



Photos by Dave Wallis / The Forum and photos special to The Forum

Karin Jacobson makes jewelry, including the pieces she models on her finger and around her neck. At right are more of her designs from top to bottom, including her pagoda pieces, the matrix bracelet and ring and her Glamrocket ring.

A sparkling résumé

Former Moorhead resident's jewelry designs attracting attention

By Tom Pantera

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Karin Jacobson combines an ancient craft with a uniquely futuristic style—and an artist's sensibility with an entrepreneur's bent.

Jacobson, 29, grew up in Moorhead. She is a goldsmith and jewelry designer in Minneapolis whose work is starting to get noticed.

She's as likely to talk about how she's launching her career as a professional artist as she is to talk about her designs.

But it starts with the art itself. "Generally speaking, it's large, it's colorful, it's futuristic," Jacobson says.

She takes her inspiration from comic books, science fiction and Japanese art, from animation to ancient wood-block prints. Even a quick look shows those influences.

Her "Rocket Trio" of rings shows all three. One piece, which she calls "Glamrocket," looks like it could be worn by The Mighty Thor; small wings jut out from either side of a pear-shaped gem. The second looks like a tiny, futuristic pagoda and the third recalls Japanese chrysanthemum designs.

Other pieces recall more traditional looks. Her matrix bracelet and ring are square, heavy pieces encrusted with

ranks and files of tiny, red stones.

Her pieces sell for anywhere from \$100 to \$1,500. It's work that has already started to bring her honors at the dawn of a promising career.

But it's promise that wouldn't have come her way without some hard study and some hard work put into self-promotion.

Jacobson moved to Moorhead with her family when she was 6. She went through Moorhead schools until her junior year, when she transferred to the Perpich Center for Arts Education in Minneapolis. It was there she first learned jewelry design.

After graduating from Perpich,

she took a year off and then attended college, graduating summa cum laude in 1997 from the University of Minnesota, where she majored in American history.

While in college, she learned goldsmithing by working as an unpaid apprentice. She dabbled in jewelry design under one employer, then took a second goldsmithing job where she could concentrate more on the creative end of the business.

And she began to define her own style, beginning on fine, petite pieces and working up to her own more bold designs.

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JEWELRY: Awarded spot in showcase

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"I got the biggest fake stones I could as a design exercise for myself and started working with it," she says. "I found out I could come up with some really great, fun stuff."

She left her second job and a friend offered her use of his studio. She put together a portfolio of her work, paid the bills by tending bar and waiting tables and mulled going to a design college.

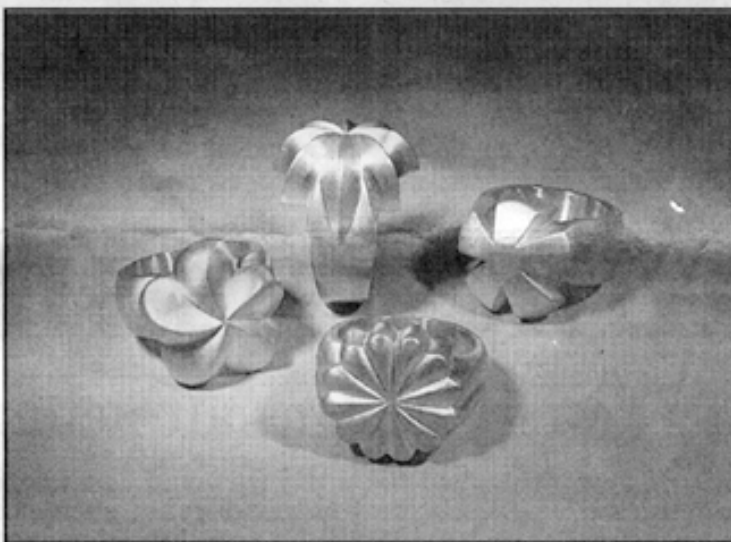
She had lunch one day in 1999 at the Walker Art Center with a friend who worked there. Jacobson had brought samples of her work and her friend was taken with them. The friend ran downstairs, showed the samples to the buyer in the gift shop and he immediately agreed to start selling them there.

"I think I wouldn't have made the scary jump into running a business if it weren't for the fact that it didn't seem like a scary jump at the time," Jacobson says. "It just seemed like this nice opportunity that fell in my lap. It was just this cycle of the right place at the right time."

She started cold-calling galleries nationwide and put together a promotional kit. While visiting Houston and San Francisco, she got her work into shops there.

She sent out perhaps 30 press kits and soon found success bit by bit. Her work began appearing in jewelry trade magazines. She did her first trade show just last February. She found she had a taste for the business end of art, something many artists abhor.

Her view of promotion is practical. "If you want to do what you love to do every day, you've got to find somebody to buy it," she says simply.



Special to The Forum

Karin Jacobson's flower rings show her flair for bold design.

Her business began to increase, but not quite fast enough. Jacobson even began to doubt the appeal of her work.

Then came The Call.

It came from Alan Revere, owner of San Francisco's Revere Academy of Jewelry Art. Revere told her she had won the American Jewelry Design Council's New Talent Competition, one of several professional contests she entered last year.

Jacobson didn't receive air fare or a hotel room, but she got something vastly more important: a spot in the Jewelers of America Trade Show, one of the nation's premier jewelry exhibitions.

Part of that show is a "new designer row," featuring the work of the industry's future stars. Because she won the contest, her booth there was free.

And while there are some buyers at the show, the publicity is more important.

Revere says Jacobson's work "was refreshing and fresh and innovative. It is you and kind of free and that's why she won."

He says Jacobson has great

potential "because of the different directions she's taken her jewelry from what the mainstream has done."

The initial publicity has generated even more. In April, Jacobson was one of three people profiled on "Right on the Money," a show on PBS. The show was about making a living as an artist; Jacobson's segment portrayed an artist just starting out in the business world.

She has other gold in the fire as well. In October, Jacobson will be the featured artist at the Walker Art Center bookstore in the Galleria, a gallery mall in Edina, Minn.

As she grows her business and her art, Jacobson sees herself doing the design work and handling the business, while others do the actual production.

"I don't feel like I need to have my fingers on every single piece," she says. "I want to make really cool stuff, I want to do as much designing as I possibly can. I love designing, it's my absolute favorite and I get a real charge out of it."

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