



John Iversen Hydrangea bracelet in oxidized sterling silver and 18-karat yellow gold.

MIX MASTERS

Whether it's gold, silver or platinum, the trend of combining different metal colors is heating up. **By Beth Bernstein**

Plain yellow gold is here to stay, but mixed-metal looks are nudging their way into the trends we can expect to see for the rest of 2024. Designers are embracing combinations of metal colors in a single piece, and retailers are showing their clients how to mix solid metals in their bracelet and neck stacks. Here, three retailers share how and why they are putting the pedal to the metal.

A study in contrast

The mixed-metal trend witnessed tremendous popularity during the 1990s, and artisan designers have successfully been creating such pieces since

then as part of their aesthetic, particularly in high-karat gold and oxidized silver. Recently, more and more designers have found it necessary to combine yellow gold with silver due to the rise in the price of gold, while others are doing it to add dimension or tactile interest to their styles.

“Mixing different-colored metals gives depth and can accentuate the nuances that make a piece special,” explains Laura Freedman, founder and CEO of Broken English Jewelry in Santa Monica, California, and New York.

Quadrum Gallery in Boston, Massachusetts, represents “several artists that have been mixing metals for a long time,” says director ●



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Sia Maravelias. “Each of these artists uses the contrast as a key element in the design and composition of their collection. Today, we are seeing emerging designers try new elements and combinations, which is also helping ignite the trend.”

Ready to mingle

Which companies are at the forefront of this aesthetic? Pomellato and Bulgari are high on the list, according to Anne Russell, executive vice president of Hamilton Jewelers, which has stores in Princeton, New Jersey, and Palm Beach, Florida. “And of course, David Yurman, one of the original designers to mix silver with yellow gold. The combination is practically synonymous with their brand.”

Maravelias cites Kate Maller, Annie Fensterstock, John Iversen, Amáli Jewelry, Ananda Khalsa, Pat Flynn, Jamie Joseph, and Variance as brands that work primarily in multiple, contrasting metals. Those that do best in Freedman’s store include Shay, Milamore, Prasi, Kloto, and Foundrae.

Both Freedman and Maravelias find that clients looking for versatility and stackability are the ones most drawn to mixed metals. Sometimes it’s a slightly edgier customer, says Freedman. Maravelias observes that for “clients who wish to stay current with their jewelry choices,” this is “an easy trend to make one’s own, with so many wonderful options.”

Making a good team

While 18-karat yellow gold and oxidized silver is the most popular pairing, says Maravelias, “many artists do work exclusively in gold, mixing karat and color with beautiful contrast.”



At Broken English, “our best sellers are combinations of yellow and white gold,” reports Freedman. Russell, meanwhile, has seen different combos succeed at different price points: sterling silver pieces with yellow gold accents at the more affordable end of the spectrum, and “more of a high-jewelry piece that uses platinum to offset a rare gemstone at the high end.”

As far as types of jewelry, “rings seem to be the easiest to understand,” adds Russell. “We have seen platinum heads and 18-karat yellow gold shanks becoming very popular in rings.”

From top: Bulgari Serpenti tubogas watch in tricolor 18-karat gold; Rainbow K Eyet ring in 14-karat gold with diamonds. Opposite, from top: Foundrae jewelry on model; Kate Maller Aspen cuff in oxidized argentium silver, 18- and 22-karat yellow gold, and diamonds.



IMAGES: FOUNDRAE; KATE MALLER; BULGARI; RAINBOW K

For Maravelias, “mixed metals work best in more bold designs, such as a statement ring or large cuffs, the mix lending character and beauty, while the versatility of silver and gold together make a winning combo for everyday staples.”

Certain metal pairings work well with either gemstone accents or larger center stones.

“Diamonds and mixed metals are always desirable, but it’s all about the application,” comments Freedman. “I wouldn’t get bogged down by rules, but rather see where...the designer’s imagination takes them.”

Maravelias concurs. “There are no rules in the alchemy of mixed metals, but some gemstones do thrive in a multitude of settings. Diamonds top the list with the sparkle of the sun in gold or the stars in silver. Multiple gemstones feel at home in any metal, while pyrite stands out as a gem that seems to be simply destined for a mixed-metal masterpiece, its own color spanning both gold and silver naturally.”

FIVE DISPLAY IDEAS FOR YOUR STORE

- 1 Create a display in which you stack different metals to showcase how good the colors look together.
- 2 Try to add in pieces that have textural contrast and dimensional interest as well, with details like oxidized silver accenting the gold.
- 3 When in doubt, show pieces with diamond accents. Diamonds highlight all the metal colors.
- 4 In your marketing photos, pile on different metal combinations and work with your customers on building their own personalized wardrobes.
- 5 Show one statement piece with artistic design and handmade craftsmanship that your customers can either wear alone or layer with other items.