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VALUATIONS**



**Jenny Knott**  
Silver & Jewellery Specialist

## J IS FOR JENSEN



George Jensen –  
Scandinavian Silversmith  
1866 – 1935

The eponymous brand Georg Jensen epitomises the best of what we think of as Scandinavian design. Timeless yet innovative; made to the highest standards, yet often deliciously spare and simple. Their current web site opens with the phrase 'Experience classic Scandinavian

**design at its most elegant and refined'. There is little to disagree with here, nearly 120 years after Jensen first started to make pieces for the Scandinavian market.**

Today there are Georg Jensen shops and franchises worldwide. Producing and selling, jewellery, watches, tableware and giftware. Georg Jensen is perhaps best known for silver and the brand is still much associated with the style and principles of its founder.

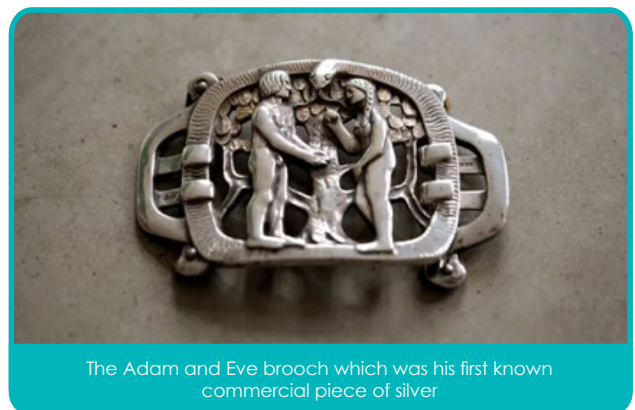
It was tragic circumstances that lead Jensen to start producing silver in such a commercial way. He was born in 1866, the son of a knife grinder in a town to the north of Copenhagen. At the age of 14 he was apprenticed to a goldsmith where he studied for the next four years. Having been a jobbing silver and goldsmith for a further four years, he enrolled at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 1887, where he studied sculpture.

After graduation he not only started to exhibit as a sculptor, but also started to study ceramics. For some years he tried to make a living as a ceramicist, but when his wife died, he was obliged to find a better way to make an income to support his young family and he turned to the production of silver and jewellery. However, his training in the wider range of fine Arts, a spell studying in Paris, and his interest in the naturalist styles of the Art Nouveau movement, combining flora and fauna into his work, remained a persistent theme and singled his designs out as materially different from those of others.



Silver and Malachite brooch, Design number 14. Circa 1904-1908  
2022 – £5,700

He was, like the members of the British Arts and Crafts movement, passionate about how pieces were made. He eschewed machinery and what he regarded as ugly mass produced pieces. It is a testament to his design principles and the quality of his manufacturing that many variants of the early designs are still in production today. He was committed to making beautiful pieces that were accessible to all budgets. This was handy, as the materials were less costly and therefore a smaller investment to an impoverished artisan. He used moonstones, amber, enamel, all in silver. After a highly successful early exhibition his pieces were in such demand that it is said he would put a sign in the workshop window saying 'closed for repairs', to buy himself some time to make more!



The Adam and Eve brooch which was his first known commercial piece of silver

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Jensen in his workshop

For many years he combined his work as a ceramicist with his silversmithing. The silversmithing was, however, far more lucrative and he had a young family to raise. He bought his first workshop in Copenhagen in 1904 and such was the appeal and quality of his design that by 1924 he had opened retail outlets in Berlin, London and New York. The New York store is of particular interest as it was run independently by Frederick Lunning, who had been a salesman for Jensen in Odense and Copenhagen and also opened the London shop. The first store New York Store, 'Georg Jensen Handmade Silver', was followed by a larger store on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue selling a variety of homewares. This is still the case today.



Pyramid Collection, originally designed in 1926

One of Jensen's skills was to recognise talent in others and employ their skills under the Jensen banner. They, in turn subscribed to both the design values and his insistence on high quality hand production. Over the century, Georg Jensen has employed numerous designers including Gundolph Albertus, Johan Rohde, Harald Nielsen and Henning Koppel.



Pyramid pattern – first designed for Jensen in 1926 by Johan Rohde – showing it's Art Deco roots, and still in production today

If you own any Jensen pieces you will see, that as well as the classic Jensen stamp, many are signed with the name of their designer and also have a design number. If you acquire a piece of vintage Jensen, you will often be able to use these to trace the piece back to its origins.

He married four times, outliving three wives, he travelled widely, and experienced highs and lows artistically, emotionally and financially. Towards the end of his life, he was interviewed and asked about the purpose of Art. He replied "people worry too much about purpose. The object must...absorb the most beautiful abstracts from the nature that surrounds us."

Designs showing beautiful abstracts from the nature that surrounds us.



Kneeling fawn brooch, 2022 – £600



Birds on Barley Silver Brooch, 2022 – £350

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