

If you've ever thought about selling your work, it's time to start thinking about your brand.

We are all brand conscious. Most of us buy food, cars, clothing, sports equipment, or candy based on the name stamped on the package or on the product itself.

Branding is all about recognition, not only of the product, but of other tangible and intangible characteristics we associate with the product, whether it's a can of green beans or a wedding ring. Quality of materials and workmanship, design idea, price point, audience, cachet, dependability, even the personality of the manufacturer are all a part of branding. Brands

live or die on their ability to deliver on those expectations consistently.

brand

YOU

BY  
SHARON  
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Even if you're just considering selling in the future, you should be aware of how your decisions, from materials and techniques to your Facebook page to the clothes you wear, may eventually affect your brand. Here are 10 questions to ask yourself now to help you with your branding decisions, present and future.

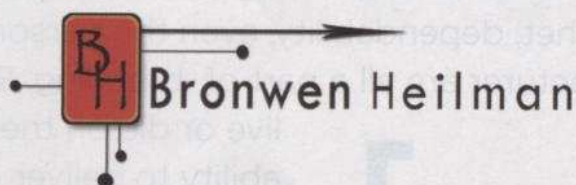
**What's your product?** From food to athletic shoes to jewelry, the most basic brand question is: what product will you make? If you make jewelry solely for your own enjoyment, it may be a difficult but necessary mental shift to start thinking of your work as a "product." You can do this one of two ways. Like many manufacturers, you can decide what audience or market niche you see beckoning, and gear your jewelry to that market. In fact, this might be your first move if you want to sell your work, says Sherry Beck Paprocki who, with her husband, Ray Paprocki, co-authored *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Branding Yourself*. "If you're creating a product that no one wants to buy, it's hard to be a business," she says.

But unlike other manufacturers, art/craft/studio jewelers are driven more by their creative imaginations, fascination

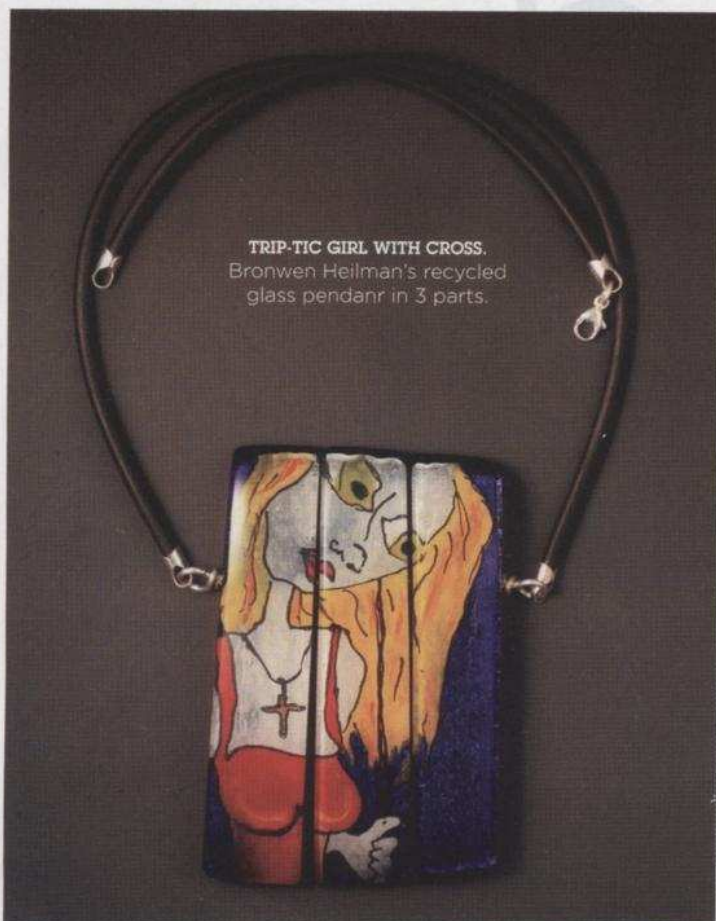
with certain materials and techniques, or the desire to say something with their work than by market demand. This is also a legitimate way to determine your product.

**Who is your audience?** No matter how you determine your product, at some point you have to determine who your buyers are. "Take a look at the people who currently buy your product," suggests Amanda Gizzi, Director of Communications for the Jewelry Information Center (JIC), or those to whom you give your jewelry as gifts. You might ask them to take a short survey to find out their age and gender; what they want and need; where, when and what they buy to fill those needs and desires; and what they like about your jewelry (price, look, materials, color). "See if there is a common denominator," says Gizzi. "Build on that." And don't be afraid to try different things, she suggests, such as a Facebook poll. "Social media makes it easier than ever before to reach different parts of the world and a new client base," she says.

Be prepared to rethink your market base. The work you think is ideal for an established career woman might flop with them but be surprisingly successful with women in their 20s just entering the work force. "A lot of companies are really shocked when they find out who their target market really is. It may be wildly different from what they expect," says Gizzi.



Bronwen Heilman



**TRIP-TIC GIRL WITH CROSS.**  
Bronwen Heilman's recycled glass pendant in 3 parts.

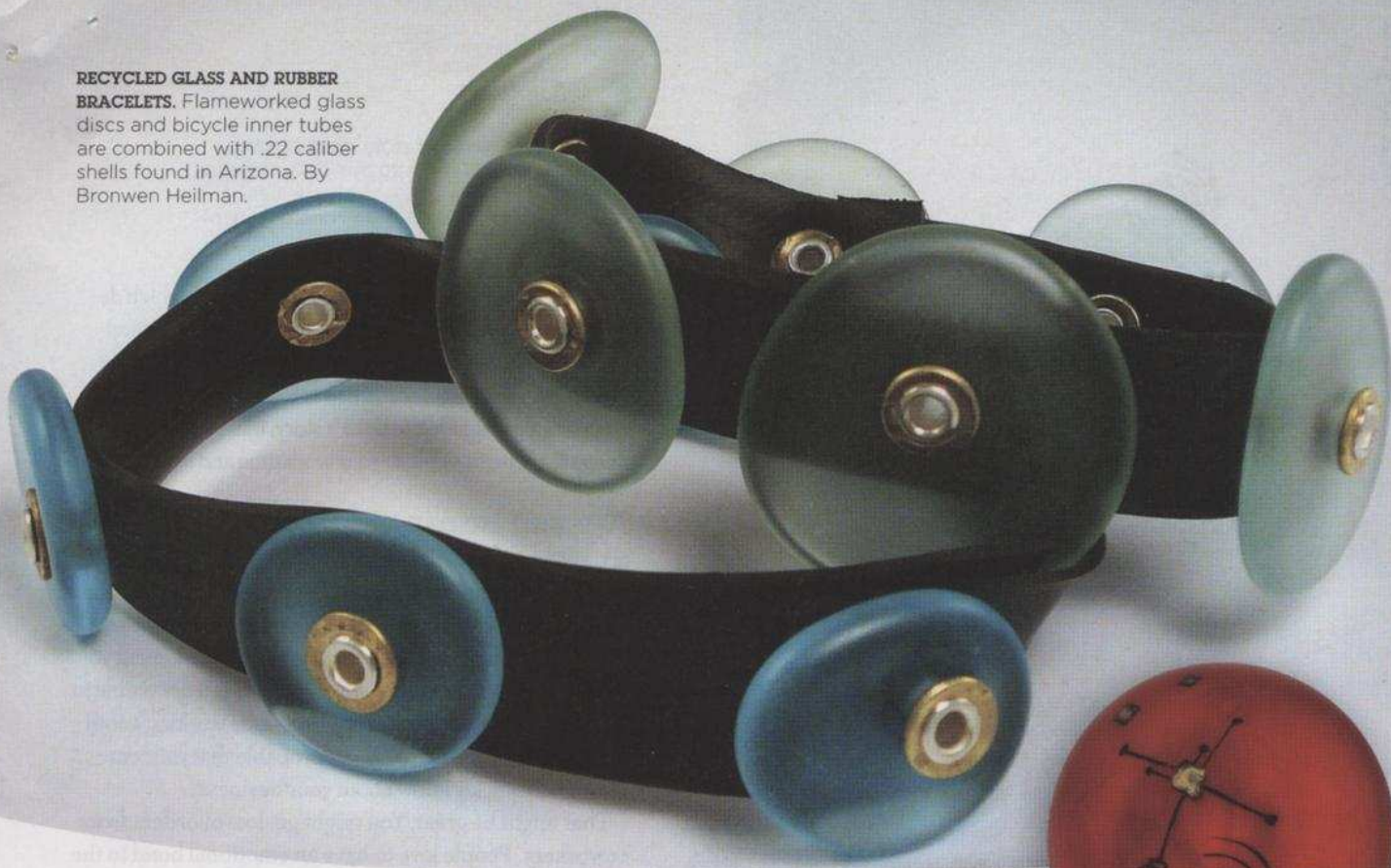
**How is your work different?** No matter what materials and techniques you're using, someone else is using them, too. One way to set yourself apart from other makers is to excel at whatever jewelry making technique or material you work with: found object, anticlastic forming, reticulation, granulation, etching. High quality always makes work stand out.

Second, find a way to make the work yours. Your brand should be "an authentic depiction of who you are, what skills you have developed, and what value you can bring to your work," write the Paprockis. People usually choose art jewelry for some reason other than adornment. They are drawn by its playfulness, its spiritual quality, its storytelling, its innovation, or simply its wicked sense of humor.

While many people may work with tin, Harriette Estel Berman's work is impossible to duplicate. Michael Boyd is not the only jewelry maker who cuts his own gem materials, but he uses his sense of color to create work that is uniquely his. When it comes to anticlastic forming, the first name that may come to mind is Michael Good.

What quality comes from your heart that will make your work immediately recognizable and make it impossible to duplicate? What do you want people to think of when they hear your name?

**RECYCLED GLASS AND RUBBER BRACELETS.** Frameworked glass discs and bicycle inner tubes are combined with .22 caliber shells found in Arizona. By Bronwen Heilman.




**How will you communicate your brand?** Keep your message simple and keep it focused on your target audience. Have an “elevator pitch” prepared, something that describes your work in a few sentences, a response you can give whenever anyone says, “What kind of work do you do?”

Be available to the media from bloggers, to newspapers, to magazines, to radio for interviews. Have professional photos taken of you and your work. Put together a press packet containing images (on a disk, labeled correctly), an artist statement, a bio, awards, shows, your upcoming schedule, and news clips.

And if you work under your own name, remember that you are your brand. Especially if you don't have a staff but even if you do, you need to be aware of your appearance, your manners, and your interactions with people.

**Is your brand identification consistent?** If there is a battle cry of branding, “Consistency!” is it. “It is important for a jewelry designer to think about what message they are conveying to their target audience,” says Gizzi, and to make sure every part of the brand identity — product, logo, name, font style, blogging style, you name it — not only identifies your product but tells the same brand story to the same target market.

If your work is formal or conservative, bright primary colors in a logo, banner, or brochure will send confusing messages to your audience. If your work is dark and edgy, a traditional font on your business card is not going to represent your brand well. So before committing to your

 Bronwen Heilman

This finely handcrafted piece is made using recycled materials. The glass in this piece is made from recycling beverage bottles that I collect, wash, cut, grind, tumble, flame-polish, slump and/or flamework.

The glass in this piece is from:

Thank you,

Bronwen Heilman includes a hand signed “romance card” with every piece of jewelry detailing where her recycled glass originates.

support materials, such as packaging, think about how everything will reinforce the concept of your brand.

While you don't have to do everything at once, it helps to get the big pieces in place at one time. Building a brand doesn't happen overnight, says Gizzi. “It's going to take a while for people to recognize your brand, so the more brand identifiers you can have early, the better off you'll be in the long run.” Once you establish your identity, stay with it. “Nothing is more confusing to the customer than trying to figure out whose jewelry it is when there are different names used,” says Gizzi.

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