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DRAGONFLY NECKLACE WITH KYANITE

BUG RINGS: BUMBLEBEE, BEETLES AND ANT

BY ELIZABETH RYAN
EASTHAMPTON

Never a real insect lover, I have recently become fascinated by all sorts of bugs that used to give me the heebie-jeebes. My latest collection of jewelry inspired by insects has only grown since moving out to Western Massachusetts. My apartment and home studio in Easthampton is over two hundred years old and attracts more bugs than one could imagine. After research (which includes looking at photographs of the bug magnified over fifty times... scary!), I work to give each insect a personality and style of its own. I love for the bees to look friendly and the beetles to seem as if they are dancing together!

Being a jeweler and lover of miniature objects, I work on a very tiny scale. My favorite tools are my jeweler's saw and tiny drill bits. Both my sawblades and drill bits are about as thin as a strand of human hair and are perfect for capturing the minute details of an antenna or dragonfly wing. Once the silhouette of the insect has been cut away from the metal, I begin to hand-construct each image into a 3-D hollow piece that can be worn. I work in sterling silver, brass and copper and add color with kyanite and tourmaline—semi-precious stones.

Through this collection of work I have grown to see the beauty in insects that I hadn't always seen. Through my customers' eyes I learn more and more about the symbolism related to them.

Elizabeth Ryan is a graduate of Massachusetts College of Art and Design. In 2007 she started LOOKA jewelry (www.LOOKAjewelry.etsy.com).

