

Natural inspiration

Jewelry becomes art when fashioned from nature

By **JASON ASHLEY WRIGHT**
World Scene Writer

In David Lee Holland's world, the leaves are solid gold.

So are berries and almonds, acorns and coffee beans. Even the oak branches, also gold, are budded with precious pearls.

Holland is a fine-jewelry designer. His medium is 18-karat gold, and his inspiration comes from nature.

"When I see a tree, I don't see just a tree, but a sculpture," he said recently during a phone interview from his gallery in SoHo, a gilt oasis amid the "concrete world of Manhattan."

Holland will showcase his Midas touch on Mother Nature at Saks Fifth Avenue in Utica Square from Thursday through Saturday.

It will be his first trip to Tulsa, said Holland, who was born in Selma, Ala. His parents were jewelers who owned retail stores.

Following their career path was "sort of inevitable," he said. His first job was cleaning up the floor, which would be scattered with tiny gems from his family's work.

He had great opportunities to meet people from all over the world who came to see his father, a master jeweler, Holland said.

He left Selma for Tuscaloosa, Ala., where he attended New College, part of the University of Alabama. He then moved to



A. CUERVO / Tulsa World

David Holland finds inspiration from nature for his 18-karat gold jewelry.

New York, working for Vogue, Vanity Fair and Conde Nast publications.

Later, Holland returned to his roots and started fashioning nature-themed jewelry under his name. The initial collection was all gold, with a few diamonds and South Sea pearls mixed in. Eventually, it came to encompass several colors of gold, such as white, yellow, rose and green.

He doesn't do a seasonal collection, but rather introduces anywhere from four to 10 pieces a month. It's all handmade in Manhattan.

"Like nature itself, we have a

base collection, and it's ever-evolving," Holland said.

One of his favorites is an oak branch lapel pin accented with a Japanese Akoya cultured pearl. Another is a pair of earrings he named Alpine Blossom, which have diamond-set centers.

In addition to pins and earrings, Holland's collection includes necklaces, bracelets, pendants, rings and cufflinks. He takes finds in nature, from nuts and leaves to buds and eucalyptus, then recreates them in top-quality, gleaming 18-karat gold.

Inspiration for his work also comes from travels, he said —

particularly visits to Greece, his partner's native country, where they hope to some day have a house on one of the islands.

"There's an inspiration from ancient times in the aesthetic of it," he said.

Holland's work has been showcased in magazines, including Town & Country, the Robb Report and Avenue. One of his coffee bean bracelets earned the World Gold Council Design 2000 Award.

Also rewarding has been the clamor from patrons, who look at his work not only as elegant art to wear now but as pieces that will later become heirlooms.

"Clients buy it knowing they'll leave it to their children or their grandchildren," he said. One day, a woman brought her adult daughter into his SoHo gallery. She was picking out a piece for herself, but she wanted help from her daughter, who would eventually wear it.

"That's part of what makes it special as a jeweler," Holland said. "Jewelry is very personal."

He's currently working on sterling silver housewares, and his men's collection should debut next year.

For more information on the trunk show, call Saks Fifth Avenue at 744-0200. You can also visit www.davidleeholland.com.

Jason Ashley Wright 581-8483
jason.wright@tulsaworld.com