



MONDAY, JUNE 1ST

Workshop Focuses on Retaining Top Talent

How to choose and retain top talent was the topic of the day at Saturday's America's Best Jewelers workshop.

Moderated by David Peters, director of education for Jewelers of America (JA), the hour-long roundtable held in the Wynn hotel featured panelists Jay Lell, a consultant to Overseas Diamonds; Mark Sanders, vice president of Sissy's Log Cabin in Pine Bluff, Ark. and Melissa Tyler, founder of body jewelry company Tummy Toys in Boston.

The session, called "Strategies for Compensating and Retaining Top Talent," opened and closed with Peters pointing out that now is the time for store owners to assess the performance of their sales staff and, if necessary, dip into the available pool of workers to cultivate fresh talent, and not be afraid of replacing underperforming employees.

"We have hard questions to ask ourselves as owners," he said. "Do we have the people we need to move forward?"

Once a retailer determines that their store is adequately staffed, they then need to decide how best to reward good employees for a job well done.

At Sissy's Log Cabin, contests are a



crucial part of the store's operation.

"We love games. Sissy and (son and store President) Bill, you can't put them against each other," Sanders joked.

"We're a competitive group."

"We like contests and we've got a lot of them in our store," said Founder and CEO Sissy Jones.

Jones said one contest she uses sev-

eral times a year involves dividing all employees—even those who don't work in sales—into teams and setting a goal for each team. If the team reaches that goal, everybody on that team gets a monetary reward.

"They love it," Jones said. "They like money. My people like dollars."

DAILY SCHEDULE

Monday, June 1, 2009

7:00am – 5:00pm

REGISTRATION OPEN
Alsace Ballroom

7:30am – 8:45am

BREAKFAST
Lafite & Latour Lounges, Margaux 2
Ballroom
Ticket required

8:00am – 9:00am

AMERICA'S BEST JEWELER
BREAKFAST WORKSHOPS
TEN CREATIVE IDEAS
FOR OLD INVENTORY
Mouton 1
Open to retailers only

9:00am - 5:00pm

COLLECTION FLOOR OPEN

9:00am - 10:00am

OPEN BEVERAGE BARS
Lafite/Latour Ballrooms

12:00pm - 1:30pm

LUNCH
Lafite & Latour Lounges, Margaux 2
Ballroom
Ticket required

3:00pm – 4:00pm

COOUTURE SWEET TREATS
PASSED
Collection Floors

3:00pm – 4:00pm

OPEN BEVERAGE BARS
Lafite/Latour Ballrooms

Offbeat Materials in the Couture Spotlight

Pyrite, moose antler, diamond bort. A few years ago, the Couture community might have written off designers using these nontraditional materials as nothing more than new-age experimentalists. Today, they're lauded as cutting-edge stylists and are stocked by the most discerning retailers around.

The phenomenon lies at the intersection of two distinct trends: the vogue for all things eco-chic and the embrace of materials less costly than precious metal.

Artist-turned-jeweler Anna Ruth Henriques understands the appeal. At the show, Viewpoint, her sales and marketing agency, introduced a brand new necklace she made from hunks of pyrite, or fool's gold, the brassy yellow mineral. It offers a big shiny look for just \$2,100.

"I love the silvery metallic nature of the pyrite that contrasts gorgeously with my signature 18-karat gold, a shade I call mango gold," said Henriques, adding that she likes to place her deli-



A NUBIAN IBEX AND A WILD BOAR CARVED FROM MOOSE ANTLER BY DESIGNER KATEY BRUNINI.

cately sculpted signature spider on top of the rugged stone.

At the Design Atelier, designer Devon Leigh showcased a pendant made from an enormous slice of amethyst stalagmite. She was joined in her love of the purple stone by Elena Votsi, a newcomer from Athens—and winner of the Couture Design Awards's "Best New to Couture" category—whose collection of outsized

fashion-forward gold jewels included a raw amethyst pendant.

But it's not just up-and-coming designers who have embraced raw, organic and distinctly funky materials. Erica Courtney, the Los Angeles-based jeweler best known for her platinum and diamond red carpet style, displayed a \$7,200 drusy quartz pendant, the likes of which are sold at the rock

and mineral shows of Tucson gem week.

Likewise, Couture designer Katey Brunini incorporates cocobolo wood and goat horn pendant into her luxe jewelry collection, which includes a new deluxe objet: a carved antelope antler featuring scenes from the animal kingdom capped with solid 18-karat gold and 17 carats of diamonds. Cost? A cool \$69,000.

At Gurhan, Color and Glamour Collide

Gurhan, the international designer and master goldsmith, is unveiling a number of new collections filled with color and creativity for the Fall 2009 season. His designs are perfectly in line with the trends seen on the runway for fall: Color Craze, Cut it Out, Tough Chic, Country Glamour.

With everything going on these days, people are looking for a little Color Craze to brighten their day. Featuring stones such as faceted lemon citrine, rose-cut rubies, and cabochon pink and green tourmalines, the Aurora, Watermelon and Gumdrop collections offer that a much needed burst of color. The sophisticated opulence of Desert Rose glows with rose-cut rhodolite, iolite, tanzanite and amethyst.

Attention to graphic looks and cut-out shapes are the hallmarks of the Iznik collection, inspired by 16th century pottery and tiles from the city of Iznik, Turkey. Gurhan transformed the distinctive floral motifs and patterns of Iznik into striking styles in pure silver accented with pure silver gold and stones.

With a distinctive cocoon-like shape, the styles in the Cocoon collection offer looks that are either light and airy or substantial and significant. In designing the Lace collection, Gurhan continues to revolutionize the use of pure 24 karat gold, by creating



intricate patterns with the metal.

A little bit of glamour juxtaposed with a touch of edge in Tough Chic create a striking look. In the Twinkle collection, a sea of black diamonds is framed in pure 24 karat gold. Sensual pure 24-karat accented with lacy dark silver creates an enigma of style that is dead-on in the Lace-Black & Gold collection.

Cool hues of green and blue with tones of mushroom evoke the aristo-

cratic glamour of the English countryside in Country Glamour. With the muted palette of Laguna and Desert, the dramatic silhouettes become interchangeable for both day and evening wear. The swirls of opal peeking through brown ironstone in the Boulder collection are elegantly enhanced by Gurhan's pure 24 karat gold designs. Sorbet Spice is the perfect for classic tweeds an essential element of Country Glamour.

Deborah Pagani Jewels: Not For Faint of Heart

New York City-based designer Deborah Pagani is bringing sexy fashion to fine jewelry. She has created items sure to be coveted by the fashion forward women of the world.

Modern luxury, art, and fashion are the passions that surround both her personal and professional life. Deborah's childhood obsession, Cleopatra, became the perfect muse to inspire a collection for modern women that bears the timeless qualities of powerful femininity epitomized by the Egyptian queen. These themes, with an underlying influence



of 80s rock and roll, inspired her newest pieces for Fall 2009.

Each piece stands alone. Each piece makes a statement. The power of the Pyramid Cuff, the luxury of the Gotham Ring, the audacity of the Zeena ring, the sensuality of the Superwoman earring, the fashion of the Patra earring—all part of her 18-karat gold compilation of rings, cuffs, bangles, necklaces, pendants, and earrings that are not for the faint of heart.

Just in line with fall trends, Deborah's Idol earrings rock black diamonds with milky sapphires in an edgy, yet wearable design. In the Cleo and Annie earrings, fringe and chain are surprise elements executed with a three dimensional appeal—they look great from any angle. Architecturally inspired, the Chan earring has a fluidity and grace with the pop of golden citrines that boast a textured appeal.

The Zeena ring truly represents the bold nature of Deborah's designs. Deborah has also created the one-of-a-kind Warrior ring showcasing a 43.68-carat ox-blood coral centerpiece from Sardinia that has a truly magical presence.

Deborah's designs have appeared on Oprah, and in such magazines as Town & Country, InStore, Gotham, Hamptons House & Garden, US, In Style, Women's Wear Daily and Cosmopolitan.

Alex Sepkus Takes Candy Line Into Bridal

Alex Sepkus Inc. has expanded the hugely successful Candy Collection featuring bands with delicious combinations of richly colored sapphires, colored diamonds and white diamonds to now include mountings and bands specifically created for the bridal market. The new collection will be introduced at the Couture show at the Wynn Las Vegas from May 28th through June 2nd, booth #275.

"We were so excited to launch the initial Candy Collection several years ago and were extremely pleased with how well the line was received by both retailers and consumers," said Jeffrey Feero, Managing Partner at Alex Sepkus Inc. "We never anticipated the response to be so enthusiastic...it was a hit at every trunk show. More and more brides were ordering the bands for their weddings, and requesting special orders of complementing engagement rings and men's bands. So we decided to expand the collection by offering several bridal mounts with center and

side stones, as well as more band styles for both the ladies and gents."

Though most center stones are still requested in white diamonds, Feero has seen a big increase in the use of



colored center stones in pinks, yellows and blues as well as natural colored diamonds. The bands for bride

and groom can be color coordinated with the engagement ring to create a custom set, and all pieces are available in platinum, 18-karat yellow or rose gold.

The expansion of the collection into the bridal market has been a great opportunity for Alex Sepkus Inc on all levels. Not only has it brought in new customers to their existing retailer partners, it has opened new doors as well. "They not only love this collection, they are amazed at just how extensive our bridal selection is and are adding in other bridal jewelry as well," Feero said.

Renowned for his signature microscopic detailing, Alex Sepkus uses the finest precious metals and stones to create jewelry designs that display style, grace and elegance. His work is carried by more than 100 of the finest jewelry stores and galleries across the country.

For more information, please call 212.391.0709, or visit www.alexsepkus.com

