

Style Legend

FORGE AHEAD

IN THE MIDST OF THE DANISH MODERNIST MOVEMENT OF THE MID-20TH CENTURY, JEWELRY DESIGNER AND SCULPTOR ARJE GRIEGST FREED HIMSELF FROM THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE PREVAILING MINIMALIST AESTHETIC TO CREATE FANTASTICAL WORKS OF BEJEWELED ART THAT CONTINUE TO CAPTIVATE THE IMAGINATION TO THIS DAY.

PRODUCED BY HUDSON MOORE. WRITTEN BY JILL NEWMAN.



At a time when midcentury Danish designers followed the functionalist Scandinavian movement like religion, Arje Griegst forged an entirely different path. The Lithuanian-born goldsmith (1938-2016), who learned the trade from his father and apprenticed with masters like Georg Jensen before establishing his eponymous brand in Copenhagen in 1963, forged lavish gold and gemstone jewelry infused with references to Greek and Roman mythology, the cosmos, Surrealism, and emotion.

Griegst can't easily be cataloged in a specific style; his wildly creative oeuvre, which spanned more than 60 years, explored a range of themes and mediums. He created a massive bronze Conch fountain for the Tivoli Garden in Copenhagen; porcelain tableware for Royal Copenhagen; and a tiara for Denmark's Queen Margrethe II that turned tradition on its head: The dreamy headpiece portrayed a field of ethereal 22-karat-gold poppy flowers, each adorned with crystal spiders, black opal beetles, and moonstone dewdrops, arranged in a freeform composition.

He approached jewelry like a sculptor, using his own version





of the ancient lost wax process to tell stories. His groundbreaking 1960s “Spiral” design expressed fluid lines of 18-karat gold winding around rings, earrings, and necklaces; the launch of the Hubble Space Telescope in 1990 inspired the “Cosmos” series, whose raw diamonds and pearls appear like asteroids landing on the moon’s surface.

To this day, Griegst’s jewelry still commands top dollar when (on rare occasion) it appears at auction. That enduring interest inspired his wife, Irene, also an accomplished goldsmith who passed away earlier this year, and son Noam, a photographer, to reopen the Griegst showroom in Copenhagen in 2018. Every year, Noam selects a handful of designs from

the vast archives of jewelry molds to reproduce in limited editions; each is made and finished by local craftsmen.

“When the craft is so good, you can’t put a date on it,” he says of his father’s work. “It resonates today and will still resonate one thousand years from now.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Rossini Ring, 1988, in 20-karat yellow gold and pearl with diamonds. Untitled (Mask Pendant), 1981, in 18-karat yellow gold, with opal, emerald, moonstone, and pearls. Cosmos Ring, 1991-1995, in 20-karat yellow gold with raw diamond and cabochon cut emerald. Face of the Night Pendant, 1966, in 20-karat yellow gold with opals, colored pearls, and diamonds. For more information, visit griegst.com. PREVIOUS PAGE, FROM TOP: A detail of the tiara that Griegst created for Queen Margrethe II of Denmark in 1976. The artist studies his sculpture *Tivoli* made for Kurashiki Tivoli Park in Japan.