

Rich Pickings

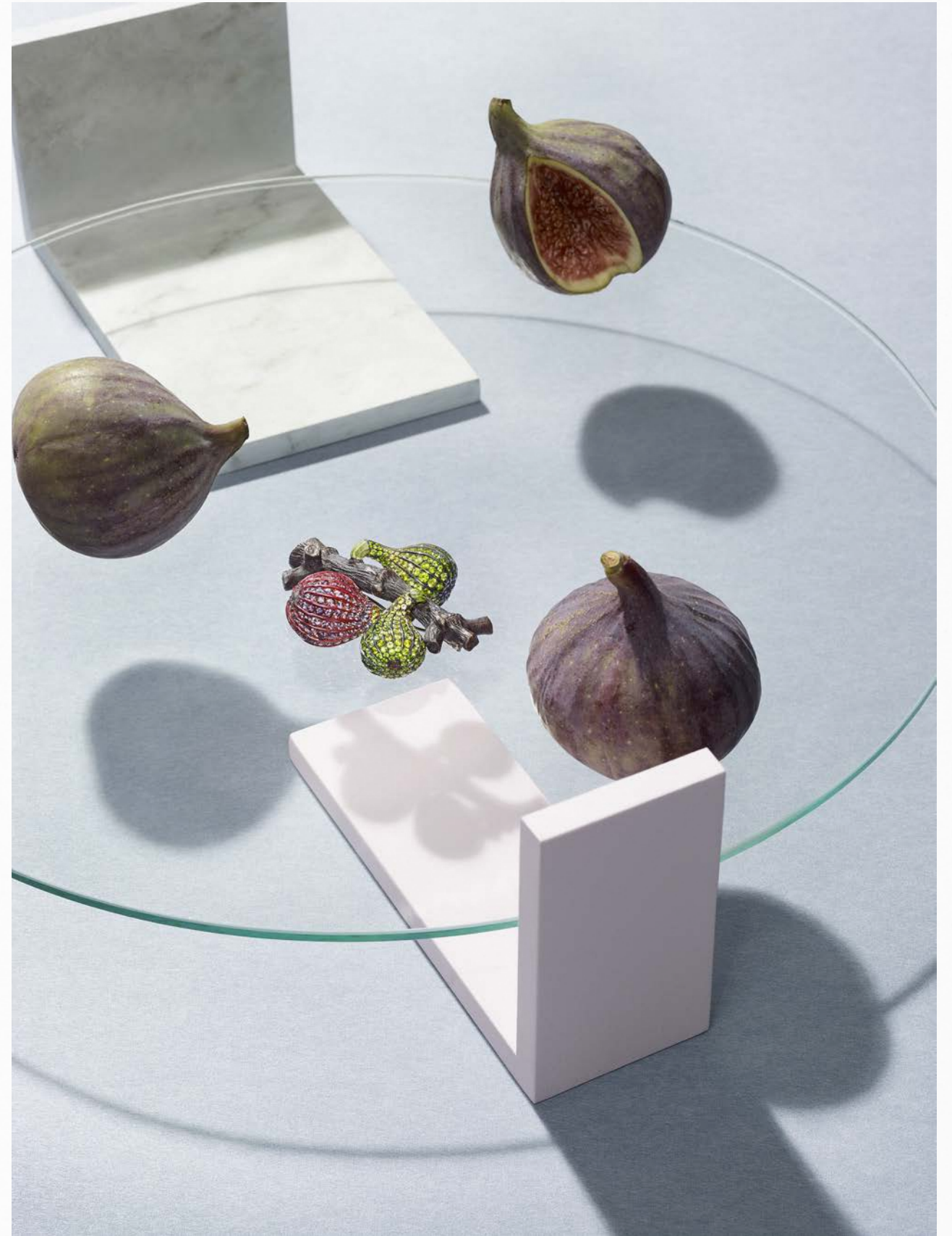
Hemmerle's Fruit
and Vegetable Jewels

Photography: Thomas Brown • Set Design and Styling: Annette Masterman
With an introduction by jewellery historian Vivienne Becker



A Munich-based, family-run house, Hemmerle has one of the most distinctive styles in modern jewellery. Inimitable and uncompromising in its rigour of line and form, it is audacious in its use of colour and materials, and barrier breaking in its craftsmanship. Hemmerle designs are also cleverly, even emotively underpinned by the richness of jewellery history and heritage. ¶ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Stefan Hemmerle, together with his wife Sylveli, set about transforming the look and identity of the creations produced by his family's long-established jewellery house. It was the early nineteenth-century tradition of Berlin iron—blackened ironwork jewels exchanged for gold donated to the war effort in the battle against Napoleon—that gave him the idea of setting an important diamond in textured iron. This was the first step towards cultivating his very particular aesthetic, one that balanced monumental stature with low-key opulence. It is an aesthetic that was shared in turn by his son Christian and daughter-in-law Yasmin, all working together as a creative team. ¶ But it was cultivation of an entirely different sort when, in 2011, Christian and Yasmin surprised Stefan with a collection of 12 sculptural, vegetal jewels, each depicting in breathtakingly realistic bejewelled detail a humble fruit or vegetable, thus turning the mundane into the magnificent (or perhaps it's the other way round?). A soft, dimpled, bruised red pepper of patinated copper, silver and white gold, topped with a stem of brilliant green demantoid garnets; a cauliflower, its densely clustered diamond florets held in thick, waxy leaves of patinated silver; carrots of orange sapphires; an artichoke and an aubergine paved in purple sapphires; a cabbage, exuberantly curled and sculpted with patinated silver and white gold; an onion sliced to show its lustrous layers; a pumpkin of pink gold; a cob of sweetcorn glistening with natural oriental pearls; and a vibrant green pea pod nestling in leaves of demantoid garnets, split open to reveal glossy jade peas. ¶ It was, as the accompanying book *Delicious Jewels* described the collection, a jewelled vegetable garden of delights, an homage, said the Hemmerle family, to the natural treasures of the earth, intended as a feast for the eyes and the senses. In this intriguing series, Hemmerle takes up the challenge faced by every generation of jewellers and goldsmiths: how to capture the beauty and energy of nature in nature's own minerals and metals—how to turn the ephemeral into the eternal? ¶ Both fruit and vegetables possess an irresistible charm, these three-dimensional works of wearable art in which the mastery of craftsmanship disappears in the perfection of artistry, in the sublime proportions, emotive colour and wondrous working of materials. In Hemmerle's hands, nature takes on a hyper-reality, its complex creations captured as works of art, sculptural masterpieces of awe-inspiring skills, honouring yet subverting conventions, acknowledging yet avoiding clichés. These are the fruits of the family's combined imagination. Jewels good enough to eat.







For Tamasin Day-Lewis's Fettuccine with Rainbow Chard, Porcini and Crimini Mushrooms recipe → p116