



Chain, seed beads, components, and even vintage jewelry molds (far left) overflow their boxes at CJS. The vintage paper wrappings on certain bundles (far right) suggest the age of the treasures within. All photos by Maggie Roschyk unless noted

A jewelry designer's paradise in

New York

City

by Helen Dahms



Top: Debbie Cantor, owner of Elvee Rosenberg, focuses on purchasing the best quality beads and findings.

Bottom: The showroom at Elvee Rosenberg provides plenty of inspiration for visiting designers.

Upon returning from a recent trip to New York City, author, designer, and teacher Maggie Roschyk regaled me and a group of our Wisconsin-based bead-loving friends with glowing descriptions of the must-see jewelry designer destinations in the Garment District. She enthralled us with a tale of an elevator that opened onto a floor covered with so many boxes of jewelry components that she was barely able to enter the room — a place where customers were literally walking on jewelry shards. She spoke of a designer's utopia where every conceivable bead and component could be found — if you know where to look.

A skeptic at heart, I rolled my eyes but held my tongue; after all, we have great bead stores here — could they be so different in New York? A couple of months later, Maggie invited me to accompany her on another trip to NYC. I jumped at the chance to see for myself so I could tell our group what the real scene was like.

York Beads

The weekend's main attraction was York Beads on 37th Street, where Maggie was teaching. To say there's a drool factor at York Beads would be an understatement.

Owner Perry Bookstein specializes in gorgeous colors, finishes, and innovative shapes, like spikes, gumdrops, daggers, and studs. Seeing this magical array of beads in person took my breath away!

York Beads is a mecca for many greats of the beading world. Maggie was teaching, while Suzanne Branca from A Grain of Sand presented a trunk show featuring her yummy vintage Bakelite. Marg Yama from Bead FX in Toronto was there to learn and shop. Designer extraordinaire Suzanne Golden stopped by and added her endorsement: "I adore Perry and think he has really brought the business into the forefront of beading." It's obvious York Beads is hip and happening!

Elvee Rosenberg

Across the street from York Beads is Elvee Rosenberg — Importer of Beads and Simulated Pearls. Owner Debbie Cantor led me to their fifth floor showroom. Yes, there are six floors: one sales floor, one showroom, and four floors of delicious inventory! While discussing the bead industry, I tried to concentrate, but I was admittedly a little distracted by the floor-to-ceiling displays of pearls, crystals, Lucite, glass, wood, metal, and vintage beads and components in every color and size imaginable.

Elvee's entire selection is produced in the

U.S., Japan, the Czech Republic, Italy, and Germany. Debbie's mantra is, "We are not going to compromise on quality; that's not us!" Debbie watches the art, dance, and theater worlds, street fashion, and small design manufacturers for the latest trends to produce an exciting line of jewelry components. Designers are encouraged to create on-site in the Showroom at Elvee Rosenberg, so they tend to stay for hours.

CJS Sales

Next on our tour was CJS Sales: Craft, Jewelry, Supplies on West 36th Street, where I had been warned to expect the unexpected. As we rode the elevator to our destination, I wondered — would there be such a plethora of bead treasures that they would literally be crunching under my feet?

As owners Carl Schimel and his daughter Elyse guided us through 5,000 square feet of crystals, beads, chain, findings, filigree, buttons, jewelry molds, Venetian glass, and even finished vintage jewelry pieces, I saw that, indeed, glittering bits and bobs were sprinkled about the floor. It's easy to imagine how they got there — Elyse is a dynamo, and she'll climb to the top of an 8-foot-high mountain of boxes if that's where the "just right" component might be found for a customer.

Nestled within New York City's Garment District, bead stores, showrooms and warehouses cater to jewelry makers of every stripe.

The Schimels began doing business out of this warehouse 50 years ago, when Carl was running Kim Craftsmen, the line of costume jewelry he co-founded in 1950. To this day, he generously shares his industry knowledge with customers. Though CJS is strictly wholesale, their ever-changing collection of overstock and vintage closeout goods from around the world offers designers a range of one-of-a-kind components. The fashion elite, such as Diana Eng of "Project Runway" fame, frequent CJS for inspiration.

Each of these destinations offers creative inspiration for today's jewelry designers. I know there are more great NYC bead stores and can't wait to explore them on my next trip to the Big Apple. Upon my return home, I was the one who happily regaled our beady friends with an unequivocal announcement: "These places are all that Maggie described and more . . . really!" Can't get to NYC? Visit these fine establishments online at www.yorkbeads.com, www.cjssales.com, and www.elveerosenberg.com. ●

Helen Dahms got hooked on beading after retiring from a lifelong career as an English teacher. She has since done many bead-related things, including serving as president of the Loose Bead Society of Greater Milwaukee. Contact Helen at dahmsbl@sbglobal.net.



Vintage beads and findings spill onto the floor from towers of boxes surrounding Elyse and Carl Schimel of CJS Sales.



Members of the South Jersey Bead Society swarm York Beads on a recent shopping trip. Photo by Amy Blevins