



From Start to Finish / JQ Magazine / May 2003 By Dena Bunge

It was at the young age of 17 that Harout Ritani first sat down at a jeweler's bench. At the time, he was a diamond setter and then a model maker with dreams of a bright future in the jewelry industry. His hard work has certainly paid off, and those dreams have recently become a reality. It was only two years ago that Ritani began to focus his efforts entirely on his own designs and his own company.

Ritani's designs are graceful and elegant, but what sets them apart are the details. He takes pride in the quality and craftsmanship of his jewelry, but he is also focused on creating pieces that are meticulously detailed and above all, unique. "As I see many other designs out there, perticularly in bridal, more and more pieces look the same," he asserts. "When I create a new piece, I want to feel that nothing like it has ever existed before, so people can truly say I've never seen anything like this." he explains. "When people see my work I want them to recognize it as Ritani."

"My rings have wonderful modulation and beautifully soft edges, not sharp or angular," says Harout. "Looking even closer, you will find azures and delicate openings underneath the settings in the shapes of hearts or stars." As pointed out by Harout, these details add to the romance of selling and owning a Ritani ring.

With the volume of work that Harout Ritani has created in the past two years, coupled with the high standards of uniqueness he places on himself, one would think it might be difficult to create so many extraordinary pieces. It requires not only talent, and of course time, to come up with new ideas, but also inspiration.

Ritani credits his wife, Ani, and his two daughters for keeping him inspired. "Sometimes it takes a month to come up with a single design," he says. "It really depends on how happy and excited I am. If I am happy I can come up with two or three concepts in a week. Fortunately, most of the time I¹m always happy thanks to my wife and daughters," Harout continues. "That is why I have achieved what I have today."

The most recent achievement for Harout is the creation of The Butterfly by Ritani and his family played a vital role in the inception of the design. Last December, Harout, Ani, and their daugthers took a much-needed vacation to their second home in Florida. But like many designers, Harout is most creative when he is relaxed, and family vacations, like this one, often allow him to come up with new concepts.

From start to finish, the Butterfly collection was created over the course of about two months. Due to the busy holiday season, trunk shows, and trade fairs, this collection was just recently launched. However, the idea for the new line was created in a matter of hours, thanks in large part to Harout's youngest daughter.

During their vacation, Harout took his daughters to Butterfly World (an attraction in Ft. Lauderdale with lush gardens, aviaries, and a butterfly house). This was not the first time they had visited, so with much excitement his daughters, ages ten and six, entered the butterfly house to enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

His youngest daughter was disappointed that the butterflies wouldn't land on her, so Harout took a leaf, rubbed it on her finger, and slowly placed it near a flower. The butterfly flew to her finger and it was at that moment, as Harout was looking at her hand that the idea for a new collection was born.

Later that afternoon, he worked on his laptop creating this new design and by midnight the first prototype was complete. "I was very excited," he recalls. When he returned to the office in New York, he perfected the proportions and the new collection was started.

Again, the beauty of Ritani's pieces is found in the details. In this case, the detail is in the butterfly design. The collection will initially will feature about twenty different pieces. Once the line is completed it will include diamond engagement rings in various styles, wedding bands, pendants, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings. In addition to the diamond designs, Ritani will expand the collection and create a Butterfly fashion line featuring colored gemstones.

While many designers sketch designs, Ritani uses state-of-the-art technology to create his designs on a computer. "Our exclusive designing software creates stunning jewelry. Before I do the prototype I can do everything on the computer and perfect the model before we go into production," Harout explains.

"If you do a sketch by hand and want to change it, you have to start over, which takes a lot of time. I can do it all on the computer and tweak it within minutes. It allows me to almost see the finished piece without having it in my hand," he says. "I can zoom in on the prongs or the shank to do the details and that gives me perfection in the designs. Once I finish designing the piece and making adjustments on the computer I download the design and a machine carves the wax."

After the first model is finished Harout usually makes some additional changes, perfecting the design and then runs the machine again. Once the wax model is completed everything is done by hand. Harout always finishes the first ring and uses it as a sample. Finally, the ring is put into production and the staff at Ritani is put to work. "Their quality has to match my quality," Harout adds. "Take a look at each of our pieces very closely. On all of them you will notice our commitment to quality."



Upon completetion of the first new ring, Harout makes additional samples of the new style to accommodate different sizes and cuts of diamonds, as well as three-stone and five-stone settings. Ritani also takes pride in the fact that he does not use components or switch heads/settings to accommodate different sizes and shapes of center stones. "Each ring is born from its own individual model to assure beautiful balance and symmetry. So you will never see bulky tops, air spaces, sloppy soldering, or unbalanced rings usually found from switching a setting to accommodate a different stone," he explains. "We provide you with seamless beauty every time."

Harout also considers customer service to be as important as the product. This is another reason why the technology Ritani uses is a vital part of the company. By creating each new concept in multiple styles and settings he is able to fulfill retailer requests in a timely fashion. Each retailer is provided with a complete catalog of all the styles in every Ritani collection. This also allows Ritani to provide the retailers with a variety of options to present to the consumer in addition to what they have in stock.

Ritani's technologically advanced system of designing also allows him to provide his retailers with additional support. "I can email renderings to a retailer, change things, and email it back within hours, and this increases sales," Harout says. "And since we have every design we produce in our computer library, if we need to create additional pieces, such as matching wedding rings, the customer will never have to part with their jewelry; we simply build the new piece literally around our 3-D model to ensure both pieces fit together like a puzzle," he explains.

Clearly, Harout and his talented team have developed a system that has great potential and this new collection is another big step in their efforts to brand the company name. The new line also meets all of Harout¹s expectations and the result, in his words, are "beautifully balanced timeless designs." JQ



