



Carl Schimel
and his
daughter, Elyse

BAUBLES, BANGLES & BEADS: CJS SALES, A DESIGNER'S KISMET

All those “baubles, bangles, bright, shiny beads, sparkles, spangles,” that make designers’ hearts sing out likely come from one of New York’s best-kept secrets, CJS Sales.

That is, of course, unless you are among the cognoscenti who make CJS their first stop when designing next season’s—or next year’s—collections.

Nestled in a 5,000-square-foot warehouse situated in the accessories and trim district, CJS boasts a dizzying array of beads, findings and crystals. In fact, owners Carl Schimel and his daughter, Elyse, take pride in being the starting point for future fashion.

And what a starting point it is: one of the world’s largest collections of vintage closeout beads, craft and jewelry findings, including rhinestones, Venetian and pressed glass cabochons and stones, filigree, plastic beads, Bakelite, chains, nail heads, Lucite, Swarovski crystals, cameos, seed beads, pearls, buckles, even antique chandelier parts. In short, a veritable gold mine for jewelry, accessories, apparel and even interior designers looking for that something special material to differentiate their designs.

Carl, one of the founders of Kim Craftsmen, a leading costume jewelry company for nearly 50 years, planned to retire but returned to the business after friends, colleagues and budding designers keep seeking his advice and sources for their collections. “I much preferred dealing one on one with creative people than dealing with corporate hierarchies,” he says. Elyse Schimel joined her father after studying business at Wharton and psychology, adding another generation of expertise.



“We act as advisors, archivists, historians, confidantes and hunter/gatherers for our clients,” Elyse says, noting that “we don’t talk about what our clients buy, though, since many beads or jewelry parts are exclusive to them.”

Their treasure trove comes from decades of collecting, buying inventory from closing factories and other sources from around the world. So it’s no wonder that designers fly in to peruse their stock. Even Native American artisans call in special orders since CJS offers the last vestiges for the rare and unusual outside of museums.

“We love picking up a copy of *Vogue* or a Bergdorf Goodman catalog and seeing how materials we stock, such as Japanese enamels, Czech beads or some other long forgotten piece, return to life through a designer’s imagination,” Carl adds.

A look into the canyons of 12-foot plus high stacks of boxes that contain CJS’ inventory is an immediate signal that CJS is no place for amateurs. “Our clients come in with a vision, we hand them a tray and dig in, sometimes staying for hours,” Elyse says.

So it’s no wonder the Schimels put this admonition on their website about the firm: “It’s a warehouse and unless you know what you are looking at it can be very overwhelming—but if you are an experienced buyer—and willing to dig and get dirty you will be in heaven!”

CJS Sales

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