



Burlington Artist Brings Landscapes to Life

SPOTLIGHTING TOPOGRAPHICAL JEWELRY

Courtney Reckord is not your typical jewelry designer. A cursory glance at her website and products might lead one to believe that Courtney simply creates interesting jewelry. However, there is a lot more to the story: Courtney makes

data-driven jewelry. Each piece she creates is an accurate representation of a different landscape or a topographical map.

For the past 13 years, Courtney has been making one-of-a-kind pieces specifically for daring people. “I create jewelry for

adventurous people and the places they love,” she says. “My jewelry is a confluence of my love of the outdoors and my background in both environmental science and the arts, and of course my love of maps.”

CAPTURING LOCAL AND GLOBAL SCENES

Courtney uses recycled metals and responsibly sourced stones and works with small, often local, manufacturers to help her customers carry a physical piece of an important place with them. Her bestselling pieces include silhouettes of Camel’s Hump and Mount Mansfield that are placed on pendants,



“My jewelry is a way for people to carry positive memories of moments. Everyone has a place that is meaningful to them, such as where they grew up, went to college, or got engaged,” says local artist Courtney Reckord, who creates data-driven topographical jewelry.

cufflinks, rings, necklaces, and bracelets. “A lot of people connect to these places because they have hiked these mountains or see them from their homes,” she says. While her bestselling pieces showcase Vermont, she has also created topography jewelry from locations all over the world, including a paperweight of Death Valley, a wedding ring for a couple in Sri Lanka, and a ring of a river in Siberia. “My jewelry is a way for people to carry positive memories of moments. Everyone has a place that is meaningful to them, such as where they grew up, went to college, or got engaged.”

Courtney’s process is a bit complex. She creates jewelry using Rhino 3D, a 3D modeling software. She first imports the United States Geological Survey (USGS) data into the software and manipulates it to create distinctive jewelry designs. Her files are then exported to a high-resolution printer. “I cast the prints using a wax casting and then the pieces are finished. Sometimes I add stones, such as diamonds, garnets, and sapphires,” she explains.

FROM ETSY TO DATA VISUALIZATION ARTIST

Courtney is a former art teacher who has been creating art for most of her life. She credits her official entryway into entrepreneurial jewelry making when she opened a shop on Etsy.com more than 13 years ago. She now sees herself as a full-time data visualization artist and helps companies with this process as well. “Data visualization is the process of analyzing data and then creating graphics that accurately and clearly represent the findings,” Courtney explains. “It can be in the form of an illustration, bar chart, or a 3D sculpture.” She has worked with some interesting





Top: Courtney and her husband Adam at the New England Made Trade Show.
Above: Birch leaf ring, sterling silver.
Right: Camel's Hump silhouette necklaces with a variety of precious stones.

companies, such as The Neighborhood Design Center in Baltimore, Maryland, and helped them visualize their stormwater remediation projects to benefit the Chesapeake Bay.

In 2012, Courtney was teaching a class on metalsmithing at a local high school. As she carved a mountain ring out of wax, she was struck by the idea that she could “use actual data to create jewelry,” she recalls. “I had been hiking the weekend before. The mountain ring was just a stylized version of a mountain and the science nerd in me wondered if this was possible.” Turns out, it is possible! It is also a rewarding, although tedious, process and one that has allowed Courtney to develop new skills.

“The hardest part of my work is doing the mundane things like ordering supplies and managing finances,” she says. “However, the most fulfilling by far is hearing the stories of people who have purchased my jewelry and learning about the stories behind why they selected the piece and discovering why it’s so special to them.” Her favorite pieces to create are the custom ones because each one brings a new challenge.

FINDING LOCAL SUPPORT

Courtney is honest about the struggles of entrepreneurship. “I spent several years waking up at 5am so I could spend an hour working on my jewelry because I was too tired when I got home from teaching,” she recalls. “There were many points when I was just about to give up, thinking about how many hours I had spent on trying to create something that I was not even sure anyone else would appreciate. But the slightest bit of progress would bolster my spirits and help me to keep going.” She also encourages local artists to seek out community support from local resources. “Vermont offers so many resources to entrepreneurs. The Center for Women in Enterprise offers classes and mentoring, and The Generator is a group of creative people with many different kinds of resources for learning,” she says. “My advice to artists is to persist. Creating something unique doesn’t happen overnight.”

Courtney’s jewelry can be found at the Burlington Farmers Market as well as at various stores in Chittenden County, including Zinnia, Common Deer, Thiry-Odd, Vermont Gift Barn, Mysa, and the ArtHound Gallery. To learn more about Courtney Reckord, visit courtneyreckord.com. 🌸

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Knauf LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



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