



One Ring To Rule Them All

Once upon a time during the age of Arda, there was a very powerful ring with malevolent powers that brought world destruction and invisibility to the wearer. The ring seemed to be made simply of gold, but it was impervious to damage. It bore no gem and when placed in a fire, it displayed a fiery Tengwar inscription in the black speech of Mordor, with two lines from a rhyme of lore describing the ring:

*“One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them,
One ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.”*

This ring is none other than J.R.R. Tolkien creation from his world-renowned literature: The Lord of The Rings.

STORY BY Erza S.T. PHOTO BY Jens Hansen



to move to Nelson, New Zealand in 1968 – where they resided until now and founded Jens Hansen Gold and Silversmith Workshop. His European background combined with New Zealand based gold and silversmith training plus his originality, craftsmanship and creativity are all reflected on his creations. He merged design elements from other disciplines such as sculpture, architecture and art to achieve a certain distinct originality. His way of working outside traditional structures really added uniqueness to his designs.

During my recent trip to Nelson, I went to visit Jens Hansen shop and workshop at 320 Trafalgar Square, not only to see the iconic ring from The Lord of The Rings but also to chat with Halfdan Hansen about it. Like any design icon in the world, they always have an interesting background story to share:

What is the culture and philosophy of Jens Hansen design?

As an artist and a sculptor, Jens’ hand-forged jewelry designs are easily recognized and crafted to last. Jens’ work is highly regarded

ONE RING TO RULE THEM ALL CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

— Halfdan Hansen and with one of the original ring that used in the movie

— The making process of the ring in the workshop

— The Iconic Ring from The Lord of The Rings

The story of this famous ring may have existed since the first book of The Hobbit was published in 1937 by J.R.R. Tolkien, but the popularity of the ring itself would not be as epic as it is now if it wasn't for Peter Jackson's efforts on the silver screen. After the trilogy of The Lord of The Rings ended, the ring became one of the most sought after rings by its hardcore fans. So who really made this fictional yet famous ring? It is none other than the late Jens Hansen.

Regarded as Nelson's most established and only international recognized artisan jewelry workshop, Danish-born Jens Hansen (1940 – 1999) started his first solo jewelry exhibition in 1960. Together with his wife Gurli and his first son Halfdan, Jens decided



ONE RING TO RULE THEM ALL
CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

(FIRST TWO PHOTO)
Meticulous process to get the finest result

The sketch design of the ring from The Lord of The Rings

Some ring designs by Jens Hansen

nationally and internationally; he is in the Marquis Who's Who and has designs in the permanent collection of the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. Art historians say that he successfully transformed his European goldsmith heritage into a native one by responding to the landscape and environment of New Zealand. His larger than life personality is reflected in the bold clean lines and expressiveness of his designs. They have the distinctive 'Jens Hansen style,' and have been described as having 'a kind of muscular beauty, a sensuous strength.' The pieces we create today embody these principles and have that distinctive Jens Hansen look.

What is the story behind the decision of putting the Chi-Rho symbol as the brand signature mark?

All our jewelry now carries the Jens Hansen studio brand mark, which is stylized version of Jen's signature. Today's recreations of Jens' original ready-to-wear designs also carry his own personal maker's mark which he began using in the 1960's. A version of the Chi-Rho, this mark was long used as symbol of good luck as it was similar to the pagan work for gold. It was used in the first centuries by believers to mark possessions and later became the emblem of the imperial standard of Roman Emperor Constantine.

As a family business, how far is the evolution of the design process in your company?

Jens was certainly our founding designer and as a young émigré from Denmark in the 1950's he himself was heavily influenced by the organic minimalism of Arne Jacobsen and Henning Koppel. It is said that we all stand on the shoulders of giants, and over the years we have added new designs to our repertoire from my brother Thorkild Hansen and we have



also added both development extensions of Jens' classic pieces and also new designs that have sprung from our work on custom pieces for individual customers. In many ways the design process today is still is very much that of the classic artisan, driven by both the desire of the artist to create but tempered by the disciplines and traditions of the craft and the economic practicalities and desires dictated by our clients.

Can you share with us the story behind the involvement of Jens Hansen in The Lord of The Rings movie? What was the reason for Peter Jackson to choose your company to make it?

Jens was considered to be a founding father of contemporary jewelry design in New Zealand. He was approached directly to make The One Ring by Dan Hennah of the Art Department team of Peter Jackson's



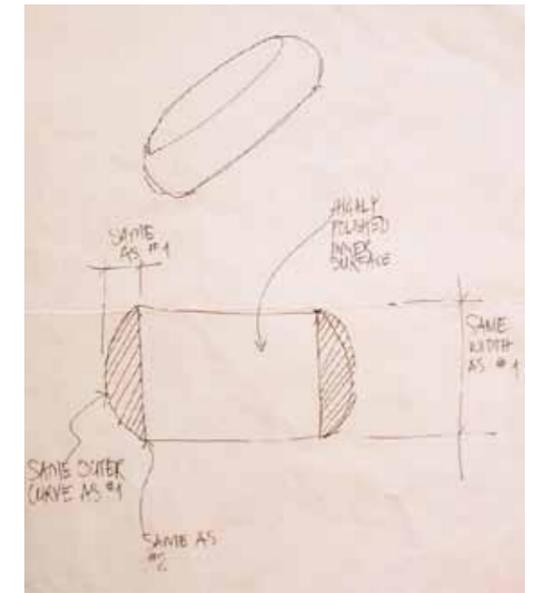
production company 3 Foot 6. Dan later won an Academy Award for his involvement with The Lord of the Rings trilogy. Jens famously almost dismissed the opportunity to make the ring as he humbly questioned why the movie makers needed him to make such a 'simple' ring, since it is described in the books as a plain smooth round band ring.

Can you tell us more about the ring design that was eventually selected for the movie?

Jens we did, of course, eventually agree and he proceeded to design a ring that would have the power and presence of the fabled ring in Tolkien's story. 15 prototypes were subsequently submitted, all characterized by Jens' distinctive sculptural simplicity of design, and each of a different gauge,

weight and finish. From this extensive collection a decision was made and the "One Ring" was chosen. Another matter of interest concerning the One Ring is the *elvish* inscription that appears in a few special circumstances during the movie. The *elvish* writing was actually added in post-production as a computer generated special effect, so to be faithful to the original creation, the true One Ring will always remain a pure and elegant 18ct yellow gold polished band without markings.

Among so many other franchise movies, the ring from The Lord of The Rings movie trilogy is considered to be one of the most iconic and sought after items. What do you think is the reason behind it?



Rings in general have long been considered the most important form of jewelry because they are worn on our hands and are thus extensions of our physical being and literally sit on the interface of our connection to the world around us. Aside from being effectively a title figure, being named in the title of Tolkien's book trilogy, The One Ring is clearly a key 'character' in the book and its power to corrupt resonates powerfully with the legends and myths of almost all cultures in history. Simply put, I think most people instinctively 'get' the concept of a 'ring of power'.

Before the ring existed, what was Jens Hansen's most iconic piece of jewelry design?

It would be hard to pick one design but in terms of years of continuous production and sales, Jens' bangle version of the famous topological Möbius strip is probably one of our most iconic. We have been making this design continuously since the 1970's and it has become a favorite graduation / coming of age present for many generations of our customers.

According to your own personal opinion, what makes a design to be iconic?

"Iconic" is arguably an over used term today, but I personally feel that works that are original, are easily recognizable and will stand the test of time. #