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THE ARTIST AS JEWELLER

Jewellery designed by artists and architects is enjoying a resurgence, but this trend has a rich history, says **Bethan Ryder**



Left to right: A Sally Mackereth ring for Eiger; pieces by Picasso, Man Ray and Alexander Calder available at Louisa Guinness Gallery

Louisa Guinness, whose Mayfair gallery specialises in jewellery designed by artists, cites Alexander Calder as the instigator of his generation of artists' dalliance with jewellery. "He would stay at friends' houses and, not being able to sleep, would go downstairs and raid their scissors, knives and forks and build these things into [jewellery] pieces," she says. "They became popular, so he staged an exhibition, but it was during the war and so the pieces didn't sell particularly well."

Today it's a different story, as prices for Calder's jewellery have rocketed, with single pieces fetching up to \$650,000 at auction and sparking a renewed interest in jewellery by artists.

Calder made his pieces himself, often out of non-precious metals, while Picasso, Max Ernst and Man Ray collaborated with goldsmiths – Parisian Francois Hugo and Milan-based Montebello – to make their

jewellery work. It was during an exhibition of vintage artists' jewellery in 2003 that Guinness, who is married to fine art dealer Ben Brown, recognised the lack of contemporary pieces. She approached artists including Anish Kapoor and Conrad Shawcross, and sells their work alongside pieces she has acquired by artists including Ernst and Picasso.

Or how about some jewellery designed by a leading architect? "After making tools to kill, cook and eat with, we made things to string around our necks," says furniture designer Terence Woodgate. Thanks to his new jewellery brand Eiger, now you can wear a miniature design by the likes of Ben Kelly, designer of Manchester's legendary Hacienda club; hip furniture designer Tomoko Azumi; or architect Sally Mackereth, of Studio Mackereth. The results are pleasingly contemporary, with strong forms and striking, bold colours, and

no single piece costs more than £310.

Many of the Eiger pieces, perhaps unsurprisingly, exhibit qualities that are visible in the products of the creator's day job. For instance, Tomoko Azumi's Arête bracelet shares the simple refined geometry that is apparent in some of her furniture. Likewise, architect Sally Mackereth's Oscar ring, with its beautiful disc of malachite, was inspired by her architect heroes, Brazil's Oscar Niemeyer and Italy's Carlo Scarpa, and demonstrates her love of organic forms. "My work has always had a sense of clean, simple lines," says Mackereth, "but with a bold use of colour and textured materials. I like juxtapositions of complementary materials, such as concrete and cashmere, timber and box calf leather. So the mix of gold and malachite made sense to me."

Also persuading diverse talents to consider jewellery design is Nadja Swarovski, who, upon taking the

reins of her family's crystal company, promptly began canny partnerships with global art and design names.

This autumn, Atelier Swarovski launched jewellery by artist Arik Levy and furniture design duo Fredrikson Stallard. Levy's Rock Craters range of jewellery features asymmetric, organic shapes echoing his large sculptures, in powder-coated and corten steel. Patrik Fredrikson and Ian Stallard, meanwhile, rescaled and adapted their designs to create ergonomic pieces for the body. The pieces in the duo's Space Flower range for Swarovski are characterised by reflective, mirror-polished domes combined with different cuts of crystal.

Ultimately, perhaps the appeal of jewellery designed by artists and architects, is that it is a way to connect with someone whose work you've admired on a grander scale. "The beauty is," says Louisa Guinness, "that these pieces have real personality."



Left to right: A bracelet by Belgian artist Pol Bury; pendants by Anish Kapoor and by Max Ernst, all at Louisa Guinness Gallery. Far right: A ring by designers Fredrikson Stallard for Swarovski