

BETSY MILLIKEN AND
REGAN CATON

Jewelry Designers Span the Decades

By Pam Lazor

In the 1980s, Rumblefish jewelry was all the rage. The unexpected blend of luxury components, colors, textures and stones made for the boldest and most interesting jewelry designs of the time. The look commanded the attention of all the major fashion magazines, haute designers and a significant celebrity clientele. The two designers, Betsy Milliken and Regan Caton were a celebrated duo at the forefront of the accessory industry with representation in over 200 chic retailers throughout the United States and Canada. The designers took a break from their business, and only now, almost 20 years later, have Milliken and Caton decided to re-launch their much sought after design label. Today, there is an array of fresh new designs as well as a selection of revamped classics taken from the best of their archives. When Rumblefish first launched in 1983, the name and the jewelry catapulted to the top of the accessory industry.

What spurred that instant and continued success?

Regan: Designer jewelry was just becoming popular. We hit the market at the right time and we had a specific look, and the stores loved us.

Betsy: We followed our passion and accompanied that with a natural ability to consistently design unique jewelry.

The jewelry has such a unique flavor, how would you describe the look?

Regan: Mixed medium. We use all different elements to create the pieces. Our trademark is using vintage settings that make the jewelry look heavy and bold, but it's actually very lightweight. We use semi-precious stones, leather, 14 karat gold findings, fur, and all kinds of things.

Betsy: It's a look that Rumblefish has branded.

Obviously, you are both very creative women. What are your backgrounds and how did you end up as jewelry designers?

Regan: When I was modeling, I had a hobby of combing the antique shops and buying beaded necklaces that I'd take apart and make into earrings; people would notice me wearing them and asked if I would sell them.

Betsy: I had acquired an apprenticeship in New York's diamond and gold district working in a manufacturing and finishing house, where I stayed for six years. It was a natural progression toward designing jewelry. I also worked for a while as an agent for a celebrity photographer.

Now that Rumblefish is re-launched and up and running again, what are your plans going forward for the company?

Regan: Our on-line store has just opened, and we are building a new customer base of wholesale accounts, those are two of our focuses.

Betsy: To build an important design company and continue to offer great jewelry designs for everyone. I have heard that you donate a percentage of proceeds from your trunk shows to charity, which is very generous. Do you have any pet causes?

Regan: The Susan B. Komen Foundation, Keep a Child Alive

Betsy: We support local charities as well, like the Stockton Flood Relief Fund: we'll be traveling to other cities later this year, Annapolis, South Beach, and support resident charities there, too.

Who would be on your wish list to wear Rumblefish jewelry?

Regan: Fashionable women who express their individuality with a great piece of jewelry.

Betsy: Everyone on the planet...if only there was enough time.