

Keep It Simple

Westport's **Jennifer Lau** creates jewelry with an edge and an altruistic twist

by **JILL JOHNSON** photographs by **DEBRA SOMERVILLE**



If you don't know Jennifer Lau (and chances are, you do), you've probably seen her around town. She drives a black Land Rover teeming with kids—five of them hers, plus an assortment of their swimming/baseball/soccer pals. A petite brunette with luminescent skin, Lau would strike you as someone who hasn't changed much since college, except that between Catholic University of America graduation and now, she's fit in adventures to Russia and Africa, a career on Wall Street, enough kids for a basketball team, self-reinvention as a fashion stylist, and, as of January, a jewelry line.

Genevieve Lau is the result of Lau's first summer of free mornings since her twin boys were born ten years ago. "All the kids went to Hunt Club camp from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. every day," explains the Greens Farms resident, whose youngest child is four. Most moms would get some laundry folded, maybe go to the gym. Lau started a business.

"As a stylist, I'd be dressing people and couldn't accessorize at the price point that people wanted with pieces that I loved," she explains. Lau proceeded to create her own jewelry collection, named after her great-grandmother Genevieve (the French version of Jennifer). She intended to fill the gap between costume and high-end fine jewelry with delicate bangles, rings of colorful gems, and earrings and necklaces in exquisite shapes that pop into her head during her morning runs. "That's my time to brainstorm ideas," she says.

A jewelry maker in Westport makes most of the pieces, which retail from \$250 to



Paris bracelet (\$2,695), Los Angeles necklace (\$500), and San Sebastian earrings (\$1,220)

BUSY MOMS, KEEP IT SIMPLE...

1 Wear clothes that fit properly and mix fitted with loose: boyfriend jeans with fitted tops, skinny pants with voluminous blouses.

2 Invest in two pairs of shoes: a classic pump to elevate any outfit (even jeans) and ballet flats, which make jeans, shorts, casual skirts, and dresses look cute all year long.

3 On a budget? Minimize your wardrobe and spend money on accessories. Pair a white tee and jeans with a really great necklace and a pair of ballet flats, and all of a sudden you look stylish.

4 When in doubt, wear neutral colors and accessorize with brights/prints/leopard.

5 Always add a little bit of edge or surprise: a great pair of earrings with a simple outfit, a fun scarf, or layered necklaces and bracelets.

\$2,800. “I go in with my sketches and he brings them to life. All of the jewelry highlights the beauty of gold and stones.” A jewelry maker in New York makes some items in the collection, which has reached fifty pieces. Each is named after a city. “Traveling and cities inspire me—the culture, the sights, the people,” says the designer, who is originally from Glen Cove, Long Island. She studied abroad in Belgium and London, lived for a year in Madrid teaching English, and ventured to Russia and Kenya solo.

She has translated Los Angeles into a “stick” necklace, sleeker than the typical bar. The Versailles bracelet is a gold “C” shape, adorned with clusters of black and white diamonds. The Montreal necklace is an elegant interpretation of the charm trend, with a male and female sign, a heart, and a gemstone.

“When styling, I love layering, both clothes and jewelry. All of the pieces are designed to be layered together or with people’s existing jewelry,” she says. “For so long it’s been about messy layering. I wanted to bring it back to simple, pretty layering.” She even likes her jewelry to sound pretty. “I love the sound the simple solid gold bangles make. It’s pretty and calming versus the aggressive noise of chunky bangles.”

Another nice sound is the noise her jewelry is making among clients. “The Theory, J Brand, Vince Girl, the contemporary fashion girl—that’s who I’m targeting.” A year away

from forty, Lau is still that girl. Many of her friends are as well, and they’ve swiftly become Genevieve Lau fans. Lorraine Palumbo raves, “It’s so refreshing to have a line of jewelry made of special stones that isn’t so serious. The Miami earrings are a casual alternative to my diamond studs; they take my boring mom outfit up a few notches. The L.A. necklace—I’ve never seen anything like it. The Paris bracelet is by far my favorite. It’s the perfect design for our age: light and pretty. I get tons of compliments every time I wear it.”

Even Lau’s kids want in on the action. “Caroline and Sarah are talking about doing a kids’ line down the road,” she says of her young daughters. Lau’s husband works in finance and handles Genevieve Lau’s accounting, so it’s becoming a family affair.

Genevivelau.com is an e-commerce site, but Jennifer encourages people to call and order. “It makes it more personal,” she says. “I can talk about what they have already and sizing. Everything is custom made.”

When not designing jewelry and shuttling kids to activities, Lau is busy chairing next year’s Near and Far Aid Spring Gala, volunteering for Tiny Miracles and Make-a-Wish, or helping with ArtSmarts. Since she also donates ten percent of Genevieve Lau profits to charity, looking pretty never felt so good.