

fashion·fix

# First Frost

Jeweler Betsy Frost's flowing designs

by Juliet Bowler



Betsy Frost holding some of her beautiful creations



Imagine a world where silver and gold dance around your body in a fluid, graceful arc, where children's jacks become glorious necklaces and colored stones tumble and sparkle in delicate golden baskets.

This is Betsy Frost's world.

By all rights, Betsy should have become a doctor or psychologist. It runs in her family. Perhaps she should have continued pursuing her Master's. Or kept working in the computer industry. But she decided to do us all a favor and go for her dream: designing lovely, wearable jewelry. After taking a class in jewelry making, Betsy decided to forgo the computers and the Master's and turn instead to jewels and the Mass College of Art.

"I submitted some work to the New York International Gift Fair and got in," she says of her first showing.

Jewelry with such movement and architectural flair is not all that surprising from a Bennington, Vermont native. "Bennington is the center of modern dance. I still love to dance," she says, explaining one of the strongest influences on her designs.

"That's why I'm inspired by artists like Degas and Matisse, as well as the curve of a woman's body."

"I like to think of my works as contemporary classics, for a woman who wants simple, elegant, classic shapes, but who also wants movement."

Betsy spent time in Sweden studying silversmithing, drawing on and sketching ideas from the functional yet beautiful designs in Swedish furniture. "The work there is architectural, yet simple." This same design ethic finds its way into Betsy's jewelry. She's less concerned

with color or surface texture, than with the movement of the piece and how it will lie on the body.

"I always work three dimensionally. I don't draw a design on a piece of paper. Instead, I get an idea and begin shaping it, either in metal or with lost-wax casting." After creating models, she works on linking the shapes together, creating hinges, unusual pairings, and suspended stones.

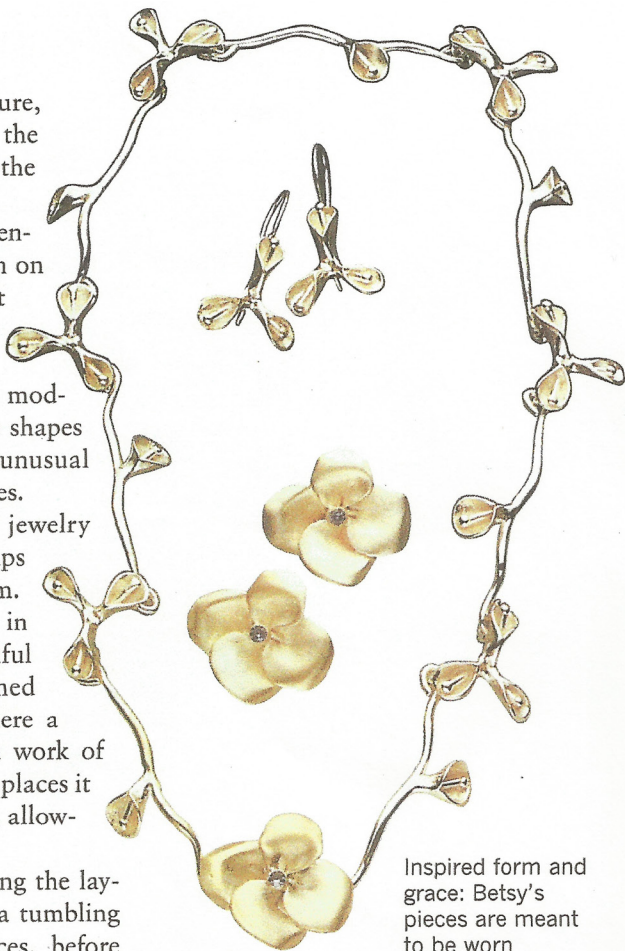
"I think I'm the only jewelry designer in the area who traps stones. I don't like to set them. Instead, I like to place them in cages or spheres." A beautiful example is the aptly named Caged Stone Collection, where a simple silver ring becomes a work of art. Betsy takes the stone and places it in a small gold or silver cage, allowing the stone to move freely.

After the process of creating the layout of the piece, Betsy uses a tumbling technique to finish the pieces, before hand polishing them to a shine. "I'm extremely picky," she laughs. Some pieces incorporate a matte finish, while others, like those of her Moon Charm Collection, use both finishes.

Betsy's pieces come alive when they're worn. She rarely shows them on a flat velvet display. "I always use a bust to display the jewelry."

You can see her New England roots in the simplicity of the designs, as well as the athletic quality of the pieces. "I was a springboard diver when I was younger. I love athletics, running, hiking, and gymnastics." This awareness of the physical body allows Betsy to create objects that work with the lines of the human form, flattering the neckline or enhancing the wrist while still maintaining their own beauty as individual pieces of jewelry.

When asked if she could ever imagine herself doing anything else, she replies



Inspired form and grace: Betsy's pieces are meant to be worn

with a firm no. "It's my dream come true. Though being a mom is pretty great, too!" she says. Betsy is, in addition to a metalsmith, the mother of four-week old Conner. "I'm pretty busy these days." Though she did take the time to create pacifier-shaped earrings for her close friend, another new mom.

She wears all her own designs and shares them with her nine brothers and sisters. All but one of them, that is. "My sister is a model in New York and she never wears my stuff!" Her sister doesn't know what she's missing!

Betsy's designs are available nationwide in stores like del Mano Gallery in Los Angeles (310.476.8508), Joan Michilin Gallery in New York City (212.475.6603), and Signature in Boston (617.227.4885). You can also view her designs online at [betsyfrostdesign.com](http://betsyfrostdesign.com).



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