

## JEWELRY, ITALIAN STYLE

To best comprehend what's going on this year in Italian fine jewelry, the lesson could easily begin with the three R's: rose, rough, and raw. More accurately, rose gold, rough surfaces, and raw gems.

### Coming Up Roses

Judging by the two most trendsetting Italian fine jewelry trade fairs this past winter—*Vicenzaoro First* in Vicenza in January and the all-luxury *About J* in Milan in February—rose gold has finally come into its own. Whatever one chooses to call it—rose, pink, or red—warm, blush-toned gold is the metal of the moment. However, since building a rose gold jewelry wardrobe can be pricey to do all at once, vendors suggest consumers mix it in with yellow and white metal pieces, especially recommending stacking slim bangles and bands.

Rose gold harkens back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was wildly popular, so many firms are showing it in romantic retro looks, featuring fine filigree work and subtle satin surfaces. However, others are fabricating the copper-alloyed precious metal in thoroughly modern ways—with at least half of Italy's jewelers making strong architectural statements in sleek, simple collections in high-polished pink.



Textured rose gold bracelet with rough cut amethysts. Calgaro



Modern pink gold Y-necklace with diamonds. Luca Carati



Rose gold flower earrings with ice diamonds. Mattioli



Rose gold cocktail rings. Maria Callas



Vintage-inspired rose gold and black diamond owl pendant. DADA Arrigoni



Textured gold and diamond necklace. Marco Bicego

**Rough and Raw**

Despite Italy's longstanding preference for surfaces that are high-polished, texture has, at last, made its indelible mark in this Mediterranean country. Hand-scratched and hammered finishes are everywhere. The final look? In a word, artisanal.

Baroque cut peridot ring. Nanis



Scratched surface 18k gold and diamond earrings. La Pepita



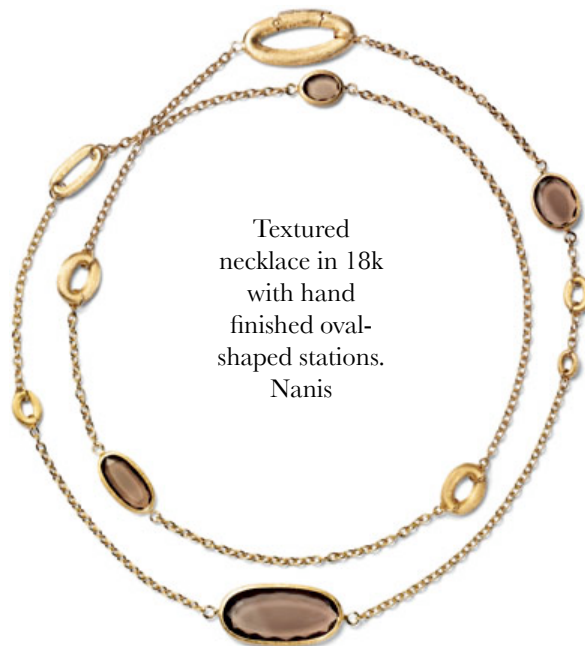
...which is also why many Italian manufacturers are now choosing less-than-perfect and far-from-symmetrical gems as central to their handcrafted—or handcrafted-looking—collections. The mantra seems to be: the more amoebic and off-shapen the stone, the better it looks. And that goes for large center gems as well as smaller accent stones.



Cutout rings with uneven bezels holding diamonds. Talento

**The Oval**

The oval has replaced the circle as the freshest shape in jewelry. Featured frequently on long link necklaces and chain bracelets, the oval is very often uneven in form. And so, much like the current use of baroque gems and rough-hewn surfaces, the uneven egg-shaped oval silhouette is integral to Italy's newest obsession with handcrafted in the high end.



Textured necklace in 18k with hand finished oval-shaped stations. Nanis



Uneven oval links in rose gold and ebony. Mattioli

**Neutral Zone**

Despite the usual chatting it up on colour, Italy, it appears, is taking a direction that's similar to fall ready-to-wear. In this year of global economic crisis, its jewelers have decided to play it safe, often steering clear of colour. In place of their customary vivid spectrum of sapphires—so prevalent in Italy for the last half-dozen years—many are, alternatively, opting for basic black. And white. And black-and-white together.

The foremost black stones include black diamond, black sapphire, black onyx, and Tahitian pearls. The one bright spot in this dark palette comes from a few high-fashion lines, where black sometimes takes the form of ebony wood, ceramic, rubber, or enamel.



Brown diamond pendant.  
Roberto Coin

Tahitian black and South Sea white pearl ombre necklace.  
Utopia



Ebony, diamond and gold ring. Calgaro



Oval ebony wood and diamond earrings.  
Mattioli



White ceramic and diamond stretch bracelet. Jarrettiere

The “white list,” however, generally pales by comparison—mostly because it is typically represented in diamonds or white south Sea pearls. Look carefully, though—inside the booths, not in display windows—and lines known for their ahead-of-the-curve approach are working in white via ceramic, “milky” or ice diamonds, and clear rock crystal quartz.

**Key Concepts**

- rose gold finally comes into its own
- artisanal textured metals
- amoebic shapes
- raw and rough cut stones
- neutral colour gems
- black & white: ebony, rubber, ceramic, milky/ice diamonds
- non-uniform oval and egg-shaped cuts

The next *Vicenzaoro First* will be January 16-21, 2010 in Vicenza.