

suburban life



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Annette, Robert, and Elan Brandt, the family behind A. Brandt + Son Antique and Estate Jewelry

by ERICA YOUNG | photos by JODY ROBINSON

Captivating

Led by the Brandt family, **A. Brandt + Son Antique and Estate Jewelry** celebrates timeless beauty through its artfully curated in-store and online collection.

Antique jewelry is often described as unique and timeless, but it also has an indescribable quality. It's eternal in a way, in that each piece passes its prior owner's history on to the next.

Few know about the nature of antique and estate jewelry better than Annette Brandt. As the founder of A. Brandt + Son Antique and Estate Jewelry in Narberth, Annette has built a thriving family business known locally and around the world, with pieces that are as unique as the Brandts' own history.

The Brandt family has been a trusted name in the tri-state area for more than 50 years. In 1970, Annette's husband Robert launched the

women's retail brand Knit Wit, which has had more than 25 locations since its start.

Annette traces her passion for antique and estate jewelry to combing the East Coast for the rarest pieces, which she sold on consignment at the Knit Wit store in Margate, New Jersey. A trained metalsmith, Annette studied at both the University of the Arts in Philadelphia and at Robert Kulicke's Jewelry Arts Inc. in New York City, where she learned ancient techniques in fabrication and design.

"That education helped me understand jewelry," Annette says. "It gave me the tools to learn what goes into making jewelry and also what

makes special pieces really stand out. I started with a case, putting my jewelry in Knit Wit, then moved into two cases and continued to grow into a real business that was a pure labor of love."

Annette's expertise attracted return customers and new customers through referral. Over time, the business became so substantial that Robert and Annette decided to open A. Brandt, to specialize in jewelry. Apart from its storefront in Narberth, A. Brandt + Son has been in Center City Philadelphia, the King of Prussia Mall, Margate, and a few other locations in New Jersey.

"Annette has always worked unbelievably hard, running all over the country at times to find the best pieces and collectibles," says Robert. "She has accumulated an incredible inventory. The Main Line is an incredible area, with people who appreciate Annette's attention to detail. She's been a success since her start."

Annette and Robert's son Elan has been by Annette's side from the beginning, which allowed him to develop a passion for antique jewelry at an early age. When Elan joined the business in 2002, A. Brandt + Son was born—a locally based retailer that serves the entire globe through a robust online presence.

"Elan grew up with this business," Annette says. "I would travel all over to estate sales, auction houses, and flea markets, and he was right alongside us. So when I opened my first store with my son, it was a natural fit. And when he asked to join the business, we were able to expand and do this together as a family."

The family business is truly a multi-generational enterprise: Annette drives the passion for the customers, Robert has an in-depth understanding of the area's business community, and Elan focuses on marketing and the online presence that has powered the company's international growth.

"We've been able to grow the web business over the last 15 years when we really started to focus on a wider clientele," Elan says. "It's allowed us to become a global business that's evolved through strategic marketing, customer retention, and referrals. The goal is to both retain customers and give them a reason to keep coming back, and we've been able to do that and expand on that since we launched our web sales."

A. Brandt + Son has grown to include customers in Australia, China, England, Singapore, and almost every European nation. It has been featured in local publications, as well as in the likes of fashion icons such as *W Magazine* and *Vogue*. Through all the company's growth, an

"You can really tell the difference between old jewelry that was made by hand and new jewelry that was casted. It's a passion, and we take pride in our passion. We want people to really enjoy their piece of jewelry and look at it and be proud of what they have." ■



A. Brandt + Son's distinctive selection includes jewelry made between the 1880s and the 1940s.

[Vintage jewelry] is a passion, and we take pride in our passion."

—ANNETTE BRANDT, FOUNDER OF A. BRANDT + SON ANTIQUE AND ESTATE JEWELRY

intense focus on the product has been at the core of A. Brandt + Son's success.

"Our goal is to expand overseas and buy across the whole world," Elan explains. "In order to maintain our quality, we need to see pieces in person to know that it matches. We really look for one-of-a-kind pieces that you won't find anywhere else. That's our secret: You want to find really unique pieces that separate us from the competition all over the world."

A quick browsing of the A. Brandt + Son website confirms the company's distinctive selection. Visitors will find jewelry made between the 1880s and the 1940s, with an emphasis on engagement rings in an array of price points.

"We have an enormous selection that's been accumulated between Annette and Elan's hard work," says Robert. "You can see that on the website and in our inventory. It's a great place for young people because we offer a variety of options at a really large variety of prices."

Elan is a diamond-sourcing expert, with more than 20 years of hands-on experience.

"I see thousands and thousands and thousands of rings every year, and was able to become self-taught," says Elan. "I've also dealt with a lot of experts in the industry that have taught me so much. There's no one that you cannot learn something from."

The Brandt family loves sharing their passion for jewelry with their customers. They invest tremendous amounts of time and energy to curate an inventory of timeless pieces.

"We've been in business for over 40 years and we've developed a reputation; we're knowledgeable and we are known for our quality," says Elan. "We're able to be the comfortable source to help people find exactly what they're looking for, even if they might not understand what to look for when they walk in the door. I always tell people: Follow your heart and see what you like. Your taste is not right or wrong, and your taste is unique to you. That's what makes estate and vintage jewelry so special. You can follow your heart and find an unusual piece that is exactly uniquely you."

"Collecting vintage jewelry is a natural thing that you're drawn to," Annette adds.

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