

IVAR Jewelry Brings Indian Elegance to Madison Avenue

BY LAURIE MELCHIONNE



Ravi in the entrance of her store

Located at 29 East 73rd Street between Madison and Fifth Avenues, IVAR Jewelry is an oasis of Indian interior design, water-themed accents and, most importantly, a treasure trove of fine jewelry. Founded by designer Ritika Ravi, IVAR's latest New York location gives customers a taste of Indian culture. IVAR is also the first Indian brand to be certified by the Positive Luxury Butterfly Mark, which verifies the brand as ethical and sustainable. From sourcing to production, customers can shop with a clean conscience knowing that ethical practices are in place and approved by the Butterfly Mark's credibility.

Fashion Manuscript met with Ravi for an inside look on the fine jewelry brand.

You have a BA in Fashion Jewelry from the London College of Fashion; have you always wanted to go into jewelry?

No. I've always been a creative person, but the path wasn't always so clear in the beginning. When I was a student, I often thought, 'Why do I actually need to do this course? It makes no sense.' But going to school was the best decision that I took. As students, we explored so many different aspects of our passions. Not only were we taught different design areas like footwear, accessories and textiles, but we also got exposed to marketing, visual merchandising and so much more. That was when I realized where my strengths and interests were. I love jewelry design. It's something that I used to do with my mom from when I was young. However, I didn't know that I wanted a career in it until I got to college.

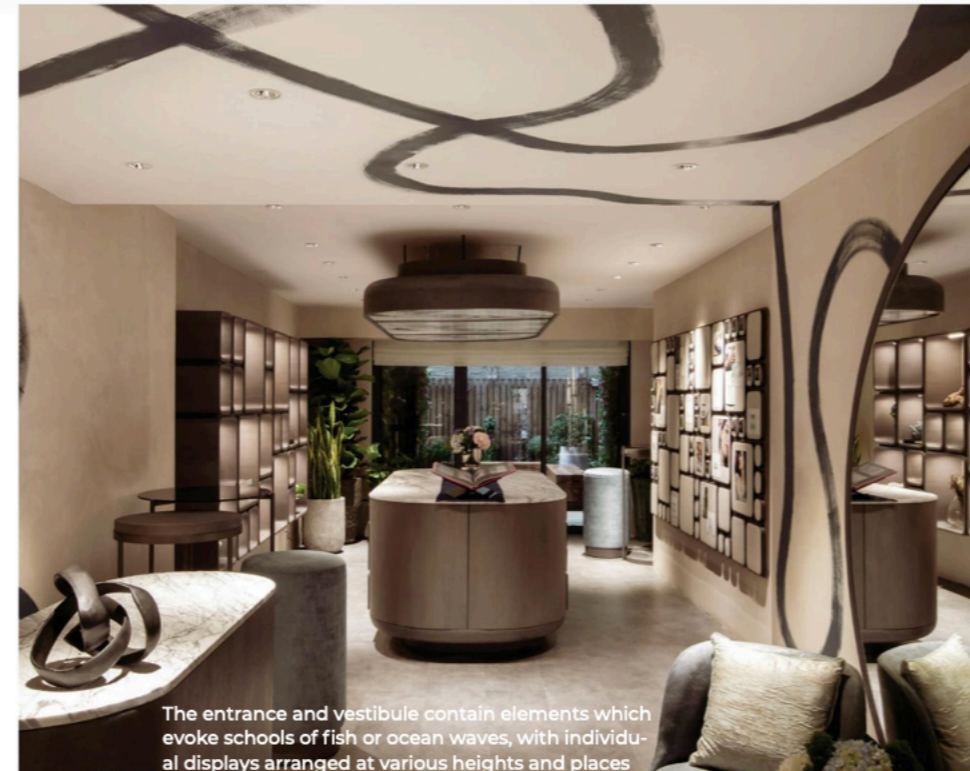
How is the London fashion scene different from the New York fashion scene?

Here in New York, there is the option to be a lot more casual in a lot of places. In England, fashion is more formal. Everyone always dresses up. It was never acceptable to turn up to university in sweatpants. However, people are more experimental here than they are in London.

Have your design decisions here in New York been informed by the London fashion scene?

I wouldn't say specifically London. My travel influences my designs. You never know where inspiration is going to hit. When I'm traveling, I'm always inspired; I love seeing, learning and experiencing new things. That inspires me to create jewelry. I've always been quite a global citizen. I've traveled so much with my parents, and they've given me so much exposure to so many new different things. So my designs are always about trying to bridge that traditional aspect of the more contemporary aspects.

Store photos courtesy of Costas Picadas



The entrance and vestibule contain elements which evoke schools of fish or ocean waves, with individual displays arranged at various heights and places

What kind of traditional Indian crafting methods are found in your jewelry?

All of my pieces are handmade. We use this technique called meenakari, which is an enamel push combined with a more contemporary use of some inlay work. Enamelware can give a contemporary and global aesthetic. We also work with typical Indian bridal jewelry. It originally came to India from the Mughals, which was hundreds of years ago, so it makes our jewelry rooted in history. It's important for every bride to have something that is an uncut diamond, and that comes from a design technique called polki. This process makes the jewelry feel like lace. It's sparkly and elegant while at the same time not overpowering; perfect for any bride.

What distinct cultural elements set your jewelry apart from other brands?

Traditional craftsmanship is key to what we do. The craftsmen are integral to every product. A lot of brands produce things quicker and cheaper with machine-made jewelry, but to me, a product is all about what comes behind it. There is a story behind every piece. What sets us apart is that when you speak about traditional cultural aspects, there is a very traditional piece typically given to the Indian bride. A lot of young brides actually come in and want a ring that is given to them at their wedding and has sentimental value forever. I have a beautiful piece of jewelry that was my grandmother's, and my mom wore it. I love the sentimentality of it. That's an important cultural thing; it's lovely to have sentimental jewelry, but you also want to wear it and incorporate it into your everyday style. If you can't relate to the jewelry

anymore, and just keep it in a safe somewhere in your house, the value of the item is lost.

What has it been like to open a store on Madison Avenue?

It's been surreal. Honestly, I was so focused on getting the store that I forgot to enjoy the process a little. It hit me one day and I thought, 'Oh my God, I have a store on Madison Avenue.' On December 1 when we actually opened, I was here at the store and I just needed a minute to take it all in. It was a dream come true for me.

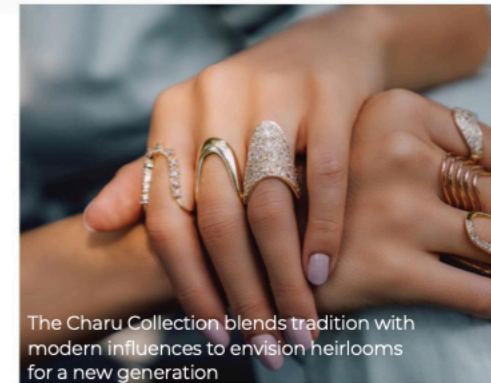
It couldn't have happened without my amazing support system. I have the best champions behind me who always push me to do more and grow in the best possible ways. Without my parents, my brother and all the people behind me, I couldn't have achieved this.

What challenges you about your job?

Anything new that you try is always going to be a challenge. For me, this journey is not a challenge but an adventure. I like learning new things. Rome wasn't built in a day. Taking time to make sure things are done right sometimes brings delays. There have been things that I didn't hope for, but I am a strong believer that everything happens for a reason. I started this journey in 2021, and I'm finally here today and happy with everything that's happened.

What is your design process?

It starts with the concept. For example, for traditional rings, I took the time to research them and what they actually look like in India. I



The Charu Collection blends tradition with modern influences to envision heirlooms for a new generation



Photo courtesy of Ivar Jewelry

like putting pen to paper; I do not like honing my concepts digitally. Wherever I go, I always take a notebook and pen with me in my bag. As much as I'm organized about everything in my life, my design notebook is very chaotic and only I can understand it. I usually do quick sketches, and six months pass before an entire collection is realized. Then I do my final lineup and have a team back at home that digitizes that and sells it to the factories. After that, I handpick every gemstone that you see in my store and on my website. A lot of thought goes into every piece, especially because I want jewelry to be comfortable. Jewelry shouldn't feel like a strain on your body that you can't wait to take off after a day at the office or a night out. I don't ever want my clients to feel that way. Jewelry should be a joy, not something you want to remove.

Anything planned for the future?

We have two new collections that are coming out this year, one of which I've been working on for three years now. It's a reversible collection that can be worn on both sides. The entire collection is about versatility, multiwear and reversibility. I also hope to donate a percentage of sales from that collection to breast cancer awareness and research.

We also were recently certified by the Positive Luxury Butterfly Mark, which means that we are a verified ethical and sustainable brand. Since I'm a young brand, it's a lot easier for us to implement changes that make us sustainable, which has always been important to me. Moving forward, I think that's very, very exciting, and only means great things for the future.