

**A HOT AND CHIC NEW WATCH
AND JEWELRY EMPORIUM IN
CHERRY CREEK NORTH IS
CLOCKING UP BIG-TIME CLIENTELE FROM
AROUND THE WORLD.**

Although it may not always seem like it, everyone's day contains exactly the same amount of time: 24 hours; 1,440 minutes; 86,400 seconds. You can keep track of it all just fine with a \$20 Timex from Wal-Mart.

So why would anyone in their right mind fly all the way from South America to Denver to buy a wristwatch? Especially one that costs (gulp!) \$250,000?

Jeremy Oster, co-owner of the new Oster Jewelers boutique in Cherry Creek North, just smiles at the question. As the saying goes, "If you have to ask . . ."

Jeremy and his wife, Melissa, are proprietors of Denver's newest chic sensation—a shop that sells very, very fine watches and jewelry. If this doesn't sound terribly unusual, consider that patrons from as far away as Monte Carlo, London, Paris, and Singapore are snapping up the Osters' ultra-exclusive wares.

And if you visit their cozy yet elegant salon at 251 Steele St., you're likely to rub elbows with moneyed "who's whos" from all over America—film and television stars, Forbes-level business magnates, celebrity athletes, political poobahs, and fashion mavens galore.

They're all flocking here

because Oster is one of very few places on the planet where one can find not only wonderfully unique jewelry, but also what can only be described as an utterly stunning caliber of rare, hand-crafted watches.

Among Oster's most sought after superstars are timepieces from a small Swiss company called Arnold & Son. The firm's prede-



cessor had been making watches for well over two centuries, since 1764. It is most famous for its "Longitude" marine timekeepers—handcrafted for British royalty and for such noted explorers as Sir Ernest Shackleton and Captain Cook.

Investors and connoisseurs eagerly seek out many of these exquisite timepieces. "There's a huge, huge culture of aficionados for the kind of high-end, collectible watches that we carry," says Jeremy. "Rarity is an exciting thing. It is very difficult to get a truly top-level product, but every one I can get, we

sell immediately. Most of our brands are extremely desirable to sophisticated collectors."

However, adds Melissa, the majority of Oster's watches—and jewelry items too—are embraced by individuals who simply want something special and exclusive. "Our typical customer is fashion-conscious, well-traveled, adventure-some, very conscious of true quality, and someone who likes to enrich his or her life with unique and beautiful things that not everyone else has," she notes.

It's not necessarily a question of price—you can easily spend a quarter-million dollars at Oster, but you also can walk out the door for under 60 bucks. And it's not just about style, although every item in the store flaunts cutting-edge design.

No, according to Jeremy, the irresistible cachet of his products is entirely about one thing: passion. In this case, a passion for old-world pride in craftsmanship, for history and tradition, and for the unequivocal beauty of good design. Spend a few minutes talking with him about watches, and you can't help but be caught up in his passion for the romance and mystery that surround the keeping of time.

"My love of fine timepieces began as a job, managing a jewelry store in Aspen," he says. "But my nature is that I want to learn as much as I can about what I sell, and the more I read about timepieces, the more fascinated I became.

"Throughout history, time has been a symbol of power," he explains. "The original keepers of

time were the churches throughout Europe. Their clock towers told people when to get up, when to go to work, when to go to church, and so forth. Members of royalty were the only ones who could afford pocket watches, and thus wield the power to control their own time.

"Only within the last century could every person afford the luxury of keeping time for themselves. That's partly why today, each individual's watch is such a strong reflection of that person's personality, and a statement they wish to present to everyone around them."

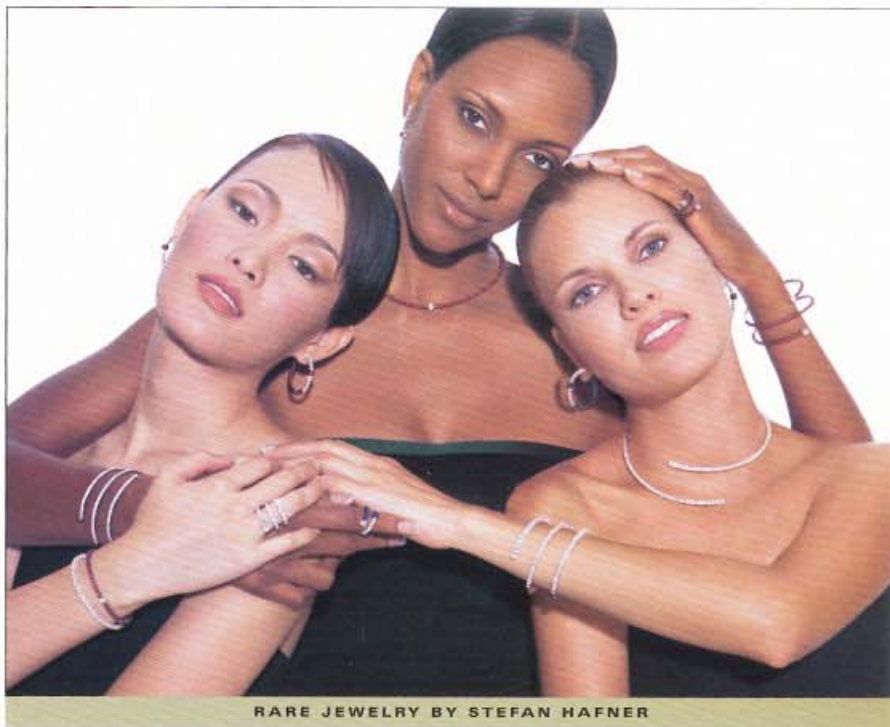
While obviously not for everyone, the timepieces at Oster have an irresistible appeal to those who share the couple's fascination with genuine craftsmanship. And for neophyte watch buyers, the Osters are all too happy to share their knowledge.

"We love to expose people to the beauty of fine timepieces and how wonderful they make everyone feel," says Jeremy. "A fine mechan-



HIGH-END STERLING BY PIANEGONDA

ical watch is special and unique, something you can wear every day of your life and pass on to future generations as a beautiful heir-



RARE JEWELRY BY STEFAN HAFNER

loom. You enjoy the pleasure not only of wearing a practical work of art on your wrist, but of holding two- to three-hundred years of artistry and history in your hands!"

An appreciation for fine jewelry and watches comes naturally to Jeremy, who grew up in London. "My grandfather was a manufacturer in the jewelry business, and my mother was a jewelry wholesaler, so I kind of grew up in the profession."

While he has no formal administrative training, he decided to specialize in the luxury watch and jewelry business after acquiring more than a decade of high-end retail experience managing one of the country's most exclusive jewelry stores in Aspen.

"During that time I fell in love with the fine nature of mechanical timepieces," he explains. "I wanted to open a store of my own and really explore the finer watches. I wanted to have no limits on the artistic side of the business, to take risks, to bring in smaller manufacturers and show people what they hadn't seen before."

Today, Jeremy's relationships in

the industry allow him to stay ahead of the field and have won him a huge following of collectors



CHRONOFIGHTER BY GRAHAM-LONDON

who rely on his expertise. He makes sure that each customer "knows" the watch he buys—what makes it special, and how to take care of it.

"One of the unfortunate things about the heavily marketed world we live in is the incredible weight placed on advertising," he says. "These days, many true craftsmen who focus solely on product are

Collectible Watchmakers—A Primer For Investors

Jeremy Oster recommends watches from these elite European watchmakers as the most exquisitely crafted and collectible timepieces on the planet. Prices can range from under \$300 to \$250,000 or more.

- **Anonimo (Italy).** This Florence-based watchmaker is known for originality of design. One of its creations recently was nominated for “Watch of the Year” in the leading trade magazine, *Watch Times*.
- **Arnold & Son (Switzerland).** Founded in 1764, this exclusive company has created watches for His British Majesty and famed explorers Sir Ernest Shackleton and Captain Cook. Today, watches by Arnold and equally famous Graham (established 1695) are sold under the name British Masters.
- **Audemars Piguet (Switzerland).** Since 1875, AP has been known for luxury and prestige. Its Limited Edition “City of Sails” Royal Oak Chronograph starts at \$12,500 in stainless steel and is higher in 18k pink gold or platinum.
- **Bell & Ross (Switzerland).** Designers of elegant professional timepieces, including the world’s deepest dive watch (Hydromax world-record water resistance to 11,100 meters), and the first automatic chronograph used in outer space.
- **Dubey & Schaldenbrand (Switzerland).** A small factory founded in 1946 and one of the few watchmaking firms owned by a woman. Its specialty is unusual, quality timepieces that also are affordable, starting at around \$3,200.
- **Roger Dubuis (Switzerland).** A Geneva-based watchmaker who creates some of the finest timepieces ever seen. Dubuis’s ultra-exclusive handmade watches (he makes only 28 of each piece) are ultra-expensive as well.
- **Magellan (Switzerland).** Visually stunning Magellan watches feature a massive domed crystal, literally covering the world, with a hand showing the position of the sun over the Northern Hemisphere.
- **Momo (Italy).** This famous Italian design company, founded by race-car driver Gianpiero Moretti, has expanded its focus on speed and automotive designs to include sleek, racy timepieces—affordably priced from \$295.
- **Parmigiani (Switzerland).** One of today’s finest living watchmakers, Michel Parmigiani creates one-of-a-kind watches that, says Jeremy Oster, “must be seen to be believed.”
- **Ulysse Nardin (Switzerland).** Founded in 1864, this company is best known for extremely precise marine chronometers and unique timepieces such as its famous “Genghis Khan” and the “Freak.”

never seen or discovered. Our store provides a window to the world for those craftsmen. We believe that if we don’t support them today, there will be none tomorrow.

“It may be easier to pick a known brand, but it’s more fun to discover an unknown.”

What determines the value of a fine, handmade timepiece? At Oster, mechanical watches start at \$450 and go up to \$200,000 or more. Confesses Jeremy, “The sky’s the limit. I have superb brands between \$2,000 and \$5,000, and others start at \$10,000 to \$250,000 or more.”

One determining factor is material—collectible watches often are made of rare substances such as pink gold or platinum and set with diamonds and other precious stones. Another factor is scarcity; the renowned Geneva watchmaker, Roger Dubuis, for example, produces only about 28 of each piece.

Of course, the overriding value of a collectible watch is inherent in the design and workmanship created by the watchmaker. “In higher end mechanical watches,” explains Jeremy, “the mechanism is much, much more complicated. It requires more time and expertise to

make collectible watches. You’re talking about minuscule details, about workmanship inside the mechanism.”

The materials, rarity, and craftsmanship of collectible watches can make them enduringly valuable—a fact that hasn’t escaped the attention of investors.

“Over time,” says Jeremy, “it’s been demonstrated that rare watches, and diamonds, can be the best investment of all luxury items—more than art, furs, automobiles, etc.”

The diamond and jewelry side of the business is directed by Melissa Oster, a marketing and sales management specialist who met Jeremy while both were living in Aspen. Today she specializes in discovering up-and-coming jewelry designers worldwide. “A lot of today’s fine jewelry tends to look alike,” says Melissa. “I get incredible joy out of finding rare and unique items for my clients.



“We specialize in very innovative jewelry lines, exceptionally rare and unique stones, timeless styles . . . and we work hand-in-hand with the latest trends in fashion.”

Melissa literally will search the globe on clients’ behalf for everything from important yellow diamonds (an Oster specialty) to such “fashion-forward” discoveries as exquisite bead necklaces made of



WATCH FROM THE FOLLOW ME COLLECTION BY ROGER DUBUIS

tiny, semiprecious stones.

Just as Oster's timepieces vary widely in price, so does the fine jewelry. The store carries works by some of today's hottest international designers—like

\$125,000 yellow-diamond necklaces by Italian jeweler Stefan Hafner, and high-end sterling jewelry (starting at only \$60) from Pianegonda of Italy, where customers literally line up out the

door to buy new pieces.

Viewing the cozy/elegant ambiance of Oster Jewelers' store decor and the quality of treasures the Osters sell, visitors immediately can sense that this budding enterprise is very much a labor of love. Whether you're a serious investor or just a casual window shopper, you can't help but get caught up in Jeremy and Melissa's passion for the beautiful and unique.

And, after all, as Jeremy likes to say, "Life without passion is, quite honestly, rather boring." □

SUZY PATTERSON IS AN AWARD-WINNING CORPORATE MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT AND FREELANCE JOURNALIST WHO HAS WRITTEN ARTICLES FOR COLORADO EXPRESSION, ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN OF THE WEST, MANGIA, COLORADO PRAIRIE TO PEAK, AND NUMEROUS OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

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