

Bank on silver jewelry from Taxco, and look good doing so

Carmen Armstrong



Experts claim that attractive people on average have more money than “Plain Janes”. One way to stay looking sharp while keeping your money safe is by investing in vintage Mexican Taxco silver jewelry. Well-made, signed pieces keep going up in value, and the bold, classic designs from the 1930s-1950s still look sharp and modern today.

The silver jewelry industry in Taxco may be traced to the 1930s with the arrival of William Spratling to the remote town of Taxco, located in the mountains of Mexico. Prior to his arrival, jewelry was created in an artisanal setting with the apprentice system in place. Typically the styles were particular to that region in Mexico. The Spanish originally brought their jewelry styles from Spain and trained the indigenous population to work gold and silver in the monasteries. The styles were copied from Spanish jewelry which also varied regionally throughout Spain. In most cases, the jewelry had religious themes. The copies of the Spanish jewelry had a distinct Mexican look and were filtered through the indigenous interpretation of Spanish design. Gold was the preferred medium for jewelry. Silver was considered to be a medium utilized in jewelry for the poor.



the use of pre-Columbian motifs in design were quite revolutionary at the time. Mexico was in the process of a cultural reawakening and at the time was beginning to appreciate her pre-Columbian

heritage. Previous to the revolution, European design was desirable and the native pre-Columbian heritage dismissed as inferior. William Spratling also selected silver as the material of choice for his designs. He felt that the silver lent itself to the rustic designs and the patina also enhanced the three dimensional look of the jewelry.

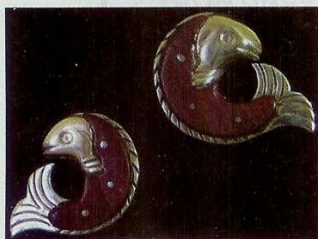
William Spratling proved to be quite successful in the promotion of his unique designs through his connections in the art and academic world. World War II occurred and

Europe was closed as a venue for luxury goods in the United States. Buyers for prominent stores in the United States and tourists flooded Taxco during the war years. Many of Spratling’s early apprentices left his employment and



established their own workshop studios. A synergy developed in Taxco and it became known worldwide for unique artistry and design in silver jewelry creation. This proved to be the enduring legacy of William Spratling to Taxco. □

Carmen Armstrong is a professional dealer in vintage Taxco sterling who welcomes questions regarding manufactures and values of Mexican jewelry. Stop by her booth at Cole’s Antique Show in Warrenton during the events for a consultation.



William Spratling arrived in Taxco originally to write for various publications in the United States and to write a novel about life in Mexico. The money from his writing proved to be insufficient. Dwight Morrow, the United States ambassador, suggested that Spratling consider designing and selling silver jewelry to the growing tourist trade from America. Fred Davis, another ex-pat from the United States, was creating & selling silver jewelry and had been quite successful. William Spratling decided to try the novel idea and began to produce jewelry in Taxco with the aid of two goldsmiths recruited from the neighboring town of Iguala. Spratling was a gifted artist and had an appreciation for pre-Columbian art. He was one of the first to deal in pre-Columbian antiquities. The choice of silver for the jewelry and

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