

VANITY FAIR

On Jewellery

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Lily

The other LILY JAMES fairy tale:
leather, lace and bewitching jewels

MAKING A SPLASH

Diane Kordas's designs may be playful, but their inspirations are serious: art and even classical architecture. It's an eye-catching combination. *By AIMEE FARRELL*



MASTER STROKE

Diane Kordas, photographed in front of Barry Reigate's *Ubu Warrior*, in London, March 3, 2015.

Doric may not be the first word that comes to mind when describing Diane Kordas's designs. But take a close look at her shield ring or her heartbeat ear cuff, and you'll see the founding principle of Greek architecture—simplicity—at play. “It all goes back to the Doric Order,” says the American of the pavé jewels that are sparking some serious business on both sides of the Atlantic. “It has to be simple, and that’s the hardest thing to do.”

The company's studio is in South Kensington, where a dazzling white-fronted entrance gives way to a series of pristine rooms where the only clues to the job at hand for the immaculate, all-blond team inside are the black velvet trays of delicate starburst, arrow and geometric jewels on the desks. The brand had rather humbler beginnings. Her first creation was an 18ct-gold evil-eye bracelet, inspired by a family trip to Athens, where the bustling workshops and studios of Syntagma Square sparked the idea of a line of fine jewellery for children. “People love the talismanic idea of protection that the eye brings,” says Kordas of the symbol that still resonates throughout her work (now for well-heeled women, not kids). “Soon I got a call from a stylist requesting me to show her the pieces. It turned out they were for Madonna. She was my first customer. Then things got serious.”

Seven years on, the design process is much the same. Ideas come quite naturally in Mykonos, where Kordas spends the summer; a trio of Athenian workshops then translates them. The art world has been a constant muse. Her tomboyish youth, spent tearing around New Jersey by bike, was often interrupted with trips to the galleries and museums of Manhattan; at 18, she skipped to New York to study fashion and textiles at Parsons. This season, she once again takes inspiration from the pop art of American artist Roy Lichtenstein: comic-strip slogans have made their way on to necklaces and rings. “Like fur, jewellery can age a woman,” says Kordas, “but clean, modern jewels keep you young. I like things to be light. I feel suffocated if it’s too heavy.”

You get the sense Kordas creates with men, as much as women, in mind. The latest incarnation of her bestselling Starburst collection is a body chain designed to be worn at the beach, or peeking from beneath a simple white shirt. She smiles. “I want them to think, where does that chain go?” Such suggestive, yet enduringly simple design is doubtless why Gisele chose to wear the Starburst earrings and cuff on Jimmy Fallon's show last summer. As welcome as such kudos is, the litmus test for Kordas will always be her two daughters Alex, 21, and Kristi, 17. “When they wear my work, I know I got it right.” □ dianekordasjewellery.com

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAKE WALTERS. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: TANIA RODNEY FOR ME HAIRBEAUTY USING NARS COSMETICS