Do you feel a similar sense of pride in your positions in academia versus your positions in trade?

CS: I feel a sense of pride in both worlds. Though the funnier thing is how I shared that work with the people I was with in those two different environments. It was easier to share the art with non-artists than it was to share my trade work with artists. There was a different receptivity to it. For example, the people that I worked with in the shops, if I show them my art, they thought it was really cool that they appreciated how I took what we did together in a new direction. There was always a lot of interesting conversation and openness to seeing my art. In the opposite direction, it was a day job and people would say that this is what I do to make my work and there was a tinge of shame implied there. But it was

also excepted that artists have to have a gig. Working in the shop did up the quality of my artistic practice and so there was some reverence there. Unless we worked somewhere with notoriety, like a cool furniture shop which was connected to the art world and available to the art world, it didn't really translate. My trade work was noticed by artists when the scale was evident in the work. Sort of how when my skills became very strong, that would be noticed and was a direct result of my trade work. And it was evident that it was coming out of this other life; this other form of education.

CJ: What is the community interaction with the products you were making?

CS: In many of the cases, the things that we are making are going off to other places and so there was some anonymity to that. I didn't feel directly connected to them but more so to the community of people that I worked with because we all got it done. So the focus was on us and our completion of this thing and our unity in the completion of that thing more so than the things that we made. In the trade show world, in particular, there would've been weeks working on displays that get packed up and shipped out to New York, Las Vegas, or Chicago, and it disappears like it never happened. What you're left with is the memory of the little triumphs. The things that you and others figured out and that's the thing that stuck and so the community, in that case, its with the people that I worked with. When I was doing the stonework, there were a few projects that were visible in Atlanta where I was working and there were moments when I would pass something and say "I made that" and that was fun to share with people. But I didn't feel like it was contributing to my community, but more so economic development.

CJ: In your current position working at the children's museum do you feel like that community engagement has shifted?

CS: Absolutely, 100% and that's one of the parts I love so much. I did the math the other day, in the years that I've been there two and a half million people have gone through that museum and played with the things that I've made and that is mind-blowingly meaningful. I know that they're kids, mine and other peoples I know, and people that I don't

Interview

know and it's not even essential that I know them it's just that I know that they're out there. And I think about those experiences and about the fact that I was a part of it and that may have sparked something in someone. They're very particular environments yet they are still "made" and are coming out of a tradition of making that is trade-based. In a way, this is the merging of both trade and art.

CJ: Are there any other motivations that bring you to trade-based work?

CS: I always like to learn new things. And I think things that provide an opportunity to acquire a new skills, develop a new understanding, or learn about a new way that something can be done or get used is something really exciting, so I'm always interested in learning new stuff. And I look for that in my work and in my design work and my studio work. I'm also interested when I recognize an opportunity, not from the sense of making money but also seeing a place where I can bring new knowledge to a new application. Like working at the children's museum, or my time working at the antiquities museum where I was a mount maker. The guy who was doing their mounts had been trained by somebody else and his knowledge was limited to just the thing he had been taught and it did not go beyond that. I brought in all of this other trade experience and I increased their ability to do certain things by 10 times. And so suddenly they thought, "oh you can do it this way?" And I get to give something that they didn't have before and that's very rewarding.

CJ: Can you describe a time when you use the knowledge from these positions outside of work?

CS: Fixing my house or helping other people. My son had a job at a kayak rental place and one of their racks that they used to transport kayaks on collapsed and I saw it and offered to fix it. They were going to go out and buy another $800.00 rack so I said give me that and I'll fix it and because I have the tools and access to the material I can do this for them. It's nice to be able to just offer that out to someone without an expecta-

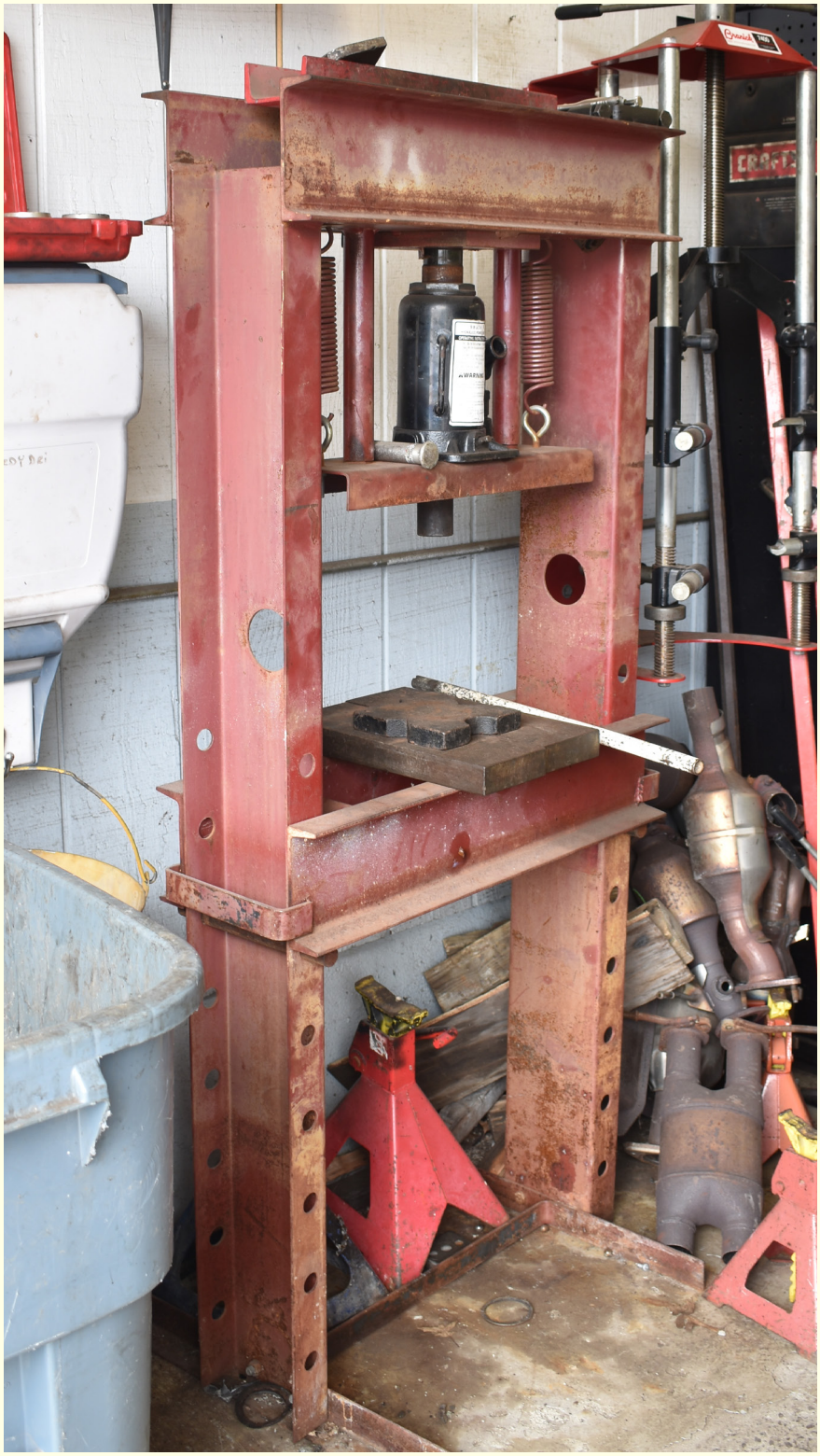
tion to be paid. I didn't ask for money; I wasn't interested in money.

CJ: How does it feel to be one of those people involved in a nameless step?

CS: Weird because as an artist you want authorship over the thing that you do. And even though there was anonymity it was still meaningful to put down a good weld or to do something well. Because I know that I look for those things and I would expect that there are other "me's" out there looking for those things too. And even though you may not ever connect with that end user there is some personal satisfaction. You know when you get a package and it has a note in it that says "packaged by Randy." Or you get some quality control sticker that suggests that there was a person there? That's a funny reminder, and I always wonder if there is a Randy or if it's a marketing scheme to make us believe that this is meaningful. But I still wonder about Randy you know and I still wonder about the sort of nameless people that are involved in the different steps because I've been one of those people involved in those different steps.

CJ: Is this type of work present in your lineage?

CS: My maternal grandfather was a woodworker. He also wore many hats and he was a linesman for national grid and when I was very young and I would go visit them we would do weeklong projects together. He built furniture as a hobby, and he built grandfather clocks and things like that. He didn't sell them he gave them to people and so I started learning that reverence for tools and materials, and the protocol for how to work in a shop, and the ritual of that kind of work, like putting on an apron and cleaning up afterward. All of those things were a really interesting familial connection and so all of that came for my grandfather.



Above: Picture of a hydraulic press

Richard Jasterzbski
Automotive Distributor
Salesman
Business Owner
Skilled Laborer

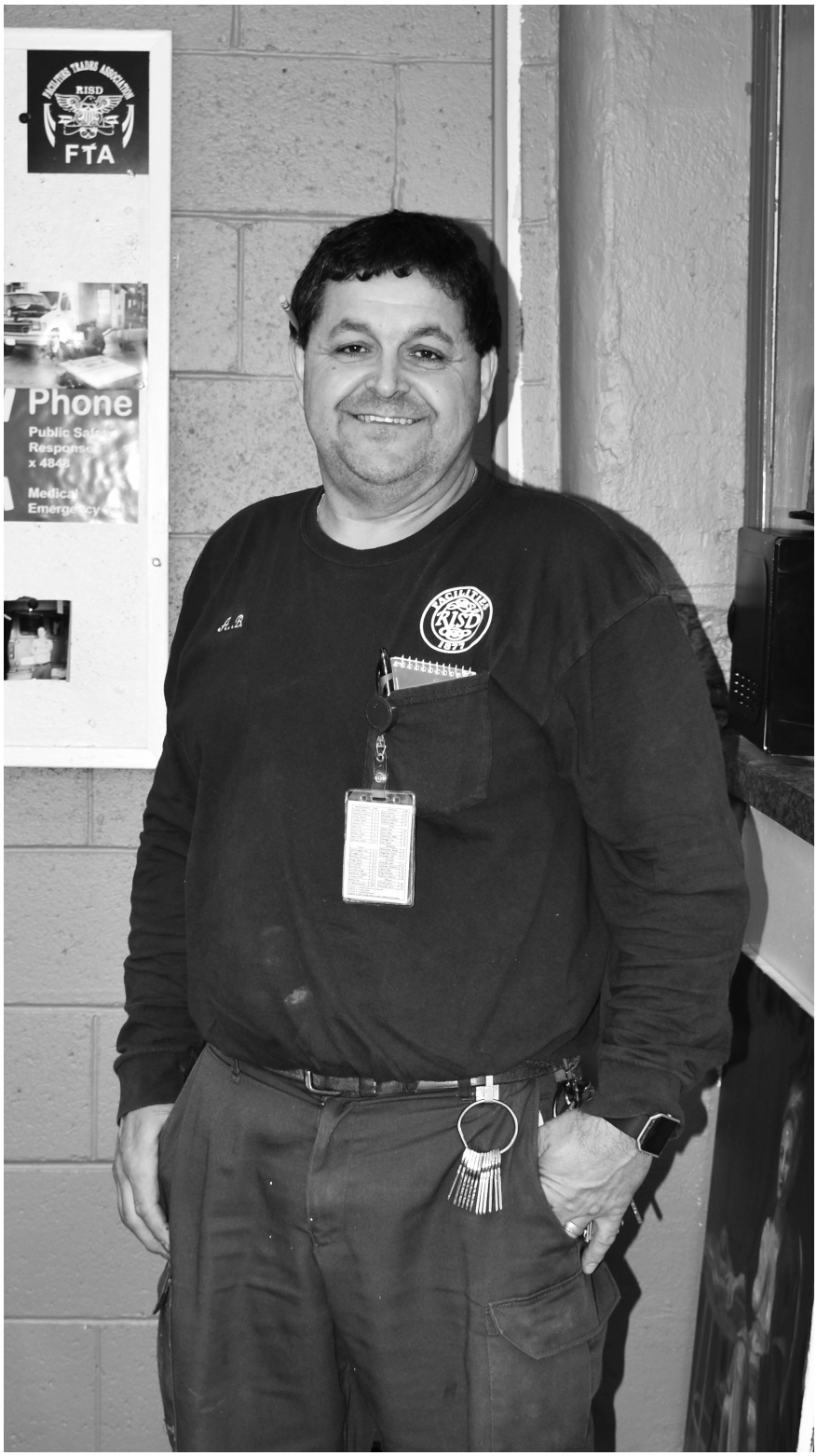

12-32 FL OZ
Tartan
Scotch-Brite
Scotch-Brite
Scotch-Brite

"People might look from a point view that assumes that the common mechanic is an uneducated person that has a low level of skills. I have experienced being placed in that category and education comes from many places, not everyone gets the opportunity to go to college to be educated through those means and everyone's path is different. Maybe someone was unable to go to college, or maybe they chose a trade. Either way, that doesn't mean that their skills or the knowledge that they gained from their field isn't just as valuable as a college

degree. For example, I am technically a salesperson, but I do everything, and I have no employees. I do sales, I take orders, fix cars, I load orders and unload trucks, I put stock away and still to this day I do all of the jobs necessary to run my business. My brother and I still do much of the same work, labor that we did when we were 10, 11 years old. It has never been beneath me to pick up a broom and sweep up the floor, or recycle boxes, or lift heavy inventory and put it away, or unload a truck. ”

—Richard Jasterzbski

Andriano Barbosa
Lead Maintenance Technician
General Contractor
Carpenter
Salesman
Business Owner
Skilled Laborer


FIREFIGHTERS TRADES ASSOCIATION
RISD
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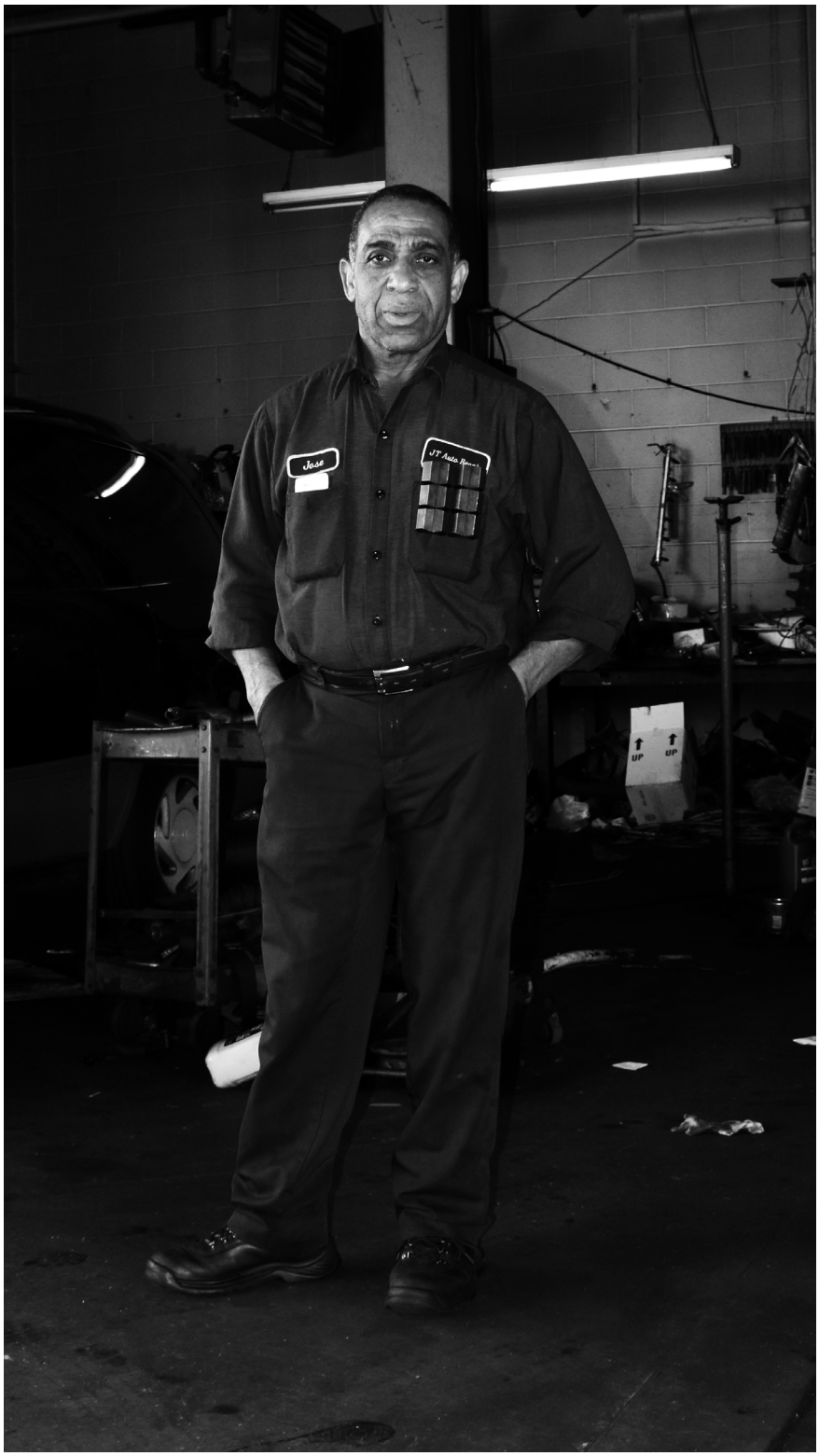
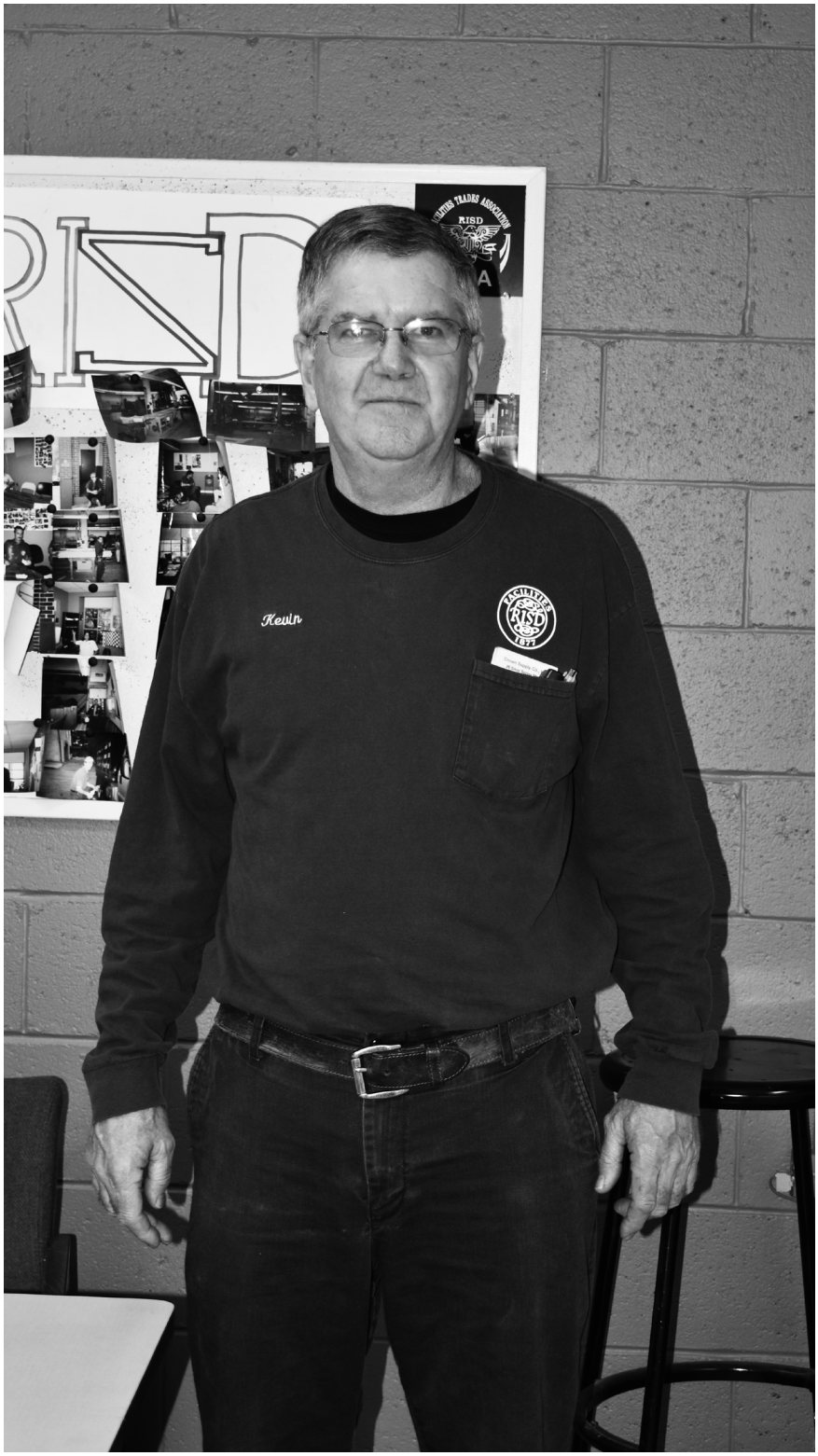
Public Safety
Response
x 4848
Medical
Emergency

José Fernando Tavarez
Automotive Mechanic
Salesman
Business Owner
Skilled Laborer


Jose
UP
UP

Kevin Burns
Lead Electrician
Veteran
Skilled Laborer

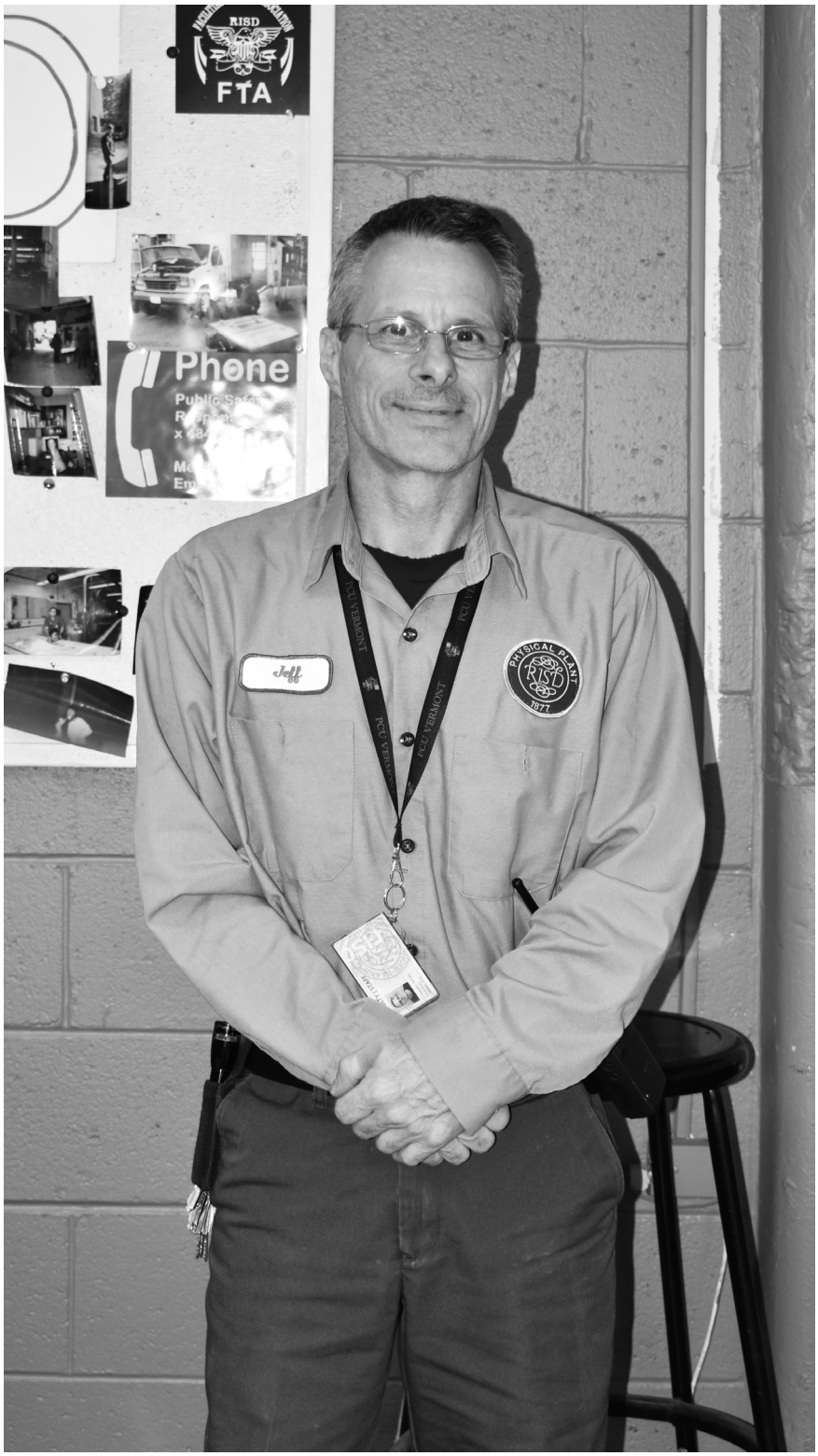

RISD
Kevin

"It's scary when that happens, it takes control of your muscles. I had that happened when I was hung up on the electrical current end and I couldn't let go, luckily my legs buckled and I was on a six-foot ladder and the weight of my body made me

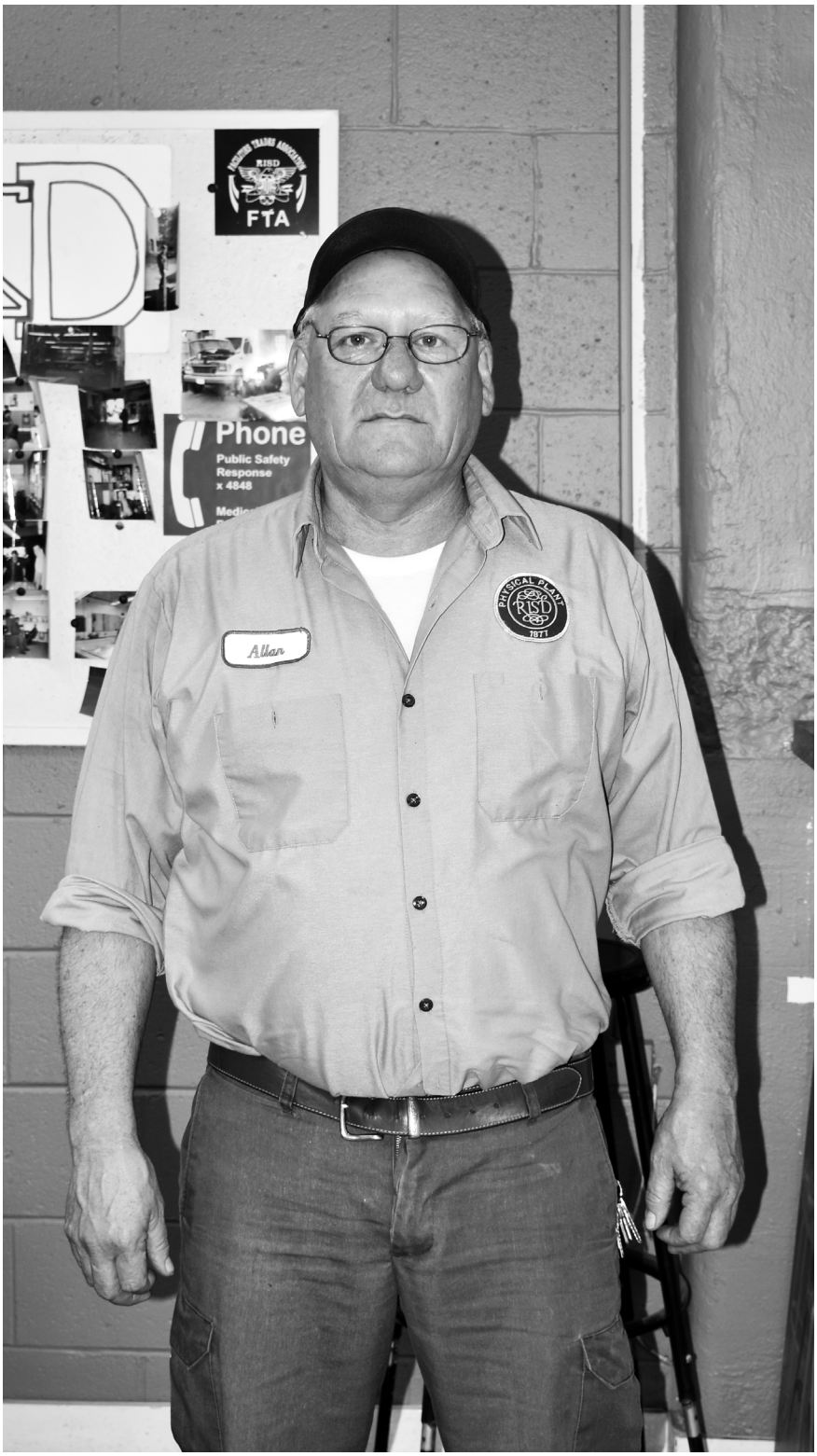
fall off the ladder and pulled me off of the lines and if it didn't I wouldn't be here talking to you. I fell into a nice soft bush and I had to get back up and finish the job, it was about 90° outside and I was sweating bullets."

—Kevin Burns

Jeffrey Jeffrey D'Amario
Master Plumber/Pipefitter
Business Owner
Skilled Laborer


RISD
FTA
Phone
Jeff
PHYSICAL PLANT
RISD
1877

Alan Hall
Maintenance Technician
Mechanic
Skilled Laborer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Allan
PHYSICAL PLANT
RISD
1877

Michael Andreozzi
HVAC Mechanic
Truck Driver
Skilled Laborer


CHILLED WATER RET.
D WATER SUP.

"I really like helping people I've always had that sense where it gives me joy to see someone happy because of what I've done whether it be here on campus or in life. There has been numerous times where I

have helped people on a whim. I'll be driving by and see a problem and I'll go out to help somebody just because I like the sense of satisfaction that I've made somebody happy."

—Michael Andreozzi

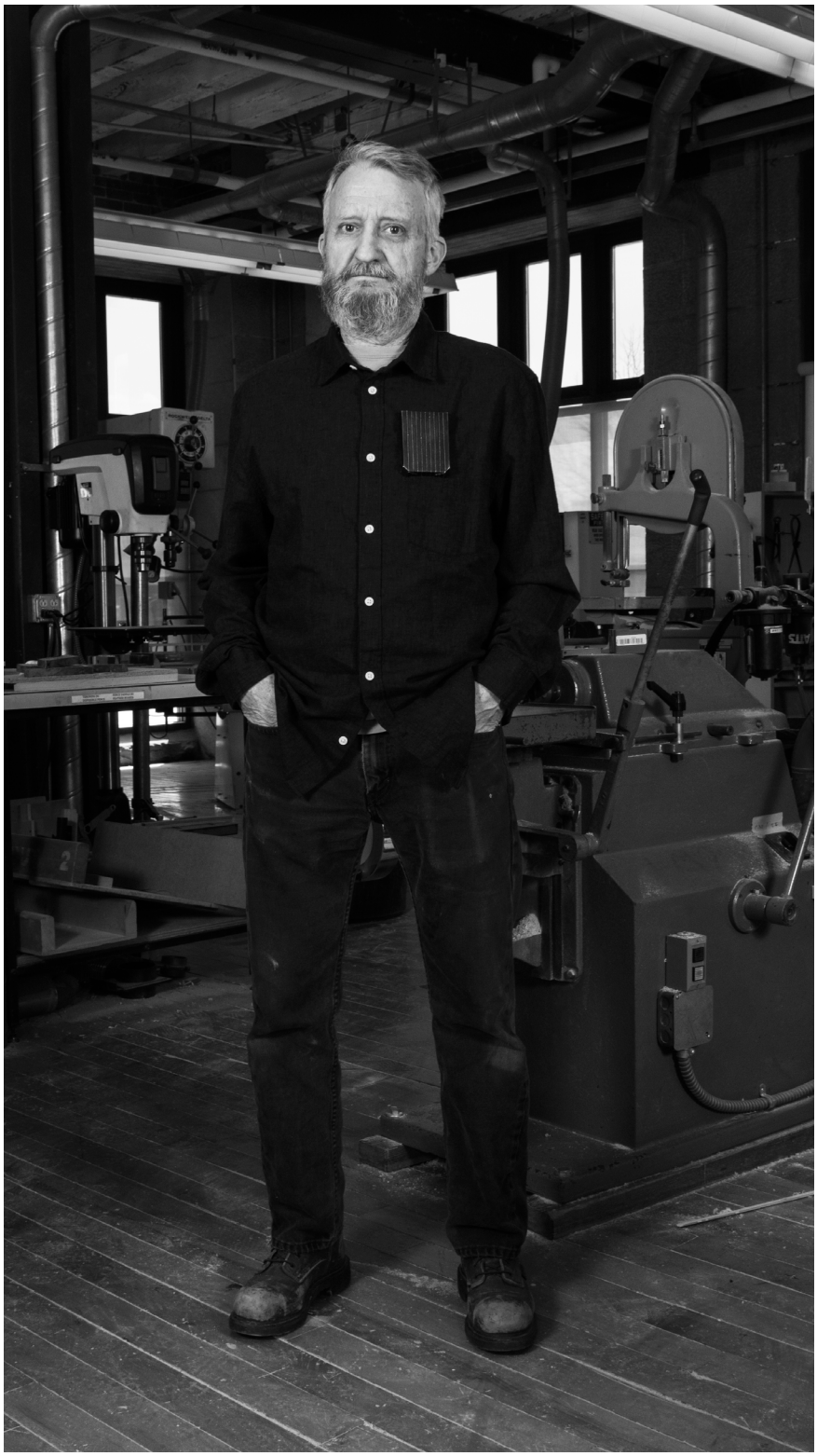
Jonas Levi
Technical Assistant
Carpenter
Skilled Laborer
Artist


NO
PINE
DELTA

Polly Spenner
Technical Assistant Jaquard Loom
Skilled Laborer
Artist

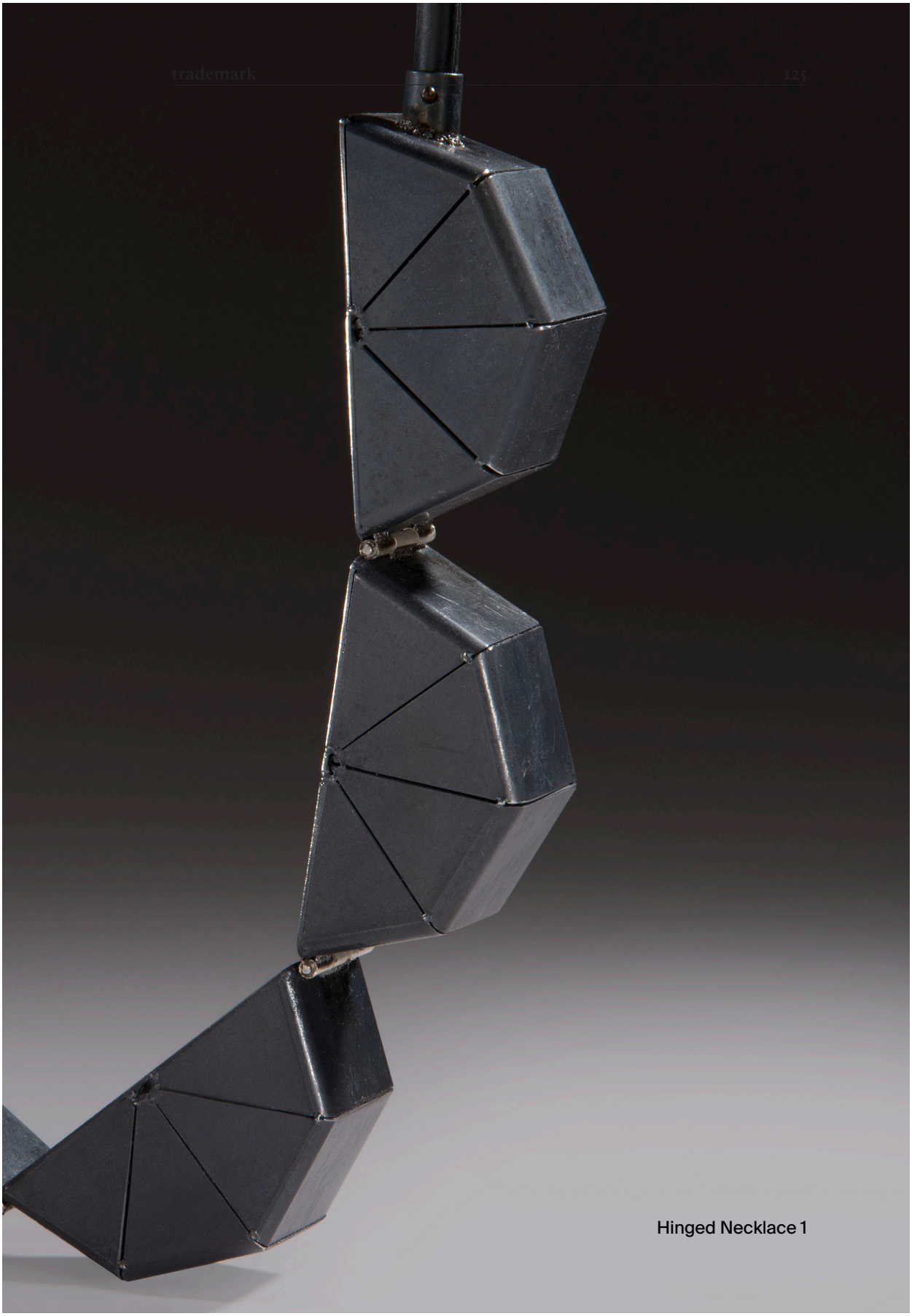

STAY BEHIND

Mark Johnston
Technical Assistant
Carpenter
Photographer
Designer
Skilled Laborer
Artist



Doriene Taylor
Student
Skilled Laborer


COMMUNITY COLLEGE
RHODE ISLAND



Hinged Necklace 1

Conclusion

The weld acts a physical bridge between two pieces of metal. Within this localized coalescence, a union is formed—making two entities one through a common bond. I see my work through this lens. The process of welding has allowed me to fuse the gap that I feel within myself, between the worker and the scholar, the misconceptions of the working-class versus its truth, and externalize that through jewelry.

Through the culmination of my research, the act of interviewing, and the making process, I have created wearable identifiers that cannot be bound to one *class*, as they are born from knowledge that spans from industrial worksites to fine arts institutions. It is my goal that this work is imbued with the identity that inspired it as well as my own, and is able to move fluidly through our social structure while bringing it's wearer's attention to the visualization of work that is evidenced in each piece.

Bricolage Pendant 1


trademark

Coalescence Pendant 2

The Bead Necklace 2

The Bead Necklace 2 detail

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