

# MC Ginsberg expands into cottage manufacturing and biotech



Mark Ginsberg president of M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art shows models of spinal discs that were used to cast in stainless steel at the business Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. The company is expanding into other types of manufacturing in addition to its custom jewelry. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)

IOWA CITY — Mark Ginsberg keeps a display case on the second story of his jewelry store in downtown Iowa City that appears to be filled with tubes of small colored plastic.

It seems anticlimactic compared with the beauty of some of the other items on display in M.C. Ginsberg, an Iowa City institution since 1926 and owned by Ginsberg since 1985, until he opens the case and explains.

The tubes are polyurethane models and molds of an infant's trachea made so a local surgeon would have a scale model to practice on before a lifesaving operation.

The doctor had only one shot at the procedure, so having an accurate likeness to practice with is a major bonus.

Ginsberg's employees used 3-D printers, equipment they've had for years to model and prototype jewelry, to create the models within a 72-hour window.

“All these things combined allows us to assemble a nuclear destroyer, if we had the space,” he said.

It's an early attempt to turn the idea of manufacturing and what you can do in small-town Iowa on its head.

Thanks to 3-D printing and casting mills, anyone willing to invest in the technology and learn about computer-aided design can turn a storefront into a manufacturing center. Ginsberg, 53, created such a setup on the second floor of his Iowa City building his family has been using since 1926, a \$300,000 investment in equipment.

But Ginsberg regards the technology as a sideshow to the \$400,000-a-year human aspect of his operation. What sets him apart from large-scale manufacturers is his ability to efficiently assemble a diverse team of specialists with all the skills necessary to find solutions. His team includes everyone from artists with MFAs, biomedical engineers and high school graduates who are experts in computer-aided design. The vertical integration of these workers of different backgrounds is where Ginsberg sees his edge.

"I don't have to wait for a response from different departments, I can get to work right away," he said.

Ginsberg still is expanding and developing what he can do with this operation. He currently uses 5,000 of his 20,000 annual unit capacity with a variety of contracts, many involving biotechnology. Those contracts typically come with intellectual property restrictions on what he can discuss, but he's free to reveal that — for now — jewelry sales carry his new manufacturing business.

He's OK with that, though. His hope is that other businesses invest in the technology and the human strategies he has employed to turn small towns all over the state into manufacturing powerhouses.

"All of a sudden, we're not dependent on overseas factories that are paying 30 cents a day and no bathroom breaks," he said.



A four-axis CNC mill at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)



A rubber casting of a practice infant trachea (left) lays next to a mold at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)



A model of a practice infant trachea was created on a CNC mill at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek) at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. The model was used to make a mold where rubber casting is made to practice medical techniques. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)



A motorcycle pendant, with working kickstand, steering and wheels, lays on a shelf in front of a model of blood vessels in the head and neck at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)



A model of blood vessels in the head and neck was created at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art. Photographed Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. The models are used to study aneurysms. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)



A printed three-dimensional prototype of a gas pedal was created for a client at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)



A motorcycle pendant, with working kickstand, steering and wheels, lays on a shelf at M.C. Ginsberg Objects of Art on Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2011, in Iowa City, Iowa. (SourceMedia Group News/Jim Slosiarek)



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