

VARIETY



INSTANT HEIRLOOMS
 Cara Brown Designs transforms artifacts into signature necklaces and vintage tweed LifeJackets, modeled above by the designer.

TASTEMAKER

Treasure Hunter

Cara Brown repurposes found objects to create a legacy of bespoke fashion.

Jewelry designer Cara Brown of Hopewell Township is always on the lookout for vintage artifacts to transform into one-of-a-kind, statement necklaces.

"I should have been a pirate because I'm passionate about collecting old beads and unusual brooches and belt buckles," she says. "When I sit down to design new pieces, I warn my family to steer clear. Then I spread everything out and begin creating about 50 necklaces at a time."

Brown's mother was an interior designer, so her early years were spent surrounded by beautiful things. After graduating from Vanderbilt University, she and a partner began creating Christmas ornaments from antique jewelry and beads. Eventually, their decorative holiday baubles were sold to Neiman Marcus. Almost 20 years later, after raising three children with her husband in their 18th-century

Mercer County farmhouse, Brown introduced a trendsetting collection of handcrafted necklaces.

Within a year, Barneys NYC and Saks Fifth Ave picked up her two lines—some pendants made of old objects and some crafted with antique horse brasses that previously adorned the leather harnesses of working equines. Today, Brown's jewelry can be found at luxury boutiques across the country and at carabrowndesigns.com.

"Cara Brown Designs was inspired by my desire to repurpose vintage objects and transform something old into a classic art piece to layer with one's fine jewelry," she says. Initially, Brown made a few necklaces for herself, but people literally began buying them off her neck, in the nail salon and even on airplanes.

"Each of my hand-knot-

ted pendants includes semi-precious or antique beads to create a one-of-a-kind work of art that can distinguish a woman's everyday uniform," she says.

The designer's latest passion project, the Cara Brown LifeJacket, captures the chapters of one's life on hand-selected, vintage tweed jackets.

"Each LifeJacket tells a special story. We begin with a one-on-one consultation, then each jacket is custom tailored and hand embroidered to reflect special occasions and life events," she says. Brown's own LifeJacket highlights personal milestones as well as her hometown, places she has lived, her wedding date and her children's birthdays.

Whether it's a one-of-a-kind pendant or a tweed LifeJacket, each Cara Brown creation is an immediate conversation starter—and a future heirloom.

— Susan Brierly Bush

CARA BROWN

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