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## **From The First Day, His Jewelry Career Was Set In Stone**

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*Artist Robert Vengoechea says he never considered another career. Photo by  
Tim Barnwell*

**M**ost makers chase various muses en route to a career. Not Roberto Vengoechea.

“I was born to do this,” says the jewelry designer. “I did not have any other careers prior to jewelry. This was my path that God put me on.”

Vengoechea immigrated to Florida from Colombia in 1968, when he was 18. In the U.S., a family friend introduced him to sculpting in wax (the first stage in making most jewelry).

“He asked me to create something for him, and left me with ten stones to play with. When he returned four days later, he was amazed by my creativity,” says Vengoechea. Encouraged, he continued creating unusual wax designs based on images from his own imagination. He says he is totally self-taught.



*The artist's signature "coupling bands" ( top left) unite engagement ring and wedding band in one.*

Vengoechea worked as a wax modelist in Miami for 15 years in the wholesale jewelry business, eventually opening a small boutique. “I garnered a reputation as the ‘Wax Man,’ creating wax sculptures for the jewelry trade,” he says. He also learned other aspects of the business, including how to repair jewelry and set stones. But he’s quick to point out, “I am a sculptor first and a jeweler second.”

In 1989, he met June, an immigrant from Scotland, and they married two years later. When the friends who had introduced them moved to Western North Carolina, Roberto and June traveled north to visit them. “We saw how peaceful and beautiful it was. We were looking for quality of life and peace of mind.”

Once established in Black Mountain, they decided on a name for their jewelry business: Visions of Creation. “Visions are what come to me either in my dreams or as dictated by the gemstone,” explains Vengoechea, “and Creation comes from the Creator who gave me the talent to do what I do.” He makes the jewelry and his wife manages the daily operations. “Working together as a team is what makes us successful,” says June.

Vengoechea enjoys sculpting “coupling bands,” where the engagement and wedding rings are designed to fit together, appearing as one. His “Mountain Collection” of rings, pendants, and earrings is earthy and accessible.

But the artist, who is a member of the Southern Highland Craft Guild, says his favorite thing to make “without a doubt” are his avant-garde pieces — bold, sculptural rings that somehow look both medieval and futuristic, stones set as though in a crown. Vengoechea even shares his secrets when he hosts DIY workshops. He and June guide attendees through the process of making their own rings. “In the span of eight hours, they create something they will cherish for the rest of their lives,” he notes.

*Robert Vengoechea, Visions of Creation, 100 Cherry St., Black Mountain. For more information about workshops, call 828-669-0065 or see [visionsofcreation.com](http://www.visionsofcreation.com)(<http://www.visionsofcreation.com>).*