"MODERN" JEWELRY: RETRO TO ABSTRACT

By Sally A. Thomas

The period between the onset of World War II and the mid-1960s saw the development of several styles in fine jewelry. During the 1940s, Retro jewelry retained Art Deco's bold lines but gradually softened its colors and curved its sharp geometric shapes. These heavy settings were eventually replaced by fine, hand-made wire settings which produced flexible, three-dimensional jewelry shaped by the gemstones themselves. The designers and neo-Renaissance artists of the 1950s created colorful jewels overflowing with faceted gems as well as beads, cabochons, or rough-tumbled stones. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, gemstones became subordinate to the flow and shape of the overall design during a revival in individual craftsmanship that is still evident in contemporary jewelry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms. Thomas is a writer and editor for the Gemological Institute of America in Santa Monica.

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The roughly 30 years between the onset of World War II and the early 1960s were dynamic ones in jewelry design. Art Deco, which was the predominant style of jewelry in the 1920s and early 1930s, was a backlash against the disillusionment following the first world war. Deco jewelry was weighty, bold, and exotically geometric, a bonding of art and industry (Ebert, 1983). By the late 1930s, however, Deco had begun to alter into a softer, more voluptuous style that has recently been loosely classified as Retro (figure 1). Created primarily in France, Italy, and the United States during the lean war years, Retro jewelry used what precious metals (for the most part gold) and gemstones were available during and immediately after the war.

As was the case following the first world war, people in the late 1940s and early 1950s were hungry for luxury and opulence, which prompted a revolution in the design of fine jewelry. Light, hand-made wire settings enabled jewelers to create flexible, three-dimensional pieces that shimmered with cascades of fine diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds.

During the mid-1950s, artists already skilled in painting and sculpture began to take an active role in jewelry design. Many new or improved methods to work gold had evolved during the war; at the same time, new quantities of gems such as citrine, tourmaline, amethyst, and aquamarine became available on the market. These neo-Renaissance artists—applying their design talents in many different areas, like their counterparts centuries earlier in Europe—used these materials to create colorful, exotic pieces that appealed to a burgeoning upper middle class seeking both quality and stylish creativity in their jewelry.

The demand for creativity in design also propelled individualized craftsmanship in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Eventually, fewer gemstones were used, as the emphasis in design shifted from the materials to the design itself.

This article, then, traces the evolution of jewelry design from Retro, the most recently defined period, to the beginning of contemporary jewelry design in the early 1960s.

JEWELRY OF THE 1940S: THE INFLUENCE OF WAR

World War II, with the destruction and privation that it brought to much of Europe and Asia, greatly affected the design and production of jewelry. In Europe especially, metal, jewels, and craftsmen were consumed by the war. Many jewelry firms were forced underground, disbanded, or even destroyed. And many pieces made during this time were broken up after the war to finance reconstruction efforts. In addition, during the 1960s some jewelers had their 1940s gold jewelry florentined (a texturing process whereby parallel lines are closely engraved in one direction and then crosshatched at 90° with parallel lines more lightly engraved) to make it more salable (J. Samuel, pers. comm., 1987). This is why, until recently, many jewelry historians have overlooked the decade surrounding World War II, believing it was little more than a buffer between the bold geometric jewelry of Art Deco and the luxurious flexible pieces of the 1950s.

Only within the past several years has interest in this "lost" period been piqued. During the past decade, jewelry from the 1940s began to appear in prestigious auction houses. François Curiel, head of the jewelry department at Christie's New York office, is credited as having been the first, in the early 1970s, to categorize jewelry from this period under the term *Retro*. He chose this word because it was, like much of the jewelry it described, reminiscent of Art Deco, and it would be easily recognized by the public (N. Letson, pers. comm., 1987). The identification of a recognizable style initiated research and reevaluation of the jewelry produced during the years surrounding the second world war.

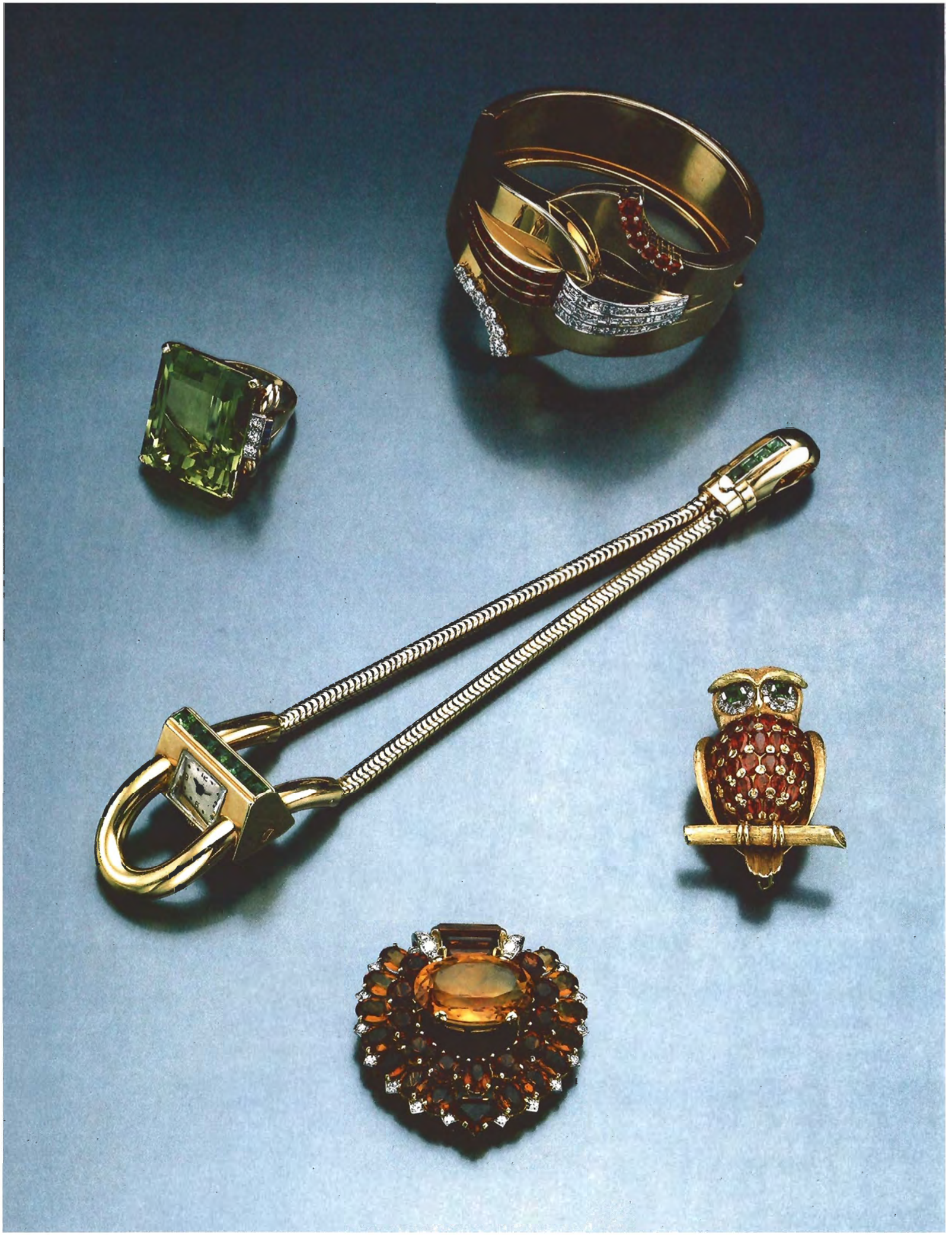
Retro Jewelry: The Materials and the Style. Retro jewelry evolved directly out of Art Deco, which had waned by the early to mid-1930s (again, see figure 1). Pieces became much heavier and more curved, as jewelers consolidated gold and gemstones into easily transported items of jewelry (Gabardi, 1982). Whereas Deco jewelry was usually flat and one dimensional, early Retro jewelry had a chunky, sculptural quality, accompanied by raised rectangles, domes, and baroque scrolls set with bands of gemstones.

Because the war cut off most of the usual gemstone supplies, Retro jewelry was fashioned almost exclusively from gems and metals in stock when the war broke out. Diamonds were abundant, usually in small and medium sizes and cut in calibre, round, or baguette shapes. Like Deco, some Retro jewelry also used vibrant colored stones such as rubies (and synthetic rubies), sapphires, and emeralds. However, as it grew away from Deco, Retro jewelry started to use different color combinations. For example, in 1939 Louis Cartier produced jewelry that combined orange and brown gems (Sindt, 1987), initiating the use of less vividly colored stones such as topaz, citrine, green beryl, and aquamarine (figure 2). In Retro jewelry, citrines and aquamarines were often paired with rubies.

The war also had a dramatic impact on the type of metal used for jewelry. Platinum, the most popular metal of the 1920s and early 1930s, was commandeered for war-time manufacturing. Thus, most Retro jewelry was set with gold. It was often used as smooth or fluted sections, pierced strips, or wires interwoven in lattice and grid meshes (Gabardi, 1982). After the war, warm, soft shades of pink, green, white, and yellow gold were created with copper and silver alloys. Many pieces combined several different shades of gold together (N. Letson, pers. comm., 1987).

Although early Retro jewelry retained much of Deco's geometric lines, pieces produced near the end of the 1940s took on a distinctly floral style. Sprays or bunches of diamonds burst forth, loosely bound with flowing scrolls, plaques, twists, and spirals of diamond baguettes. Many of the finer diamonds in these pieces had been part of the Spanish crown jewels, which were broken up and the stones placed on the market in the early 1940s.

Figure 1. These jewels represent three distinct periods in jewelry design. The cabochon ruby cufflinks (manufactured around the turn of the century) are late Victorian, and the ruby, rock crystal and diamond cufflinks (1930) are typical Art Deco. Note how the gold, ruby, and diamond bow and bracelets (all are c. 1940), which are characteristic of the early Retro style, combine the softness and the geometry of the other two styles. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.



A number of these diamonds were purchased by American dealers, who often had the old-mine stones recut into modern styles by European cutters who had fled the war (A. H. Fisher, pers. comm., 1987).

Retro jewelry originated in France, spread throughout Europe, and emigrated to the United States with the outbreak of the war. For example, the French firm of Van Cleef & Arpels produced a collection of jewelry for exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, but when the war broke out, the pieces remained in New York and served to influence U.S. designers. Van Cleef and Arpels jewels were particularly known for their *bouquets de fleurs* style. Ribbon-like bracelets consisted of hexagonal links that were centered on flowery clusters of fine gemstones and fastened with heavy clasps containing gems set *en suite* with the band (Gabardi, 1982).

Much of the war-time jewelry produced by Cartier was in the "animalier" style. Many kinds of animals, such as birds, dogs, cats, and horses, were created by individual Cartier craftsmen. These miniature golden figures were studded with a variety of fine-colored gems and often brightly enameled—a gay, rebellious style against the advancing war. Cartier mastermind Jeanne Toussaint designed two symbolic pieces, *L'oiseau en cage* and *L'oiseau libre* (the bird in the cage and the free bird), in mute defiance of the German occupation. Other French firms such as Boucheron, Chaumet, Lacloche Frères, Fouquet, and Mauboussin, as well as the closely linked Belgian firms of Wolfers, Leysen Frères, Altenloh, and Sturbelle, all produced fine Retro jewelry during and after the war.

Italian jewelry of this period tended to adopt the French forms, motifs, and materials. Firms such as Buccellati, Castelli, and Bulgari all created pieces in the Retro style. Interestingly, gemstones were in such short supply in Italy during the war that amber, which has been used sporadically in jewelry throughout history, once again became a popular gem material.

Figure 3. Gold bracelet-watches with gem-covered dials were important fashion accessories during the 1940s. This one features gold scroll links, typical of Retro jewelry, with an emerald and diamond cover. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

Fine Retro jewels were produced in the United States by firms such as Raymond Yard, Oscar Heyman, Black Starr and Frost, Lackreitz, Bailey Banks & Biddle, Seaman Shepps, Shreve & Co., William Russer, and John Rubel. Traubert and Hoeffer created a jewelry line called *Reflection* for Mauboussin in New York. In addition, Forstner Chains of Rhode Island became known for their snake-like gold chains, which were often seen in conjunction with American jewelry of the 1940s (F. Rich, pers. comm., 1987; again, see figure 2).

Retro Fashion. The dramatic change that occurred in women's fashion during the 1940s greatly affected Retro jewelry. The sleek, elegant fashions of the Deco period were suddenly replaced by severely tailored jackets, with lapels and padded shoulders, that were worn with narrow skirts.

The single most important item of jewelry during this time was without a doubt the clip. Popular in the 1930s, clips of the Retro period served to soften and feminize the starker clothing

Figure 2. This assortment of jewels illustrates many of the characteristics that are distinctive of the Retro style. The ruby and diamond bangle bracelet (c. 1940) shows the curved lines of Retro but with the sharply contrasting white and red that are often associated with Art Deco. The citrine and diamond brooch by Cartier (c. 1940) and the green beryl, sapphire, and diamond ring (1940) demonstrate the trend toward tawny-colored gems during this period. Gold "snake" chains, like those in the gold and emerald Van Cleef & Arpels wristwatch (1940) shown here, were also popular in the 1940s, as were animal figures such as the ruby, emerald, and diamond owl brooch. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

of the 1940s. Two clips worn together often served as a brooch or a pendant to a neckline. Separately, they adorned jacket lapels or served as hair ornaments.

Bracelets were commonly made of heavy gold bands, often thickly set with precious stones. It was during this period that "tank-tread" style bracelets appeared, bracelets formed of chains of angular links simulating the tracks of armored cars (Gabardi, 1982). Swiss jewelers of this period produced *montres* bracelets, wrist watches that were actually heavy gold bracelets with small dials that were commonly concealed under jeweled covers (see figure 3).

Brooches were enormously popular, especially as executed in heavy, flowing gold bows (figure 1) or sprays of flowers. Necklaces and rings also followed the basic Retro style.

Retro jewelry was born and nurtured out of World War II. As French jeweler Jean Mauboussin observed: "The jewellery of the Forties was the jewellery of an age of crisis, so it was only logical that it should come to an end with the crisis itself" (Gabardi, 1982). However, although the war ended in 1945, it would take several years for manufacturing jewelers, particularly those in Europe, to recover from its effects. Thus, Retro jewelry appeared in the early postwar years as well, until it was gradually replaced by the multitude of styles that came to the forefront during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

POSTWAR TRENDS: CLASSIC TO AVANT GARDE

Since jewelry historians have only just begun to recognize and define the jewelry of the 1940s, it is not surprising that the jewelry of the ensuing decade has not yet been given a specific name. Not only do we lack the benefit of historical perspective, but this period is also difficult to pinpoint because of the surge of diversity in jewelry design that began in the late 1940s and has, in fact, continued to the present. We can, however, identify certain important trends during this period—in the gemstones, types of settings, and designs—that give it a distinctive character.

Gemstones at the Forefront. As the world left the war behind, wealth was redistributed to a rapidly growing upper middle class, which was hungry for luxury and eager to display its prosperity. Consequently, the most striking characteristic of the jewelry of the late 1940s and the 1950s was an almost ostentatious use of gemstones.

The fascination with gemstones was propelled by the numerous discoveries of new gem sources that occurred both during and right after the war. In their search for large quantities of minerals and metals to support the machinery of war, many countries looked to South America for electronic-grade mica, feldspar, quartz, and lithium minerals. During the prospecting for these minerals, several hundred gemstone mines were discovered in Brazil alone (Proctor, 1984). These prodigious discoveries launched the subsequent interest in and popularity of Brazilian gems such as citrine, topaz, kunzite, and chrysoberyl. Aquamarine and amethyst were also extremely popular and were often set together, accented with diamonds (N. Letson, pers. comm., 1987). Tourmaline, particularly rubellite, experienced an increase in popularity (R. Liddicoat, pers. comm., 1987). In fact, literally tons of gem-quality tourmaline crystals were discovered by American miners intent on recovering mica from deposits in the Governador Valadares district of Minas Gerais, Brazil (Proctor, 1985).

Although faceted stones were extremely popular at this time, beads, cabochons, and rough-tumbled gems also experienced a revival. They were often mounted in independent prong settings to create a smooth continuous band, or jumbled together in a riot of color. Rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, as well as coral and turquoise, were favorite stones of firms such as Boucheron, Bulgari, and Van Cleef & Arpels. According to Baerwald and Mahoney (1949), during this time peridot was "rapidly becoming one of the most popular gemstones for modern pieces." And, indeed, peridot was commonly seen in jewelry of the 1950s.

Also following the war, diamonds were brought to the attention of consumers at all income levels by De Beers, who in 1948 coined the now-classic phrase "a diamond is forever" (Nadelhoffer, 1984). In 1954, De Beers instituted the annual Diamonds International Awards to encourage the use of diamonds in both daytime and evening jewelry and to advance diamond jewelry design (Scarisbrick, 1981).

Flexible Settings. The growing demand for conspicuous luxury was eloquently expressed in the new flexible jewelry pioneered by Harry Winston of New York. The heavy settings characteristic of Retro jewelry had some sense of dimension, but a

Figure 4. Light, hand-made wire settings enabled Harry Winston to create supple jewelry—here, 142 ct of diamonds set in platinum—that was shaped entirely by the gemstones themselves. Courtesy of Harry Winston, Inc.

ponderous amount of metal still dominated the gemstones. Winston spent a lifetime accumulating fine diamonds, as well as rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and pearls. To him, fine gemstones were the essence of jewelry, meant to be displayed in elegant but undeniably unobtrusive settings (Krashes, 1984).

Innovative fabrication methods were needed to accomplish the lightness and dimension Winston desired. His inspiration for this new method occurred one Christmas as World War II drew to a close. Arriving home one evening, Winston noticed how the leaves of the holly wreath on his front door gave the wreath shape and dimension. It suddenly struck him that perhaps gemstones could be made to shape jewelry, and at once he set craftsmen to the task. What resulted was a revolutionary way of setting and designing jewelry: fine, hand-made, flexible wire settings of platinum or gold (figure 4). Independent prong setting allowed Winston's famous diamonds and colored stones to shape jewelry that was light, dimensional, and so flexible that bracelets could be "crumpled like a sweater and not one stone will touch another" (Krashes, 1984).

Figure 5. During the 1950s, gemstones could not be too large or too lavish. Created in 1951 by Harry Winston for Mrs. I. W. Killam of Canada, these five pear-shaped diamonds (ranging from 14 to 20 ct) drop gracefully from a river of round and baguette diamonds (62 ct total). Illustration by A. V. Shinde; courtesy of Harry Winston, Inc.

Winston's earrings were shimmering cascades of diamonds falling from larger and often detachable bases suitable for daytime wear. Perhaps the most sumptuous pieces are his necklaces: brilliant, supple rivers of large diamonds (figure 5) and fine colored stones that lie softly against the contours of the neck and throat. This style proved enormously popular with wealthy, conservative clients, and remains a hallmark of Winston jewelry. This method of setting jewelry was adopted by other large firms such as Tiffany and Van Cleef & Arpels and established an important trend in jewelry design.

Legendary Designers. The nouveau riche of the 1950s wanted color, creativity, and individuality in their jewelry—pieces to express the vitality of the times. Two jewelry designers of this period created pieces that capture the essence of 1950s style: Jean Schlumberger (1908–) and Fulco, Duke of Verdura (1898–1978).

Jean Schlumberger ("berger" pronounced as in Fabergé) is famous for both his jeweled objects and his jewelry (Hoving, 1982). Born in France, he

Figure 6. Fanciful and prickly, this "Sea Bird" was designed in the 1950s for Tiffany & Co. by Jean Schlumberger. The body is made from diamonds pavé set in platinum, with gold scales and crests, a ruby eye, a black enamel beak, and a blue enamel collar. Photo courtesy of Tiffany & Co.

Figure 7. Schlumberger also designed this sinuous "Leaves" necklace, created from diamonds pavé set in 18K gold. Photo courtesy of Tiffany & Co.

emigrated to the United States during World War II and set up a small shop on Fifth Avenue. In 1955, his business was absorbed into Tiffany and he entered his prime as a jewelry designer. He created lavish pieces to suit the individual tastes of his wealthy American customers. As he commented in a recent interview, "To create these splendid baubles, I become almost a psychoanalyst. When a new client comes in, I must determine her taste, her way of life, her likes and dislikes, her superstitions, her physical characteristics, and the sense she has of her appearance. You see, I must know the physical environment in which my jewel will live" (Hoving, 1982).

Schlumberger produced numerous imaginative pieces: angels, sea horses, birds, flowers, and star fish (figures 6 and 7). Many were set in prickly spines of gold amid a profusion of faceted jewels. He is also credited with reviving enameling in jewelry (figure 8). Schlumberger's famous Pegasus pin combines emeralds and amethysts with gold and sparks of diamonds, endowing the legendary winged horse with flight and fire. He also created a whimsical setting for the 100-ct Dancing Girl sapphire by centering this magnificent stone in a spikey gold sunflower "growing" out of an ordinary clay pot taken from his client's greenhouse. After this piece, Schlumberger went on to design a series of jeweled boxes and other objects valued by Tiffany between $200,000 and $500,000 (Hoving, 1982). Although he closed his studio in the late 1970s, his designs are still being interpreted and executed by Angelo Poliseno, Schlumberger's chief jeweler at Tiffany.

Figure 8. Known as "The Classics," Jean Schlumberger's vivid enameled bracelets and earrings studded with 18K gold were almost a necessity for fashionable, upper-class women in the 1950s. Photo courtesy of Tiffany & Co.

Fulco Santostefano della Cerda, Duke of Verdura, was another innovative jewelry designer of the 1950s and early 1960s. Born into a noble Sicilian family in 1898, Verdura's talent for drawing was evident at an early age. In 1927, he became a textile designer for Chanel in Paris. His creations were so original that within a short time he became Chanel's head jewelry designer. In 1937 and 1938, he designed jewelry for Paul Flato in New York and then in California, and in 1939 he set up his own business at Cartier's original headquarters on Fifth Avenue. Despite the war, his jewels quickly became popular, and were purchased by such personalities as Cole Porter, Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg, and opera star Lily Pons.

Verdura's pieces, many of which originally sold for less than $1,000, show a more subtle, rounded elegance that was also characteristic of the 1950s. Verdura believed that jewelry should enhance, not overwhelm, the wearer. Favorite motifs included ropes and knots of gold and diamonds, caning, coins, and tassels similar to those in the papal coat of arms (figure 9). He also liked to design pieces based on nature: feathers, wings, ferns, and leaves. Verdura's exquisitely executed jeweled sea shells were fashioned from colorful scallop shells skillfully set with thin gold rims and small diamonds and cabochons of coral or turquoise (figure 10). A versatile designer, he could create a delicate "fairy queen's tiara" of branched pink coral set with tiny diamonds, and at the same time produce an abstract set of large baroque pearl links and studs inset with round brilliant diamonds.

In 1970, Verdura retired to London and sold his business to his associate Joseph C. Alfano. In 1985, Alfano turned the business over to Ward Landrigan, who continues to execute Verdura's original designs. Verdura's jewelry influenced both his contemporaries, such as David Webb (figure 11), and later designers such as Margaret Styx, Angela Cummings, and Paloma Picasso (Letson, 1983).

NEO-RENAISSANCE IN JEWELRY

An important development in jewelry design occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the emergence of neo-Renaissance artists. Like Cellini, Botticelli, and de Lucca of the Italian Renaissance, these artists were already skilled in painting and/or sculpture when they began to experiment with jewelry design. Few of these modern artists

Figure 9. Tassels were popular with the Duke of Verdura, and were often seen in his designs. Here they appear in gold and diamonds, setting off a necklace of tumbled peridot, a gemstone that was particularly popular during the 1950s. The matching pearl with diamond earrings were also designed by Verdura. Photo courtesy of E. J. Landrigan Inc./VERDURA.

Figure 10. Verdura's sensitivity to natural beauty is evident in this scallop shell set with turquoise and diamonds. Photo courtesy of E. J. Landrigan Inc./VERDURA.

had the technical skills needed to actually manufacture their creations, yet they were responsible for introducing concurrent art movements such as cubism and surrealism into modern jewelry design, generating a trend that has heavily influenced contemporary jewelry.

There is a small group of artists who designed only a handful of pieces: Calder, Giacometti, Cocteau, Ernst, Arp, Man Ray, Tanguy, de Chirico, and Dubuffet (Black, 1974). However, two neo-Renaissance artists did produce impressive collections of jewels, and contributed greatly to the advancement of jewelry design: Georges Braque (1882–1963) and Salvador Dali (1904–).

Georges Braque was a French painter and designer who, together with the famous painter and sculptor Pablo Picasso, pioneered cubism in the early 1920s (Hughes, 1963). In contrast to the single artistic viewpoint characteristic of Renaissance art, cubism involved multiple angles of vision and the simultaneous presentation of discontinuous planes.

The culmination of Braque's work in jewelry design occurred in 1963 when, at age 81, he exhibited 133 jewels executed by Baron Henri-Michel Heger de Lowenfeld at the Museé des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. Most of these jewels portrayed themes taken from classic mythology and interpreted with Braque's cubist vision (figure 12). Many of the forms are similar: textured gold over thin slabs of stone such as jasper, rhodochrosite, lapis lazuli, grossularite, and turquoise. Some pieces also used masses of pavé diamonds to complement areas of textured gold.

Salvador Dali, the celebrated surrealist Spanish painter, wholly believed in the Renaissance concepts of an artist's versatility and integrity of design. As he commented in *Dali, A Study of His Art-In-Jewelry* (Dali, 1959):

> Paladin of a new Renaissance, I too refuse to be confined. My art encompasses physics, mathematics, architecture, nuclear science—the psycho-nuclear, the mystico-nuclear—and jewelry—not paint alone.
>
> My jewels are a protest against emphasis upon the cost of the materials of jewelry. My object is to show the jeweler's art in true perspective—where the design and craftsmanship are to be valued above the material worth of the gems, as in Renaissance times.

Although he was influenced by Picasso in the late 1920s, Dali was much more closely associated with the surrealist art movement, a revolution against traditional representational art. The surrealists portrayed fantasy and images from the subconscious mind, founded for the most part on Freud's methods of psychological investigation. Thus, much of Dali's jewelry has a dream-like, if not nightmarish quality. Many of his pieces are anthropomorphic: An anemone swirls its petals of human arms formed from pavé diamonds and gold in an unseen wind; a honeycomb heart of gold with rubies and diamonds drips a golden drop of honey (figure 13); an oak leaf is startlingly transmuted into a gnarled hand with ruby cabochon fingertips; two rows of lustrous white pearls beckon from a pair of sensual, yet vaguely sinister, ruby lips.

Dali's religious convictions are embodied in his crosses. Many show a cubist influence and convey an explosive divine power with sharp needles of diamonds radiating from shattered or disjointed golden crucifixes. One of his medallions presents the world as a misshapen sphere, ruby blood oozing from deep cracks, pierced together with an arrow that Dali says represents the healing power of Christ (Dali, 1959).

INDIVIDUALISM PREVAILS: THE EARLY 1960S

The jewelry designed by artists such as Dali and Braque helped to close the gap between the main-

Figure 11. Jewelry designer David Webb was influenced by Verdura's designs and, like Verdura, many of his pieces used beads or rough-tumbled gemstones (often in conjunction with faceted material). This necklace of baroque rubies and pavé diamonds set in gold, with a 27.5-ct ruby pendant, also shows the geometric lines that were distinctive of Art Deco. The ring, another David Webb piece, contains a 32.5-ct ruby. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

stream art world and the applied art of jewelry design. As mentioned previously, most of these artists merely designed the pieces, leaving their interpretation and execution to highly skilled metalsmiths. However, the 1950s and early 1960s witnessed a revival of individual craftsmanship, and the reemergence of artisans who possessed the talent to design, manufacture, and market their jewelry.

In the United States, one woman is credited with almost singlehandedly reviving the crafts: Mrs. Eileen Vanderbilt Webb (Black, 1974). Webb

Figure 12. By French artist Georges Braque, this brooch of turquoise, textured gold, and pavé-set diamonds portrays the bird Memnon flying away from the walls of Babylon. Photo courtesy of The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London.

strove to establish a school in the U.S. that, initially, would train World War II veterans in the American (primarily Appalachian) crafts, including jewelry fabrication (B. Merritt, pers. comm., 1987). In 1952 she founded the School for American Craftsmen in Alfred, New York (now part of the Rochester Institute of Technology), and in 1955 she founded the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York City. Shortly thereafter, Webb implemented America House in New York, a retail gallery and shop open to any qualified craftsmen. Backed by these institutions, the American craft movement grew quickly and eventually influenced many talented artisans and jewelers such as Irena Brynner, Ronald Pierson, Art Smith, and Stanley Lexon.

The surge of craftsmen into jewelry was also evident in Europe, particularly in Great Britain. Graham Hughes, former artistic director of The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, has been particularly instrumental in promoting the crafts movement. In 1962, in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, he helped assemble 1,067 jewels from 28 countries. The exhibits were selected on the basis of originality of design and artistic merit rather than monetary value. Thus, "the most precious diamond jewels in existence shared the showcases with intrinsically worthless pieces of extraordinary beauty" (Hughes, 1963).

The basic trend of this period, then, was one of freedom and diversity unbound by any single rigid standard of taste or fashion. The concept that jewelry need not be dominated by expensive, large stones to have value and merit encouraged individual craftsmen (and women) of the early 1960s to pour their energy into individualistic, nonrepresentational pieces (figure 14). In general, gemstones became subordinate to the flow and texture of the overall design. Many pieces, particularly those from Switzerland (figure 15) and Scandinavia, revolved entirely around the cool, smooth, abstract lightness of gold or silver.

During this time, many artists turned to creating *objets trouvés*, the "found objects" that owe their shape to chance or the work of nature (Hinks, 1983). British artist John Donald was one of the first to attempt to mount high-quality gem crystals into rings, pendants, or pins. Through arduous experimentation, he discovered methods that enabled him to set the specimens without damaging or even destroying their sometimes fragile beauty (Hinks, 1983). Artisans such as Georg Jensen, David Thomas, Desmond Clen Murphy, and Gilbert Albert also produced some stunning natural crystal pieces. Donald also experimented with dropping molten gold into cold water, allowing the physical reaction to naturally shape

Figure 13. The famous surrealist painter Salvador Dali also designed a collection of jewels, including this "Honeycomb Heart" with rubies and diamonds set in gold. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

the piece. Andrew Grima, who is most famous for his innovative watches, was also very skilled in producing *objets trouvés*, such as a delicate rosette-like brooch of diamonds set in gold cast from pencil shavings. Others successfully incorporated nongem materials, such as arrowheads, meteorites, and even small chunks of coal into beautiful, expressionistic jewelry.

SUMMARY

The 30 years from the onset of World War II to the mid-1960s witnessed dramatic changes in jewelry design. The heavy, curved jewelry of the 1940s gradually evolved into the sumptuous, gemstone-oriented jewels of the 1950s, and then expanded and grew to incorporate a multitude of textures, forms, and materials. In essence, modern jewelry has moved from periods (such as Art Nouveau, Art Deco, or even Retro) where one style predominated and was relatively easy to identify, to a multitude of styles unhampered by any one standard. The "do your own thing" credo of the 1960s artisans encouraged a new generation to embrace the values of originality and craftsmanship, and to continue to experiment with shape, form, and texture. This creative freedom has produced fine contemporary jewelry designers such as Paloma Picasso, Elsa Peretti, and Angela Cummings. In turn, their individualistic jewelry has encouraged consumers to dare to express their own tastes, whether it be meteorites in niobium or diamonds in gold.

Figure 14. Jewelry of the mid-1960s became increasingly abstract and individual, as demonstrated by this bangle-bracelet made from malachite, tiger's-eye, diamond, and rhodonite. Courtesy of Gübelin.

Figure 15. Individualism in the 1960s emphasized originality in texture and design rather than gems. Courtesy of Gübelin.

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