

# FINE JEWELRY

January 2010

*In Style and In-the-Know*

NEWS™

## MIDNIGHT GLAMOUR

Let a Little Mystery  
into Your Life

## ZAFFIRO

Designers  
with the  
Golden Touch



## SOFT CHIC

Michelle Obama  
says, "Yes you can!"

# Designer Spotlight

## ZAFFIRO



Jack and Elizabeth Gualtieri have the golden touch. This national award-winning husband-and-wife design team is expert at turning delicate droplets of gold into exquisite, exotic jewels. The beautifully beaded look of their jewelry is the result of a process called *granulation*, a specialty of Zaffiro, the couple's design studio in Portland, Oregon.

"Zaffiro means *sapphire* in Italian," says Elizabeth. "It's a beautiful word that has two meanings for us: it reflects Jack's Italian heritage and the nature of our craft."

"We went to Italy for our honeymoon 16 years ago," Jack recalls, "and we just went back this past June. I am always impressed by what earlier cultures did with no modern technology." Jack and Elizabeth spent hours at the Villa Giulia in Rome where the Castellani collection is housed. In the mid-1800s, the Castellani family revived

the lost art of ancient Etruscan granulation, creating geometric pieces enhanced with tiny spheres of gold and delicate filigree wire applied with absolute precision—and completely by hand. Elizabeth and Jack proudly carry on this thousand-year-old tradition today.

The painstaking process of granulation is fraught with difficulty: if overfired, the gold granules will melt into the surface of the piece; if underfired, they will not adhere properly and fall off. After years of experimentation, the Gualtieris have broken the boundaries of what was thought possible with 22-karat gold granulation: they've perfected alloys of 22-karat rose gold and white

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*Clockwise from bottom left: Elizabeth and Jack Gualtieri of Zaffiro; Patricia pendant; Empress III pendant; "La Floraliere."*



gold as well, and even platinum. Some of their pieces mix these metals for a stunning two-tone effect.

Even with these never-before-seen advances, the Gualtieris keep pushing toward a new level of design. “We always want to do something fresh—something that changes the way people think about granulation and sets us apart from other artists,” says Jack. “Our most recent innovation is setting gemstones into granules within the granulation. Drilling holes and setting is quite challenging without making a mistake and damaging the surrounding granules.”

For all their love of the intricacies of their craft, it’s often the stones that make the Gualtieris’ imaginations take flight. The gorgeous creature they call “La Floraliere,” for instance, was inspired by a single Australian blue keshi pearl. “I picked it out of a pile of keshi and saw right away that the pearl was the back of a woman,” Elizabeth recalls.

Boulder opals and moonstones are particular favorites, but vivid gems of nearly any hue play a starring role in most of Zaffiro’s pieces. The Mielikke necklace, named for the Finnish goddess of the forest, comes to life in a symphony of greens—a mouthwatering combination of lime chrysoberyls and mint tourmalines glow against yellow gold. Rings in the Patricia series offer up pairings of fiery mandarin garnets against magenta sapphires, or the peachy candlelight glow of Hessonite garnet against a sprinkling of tiny garnets in a rich grape hue.

“Everyone needs a piece of jewelry that makes them feel special and unique,” says Jack. “We make jewelry fit for royalty, and we believe there is a queen or a king inside everybody.”



*Clockwise from top: granulation in process; Chiara ring; Patricia earrings; the Mielikke necklace.*