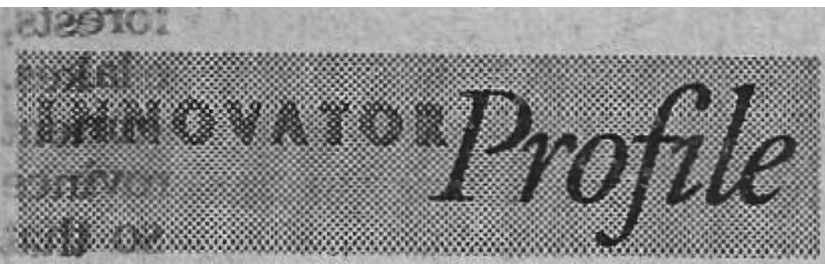


Abugov, creator of family jewels

Jeweler revels in designing ladies' 'signature piece'



David Abugov, co-owner with his wife Marcella of Touch of Gold in Halifax, is a many time award wishing jewelry designer. His most retecht coup was the grand prize in the 2001 Canadian Jeweller's National Design Competition for his "Dripping Diamonds" earring design. While proud of his many awards including 11 from Canada's foremost jewelry publication, four from DeBeers Diamonds, two first-place U.S.A. Spectrum awards and, last but not least, the honour of being the first Canadian designer ever chosen for inclusion in the U.S.A. Masterworks Collection — he's a designer because he loves the craft. He loves people and he loves giving them something that will last through time.

David Abugov began designing jewelry at summer camp in 1968, at age^T16, carving wooden sections for haMd-made earrings. In the early '70s, Unattended McGill University in his hometown Montreal, received a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Education. Then, during a summer job at Vittorii Archangel! Jewellers in Montreal, he discovered his life's work and signed on to apprentice for fisfar years.

While working there, Mr. Abugov met his future wife, Marcella, a native of Belize. They married in 1982, and hemoved to Halifax to work with her at>the store she founded, Touch of Goki, which together they developed into the business it is today. Marcella Abugov has also won awards, including the Progress Women of Excellence Award in 1992 for entrepreneu-rial hmovation.

rOur whole essence is to take care ofpeople the way your grandparents used to be taken care of, in a very, very old-fashioned way," Mr. Abugov says.

-Mr. Abugov's staff have been in the business 15 to 20 years. They're "professionally trained, with the designation of Graduate Jewellers, so thlt when you come in, you're dealing with your old family doctor,"

"You're working with someone who knows you, who knows your needs and really cares about satisfying those needs, rather than just simply doing business.



Lilly P. Blell Photography

David Abugov, co-owner of Touch of Gold in Halifax, is an award-winning jewelry designer. His most recent coup was the grand prize in the 2001 Canadian Jeweller's National Design Competition for his Dripping Diamonds earring design.

"It's a very different approach, relative to walking into any of the bigger box businesses, where there's no love, no care, where it's simply product," he says.

"We want to go right back to the future, where we're providing all of the modem design and innovation, but in a very old-fashioned touchy-feely, caring package."

"Our way," he says, "is a slow, methodical building of trust with the intention of forming these deep relationships."

Once that's accomplished, "what we try to do is make our client's lives really easy. One phone call during a very busy businessman's day to somebody who knows all of his or her needs, and a little description of what the occasion is, and we take care of everything for them. They can go on with their life knowing, 'Hey, I've got my lawyer. I've got my trusted accountant. I've got my

family doctor, I have my jeweller,'" he says.

"In the old-fashioned European sense of the word, the jeweller is held in the highest regard The jeweller creates the family jewels," Mr. Abugov says.

"One of the things I really love to do, that is my speciality I would say — I'm just like a kid — I like to

rummage through the jewelry drawer," he says.

In getting in touch with who his client is so he can design that 'signature piece,' he says, "I tell people to bring in all their stuff, to dump the drawer right on my lap, and head-to-head, talk to me about who they are, what they are, and where they're going.

"I look at their colours, their appendages, their lifestyle, their occupation and I zone in on what I perceive to be the real need, the essence and the spirit of that individual and then we look at all the stuff that's been accumulated—with an emphasis on 'stuff — because there's an awful lot of very dysfunctional acquisitions that have come from many different areas, including inheritance and spousal gifts," he says.

"It's hard enough for a woman to pick her own jewelry and when they get gifted by men, sometimes it just doesn't fly. I kind of like to take the puzzle apart and put it back together the right way."

What is a signature piece? He gives this example: "You look in your closet and you see all this stuff, and you say: 'Gee I got that on sale, and W picked that up for next to nothing, and this was a three-for-one buy, but this pair of jeans — that I bought for f full price. They fit me so well, and every time I put them on I feel young and slim and wonderful and fabu-g lous. I love these jeans.' That's the kind of jewelry I look to design, j where somebody gets it and can put it on for a casual afternoon, keep it on right into the evening, and just wear the death out of it," he says. "It f becomes what I like to call a 'signature piece' — something that is theirs and theirs alone, designed Z specifically for who and what they are.

While all this may sound expen-l sive, it doesn't have to be. He says, "for a couple of hundred dollars, I've taken several pieces of jewelry and j put them back together into onel beautiful piece. I'll use a pre-con-l structed piece that I had in my store I and transpose different stones into patterns that are familial, meaningful, s uniquely that individual.

"Whether we do a \$20,000 piece I from scratch or a \$500 renovation \ using the client's old pieces, we're \ going to end up with the same thing j — your original one-of-a-kind, spiri- i tually endowed signature of who you are and what you are. Nobody else in the whole world will have this and i when you wear it, you wear it with i pride." Or your money back.