

JEWELLERY STYLING

# *Girls Just Want To Have Fun:* An Elevated Take On Nostalgic and Joyous Jewellery

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8 MIN READ

In recent years, independent designers have been inspired by the nostalgia of iconic toys and games from the 70s, 80s and 90s to create joyful, light-hearted, yet technologically innovative jewellery. With a nod to Cindy Lauper's 1983 song, *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*; these pieces offer a sense of whimsy, tongue-in-cheek quality and appeal to our memories of simpler, innocent times. They conjure up optimistic images for those of us who grew up in those decades and act as talismans representing a positive, hopeful future for new generations by turning back the clock. Some include optical illusions, while others - secret mechanisms and unexpected movements, which are all part of the allure. Some of my much-loved games and toys from age eight through eighteen have more recently been reinvented into jewellery. These objects range from those that spoke to my future, my boy crushes, and my affinity for star gazing while listening to mixed music tapes to recreate a sense of the happiness and wonder of the less complicated times of my youth. Here, we look at these types of jewels and more.



A selection of playful coloured gemstone rings by Solange Azagury-Partridge

## *Fortune* Telling

In 2023, my absolute favourite toy from the 1970s was reinvented as a pendant. Marie Lichtenberg in collaboration with Mattel© interpreted the Magic 8 Ball (first created in the 1950s) into an award-winning piece. She has since designed several iterations of it. “I channelled my love of pop culture into a jewelled tribute to an American icon. The Magic 8 Ball toy has enchanted generations of children, providing answers to questions when shaken, that appear to float into a window in its base,” says the Parisian-born/based designer who received her 8 Ball from her parents after they travelled to the U.S which still sits in her living room. “Yes, No, For Sure, Maybe, Ask Again Later, and Outlook Not Good” were some of the original answers. Lichtenberg has chosen those that resonate today.



Marie Lichtenberg x Mattel® Magic 8 Ball pendant

Another 70s treasure that still holds the imagination of teenagers to this day is the mood ring, which changes colours and comes with a chart to tell you what mood you are in. NYC-based Gwen Meyers of Eden Presley has redesigned it in precious metals with diamond accents. “The very first one I made used the stone from the gumball machine ring I had from when I was young. But to continue we had to source a manufacturer of new mood ‘stones.’ I love the idea of combining something so nostalgic and non-precious with a design and materials that are both timeless and fine,” shares the designer.



Colour changing mood rings created by NYC-based designer Gwen Meyers of brand Eden Presley



# *Wishing and Hoping*

This category of objects turned into jewellery represents looking into the future as well as wishing, hoping or dreaming about love. One of the most universal games of teenagers from the U.S. to France was picking petals from daisies and inquiring about romance. In the States, we simply asked if he loves me or loves me not, but the French elaborated on the game.

Lauren Rubinski, a Parisian designer, inquires, "Who hasn't played the game with daisy petals?" she continues, "I did it over and over again as a kid," Her piece is engraved in French as statements rather than questions and gives a nod to the antique spinning top interpretations of this game. She continues: "In my 'Wheel of Love Collection', I sought to keep the spirit of the game but translate it into a wheel in which a heart lands on the words or the phrases in French. It's a piece that plays on fate."



A pendant from the Wheel of Love collection by Lauren Rubinski inspired by the childhood paper folding game of 'daisy petals'

British/Lebanese designer Katarina Tarazi has created her version of the spinning wheel ring and pendant in her Marguerite collection, which also features a heart in different coloured gemstones (as opposed to all gold) that land on the following statements and words as Rubinski: Je t'aime - I love you, Un peu - A little, Beaucoup - A lot, Pas du tout - Not at all, A la folie - Madly. She refers to this collection as “mechanism meets sentiment.”

Los Angeles-based Susan Cohen of Circa 1700 ‘Spinnin’ the Dice...In Your Favour’ charm is a whimsical and inventive interpretation in dice form on the antique Loves Me/ Loves Me Not spinners and Picking Petals game. Cohen quips, “but this time with no youthful crush required. The wearer can now have their questions answered with a simple spin of the dice that reveals: Oui or Non? Or C’est Fou (which has many meanings... It’s Crazy! or It’s Incredible!). Text and icons can be customised to create personalised talismans.”

Francesca Villa approaches this theme with hand-carved Ladybug earrings. It was a common belief that if a ladybug landed on you—you were to make a wish and blow it away, and your wish would ultimately come true.



Spinning wheel pieces from the Marguerite collection by Katarina Tarazi with gemstones that land on specific words and phrases



'Spinnin' the Dice...In Your Favour' charm by Los Angeles-based Susan Cohen of Circa 1700



Francesca Villa Shopping Time earrings with miniature paintings, enamel and diamond baguettes in rock crystal, mother of pearl and 18k yellow gold

# Forever Friends

Although the iconic Best Friends pendant doesn't fall into the realm of toys, it is one that myriad young girls gifted each other from elementary school through high school.

Briony Raymond's Best Friends Duet Medallion Set speaks to our youth when a piece of shared jewellery represents one of our most important relationships. Briony ups the ante with her luxurious take on these iconic pendants. She explains, "Jewellery is inherently sentimental, but there's something especially meaningful about pieces that evoke nostalgia. My medallion reimagines the classic friendship necklace, rooted in childhood traditions but elevated through fine craftsmanship. It's a celebration of the bonds that shape us."





# Toy Room

Certain toys will always be part of our collective memories and have worked their way into independent designer and renowned houses' jewellery. Switzerland-based Nadine Ghosn, who lived around the globe, has created a collection based on a toy that kept kids everywhere busy for hours. Her Bon Bon Building Block rings are designed in 18K gold and different stones with reflective sapphires and can be worn alone or stacked.

Tiffany & Co. has collaborated with Daniel Arsham on 18K yellow gold and diamond, silver and diamond Pokémon pendants (Pikachu including of course!) that are based on his Pokémon sculptures presented in his exhibition *A Ripple in Time*. It is just one of the universal Pokémon toys or games that held kids' attention since the Japanese franchise was created in 1996 by Satoshi Tajiri. Arsham grew up playing with Pokémon, as did his children, which inspired his works for part of the exhibition and led to the designs for Tiffany & Co.



A model wears the Bling Block ring by Nadine Ghosn (left) with 3.33 carats of diamonds in 18k white gold

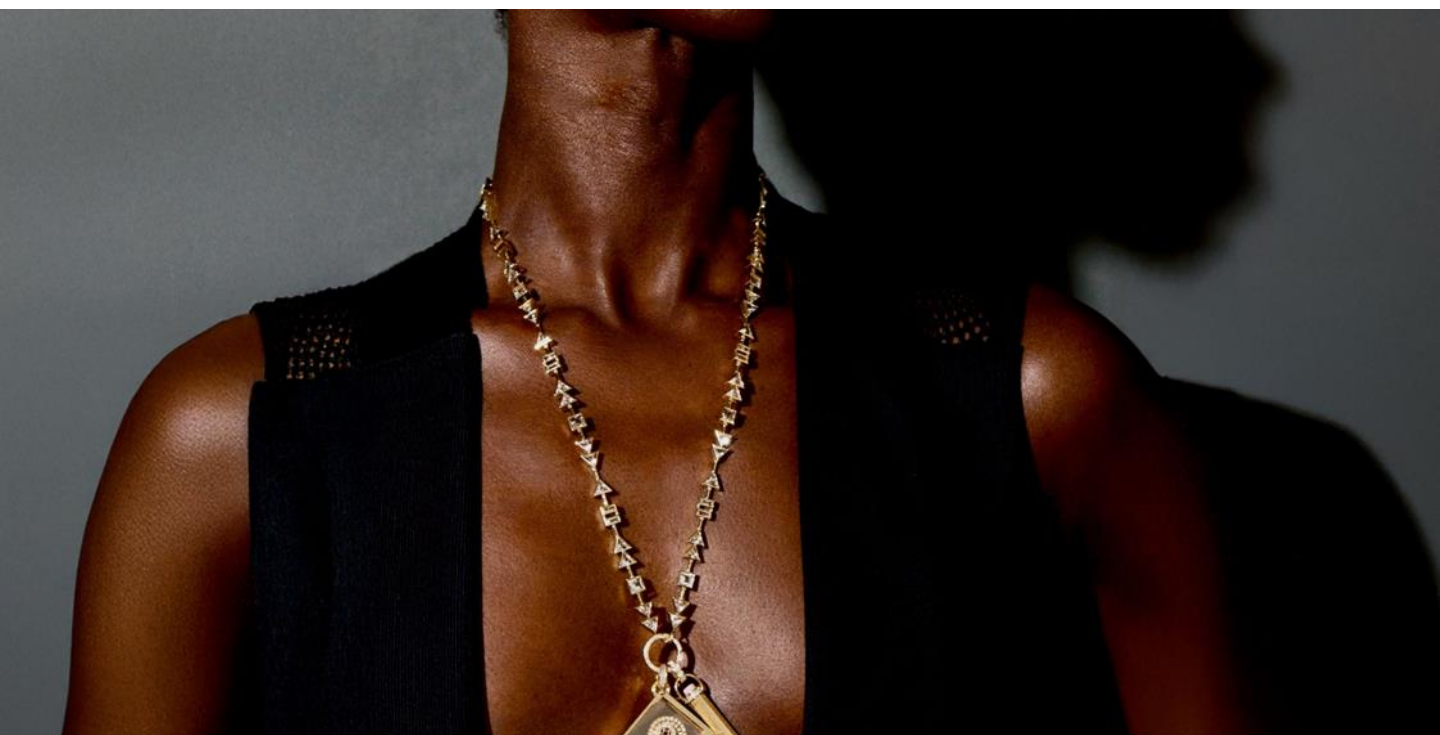


# *Music* Makers

It starts young when we hear a song to which we can totally relate, that seems to speak directly to us, or one that lifts us up and brings happiness to our world. And although there are a variety of vintage music charms, none are as enchanting as those that contemporary designers are creating today.

Such is the case of Sorellina's award-winning cassette pendant. It hangs from an 18K gold necklace with white topaz and rock crystal cut into the shapes of Walkman buttons. Nicole Carosella, co-founder and designer, explains, that "the cassette tape necklace provides the essence of a simpler time. Music was our escape, and those tapes held the soundtrack to our lives. By turning that memory into a piece of jewellery, I wanted to remind people of those small, fleeting moments—pressing play on your favourite song and feeling like the world was yours."

Robinson Pelham takes a different approach to a similar object. "We've taken custom-cut barrels in malachite to make up the centrepiece of our Stereo Pendant. The gemstones set in the central barrel, emulate Play, Pause, Stop and Record symbols. The inspiration comes from the buttons on cassette tape recorders in the 1980s, then marrying it with the 21st century need to unwind." Says Vanessa Chilton, Co-Founder, Robinson Pelham.



A model wears the Sorellina Cassette Tape pendant necklace with rock crystal, topaz, diamonds and pink coral in 18k yellow gold.



Robinson Pelham Morganite Stereo pendant with pink tourmalines in 18k yellow gold



Robinson Pelham Malachite Stereo pendant with tsavorites in 18k yellow gold

# *View* Points

Whether it be star gazing or seeing the world from different perspectives, designers create charms, pendants and full collections to illustrate these youthful activities.

Connecticut-based Jenn Breznan of Mined + Found's entire three-dimensional collection imaginatively nods to nostalgia. Two pieces in particular fit into this theme. Her Memory Charm is based upon "a kid's love for carrying around a disposable camera, snapping pictures during trips or special occasions. To this day, I still have so many pictures, which brings me so much joy," says Breznan. Hence, the charm opens to reveal a hidden smile.



Mined + Found Memory charm inspired by traditional box cameras crafted in 14k yellow gold



Breznan’s Perspective Teleidoscope Pendant transforms her affinity for viewer toys as a child-- ‘Teleidoscopes, kaleidoscopes, anything that would stir my imagination kept me busy for hours. I hope my rendition prompts its wearer to realise that with a change in our viewpoint comes change into our lives.’

Rubinski’s spinner is not the only item she has revamped into jewellery. "I’ve always been fascinated by holograms that shift with the light. They were a cult object when I was a kid. My goal with my Fortuna piece was to recreate that magic and add a message of luck and destiny."



Mined + Found Memory charm (left) and Perspective charm that works like a children's kaleidoscope

U.K. design extraordinaire Solange Azagury-Patridge has designed one of the most intricate signet rings I have encountered: The Days of The Week. It is set with square and baguette rubies or emeralds and a diamond set dial with a revolving enamelled barrel depicting the days of the week. It is a mastery of mechanical technology combined with the cheerful anticipation of how Monday, the start of what was once the school week, now the work week moves each day to the weekend when we look forward to the freedom to revel in enjoyable and entertaining activities and still do.

French Marie Caribou of Marie Mas says, “I seek to recreate that pure amazement we experience as children, discovering how things move and transform. Each creation reveals new colours and shapes through patented mechanisms that allow precious stones to flip and dance like playful dominoes. These dynamic elements reflect our vision of bringing interaction back to fine jewellery. Each piece features an element of surprise and invites the wearer to play and engage.”



A model wears the Solange Azagury-Partridge rotating Days of the Week ring with rubies and diamonds in 18k yellow gold

When I reconnected with some of these iconic objects in jewel forms—I received a more positive answer from Lichtenberg’s Magic 8 ball. It didn’t tell me to “ask again later like when I was a girl.” Instead, it gave me a direct “for sure.” And when I recently gazed into Mined +Found’s Teleidoscope, I did sparkle with a different view. These pieces are not just jewels but reminders that a part of our youth continues to live inside us; they are proof that we can still find humour and can rejoice in the light-hearted spirit that they bring. ✦

#### WORDS

*Beth Bernstein is a jewellery historian, author, journalist and one-time jewelry designer. Her love for the story has inspired Beth to pen five jewellery books. She has also contributed to many magazines, journals and publications including Forbes.com, Rapaport Magazine, Elite Traveler and others.*

