

Jewellery finds

We scoured the depths of social media to find eight Instagram-famous cult jewellery labels dressing a carousel of celebrities and influencers alike. By Akanksha Kamath

When people start to identify a piece of jewellery and associate it with a brand and designer, and then seek out that piece from that designer, that is when a cult jewellery piece is born," says Stephanie Gottlieb, jewellery designer behind the cult 'Slider Bangle'. Her bracelet, in which letters slide around like a little game of Scrabble, rendered knock-offs around the world, so much so, that she had to trademark her invention. Elsewhere, designer Roxanne Assoulin's colour-enamel bracelets hit the rewind button on '90s nostalgia, and with it, fuelled flashbacks to care-free days with colour wheels on wrists.

Talismanic symbols, hidden meanings and metaphors, versatility and a colour refresh are the criteria for jewellery making it to our shopping carts right now. And filling our feeds with their eclectic designs, retro feels and future heirlooms are these cult designers. We zoom in on their carats via these conversations.

From left: Begüm Khan, the designer's wildly whimsical creations



BEGÜM KHAN, Istanbul

WHO: "I was born and raised in Istanbul to a family of Ottoman art and antique collectors. Istanbul is a magical melting pot of Eastern and Western cultures. I always dreamed of creating timeless pieces with a touch of old-world glamour, so I founded Begüm Khan in 2012 while I was pursuing a degree in Chinese culture in Shanghai. The dream was to create an artisanal Turkish brand, handcrafted in Istanbul and distributed first to the Far East, and then to the whole world."

WHAT: "I was always looking for unique pieces to wear myself, but I was never able to find any jewellery that was distinctive, whimsical, yet elegant. Our jewellery has often been called strangely beautiful and bizarrely attractive. It is contemporary yet timeless. I use gold and bronze (a material Ottomans used a lot in classical jewellery making) and then we encrust them with diamonds, crystals, turquoises, corals, and semi-precious gems."

THE SOURCE: "I always make notes, take photos and sketch so as to not forget a fleeting inspiration. A conversation I am in, a book I read, a flower pattern on my coffee cup, the tiger shape on my bedroom carpet, the games I play with my nieces—they all could be sources of inspiration."

CULT FOLLOWING: "Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, Crown Princess of Greece Marie-Chantal, Katy Perry, Sofia Vergara."

CULT PIECE: "Our turtles, scarabs and evil eyes. Women want talismanic jewellery that also makes them feel better during these times."

Instagram.com/begumkhan



Clockwise: Stephanie Gottlieb; the 'Undecided' ombre ring; the 'Slider Bangle'

STEPHANIE GOTTLIEB, New York City

WHO: "I established my Fine Jewelry Collection and Bridal Concierge service in 2013. I felt there was a gap in the bridal industry—it was difficult to find a female perspective and fashion-forward designs. My goal when starting was to provide education and transparency in a traditionally opaque space."

WHAT: "We bring new life to classic designs, layering on an innovative and creative twist."

CULT FOLLOWING: "Alanis Morissette, Arielle Charnas, Kyle Richards."

CULT PIECE: "Our 'Undecided Band', in which we incorporate two diamond shapes—round diamonds and a fancy shape—and set each on half of the band. For those who are 'undecided', they can have the best of both worlds and wear the side that suits them each time it's worn. We also make the 'Undecided Band' half with diamonds and half with a variety of gemstones. This piece was something my husband and I created for our 10th anniversary, a way to incorporate the 'Rainbow' [ring] into my everyday stack without it always being front and centre."

Instagram.com/stephaniegottlieb

ANANYA MALHOTRA, London

WHO: "Ananya launched three years ago after I studied jewellery design at Central Saint Martins and GIA. I grew up in India, where jewellery holds significant importance at ceremonies and in culture. Having grown up inspired by spiritual grandparents, my wish was to create jewellery that was not just material but had a deeper meaning. My collections stem from spiritual philosophies, and so, Ananya translates into 'unique' in Hindi."

WHAT: "Bold gemstones with subtle and intricate detailing and inlays. We are a team of 90 per cent women. There is more demand for versatile and everyday jewellery and this was, in part, my inspiration for the Scatter collection. Many of the earrings can be worn as studs or hoops along with the option to add ear jackets to dress them up and transform them into a different piece."

CULT FOLLOWING: "Indya Moore, Emily Blunt, Dua Lipa."

CULT PIECE: "Our 'Chakra' bracelets—they are wearable, stackable, colourful and chic. They combine gemstones and diamonds, and our clients love to stack them together and mix and match with their other jewellery and watches." >

Instagram.com/ananyafinejewellery



Designer Ananya Malhotra and a bracelet from her 'Scatter' collection

PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

LAUREN RUBINSKI, Paris

WHO: "I started my namesake brand two years ago, when I decided to make a switch from my high jewellery brand called Pristine to a more affordable jewellery line with a focus on gold. I've always been fascinated with traditional and tribal jewellery and the idea of people wearing ornaments based on where they come from."

WHAT: "Jewellery that is sculpted on the tenets of wearability, longevity and style. I would describe my aesthetic as being inspired by the time we live in."

CULT FOLLOWING: "Kate Moss, Hailey Bieber, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley."

CULT PIECE: "The 'Heart Necklace'. Inspired by a piece of jewellery my grandmother used to wear around us all the time, I wanted to recreate it as a big heart that you always keep close but that also doubles up as wearable art. It may be large, but it is incredibly light."

Instagram.com/laurenrubinski



Lauren Rubinski brings her personal take to the 'Heart Necklace'



Roxanne Assoulin and her Color Therapy™ bracelets available in 120 colours

ROXANNE ASSOULIN, New York

WHO: "With no formal training, I have been designing jewellery since 1977, while I was a student in college. I started my brand only five years ago, making bracelets. I think of my brand's aesthetic as fresh, colourful, and happy. My goal was to keep it blatantly costume and create an inclusive and democratic line built around the idea that we can make people smile through the use of colour."

WHAT: "For me, there are times when I need a shot of colour—in food, in my home (flowers), in what I wear. Colour is a mood-changer and that's one of the reasons we did a capsule called Color Therapy™. Our collections aren't seasonal, nor gender- or age-specific."

CULT FOLLOWING: "Madonna, Prince, Whitney Houston, Gigi Hadid."

CULT PIECE: "Our enamelled bracelets in 120 colours."

Instagram.com/roxanneassoulin



Venessa Arizaga; the brand's friendship bracelets



BETTY IMAGES

VENESSA ARIZAGA, Puerto Rico

WHO: "I started the brand in 2010 after studying fashion design from Parsons, and working in the ateliers of Carolina Herrera and Zac Posen. The culture of clothing has its similarities to jewellery design, and I still use many of the tools I picked up working in fashion."

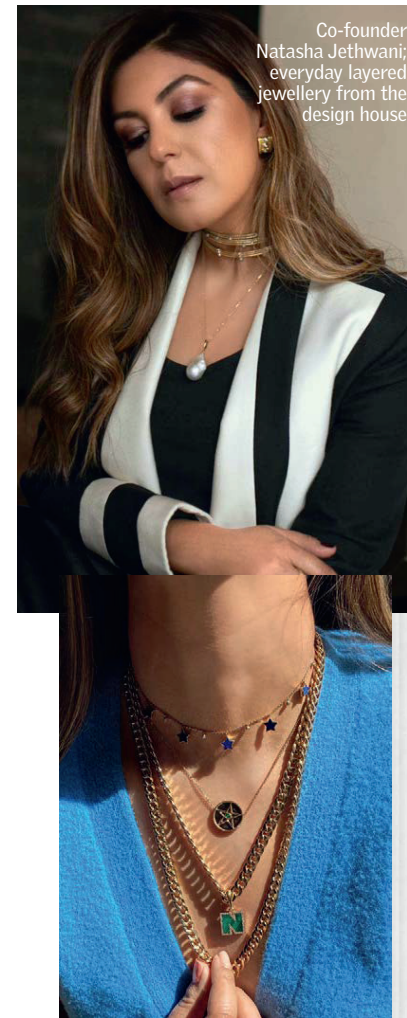
WHAT: "My jewellery is an expression of my sense of humour. I like to think of my line as thoughtful, cheeky, and nostalgic."

THE SOURCE: "I live in Puerto Rico, and I am blessed to walk out the door each day and get sun-kissed, take a dip in the ocean and tend to my garden. Much of my jewellery has a tropical undertone of happy colours, shells and a bit of paradise that I like to provide all my wearers with."

CULT FOLLOWING: "Kristen Bell, Tracee Ellis Ross, Shay Mitchell."

CULT PIECE: "Our friendship bracelets are like memorabilia. We work with a handful of female artisans who are extremely knowledgeable in the craft of handiwork such as macramé, crochet and sewing, and they bring this talent to the friendship bracelets."

Instagram.com/venessaarizaga



Co-founder Natasha Jethwani; everyday layered jewellery from the design house

NATASHA JETHWANI, Dubai

WHO: "My husband and I co-founded Vik Jet Fine Jewelry eight years ago in Dubai. Vik is a third-generation jeweller and gemologist while I have a background in fashion, marketing and styling. We saw a huge gap in the market for contemporary, wearable fine jewellery. There was an abundance of the big stuff that you keep locked away in your safe, but we wanted to make everyday pieces that sit on your dressing table and become an intrinsic part of your style and personality."

THE SOURCE: "We used to travel a lot, so inspiration came from new places, new cultures, and new people we met along the way. This past year, though, we had to learn to look inward."

CULT PIECE: "We were one of the first jewellery houses to create a wearable, modern collection centred on uncut diamonds. These stones are a part of our culture and heritage. As an international jewellery design house of Indian origin, we wanted the world to be able to appreciate the beauty and rawness of these stones as well."

Instagram.com/vikjetfinejewelry



Puja Shah; Inset: the 'Red Mogul Tassel' necklace by Moi



PUJA SHAH, Aurus and Moi, Ahmedabad

WHO: "I studied jewellery design from FIT, New York, and started doing custom commissioned jewellery in 2003. I set up a boutique in 2013 along with my husband. We set up Moi in 2019. It was conceptualised to accommodate casual and everyday pieces of fine jewellery that are exclusively sold online."

WHAT: "My time spent working at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York, where I discovered India's incredible heritage in crafts, materials and techniques, filtered into Aurus, and it captures this vintage mood."

THE SOURCE: "The India of Moi is not the land of kitsch and over-the-top embellishment. It recognises craftsmanship, the luxury of materials, and layered storytelling."

CULT FOLLOWING: "Padma Lakshmi, Deepshikha Khanna, Shraddha Kapoor."

CULT PIECE: "The basra nose ornaments refashioned into earrings by Aurus. This piece highlights the pursuit to revive the old *pachikaam* technique—anything that is not super-refined but is yet beautiful because of its inherent imperfection. Another cult favourite is the 'Revival Necklace' from Moi. It has been the highest-selling piece in my collection to date." ■

Instagram.com/aurusjewels; Instagram.com/moi.vibe