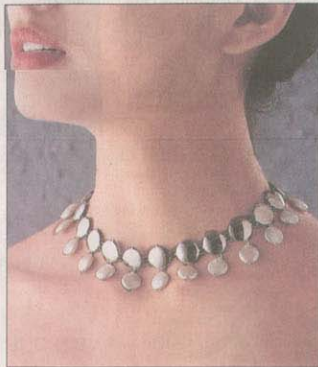


Design by clicks

Zhao Feifei talks with architect Philipp Mohr and learns about his journey into the brand-new world of e-jewelry and his passion for design



MetaRing, the computer-aided jewelry collection, features finger rings, bracelets, necklaces and other accessories.

This is an e-generation. Life is filled with e-mail, e-books and e-commerce. And now, thanks to the latest inventions of a German architect, you can add "e-jewelry" to the list.

Philipp Mohr, a 32-year-old architect based in New York, has created a software program that allows you to make jewelry with unlimited possibilities. Once your design is complete, the program produces an actual prototype of the custom-designed ring, bracelet or pendant simply by sending the digital object to a three-dimensional printer.

MetaRing, the title of the computer-aided jewelry collection, has been a hit in Europe since its launch in 2001, and the program could be the next e-trend now that it is available in Shanghai.

While Shanghai has yet to become one of the world's most fashion-forward places, its constantly changing environment surely is one of the most exciting. That's why Mohr and his brother decided to open a jewelry store on Taikang Road.

"I am very interested in Asian culture and a lot of my work is actually influenced by Eastern cultures," Mohr says. "I think China is much more culturally advanced than Europe and the United States and therefore I think there might be some interest in digitally perceived jewelry."

He explains that the objects in the Shanghai store are usually produced via e-mail sent from New York to a factory in China. A company in Shanghai then makes multiple castings from these prototypes and finishes them with polishing machines.

Mohr says that the 3D design program used to create the jewelry is also applied in film animations and the design of famous contemporary buildings, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. "I think jewelry is the smallest form of architecture that we can actually inhabit,"

he says. "It has a very similar relation to us in terms of security and beauty and it has the meaning of something eternal. I think every house and every design should also be a piece of jewelry."

The MetaRing collection is just that. In addition to finger rings in the first collection, MetaRing comes in several series of bracelets in resin, aluminum, titanium and wood. New techniques are now being used to cut the shape out of a cube of any type of material.

A new collection of jewels with diamonds — entitled "WMC" — just came out for Wong Mohr Collaboration. Together with Tohi Wong, a New York-based designer of Chinese heritage, Mohr created a series of conceptual jewels that will soon be available in the market.

The collection includes a wedding band with a diamond set on the inside of the ring that already has received international acclaim. The idea is that the diamond is not visible to other people when you wear the band and therefore remains a secret between lovers.

Another playful ring is a band with a diamond set in reverse so that it points out of the ring like a thorn. The design questions the idea of the engagement ring as well as the importance of a large diamond to communicate the wealth of the engaged individuals.

"I like the fact that some of the rings that we calculated with the computer look very natural, as if they could have been made thousands of years ago," he says. "That was really more of a result of mathematics than of our conscious creativity."

While Mohr has embarked on a career in the jewelry business, he says that he still defines himself more as an architect instead of a jewelry designer.

And he has the resume to prove it. Mohr has worked with international architects, such as Peter Eisenman and Peter W.



Designer Philipp Mohr

Schmidt, and his current projects include a penthouse in a factory in Brooklyn that overlooks the streets of Manhattan. He also was the project manager for the Westin Hotel on 42nd Street in Manhattan.

"My background in architecture has given me a totally new perspective toward art and design," he says.

After completing high school in 1991, Mohr studied architecture at the Bauhaus, Columbia University and the Polytechnic University in Milan.

When living in Milan, he met many designers and artists. One of his colleagues was Monica Castiglioni, daughter of the design legend Achille Castiglioni, who also creates jewelry. Mohr also learned from designers such as Gianfranco Ferré, a fashion designer who is also an architect.

"The Italian design and fashion scene is very vital and happening," he says. "Many Italian designers study architecture and then turn to another creative field."

Mohr's affinity for jewelry design runs

in the blood. His great-grandfather created Fabergé, a jewelry factory in Germany. The company has preserved a history of jewelry making that spans more than 100 years.

"Sometimes I worked in the company as a child when I had some time or needed some extra money. So it came naturally to me to continue doing jewelry on the side next to being an architect," Mohr reminisces.

Mohr's passion for the visual has led

him to appreciate the contrasts between convention and conceptualism.

"I see objects in a very social and broad context. Every design object is related to the world, people and history in a very complex way," he says. "Jewelry, for example, seems useless and luxurious to many people. But to me jewelry is a human necessity. It has a function that is as important as language or architecture. It communicates standards, social connections, cultural heritage and ideas."