

Clockwise from top left: Inside the workshop of Ruth Tomlinson, one of the brands on offer at Greenwich St. Jewelers; Lauren Addison graduated baguette diamond ring in platinum; Sofia Kaman *toi et moi* double pear engagement ring with champagne and white diamonds. Opposite: Walters Faith hoops in 18-karat rose gold with baguette diamonds.



# SHAPE OF A TREND

Jewelers share their thoughts on older fancy cuts, which are currently all the rage thanks to a celebrity-fueled drive for distinctive designs.

BY BETH BERNSTEIN

**W**ith celebrities showing off engagement rings in fancy cuts that were considered *passé* for decades, and with designers working baguettes, princess cuts, marquises and other alternative shapes into their jewelry, the adage that “everything old is new again” continues to ring true.

Unconventional cuts have been trending for some time. These include kites, shields, octagons and portrait diamonds, as well as antique or antique-inspired styles like rose, old mine or cushion cuts. There’s also been renewed interest in shapes that slipped in and out of fashion throughout the 20th century, such as ovals, baguettes, princesses, trillions, marquises, emeralds and pears.

These trends speak to the desire for more variety and individuality in both engagement rings and everyday jewels — a preference for style over status, originality over convention. It’s also indicative of designers’ fertile

imaginations. Some mix different shapes in a single piece, creating a mosaic-like effect or a geometric look that appeals to a new generation of collectors and brides-to-be.

Modern jewelry lovers are also driven by sustainability concerns and the sentimentality of reimagining family heirlooms in brand new settings. Many designers use upcycled diamonds, taking them out of jewelry from periods when those older cuts were popular.

Here, 10 retailers and designers discuss the resurgence of fancy cuts: Jennifer Gandia, co-owner of Greenwich St. Jewelers in New York; Jonathan and Susan Landsberg of Landsberg Jewelers in New York; Ellen Hertz, owner of Max’s in St. Louis Park, Minnesota; Sofia Kaman of Sofia Kaman Fine Jewels in Santa Monica, California; Jennifer Dawes of Jennifer Dawes Design; Joanne Teichman, co-owner of Ylang 23 in Dallas, Texas; designer Lauren Addison; Laura Kitsos, owner of Gem Jewelry Boutique in Oak Park, Illinois; and designer Megan Thorne of Megan Thorne Fine Jewels.

**How much are celebrities driving the rejuvenation of previously unpopular diamond cuts in engagement rings?**

**GANDIA:** “Celebrity engagement rings influence consumer acceptance and attraction to these fancy shapes. For example, [singer] Demi Lovato’s emerald-cut engagement ring prompted the store to receive tons of calls inquiring about emerald-cut rings. When a celebrity picks a fancy shape, it creates allure and gives the consumer the permission to consider that shape for themselves. [Actress] Blake Lively’s oval-cut diamond ring had the same effect.”

**ADDISON:** “Ovals have had a surge in popularity over the past several years, and the reason is in part due to its beauty, as well as the fact that A-list celebrities such as Blake Lively, Hailey Bieber, Serena Williams and Ariana Grande have opted for this elongated, brilliant-cut stunner. Just as these women have revived ovals, Victoria Beckham, Paris Hilton and Cardi B have shone the spotlight on pear-

shaped diamonds with their memorable engagement rings. And although emerald cuts fall into a different category, as runners up to rounds, Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez and Amal Clooney have breathed new life into these geometric shapes, appealing to a more youthful customer.”

**What shapes are popular among today’s brides?**

**JONATHAN LANDSBERG:** “Emerald cuts have been pretty steady over the years, but ovals are back in a big way. Diamond cutters have really improved on exposing the beauty of these diamonds. Pear shapes are also in demand with new brides-to-be.”

**HERTZ:** “These stones are alluring to younger customers who were not as familiar with them throughout the 20th century. They are responding to the originality of designers and the range of styles, from the ultra-contemporary and clean line of [California-based brand] Rebecca Overmann to the vintage-inspired setting of [jeweler] Single Stone.”

**GANDIA:** “You can have a client picking a marquise and setting it into a solitaire, juxtaposing something that feels a little edgier and unique with a setting that’s very timeless and traditional. Then you have people who are taking these fancy shapes and doing something that is much

more elaborate or customized. No matter what they choose, it speaks [of] clients gaining more insight into what works for them and their lifestyles.”

**KAMAN:** “Many [fancy cuts] were in a north-south setting in the past and are now being set east to west, offering a more wearable, versatile and modern approach. My preference is always to use antique versions of these cuts when I can find them — not only because they are upcycled, but also because each of these stones has such a unique character, charm and scintillation. It imbues every piece with the one-of-a-kind quality my clients are seeking in an engagement ring.”

**What else is driving the revival of fancy shapes?**

**DAWES:** “Fancy cuts really started coming back into fashion about five years ago, when we started seeing more Art Deco influences in designs. I have always been very attracted to the more geometric cuts, as they offer a much different, streamlined and elegant approach to jewelry design. I have had a lot of fun rethinking the halo, cluster and simple solitaire with these unusual shapes, and so have my clients. As I have evolved, I have also witnessed my clients desiring more customized looks as they become more comfortable expressing themselves and abandoning convention for personalization.”

**In which jewelry categories — besides bridal — are fancy cuts most popular, and how are designers working with them?**

**TEICHMAN:** “Our clientele is always looking for something new and different, and while the most popular choices in stone cuts have historically been round or emerald, older cuts — including pears, princess cuts and ovals — have made a strong resurgence, especially when several are used together in one design. Currently, the sheer volume of different cuts being used by our designers is creating so much excitement. Suzanne Kalan has been a pioneer in the use of baguette-cut stones and is continuing newness with artful combinations of baguettes, rounds and princess cuts. Designer Irene Neuwirth defies ▶



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definition in which stone cuts she prefers, because her gems include all the cuts — from the basic shapes of different rounds, emeralds, ovals, pears and squares, to sophisticated faceting. Then she tosses it all into the most delicious pieces, which incorporate many cuts both old and new, [and that] fuels interest, especially from her one-of-a-kind collectors.”

**KITSOS:** “Designers have successfully brought back the use of the fancy-cut diamond in both accents and as the main stone for necklaces and earrings, as well as rings. I personally wear an emerald-cut diamond necklace I love. Geometric and asymmetrical looks are gaining in popularity due to imaginative compositions of the stones. Also, younger collectors are hugely into vintage and antique jewelry right now, so it makes sense that they would be drawn to stone cuts from the past.”

**How do the prices compare with round brilliant or cushion cuts?**

**ADDISON:** “The per-carat price of fancy-shaped diamonds is often much less than those of round brilliant-cut diamonds, and when you pair that with the fact that fancy shapes such as emerald cuts, marquise and pear-shaped diamonds usually appear larger than their carat weight, opting for a fancy-shape diamond provides our clients with added value.”

**THORNE:** “Marquise and pears are a great value compared to rounds when it comes to the price per carat. You might have to pay more for step cuts such as emerald baguette cuts, as they need to be of higher clarity due to how inclusions show in that style of faceting.”

**How do you bring the gems back to life in upcycling projects?**

**DAWES:** “Repurposing customer stones has always been a big part of my business. I love being able to reimagine sentimental stones into a more modern or adaptable setting. I find the best solution for designing around existing stones is to keep it simple. Simplicity speaks volumes. It also keeps the jewelry from getting dated and stale. I always give my clients the option to use their old settings as

Single Stone Monet bar pendant necklace with French-cut baguette diamonds in 18-karat yellow gold.



beautifully in an updated design. I suggest clients keep two design folders: one for general inspiration, favorite pieces and styles, irrespective of what stones they are wanting to reuse; and then second, pictures of pieces they like, taking into consideration what they actually own. Once they have put together these folders, we can get to work and create a piece that will preserve the gem and offer them a bespoke jewel that was created just for them.”

**What are the essential checklist points to cover in the conversation with the customer?**

**GANDIA:** “If a gem is being recycled, we look at it to see if it needs any recutting or repolishing due to any damage it might have incurred over time. We discuss this with the client and try to get the diamond out of the setting right away, so that way, we can help the client see the potential of the stone in other designs, as it may be coming out of something very dated that they don’t resonate with at all. We will talk to them about different designs and ways to work with the particular shape we are recycling that will be best for the stone, and that will also reflect each client’s unique personality and lifestyle.”

**SUSAN LANDSBERG:** “Some of the questions I ask my customers: Have you seen any photos or images that you like and want to replicate? What pieces do you wear every day, and do you want to add onto that with

a new piece, or create a piece that will be for a different part of the body? If you’re trying to achieve a layering look, what is your foundational piece that we should work off of? What color gold do you feel most comfortable in?”

## “THESE STONES ARE ALLURING TO YOUNGER CUSTOMERS WHO WERE NOT AS FAMILIAR WITH THEM THROUGHOUT THE 20TH CENTURY”

credit for their new piece. That helps offset the cost and recycles the gold in a positive way.”

**THORNE:** “One of the aspects of design that I am passionate about is working with clients’ gems and thoughtfully repurposing them rather than buying new ones. I have always believed that it’s the setting that feels dated. The stones themselves will most often work

**KAMAN:** “We start off trying to find an inspirational piece that incorporates the same shape [of] center stone. It’s harder to try and mimic a certain style design with a completely different-shaped center. The key is to embrace the shape and work with it to create a piece that is going to allow the stone’s most striking features to come to life and that our client will want to cherish and wear, that is relevant for today and enduring well into the future.” ■