



COURTESY PARADISUS

Mother and daughter, Linda, right, and Akemi Ueda bond over a shared passion for jewelry design. Akemi wears a Monstera pendant and Linda wears a Gingko on stone (\$104) pendant. [CLICK FOR LARGE](#)

## Across the sea

### Inspiration bridges the ocean for a pair of jewelry designers

By Nadine Kam  
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A GENERATION and some 2,500 miles apart, mother and daughter Linda and Akemi Ueda somehow manage to make their year-old jewelry design business, Paradisus, work.

E-mail and instant messaging help bridge the distance between Akemi, in Hawaii, and Linda, in the Bay Area. As for the generation gap, it's one reason their Asian and flora-inspired collections have turned out to be a hit, not with just one demographic, but with women of all ages.



COURTESY PARADISUS  
Paradisus was born out of a Monstera pendant (\$169) design.

Behind their interpretations of such flora as monstera leaves, pikake buds, ginkgo, lauhala and bamboo, is an eye-catching "vintage-meets-modern aesthetic."

"We're really inspired by nature," said Akemi, a Punahou graduate and University of Michigan biopsychology major, who works as a regulatory affairs expert for a local medical device development company when she isn't designing jewelry. "We want to keep things traditional and classic, yet at the same time have an urban aesthetic to appeal to all generations."

They've achieved that by skillfully combining the retro feel of 1930s Hawaii or Shanghai with a graphic, contemporary sensibility. The look fits effortlessly with today's fashion, whether one's style is classic chic like Linda's, or urban eclectic and colorful like Akemi's.

Each piece is hand-crafted in Indonesia using a technique called repoussé, which involves hammering the metal from the back to give pieces an organic fullness when viewed from the front.

Although early pieces were fashioned from 925 silver, Paradisus now incorporates other materials such as pearls, agates and semi-precious stones, like topazes and peridots. Prices range from about \$70 for simple pikake with pearl earrings to \$620 for a large lauhala cuff, and they're currently at work on a men's line to debut in early 2007.

LINDA UEDA worked in Hawaii as an interior designer for 25 years before moving to San Francisco, and although she continues to work for clients in both places, was interested in branching out into other areas of design, from textiles to consumer goods.

"I was looking to do more product design and the jewelry came up," she said by phone from her home in California.

While traveling in Indonesia, she had asked a craftsman to create a monstera leaf for her, which had all her friends back home demanding a piece for themselves, and Paradisus was born, not that getting a business off the ground is an easy ride.



COURTESY PARADISUS  
One of the company's new coral designs (\$130), incorporating a red agate backdrop.



COURTESY PARADISUS  
Silver Philodendron leaves are linked to form a bracelet (\$325) with an adjustable clasp to fit all wrist sizes.

"It's a totally different industry, so that's been part of the challenge," Linda said. "When you're a designer, you can design all kinds of things. What you need to learn is the business and the discipline."

That has included getting accustomed to the cyclical and fickle nature of the fashion industry.

"The pace is very fast and jewelry is a fashion statement, so we try to come up with new things and always with a look at where fashion is heading," Linda said. "We want to bring out a couple of collections a year."

Back home in Hawaii, Akemi said, "We also want to be unique. My favorite flower is the plumeria. I love plumeria but it's been done enough. Some plants people don't see as beautiful, but we see something interesting in them."

The difference in geography opens a window on preferences from city to city that they would not have had if they had started the company solely in Hawaii.

"Our original collection, the Monstera Leaf group, is always the first one people gravitate to," Linda said. "But there are differences. Here, in Northern California, buyers gravitate to the Gingko group. In Hawaii, everybody loves the Pikake, but not everyone wants to wear a small thing or a dangling thing," she said, referring to the compact, near life-size flowers strung up as they would be in lei.



COURTESY PARADISUS  
Paradise's banana leaf pendant (\$169) on a choker, sold separately.

ALTHOUGH AKEMI'S strength is in science, and her day job involves handling FDA compliance issues for research into detection of cervical cancer, she said jewelry offers a pleasant creative outlet after a day at work. She grew up taking style cues from her mom, and also developed a love of nature through her father, a landscape architect. "I always loved being in the garden and doing yard work," she said. "I'm a real plant person, so this seems natural."

Despite the difference in longitude, latitude and time zones, the long-distance working situation is just fine for both mother and daughter. "It works," Akemi said. "It keeps us close but we're where we want to be. What's important is that we design together, and we shoot each other's ideas down all the time, but ultimately, nothing passes until we both agree."



CHRISSY LAMBERT  
A model wears a large lauhala-weave cuff (\$620)  
and coral pendant (\$130) by Paradisus.

Linda continues to return to Hawaii monthly to work with clients in the islands, and otherwise, work is shared via e-mail and instant messaging.

"We always seem to be able to keep the ideas flowing," Akemi said. "We'll e-mail sketches and we're on the phone every morning and every night."

"It doesn't feel as if we're separate," Linda said. "(Akemi) manages a lot of the distribution in Hawaii and leaves me free to concentrate on design."

Linda also takes responsibility for the accounting and working with the jewelry makers in Indonesia, while Akemi is responsible for the company's Web site and graphics.

"The fun part is the way my friends in my age group enjoy the jewelry, as do her friends, and that's been kind of amazing to all of us," Linda said. "We really would like to see this business grow. I think we've really just begun. We have a lot of ideas; it's just a matter of getting it all out."



COURTESY PARADISUS  
The Dragonfly link bracelet at far left is \$325. Paradisus designs suit diverse tastes, whether one gravitates to small, delicate design or bold graphic pieces.

In Hawaii, Paradisus jewelry can be found at Hana Hou in Hilo, Nohea Gallery-Ward Warehouse, Riches-Kahala Mall, and Tori Richard-Ala Moana Center. The company's Web site is [www.myparadisus.com](http://www.myparadisus.com).

Article URL: <http://starbulletin.com/2006/12/21/features/story01.html>  
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