

# Jewellery

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# A silent language

*Mahtab Hanna discusses her creations, her inspirations, and the powerful conversation which exists between the jewellery designer and the jewellery wearer*



## **When did you begin designing jewellery, and what motivated you to become a designer?**

As soon as I was old enough to get my hands on my mother's jewellery, I started to draw necklaces, earrings and rings, using different colours, shapes and forms; that's when the adventure began. I am fortunate to come from a very artistic family, which gave me every opportunity and confidence to experiment with my design ideas and to form my own ideals and ideas.

My motivation stems from my absolute passion for design; a love of creating and making flamboyant statements using different materials. The exploration and creation of intricate handmade pieces where an idea becomes a reality, which draws compliments to the wearer, and at the same time complements and adds to their style and thinking. People are judged on what they wear, and in the same way their jewellery is a statement of who they are and where they aspire to be.

## **Where do you draw your inspiration from?**

My inspiration for my current collection is Mother Nature. Some pieces break with convention and re-write the rules as to how jewellery is made, its controversial message and how it's worn, while others remain true to the spirit of what I call 'dichotomy jewellery' – as the veins of a leaf bring it life, my designs, using different wires in this collection, bring verve to the design.

I am exploring the boundaries between reality and fantasy through the occasional exaggeration of natural shapes and forms, contrasting expressions through hard, often industrial materials and delicately formed natural phenomena like leaves and webs. I am also inspired by making my clients happy. After all, this is where real satisfaction is.

## **Of which piece are you particularly proud?**

That's a tough question! Which one of your kids do you love the most? Every piece has had an influence on me, and has a part of me and my experiences in it. The one piece I would highlight would be my brass neckpiece (left). It represents the beauty of the neck and shoulder, yet allows the skin to breathe and accentuate the form of the wearer. It's a break with convention; more of a runway creation.



Images: Copyright Simon B Armit 2009



### What is your target market?

Individuals with their own style – people who adore fashion jewellery, who prize forms and dimensions, and appreciate handmade craft jewellery. I don't believe in the word 'products'; it's all about appeal and desires. Every person is different and part of the excitement of this process is seeing how each individual wears a piece slightly differently. We all bring our own expression to our clothes and jewellery – it's a two-way conversation between the jewellery and the wearer.

### How are your designs different to those of other designers?

My designs are radically different from others – culture, character and thoughts all play a part in the creation process. My present passion is using metals in the form of wires, adding shape and movement. I like to use traditional techniques with unexpected materials. It's fascinating to see just how much you can do with different materials from a structural integrity perspective, and then incorporate everything you learn within a design; that excites me greatly. Whether it's unique pieces or a limited edition series of work, my quest is to define within those pieces what I am, and the reason behind each design, to make the wearer feel and look special.

### What do you think is the most important aspect to take into account when designing jewellery?

To always remember that it is a responsibility and an honour to make any jewellery, in my view.

Researching and studying to create unique organic ideas – those based on nature – to me is the most important aspect to consider when designing jewellery. Nothing goes out of fashion, it just loses the limelight for a moment in time.

I ask myself how nature would express herself in different pieces, in its design, its movement, how it's worn, who the wearer is, how it's made, the materials used and the way they are used, as well as the impact of light and shadow.

I love creating unique pieces and, where possible, try to understand the style and desire of the wearer. Wearing jewellery is an

expression of self, for no more reason than we choose to wear things we like in some way. While creating each piece is a process and expression or development of a vision I have, it is important to remember that these pieces are for other people. It is important to remember this without compromising on the original vision I have throughout the design and creation process.

### What do you enjoy most about your work?

Some would say seeing the finished piece, but for me it's about the creation process itself – research, influences, and drawing on my own experiences, literature, architecture and materials. The ultimate realisation of an idea or vision, through research, development and manufacture is incredibly rewarding. Once a piece is finished, a journey comes to an end and I immediately look forward to the next one. Looking back over my work is a luxury I have at my disposal but the challenge is to forever move forward and evolve.

Seeing someone wearing a creation, the additional elegance it adds to their own character and what they are wearing – in essence the ability to make someone happy – this is the absolute highlight of my work. The ability to have a conversation with someone through something I have crafted myself, by hand – that is very powerful.

### Who do you admire most in the jewellery industry?

I appreciate and respect a myriad of designers, all of whom have designed and created by using their imagination, a combination of various materials, and an inventive attitude. If I had to choose one designer it would be Shaun Leane, as his designs remain true to his signature, yet it looks so natural when he radically changes that style, it feels like he is always opening another treasure trove of creativity.

### How are you currently developing your design work and your style?

I am staying true to my style, the integrity I bring to each creation, but also constantly pushing the boundaries of my imagination, the demands of the client and my creativity in terms of the materials I use. I am influenced by two things presently for my next work: how the human form plays a part in religion and politics, the result of my upcoming catwalk show, to be held later in 2010; and poetry, where different verses lead me to want to create pieces that can be seen as art, not only creative jewellery.

### Where would you like to be in three years' time?

A brand that is mentioned in the same breath as those I admire. To make each design a part of someone's heritage, and to walk into a function and see one of my creative pieces being worn, and that piece drawing stares of admiration – I will smile to myself.

