

A woman in profile, kissing a large red rose. She is wearing a diamond earring, a diamond ring, and a diamond bracelet. The background is white with some pink petals. The text 'JQ THE INTERNATIONAL JEWELRY QUORUM' is overlaid on the image.

JQ THE INTERNATIONAL JEWELRY QUORUM

- ◆ 2008 Trends
- ◆ Chocolate Jewelry
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www.JQIntl.com

Jean-François Albert

“One-of-a-Kind”

In an industry filled with copycat designs and ever-increasing pricing pressures, Jean-Francois Albert is a true one-of-a-kind who has masterfully earned the right to be in the elite of this industry.

>> Diana S. Zimmerman, Special Features Correspondent

From his highly inventive, patented Signature Fit™ rings and timeless bridal collections, to his phenomenally successful Originals-Only™ one-of-a-kind works of wearable art, Jean-François Albert, co-founder of JFA Designs, isn't happy just creating. He is the consummate innovator and entrepreneur. After all, how many designers have their jewelry on the cover of *Robb Report*?

Together with his wife and business partner, Babs Albert, they continue to reinvent style, fashion, and their own way of life. “One of the joys of this industry has been the friendships we have made during our career,” says Babs who oversees sales at JFA. “We work with many friends and companies, some of whom we've enjoyed a twenty-five-year-plus relationship with. We are fortunate that we are now in a position to work with the customers we enjoy, and that Jean-François can focus on creating such special pieces.”

Albert could not agree more. When he isn't designing an amazing one-of-a-kind ring or pendant in Newport Beach, California, he and Babs can be found searching the globe for unusual colored gemstones. “We have an extensive colored gemstone collection that we've managed to gather over the past 27 years,” Babs explains. “My husband has the best eye in the business. Our color is fabulous. He has been very busy lately, and his new designs focus on these gems, some of which we will exhibit at Centurion and at Couture.”

“There is a lot of freedom in creating one-of-a-kinds,” continues Albert. “You don't have to think about production considerations and can focus on the design. Each piece presents an exciting and challenging opportunity for me that is also very rewarding.”

Babs and Jean Jean-François Albert on a trip to Albert's native Switzerland.



And rewarding it is, not just for Albert, but retailers. “I am fascinated by the possibilities,” says Scott Cusson who has purchased dozens of one-of-a-kind JFA creations. “The unique nature of each piece and the documentation of originality make this concept very special.”

Ads in consumer publications such as *In Style*, *W*, and *Town & Country* have featured his boldly beautiful designs. And select Originals-Only™ pieces are featured on JFA Designs’ website which includes information on how to contact the retailer who possesses it. As with any great work of art, each Originals-Only™ ring or pendant is accompanied by a photograph and a certificate of authenticity, guaranteeing that there will never be another like it.

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Throughout the years, Jean-François and Babs have built an impeccable reputation in the jewelry industry for ethics, quality, and being just plain nice. Their customer list reads like the Who’s Who of retailers. This note from Timothy C. Braun, vice president and general manager of Neiman Marcus, Scottsdale says it all: “For many years, I was involved in Neiman Marcus’ jewelry business as a divisional merchandise manager. My buyers and I interacted with hundreds of designers and vendors. I learned how important it is to work with a designer who is consistent in quality and design, as well as one who can meet the expectations of our jewelry clientele. We can always count on Jean-François Albert to meet all of these expectations. What impresses me even more, now that I am the general manager, is how Jean-François and Babs build such great working relationships with our jewelry associates and managers. I see the tremendous value they bring to the jewelry world by being so kind, considerate, and willing to always go the extra mile. Our sales associates have confidence



Featured Designer



and feel good about showing a JFA piece because of its beautiful design and expert quality. They also know that when they need to be in contact with JFA, they will get first-class attention.”

Braun’s sentiments are echoed by retailer after retailer, such as these comments from Mike & Jillona Moretti of Moretti’s Fine Jewelry: “We’ve been doing business with JFA Designs for the past twenty to twenty-five years. We consider Babs and Jean-François to be great friends, but we are also fanatics about quality. JFA Designs continues to be the most perfectly manufactured jewelry in the industry. That fact, coupled with the timeless style of the designs, makes for a very successful combination.”

Albert began his career in jewelry at the age of 15 with an apprenticeship in his home town of Lausanne, Switzerland. In just four years, Piaget snapped him up and he moved to Geneva. It was there that he perfected his design and bench skills. Always the entrepreneur, Albert struck out for Canada. He landed in Montreal, where he built a thriving business as a freelance model maker. He later relocated to Vancouver, a fortuitous move that gave him access to the entire West Coast market. It was during this time that he met the love of his life, an amazing woman named Babs Jolitz. The year was 1978 and Babs was managing a jewelry store in Newport Beach. In 1979, they were married and have been working together ever since.

Today, Albert’s design talent is recognized throughout the industry. He has been awarded the prestigious De Beers Diamonds Today Award an impressive four times. He is a three-time winner of the American Gem Trade Association’s Spectrum Design Competition, which focuses on colored gemstones. The American Jewelry Design Council—whose membership consists of America’s most influential and innovative designers—has also recognized his prolific design skills.

Strictly American-made, Albert’s designs are manufactured in Costa Mesa, California where the company employs an international staff of highly skilled professionals. Albert and Babs have worked hard to earn their distinguished reputation—she as the consummate sales and spokesperson, and he as a master craftsman, classically innovative designer, and entrepreneur of the elite. Together, they have created a powerful partnership and a very special, one-of-a-kind company. (www.jfadesigns.com)