



Hip and High End

An Interview with Charles and Joanne Teichman, Ylang23.com

EDITOR'S NOTE Joanne Teichman graduated from the University of Texas with a Journalism and Marketing Degree, and received her Masters in Journalism from Northwestern University. She spent four years in Brand Management at Procter & Gamble, and then served as Vice President at three major New York advertising firms.

A Law graduate from Paris Law School, Charles Teichman emigrated from Paris to New York where he worked as a retail consultant.

Joanne and Charles met and married in New York in 1980, opened Ylang-Ylang in Dallas in 1985, and renamed their company Ylang 23 in 2004. The company offers fine jewelry collections from renowned designers including Cathy Waterman, Irene Neuwirth, and Jennifer Meyer.

The Teichman's charitable endeavors include donating a portion of their annual Cathy Waterman Trunk Show to The Family Place for battered women and children. Designer Catherine Michiels created a "Chip for Charity" recognition charm that the Teichmans now sell exclusively, channeling all proceeds to the Food4Kids Program of the North Texas Food Bank. Charles serves on the Board of the Dallas Holocaust Museum.

When you created Ylang 23, what made you feel there was a need and opportunity for this type of company and that the timing was right?

Charles: We brought to New York what was originally a French concept. America was ripe for it. Joanne and I moved to Texas because it was the only big market where we were not represented. There were stores in most major U.S. cities, but Texas was the best opportunity, and we opened in 1985 and later split with our partners who had moved back to France.

Joanne: Another reason was that I'm from near Texarkana, so I knew Dallas and its fashion sense very well. I knew it was going to be a great market, and Charles knew that as well, as he had been in this business before I was. The timing was right.

Charles: Most traditional jewelers go after the husband or significant other. Our typical



Charles and Joanne Teichman

client is the independent woman who can shop for herself. In a way, we perform a public service. When that woman puts on that necklace and looks at herself, she feels good. Our customers have the means to purchase what they like, and they don't have to depend on anybody else to buy it for them.

From a price point of view, how broad is your market?

Joanne: Our price point ranges from \$100 to \$100,000 – we're positioned as very hip and high end. Our strongest competitor is Barney's jewelry department.

What are the key characteristics you're looking for in the designers you feature and how broad are the relationships?

Joanne: First and foremost, we're looking for absolute originality. We're also looking for a long-term relationship with the designer. Cathy Waterman, based in Santa Monica, is our lead designer and now a personal friend. Her jewelry has been worn by key celebrities such as Julia Roberts and Jamie Lee Curtis, as well as Gwyneth Paltrow, who was wearing one of her pieces when she received her Oscar.

We're looking for beautiful wearable jewelry too. We know our client and we do some edgy things, but we are driven by originality, fine workmanship, a close collaboration, and also how smart these designers are at running a business.

Charles: We also look for designers who are as loyal to us as we are to them. We'll give them space, promote them, and feature them

prominently on our Web site. In exchange, we look for exclusives and the reciprocation of loyalty from our vendors. Our relationship is always with our clients in mind.

Will there be expansion in the store area or because of the online strength, do you really not need that today?

Charles: No more stores. Through our Web site, our two biggest markets are now New York and Los Angeles. But Japan is our third market – we ship there daily. Canada, France, and England are also major markets for us. We also ship to some of the Gulf countries and recently had a flurry of orders from Scandinavia.

Joanne: After 10 years on the Web, our Web site is our flagship. We have only scratched the surface, because now there are so many ways to build a Web presence. China is of interest for us to explore. We also have a mobile site, which is an automatic redirect across every mobile phone in the world. I'm working on adding iPad and iPhone apps. Everything growth-wise is now directed towards the Web, including social media and my blog (Joanne's Eye). Now, even the major luxury brands are going online.

Do you have the ability to ever get away from the business?

Charles: Yes, our family life is our anchor. We just returned from two weeks in Africa with our children.

Joanne: We love mentoring and cultivating new design talent – it's really rewarding, and we have devoted more of our time to fundraising in Dallas.

Charles: That's probably the most rewarding thing we've ever done. We decided two years ago that we were not going to send any more Baccarat and Lalique crystal to our major clients for the holidays. Instead, we make substantial donations in our clients' names.

Joanne: What's nice is that we received wonderful thank you notes that we never got for the crystal. It shows how good people really are. ●

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