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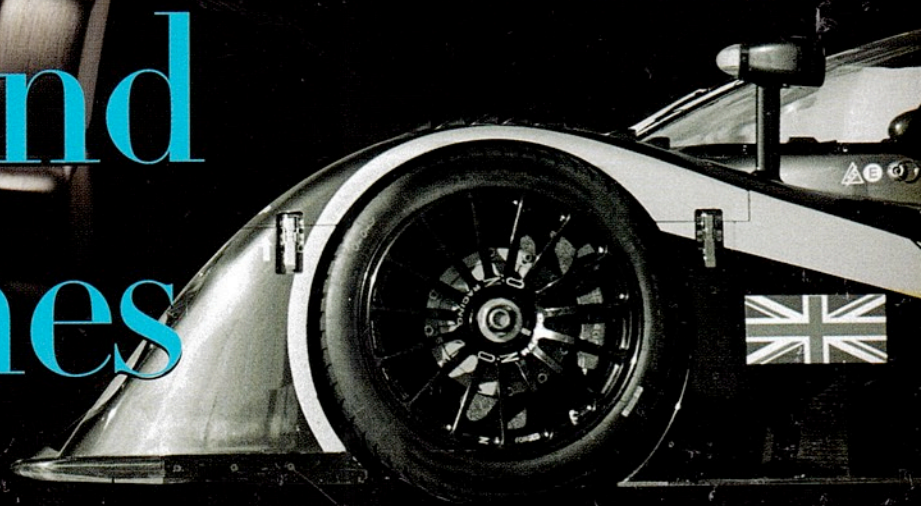
THE
SURPRISING
RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN

Cars and Watches

SPRING SPRUCE-UP:
NEW STORES, NEW CASES

NEWS FROM TUCSON

JEWELERS AND eBAY:
TURNING DOGS
INTO DOLLARS



When most people speak of "European" jewelry design, they're referring to England, France, Italy, and Germany. Switzerland almost never comes up. Yet this country turns out skilled jewelers by the dozens each year, thanks to a long-standing four-year government-sponsored apprenticeship program.

So where are they? Quite a few are designing watches in Geneva. Some migrate to other European capitals, and others have landed in the United States, but the majority toil quietly in their own workshops. Switzerland's cities and towns—including Zurich, Lausanne, Geneva, Bern, Lucerne, and Winterthur—are sprinkled with one-designer/owner galleries, and, for jewelry connoisseurs, these shops are among the most fascinating of Switzerland's treasures.

Venture inside these shops and you will likely find the designer at the bench or behind the counter, ready to chat about his work, take out pieces from his cases, and help you try them on. It's designer jewelry on a scale so intimate and accessible that most Americans can barely fathom it.

Wearable still life. Gilbert Albert is probably the most successful Swiss jewelry designer of the last half-century. Last year he celebrated the 40-year anniversary of the workshop he opened in Geneva in 1962. By 1988, he had won the Diamond International Award 10 times, and his work has been shown at the Moscow Kremlin and Prague Castle.

Like many Swiss goldsmiths, Albert launched his career at a watch house (Patek Philippe's Geneva headquarters) after studying goldsmithing and jewelry design at l'Ecole des Arts Industriels. At age 24, Albert designed a line of watches with slanted, distorted cases—obviously influenced by Salvador

Dali and the Surrealist movement that was thriving nearby at the time. His elegant, psychedelic watches were a hit 40 years ago and are now highly collectible. Four of them appeared recently at a Christie's Geneva auction, with values estimated as high as \$76,000 each.

Albert's jewelry is designed around a luscious variety of stones and pearls, which he arranges as a kind of wearable still life. He is most famous for using materials with little or no intrinsic value—seashell shards, agate, beetle wings—mixed liberally with high-karat gold, diamonds, and other precious gems. One of his first major exhibits, at the Goldsmiths' Hall in London in

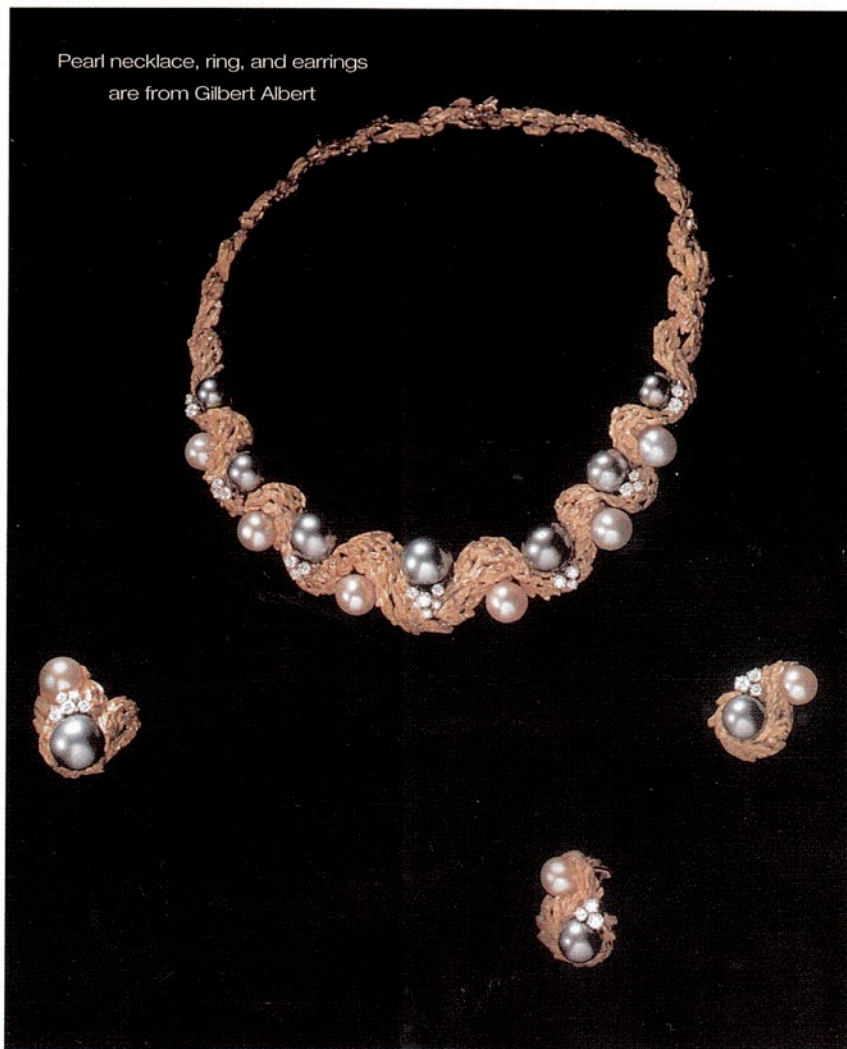
1965, was titled "Meteorites and Jewellery."

His trademark necklace is a hinged V-shaped collar with stones and gold elements arranged asymmetrically so that they appear to flow together to a point. Though he makes more conservative versions, the best of these collars are bold and flamboyant—not intended for the shy and retiring.

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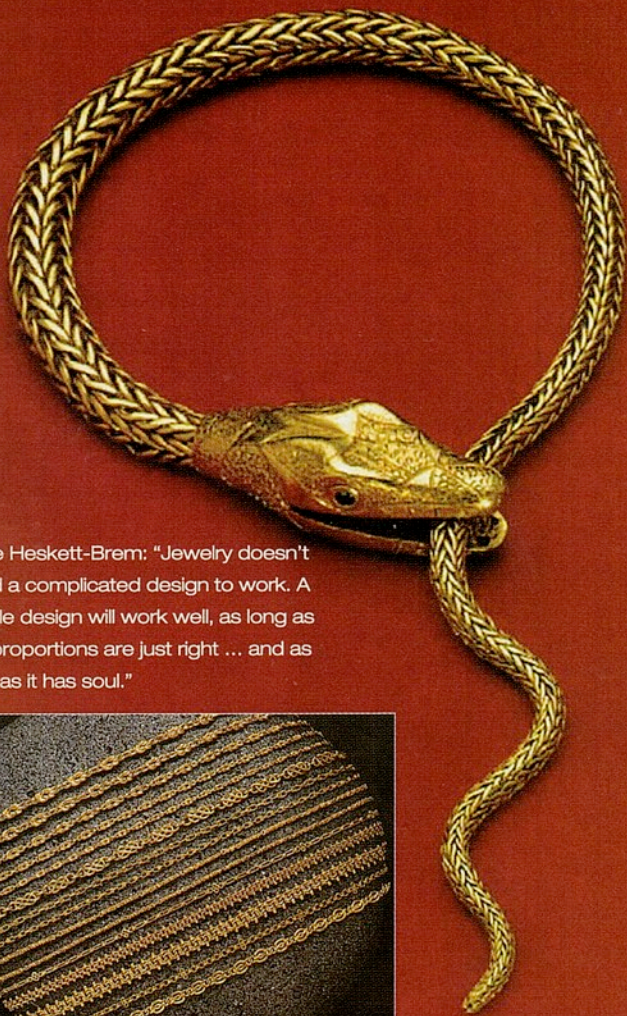
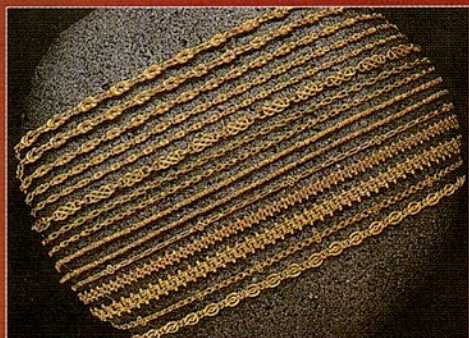
Designs with soul. Lucie Heskett-Brem came to the jewelry arts late in life, by Swiss standards. She was 30 when she signed up for a jewelry

Pearl necklace, ring, and earrings
are from Gilbert Albert



Lucie Heskett-Brem makes chains that "move like an animal."

Lucie Heskett-Brem: "Jewelry doesn't need a complicated design to work. A simple design will work well, as long as the proportions are just right ... and as long as it has soul."



hobby course, after working as a secretary and translator for more than a decade. Heskett-Brem showed unusual talent and imagination, and her teacher encouraged her to enter the apprenticeship program in her hometown, Lucerne. "My classmates were all 15," she recalls. "They thought I was a teacher."

It was the meditative art of chain making that captured her imagination. In 1992, she set up her workshop overlooking Lake Lucerne and began weaving intricate gold chains

by hand. At her first exhibition, she sold every piece and had to hire an assistant to keep up with the orders. By 1994, her chains were being carried by Bentley's, an antiques dealer on London's Bond Street. "Two years after starting my business," she recalls, "I found myself on a list that read: '4. carved Faberge, 5. chain by Lucie Heskett-Brem.' It was unbelievable how fast it all happened." Her jewelry is now carried by Demner Natcon Art & Jewels Ltd. in Manhattan as well.

Initially, it's difficult to distinguish Heskett-Brem's chains from the fine Victorian chains that Bentley's carries. In fact, her inspiration comes from the delicate balance and meticulous handicraft of that era, before machine-made chains took over. She is equally fascinated by ancient gold work, particularly the Egyptian serpent chain that was revived during the Victorian era. Her version of this classic—a three-dimensional chain formed like chain-mail using .34 kg of gold—takes two months to make and is among her most popular designs. "I spent months figuring out the optimum proportion between density and flexibility that would make a snake chain move like an animal," she says. The result is a gold snake so slippery and slithery in the hand that customers sometimes gasp in alarm—much to the designer's delight.

"My jewelry is a modern interpretation of classic patterns. A lot of Swiss designers are into that neat, geometric look—sleek, flush, and straight. That looks mechanical to me. My jewelry is tactile and organic, with a kind of playfulness," she says. "Jewelry doesn't need a complicated design to work. A simple design will work well, as long as the proportions are just right ... and as long as it has soul."

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Home turf. Christophe Graber was born in Basel and studied jewelry making in art school in Zurich. He introduced his first line in 1985, opened a jewelry shop three years later, and began designing watches for Swatch on the side. By the 1990s, he was making an international splash with his funky insect-