

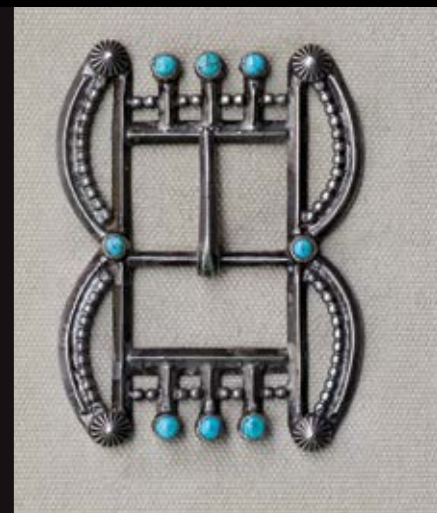
ARNDT &
EMMERLING

ART of the
BUCKLE



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FAVORITE WESTERN ICONS

I GUESS I WAS A western girl before I knew it. In Minot, North Dakota, I remember going to the rodeo on Saturday mornings. That's where I got my first tourist western buckle. I recently found a photo of my brother, Terry Ellisor, and me at Christmas when we had moved to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware; I had on my big western belt.

Some buckle companies took center stage as early as the 1920s, with Bohlin taking an early lead in saddles, buckles, spurs, you name it—the major cowboy accoutrements. Other companies joined the ranks of high-class buckle makers, one being John McCabe in 1923, which would later be acquired by Sunset Trails in the 1960s. Their work, along with Bohlin's, set the standard of excellence in western silver and gold creations.

I started collecting buckles with stones and to remember places I had been. Some of my favorites have icons like stars, cowboy boots, arrows, horseshoes, hearts, crosses, skulls, and my favorite—crowns.

"Jewelry, being worn on the body, is the most personal of art objects. These works become statements about the wearer announcing status, personal taste, cultural identity, spirituality, and much more.

"As wearable art, The Buckle can provide all this, plus the added virtue of practicality. Often a centerpiece of dress, The Buckle is both functional and decorative. Simple or bold, it may be a symbolic work of art, a thing of beauty and value, created in precious metals and gemstones. Or it may be the simplest of utilitarian shapes in the sparsest of materials. No matter the choices involved an individual expression is conveyed.

"The Buckle and Belt often becomes an important feature of the wearer's sense of personal identity.

A man might wear the same Belt/Buckle every day until the leather is worn and ragged, or he might collect and wear belts for different occasions. The Belt/Buckle will carry with it a sense of well being to the wearer. Emotions are involved. At least one famous golfer always wears his favorite

buckle during tournaments for luck, and a famous orchestra conductor wears his standard buckle even with a moped! Most all of us have a favorite Belt and Buckle.

"For those of us who specialize in crafting Buckles, it is a source of satisfaction to create something which will possibly become an intimate part of another's persona. Something that actually matters in that person's daily life, and perhaps, for generations on down the line.

"The Belt makes the Man!" Or at least represents him."

—Doug Magnus



◀ 134 ▶



OPPOSITE: Silver and my favorite—bing—make very pretty statements. (Left to right: Matt Hackett; courtesy Mary Emmerting.)

Two horse heads embrace turquoise triangles; a highly intricate inlaid cross; tiny Zuni mosaic inlay; and classic eagle. (Clockwise from top left: unknown, Lee Downey, Al Summer, Chrissette family)

◀ 135 ▶



A butterfly, turtle, and trout. What's your favorite animal? (Clockwise from top left: Mona Van Riper, Barry Kisselstein, James Reid.)

OPPOSITE: How about a sleek horsehead, an owl, an elk, or even pelicans? (Clockwise from top: James Reid, Barry Kisselstein, Lee Downey, Lee Downey.)



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◀ 27 ▶