

natural BEAUTY

NOT-SO-TEPID TEMPERATURES, SOME SNOW, and a misty fog—the weather outside during VicenzaOro1 reminded visitors that Mother Nature is, indeed, queen, and sometimes the queen is not so kind. Nonetheless, inside at the year's first Vicenza show (January 15-22), its most fashion-forward exhibitors paid reverent homage to Madre Natura.

Flora and fauna themes were everywhere, organic materials proliferated, gems au naturel were ubiquitous, and amoebic shapes seemed to procreate.

First and foremost, there was an omnipresent primeval flavor in the finest collections. Those of us who remember Italian jewelry from a decade ago recognize what a departure this is from what was once distinguishable as typical classic Italian style. The primordial feeling is



Roberto Coin "Nature" collection enamel and 18k gold jewelry. Model: Urban Management



Vendorafa 18k gold leaf pins



Piero Milano enamel flower-themed pendant



Giorgio Visconti butterfly necklace



Rajola. Model: Urban Management



Maria De Toni ring from the "Rainbow Butterfly" collection



Annamaria Cammilli pendant



Pippo Perez "Capri Snake" enamel bracelet



Jarretiere "Fiori" rings in three colors of 18k gold



Pasquale Bruni "Prato Fiorito" earrings in 18k gold and diamonds

Balocchi Preziosi "Fiorella" ring in pink quartz, ruby, and emerald

trend talk: vicenza trade fair

Pontevecchio diamond pendant



Salvatore Bersani organically shaped 18k gold necklace and earrings



K. di Kuore "Galuchat" stingray cuff bracelets



Vaid organically shaped hammered gold link ring

Palmiero "Petunia" ring



La Nouvelle Bague bangles and rings from the "Flowers of India" collection

sometimes evident in the use of organic materials like ebony, fossilized ivory, bone, and horn, but other times in the rough cut of gemstones.

For Italian goldsmiths, this fair, in fact, marks the beginning of the rough cut diamond at its best. By and large, they seem to think it's wisest to introduce the natural beauty of rough cut diamonds to the universal market via men's lines—for example, at La Nouvelle Bague and Leo Pizzo.

As inspiration, natural forces also seem to be coming into play when it comes to new Italian designs and themes: the sun and its rays, cosmic processes, and water power, for example. Designers showed innovative lines with diamond sun rays, comets, rain, and waterfalls.

Like last year, the number one motif continues to be the flower, with every imaginable Fiori collection available, especially roses.

The second most popular theme? Mother Nature's creatures such as butterflies, ladybugs, frogs and, lest you thought otherwise, the snake is still here to stay. Cobra interpretations slithered here, there, and everywhere.

One of the strongest trends in Vicenza was what is called "free links" by Paola De Luca, creative director for Trends & Jewellery Forecasting, Arezzo, Italy. The link necklaces, bracelets, and earrings—almost always in yellow gold—are organic and asymmetrical. De Luca says the trend of nature, very strong in Italy, is a global one as well, going forward in 2006 and into '07. She notes that it is a sophisticated direction and points to all elements of the nature-inspired: unfinished raw stones, organic surfaces, and bamboo elements. De Luca is particularly confident about rough diamonds. "They will come to the fore and be a major trend. Everything uncut and not excessively defined will be important."

On a final note, orange as an accent color is trending: orange sapphire, zircon and topaz, as well as peach and apricot moonstones, corals, tangerine enamels, and leather cords in everything from salmon to burnt red-yellows. Some see this enchantment with orange as yet another step on the nature path that Italians are walking because it is a warm, earthy color, reflecting the tones of sunshine, mountains, and desert sands.