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## ITALIAN INNOVATION

Every summer evening when Elaine Campbell (my sister) goes into her garden, she is never disappointed. At the end of a long workday, watering the tomatoes and weeding the lettuce helps her to relax.

Every school year when Dr. Harvey Rosenberg (my periodontist) attends a recital or sports event for one of his daughters, he is never disappointed. After performing a tedious surgery, watching Rebecca dance in “Carousel” or Emma ace a jump shot helps him to unwind.

In this world fraught with disappointments and stress—people lining up at Home Depots to buy duct tape, neighbors hoarding gallons of bottled water, friends losing fortunes in the stock market, and business colleagues uncertain about the timing of an eventual industry recovery—we need things that won’t disappoint. Personal relationships and leisure activities

aside, for me, the Vicenza jewelry fair in January falls under that category.

Although it’s been well over a decade that I’ve been attending this trade show, I can honestly say that I am never disappointed. Why? Simply, because of Italian innovation: jewelry where the practical is beautiful and the beautiful, superbly functional.

Whether I spot a new setting technology or a directional gem trend, visiting this fair reminds me of why I endure airport delays, valuable time away from the office and, of late, travel risks.

Truth be told, of course, some years the innovation is not as apparent as in others. (Translation: You have to work harder.) In ’02, for example, brown was clearly a new color direction in Italian jewelry, but this year, no single shade stood out.

Still, typical of this Italian show, some launches were so innovative that the fair was far from disappointing. Included among them: Orlando Orlandini, Jarretiere, and Pasquale Bruni.

Orlandini’s new “Samba” cuff—so new that an image wasn’t available at press time— involves a patented mechanism enabling the bracelet to be worn one way as a regular wide cuff and another way so that it resembles the French cuff of a shirt.

Pasquale Bruni was, in fact, able to provide us with a picture of his new “Griffo” collection rings. I was told that, in Italian, *griffo* means claw or grip—and Bruni’s rings and matching pendants in “Griffo” are gripping in every sense of the word: They utilize an innovative setting made to look as if a claw is holding the gemstone.

As I mentioned earlier, Vicenza this January wasn’t saturated in any one color, however, there was an extraordinary color innovation from Brescia-based Jarretiere. The manufacturer premiered a collection in 21-karat blue gold—and the colored gold wasn’t layered on top like icing on a cake. But the real icing on the cake in this new collection? The pieces look exactly like the color of peacock-shaded Tahitian pearls—luster and all. (If I sound somewhat effusive in my enthusiasm over this “new color,” I suppose I am. This photo shows an example, but it’s so luxurious that you really should see it for yourself.)

Speaking of seeing things for yourself, you simply must check out “Fashion, Italian Style,” an exhibit at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, running through April 12. Beth Bernstein’s story on this exciting exhibition, which includes some of the finest fine jewelry names in the business, begins on page 40.

Because Beth and I attended this year’s edition of VicenzaOro 1, a good deal of new Italian jewelry appears throughout this issue. You’ll enjoy Beth’s report, “Snake Charmers” (page 20), in which she chronicles the ever-continuing rise and fall of the snake’s popularity in jewelry. As you’ll see, some American designers are showing spectacular serpentine styles, but, frankly, the Italians are spearheading the trend.

On a final note, this month’s “Guest Editorial” (page 8) is fortuitously fitting, since it focuses on innovation and originality. Brinsmaids’ president Scott Cusson emphasizes the importance of originality among contemporary luxury jewelers. To put it plainly, Scott says, “In order to reverse the years of complacency, the independent retailer must create an original unique statement within their area of interest, expertise, and influence.” You’ll find Scott’s editorial interesting, timely, and, of course, original.



ABOVE: Bracelet from Jarretiere’s new 21-karat blue gold collection

BELOW: Rings from Pasquale Bruni’s new “Griffo” collection

