



ITALIAN STYLE



quality inspire me. These are characteristics that we are losing to the age of technology," Brunini says. "Passion inspires me. Multisensory experiences inspire me. Artistic explosion inspires me. I was lucky to experience this all firsthand in Italy."

Back to school One of Brunini's first stops upon arrival in Spoleto was the Istituto Statale d'Arte, a trade school that accepts students from ages 14 to 18. With specialized concentrations in painting, textiles, photography, jewelry and stage design, among others, the 150 teenagers who attend the school are given invaluable early training in artistic careers.

"These kids are offered a public education in specialized creative fields, and it's something that Italy really includes as part of the lifestyle," Brunini says. "It's inspiring and speaks volumes about why this country breeds an exceptional level of talent."

Students in the jewelry program are taught metal fabrication, setting, and technology before they can go out into the working world to earn an apprenticeship. Later in the week, Brunini had a chance to speak to one of those apprentices.

Enrico Morbidoni, proprietor of Spoleto Gioielli, the largest jewelry producer in Umbria, has been recruiting from the institute for years. "In my workshop right now I have eight people who came from the institute," Morbidoni says. "They all must commit to a six-year apprentice program to even be considered—it's not just a job, it's a way of life."

Morbidoni is also the guiding force of the jewelry exhibit at the Spoleto Festival. The organizer for the past 15 years, he was thrilled to include K. Brunini Jewels as an ambassador representing the bond between Italian and American designers. Like many other local jewelers who show their wares year after year, Morbidoni sees the festival as "a window to the world": "Visitors are looking for one-of-a-kind pieces of art and handmade products," he says. "It is less a commercial objective than a creative one."

The green heart of Italy The Umbria region where Spoleto lies is made up of postcard-perfect scenery. Rolling hills, ancient cityscapes and scattered vineyards make it the ideal destination for a budding designer or lifelong student of the arts. Nicknamed "The Green Heart of Italy," it sits just south of Tuscany and north of Rome.

The Spoleto Festival takes advantage of both the view and the bounty contained within. The region is famous for many culinary delights, including truffles, Montefalco wine, prosciutto, wild boar, lentils and strangozzi, a type of pasta made without egg. Brunini and her merry travel buddies took advantage of it all, while also sampling opera, ballet, modern dance, church choirs and city tours.

"To be able to display my jewelry in such inspiring surroundings only makes me more determined to embrace my career with open arms," Brunini says. She hopes to bring other accomplished jewelers of Italian heritage to upcoming festivals, and another goal is to eventually work with GIA to create a Carlsbad, Calif.-Spoleto student exchange program.

More than anything, she hopes to do her part to bring the spirit of the 1962 Spoleto Festival back to the forefront. That year, local sculptor Pietro Consagra posed a question to his fans: One wonders, should such a marvelous, harmonious and entirely possible event remain forever unrepeatable?

"The answer is no, the city is ready, willing, and able," Brunini says. "It can be in the fields of dance, opera, sculpture, art, music or jewelry. It's up to each of us to make it happen." ■

Art and architecture The narrow streets of Spoleto date back to 241 BC. Walk far enough and you'll find yourself amid the rolling hills of Umbria. The view from the local art institute, where jewelry making is an important concentration, helps the creativity flow. When Katey Brunini and company arrived in town, the institute was among their first stops. The artistic training the students receive "speaks volumes about why this country breeds an exceptional level of talent," she says.