

WJA Announces 2020 Cindy Edelstein Jewelry Design Scholarship

The scholarship, created to honor the legacy of long-time WJA Board member Cindy Edelstein, is awarded to Olivia Shih

The Women's Jewelry Association (WJA) has awarded Olivia Shih the 2020 Cindy Edelstein Jewelry Design Scholarship in memory of one of the jewelry industry's pioneering advocates for jewelry designers entering the field.

For that reason, the \$5,000 scholarship is targeted to emerging fine jewelry designers or artisans, and memorializes Edelstein's tireless pursuit of educating, mentoring, and coaching these entrepreneurs. The recipient can pursue jewelry design, metalsmith, or business courses, providing she is focused on improving her artistry and/or her designer jewelry business.

Olivia Shih is a Taiwanese and American jewelry designer and maker based in Oakland, CA. She graduated from the California College of the Arts with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jewelry/Metalsmithing. Because her degree did not cover all metalsmithing techniques in depth, she honed her fabrication, texturing, polishing, and precision skills working for various jewelry designers/makers in the San Francisco Bay area and filled other gaps with workshops in enameling, wax carving, and stone setting.

At the same time, Shih took business courses in starting a wholesale business, pitching to publications, and designing a jewelry collection. She plans to use her WJA grant to:

- * further develop her business skills
- * learn more about responsible sourcing/ethical metalsmithing
- * take classes on online marketing and sales.

Shih designs jewelry for "thoughtful, introverted women... [who] might be seen as quiet or serious on the surface." But her customer, she says, has a vibrant inner life and a vivid imagination. "As an introvert myself, I want my jewelry to give voice to soft-spoken people who are often ignored." Her jewelry should empower women with "the confidence to give a boardroom presentation or walk into a room full of strangers."

The young designer/metalsmith worked for and was mentored by jewelry designer Julia Turner, also based in the San Francisco area. Shih says Turner taught her about creating well-crafted, high-quality, and ethically made jewelry, but also demonstrated that a small jewelry business can treat its employees with respect, listen to their feedback, and incorporate their ideas.

Shih learned from her mentor that she could run a successful business that also emphasized her core values. "As a woman of color and an advocate for gender equality, I look forward to fostering an educational environment [for my own employees] where all genders are respected, privileges and biases are re-evaluated frequently, hard conversations are not avoided, and open-mindedness is highly valued."

"Because WJA emphasizes gender equality, mentorship, and education, Olivia Shih is the ideal winner for the Cindy Edelstein Jewelry Design Scholarship," says WJA Foundation President Brandee Dallow. "Cindy was a very close, personal friend and mentor of mine and I know she would be so pleased that these funds are going into such inspiring hands."

The WJA Foundation administers the Cindy Edelstein Jewelry Design Scholarship. Because of Edelstein's unwavering commitment to WJA and the careers of women, only women who are current WJA members are eligible to apply.

Since its inception, the WJA Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation, has awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide education, business support, and mentorship to its members. The Women's Jewelry Association raises funds for the foundation's grants and scholarships throughout the year. Donations to the WJA Foundation can also be made here:

<https://www.womensjewelryassociation.com/foundation>.

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About the Women's Jewelry Association

WJA's mission is to help women in the jewelry and watch industries advance and develop professionally through networking, education, and leadership development. For more information, visit www.womensjewelryassociation.com.

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