

The Girls at Vintaj

Designers. Sharing our passions. Growing friendships. Growing our business.

Vintaj Natural Brass Co. is the dream fulfilled of three women—sisters Wendy Mullane and Jeanne Holland, along with their close friend, Jess Italia. Born with kindred spirits, the three were brought together through their passion for jewelry design in a place offering natural beauty, history, and inspiration—the small, eclectic and art-inspiring town of Galena, Illinois.

Wendy Mullane A tomboy through and through, Wendy preferred mud to beads in her childhood. Once college bound, she began answering her calling by pursuing art and design at Brigham Young University. Wendy continued to follow her passion for the arts and her love of nostalgia by opening an antique and jewelry shop in 1991, while raising her 4 children. It was in this creative environment where she began working with metals and where her inventive spirit grew strong. This 10 year experience eventually lead her to the discovery, with her sister Jeanne, of the “creative filigree settings” technique. With this new design technique in hand, she formed Vintaj Design Studios and eventually Co-founded Vintaj Natural Brass Co. Wendy’s art education, metal-working skills, store ownership experience, motherhood and numerous other life educational lessons prepared her for her current role as President of Vintaj Natural Brass Co. She loves a challenge and strongly values moral ethics. Wendy stands firm in the belief that these two qualities are essential to being a good leader.

Called to fulfill their dreams—

Jeanne Holland Jeanne’s interest in jewelry design came at a very early age. It began with a box of antique glass beads and broken necklaces from her grandmother that captivated her imagination. She continued to design as she progressed through high school and, on occasion, sold her creations. Jeanne found herself at a crossroads, having to choose between her two loves: art and dance. Her love of form and function and a strong desire to have a career that would give her time for family prompted her to pursue art at Brigham Young University. It was in this wonderful atmosphere of creativity and spirituality that she learned to express herself. Influenced by a variety of the fine arts, from classical ballet to stained glass mosaic, Jeanne went on to own a small art and jewelry shop in down town Galena, then form the jewelry design company of Vintaj Design Studios with her sister, Wendy, and eventually Co-found Vintaj Natural Brass Co. Among all of these things she considers being a mother to her four young children, the youngest born in May 2007, to be her greatest accomplishment.

Each brings strength that compliments the other.

Jess Italia-Lincoln Inspired by and interested in all forms of art, Jess has dabbled in it all. With the hopes of having a career in the advertising field, Jess pursued design and marketing at the International Academy of Merchandising & Design in Chicago, graduating with her bachelors in advertising design. Living in the fast paced city has given her a sense of adventure. While experiencing many cultures and entertainment and enjoying the company of friends, she always made time for her crafts (*Designing handmade clothing, purses and quilts was a relaxing hobby that she picked up from her mother.*) Designing with vintage fabrics quickly changed to beads which lead her to discover her true passion—jewelry design. Jess relocated to Galena from Chicago after being drawn by its beauty and history, which she feels inspires her designs, and is reflected in the atmosphere of her bead & jewelry shop where she continues to share, teach and inspire. Jess, too, has a deep-rooted passion that stems from—and continues to unite her with—a strong bond with her family.



How did it all come together?

The spark ignited when Wendy and Jeanne were teaching jewelry design to a women’s group in their church in the spring of 2001. Playfully and artfully manipulating a filigree bead, Jeanne opened it and wrapped it around a glass stone. Wendy and Jeanne immediately realized the unlimited potential of what they now term “creative settings” and began to design together full time as Vintaj Design Studios. Not only did this venture give the opportunity for an income and creative outlet, but also it allowed time for the things they considered most important: raising their children and serving in the community. Wanting to share this opportunity with others like themselves, they began to explore the notion of offering their jewelry components to the beading industry.

Impressed with Jess’s unique sense of design, creativity, talent and fervor, Wendy and Jeanne invited her to join them. Immediately applying her talents, Jess began implementing a campaign to reach beaders all over the world. (Sharing their unique products and innovative techniques by exhibiting in bead shows and being featured in books, magazines and key publications) Jess completed the circle, and through their combined efforts, Vintaj Natural Brass Co. was born. Three artisans, here to share the good fortune they’ve found through working together, as one, in the spirit of inspiration, friendship and harmony...

Vintaj—now reaching worldwide markets—is growing rapidly and employs several friends and family members as well as working with additional friends in various fields who are also following their dreams.

