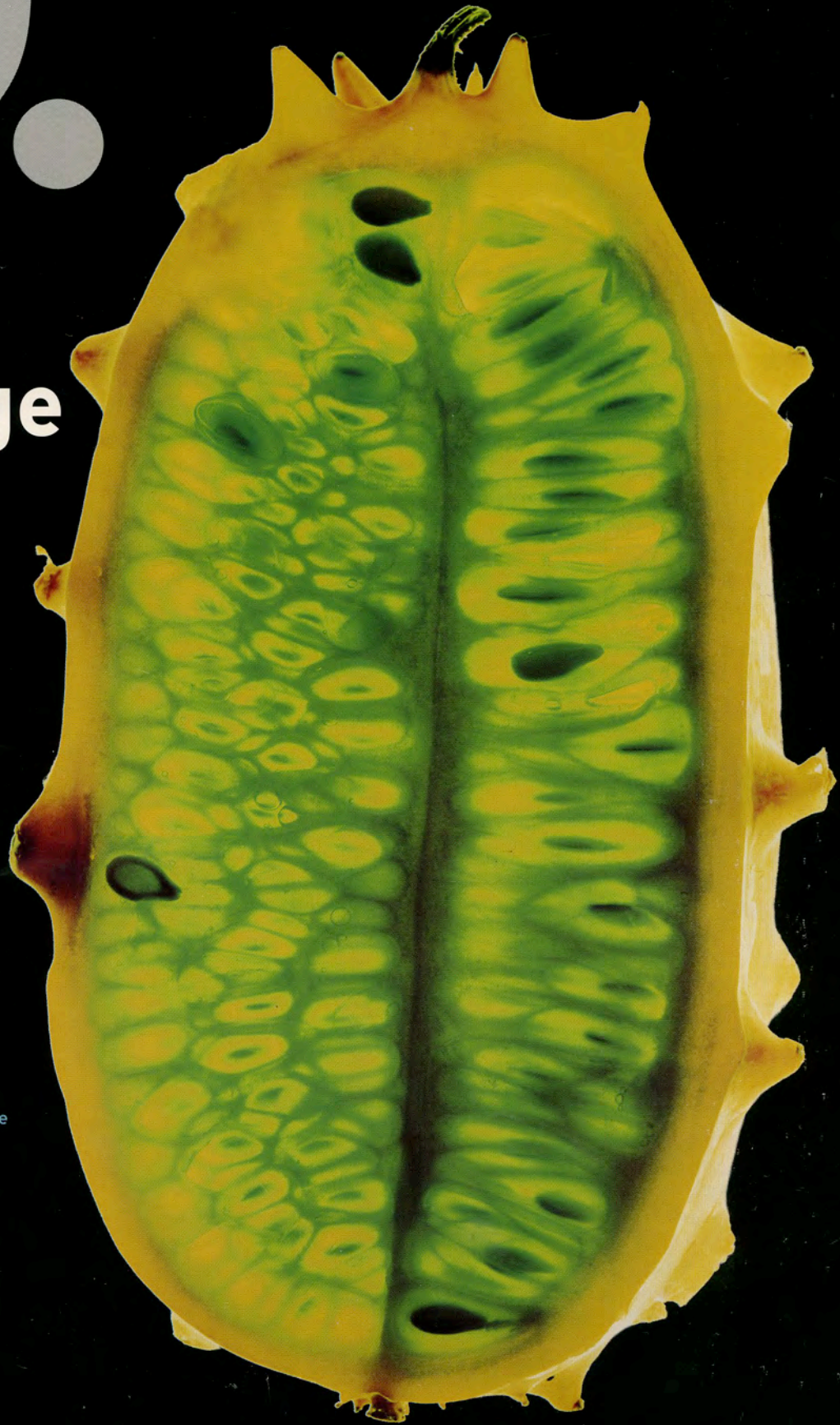


I.D.

Seeds of Change

Forty innovators from
the U.S. and Europe



Alberto Meda

Gene Meyer

Marc Newson

ninaber/peters/krouwel

Osbert Parker

Karim Rashid

Thomas Sandell

Paula Scher/Pentagram

Nevenka Schumaker/Ford

Seymour Powell

Erik Spiekermann

Paul Steinberg

Linda Stone/Microsoft

TKO

Tomato

W<

Sylvia Harris Woodard

Fred Woodward/Rolling Stone

World Studio

Eva Zeisel

Jonathan Barnbrook

Jhane Barnes

Fabien Baron

Tom Bonuaro

Irma Boom

Achille Castiglioni

Droog Design

James Dyson

Giorgetto Giugiaro

Konstantin Grcic

Hot Java

i/o 360

Takeshi Ishiguro/IDEO

Galle Jean-Louis

Johnson & Wolverton

Flavio Kampah

Ross Lovegrove

Jim Ludtke

Serge Lutens/Shiseido

M/M

Jhane Barnes

● There may be other fashion designers who keep a theoretical mathematician on staff, although it is doubtful. But surely there are none who keep two, as Jhane Barnes does, constantly tweaking the computer programs she uses to design the shimmering fractal- and fern-inspired sweaters, suits and socks for which she has become famous.

Barnes brought software to ready-to-wear, and applied the computer to fabric design (notably for Knoll) and most recently to furniture, applying her mouse to a line of tables, couches and chairs for Bernhardt. Her success is in making it clear – once again – that the computer is a tool. It should be a needless demonstration, at this point, but Barnes's socks and sweaters and sofas demonstrate this truth for the surprising number of people who can still say such things as, "It doesn't look like it was done by a computer." That is because her work is so clearly "by" Barnes herself.

Barnes has been experimenting with computers ever since she got her first Atari in 1984, and these days, using her laptop on the way to work, she noodles with customized versions of pattern-generating programs like FractalSketch, MandelMovie, Expansions and Symmetry Studio.

These programs make use of "Vector Automata" – self-evolving algorithms that pump out the complex interweavings she manipulates to create the



"computer currents" sweater or "modem plaid" jacket of her most recent menswear line. She calls them "seed" units that grow inside the computer into thickets of pattern. They may be thought of as friendly computer viruses – the yeast in the whiskey, the malt in the brew. Software lends Barnes a method that is jazzy and improvisational, and the

iridescent results – like the folk weavings of some 21st-century tribe – remind us that the looms used to produce many of her fabrics are descendants of the French jacquard looms of the early 19th century, but are driven by a system of punch cards, which begat the first computers. But the results don't look "computerish," or tribal or anything else; her nearest antecedent would have to be Josef Albers or Eileen Gray.

Barnes can modern her designs to fabric mills, usually in Japan, but she often visits with her Japanese-born husband, Katsuhito Kawasaki. Japanese influence is as clear in the shapes of her new tables, couches and chairs as in their names: Tatami, Kasane and Otera. The odd thing is that Barnes's furniture tends to be straightforward in contrast to her kaleidoscopic fabrics. It could be the software behind the hardware, but perhaps it's something else: that simple cherry, oak, steel and nickel lounges and chairs provide the perfect foil for the complex upholstery patterns she designs for Knoll or her "Japonica" line of bedding for Michaelian and Kohlberg. Barnes gives suggestions of the modernist ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*; if a Barnes chair looks severe by itself, perhaps that is because it looks best when its shape is enriched by a Barnes pattern: when someone wearing Barnes clothes sits on it.

PHIL PATTON



Above: Barnes's Construction Textiles for Knoll were created with such low-born materials as acrylic resin, toothpick shavings, rayon yarn and woven paper arranged into patterns via sophisticated self-evolving algorithms.

Firm: Jhane Barnes Inc. • Location: New York • Age: 41 • Staff: 14 • Education: Fashion Institute of Technology, New York • Greatest achievement: "Designing in several different fields." • Hopes for the year 2000: "To maintain my level of enthusiasm and passion for design."