

# DEPARTURES

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 20

THE SHOPPING  
ISSUE

COATS  
SWEATERS  
BOOTS

THE NEW  
CAVIAR

PICASSO'S  
POWER

NEW YORK  
BLACKBOOK

WINTER  
CHIC

MANCHURIA  
UNDER  
ICE

ARMANI  
COUTURE

BAROQUE  
PEARLS



ALL THAT GLITTERS

# Madame Bijoux

Equal parts personal shopper and market expert, Patty Hambrecht knows jewelry like few others.

BY STELENE VOLANDES



Mandarin-garnet and knitted citrine earrings from Hemmerle, \$15,000

**T**HE FIRST PIECES OF jewelry you'll want Patty Hambrecht to source for you are every single thing she has on: the James de Givenchy moonstone and diamond earrings, the waist-length string of Venetian glass beads, the antique moon ring fashioned out of a 19th-century moonstone brooch, the pearl and chalcedony bracelet, the Verdura lizard watch. (Sorry, the slate-hued Armani suit, butterfly-embossed Bottega tote, three-inch-high Manolo slingbacks, Alain Pinon haircut, and 24 Faubourg parfum are not included.)

Personal shopper seems too crass a term to describe Hambrecht, a Yale- and Harvard-educated lawyer and the former president of Harry Winston, but it does get to the heart of Jasper, the jewelry advisory service she began last year. Clients arrive at her New York



Patty Hambrecht in Oscar de la Renta and Manolo Blahnik



Diamond rivière, ca. 1880, \$215,000



Green beryl ring with green garnets and diamonds, from Taffin by James de Givenchy, \$50,000



Diamond brooch with emerald, ca. 1880, price upon request

office or summon her to theirs with a jewelry crisis. Sometimes it is a straightforward request such as "I would like a sapphire and diamond brooch or bracelet for my wife's sixtieth birthday. I want to spend twenty thousand dollars." Sometimes it's not: "I want a five-plus-carat blue diamond. Yes, I know there are only two in the world." Desire also takes more abstract forms: "I want cuff links—outrageous—green!" or "I want something coral for my brown-haired wife" or "I need a necklace that works with the colors in the print of the dress I'm wearing to my son's bar mitzvah."

The two enormous Rolodexes that sit on Hambrecht's antique desk contain 20 years of jewelry and art-world contacts, giving her—while clad perhaps in black sleeveless cashmere, a white satin Lanvin skirt with black sequin-flower appliqués, Harry Winston Mississippi pearl earrings, and three baroque pearl bracelets from a market in Istanbul—entrée to everyone from the famously elusive JAR to the guys who track art fraud at Scotland Yard. For each of the very real requests mentioned above, Hambrecht delivered the goods. Yes, even that blue diamond.

## Some requests are simple: "I'd like a sapphire bracelet for my wife." Some are not: "I want a five-carat blue diamond. Yes, I know there are only two in the world."

"I know jewelry," Hambrecht says. "I know the people who make it, who has the best vintage pieces, and who has the stones." Her office on 608 Fifth Avenue—referred to in the trade as the antique jewelry building—was strategically chosen to put her in direct contact with the city's best estate dealers, those inaccessible to the general public but who can get a sixties Seaman Schepps coral and gold link bracelet or a thirties Rene Boivin agate and pearl ring when a client needs it. She also has what she calls her Christie's alumni network, contemporary jewelers such as the Hong Kong-based Edmond Chin, who only does

private commissions, and New York's James de Givenchy. Both worked at the auction house in the early nineties, when Hambrecht was its general counsel. Then there is Stefan Hemmerle, a German goldsmith whose exquisitely simple work is only available in the United States through Hambrecht. Their collaboration began when Hambrecht was at the Maastricht Art Fair for Harry Winston and found herself leaving the Winston booth again and again to visit a pair of Hemmerle's diamond and smoky quartz earrings just across the aisle.

Jewelry, Hambrecht admits, has been a lifelong affair. "My parents had an antique store in New Orleans and they took me to the auctions at Christie's," she says. "In those days lots were passed around a table and my mother bid on pieces by blinking. When I was six I held the tiara of the Duchess of Westminster in my hands." (Such family auction outings hit a snag when little eagle-eyed Patty broke the secret catalogue code that the venerable London dealer S. J. Phillips used to order lots according to his interest. He was not amused. "Please have that child removed from the room," he requested.)

Today the eye focuses on cracking her clients' codes. "I usually know what I want," says Jamie Niven, vice chairman at Sotheby's, "but I don't know how to articulate it. I don't know stones and I don't know what things cost. Patty does the leg-work and brings you things to choose from. I would never do all that running around from one place to another myself. I'd go nuts. Or I would get taken." Hambrecht found Niven exactly the kind of discreet diamond wedding band he wanted for his then fiancée. And later, when he asked her to find him something elegant for his daughter's 35th birthday, she directed him straight to James de Givenchy.

"Patty has impeccable taste," says Ellen Gendler, M.D., a New York dermatologist who spent a year searching for lightweight, low-key diamond hoops until Hambrecht had a pair made for her in titanium. "All I said was that I wanted ones I could wear for dressy occasions but also to dinner. Plus they had to be comfortable. And different.

She sketched exactly the earrings I had been looking for," Gendler says. "I give her name to everyone who wants to buy beautiful and unusual jewelry."

"Service comes in many forms," points out Hambrecht,

who takes her role as advisor seriously. When a client showed her a diamond and pearl estate necklace for which a private dealer had offered \$60,000, Hambrecht told her to turn down the proposal and put the necklace up for auction. Just a few months later it brought in a bid of \$156,000. ■

Jasper, 608 Fifth Avenue, New York; 212-333-5423.



Bakelite brooch with yellow and black diamonds, from Daniel Brush, price upon request