

## Adding polish

Georg Jensen's handcrafted silver is capturing a new audience of big-ticket connoisseurs drawn to modern, graceful lines.

BY DIANE DORRANS SAEKS

It's only been a few years since trendsetting interior designers started collecting museum-quality 20th-century French furniture by the likes of Jean-Charles Moreux, Maison Jansen, and Pierre Chareau. Now these classics, along with sinuous Scandinavian styles, are part of the lexicon for chic decor. This begs the question: What belongs on that exquisite Jansen table? And how does someone accessorize a historic Chareau desk, Leleu chairs, or a Ruhlmann console?

One elegant answer for some Bay Area collectors is Georg Jensen's estate silver, including virtuoso tureens, pedestal bowls, pitchers, and candelabras, all handwrought from the early 1900s to the mid-1950s with the Danish company's signature pure lines and modern edge. Even utilitarian sugar casters and inkwells crafted as early as the teens and '20s have sleek angles.

Jensen's designs offer nature-inspired takes on art nouveau, art deco, the '40s machine age, and even aerodynamic, post-Sputnik, space-age silhouettes. Prices for the designs range from \$100 to upwards of \$100,000. The London-based Silver Fund, which specializes in rare Jensen hollowware from 1904 to 1955, has attracted San Francisco interior designers, including Suzanne Tucker and Orlando Diaz-Azcuy.

It's not surprising that some local antiques collectors have a yen for fine silver. Many of San Francisco's original fortunes came from mining silver in the 1880s.



Jensen, the founder and designer of his namesake company, had his very first American show in San Francisco, at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in 1915, when William Randolph Hearst famously acquired nearly all of the silversmith's pieces. That landmark visit jump-started California's affair with 20th-century handcrafted silver.

The Silver Fund, which offers the world's largest collection of Jensen, with hundreds of silver designs, opened its only U.S. gallery in Jackson Square in June. This month, the company will exhibit at the San Francisco Fall Antiques Show, at Fort Mason Center. The price tag for early Jensen pieces, such as a rare amber-set butter dish or tea caddy (ca. 1908), is around \$15,000, while a later piece, such as a large, six-branch silver candelabra by Sigvard Bernadotte (ca. 1955), might sell for around \$25,000. Prices are based on the true rarity, size, and complexity of the design. ■

Above: Sigvard Bernadotte for Georg Jensen water pitcher ('40s); below: Harald Nielsen for Georg Jensen six-light candelabra ('30s).



GEORG JENSEN ESTATE PIECES AT THE SILVER FUND: 472 JACKSON ST., S.F., 415-391-4151, THESILVERFUND.COM; NEW COLLECTIONS AT GUMPS: 135 POST ST., S.F., 415-984-9263, GUMPS.COM; SAN FRANCISCO FALL ANTIQUES SHOW: OCT. 23-26, FESTIVAL PAVILION, FORT MASON CENTER, EHSS.ORG