



PHOTO COURTESY MEGAN MCATEE

Honed on the Prairie

KANSAS JEWELRY DESIGNER BRINGS HER SUSTAINABLE LINE TO EUGENE by Suji Paek

Midwestern jewelry designer Kylie Grater doesn't find her materials in a bead shop — the majority of her pieces are harvested “afoot” on nature ambles or hikes through knee-deep grass, whether that's feathers, bones, stones or leather. The Kansas-born-and-bred Grater has brought her prairie-tinged line, Early Jewelry, to Eugene, where she features pieces at The Barn Light's monthly The EUG Pop Up Shop in addition to selling online. Inspired by a childhood spent overlooking the rolling plains, Grater's rural beginnings are ingrained, quite literally, in every process of her approach to jewelry craftsmanship.

Raised in an environment directly affected by the rotation of seasons and the cycles of harvest, Grater's understanding of the symbiotic cycle of nurture, labor and bounty is directly reflected in her work. Created in 2004, launched online in 2005 and developed into a full business in 2007, the unique aesthetic of Grater's handcrafted, nature-inspired Early Jewelry has caught the attention of retailers like Urban Outfitters and Free People and publications *Nylon* and *Time Out Chicago*.

Constructed from natural and raw elements, Grater's jewelry line also boasts an equally diverse selection of naturally reconstructed pieces created from bits of old and new (like coins and old metals) — fitting right into Eugene's “reuse and upcycle” design ethos. This repurposing ultimately lends to the one-of-a-kind feel to Grater's pieces, which exude the antique charm of dusty fields and gently swaying cornflowers, but with a modern, minimalist twist. These sustainable, handcrafted methods are also reflected in her business practices; Early Jewelry is designed, assembled, packaged and shipped by human hands at every phase of production.

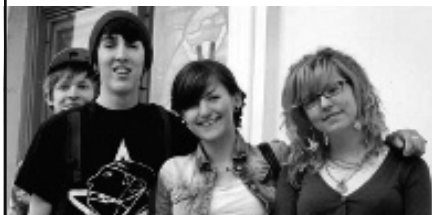
Grater's latest brainchild, The EUG Pop Up Shop, features contemporary and vintage jewelry, knitwear, footwear, accessories and design objects handmade by local Eugene artists, artisans and companies (such as Archival Clothing). Hosted in the atrium area of The Barn Light, which is co-owned by Dustin Kinsey, Grater's boyfriend, The EUG Pop Up Shop developed as a means of representing local artists without the burden of overhead costs and the reliance on “mainstream” commercial success. This “DIY approach for retail” caters to forward-thinking, style-minded individuals seeking to discover unique, locally produced creations.

The Barn Light will host the next The EUG Pop Up Shop in May, so grab an espresso or a pint and see what treasures the prairies have been hiding in the tall grass. ■

For more information, visit earlyjewelry.com or check out The Barn Light's Facebook page for updates.



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