

The glitterati once seemed satisfied to accessorize purely in gold and platinum. Today, statement silver is taking the red carpet by storm. Why such strong and renewed interest? Partially because silver speaks to fashion's return to low-profile luxury. "We're dressing up again, but we're not overdressed," says David Wolfe, creative director of The Doneger Group, New York, a leading international authority on fashion, color, and trend forecasting. "It's about deluxe without being flashy," he says, adding that clothes are becoming more simple and classic, making big, bold, uber-jewelry, such as oversized necklaces, even more important.

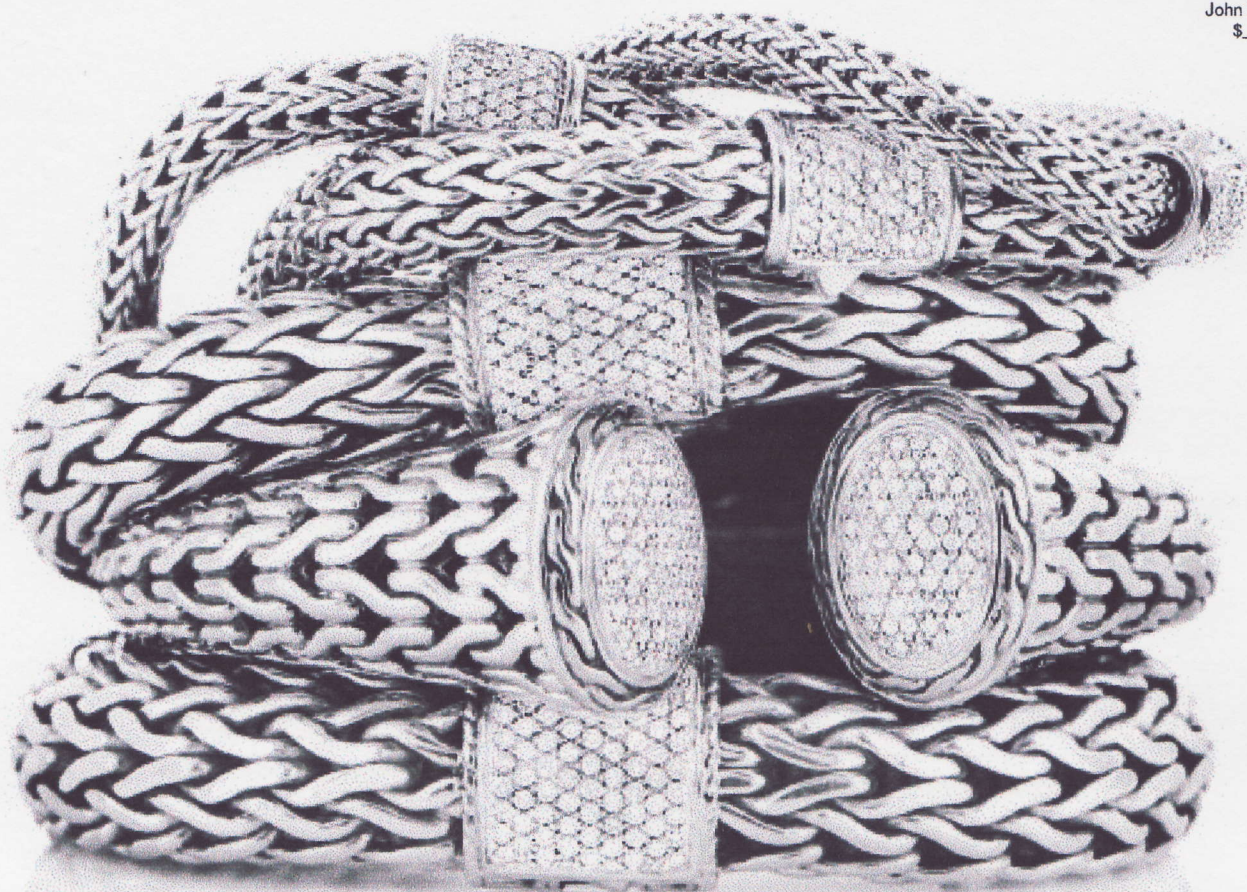
A Sterling Choice

BY LORRAINE D. PASQUE

"In these uncertain economic times, dramatically-sized jewelry is doable in sterling silver," says Michael Barlerin, director of the Silver Marketing Initiative (SMI) of The Silver Institute. Like gold and platinum, silver has intrinsic value, and because silver's price doesn't fluctuate as much as other precious metals, many recognizable names in jewelry design who never before worked in the metal have recently chosen to work in silver.

Bracelet by
John Hardy
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The Perfect Accessory

Helena Krodel, director of media and special events for the Jewelry Information Center, New York, says designers are pushing the envelope in terms of scale, creating cuffs and cocktail rings that often look like miniature pieces of sculpture. "Big cocktail rings are especially strong," notes Krodel. Two other major silver jewelry trends this year are textured surfaces and colored silver, especially black silver. Krodel notes that hammered and scratched surfaces are strong, infusing a piece with a craft-like, artisanal feeling. In terms of shades, high-polished surfaces often have a white look, while oxidized surfaces demonstrate a grayish appearance. This year, many innovative design houses are experimenting with ebony-hued surfaces. Blackened silver offers a striking contrast to high-polished white silver, so some brands mix the two colors on a single piece, while others add touches of karat gold to the darkened silver.

The white/black combination – in fact, any shade of silver – is the perfect accessory to this season's two most important items: the LBD and LGD. The LBD (Little Black Dress) is, of course, always a fashion must, but according to Wolfe, the LGD (Little Gray Dress) is also key to a stylish wardrobe for fall and holiday, as fashion returns to the classics. "There are such interesting shades of gray this year," he says. "Everything from charcoal to cement to light fog was seen on the catwalks. And silver goes with all of them."

Krodel says sterling-silver pieces can make a statement merely by their motif, such as pendants with hearts, stars and inspirational inscriptions, bracelets with charms that are meaningful to the wearer, especially good luck talismans, and stack rings that are mixed and matched for individual style.

Knowing Your Silver Facts

For information about sterling silver, including alloys, grades, hallmarks and how to care for silver jewelry, visit www.SavorSilver.com. It includes a Designer Gallery, with collections from top makers of silver jewelry. The sterling-silver hallmark, usually on the reverse or inside of a piece of jewelry, is a stamped symbol guaranteeing it conforms to legal quality standards. All high-quality sterling-silver jewelry is stamped with "Sterling Silver" (argento if it's made in Italy) or a .925 mark, assuring that the item is 92.5% silver (its precious metal content), which has been the world's standard for silver jewelry since the 14th century.

In this century, which The Silver Institute calls "The Modern Era of Silver" (began in the 1920s), it's encouraging to know that there is a selection of contemporary sterling silver for every budget as well as for every special occasion and wardrobe style. "The breadth of sterling-silver jewelry offerings just keeps growing," says Barlerin, "because silver is timeless and tasteful."