



By Angela Pearse

On Home Ground

Turangawaewae is a Maori term meaning 'a place to stand'.

When you find such a place, it becomes your foundation, your place in the world, your home.

Designing jewellery has allowed Amanda Powell to create her own special place right in the heart of her home.



When it comes to designing jewellery Amanda Powell, like many other goldsmiths, derives much of her inspiration from nature. Luckily she lives on a rural property in Kaipara Flats, just north of Auckland, and has five acres of native bush on her doorstep to get the creative process flowing.

Two years ago this natural setting, as well as her desire to create her own designs, motivated Amanda to produce a range of kowhai flower and native leaf inspired jewellery. Since then this native range, under her pseudonym 'Amanda Eve', has sold in galleries in Auckland, Piece Gallery in Matakana and featured in the Australian Woman's Weekly.

Juggling Life

Amanda works from her studio on the property but she doesn't just make her own jewellery there, she juggles quite a few other jobs as well. She designs custom made pieces, remodels and repairs jewellery for clients and also contracts to a High

Street jeweller in Central Auckland. In between she works one day a week at the Peter Minturn Jewellery School and shares the raising of two children, Ben 7 and Lily 5, with her husband Craig, who also works from home with his video production business.

Looking back Amanda says she has always liked creating things in 3D and took every art subject possible at High School. In 1996 she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in sculpture from The University of Auckland's Elam Art School. The idea of being a jeweller, however, was something that just 'popped' into her head one day. "I was playing around at home with lumps of wax and, as I'd learnt the Lost Wax casting process at Elam for my bronze sculptures, I knew jewellery could be made the same way. So I literally just started making things out of wax and had them cast in silver and gold," she explains, "They were very organic shapes, which I used to thread on rope and give away to people as gifts."

Word spread amongst her friends and soon Amanda had small commissions. One of the first commissions was a silver elephant ring with interlocking trunks and tails, "I was down in my dad's garage sanding away at it. I didn't have any equipment and I didn't know what I was doing really," she says.

After completing a 10 week night school course in jewellery making, which she thoroughly enjoyed, Amanda kept exploring ways to become a jeweller. This involved phoning a number of jewellers in the Yellow Pages. "Most of them said they weren't taking on apprentices anymore. I also got the feeling that I was too old (I was 23 by then) and that they were reluctant to take on a female. They didn't say it outright but it was a feeling I got. Many referred me onto other jewellers."

Disheartened she rang the last person on her list which happened to be Peter Minturn, one of New Zealand's best

Council 3D Competition with an intricate silver ring called 'Turangawaewae' and took out first prize.

"Turangawaewae is a Maori term which means a place to stand, often a spiritual place, a place where you feel like you're at home. For me as a fine arts graduate I like to personalise jewellery symbolically, so with the ring the competition's theme of 'land, sea and air' is symbolically represented by the jetty, boat and kite. But there are all sorts of other symbolic things incorporated, such as the tiny pair of jandals left on the land, which is about taking your shoes off before you enter a marae or a holy place. People can either look at it and enjoy it as an



Left:

The winning ring in sterling silver entitled "Turangawaewae" representing land, sea and air.

Left and below:

Pieces from the AmandaEve collection.

known jewellers, who was working from his home in Point Chevalier at the time. It was a call that changed her life. "I rang him up, he answered the phone and I did my usual spiel of having a fine arts degree and wanting to make jewellery and he said his last apprentice had just left him, so would I like to come over tomorrow? I hung up the phone and burst into tears."

After she had worked part-time with Peter for a year learning the tricks of the trade, Peter then decided to set up a jewellery school in Kingsland and indentured Amanda into a full-time apprenticeship. "He decided I was indispensable then," she laughs. "As more and more students enrolled I started teaching and then night school happened and I was doing that as well. So I was working for him, and teaching and doing night school and it all added up to about 50 hours a week. But I enjoyed it, so it didn't feel like work."

Peter's traditional methods and 'off-the-wall' designs have stretched and fine-tuned Amanda's abilities as a jeweller over the last 12 years to the point she now has the expertise to make some quite out there pieces herself. In 2012 she entered the local Rodney Arts

interesting ring or also read more conceptual ideas into it."

The ring took around forty hours to complete but she says it was done in stages when she could find the time. "Although I'm often very busy, I consider myself lucky that the career choice I've made has enabled me to be a stay at home mum, whereas my other friends have had to put their kids into Day Care and go off to work. I've always been able to be there for my children, even if I'm out in my workshop, I'm not far away."

Amanda says another good thing about having children is all the different networks that have arisen, such as play groups, kindergartens, schools and coffee groups. "You're socialising with a whole lot of women, and who often have grandmothers that babysit the children too, who want jewellery made. Many of the jobs I get come from these local networks."

Networking aside, her New Year's resolution is to find more time in the day to work on her own designs and website. "At the moment contract and repair work pay the bills and put food on the table," she laughs good naturedly.

www.amandaeve.co.nz

