

COOL STORES

AMERICA'S MOST UNIQUE JEWELERS

JEWELS THAT DANCE ASHEVILLE, NC

OWNER: Paula Dawkins and
Carol Schniedewind

WEB SITE: www.jewelsthatdance.com

YEAR FOUNDED: 1983

(expanded and renovated: 1998)

DESIGNERS: Dawkins and Schniedewind

TOTAL STORE AREA: 3,200 square feet

INTERIOR BUILDOUT COST: \$160,000

SLOGAN: Living your life Asheville style
wearing Jewels that Dance

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 7

TOP SELLING BRANDS: Alex Sepkus,
Simon G, S.A. Gems, Breuning, Michael
Good, Samuel Jewels, Studio 311,
Caroline Ballou, David Virtue, Hot
Diamonds



A FLIGHT OF FANCY IN PARIS OF THE SOUTH

NORTH CAROLINA STORE HIGHLIGHTS AMERICAN CRAFTSMEN



FOR PAULA DAWKINS AND CAROL SCHNIEDEWIND, Asheville, NC, still resonates with the spirit of 1930s craftspeople who came from the Appalachian Mountains to sell their wares in the artsy little town tucked in the mountains. Downtown Asheville, rendered a virtual ghost town by the mall boom of the '60s, was reclaimed by artists and turned into what has been called the Paris of the South. Dawkins and

Schniedewind helped pioneer that rejuvenation in the '80s. Jewels That Dance, the first designer jewelry gallery, remains at the heart of Asheville, both literally and philosophically. The artistic soul of the city is alive and well in Jewels That Dance; though it offers an eclectic collection of popular lines, it continues to spotlight the unique, handcrafted pieces inspired by the original Appalachian artists. "We still hold in our hearts — and have room in the store — for one-of-a-kind pieces of designer jewelry from American craftsmen," Schniedewind says. — JUDY TRUESDELL MECCA





COOL THINGS CUSTOM COMFORT

1 The store was designed and outfitted to maintain a relaxed, casual atmosphere that maximizes customer comfort. Its walls and interior archways are sunny yellow with mocha accents, both colors chosen to create a calming, welcoming and warm feel. The casework, arranged to create what Schniedewind calls an easy energy flow, consists of small components, arranged so that clients can walk around them easily, examining displays and pieces

»» HEARSAY THINGS HEARD AROUND THE STORE

“It always feels so good to be in this store.”

.....
Husbands who were less willing than others to shop for jewelry, now have a sitting area with comfy chairs available to ease their pains.

from every angle. There are “nooks and crannies” rather than long cases that create barriers between employees and customers. The store isn’t boxy or rectangular; it’s a sparkling labyrinth that facilitates browsing in an unhurried atmosphere. Two private spaces are available for customers working with designer Dawkins to create individualized pieces; it’s important, the owners say, to assure the customer he or she is the sole focus at the moment of their consultation. In addition to Dawkins’ office, there is a “custom room” outfitted with microscope, scale and other gemstone-viewing equipment.

DESIGN THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

2 Dawkins has two effective tools at her disposal when she sits down with a customer to design a custom piece. First, she has, according to her partner, an uncanny knack of being able to intuit the customer’s needs. Whether it’s her degree in psychology or a skill she’s honed over her 25 years in the business, she

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH CAROL SCHNIEDEWIND

1 WHY DID YOU DESIGN YOUR OWN INTERIORS?

We like the arty, creative side of doing things ourselves, and we feel the display cases are part of the artistry of the store, too. We like the case to be as beautiful as the jewelry it holds.



2 HOW DID PAULA'S WORK COME TO BE EXHIBITED IN 75 NATIONAL GALLERIES?

I always felt that Paula’s been a little ahead of the curve. She would design a line, and then a year or two later we would see it other places. Nobody copied her; she just had her finger on the pulse of where things were going.

3 HOW DOES YOUR STORE FIT IN WITH THE ASHEVILLE OF TODAY?


We’re on a wonderful street that is all occupied and eclectic with great local flavor. It’s a lovely, walking city, a downtown-living city with older renovated buildings housing street-level retail and nice condos on the upper floors.

4 WHAT'S THE MAIN THING THAT MAKES YOUR STORE UNIQUE?

That we can make pretty much anything. No, not “pretty much” ... we can make anything. Our retail and custom components make us extremely versatile.

5 HOW ARE YOU CONTINUING TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THESE CHALLENGING ECONOMIC TIMES?

Jewelry is so personal; so much emotion is attached to it. People still get married and celebrate other occasions, sometimes with new pieces, sometimes by redesigning something they already own.



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✓ The store's case placement encourages browsing.

» TRY THIS BREAK OUT THE BUBBLY

Upon the close of an engagement-ring sale, pop open a bottle (or half bottle) of champagne, and have staff members toast the happy couple — or nervous groom to be. Make sure it's a new bottle for each sale; there's magic in that **"POP!"**

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- **Visuals** – displays, windows, store appearance
- **Marketing** – advertising plans and events
- **Security** – key, merchandise, mail control, hiring checkpoints
- **Services** – jewelry cleaning, warranties, appraisals, credit, in-house repairs, client books



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has a 99 percent success rate. “I often hear customers say, ‘How did you know this was what I wanted?’” she says. In addition, though it was a struggle to go from fabricating to wax to Gemvision’s CAD program, technology provides benefits that made the transition well worth the challenge. She can design the piece in front of the client, demonstrating every aspect of how it will look. “Using the program’s rendering section, I can show them a three-dimensional, lifelike image of their piece. We talk it over, and then boom! ‘OK! Let’s go!’ they say. They’re able to trust me and see that the product is going to be worth the cost.” Once the design is agreed upon, however, the jewelry is handcrafted, creating a best-of-both-worlds situation. “It allows us to provide a more complicated design at a more affordable price.” Another benefit of the CAD program is that an interesting demographic, “tech-savvy” young men, are attracted to the technology. “It gives me a way to relate to them,” Dawkins says.

BRANDING MAGIC

THE DANCE THAT STARTED IT ALL

3 The dancing figure logo — and the store’s name — came about in 1983 when legendary dancer/choreographer Martha Graham’s troupe performed in Asheville. “The city has always attracted really great musicians and dancers,” Schniedewind says. The “new kid in town,” Jewelry Design by Paula Dawkins (the store’s original name), purchased ad space on the back page of *Playbill* magazine. The owners designed the ad themselves; it included a little dancing figure running up the side as well as the phrase “Jewels that Dance,” a nod to Graham’s group. Delighted by the simple lines and joy of the character, they started put-

ting it and the phrase in the corner of all subsequent advertising until finally, Brian Smith, a graphic designer with whom they were working on promotional materials, said, "This should be your name! And this is your logo!"

BEFRIENDING THE WEB

LOCAL CHARM, NATIONAL CLIENTELE

4 Though their initial foray into the world of Internet advertising was less than stellar ("We had a shopping cart at first — it was a disaster!"), their website has turned into a valuable marketing tool. "Customers come in and say, for instance, 'I'm from Chicago; may I see that ring I saw online?' They've Googled Asheville and checked us out before they arrive," says Schniedewind. The owners have found that customers didn't want to order jewelry via their computers ("People like to feel, touch, see..."), but they *do* want to preview the store's offerings. The Jewels That Dance owners also use their website to educate customers on the proper care of their jewelry, and there's a video presentation about their South African diamond line. There is one item, however, that "sells like hot cakes" online — a commemorative Asheville charm, designed by Dawkins and available in sterling silver or 14K yellow gold, usually depicting a rising sun and the town nestled in the mountains. They create a new collectible charm each year, and it continues to be a popular item.

**»» TRUE TALE
BLUE MEMORIES**

When the owners knocked out the wall and incorporated the next-door store into their own, it took them a while to get the smell of "perm" chemicals out; it had been a "blue-haired ladies' beauty parlor" in the '50s.

LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

CHAMPAGNE CELEBRATIONS

5 The Jewels That Dance staff members are genuinely friendly, according to Schniedewind, and develop lasting relationships with the clientele. "People come in, possibly nervous about making the big commitment," she says, "and we make them comfortable. We sell exquisite, expensive pieces of jewelry, but we're not snooty; we're professional." Sometimes couples come in together to choose an engagement ring. Octavia Campbell-Orde, a sales staff member, says, "Once they choose a stone and we set it in the ring they have chosen, we will open a bottle of champagne to celebrate this exciting moment in their life with them." Employee Marlene Clevenger started with the company when she was 17 and has been with the store for 17 years. Clevenger has an amazing knack for remembering customers' names, their kids' names, what they do for a living, and their jewelry preferences, all of which contribute to the welcoming charm of the store. Clevenger grew up in the Asheville area and speaks with a distinctive North Carolinian accent, which, tourists and transplants to the area often find delightful, Schniedewind says. "People are charmed by the local accent."

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AND SEE YOUR *DIAMONDS DANCE!*

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