

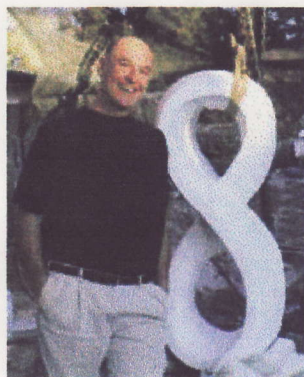
# Somers Randolph – Turning Soapstone into Gold . . . and Silver

*"To be an artist is to believe in life."* – Henry Moore, English sculptor (1898-1986)

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Somers' soapstone whittle carvings.



Somers Randolph with one of his soapstone sculptures.

With organic jewelry all the rage for the past several years and "going natural" no longer a trend but a way of life, the Santa Fe jewelry design company—known simply as Somers—is particularly in vogue. It could be said that Somers Randolph, its founder, is one of the original modern organic artisans because, for 30 years, one of his primary mediums has been the natural element, soapstone. Much the way carvers in India used the medium for centuries for their creations, Somers has used soapstone for decades in his profession as a sculptor.

So just how did the internationally recognized Somers, the sculptor, also become Somers, the jeweler? And how does soapstone fit into his jewelry craft? The story is, well, a bit soapy—a classic tale of boy meets girl, girl

believes in boy, boy and girl become successful together and live happily ever after.

As Somers tells it, "I backed into the jewelry world." Ironically, to understand how he backed into it, we need to fast-forward from the business he began in 1979 after graduation from Princeton to the year 1999, when he met Hillary, now his wife and business partner. Soon after the couple met in New Mexico, Hillary discovered (in the trunk of Somers' car, of all places) what she believed was a treasure trove: tiny soapstone sculptures. "I'd been whittling them for years," Somers says. "Once in awhile, I'd gift someone with one of the carvings, but, for the most part, I just kept them. By the time Hillary found them, I had about a thousand."

Hillary's first thought? She wanted to wear the miniature sculptures—and her instincts told her that many women would want to do the same. Realizing, however, that the fragile soapstone would crumble if worn, she decided to have all the pieces cast in solid precious metal. Today, the Somers line offers 160 designs in a collection of pendants, chains, earrings, bracelets, and cufflinks, in sterling silver, 18K, or 14K gold. Designs are sleek and streamlined, and the half-twist "Mobius Square" pendant is their bestseller. A new satin finish has quickly become popular and, going forward, Somers is experimenting with different textures. To meet clients' fashion needs, pendants are offered not only on precious chain, but also on black silk cord or various leather options in metallics and brights. Suggested retail starts at \$225 and can go up to \$15,000.

Expanding into jewelry has also provided Somers with an outlet for his philanthropic notions. Each year, he donates at least 100 pieces to various charities, among them, Gilda's Club, UNICEF, and Girls Incorporated of Santa Fe. "Donating jewelry is part of our business model," Somers says. "I like the idea of good jewelry doing good."

Indeed. Now that's good form. ([www.somersjewelry.com](http://www.somersjewelry.com), [somersrandolph.com](http://somersrandolph.com)) JQ



Gold pendant.



"Mobius Square" pendant in sterling silver on black silk cord.



"Daphne" cuffs in sterling silver and 18K gold.



Silver cufflinks.