

Julia Watts Starts Import Company

Industry veteran Julia Watts has opened an eponymous import business distributing high-end European tableware. The former Baccarat, Rosenthal, Hermès, and Saint Louis exec started her tabletop career at Milwaukee retailer, George

Watts & Son. "I started this company," she says, "to be a luxury resource for specialty stores, providing exciting unique product lines, service, education, training, and marketing opportunities that generates sales." Independents need a way to differentiate themselves, Watts continues. "I come from a specialty store and luxury product background. It's not just about products – which need to be superior and inspire imagination – but it's about relationships. JULIA WATTS LLC finds exclusive collections and seasonal exclusives." Each of the four companies represented, thus far, are small, hand-crafted, high-end, quality lines with the flexibility to be customized. "The idea is all about fashion for the home and table," Watts notes. "Stores can mix and match my collections

to fit their merchandising concepts and existing assortments." The products shown here represent Artel, a ten-year Czech glass company; Soiczik hand-painted French ceramics; Poc a Poc French porcelain; and Laparra Silver, also from France. For more info, call (212) 582-1182.



EMPIRE SILVER CELEBRATES DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY



Empire Silver – the Brooklyn-based gem operated by Joe Otranto (left), son Dennis, and son-in-law Vinny Mongelli – fêtes 60 years of production this year. Even more reason to celebrate is that master pressman Joe, who turns 80 next month on July 25, continues to play an active role in the business. Otranto, who commutes across the Verrazano bridge daily from his home on Staten Island to the Bensonhurst factory, shows no signs of slowing down. "I do whatever's needed because it's what I do," he says. (He also finds time for his weekly tennis game.) Retailers are among Empire's fans. "We've been doing business with Empire for close to 50 years and have great respect for their business and the fine quality product they produce," says George Fina, president, Michael C. Fina. "We never have to worry about ever being late on anything they make. They're the only American company that produces any type of sterling silver or pewter gifts." Geary's president & CEO Tom Blumenthal adds, "Being an entrepreneur myself, I think Joe and his family are inspirational. My family has been doing business with them for over 50 years and their standards and service are extraordinary." For more information on Empire Silver, call (800) 255-9475.