

# FINE ART CRAFT

innovative works in clay, glass & much more

## Adornment by Design

Today's jewelers create a stunning variety of works

The oldest known form of personal adornment, jewelry often indicated status in ancient cultures. It has been used as currency and worn as a protective talisman or to heal illness. Today, fine-art jewelry's function is mostly aesthetic. And in the hands of innovative modern artisans, it is an astonishingly versatile means of expression. Jewelers are using their imaginations, diverse materials, and artistic inspiration to create one-of-a-kind pieces collectors will cherish for years to come.

Trends can spread faster than rumor of a celebrity scandal, but finely crafted works of jewelry are timeless. Whether worn daily or for special occasions, jewelry lifts the spirit and showcases an individual's sense of style.

According to several gallery owners, despite the current economy, designers with a gift for transforming both traditional and nontraditional metals and stones into stunning objects are still very much in demand. Trends in the world of jewelry include using more unusual materials, using traditional materials in new ways, and offering a broader range of design choices than ever—from romantic stylishness to bold, sculptural forms, from minimalist refinement to Hollywood-style flash.

Amy Logan of Squash Blossom in Vail, CO, sees an uptick in the appeal of Chalcedony and calcites, especially the lavenders, greens, and blues. "Hoop earrings, of course, continue to be hot," she says, noting that many designers are now creating add-ons—secondary elements both with and without stones that dangle from the hoop. "Cost seems high on the list of considerations for buyers today, so to enhance a piece they already have is very attractive."

Stacking rings are also popular, with women wearing several narrow bands, often with small set or inset stones. "Like hoops, you can add to them," says Logan. The rings can be changed or rearranged to match any outfit or mood. "They're fun," she continues. "Fun seems to be a major trend these days—something new and light that lifts the spirit but doesn't break the bank!"

Mixed metal work, often unadorned, is also on the rise in popularity. Jewelry designers are texturing and oxidizing sterling silver. Many who typically work only with gold are now mixing it with silver to keep prices in check, making it more affordable for collectors to continue to acquire pieces. Stainless steel is making an appearance, too. Mixed-metal pieces tend to be clean, elegant, and understated.



▲ "WATERLILIES" NECKLACE BY LARISSA PODGORETZ, MADE OF 18K GOLD, PAINTED LIMOGES ENAMEL, AND PEARL, AT DEL MANO GALLERY.



▲ EARRINGS BY ROBIN MARTIN-CUST, MADE OF RECYCLED STEEL, 18K GOLD, BLACK PEARLS, AND DIAMONDS, AT PATINA GALLERY.



▲ BROOCH BY SANDRA ENTERLINE, MADE OF OXIDIZED SILVER, 18K GOLD, AND DIAMOND SLICES, AT PATINA GALLERY.

“Collectors are looking for top design and craftsmanship more than trends,” says Kim Alderwick of Patina Gallery in Santa Fe, NM, adding that she finds price is far from the most important decision-making component. “In addition to cut and polished precious and semiprecious stones, we are seeing new uses of these materials,” she says. For example, sheets and slices of industrial diamonds are being incorporated into fine-art jewelry, and chunks of raw stones, such as aquamarine, are used to “reveal the uniqueness of the stone as it comes from the earth.” Rocks such as granite and schist “are being used in artful ways,” Alderwick continues, “as are beach stones, paper, wool felt, and even leather parchment.”

On the West Coast, Jan Peters of del Mano Gallery in Los Angeles reports, “Our clients have always liked interesting, out-of-the-ordinary stones. Our artists produce very unusual combinations featuring a variety of materials, such as glass, wood, beads, and ethnic elements integrated in exceptional ways.”

The gallery owners agreed that design and materials are paramount. It’s an exciting time in jewelry making, with innovative combinations of metals, stones, and other materials—from fossils and dinosaur bones to semiprecious stones hand-cut and shaped to enhance their natural patterns, like the markings seen in a piece of polished Peruvian opal.

For those who adore their sparkle and still want a collector’s piece that will

impress all who see it, sensational work with precious gems is still being created and likely always will be. The human desire for beauty and personal adornment has a long history and a bright future. Fine-art jewelry will always offer a means of personal expression and appreciable value, combined with the satis-

faction of wearing a singular work of art.  
—ROSEMARY CARSTENS

Rosemary Carstens, editor of the award-winning webzine *FEAST*, is writing a book about Mexico City artist Annette Nancarrow, a contemporary of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.



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▲ EARRINGS BY JANIS KERMAN, MADE OF 18K GOLD, PERUVIAN OPAL, CITRINE, SMOKY QUARTZ, AND TIGERSEYE, AT DEL MANO GALLERY.