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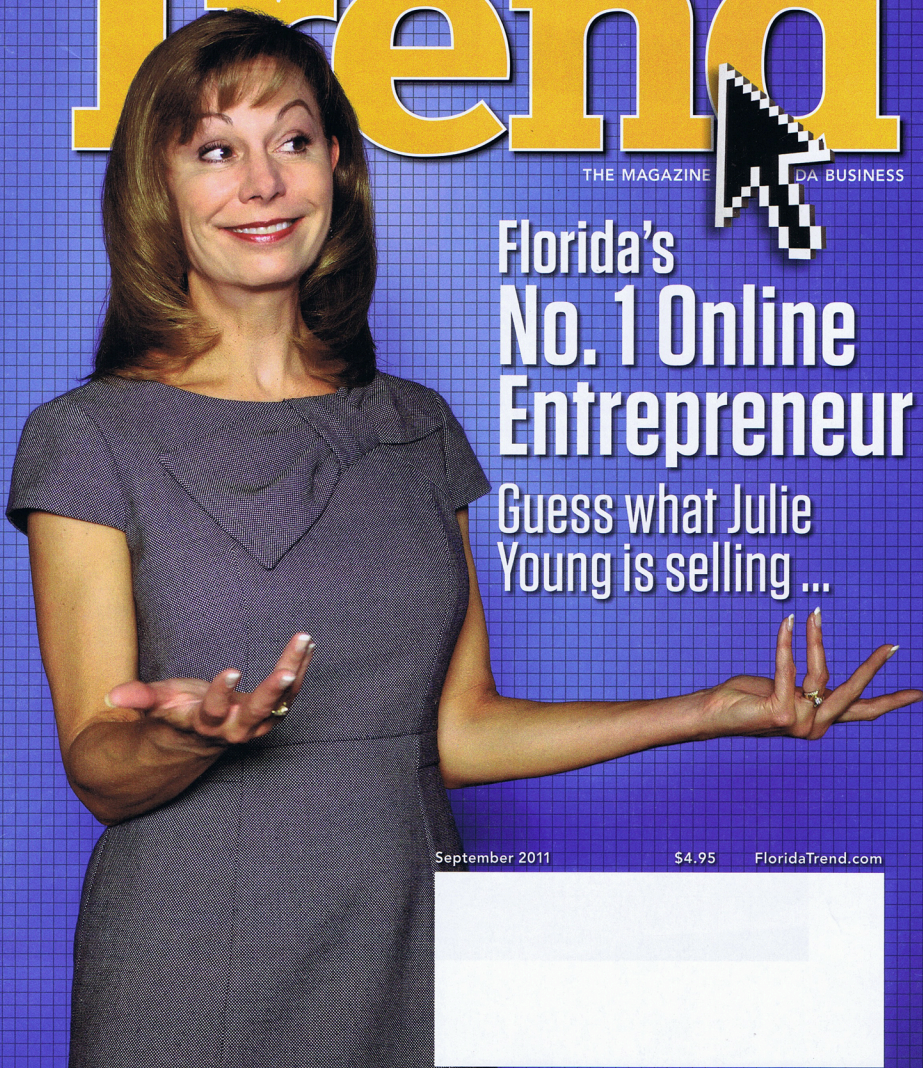
Florida Trend

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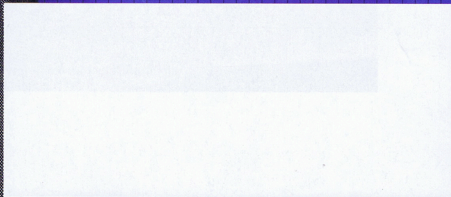
Guess what Julie
Young is selling ...



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\$4.95

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Form + Function

From sweets to skyscrapers, here are four at the cutting edge of design in their respective fields.

➔ CHARLES ALBERT, 45

Charles Albert Inc. Jewelry / Pompano Beach

Neither as a child collecting stones behind his grandmother's Pennsylvania home nor as a soldier did Charles Albert figure he'd eventually become one of the most innovative and successful jewelry designers in the country. "I graduated from Army boot camp before I graduated from high school," he says, "because I wanted to make money to pay for college. I got a degree in business management, but I had no idea what I was going to do with it."



After bouncing from a job at a security system company to a gig selling cashmere scarves, he decided he needed something more permanent. Albert bought five dozen pairs of earrings for \$60, and sold them for \$120. He then bought more earrings and flipped those for \$240. And so it went. Then he traveled to Mexico with \$1,200 to buy silver. He continued to buy and then sell at a profit — until it got boring. "I decided to start doing my own designs and setting stones," he says. "It allowed me to explore my artistic side and make a profit at the same time, and it was much more interesting than just buying and selling." As his financial resources increased, he says, "I got crazier with my designs and started doing things no one else was doing."

Today, Albert has a workshop in Pompano Beach with a dozen employees as well as 40 people working



for him in Mexico. His necklaces, rings, cuffs and earrings are showpieces comprising massive chunks of semi-precious stones and crystals such as quartz, agate, citrine, turquoise and amethyst, which he collects during trips to locales as near as Tucson and as far away as India. They're set in sterling silver because, Albert says, "It's a step up from costume jewelry, but people are price-conscious." In August, he launched a new line, Alchemia, made with materials Albert calls "zero-karat" gold. "It has the warmth and feel of 18k gold, but there's no precious metal in it, so my wholesale costs come in at half of what silver costs, but there's the same quality of work in it. And we use a special lacquering system on it to ensure it won't tarnish. The color is dead on."

- **Prices:** \$29 to \$3,000
- **Star quality:** Pop stars Cee Lo Green and Ke\$ha have been photographed wearing Charles Albert jewelry.



➔ **GERMÁN BRUN, 38**
LIZMARIE ESPARZA, 32

DEN Architecture / Miami

Salvade-Serenelli
 residential renovation

The husband-and-wife team of Germán Brun and Lizmarie Esparza, principals of DEN Architecture — the “D” is for design, “EN” for environment — are serious about sustainability. “Even the paper we use for our stationery is 100% reprint cotton. There’s not a splinter of wood in it. Sustainable design percolates throughout every aspect of our practice.”

An example of that philosophy can be seen in DEN’s renovation of the kitchen and two bathrooms in a Pinecrest home. To create an airy, open layout, two non-load-bearing walls were removed from the 525-sq.-ft. kitchen, which had originally been partitioned. The color scheme was inspired by a coconut — a palette of rich, dark brown woods and stark white, which was used to emphasize areas of activity and add volume amid the chocolate tones. “White counters also maximize daylight, which reflects off them through the windows, making less artificial light necessary,” Brun says. Wood materials were all certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, meaning they are from a forest with controlled logging — basically ensuring that “you’re not chopping down half a forest to build one cabinet,” Brun says.

The mission for the master bath was to transform it into a multipurpose bathroom that balanced formal

compositions with casual materials. To save money on the renovation of the guest bath, they repurposed a large mirror and used prefabricated components bought from local retail stores.

“The market is driving builders and developers to go this route,” Brun says of green practice. “People want to save money on water and on energy. More homes will be built with increased insulation, better roofing products that reflect UV rays and allow homes to stay cooler, and more efficient appliances. It’s unstoppable.”

- **‘Green’ tool:** “There’s a lot of ‘greenwashing’ out there — people using the term ‘green’ as a marketing tool, but their work isn’t guided by the principles of sustainability.”

- **Garden aid:** “We’re just finishing a house that can harvest rainwater for gardening.”

