



FINANCIAL TIMES

# how to spend it

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Arts Special

Radical art  
on the Bosphorus

An aria in Bavaria

...and an evening  
with Brad Pitt

Below: Bulgari Cinemagia brooch, POA

## rocks that pop



The daring new genre of pop art-inspired jewellery presents a playful take on some old favourites.  
**Vivienne Becker** reports

**K**erpow! An explosion of comic-book creativity and high-jinks storytelling has hit precious jewellery. This wave of ingenuity is delivering a pop art-inspired punch to tradition, using a subversive vocabulary of pulsating colours, witty and whimsical motifs and irrelevant materials, from shiny wet-look lacquer to multi-hued titanium. This daring new genre is the antithesis of heirloom jewellery's serious nature, challenging perceptions of preciousness and the well-trodden tropes of sentimentality. And, following in the footsteps of rebels like Aldo Cipullo (who in the 1960s and '70s created his Love bracelet and the Juste un Clou nail motif for Cartier), it's making precious jewellery relevant for a new generation.

Victoire de Castellane, artistic director of Dior Fine Jewellery, led the way with Milly Carriwona, a cool, ironic take on flower jewellery featuring imaginary carnivorous plants. Now, she has reinvigorated the theme in her Rose Dior Pop rings, adding a lively charge to the signature Dior emblem, with coloured gems enveloped in bright lacquer petals.

Geneva-based designer jeweller Suzanne Syz is a leading exponent of pop art-inspired work. She is a collector of contemporary art – particularly that of emerging artists, with whom she collaborates at Design Miami/Basel and PAD. In the '80s, Syz was immersed in New York's art scene, mixing with Warhol and Basquiat, whom she met through her friend, the dealer/gallerist Bruno Bischofberger. "This experience has been a big influence on my work – especially in the use of colour," she says. New materials (aluminium and titanium) and techniques such as ceramic plating have enabled her to create provocative and light-hearted one-of-a-kind pieces that she admits are "a bit crazy".

She has enamelled Warhol-inspired We Are Your Art earrings in the form of Campbell's Soup tins; a ring – the

Wrap It Up – topped with a glossy aluminium pink rosette of looping diamond-scattered ribbons; and woven titanium wire baskets of enamel fruit, dangling from tourmalines in her madly theatrical Shop Till You Drop earrings. But the ultimate pop-art expression may be her limited-edition series of earrings in gold, aluminium and diamonds that take their cues from Lichtenstein's comic-strip expletives, appearing in pairs such as Damn and Glam or Sexy and Bad.

Bruno Bischofberger's daughter is London-based Cora Sheibani, whose jewellery clearly draws on her upbringing surrounded by art and artists. As a child, she was influenced by pop art, she says, principally by its use of colour and graphics. "I like to abstract my inspirations, not take them literally – in much the same way as pop art." She creates jewels in the shape of ice-cream cones, pills or Kugelhopf cakes, and most recently her Glow collection explored the disco-like light within fluorescent gems – stones usually rejected as substandard. She makes the link to Warhol's 1978 Gems series – "He was a big collector of jewels, and loved gemstones" – some of which, she says, were made with diamond dust to fluoresce under UV light.

The Warhol connection is especially strong at Bulgari – the artist famously said "Bulgari is the '80s". The Wild Pop high-jewellery collection references Warhol and that decade through motifs including microphones, a keyboard synthesiser, vinyl discs and even marijuana leaves, while the new Cinemagia collection, a tribute to the Italian film industry, follows a similarly audacious route into unexpected themes, and includes a necklace crafted from blackened-silver zirconium to represent celluloid film.

No stranger to drama, Solange Azagury-Partridge has always loved to shake up jewellery conventions, flooding her pieces with intense colour, inventing arresting – even jarring – combinations, and designing around fun-loving concepts. She doesn't like jewellery to look obviously

precious or valuable: "It should be worn for personal pleasure, like lovely underwear. Only you know its worth."

Her latest Scribbles collection of rings and earrings is just that: scribbles of ferocious energy and spontaneity. Colours pop and pulsate – neon pink, acid yellow and hot orange – in lacquer and ceramic plating, contrasting or clashing with coloured stones. About as anti-establishment as you can get. Diane Kordas, meanwhile, updates the pop-art movement's comic-book styling and lexicon to reflect "changing colloquialisms of digital communication", in a collection of necklaces, rings and ear cuffs that shriek LOL!, OMG! or YOLO in coloured stones and diamonds. And even Jessica McCormack, usually restrained in her vintage-inspired style, has turned to '60s pop-art culture for her Superdelic collection, drawing on stylised, naive images of the sky, rainbows or bubbly clouds streaming with diamond raindrops.

Meanwhile, Nina Runsdorf, another avid collector of contemporary art, takes the key colours of her favourite paintings as the bright enamel frames for hoop earrings and Flip rings in her whimsical Artist collection. Bold colours complement the simplicity of the New York-based designer's pieces – black, from *Untitled (Cowboy)* by Richard Prince, is contrasted with pink rose quartz, for example – and each has a removable drop-shaped gem-charm.

It's this burst of unexpected colour and innovative materials – layered with irony, irreverence and modernity – that continues the message of pop art: challenging the status quo and injecting some wow into the mix. ✦

**TOP OF THE POP ART**

**Bulgari**, bulgari.com. **Cora Sheibani**, corasheibani.com. **Diane Kordas**, diane.kordas@jewellery.com. **Dior**, dior.com. **Jessica McCormack**, jessicamccormack.com. **Nina Runsdorf**, ninarunsdorf.com. **Solange**, solange.co.uk. **Suzanne Syz**, suzannesyz.ch.



Dior Rose Dior Pop ring, from £21,600



Diane Kordas OMG! necklace, from £1,749



Suzanne Syz We Are Your Art earrings, POA



Cora Sheibani Ice Cream ring, from £4,920



Jessica McCormack Superdelic earrings, POA



Solange Scribbles ring, from \$1,500