

# Donna Chambers



Rhodolite garnets add a touch of color to the black mother-of-pearl and black pearl bracelet set in 14kt gold, above, with two pairs of coordinating earrings. The engagement ring and wedding bands, right, incorporate another gem of the sea—a cowrie shell motif.



Chambers "marries history and style" by using 18th-century Chinese gambling chips and pearls in a five-strand necklace.



**D**ONNA CHAMBERS LEARNED ABOUT JEWELRY BY REPAIRING it. "I learned how to solder pieces back together, fix chains, size rings," she remembers. "Finally, I got bored and decided, rather than fixing existing pieces, I would create my own line."

The artist chose pearls as her medium. "Pearls," she says, "are the oldest gem known to man. They possess classic appeal. Most women own at least one strand of pearls, and most stores carry an entire line of pearl jewelry." Her inspiration came from the creations of Kristin Moore—"wire earrings with a single pearl on the end." "I liked their simple elegance," explains Chambers. "My goal was to take this classically appealing medium and put it into a contemporary form that would blend well with other jewelry."

Chambers has always searched out new ways to keep her line fresh. Like her discovery of intriguing mother-of-pearl gambling chips, which have led the artist to many new designs. "What I love about them is that each one is etched and old [created in the 1700s] and possesses a story about families and lifestyles. They were all commissioned pieces, made by the Chinese for the English. At first I found a few and created several one-of-a-kind pieces. After a while, people started calling me to say they had gambling chips for sale," says Chambers. "What's great is that it's easy to cut and change the shape of each piece, which lends variety to the line."

Working out of her studio in White Plains, N.Y., Chambers is pleased that, after almost 20 years in the business, her work has remained popular. Both Lonnie Anderson and Sissy Houston have purchased pearls from Chambers' line. She discovered another celebrity patron thanks to the U.S. Postal Service. "I received a photo in the mail of a couple. The woman in the photo was wearing a piece of my jewelry, a piece she'd later lost, but wondered if I could replace it," says Chambers. "As it turned out, the gentleman in the picture is her husband Chuck Daly, who happens to be the head coach of the Orlando Magic. Needless to say, I replaced the original."

—Sue Wasserman



The hand-etched Chinese chip pendant is enhanced with freshwater pearls and a large South-sea pearl drop.



Raised in Ossining, N.Y., Chambers studied at the Pratt Institute, then worked in fashion design.

AS SEEN IN:  
Touches, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Joseph's, Des Moines, Iowa  
The Jewelry Box, Kapaa, Hawaii