

**Showcasing an
exclusive jewelry
collection handcrafted by
American designers**

Jack and Elizabeth Gualtieri frame an abalone blister pearl with 22kt gold granulation in the "Empress I Pendant." Keiko Mita expresses the texture and landscape of the desert in this 18kt gold and diamond "Large Cuff Bracelet," opposite.

Redefining Haute Couture



BY CLAIRE PATTERSON

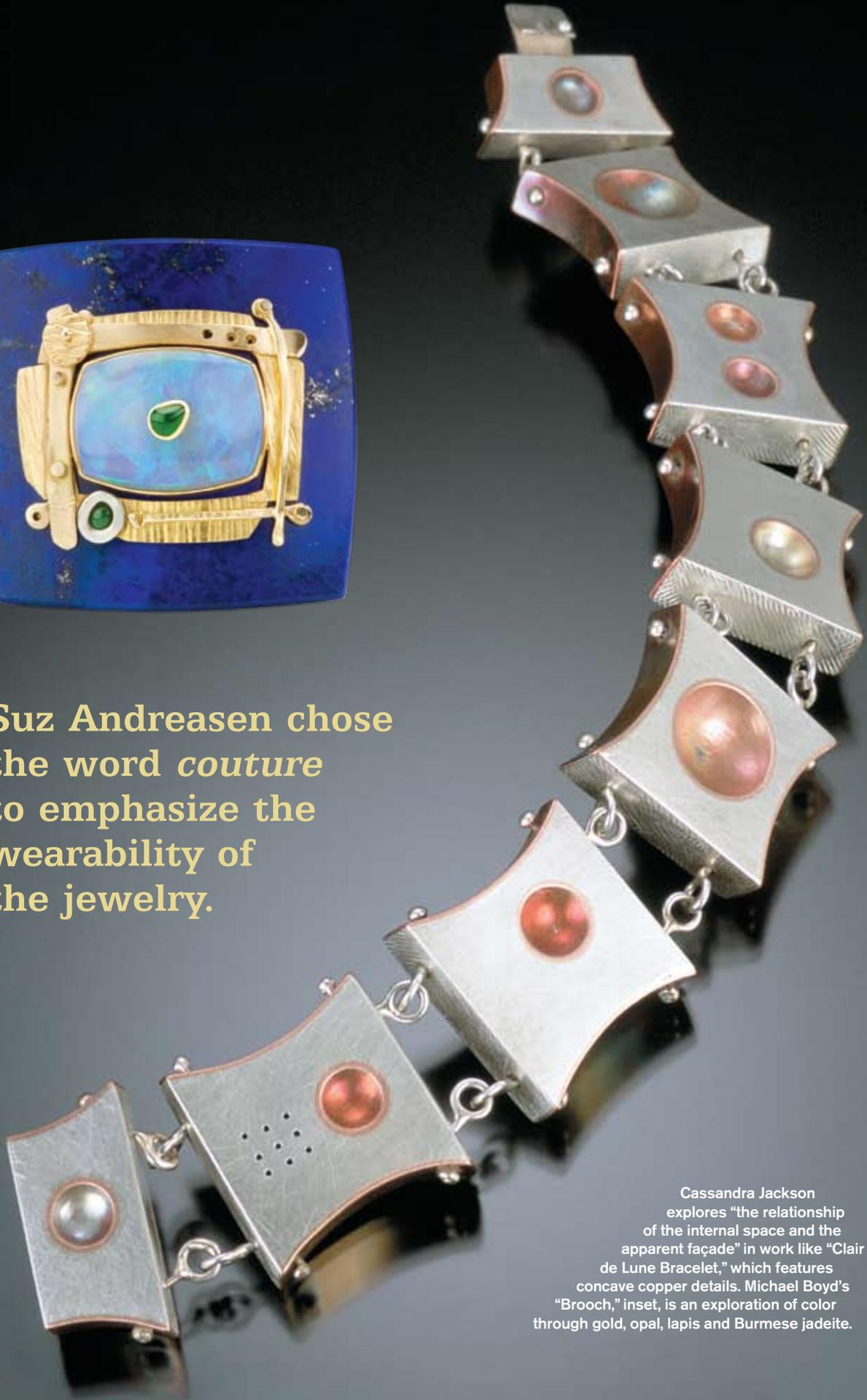
WHEN YOU HEAR THE PHRASE *haute couture*, the first thing that probably comes to mind is high-end fashion. Artist Suz Andreasen is out to change that notion with The Couture Jewelry Awards, a highly selective new competition for studio jewelers, juried by some of the most knowledgeable curators and professors in America today.

A one-day exhibition and sale unveiled the winning artists' work to the public in December at the Pratt Mansion in New York. It featured 44 jewelers, who sold work ranging from plastic married with silver to luxurious 22kt gold coupled with precious stones.

Andreasen chose the word *couture* to emphasize the wearability of the jewelry. To "change the perception of jewelry, you have to completely re-identify it in a new movement," she maintains. In essence, it's not mere ornament, it's wearable art.



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Cassandra Jackson explores "the relationship of the internal space and the apparent façade" in work like "Clair de Lune Bracelet," which features concave copper details. Michael Boyd's "Brooch," inset, is an exploration of color through gold, opal, lapis and Burmese jadeite.

“Jewelry was more independent until it got locked into fashion in the 1930s and ‘40s,” says juror Ulysses Grant Dietz, decorative arts curator at the Newark Museum in New Jersey. “Suz is trying to pull it back. That’s why this show is interesting.”

COLLECTORS FOCUSED ON JEWELRY may be familiar with Andreasen’s work. She launched her Women Want Jewelry line in 1997 to create elegant, timeless pieces that women can pass along to their children. Two years ago, she started Suz Andreasen Couture, an exclusive line of high-end custom pieces.

As her own creative efforts were being recognized, however, Andreasen noticed that some of her peers were not getting the level of attention she thought they deserved. As a way to correct that oversight, in 2006 she created The Couture Jewelry Awards to showcase American jewelers.

In addition to Ulysses Grant Dietz, the jurors included Karen Christians, founder of



Stephen LeBlanc created “Unfurling Torque and Earrings,” above, from one piece of sterling silver to explore the transition of line to form. Although it isn’t easy to spot, Patricia Madeja incorporated a clasp into her “Slinky Bracelet.”





Metalwerx School for Jewelry and the Metal Arts in Waltham, Mass.; Ronda Coryell, a professor at the Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts in San Francisco; Bert Denker, a curator at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware; Judith Price, president of the National Jewelry Institute in New York; and Ursula Neuman, the jewelry curator at the Museum of Arts & Design in New York.

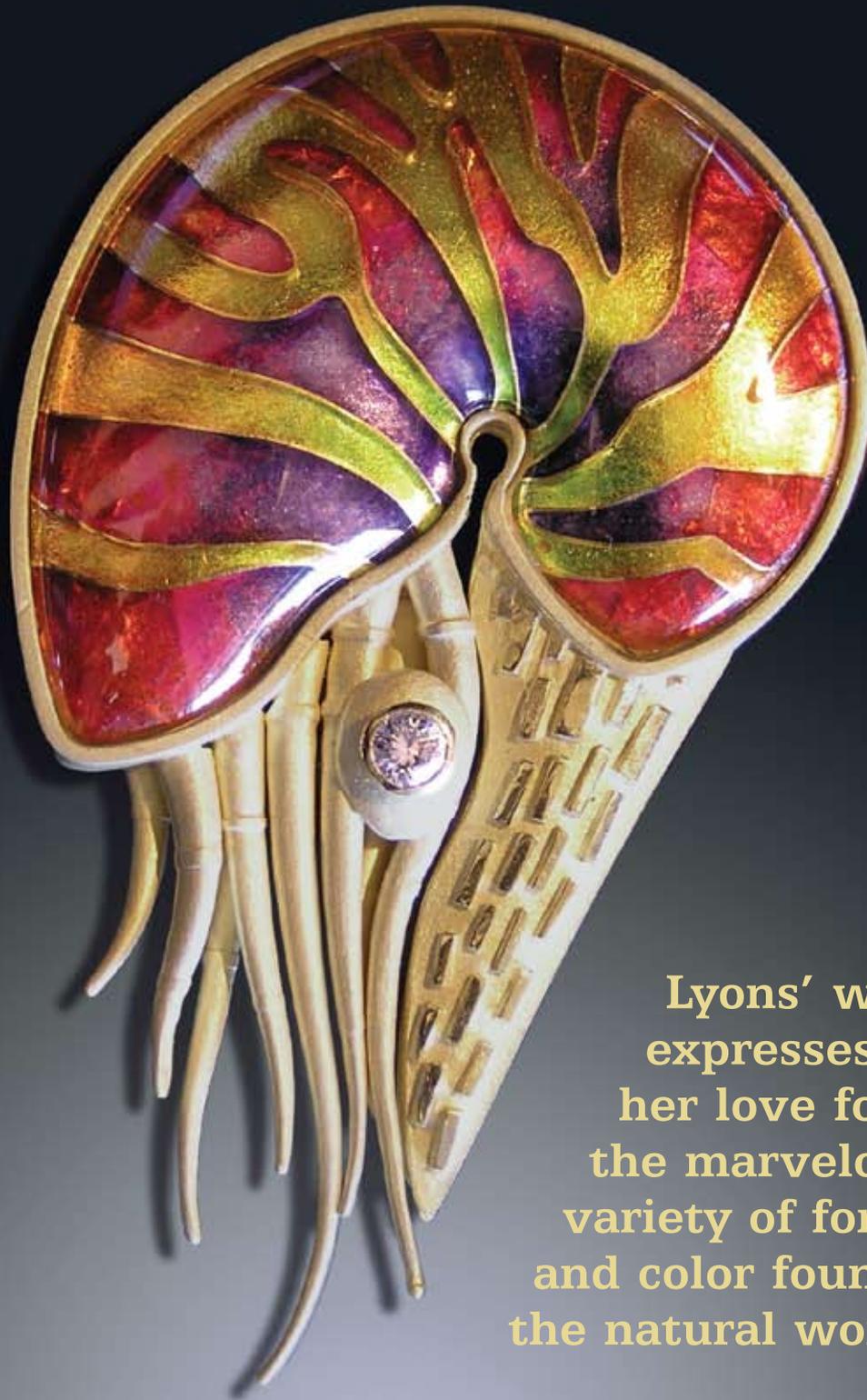
TWO ARTISTS RECEIVED SPECIAL HONORS as part of the December event. Amy Roper Lyons was awarded top prize for her stunning use of gold and enamel. Pat Pruitt won for his interpretation of Native American designs in stainless steel.

Other notable jewelers included Stephen LeBlanc, Andrea Lucille Shin and Keiko Mita. LeBlanc's "Unfurling Torque and Earrings" play with the absence and presence of space and material. "I intend to grab the viewer's interest, to coax them ... to explore the form," LeBlanc explains. Hand-forged from one piece of sterling silver, the corresponding necklace juxtaposes high-polished and matte surfaces.



Martin Key contrasts tourmaline and peridot sections in a "golden temple" setting in this "Sonagiri Pendant," top. Couture Award winner Pat Pruitt marries traditional Native American themes with contemporary stainless steel in this "Cuff." Andrea Lucille Shin layers precious materials in "Waterfall Necklace," right, without overwhelming the piece.





**Lyons' work
expresses
her love for
the marvelous
variety of form
and color found in
the natural world.**

Couture Award winner Amy Roper Lyons masters
enameling in "Chambered Nautilus #2 Pin/Pendant."

The Golden Girl

Suz Andreasen's interest in jewelry stems from her childhood. Her father, the late George Andreasen, invented orthodontic memory wire, and helped lay the foundation of her career. She sat with him at his metalsmithing bench for hours as a child, making wax molds and learning basic techniques.

Andreasen participated in her first craft show in Chicago at the age of 10. "It was literally a card table and a chair with a blue velvet cloth," she says. "Most of my customers were adults, which made everyone laugh." She continued to participate in two shows a year, earning enough money to pay for college.

Although jewelry is her first love, Andreasen switched gears in college, graduating from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University in 1985 with a degree in film. She embarked on a series of "serious" film jobs mixed with work in all aspects of the jewelry industry. In 1991 she left the film industry and started selling jewelry full time.

In between work on her independent jewelry lines, Women Want Jewelry and Suz Andreasen Couture, Andreasen finds the time to produce the Couture Awards as a volunteer show director. Why does she do it?

Andreasen follows a strict, but generous, code. "You always have to give back fifty percent more than you get. ... If you're in a position where you know you can help someone, you have to do doubly good," she says.

The dates for the 2008 show will be announced at www.coutureawards.com. You can also log on to this site to purchase the accompanying book, *American Couture Jewelry: An Exhibition in Print*. —c.p.



Suz Andreasen works with clients to create custom, high-end pieces like "Lava," above, and "Tigerlily Suite" through her line, Suz Andreasen Couture.





“Jewelry is only complete when it is worn.”

—Ursula Neuman, jewelry curator, Museum of Arts & Design

Shin embraces precious materials, but doesn't overwhelm a piece like “Waterfall Necklace” with pearls and stones. “It's all about the color,” Dietz says. “René Lalique and Louis Comfort Tiffany both thought of jewelry in terms of color and shape and line. They used materials for those purposes.”

Mita's “Large Cuff Bracelet” awes with a glittering sea of diamonds, but if you look closely, each cut is tiny, only 1.78 ct. The cuff “represents lakes wandering around the desert,” Mita says. Dietz was instantly drawn to the piece. It “hooks you in with precious materials for the wrong reason, and then shows meaning and hooks you for the right reason,” he says.

No matter how you view the exquisite collection of studio jewelry in The Couture Jewelry Awards, one thing is certain, according to juror Ursula Neuman: “Art jewelry is only complete when it is worn—creating a collaboration between maker and wearer.” ●

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Debra Adelson's “East/West” pendant, above, stands out with colorful acrylic and unexpected tanzanite accents. Valerie Jo Coulson's “The Gauntlet Cuff” is a metaphor for challenge, struggle and triumph, and represents opal soldiers flanked by black spears.