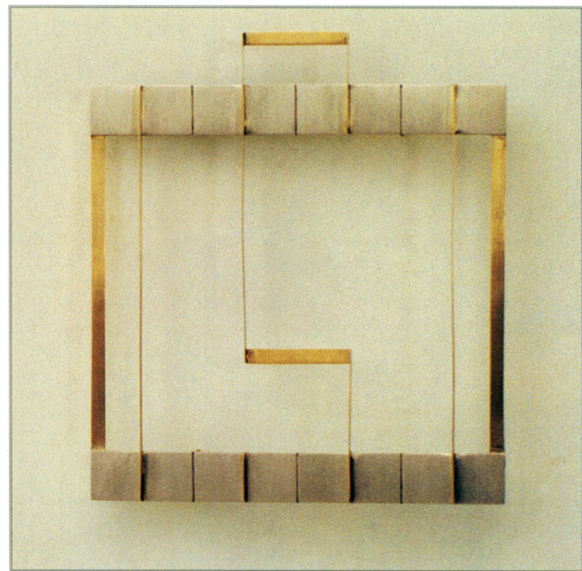


'Frames Series', 1997, brooch, 18 ct gold, stg silver, 6 x 6 cm



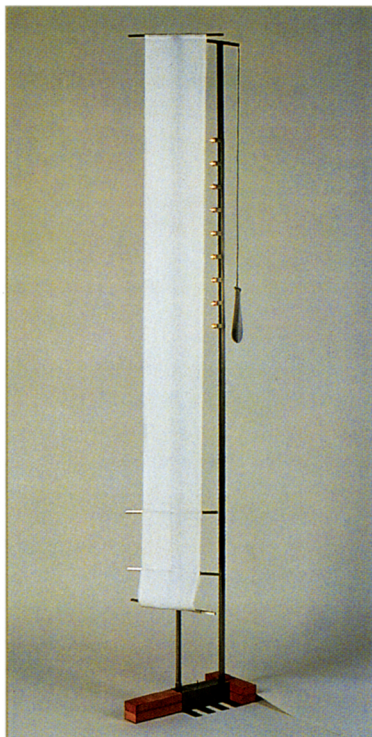
'Frames Series', 1997, brooch, 18 ct gold, stg silver, 6 x 6 cm

AN ARTIST WITH LIGHT

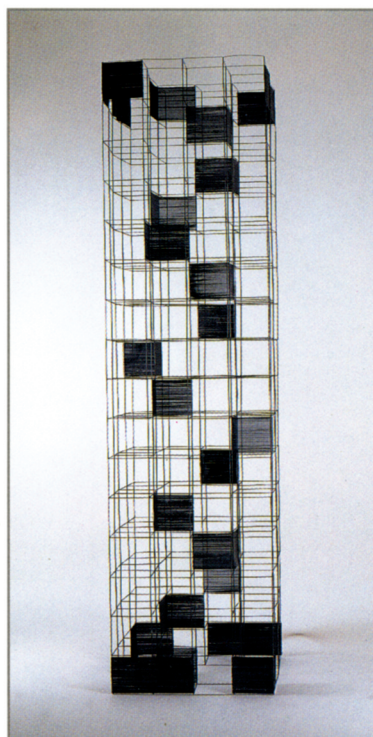
Ambiguous and enigmatic, the engaging works of Austrian artist/designer Brigitte Pamperl are informed by a minimalist aesthetic and enlivened by her artistic sensibility to light. Profile by Dorothy Erickson.

THE Viennese are noted for their refined elegance and jeweller, "light-object" maker and interior designer Brigitte Pamperl is no exception. Tall and elegant herself, she makes minimal jewels which are examples of art reduced to its essentials. Her crisp geometric "artworks-to-wear" intrigue the eye. They appear fragile and ephemeral, yet the properties that define the pieces come from the tensile strength of the ribbons of finely-rolled gold sheet which hold the flexible works together. Paillions of applied silver strengthen the fabric and double as the decorative element. Each piece is one of a series

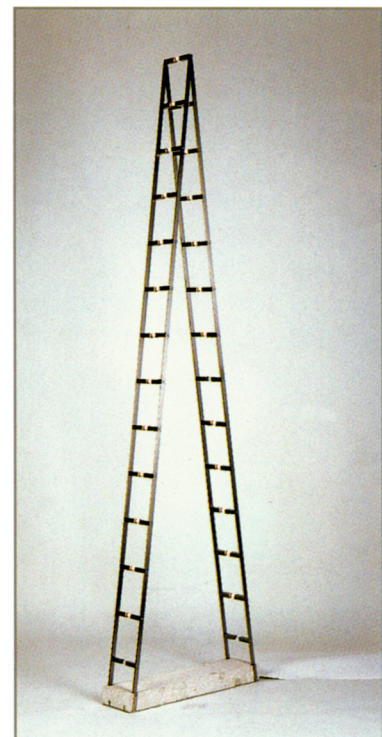
for Pamperl works to a theme, creating variations on each idea. There is an architectural crispness to the work and it comes as no surprise to discover that she is an architect's daughter. Specialist tools are required for work of such precision and Pamperl's is fabricated with a micro weld torch that allows for soldering without reducing the tension in the metal. Pamperl grew up in Salzburg, where, as a child, she drew and played with many materials. She found three dimensions were more interesting than two. Her elder brother studied medicine in Vienna so when old enough the little sister was allowed to attend



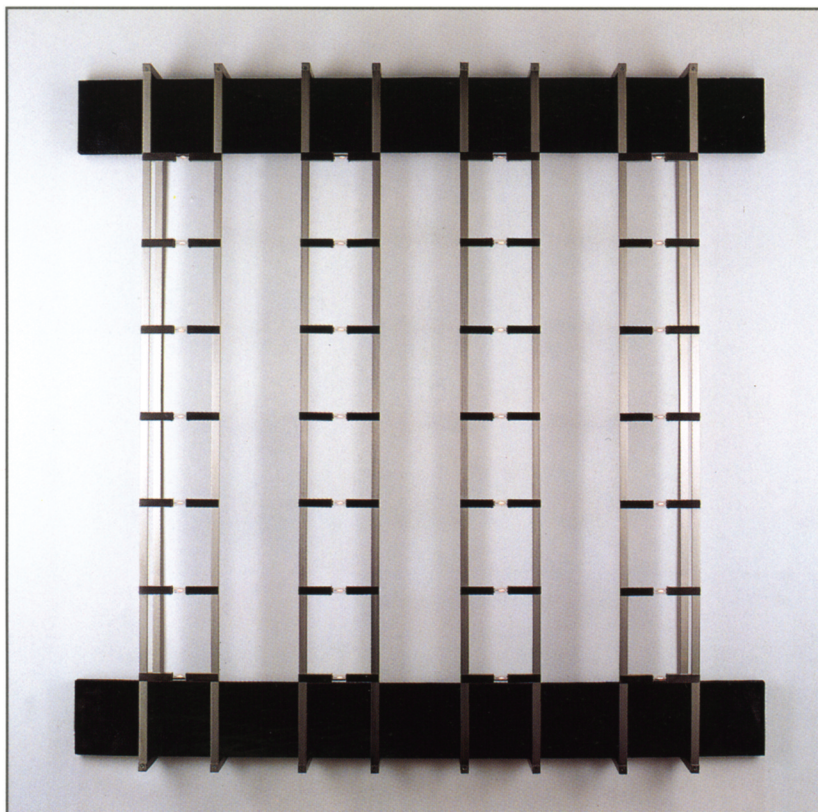
'Light-Object', 1991, steel, wood and fabric, with 12-volt globes, ht 130 cm



'Light Ladder', 1998, nickelplated brass, oak, with 12-volt globes, ht 130 cm

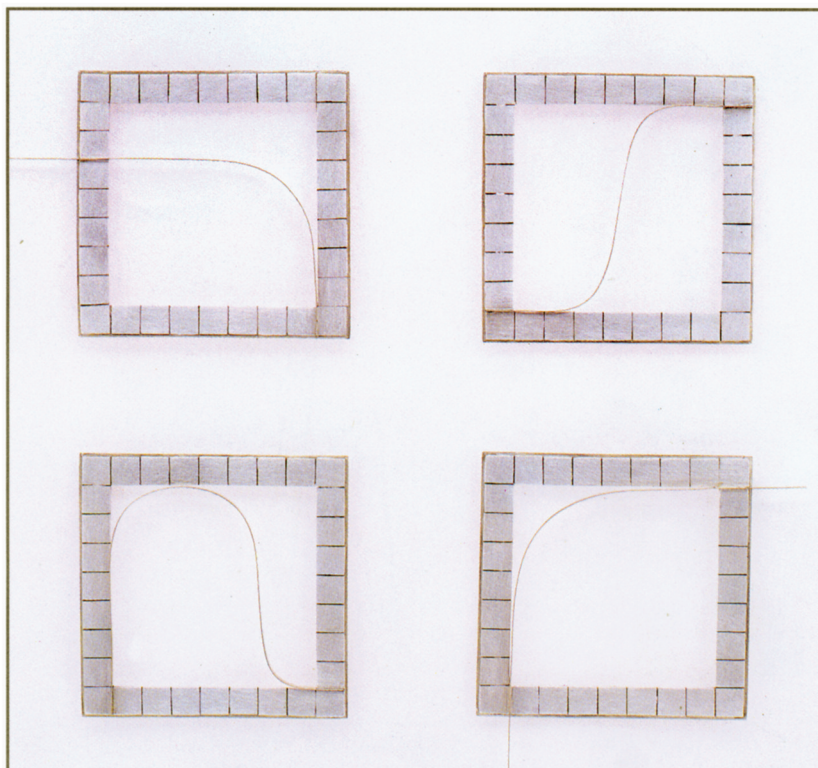


'Light Ladder', 1998, nickelplated brass, sandstone, lights, 60 x 22 cm



*'Light-Object', 1998,
nickelplated brass,
painted wood, lights,
60 x 76 cm*

*'Rahmung', 1996-97,
four brooches from
'Frames' series, 18 ct
gold, sterling silver,
6 x 6 cm*



art school in Vienna under his supervision. Trained at the Academy of Applied Arts (Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst), she graduated in 1974 primarily as a designer/maker of jewellery. Since then she has pursued a career as an independent designer and freelance artist. She is, she says, first of all a designer and second an artist but moves freely between the categories. A recent incursion into more abstruse activities involves flag festivals where she designs installations of flags or banners. The first flag festival was held at the picturesque town of Krems-Stein not far from Vienna in 1993, and since then she has been a regular participant.

Pamperl began exhibiting as an artist while still a

student, the first being in the prestigious Museum für Angewandte Kunst in 1970 and again in 1971. The school and museum are situated together and have close links, making this early exposure possible for the students. European students are encouraged to enter competitions and her entry was selected and shown at Galerie Handwerk in Munich. This early work was organic, featuring linear shapes filled with sand and set in vitrines.

Married soon after graduation to a young doctor starting out on his career, she put her design skills to work revamping the apartment adjacent to his rooms, in which they lived. Her jewellery in vitrines on the wall made a striking décor. Placing her work in an architectural context has always been important to her. This interest led in due course to a number of interior design commissions.

Jewellery work with naked flames, sharp tools and potentially hazardous chemicals was somewhat restricted in their inner-city apartment once her children were born in 1975 and 1976. Nevertheless, she made time to assist in organising the successful World Craft Council Conference which was held in Vienna in 1980. When both children were seven and at school she could commence working in metal again and by the time the youngest was 14 in 1990 Pamperl was able to return fully to her own career.

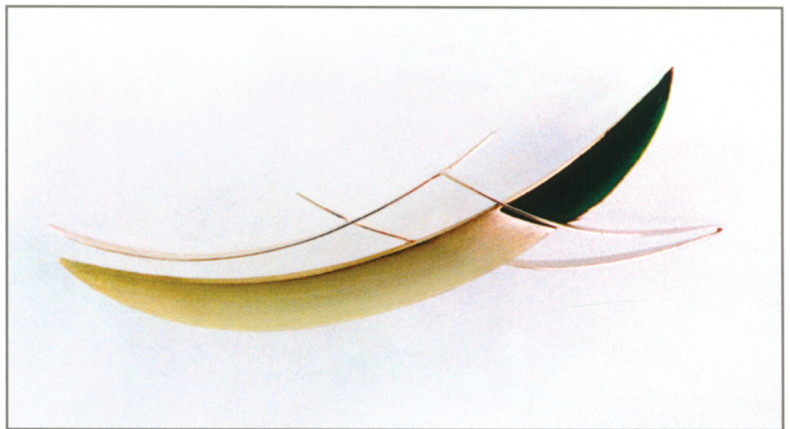
Meanwhile she turned her attention to interior design. Her husband's surgery needed renovating so she designed for the practice. She is influenced by the translucency or transparency of fabric and how this is altered by light. Light, she feels, gives a different dimension to a room and she uses this in her work. The stark simplicity of her designs brought requests from colleagues and customers and her client base and practice grew from there. Each interior requires at least one light object to create a feeling of space. Finding nothing suitable to purchase (they were too compact and the design poor), she started designing and making them herself.

At this time she also revamped the apartment to set up her studio. She likes light and the feel of space and says she needs it for her soul, but with a small flat she felt cramped and so she used light to open up her environment. The theme was white – white walls, curtains, couches, chair coverings and light-objects. In this setting, texture, light and translucency became important.

The quirky touches that she brings to her interior design work stand in sharp relief. For instance, chairs are designed, each with a white fabric-covered seat, but on close inspection each wooden back is subtly different, creating a rhythm. The variations on a theme are seen today in both her jewellery and her light objects. It was at this stage the two careers become intertwined. In 1989 she was invited to be part of a promotion in a large Viennese department store. The First Vienna Designers' Saturday was held at the Henn, where she exhibited furniture as well as jewellery. She has since participated in other Designers' Saturdays, and at interiors fairs in Spain, Austria and Germany, including the International Design Exhibition in Berlin.

Her first solo show was in 1990 at Galerie Tiller in Vienna's diplomatic quarter. After the success of this she started making her first light-objects for sale. Their unusual appearance has resulted in extensive coverage in European art and architecture journals. Her two careers proceeded in tandem. She staged solo exhibitions of jewellery or jewellery and light-

objects in 1991 at Galerie Tiller, at Frech & Co, and Galerie Alpha in Vienna, and at Galerie Gottlicher at Krems-Stein. Many of these were invitational exhibitions. In 1991 she showed her Franke lights at the Vienna International Interiors Fair and at the Austrian Institute for Design. In 1992 she exhibited in the gallery of the Society of Engineers and Architects and was invited by Austrian Design Institute to participate at the Seville World Fair in an exhibition entitled "Diagonal". The next year her furniture prototypes were shown at the Cologne International Furniture Fair. Four more solo shows followed in Villach, Vienna and Kagenfurt in Austria between 1994 and 1996. In 1997 and 1998 Galerie Tiller presented her work at the Miami Art Fair and at



Brooch, 1992, stg silver and feather



Neckpiece, stg silver, 18 ct gold

SOFA Chicago. She also shows at the Viennese Art Fairs that commenced in 1995. Pamperl considers such events useful as they attract an audience that would not frequent a gallery.

The light-works are characterised by their preciseness. They are straight, slim in configuration, and with various movable parts. Mirrors may be used in the work. Ladders continue to be a motif. The lights are 12-volt with the current carried through nickel-plated brass frames. In one ladder-like light-object hung against a wall, lights are inserted into each of the stays which hold apart the paired steps suspended on cable. In another free-standing ladder-like light each step supports a small light. The objects are often stabilised screens, filled with a metal mesh, with a stone base. Other works are more like pillars, with small hinged screens that deflect or filter the light. Grids of metal feature prominently and the multiple lights imbue these metal structures with an unexpected delicacy.

In the catalogue statement for an elegant exhibition held at Galerie Göttlicher in Krems-Stein in 1998, at which her *Frames Brooches* and *Neckpieces* were exhibited together with a dozen light-objects and a number of sculptural works, she wrote:

'Working with metal, I try to communicate with the material to approach, by experimentation, its limits. I search for ways to make the metal look lightweight in contrast to its genuine material character. My

latest works in jewellery, *Frames*, just appear to be rigid, but they are all flexible and smooth. The reality of things cannot be made out at first sight.'

The bracelets, brooches and neckpieces that made up the majority of this jewellery were fabricated in gold and silver, with a repetitive geometric patterning outlining a square. There was a faint echo of the squared wire baskets of the celebrated Viennese designer and former teacher at the school she had attended, Joseph Hoffman. Just a touch of the design workshops of Secession, but undertaken in a thoroughly modern manner. The magic in the individual pieces came with wearing. The flexible neckpieces draped elegantly on the body. The brooches could curve to fit a body contour if desired. Bracelets were sprung and elastic and, being ultra light in the second meaning of the word, everything was very easy and comfortable to wear. They also made striking statements on the body.

Her elegant, ambiguous and enigmatic work continues to intrigue. Her artworks are strongly informed by classical design principles and the design work is enlivened by an artistic sensibility and approach. The work speaks eloquently of its Viennese origins.

Dr Dorothy Erickson

Dorothy Erickson exhibits jewellery worldwide and writes on art and design from her base in Perth, Western Australia.

Neckpiece, sterling silver and sprung 18 ct gold

