

# Professional Profiles



Photo: Brian Goodman

## Digital Art

### Jewels of Light and Shadow

By Elizabeth A. Harris

The delicate profile of the girl is centered on Avi Roth's monitor. From the treasure troves of Martin Lawrence Galleries, the stunning detail of an exquisitely designed jewel and its 14K Grecian scroll chain has just been digitally preserved. It is Aventurine, a luminous art deco mother of pearl pendant by Erte; sumptuously extravagant, irresistibly female. Priced at \$10,750.00

Just days before the session, creative director Gary Cohen of MLG had begun his search for a master jewelry photographer, when he discovered Digital Jeweler's website and its award-winning jewelry photographer Avi Roth.

Roth's studio, built in 1947 of cold-concrete, warmed by the Pasadena sun is located close to historic, Old Town. After purchasing the building in 1994, Roth remodeled the former portrait studio, transforming the structure into a photographic haven, where through the eye of his mind, and the probing lens of his camera, he infuses life into the flawless jeweled creations of Cartier, Omega, Mikimoto and Erte, to name a few.

The studio, a photonic dance of natural and artificial light is an inspiring environment where "photographing is a pleasure," says Roth. With capability of offering a variety of photographic specialties, he satisfies even the most demanding clients who seek to replicate, embellish and preserve their jewelry through the art of digital imagery. And it is here on his studio's altar that I observed how jewels shine with a new brilliance. Dim lights and reflections that vary from white to yel-

low assuming tonalities of platinum and gold, suddenly transform Roth's studio into rays of light that trace a thousand geometries.

Set-ups are executed with impeccable attention. Roth, working from a palette of light and shadow, paints with disciplined strokes. Harnessing the newest tools of digital technology he works in excruciating detail, breathing life into inanimate works of art. Creating with the confidence and aesthetic mastery of the artist he has become, Roth uses his amazing skills and talents to coax color, light and shadow deep from within mysterious gemstones, revealing their hidden beauty, capturing their essence in digital imagery.

"To create a flawless image is increasingly precious" Roth says, because, "to master the art of jewelry photography requires a long apprenticeship that can vary from a few years to a lifetime. Clients more and more understand and appreciate the value of image quality needed to compete in the electronic marketplace."

Clients and art directors find real joy in re-discovering Roth's craftsmanship. "If Erte would be present he would approve" says art director Gary Cohen looking at Aventurine on the computer's monitor as Roth applies his final touch to enhance the onyx frame. Roth practices methods acquired from the past traditions of silver-based imagery implementing them with fresh intensity. His studio, where jewelry photography is a celebration of visual art, represents an effort of continuous and careful research in finding the best solution to each and every quandary.

And why did he choose jewelry photography? "I am fascinated by the luxury of exquisite jewelry," says Roth. "Perhaps because my father was a master jeweler or my uncle a photographer or perhaps because jewelry and photography are fused by luxury, a common term that comes from the Latin Lux meaning light. For me photographing jewelry means discovering original disciplines and new forms of expression in photography. I find spending time photographing beautiful things

while surrounded by them to be very pleasant and stimulating. It all brings me a sense of peace and mental tranquility; and when photographing jewelry on models, at first, always a big challenge but the result is a seductive and magical triumph."

"Photography has been my obsession from the time I found my uncles portrait-photographs in the attic at the age of nine. There, I lived in the atmosphere of photography among the old chemical-soaked prints which smelled so great in the warm dusty attic." At the age of 14 a local gifted portrait photographer introduced him to the feel of photography.

Roth started as a "street photographer" in the tradition of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank and Endre Kertesz. His work was exclusively in black and white, seeking to validate a tradition of documentary/art photography.

The complex relationship between business and art in Roth's career is shown in the number of photographic disciplines in which he has worked. Each has been a balance or counterpoint to the other, and only by looking at their individual meaning can viewers appreciate the collective power of his photography. Roth's sense of beauty draws from multiple cultures. Born in Oradea, Transylvania, his family emigrated to Israel in 1960. Encouraged by family and friends Roth enrolled in 1968 at Tel-Aviv Polytechnic to pursue his passion. This led to studies at the London Film School, where he graduated with honors in 1974.

And what does it take to become a master jewelry photographer? "Beyond the technical skills and the experience one acquires over the years" says Roth "a deep and fundamental understanding of the jewelry profession but most importantly, passion, creativity, and aesthetic sense".

And how will the digital era shape the future of Digital Jeweller? "More creative photography of course, however while utilizing modern day digital technologies, I am not ignoring two hundred years of silver-based practices but rather continue to learn from the developments and trends of the past and apply the best to the future."

Faithful to a tradition of excellence, like his father the noteworthy jewelry artisan in pre WW II Hungary, Roth represents the maximum dedication in transforming a jewel into a digital image while visually preserving its original values. A difficult task, but the results are impressive. For those who wish to follow the progress of a master jewelry photographer we recommend that you visit the web site [www.digital-jeweller.com](http://www.digital-jeweller.com), often updated. You will discover a whole new world and wonderfully charismatic personality. A man perhaps more unique than rare.

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