

From the
Field

THE PAST IS NOW



Circa 1700
Horseshoe
Nail rings

REMAKES AND REBOOTS RESONATE WITH A NEW GENERATION OF CUSTOMERS AND ALSO HIT A RESPONSE CHORD WITH THOSE WHO LIVED THROUGH THE ORIGINAL PERIODS, ALL OF WHICH HAS AFFECTED THE LUXURY JEWELRY MARKET.

BY BETH BERNSTEIN

Independent jewelry designers are taking their cues from the past, reinventing history with modern viewpoints and techniques. They are also inspired by the trends we see on the red carpet—celebrities wearing archival haute couture and jewelry, and on the runway—ready-to-wear that has mined various decades for inspiration. There is also a mash-up of styles and periods which creates a more contemporary feeling. Additionally, movies, music, and art travel back in time and create a feeling of nostalgia.

Past & present, reimagined

From reinvigorating antique and vintage components to creating new mechanisms, color combinations, and motifs from different periods, jewelry designers are artfully blending old themes with new creativity and mastery of craft. This has been a theme that has been building due to social media platforms and the vast information and images that consumers can find on the internet, the desire for personal pieces with a backstory, and the trend toward more one-of-a-kind or limited-edition pieces.



Circa 1700 18K gold Love & Luck Horseshoe cuffs with enamel and gemstones



Reviving Victorian symbolism

Motifs, imagery, found objects, and goldwork from the Victorian era are reinterpreted into relevant pieces for today's consumer. This period has been mined continually throughout the 20th and 21st centuries and today's designers are more inventive than ever. They have created ingenious mechanisms in three-dimensional designs that also capture the heartfelt symbolism and sentimentality of the period.

Susan Cohen from Circa 1700 explains, "I'm drawn to elements and symbolism found in Georgian and Victorian jewelry and have married that with the modernity of 'Gem Mechanics', such as the movement of antique compasses set into three-dimensional shapes that embodies direction, strength, and love." Her designs also include 19th-century inspired horseshoe cuffs with mechanical closures detailed with the romance of old-world phrases and iconography in enamel and gemstones. Other pieces in the collection include a hand that opens as a clasp, and an orb that spins to reveal the night sky."



Jenn Breznan of Mined + Found takes the opposite approach, she chooses functional pieces held by chatelaines of the era. "I think of these styles as emotional utility. I add meaning to a sovereign case which was used to carry coins and transform it into a gem set star pendant that opens to reveal a coin that flips with different phrases on each side. This guides the wearer through difficult moments and help them find their direction each day."

FROM TOP: Circa 1700 18K Gold Compass Talisman with antique compasses; Circa 1700 Open Heart pendant with mixed old cut diamonds in 18K blackened gold; Mined + Found Direction Major pendant



Heavenly Vices 14K
Lock Stories Flor
Lock necklace

Samantha Jackson of Heavenly Vices combines both utility and sentimentality with a fully functional combination lock in five different iterations that have imagery and words based on Victorian symbols. “One example is our ‘Love Lock’ in which each wheel is part of the locking mechanism and contains letters spelling out love and representative symbols (rose, dove, double hearts, and lovers’ knot). When the letters of the word and motifs are lined up, it will reveal a secret message and the lock will open.”



Anna Maccieri Rossi
18K gold Carpe
Diem Magic Moon
charm with blue
aventurine and
mother of pearl;
Anna Maccieri Rossi
In Love 18K white
gold, aquamarine,
pink quartz, golden
titanium, white
ceramic, mother of
pearl Carpe Diem
pendant;

Italian-born and based Anna Maccieri Rossi is also inspired by mechanisms in which she blends old-world techniques with modern design but from the horological world rather than one particular era. Her career took shape at Jaeger-Le Coultre, Tiffany & Co., and Bulgari as a senior watch designer. “Launching my collection in 2018, I questioned why we don’t use watch movements to tell stories rather than just the hours and the minutes. “Carpe Diem (Seize the Day in Latin) expresses my belief that time is precious, to be lived, and celebrated with awareness and passion.” Her jewelry has a watch movement that allows the little star in the center of aventurine, hardstone, and ceramic pendants and rings to move every second, reminding the wearer that each moment counts. She has recently added a heart to the center with the same movement and asserts, “Love is the engine that moves everything in our lives.”

Other designers such as Shari Cohen from Seal & Scribe incorporate Georgian and Victorian glass and hardstone rebus intaglios seals (phrase and imagery puzzles) in contemporary settings gemstones and diamonds. “Our latest capsule collection, Hidden Messages, takes Victorian-era intaglio seals, molds them using very high-tech machinery, then we hand cast each seal in solid gold, and from there work those cast seals into the under gallery of the ring using the latest in CAD technology, ensuring that each seal will fit perfectly within the under gallery of the ring.”



FROM TOP: Seal & Scribe antique Separate
But Not Disunited glass intaglio with a
contemporary ruby halo set in 18K white
gold, all backed with a lustrous tablet of
mother of pearl; Seal & Scribe I Am Looking
For The Most Faithful antique intaglio seal in
modern setting with diamonds



Renna Rosebud
Caspian ring in 18K
gold, pink opal, and
half moon diamonds

Renna Brown-Taher of Renna creates new intaglios and can customize them for her customers. “These intaglios bridge the past with the present. By carving into gemstone surfaces with meticulous detail, I aim to breathe new life into these age-old traditions, making them resonate with contemporary sensibilities.”

The Deco revival

Although numerous designers seek to reinvent pieces from the Victorian era due to the popularity of the significance of the motifs of the jewels, other designers prefer the streamlined geometry of Art Deco as inspiration. These designers have interpreted a modernist movement to appear even more modern, focusing on circular or linear forms and sleek and streamlined looks that are bold and statement-making. They utilize a more strikingly unconventional approach to color than that was seen in the Art Deco period which began in the early 1920s as an all-white platinum and diamond aesthetic. Jewelers of the time then added vibrant rubies, sapphires and emeralds in faceted and carved gemstones into the mix in Asian and Egyptian influences. Contemporary styles are seen again in precious stones but also in the use of graphic enamel accents, contrasting elements and colors, and a dare-to-be-different presence. This reworking pays homage to looks that defined an earlier moment in time while keeping looks current.



FROM TOP: Cicada platinum, emerald, black jade and diamond necklace; State Property Battuta Enchantress necklace



“We have re-interpreted the Art Deco aesthetic with contemporary technology and materials, such as our new titanium-infused ceramic. It is very hard and durable and can be made in a wide variety of colors. It is available in black ceramic with white diamonds or white ceramic with 18K gold and colorful gemstones like turquoise and coral,” says Maria Carola Picchiotti, Marketing Director at PICCHIOTTI. We have also revived the symmetry of the period with repetitive geometric shapes with overlapping, layering, or framing stones with unexpected or contrasting hues.”

Nevernot’s nod to Art Deco is seen in convertible pieces and a play of silhouettes with a dash of wit and different hardstones mixed with faceted stone in yellow gold.



FROM TOP: PICCHIOTTI Art Deco inspired earrings featuring round diamonds and onyx in 18K gold; PICCHIOTTI Xpandable™ Art Deco inspired featuring coral, emerald cut diamonds, and black ceramic in 18K white gold; Nevernot malachite and garnet Puzzle ring



FROM TOP: Maison H Brushed Scatter earrings in 18K yellow gold and diamond; Monica Rich Kosann Sun, Moon and Star locket in 18K gold on blackened chain



FROM TOP: Jacquie Aiche onyx star crescent opal Rays Inlay necklace in 14K yellow gold with opal, onyx and diamonds; Jacquie Aiche Starry Galaxy Inlay necklace in 14K rose gold, opal, onyx and diamonds; Single Stone Astraea pendant in 18K gold with repurposed old and brilliant cut diamonds



A cosmic comeback

The Space Age of the fifties and sixties is also witnessing a revival. This theme hit its stride after Neil Armstrong walked on the moon in 1969. Jewelry of that time period featured the sun, moon, star motifs and spherical shapes as well as textures of craters and other objects from outer space. Today's designers create a fresh take on celestial and planetary motifs. Some of these designers include Jacquie Aiche and Lauren Harwell from Harwell Godfrey, who incorporate intricate inlay techniques in medallions and three-dimensional pieces, while Maison H. focuses tactile interest in yellow gold, setting diamonds to twinkle like stars.

The luxury of repurposing

Many of the companies feature upcycled old cut diamonds and objects from the past while using recycled gold. They work to lower the negative impact of the the environment, which enhances the trend as well as creates a more eco-conscious and socially responsible jewelry.

Past in high demand

Nostalgia for happier, less complicated times, the sustainability factor, and jewelry's historical character and soul, all contribute to collectors' desire to invest in jewelry that speaks of the past, is designed in the present, and looks to the future. ♦