

PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM



THE JEWELER'S ART

Four Provincetown Silversmiths, 1940s-1960s



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Paul A. Lobel

Henry Steig

Ed Wiener

Jules Brenner

CURATORS

Claire Sprague

Irma Ruckstuhl

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AUGUST 15 — SEPTEMBER 21, 2003

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every endeavor is indebted to many sources. A show like the present one involved so much sleuthing, so much word of mouth tracking that it could not have happened without the countless people who helped us to uncover jewelry owners, those primarily in the Cape Cod area. We thank them all.

We would like to single out the following for thanks:

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Aviva Arkin
Lee Brenner
Michele Wiener Caplan
Michael Steig
Sandra Ortner

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Origins and Legacies: Modernist Silversmiths in
Provincetown, August 23, 2003:

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Gloria Lieberman
Mark McDonald
Catherine Siracusa
John Taylor

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REVISITING 50s SILVER

Revisiting the silver jewelry now called modernist or studio or design means revisiting my youth. As a graduate student drop out I worked at a gift shop called The Willow on West 4th Street in Greenwich Village. One case displayed silver by Steig. His work was beautiful but expensive. When I say expensive, I mean \$15.00 for the Steig pendant I coveted. (Yes, the dot is in the right place.) Still, with my employee discount, I managed to buy two pieces. I still have them. The Lobel, Wiener and Brenner shops were then or soon to be just steps or blocks away. Also within easy walking distance was Cooper Union where I was studying art at night and trying to figure out my next moves. I didn't think about the connection between the silver I admired and touched every day and the art I was making at night. They were separate spheres, day and night, yet somehow connected.

There were no separate spheres in Provincetown. The *Provincetown Advocate* of the 40s, 50s and 60s makes heady reading. It supports Ed Wiener's sense of the excitement of the many small storefront studio-galleries, the sandalmakers, jewelers, bronze casters and clam shell painters. There were also weavers. And theatre. Even a symphony orchestra on occasion. And many art schools. And much "talk, talk, talk." This is the world that "became my art school" for Ed Wiener. Like him, the other jewelers were largely self-taught and steeped in the arts of painting and sculpture. Artists bought jewelry. Jewelry makers exhibited art in their shops or ran separate galleries. They bought and made art themselves. The line between art and craft became porous. Terms like negative space, silhouette, scale, containment, texture, volume were bound to affect jewelry design. Diamonds and gold seemed "symbols of ostentatious arrogance." A democracy of materials was the order of the day. Pebbles, wood, wire and other unexpected materials entered jewelry making. The shapes could be non-objective (geometric), suggest natural forms (biomorphic), clearly refer to nature (fish, flora, fauna) or to manufactured objects (musical instruments). They could duplicate the abacus or the mobile. Some earrings even moved like mobiles. Pearls and diamonds re-entered jewelry design in the 60s and gold became a preferred medium even for modernist audiences.

Now hindsight and history tell me that modernist silver jewelry design is, like abstract expressionism, essentially a post-World War II phenomenon. The era of my own coming of age. That is one reason the work is so dear to me. I also knew three of the four designers.

All these strands of life and history came together two years ago when I thought, why not a museum show of 50s silver here where Lobel, Steig, Wiener and Brenner had all once lived and worked? Where the thought came from when it did, I can no longer pinpoint. But it arrived, and happily, the Provincetown Art Association and Museum was ready to show art that isn't called "fine."

Such, in brief, is the genesis of the present show: "The Jeweler's Art: Four Provincetown Silversmiths, 1940s-1960s."

My special thanks to Nyla Ahrens who began the labors connected with curating the exhibit and to Irma Ruckstuhl who finished them with me.

Claire Sprague
June 2003

FOUR PROVINCETOWN SILVERSMITHS, 1940s-1960s

Paul Lobel, Henry Steig, Ed Wiener, Jules Brenner

During the late 1940s and 1950s Commercial St., Provincetown's main shopping street, had far fewer retail shops than it does today. But those it did have were often run by craftsmen: silversmiths, leather workers, weavers and potters, all strongly influenced by the town's large summer and resident art colony. Provincetown had long been a center for artists on the East Coast. By the 1940s the presence of the Hans Hofmann School attracted abstract expressionists from all over and the town became a summer outpost for the New York School.

What better place for silversmiths Paul A. Lobel, Ed Weiner, Henry Steig and Jules Brenner to set up their summer studio/shops. All were New Yorkers already established in New York City. Mostly self-taught, they saw themselves as artist-jewelers, whose creations were a reflection of the modernism in fine art at that time. Their work subordinated materials to form. Its inventiveness, originality and experimentation placed a higher value on the aesthetic than the monetary. Yet there proved to be a very strong demand for their work as an art form to be worn.

Following World War II the economy was booming. Veterans returning to civilian life needed to make a living. The craft of jewelry making was wide open to creative people and courses in jewelry making were offered by the Museum of Modern Art at their War Veterans Center. The fundamentals of the craft, carving, engraving, chasing, chiseling, repousee, hammering, drawing wire, finishing, polishing and casting were the same basic techniques used in sculpture. When the Museum had an exhibition of "Modern Jewelry" in 1946, including pieces by artists and sculptors Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia and Julio de Diego, modernist jewelry became identified with modern art.

Also in that show were examples of jewelry by Sam Kramer and Paul A. Lobel. Lobel was one of the first studio jewelers who, along with Sam Kramer and Art Smith, worked alone or with one or two assistants in New York City's Greenwich Village, where Lobel had established a shop on West 4th Street by 1944. Sam Kramer had been making his wild, surrealist jewelry since 1936 and had opened his shop on West 8th Street in 1939.

PAUL LOBEL

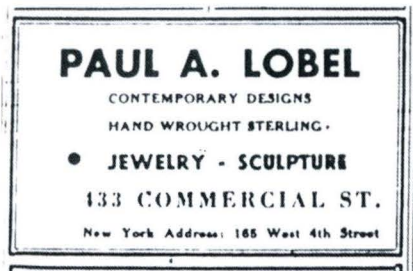
When Paul Lobel opened his New York City studio/shop, he had already won numerous awards as a designer and metalworker since the 1920s. Born in Romania on March 4, 1899, he was brought to this country as an infant, and later forced by poverty to leave school at the age of ten. He and his brothers and sisters had to find whatever work they could to help support the family. In these difficult pre-World War I

years, Lobel chose to become a mechanical draftsman. After the war, he became a radio operator in the Merchant Marine and studied commercial art at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and Illustration at the Art Students League. His work was so outstanding that it appeared in publications like the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* while he was in his early twenties.

In 1925 Lobel went to Paris where he attended the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, the show which gave its name to the Art Deco period. While in Paris he began working in metal, and was rewarded the following year with a one-man show at the Grande Librairie Universelle.

Returning to New York in 1927, Lobel opened his own metalwork studio and in 1928, with Leo J. Uris founded Lobel-Uris, a firm which lasted until 1934, designing and producing modernist accessories of metal and glass for hotels and showroom interiors. The firm won many awards for Lobel's Art Deco style designs applied to products ranging from silver tea sets, candlesticks, lamps and furniture to glass plates, drinking glasses and toys. Lobel also invented a process of bending glass which he called Benduro. The Benduro line, made from 1935 to 1943, featured small domestic objects of metal and glass which received two awards at the 1937 Paris Exposition of Decorative Arts.

During World War II a shortage of materials for larger projects turned Lobel's attention to designing on a smaller scale. He subsequently opened a studio shop at 165 West 4th St. in New York City to make jewelry and small sculptures in silver. Although influenced by the silver jewelry of Georg Jensen, Lobel soon developed his own style and way of working through constant experimentation. With an artist's eye, a designer's elegance and a cartoonist's wit he shaped flat sheet silver and square wire into



abstracted, lyrical, stylized forms. Many of his designs were based on musical instruments, leaf and flower forms, animals and masks, but he also did purely abstract pieces.

Lobel's designs were constructivist in form, relating more to his background in industrial design and his familiarity with the Art Deco period rather than to the abstract expressionist, primitive and surrealist modes that prevailed in the late 1940s and 1950s. Working primarily in silver, he rarely used stones, feeling that color detracted from the form of the piece. He understood that a designer must remember that a piece of jewelry always looks different when worn. While working in New York, Lobel's jewelry was included in the "Modern Jewelry" show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946, "Jewelry Under \$50" at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1948 and in a number of other important exhibitions. A one-man show of his small silver sculptures, "Shining Birds and Silver Beasts," was held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in 1949.

Paul Lobel and his wife, Shirley Herman Lobel, ran a summer shop in Provincetown for only four years from 1949 to 1953. It was an immediate success. "My father knew all the artists and writers, the cognoscenti from New York who spent the summer there," says Judith Lobel Arkin. Many of Lobel's designs from this time show a marine influence, such as his seahorse pin, his whale pin and an abstracted fish on a hook, called "Truro" in his 1949 catalogue.

Lobel closed his New York shop in the late fifties, but continued designing for the rest of his life. He turned his attention to plastics in the 1960s and later made paper sculptures using newspapers, scissors and cellophane tape. An exhibition of what he called his “paperteering,” “Mainly Masks” was held at the Donnell Branch of the New York Public Library in 1972.

Paul Lobel died in 1983 at the age of 84. The first president of the American Crafts Association, his credo was “Think. Experiment. Understand.” Revered by the studio jewelers who followed him for his beautiful, elegant and finely crafted work, he was a consummate artist, designer and craftsman.

HENRY STEIG

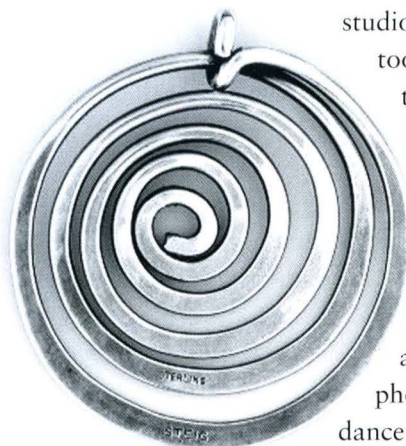
Henry Steig was described by his friend Mischa Richter, the late *New Yorker* cartoonist and fellow Provincetown resident, as a “renaissance man.” Before becoming a studio jeweler he was a jazz musician, a short story writer, a commercial artist, a cartoonist, a photographer and a novelist. Like Paul Lobel, Henry Anton Steig came to jewelry making as a mature and accomplished artist. Throughout his life he continued to paint, take photographs and to exhibit his work in galleries.

Born in New York City on February 19, 1906, he was one of four sons: Irving, Henry, William and Arthur. His parents had immigrated to America from Lvov, Poland. His father worked as a house painter, his mother as a seamstress. Growing up in the Bronx, Steig attended City College (CCNY) for three years, studied painting and sculpture at the National Academy of Design, and became at the same time an accomplished musician on the violin, saxophone and classical guitar. From 1922 to 1932 he played reed instruments in local dance bands.

After four years at the National Academy, Steig worked as a commercial artist and a cartoonist, using the name Henry Anton, since his brother William Steig was also doing cartoons for the same magazines, including *Life*, *Judge* and the *New Yorker*. During the same period Steig was also writing short stories which appeared regularly from 1935 to 1947 in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, the *New Yorker* and other magazines. His non-fiction included jazz criticism and a profile of Benny Goodman for the *New Yorker*. In 1941 Alfred A. Knopf published his novel *Send Me Down*, a story of two brothers who become jazz musicians in the 1920s. When some interest was shown in making a movie from the book, Steig went to Hollywood under contract to write screenplays and to work with the songwriter Johnny Mercer. He returned to New York after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

From 1945 to 1948 Steig and his brother Arthur were partners in Steig Products, manufacturers of artists’ colors and inks. While the business later became very profitable, during its early years it could not support both brothers. Henry left. In an effort to find a way to make a living using his considerable skills, he decided to try jewelry making. A few evening courses to learn the fundamentals of the craft got him started.

From then on he was largely self-taught. By the next year he was confidently exhibiting and selling his work from his apartment on West 9th Street. In early 1950 he opened his first studio/shop at 51st Street and First Avenue in midtown Manhattan. In the summer of the same year, he came to Provincetown where he ran



Henry Steig,
Silver pendant,
verso

his seasonal shop at 200 Commercial Street until 1972. Around 1955 Steig moved his New York City location to 590 Lexington Avenue at 52nd Street. His shop and his name are clearly visible in the film *The Seven Year Itch*, as a background to the famous shot of Marilyn Monroe standing over a subway grate, the updraft blowing her skirt up to her chin.

In the 1950s Steig worked primarily in silver, but offered his designs in 14 karat gold as well. His jewelry was often constructed of flat forms, combining geometric or biomorphic shapes. Other pieces were made of twisted silver wire, reminiscent of Calder, but more labyrinthine and lyrical. For the most part his work was abstract, but a number of pieces were inspired by plant and animal forms: leaves, birds and fish. His preference for the asymmetrical, his sophisticated use of positive and negative space, his use of twisted wire to create complex, curvilinear forms demonstrate his highly developed sculptural sensibilities.

Steig also used semi-precious stones, cultured pearls and handcarved ebony to accent or add contrast to his designs. He sought out unusual stones and would often design a piece around a particular specimen. In the 1960s he began working almost

exclusively in 14 karat gold, crafting some delicate pieces of square gold wire, and for the first time began to have cast pieces made.

In 1963 Henry Steig closed his Lexington Ave. shop and, with his wife, Mimi, moved permanently to Provincetown. He operated his shop at 200 Commercial Street for almost another ten years, while at the same time actively painting abstract and semi-abstract oils and landscape studies of the dunes at Pilgrim Lake. He

exhibited his work at the Provincetown Group Gallery and at the Provincetown Art Association where his paintings are part of the Museum's permanent collection. His avid interest in music and chess did not abate as fellow members of his recorder and chess groups remember.

Steig sold the use of his Provincetown shop and his designs to Jan Dee, a Chicago jeweler, in 1972. He died the following year.

ED WIENER

Ed and Doris Levin Wiener spent the first summer of their married life together in 1944 in Provincetown. Two years later Ed Wiener became the first of the New York studio jewelers to set up shop in Provincetown at 197 Commercial St., where he returned every summer until 1965, selling his own work and showing painting and sculpture by other artists.

Ed Wiener had no art training. Born in New York City on July 10, 1918, he worked in his father's butcher shop after high school and in a factory assembling radios during World War II. Following their marriage, the Wieners took a craft course at Columbia University, where Ed discovered a natural aptitude and talent for jewelry making. Using basic tools and simple techniques he began making jewelry in his kitchen and selling pieces to his friends.

At the shop they initially shared with sandalmaker Roger Rilleau, the Wieners soon became part of the artistic community of Provincetown. Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman, Hans Hofmann and Ward Bennett, painters who summered there,



would come into his shop for informal discussions about art, and to critique his work in aesthetic terms. Wiener called these sessions his “art school.” Taking his cue from their non-objective art, he constructed bold, multi-layered, complex pieces. Inspired by Calder’s mobile-like earrings of bent or flattened wire, he created his square spiral designs and the abacus pins: irregular circular shapes strung with hand-carved beads or cultured pearls which move on tracks of silver wire. A more literal piece from this early period is the 1947 pin “Dancer” inspired by a famous photograph of Martha Graham. Simply constructed of sheet silver and bent wire, its dynamic form conveys the motion and emotion of dance.

Encouraged by the success of their first summer in Provincetown and by jeweler Sam Kramer, the Wieners opened their first studio/shop in New York City the following year at 58 West 55th St. Their clientele at first were mainly artists and art teachers who had seen the “Modern Jewelry” show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1946, but his clientele expanded as Ed considered it his mission to educate the public about modernist jewelry.



*Ed Wiener,
Silver brooch*

The first of several moves in New York City was made in 1953, when the Wieners’ shop “Arts & Ends” relocated to 56 West 53rd St. near the Museum of Modern Art. Wanting a new look for his work, Wiener began casting pieces, using a new plastic compound called Carvex. This versatile material allowed him to make elongated, tapered, modular pieces which could be joined and arranged in various ways. When the shop moved again in 1965 to Madison Ave. at 69th St., the Wieners also closed their shop in Provincetown.

At this time, Ed began another distinct new period of work, confined almost exclusively to gold, using the lost wax method of casting. Here surface, texture and shape were extensively explored and developed. On a trip to Paris Wiener saw medieval work in gold and semi-precious stones at the Cluny Museum which provided inspiration for yet another period of his work. The influence of antique Asian art and a trip to the gem-cutting centers of India led to his work in 18 karat gold and gemstones. He continued this style of work after moving to 57th St. and Madison Ave. in 1971 and produced many bold, extravagant pieces during this time.

Wiener closed his shop in 1981, but continued to make jewelry in his downtown studio. On a visit to Provincetown in 1983 he saw many of his early silver designs still being worn and was inspired to rework some of them in gold. He called this period “The Great Reprise.”

In 1988 the 50/Fifty Gallery in New York held a retrospective of Ed Wiener’s jewelry and produced a catalogue with examples illustrating how his style changed and evolved as he exuberantly investigated and interpreted the major trends in modern art over a forty year period.

After his death in 1991, his daughter Michele, using original molds from the 1953 Carvex period to the last work he created, produced for a short time his pieces under the name “Ed Wiener Jewelry.”

JULES BRENNER

When Jules Brenner closed his shop at 382 Commercial St. in 1982, the last of the New York studio jewelers who set up shops in Provincetown during the 1940s and 1950s had gone. The town inspired Brenner's first work as a jeweler. His early silver designs, "Starfish" and "Three Fishes" (his most popular creation), while modernist in style, are clearly Provincetown motifs.

Jules Brenner, born in the Bronx, New York in 1918, grew up in Washington Heights in upper Manhattan where he attended public schools. His father was in the liquor business and his mother a homemaker. Although there were no artists in the family, Brenner became interested in both art and the theatre, and began studying acting with Stella Adler and painting and sculpture with Rosti, a sculptor who taught out of his Greenwich Village studio. He later found work performing in summer stock with Eli Wallach.

In the late 1940s Brenner went to Provincetown to work in Ed Wiener's shop, where he first made trays and platters of hammered copper and brass. As a side-line, he began designing and making his own jewelry. Encouraged by the successful reception of his own creations, Jules and his wife, Lee, opened a shop in the artistic community of Woodstock, New York, which they ran for one summer in 1951. Jules continued to work with Ed Wiener in both New York and Provincetown until 1953, when the couple opened their own studio/shop at 127 MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village. Brenner made it a practice to place his workbench in the front of the shop, for he felt it was important for people to see the process of jewelry-making.

Brenner's first works were in handwrought silver. They show the influence of American Indian jewelry and his attraction to primitive, surrealist, cubist and constructivist design. Simple good design, using silver and sometimes 14 karat gold with textured surfaces and bold dark and light contrast, became his way of working in the 1950s. He often incorporated cultured pearls into his pieces and used semi-precious stones to accent the shape of a piece.

In 1963 the Brennens moved their New York City shop uptown to 828 Lexington Avenue between 63rd and 64th Streets. Given the demands of his new, wealthier clientele, he soon switched to working exclusively in gold, using the lost wax method of casting or a combination of casting and direct metalworking, which he developed into a unique way of working gold. He also began using gemstones, coral, carved antique jade, baroque pearls, opals and other semi-precious stones to make one-of-a-kind pieces or limited editions.

For a number of years, the Brennens had also operated a seasonal shop in Provincetown, where they became established on their own in the summer of 1956. Their first shop exhibited Jules' jewelry and showed works by local artists, a combination which continued when they moved in 1967 to 382 Commercial Street. Until 1972 the Jules Brenner Gallery showed the work of many well-known artists, including Karl Knaths, Chaim Gross, Jack Tworokov, Robert DeNiro Sr., Red Grooms, Mimi Gross, Sydney Simon, Myron Stout and others. The Brennens closed their New York shop in 1974 when they decided to live year-round in Provincetown.



*Jules Brenner,
Silver ring with
oxidation*

Jules became active in the civic life of the town, serving as Chairman of the Planning Board and as a Trustee of PAAM. He was also involved in trying to establish an arts center at what was then the Provincetown Heritage Museum and is currently in the process of becoming the town's new library.

When Jules Brenner retired as a jeweler in 1982, he returned to several earlier pursuits, playwriting, acting and sculpture. He died in 1991.

Studio jewelry was created for a new audience, one that was open to original designs and materials. That audience responded to the four Provincetown jewelers who worked with a deliberately limited vocabulary of simple shapes and forms in materials that repudiated the traditional. In the 1940s or 1950s to wear a Lobel "Stradivarius" pin, a Wiener abacus, a Steig wire pendant, or a Brenner silver cuff was to identify oneself with the artistic avant garde.

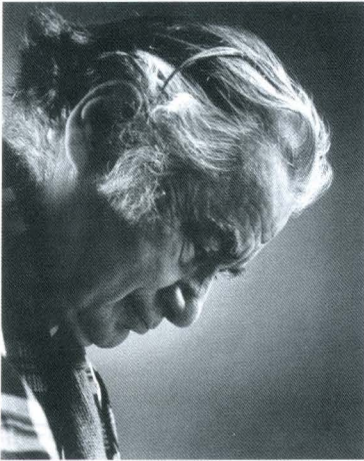
Paul Lobel, Henry Steig, Ed Wiener and Jules Brenner were similar in their conscious identification with modernist design. They were inspired by the work of contemporary abstract artists such as Alexander Calder, Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore, Joan Miro and others. These four Provincetown jewelers were also very American. In our view, they were part of a mid-century design movement that created a jewelry as American as jazz.

*Catherine Siracusa & Sid Levitt
July 2003*

Paul A. Lobel

b. Baku, Romania, 4 March 1899

d. New York, 11 February 1983



My father, Paul A. Lobel, was the apple of my eye — as I was of his. I remember the many gifts he gave me to encourage my creativity and femininity. A small leather-cased sewing set with bobbins of multi-hued silk thread, for example, a gift that fostered my life-long interest in sewing. A gift that was like a pebble thrown into a pond, making concentric circles from the center, since I encouraged my four daughters, Helen, Aviva, Jessica and Sarah, to sew.

Dad had a pair of “golden” hands (or should I say gold and silver hands?) that could create objects in metal, glass, paper and wood. He designed brass wall-hangings that won three gold medals in the decorative arts exhibition in Paris, 1925, a show which featured the work of artists worldwide whose work revolutionized design in contemporary utilitarian objects.

During the Second World War, in 1944, my father opened his first jewelry shop on West 4th Street, Greenwich Village. There he designed and hand-crafted pieces in sterling silver and gold. Later, my mother, Shirley Herman Lobel, ran our summer shop on Commercial Street in Provincetown. It was very successful.

I worked for my parents in their Greenwich Village shop as a silversmith. My father taught me techniques of the craft. He was a patient, humorous, incomparable teacher. Among his students was Wally Cox (Mr. Peepers of TV). Dad’s shop eventually became the mecca of the craft world. In 1944, the American Museum of Natural History exhibited his unique rendition of 100 animal and bird sculptures in sterling silver. The exhibition, entitled “Shining Birds and Silver Beasts,” covered the entire ground floor of the museum.

The glassware he designed, candy trays and serving dishes, for example, was made with a unique hand-bent technique by his firm, Benduro. The glass was fluted in such a way that it seemed to be undulating. Sweden, glass center of the world, imported Benduro glass.

Paper, a medium my father found very fulfilling, was used to fashion his Peace Chapel. The Peace Chapel was exhibited in the Donnell Library in New York City. Formed in the shape of a gazebo, the Chapel was made out of thin, reed-like, rolled-up sheets of the *New York Times* newspaper and had the signs of the three major religions, the Christian cross, the Islamic crescent and the Jewish star, hanging in the center. Among his other paper designs were Paper Plays, a colored paper cut-out kit of birds, fish, turtles, et.al., fashioned by America’s first Paperteer™, Paul Lobel.

Wooden, three paneled folding screens; glass topped basket-weave occasional tables; and waste-paper baskets, to mention a few of the objects made by Broadweave Screens, were featured in department stores throughout the country. They were very well received.

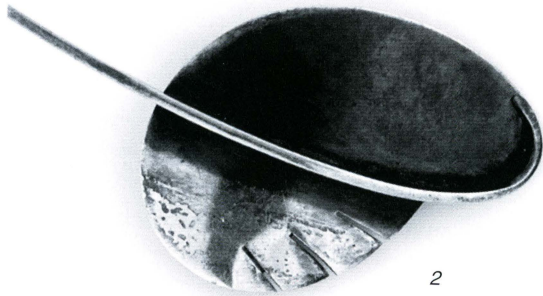
One year, in his spare time, Dad designed and crafted for my birthday a Panoe, a small, bicycle-sized paneled canoe mounted on wheels which would help you go forward as you “paddled” with your feet. Both my brother and I shared rides in our glorious Panoe. My sister, as yet unborn, never knew the fun she missed.

One of the best gifts my father ever gave me was an Indian bead set frame on which I learned to make beaded head bands, watch fobs and bracelets. My fondest memories are of summer days on the Provincetown dunes with my family where I sat close to the breaking ocean waves and learned to be a craftsperson.

*Judith Lobel Arkin
June 2003*



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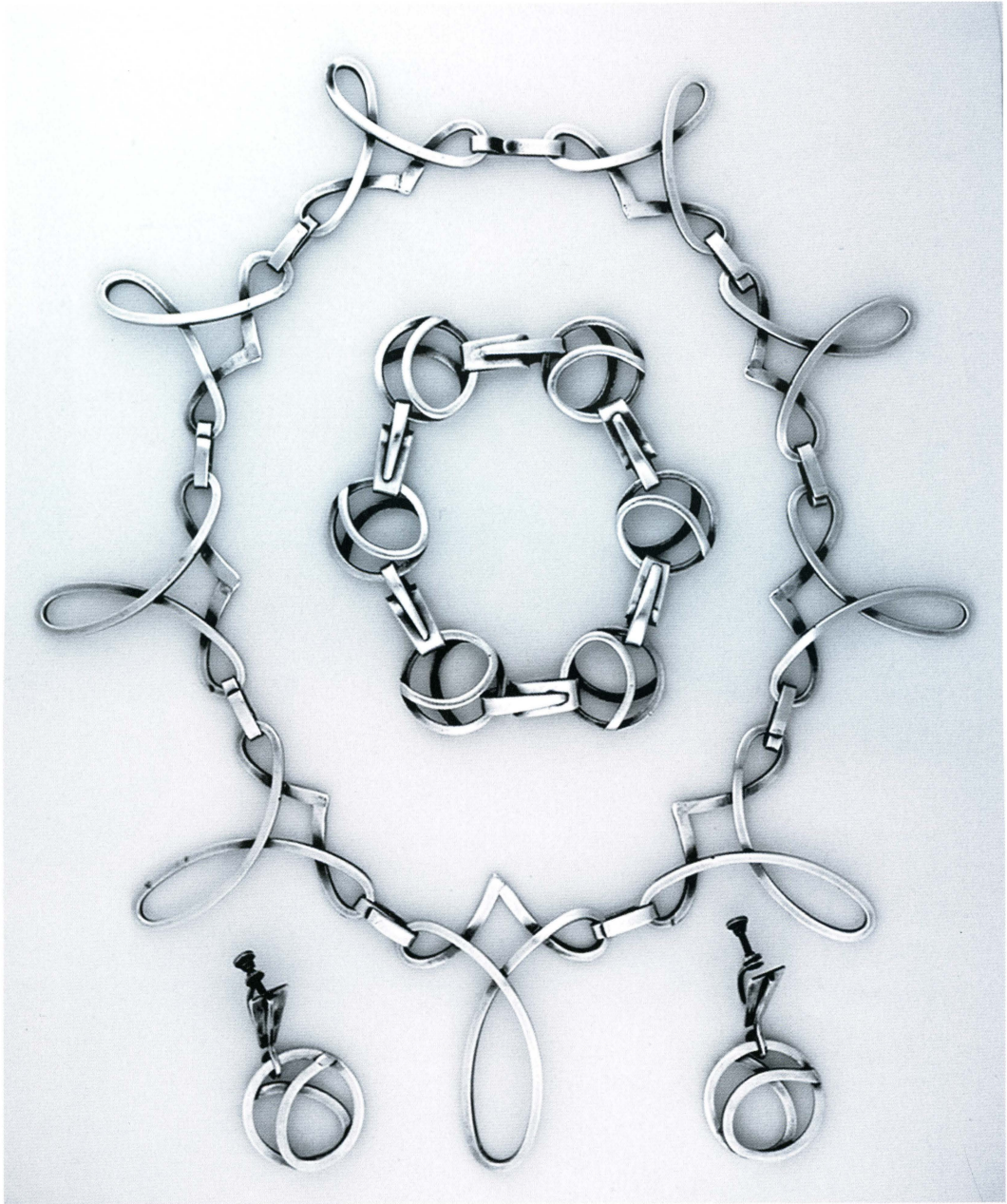
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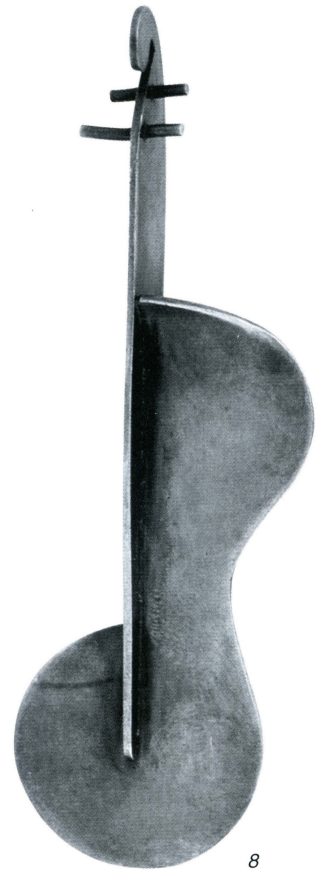


5

*Facing page, 1. Double leaf brooch 2. Shadow leaf brooch 3. Silver earrings 4. Pendant with yellow glass ball on silver chain.
Above, 5. Link design matching earrings, bracelet, and necklace*



6

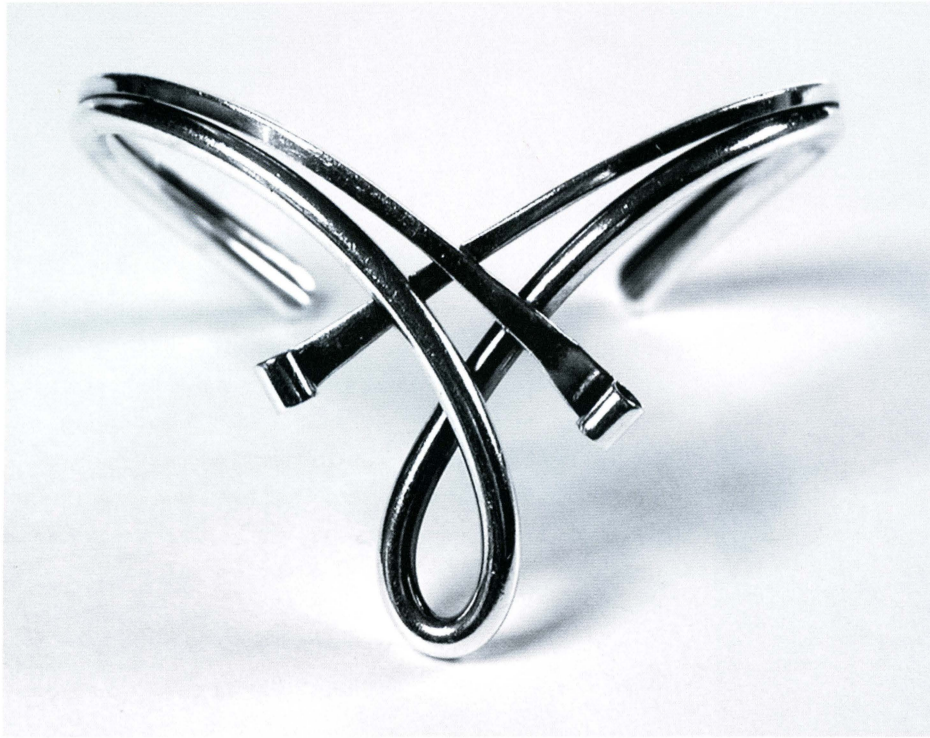


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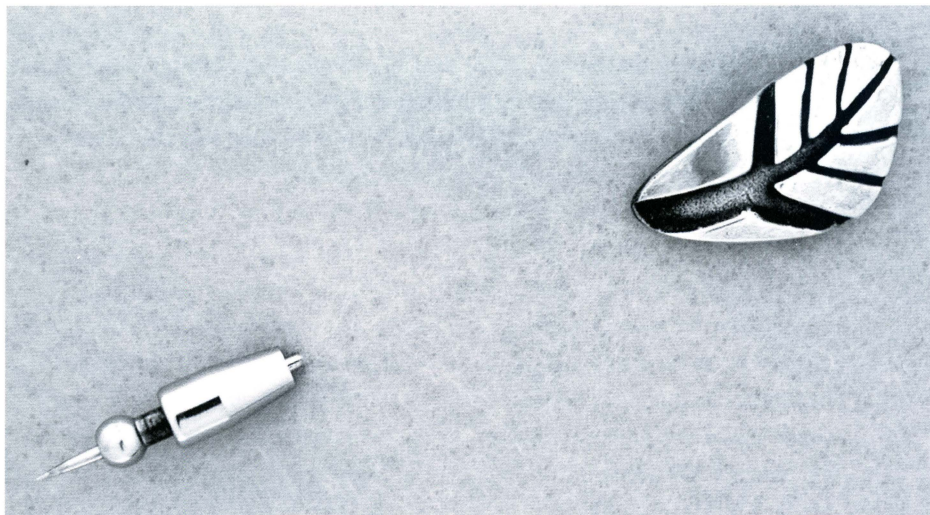


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6. Leaf form earrings 7. Silver leaf brooch 8. Stradivarius brooch



9



10

9. Silver wire bracelet 10. Leaf form stick pin

Henry Steig

February 19, 1906 — February 2, 1973



Henry's first vocation was music: he played saxophone and clarinet with various small groups, especially at resorts (which is how he met my mother). But even though they had my mother's salary as a public school teacher, it was not a realistic career for him.

By 1932 he became a cartoonist, under the name of "Henry Anton," since his brother Bill had already established himself as a cartoonist for *The New Yorker*. By 1935 or 1936, he had begun to write, and the first short story he submitted to a magazine was accepted. He continued to publish fiction in *Collier's*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The New Yorker*, and *Esquire*. In 1936 he wrote a Profile of Benny Goodman for *The New Yorker*. And in 1941 his jazz novel, *Send Me Down*, was published by Knopf. A contract in Hollywood came to an abrupt end with the attack on Pearl Harbor, and though he continued to write, his primary employment during the war was as a diamond-tool machinist.

After the war he found it hard to place stories, and after getting Steig Products established with his brother Arthur (a company that later did well manufacturing paints for commercial artists), in 1949 decided to try designing and making jewelry. In 1950, after producing enough stock for the summer, my father rented 200 Commercial Street (then also the home of the *Provincetown Advocate*), and set up shop. My mother was the salesperson. For a first summer, they did very well, with a profit of about \$1500.

That fall he opened a store in New York on First Avenue near 51st street, and things went well enough so that he was able to move to Lexington and 52nd a few years later. In the summers they always returned to Provincetown, hiring someone to handle the New York store. At some point he found that customers were more interested in gold than silver jewelry, so a large part of what he made was gold. He was always coming up with new ideas, sometimes inspired by chance happenings, as when a man came into the store selling ebony violin pegs. By adding silver legs, arms and eyes, Henry made them into a charming pendant, which his assistant called an "ooga." We are still finding, among my relatives, jewelry which we did not know Henry had made. During his time in Provincetown he did many oil paintings, some abstract, some of the dunes or Pilgrim Lake. The late Mischa Richter liked to call him a "Renaissance man."

My parents moved to Provincetown permanently in 1963. Henry had a serious heart attack in 1971, and an x-ray showed a tumor in one lung. During their visit to us in England in 1972 he began having pains in his back. It was spinal cancer, causing a slow and painful death. But that visit to Europe, including a week in Paris, meant a great deal to him, and led to a fine semi-abstract painting of Beachy Head.

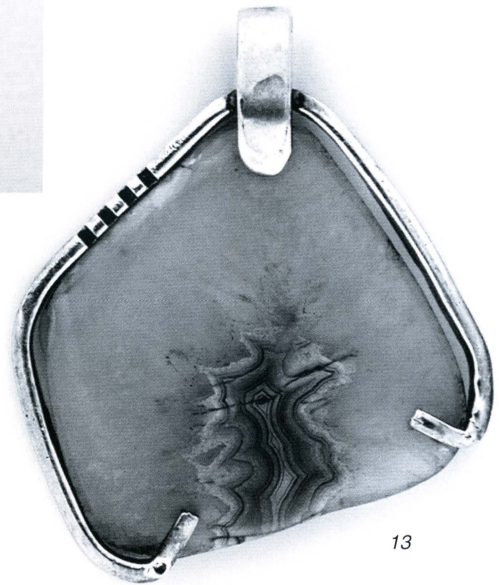
Michael Steig



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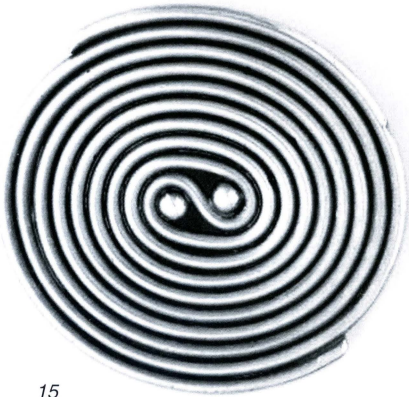


13



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11. Silver choker 12. Triple wave silver bracelet 13. Agate pendant set in silver
14. Ring, spiral design



15



16



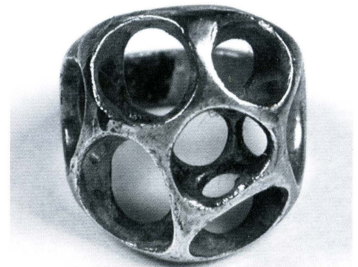
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15. Round silver brooch 16. Triangle spiral pendant 17. Silver earrings with moonstones 18. Heavy silver bracelet
19. Silver and turquoise necklace 20. Silver man's ring



21



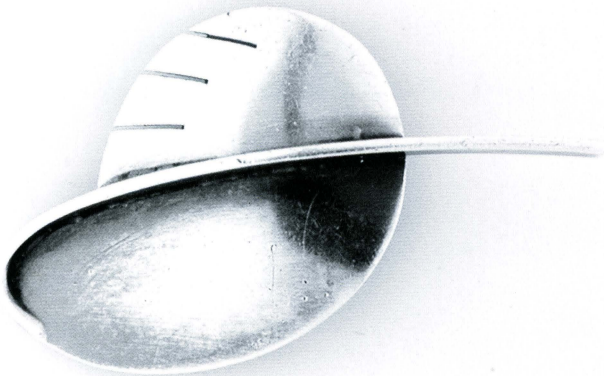
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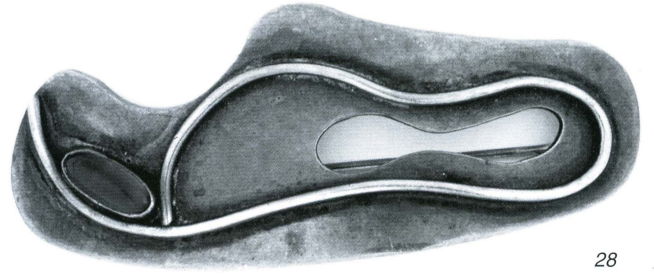


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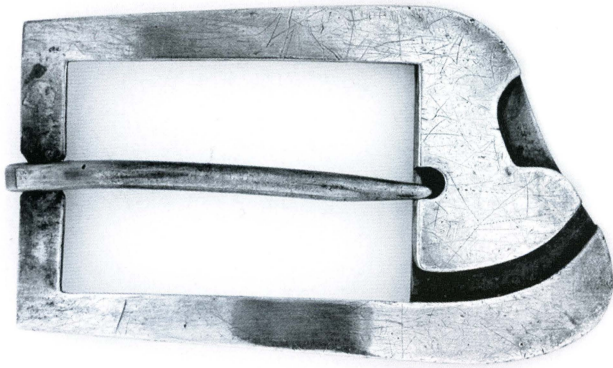


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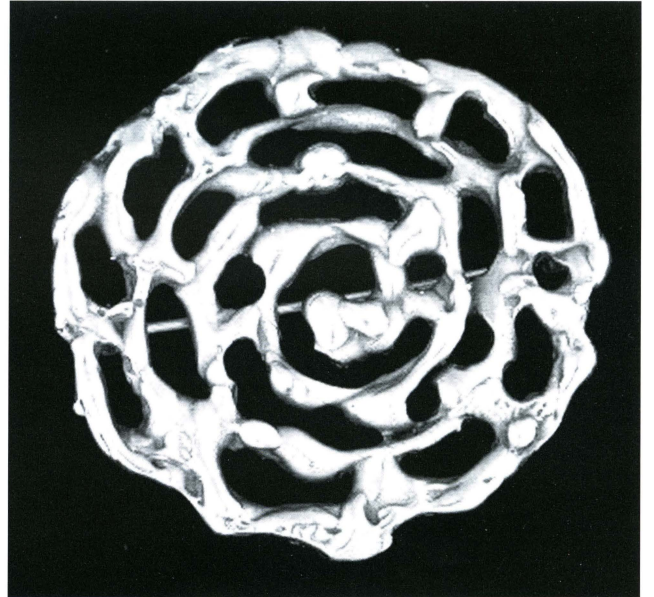
21. Silver linked bracelet 22. Silver cuff bracelet 23. Silver leaf pin with oxidized half leaf 24. Silver spiral earrings 25. Prehistoric bead necklace



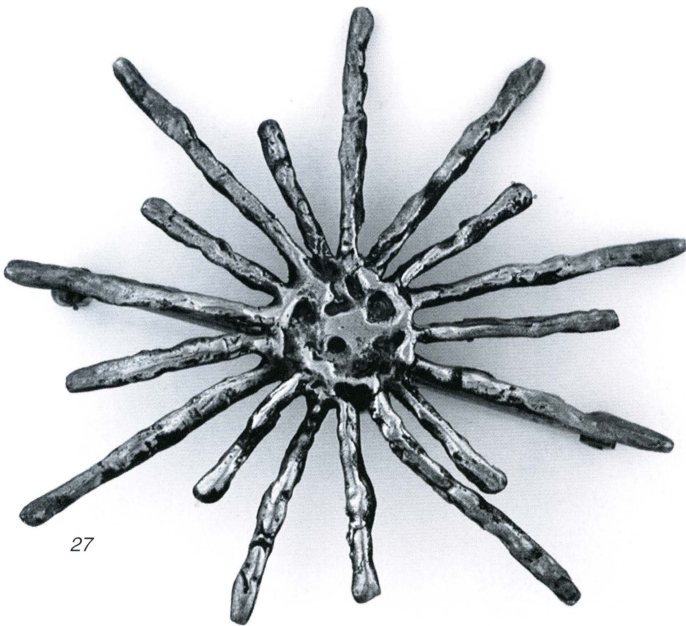
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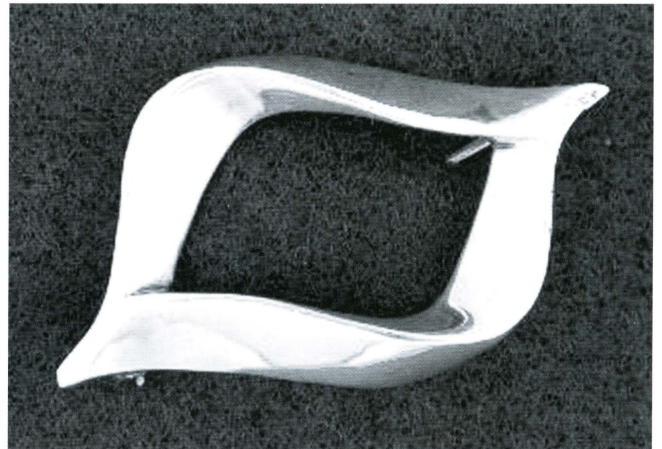
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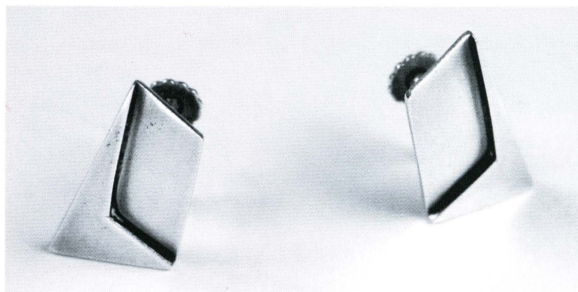
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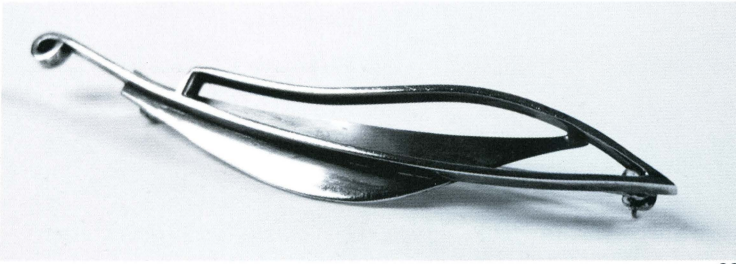


30



31

26. Silver belt buckle 27. Silver starburst brooch 28. Oxidized silver free form brooch 29. Round open work silver brooch 30. Silver curved brooch 31. Silver earrings



32



33



34



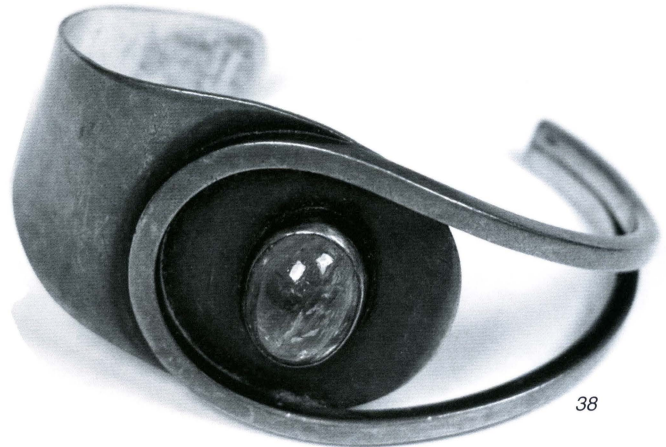
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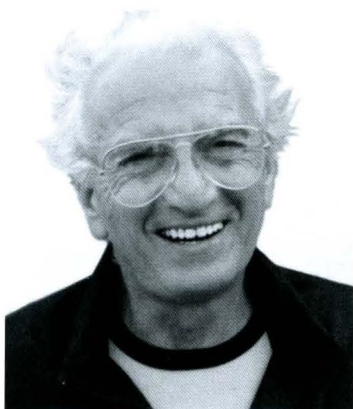


38

32. Stylized silver brooch 33. Silver spiral cuff 34. Silver cufflinks 35. Silver ring 36. Silver triangle earrings
37. Free form silver brooch 38. Bracelet with agate stone

Ed Wiener

b. New York City, 10 July 1918
d. New York City, 21 July 1991



Long after Dad had left Provincetown, after the shop had been closed for 20 years, after he had traveled the world with my mother, going to India, Asia and Europe he said to me one day as we walked down Fifth Avenue towards the lower east side, that of all the beautiful places he had ever been the Cape had been the most extraordinary. He thought maybe dunes clarified the light and made it clearer, and bluer.

I know exactly where we were when he said that. But I cannot help thinking that maybe we were at the breakwater, in a car looking over the bay. Or maybe we had stopped while driving from Herring Cove beach to the lighthouse and stepped onto the bike trail. These are all places where we later scattered his ashes. There and at Gull Pond and around our house near Land's End Marine Supply. He was not particularly sentimental, except about Ptown. By then he was a much different person than the hungry, brash, wildly talented and headstrong young man of 27 who got lost on the way to Maine with his beautiful young wife and decided to stay and try belt buckle making on impulse.

I have often wondered what he was feeling. He was not an easy man to read although he loved to talk, especially about himself. Clearly he was drawn to the intellectual ferment of artistic conversation, but he later said that he had a hard time seeing himself as an artist, that was too much of an intellectual arrogance for him, meaning a poorly educated member of the proletariat, a kid from the Bronx. Yet, his talent must have been apparent to him from the early days as it was to everyone around him. The recognition he received was immediate and emotionally overpowering, a veritable roller coaster. Conflicts like these governed his life and fueled his creativity. His favorite characterizations of himself came from a friend who once said, "Don't be so modest, you are not so great."

A night course in crafts at Columbia University was his whole art education when he started as a belt buckle maker with Roger Rilleau, drawing on skills he developed working with sheet metal and radio assembly during the war. Soon he opened a shop near the post office, sharing it with my mother. They moved to one of a series of shops near Lands End Marine Supply. It was there that I "met" him. By then he was immersed in biomorphism. A curator from the Brooklyn museum once looked at a piece of his from this period and pointed out that it was an egg case from some sea animal. He loved taking all the children on long nature walks on the sand flats. Clearly he was doing more than just looking. In fact, we were all exploring, analyzing, looking and collecting whatever we could for paella.

Dad's paella parties were the annual highlight of the social scene on the "deck." In the afternoons, when the shop was closed, friends gathered on the deck over gin and tonics to talk about art, to gossip and to critique each other's work. This always lively, often provocative exchange of ideas was an essential part of the Ptown experience. He says about it in his catalog "Best of all was the atmosphere of inquiry and persuasion, studio visiting, and talk, talk, talk which became my art school."

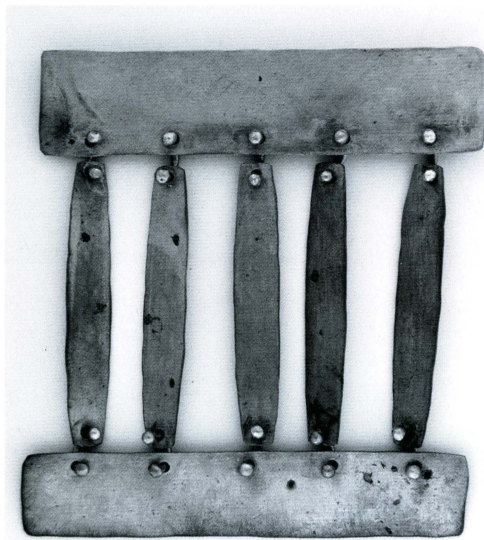
In 1968 he closed the shop, in part a logical consequence of the change in culture and his growing interest in working in gold. My mother's interest in Asian art drew them both to Asia, and the summer was the best time for them to travel. In 1980 he went into retirement. In 1986 he came back to Ptown. The epiphany of seeing his own jewelry walk down the street on the blouses and ears of women made him begin to design again. This time he made big flat beautiful spirals.

The last time I saw my Father he had made paella for friends in Wellfleet. He had rented a house for me in the East End where I spent the month of June with my two babies. He came and visited often. On my last day he came by, but we missed each other. He later said that he had spent the afternoon on my deck watching the tide. He told me exactly why it was so beautiful. A month later he was dead. I miss him terribly.

*Michelle Wiener Caplan
June 2003*



39

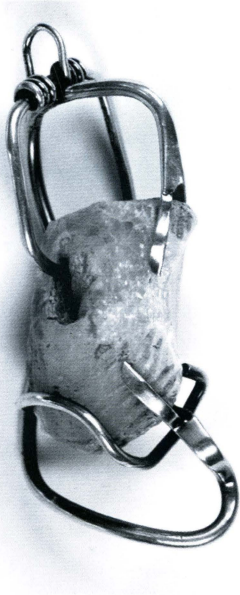


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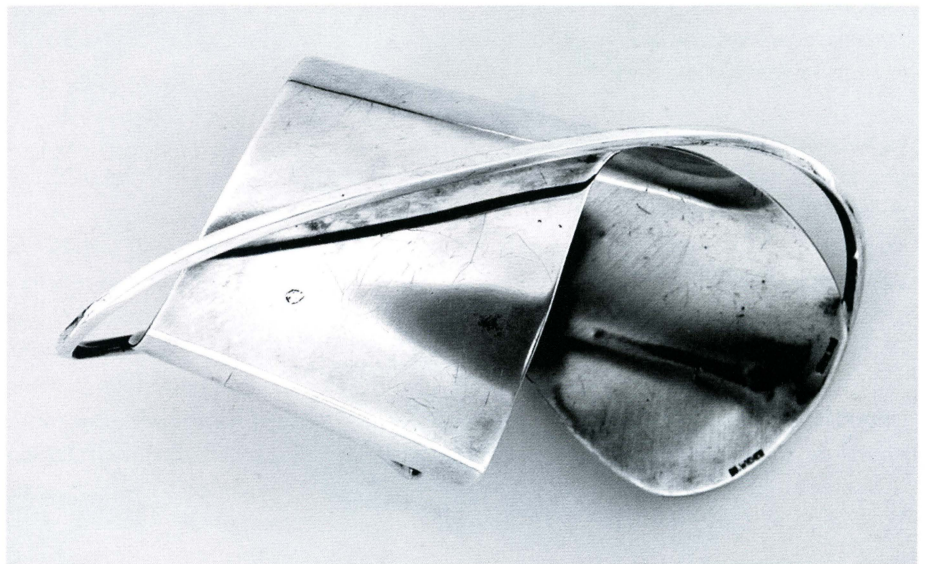
39. Fishscale necklace – verso 40. Silver pin 41. Silver and ebony cufflinks



42

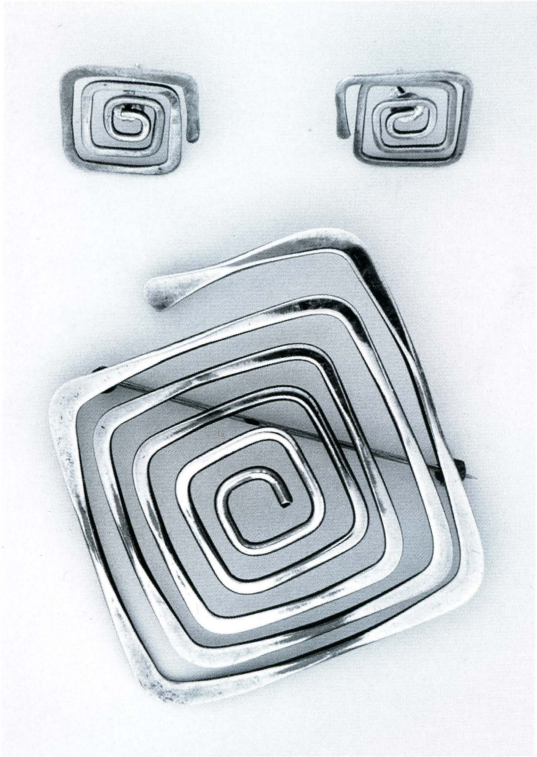


44-47

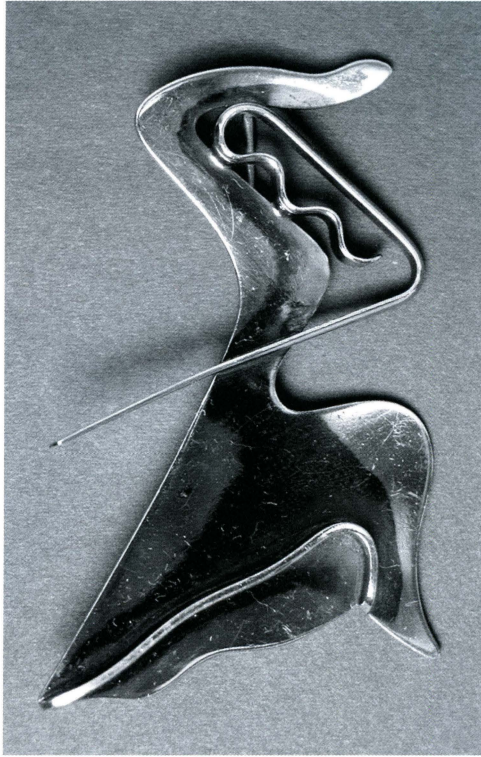


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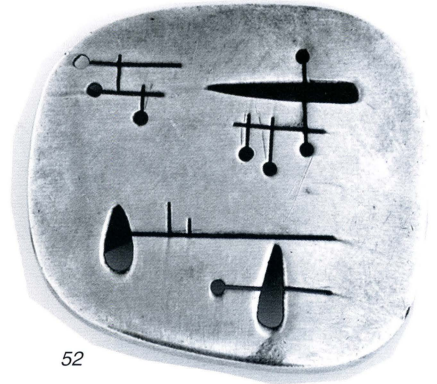
Above, 42. Pendant with fossilized clam shell 43. Silver cuff 44 – 47. Silver cuff with three rings
Opposite page, 48-49. Brooch in Greek design with matching earrings 50. Choker with moonstone
51. Ring with green stone 52. Silver brooch with negative space 53. Dancer brooch



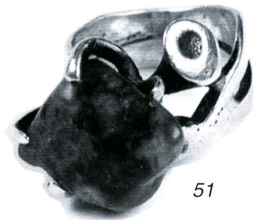
48-49



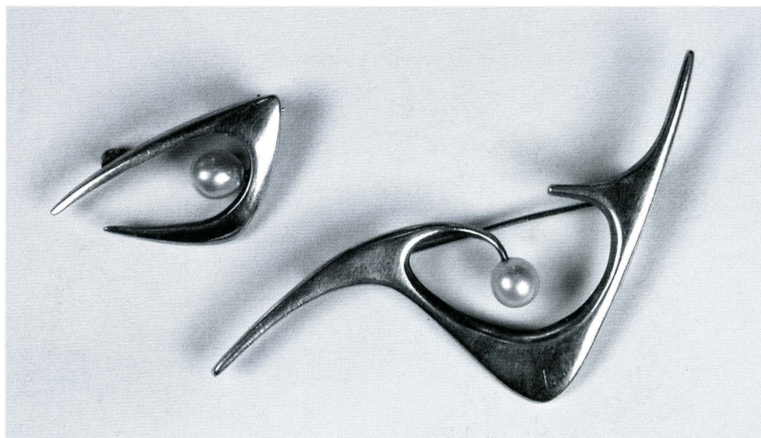
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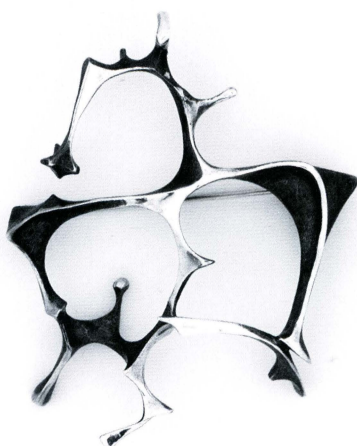
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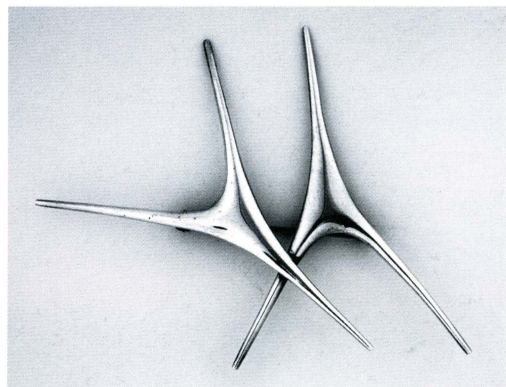
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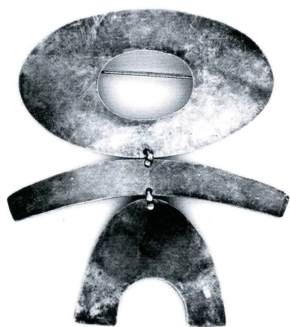
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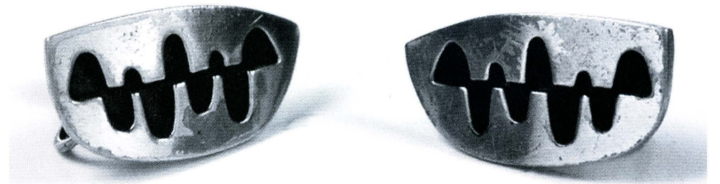
54-55. Two silver brooches with cultured pearls 56. Ring with oxidized silver 57. Silver abstract brooch 58. Silver abstract brooch 59. Silver figure pin 60. Fishscale bracelet



61



62



63

61. Silver link collar 62. Silver cuff 63. Silver earrings

Jules Brenner

b. New York, New York; 28 November 1917
d. Provincetown, MA; 6 June 1991



My husband and I were business partners for over 30 years - from the time we opened our first shop in Woodstock, NY in 1951 (one summer only) to our second on Macdougall Street in Greenwich Village, and, finally and lastly, to our shop on Lexington Avenue between 63rd and 64th Streets in New York City. Throughout this period we ran a “summer shop” in Provincetown.

For the first several years our shop was almost directly across from the Provincetown Art Association. Our hand lettered sign made by Jim Forsberg stood outside 465 Commercial Street. We would come up from the city in mid-June to open our shop, close it after Labor Day and return to New York City to prepare for our Christmas season. One year we returned with a three week old new-born who was weighed in after hours on Duncan Bryant’s vegetable scale. Duncan used to come back to his grocery store to do the books and often brought ice cream over for us to share. Then we’d go into the darkened grocery shop for the weigh-in.

From that location we moved to 382 Commercial Street. We gave up our New York store to become full-time residents in Provincetown in 1973. Our shop hours were long, 11 to 11, with a few late afternoon hours off for a swim and dinner, but between the two of us, we did it all.

We each did what we enjoyed - he designing, creating and executing. I did all of the displays, the selling and “took care of the business.” Jules particularly enjoyed what he called “one of a kind” designs or “special orders” for customers. These were very often done by first carving the design in wax in what is known as the lost wax process.

Our wide and varied roster of customers included people from all walks of life, celebrities from theatre and film, the UN and a devoted group from Tiffany’s. It was a great time. Best of all, I think, we both knew it was a special time; lots of laughs and wonderful friendships developed here in Provincetown.

Jules was generous of his time, especially with his work on the Provincetown Planning Board. He strongly believed that town boards “should not be confrontational, but serve to help citizens through a possibly difficult process.” He was proud of his role on that Board and persuaded some creative talent to join.

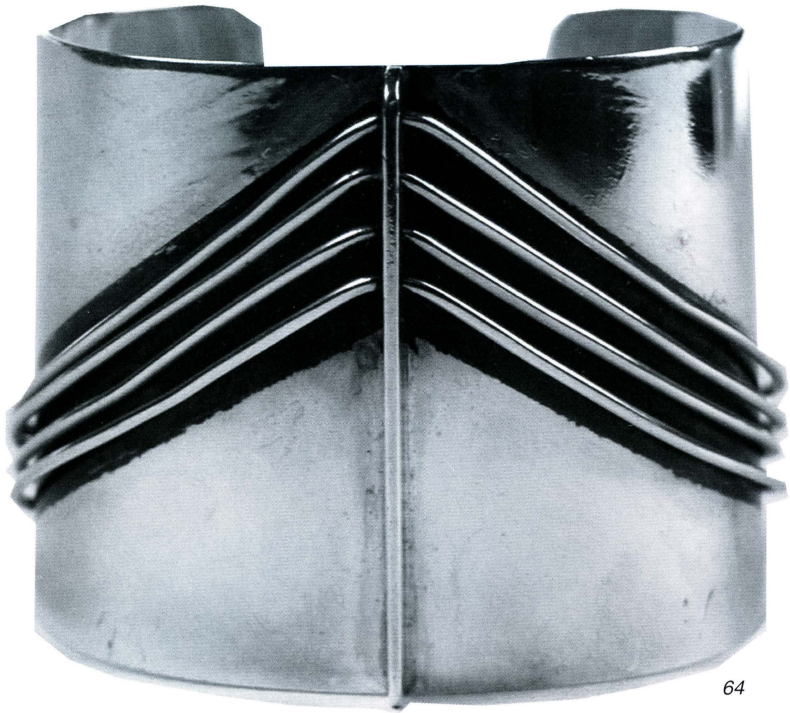
The Writers Group that he and my daughter started during her college years really sparked his interest in creative writing. He turned to poetry, prose and playwriting. His “Tee Vee News” was eventually produced by the Provincetown Theatre Company. It was filmed by Channel 8/Hyannis and is occasionally rerun on local stations.

The Jules Brenner Gallery speaks for itself. It was the hippest gallery in town. Monday night openings were very popular and attracted an eclectic group of artists and art lovers. Jules’s interest in art spilled over into his involvement with the local museum. He was an early advocate of adding “Museum/School” to the title of the Provincetown Art Association.

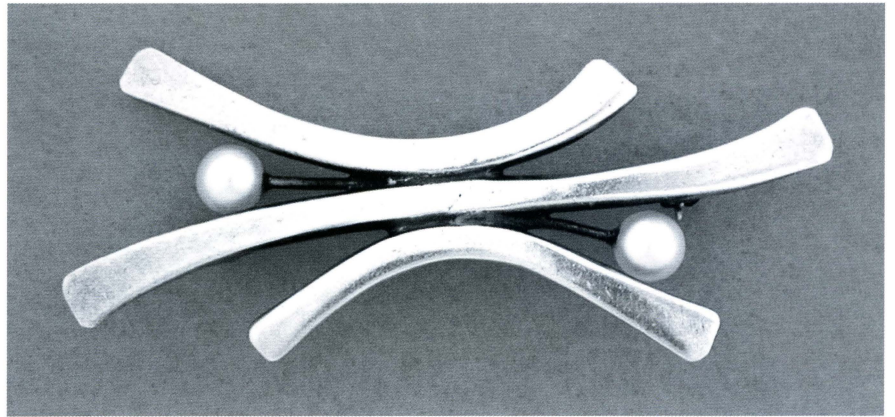
And tennis. He was a natural. He took lessons from Sheldon Caldwell and was like a kid with his new found love; he couldn’t get enough of it.

My husband had a curious mind and many talents. In addition to jewelry making and writing, he had worked in sculpture and filmmaking. Not surprisingly, he was a voracious reader, devouring the classics, pot boilers, mysteries - whatever. Our later trips abroad fed his great curiosity. I remember my husband as a man of tremendous wit, a wonderful sense of humor and an especially gentle nature.

Lee Brenner
July 2003



64

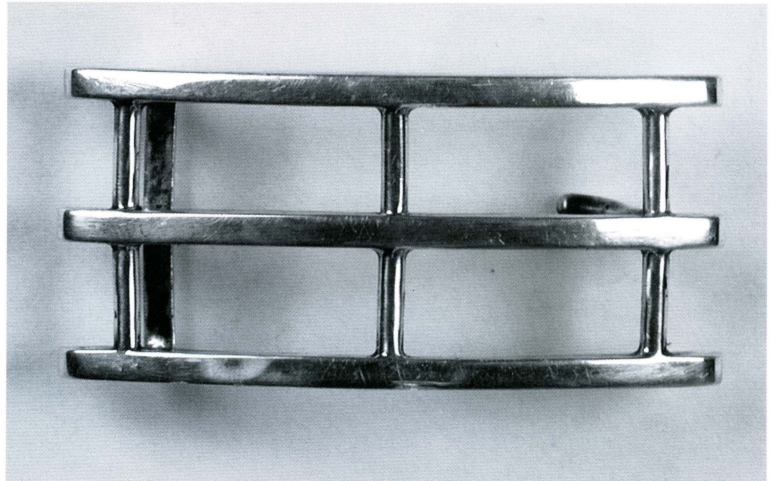


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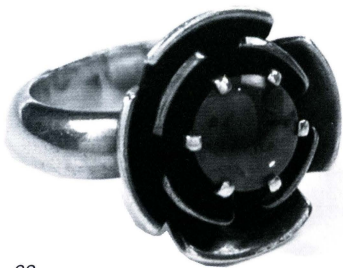


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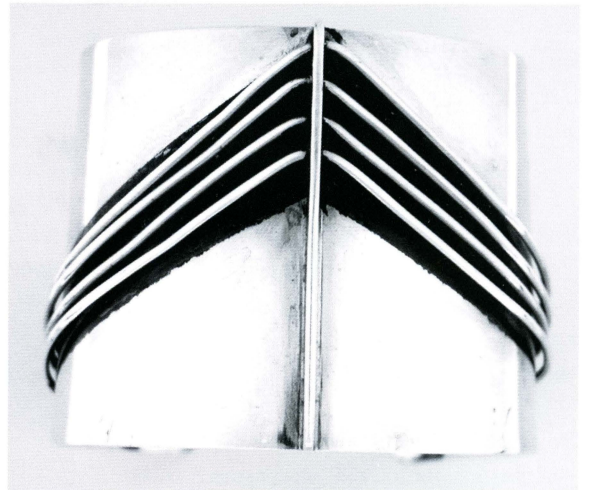
64. Silver cuff in chevron design 65. Silver brooch with two cultured pearls 66. Silver starfish brooch



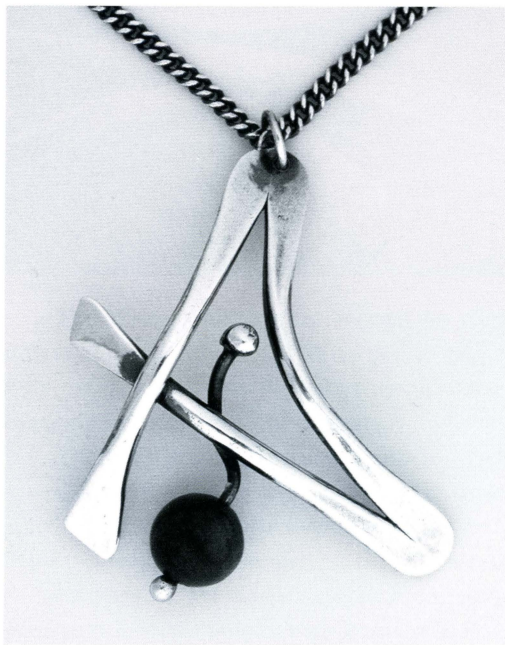
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67. Lattice form belt buckle 68. Oxidized flower ring with amethyst cabochon 69. Silver pendant with blue stone
70. Silver chevron striped belt buckle



71



72

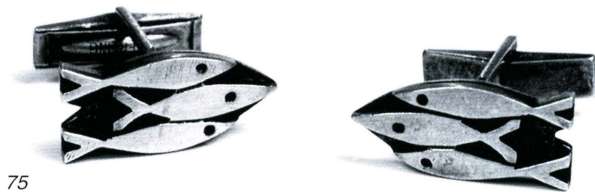


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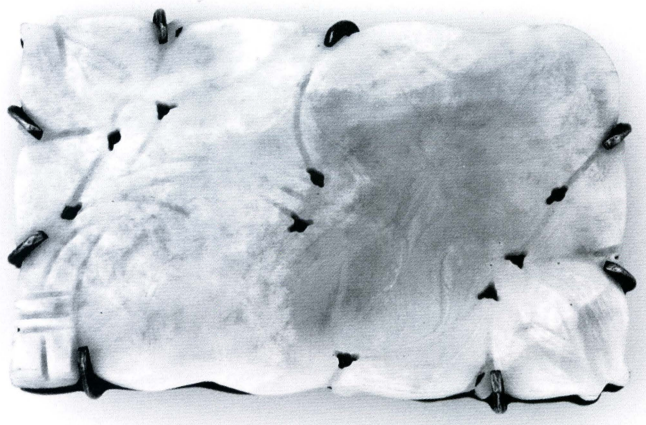
71. Bird form brooch with cultured pearl 72. Silver linked choker 73. Starfish cufflinks 74. Falling leaf earrings



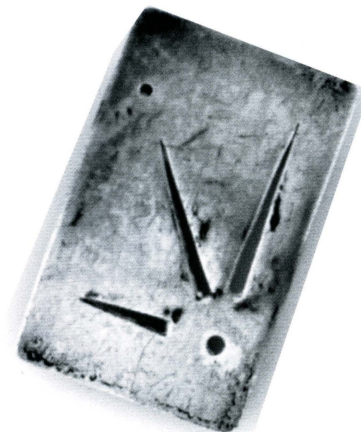
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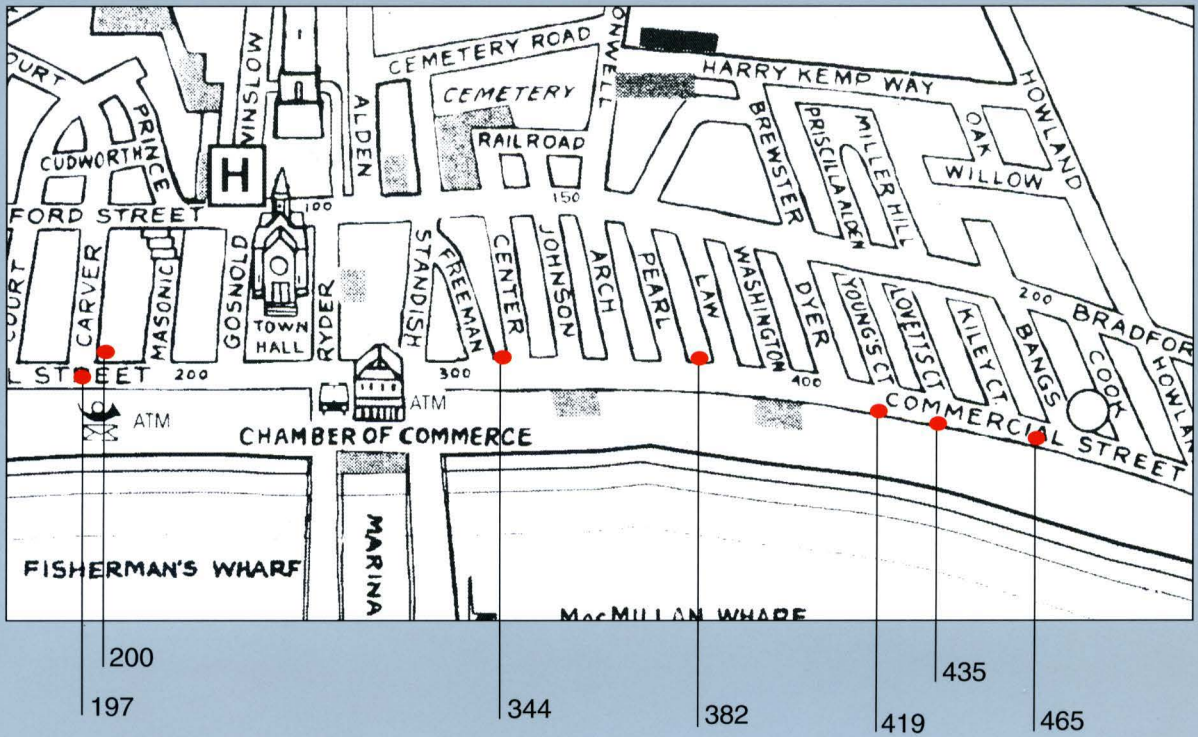


78



79

75. Three fish cufflinks 76. Open box design wedding ring 77. Green jade set into silver frame brooch
78. Silver money clip 79. Initial paperweight, silver on brass



Four Provincetown Silversmiths Where They Were When

Dates	Addresses	Jewelers
1946	197 Commercial at Carver Street	Ed Wiener
1949	419 Commercial at Youngs Court	Paul A. Lobel
1950-1953	435 Commercial at Lovett's Court	Paul A. Lobel
1950-1972	200 Commercial at Carver Street	Henry Steig
1951-1965	344 Commercial between Center & Freeman	Ed Wiener
1956-1966	465 Commercial at Bangs Street	Jules Brenner
1967-1974	382 Commercial between Pearl & Law	Jules Brenner

Dates and addresses are based on articles, interviews with family and friends, and Advocate ads, save for Lobel dates and addresses which are based on Advocate ads only.