

After 120 years, time for a move

Hemmerle is leaving its historic boutique for a discreet suite down the street. ‘It’s more in line with who we are today,’ Christian Hemmerle said.

MUNICH

BY NAZANIN LANKARANI

For 120 of its more than 130 years, the German jeweler Hemmerle welcomed clients in an elegant shop at Maximilianstrasse 14. On one of Munich’s prestigious royal avenues lined with high-end fashion and jewelry stores, the boutique was Hemmerle’s only physical site; its grand arched facade a symbol of the brand in the city.

Last year, as it marked its 130th anniversary, Hemmerle gave up the lease and announced, on cards mailed to clients, that it was relocating. The new home would still be on Maximilianstrasse, but on an upper floor, accessible only by appointment.

“The new space is a dream come true,” said Christian Hemmerle, who now owns the business with his wife, Yasmin. “When the landlord offered to buy out our lease, we jumped at the opportunity.”

The business never had a great deal of foot traffic anyway, he said. “We have always been confidential, so this is more in line with who we are today.”

Hemmerle is renovating the 350 square-meter (3,770-square-foot) space into a “private, yet spacious sanctuary of elegance and refinement,” Mr. Hemmerle said, with floors of reclaimed wood, high ceilings and views of the Maximilianeum, home of the Bavarian Parliament. As the work is not expected to be complete until September, the historic boutique remains open for now.

The plan, Mr. Hemmerle said, is to create the feel of sophisticated living rooms, with custom-designed niches to showcase current creations alongside pieces that pay tribute to the brand’s rich history. “We will have display cases for ornaments made by my grandparents,” he said. “But the best feature is a large walk-in safe. I have never had that in my life.”

“We had classic built-in safes installed by the second generation with beautiful bronze details that have patinated over time,” he said, “but they were in our private offices whilst now there is a specific walk-in safe in a designated room.”

The family-owned business was founded in 1893 by the brothers Joseph and Anton Hemmerle, who took over a local goldsmithing business in Munich and initially made iron jewelry, medals and gem-set adornments for the Bavarian court. In the 1970s, under the creative direction of Mr. Hemmerle’s father, Stefan, the company espoused a more modern aesthetic, combining untraditional materials such as wood, pebbles and iron with precious gemstones.

The fourth generation of Hemmerles, Christian and Yasmin, entered the business in 2006, assuming full ownership in 2021 when Stefan and his wife, Sylveli, relinquished control.

The relocation signifies a new chapter for the house, and something of a rite of passage for the younger couple, as they steer the company into a new era. “My father is less excited about the move,”



Christian Hemmerle said. “He loves to come into the boutique.”

But, Yasmin Hemmerle said, “Change is good. You grow through change.”

The decision was partly driven by the couple’s perception that the jewelry business has evolved, and their determination to adapt.

“My parents had a strong local and European clientele,” Mr. Hemmerle said. “We face different opportunities and challenges. Our clients are international with information at their fingertips. Reaching clients may be easier, but competition is tougher, and global bureaucracy is more complex.”

In mid-February, Hemmerle opened a seasonal shop in Palm Beach, Fla., and three years before that, a showroom in New York City. It has long exhibited at major art fairs and this week was scheduled to exhibit at the TEFAF Maastricht fair in the Netherlands, as well as TEFAF New York in May and PAD London in October.

The fourth-generation Hemmerles have also built on the brand’s legacy by enriching its stylistic vocabulary with bold or playful collections such as Delicious Jewels, a hyper-realistic collection inspired by garden vegetables presented in 2011, and Infused Jewels, inspired by plants used to make tea, which debuted in 2022.

At TEFAF this week, the house has planned to show signature pieces, such as a Harmony bangle in a combination of pock wood and a gradient of colored diamonds set on bronze and white gold. The curved bangle, initially designed by Stefan in 1991, encapsulates everything that makes a Hemmerle piece distinctive: minimalist design, gentle curves, a vibrant color gradient and a smooth mechanism produced by top-tier German engineering.



But the TEFAF exhibits also are to include experimental creations in colored gemstones and scratch-resistant, anodized aluminum, an unforgiving metal that years of testing has turned into a staple at Hemmerle.

An example is a new pair of earrings set with violet tanzanites on a layered bed of hand-sculpted aluminum, each layer anodized in a slightly different shade of blue.

“It has been challenging but we have learned so much from aluminum,” Ms. Hemmerle said. “Sometimes you need to walk through a new door to find out what is behind it.”

In the construct of the earrings, Mr. Hemmerle said, art connoisseurs may find echoes of the art of Agostino Bonalumi, Paolo Scheggi and Enrico Castellani, postwar Italian artists known for their spatial experimentation and

whose work inspired the jewelry.

“The Hemmerles use cultural themes as the inspiration for their unique collections,” Max Fawcett, the head of jewels at Christie’s Geneva, wrote in an email. “They have created their own iconic style which resonates with collectors, easily recognizable amongst the huge variety of choice that is on offer today.”

Hemmerle does not disclose prices, and its jewelry rarely appears at auction. In November, Christie’s Geneva sold a pair of pinkish-red spinel earrings and a matching ring by Hemmerle for a total of 541,800 Swiss francs (\$614,760), far exceeding the lots’ combined presale high estimate of 295,000 francs.

Hemmerle produces only about 200 pieces a year, each made only once, and typically each piece’s fabrication requires more than 500 hours of work. It



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAETTITA VANCON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

has had its own workshop since its founding, but the current location, not far from Maximilianstrasse, opened in 1999. It now employs 20 master goldsmiths, three of whom are gem setters, and two apprentices, many of whom moved to Munich to work for the company. “We have eight different nationalities in the workshop and 13 in the company,” Mr. Hemmerle said.

Since 2016, a spacious loft-like area on the top floor of the workshop has offered clients a way to see firsthand how Hemmerle pieces are made, and the artisans can meet the people who will wear their work. Afterward, refreshments by a Michelin-star chef such as Tohru Nakamura or Tim Raue are served.

“This makes for a very special human connection,” Mr. Hemmerle said. “For us, it is all about creating unforgettable moments.”

On display

Clockwise from top left: Yasmin and Christian Hemmerle; a necklace made of rock crystal and labradorite beads featuring sapphires, and earrings featuring tourmalines; a Harmony bangle; and a diamond ring made with bronze, aluminium and gold, and earrings featuring emeralds.