

Making your Own Jewelry like a Pro

Making your own jewelry starts with knowing the basic metalsmithing methods.

Continuing with your basics series, now its time for **making rings**. Here you'll learn two **techniques used by metalsmiths** to form sheet metal into rings.

Preparing the metal



From an **18 gauge silver sheet metal**, cut two segments of about 5mm long. **File the ends straight** with a 7" flat hand file. Anneal one of the strips of metal to a dull red, quench and dry.

Put your **mandrel's handle** on your tummy (the mandrel should look away from you); then place the sheet metal halfway on the mandrel and hold both ends of the sheet with your hands and gently **curve it downwards** to make it a U shape.

Hit it a couple of times with a mallet to **close the U shape** a bit, making sure you're **holding the sheet metal** with the palm of your left hand while at the same time holding the mandrel (the handle of the mandrel still on your tummy for support), see the pictures.



Measure the size of the ring to see how much excess sheet you'll have to discharge. Estimate the length of sheet you need to cut and **saw it off**. You can make a small dent on one of the ring's angles to start sawing.



Anneal again and keep shaping the ring on the mandrel.

To close the ring, and start making the joint, **move the ring upwards on your mandrel** to continue hammering it, so that you shape it towards the **narrow tip**. Hit it a few times as you make your way up and the ring starts closing.

Tip: you can use the **bench vise** as a short-cut to close the ring. Place your ring on your bench vise with the jaws covered with leather or any other thick fabric. With a small brass or chasing hammer **bend the two ends of the ring** by hitting each end towards the next until they meet.



Anneal and repeat the trick. You can also hit the top of the two ends to bend them flat.



Soldering the ring

When soldering you want the joint to be nice and tight. To do that, **saw the ring's slot inwards and then outwards**, that will flatten the edges and make a good soldering surface.

Place the ring on your **soldering charcoal** and **add chips of solder along the seam**, put drops of flux and light your torch to a blue flame. Heat the surrounding area until the flux fizzes.



Then **move the flame on the metal** and move it around the ring heating it evenly. When the **metal changes color** direct the **flame on the two joints**, always moving the flame, until solder flows. When ready, quench the ring, pickle and dry.

Check that the soldering is even and that it filled the entire gap. **File any excess solder** on the inner rim of the ring. You should do this before forming it to a nice round shape because if you leave any excess solder on the rim it will "distort" the shape of the ring while hammering it on the mandrel (it will be like an inner bump).



To know when filing is enough, simply pass your finger on it and it should feel smooth.

Shaping the ring

Now that the ring is soldered, you can **continue forming it** to the appropriate shape. At this stage it's very important to **turn over the ring** on your mandrel while forming it. Why? The shape of the mandrel is like a funnel, if you insert the ring one way only then your ring may turn out shaped in that way.

To achieve a **properly shaped ring** (geometry) just flip the ring several times while shaping it on your mandrel.



Sometimes, especially when using thicker gauges of sheet metal, it's necessary to level the sides of the ring. In other words, when you put the ring flat on top of your bench, you should see no light passing below it.

If it's a bit crooked, simply anneal it and place it on your bench steel block and hammer it down flat with a piston (you can get some in a Car Junk Yard, just make sure it has a nicely polished base).



Place the ring on a ring clamp to do the filing and sanding, you want to file the ring not your fingers! File the entire ring **starting with 7" files** to remove metal and then **use needle files to improve the shape** and get rid of excess solder.

Remember to **file the edges** of the rings to a smooth finish. Wrap your files with sanding paper and work your way up starting with 400 grit and moving up to 600 grit.



You can **sand the inner shank of your ring** using the Foredom device for sanding.

It's a great tool and I also use it to make the final sanding of the entire ring.

And you're done!

Next, look at this page for yet another technique to make a ring, [click here](#).

Check these great methods of polishing your jewelry; [you can pull off a satin or matte finish, the possibilities are endless!](#)

Design jewelry with a beautiful matte finish

Design jewelry and make the bright polish your **trademark**.

It gives your design that final touch that surprises your clients.

You can make lots of **different textures and finishes** using your flex shaft, an indispensable tool for every jeweler. Foredom carries many **accessories** including lots of options for polishing metal.

You can find **abrasives, brushes, polishers, sanding bands and burs**. Each of them has specific characteristics and uses depending on the result you want. Let's look at some of the accessories widely used by **jewelry makers**.

Warning: always wear eye protection!

Grinding stones - abrasives

Here you can see a **pink grinding stone** being used in a strip of sheet metal. It achieves a slightly **textured finish** and you can vary the pattern by drawing circles or making straight lines.

These pink points are also used to smooth away imperfections and to refine details.



Textured surfaces don't have to be even, they can also **have some kind of "design"** to it. You can play around with larger pieces of sheet metal (could be copper) to experiment by **moving the grinding stone** in straight lines, circles or any other pattern you wish.

Matte and satin finishes wheels



This **synthetic fiber disc** is less hard than the pink grinding stone.

The **texture is finer and smoother**, but I kind of like the sheen that brings to the metallic surface, although it heats up the strip of metal in no time.

Home-made matte finish wheel

This is a **great polishing method** I use allot. It's really easy to make, just buy a **green kitchen fiber** (Scotch-Brite) in the supermarket and cut out a circle of about 1" in diameter with scissors and pass a metallic wire through the middle to open-up the fibers.

Adjust this home-made disk to a flex shaft mandrel and use.



Please **wear eye protection** with this one because as soon as the motor starts running lots of **bits of fiber start to fly off** the disc.

But it makes a beautiful matte, "brushed" finish on your jewelry.

Sanding bands

These bands make a **gentle texture** on the metal.

It is very similar to the effect achieved with the synthetic fiber disc but a bit finer.

It **heats the metal** quite allot too.



Silicon polishers

To give a **shiny surface, sort of mirror-like finish**, use this blue silicon polish applying light pressure on your work.

The wheel is particularly designed to polish in hard to reach areas because if you want a **glossy finish**, its best obtained in a proper **polishing machine**, but if you don't have one, this is an alternative. They come in lots of shapes and sizes to fit everywhere.



Slotted mandrels

Sanding is extremely easy using the **slotted mandrel for your flex shaft**. Cut a rectangular piece of sanding paper, about 1" wide and 3" long. **Fold** twice the width and **insert it into the slot** of the mandrel.

Run the machine to check that the sanding side rotates outwards.



The first time you use this accessory don't worry about the noisy "flapping", just **smoothly run the machine** and the sanding paper will coil within itself making a cylindrical device for you to sand any metal extremely well.



Learn how to make silver flower earrings and practice all these basic techniques [here](#).

You can also make an amethyst necklace with silver flowers for your Mother on her day, [go here to see the step-by-step project](#).

Master your jewelry design skills without agonizing in the process.

Do you find yourself sometimes echoing jewelry design seen on others?

Do you sometimes re-design previous jewelry that you have sold really well?

I bet you want to have the **resources** to continually work out original pieces from scratch and have fun exploring lots of ideas that come flowing off your head.

With the **elements and principles of design** that are shown here you will have the basic concepts to spark those artistic abilities within you.

Use these concepts anywhere, anytime to suit all your design needs.

A designer knows that he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

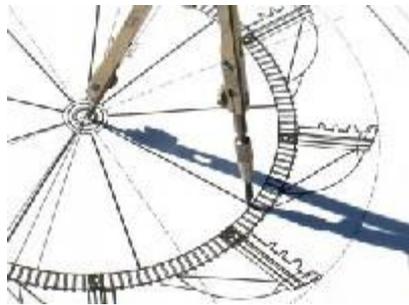
The building blocks of design are **easy to comprehend** but are not usually easy to find.

But I've already done the research for you; everything you need to get started is **here**.

You don't need an art degree to apply these concepts in your jewelry design. Just have the desire to learn the principles shared by all the art and craft disciplines.



This is not a method, it's more of an attitude, a mindset.



Jewelry designers live and experience on it.

It's about **personal expression** and the means to attain it.

Only the curious, genuine jewelry designer, that believes that learning is a life-long experience will make good use of these design basics, and I'm sure you're one of them or else...

... You wouldn't be reading these lines!

So, you want to stop endless doodling and start drawing?

Everything is boiled down to **easy and applicable concepts**.

With a bit of practice, your jewelry design will have that extra dazzle that you know strikes high on the market.

These concepts will boost your jewelry design skills sky-high:

[Recharge your talent with new possibilities of shape, space and form.](#)

[Your brain will have more elements to transform a thought into a creative and functional composition.](#)

You can do the mental exercise to keenly observe all these elements and principles of design explained here the next time you see jewelry. Great jewelry designers use these concepts to achieve brilliant designs, just put a bit more of attention when analyzing their designs to discover them.

[You will conceive a proportional, durable and wearable object.](#)

[Become skilled at deciphering the basic design components of new trends.](#)

[Acquire a new vision on how to contemplate jewelry designs in general.](#)

Anyone can be a designer, but that doesn't mean everybody is a good designer.

Become one of them. Let's start, choose from any of the links above.

What makes people buy? What is so enticing in great jewelry?

Start your creative learning process designing jewelry, find lots of articles about innovation and originality in Jewelers Xpress, my **NEW** e-zine!

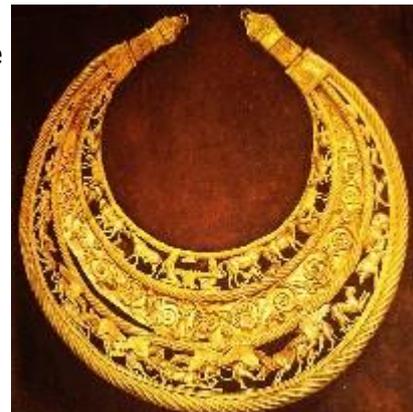
Please subscribe to my newsletter: Jewelers Xpress. It is a **FREE** monthly e-zine with all the latest info posted on Design-Unique-Handcrafted-Jewelry.com

Design patterns synthesize the product of harmoniously combining the conceptual, the visual and the relational elements we have seen before.

The design patterns are therefore the outcome of **your personal expression in jewelry design ideas**. They are not about replicable diagrams, but about abstract arrangements of figures.

Your jewelry design will stand out because you're using universal and time-less design schemes.

They are not however design patterns to reproduce; they are models or paradigmatic instruments that will aid your designs.



Formal connections between geometric shapes bring about completely new figures and effects. It is precisely when a unifying effect is achieved that design patterns transform into whole new visual configuration.

For **best results**, hold together the figures you're manipulating within a design pattern that depicts unity.

To make these design patterns appear harmonious you have several schemes at hand. You can use them to **try different arrangements and effects** depending on your intent and message.

Your jewelry design ideas will reap consignment deals.

These schemes are:

- Overlapping,
- Abutting,
- Interlocking,
- Intersecting,
- Subtracting,
- Integrating,
- Separating.

When shapes are placed beside each other, sufficiently enough for them to be nested one on top of the other, an **overlapping scheme** is portrayed. Overlapping schemes may have different effects.



The overlapped shapes can acquire mass by **light and shadow effects** and are able to create a new shape from the overlap.

Overlapping is best used as the bond to stick together various shapes and figures.

Abutting is the relationship between shapes when put side by side. They then **share the edge or boundary of their figure** and can visually create a whole new outline.

Abutting is best used when a group of similar figures, especially regular figures, are arranged touching each other. This will **create a cohesive design pattern** that stands by itself as a design entity.



Crossing shapes with one another is a result of having a portion of one of them being covered by the other. **Interlocking is achieved mainly by mixing opposite design elements:** concave with convex, horizontal with vertical, acute with obtuse angles.

Interlocking is best used when opposite contours “fit” with one another, in order for the scheme to suggest a unified whole.

Intersecting can be confused with overlapping. The difference resides in that the intersecting scheme has as its main design feature the intersection.

Geometric shapes that intersect **create figures in their intersection** and this is the visual design pattern that is outstanding.

For the most **dramatic results**, you can use the intersecting figure prompted as your design pattern leaving the construction of the intersecting unrevealed.

When an invisible shape overlaps a visible shape, the result is a **subtraction**. The portion of the visible shape that is overlapped by the invisible one becomes in itself invisible.



Subtracting therefore becomes a game between positive and negative shape.



Use subtracting schemes in jewelry design ideas to convey oppositional forces or to **create tension and a gravitational pull** in your design patterns.

Integrating figures is the merging of one another into a unified and single figure. When two or more shapes blend a new and superior shape is born.

When integrating different figures make sure that the amalgamation or the result suits your design interests.

Integration is best used when it can be formally related to a structure, or else, it may be confused with a figure in its own right, not a geometric integration.

Familiar design patterns are particularly associated to repeating but separate figures.

Separating schemes offer sufficient space to acknowledge irregular figures. In turn, the space that actually separates them becomes important or not depending on the **tension** between the figures.



This scheme is best used in design patterns that **explore visually persuasive characteristics** such as color, texture, shine, etc.

Even greater design patterns can be achieved by mixing these schemes.

[Take forward your jewelry design ideas by **making models of your own design patterns.**](#)

You don't have to use metals for now, start with some cardboard, paper, sticks or cloth; whatever you have at hand.

[**Now that you're an expert in two-dimensional design, it's time to plunge into the world of space and form.**](#)

You'll learn all about the three-dimensional elements that define space and void.

Expand your design ideas for jewelry; bring your jewelry to three-dimensional life

Boost-up your design ideas for jewelry with these useful three-dimensional design tips.

Your jewelry design will stand out for its originality and sculptural characteristics. Your skill to achieve volume and to experience concavity and convexity will attract all attention.

Here are the resources you need to **cram your jewelry with spatial energy**.



What you have read until now is the visual language of two-dimensional design.

All the elements and principles of design you now master are there to give harmony and unity to the **visual impact** of your design ideas for jewelry.

Now, begin **your journey towards the depth of space and form**.

Three-dimensional design brings forward multiple ways of seeing and comprehending an object. One point of view will never suffice to grasp the **infinite range of forms and volumes**.

Your design ideas for jewelry will gain a soaring sense of movement and depth.

Defining space through form

The most common form of three-dimensional work is an object that can be viewed from every angle, in the full round.

For your jewelry to have **three-dimensional qualities** it must provide different views when turned around in your customer's hand.

Form and figure are terms that usually get mixed up. A three-dimensional form can have multiple two-dimensional figures when seen from different angles. Therefore, figures make up one of the elements of form.

Your challenge is to **grasp the complex nature of thinking and seeing in a multidimensional fashion.**

When thinking about your design ideas for jewelry, **mentally turn these ideas around**, see them from both sides, from the top, from the bottom, from an angle.

Go beyond thinking about the mere surface and move the piece in your **imagination** to start noticing its space and volume.

For jewelry makers, it is absolutely a must to mentally **watch the flowing change of contours** every time they conceive a piece of jewelry.

Three-dimensional design also works with the conceptual, the visual and the relational elements we studied before. [The conceptual elements are the defining structure of your design.](#)

The visual elements constitute the appearance of the object and the relational elements bond together the conceptual and visual elements within a configuration.

When you rotate a form in your hand or in your mind, you see different figures every time you're moving it. Each new point of view will reveal a new figure. The **structure** that governs the way a form is built (the conceptual, relational and constructive elements) may or may not become apparent in the overall, color, texture or shape of the form (the visual elements).

For example, the external appearance of an object may seem very complex, while its internal structure might be very simple.

Sometimes, the internal structure of a form may not be evident.



Once the internal structure is understood, a better appreciation of the object is achieved.

The three-dimensional challenge

Your challenge as a jewelry maker is to **create a piece of jewelry that makes the viewers want to investigate the work**, rather than merely glance at it and move on. Take a look at the fantastic sculpture by Henry Moore below, now that is 3D mastery!

Your well designed three-dimensional piece will **capture viewer's attention** and make them want to discover new things.

[Because of the wearable function of jewelry, its design must be compatible with the](#)

[basic laws of physics, particularly gravity.](#)

Sometimes, artistically designed jewelry does not consider gravity and at the end of the day, **the manufacturing process changes the design** to comply with this natural law.



However, that is not to say that designs that defy gravity are intriguingly novel. Other approaches used by jewelry makers, exaggerate the downward pull by means of **visual tension**.

For a piece of jewelry to hold a viewer's attention, it must change continually as it is moved around and at the same time maintain an overall sense of continuity and wholeness.

The cohesiveness of the elements of three-dimensional design is the key goal for achieving spatial and volumetric interest.

The basic elements of three-dimensional design for jewelry makers are:

- Form,
- Light,
- Space,
- Time.

In three-dimensional work the area enclosed by the contours of the piece is known as the form or mass of the work. This form is real in the sense that it has **width, length and depth**. The contours that build-up the form broadly constitutes the overall **outline of the form** at any given point of view.

Details within the form help to lead and guide the viewer around or through the work. What viewers see can change dramatically as their perspective changes.

The best way to **increase the effect of three-dimensional form** is to use negative space. Piercing, penetrating and hollowing-out form is an integral part of constituting space.

The effect of light in three-dimensional objects affects the values of light and dark areas in terms of their brightness and darkness. You can easily control these effects by the way you control, in your design ideas for jewelry, the changes in contour and **how light strikes the piece**.

For best results, you may accentuate lower areas to cast greater shadows and increase the bulginess of higher areas to obtain more light.



You can also use smooth surfaces to **reflect light** and use textured surfaces to attenuate reflection. Rounded forms tend to graduate the changes in values while angular shapes cast strong shadows.

Space is the distinctive characteristic of three-dimensional design.

What builds the sense of space is scale. The relative size of three-dimensional work affects the way we perceive ourselves.

When scale is distorted, exceedingly large or painfully small, different emotional reactions are suggested. In your design ideas for jewelry, scale and proportion are very important elements to consider.

If jewelry is meant to be worn, then it should be designed and crafted to suit the human body.

In three-dimensional objects, because the relationships among the parts and the movement of the viewer are constantly changing, the time factor becomes crucial.

A continual **interplay of forms and movement** helps explain why time becomes an element of three-dimensional design.

When applying the time element to your design ideas for jewelry, have in mind that **achieving movement is the key factor to experience time.**

Jewelry makers can blend moving pieces to their jewelry in order to create unpredictable patterns when worn. This **kinetic quality** will bridge the notion of time. You can handle it as an ephemeral experience; appreciate it only once, or as a recurrent change, differing as the wearer moves.

How to apply these three-dimensional design elements in your jewelry?

Designing and crafting a three-dimensional **wearable object** involves the design and organization of contrasting forms. This grouping of forms will reflect the experience of movement, balance, force and tension in space.

[In the next page you will find the basic **models of three-dimensional design** you can use in your own design ideas for jewelry.](#)

You will experiment what negative space is all about.

Negative space brings all the form together; it provides its fullness, its proportion and complexity.

Design your own jewelry and surpass the market

Work your way up, design your own jewelry with the **best design advice**. Find here the ultimate ideas and concepts on how to work with three-dimensional forms.

You will soon speak the language of **three-dimensional design** and in no time you'll be making beautiful jewelry.

Design your own jewelry by appreciating the qualities of contrasting shapes and master the relationships between volumes or forms. You'll get to grips with the use of **rectilinear and curvilinear forms** in this section. They both share the same basic relationships, proportions, axis and balance.

What is the main design concept when working with forms?



The best and easiest way to start arranging forms in space is by choosing **dominant, subdominant and subordinate forms**. You can study this idea in Greet (2002), where these design elements help the design and making of a spatial composition using three forms (rectilinear or curvilinear).

When you've had the chance to make several models of rectilinear and curvilinear forms, using cardboard or wood rectangles, cones, cubes, prisms, etc, arrange them in several compositions. When you design your own jewelry following the dominant, subdominant and subordinate concept you **acquire a mental device to design anything**.

How do you use the dominant, subdominant and subordinate concept?

In the whole composition of your jewelry, **the dominant form occupies the "center" of attention**, it is the largest element. This is complemented by the subdominant volume. The subdominant volume will **add excitement and attractiveness** to the dominant volume by means of contrast, position and differences in balance.

The subordinate volume adds a third visual element and a different axis. Subordinate volumes should add to the **spatial character** and will complete the "wholeness", the balance, of the design. It can be contrasting but complementary to the other two forms.

The harmonic arrangement of these three volumes must be viewed from many angles to **check proportion, scale and balance**.

When you start making your compositions with three forms, look at the whole work and have a good look at the overall proportion. Then **check comparatively each form looking for complementarity and interest**. Here you can compare a volume with the other two.

As you see the composition from all angles watch for uninteresting views and if so, rearrange your composition in another way until there's a design unity.

Become aware of aesthetic relationships between the forms.

Design your own jewelry considering how the volumes are joined, how they touch one another.

Examine if there's contrast between the forms, is there enough difference in shape and size between each form to achieve contrast?

Is the overall configuration pleasing to the eye?

You can also choose to use either the vertical or horizontal proportion in your design to organize your composition. Try to add the volumes in such a way that **the whole unity appears as structural**.

Each form should contribute to the whole.

You may use the **dominant, subdominant and subordinate** concept to structurally organize your jewelry designs. Design your own jewelry using the concept to give the design structure an order, but you don't have to take it literally.

You can also use the diagonal axis to **give your jewelry designs extra interest**. A dynamic proportion between forms will appear as soon as you start using curvilinear forms with the same dominant, subdominant and subordinate concept but in a **diagonal visual tension**.

Use the diagonal axis to **create movement and three-dimensional qualities**. The three curvilinear forms should be arranged in a dynamic relationship with a good proportion between the diagonal axes to give the design appropriate visual tension.

Look at the overall proportion.

Check the negative space around and between your three forms.

Become sensitive to the volume of air within which your design exists.

Remember that the **diagonal axes also become directional forces**, so make your design to suit your intentions.

What do you want the viewer to see? You can control how the design will be perceived.

Just like with the rectilinear forms, the composition of curvilinear forms should look structural. That is, **it has to appear self-supporting, it must look like a structure and a unified design**.

Design your own jewelry having in mind the dominant, subdominant and subordinate concept explained here. You can also design your own jewelry, following this concept, with **metal sheet achieving wonderful designs** by means of planes.

[For ideas on how to use planes in jewelry design, check out this section here.](#)

I hope the dominant, subdominant and subordinate concept may ease your **design experiments**. There's no need to use only three volumes or forms when you design your own jewelry. **The concept is useful as a design resource to achieve beauty, balance, proportion and harmony.**

Whenever you're designing your jewelry, have in mind the relationships between volumes and forms.

Take this further by changing your own position as a viewer.

Stand up and see the composition from above. **Take two steps back from your work and look at it with a bit of distance**, look at it from all sides and from the bottom.

If you **get used to looking at your work in different angles** besides the way you view it from the bench, the design can speak to you tons!

In another section you can also see how concavity and convexity lead your designs into the world of organic forms.

At last! How to design jewelry...

... to reap sales!

Jewelry with **great design** is the differentiating factor for your jewelry amidst the mass of conventional jewelry found in the market.

Your jewelry will **stand out and become recognized** with your distinctive style.

How to design jewelry that takes the trade that stretch further?

Master the structure and relationships between design elements and forms. Develop your ability to explore abstract visual relationships and spatial analysis.

This will surely part you away from the crowd and put you in a better position to **expand the realms of jewelry design**.

This section is dedicated to the study of planar structures.

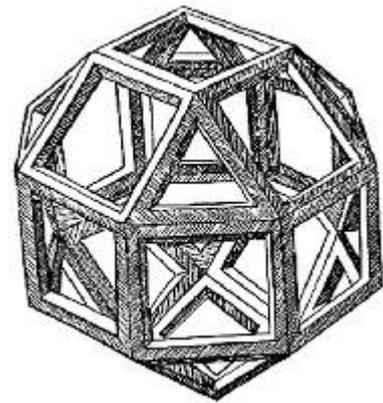
That is structures in space made up of planes.

As seen in the section on elements and principles of design, a plane is made up of surfaces, vertices and edges.

When you **start experimenting with planar compositions**, your best bet is to start organizing your planar elements by axes. These axes will be expressed by the edges of the planes that in turn structure the surface of the plane.

Experiment with horizontal, vertical or diagonal axis as your first organizational element for the planar structure.

The **visual relationships** in your planar construction should be governed by the surface of the plane, because the surface is the most powerful feature of the planes. Visual



continuity across space is achieved by means of the **movement of the surfaces**. This movement is structured by the axis you define in your design.



To create more than an assemblage of planes, you can **create different volumetric perceptions** in the viewer using curved, broken, twisted or grouped planes.

Look at this wonderful sculpture by Clement Meadmore. Simple twisted planes... it looks like a square metal wire coming out of the rolling mill!

Check the negative space created around your design and see it in relation to the planar construction you're devising.

Think of your design in terms of wearability too.

Planar constructions may become sculpturally beautiful but not comfortable to wear.

IMPORTANT FACTS

Are the edges of your design consistent with the **axes**?

Do the surfaces of the **planes** move in a harmonious and balanced way?

Is the overall **construction** structurally connected?

Does it **look good** from every angle?

You can also start combining planes and lines.

To learn how to design jewelry using these two design resources, think of lines as the axis of solid forms, as the constituent element of planes and volumes and as the best element to delineate.

Lines can be curved or straight. Take your time to design your curve not just bend it.

Practice using copper wire with lots of curves, starting from the top, working your way towards the bottom, using one long segment of wire shaping it with pliers.

Make your curves dramatic and dynamic.

Have in mind that each curve you make will **express a direction**. Make sure to see your composition from every angle and from the top. All the curves have to be complementary to each other and **achieve a balanced and exciting three-dimensional design**.

Within the linear structure you may start to add planes. These planes can be attached to the edges of lines or between lines. Use paper to ease construction of your model.

Kick-start your conception of space.

Practice how to design jewelry with lines and planes. In your jewelry, lines can become the metal wire and planes can become gemstones or metal sheet. Just depart a bit from the conventional way of setting gems and wrapping wire.

Start thinking like a sculptor, even look for their work to get new ideas.

Mentally think of lines and planes as **abstractions** and take them to jewelry design. Use them as design elements to build and structure your jewelry.

You can transform lines and planes into organic gestures.

Structures of lines and planes can blow-up and become **volumetric solids**. Like sculptures, the planes are expanded to form surfaces and the lines are embedded within the structural configuration of the solid.

Master positive volume and negative space to inspire your jewelry designs.

[Take a look at the art of concavity and convexity.](#)

[Go from How to Design Jewelry back to Design Basics Plus.](#)

Premier designs jewelry with YOUR unique style

Take your premier designs jewelry to the limit.

Accentuate your jewelry with **voluptuous shapes and magnificent volumes**. Your designs idea can become original wearable sculptures.

Learn the subtle power of convexity and concavity.



Organic forms have long been one of the most popular shapes for jewelry design. Here you'll find the design method to **acquire expertise in handling mass, volume and space**.

When making your premier designs jewelry with **volume** in mind, think about how the mass of your design creates **surfaces** and how these in turn result in a **silhouette**. Check this Barbara Hepworth sculpture.

This means that you can think about volume from the inside out, instead of the other way round.

We usually analyze and express volume starting from the outside and then getting inside the mass.

If you think of it the other way round, you'll perceive form in a much

better way.

Convexity is perceived as a positive volume that pushes into a negative space. **Concavity is the expression of negative space** pushing into positive volume. They both complement each other and structure one another.

Exploring the negative space between positive forms will help you see the whole **character, position and tension of your design.**

You can also group two or three masses and add them to make a new abstract volume, like grouping little masses of clay together into a coherent whole.

The dominant, subdominant and subordinate concept we saw before comes into play here again. [For a quick reminder go here.](#) Work with the axis of your design, in terms of structuring three-dimensionally the mass, volume and space.

Look at your sculptural design from all possible angles.

Study how the viewers' eyes are drawn around, over and under your design.

The negative space should flow around the volume, at first, keep concavities subtle.

Practice to mentally "see" the structuring elements of your design, those inside the outer surface, like an X-ray of your volumetric creation.

That means to **look for the directional axis**, or lines that structure the whole mass. Examine the surfaces that protrude and move to see if they are consistent with the axis and the planes that build up the volume.

Explore these relationships while you turn the design around.

As Greet (2002) suggests, unless the important relationships of the negative volumes, or concavities, to the positive forms is explored, the visual solution is only half controlled. Premier designs jewelry have that **three-dimensional quality of balancing positive forms with negative volumes**, achieving sculptural designs.

Understand the internal movement of your design; concavities also have axis, direction and tension. Negative space becomes as important as the mass. Try not to see your design as figures and surfaces but as an **abstraction of forces and tensions**, just like Henry Moore did so well.

By turning around our conception of mass and volume, the overall result of your premier designs jewelry should look "larger" than the form you started out with.

The complementarity between positive



form and negative space adds up to the dynamic tension across space.

This section is very useful when making premier designs jewelry with the lost wax casting method. There's plenty of **plastic freedom** with this method but you can also achieve great results by traditional jewelry making methods.

This is also true if you're working with other jewelry materials such as resin or precious metal clay.

While **designing with a sculptural twist** in mind, don't forget to check the elements and principles of design section to build upon what has been said in this page.

It all comes together to create **outstanding design**. **Please subscribe to my newsletter: Jewelers Xpress**. It is a **FREE** monthly e-zine with all the latest info posted on Design-Unique-Handcrafted-Jewelry.com

What you will find in Jewelers Xpress:

Hot interviews with the top jewelry artists, you will gain real knowledge from
„Plan ahead your custom jewelry making and ditch common pitfalls

Split from the frenzied, don't let the ticking of the clock disturb you while trying to finish a commission on time.

Save time and hassle by learning how to plan your custom jewelry.

Top designers have a clear vision of all the course of action involved in the making of custom designed jewelry, from its design to its polishing and packaging.

They leave nothing to chance.

Work smarter, not harder. Focus on the tasks that yield greater incomes.

Here are **all the resources you need** in order to develop your own working method for custom jewelry and more.



It will not only work for a single commission but also for making a whole line of jewelry.

Have spare time to do the really important stuff you want but never get around to actually do it.

This is not about time management, it's about **lowering costs and increasing revenues**.

Enjoying and making a living from custom designed jewelry is a privilege few have.

Become one of them by intentionally reaching the discipline of considering the design process.

Doing this will save you tons of troubles.

Imagine yourself woozing swiftly around your work-area, having the materials and tools you need ready for action. Your beads and gems collection tingling in the tray just waiting to be chosen. You have a new custom jewelry design challenge for your best client.

Your inspiration, that rusty but colorful bit of something you found walking home a few days ago is lying on the bench. Your mind is clear, the message you want to portray for that piece is in tune with your client's wishes and your feeling sure that the price will show your effort.

Now that's **working with a design process in mind.**

Smooooooth...

Simple, the point is making these actions part of you:

What is the **intent** or purpose of the jewelry? (message, meaning, metaphor).

What **function** will it play? (anthropometry, durability, style, occasion).

The coherence between the intent of your jewelry and the function it will play is an integral part of the design process. After that you may think about the actual crafting process and other aesthetic considerations.

What **manufacturing** techniques will be carried out? (equipment, space).

Is the design idea **aesthetic**, what can be changed to make it more appealing? (design).

Are there adequate and enough **tools** for the job?

How much **time** is needed to finish the custom jewelry?

How much will it **cost** to produce? (services, tools, materials, gems).

Did the jewelry come out as conceived? (feedback, evaluation).

Achieve great **expertise** and the **acknowledgement** that comes with it.

Making custom jewelry design and handcrafted jewelry is a learning process.

With all the info given here, you'll conceive jewelry looking for **beauty**, mastery and **originality**. Develop creating art through knowledge and **creativity**. Work linking desire and patience with **effort**.

Let your custom jewelry thrive with these useful ideas.

There Are Times When You Could/Should Be Ahead Of The Market.

Jewelers Xpress, my **NEW** e-zine (!), is best for you if you're looking for the following:

- you're interested in learning more about **creative design**.
- you want to broaden your skills set for **crafting** the dimensional object.
- you wish to develop the **visual impact**, appeal and marketability of your jewelry.
- you want to make what you **enjoy** and raise your chances of making a living out of it.

successful and experienced jewelers.

designers are here!

Top jewelers confess all their classified tips!

Learn from the masters.

Read **break-through articles** about the world's top jewelry designers and other experts from the field.

See **amazing jewelry designs** from our constantly growing Jewelry Designers pages. These pages are The **essence** of Design-Unique-Handcrafted-Jewelry.com, don't miss the updates.

If you're just starting in the marvelous world of jewelry making, see the **NEW** Beginners Section. Find all the **basic techniques** explained with step-by-step photos and instructions. Learn the fundamental **methods and tools** used in metalsmithing. [Go to Beginners Section.](#)

NEW This Month: Women Jewelry Designers



CLAUDIA CORREA NOE

Chilean award winner metalsmith, focusing on making colorful jewelry with acrylic and other materials, great design!



EMILY WATSON

Famous jeweler, has astonishing jewelry with organic shapes using enamel techniques. Her work appears in various books.



FRANSIZKA VENRATH

Outrageous jewelry with puppets, toys, dolls, feathers, charms, flowers and lots of vintage finds. Jewelry design with wit!

illustrator of fantastic scenes



Mesmerizing isn't it?

Catalina Estrada's work is of outstanding beauty. Contemplate the art jewelry made by her brother, Nicolas Estrada – also featured here, using Catalina's **breathtaking illustrations**.

Nicolas says: *"This jewelry collection includes romantic and delicate pieces. It is a collection that has been designed in partnership with Catalina Estrada, my sister. In these pieces I have integrated her beautiful illustrations in order to showcase her ideal world"*.



Rich with **icons and idols**, Catalina's illustrations have captivated the international design community.

Her work has appeared in **Grafik magazine** and lots of other international best-selling magazines.

This is her Two Parrots necklace, left.

Her illustrations have been used in a limited edition range of Coca-Cola bottles, **album artwork** for a Sony solo artist, a book cover for Oxford University Press and requests from various **fashion brands** such as Custo in Spain, Anunciacao in Brazil and Paul Smith in the UK.

Folkloric patterns and icons are Catalina's inspiration

Catalina is deeply fond of **Latin-American folklore and aesthetic**. Prismatic colors and expressive images have a profound influence on her work. Born in Medellin, Colombia her memories are full of **light, color and tropical flare**, it

is second-nature to be geared towards tropical scenery, nature and Latin iconography, as seen in her art jewelry.



Japanese esthetic is another source of inspiration, the story behind this is touching.

When she was a **little girl** her father worked for big Japanese companies and used to travel a lot to Japan. He used to bring back home to his little girl lots of gifts such as tiny, richly illustrated books, cards and other traditional Japanese souvenirs.

Catalina **feeds her creativity** from these emotionally charged **childhood memories**.

It reminds me of a little embroidered rose that my father always had stuck on an event ID from a yearly Congress he used to attend. Every time he arrived from this event, getting hold of this little rose was for me heaven! A couple of years ago while organizing some old drawers in my parent's house, I found it glued to a picture, and I was again thrilled! 20+ years afterwards and I still had a rush of emotion!

A talent rising from Colombia and landing in Barcelona

Catalina **studied graphic design** at Pontificia Bolivariana University in Medellín and then started her graphic design career while working free-lance as an **editorial illustrator** for magazines.

As found in www.computerarts.co.uk, after some time, Catalina took the unexpected decision to leave everything behind.

She says that *"I was a little bit tired of graphic design and the clients. It's not as nice when you work for other people, especially in Colombia where there is almost never the budget that you wish for your project"*.

This is her How Windy! necklace to the right.



Catalina moved first to Paris and then arrived to Barcelona where she pursued an illustration course and **joined a public art school of fine arts**. Catalina was starting drawing for her illustrations and, in her own words:

"I was feeling comfortable in the city, was doing what I liked and decided to

keep on going”.



But don't think that everything was perfect.

At the time, **galleries** favored abstract work over the more figurative work of Catalina's art.

She had to find something to make a living... and Barcelona's DJ scene came to the rescue.

"I was lucky to start getting projects for night clubs, I don't listen to DJs that frequently, but it was a graphic world that allowed me to create explosions of colors. It was great because it meant I could do illustration mixed with graphic design, which is what I really like".

Finding her unique graphic language

Catalina did some graphic design for cards to be sold on behalf of charity. That was the **turning point** for finding her **style and personal visual expression**.

"I think that work was the biggest step for me because I started creating my own graphic language. When you work for a client, and your graphic language is not very developed, then you'll always end up doing what the client wants. You never find out what you really want.

In these projects, I could do what I wanted and it was great. I was doing art through illustration, on the computer, and that was it. I was very happy with the results".



Catalina has the power to talk to the **viewers' heart** and grab their attention.

And when they leave the exhibition, whenever they close their eyes, those shiny colors and curly shapes are still glowing in their mind.

Look at this beautiful owl in her Bad Bird necklace.

Marketing her singular approach to artistic illustration

Catalina was so happy with the results, that she **sent her charity illustrations to different blogs**, websites and publishers, "which brought lots of good things", ie: requests from magazines, books and clients. **What a good marketing idea!**

Her inspiration and love of nature, equally loved by her clients, has reassured her **unique style**.

"I come to a point where if a client approaches me, it's because they already know my graphic language. It's very comfortable, very enjoyable and it gives me time to combine illustration with my personal art pieces".



The key to success: listen to your heart

"Art was something I really wanted to do from the beginning. Once I approached it in a different way and started doing it because I wanted to, not because I had to make a living, then I began to do everything and anything, no matter if it would sell or not. Only then did I get an exhibition".

After that **first exhibition**, Catalina was able to go to other galleries with **photographs of her first show** in hand and persuade them to showcase her work.

This approach has resulted in exhibitions at the Jonathan Le Vine Gallery in New York, Iguapop in Barcelona and at the La Luz de Jesús in Los Angeles.

See more of her illustrations and latest events and shows at [Catalina Estrada's web-site](#).

Way to go Catalina, thank you and I wish you even more success!

See her brother's work [here](#).

[Go from Art Jewelry back to Jewelry Designer](#)

[Jump to Home Page](#)

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Precious stones and minerals speaking to your soul

Precious stones have a **mysterious and magnetic quality** that make them so absolutely mesmerizing to all. I believe they also provide a unique link between us and planet earth.

Christine J. Brandt knows very well this feeling and capitalizes it to the maximum

Nature in all its forms is Christine's main **inspiration**. Her workshop has beautifully illustrated books that render brilliant ideas.

She's also inspired with seascapes, a romantic sunset, the Norwegian Sea and the Coleus flower; as well as lily ponds, tiger lilies and other exotic flowers.

A former textile designer, Christine began making her first jewelry collection in 2004 after 10 years of woodcarving.



Beginning her jewelry journey

With her Japanese mother and Norwegian father, Christine **spent her childhood traveling** between the Far East, Scandinavia, Spain and the United States.

Reading through <http://www.refinery29.com>, I learnt that Christine followed a year of High School fashion studies in Paris with a BFA at New York's Parsons School of Design.

After moving to Columbus, Ohio, for a job, Christine stumbled upon her muse. *"When you move," she says, "it's not easy to make friends, so I started taking evening classes at a local arts centers to keep occupied."*



Between ceramics and glass enameling classes, Christine began making her **first versions** of her famous rings.

Jewelry making quickly tested her **personal demands for perfection and accuracy**. *"When I look back at my first ring, my biggest challenge was the fit. It was not easy to wear."*

She obviously found her way to making it more than right.

In 2007, Christine participated in The Crown Jewels at Salon 94 Freemans, showcasing select pieces. In 2008, she won the Fine Jewelry category of the **11th Annual Rising Stars Award**, she proved she's an up-and-coming style-maker.

Lark Books released their 500 Wedding Rings book featuring some of Christine's creations too.

Passion for precious stones in their natural state

Precious stones are her main design element and means to make jewelry.

The semi-precious stones and minerals found in her designs are all completely **unique formations** in their own matrix, meaning they are not cut, polished or dyed, but are as they are found in nature.



The shape of a crystal is given by the atomic structure of its constituent elemental compounds. Atoms within a mineral are arranged in a precise geometric pattern which determines its **"crystal structure"**.

For example, **amethyst**, a well-known and much loved gemstone, is a variety of mineral quartz.

It is made up of elongated prismatic crystals growing and ending as pointy six-sided pyramids. Amethyst form as druzes, crystalline crusts grouping the elongated crystals just explained. Small pieces of amethyst druzes is what Christine uses to make her jewelry.

Cutting-edge jewelry with responsibility

Christine's pieces are finished in as **natural a state as possible**: the wood is never stained or varnished, but burnished and hand-rubbed with several coats of natural Danish oil to bring out the grain and natural colors in the wood.

Christine is already on top of the **green jewelry trend**. We'll all head that way some time soon.

Sustainability and social awareness have not been in the jewelry industry agenda, but planet earth is gasping for attention, so it is our call to start paying attention to these issues and doing something about them.

Christine once said: *"The stones that I find are not conflict. They're minerals that are still found today in caves, and not so rare. I don't want to say that they're not precious, because they are all very precious"*.



Christine collaborated with **Oprah Magazine** making the "O" Bracelet which not only helps women from Rwanda but makes them active participants in the making of these bracelets.

Once again a socially aware initiative, a new road for jewelry makers to explore.

What I like most about Christine's jewelry is the way **she mixes the coarse texture** of the precious stones with the soft movements and **satiny finish** of the wooden rings. The end product is irresistibly sensual and provocative.



Surely **Henry Moore**, one of my all time favorite artists, is a source of inspiration for Christine.

His fantastic **sculptures** with sensual forms, breath-taking voids and touchable surfaces are very similar to Christine's wooden rings.

Christine in <http://sprig.com/experts/39/> explained how she makes her precious stones jewelry:

"All my pieces I carve by hand. I work with a rotary tool to carve out large chunks of matter, but the refined shape is created by hand gouges. I have a lot of hand gouges! You need a lot of control when working with sharp tools; it takes a lot of concentration to get the precise cuts."

Usually when I start on a piece, I'm inspired by the materials. So, I have the stone and I have the wood and I look at the colors and try and match things up that I feel would be an interesting combination, for example, starting with a very grainy wood like wanga, which has a beautiful dark and light brown grain. And then I'll see a red-orange crystal that might be very beautiful with the browns and that inspires me to create a piece.

So often, I don't have the idea already, like this is what I'm going to make. It just forms as I'm carving the pieces out. An average ring of a moderate size, maybe about an inch wide, like a silver dollar, takes about a week to carve and place and set."

Taking advantage of ideas and experience from other disciplines

As I have discussed before, namely in Blanche Tilden's work, there are infinite possibilities for **cross-pollination between disciplines**, and jewelry can benefit so much from that.

Lots of artist, eg: Picasso, Alexander Calder, Frank Ghery, have made jewelry pieces, although it was not their primary artistic interest.

What I am saying is that **jewelry making** can find in other disciplines not only inspiration but also **mechanisms**, technical processes, functional parts and in general, ways of solving problems that enrich our art.

I think **Christine agrees** with me: *"Before I made rings and necklaces, I was carving sculpture for ten years. One day I decided to take jewelry-making classes and do metalsmithing when I lived in Ohio.*

I combined my love of carving wood and my fascination of making things that you can actually wear, and put them together, and I started making jewelry out of wood. Not accidentally, but organically, my process just flows and things just start.

I don't have an idea, I just start working and it just develops naturally".



In www.nationaljewelernetwork.com, I read that Christine **packs her sculpted-wood and precious stones jewels** in traditional Japanese bento boxes that are a tribute to her birthplace as well as her mother's heritage.

When the **boxes** are opened, the jewels float in olive-green mung beans, nature's own packing foam.

Being a child of several cultures, Christine has developed her own way of expressing herself in this art, articulating the best aspects of the cultures that have nurtured her.

Christine is present in every sparkle of her precious stones and in every grain of her beloved exotic woods.

More of her precious stones may be seen at her web-site: <http://christinejbrandt.com>

Christine, it has been an honor to feature your work here, thank you!

[Go from Precious Stones back to Jewelry Designer](#)

Glass jewelry worthy of the famous Smithsonian Craft Show

It's an honor to present **Donald Friedlich's glass jewelry**.

Finding his design in the net was a nice surprise for me. I found his **glass jewelry** to be elegant, simple and clever.

I love his **clean shapes, smooth surfaces** and rhythmic lines.

What you'll find most astonishing about his work is how he has maintained for 20+ years **a career constantly increasing in success**.

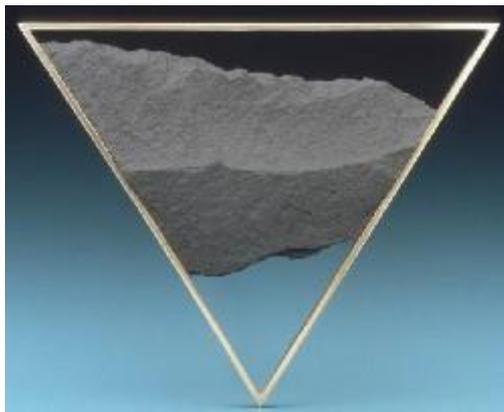
Just one example to illustrate this: **he's the oldest exhibitor in the famous Smithsonian Craft Show**. He's had to satisfy the Show's admissions requirements with his work every single year, how does he do that?



Obviously, he will be attending again the Smithsonian Craft Show this year. Friedlich is **receiving a special award** in recognition of being the artist that has shown the most times.

His early years in the world of jewelry

He started exhibiting since 1983 the inaugural year of the Show, just after **graduating from Rhode Island School of Design**.



Three years later he was **honored as the school's outstanding recent graduate**.

His jewelry design interests were working with **black slate**, precious stones, ceramic tile and, yes, glass.

He tells us that back then "*my inspirations included the landscapes of the American southwest, the art and architecture of Japan, the sculpture of Isamu Noguchi and paintings of Richard Diebenkorn*".

I'll research about the **sculptor and painter** he mentions and write about them in a future article, check your Inbox for this info in your Newsletter.

A design idea and a manufacturing challenge: glass jewelry

Friedrich has a magnificent collection of **glass jewelry**.

Its particularity is that it **plays with magnification** and other optical effects.

He **has collaboratively worked** with glassblowers to create the range of glass used in his jewelry.

You can see the molds they developed which give shape to Friedrich's jewelry



After the glass has cooled down, he starts the **process of creating jewelry** out of the glass forms by **cutting and grinding** the pieces of glass by hand.

The **sculpting** process continues until the refined form **takes the shape of a jewel** he had in mind.

I believe this process of creating a jewel from the piece of glass involves thinking about function and wearability.



He resolves this by **designing how to make glass wearable** as a brooch or a necklace.

Friedrich says that:

"Both goldsmithing and glass working are demanding. I find combining the two into one cohesive design to be my ultimate challenge".

Taking the challenge one step further: integrating glass and jewelry

Friedrich's work is not only about making jewelry with glass. He goes one step further in his **design motivation**.

Friedrich **uses glass** in jewelry for the **purpose of making discoveries about jewelry** itself.

In his web-site he explains this:

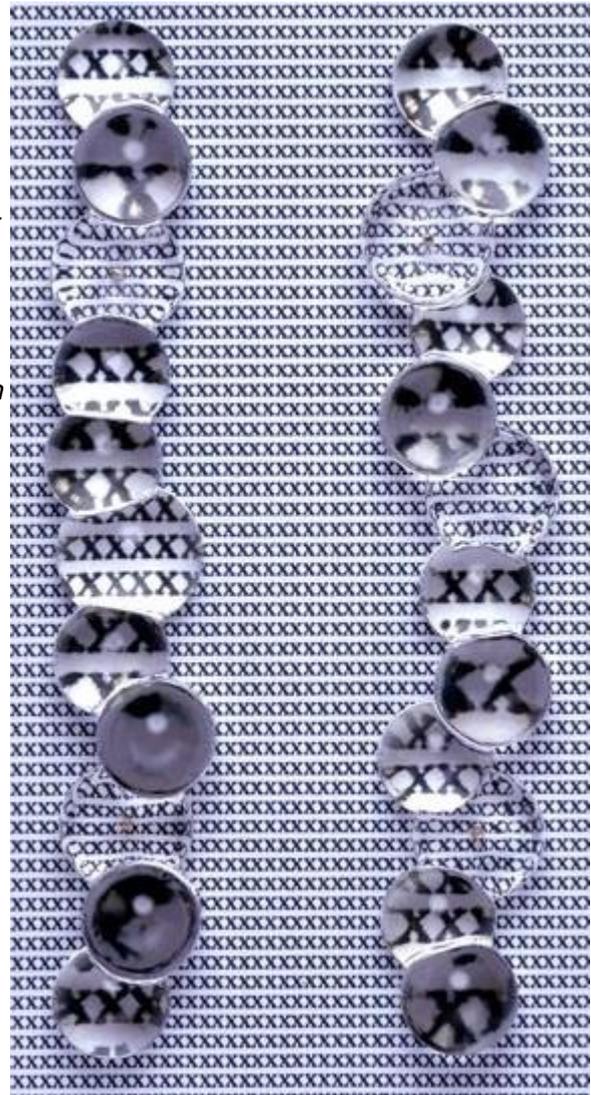
"Much of my exploration has involved a search for qualities that are unique to jewelry as an art form.

One quality that currently interests me is that brooches and necklaces are usually worn against a fabric environment.

My clear glass jewelry exploits the optics of glass to heavily magnify the clothing on which it is worn so the weave of the fabric becomes the image in the jewelry, while my frosted pieces exploit the translucency of glass to exhibit a subtle color shift with the color of the clothing.

I think of these pieces as "site adaptive" jewelry.

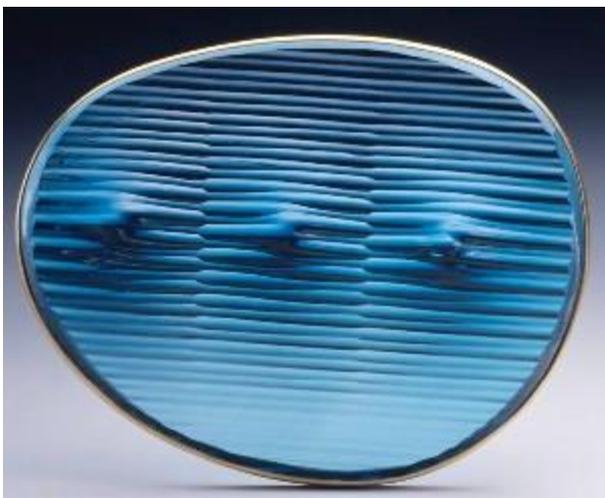
This body of work bridges three craft media: it is jewelry, made of glass, with textile imagery".



Looks a bit like **Biomimicry** to me; jewelry used like camouflage, concealment, adaptive coloration or color patterning.

Nature is the best teacher of this amazing capacity. But I know this is off topic...

Technology and the art of glass



Looking for information about Friedlich's work I found some pictures in Philcarizzi photo series at Flickr of a **workshop** he preceded about glass jewelry.

Browsing the pictures slideshow, I was surprised at the sheer **technology** that goes into each piece of jewelry.

Every single glass mold is made with high tech equipment.

Friedrich has taken a lot of trouble in **creating a glass design** and then translate his dream with the **appropriate techniques of glass making**.

No wonder, he was the **first jeweler to be an Artist in Residence** at The Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass in 2003, where he developed his magnification series.

The **museum's glass studio** is a great place to explore glass.

I'd never thought about the **fluid nature of glass**, a material appropriate for being converted and transformed easily.

It may be melted, hardened, shattered, reheated and reborn in new guises.

Obviously, making magnification glass is an even harder challenge.



I love the simple and straight-forward way he has created the **magnification necklaces**, letting the glass beads speak for themselves, without cluttering the design.

Friedrich's magnification glass jewelry also reminds me of Op Art; a brilliant artistic genre from the 1950's and 1960's. It was a method of painting concerning the interaction between **illusion** and picture plane, giving the impression of **movement, hidden images**, vibrating patterns and swelling lines.

In his jewelry, the **bi-convex type of glass beads** gives them the optical property of magnifying what lies behind them.

This gives structure to the **relationship between form and function** of jewelry that he is trying to reveal.

Adding to the ornamental function of his jewelry, Friedrich plays with what jewelry can do to spark a viewer's curiosity.

The glass beads magnify the textile beneath it, there are many types of textiles, some with intricate design that

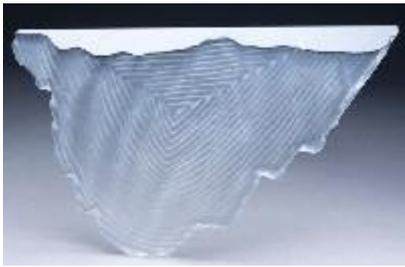


could stand-out beautifully.

Hard work and talent honored with lots of awards and accomplishments

Friedlich has been **honored with numerous awards**.

They include a National Endowment for the Arts New England Regional Fellowship and the **2001 Renwick Gallery Acquisition Award** at the Smithsonian Craft Show.



He served a term as President of the **Society of North American Goldsmiths** and as Chair of the Metalsmith Magazine Editorial Advisory Committee.

His work is in the permanent collections of the **Victoria and Albert Museum**, the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and more.

His jewelry has been **exhibited at numerous galleries and shows**, and is frequently featured in magazines and books.

Click on the image to get enlarged version

