

inspired art in jewels and precious metals



For Cornelis Hollander, jewelry
is sculpture in miniature

By RaeAnne Marsh

The fire of passion glows in a multitude of colors from gems that have been cut into shapes and sizes born of an artist's inspiration. Cornelis Hollander's nimble mind is never at rest, enhancing visions of the natural world to create pendants and rings, links and bands in innovative settings that carry fashion forward and endure beyond its whims.

Inspiration, for the award-winning jewelry designer, is a non-stop process. "If I had to make every idea I have in my mind, my store would be a hundred times bigger," he says, sitting in his jewelry gallery on Marshall Way in downtown Scottsdale. A prolific designer, he sketches everything and then considers which would work best in production. He then designs the shape of the stone needed for each piece. The gems in his stunning collections exhibit shapes unique to Cornelis Hollander designs.

Such exacting designs may have their roots in his early goal to be a sculptor. To become a sculptor, in fact, is what he studied for in his native Netherlands. His sculptures gradually became smaller and smaller until "I made one small enough to put on a finger to make a ring." He found he liked the detail of creating miniatures, and turned to jewelry. Hollander enrolled in the Vrije Academie in Den Haag, where he studied jewelry design and earned a master's degree as a goldsmith.

His next stop was London, apprenticing in the prestigious jewelry center of Hattan Garden, followed by several years in South Africa, the source of so much of the world diamond supply and a special jewel for him personally – it was there that he met and married wife Christa.

"It was just chance" that led them to settle in Scottsdale, he says. Heading across country from Chicago to Los Angeles, "We stopped in Sun City to visit a friend of my

father's," and were immediately attracted to the lifestyle in the Valley of the Sun. Forsaking the job waiting for him in Los Angeles, Hollander accepted a job with Grunewald & Adams at the Arizona jeweler's location in Phoenix at the Biltmore Resort.

It was during this time that he began to earn what would become an enviable list of awards for his jewelry designs. What is possibly most remarkable is that his first two were last-minute efforts. "I had just been hired by Grunewald & Adams, and they asked me to design two rings for the 'Gold '82' competition (sponsored by International Gold Corporation Ltd.) I had three days to do it," Hollander recalls. It was the biggest jewelry design contest in the country, and Hollander's designs came out on top: His entry for Grunewald & Adams took first prize, and his own entry earned the competition's grand prize.

The awards gave him the confidence to



become an independent jeweler. Working out of his home, he designed and created a collection of pieces that he personally carried to major department stores, wrangling face-to-face meetings with store buyers that resulted in the stores adding a few of his pieces to their jewelry inventory. This built to a significant business within just two years.

Then, after exposure at a trade show in Basel, Switzerland, in 1987, Hollander began to build a tremendous following halfway around the world in Japan. “(Most) forms of Japanese art are very simple. Maybe that’s why they like my designs; the clean lines appeal,” he observes.

But it is the personal interaction with customers – in his store on Marshall Way in downtown Scottsdale, which he opened in 1998, and at The Summit on Scottsdale Road in north Scottsdale, which he opened in 2001 – that he most enjoys. “It’s satisfying to help a couple with their engagement ring,” he says, adding in an understatement while pleasure suffices his countenance, “It’s pretty cool to be part of that.”

Hollander’s style is decidedly modern and geometric. He pictures the designs in

his mind, including the shape of the stone (although not necessarily the stone’s color). The designs reflect his inspiration, and tend to not be affected by simply what stones are available. His favorite gem, in fact, is the paraiba, a rare, neon blue/green tourmaline from a mine in Brazil. (It is even rarer now, as the only mine that produced it has been closed.) And he likes stones that feature unusual cuts.

Individual pieces may set opposite colors off against each other, with combinations such as yellow sapphire and emerald, for a very colorful effect, or blend similar colors such as with amethyst and tanzanite.

Although his jewelry designs enhance the latest fashions, Hollander has little concern for trends when it comes to jewelry. Pointing out that clothing fashion changes every half-year, he describes jewelry as “long-term fashion” that will last 15 to 20 years.

Hollander has been honored with numerous awards since his auspicious showing at Gold ’82. His awards include the De Beers Diamonds of Distinction (three times), the Platinum Guild’s Platinum Design of the Year (for three consecutive years), the

American Gem Trade Association’s coveted Spectrum Award (nine times), and the Arizona Jewelry Association’s Best of Show in their annual design competition. He has also been recognized in Japan, winning the International Pearl Design Contest nine times. He is a founding member of the American Jewelry Design Council, a member of the elite U.S. trade organization Contemporary Design Group, and an associate of the International Design Guild.

Hollander’s designs range from the sophisticated Archi-Tech collection to the playful Geo Art, and include the Air Band Collection with a design that minimizes contact between ring and finger – a design so unique that he was actually permitted a patent for it. Does he have a favorite? Yes, in a way. “My favorite design is my latest one,” Hollander says. “I’m most proud of it, because I just made it. Then it’s on to the next.” ■

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