3. THE RADICAL JEWELLERY MAKEOVER

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Thanks to the proliferation of makeover television programs in recent years, we are all familiar with the idea of a team of experts taking something deemed ugly or worn out and transforming it. The few I’ve watched have made me cringe primarily for the superficial surface treatments that seem destined to age badly. So I was intrigued when I came across information about a Radical Jewellery Makeover in the Ethical Metalsmiths Newsletter. I had been slowly transforming the studio I teach in to better reflect and enforce responsible use of materials and resources. The Radical Jewellery Makeover (RJM) was the result of two US academics dealing with similar ideas.

The academics, Susie Garch and Christina Miller describe the RJM as ‘a travelling community mining and recycling project that uses donated jewellery to create an alternative to mining and manufactured jewellery. The project encourages consideration of the social and environmental impacts of mining and jewellery production. RJM draws public attention to the creativity and skills of jewellery designers, reveals the stories behind our personal collections and encourages re-consideration of our habits of consumption.’ The first RJM was held at Virginia Commonwealth University in early 2007 and has since been held at three other US universities and in July 2010 the fifth RJM was held at Queensland College of Art. This paper reports on the RJM as a model for how to harness the interests of students, artists and to engage the public to collaborate in community shift.