

Expats, continued...

Gzurstrassen Galleria / Gonzague Zurstrassen

After graduating as a gemologist at Antwerp's HRD in 1996, Belgian national Gonzague Zurstrassen met Fred Mouawad in Geneva, Switzerland, who offered him a job. He worked for the Mouawad family for 14 years and traveled the world on their behalf, eventually landing in Bangkok in 2003, running their Asian operations. In 2010, he set out on his own, creating a production and sourcing atelier in Bangkok and two retail outlets, Gzurstrassen Galleria, in Ko Kut, Thailand and in Soneva Jani, Maldives.

Gonzague's world travels were clearly an inspiration for his own style of jewelry, which he describes as "Bohemian chic with a strong DNA inspired by beach resorts in Thailand and the Maldives."

Other inspiration is perhaps from Gonzague's own DNA, coming from a family of artists, gem collectors and fashion designers. "My love of jewels runs in the family," he smiles, "and as far as I can remember, I have been attracted to colored gems. So, I guess it was destiny that I would end up expressing my creativity through gems and jewelry." Colored gems form the basis of his one-of-a-kind pieces, which tell a story or relate a "spiritual journey through Nature."



Why set up shop in Thailand? "Thailand is the world capital of colored stones and manufacturing. For the work I do, it's essential to be based here, where I can source stones and find good jewelry manufacturers. Here, there are many options to outsource my needs in the jewelry making process, from wax models to CAD designs to casting to creating large-scale art objects in silver or bronze. Any and everything is possible in Thailand. And, having all these options helps the creative process," he explains.

And living in Thailand? "I really consider Thailand as my home. It's a very pleasant place to live. The weather is good, as is the food, and the people are great. Because my creations represent spiritual journeys through Nature, Thailand is a great source of inspiration, from its beaches to its mountains. There is always plenty to do, and lots of friends to do it with." Gonzague adds that Thailand is also near a number of other interesting neighboring countries, which is an advantage in his work.