

Architecture

Jewelry designed by architects

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hk+np studio is a Vancouver based jewelry design studio that utilizes techniques and forms derived from the architectural backgrounds of the partners, Hiroko Kobayashi and Neil Prakash. Hiroko was born in Japan and is a graduate of the architectural program at Nihon University Tokyo. Neil is Canadian and a graduate of the University of Manitoba. All the studio's products are designed in Vancouver and produced in Japan.



Neil Prakash & Hiroko Kobayashi (photo: Precarious Photography)

Hello Hiroko and Neil, can you tell us how you made the leap to independent entrepreneurship? Our full time employment in the field of architecture was reduced once the economic downturn hit the firm we were with in 2009. We found we had extra time because of this so we decided to utilize it to turn Hiroko's hobby into a viable design studio. We both had an interest to learn about the business side of design and architecture, so what better way than to jump right in.

What is a typical day like for you? Architectural practice still accounts for the majority of our day, and in that we do a lot of custom design work: planning, sketching, ruminating... accompanying this we also spend time designing and developing jewelry, corresponding with our craftsman and retail outlets, accounting work, creating marketing material. We are responsible for all aspects of our business so on a daily basis we really need to multitask and tackle the most pressing issues.

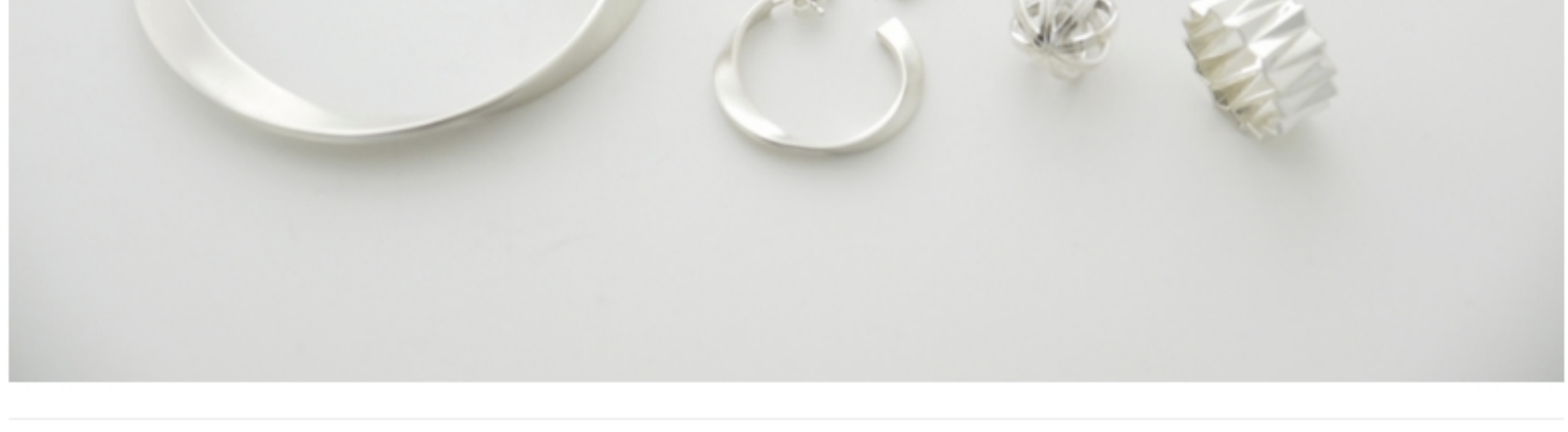
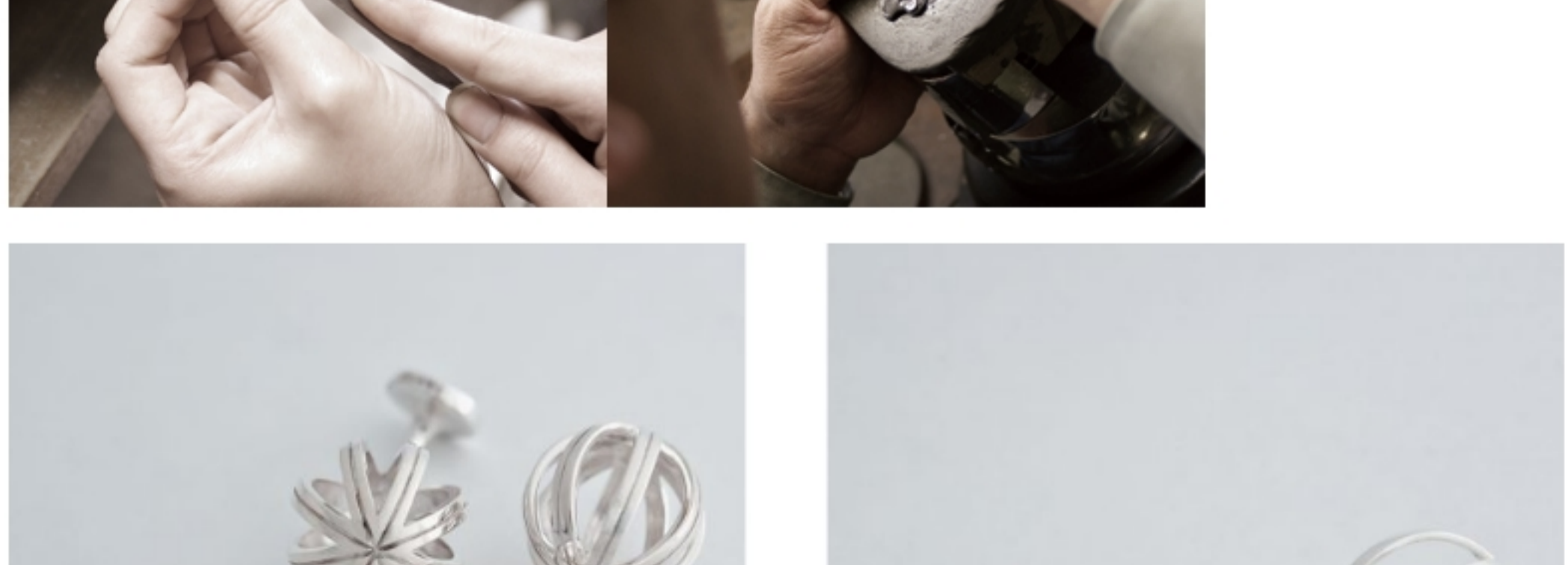
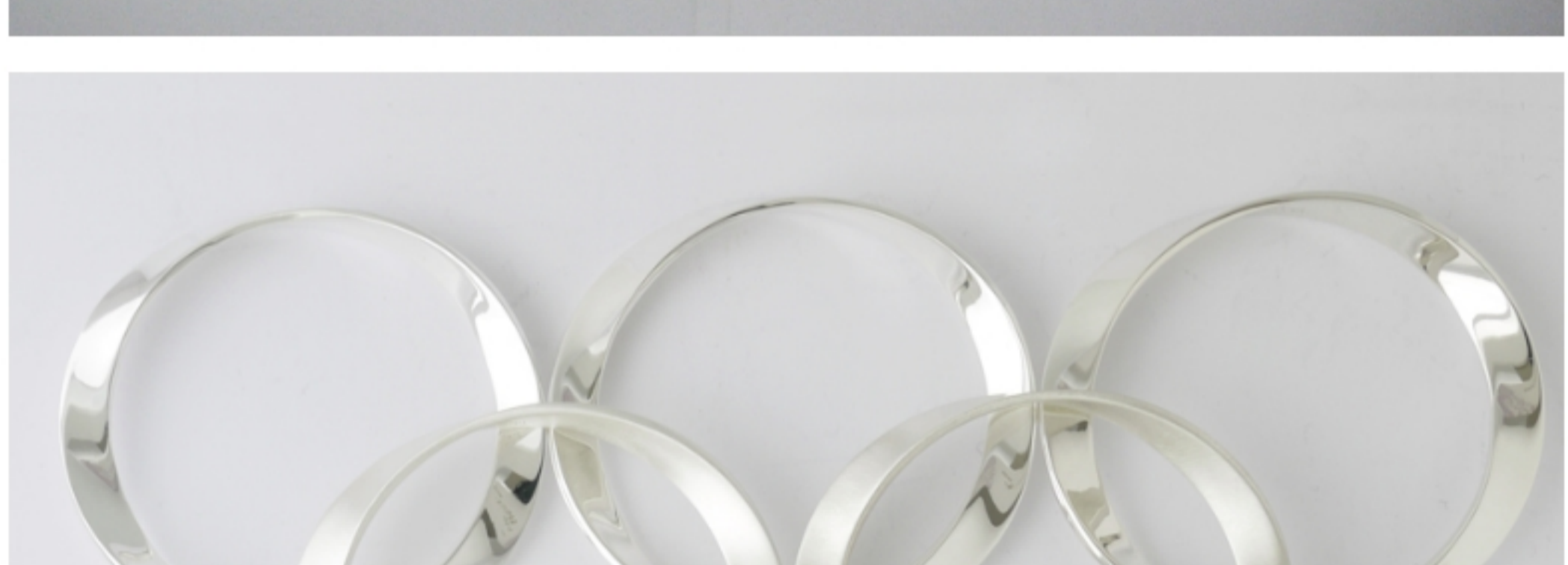
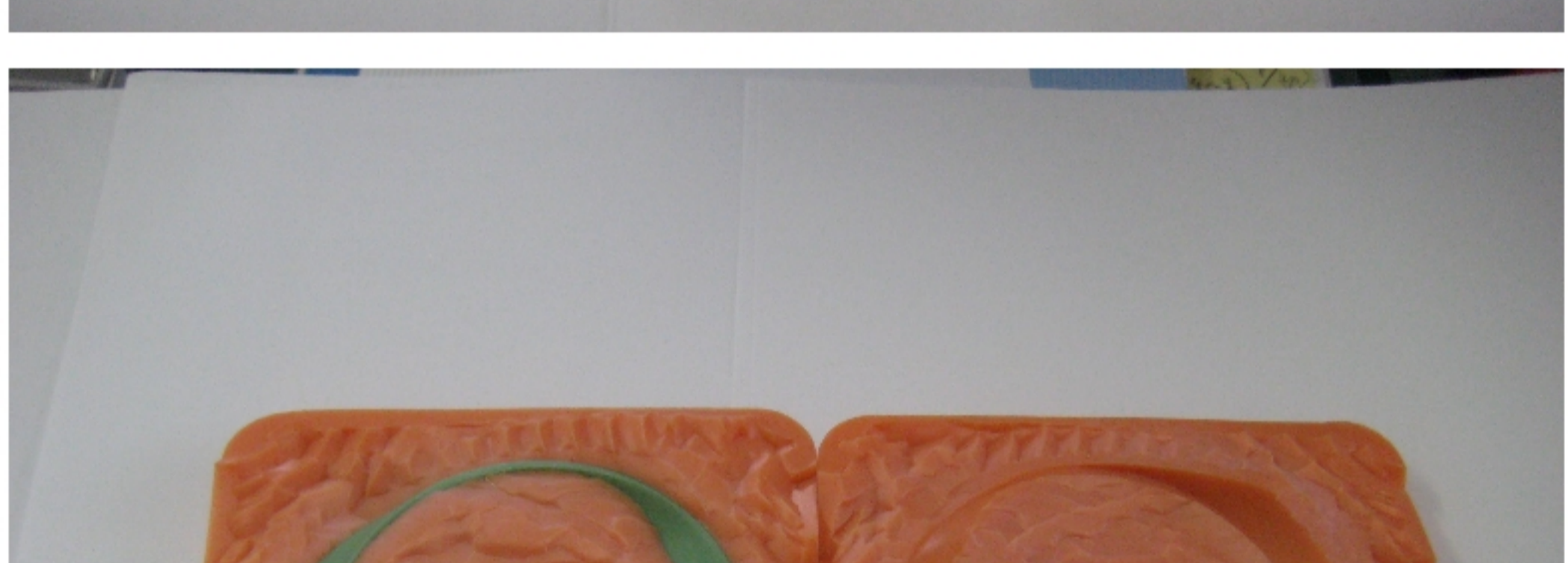
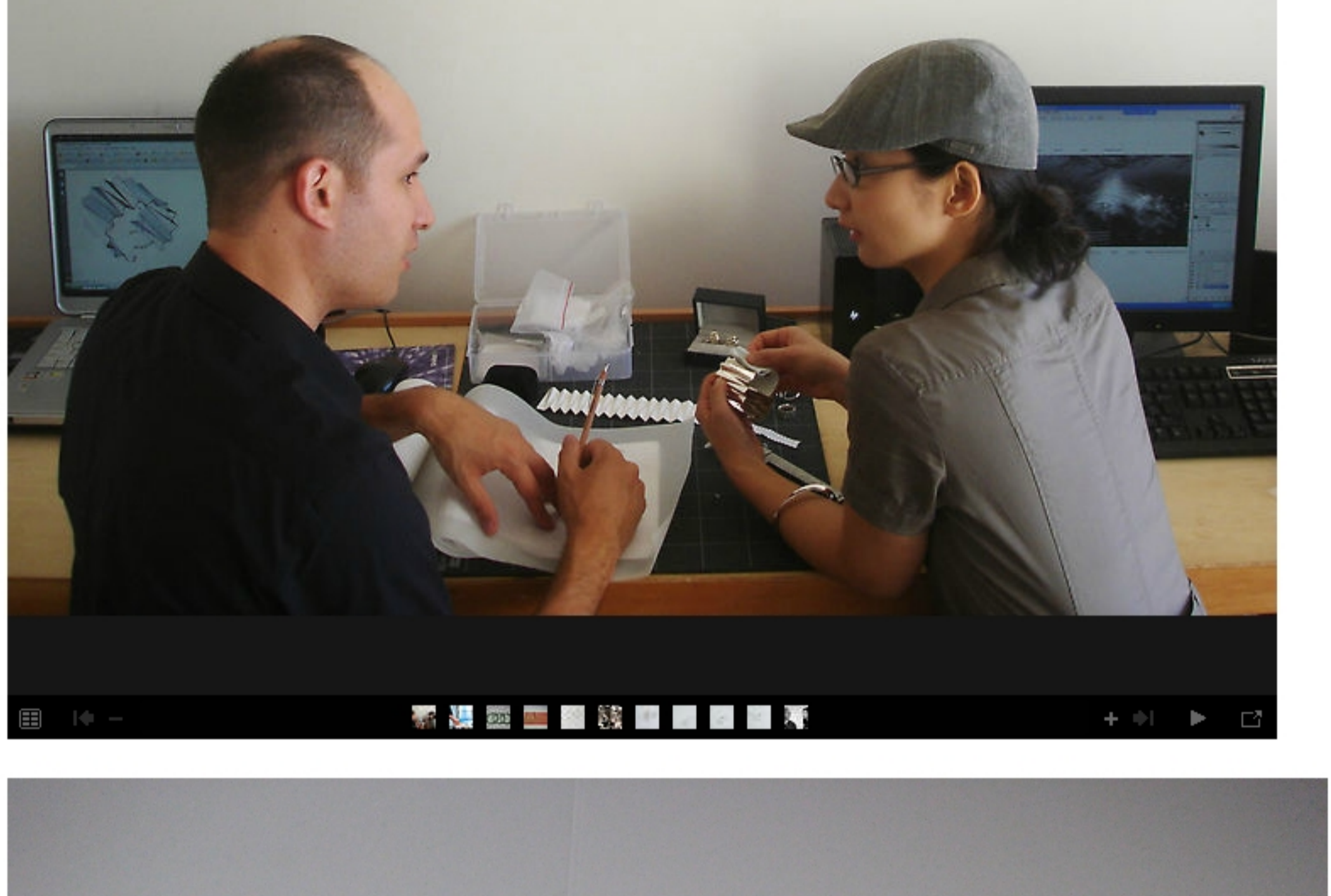
Do you enjoy your work? Yes, we do enjoy our work. The process is its own reward, and growing our business is the icing on the cake. Coming from design backgrounds, this entrepreneurial opportunity has allowed us to experience many different aspects of business we had not yet experienced. To learn and grow in experience are valuable aspects of the design process, and each project offers a new set of unique challenges. We have always enjoyed this, and now realize that business offers similar unique challenges.

Where do you find inspiration for your work? We are influenced and inspired by many different things, architecture, art, product design, furniture design, and nature. Well made, thoughtful spaces and objects. Objects that appear simple are often the most intriguing because they usually belie an underlying complexity.

How do you keep focused on doing something unique and true to yourself? We tend to allow things to take their own time, and try not to force a result from any particular line of inquiry. In this way the objects we design tend to take on their own importance. If we are focused intently on a design and it doesn't seem to feel quite right, we step away from the process, or refocus on another piece to allow time to assess our misgivings. Reflection is a valuable aspect to staying focused for us.

What sort of skills do you need to do your work? We have a host of skills that we utilize that include both traditional and contemporary drawing and modeling techniques. Having an open mind, and flexibility in thinking are important as assumptions are rarely correct when thoroughly tested. We also find that being a good listener, social, and knowing when it's appropriate to balance our own limited skill sets with the expertise of others is important. As architects we often have to balance the opinions, motivations, and skills of many different personalities. This is also important in jewelry design and business as well.

Do you have one piece of advice for other aspirant creatives or entrepreneurs? My best piece of advice would be to immerse yourself in your business and try to understand every aspect of it. Apply whatever creative and imaginative force you use to develop something and apply it to how you wish to run your business as well. There is no template or formula for business success as the measurement of success is a very personal consideration, so enjoy the process and don't shy away from challenges.



Photos from top to bottom:

1. Process – wax models (photo: Craft Sanyuu)
2. Process – silicon mould (photo: Craft Sanyuu)
3. Twist Series Bangle Composition in mirror and matte finishes (photo: hk+np studio)
4. Composition of production photos (photo: Craft Sanyuu)
5. Q-Series Cufflinks and Ring (photo: Precarious Photography)
6. Twist Series Bangles & Earrings in mirror, matte, and scratch finishes, Q-Series Cufflinks, Zig Zag Ring (photo: hk+np studio)

Tagged architecture, Canada, design, jewelry design, Vancouver