

## Goldsmiths Gallery a gleaming success story

20/07/2013 - KASHKA TUNSTALL

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/business/8943875/Goldsmiths-Gallery-a-gleaming-success-story>



*Golden touch: Anthony and Michelle Licht are the couple behind award-winning Manufacturing jewellery shop Goldsmiths Gallery Jewellers.*

### Goldsmiths Gallery Jewellers is a name well given.

Entering the Hamilton central city store is like walking into an art exhibition.

Glass cabinets full of shiny gold and silver line the narrow room. Everything is illuminated from beneath and light glints off the precious metals and gems. It's all very theatrical. There's a feeling here a hum because, unlike the average jewellery store, the pieces have a connection to the place. More often than not, they came from the workroom behind the front desk.

And, more often than not, that is where you'll find Anthony Licht, crafting the miniature pieces of art meant to last a lifetime. His hands are deft and his knowledge of his material extensive. He recognises rings before he recognises the faces of their owners. And his customers appreciate it.

The people have spoken twice now, naming the retailer manufacturer a People Choice favourite at the Hamilton Central Business Association awards. But no one is a louder cheerleader for Mr Licht's work than his wife and business partner, Michelle. *"He's got the eye,"* she says.

The couple have owned and operated Goldsmiths for 13 years, setting up shop on Victoria St after a short stint in Tauranga. They moved from South Africa to New Zealand 16 years ago with nothing but two suitcases and a desire to create a new life in a new country. Mr Licht was already a trained manufacturing jeweller. Back in Johannesburg he had worked as an apprentice for his stepfather. He says he just fell into the trade and he is glad he did. He enjoys the creative element of the work and likes collaborating with customers.

*"It's the sort of industry where we do get to sit down with the customer and be there for the whole process, from the initial idea.*

*"It's not like building a house, where you deal with a plumber and an architect and a builder and an electrician. We are with them through the whole process."*

The average time from idea to finish is four to six weeks. Business is brisk enough to justify employing a second jeweller. It is a good industry to be in for job satisfaction, Mrs Licht says.

*"We're not like a lawyer, who sees miserable people. We have happy customers on the whole... because they're getting married or they're having babies... great occasions."*

More than a decade has passed since the Lichts settled in Hamilton and a bit has changed. The shop has shifted sites it's still on Victoria St but is now close to Centre Place. And fashions have changed. Mr Licht remembers making a lot of two tone pieces from yellow and white gold when Goldsmiths was set up. Over time, princess-cut, claw-set, white gold and platinum work became popular. Now retro is the style.

Men are big on wedding bands these days and like to get involved in the process. Once the shop had a single tray of gents' nuptial jewellery; now it has a whole cabinet. Most material, including bullion and most gems, are sourced from Auckland, but gems all ethical, say the couple are also bought overseas. More technology is now used in the industry.

*"We used to do hand drawn sketches, and people would have to look at a one dimensional drawing to get an idea. Now people can look at a three dimensional image on a computer screen."*

A 3D milling machine can pop out a little wax model of the image.

*"Does it speed things up for us? Not really. We're doing more but we are getting it right far more often. It takes the guesswork out of it,"* Mr Licht says.

Internet shopping has hit Goldsmiths, like every other retailer. But the internet can be a deceptive place, and the balance is swinging back in favour of physical stores.

"People are getting burnt by the internet... they are coming in, in order for us to fix the problems that they've picked up," Mrs Licht says.

And people still value personal service. Customers are getting value for money from whole experience of visiting a manufacturing jeweller, Mr Licht says. That value is in diamond and metal education, getting a design and piece you really want and the promise of its longevity.

**Goldsmiths was supreme winner at the Hamilton Central Business Awards, beating 45 other central city stores to be business of the year. Last year, at the inaugural awards, the couple received the People's Choice award.**

This year, they were not too sure if they would come away with anything.

*"It blew us away, really,"* Mr Licht says.

What their win proves is that people still want customer service, he believes.

*"They still want to walk into a place where there are professionals that can give them good solid advice and information on the products they are buying."*