

# Liberty! Egalite! Jewelry!

A petite new shop practices jewelrymaking with a conscience

**N**EIGHBORHOOD entrepreneur Hanne Lis Rasmussen has transformed part of the tiny space that is home to Surprise Party, the bead and seashell store, into a jewel box of finely crafted creations made from recycled jewelry.

Rasmussen worked in non-profit social services for 20 years while dabbling in her heart's desire: metalsmithing. Last year, she honored her passion by attending a "jewelry intensive" course with master goldsmith Alan Revere, emerging as a jeweler and goldsmith.

"It was one of the best experiences in my life," she says. "And it gave me an appreciation for the older arts such as hand engraving that simply aren't done anymore."

It also gave her the confidence to go public with Egalite Just Green Jewelry, her new business in the half-shop at 1900½ Fillmore, offering "sustainable recycled jewelry" crafted from the antique and mid-modern pieces she has been collecting for the last three decades.

"Most jewelry shops are the same — all big diamonds and white metal," says Rasmussen. "I wanted to offer people pieces they don't see anywhere else."

The pieces adorning the display cases all have histories and stories: Scandinavian enamelware passed down through generations, earrings and pendants made from real leaves washed in gold,



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— HANNE LIS RASMUSSEN, Egalite Just Green Jewelry

Victorian mourning jewelry of intricately carved jet, ornate metal Spanish tourist jewelry and parts of old Mexican silver bracelets and pins on oxidized chains.

She reuses stones and metal and jewelry findings, such as chains and earwires, to rework vintage pieces to suit the tastes and wishes of today's customers. She has made dozens of "earcuffs," for example — cufflinks refashioned and refitted to be earrings — and has converted old pins and powder compacts into pendants. No piece in the store costs more than \$400.

"I have to admit I'm fond of quirky things that have humor and beauty and greater meaning in them," she says.

It's jewelrymaking with a conscience. Rasmussen notes that mining for gold and gemstones to make new jewelry

can harm the environment and sometimes involves child labor.

Rasmussen also makes custom pieces for customers — particularly those who have inherited jewelry they don't like and don't wear.

"Someone will come to me and say, 'I hate these old pearls. Can't we do something interesting with them?' And I'll reuse the customer's piece along with things from my own collection to make something different and wonderful, something fitting to their taste. That's what jewelry should be — a reflection of your personality."