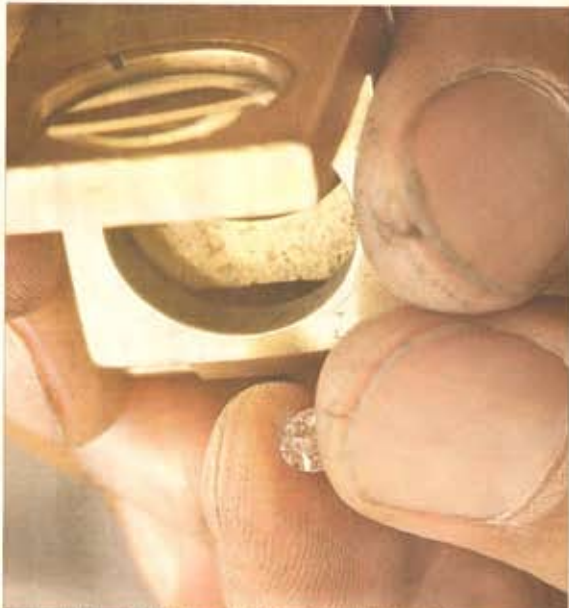


WATCHES & JEWELLERY

FINANCIAL TIMES SPECIAL REPORT | Saturday November 8 2008

Markets take the shine



Close inspection: The very top end of the market seems to be holding out better than the mid level

Scheherazade Dunesbldhu of spectacular high-wire act may be coming to an end

The watch industry, which has been hit hard by the global economic downturn, is expected to see a recovery in 2009. The industry is expected to see a recovery in 2009. The industry is expected to see a recovery in 2009.

"Today's designers take a much more daring and futuristic approach," she says. "Maybe it's a direct result of the credit crunch? Whatever the case may be, we are seeing the most innovative use of material and colour in years."

The boom in British jewellery design could be attributed to an inevitable backlash against the commercial jewellery market. With so many luxury ready-to-wear brands getting in on the act, where does that leave the individualist? Independent designers seem to strike a chord with our clients who can buy on Bond Street any day of the week, but who are instead being attracted to one-off pieces that no one else will have," says Mr Russell.

Exciting times for young creative talent

YOUNG BRITISH JEWELLERS
Lucie Muir on those making hay out of commercial backlash

It is not only ready to the field of contemporary jewellery design where a growing number of young British jewellers - or 'YBs' as they are called - are not going to be riding world gold prices and their gold prices stand to their way.

Led by Philippe Heiland and Anthony Russell, designers such as these are making one-of-a-kind pieces from the most unlikely materials: sustainable wood, plastic and recycled silver.

Others such as Jo Hayes-Ward and Laura Hayward look like they might think long these require extra support, there are some for whom business is already on the up. Take Philippe Heiland who secured two clients from Dubai and Russia during last month's Paris Fashion Week. "It might be a recession but, in my experience, people are prepared to pay for unique designs," says the London-based designer.

Once mastering the Renaissance art of 'casting from the top' (otherwise known as pouring molten wax and small ornaments in precious

metals), Mr Heiland has produced dramatic, limited-edition, Scorpions, moles and beetles are among the pieces she likes to set in silver.

"I'm fascinated with nature and English folklore," says the 35-year-old designer - who studied the history of jewellery-making at Sotheby's. "I started by making pendants and went on to set a real raven's skull in a ring. The latter was cast in silver and topped with black diamonds just to make it seem even more macabre."

Clients can buy on Bond Street any day of the week, but they want the one-off pieces

Like Mr Heiland, 30-year-old Anthony Russell also looks to nature. Since graduating from the London Metropolitan University's silver-smithing course last year, his designs - made mostly from wood approved by the Forest Stewardship Council - are the latest sensation.

"Both wood and rock are great to work with, as they have such wonderful lightweight qualities," says Mr Russell. His latest collection includes carved rings and bangles from thin slices of

wood and precious metals. These are placed one on top of the other and then cut into intricate patterns by way of newer technology such as laser cutting.

Jo Hayes-Ward is another award-winning British jeweller who takes a high-tech approach to her art. From a studio in south Devon, the 30-year-old designer employs rapid prototyping technology (used to make moulds) alongside traditional jewellery techniques. "Sometimes, it can take up to a week to create a design on the computer," she says. "Inspiration comes from urban settings - the New York City skyline for example - or cellular structures - and spheres."

At first glance, her most recent brooches and rings look like a simple circle but, on closer inspection, a stoppage comes to life in 18 oval gold.

"It is precisely this simplicity that goes so much deeper than any fashion trend," says Professor Hans Stuber, who leads the gold-smithing and silver-smithing courses at London's Royal College of Art. As for the complexities of jewellery-making, he adds: "The longer we students studying from predominantly fashion disciplines. Instead, we are seeing those who come from architecture and furniture design, which adds a whole new dimension to things."

In the case of 30-year-old Laura Hayward, a BA degree in classics followed by a short stint in law grounded her career in jewellery design.

"By taking a more unconventional route to design you are more likely to do things differently," says the designer, whose latest 'Athens' collection is inspired by Greek and Roman mythology.

Ashley Clark, the online jewellery boutique, was so impressed with her spear-shaped dropped earrings encrusted with black diamonds that it chose her for this year's coveted 'new designer' award.



Jo Hayes-Ward's random oval necklaces

Watches & Jewellery | A New Generation



Below: Anthony Russell's rings and bangles, Jo Hayes-Ward's necklaces by Bangles.

