

SILVER SIZZLES, HIGH PRICE POINTS FIZZLE Fine Jewelry in Las Vegas

As the challenging economy continues to test the mettle of the fine jewelry industry worldwide, the newest collections for fall/holiday are thoughtfully targeting the uncertain financial circumstances of American consumers. Despite this year's decreased attendance at the three fine jewelry shows in Las Vegas—*Luxury & Premiere*, *Couture*, and *JCK*—they continue to be the most important domestic fine jewelry fairs in America, where key jewelry retailers shop for the all-important fourth quarter.



“Nature Collection” ring in 18k rose gold. H Stern

So Transparent

One gem, especially, emerged as a clear favorite: rock crystal. Part of the quartz family, it showed up in many new collections, particularly from fashion trendsetters like *H. Stern*, *ELLE Jewelry*, and *Penny Preville*. Big chunks of polished and rough rock crystal dangled from neck chains and charm bracelets and topped uber-sized cocktail rings and cuffs. In these difficult economic times, designers contend that a no-colour gem like clear crystal—also white topaz from a few, such as *Steve Lagos* and *Suzy Landa*—is perfect for right now, as it's relatively more affordable than many other stones and also because it's a safe colour choice.



Quartz ring.
Gintare

White topaz and gold pendant.
Suzy Landa



White sapphire and diamond studs in pink gold. Alberian & Aulde

Rock crystal and milky aqua pendants.
Penny Preville



Talismans

With the industry hopeful that the economy will begin to recover and holiday sales will be better this year than in 2008, good luck gems and charms were ubiquitous. One after another, manufacturers premiered their versions of talismans, amulets, and charms with inspiring (and sometimes reassuring) messages. *Preville's* new 18-karat gold “Healing Stone” pendants, for example, feature gems such as rock crystal and milky aqua, both believed through the ages to bring good fortune.



“Lucky” ring in 18k. Christian Tse



Message charms.
Heather B Moore



18k earrings
symbolizing good luck
and prosperity. Tresor



Talisman necklace.
Meira T

Silver Shines

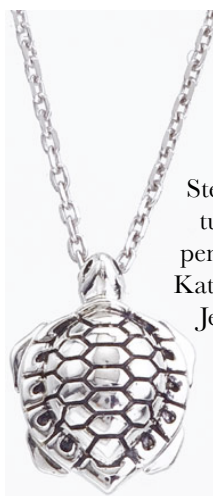
As business people realize, of course, one can't rely solely on talismans and fetishes for success and, instead, must work to create their own good luck. This year an abundance of jewelry designers decided to do that by entering the sterling silver arena. And so, unlike never before at these fine jewelry shows, silver was a shining star. In an effort to keep prices at retail accessible, there is huge momentum behind the precious metal, with brands that never before worked in it now devoting key collections to silver that shiny or oxidized, polished or textured. One of the most notable was Italian mega-brand *Roberto Coin*, who is offering two different silver finishes (high polish and darkened "chocolate silver") in his new "Capri Plus Collection," starting around \$1,200 at retail.



Sterling silver necklace.
Tara Moor



Sterling silver and
aquamarine cuff.
Daniel by Yvel



Sterling
turtle
pendant.
Katherine
Jetter



Oxidized silver and
diamond earrings.
Leslie Greene



"Capri Plus Collection" bangles
(shown in 18k) also come in silver.
Roberto Coin

Showing reasonably priced jewelry this year is also important for designer *Leslie Greene*, who invested heavily in her sterling silver collections, which she premiered a year earlier: “My stores want a range, but \$500 retail is a big request.” *Greene*, like *Coin*, made a name for herself in the 18-karat-gold market—especially with self-purchasing females—but, to address the current economic crisis, she features just as much diamond-accented silver as gold. Most of *Greene*’s silver is high-polished light coloured, although some pieces are oxidized—another big trend in silver at the recent jewelry shows. *ELLE Jewelry*’s design director, *Claire Vessot*, notes, “We’re having such a great run because right now everyone wants something they can sell for under \$1,000.”

Dark Moment

The trend toward darkened and oxidized metals began to gain momentum last year, with high-profile designers like *Gurhan Orhan* and others showing extensive collections in blackened silver. Darkened golds also began to make an appearance, especially from Italy, with fashion powerhouses like *Damiani*, *Mattioli*, and *Pippo Perez*.



Oxidized silver
“Dew Drop” cuff with
18k droplets.
Rebecca Overmann



Circle studs in
blackened silver. Belle
Brooke Designs



Medium sized
earrings with
blackened metal.
Sethi Couture

Just as the fall ready-to-wear runways leaned heavily toward “safe black” clothing, so, too, do the collections of leading designer jewelry collections. As darkened metals continue, black gemstones also gain strength, making for a preferred and perfect tone-on-tone look. From black diamonds and pearls to black sapphires, onyx, spinel, tourmaline quartz and, in some more artisanal cases, black slate, druzy and ebony wood—they’re all important. Perhaps the gem trend echoes the underlying mood, but black is the strongest colour statement this year, bar none. A few edgier collections at the shows featured black gems in rose gold, among them, lines from *Sethi Couture* and *Damiani*.



Cocktail ring.
Deborah Pagani



Black
“Reverse Fit”
earrings. Yael
Sonia



Black and white pavé
diamond ring, Rhonda
Faber Greene Designs

The “safe journey” often took the form of black-and-white mixes as well. Depending on the gems selected, the contrast gems selected imparted either a dressy evening look or a more casual daytime look—which, frankly, according to retailers, since holiday, has been doing better at retail with their customers. So for day dressing, black gems often were mixed with white agate, white opal, mother-of-pearl and cultured pearls.

“Eclipse” sterling silver bangles use ancient metalworking techniques from India. Maya Jewels



Plenty of Pearls

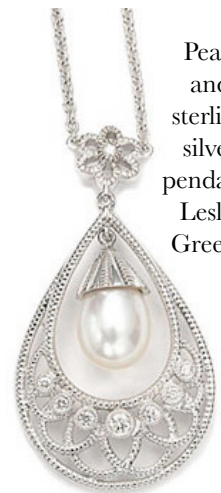
Pearls are poised for a comeback. Some say a big comeback. New pearl interpretations have already made a strong statement in fashion jewelry for spring, and *John Galiano* showed plenty of pearls with *Dior’s* recent cruise collection. Not to mention America’s newest fashion icon, Michelle Obama, is influencing the trend toward daytime pearls, especially pearl necklaces. Following such arbiters of taste, the jewelry industry is immersed in making collections that carry pearls of all sizes and in all configurations. Of course, the usual pearl suspects like *Honora*, *Mikimoto*, and *Utopia* launched interesting selections, but more designers definitely jumped on the bandwagon.



Gray baroque Tahitian pearl necklace with diamonds. Yvel



Mother-of-pearl and sterling silver ring. Bliss Gioielli



Pearl and sterling silver pendant. Leslie Greene

The lustrous gem showed up in all key jewelry categories: cocktail rings, big cuffs (usually open and airy), medium-sized daytime earrings, large-ish stud earrings, pendants, and charm bracelets. *Coin* himself, who just premiered a plethora of big dome rings, says, “I believe this is the year of the cocktail ring.”

Key Concepts:

- lower price points
- sterling silver
- pearls and mother-of-pearl
- black, white, and black-and-white gems
- oxidized surfaces, especially on sterling silver
- daytime designs, less dressy
- good luck charms and talismans

- The next Las Vegas shows will be:
- *Luxury & Premiere*: June 3-4, 2010
 - *Couture*: June 2-7, 2010
 - *JCK Las Vegas*: June 5-8, 2010