

PROVIDENCE MONTHLY

your guide to living well in the city-state

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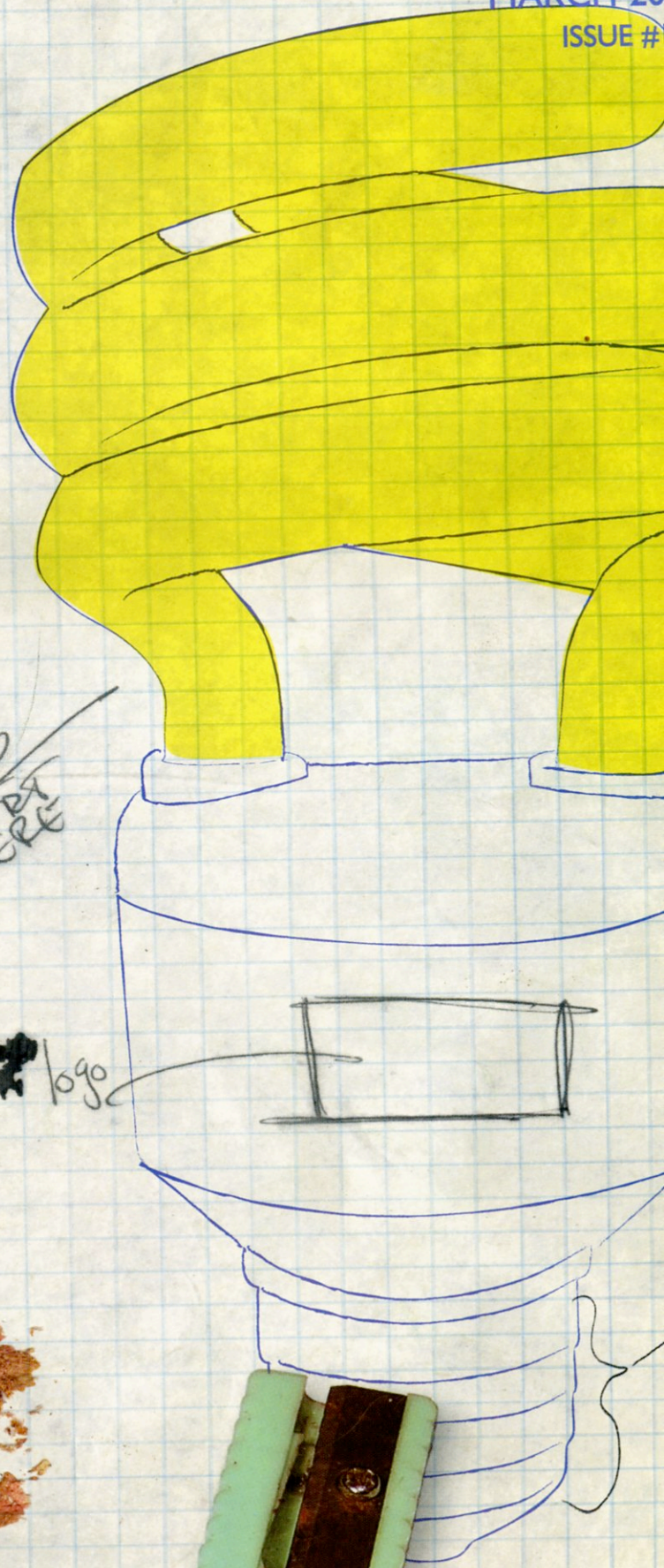
ISSUE #



Nine Great Local Products You've Never Heard Of

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Also in this issue...

- Inside CSI: RI
- Up close with the Governor
- Columbus sets a new course at Trinity



Form AND Function

"Pieces with Purpose." That's LeeAnn Herreid's purpose for making jewelry – to create bracelets, earrings, and necklaces that are more than simply something you wear. In the business of jewelry, each line usually has its signature piece. But in Herreid's **Individual Icons** line, every piece stands on its own due to a common trait each possesses: a functionality that you'd be hard-pressed to find anywhere else. Except, perhaps, in your nearest toolbox. That's because her handmade, hand-casted jewelry not only depicts your favorite toolbox gadgets like thermometers and levels; they're actually made of them. And, they work.

After checking out her unique jewelry at OOP! and risd/works, I was curious to discover the nuts and bolts behind Herreid's affinity for such handy objects.

"We end up having the 'too much stuff' issue... a lot of us just have too much stuff," Herreid explains. "I wanted to make something that was more than just adornment. I



wanted something I had a reason to wear, something with dual meaning."

It was during the early 90s as the Concord, MA native was finishing up her studies at RISD when the first 'icon' was created in earnest, a compass ring. From there came a compass necklace, then a necklace adorned with a thermometer, and then a pair of level earrings. And with this, Individual Icons was born.

A few years after graduating from RISD, Herreid ventured into the world of entrepreneurship with her charmingly practical jewelry in tow. Success didn't come so easy, LeeAnn remembers, until she joined forces with a salesperson who brought her pieces into the hands of New York wholesalers. Flash forward a few years, and now her jewelry is sold from Rhode Island, with love, to museum gift shops and retail stores throughout the world.

Her jewelry is also gaining lots of buzz with some famous A-listers, with Jewel, Jennifer Aniston, Jerry Seinfeld, and Julia Roberts among the celebs wearing Herreid's pieces. At least, so she hears. "Sometimes I see my jewelry worn by a celebrity in a magazine, or a friend of a friend tells me they heard someone famous bought one of my pieces," she says. "That's nice to hear, but I can't help but say, 'wow, it would be great if they could just send me a picture of it.'"

With worldwide sales and a growing following, you may think Herreid would leave Rhode Island for the bright lights of a bigger city. Although she did move to New Mexico for a few years in the late 90s, this Rhode Islander at heart returned to the place where she's laid down her roots in the jewelry business. "I love it here," Herreid replies. "There are so many resources available to jewelry makers, much more than in other states. And I am lucky to work with such great suppliers, casters, polishers, and finishers throughout Rhode Island."

And with that, Rhode Island's rich tradition in the jewelry industry remains alive and well, with the creativity of artists like LeeAnn. Not that she would say so. "I'm just another RISD person who went to RISD, and then stayed in Rhode Island." Aren't we glad she did? -C.E.