

handcrafted to perfection

by Cheryl van der Merwe

Exquisite, thought-provoking, memorable, personalised... Rarely are these words used to describe jewellery – maybe one or two, but seldom all together. Kai Schmidt's matchless creations are all of these, and more...

Kai Schmidt, Owner and Founder



From small beginnings in trendy Melville in 1996, Kai Schmidt Manufacturing Jewellers has grown into a design inspiration that embodies the spirit of creativity in every handmade piece that leaves the premises for its new home.

Schmidt, along with his wife Alison, who runs the financial side of the business, places a strong emphasis on individualism, and truly believes that handcrafted jewellery is the most meaningful. Breathtaking handmade rings, bracelets, necklaces and earrings are crafted by combining precious and semi-precious stones in polished white or glossy yellow gold, platinum, chunky silver or even a warm rose gold.

Schmidt apprenticed under his highly talented father, and today continues the legacy of world-class craftsmanship as a world-renowned goldsmith. He understands the needs of his clients, and spends hours in consultation with them discussing their envisaged creations from scratch and rendering detailed drawings before even setting foot in his workshop.

An inspiration to jewellery designers and crafters everywhere, Schmidt embodies all that is unique. His business is vibrant, dynamic and constantly changing, and as part of its natural growth pattern, now has an outlet in scenic Franschhoek. Far from being just another retail jewellery store, this charming outlet is situated in the original mid-1800s co-op building on Huguenot Road, and exudes an ambience that speaks of relaxation and good living.

Future plans include investigating expansion into the UK, where Schmidt sees huge gaps in the handmade jewellery market. Already, 40% of Johannesburg clients, and 95% of Franschhoek clients are international, and range from celebrities and sopranos to sporting heroes and the princess of Thailand.

Schmidt also has a business relationship with a respected hotelier who commissions pieces to be auctioned at Sotheby's. This avenue is a burgeoning success, with buyers coming from all over the world, particularly the Middle East. Schmidt is also often called upon by Christie's Auctioneers to perform valuations on various pieces.

For Schmidt and his wife, bringing in fresh talent and finding people who look at life a little differently is key. A mixture of talents and creative styles feed off each other's ingenuity for a final product that is truly magical.

Schmidt believes that South Africa has become a melting pot for creativity, and that the quality of work produced by South Africans is substantially better than overseas work. He nurtures and encourages the talented people working for him, instilling in them his love for nature's finest metals and gemstones, and creating in them an understanding for the need to craft each piece by hand, ensuring individuality and uniqueness. ceo

