

Debbie Sheezel

BEST of SHOW – Lineal Alchemy

This year the piece of jewelry that won Best of Show, deserved the title. This extraordinary piece of wearable art is breathtaking in its detail, artistry, craftsmanship, engineering and color. Australian enamelist/artist Debbie Sheezel has captured the feeling she described as “...turning base metal into gold and find the elixir of life.” It is here. She has accomplished her goal of turning metal into a true elixir of life.

Why did you choose the name?

Because the structure of the necklace and the interior design is very linear, that's where that word comes in. Alchemy is medieval chemistry to try to turn base metal into gold and find the elixir of life. I am going back thousands of years depicting in my own way the designs of utensils and artifacts.



What are the materials in the piece?

The materials used are enamel, 24ct, 22ct gold, fine and sterling silver, platinum and diamonds.

What was your inspiration for the necklace?

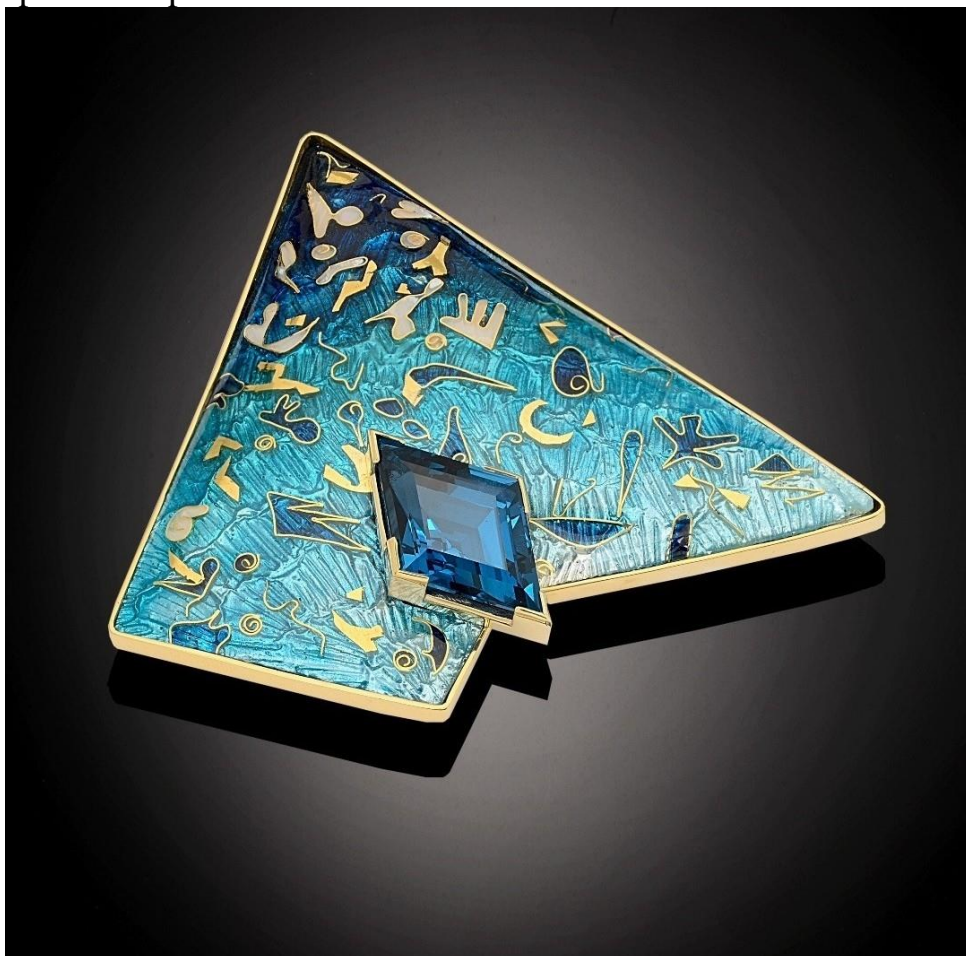
I was inspired by tribal implements and artifacts crossing many cultures. Simple geometric sculptural design with magical colours translates my thoughts of inherited artistry with the science and craft of enamel.

How long did it take you to make it?

It took me eleven months from the visual design to the finished article. As for obstacles, I think the mechanics and articulation of the piece was a big consideration for the comfort of wearing.

Do you think this piece will inspire other designs?

Yes, I suppose this piece will inspire other pieces as other previous pieces of mine inspired this piece.



Do you have any plans for the piece?

I have no idea what I will do with the piece!

Name three fun facts about yourself.

I love my family and of course my dog Milo. They come first.
I enjoy the company of like minded people. I love reading a good book. (When I have time late at night when the phone doesn't ring).

How would you describe yourself?

Warm, easy going, focused, subjective, introspective, and loyal.

Of all the arts and crafts why did you choose jewelry?

I began as a painter/artist and my aunt talked me into going to jewellery classes at night school when I had a small baby. There they had a kiln and after the teacher showed me what it was used for, I was hooked!



What was the first thing you ever made?

The first thing I ever made was an enamel plaque on copper.

What or who do you think has been the strongest influence or inspiration on your work?

There have been so many influences in my life but probably Japanese art influenced me greatly.

In such a competitive industry, what do you credit your longevity to?

I credit my longevity in my work to its individual qualities. One-of-a-kind.

Do you have any advice for those starting out in the jewelry world?

Do the very best you can and follow your dream.



What would you say you know now about living a happy and successful life that you didn't know when you were twenty?

I do know that when I was twenty I was completely naïve and sheltered to some degree. Now, I think love and tolerance is most important. Try to be optimistic and happy.

What do you want your legacy to be?

Advancement of enamel jewellery. Appreciation of my enamel works.

What artist dead or alive do you most admire? Why?

I have always loved the works of Matisse, whose work was sensuous with beautiful use of colour. Hundertwasser for his design and also for his use of colour. Lalique for his superb jewellery designs and his use of enamels.

In such a competitive industry, what do you credit your longevity to?

I credit my longevity to my enamel pieces to unique designs and extremely fine and good finish and good design.



What do you want people to know about you and your art?

I want people to know that the integrity of my work is 100%. This is shown by the marks on the back belonging to the Australian Gold & Silversmiths Guild of

Australia along with my Makers Mark. I want people to know that all my pieces are made with enthusiasm and enjoyment of the craft.

What other awards, honors have you received in your career?

I won the Tool Traders Award in 1993 at RMIT University

Award of Excellence in the 19th International Cloisonee Jewellery contest – Tokyo.

2016 Saul Bell Award 2016.

I have also won best enamel piece in the Australian Design Awards for 2019 and also “Overall Best in Show” in the same competition.

I didn't enter competitions for many years.



What was the biggest challenge you have faced in your business?

I've had many challenges. From making a mural for the Brisbane International Airport in enamel to finally making this piece for the Saul Bell Award. I like a challenge.

What is the best and worst advice you have received?

My art teacher in school said to me, "If you have an idea to do something, just do it! You can only try."

Bad advice.... I was told to make icons just because I was enamelling.

Do you plan to retire?

I don't plan to retire...who knows what the future brings.

What is your definition of success and why do you think you have been successful?

My definition of success.....probably winning the Saul Bell Award in 2016 and now in 2019.

I'm not sure what "success" is. Probably because I get really lovely messages. Many saying that I inspire them to work at whatever they are making.



Who has been most supportive in helping your business grow?

My husband is my most supportive person helping me in whatever I set my goals to. My metalsmithing mentor is Ken Gray, and wonderful jeweller who has always helped me with anything I asked him.

What is your training and education in metalsmithing?

After leaving high school I was lucky enough to be accepted to the Australian College of the Arts which is considered to give the best training for all areas of the arts – ballet – painting – music, etc. I trained as a painter. Very few students are taken each year for each category.

I went to Collingwood Technical College night school in the early '90's , then left there to have a family.

In later years after many years of enameling, (self taught), I realized I needed to know more about metalwork to be able to advance with enamelling, so I applied to RMIT University as a mature aged student.

Is the product or the process more important to you?

I feel that both the process and the product are important to me. The process is therapeutic and it keeps your mind busy and the product is important for its finish and integrity.



What is your favorite type/piece of jewelry?

I think necklaces are my favourite piece of jewellery.

What do you like most about making jewelry? What do you like least?

I obviously like enamelling my jewellery best and don't enjoy polishing!

What is the biggest change you have seen in the jewelry world since you have been around?

I'm disappointed and yet intrigued with CAD. Disappointed because all the skill will disappear in the making of an object. Intrigued because of what it can and will be achievable. I also am sad that mass production has overtaken the beauty and individuality of the "hand made" article.



Describe your studio.

I have the BEST studio for my requirements. Light, airy and spacious with all the equipment I feel I need.

What metals, gemstones, processes are most important to you?

The perfection of my enamel work is most important to me. The inclusion of the right gemstone or added precious or simple article is important because of the overall design and whether it adds to the enamel piece or detracts from it.

Define your work.

Unique bespoke fine enamel jewellery.

What is your artist statement?

My passion is enamelling which led me to metalsmithing. I'm a bit of a perfectionist and metal work needs perfection to look really good. My designs just come naturally don't know where from! My brand is "Debbie Sheezel" unique bespoke jewellery.

<https://debbiesheel.com.au/>



@debbiesheel

Debbie has an upcoming solo show in Sydney. 16th – 20th May at Frank Robinson Jewellery, Double Bay

Thanks to Debbie for sharing this interview

