



FROGS AND FINGERPRINTS IN 18-CARAT GOLD

Goldsmith Idar Bergseth can fill just about any jewelry order—and he has had some real originals

VICTORIA PRINCIPAL knows where to go when she wants something unusual in 18-carat gold jewelry—she talks to Idar Bergseth. A few years ago, she asked the Victoria goldsmith to craft a gold pendant for her ex-husband. The unusual part of the television star's request was that she wanted the pendant to feature her own *fingerprint*.



Idar Bergseth in his goldsmith workshop: an 18-carat business

The goldsmith, whose shop, Idar, is at 964 Fort St. (383-3414), admits he didn't know who Principal was when he took an impression of her fingerprint in wax five years ago to make the pendant.



Biwa pearls with jadite clasp: \$700

Principal's not the only one who likes the personalized touch; Idar has made gold and silver fingerprint bracelet charms and pendants for other, less famous customers, at prices ranging from \$200-\$300.

He's open to nearly any suggestion, including one from a man who wanted a different kind of lapel pin—a tiny gold

frog with diamond insets—for which he paid \$700. Another man ordered a "nose ring" of 18-carat gold, not to pierce his nostril, but to pierce the skin between.

Idar created a golfing trophy for the Pez Open, featuring a circle of tiny silver golf clubs with gilded tips, backed with the legislative buildings etched on brass, silver plated and set in plexiglass.

A male customer ordered an ornate Celtic bracelet for his watch. Designed and crafted in gold and silver, the bracelet sold for \$3,500.

Gold: 'It feels good, it smells good, it works wonderfully'— Idar

Idar's love of jewelry reaches back to his childhood. As a boy growing up in Vancouver, he had an extensive rock collection which, by age 12, he was polishing and making into pendants as Christmas gifts. By high school he was looking into apprenticeships, and eventually spent seven years working with German goldsmiths in Vancouver. He opened his own business in Victoria 14 years ago.

He works with some unusual and exotic materials. Currently enjoying a new surge of popularity is hematite, better known to the '60s generation as the Alaska black diamond. In 1962, every teenage girl just had to have a ring with the huge black diamond on it; today, hematite has achieved a more elegant, sophisticated look, such as Idar's handcrafted necklace of cylindrical pieces with 14 carat gold.

Also popular is the unevenly shaped *biwa* pearl, taken from fresh-water mussel. Idar has made a necklace of *biwa* pearls with 14 carat gold pieces and a jadite catch, for \$700.

Space age technology comes to the goldsmith's shop with the light but very strong titanium, a metal whose high heat tolerance has led to its use in missile nose cones and supersonic aircraft.

Idar gives titanium a more esthetic treatment. Its strength makes it difficult to work with, but once it is hammered and forced into shape, Idar transforms its shiny or pewter-like appearance into jewelry of incredible colours and undertones by heating it with a blowtorch. The resulting earrings and cufflinks, selling for \$100 to \$150 a pair, not only will last an eternity but are unique in their colour ranges.

Of all the metals he works with, Idar enjoys 18 carat gold above all. "It's a beautiful metal to work with. It feels good, it smells good, it works wonderfully."

He dispels the myth that 10 or 14 carat gold is "harder" than 18 carat and therefore wears better. "In reality, 10 carat doesn't wear as well as 18. You can use the example of an ice cube and a pound of butter. If you run a sharp object across the ice, it chips away. The butter will just fold into itself." Similarly, 18 carat gold is more malleable, but tougher.