

DESIGNERS



Woman to Woman

Judith Ripka jewelry: beauty, confidence, style.
By Lorraine DePasque



WOMEN EVERYWHERE WANT HER JEWELRY.

They see ads for bangles and other baubles in countless publications, from the style pages of *The New York Times* to the glossy pages of *Town & Country* and, of course, *Accent*. Recently, even my gynecologist confided to me that if he didn't buy his wife, Joanne, a Judith Ripka-something for her upcoming birthday, he'd be in the doghouse for the whole next year! So what is it about Judith Ripka jewelry that inspires such an intense gotta-have-it craving in female consumers of almost every age?

Indeed, it's the jewelry itself: beautiful, high quality, and versatile—the ultimate luxurious yet understated accessory for the lifestyle of today's woman. Ripka herself, who started the New York-based company over 30 years ago, describes her collection as “timeless and classic with a modern twist.” The designer credits her mother, a couturier, for teaching her to see the beauty in even the most common detail. And her father, she tells us, reinforced in his daughter the idea that she could do anything, often telling her: “The harder you work, the luckier you get.” Here, in an exclusive interview with *Accent*, this internationally recognized designer, whose jewelry is sold in over 275 stores worldwide, talks further about her influences, the jewelry she loves to design and the women she makes it for.

All that glitters: Rings from the “Monaco” collection in 18k gold with diamonds, sapphires and colored gemstones. Above: Pieces from the “Disc Pendant” collection in 18k gold and diamonds featuring white onyx, black onyx and turquoise.

PHOTOS: COURTESY JUDITH RIPKA

Clearly, your parents inspired you, but your line is also so fashionable. Do any clothing designers, past or present, influence your collections?

Coco Chanel, Valentino, Armani and Karl Lagerfeld. Fine jewelry is a fashion accessory, and I must know what the clothing designers are introducing so that I can make jewelry that complements their designs.

Tell us about your Fall/Winter 2008 jewelry collections.

One of my favorites is “Aurora”, inspired by the Aurora Borealis. During a recent vacation in northern Canada, I saw this luminous display in the night sky and I was captivated by the beauty. So I immediately began sourcing stones that resembled the same brilliance, luster, iridescence and mystery that I saw. This collection features rare pink opal, pink sapphire, and white moonstone hand-cut cabochon gemstones consciously placed in a montage to evoke the same magical luminosity of the aurora light.

If a woman is a new Judith Ripka collector, what’s the perfect first purchase?

My “Pearl Necklace System”. It’s a strand of pearls with a detachable 18k gold loop-and-toggle closure. I designed it in 1986 and it laid the foundation for my distinctive style, as this one pivotal piece is based on fluidity and a system of interchangeable components. This makes it

more beautiful, more confident.

You’re on the road a lot doing public appearances. What pieces of Judith Ripka jewelry do you always travel with?

I love to wear my “Ambrosia” bracelet and my “Monaco” rings because they’re happy and fun with colorful gemstones; they are extremely wearable all the time.

What’s your personal favorite piece of jewelry?

My engagement ring, which I designed myself. My husband Ron bought me the diamond and two very rare emeralds, and I created what I think is the perfect ring! Although I mix and match my jewelry every day and always try to wear something different, it is that one ring that makes me smile like no other because it is a great symbol of love and commitment to my friend and husband—who is also co-chairman and co-CEO and the backbone of the company.

Is there something your customers don’t know about you that you’ll share with Accent readers?

Well, I run at a very fast pace, but I make time for three things each day: quality time with my husband, a walk with my dog, Pookie, and calls to my three sons, David, Brian and Peter, just to say hello.

You are involved in a lot of charity work. Tell us about that.

I enjoy designing custom commemorative jewelry for charity organizations, with my most recent for Autism Speaks. I have also designed custom pieces for the United States

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versatile for wear from day into evening.

How important do you think it is that you’re a woman designing for women?

Very important. I design for every woman. I believe that a woman is never too young or too old to wear jewelry because adding jewelry to an outfit makes a woman feel like she shines—more glamorous,

“Aurora” collection cuff in 18k gold with pink opals, pink sapphires and diamonds.



Holocaust Museum, the Mothers’ Voices AIDS Organization, and the Long Island Philharmonic. My family and I support many charities, including the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation, which is very near and dear to my heart.

What would you like to do next in your business?

I would like to evolve into a total lifestyle brand, which ultimately means designing other products such as handbags, scarves, sunglasses, and tabletop items. ♦