

## BEHIND THE DESIGN



# Winning by Design

## Bayot Heer Adds a Spectrum Award to Jewels by Design's Collection

Llyn Strelau, owner of Jewels by Design in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, has a small problem. He's running out of wall space for the plaques and trophies his shop has garnered from competitions over the 15 years he's been in business. There was almost enough space until this year: Strelau won in the Platinum Honors division of the AGTA Spectrum Awards, and one of his goldsmiths, Bayot Heer, created an 18k, platinum, diamond, and emerald ring that captured both the top spot in Division I and Best of Show.

Those honors brought the totals, in the Spectrum competition alone, to nine wins and honorable mentions and three Platinum Honors. On top of that, over the years, Jewels by Design has won six Buyer's Choice awards from *Canadian*

*Jeweler* magazine, as well as the bygone International Pearl Association's Paragon award and the De Beers Diamonds-Today award. Entering contests and, it seems, winning them are part of what Jewels by Design is about.

"Competitions are a chance for my jewelers to have fun," Strelau says. "Day to day, we design pieces for real people, and there are limitations we have to respect. I love jewelry on people's hands, but they've got to be able to get a glove on."

When it comes to competitions, though, you could say it's time for the gloves to come off. "A contest should bring out new and difficult things," says Heer. "It's a chance to do something new, to go out on a limb a little bit. It's my personal challenge to do something I haven't done before."

Strelau encourages his designers to enter contests. He gives them, to some degree, free reign—although he retains "veto power" over what gets made, since each piece will ultimately represent the Jewels by Design name. Still, he affords his employees a lot of leeway. "If someone can tell me why they think a design is going to work, if they can convince me, they can go for it," he says.

The Jewels by Design process of designing for contests generally starts with a box of stones and an open invitation. "We have a hefty inventory of stones," Strelau explains. "I tell them to go through the boxes, find something that turns them on, and give me some sketches."

In that box of stones, Heer found the emerald that became both the inspiration

The most recent award winners to come out of the Jewels by Design shop are Llyn Strelau's platinum brooch with 18k accents, sapphires, tourmaline, and a moon face carved from spectrolite (left) and goldsmith Bayot Heer's 18k ring with a triangle-cut emerald, platinum wires, and pavé diamonds.

## BEHIND THE DESIGN

and the centerpiece for his Spectrum Award-winning ring. On loan to the shop from EmeraldStone Inc. in Victoria, British Columbia (one of Jewels by Design's suppliers), it is a 1.69 carat untreated, fancy, cut-corner triangle. Two sides are longer than the third, and those two sides also differ in length by roughly a millimeter. It is this inequality of sides that first caught Heer's eye.

"I saw and liked the challenges the gemstone posed, without knowing what the outcome would be," he says. "The asymmetry may have laid the foundation for the design."

Strelau, in fact, had at one point also considered using the stone. "I love the stone, but nothing about it leapt out at me," he says. "The three designers all had a kick at the can, but it's probably more [conducive to] Bayot's personality. It was no surprise that he took it and ran with it."

Heer's design uses as its basis not only the inequality of the stone's sides, but also its cut. The ring comprises two separate rectangular plates of 18k gold. The plates themselves are curved slightly, the back plate (facing the wearer) larger than the other by about 2 mm on all sides and tapered to balance and accent the stone's asymmetry. Platinum wires, set 1.5 mm apart, connect the plates. The wires completely pierce the metal, so that each of the outer walls appears studded with small dots of platinum. Offset to the left of the upper plate, the emerald is tilted gently toward the middle. It rests in an oversized bezel set with pavé diamonds.

"The angular form of the stone is contrary to the curve of the ring," Heer explains. "From the top view, there are two curves that hold the ring together. The softness of the curve breaks up the lines of the stone. If the plates were very angular, it would have been too stark."

To begin designing around the stone,



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Heer first scanned the outline of it on a computer. With the exact size and shape of the stone always at hand, he began sketching, working from the top view.

"Even though I only drew the top view, I had an abstract idea of how it looked from the sides and the front," he says. In the original designs, the ring had just one plate—but the overpowering size of the stone virtually forced Heer to add the second plate for balance.

"One plate would not have been enough. It would have looked lopsided," he says. "And it would have been hard to wear."

Heer went through some 100 sketches before hitting upon the winning design—more or less. There was, in the original "finished" sketch, a platinum wire curved from one corner of one plate to the bezel. When Heer made a scale drawing of the ring, he felt that the extra wire added a feel of too much height to the bezel, which was, by virtue of the depth of the

stone, necessarily large. That, combined with the curve of the ring, left "too much gold showing," according to Heer.

Luckily for him, it's the Jewels by Design way to get input from other people. "There's always discussion, lots of give and take," Strelau says. "Things get shopped around." Despite being the owner, even Strelau is not above the give and take when it comes to his own designs.

"Llyn does most of the design for the clients, and he consults us on both the technical aspects and the aesthetics," says Heer.

So Heer asked Strelau his opinion, and they agreed—first, lose the third wire. Strelau then suggested setting the bezel with the pavé diamonds to turn it into a design feature. And so the final design was created.

From there, with the Spectrum deadline looming, the Jewels by Design shop shifted into competition overdrive. There is a point, Strelau says, where the adrenaline kicks in and all that matters are the contest pieces. And that adrenaline kicked into overdrive for this year's competition. Because business had been so good, the Jewels by Design shop didn't start working on their Spectrum entries—which were due in September—until August.

"I know that these guys were working lots of overtime that last week," says Strelau, who was out of the shop at that time. "If a customer came into the shop, one of them would go down and be nice to the person, but if they needed repair work, it was, 'Sorry, we can't do it this week.'"

In the end, sweat equity paid off. The contest pieces were finished within two days of the deadline and ultimately they earned two more awards—testament to the talent and pride of Jewels by Design—to hang on the rapidly decreasing wall space at the shop.

But for Heer, there was one other reason to win. "It was one of the incentives my boss set," he admits. "He said, 'If you want to go to Tucson, you have to win the Spectrum.'"

Enjoy Tucson, Bayot. **JOHN SHANAHAN**