

MAY/JUNE 2016

BLOUIN *lifestyle.com*

The collectability of
Korean ceramics

A LOOK AT THE ITALIAN
AUTOMOTIVE RENAISSANCE
OF 1945–1975

HEMMIERLE

*keeps it in
the family*

*The bejeweled
wonders of*
VIREN BHAGAT

REDISCOVERING
THE TIME-
HONORED CRAFT
OF GEMSTONE
CARVING



Christian and Yasmin Hemmerle (below): Earrings of aquamarines and patinated copper by Hemmerle (right).



Munich-Made Magic

CHRISTIAN HEMMERLE, FOURTH-GENERATION JEWELER, TALKS GEMS, FAMILY, AND DESTINY

By Michelle Tay

Creativity shouldn't be limited, declares Christian Hemmerle, director of Hemmerle, an established family-run jeweler that is perhaps best known for its use of precious gemstones set in unorthodox materials such as copper, aluminum, or wood.

Modern and striking, the atelier's one-of-a-kind designs have over the years drawn an international clientele that includes gem lovers, art collectors, and even royalty. Frequently inspired by themes as eclectic as nature, geometry, and minimalism, the designers at the Munich-based jewelry house push boundaries through the use of metals and other materials not usually thought

of as precious.

"It was really my dad who was bored of the limitations of usual jewelers and traditions of jewelry making," explains Hemmerle, who works alongside his parents, Stefan and Sylveli, and his Egyptian-born wife, Yasmin. "He has used an original snail shell, as well as wood, and iron. From there, we went further down that road, picking different materials, including, most recently, aluminum. We live in a global world where there is very little individualism these days, so our clients seek the unusual and love us for it."

Asymmetry, for instance, is almost a Hemmerle signature. A

ALL PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HEMMERLE

pair of earrings designed as beehives in amber, patinated bronze, iron, pink gold, and red gold feature a bee on just one side while another pair of earrings feature pink tourmalines and rubellites on one side, and orange spinels and sapphires on the other. The aesthetic is not deliberate; rather, it is a function of a pragmatic approach to design.

The jewelry house was founded in Munich in 1893, by brothers Joseph and Anton Hemmerle, when they took over an established goldsmithing company that specialized in making medals. In 1895, Hemmerle was appointed jeweler to the court of Luitpold, Prince Regent of Bavaria and soon became renowned for the 'bejeweled fantasies' it was creating for the Bavarian royal family and others.

"My father and mother really brought the company to life," says Hemmerle. "Before, it was a small family business. They made it grow into what it is today."

Stefan Hemmerle joined the firm in 1970, and it was he and his wife Sylveli who conjured an avant-garde aesthetic for the house that would take it into the 21st century, notably in 1995 when they decided to set a diamond in a ring of textured iron for a valued client — an art collector who "detested flashy gems." From there, the possibilities were endless, a feeling they instilled in their son. Hemmerle recalls his parents encouraging him to "walk with open eyes through the world, and you will see inspiration is everywhere — from nature and architecture to Roman sculpture and Egyptian art."

For his part, Hemmerle feels that being a jeweler is both his calling and passion, even though he once tried to avoid it. "I'd gone to boarding school in a small German village so I wanted to see a big city. When you're 18, 19, or 20, you have all other thoughts other than to join your family business," he recounts. "I'd wanted to go to New York, but the only job availability there was in the jewelry industry. At one point, I just knew deep inside me that I wanted to be a part of it, despite the struggle of getting away."

Today, Hemmerle works closely with his parents, as well as his wife, calling the design process a team effort that strives to push boundaries each and every day. Always starting first with the gemstone, because "what nature produces is most beautiful," they then explore creative possibilities before settling on "the perfect home for that gem," he says,

Yasmin Hemmerle, for her part, says jewelry runs in her blood, and credits her grandmother for inspiring in her a love for stones. "She was a powerful and inspiring woman who shared her love for jewelry and instilled in me the significance of wearing it with character. An important present she gave me when I was young was a set of raw minerals that included turquoise, amethyst, rock crystal, and malachite... [which marked] the beginning of my



Earrings of jade and demantoid garnets with blackened silver and white gold (above); Earrings of tourmalines, rhodolites, copper, and white gold (right).



THE JEWELERS

“Clematis” brooch of sapphires, diamonds, aluminium, and white gold (left); Necklace of moonstones, diamonds, copper, and rosé gold (below).



“Jewelry should be worn and should be part of everyday life, not something hidden away in a safe. It is a value we also instill in Hemmerle creations.”

—Yasmin Hemmerle

long-lasting love with stones,” she says, adding, “Jewelry should be worn and should be part of everyday life, not something hidden away in a safe. It is a value we also instill in Hemmerle creations.”

Above all, artisanal excellence is an important hallmark of Hemmerle’s creations, some of which are currently on display at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York, as part of the “Beauty — Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial” exhibition, running through August 21. Notably, the atelier has revived some earlier practices for example, an early 19th century Austrian technique of weaving precious little gem beads into a knit-like mesh, which is then often hung with a tassel.

Hemmerle points out that, “In France, you can have multiple ateliers, and each one has a different style, so you might not be able to clearly identify a particular designer. But we only have this one workshop in Munich. Once you are accustomed to our jewelry, you know our work straightaway.” ◀

