

Rich journey with jewellery



Eytan and Nurit Aharoni in their Bunda Street store above, and an example of Mokume-Gane technique, or wood-grain in metal, by Eytan Aharoni. Pictures: Greer Versteeg and Nina Karolina Lang



After years on the move, Eytan and Nurit Aharoni are happy with their solid and growing case in Canberra, **Arne Sjostedt** writes

An alternative to the industrial jewellery found in more commercial stores, Aharoni Jewellery offers the adventurous consumer a signature piece of handcrafted art. “Each stone and the forging of the metals, the layers, and the number of layers, are one-off,” Eytan Aharoni says. “Each piece is an individual work which cannot be repeated.”

Aharoni specializes in textures in metal, and with wife Nurit has just launched the store’s website – www.aharoni-jewellery.com. Thanks to designer Greer Versteeg and photographer Nina Karolina Lange, the site is as carefully crafted as the jewellery on display.

“We struggled a lot over how commercial we wanted the website to be, but we feel that the artistic nature of our jewellery is what we wanted to reflect in the site the most. We decided to make something different, and I think to some extent we have achieved that.”

The website showcases a stunning array of stones, set in timeless handcrafted metals. Taking centre stage on the home page is a piece the pair have called the Sydney Opera House Ring. Forged around a single indigolite tourmaline, “a 15 carat, magnificent rarity in cut stone”, Eytan and Nurit were instantly inspired when they saw the stone.

Shaped like the Sydney Opera House, the stone is “blue green in colour, reflecting the blue green of the sea”, Aharoni says. The sent photographs of the finished ring to the family of Opera House designer Jorn Utzon, and received a letter from Utzon’s grand daughter, praising the work. The ring, eventually bought by a young doctor, is testament to the years of dedication Aharoni has put into his craft.

On the website, they also tell the story of how they ended up in Canberra. Married in Israel, Aharoni and his wife took money received from their wedding and purchased jewellery making equipment. They set up a workshop in their flat, and began experimenting, selling work at markets in Tel Aviv. As the Gulf War began to have a greater influence

on their lives, they took their family to South Africa, and then searched Africa for unusual gems. Because of the then unstable political climate in South Africa they moved to Sydney, where they set up a shop in Double Bay, and later moved to Canberra.

With a workshop and display space in the lower ground floor of City Executive Suites, Canberra City, Aharoni invites people to see his work. He is a proponent of a Japanese technique of forging metal known as Mokume-Gane, which means wood grain in metal. “It’s a technique that started in the 17th Century. It was done by the samurais, for their swords and knives, by the blacksmiths.”

On the website, which came online about two weeks ago, he says the process is “a dialogue between the maker and the metals he is working with. And only if the metals are handled in a certain gentle way that suits their properties will the final result become a whole fused piece.” When they were setting out on their journey, they wondered what path they would take. Critical of a modern attraction to mass-production, believing this “reflects conservatism” in the market place, Aharoni was not drawn to making potentially bland, faceless copies of copies. Instead, with his wife and family, he chose to take an independent route, devoting his life to making unique, one-off pieces.

He is also a great supporter of the Kingston markets. “Our [Australian] beginning was in Sydney in Double Bay, and we used to drive from Double Bay to Kingston Market every week for five years, and then decided to move to Canberra. We are very happy that we did that move.”

Aharoni studied Socrates at university, and says that if spending one’s life in the marketplace, conversing with people and taking part in a down-to-earth, democratic exchange was good enough for Socrates, then it’s good enough for him. “We feel fortunate because there are a lot of people supporting us.”

■ Aharoni Jewellery. Suite 2, lower ground floor, City Executive Suites, 88-96 Bunda Street, Canberra City. Ph: 6262 5053 or visit www.aharoni-jewellery.com