

Ruth Taubman

Ruth Taubman remembers the “cattle calls” with buyers she and a partner would have to endure to sell their newly designed jewelry and accessories at upscale New York department stores. And she remembers being one of the only women in a business dominated by fathers who handed down their jewelry businesses to their sons.

“Even when I would go to wholesalers in the market where I was buying materials, they would say, ‘Whose secretary are you?’ or ‘Who’s your father?’ because the only women involved were working for somebody else or had a father in the business.”

Those days — and the days of lugging cases of hand-made jewelry to buyers only to see it knocked off at half the price — are long gone for Taubman, 44. She now presides over a custom jewelry business that works through private showings and referrals only.

“How many people get to do what they love and make a living at it?” she asks from her office in a small brick cottage that stands a few yards from her Ann Arbor home.

Ruth Taubman’s jewelry is all about details. She is painfully nit-picky when it comes to details, from the way the stones are set to the closures to the quality of the stones themselves.

She has spent years developing relationships with gem suppliers “who know I’m only looking for the most unusual, best quality pieces. My clients know I’m very driven in terms of how the piece is put together and the quality of the materials.”

All this attention to minute detail pays off when client and jewelry meet.

“I love that moment when the piece and person come together,” she says. “A piece has to feel fabulous on.”

The perfectionist streak in Taubman runs quite deep. Her father, an aeronautical engineer, ran an aluminum manufacturing plant at which she worked during summers between school. In addition to inheriting some of her father’s perfectionism, Taubman also gained “a deep understanding about how things were put together, particularly metal work.”

She can design a pendant for example, and take components of the pendant and make earrings from them. The earrings might have variations that allow them to be worn formally with South Sea pearls, for example, or with a sapphire or tourmaline in the same setting with a hanging drop attached.

“When I sell pieces, I try to build them as a part of a collection and, because I have long-term relationships with my clients, I’m not trying to hit a home run one time,” she says. “For me, it’s all about that ability to have pieces that can be worn together.”

Taubman’s pieces reflect an inspiration derived from many places. She knows that art strikes emotional chords in many different ways and she appreciates a certain aesthetic in folk art, furniture, glass, ceramics, even wallpaper and beautifully designed hardware.

“I can take the most inveterate non-jewelry person,” Taubman says with pride, “and turn them into a jewelry junkie.” ✨

