

# Bayot Heer

by Robin Gambhir



**Elevated Green:** Emerald ring in 18k yellow and platinum, bezel-set with freeform triangular un-treated Colombian emerald (1.69 ct, supplied by EmeraldStone, Victoria BC.). Bezel is encrusted with pave-set round brilliant diamonds, 0.30 tcw. Winner of 2000 AGTA Spectrum Award, 1st place Division 1 and Best of Show.

For Bayot Heer, the wanderlust was short lived! A trip he took to Banff at the age of 20 opened his eyes to the world that existed outside of his native Switzerland - a country where he can trace his ancestry back some 400 years. Two years after that trip, he took everything he had and moved to Calgary. He's lived there ever since. Strangely, he had never actually been to Calgary before he moved there; coming eastward during that 1978 odyssey, he had only come as far as Banff.

Long ago, Montreal was the place that many new immigrants decided to make their home. This was especially true for

Europeans who recognized some of the same urbane sophistication they had at home. More recently, Vancouver and Toronto have found favour amongst new arrivals. But Calgary? Bayot says he liked the palette better. The blue sky, the brown and tan hues of the prairies - so different from the lush greens of back home. Ontario? Too much like home, he says.

I caught up with him at the studio of fellow award-winning designer, Llyn Strelau. Bayot is a designer at Strelau's well-known Calgary studio, Jewels By Design. He has been there for five years. When he first arrived in Calgary,

he was exploring furniture design, a discipline he learned in Switzerland. But it was at the Goldsmiths, a prominent Calgary firm, where European goldsmith Eric Mursula taught Bayot the fundamentals of jewellery making.

Bayot would probably take issue with anyone who characterized his move from furniture to jewellery as upward. He regards any artistic endeavour as equal, since most borrow from each other. Not surprisingly, his favourite period in history is the Renaissance, a time when all forms of art, from painting to architecture were, as he puts



1. **Snakes & Ladder Ring** hand-fabricated platinum.

2. **Northern Harmonics**: Brooch of platinum spear with 18k yellow gold inlay, 18k and platinum wires and bezels. Set with 31.75 ct freeform, stabilized ammolite and assorted faceted round, princess and square step-cut blue sapphire rubies and emeralds, 1.50 tcw.

3. Two pair of hinged back ear clips: On the right, 18k yellow gold flush set with 12 round brilliant-cut diamonds, on the left, 18k yellow and white gold with bezel set princess-cut blue sapphires and bead-set round brilliant-cut diamonds.

4. **Just Passing Through**: Ring, 18k yellow gold and platinum bezel-set with round faceted ruby and round brilliant-cut diamond. Winner of a *Canadian Jeweller Buyers' Choice Award*.

it, "in sync:' So too with the Bauhaus, a group of German artists who, during the 1920s, sought to break down the academic distinctions between different types of artists. They believed, as Bayot does, that there is no difference between an artist and a craftsman.

Given that he is a designer with such a varied view of his art, his influences are many. Architecture, industrial design and even painting find expression in his designs. These influences are found in the form and shape of his designs. But color also plays a significant role. When asked which metal he prefers to work with, he answers: "18k gold because the color is intense and it can take a variety of textures." Some of his tastes are crossovers from other arts. Textiles, and more specifically the fashion industry, also influence the colored gems he works with and, interestingly, the textures he gives to the metal.

To Bayot, a well-cut gem is one that, when you look inside, "goes on forever". He likes fancy shapes and, perhaps betraying some residual Swiss rigidity, he prefers geometric shapes. He praises (convincingly) round brilliant

cuts: "Since they are not bound by any lines, they are the ultimate for a designer seeking freedom for their design." Sapphire is another preference because of its wide range of colors and durability. The issue of durability introduces a new line of thinking to this discussion. What about the client?

For a piece to work, "it has to be wearable and durable." Some customers will give him carte blanche while others will have some idea of what they would like. Would he make something ugly? If that was what the customer wanted? He winces. There is sometimes a tension between what the customer wants and what the designer is willing to put his or her name to. When prodded, he answers with a 'no'. But he qualifies this by saying that, before answering 'no' he would do whatever he could to prod the customer in a different direction. So far, it hasn't been an issue.

His work has garnered him a bevy of awards, including three from *Canadian Jeweller* in the last five years. In 2000, he won an award from the American Gem Trade Association for best piece over \$10,000. One would think that all

these awards would send customers clamouring at his door. It hasn't. Award winners must often content themselves with what a trade association award really means - recognition by one's peers. But that means a lot to one who constantly strives to improve his skills, knowledge and ultimately his craft. This is all part of his professional journey. The journey to Calgary from Switzerland seems easy by comparison.

But Calgary was a good move. Fourteen years ago, he met his wife Fran there. Two children, Nicholas, 12, and Emily, 10, followed. Not surprisingly, his family is his passion. He likes to cook on weekends and enjoys hiking, cycling and photography. And furniture making? He doesn't do that anymore. He lacks the space for a proper shop and he no longer has all of the tools. But he knows he can always return to it No matter the moniker, artist or designer, he is always a craftsman.