

IN

NEW YORK

FALL FASHION
TRENDS IN THE
HEART OF HARLEM

JEWELRY FIT
FOR A MUSEUM

MUST-SEE
BROOKLYN
AND QUEENS

SEPTEMBER 2017

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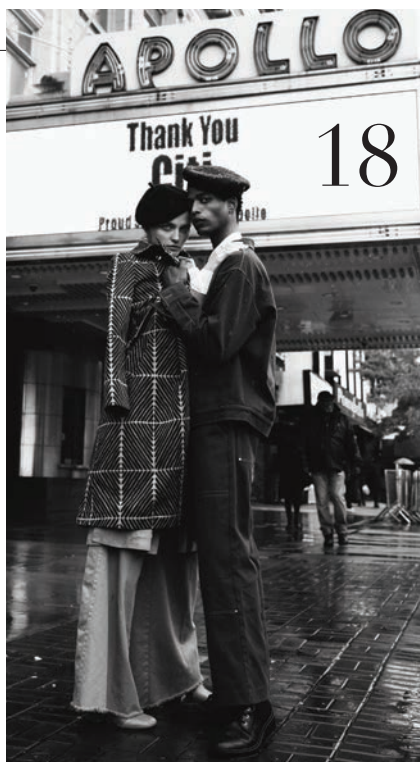
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WEARABLE art

World-class jewelry pieces, worthy of a museum viewing. By Diana Bruk

TO SOME EXTENT, all jewelry can be described as “art,” in that it is crafted with aesthetic intention. So what distinguishes an item meant for personal decoration from an exquisite piece of what people refer to as “wearable art”?

For Beth Carver Wees, a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s American Decorative Arts department, the answer is (somewhat) simple: “It’s about the design and virtuosity of the piece, but also about its manufacture. It doesn’t have to be made by an ‘artist’ to make it an artistic piece of jewelry, nor does it have to be costly. But there’s a difference between jewelry that’s cranked out by a machine and jewelry that’s made by hand in an artist’s studio.”

While mass production certainly disqualifies an item from the leagues of art, an item doesn’t need to necessarily be “one of a kind” for Franci Sagar, vice president of retail and brand development at the Museum of Arts and Design and the curator for the “Redefining Fine Jewelry” exhibit opening on Nov. 16. For her, what’s important is the item’s aesthetic value, along with how the artist uses his or her materials.

As an example, Sagar refers to some of the pieces by Lilly Fitzgerald, whose work is included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and who was featured in the Museum of Arts and Design’s “Redefining Fine Jewelry Spring 2017” exhibit (all of the items of which are presently on sale in the museum’s store). While some of her designs may be similar, her attention to detail and the passion that she puts into her luminescent pearls and radiant gemstones ensure no two pieces are ever exactly the same. Her blue moonstone



earrings set in a hand-built 22-karat gold cast with large round double-sided, rose-cut blue moonstones, for example, evoke the hypnotic beauty of the way moonlight brings out the shimmer and deep colors of the shifting sea at night.

Oftentimes, what distinguishes a piece of jewelry as art is its sculptural intricacy, and in that way the husband-and-wife design team of Roule & Co. is the apex of artistry. Known for its trademark wire-form metalwork,

Roule’s pieces, like a lot of architecture, seem simple at first. It’s only upon looking closely that you realize the intricacy of the construction and movement. The Shaker Teardrop earrings, with yellow spessartine encased in 18-karat gold wire, are an example of this type of stunning architectural jewelry.

Maria Soldier, daughter of acclaimed artist Alex Soldier and executive director of his appointment-only boutique in the heart of Manhattan, evokes the immortal words of Yves Saint Laurent when describing her understanding of jewelry as art. “Fashion is fleeting, style is eternal,” Saint Laurent observed. “It’s the same with jewelry,” says Soldier. “It’s not about what’s trending now. You can look at an Alex Soldier piece and immediately recognize it as Alex Soldier, just like you can look at a Rembrandt and immediately recognize it as Rembrandt. You never think, ‘Oh, Rembrandt was so last season.’” Alex Soldier, who hails from the remote Ural region in Russia, shifts seamlessly from sculpture to jewelry, and is the designer of the annual Princess Grace Award, which has been awarded to celebrate artistic innovation since 2009. His custom-made pieces have been worn by Princess Charlene of Monaco and Julie Andrews, among other epitomes of grace and

Facing page: Alex
Soldier Sunflower ring.
This page: Actress
Jessica Biel in Tiffany
& Co. Whispers of the
Rain Forest necklace
from the 2017 Tiffany
Blue Book at the 2017
Academy Awards.



class. A few of his signature styles include rings depicting sunflowers, which were inspired by the works of Vincent van Gogh, and jewelry depicting snails, which remind him to slow down and enjoy life. One of the classic Sunflower rings, which he makes five times a year, is frequently worn by actress Kate Upton. It is made of 18-karat white, yellow and rose gold studded with 2.5 carats of yellow, champagne, cognac, brown orange and black diamonds and 4.5 carats of green garnet.

The ability to add a modern touch to an ancient craft is what makes the work of Missouri-based jewelry artist Adam Foster so popular among Manhattan's elite. Foster began his career by making custom jewelry for his clientele before launching his own business. Following the enormous success of his first couture show, Foster's jewelry is now on sale at Neiman Marcus in Dallas, as well as Plan de Ville in NYC, which sources exclusive pieces from the world's best emerging fashion designers. One of the items in the boutique that best displays Foster's ability to pair Old World sensibility with modern technology is his Double Plume ring: strings of diamonds set in a fluid gold leaf pattern like dew in an enchanted forest inhabited by King Midas himself.

Those who are drawn to vintage pieces, whose beauty has withstood the test of time, should look no further than the carefully curated Mahnaz collection. Mahnaz, a scholar with a career in international affairs that submerged her in the cultures of distant lands, hunts down special jewelry pieces with her team for the avid collector, drawing inspiration from ethnic and modernist South Asian, European, Nordic and North and South American designs. The by-appointment-only gallery, which recently has opened to the public on the penthouse floor of the Pace Gallery, is particularly famous for its exquisite collection of pieces from the 1960s and 1970s. An aquamarine, diamond, pink tourmaline and 18-karat white-and-yellow gold bracelet, made in the 1970s by Giorgio Facchini, is a perfect example of Mahnaz's expertise in choosing pieces that remain modern and yet are evocative of the unabashed regality of the Disco Age.

For true romance, there is nothing finer than the legendary Parisian art house, Lalique. Founded in 1888 by René Lalique, the luxury brand quickly gained worldwide recognition for its refined glassmaking. But Lalique, who considered "jewelry as a piece of art as well as an emotion, a personal talisman that should live and express itself," is also recognized as one of the innovators of modern jewelry, who used crystals to sculpt delicate treasures that are timeless in elegance and style. One of the many stunning designs available in the Manhattan boutique is the L'Oiseau de Feu necklace. Part of the Vertiges collection and in collaboration with the Opéra National de Paris, the collection pays tribute to the Ballets Russes and, more specifically, Igor Stravinsky's iconic 1910 bal-



This page, top to bottom: tourmaline and 18-karat gold bracelet, by Haroldo Burle Marx, c. 1980s, from Mahnaz; Lilly Fitzgerald 22-karat gold moonstone earrings; Adam Foster Double Plume ring with diamonds. Facing page, top to bottom: Lalique L'Oiseau de Feu necklace and matching ring; Roule & Co Shaker Teardrop earrings.

PHOTOS: TOURMALINE BRACELET, COURTESY MAHNAZ; LILLY FITZGERALD MOONSTONE EARRINGS, COURTESY LILLY FITZGERALD; ADAM FOSTER DOUBLE PLUME RING, COURTESY ADAM FOSTER



PHOTOS: LALIQUE NECKLACE AND RING, COURTESY LALIQUE; ROULE & CO TEARDROP EARRINGS, COURTESY ROULE & CO



let, “The Firebird.” Inspired by its vibrant and extravagant stage costumes, the L’Oiseau de Feu necklace features hand-braided black silk with gold thread, and has three ropes of pearls mixed with carnelian beads and hand-engraved white jade, along with the fire opal, orange sapphires, diamonds and black jade that capture the blazing glow of the mythical beast. The fire opals on the matching earrings can be worn alone as studs or with the ear jacket.

Those who coveted the stunning \$2 million Whispers of the Rain Forest necklace that actress Jessica Biel wore at the 2017 Oscars are in luck, as the same item is available for purchase at Tiffany & Co. Created for Tiffany’s 2017 Blue Book Collection, The Art of the Wild, the 200-baguettes-diamond collar is made up of 350 individually hand-sculpted 18-karat yellow gold fronds. The effect is clearly mesmerizing, which is exactly what great art, in any form, is meant to do.