



HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH JEWELLERY DESIGNING?

Designing jewellery has always been a passion since I was a kid. I made a conscious effort to go to Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York to study jewellery design for three years. I did an Associate's degree in jewellery design there. FIT was the school that I really wanted to get into and I was fortunate enough to get that opportunity.

WHO WOULD YOU SAY ARE YOUR INFLUENCES?

I really admire designs by Tribhuvandas as some of his creations are very unique. From the international front I like designer Fred Leighton and David Yurman's creations. Fred Leighton has clean basic lines in his diamond jewellery designs and also uses coloured stones such as rubies, emeralds. Personally, I like very fine lines, very clear cut designs in an *décor* style and I use a lot of this style in my work.

WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO BRANCH OUT BY YOURSELF?

It has always been a dream, an ambition since I was a kid to own a jewellery store one day. It's too soon right now — it's only a year and eight months that I've been doing it on my own. I've been approached by a few people to get into partnerships. But I think in the long-term that creates a lot of hassles. Being independent and working on your own is much tougher and there's a lot more work to be put in. But I think it's worth it. Doing it all on my own helps me in laying my foundation which will boost me to go forward.

HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCE AT FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (FIT), NEW YORK BENEFIT YOU?

Besides an extensive course in jewellery design, I also took classes in gemology, design and grading. It was a very exhaustive course. The experience and knowledge I got there is unparalleled to anywhere else. Being in New York was a very good experience because I was in the centre of the fashion industry. FIT itself is

JUMPSTART

DEBUTANTE JEWELLERY DESIGNER, **LAVINA GODHWANI** SPEAKS TO **SAVIA RAJAGOPAL** ABOUT HER ENTRY INTO THE CREATIVE REALM OF JEWELLERY DESIGN

in the middle of the fashion garment district of New York. So being around there was very inspirational.

HAVING WORKED WITH A DESIGN HOUSE IN NEW YORK AND THEN WITH DIAMOND TRADERS HERE, WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES THAT YOU HAVE OBSERVED?

I worked in New York and then came here and worked at Opera House. They are just far more organised abroad. In New York, things happen a lot more quickly than here. Implementation and production of your designs is much faster abroad. But India is most definitely progressing in every way. Still, time wise, we need a lot of improvement as people are very relaxed with delivery deadlines here. For me, delivery on the agreed time is important as the date given to a client holds utmost importance.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN TASTES AND DESIGNS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE WEST?

The West is more fashion-forward as they are more aware of the trends. But India is catching up very fast. People are definitely much more 'with it' now, than they used to be 10 years ago. They are much more aware! This also has to do with the fact that people have a lot more spending power now. Also, being able to travel a lot more to the West helps them to keep a track of trends there.

WHAT ARE THE TRENDS FOR THIS SEASON?

Big coloured stones are very hot, especially those set in gold, embellished with diamonds. Large chunky pieces are more popular than small feminine delicate ornate pieces. Pink tourmaline is a very big seller. Pink I think is the colour of the season which is why that stone is doing really well. For this season I would say the trend is large motifs and large stones that make a statement. Globally, pearls have come back in a very big way. Pearl necklaces or pearl lariats as we call them (strands of pearls), mixed with turquoise, coral, gold beads are what people are wearing a lot. Also, layers of gold chains with coloured stone beads are selling. Big pendants are something you can see all over the place. Cocktail rings are extremely popular and chandelier earrings are still going strong. Anything that's a bit dramatic with a

touch of colour is selling very well.

WHAT KIND OF JEWELLERY DO YOU PERSONALLY PREFER?

There is a difference between chunky silver jewellery and the kind of big pieces that I make. I like something that's big and glamorous but not chunky like silver jewellery. So I like a big stone that is set in gold and has a little bit of diamond.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR DEBUT COLLECTION 'BLING'.

Bling comprises primarily of cocktail rings alongwith pendants and earrings. I have used big coloured stones like



turquoise, coral, black and green onyx. I have also used faceted stones such pink tourmaline, blue sapphires, yellow citrines, green peridots, blue aquamarine, amethyst. So my collection involves all these coloured stones set in 18-carat gold embellished with diamonds. Also, I use geometric motifs and the art décor style in my creations. Nature is a huge inspiration for me. So I have a lot of floral designs. It's an amalgamation of all these factors that I've put together. To sum it up, my collection is elegant, glamorous jewellery that makes a statement.

DO YOU RETAIL IN INDIA ALONE OR ABROAD?

In New York, I retail at a store in Soho

called Marisa Perry and in Italy, I have an agent who sells for me.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMER PROFILE.

My customers are glamorous women who like to make a style statement and are very trendy and fashion-forward.

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES YOU FROM OTHER DESIGNERS?

I think the use of extra large, big stones set my designs apart. There are lots of designers who do use big coloured stones but I don't think they do it quite the way I do. My style itself is very different from the rest. The 'big' pieces are what set my designs apart.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

Like I said earlier, nature inspires me. Sometimes even a broken leaf can work as an inspiration. Art décor style which I use a lot can inspire me from anywhere. For example, how buildings are constructed. Certain stain glass windows, the way they are placed — all that has been, a huge inspiration.

DO YOU THINK USING COLOURED STONES IS A PASSING PHASE OR A TREND THAT'S HERE TO STAY?

Well I think it's a trend that's here to stay for now at least. It has been abroad for the last three years now. It has caught on because younger women have the money to spend which they did not have earlier. Spending power is a lot more today. Coloured stones in itself brings a lot of life, and colour to jewellery.

WHY IS RAJASTHAN A PREFERRED CHOICE TO SOURCE COLOURED STONES?

Rajasthan is popular because of the sheer variety of coloured stones there. I buy a lot of stones from Zaveri Bazaar in Mumbai, but I haven't seen a variety as big as Rajasthan. The quality too is excellent.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

I'm looking at retailing at stores later in the year or next year. Right now I'm very busy with my private clientele. Also, I've started doing business in New York as well as Italy. I'm trying to make that grow. But in Mumbai, retail is something that I'm still thinking about. I'm not sure about it as yet.