

Jewelry maker migrates to town

LeeAnn Herreid joins Warren's growing artistic community

By Aimée L. Croke

More and more artists continue to bring their talents to town.

Jewelry maker LeeAnn Herreid is one of the newest to arrive. She moved to Baker Street from New Mexico about three months ago and set up shop as Individual Icons.

"I sell to places like the Museum of Modern Art, a shop on Thayer Street, one in Newport, Boston, New York, San Francisco, Chicago, St. Paul and many more places," she said.

Her work also can be seen at local gift shops.

The 31-year-old has been making jewelry since she was 13. A high school art teacher in Concord, Mass., first taught Ms. Herreid to solder metal.

"From there, I'd work all the time in my father's basement," she said.

Her career making jewelry also began as a teen. Throughout high school she worked in an antique repair and restoration store as a goldsmith.

"After that, I went to RISD (Rhode Island School of Design)," she said. "After college, I moved to Maine and worked for Etienne Co. and worked with 18-carat gold, platinum and fancy colored diamonds."

Unable to take too many cold Maine winters, Ms. Herreid moved to Fall River to live in one of the many mill buildings. While there, she met a sales representative who would take her jewelry around to shops.

After a year in Fall River, Ms. Herreid moved to Newport, where "it all started to happen," she said.

"Sales went up and I got into some catalogs," Ms. Herreid said. "I really got busy."

She is known in the jewelry business for her compass necklaces and matching rings made of sterling silver. Ms. Herreid was crafting sundials and needed a compass to tell her which way the dial was to turn.

"I was making it for my mother who is just horrible with direction," she said. "Since she's been wearing it, she's really improved."

Among her other items are a watch with a metal ruler band; rings, earrings and necklaces



RICHARD W. DIONNE JR.

Warren jewelry maker LeeAnn Herreid strings a piece of garnet through a string at her Baker Street studio.

that are small levels; thermometer earrings and industrial diamond-dust necklaces.

"I love metal. I work with a fabrication of stainless steel, gold, platinum and steel," Ms. Herreid said. "Platinum is an awesome metal."

With a sparkle in her eye, she explains why she holds platinum in such high regard.

"If you heat it to a certain degree, you can see right through it," she said. "It's hard, durable and you can't be allergic to it because it's an element. It's just so superior."

Making jewelry is an enjoyable challenge to her. Ms. Herreid said she dreads an easy task and much prefers making difficult items so she doesn't get bored.

"Probably my hardest item to make are the diamond-dust necklaces," Ms. Herreid said. "I really enjoy working with high-end gold."

She doesn't cast or polish any of her pieces and any stones used in her jewelry are bought from stone dealers or at shows.

One of the many reasons she moved here was because Warren reminds her of how Newport was 20 years ago.

"Everything is on a walking scale and the people are really nice," Ms. Herreid said.

She had no idea how many artists, like herself, had migrated to town in recent years. She is thrilled to become part of the art community.

"They're a very welcoming group of really good artists," she said. "I really like the urban nature, the architectural design of the houses, the water, friendly people, antique stores and the fact that there are so many preservationists running around."

She returned to Rhode Island also because the state is the tool and dye center of the nation. She said she felt as if she was swimming upstream in New Mexico.

"It's easier to be back here," Ms. Herreid said.

When she isn't making jewelry, Ms. Herreid likes to travel, draw, paint, take photographs, hike, fish and train dogs.