

Cathie Merkel
The Goldsmith
Sebastopol, California
(707) 829-3049 – Email: c_merk@comcast.net

Sonoma County has been my home since I was four years old, and I grew up surrounded by art. My mother specializes in paper sculpture, drawings and wearable art. Although I admired everything she did, I was not drawn to those soft media. For me it was always metals, and I took my first class in jewelry making at Piner High School in Santa Rosa. There is something viscerally satisfying about taking metals and stones from the earth and fashioning them into works of art that are worn for generations.

I began my art education at the Santa Rosa Junior College where I took art history, English, and jewelry making classes. In 1984 I earned my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from The California College of Arts in Oakland. I majored in metalsmithing and minored in art history.

For the first four years after graduation I worked for various goldsmiths in San Francisco area and also exhibited at galleries across the U.S. But I wanted to be independent, showcasing my designs, and started my own studio out of my home in Sonoma County. Eventually I joined The Goldsmith in Santa Rosa for two years as an employee, and then was offered the opportunity to purchase the business. I continued to run it from the store for another seven years.

When my first child was born, I moved my business to my country home in Sebastopol because I did not want my children to be raised by strangers. I continued to work with my clients who appreciate my innate sense of what looks good, and my ability to make their vision come to life.

Since there are so many different styles, one of my first questions is always about my clients' needs. I then do sketches and make stone recommendations depending on where the jewelry will be worn. The next step is a detailed drawing before the work begins. Some clients just bring me a stone they love, and depend on my expertise to use it in a way that shows off its beauty to maximum effect.

Of course, I also supply stones and can source a lot of other custom components. In some cases it is possible to use old gold to fashion into new pieces. This is a service not every jeweler offers. I'll be happy to oblige. Just bring me what you have, and I will tell you if it's possible.

I use both the hand fabrication and lost-wax casting methods of making jewelry. Repair and re-stringing is, of course, also available, and if you have pieces that have lost their luster, stone re-cutting and polishing results in amazing restorations.

My vision for the future of my business is to build relationships with galleries.