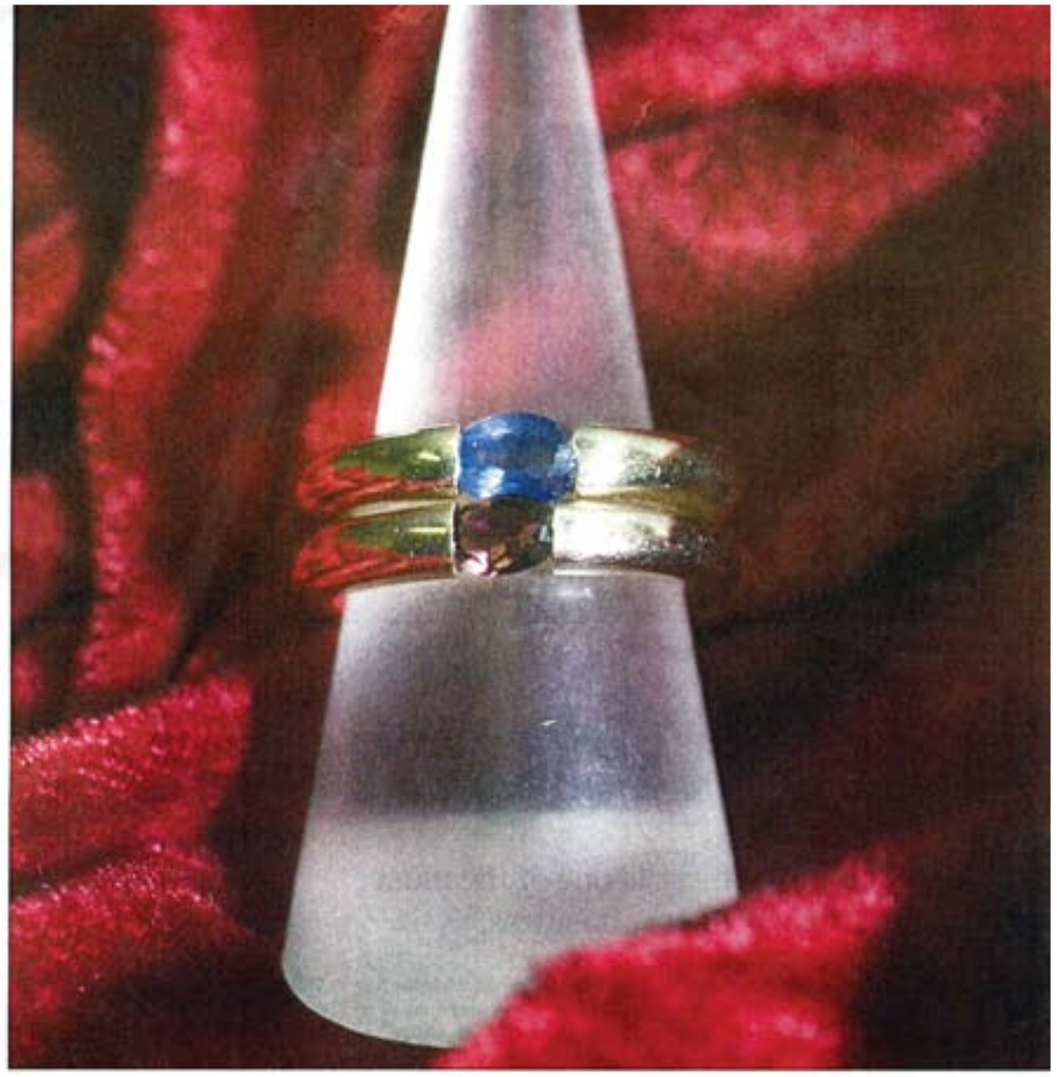
Set to sparkle



Eytan Aharoni has a deep passion for jewellery.

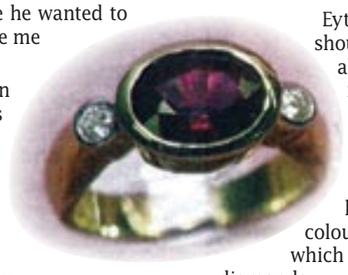
Much of Eitan Aharoni's jewellery begins as tiny pieces of raw gold. The finished products are anything but rings, pendants, and bracelets sparkle with diamonds and coloured stones, many of the latter collected when he lived overseas.

Eytan is now based in Canberra, and has set up a workshop and stone in Civic. It is a self-contained workshop – he does everything from melting the gold to setting the stones and engraving the metals.

He says real designer jewellery is in danger of being swallowed by commercialism. Ninety-eight percent of what we buy is industrial, or mass-produced jewellery. "I have been almost 20 years in the business and from '91 I have seen big changes", he says. "The world is going more and more for cheap labour. The big guys with the money control the system. They hire the jewelers who are not necessarily good and capitalise on the fact they have excellent marketing."

"Because the industry is killing the art, good craftspeople are almost not to be found." He prefers to work with white gold – it shows diamonds to their fullest potential – and specializes in setting stones and using different textures on the metals.

He came to Canberra a couple of months ago from Double Bay, where he set up a shop after moving to Australia from Israel in 1998. He arrived at Sydney airport not knowing anyone in Australia or anything about Sydney. He hailed a taxi and, when the driver asked him where he wanted to go, said "just take me to a nice place."



He ended up in Double Bay. His wife, Nurit, and four children arrived 3 months later.

While they enjoyed Sydney, they never really fitted in. "I had a good time, but to me Double Bay represents glamour fake," Eytan says.

They had been meeting with clients in Canberra regularly for three years, liked the place and decided to move here. Eitan believes he is getting better with age – "like wine", he says with a laugh. "As the years go by the hands are getting more skilled." He trained in Israel – he can't remember a time when he didn't want to be a jeweler - the moved to South Africa. "We were planning to have a short trip, fell in love with South Africa and stayed for seven years."

They returned to Israel for two years, then decided to come to Australia – as had a lot of their South African customers.

Eytan says a jeweler should be knowledgeable about stones (and not only diamonds), about metals, settings, polishing and design. He believes diamonds are overrated and he particularly loves coloured stones, many of which are much rarer than diamonds.

"When we lived in South Africa we travelled the continent collecting unusual stones."

He lifts the lid on some beautiful Burmese rubies, tsavorite (green) and other red, blue, green and golden stones – "this is how they appear in nature" – and says the price of diamonds is man-made. "It is more of an economic and political decision."

He designs from the heart and according to the cut of the stone. Because his retail outlet is also his workshop, clients can sit and watch him work.

"Design wise, a new piece of jewellery should be beautiful in 20 years, in 30 years. It should last forever."

Aharoni Jewellery is on the lower ground level, 88-96 Bunda Street, City.

Second year fashion students at the Canberra Institute of Technology present their end-of-year collections at the Reid Campus next Tuesday. Students can exit the course at this stage with a diploma, or continue studying next year for a degree. Student kate Small said the collections were designed in groups and her team, also comprising Christina mcnally and Blossom Yeo, was inspired by Indian culture and fashion. They have designed evening outfits which will be paraded before teachers, family and friends by models from the Elite Academy.

Good luck to all of the budding designers!