

# MJSA JOURNAL

AT THE BENCH

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## Stick With It

*Using sticky foam to lay out designs for laser welding*



Components for a pendant (top) and earrings (bottom) are arranged on the sticky side of craft foam.



A photo is taken to document the pattern, then marked to show the outline of additional gold pieces that will need to be cut to back the pearls.



The components are laser welded together on the foam sticky paper. The pieces are not removed from the foam until assembly is complete.

**BY SUSAN EISEN** Designing stock pieces for my jewelry store has never been more fun than it is now that I have a laser welder in my shop. When I was learning to use the laser, which I purchased from Stuller Inc. in Lafayette, Louisiana, one of the trainers gave me a fun tip for assembling my designs that I love to share with other jewelers.

When laying out a design to be welded, I always reach for Funky Foam—craft foam sheets that have one super sticky side on which to adhere the components. I keep a box of component parts on hand that I use to dream up my creations. The box is filled with hand-hammered recycled 14k gold sheets, cast pieces that exemplify rock formations in my area, branches cast in-house from our native tumblewoods, and various gems and pearls. When I'm feeling inspired, I sit at my bench—or sometimes at my kitchen table at night—and

organize the pieces into abstract designs, then take a photo of them.

If I'm still happy with the designs the next day, I transfer the components to the sticky foam paper (1) and photograph them to document the pattern (2). On the pattern shown, I have sketched the outlines for additional gold pieces that will be required to back the pearls in the design, so I can cut them out using the photo as a reference. I will later add posts to the gold sheets and mount the pearls in place.

The beauty of this is that I can weld right through the sticky paper, keeping my designs in place as I work through the various joints. If my jeweler is doing the welding for me, he can use the photo as a guide in case any of the components move or shift during the process—ensuring that the finished design (3) looks exactly as I had intended it to. ♦