



The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective Presents:

SPOT ON!



Behind the scenes from the mini-documentary
A Craftsman's Journey by Maria Belenkova-Buford

Issue 6, November 2021
Interview with Raymond Belenkov
Edited by Meaghan Sweeney

The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective are a group of creatively driven youth who act as a voice for an emerging generation of the arts within the Windsor Essex region.

'Spot On!' is Vanguard's new artist interview series edited by members Meaghan Sweeney and Alexei Ungurenaşu. These interviews offer a spotlight for emerging and established local artists who work in various media to discuss and promote their past and current art projects.

Raymond Belenkov began crafting jewelry at the age of 29 in the former Soviet Union. At the age of 15, Belenkov worked as a toolmaker and metal worker, but he eventually combined those skills to develop his hobby of making jewelry. That avocation soon became his vocation as his craftsmanship improved. Raymond came to Canada in his late 50s and successfully combined his passion for jewelry making, innovation, and creativity with the technical responsibilities of his current work.

How did you start crafting jewelry?

My elder sister Svetlana came home from one of the jewellery exhibitions and asked: "You work with metal, could you do something like this? It shouldn't be difficult." She showed me earrings. I thought for a moment and said that I could try but I would need someone to teach me. Svetlana found me a mentor, Yuri Saveliev — a famous Soviet jeweller who showed me which



Raymond at his work table

tools to use and sent me off to practice on my own. I was determined to accomplish what I started — earrings for my sister. However, I haven't stopped there.



"Secret" ring and earrings set: Silver, pearl, garnet

What medium do you use to create?

I typically use gold, silver, and wood to create various pieces of jewelry or other items of interest to me or my clients. I often incorporate filigree as it adds complexity and intricacy to the works. Filigree is like an exquisite lace; it's a delicate, elaborate, beautifully shaped thin metal wire. The process originated in Italy and is very time-consuming.

What is your approach to creating?

I take inspiration from the objects I see in everyday life. Sometimes, I get inspired by works of art, and sometimes something simple catches my eye: a paper knife or a business



"Lake at night" bracelet: Silver, mother-of-pearl

card holder. Their forms might be interesting, for example. Using those forms as basis for my creations, I elaborate and add details. I find it fascinating how forms can be transferred from the real world into jewelry. Once I figure it out, I try to determine what the materials are and how they can be incorporated into the original idea.



Retractable envelope opener: Silver, blackwood, pearl, almandite

What is a challenge of being a creator in Windsor?

One challenge I face is not having a solid connection to other jewelers in the area. As I mentioned about learning and working more with filigree, it would be great to cultivate connections locally to be able to learn and discuss processes with others interested in jewelry-making. Discussing a variety of approaches to creating within my field is one of the ways to gather knowledge and ideas. I would enjoy exploring that collaborative element in my work, if possible.



Dreidel "Ilia": Silver, wood

Are there any potential projects that you hope to create in the future?

One of my favorite styles is Art Nouveau. It's beautiful as it is, but I would like to explore by adding enamel and incorporating different ways to use molds. The possibilities are unlimited.



"Pleasure" bracelet and ring: Gold, agate

We thank Raymond for being our guest in the Spot On! interview series and Maria Belenkova-Buford for helping translate Raymond's interview.

If you would like to keep up with Raymond's work you can check out his website <http://rbelenkov.tilda.ws/eng>.

For more artist interviews and other Windsor-based projects, follow the Vanguard Youth Arts Collective on Facebook and Instagram @vanguard.collective and stay tuned for our next issue!



Business card holders: Silver, blackwood