

What's in the Trunk?

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Collectors of Barbara Bagner's jewelry stand shoulder to shoulder, sipping wine and sampling refreshments while waiting their appointed time with the visiting artist at Craft Company No. 6 in Rochester, N.Y. As customers browse a display case filled with her newest designs, Bagner cultivates relationships with buyers, getting to know each one individually as they try on jewelry at her scheduled trunk show.

Collectors look forward to the trunk shows as a time to select a new piece of jewelry. Other customers arrive carrying heirloom or dated jewelry, commissioning Bagner to remount their gemstones in an original design. Still others show up for a glimpse of the personable designer whose sales and reputation have grown as a result of direct selling.

"My creativity comes full circle when I meet a customer," says Bagner, who, after much prodding from gallery owners, had her first trunk show about six years ago and now does 12 a year. "Making connection with clients and getting to know their lifestyle and personality is just as important as creating the work."

For a jewelry designer, the trunk show is a one-time presentation of a much larger assortment of work than normally exists in the gallery. It often provides important contact with the public and the store sales staff. For the retailer, the additional items, on loan cost-free, expand inventory.

The complete article "What's in the Trunk?" can be found in the Spring 2004 issue of NICHE magazine.