

My bangle of life was made out of jewels I never wore

What can you do with odd bits of jewellery you don't wear? Jo Foley has a clever solution

Once worked for an editor whose mantra was "If you've got nothing, blow it up" – no matter how slight the theme, you can give it importance by making it big. Some decades later, this came into my mind when I was sorting through my jewellery, some of which were presents, others inherited and some silly buys. I never wore them and it was only during a house move that I collated the lot.

They were the sort of baubles that not even the kindest of godchildren would want. Selling them was pointless; the retail value of second-hand jewellery, unless it's Liz Taylor's diamonds or a maharajah's ruby collar, is laughable. I would rather give them away.

A couple of pieces, both presents from my ex-husband had cost a lot in their time – an amethyst and diamond ring and a pair of sapphire and diamond earrings – but sadly not even retro rage could resurrect them. There was also a blue topaz I'd bought for a song in Brazil and some mismatched amethysts I'd had made into earrings, but which somehow hadn't worked. The rest consisted of a tennis

bracelet – a present to myself – a few garnets from a ring of my mother's and the odd piece of coral, lapis and peridot. Not exactly a king's ransom.

Having no idea what to do with them, I stashed them away and forgot about them. Then, suddenly, out of the blue, I had a stonking good idea. I was flicking through a magazine and saw some multi-coloured brooches and necklaces when my eureka moment arrived. I

would take all the bits and bobs to a jeweller and get one piece made using all the bits of gold and stones.

I decided to have a wide bangle (I believe

they are now called cuffs) and get the jeweller to set the stones randomly – like Hundreds and Thousands on a cupcake. That way, it would go with everything, from jeans to party frocks.

Of course, it wasn't quite so simple. I didn't have enough gold for a start, so some investment was required. But I was lucky to find a jeweller who fell in love with the idea. He decided it would be too costly to extract the small diamond chips from their setting in the tennis bracelet and thought that

leaving them in situ would make them look bigger. He also devised a pattern along the front of the bracelet using the bigger stones. While I had an idea of what it could look like, I was totally unprepared for the finished item. I am now the proud possessor of the most vulgar piece of jewellery in existence – but it gives me great pleasure. I giggle every time I look at it and I love seeing the jaws drop around me when it is spotted. Nobody is quite sure whether it is real or fake and they are too embarrassed to ask.

I don't care; I'm thrilled with my ingenuity and my jeweller's, but also with my own great, walloping streak of vulgarity. **w&h**



"It's vulgar, but it gives me great pleasure"

To make your own bangle of life

Ask your local jeweller – many will melt down your old jewellery and create a new piece for a reasonable price. Andrew Berry Jewellery offers a Melt and Make service, prices from £65 for a bangle, plus postage and packing. Call 01443-815555 or visit www.andrewberry.co.uk.