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Ballad of a Bootlegger

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts, at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by:

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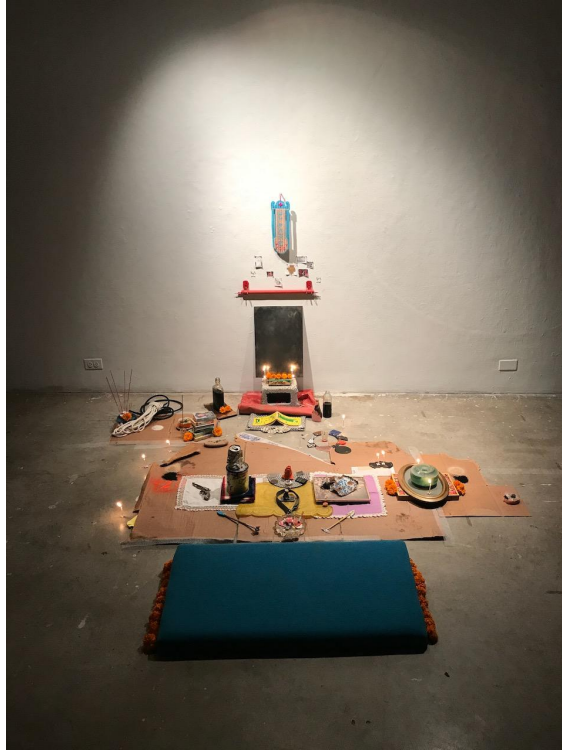
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Sarah Parker
Altar of a Bootlegger: Shit Fire #3, 2020

ALTER OF A BOOTLEGGER: *Shit Fire #3*

A brief freewriting associated with the above work.,

You smell of car oil, blackened with soot, brokenness open, calloused. Fingerprints make the spaces of tender touch by hardened hands. Honor your teachers. Honor your family for all it has suffered. Meditate on the juicy labors and the forgetting. Sitting by the river, pull the trigger you fucking American! Steal what belongs to you and there you sit on your scarred box under the bathing sunlight, bright eyes slit to see only fuzzy edges in a crowded dirt land.

You stake your pennies on a lost reality; you'll never rake in millions on a Powerball but hope folds you into the fool you need to be to float downriver. Patti Smith, Waylon Jennings, JJ Cale, Dylan, Elvis, and Billie Holiday. A man collected these bootlegs. Year's accumulated in a house stunk with cigarettes strung together in a pacing march of a year's-long meditation; you're dead now, heroin took you to heaven and you sit there with Steve who suffocated

until his last breath too, the misery consuming your minds and the sickness of genius never escaped. You are free now and I sit here and listen to the quiet that surrounds your scarred accumulations.

I don't pray but I pretend to, I know you live here with me in leaking and staining, I can brush and brush, but these teeth will never reach perfection, there is reverie in the slipping, in the queer. How can I slurp up the perfection of that which I will never access, like sieves that bring it closer in, distilled into a new perfection? I'll drink at day's end and pretend I'm not wrought with the pangs that I might too suffer similar fates. So I fold and align and arrange, I create little places where you can rest, settle your heavy eyes on quiet expanses of purple fenced by lace, then question your place (just know that fresh water and puja will connect then to now and tomorrow). There is no apology in delight, quite the opposite really. You'll know more once you unveil your unconscious/subliminal lust-filled desire to touch and smell and *connect*.

Roll in the soot of fires-gone! Purification through osmosis(?). They don't pass onward so you can pass on the recognition. Learn the lesson, you bootlegger! This is necessary; you must *use your hands* and forge onward. Shit fire to save a match and light the birthday candles, time will pass before you've finished blinking so take another sip in and breathe easy child-- loss is part of life and no one can ever take that away from you (not that you've feared this). Slip the ring on your finger and marry to a practice of breaking perceptions of rules that will only align you to dump-mountain humans' fear; you'll smile when you realize that misery breeds bliss bliss, sip sip, welcome home Homeless Graphite Pile! This is it, potent with potential that only you can waste.



The installation, titled *Shit Fire #3*, marks the conception of a thread of working that has gripped me in this past year of work: the bootleg. Here I have begun to integrate these "bootlegs" into a messy swirling mash of chaos and information. This installation marks one of my first explorations to understand what the term means to me visually, to decode the rules and regulations that I am defining in my use of this term, and it is the point with which I determined the importance of the cultural slippage or even misuse of this term.

There is a 'Shit Fire' ring in the center of the composition which is a Karl Fritsch Bootleg. A "mirror" (polished aluminum with car oil poured on the surface and drawn into) on the back wall is a Tony Matelli bootleg. Cardboard, laid out into a composition that was intended to reference the cardboard series by Robert Rauschenberg created from 1971-1972. The altar which makes the larger composition referenced some of the photographic works by the artist, Nick Sethi, who photographs people in modern-day India. There are bootleg tapes from an inherited collection in the corner, and a necklace of strung-together found objects and shards of broken plastic and metal that were a nod to art jeweler, Lisa Walker.

Not only do I have these special bootlegs in the installation, but I also have integrated objects of personal significance to me. I asked viewers to approach the installation and kneel on the blue bolster at the center-front of the altar. The altar was lit dimly from above and candles were lit throughout the gallery. In the quiet, there was space to observe the potency of each object. I hoped to create equanimity between materials with vastly different intrinsic values to generate an entry point and demystification of that which we don't understand (for example eccentric art jewelry) or have access to (again, eccentric art jewelry). I also hoped to insert my narrative into the space through ritual, which was performed through lighting birthday candles, pouring blackened car oil over the Tony Matelli mirror, and through the specific placement of marigolds and fresh water in the space. In this installation there was order and disorder, clarity and murkiness--it was a bizarre round-up of seemingly unrelated things placed upon this altar to memorialize a bootlegger, whose identity was concealed to viewers.





Sarah Parker
Shit Fire #2, 2020

Shit Fire #2 investigates entropy, dissolution, and decay utilizing the chaos of color, form, and dense composition to reference a packed flea market vernacular. I sought to dissolve the hierarchy of objects in the space to generate equanimity between my creations and found objects. Jewelry adorned architectural bodies; it became unclear at times what was wearable from what was being worn. Studded throughout the installation were spaces where certain wearables were highlighted. In the composition surrounding this jewelry, the chaos dispersed, or light was used to highlight the stars of the show. Fabrics and found sheets of plastic and rubber generated swaths of color to break up the space creating a time warp where a viewer could get lost without the burden of specificity.

Shit Fire #2 and *The Altar to a Bootlegger* bridge the gap between the research of my early graduate career and that which has culminated in the thesis exhibition works.



Bootlegging

In this section, I will discuss why I am drawn to research bootlegging. I will describe the value of it in the realm of contemporary art jewelry. The through-line from the practice and deep history of bootlegging to the similarly rich history of jewelry and adornment arts needs to be teased out for various reasons. The subject of thievery in the field of craft is deeply fraught and brings forth strong feelings for most. Before jumping in, I feel called to insert a quote that has stuck with me through the long and circuitous journey of jabbing my flag in the dirt on the planet of bootlegging.

Director, producer and screenwriter Jim Jarmusch states:

Nothing is original.

Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. *Devour* old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light, and shadows. Select only things to steal from that *speak directly to your soul*. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be *authentic*. Authenticity is invaluable; *originality is nonexistent*. And don't bother concealing your thievery- *celebrate* it if you feel like it.¹

For some, to hear the word bootleg draws in strong associations—associations that I have learned in some ways correlate generationally and culturally. Stating the discomfort in what I am attempting to do in this redefinition and in my craft practice is important because it will expose the imperatives for why I feel what I am doing is necessary. There are a multitude of synonyms for bootlegging, not necessarily in the strictest of ways but in cultural realms that many have likely heard of: knockoff, replica, homage, counterfeit, unlicensed copy, black-market, appropriation, copyright infringement, etc. The list undulates between practices we understand as acceptable, such as homage, to illicit practices such as counterfeit. I liken them to notes on a scale, each one pinging a different tone into

¹ *Manifesto*, *Manifesto*, 2017, <https://www.kanopy.com/product/manifesto-0>.

the belly of our ears, striking a particular sentiment. In my terms, they each are implicitly attitudinal evoking a varied range of emotions.

The etymology of the term dates to the late 18th Century during King George III's reign where smugglers became nicknamed bootleggers because of their custom of hiding valuables in their large sea-boots when dodging the King's coastguard men². It's worthwhile to define what constitutes smuggling as well considering their relativity in this early context. It is a verb, an action of importing/exporting secretly and *contrary to law*. An older term than bootlegging by just over a hundred years:

1660s, from Low German *smuggeln* or Dutch *smokkelen* "to transport (goods) illegally," apparently a frequentative formation of a word meaning "to sneak" (from Proto-Germanic **smuganan*; source also of Dutch *smuigen* "to eat secretly;" Swedish *smyg* "a lurking-hole," Danish *smughandel* "contraband trade," Norwegian *smjuga*³.

Both terms, "smugglers" and "bootleggers", originated during distinct eras where the rich were flush with access and the poor were 'sneaking' to 'eat secretly' into a 'lurking hole'. As the term has evolved different subcultural associations have become attached to the term. Many associate the term with the illicit production and smuggling of alcohol to factions of the population during Prohibition where alcohol was illegally sold to circumvent heavy taxation. Again, those participants were smuggling something of value past surveilling officers in small jars tucked into the legs of their boots.

The term regained use during the late 1960s and through the '70s regarding bootleg recordings. According to Wikipedia bootleg recording can be dated back to the time of William Shakespeare where illegal transcripts were produced of his plays⁴. I reference Wikipedia in this academic writing to highlight one of the many platforms that

² Unknown Public, "Rum-Running," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, October 19, 2021), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rum-running>

³ Unknown Public, "Rum-Running," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, October 19, 2021), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rum-running>.

⁴ Unknown Public, "Bootleg Recording," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, November 25, 2021), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bootleg_recording.

have gained unimaginable success for the dissemination of what may have formerly been considered privileged research. It is monolithic in its representation of serial reproduction in the age of information.

It is the midcentury music scene that brings with it the popularization of the bootleg that is more culturally-relevant today. History shows that during the Vietnam era when music was God, and subversion was infiltrating the attitudes of the young as the mistrust in ‘the man’ was in-vogue (specifically the opposition to patriotism, patriarchy, capitalism, and the social conservatism that reigned through the 1950s and early 60s). During this time, individuation was paramount, therefore what many music bootleggers were engaging in was the pursuit of capturing history in bite-sized moments.

It is the music industry term of bootlegging that I am most concerned in learning about in its successes and failures, and the ways it has created inroads for voices that have not been squarely centered due to various prejudices allocated through the capital-driven music industry. I initially used the Grateful Dead as my exemplary qualifier of how and why the bootlegging subculture remains imperative to study and emulate in my recent research, though it has become clear to me that the acceptance of the bootleg in the culture of the Grateful Dead as well as for the Dead and Company, is precisely what makes this example complicated. The success of this band, its wide-reaching audience, and household notoriety are due to the band’s acceptance of the bootleg recordings of their live shows. I would argue that this band has had transcendence through time and space precisely because of the symbiosis between studio recordings (industry sanctioned) and live recordings (not industry sanctioned). So much of the Dead Head culture is about experiencing live performances, which means that the Grateful Dead made decisions in service of archived experiences (bootleg recordings) over the quality of recording; they accepted losing profit to these underground cultural reproductions with the recognition that these conditions reify the essence of their branding.

Mark Neumann and Anthony A. Simpson discuss in their article, *Smuggled Sound: Bootleg Recording and the Pursuit of Popular Memory*, that many bootleg amateur producers are offering, “an alternative depiction of popular culture” and that their recordings are an “attempt to capture live performances, to collect them as a source of memory and authenticity, and to mediate the events of their lives through means of technological reproduction.”⁵

⁵ Mark Neumann and Timothy A. Simpson, “Smuggled Sound: Bootleg Recording and the Pursuit of Popular Memory,” *Symbolic Interaction* 20, no. 4 (1997): pp. 319-341, <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1997.20.4.319>, 3

According to Neumann and Simpson, many bootleg recorders assume alternative descriptions to avoid some of the negative associations that come with the bootlegging term such as ‘music archivists’⁶. This seems to be because “bootleg recording is undoubtedly labeled as criminal or deviant activity”⁷. But the deviant label is argued to be applied to these practices that violate convention and serve as, “material artifacts generated by a marginalized group of cultural producers”⁸. Therein lies the real “gotcha” to my insistence on this term. Bootlegging, viewed through this lens, means viewers (of the bootleg jewelry and sculpture) or listeners of bootleg recordings may allow audiences, “to redefine their relation to the commodification of popular music” as well as putting the onus on these bootleggers to address larger issues, “regarding the relationship between “deviance” and cultural reproduction.”⁹ In the art world, and in the craft world, I would like to argue how important it is to wrestle with the ambiguity of authorship, authenticity, and the commodification of creative capital. Bootlegging has culturally struck the edge of discomfort at many points during history. Because of this, I am in turn interested to present work that may generate discussions around that prickly feeling. Where does my genius as an artist begin and end and where does the collective knowledge bleed into that? These topics need to be under critical scrutiny, in my opinion.

Further, the reality of illegal reproduction of such cultural objects ensures the dissemination of said objects to such audiences who would have never experienced them. Marcus Boon, the author of *In Praise of Copying*, discusses Louis Vuitton handbags, stating that, “these handbags have been called the most copied object in the world” that, “internet folklore has it that only 1 percent of Louis Vuitton bags are actually made by the company”¹⁰. Whether this lore is true or not is irrelevant, the take-home here is that people in developing nations have access to luxury items (or at least the illusion of luxury) such as these handbags by way of the copy. The global footprint of this brand would arguably not have reached its current scale were it not for the illegal reproduction of these culturally significant objects, only made more culturally significant by their unsanctioned reproduction.

I don’t agree that the terms ‘bootleg’ and ‘copy’ are interchangeable, though the research I have done on such terms has been generative and has bolstered my development with the bootleg jewelry/sculpture series.

⁶ Neumann and Simpson, “Smuggled Sound”, 319

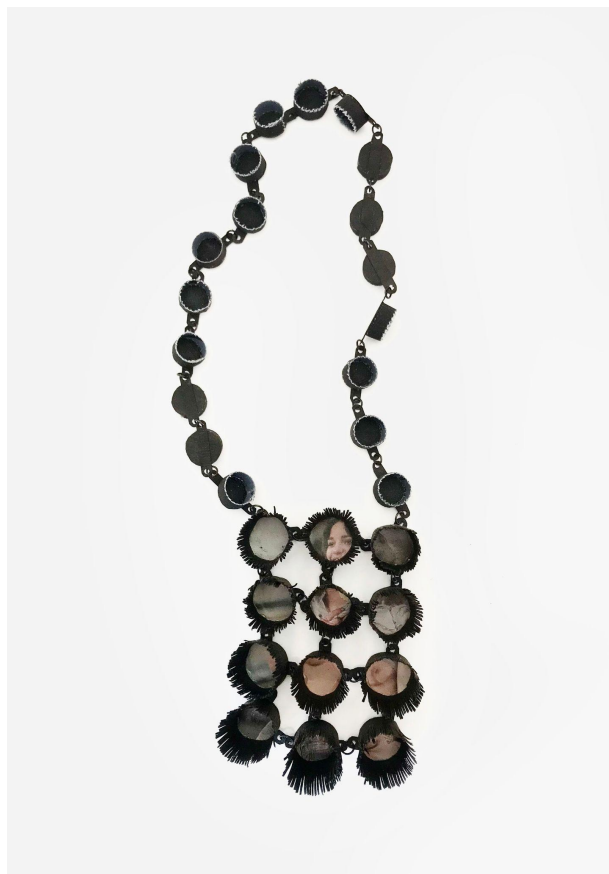
⁷ Neumann and Simpson, “Smuggled Sound”, 319.

⁸ Neumann and Simpson, “Smuggled Sound”, 321.

⁹ Neumann and Simpson, “Smuggled Sound”, 321.

¹⁰ Marcus Boon, *In Praise of Copying* (Harvard U.P., 2013).

Notably, I have come to recognize the importance of the bootlegs that I create to be distinctly bootleg and not copy. By this I mean, as I generate a formula around these developing bootlegs, I must ask myself time and again, “have I just created a copy? Or am I satisfying the qualifications for what it means to create a bootleg in my vision?” This question has led me to parse out what those ‘qualifiers’ are and in what way I measure them. Although my initial impulse was to build out a formula for the bootlegs, I realized that similar to the realities of nature, there are always exceptions to the formula and sometimes nature stumps us. As I write onward about this formula, I always hold in hand an important truth that developed during this research; *bootlegging is above all attitudinal*.



Sarah Parker
Lynn Batchelder Bootlegger Necklace, 2021

Pictured here is a bootleg I made of Lynn Batchelder’s work. For those of you who know Batchelder’s work (which I have pictured just down the page) you might think what I have created is distinctly unlike what you have seen of her work. I am interested in that slippage. *This Body is not a Temple*, written by

Christopher Corey Allen, is about the punk body and draws on queer theory, punk history, fluidity, and anti-containment. This article has been resonant with me as I have embarked on creating jewelry bootlegs. They state, “A punk body acknowledges its own slippage”¹¹. I wanted to create relatability to Lynn Batchelder’s work so I used pedestrian materials. The black material is cut tar paper whereas Lynn uses silver and steel. Empowered by a punk ethos, and “led by the aesthetic and acoustic distortions of punk rock, which values the amateur and sloppy play as forms of success”¹² I saw this working style as a form of resistance, to assert power. The crude reproduction became a form of queer success. Instead of sleek black backplates, these forms reveal cutouts from a bike week magazine from the 80s. Relative to the punk ethos I have described, in this jewelry I created an abject version of the original thing.



[Lynn Batchelder](#)

The irony of working in this way is that the bootlegs become distinctly unbootlegish--- I see that as another form of that slippery punk body. Have you ever collaborated with a friend or another artist and in the process, you think, I would do that differently? The same happens for me, I intend to make a bootleg of a specific artist's work or

¹¹ Christopher Corey Allen, “This Body Is Not a Temple,” Mn Artists, February 16, 2021, <https://mnartists.walkerart.org/this-body-is-not-a-temple>.

¹² Allen, “This Body Is Not a Temple”, 6.

by mimicking their signature marks and end up derailing my plans by deciding against the integrity of the design I am bootlegging. Then the forms become hybridized, which relates them to the lineage of craft.



Sarah Parker
Betina Speckner Bootlegger Necklace, 2021

Above is a brooch I made during my month-long Emerging Artist Residency at the Baltimore Jewelry Center. I made it with the jeweler, Betina Speckner, in mind. During the process of critique with my advisor and mentor, Susie Ganch, the two of us started to realize how readily lineage, slippage, and misinterpretation come into play during this bootlegging process. The attitude with which I produced this work was conceptually divergent from Speckner's and became more allied to other artists such as Mary Hallam Pearse and Gijs Bakker by happenstance. In this scenario, a viewer may see the work and misunderstand my interpretation, generating tension in the misread, in the uncategorizable third thing. It also becomes clear that to bootleg one artist can easily lead to misunderstanding by way of visual redundancy in the art/design/craft worlds.



Gijs Bakker



Mary Hallam Pearse

What I have come to learn through this process are several things. First, generating prolifically helps me work through not only how I will land on this “collaboration” or “formula” as I have described it earlier but also how I will acquire skills that I have not formerly had. Each maker employs different modes of working so inhabiting another’s working style takes practice. Interestingly, the process is unraveling in ways I would not have expected. I am learning so much about the work I am bootlegging, learning about the histories around these artists, learning about their lineages, learning about other artists who speak similar languages visually, learning skills as a

metalsmith, etc. This is what makes my jewelry and sculpture bootlegs inherently different from the music bootlegs; my hands and mind translate the artworks and act like the low-tech recording device as it translates live performances.

As I make more bootlegs, I determine how my creative choices can fulfill my desire for access-building. In other words, if I want to make it more affordable to wear a Lola Brooks ring, for example, then when I create a bootleg, I employ the use of more low-cost materials, similar to how costume jewelry is an affordable version of haute couture jewelry. A Lola Brooks original (pictured below on the left) compared to my bootleg (pictured below on the right) highlights this. Lola's materials include gold with high karat stones whereas the bootleg is composed in silver and contains a dyed-glass cabochon. The Lola Brooks ring carries a retail value of \$11,600.00 at August, a jewelry retailer in Los Angeles. The bootlegged version is priced at \$125.00. The disparity between these two prices show the direct correlation between the commodified value of high-end, one-of-a-kind designs and the economic inaccessibility to these sectors of the field.



Lola Brooks

Sarah Parker

I am compelled by Lola Brooks' pillowy ring designs. I'm not afraid to say when I think I'm not hitting the mark with some of these bootlegs. Although I find them compelling in their uniqueness, I am not satisfied; I don't think they did the thing I am asking them to do. Specifically, with the above work, I haven't captured the voice of Lola Brooks yet and I have not translated her work through material enough to push it from the world of copy into the land of bootleg.

As I explore materials that are less expensive in these bootlegs, I interrogate access through a lens of relatability. There are certain materials that we encounter daily and because of that, we have associations and comforts with those materials. Such things as steel, aluminum, yellow pine, plastic, tape, a cotton tee-shirt-- these are materials that I would say we have more interaction with on average than gold or sapphire, for example. I have developed skills with centrifugal aluminum casting. I see this material as not only being affordable, relatable, and 'lo-fi' (<referring typically to poor music production quality, which has become another descriptor of these bootlegs). Additionally, there is a haptic quality to the cast aluminum that I am very drawn towards. Its lightweight nature relates these bootlegs to high production processes and low-cost materials. It is a low melting temperature metal, similar materially to many of the lo-temp alloys that are utilized within the costume jewelry industry. I will circle back around to the topic of costume jewelry as there is much more to unpack here.

Another way I am exploring relatability is through bootlegging objects outside of the art jewelry universe. As I have stated above, I have integrated bootleg sculptures into the conversation. For many of these sculptures, I have utilized the same formulas for generating the bootlegs as I have discussed here with the art jewelry. Below is a work titled, *Bootleg of a Ring seen in a Film Called Celine and Julie Go Boating*. This ring brought another form of relatability to the conversation of bootlegging: sourcing and bootlegging cultural objects from outside the niche sculpture and art jewelry worlds.



Sarah Parker
Bootleg of a Ring seen in a Film Called Celine and Julie Go Boating



Film Still from *Celine and Julie Go Boating*

The inspiration to recreate this into a bootleg was to see what happens when the bootlegs have some diversity of source content. I'm excited about the possibilities that work of this variety can offer the art jewelry bootlegs, I hope that these will serve as a counterbalance to the niche works. Another example of these is posted below. The bootleg I have created is on the right and the original, pictured on the left, was posted on Instagram by a 'picker' from NYC called, @tihngs, who posts bizarre finds.



Punk/Addiction and Subversion

In the words of Christopher Corey Allen:

“Punk defies categorization.

To be punk is to be a multiplicity. It’s a belief in the self and a belief in collectivity. It can be adorned in leather, studs, dyed hair, nose rings, hard and sharp. But it can also be lycra, platforms, soft and billowy. It can be aggressive, loud, and fast, but it can also be passive, slow, quiet---anything it fucking wants. It is not just a fleshy sack that is to be maintained and kept alive, it sneers at a cartesian binary. It is everything that comes with that sack; our fears, thoughts, and desires. Utilizing all forms of resistance and liberation, it pursues a life of generative refusal. Dancing around utopic and dystopic, it is where *fuck you* means *why not*.”¹³

I used to go to the GSS house in Raleigh as a teen. GSS stands for Gorman Street Sluts which was a punk band from the '80s that started this DIY venue run out of a house in a quiet neighborhood in Raleigh. I flirted with fitting in. I was a wallflower. I was never able to let loose enough to jump in and give myself to the music. I watched

¹³ Allen, “This Body Is Not a Temple”, 4.

from afar as friends studded their jackets, and played 20 second long songs, thrashing and jumping delighting in an accidental shiner. At that moment in my life I was concerned with being exactly unnoticeable-- to individualize my wardrobe could send the message that I was "a problem child" and might get teachers, or friends' parents to start wondering what was going on internally with me. I love the above quote because I was then and still am today all of those descriptors. On the underside of my skin, there are studs and leather and more and more every day I allow myself to express outwardly that inside sense of self.

From some of my earliest experiences as an art jeweler, I was always interested in breaking perceptions of value; I wanted to create jewelry that spoke to my individual experience in the world, one where I was not interested in being like everyone else and further-- not interested in adorning myself in anything *ordinary*. The superpower of jewelry to transmit and project to the world your identity and even your story was the end goal here and is it what has kept me making jewelry. The picture below shows work that I applied to graduate school with. It is here that I began to dip my toes into what it means to make and wear subversive jewelry.



Sarah Parker
Pin Back Button Series

All of these brooches integrate found pinback buttons, each denoting different subcultures. They're raunchy, edgy, taboo, mischievous, inappropriate, and devilish. This series felt like home for me while I was sorting through how I wanted to orient myself as an art jeweler. The construction was simple on these mostly made from steel which was affording me the ability to work prolifically. I was collaging found materials around a featured prop, the pin back button generally using stone setting techniques for assembling. As you can see the formats for all of these collages speak to compositional solutions one can find in costume jewelry, especially from the mid-century modern era. As I collaged various found materials together I had developed a language in my work that is still present today, nearly 6 years from when these pieces were completed. The language speaks of resourcefulness, finding beauty in the scarred, breaking gender-coded jewelry practices, etc. I reference these earlier works because of the ever-developing relationship between subversion and punk that has been present in my work from day one.

Despite my formal training in metalsmithing practices, another element in the vernacular of my works is DIY which has its roots in punk culture. Breaking ‘rules’ in this craft, such as sloppy or poorly executed stone settings, is a tactic for asking viewers and wearers to think critically about what one should consider to be correct or why it is important to follow convention. Arguably, the craft world is primed for work of this variety; the Sloppy Craft Movement, a term coined by Glenn Adamson in 2009¹⁴, is a subversive movement built upon rebelling against conventions of ‘craft’. If punk is concerned with breaking patriarchal ideologies then too, my work is concerned with breaking tradition as so many of the conventions of silversmithing/metalsmithing were generated and evolved alongside patriarchal histories.

Low theory is a term coined by Stuart Hall and Jack Halberstam. It claims that to reject heteronormative forms of success can look like failure. Failure to live up to these standards can lead to freedom. Allen interprets their theory to be, “...a way of embracing failure as a counterintuitive form of resistance, a way to inhabit the refusal of mastery and success.” (7). The performance of wearable objects that highlight the fallibility of the hand, that are honest in the scars of their lived existence insist on a wearer and/or viewer's empowerment through imperfection. There is mastery and success in the form of messiness and inherent miscommunication.

I think it is important to also draw a relationship between punk history and addiction. This is an important relationship to me considering my personal history with family addiction challenges. It also happens to be a big part of the discussion involving punk history. Allen reminds us that through rejection of a normative healthy lifestyle, “habits such as alcoholism and drug abuse indirectly become a form of social critique and deviance. It is by no means a requisite of a punk body, but is often a part of the culture.”¹⁵. Often in places where there is a thriving punk community, there is an equally thriving recovery community (here recovery means recovery from any substance addictions). Not that the Grateful Dead would be categorized as punk but you see this relationship in the community of Dead Heads where excessive alcohol consumption and drug use have led to the emergence of the Wharf Rats, who are followers of the Grateful Dead who are in recovery. The name of the group comes from a 1971 song by the Dead about an alcoholic. And too, it’s important to note that there are subcategories of music and cultural practices within the punk community where strict abstinence from substance use is a lifestyle: straightedge.

¹⁴ Glenn Adamson, *Sloppy Craft: Postdisciplinarity and the Crafts* (London, England: BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS, 2020).

¹⁵ Allen, “This Body Is Not a Temple, 6.

I relate the bifurcation of these communities with my own emotional splits. Often I create pieces that have areas of refinement alongside areas of contradiction where I may bypass the thoughtful precision of craft for a DIY aesthetic. I am drawn to cohabitate rusted steel with gem-cut stones or aged findings in a shined silver setting. As my human experience mirrors the sculptures, installations, and jewelry I create, there are generally extremes and addiction is presently discussed through the artworks.

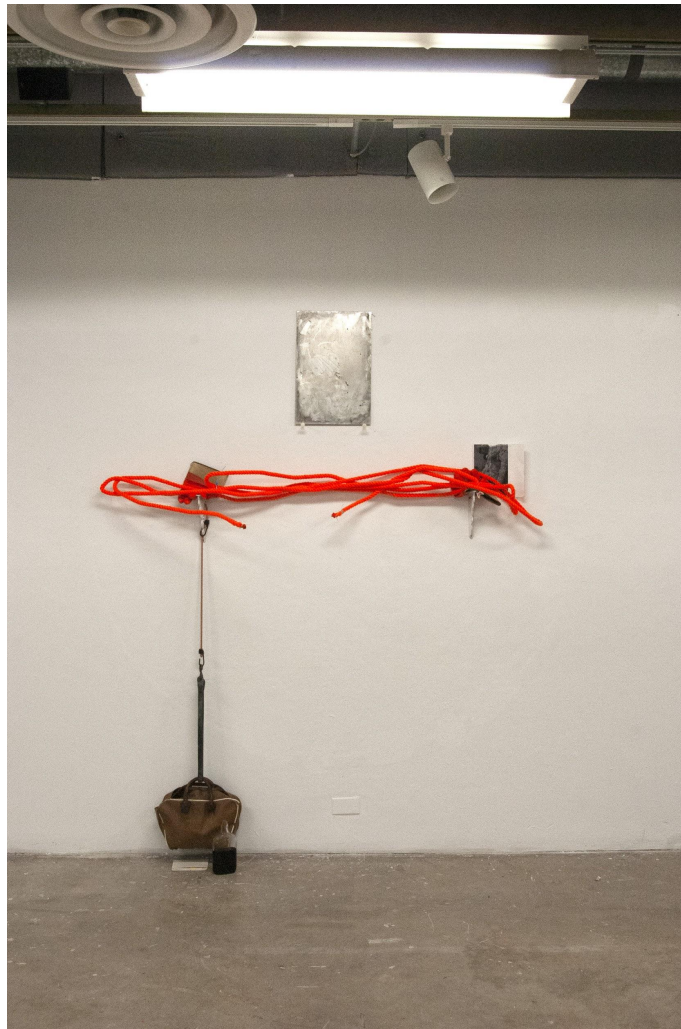
The sculpture pictured below titled, *Relapse Syndrome*, is one of the thesis works for the exhibition. Installed on the floor, the pile feels like a fresh accumulation of source material that an addict may turn to in times of self-reflection. A small mountain of cigarette butts envelop the viewer in the potent smell of a not-present smoke and speak of the passage of time as one laments on the possibility of relapse, and anxieties about the precarious nature of sobriety. A small reading lamp magnifies a selection of the text, "Recovery is like walking up a down escalator. It is impossible to stand still." (pg 129 in *Father Martin's Ashley Out-Patient Family Program Curriculum & Resources*). The magnifier illuminates but also distorts, it entices a viewer to bend down and read and inspect the quiet assemblage of materials. Two black eyelet screws pierce into a Bible History book with an unsmoked cigarette bridging the space between them. The implication is that the book could become some sort of ready-made purse or an on-the-go book with a handle; it becomes an object for ready reference. An orange acrylic skull and a pool ball are tucked just beneath the short oily black plinth that the larger book is posted on, again implying the seductive nature of the devil on one's shoulder, speaking to precarity in sobriety.



Sarah Parker
Relapse Syndrome, 2021

This is a Tony Matelli Bootleg is ironically far removed from the inspiration works. While what you look at feels a far cry from the original works (of which there are two references in the piece) the sculpture that stands before you is tensioned between reality and fantasy---there is the actual and the imagined. As was stated above in the discussion around my use of the term bootleg, I love the slippage of the bootleg because it speaks to the punk body that Allen has described in their research. The mirror that hangs above the 'mantle' is made of aluminum that has been polished and then coated in used car oil, which you see in the bottle at the base of the sculpture. The reference image is pictured below. As you can see Matelli has taken the accumulation of dust over mirrors and devilishly

graffitied into ethereal surfaces. My bootleg, made from scrap aluminum, utilizes car oil as a substrate to hold dust against a surface as a solution to eliminating the length of time necessary to generate the original-- this is what makes it a bootleg. Instead of scribing in the dust illustrations like his, I have drawn into the oily dust the words "this is a toni matelli" (unintentionally misspelling their name). Below the mirror, the orange rope is laid across two L brackets on the wall, again a reference to a Matelli sculpture where rope lyrically defies gravity. I was unable to create a rope that defied gravity. I accepted the failure as a signature of these bootlegs and switched the orientation of the rope, collaging it with other elements like the brown bag that hangs from the stylized L brackets as well as a xerox of my mother laying naked on the bed.



Sarah Parker
This is a Tony Matelli Bootleg



Tony Matelli
Installation shot from show at the Koenig and Clinton Gallery titled *Windows, Walls, and Mirrors*



Tony Matelli

The work, *Pot to Piss in* evolved out of a desire to merge personal narrative with colloquial experience. The phrase, “she/he/they don't have a pot to piss it” denotes houselessness and poverty. But here, there is quite literally a

pot to piss in-- merging the literal with the figurative; it is a sardonic play on words. The height of the sculpture is autobiographical because I take an upward gaze at the pot with a clock on it, ever-reminding myself and the viewer of the present passage of time. The objects and materials in this work are incredibly varied but are collectively a material snapshot of my Southern experience. It is an 'everything but the kitchen sink' stack built around a central repeating form which is a jet black plaster pillow that resembles a 3-dimensional child's drawing of a flower.



Sarah Parker
Pot to Piss in, 2021

This work in its earliest development was born from a bootleg I created of some of Mike Goodlet's pillow sculptures (pictured below) but has journeyed far from its starting point. Important to note is the inclusion of a ponytail adorned with a dirtied pink bow which hung on the wall of my undergraduate thesis exhibition in 2014; in this sculpture, the ponytail hangs at a young child's height leading a viewer to understand that the hidden narrative

in the work is about a young girl. Then questions about the young girl can develop-- is this her pot to piss in? There is religious memorabilia throughout the sculpture and a bundle of cigarettes at the base tucked just between the two suitcases all bound together across an enamel tabletop that has stains and cracks. As with many of my works, the objects and found materials throughout the sculpture span decades but are all familial in the sense that they share a similar 'patina' that flattens time. The stack feels precarious and haphazard, and yet is also seemingly rooted. The structures that bind it are not hidden, they are honest and forthcoming. Ratchet straps tie down suitcases filled with concrete which speaks to the heaviness of the burden of returning home, suitcase in hand.



Mike Goodlett
Image from Tops Gallery, Show Title: *Almost Folly*

A Brief History of Costume Jewelry

It is a misconception that all costume jewelry is cheaply made or so mass-produced that it loses value by nature of being incredibly accessible. That said, these are the realities about *most* costume jewelry, especially today. The earliest costume jewelry dates back to the 1700s in France with the rise of the bourgeois class¹⁶. It was created as a way to bring high fashion designs to the lower classes in an affordable format that mimicked the more

¹⁶ Farneti Deanna Cera, *Adorning Fashion: The History of Costume Jewellery to Modern Times* (ACC Art Books, 2019).

expensive counterparts. Costume jewelry is discussed in this thesis because it has served as a guidepost for how I have devised some of my bootlegging formulas.

Not only does costume jewelry bring fine jewelry styles to everyday people by nature of affordability, but often the reproduction of these high fashion wearables are translated into formats that are more ‘palatable’. Where high fashion design can often take bold liberties in service of drama and concept, the costume jewelry look-alikes may get edited in service of everyday wearability. Low-temperature metals are plated to resemble gold and silver, plastic jewels replace precious and semiprecious stones.

I have been compelled by costume jewelry from the mid-century modern era since I started making jewelry, likely because I was encountering costume jewelry from that era to present-day seasonal wears in thrift stores and antique shops. Costume jewelry, it should be noted, is also related to the popular aesthetics of a specific time. Because of this, you can recognize designs specific to their designers but as well, you can date the jewelry to specific trends within a season of designs. Therefore, because of the use of low-cost material which creates economic accessibility, and the translation of designs in service of relatability, utilizing the strategies of costume jewelry has become apropos with the bootlegging research.

Affordability viewed through this lens is democratic. Despite this, there is an unfortunate reality that the more affordable the jewelry, the more likely it is produced from unethical materials and without craft integrity; often the jewelry cannot be recycled and the metals cannot be refined and reused. This has served as a point of tension as I create these bootlegs. They are admittedly ‘seasonal’; they will not necessarily live decades into the future. Glue, however archival it may claim to be, will never be as structurally sound as a silver soldered joint or a well-executed prong setting. The craftsman in me has to remind myself, as I make bootlegs guided by the characteristics of costume jewelry I must mitigate the desire to over-engineer. As I honor this drive to mimic the format of costume jewelry, I consider this: just as I am hybridizing designs of makers through the process of bootlegging, I can hybridize some of the typical processes used to create costume jewelry in a way that still maintains my ethics around materials use. When costume jewelry is often created from a slurry of various unidentified low-temperature metals

and plated with silver or gold enamel look-alikes, I choose aluminum or pewter as metals that can be melted down in the future for reuse; they have a similar haptic quality but align more with my values as a maker.

The pearl necklace for most of history has been synonymous with wealth and prestige. A necklace of real pearls is expensive, so unsurprisingly there have been countless costume jewelry reproductions from designers such as Coco Chanel¹⁷. The iconic image of Jackie Kennedy wearing her triple strand pearl necklace is known to be made of plastic pearls, denoting a shift in the value of the pearl necklace transcending its intrinsic value and transforming into a democratic and symbolic image of wealth. I remember in my mom's jewelry box there was a cloth necklace that wore high on the collar which had a dozen or so rows of small plastic pearls sewn into the surface. It had a really lovely feel when worn, it was a little heavy and so the silk on the underside wrapped into the contour of the space where the neck and shoulders meet. It was yellowed in a way that made it clear that it was old, it smelled of the jewelry box that it lived in for most of its life. I imagine it is costume jewelry from the late 1920s but I don't know that for sure. What I do remember is that the necklace was fascinating to me as a child. It was a symbol of adulthood in my child-mind, it made me think of wealth even at that young age.

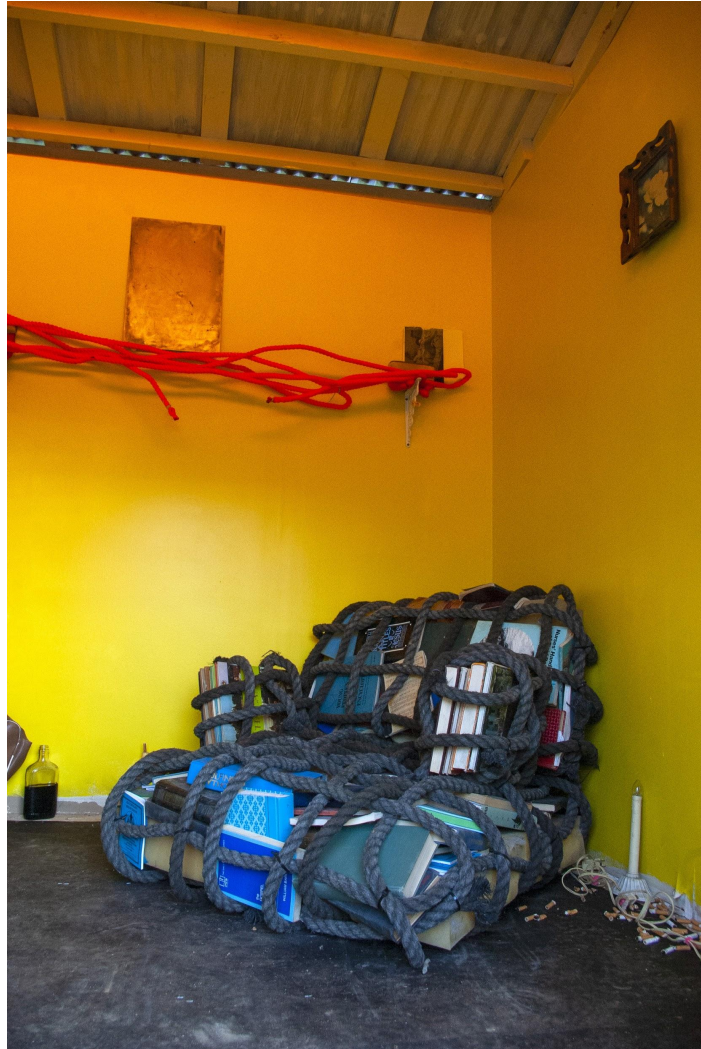
¹⁷ Ase Anderson, "The History of Pearls: One of Nature's Greatest Miracles," www.thejewelleryeditor.com, accessed November 26, 2021, <http://www.thejewelleryeditor.com/jewellery/article/history-of-pearls-pearl-jewellery-rings-earrings-necklaces/>.



Sarah Parker
White Trash String of Pearls, 2021

The above work, titled, *White Trash String of Pearls* was so named out of a desire to tie this sculpture to the history of pearl necklaces and counterweight it against the repetition of a chain-smoker's byproduct: the cigarette butt. This work is both sinister and playful. Like a pearl necklace, cigarette butts are strung together and the accumulation becomes like the multiple strands of pearls. Similar to the cigarette butts, the orange pool balls are strung together, the repeating forms referencing the return to certain pastimes. The assemblage speaks to a phenomenon I have encountered throughout my life--- spaces that accumulate objects all that are seemingly unrelated to one another and yet share space and sometimes never move from the place that they have landed. They become a motley crew of misfits, accumulating dust at the same rate existing in the liminal space between a 'then' and 'now'. I find these types of spaces mesmerizing and infuriating all at the same time like looking at a beautifully aged knot of rope, always wondering if you can untangle it.

Conclusion



Sarah Parker
Richard Mauro Bootleg Chair

I have been able to find very little information about *The Library Chair* by Richard Mauro. It is one of the works I have chosen to bootleg for this thesis exhibition and it felt important to include it in the grouping of works because it bridges the gap between sculpture and jewelry or more broadly, art and craft. The only place I have found an image of this chair is on a design blog called MondoBlog. This 2011 blog post was titled, “What happens when

artists design furniture? Part 2”¹⁸. From what I could tell the blogger merely supplied the images for this question to be answered by viewers; there was no written component. It is a list-like format of picture after picture of furniture made by artists, each with a title and the accompanying artist’s names; there is a Sol LeWitt and a Lichtenstein among many others. There is one commenter to the post, Greg, who shares, “Personally I prefer the Rauschenberg”. Further investigation into ‘Part 1’ of this post reveals the man behind the curtain. The blog entry is merely the regurgitation of the Denise Domergue book titled, *Artists Design Furniture* copyright 1984. I had to include this anecdote here in the concluding paragraph because of how perfectly full circle this research felt.

The *Richard Mauro Bootleg Chair* shares many similarities with its original. The thick gauge rope grids books within its form. The books I chose to encapsulate are religious, about psychology, travel, life in the south; there are many Alcoholics Anonymous books as well. Many of the books I included were from the family collection, sourced on a day when mom was conducting a “cleanout.” I chose to re-envision the chair with chunky armrests. What pushed this sculpture from copy to bootleg was a simple solution: the chair was filled mostly with foam and only a thin layer of books covered the interior surface creating the illusion of sameness but upon closer inspection one sees foam peeking through. The books serve as a facade. The backside of the chair is bare, exposing the foam and there is text at the base that reads: “this is a bootleg”. During the process of creating this exhibition, it became important to demarcate the works that were my own ideas from the works that were founded in the conception of the bootlegging form. I purchased two maker's marks, which are commonly used across the craft disciplines as a way to sign work. Depending on the craft medium the maker's mark tool will be different; in metals, it is a tool-steel stamp that can be hammered into the metalwares. I have a SPEE (a nickname/shorthand for my signature) and a BOOTLEG both of which have been used in one way or another to demarcate the various pieces in the thesis body of work.

¹⁸ “What Happens When Artists Design Furniture? Part 2,” MONDOBLOGO, accessed November 26, 2021, http://mondo-blogo.blogspot.com/2011/01/what-happens-when-artists-design_28.html.



Richard Mauro
The Library Chair

The push-back and discomfort that some of these works elicit emboldens me to dig deeper here. I see an opportunity to continue scrutinizing the relationship between authorship and authority. It is an imperative conversation to be had in the Craft field. There is a network of unspoken rules regarding the authorship and creative capital that makers hold. This question does not feel consensually understood in this field: where does my genius as an artist begin and end and where does the collective knowledge bleed into that? Furthermore, investigations into the compelling history of both bootlegging in the music industry and costume jewelry show how affordability and access can democratically open doors to privileged sections of cultural output.

There is the mutual benefit that art jewelry can reach further audiences through the formats presented in this thesis and those audiences can receive the benefit of engagement with art jewelry. The art jewelry field is underrecognized, especially in the United States popular cultural sphere. Considering the power that craft engagement can offer public audiences (especially in relation to the politics of authority, a topic of imperative action at this time), I see ample opportunities for the art jewelry field to offer critical social and cultural engagement through its performativity and ability to reach wider audiences. The reality is that jewelry is viewed by the public more than art and sculpture that hide in the privileged spaces of the institution, therefore it can be understood that

jewelry has the ability to serve as a vehicle for the voices, attitudes, and politics of the makers who generate these art jewelry works and as a way to join with the voices of the viewers who might engage with it.

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