

colored stone

style • selling • sources

U.S. \$5.99 / CAN \$6.99

Who's Making Jewelry Now?



ON THE COVER:

INSET, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts instructor Catherine Hylands with a student; Florida Coryell, also of the Revere Academy, with a student; photos by Christine Dhein. Kezaya Arum, a student at the Fredericka Kulicka School of Jewelry Art, models the first earrings she made; photo courtesy Fredericka Kulicka. Background photo by Todd Murray.

Find A Jewelry School • Symposium Scuttlebutt • High-Tech Tracking

www.colored-stone.com • volume 19 no.6 • november/december 2006

One of the biggest trends in jewelry making in the past few years has nothing to do with technology or aesthetics — it's about who's making the jewelry, and why.

At a time when almost half of new law school graduates and 75 percent of veterinary students are female, the pendulum is finally swinging in jewelry making. Less than a generation ago, jewelry-making schools in the United States trained mostly men, who generally became bench jewelers. Today, those schools report that many of their students are women, especially older women changing careers and determined to run their own business.

BY MARLENE A. PROST



WOMEN WITH TOOLS

"The biggest change is the amount of females who are entering in the industry," says Blaine Lewis, founder of the New Approach School for Jewelers in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The 10-year-old school is known as a high-tech "boot camp" for jewelry makers and bench jewelers. "When I started teaching, it was 15 percent women, and now it's 40 to 50 percent women who are entering the industry and coming to our school for professional development."

"The trend is for women to work at the bench," confirms Alan Revere of the Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts in San Francisco. "Fewer men are going into bench jewelry than in the past. . . . I think this is a reflection of what's going all around us; it's bigger than the jewelry industry. Men are choosing other fields. When I started out, the classes were filled mostly with men. Today, women are the overwhelming majority of students."

"The entire jewelry industry is in flux," he continues. "Things are changing rapidly and dramatically, and the jewelry field will look different in five years. I think that we are going to have an even smaller pool of bench jewelers in the U.S. There will be less manufacturing here; jewelry jobs are going to Asia."

There are two main reasons for women's increasing presence in the jewelry industry: one is cultural, the other, economic.

Thirty years after the height of the women's liberation movement, middle-aged women who never touched a tool are hungrily learning to hammer metal and set gemstones to create beautiful jewelry.

"More women are coming to this field," observes Karen Christians of Metalwrx Inc. "A lot of older women want a career change. They're in their late forties and fifties, the tail end of the boomer age. . . . We weren't allowed to take shop or tinker in Dad's garage. Our 3D skills are, 'Can you push a broom?'"

Many women now taking metalworking classes started out stringing beads, took a jewelry-making class, and got hooked on the fabrication process.



CLOCKWISE FROM CENTER LEFT: A pair of granulated silver earrings with synthetic star sapphires by Pam August, a student at the Fredericka Kulicke School of Jewelry Art; above is August modeling the earrings; photos courtesy Fredericka Kulicke. A cloisonné enamel brooch in 18K gold with pink sapphires and pearl by student Tricia Young of the Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts; photo by Christine Dhein. Kezya Arum, a student at the Fredericka Kulicke School of Jewelry Art, wearing the first earrings she made; photo courtesy Fredericka Kulicke. A carnelian and citrine necklace in silver by Wendy Jo New, a Metalwrx student; photo by Todd Murray. Revere Academy instructor Catherine Nylands with a student; photo by Christine Dhein. A pendant incorporating mokume gane metalwork by student Cindy Hirsch of the Clear Creek Academy of Jewelry and Metal Arts; photo by Joe Korth.

"This is how the cycle goes: First, somebody wants to get working with their hands. There are millions [of women] beading out there. All of a sudden . . . you don't want to always rely on store-bought toggles and commercial clasps. Now you take your first jewelry class; then you start taking more classes," says Christians.

"Everybody does beads. . . . They string a lot and sell them at craft shows; then they say they need to do something else. They come to me to learn to solder," says Fredericka Kulicke of the Fredericka Kulicke School of Jewelry Art in Parsippany, New Jersey. Students include hobbyists, people interested in a career, and those "in need of a creative outlet because their job is not creative.

"I've always had more women than men. We're not teaching them to be in the factory," continues Kulicke. "[My students] are creative people who have designs they want to produce. I give them the tools. We go right into the techniques. Even if they have design ideas in mind, they learn to solder."

Wendy Jo New got hooked after her first course at Metalwrx seven years ago. Now, at 45, she's torn between her educational consulting business and going "full force" into jewelry making.

"For as long as I can remember, I was always interested in gemstones and unique jewelry, but it never was my goal in college or business," says New, who was a senior national policy specialist for Title I in Washington, D.C. When she moved to Massachusetts, she became a consultant. Then one day she spotted an ad in the *Boston Globe* for beginning silversmithing at Metalwrx, and lightning struck.

Today, New sells her jewelry at shows, has a Web site, and rents studio space at Metalwrx; she says she doesn't want to keep blow torches around the house with two teenagers at home. "Plus, it gives me a place to go, as if [it were] an office."

Will Work for Jewelry

Jewelry making, as a profession, is in flux. With more jobs going abroad, the market is shrinking. Bench jewelry, in particular, never paid as well as comparable professions. However, today, the industry continues to attract women, who have always been willing to work for less pay.

"Women are more interested in [jewelry making] as a job than men are," says Dee Huth, founder of the California Institute of Jewelry Training (CIJT) in Carmichael, California. When she created her school in 1979, "There was a need for bench jewelers. . . . In the beginning, it was 50 percent male, 50 percent female. . . . The problem is the starting wage was not good; it was \$5 an hour and \$6 an hour with training. The employer expected the student to have all the skills necessary to be a full-fledged journeyman. So they paid

their dues and continued at low wages," says Huth. "Jewelry making] became a desire of women, who were willing to work for less. . . . More and more, the shift went to women. Today, jewelers still don't make the same as apprentice plumbers, laborers, or construction [workers]."

Janet Bailey, 42, retrained at CIJT when a serious leg injury ended her career at a warehouse — and found her life's work.

"I couldn't believe there was a school here that could teach me what I always wanted to do. It was magic," says Bailey. Bailey fell in love with jewelry making in high school when she took a class on lost-wax casting. But her father said it wasn't a profession for women, and besides, it didn't pay much. So she went to college, married, had children, and worked in a warehouse until she was sent to CIJT for retraining.

Bailey, now a single mother, studied there for a year full time. Then she and her partner decided to start their own jewelry-making business; they got a business license and cashed in their 401(k) plans. Today, Bailey has a fully-equipped studio at home and hopes to build her own design company and jewelry store.

"All of our teachers encouraged us to dream beyond the everyday," says Bailey. "I really went out on a limb to pursue a career. I invested my whole soul. I'll be doing it till I can't hold the torch in my fingers."

Women who take jewelry making courses are also more interested than their male counterparts in starting their own businesses. Perhaps they are more likely to think outside the box, or perhaps they don't feel the onus to get a steady paycheck.

"There are probably several explanations," says Revere. "Women [are] discovering tools and working with their hands, which was not open to them in past generations. Also, perhaps women are more willing to trade off a bit of their paycheck in return for greater personal satisfaction in their work."

"A smaller percentage of our students are planning to enter [the industry] as bench jewelers than in the past," continues Revere. "Now, perhaps half are thinking of employment, some self-employment, and the rest are very serious hobbyists and jewelry artists with little commercial aspiration."

"Women are more willing to work freelance," says Huth. "[I see] a lot of self-employed female jewelers. Many are doing home studios and making custom-order pieces for fine jewelry stores."

Some of her female students are in their forties and fifties and have had other careers, but the "glamour of putting a studio in their home" and selling pieces "brings out the artist in them. . . . Many go into business for themselves. That's how I started," says Huth, who recalls opening a store in Sacramento.

After all, she concludes, "There will always be a market for the personal touch of selling jewelry." ◻

A series of "box" rings made by students of the Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts; photo by Christine Ghola.



Jewelry Schools



Please contact all jewelry schools and universities for current class and workshop schedules.

Jewelry Schools

Looking for classes or programs that will bring out the jewelry designer in you? The following schools are dedicated exclusively to the art of jewelry making and design.

American Jewelers Institute

1206 SE 11th Ave.
Portland, OR 97214
Phone: (503) 255-4517
Fax: (866) 848-7162
E-mail: ajinfo@amcinst.net
Web site: www.jewelersaia.com
Jewelry trade school

Clear Creek Academy of Jewelry and Metal Arts

4810 N. Broadway, Unit L
Denver, CO 80212-2827
Phone: (303) 429-1481
Fax: (303) 424-8110
E-mail: info@clearcreekacademy.com
Web site: www.clearcreekacademy.com
Offers classes on stone setting, stone setting, ring and earring design.

Web site: www.gencitycollege.edu

Offers programs in ring setting, watch making and clock repair.

Gen School America

P.O. Box 7045
FL Lauderdale, FL 33318
E-mail: gen@genusa.com



University of Florida

13332
Phone: (888) 741-3020
Fax: (954) 741-4600
E-mail: info@jewelryschool.net
Web site: www.jewelryschool.net

Offers classes on jewelry repair, wax design and casting, stone setting, stone skills, grading and more.

Bench Mark Academy

68553 Thomas St.
White Platoon, MI 49099
Phone: (249) 625-2245
E-mail: info@benchmarkacademy.com
Web site: www.benchmarkacademy.com

Teach-week graduate bench jeweler program covering soldering, repair finishing techniques, stone setting, laser techniques, custom fabrication, wax carving and more.

California Institute of Jewelry Training

5805 Windmill Way
Carmichael, CA 95608
Phone: (800) 731-1122
E-mail: info@jewelrytraining.com
Web site: www.jewelrytraining.com

Programs specialize in jewelry design, bench jewelry, stone setting, gemology and jewelry sales. Workshops with special instructors are offered on a regular basis, including diamond/finishing, stone setting, design and rendering, and more.

Phone: (800) 9335 or (419) 754-5255

E-mail: j2@clearcreekacademy.com
Web site: www.clearcreekacademy.com
Offers classes on jewelry repair and diamond setting, advanced diamond setting, jewelry design, casting, production, etc.

Fred de Vos Wax Workshops

Prince St. Station
P.O. Box 93
New York, NY 10012
Phone: (212) 596-8164 or (212) 505-8991
E-mail: fred@freddevos.com
Web site: www.freddevos.com

Students create drawings and wax prototypes of their jewelry designs and develop their own projects based on their artistic vision.

Fredrika Kullicke School of Jewelry Art

229 New Rd., Suite B 101
Parlisping, NJ 07054
Phone: (201) 230-2973
E-mail: fred@fredrikaschool.com
Web site: www.fredrikaschool.com

Offers classes on soldering, ring graduation, file use, chain making, downsizing/rewiring, stone setting, laser, subsonic cutting and polishing, and dental settings. Beginners are welcome.

Gen City College

700 State St.
Quincy, IL 62301
Phone: (217) 222-0391
Fax: (217) 222-1517

Gen School America

U.S. campuses:
Carlsbad (GIA World Headquarters)
Robert Mousaw Campus
5345 Arnsda Dr.
Carlsbad, CA 92006
Phone: (800) 421-7250 ext. 4091, or outside the United States/Canada: (760) 603-4001
Web site: www.gia.edu

New York
170 Madison Ave., 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10016-0401
Phone: (800) 366-3519 or (212) 944-5990
Fax: (212) 719-9543
E-mail: nyedu@gia.edu

Los Angeles
400 Corporate Pointe
Suite 100
Culver City, CA 90230-7416
Phone: (844) 702-2088 or (310) 650-2100
Fax: (310) 610-4452
E-mail: laedu@gia.edu

Offers programs and classes in gemology jewelry manufacturing, jewelry business, intermediate-level gemology, jewelry manufacturing design, jewelry production/practice, fine diamond cutting services. Online classes.

Holland Jewelry School

2814 Chisum Pkwy
P.O. Box 882
Selma, AL 36702
Phone: (800) 468-8507 or (256) 874-4212
Fax: (334) 872-3504
E-mail: hollandschool@bellouth.net
Web site: www.hollandjewelryschool.com
Offers classes on basic jewelry repair, advanced repair, jewelry casting, practical gemology, and watch repair.