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## FASHION SPOTLIGHT

# Designers' business a gem of an idea

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CHARLES TRAINOR JR. / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

Alessandra Feio and Erica Pacey show off some of the rings they designed for their jewelry company, Nügaard Designs.

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Alessandra Feio's relationship with her boyfriend didn't seem to be going anywhere, so she accepted a job transfer with a market research company and moved to Brazil. A year later, Feio's boyfriend traveled to Rio de Janeiro to put a ring on her finger, and she returned to Miami to design rings and other glamorous accessories with her best friend, Erica Pacey. Together they formed Nügaard Designs.

"All Alex did was read Vogue and watch E!," Pacey said, "so inviting her to work with me just made sense."

Four-year-old Nügaard Designs makes use of textural mixes that are sexy, romantic and three-dimensional. The Flora Collection includes earrings made of dehydrated leaves dipped in 18-karat gold and sterling silver; the Tribeca Collection's gold-filled and brass pieces are embellished with everything from smoky quartz to gem clusters; the leather cuffs in the Selva Collection have gold-plated animal medallions including dragons, bulls and elephants.

Most striking is the Campo Collection, defined by Pacey's use of golden grass, a vibrant gold thread indigenous to Jalapao, Brazil. Some bangles, for example, are richly woven gold strands jeweled with roughly cut gemstones. Other looks include carved bone earrings and adjustable brass necklaces -- a 40-inch Boho piece can be transformed into a belly chain or a soft choker. Prices range from \$45 to \$350.

Pacey and Feio, who have been friends for 10 years, attend everything from the Tucson Gem Show in Arizona to the Chatuchak Weekend Market in Thailand to seek inspiration for their designs, but most of their inspiration comes from their native Brazil. For every piece sold from their Flora Collection, Nügaard plants a tree through the Trees for the Future organization.

In addition to showrooms in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, Nügaard's designs are available in 250 locations worldwide.

Pacey, 32, originally from Sao Paulo, is the creative mind behind Nügaard (her middle name). She graduated with a bachelor's degree in communication from Florida Atlantic University, but she has been designing jewelry since age 8.

"I was head of commerce at Umbro.com for U.S. and Canada and it was fun, but when all the dot-coms went under, I decided to focus on my passion -- designing jewelry," Pacey said.

Pacey and four assistants hand-craft most pieces. She also uses artists in Brazil to create the golden grass designs for The Campo Collection, which will include handbags in winter 2008.

Feio, 32, originally from Rio De Janeiro, graduated from Florida International University, where she majored in marketing and international business. She is responsible for marketing, public relations and Nügaard's packaging.

"Do what you love," said Feio. "If you love making rings, then make rings."