

THE MAVERICKS

Is it wearable? How do you tell time? That's beside the point. According to these singular, boundary-pushing designers, they listen only to what stones and tourbillons tell them to do. At whatever price.

JEWELRY

SOLANGE AZAGURY-PARTRIDGE

London-based Azagury-Partridge is known for her irreverent designs like the Hotlips ring (\$1,715)—an Angelina Jolie—perfect pucker rendered in electric-colored red enamel—and the Supernature ring (\$15,720), which features tiny enamel creatures. Last year an exhibition entitled “Unwearable Jewels” showcased large-scale reproductions of her signature pieces, like an earring realized as a full-size chandelier with 200 carats of diamonds and nearly nine pounds of white gold (\$2.8 million). In January the designer debuted a colored-diamond and titanium collection inspired by rainbows and Greek myths, and she will open her first stateside boutique in New York this spring. 44-20/7792-0197; solange.info

LORENZ BAUMER

Since opening his Place Vendôme, Paris, atelier in 1995, Bäumer has made the art of designing high jewelry look like child's play. “Jewelry doesn't always have to be serious to be enjoyable or beautiful,” says the American-born son of a German diplomat and French mother. His works are renowned for merging technical precision—he's a trained engineer—and craftsmanship with a sense of whimsy. Take his hedgehog ring (\$21,640), a bauble set with spiky upside-down brown diamonds, and the vegetable bracelet (\$91,090), featuring chalcedony, amethyst, verdite, or pink quartz zucchini, and tomatoes of rhodochrosite, tigereye, or red jasper. A fine-jewelry collaboration with Louis Vuitton is in the works. 33-1/42-86-99-33; lorenzbaumer.com

DANIEL BRUSH

A former Georgetown art professor, Brush earned critical success in the seventies for his large abstract paintings. Later, his small-scale jeweled objects and metalwork began gaining attention, like a three-inch cylindrical

domed-top box in steel with 78,000 gold spherical granules applied one by one with a single hair of a paintbrush. In recent years Brush has crafted animal brooches from Bakelite and is now working on, among other things, hand-engraved pure aluminum brooches and earrings with colored diamonds. danielbrush.com

EDMOND CHIN

Owning an Edmond Chin piece is like knowing the secret handshake. A former jewelry specialist for Christie's Asia, Chin began dabbling in jewelry design in 1995 and works by private commission. His latest creations employ materials like enamel, jade, and zirconium, a metal that closely resembles titanium. 312-944-5225; sidneygarber.com

KARL FRITSCH

“I like a slightly out-of-control look,” says the German-born Fritsch. Deliberate imperfections infuse his pieces: A craggy 20-carat rough diamond sits like a boulder on top of an oxidized white-gold ring (\$8,500), while a pile of colored glass stones resides in a glorious cascading heap on an oxidized silver band (\$7,000). 212-924-1033; thecrownjewelry.com

HEMMERLE

Originally medal manufacturers for Bavarian royalty, the Hemmerle family expanded into classical jewelry in 1904. In 1995 third-generation owner Stefan Hemmerle fulfilled a client request to create a piece of iron and diamond jewelry and never looked back. The combination of nonprecious metals and precious stones now defines the house. Witness a pair of garnet and copper earrings or another with brass, copper, and diamonds (prices upon request). 49-89/242-2600; hemmerle.com

MICHELLE ONG

The designs of Hong Kong-based jewelry house Carnet reflect the style of cofounder Michelle Ong. Among her recent one-of-a-kind creations is a pomegranate brooch with white,

yellow, and brown diamonds fashioned in the shape of the fruit, with a scattering of rubies representing the seeds (\$200,000). Other signature designs include diamond pieces with metalwork so delicate, the stones appear to be suspended on the skin. 85-2/2526-5194; carnetjewellery.com

WATCHES

GREUBEL FORSEY

When Robert Greubel and Stephen Forsey launched Greubel Forsey in 2004 with the Double Tourbillon 30° (from \$420,000), the timepiece was equivalent to a sonic boom in the industry. “It was very innovative,” says Julien Schaefer, watch director at New York's Antiquorum. “Their designs are at the forefront of the future of watches.” More than four years in the making, the Double Tourbillon 30° has two tourbillons. The outer one rotates once every four minutes; the inner piece, once every 60 seconds. The duo, who met in 1992 while working for a Swiss watch complication manufacturer, has introduced two new designs since 2004. The latest, the Quadruple Tourbillon à Différentiel (\$690,000), has two double tourbillons that rotate at varying speeds. The watches' complexity means a limited number of each model are produced. Collectors, who rave about the pieces' flawless finish, must sometimes wait up to a year. 310-271-0000; greubelforsey.com

MAITRES DU TEMPS

“The brand is the watchmakers, and the watchmakers are the brand,” says Steven Holtzman, founder of this company, where master craftsmen create exclusive pieces. In 2008 it launched Chapter One (from \$400,000), the handiwork of Christophe Claret, Roger Dubuis, and Peter Speake-Marin; it's the world's first combination of a tourbillon with a monopusher chronograph, retrograde date and GMT indicators, and two rolling bars (Maitres du Temps's signature detail)

that reveal the day of the week and moon phase. Chapter Two (from \$60,000) is set to debut in June, and Holtzman believes it will be the most legible calendar watch ever designed. 570-970-8888; maitresdutemps.com

MB&F

From *Star Trek* to *Thunderbirds*, the science fiction that Geneva-based Maximilian Büsser watched as a child influences the designs of MB&F (Maximilian Büsser & Friends), the watchmaking collective he founded in 2005. Each “horological machine” is made by an evolving team of technicians and artisans. The HM1 (\$195,000), HM2 (\$66,000), and HM3 (\$74,000) feature unconventional designs with a retro-futuristic edge. The HM4, scheduled for a 2010 release, is inspired by plastic model airplanes. Büsser spent seven years at Jaeger-LeCoultre before becoming a managing director of Harry Winston in 1998, where he was in charge of its rare timepieces; during his seven-year tenure he made the brand a high-stakes player in the business, establishing the groundbreaking Opus watch series. 888-884-0838; mbandf.com

RICHARD MILLE

Inspired by Formula One racing, these watches use the same aerospace materials (shock absorbers, metallic and nonmetallic alloys, ceramics) that enable an F1 car to clock speeds at 200-plus miles per hour. Started in 2001, the company is the brainchild of Mille, former CEO of France's Mauboussin watch company and an F1 devotee, whose mission is to craft the most technologically advanced watches. The RM025 Diver's Tourbillon Chronograph (price upon request) is designed to withstand the ocean's harsh conditions and has a carbon nanofiber tourbillon chronograph. For women, there's the recent RM019 Ladies' Tourbillon Celtic Knot (price upon request) with diamonds woven through the watch's movement. 310-205-5555; richardmille.com —ALISON BURWELL

MB&F's Horological Machine No. 2. (top, \$66,000); Maitres du Temps Chapter One (from \$400,000); diamond-studded ebony beads by Edmond Chin (price upon request).

