

JEWELRY

FIVE FEMALE DESIGNERS CREATING JEWELRY THAT RESONATES WITH MODERN WOMEN

These formidable talents create pieces that both adorn and empower the wearer.

BY BETH BERNSTEIN



Female fine-jewelry pioneers like [Suzanne Belperron](#), [Coco Chanel](#), [Jeanne Toussaint](#), [Elsa Peretti](#), [Jeanne Boivin](#), [Paloma Picasso](#) and [Angela Cummings](#) broke down the barriers of what was once, ironically, a male-dominated industry. These talents paved the way for generations of women jewelry designers to come, which inspired me to explore the work of today's independent, irrepressible and spirited female makers. These women are bending the rules and are visionaries in their own right. They create [jewelry](#) not just as adornments but, more importantly, as means of empowering the wearer.

The five women highlighted here have varied backgrounds and experiences, but each is a formidable designer who mixes art, function and wearability in her work. And they all have helped shape the way contemporary women view and buy jewelry.

Anna Maccieri Rossi



Left: Anna Maccieri Rossi worked at [Cartier](#) and [Jaeger-LeCoultre](#) before launching her own brand (portrait courtesy of Rossi). Right: Maccieri Rossi's [18-karat yellow-gold, blue aventurine and diamond charm](#), 2021

[Anna Maccieri Rossi](#), who launched her jewelry collection in 2019, combines a background in fine watchmaking with an appreciation of Italian craftsmanship. Time is a recurring theme in her work. “The idea of time is precious: It must be lived, loved and celebrated with awareness and passion,” says the Italian-born Rossi, who interned at [Cartier](#) Paris and then moved to Switzerland to design jewelry and watches for [Jaeger-LeCoultre](#), going on to craft watches for such other renowned brands as [Tiffany & Co.](#) and [Bulgari](#).

This sparked her idea for her ingenious Carpe Diem collection of talismanic pendants and rings. They use a watch movement that allows a star and, most recently, a heart in the center to move every second, “reminding the wearer that each moment matters.”

Crafted from 18-karat gold, the pieces employ materials that often adorn watches — ceramics, enamel, hard stones, mother-of-pearl and aventurine glass. Maccieri Rossi uses these as well in her Night

& Day collection, which captures the different phases of a woman's life over a 24-hour period. "To design new pieces, it's important to understand and be respectful of the techniques of the past, remembering where we came from and staying connected to our roots," the designer says. "From this springs fresh, exciting and experimental ideas and ignites the imagination for pieces that are relevant today yet always timeless."

Emily Weld Collins



Left: Emily Weld Collins took metalsmithing classes as a hobby before pursuing jewelry design professionally (portrait by Olivia Steuer). Right: [Emerald square evil eye necklace, 2022](#)

While attending boarding school in New England, where she enjoyed visiting antique shops, [Emily Weld Collins](#) began collecting heavy gold-colored [fashion jewels](#). She came to appreciate jewelry's ability to serve as wearable history.

After college, Collins moved to New York City, where, after a brief stint in advertising, she says, "I started metalsmithing classes on the side as a hobby, learned about the construction of jewelry and classic goldsmithing techniques and ended up loving it. I was offered a job at a small fine-jewelry company in the city and learned so much about high-quality jewels and the importance of good craftsmanship. That experience inspired me to get my graduate gemologist degree at [GIA](#) and then move toward starting my own company."

Collins's collection, launched in 2021, is inspired by mythology and the legend and lore of past cultures. It consists of modern interpretations of historical talismans, amulets and ancient coins. She adds color by way of natural gemstones as charms to wear with the gold pieces or set into the motifs.

Marlo Laz



Left: Jesse Marlo Lazowski launched her first jewelry brand when she was 13 (portrait by Katherine Goguen). Right: [Marlo Laz gold and turquoise Porte Bonheur lucky coin charm pendant necklace, 2019](#)

Jesse Marlo Lazowski launched her firm, [Marlo Laz](#), in 2014, but her successful and widely acclaimed brand wasn't her first foray into jewelry design. Instilled with an early appreciation of artisanal craftsmanship by her great aunt, an antique jewelry adviser, she launched her first company, Shop Girl, in 2003, when she was just 13 years old, with a line of bead necklaces that were sold at a store near her home.

Her passion for jewelry as well as her travels to 40-plus countries, inform her compelling pieces, which are elegantly bohemian, speaking to life experiences and meaningful relationships. A nuanced balance of different textures and vibrantly colored gemstones imbue her pieces with a powerful and distinctive personality.

Karma El Khalil



Left: Part of the appeal of Karma El Khalil's jewelry is that many pieces are one-of-a-kind (portrait by Joe Kesrouani). Right: [Lilac Nova earrings in lavender quartz, iolite and tanzanite](#), 2024

Karma El Khalil originally studied to be an adolescent psychologist. She found, however, that she expressed herself best through drawing, which led her to jewelry design. Her New York-based brand, launched in 2004 and featuring geometric, angular forms and colorful stones, has developed a cult following.

El Khalil speaks with passion about the collection. “Through design, I celebrate every part of the woman’s body by drawing light to it, framing or inviting the eye to certain areas, by keeping others private, by allowing certain parts to be partially seen in order to create mystery for the rest,” she says. “My designs exude a strong character, sharpness and boldness. Many of my pieces are one-of-a-kind, which appeals to women who appreciate acquiring pieces that nobody else owns.”

Her jewelry is also characterized by movement and flexibility, so that it embraces the woman’s body. It often has a secret element, a detail that only the person wearing it knows about and can enjoy. Combining the vibrant colors of India, 1970s Pop art and antique and vintage inspirations, Khalil creates joyful pieces that have captured the attention of global retailers and consumers alike.

Walters Faith



Left: Mollie Faith Good and Stephanie Walters Abramow, of Walters Faith, have updated classic jewelry staples (portrait by Andrew Egan). Right: [Walters Faith 18-karat rose-gold and diamond jumbo chain link bracelet, 2020](#)

When Mollie Faith Good and Stephanie Walters Abramow launched [Walters Faith](#), in 2013, other designers were featuring motif-driven jewelry. Good and Abramow decided to take another path, challenging themselves to reinterpret simple, familiar classics like [link chains](#) and [hoop earrings](#).

“When we first started Walters Faith,” says Abramow, “Mollie designed with the four Cs in mind: a customer who is classic, cool, conservative and contemporary. Today, we fill in what’s missing, based on price point, category and novelty.”

The duo is also known for jewelry that projects a certain effortlessness, updating wardrobe staples with elements like pavé-diamond details and elevating them into pieces that can be worn for any occasion.

Each new collection is named for a member of the Bloomsbury Set, the eclectic early-20th-century group of bohemian English writers, philosophers and artists. “Their questioning of accepted ideas continues to influence modern attitudes in everything from literature to feminism,” says Abramow. “We relate strongly to the concept of molding conventional ideas and forms to create something unexpected and distinctively contemporary.”

Beth Bernstein is a jewelry journalist and author of five books, including the upcoming Jewelry's Shining Stars: The Next Generation, 45 Visionary Designers (ACC Artbooks, May 2024).

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