

Josh Warner's Good Art is the type you can wear

AS I STOOD in the hip men's co-op section of Barneys New York in San Francisco, I tried to avoid the temptation of adding more debt to my Mastercard. Labels like Band of Outsiders, Alexander McQueen and John Varvatos were taunting me — but I wasn't there to shop. I was there for the Good Art HLYWD trunk show presented by artist/jeweler Josh Warner.

Warner crept up behind a potential customer mesmerized by one of his hefty bracelets and jokingly enticed him, "Touch it. You know you want to."

This may sound odd, but if you caught a glimpse of his jewelry, you'd want to touch it, too.

From thickly braided bracelets, intricately designed lighter holders and even a chain-link silver holder for a Sharpie marker, Warner's designs mix menacing gothic style with whimsy and an element of street chic luxury.

With the artistic ruggedness that matches his jewelry, Warner looks like anything but a jeweler. Wearing a plain black T-shirt and jeans while captivating shoppers with personable conversation, Warner sidestepped glamour save for several pieces of his own jewelry.

His success didn't come overnight.

Nearly 20 years ago, Warner was living his life as a struggling artist while working at a sandwich shop in Santa Monica to pay the bills.

"I'd come in wearing something that I made and some of my regular customers would



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come in and ask me to make them one," says Warner. "From there, things just started happening organically."

As for the unique name of his company, that's a story in itself.

"I had this one customer who was a graphic designer," says Warner. "She said that I needed a business card because everyone is always asking about my jewelry. She designed my card and said I should put 'Good Art' in the center of it."

Warner says that he was making art and the name was the simplest way to get the point across.

"I wanted to distinguish myself as a local brand, so I used Hollywood instead of L.A. or California," says Warner. "But the word 'Hollywood' didn't look right, so I just turned it into HLYWD."

Thus, Good Art HLYWD was born.

From meager beginnings with trunk shows out of people's houses, Warner eventually developed a relationship with Barneys New York.

His glitzy customer roster may include people like Elton John, Gerard Butler, Whoopi Goldberg, Jennifer Lopez, Jessica Alba and Sylvester Stal-

lone, but he says having a celebrity wearing his stuff isn't what he is after.

"It's a weird dichotomy between using (celebrities) to promote what you do and just saying, 'Take a look at the jewelry and tell me you think,'" says Warner with a laugh. "That's why I hired a publicist because I never talk about that, but I realize that's what people want to hear."

Considering the price tag on some of his items (one of his bracelets is a jaw-dropping \$16,295), it's no wonder that a bunch of A-listers wear his creations. But he doesn't let that go to his head.

"I can't even afford my own jewelry," he jokes.

Despite some break-the-bank price tags (don't worry, he has items for less than \$200), Warner doesn't make his fine jewelry solely for celebs.

"It's the biggest honor for someone to spend their hard-earned money on something I created," says Warner. "I don't make stuff for a particular category of wealth or class. I make stuff for viewpoints."

Many bleeding-heart artists may think that Warner sold out to corporate America, but he thinks otherwise.

"Are you kidding me?" he laughs. "I didn't sell-out, I sold more."

Reach Dino-Ray Ramos at dramos@bayareanewsgroup.com or 925-945-4713. For more of my interview with Josh Warner visit www.ibabuzz.com/fashion. Good Art HLYWD jewelry is available at Barneys New York, 77 O'Farrell St., San Francisco or at www.goodarthlywd.com.



THE REBEL JEWELER: Good Art HLYWD founder and designer, Josh Warner (right, above) chats with a customer about his edgy jewelry at Barneys New York in San Francisco. A high-end sample of his work (left): This baby skull chain with white diamond skull pendant, which sells for \$1,660. "I can't even afford my own jewelry," Warner jokes.