

THE BARD GRADUATE CENTER

GEORG  
JENSEN  
JEWELRY



JULY 14 THROUGH OCTOBER 16, 2005

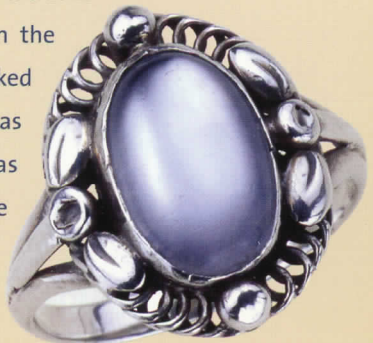
## FROM SCULPTOR TO SILVERSMITH



George Jensen was born on August 31, 1866, in Rådvad, a rural village north of Copenhagen. As the seventh of eight children of a former housemaid and a *gørtler* (brazier) at the local knife factory, he helped to support his family as an apprentice in the factory where his father worked. It was in the pastoral woodlands surrounding Rådvad that Jensen found his artistic

inspiration, molding small sculptures from the local blue clay. In a 1926 memoir, he recalled that his boyhood surroundings were “so compelling and awesome [that] without realizing it, I absorbed impressions, which [became] the basis for my art.”

Moving with his family to Copenhagen in 1880, Jensen was apprenticed to the goldsmith A. Andersen, where he gained his first exposure to jewelry making. After successfully completing his apprenticeship, he found a position with a goldsmith named Holm, but discovered he could not leave behind his first artistic love: sculpting. He spent the next five years enrolled at the *Kunstakademiet* (Academy of Fine Arts), but soon realized that the only lucrative outlet for a sculptor was in the field of ceramics. Jensen worked for nearly a decade in France as a ceramicist, where he was drawn into the circle of the artist and designer Mogens Ballin (1871–1914). Ballin, a



member of the Parisian Post-Impressionist group Les Nabis and follower of the English Arts and Crafts movement, hired Jensen to work in his art-metal shop in Copenhagen in 1901.

Jensen was uniquely suited to the field of artistic metalworking, which allowed him to combine both his sculptural and technical skills. His early designs show the influence of French Art Nouveau jewelry and the Danish Arts and Crafts movement, *Skønvirke*. The *Skønvirke* style, drawing inspiration from Nordic flora and fauna and nonfigurative Japanese design, appeared in all branches of the decorative arts. The term itself, which translates as “Fairwork,” also signified the style’s nationalism and emphasis on handcraftsmanship.



## THE JENSEN STYLE

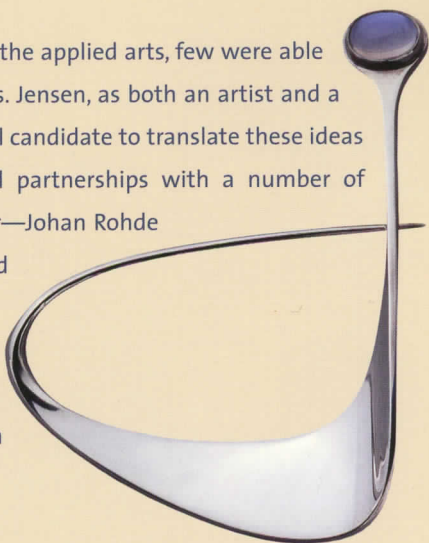
By 1904, Jensen had grown confident enough in his skills to open his own art-metal shop, and he began to establish the artistic basis of the “Jensen style.” Following the progressive tenets of the *Skønvirke*

movement, he chose to work primarily in silver, rather than gold, and to use less expensive gemstones, such as garnet, moonstone, and peridot, in an effort to make his wares available to middle-class consumers. Jensen was a prolific designer, often sketching on scraps of paper or the backs of envelopes. He drew on his memories of the Danish countryside in his designs, employing abstracted plantlike forms that utilize the plastic, flowing quality of silver.

## PARTNERS IN DESIGN

From the earliest years of his career as a silversmith, Jensen exhibited a great willingness to collaborate with other artists. While many academy-trained painters and sculptors were

becoming interested in the applied arts, few were able to execute their designs. Jensen, as both an artist and a craftsman, was the ideal candidate to translate these ideas into reality. He formed partnerships with a number of artists during his career—Johan Rohde (1856–1935) and Harald Nielsen (1892–1977), among others—and always openly credited the designers: a modern idea for its time.



## ALWAYS MODERN

Jensen's penchant for modernity has become the basic principle of the firm today: the Georg Jensen company adapts with seemingly effortless confidence to design trends, while translating the avant-garde into formats suitable for mass production and the mass market.

Designers such as Sigvard Bernadotte (1907–2002) and Arno Malinowski (1899–1976) explored the flattened, stylized design aesthetic of Functionalism, combining silver with nontraditional materials such as iron and enamel. Watercolorist and sculptor Henning Koppel (1918–1981) introduced more organic, amoeboid shapes to the Jensen firm's lexicon. In the second half of the 20th century, as Scandinavia became the apotheosis of good design, artists Nanna Ditzel (1923–2005), Vivianna Torun Bülow-Hübe (1927–2004), and Bent Gabrielsen (1918–) created jewelry that blended artistry, handcraftsmanship, and factory production, fostering an increasingly strong export industry that keeps the designs of Georg Jensen, the firm, as vital today as when Georg Jensen, the man, was creating them.





## GEORG JENSEN JEWELRY

Georg Jensen (1866–1935) began his artistic career as a sculptor and ceramicist, but is associated today with the internationally renowned Danish jewelry firm that bears his name. From July 14 through October 16, 2005, The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture explores the legacy of this icon of Scandinavian design with the exhibition *Georg Jensen Jewelry*. Comprising more than 300 examples of jewelry, hollowware, drawings, period photographs, and archival material, the exhibition provides an in-depth look at the company's history and production, as well as the first comprehensive analysis of the stylistic development of Georg Jensen and the pioneering designers associated with the firm.

Support for *Georg Jensen Jewelry* has been generously provided by Blue Shoe Strategy, Camilla Dietz Bergeron and Gus Davis, Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr., and Christie's. Support for public programs is provided by a grant from the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

*Image Credits* (all objects designed by Georg Jensen, unless otherwise noted; all images photographed by Bruce White) Cover: Brooch, ca. 1913, silver, amber, chrysoprase, Collection of a Danish gentleman. *This page*: Necklace, ca. 1912, silver, coral, Collection of a Danish gentleman. Interior (from left to right): Hair comb, 1904, tortoise shell, silver, coral, The Danish Museum of Art and Design; Ring, 1904, silver, moonstone, Pia Georg Jensen & Michael Krogsgaard/The Georg Jensen Society; Brooch, ca. 1913, silver, Collection of a Danish gentleman; Vivianna Torun Bülow-Hübe, Brooch, ca. 1958, silver, moonstone, GEORG JENSEN Corporation, Copenhagen; Henning Koppel, Earrings, 1955, silver, Drucker Antiques Collection.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### LOCATION

18 West 86th Street,  
between Central Park West  
and Columbus Avenue, NYC

### ADMISSION

General	\$3
Senior (65 and over)	\$2
Student (with valid ID)	\$2

### HOURS

Tuesday through Sunday:  
11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Thursday: 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
*Free admission*  
Thursday evenings from  
5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

### TRANSPORTATION

The BGC is easily accessible by  
public transportation:  
Bus: M86 crosstown  
M10 on Central Park West  
M7 or M11 on  
Columbus Avenue  
Subway: B or C train to 86th  
Street station

### CONTACT

Phone: 212-501-3023  
Fax: 212-501-3097  
TTY: 212-501-3012  
E-mail: [gallery@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:gallery@bgc.bard.edu)

### WEBSITE

[www.bgc.bard.edu](http://www.bgc.bard.edu)



### EXHIBITION TOURS

Group tours of the exhibition  
may be scheduled Tuesday  
through Friday between 11:00 a.m.  
and 4:00 p.m., and on Thursday  
evenings until 7:00 p.m.  
Advance reservations are  
required for all groups. Please  
call 212-501-3013.

Payment must be made in advance,  
via check or credit card. The fees  
for admission and guide(s) are:

1–20 visitors (single guide)	\$75
21–40 visitors (two guides)	\$100

### EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

*Wearing Propaganda:*  
*Textiles on the Home Front*  
*in Japan, Britain, and the*  
*United States, 1931–1945*  
November 18, 2005–  
February 12, 2006

*American Streamlined Design:*  
*The World of Tomorrow*  
March 15–June 25, 2006

### PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Lectures, panels, and other offer-  
ings are presented in conjunc-  
tion with this exhibition. For  
further information, please call  
212-501-3011 or e-mail  
[programs@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:programs@bgc.bard.edu).

### ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The BGC offers programs of  
study leading to M.A. and  
Ph.D. degrees. For further  
information, please call  
212-501-3019 or e-mail  
[admissions@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:admissions@bgc.bard.edu).

### JOURNAL

The BGC publishes a semi-  
annual journal, *Studies in the*  
*Decorative Arts*, which presents  
new scholarship in the field of  
the decorative arts, design, and  
culture. For further information  
and/or to order, please call  
212-501-3058 or e-mail  
[journal@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:journal@bgc.bard.edu).