

genevieve LILLEY

A newcomer to jewellery design, Genevieve Lilley has only been in the industry for two years. What's more, her winning entry into the JAA Opal Sector Council Opal Design award, entitled *Opalace*, is her first ever entry into the JAA Australian Design Awards. It's testament to Lilley's outstanding talent that she won the award... from herself - her other entry, *Doreen's Glory*, chosen as a finalist in the same category!

Only taking a month to design and manufacture, *Opalace* has been created using 18-carat yellow gold, green satin cord and nine Queensland boulder opals. Though not her favourite metal, Lilley selected yellow gold because it sets off the colour of the stones and the silk cord because it "allows for adjustability and it did not detract from the simplicity and complexity of the main idea".

Lilley's inspiration for her piece

came from a desire to make opals the central items in her design: "I was determined to use enough metal to make a big piece, and still use shapes and curves. It was important though, that the design did not detract from the stones, as so many pieces of opal jewellery do," Lilley explains.

In her short time in the trade, Lilley has already made some notable observations regarding current design trends. "I believe the market here is rather cost-conscious and this restricts original design, the refinement of design and the standard of workmanship," she says.

While Lilley believes there is not a particularly strong sense of uniquely Australian design on the market, she asserts there are new avenues that need to be explored to allow for growth. "There is more potential for the use of very bright colours - a function of the amount of light and long summers we

experience in Australia," she suggests. The idea of tapping into Australia's unique culture is one that Lilley believes Australian designers are ignoring. Rather than continuing with the trend of creating a pastiche of antique jewellery design or copying designs from overseas, Australian designers should explore the area of informal fine jewellery, she suggests: "Due to our generally casual approach to dressing, this is an area that could do very well in Australia. I hope that, like Europe, there will be a shift in design attitude and people will start looking at replacing costume jewellery with innovative informal fine jewellery," she adds.

Perhaps the secret to her success is that Lilley has had experience outside the jewellery industry in design. She currently works as an architect on high-end residential and commercial projects, teaches architecture at Sydney

University, and also designs furniture and lighting.

Lilley entered in jewellery design by creating pieces for herself based on loose stones given to her by her husband, Venerari's founder, Kingsley Wallman.

While she enjoys a hectic life with two careers and two small children, Lilley hopes to continue working in both the architecture and jewellery design fields.

She is particularly interested in working on some larger budget projects and strengthening her reputation in both industries.

