

## golden repairs sean o'connell

I think it would be nice if we became re-acquainted with the mundane objects that populate our individual worlds. Cars, kettles, pencils and tools that help us make our way through the day, performing usually thankless tasks, their function and form ordering a path through the chaos of life. With every use of these things, we become inextricably bound to them - we build patterns of association within the everyday tasks that they help us to perform. Yet the only response we are likely to give these objects is a cry of frustration as the years of wear take their toll, and they finally fail. It is then, in frustration, that we shake them and bang them on the table, eventually giving up in resignation, going to some ubiquitous superstore and getting a crappy plastic replacement. But what if we decided that that was enough, that we were no longer going to put up with being surrounded by badly made and meaningless consumer trash - that instead we would repair and re-use, that we would build a relationship with the world of objects that surround us, that we would demand things to be well made, and take responsibility for the life of our objects?

This silliness started with my grandmother's kettle and its broken button. It was, and still is, a mundane plastic appliance, but I just could not shake the indignation that I felt as I realised I was supposed to buy a new one. No - I wanted to fix this one, and I wanted to repair it in a way that honored the decade it boiled water, four times everyday, thanklessly performing its task without complaint. I also wanted to celebrate the relationship that kettle had with my grandmother - her finger had caressed that button so often, there were layers of accumulated dirt and grime, marks her fingernails had scratched in the plastic. We had discussed getting a new one, but she said "that's my kettle", and I think she meant that she has used that very kettle for so long, that she knows it, is fond of it, and not just simply meaning - "I bought that".

So, to underscore these ideas, to rail against the valueless act of buying another cheap crappy appliance, and to emphasise my own d.i.y. act of fixing it, I made the repair in gold. Gold - the stuff of everlasting vows and Aztec treasure. Precious, pure, mercantile, spiritual. Ostentatious perhaps, but I think it somehow suited my grandmother's humble kettle. Its use here is perhaps too frivolous, paying no regard to ethical and environmental issues of mining and production, and though much of these repairs were made from gold re-melted and re-used from old work, a third of the material is still newly milled gold. This is difficult to reconcile. My sense of guilt is lessened slightly knowing that it is a material which is eminently recyclable and in constant reuse. It is not being "used up" here - the material is simply being borrowed for a while to take on these forms.

To complete the picture shown with these appliances and tools, and to bring it back to my daily practice, each golden repair is accompanied by gold jewellery, using the broken part of the object as its focus. The role of jewellery as an indicator of wealth and as a symbol of personal taste and cultural standards, is used here in a parody of its own values as it champions the noble cause of repair and re-use. Each wearable piece explores the relationship between object and owner, through the concerns of jewellery, to celebrate the intimate connection between these distinct people and the mundane things that inhabit their world.

These repaired objects have all been used (and will return to use) by individuals. All these objects have a history, a pattern of use, and are linked to their users through emotional association and physical contact. Echoed through the jewellery that champions the value of such repairs, this work comes together to celebrate the meaningful relationships that can be forged between objects and people.