

# Jewellery Design

Need a little help with inspiration?  
Let's dive into jewellery design!

Vennice and Lucy



Hola, Vennice and Lucy here from the Metalsmith Academy. While we know that inspiration is often talked about, it's not always easy to find or tap into. That's why we created this e-book to explain the creative process of designing jewellery. Before we get straight into it, remember that the design process is not set in stone (no pun intended), and there's no universal way around it - as always, it's what works best for you. So let's look at how to take on the mythical creature that is your creative block.

## How can I get inspired?

The answer to that, is that inspiration is simply everywhere - it's just a case of looking. Sources of inspiration can come from the most random of places - it's not all pretty flowers and delicate leaves; a motorcycle tyre, a horse's bridal or even a drain covering can have delightful elements to them if you look close enough. Let's take a look at an example of a classic car: the stunning, if somewhat slightly unreliable Jaguar XK150.





<https://www.schmitt.com/inventory/david-gambee-1958-jaguar-xk150-coupe-overdrive/>

While getting up close and personal with the real deal is great, you can also find photos of a single object from different angles.

## Exploration of Composition and Shape

We could look at the whole car, but to replicate it entirely as a piece of jewellery would be a little unimaginative. So instead, we'll take a closer look at the details of the car in the few images we have.

Now, let's zoom in and take a look at the mini detailing, and simply sketch combinations of shape compositions that appeal to you. We can get into adding more details later, but right now, we're just looking at shapes - and definitely not thinking about stones or metal at this point.





Above are three different views of the same car, with two examples of shape composition sketches from just looking at the details - hopefully you can spot where each came from.

It's always good to take a little time to explore various options, rather than sticking to the first design that comes to mind, because:

1. The first idea will rarely end up being the final design.
2. Design is like exercise - the more you do, the stronger you'll become. So taking the time to practice this skill is definitely worthwhile, and will help to visualise details quicker in the future.

## *Developing Your Ideas*

After you've finished sketching out your initial compositions, you can select one that appeals to you most, and develop the idea further.

Again, we're not going into the finer details of the design just yet. Instead, we're simply playing around with the shapes.

Personally, I rarely use these prompts individually for my final designs. This eventually comes in the form of combinations which I'll show you shortly.

Below, we show you ways to play around with your designs; an exercise you can practice as well to gain perspective. There are no right or wrong ways to interpret the prompts below, so have fun with them!

A simple exercise you can do to help you develop ideas here is to consider:

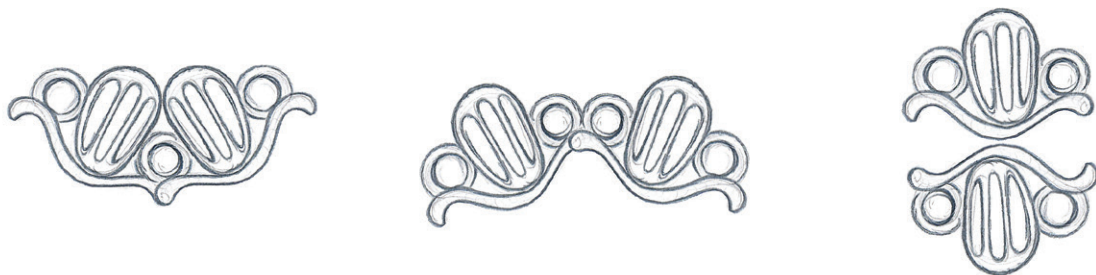


## Scale



Changing the scale of components of the design in relation to each other.

## Mirror



Exactly what it says on the tin! But think creatively about your mirror planes.

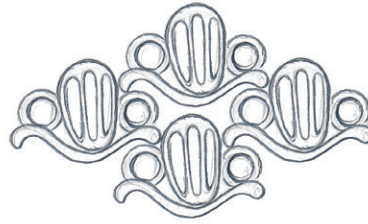
## Rearrange



Take the individual elements of the design and simply rearrange them.



## Duplicate



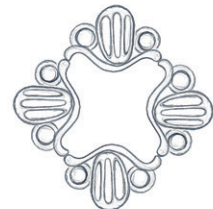
Duplicate the entire design or just elements of it.

## Proportion



Think about stretching the design in various directions as a whole or as individual elements.

## Circular Array



Imagine your design or even parts of it as a mandala! You could have 4 copies or even 10!



## Rotate



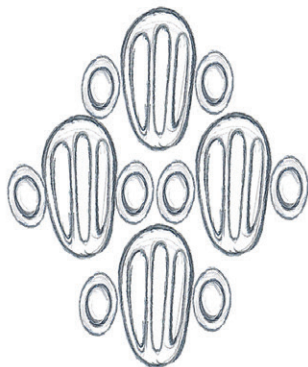
Rotate the design as a whole or take the individual elements and rotate them in different directions

## Spacing

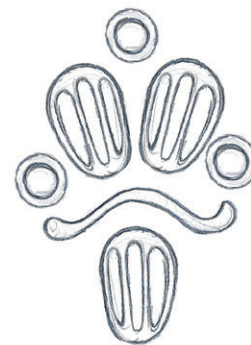


Add space between your design elements, don't worry about connecting everything just yet.

# *A Few Examples of Combining the Prompts*



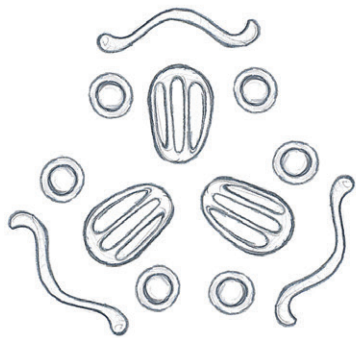
Proportion & Duplicate



Duplicate, Spacing & Mirror



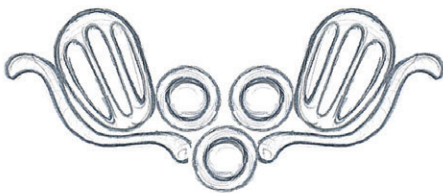




Spacing & Circular Array



Circular Array and Proportion



Rearrange & Mirror



Scale and Duplicate

The cool thing is that once you get started on these prompts, the combinations come naturally whilst you design. For now, following them is a great way to flex your design muscles.



# Getting to the Design Details

After developing your ideas, narrow them down to select just one design. You don't have to think about all the details just yet.

But let's take a look at some things you do want to think about at this stage, in no particular order:

Form

Metals

Positive and Negative Space

Texture

Gemstones

Setting Style

Additional Elements

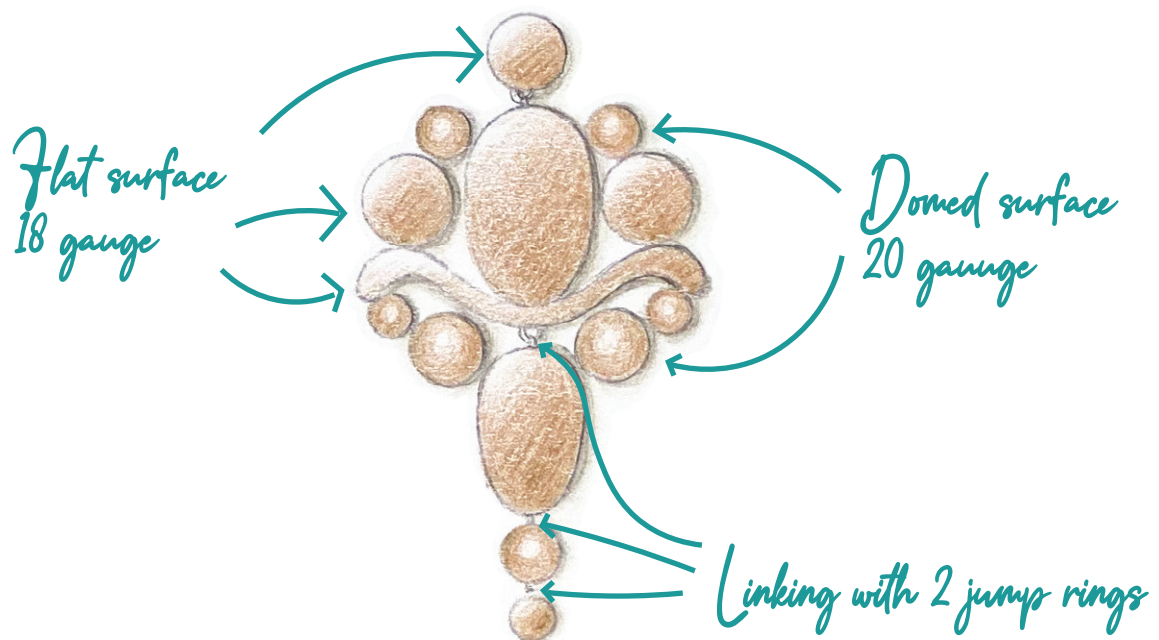
At this stage, it's also a good idea to consider whether elements of the design will be linked or stationary, and what gauge metal you might want to use - but of course, nothing is set in stone until the final design and even then, that's only if it's a custom order! Here are a few examples:



# Form

Simply put, think about if you want your design to lay flat, or perhaps be domed or formed. We can think of this aspect in terms of the entire piece, or as individual elements.

## Rose gold

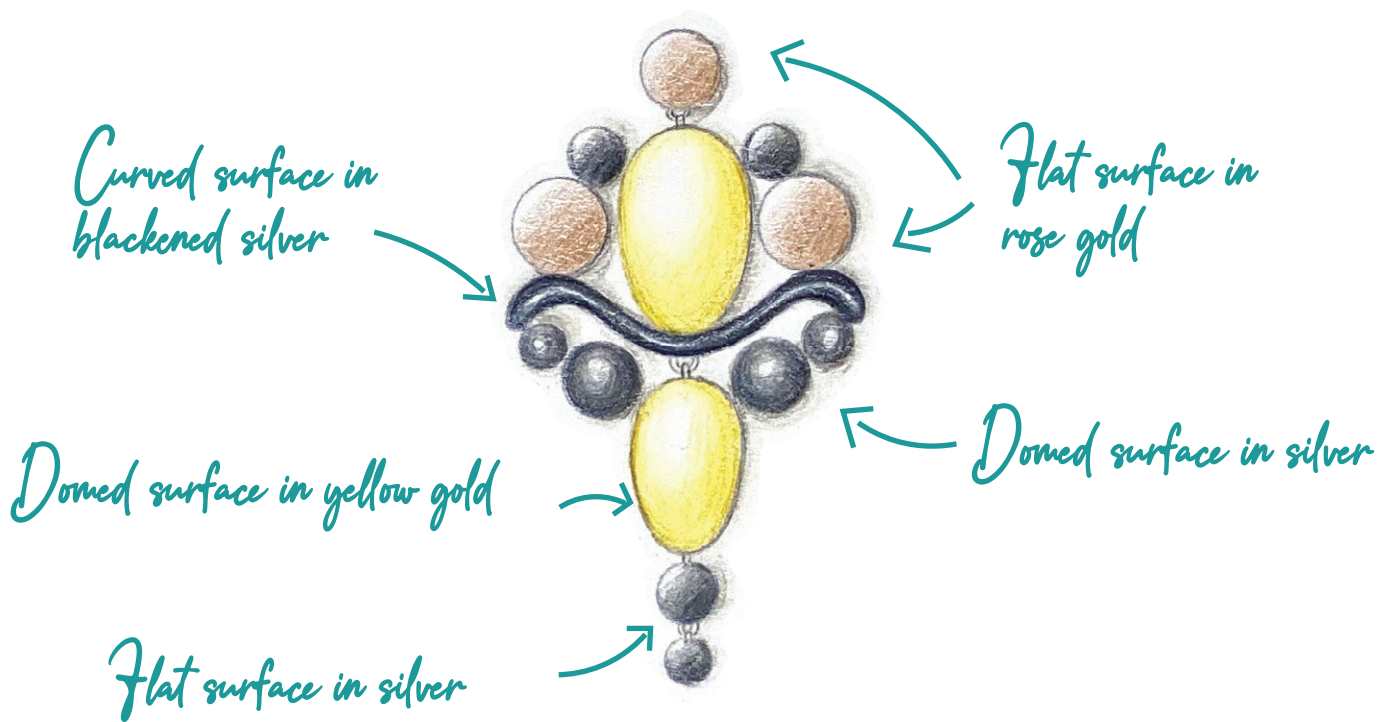


The design here is rendered entirely as rose gold, but with a combination of flat surfaces and domed surfaces. Already, it's so much more interesting than a single flat sheet of metal. Now, we can think about the thickness of the metal we will use, as well as how the elements are going to be linked together.



# Metals

If we are using gemstones for the design - will silver, yellow gold or rose gold look better with those stones? Do we want to create a warm organic feeling design (maybe using a rich 22kt gold) or a cool, modern design which may look better in silver, white gold, or platinum?



Here we have combined metals and forms to design a piece that has an entirely different feel from the first.

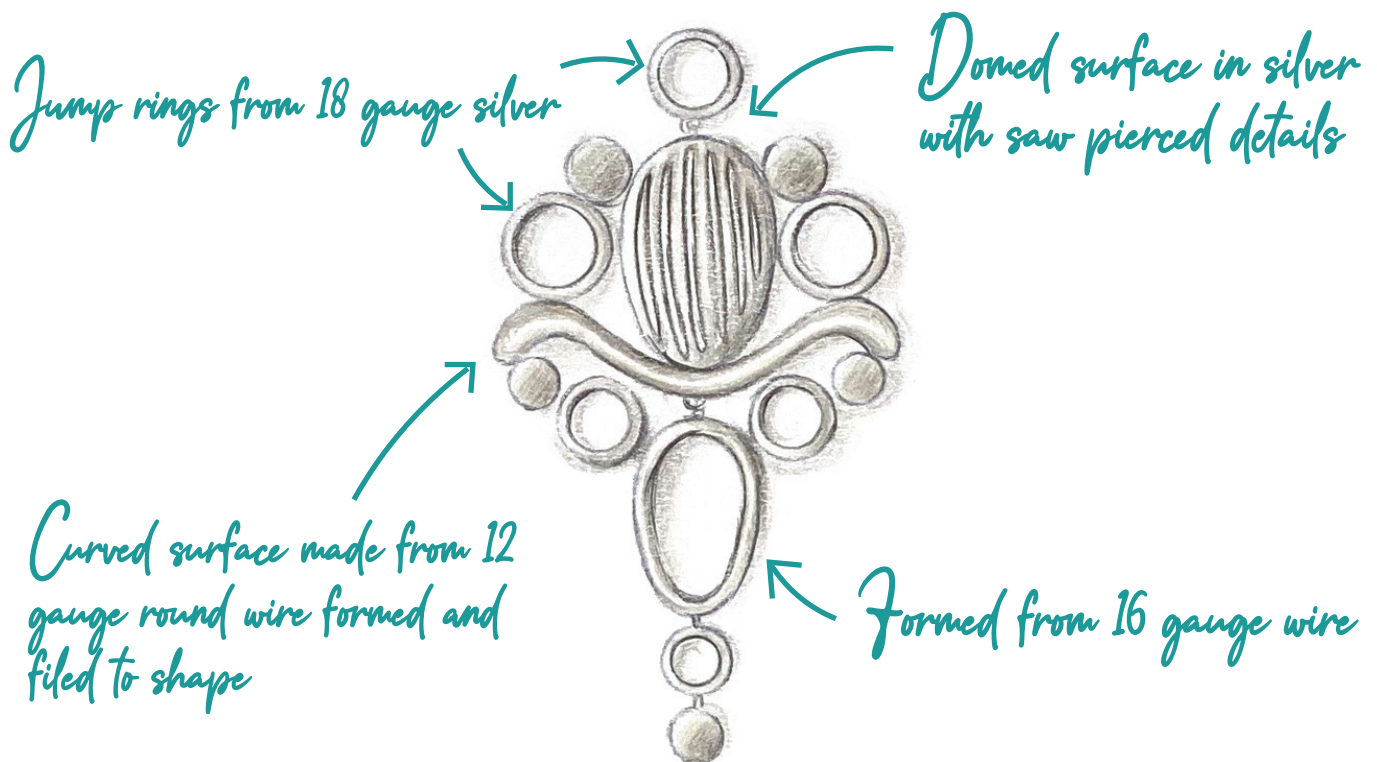


# Positive and Negative Space

The simplest way to approach this aspect is to decide if we want the individual components of our design to form a solid (as in, using sheet metal) or do we want to leave more negative space and work with wire or piercing work?

Always remember to consider the shapes formed by negative spaces - these are just as important as the shapes formed by positive spaces.

It's worth noting that when we're working with expensive materials such as gold, using negative space can be a great way to make larger pieces without breaking the bank.

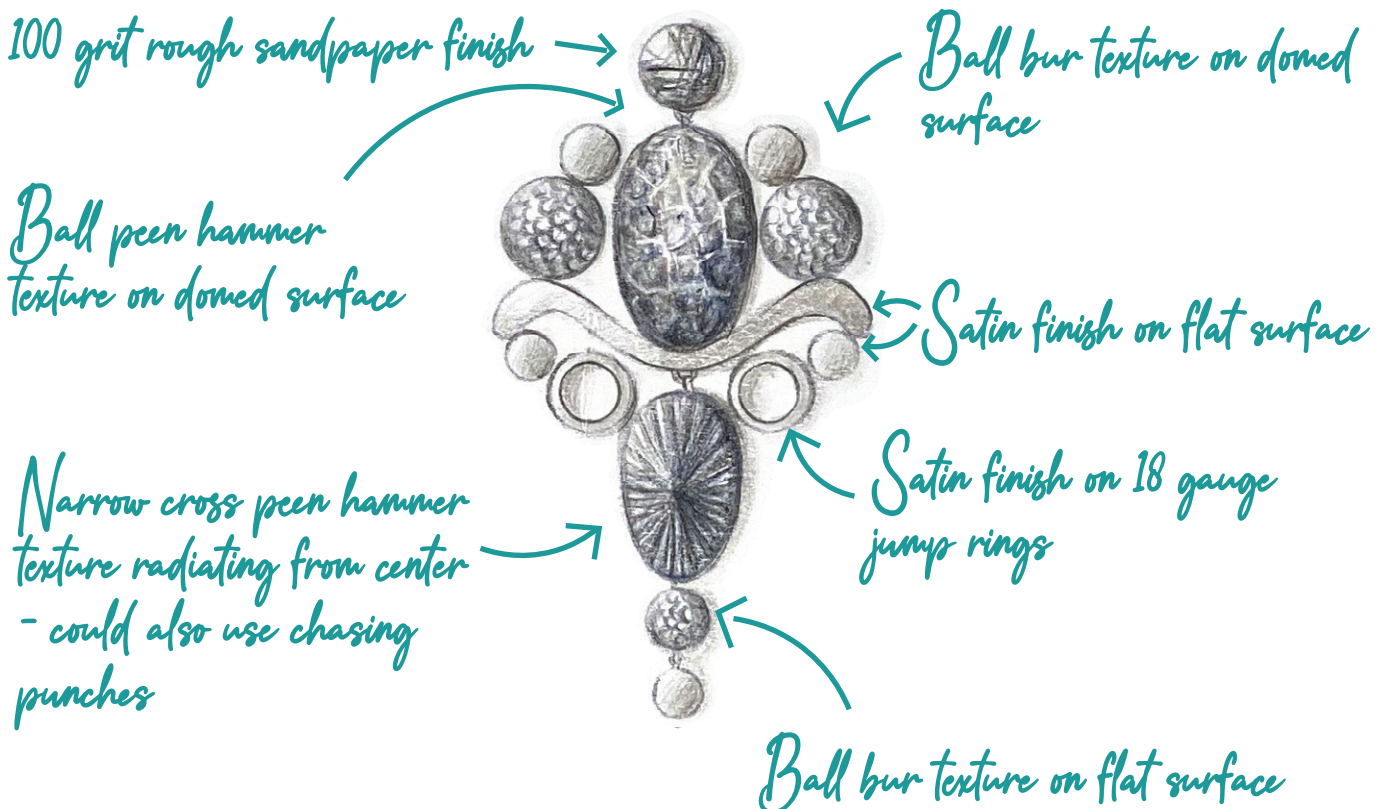


# Texture

Think about the piece both as a whole and its individual elements. If we're going for a sleek, modern look, then perhaps we want a bright, shiny smooth finish, or simply a matte finish.

Do we want to create a more interesting look utilising different textures and finishes on the same piece?

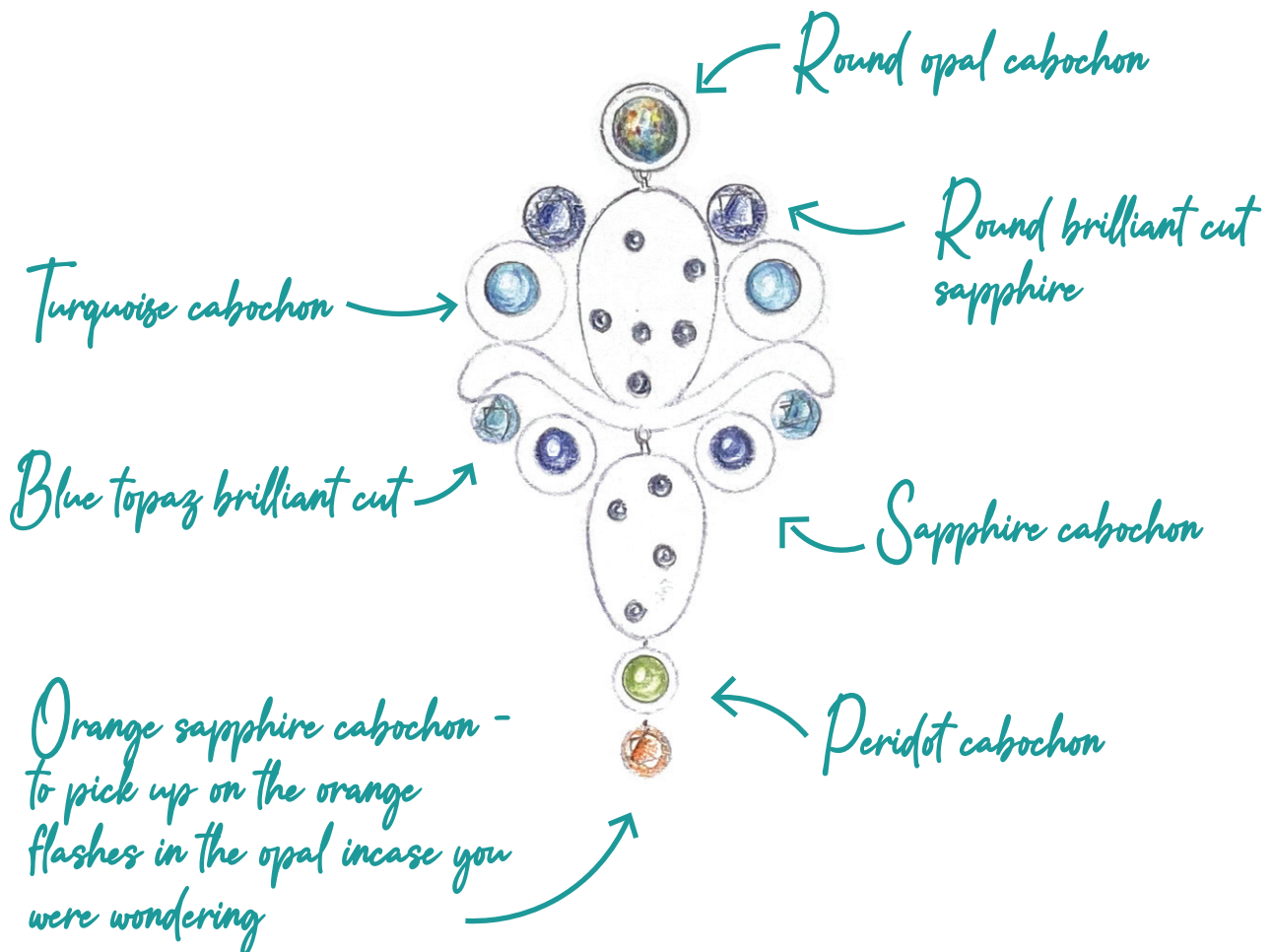
When adding textures however, we should always ask ourselves: does this compliment the design?



# Gemstones

If we use gemstones to enhance the piece, we need to think carefully about which stones might fit best with the design.

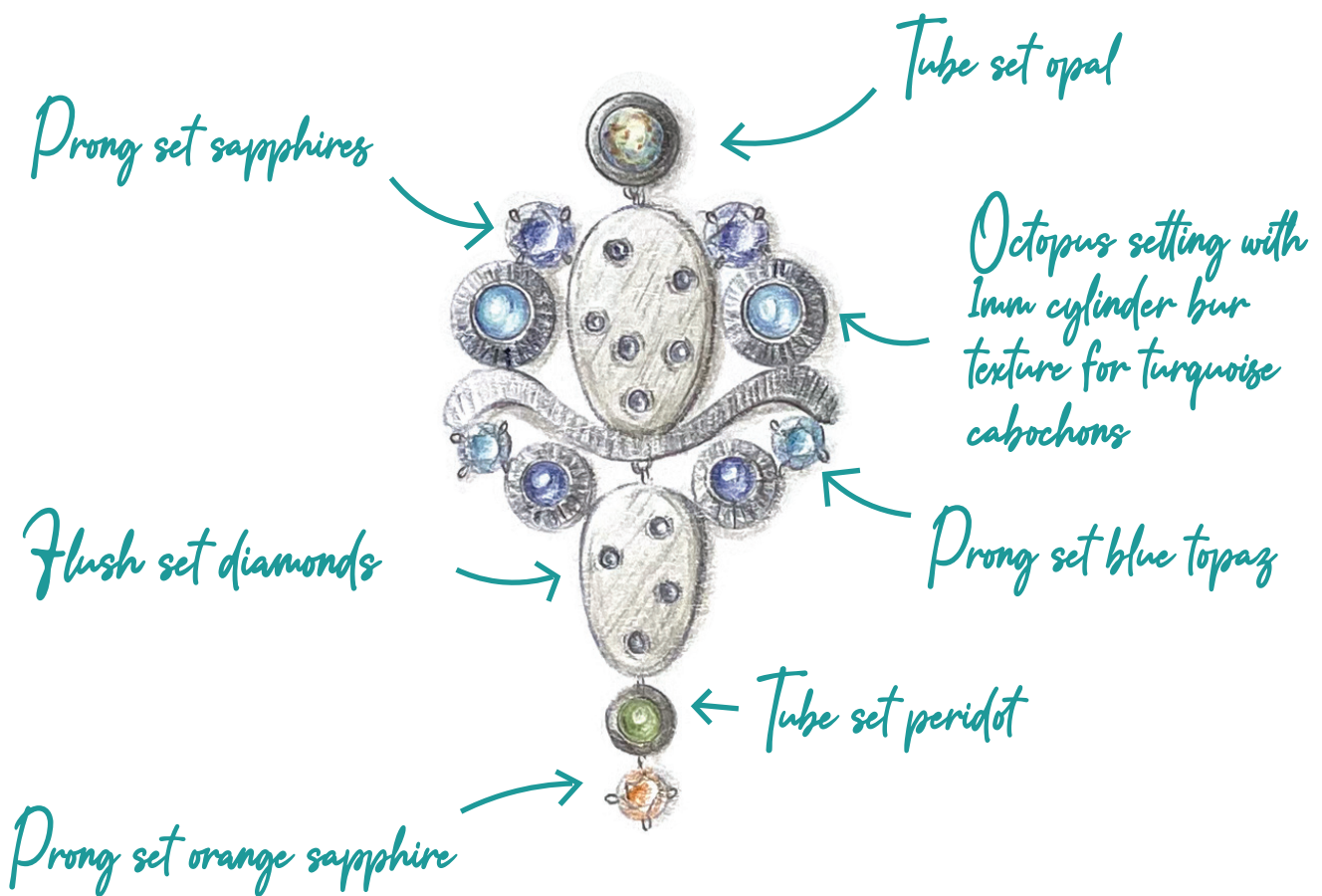
When designing pieces before you have stones on hand, consider the possibility that the stones you'll want later might not be available to purchase. If this is the case, it's a good idea to design with calibrated stone sizes in mind. Getting stones custom cut to fit a design can add a lot of expense to the process. But of course, as we often prefer to do, you can always design around the gems you already have, and lighten that stash a little!



# Settings

A pet peeve we have here in the studio: commercial settings carelessly placed onto a beautiful, handmade piece of jewellery - that's not to say commercial settings are bad, only that it should always tie in with your design.

The setting style should complement the overall aesthetic of your piece whilst also being incorporated into the design. Simply slapping a commercial Tiffany-style head onto our artistic car-inspired design probably wouldn't work out too well - but of course, there are always exceptions to the rules!





# Additional Elements

Of course, if you think the design at this stage would work better if you just added a little extra detail here or there, then go for it. If you're looking at the design and thinking to yourself "You know what, I think it would look better if I added "this detail" here", then for sure, try it out!



## The Final Design



As you can see here, the final design doesn't look like a cheesy carbon copy of a car - in fact, it doesn't resemble a car at all! And now, there's even a cool story behind your design. The inspiration can be seen and traced back with certain elements, but it's not at all obvious.

Inspiration is just that: it should guide you, but not control you.

Can't wait to see what you come up with.

Vennice and Lucy xx

