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# A golden anniversary



**Yallingup artist and metalsmith John Miller has been crafting gold and silver jewellery by hand using traditional techniques for 50 years. Annalise Hunt caught up with John to learn more.**

John Miller has amassed a large and loyal following for his distinctive designs, and has had a colourful career.

Miller discovered jewellery making by accident. It was the 1970s and he responded to a casual work offer over a middy.

"I was 18 at Steve's in Nedlands and a guy asked if wanted a job buffing jewellery," he said.

"The pay was \$30 a week.

"I walked in, saw the tools and equipment, and thought 'this is for me'."

Silver jewellery was high fashion and Perth jewellery shops

were selling wedding and engagement rings, 21<sup>st</sup> birthday keys and pewter cups – Miller seized the opportunity.

After Perth, he moved to Darwin and then India, but his Kimberley childhood drew him home.

In 1979, he opened Broome's first jewellery shop – Dampier's Chest – and became the town's

first resident jeweller at Pearler's Emporium.

"The locals thought I was mad when I mentioned my plans," he said.

"They asked, 'who's going to buy jewellery in Broome?'

"But the shop took off and each collection sold out."

For the last 25 years, Miller has called Yallingup home, turning six acres of sand into a home, a workshop, a showroom and gardens, with a second outlet now open in Margaret River.

As far as Miller knows, he's the only Australian jeweller to hand-make jewellery from start to finish in one location – design, forging, tool-making, hammering, casting, stamping, engraving and finishing.

"My silver suppliers say I'm the largest buyer of silver for jewellery in Australia, which makes me the country's largest producer of silver jewellery," he said.

"Not bad for a bloke making jewellery in the bush."

Miller brings new life to old-world jewellery making

techniques and teaching these to his young proteges.

"Training staff and seeing them grow, as well as making clients happy, gives me enormous satisfaction," he said.

"I have always tried to keep away from what everyone else is doing.

"I don't follow trends but, instead, stay true to myself, my designs, my processes and my style.

"My jewellery has matured over the last 50 years as I've added more fine detail.

"It's become a complete range and what I've always been trying to achieve – I feel like I'm finally there."

Miller said success came down to great quality and hard work.

As a fellow of The Gold & Silversmiths Guild of Australia, Mr Miller is regarded as a maker of individual jewellery to a consistently high standard, with John Miller Design having its own maker's mark struck on each item so it can be identified in perpetuity.

A special 50th anniversary



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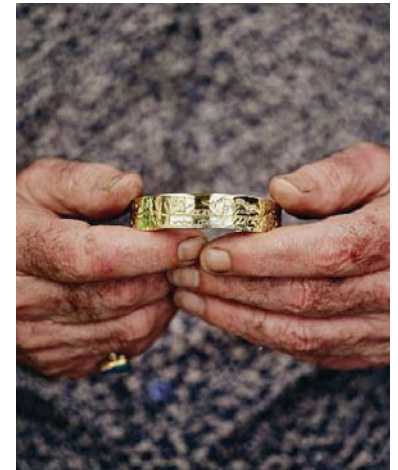


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hallmark will be added to all jewellery produced in 2023 to mark the occasion, while a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary limited edition collection is also in the making.

Miller will be participating in the Margaret River Region Open Studios in September, which will be celebrating its 10th anniversary, with Miller being involved in all the events since inception.



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