



A LOVE AFFAIR

Don and Vanessa Kennedy share a love affair they have with gorgeous gems as **Kamini Rajarethnam** discovers.

There is something extremely unique about Vanessa Kennedy, one half of the renowned Kennedy Jewellers, based in Coffs Harbour. You can sense her presence long before the luxury jewellery designer steps in the room. The first time I met Vanessa was late last year at a jewellery photo shoot in Sydney. With a personality as big as her heart, Vanessa is always lovely and never short of pleasantries. It has always been my pleasure to work with the Kennedy's as I am sure many of their clients will agree.

The accolades have slowly been building since their launch seven years ago. Their designs have quickly become must-haves for Australia's best dressed. Each creation is detailed and often slightly whimsical, such as the South Sea Pearl and Argyle Pink Diamond earrings or any item from the signature "Interchangeable Collection." Despite the success and experience behind them, it may come as a surprise that jewellery was not always their number one passion. Vanessa always had the creative bug from an early age, designing Barbie frocks using napkins and turning her great grandmother's beaded jewellery from gawdy to glam. As an interior designer and makeup artist, Vanessa was always

immersed in the design field and it was only when she met Don that they decided to pair up professionally and personally.

Whilst Vanessa is the face of Kennedy Jewellers, the other half of the dynamic duo prefers to let his jewellery do the talking. Don Kennedy first began in the jewellery industry as a gemstone cutter after which he trained as a silversmith and finally underwent an apprenticeship as a jeweller. With two completely different businesses at the time, opening up a jewellery boutique was not in the cards until an opportunity to lease a small premise at the boutique shopping destination The Promenade sprouted in front of them.

The Kennedy's are busier than usual but you wouldn't know it from the poised, unruffled demeanour or the exacting precision with which they approach their daily regiment. The Kennedy's work closely in their workshop to create each piece – developing settings and styles not seen before in jewellery design. Completely hands on when it comes to designing every piece, getting to know the client is absolutely paramount. "Customised jewellery is just that – customised, so we need to know if it is an every day piece or for special occasions only."



All jewellery consultants are trained to the Kennedy standard, which includes GAA training in knowledge of diamonds and gemstones and time with Don at the bench to have a comprehensive understanding of manufacturing handmade pieces.

No matter what Vanessa is wearing, she is never without one of her own jewellery pieces, whether they be a striking pendant on a strand of luscious South Sea pearls or a cocktail ring embellished with sparkling diamonds.

An avid fan of PASSION8 diamonds, the Kennedy's travel up to four times a year to source the very best gems. Hong Kong is a hotspot where they have the perfect opportunity to find and purchase gorgeous coloured diamonds.

Vanessa also has a self-confessed love affair with fire opals, tourmalines and coloured sapphires. "The brightest, most perfectly cut diamonds that are whiter than white or vivid coloured ones get the juices flowing as do the big, unusual cut bold gemstones," adds Vanessa.

Their latest collection is the stunning "Interchangeable Collection" – a versatile jewellery concept that the duo is extremely passionate and excited about. It revolves around the concept of "mix and match", starting with a single centrepiece or a custom piece then choosing a necklet to match.

Be it a strand of pearls, a cable of leather, neoprene or stainless steel with gold ends, the design possibilities are limitless and individual. The collection also includes earrings, where a plain hoop is set with an array of drops; some including the interchangeable designs so another piece can be added to the drop, such as a tassel.

With a philosophy that a jewel's destiny is to become a legacy piece worn by generations, Kennedy Jewellers take their art very seriously, where designing and crafting each piece is a tireless devotion in order to create the exceptional.

Vanessa loves the entire process, turning a pile of gems and gold into a design before sending it to her husband to mould and craft before basking in its finished beauty. "It excites me, makes me want to get the most out of everyday so I can have as much time creating, and making people as happy as possible."

Finding out what draws a client's attention and gets them excited, at Kennedy Jewellers, Don and Vanessa will always strive to create a piece that reflects who they are, what they are passionate about and will always desire and want to wear.

Many clients have visited their newly expanded flagship store where they have commissioned special pieces for anniversaries, engagements and births. With 35 years of experience between the Kennedy's, you can enjoy the high standard and excellent service.

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Private viewing rooms are equipped with 24" MAC computers so the client can see a true to life rendered image before signing off on the piece to be made. Refreshments of local sparkling wine, boutique beers and Italian plain and flavoured mineral water are also served on silver trays with a monogrammed napkin. Nothing but the best can be expected at Kennedy Jewellers!

"The only thing would be if it doesn't excite you in the morning when you begin, then stop doing it and find what does, life on Earth is short, eternity though is another conversation."

