

DESIGNER

If you have always been interested in style or fashion and you like drawing, painting or graphic design, you might consider a career as a jewelry designer. Designers work with jewelers and retail customers to create one-of-a-kind jewelry, or they work for manufacturers, developing new pieces for the company's line. Some designers go on to start their own businesses, producing designer jewelry under their own names. Designing jewelry – whatever route you choose – can be a unique and challenging occupation.

Is this a career for me?

It isn't necessary to be an artist to be successful as a jewelry designer, but you should have an eye for design and an understanding of its principles. The elements of design and the details of manufacturing and workmanship are equally important. Designers are comfortable meeting new people and are able to present themselves and their work in a positive light. While creativity is critical, organizational skills and the ability to meet deadlines are equally important.

Commonly, designers report an early fascination with art or art history, or with jewelry history, gems or vintage clothing. Not surprisingly, jewelry designers have to keep up with trends in the jewelry world. They also need to be aware of trends in fashion, as retailers and manufacturers today look to celebrities and clothing designers to see what the next hot trend or style will be.

PATHS TO SUCCESS*

- ◆ Previous experience in sales or customer service
- ◆ Buying or merchandising experience, especially in jewelry, art or interior design
- ◆ Formal training in jewelry design and fabrication; education in art and design
- ◆ Gemology courses and bench experience are very helpful
- ◆ For business owners, classes in accounting, marketing and entrepreneurship

* For complete education and training listings, please refer to the resource section of this booklet.

AN INDUSTRY STAR



Donna Chambers
Donna Chambers design
White Plains, New York

Donna Chambers is a fine jewelry designer, goldsmith and entrepreneur whose talent, hard work and dedication have allowed her to achieve an enviable level of success. With a personal desire to make jewelry to last a lifetime, Chambers has combined her enthusiasm and a little magic to create a classic success story.

A native of Ossining, NY, Chambers started her career at an early age by designing textiles for Vera Linens and Oleg Cassini. In 1968, she enrolled at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, from which she graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in fine arts, majoring in fashion design. In 1976, Chambers became part owner of a jewelry repair shop that serviced 15 neighborhood jewelers in Brooklyn, NY, as well as A&S Department Stores. Eventually, after refining her jewelry design skills, she created the Donna Chambers Collection, a line of 14-karat gold and cultured pearl earrings and pins.

"The most rewarding aspect of creating a piece of jewelry is to see a jewelry buyer get excited about a new design, place an order, sell the product and order it again," says Chambers, whose collection has been carried by major retailers such as Bloomingdale's, The Museum Company, Fortunoff's, Saks Fifth Avenue and many retail jewelry stores from coast to coast.

Today, Chambers is also owner of an ethnic gift and book shop in White Plains, NY, That Old Black Magic, which houses the manufacturing facility for her fine jewelry designs. Her jewelry has been exhibited at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, and at the Boston Museum of Art. She has won the International Pearl Design Contest, the 1992 Women's Jewelry Association Annual Award of Excellence in Manufacturing, and the 1995 Blenheim Award for Design Excellence.

"The jewelry industry is filled with opportunities for individuals with creative inspiration," Chambers says. "Designers like me are able to share their creations with people all over the country who wear and enjoy fine jewelry. It's quite a rewarding career."