

Wearable art

Nature inspires jewelry designers

By TAMI BICKLEY



1,3: Kazzie Talmadge
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Kazzie Talmadge's collection is available at The Pinnacle Gallery in Carefree. Contact her at kzzaz@hotmail.com.

Dorit Herlinger's jewelry is available at Goldstein Gallery in Sedona. Her Web site is doritherlinger.com. Herlinger also accepts personal appointments to view her collection. Call 480-391-0602 or e-mail herlingerd@yahoo.com.

An artist's mind is tough to calm. Images flash like broken streetlights. Ideas swirl like pinwheels.

As Kazzie Talmadge drifts to sleep most nights, she isn't counting sheep.

"I'm thinking of jewelry," she says of the imagery that consumes her nocturnal thoughts. "I just can't go back to sleep. I have to get up and make a sketch of what I'm (visualizing)."

What she sees day-to-day and what she envisions with closed eyes are fodder for her jewelry creations.

The New York native describes her designs as "fashion forward" and "trendy." Talmadge handcrafts necklaces, earrings and bracelets from a variety of semiprecious stones and metals. She uses 18-karat gold, sterling silver and gun metal, which has a blackish appearance.

"Definitely not classic," she says of her pieces.

Now that she has lived in Arizona for more than 20 years, Talmadge has forged relationships with clients who occasionally request custom-made jewelry. But for the most part, she uses her own imagination when envisioning a new piece.

On a recent trip to Portland, Ore., Talmadge's eye for art turned a visit to a button-and-ribbon emporium into material for new designs as she realized the "gorgeous color combinations."

"I get inspired by everything," she says, emphasizing that nature often jump starts her intuition.

Appreciating the artistic elements of life is a key component in crafting jewelry, according to Valley jewelry designer Dorit Herlinger.

"Jewelry is wearable art," she says.

The Jerusalem-born designer moved to the U.S. 22 years ago. She graduated from Arizona State University after majoring in fine arts and mixed media. Early on, she painted and sculpted. About seven years ago, she realized she could paint and sculpt "on a smaller scale," thus introducing her love of jewelry into the equation.

Memories of her native country shape many of her ideas. She talks about Jerusalem stone, its unique texture and how she brings its aesthetic appeal to her work by "forging the metal with a hammer."

Herlinger works alone, manipulating 18-karat gold, sterling silver and enamel with her tools and hands. Her designs are "contemporary," but not trendy.

"They're timeless," she says. "They stand alone. If you're wearing a black dress, all (you need) is one (of my pieces) and you will get noticed."

When she is not reminiscing about Israel, her everyday experiences fuel her artistic ideas.

"I'm inspired by everything from nature (to) the fluffy sweaters at the mall," she says. Herlinger's one-of-a-kind designs are never replicated, but she will produce similar pieces for those who want them.

Both Talmadge and Herlinger have created Judaica, usually for custom orders. Talmadge has created necklaces as bat-mitzvah gifts. Herlinger is working on a mezuzot collection after one that she made for a friend was so appreciated. ©