

Original Jewelry Creations Blend Modern and Ancient Elements

By Bonnie Eisenfeld



Designer Janet Russell models some of her work.

Archaeologists have found jewelry made from perforated beads dating from as far back as 75,000 years ago, and from perforated ostrich-egg shells as far back as 40,000 years ago.

Janet Russell (formerly Swartz), a Center City designer, creates modern jewelry using ancient beads that have been discarded from anthropological digs. No two pieces are alike. Some incorporate semi-precious stones, freshwater pearls, antique gems, colored diamonds, and precious metals. Each piece is distinctive, sophisticated, individually designed and handcrafted; she calls them “wearable treasures.”

Inspiration for Ms. Russell’s designs comes to her from a variety of sources, from antiques to ethnic motifs to modern symbols. Currently

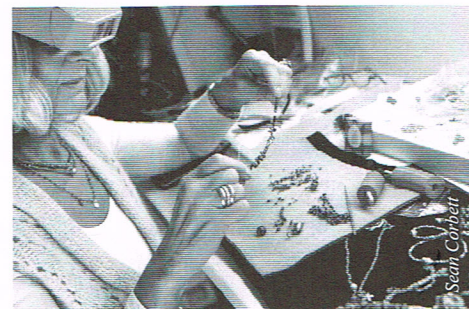
she is working on a new line she calls Chain Reaction: chains with varied beads and gems, some with religious or political symbols.

Ms. Russell feels her jewelry reflects her “love of travel, devotion to the earth and its treasures, and commitment to the indigenous peoples of the world.”

She first became interested in jewelry design in 2001 and began selling handmade jewelry created by artists in Santa Fe, under her company name JBird Jewelry, through a jewelry co-op in Chestnut Hill. While she was visiting Santa Fe, self-taught jewelry designers Marge and Hal Hiestan inspired her to learn how to make her own jewelry. In 2004, she started designing, creating, and selling her own pieces.

Always interested in art, Ms. Russell earned her bachelor’s degree in special education from the University of Kentucky, with a minor in art, and taught special education for 15 years. Later, while living in New York she worked for a printing company and moonlighted by showing artists’ portfolios to galleries and museums. She also gave seminars to groups of artists about the business side of art.

Today, Ms. Russell creates her work in her home studio and sells through four jewelers:



The artist at work.



Detail of finished piece, showing a variety of materials.

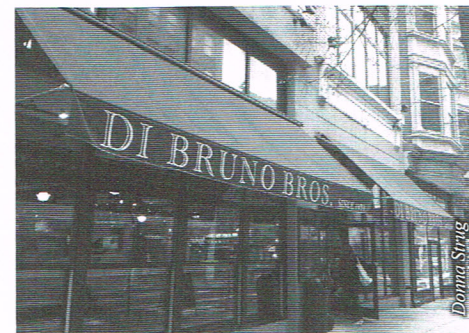
Harry Merrill Jewelers in Philadelphia, Langman Gallery at the Willow Grove Mall, Jeff Kellmer in Haverford, and Laura Sheppherd in Santa Fe. Her jewelry designs can be viewed on her website: www.jbirdjewelry.com/ or purchased on Etsy: www.etsy.com/shop/JBirdJewelryStudio.

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