

Noble Metals

Five jewelry makers
forging the future
of the craft

CRAFT OF MAINE
by Candace Karu
Photography Scott Dorrance



"Shanti" Necklace – 18k and 22k forged and fabricated gold with fused filigree, African tourmaline, cabochon moonstone, faceted rainbow moonstone, and pearls.

Stephani Briggs

On Love and Influence: When I first fell in love with jewelry I was drawn very strongly to Art Nouveau artists, like Lalique, a brilliant technician. Later I realized that it was the beauty of nature and recurring natural forms that I was most attracted to. In 1994 I first went to India on a Rotary grant as an ambassador of goodwill between our cultures. That trip began my lifelong fascination with the culture, specifically India's temple architecture and ritual objects. During that trip I spent a lot of time in Rajasthan, where I met Sudhir Kasliwal, the owner of Gem Palace, who took me under his wing and has become a good friend. This opened an opportunity for me to buy unique gemstones abroad, and after that I was exposed to ancient techniques, brought to India by the Persians.

On an Artist's Evolution: Immediately after college, I built a body of work in silver and attended juried trade shows selling to galleries. The buyers said that the quality of the stones needed to be higher and the work should be in gold; they were right. On their suggestion, I continued to create only one-of-a-kind pieces and developed a clientele, which allowed me to further explore new designs. In addition, my travel in India has influenced my work beyond measure. The temples of India are built to resemble mountains, and seeing them has pushed my work in an architectural direction that I'm still exploring.

For More Briggs: stephanibriggs.com, Foundry Lane Gallery

Devta Doolan

On Beginning Down Under and Ending Down East: I grew up in New Zealand. The primal qualities of that country and its natural beauty are constant and subliminal influences in my work. I've chosen to live in Maine, where the rocky coastline helps to nurture my desire for the pure forces of nature.

On the Juxtaposition of Textures and Surfaces: Three artists, Andrew Grima, Herman Junger, and Klaus Ulrich, have been both an inspiration and an influence on my artistic practice. Their work employs color through the use of gems and a rough texture in the metal that both contrasts and complements the color and the smoothness of the metal.

On the Importance of Light: My studio is an open space, filled with light. It inspires constant vitality and serenity in my work. The majority of the jewelry I make is hand-fabricated in 22k and 24k gold. A few pieces are worked in wax and then cast into gold.

On Bringing Jewelry to Life: I'm trying to create a boldness and directness in my work that is also tactile. It's important to me that my work not only look good but also feel good. Jewelry comes alive when it is worn. I hope the people who wear my jewelry have a desire to feel the piece in their hands as well as wear it and look at it.

For More Doolan: devtadoolan.com, Foundry Lane Gallery, and Turtle Gallery



Earrings – 24k gold and New Zealand Kawakawa jade.

Bill Fretz

On an Early Entrepreneurial Spirit: I started making jewelry in high school by teaching myself the basics from books. After talking to a silversmith in New Hope, Pennsylvania, my mother gave me more books and a small amount of money for tools. Selling the jewelry I made to my classmates allowed me to continue buying tools and supplies.

On Marrying a Local Girl: I ended up in Maine because I married a Maine girl. While working as a summer counselor at the Flying Moose Lodge, I met Marian Jordon, who is also a jewelry maker. We moved to Kennebunkport in 1974, where we lived and operated Fretz Goldsmiths for over twenty years. In 1995 we moved to Marian's hometown of Bucksport, where we remain.

On the Making of a Maker: When I was about seven, I was allowed to take scrap pine from a cabinetmaker in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Making things from scratch became a way of life and opened my eyes to possibilities in the same way that visiting museums did.

For More Fretz: fretzdesign.com,
Swamp Johns, and Mast Cove
Galleries



Woven Bracelet - 18k gold.
Ring - 18k gold and Maine tourmaline.

Sharon Portelance

On Finding Her Way Back: Originally from Connecticut, I moved to Maine in 1978 to attend Maine College of Art (then Portland School of Art). I left Maine in 1983 only to return briefly in 1993 to teach at the early college program at MECA and rediscovered Portland as a thriving city. My husband, Dave Jacobson, and I were finally able to relocate in 1999 when I accepted a position as an assistant professor of jewelry and metalsmithing at MECA.

On Art Recapitulating Life: This work here comes out of the experience of donating a kidney, living with someone going through renal failure. This work tries to develop a relationship between the interior and the exterior of the body. It continues to explore the notion of the relationship between outside and inside, public and private.

On What Is Thought and What Is Made: My process of investigation is deeply imbedded in making. I adhere to the notion of learning and discovering through the work and believe there is no end but simply a continuum. Over the years I have come to develop a productive relationship between thinking and making, when to work and when to think.

For More Portelance: By appointment at her South Portland studio



"Kidney" Ring - Sterling silver, 18k and 22k gold, and crushed Czech Republic garnet.

Sam Shaw

On Making the Maine Connection: I summered with my grandparents in Southwest Harbor, and finally moved to Maine in 1976 because it was the most beautiful place I knew about.

On the Evolution of Collections: I've had as many as six completely different design collections that have little resemblance to each other. I tend to make things as long as they continue to please me. I've been making some pieces for decades and they're still active in my line.

On Bravery: Everything is fabricated and is a linear progression from one idea to another. I tend not to sketch a group, but let my intuition guide me. I'm not afraid to make mistakes, so risk is easy for me.

On the Philosophy of Value: Consider that pure geometric forms and smooth shapes can be the result of a brutal and chaotic environment found on an ocean beach. A humble piece of basalt may have a perfectly formed "X" of intruded quartz. In my eye, this is fantastic and worthy of heightened consideration. Its value is affirmed by setting it in precious metal.

For More Shaw: shawjewelry.com,
Shaw Contemporary Jewelry



Bracelet – Twig Collection, 18k gold with diamonds, cuff style.



Fine silver woven links, cultured fresh water pearls, and sterling silver toggle clasp.

Lisa Gent

On Artistic Experimentation: I am primarily self-taught. I refine my technique by experimentation and trial and error, as well as taking classes when I can from jewelers whose work I admire.

On Following Ideas Where They Lead Me: I have no drawing skills, so little of my work is well planned out, though I do start each piece with a clear idea of the finished design. That design often evolves as I work through the construction process.

On Finding Inspiration in Connection: My greatest inspiration comes from the outdoors. The colors and contrasts that I find in nature, the textures and the perfection in patterns contrasted with profound irregularity, all these things are a wonder and a limitless source of inspiration.

On Risk Taking as a Tool for Growth: As I mature as an artist, I'm more inclined to take risks with my work, designing one-of-a-kind pieces that don't necessarily fit a particular genre, but that are exciting and pleasing and allow me to enjoy the full process of design and construction.

For More Gent: Cape Cottage Gallery, Handworks Gallery, Kennebec River Artisans, Archipelago Museum Store **MH+D**

See Resources for more information.



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