

professional

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Jeweler[®]

THE SMART READ

*Selling
to*
The
Super
Rich

Oprah Winfrey is one of the few celebrities today who owns her own fine jewelry and wears it in public – a sign of *true* wealth. Our Cover Focus beginning on page 28 will help you distinguish between the merely affluent and the rarified truly rich market.

Jewelry Art

A passion for unique design

Finding New Staff

Seeking them out and protecting your own

Nurturing a Designer Haven

Ohio's Jewelry Art showcases an amazing number of unique pieces



Barbara Johnson of Jewelry Art, Hudson, OH, credits her store's success to the nurturing of her relationships with her designers. "My customers don't want to see themselves coming and going – whether they spend \$500 or \$50,000, they never want to wear jewelry that everyone else is wearing," says Johnson, whose mother, Georgianna Bojtos, opened Jewelry Art as a design studio more than 25 years ago. Today, the store draws its customers from the Cleveland, Akron and Canton areas.

In the 1980s, Johnson began selecting only designers that were cutting edge, with jewelry unlike any sold in other stores. "I love designers who take pride in quality and craftsmanship," says Johnson. "Actually, I will only work with de-

Jewelry Art's storefront allows a look at the treasures to be found inside.

signers who have an inherent passion for what they do."

"We really nurture our designers, whereas some stores don't give a new designer a chance. We work with them for at least a few years, and some designers we have had for more than 20 years."

The Honor Roll

One thing that sets Jewelry Art apart from other jewelry stores is the variety among the designers it stocks. "We have been carrying Pascal Lacroix for about 20 years," says John-



Far left: Alishan's ornamentation is a selling tool for Barbara Johnson, owner of Jewelry Art. Necklace by Alishan, Irvine, CA; (949) 756-1140, www.alishanonline.com.

Left: Judith Ripka's fashionable styles and colors quickly built a following among Jewelry Art's clients. Cuffs by Judith Ripka, New York City; (212) 244-1230, www.judithripka.com.

son. "Simply, no one makes a bracelet like Pascal, and once you have it on you will never want to take it off. The way he sets the diamonds and the quality of the setting far surpasses any other bangle." She says her customers praise the fit of the bangles, and she's pleased that Lacroix is branching into using colored stones in his designs.

Anthony Nak, a company whose jewelry is often seen gracing actresses on the red carpet, is also sold in her store, offering a touch of Hollywood to Hudson.

"Someone I have really seen grow and evolve over the years is Robert Lee Morris," she says. "Customers embrace his designs and always look forward to seeing what new direction he will go for his latest collection."

Judith Ripka is a relatively new designer for Jewelry Art, says Johnson, but Ripka has really taken off with customers in the past two years.

Customer Care

To better sell unique designs, Johnson and her staff show clients new collections and new pieces, often through an event that showcases the designer or the collection. "It always makes a lasting impression on customers if they hear the design philosophy or personal anecdotes about the pieces they buy," she says. "Providing the most information about the piece and the designer is the most effective selling technique."

"A designer such as Alishan is a good example of this because of his use of ornamentation. When you tell customers Alishan likens his designs to rose windows and then show

how the light reflects off of the high polish and comes back through the piece, they fall in love with it," she says.

Talking to customers and getting them engaged in a hands-on experience will lead to a sale they wouldn't have even considered otherwise. Susan Sadler, for example, uses large, bold-colored gems. "While some women steer away from large pieces, I can point out how comfortable the piece is," she says. "Once they try it, they realize how feminine her pieces tend to be."

Part of Johnson's strategy includes tracking the purchases of her customers in detailed lists. "We always stay on top of which customers are buying which designer and stay knowledgeable about their interests. It's easy with computers," she says. "We also can target the client who will be interested in an event we promote. This type of simple courtesy makes our store stand out from others and makes our customers feel special."

Nurturing the Sales Team

"The best way to understand and get excited about a piece of jewelry is to wear it," says Johnson. "That's why I make all of the jewelry sold in my store more affordable to my staff and encourage them to wear Jewelry Art designers while working. There's an overwhelming tendency to sell more of the jewelry you wear yourself; it also brings the look of the piece into a different perspective to the customer."

It makes the job easier when sales associates are selling works from designers who have a passion for design. They, in



Barbara Johnson says emulating the passion and enthusiasm for jewelry of designer Scott Keating helps her staff sell better. Rings by Scott Keating, Aspen, CO; (970) 927-4347, www.scottkeating.com.

Johnson says she's loved watching Robert Lee Morris evolve over the years, as have her customers. Pendant by Robert Lee Morris, New York City; (212) 554-9157, www.robertleemorris.com.

turn, can emulate that passion and enthusiasm while talking to their customers. "Scott Keating makes our jobs easier in this way because he is so sincere about his work and his love for jewelry, making the work translate into wearable art."

The Wider World

Going beyond the showroom, Johnson likes to take her expertise to the public to drive sales and help the community. Cause-related marketing and appearances aimed at women's clubs and organizations are other ways Jewelry Art reaches out to its customers and prospective customers. "By getting involved with community-based groups, you get to know many of the people in a way that a store doesn't allow," she says. "These are special groups of people, and that is why they are my customers."

Johnson also holds workshops and lectures in her store on topics such as cultured pearls and gems. These programs always turn out to be fun-filled evenings where Johnson and her staff truly learn the needs of her customers.

Johnson says her most effective advertising vehicle is billboards. "It works wonders. I never realized what an impact they would have, but now that I have run several billboard campaigns, I see a real difference in sales." ■