

JEWELRY CONNOISSEUR

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DESIGNERS

Capturing nature: Neha Dani

BY SONIA ESTHER SOLTANI - NOVEMBER 6, 2018



From floral pieces to glacier-inspired wonders, the works of this Indian-born jewelry artist are on display at New York’s Macklowe Gallery.

The first thing that attracted Ben Macklowe to the jewelry of artist Neha Dani was the “dimensional quality of her pieces, where you could see that they were created like miniature sculptures,” he recalls.

The Macklowe Gallery president, whose establishment is on New York’s Park Avenue, launched the exhibit “Macklowe Gallery Presents: The Jewelry of Neha Dani”

“It took us 50 years to find a jeweler of such refinement and sensitivity, and we want our clients to join us in celebrating and wearing Neha Dani’s beautiful work,” says Macklowe.

“Macklowe has always specialized in Art Nouveau jewelry and decorative arts, where the artists were using natural forms and motifs to bring out humanity’s emotional response to nature, and the deeper psychology of our interaction with the natural world. Neha’s work, beneath the glittering surfaces and extraordinary gems and craftsmanship, plumbs those same depths,” he adds.



Brionne earrings set in custom colored titanium with diamonds and opals.

In an interview with *Jewelry Connoisseur*, Dani shares her creative process:

How have your Indian upbringing and traditions influenced your designs?

India has a rich heritage of a variety of hand-crafted arts, from miniature paintings, stone inlay and woodcarving to weaving. The skill of Indian craftsmen is reflected in the most minute of details in their work. Growing up amid this work, which requires equal amounts of passion and patience, has hugely influenced and nurtured my passion to create jewelry that is sculptural, with multiple detailed layers and folds.

What did your move to the US bring to your creativity?

It widened my spectrum of creativity, helped me be more experimental with my work, play around with different metals like titanium and different custom-colored rhodium.

I am mostly inspired by nature, as I love to travel, observe, and find myself in awe of its different forms and hues. But most natural inspirations have a deeper emotional meaning to them. For example, the sea wave and the ocean, to me, are like soulmates. Each one of us enjoys being by the sea and is mesmerized by the waves. Pieces with the sea spray portray that deep, reflective connection more than the literal natural inspiration.



Merida ring set in 18-karat white gold with a sea of white diamonds whirls around a center anchor of a round brilliant cut diamond like the waves dribbling onto the sand.

Which jewelry designers do you admire?

I really admire works of Fabergé and Rene Lalique, as their work was very detailed and meticulous.

How do you choose, source and work with materials and gemstones?

I work with a variety of gemstones and metals and choose the material that is best-suited for the individual design. I mostly source stones to fit my designs, rather than design around a stone. I often source gemstones at the trade shows, as one gets to see a wider collection of unusual pieces and can identify the best-suited gem for the design.

What piece of jewelry are you proudest of having created?

Amarante is a statement cuff set with 18 vivid-purplish-pink diamonds and over 11,000 natural fancy-pink diamonds, [making] it a very special piece. It embodies 18 flowers, [and] each petal was individually hand-carved and set on both sides. It took over a year to perfectly complete this piece.



Amarante cuff set in 18-karat rose gold with vivid purplish pink and fancy pink diamonds.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am working on a group inspired by outer space, specifically the universe that protects us and takes care of us. It is about the cosmic energy.

Can you select a specific jewel that is on show at the Macklowe Gallery and describe the creative process behind it?

I recently finished a cuff I have named Aialik after a glacier in Alaska. As I child, I traveled with my family to Alaska, and the glaciers left an impact on me that remains today. I was in awe of its beauty, its magnificent blue, and the thunder noise of the iceberg breaking. All of those notions were at play in my mind with this statement cuff with blue moonstones, cut by the stonecutter to my designs that reflect the blue light as a glacier would. I have placed the moonstones in an intricate pattern that is not symmetrical and [is] frozen in time. Between the moonstones, diamonds are set in 18-karat white gold in an uneven pattern that distills the pristine snow-capped peaks around the glaciers.



Aialik bracelet rendering (top); Aialik bracelet (below).



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