

IN DESIGN

{ ATTITUDE }

Silver Dreams

A jewelry business that started at the kitchen table grew to become full-time creative work for Jace and Crystal McCarty of CH Designs.

Article & Photography by Kate Bradley Byars





Turquoise has never gone out of style in the Western world, but today, the popularity of the stone is higher than ever in all realms of fashion. Just ask Jace and Crystal McCarty, owners of CH Designs, who specialize in blending custom silver with exquisite turquoise stones. The pair handcraft jewelry from their home outside of Dublin, Texas. In what started as a small endeavor just before the 2020 pandemic, their jewelry business has been booming to the point that the couple can barely keep up with the demand.

Today, the McCartys both work full-time for the business and also employ two additional full-time workers. Their venture has grown so rapidly and become so popular, the young couple is exploring a wholesale option to give boutiques greater purchasing opportunity, while also expanding their existing online store even further into the market.

While the market has a plethora of turquoise-inspired artisans, the creations crafted by Crystal and Jace have a unique, timeless quality that blends tried-and-true favorites—

like traditional turquoise squash blossom designs—with new twists derived from their own artistic sketches.

“We are looking for our inspiration outside of jewelry, and that is what sets us apart,” Crystal said. “That’s another part of where the occupation pieces came from. The idea is easy; making it happen is what’s hard.”

From Crystal’s kitchen table to the couple’s in-house workshop and office, CH Designs has become so much more than Jace and Crystal had dreamed when they graduated college and dedicated themselves to silversmithing. They work hand-in-hand to grow a business that brings joy to both them and their customers.

Makers Meet

Crystal grew up in College Station, Texas, where she dabbled in art; at age 13, she began to create her own jewelry with string, leather and other craft items. Her suburban upbringing was different than Jace, who’s from Kingsbury, a small town outside San Antonio, Texas. The two met as freshmen at Blinn College in Bryan, Texas; later, they both transferred to Stephenville, Texas, to continue their education at Tarleton State University. One thing Crystal took with her was the jewelry she’d started making while at Blinn in 2019.

“I was working for boutiques and would make jewelry on the side,” she recalled. “My mom’s neighbor was a jack-of-all-trades in jewelry and loved to learn. So, I took a class with her and every night, after work, I took out my toolbox and made things. It was a beginning bezel class, where we learned soldering, simple polishing techniques and how to set stones—that was about it. Everything after that was self-taught by trial and error.”

She sold to friends and through an Etsy store. Her maiden name, Crystal Hosea, is the “CH” behind CH Designs. As the couple continued their education in Stephenville, they both started shifting into roles as jewelry makers to keep up with the growing demand for Crystal’s items.

“Jace made a Shopify account and that really helped with getting noticed,” Crystal said. “We did a lot of hoop earrings, and some simple turquoise rings were big hits then. Then we started doing some brands. [The business happened], and we ran with it.”

Before graduation, both were juggling classes and spending available time working as silversmiths for the budding business. Jace knew how to weld, and he quickly picked up soldering jewelry, too.

“I started colts for a while, but when the jewelry picked up, we ran with it,” he said. “When we

started the business, we didn’t have a 5-year plan; it just started. We were working out of our laundry room! [Success] was coming, and we were rolling with it!”

Both graduated from Tarleton the summer of 2021, and by August they were full-time silversmiths and makers. By September, they needed to add a full-time employee. The Christmas rush was on, and their business was rapidly reaching new heights.

Cultivating a Craft

From custom class rings to horsehead pendants to lariat-style turquoise stone necklaces on display on the CH Designs social media pages is staggering. In 2023, the couple made a goal to launch a new product every Friday, and they haven’t missed a launch yet. That helps drum up interest and maintain a plethora of products.

One item—horsehead pendants—shifted the makers from the hoop earrings and turquoise rings into customized pieces. The horse’s head is the same for each pendant; the custom twist appears as they precisely cut out the facial markings for the horse being depicted. It is an item Jace pitched to Crystal while the two were feeding horses one evening.

“We have a mare, ‘Missy,’ and I asked Crystal what she thought about cutting out her markings and putting it on a horse head,” Jace said. “We did it and horse heads shifted our style and our clientele base. A lot of people see them and ask if we can recreate their horse’s face.”

Crystal draws each horse’s markings onto silver with a thin pen, then cuts it out using a handsaw. The blaze, stripe, star or snip is soldered onto a horsehead cutout, then it moves to Megan Cline, an employee who polishes each piece before it’s shipped out by employee Kinley Hasard, who juggles several tasks for the business.

“Personally, I love it, and it makes me feel more artistic,” Crystal said. “I feel like I was born to cut out those blazes. You’re not doing the same thing every time.”

The same care is given to other custom items, like brands, occupation pendants (apples for teachers, teeth for dental workers) and the earrings, necklaces and cuffs that blend silver and turquoise. All turquoise is purchased through the Kingman mine in



Arizona, and the stones are cut and shipped to the couple.

Crystal also loves to design custom class rings. Each includes a stone in the center and lettering on each side.

“I love soldering class rings because each one is a task,” she said. “They are hard, but I love them!”

Building a Business

The biggest change today from when the pair started is that Jace is focused more on the business side of their venture instead of having hands on the jewelry. The couple recently designed a new website that launched in early summer 2023. Customer service and dealing directly with orders is never-ending, and Jace is looking forward to some new site features designed to relieve some pressure.

“I respond to messages throughout the day—it is non-stop. Keeping up with the website, products and all, and our new website development takes a lot of time,” he said. “The new programming will feature an order form that will be interactive on its options.”

As the business scales, the learning curve for the two young makers continues to shift. Although Crystal was happy to continue their business on the same track as when they did in college, Jace pushed to expand. They didn’t have a business model then, but they now follow one built with the help of their business accountant, and both point to advice from their fathers with helping them achieve success.

“As the growth and sales have come, we’ve figured it out,” Jace said. “We are far bigger than we’ve ever anticipated. And to do that, we just worked our butts off.”

Whether in the shop crafting or team roping together, the McCartys are finding their own path as fulltime craftsmen in the Western industry.

“We don’t have anyone we want to be, but we want to be a household name,” Jace said. 🍷

Set in Stone

Learn more about CH Designs online.

chjewelrydesigns.com