



Suzanne Owens's unique point of difference is her skill at adding sparkle to old jewellery, whether it's a sentimental family heirloom, a piece that is out of fashion or in need of repair or a loose gemstone.

The golden touch

If there's a family heirloom languishing at the bottom of your jewellery box, a Dallas-inspired brooch that was all the rage in the '80s or even a ring from an ex that you no longer wear, Suzanne Owens at Pearl Perfect Design Room is just the woman to bring the sparkle back, writes Maria Moynihan.

Suzanne Owens's love affair with jewellery was first ignited in her aunt's antiques shop in Dublin. "There was one diamond ring I used to be allowed to slip on my finger if I was good," she smiles.

Years later, Suzanne still plays with pretty, precious things. Except now, she creates stunning bespoke jewellery to mark milestones in her clients' lives, often by reinventing and remodelling heirlooms or rarely-worn pieces.

Suzanne, who is based in the Dublin suburb of Terenure but has clients from as far as Clonakilty, is a qualified jeweller and gemmologist with more than 25 years experience. Her eye for fine design was first piqued when she won a prestigious scholarship to the CFH Institute in Lausanne, Switzerland in the early '80s. "The quality of the watches and the jewellery, you didn't see it in Dublin then," she recalls. "It was literally another world."

Suzanne opened her own jewellery shop in Dublin and specialised in pearls, which saw a surge in popularity in the '80s, thanks to Princess Diana. Over the years, however, she gained a reputation for her design skills, and in September 2009 she closed the shop and launched the Pearl Perfect Design Room.

"The change in the economic

environment was really a catalyst," she says. "It was a good time to make a decision. It evolved from demand, and this is what I'm happily able to focus on now."

While Suzanne creates eye-catching, "Yes, I'll marry you!" engagement and wedding bands, her unique point of difference is her skill at adding sparkle to old jewellery, whether it's a sentimental family heirloom, a piece that is out of fashion or in need of repair or a loose gemstone.

"I can see how a problem can be solved easily," she says. "There are hundreds of stories, but they all have a journey, which is lovely, and that's the aspect that I just never tire of."

For example, when one woman came in with an elaborate but outdated brooch, Suzanne was able to extract the diamonds to create an exquisite ring. "The brooch was an expensive piece, but do you have an heirloom in the bank or do you have the pleasure?" she says.

Another client brought in a pair of cufflinks that had belonged to her late father. "I designed a brooch that was like a bunch of balloons, so we had white gold string going up to the four circles in the brooch," explains Suzanne.

"If you melt it down, the piece is gone, the memory is gone. Why would you do that? It's the ability to make it happen for people and

give them pleasure with the pieces. I love that."

Suzanne draws up her designs using a computer programme called CAD, which shows clients 2D images of how their jewellery will look once remodelled. There is no set price list; the balloon brooch might have cost approximately €150, but a more intricate piece could run into four figures.

"We always try to give budget options as well as a design option," says Suzanne. "But the more elaborate the job, the more expensive it's going to be."

Jewellery care is a topic that's close to Suzanne's heart, though something many of us neglect.

To bring that sparkle back, Suzanne recommends regular, gentle cleaning with warm water, an old toothbrush and a squirt of Fairy liquid – and not working your fingers (or rather your rings) too close to the bone.

"Your jewellery does everything you do, but you do need to mind it," she says. "You can wear your rings washing your hair, but not putting on creams, cooking, playing sport or in the garden. It's common sense. Jewellery is not designed for that."

"It's precious, it needs minding and then you will have it forever." **CL**



PEARL PERFECT LOVE STORIES

LEA'S DIAMOND SOLITAIRE

"Lea knew what style of ring she liked and what suited her hand. While on holiday in Rome with her boyfriend, she saw a solitaire ring that she fell in love with. Her boyfriend then came to me and chose a stunning one-carat D colour brilliant-cut diamond, and enhanced Lea's original design wish with extra baby diamonds down the shoulders to create a truly fabulous ring. He planned to propose when they were away for a weekend and had to carry the ring around for two days before he found the right moment. When he did, she was over the moon."



ELAINE'S YELLOW GOLD TWIST RING

"Elaine had her grandmother's ring in her jewellery box for years. She loved the ring because it was her grandmother's, but never wore it because it was so worn and delicate and not her style. We took the five old cut diamonds from the ring and handmade it into a contemporary style in 18ct yellow and white gold, adding extra baby brilliants to enhance the new shape. Now it is worn and loved every day."



DOROTHY'S WHITE GOLD BAGUETTE RING

"Dorothy had a very beautiful antique brooch belonging to her grandmother and mother. Stunning as it was, it was not a piece you could wear today. We did designs up with CAD, using the baguette and brilliant-cut diamonds, and created a ring (*below right*). Dorothy was involved in the design process, guiding us in what she liked and disliked. There are enough diamonds in this piece to make up a matching pendant and earrings, which will be ready later in the spring."



SHARON'S WHITE GOLD FULL HOOP RING

"Sharon had four rings, all from special occasions over the years: engagements, birth of babies and anniversaries. She was wearing three together on one hand, which didn't show them off and caused wear, as they rubbed against each other. We took all the diamonds out – 32 in total – and remodelled them into one statement piece that holds all her memories."



SANDRINE'S ROSE GOLD RING

"This ring was born from an engagement ring and a diamond pendant (*above right*) that Sandrine had been given for a special occasion by her husband. She didn't wear the pendant as much as she had thought, and we redesigned both pieces into this one fabulous ring (*below right*), which she now wears every day. It has all the sentiment and memory of the original pieces."



ALISON'S SOLITAIRE WITH CURVE

"This solitaire was designed for the birth of a baby. See how the yellow gold curves around the diamond to embrace and celebrate the new baby. The yellow and white gold also complement each other and represent the mom and dad."



MARIANNE'S TANZANITE RING

"The cluster of diamonds in this ring are from Marianne's engagement ring from 20 years ago. It has been worn and loved all that time, but was in need of repair. While on a trip to Africa, Marianne saw tanzanite, a beautiful purple blue gemstone, and fell in love with its wonderful colour. Instead of remounting her original sapphire cluster, her husband suggested she change it for a tanzanite that they saw on their trip. The ring was remodelled with original brilliant-cut diamonds and new princess cuts down the shoulder."

