

# As Seen on TV: How Dallas Prince Talked Her Way to Success in the Jewelry Biz

May 28, 2016 *by* ARI KARPEL

“If you’ve ever wanted an anniversary band, here’s the greatest suggestion ever.” The deep, honeyed voice belongs to Dallas Prince, a blond woman the TV camera captures seated at a desk before zooming in on her design: The Reversible Eternity Ring is rotating to showcase every detail-covered angle. “Get two of these and jacket your solitaire with them,” Prince explains, slowly and thoughtfully laying out her pitch. “So one day you have blue diamonds as your jacket, and the next day you have champagne diamonds as your jacket.”

The pitch works. The ring—14k white gold lined with nearly 2 cts of diamonds appraised at more than \$3,500, according to the Home Shopping Network—sells out in minutes, at a price of \$1,399 (or four flexible payments of \$349.75).



This is one of countless appearances Dallas Prince has made on HSN and EVINE Live (formerly ShopNBC) over the past 17 years or so. The Texas native honed her craft as a jewelry designer, learned what customers want, and developed a massive following—all on camera. “You put up that item and the phone rings in front of you,” she says. “If the phone doesn’t ring, then, all right, let’s do something else.”



The phone has been ringing off the hook, heralding Prince’s unorthodox path to success. Since 1999, she has been crafting colorfully bejeweled crosses and intricately detailed, Renaissance era-inspired pieces that regularly sell out in bulk in the comfort of America’s living rooms. Having developed as a designer on television, Prince has cultivated a deep sense of what her audience wants. And in the past few years, she has gained industry credibility with such honors as the 2013 AGTA Spectrum Gem Diva Award and a 2016 JCK Jewelers’ Choice Award. So what better time to debut Dallas Prince Designs first retail-only line, CIUR (pronounced CHEER) named for her husband and business partner, Vincent Ciurluini.

Left: *Blushing Bride earrings in 14k rose gold with 23.8 cts. t.w. peach Morganite and 1.8 cts. t.w. white Diamonds, \$16,995,*

Right: *Pendulum earrings in 14k rose gold with 32.7 cts. t.w. Aquamarine and 3.58 cts. t.w. champagne and white Diamonds, \$29,595.*

## Camera-Ready

Jewelry hadn't been part of the plan for either of them. It just happened. Growing up in a suburb of Dallas, the city that inspired her name, Prince was a painter. She loved every medium she could try, especially acrylics, which she favored for the way they dry quickly and maintain their saturated hues. In Texas, hats are big and football is bigger, but Prince had no trouble fitting in, thanks to her sporty side: competitive track, softball, the drill team—you name it.

She is the second child of a single mother who worked three jobs to feed and clothe her five kids, so Prince earned a scholarship to the University of Houston. There she studied pharmaceuticals and premed until someone asked if she was interested in modeling. She jumped at the chance—the product was Sears bath towels—and abandoned her studies.

It was the first of many opportunities the young woman grabbed that ushered her onto new, unforeseen paths. Twelve years of modeling led her to Florida and Chicago, followed by New York City. “I thought, Wow, did I take a left turn here! But modeling, you can't do that forever.” Ever curious and ambitious, Prince found her way into art directing for print media. “I looked behind the camera,” she says, “and would ask, ‘Can I intern with you, see what you do?’”

Art directing in print advertising led to art directing for television, which in turn steered her to the West Coast—and what she and Ciurluini deem her inevitable on-air debut. “Just look at her!” he says, by way of explanation. “Oh, stop it!” she replies, blushing. “He's the proudest husband on the planet. We've been married 22 years, if you can believe that.”

Right: *Daydream Paraiba ring with 5.15 ct. Paraiba tourmaline, 0.52 ct. t.w. blue diamonds, and 0.84 ct. t.w. white Diamonds \$33,695*



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Getting back to business, Prince explains: “You can’t have this voice and not have someone say, Can you read this? Every time I worked behind the camera, I ended up in front of the camera!”

Her voice is indeed remarkable: resonant, with just a hint of Southern smokiness. Of course, her flowing blond hair and commanding presence don’t hurt. “I had been working on a small show on the set at *NBC Nightly News* and they would ask me to sit for the lighting, and then, “Would you read that from the teleprompter??”



Boom! In Prince’s telling, that’s how she became a News and Sports Anchor for a national satellite news network, which also owned a shopping network. Her boss asked her to help redesign the shopping network’s sets, but, she recalls, it didn’t take long before she received some familiar come-ons: “They said, ‘Have you ever thought about selling jewelry?’” She hadn’t, but...why not? Unbeknownst to Prince, she was one step away from becoming a designer.

When Prince was first on camera on TVN Shopping Network, she knew little about jewelry. She would wear an earpiece so that a colleague could tell her exactly what to say about the jewelry, à la Holly Hunter in *Broadcast News*. “She would parrot what he was saying, and the customers loved her,” recalls Ciurluini. “As time passes, she says to me, ‘I know what the customers want to buy. If we go downtown and produce these pieces through vendors I’ve met---we can make our own designs, sell them on the network, and make extra money.’ I said, ‘Fantastic!’”

That’s how Dallas Prince Designs was born. Prince’s love of colorful items found a new outlet in jewelry. Inspired by her reverence for the Renaissance era, her earliest work was all rose gold (“Before anyone else was using rose gold,” she says. “Now everyone is!”), featuring light-catching gems in bright, multicolored hues that play well on television.

Left: *Fire & Ice Reversible Cross* in 14k gold with 4 cts. t.w. blue Sapphires and 3.96 cts. t.w. Rubies, **\$18,195**

Right: *Fiori Ring* in 18k gold with 12 ct. raspberry Rubellite Tourmaline and 1.5 cts. t.w. Diamonds; **\$29,695**



## Renaissance Woman

The Renaissance influence is still evident in all her work: rings in the shapes of crowns that evoke mythical castles and treasures, architectural filigree and vines. Particularly in what she calls her signature ring shank, floral patterns are etched into the undercarriage, a space that's often left blank by other designers.

Says Ciurluini: "One of the things she learned was when the camera zooms in on a piece, you have to make every angle pretty. If it comes in on this side, you can't just have a blank space; if it comes in on the bottom, give them an under gallery, not just a crosshatch. That's when we knew we were on to something."

"I don't like straight lines in jewelry," says Prince, who refers to her style as "***Vintage with an Edge***".

Since she has always worn crosses—she grew up going with her aunt to Church of the Nazarene, which Prince says is "as close to being Baptist as you could be in Texas," and Ciurluini's family is Catholic—customers called in asking her to design and sell some of her crosses. The reaction at the network was less enthusiastic: "We're nondenominational," she recalls her bosses saying. But Prince knew there was a demand that she was ready to meet—which perhaps explains her loyal following. Her customers often call in during her sales and boast of having bought hundreds of her pieces. "She says. "That's how you end up with over 4,000 designs on television over the years. The crosses began as my first collectible designs."

Today, Prince's two earliest cross designs—one yellow gold with channel-set square Diamonds, the other rose gold with Etruscan details, brown Diamond rondelles, and pave' white Diamonds hang on her neck. "I'm wearing them all these years later," she says proudly. "They're everything to me."

It's an essential part of her throwback style, which is built on the fairy tales we all know. "I'm trying to create those same timeless looks," she says. "They will never go out of style, they will always make you feel like a million dollars, they will always make you feel confident."



*Kaleidoscope  
Rainbow earring in  
18k wht gold with  
10.22 cts. t.w. pink  
Kunzite, 4.28 cts. t.w.  
Mint green  
Tourmaline, 4.25 cts.  
t.w. pink Spinel, 0.42  
ct. t.w. pink Sapphire,  
2.4 cts. t.w. wht  
Diamonds, and  
0.3 ct. t.w. Tsavorite  
Garnets, \$36,995*



*Secret Garden  
ring in 18k gold  
with 12.07 ct.  
Rose Orchid  
Tourmaline and  
0.92 ct.tw. white  
Diamonds, \$24,995*

## Storybook Romance

Prince's early days with Ciurluini are something of a fairy tale. They met at a restaurant in Los Angeles. She was all done up for a performance, hanging out with her acting-class friends. He was determined to give her his number, so he slipped her a note. The following night they went on a date and shared a kiss. Two months later, they were married.

A few years later, when she started her own line of jewelry, it became clear there was a role for her husband. Like so many before him, Ciurluini had come to Los Angeles to pursue a career as an actor. He had left Toronto, where he felt he was in the shadow of his older sisters, both successful actors on Canadian TV.

"Dallas gets into the jewelry business and suddenly I had to help with everything in the business," he says. "But instead of being her assistant, I went to the G.I.A. and I loved it." Ciurluini became a graduate gemologist, which gave him the knowledge—and the confidence—to travel alongside his wife, work at trade shows, buy at showrooms in downtown Los Angeles, sell jewelry himself on television, and even design his own line.

Today they share everything—their lives, their business. In their ranch-style house on the Westside of Los Angeles, they even have a partner desk at which they face each other like screenwriting couples in old movies. "We are the two most compatible people that I know," Prince says.

They have found their way around the jewelry business together. "I would have loved to be in this business even earlier," she says. "It's the most exciting business I could have ever dreamt of. There's a trust and honor in it. And it's been ridiculously fun along the way. If you can't enjoy this, you're doing it wrong."



*Vincent & Dallas*  
*\*just celebrated 24 years of marriage....*