

Golden Boys

A jewelry-making duo invites clients to commission pieces in their Manhattan salon.



designer showed a long, rich brown skirt with a crisp white blouse, which the duo accented with a brooch of fire opal, pink kunzite, aquamarine, and diamonds. "We don't want to match the couture outfits," says Scognamiglio, "we want to enhance them with our jewels." In addition to the pieces for Herrera, the company produces two distinct collections. One consists of Italian-made, curvaceous gold designs; the other is the colorful, gem-set Couture line, which launched three years ago. The Couture collection features large, muted cabochon stones, most of which are from Brazil. "We prefer the subtlety of hand-cut, softly rounded cabochon stones in contrast to sparkling, faceted stones," says Faraone Mennella, noting that the colorful cabochon gems recall 1960s-era Bulgari designs.

Over the years, the partners have built a high-profile clientele who influence their designs through custom requests, but they agree that their true muse is Faraone Mennella's mother, Hannellore. "My mother is our critic," he says. "She's very direct, and she has great style."

Scognamiglio's family also has been an influence. Their company, M+M Scognamiglio, in Torre del Greco, Italy, has specialized in making and dealing in handmade cameos since 1857. By the age of 16, Scognamiglio had mastered the art of carving cameos, but then he carried on another family tradition, that of attaining a law degree. After he and Faraone Mennella both graduated from the law school at the University of Napoli in 1995, Scognamiglio moved to New York to expand his family's business in America, and Faraone Mennella moved there to study at Parsons School of Design. Within a few years, they debuted their first collection of gold jewelry.

Faraone Mennella recently opened its salon for private appointments to accommodate clients who want customized pieces. The space is awash in subtle gray tones and appointed with wrought iron vitrines and with Venetian crystal chandeliers and mirrors. A few stories above, in the atelier, the company's four craftsmen produce the couture pieces and remain on call to measure a client's neckline or to make sure a necklace or earrings fit perfectly. Custom pieces are usually delivered four to six weeks after you place an order. "It's nice to get to know your clients," says Scognamiglio, while sipping espresso in the salon, "and create jewelry that truly satisfies their lifestyles and personalities." —JILL NEWMAN

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Citrines, green tourmalines, kunzites, aquamarines, and rubies bring vibrant color to Faraone Mennella's Couture collection.