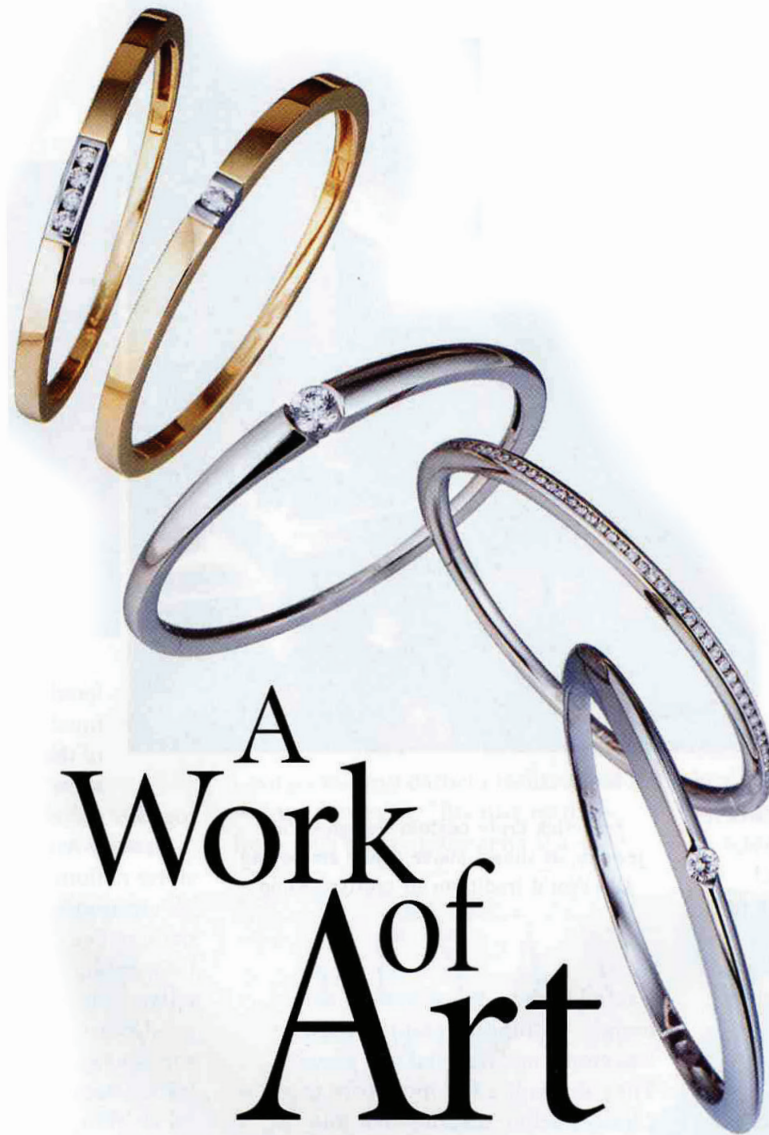


# JEWELRY ART

gift giving at its finest





# A Work of Art

For 25 years, Jewelry Art has been bringing the best in custom-designed fine jewelry to Northeast Ohio.

By Heidi Augustin and Michelle Ramage Todd

**T**he handcrafted art-glass door of Hudson's Jewelry Art serves as a subtle advertisement for the unique treasures within.

Inside, customers can admire fine craftsmanship in gleaming metals, glittering gemstones and giftware. This is no place to expect the commonplace. Jewelry and giftware are selected for their artistic qualities as well as for the quality of the materials.

The artful renderings in gold, platinum and a palette of colored gemstones and pearls draw one from display to dis-

play. The geometric designs of Susan Sadler immediately catch the eye with their vibrant array of tourmalines, tanzanites and garnets in velvety finished 18-karat gold. Perfectly engineered pieces by Germany's Cede' share a case with the contrasting liquid geometry of works by American designer Robert Lee Morris. The refined craftsmanship of Italian designers Roberto Coin and LaPepita in 18-karat gold, platinum and diamonds complement one another and illustrate the depth of Jewelry Art's collection. And then there are nature's

gems: pearls. Strands of multihued natural-color black pearls and soft golden pearls from the South Seas enchant the browser. The variety includes a pearl the color of pistachios, strands in soft pink, and the breathtaking luster of a pure-white strand of extremely rare, large Keshi pearls.

The story of how Jewelry Art came to be is almost as fascinating as its collection. As founder Georgianna Bojtos and her daughter and partner Barbara Johnson celebrate 25 years of business, they look back to a business trip and the



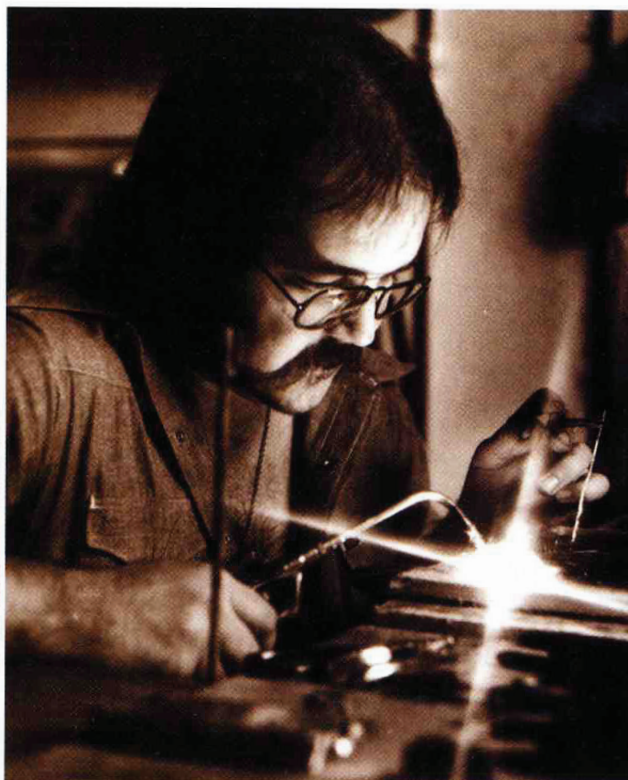
attache case of jewelry that started it all.

In 1976, Georgianna Bojtos accompanied her architect husband Laszlo on a trip to Chicago, where he was designing two churches. It was also their wedding anniversary and Laszlo looked forward to shopping in Chicago for Georgianna's gift. They wandered into Water Tower Place and a jewelry store — a turn that changed their lives. Laszlo's trained eye immediately recognized pieces of jewelry that were impeccably handcrafted works of art, something he had hardly seen since moving to the United States from Hungary in 1956.

"Every piece was unique and individually designed," recalls Georgianna. "We were so excited. Laszlo insisted that we have to bring this to Cleveland."

When the jewelry store owner refused to part with the designer's address, the couple returned to their hotel and hunted through phonebooks until they found a number for Frederick Prete, the designer of the jewelry, and made arrangements to meet him at his studio. Prete employed Old World traditions of working by hand at a time when such workmanship was going out of style.

There was instant chemistry between the couple and the designer. Georgianna and Laszlo filled an attache case with Prete creations and drove back to Cleveland. The couple was convinced that they were not alone in their desire for something special and different and



**Frederick Prete custom-designed fine jewelry, as shown above, while employing Old World traditions of craftsmanship.**

wanted to share this discovery with friends. Within two months, the case was empty and demand was growing. The pair made a few more trips to Chicago before realizing that this method was not going to be enough to handle the market they had created.

On Oct. 1, 1977, Georgianna and Laszlo opened Jewelry Art in a tiny space in the new upscale Pavilion Mall in Beachwood. At the time, there was no Beachwood Place and they were one of the few shops in the Cleveland area specializing in jewelry that wasn't mass produced.

"Jewelry had lost its individuality, its uniqueness," says Barbara Johnson. "The artistic value just wasn't available here and [my parents] believed that by opening Jewelry Art, they would be bringing something to Cleveland that there was a hunger for."

"At that time, it was a very unique store," recalls Shirley Bilek, who, with her husband Ron, attended the grand opening of Jewelry Art. "Georgianna was ahead of her time bringing in a new look." Ron Bilek was attracted by the dif-



ference in the designs — so much so that, as the producer of the syndicated television show "PM Magazine," he put together a story on Frederick Prete.

Jewelry Art was one of only a few stores nationwide to whom Prete sold his creations; after a while it became his main outlet. "My relationship with Georgianna was the longest," Prete says today. "She and Laszlo are very fine, good-hearted people of integrity and soul and appreciation of the artistic value." Because the store was so successful at selling many of his pieces, Prete had the opportunity to give his creativity greater free rein. "Everything my goldsmiths and I did for Jewelry Art was so challenging, but in a fun way," Prete recalls. It was not unusual for him to spend two months working on larger pieces, he notes.

As Prete worked up designs for Jewelry Art, Georgianna became more and more involved in the design process. She and Prete often worked together to create settings for fabulous stones brought in by customers who claimed they could not trust their pieces with anyone else. One particularly challenging piece was a silver dollar-sized opal from Europe. With different fiery colors on both sides, the client wanted the setting to be interchangeable and reversible, which is no small order for such a brittle and temperamental stone as opal. The setting had to be safe, attractive and versatile without obstructing the gem. The cus-

tomer told Georgianna, "We knew no one else in the world who would do this." Georgianna beams as she remembers, "We actually opened champagne the day she came to pick it up."

The relationship forged between Georgianna and Prete resulted in a growing business — and in Bojtos becoming a designer in her own right. Fortunately, Georgianna's daughter Barbara was already involved in the business and had been right from the start. "At first, I did it after school and weekends as something to do when I was about 14 years old," Barbara remembers. "But as I worked on the business end of things, the jewelry and the design became a part of me. It is more than a business: It is a passion."

After three expansions in Pavilion Mall, the store ran out of room there.



Innovative pieces, including works by Robert Lee Morris, are displayed throughout Jewelry Art.

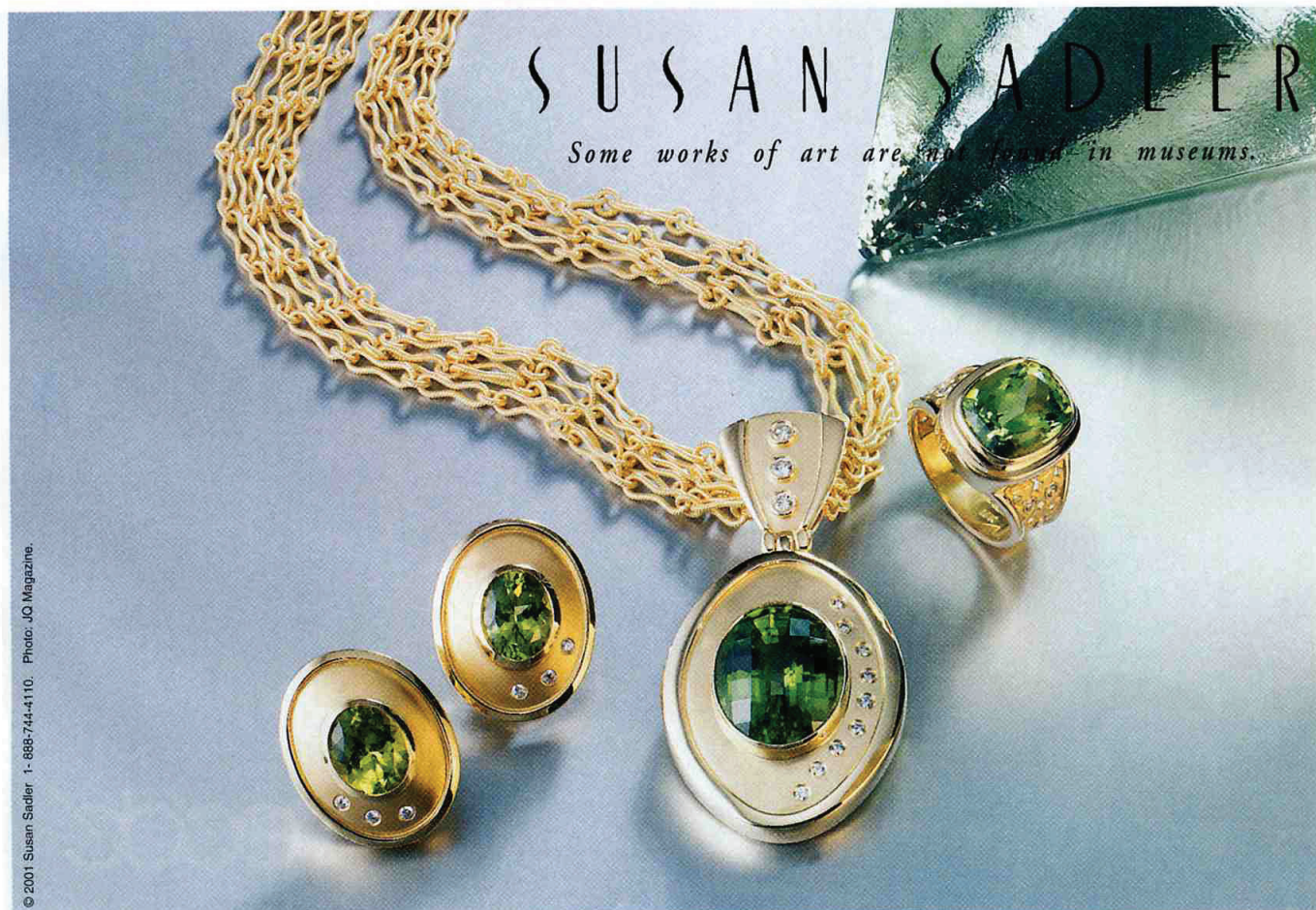
Georgianna and Barbara realized that it was time to move. "Because we drew from such a large geographical area, it

was important to find an accessible location," Barbara says. "But we didn't want to sacrifice the essence of our unique little store to the larger mall atmosphere."

"When we discovered this freestanding building, quite by accident, we knew that it was an answered prayer. I knew immediately that 214 North Main Street was Jewelry Art's new home."

The fact that the building was right on Hudson's famous Main Street made it all the more perfect. In April 1991, they completed renovations to the 75-year-old building, making it suitable for the growing collection of treasures and fine giftware.

Along the way, Frederick Prete decided to leave the jewelry industry to pursue his love of science. By then, Georgianna and Barbara had discovered their own passion for the craft and forged a reputation



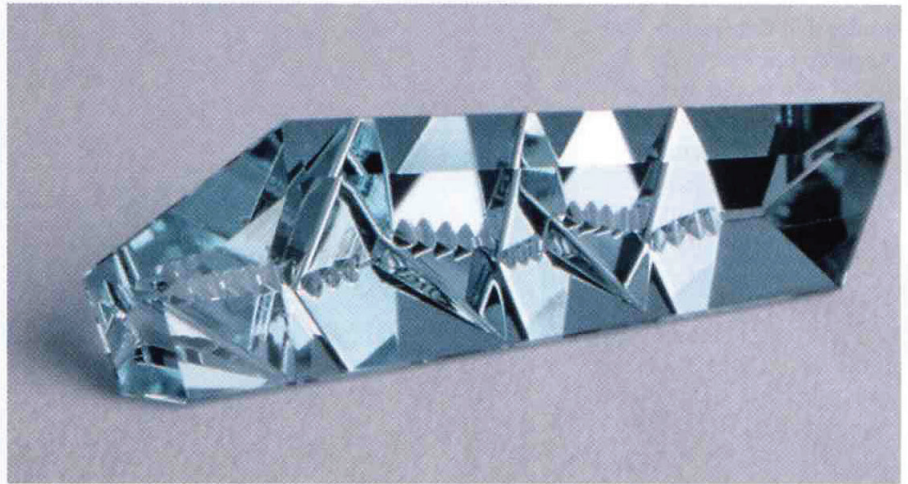
as designers of fine jewelry themselves. In doing so, they developed relationships with some of their clients that continue to this day.

“No matter what the reason, jewelry’s meaning transcends its aesthetic value. It symbolizes a very special moment in someone’s life,” says Johnson. “We often have the opportunity to touch the lives of our clients. We listen to their thoughts and ideas and value the trust they have placed in us. Through this intimacy, we are able to offer jewelry designs that represent their own very special moments.”

Bojtos adds, “We’ve had so many experiences where we’ve been honored to be part of our customers’ lives again and again.”

One long-term customer came in for a 30th-anniversary gift for his wife. Georgianna designed a symbolic ring that joined a rose-gold band with a yellow-gold band by an openwork design in white gold. A lustrous white pearl represented the June month of their wedding. “It was so symbolic and told a story,” Johnson recalls.

Works of distinction are evident



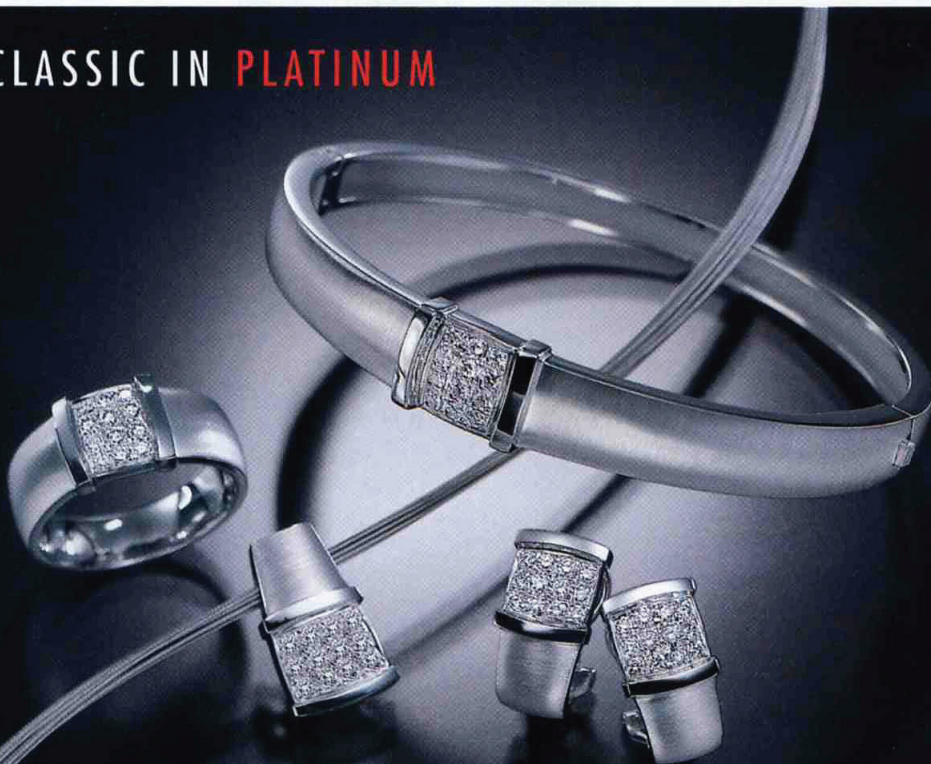
Jewelry Art utilizes a variety of unusual gemstones, such as this 9.89-carat aquamarine cut by Tom Munsteiner.

throughout the store. “We’ve looked around — Houston, Chicago, New York and even Banff, Canada — and we can’t find anything that comes up to the design ideas they have,” says Larry Wuench, who, with his wife Gizela, has been a customer since 1981. “Believe me, we’ve tried; my wife can’t pass a jewelry

store window without looking in.”

Georgianna and Barbara believe in giving clients what they want. A customer can find something unique and special for as little as \$150 to \$500. “Even a small diamond can look phenomenal if it’s a quality stone in a beautiful setting,” Georgianna notes.

## MODERN CLASSIC IN PLATINUM



céde

Despite a move to Houston in 1994, the Wuenches still remain faithful Jewelry Art customers. They are not alone.

"I haven't bought any jewelry elsewhere, even when we moved to North Carolina in 1980," agrees Shirley Bilek. "I don't trust anybody [in North Carolina]. It is that total trust that Jewelry Art is going to do things right." The loyalty its customers show is a testament to the store's integrity and reputation.

To make their designs even more individual and precious, Bojtos and Johnson searched far and wide for contacts to supply them with the finest and most unusual gemstones and materials. Some stones are cut in Idar Oberstein in Germany, the gemcutting capital of the world, notes Barbara. Other of the more unusual stones are cut by Bernd and Tom Munsteiner. The Munsteiners treat stones as sculptures, cutting each stone to make the most of its own special characteristics. Since gems are naturally occurring elements, each one has different qualities of shape and size and color. For Munsteiner-cut gemstones, Bojtos designs settings that respect and enhance

each stone's features. She herself wears a beautiful pale amethyst in a pentagram shape that is set into a radiating gold collar resembling a spider.

As trends changed in the jewelry design world and the quality and refinement that are Jewelry Art's trademark have become more readily available, Barbara and Georgianna have expanded their collection to include even more diverse and innovative designs. "We want to be able to offer up-to-the-minute designs that are fresh and exciting without compromising on the quality that our customers have always trusted us for," emphasizes Barbara. "We continually strive to find designers who have the same goals and mission of high quality and excellence in design."

During their most recent trip, Georgianna and Barbara found and chose to add the classic jewelry of Roberto Coin, which displays incomparable Italian craftsmanship, as well as the fashion-forward designs of the award-winning Robert Lee Morris. "It is important that there be a wide range of choices in style since our customers are so

diverse," says Barbara.

While their searches have brought many exciting designs to the Cleveland area, they have always maintained a sterling reputation as businesspeople as well. Jewelry Art is among just 2 percent of jewelry stores nationwide that are invited to the annual Couture Jewelry show in Scottsdale, Ariz. This event is an exclusive representation of the finest international and American jewelry designers, who select the attendees based upon their reputations and records as outstanding stores. Only the most innovative designers and manufacturers exhibit at the Couture show. It is where Bojtos and Johnson now find many of the incredible pieces of jewelry they feature at Jewelry Art.

Bojtos and Johnson's passion is evident everywhere in their store. "Our whole lives have gone into this," Johnson says.

"I started this business hoping it would work," Bojtos agrees. "I believed in it and loved it, and if you love something, it has to work." Jewelry Art continues to be a unique gift of beauty and art to the Cleveland area. ♦



J | F  
A |  
**Jean-François**  
**Albert**

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*Chris*  
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