



*Untitled Hollowware, 1977*  
mokume-gane copper/shakudo  
2 1/2 x 2 3/4 x 3 3/4"

the brooches and earrings made from *mizuhiki* cord, a craft material, composed of twisted "washi" rice paper, indigenous to the Iida region of Japan. Often combined with clay or seaweed, the twisted paper hardens until it forms a stiff but pliable cord that can be easily woven, coiled or knotted. It is time-intensive to produce, but the result is a material that can be configured into different shapes and textures while still maintaining the integrity of its original form.

The malleability of this material becomes especially evident in pieces like *Oh! I am Precious #15* (1987), a brooch design that features a tightly coiled disk of gold-toned *mizuhiki* set against a dense backdrop of straight reed-like bands glued to a canvas back. From a distance, the gold-toned cords could be mistaken for textured metal, and the tromp l'oeil effect produced here makes these pieces appear almost uncomfortably heavy. However, their delicacy becomes apparent once they are in hand, and the seeming

dissonance between their visual density and physical lightness only adds to the fascination these pieces inspire upon encounter.

The range of jewelry and objects on display reveal the depth of Pijanowski's technical skill and innovation. In recognizing their aesthetic beauty, it is easy to forget that these pieces are, at least in form, intended to function as vessels or objects of adornment. In an exhibition setting, they can be appreciated for their sculptural qualities, intricate textures or multi-dimensionality. At the same time, these pieces suggest lifetimes of use and wear that purposely are never recounted for the viewer. But this elision seems necessary and even fitting. After years of being regarded mainly as a highly skilled craftsman, Pijanowski must now be more fully recognized for what he is: an artist.

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## Sondra Sherman: Found Subjects

Hunterdon Art Museum  
Clinton, NJ  
January 12, 2014–March 9, 2014

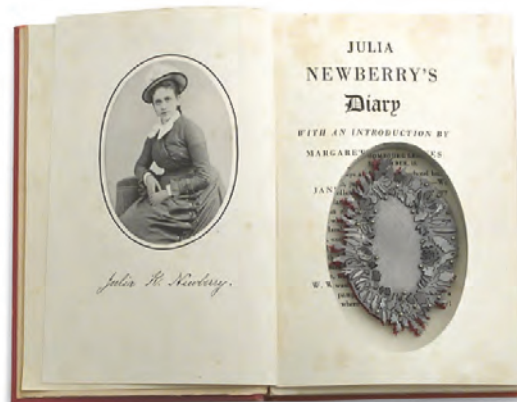
by Marjorie Simon

They say print is dead, but books live on. And so they do in "Found Subjects," Sondra Sherman's engrossing book-themed opus, in which the volumes are repurposed as presentation boxes for jewelry. The ensemble installation consists of about a dozen books, each displayed (or more precisely, splayed) open on a whitewashed wooden lectern reminiscent of a stand for a dictionary or family bible. A recess cut into the pages of each book contains and conceals the made-to-order jewelry. Like the botanical jewelry in Sherman's previous collection "Anthophobia (Fear of Flowers)," these pieces are exquisitely constructed of blackened steel and silver, and sprinkled with a few stones. Cleverly, the stands

become containers for the works, at rest or in transit.

The idea for this project came from Sherman's decision years ago to arrange her books by color, an attempt to quiet the visual cacophony of her home environment. By stating at the outset that she has not read the books, Sherman de-contextualizes them: the text doesn't even matter. They become simply objects made of paper, cardboard and fabric, which can be handled, manipulated and ultimately, discarded. Frankly, the thought of destroying books for any reason makes me a little queasy, and color seems an unlikely principle for organizing one's library. Then again, books are multiples, and these have already been discarded (as they were purchased second hand). Furthermore, books have long been used for keeping secrets, and Sherman creates her own "fictions" for each volume, relating jewelry designs to clues waiting to be discovered in the books' unseen covers and titles.

*Julia Newberry's Diary, 2010*  
steel, sterling silver, nail polish  
book: 8 x 5 1/2 x 1"; brooch: 3 3/4 x 2 3/4 x 1/2"  
COURTESY SIENNA GALLERY



For example, the bright rose cover of *Julia Newberry's Diary* is opened to a photograph of the author, whose direct gaze meets our eyes. The brooch tucked into the opposing pages resembles something Miss Newberry might wear; its pierced edge echoes the repeating pleats that fan out on her dress. But who was Julia Newberry and how did her diary come to be published at all? It's a mystery, unless you care to

look up the title online, as I did.

There is no discernible organization to the arrangement of lecterns and objects. Two bookstands are angled together as if having a private conversation, but the books do not relate thematically. On one rests the vintage *American Women's Home Companion*, while the other supports *Sumpf und Wasserplanzen*, one of a late 20th-century German

nature series. A delicate floral brooch, realistically rendered in silver, rests on a watercolor illustration of marsh plants, looking as if a dragonfly had landed on a stalk of bog lily. A synthetic fire opal flashes like sunlight against the dark metal.

With "Found Subjects," Sherman has added an emotional dimension to her characteristically cerebral endeavors. However, her intellectual rigor keeps the

work well away from facile sentiment. Engaging on more than one level with the objects she's found and the ones she's made ensures that we're not stuck in the past. Yet the work does stimulate our sense memories of clothbound books we've actually read and loved. Such associations would, of course, be impossible with E-readers.

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Installation view of "Found Subjects" at the Hunterdon Art Museum

