

Women Dressing Women, in Jewelry

‘As a woman, I really imagine each piece for myself first,’ one designer said.

By Kathleen Beckett

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More than 70 examples of fashions created by women for women are showcased in the exhibition “Women Dressing Women” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute in New York City (through March 3).

How are their creations different from those of male designers?

“Gender is such a personal aspect of identity that influences everyone differently,” Mellissa Huber, the institute’s associate curator and the co-curator of the show, wrote in an email. She noted that while many women “might not wish their work to be perceived through the lens of gender, for some it can be a really important aspect of their professional identity.”

The New York Times asked the same question of several female jewelry designers and experts. Here are their thoughts on what it means to be women dressing women — in jewelry.

Their comments, from in-person and phone interviews and emails, were edited and condensed.



Nudo bracelets in rose gold from Pomellato.

Sabina Belli

Chief executive of the Pomellato Group, in Milan

“Being a woman and a woman C.E.O. of a jewelry brand gives me the opportunity to have a special sensitivity in regards to what we do and how we do it. Designing a piece of jewelry with women in mind inspires us to pay attention to all the hidden details, to everything that goes beyond appearance. I often wear the jewelry prototypes for weeks before we decide that a jewel is ready for production. Wearability is a key factor. At Pomellato, a jewel must be beautiful yet comfortable.”

Venus Williams

Tennis champion and co-designer, Reinstein Ross Goldsmiths' Diamond Match Collection

Ms. Williams brings some of her tennis star experience to her designs. “When I’m on the court I’m sweating and grunting, but I want to feel beautiful. Jewelry makes you feel instantly beautiful. I layer on full accessories — bracelets and earrings and my favorite dome ring. My jewelry is a part of me.”

Her Diamond Match designs feature peach gold and pavé diamonds. “I love pavé, it sparkles. You can wear it every day, everywhere and feel fabulous every moment of your life.”



Pierreries necklace with 20 amethysts from Mellerio.

Laure-Isabelle Mellerio

President and artistic director of Mellerio, in Paris

“I am the first woman to be president and artistic director of Mellerio after 14 generations of men ruling the oldest jewelry house in the world. As a woman, I really imagine each piece for myself first, that I could wear easily, every day, in every occasion, whether jewelry or high jewelry. I also wanted to bring a more what we call in French *décomplexée* [uninhibited] attitude and refocused all our collections in a more casual way of wearing jewelry. I have a strong taste for volume, contrast and color.”

Eleonor Picciotto

Founder of the Eye of Jewelry website, in Paris

“Most women are genuinely creative when they imagine something from their guts, for themselves, because they cannot find a suitable offer on the market. Women making women’s jewelry think thoroughly of the weight, the structure, the proportion, the style and how it fits and feels on the skin.”

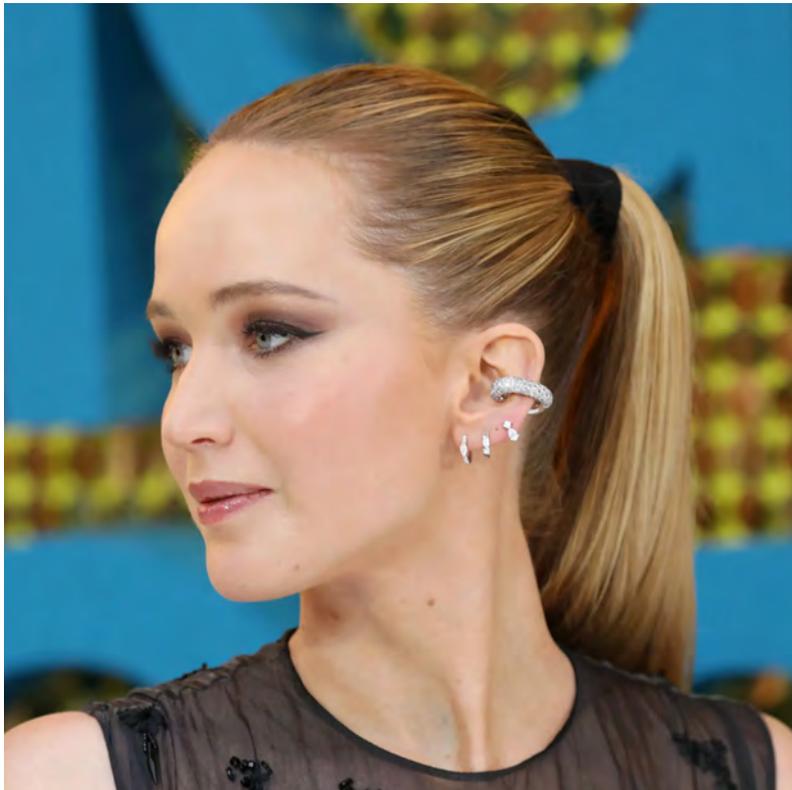


A Butterfly ring in pink gold from Dubail Paris.

Isabelle Dubail

Managing director of Dubail Paris

“I am driven by the emotion of wearing a piece of jewelry. When I work with our jewelry workshop, I always ask for the most elegant jewels yet easy-to-wear on a daily basis. This is how we gave birth to our best-selling collection Butterfly; I created it from a set of marquise diamonds, a very refined jewelry creation yet easy to wear every day. As a woman creating jewelry, I am determined yet humble in front of the beauty of stones and the craftsmanship of our jewelers.”



The actress Jennifer Lawrence wearing a diamond ear cuff by Ana Khoury and earrings by Anita Ko. Lia Toby/Getty Images

Marion Fasel

Founder and editorial director of the Adventurine website

“What stands out for me among the best women jewelry designers is the history of innovation stretching back through the 20th century. Women seem to intuitively know the risks women want to take and the bold statements they want to make with their jewelry. Recently, I think of iconoclasts like Lorraine Schwartz, who has been making lavish yet modern diamond jewelry that has been a top choice for strong women like Beyoncé, Taylor Swift and Margot Robbie for eons. Ana Khouri also stands out as one of the most groundbreaking designers of this moment or really any time in history. She is as gutsy as it gets, mounting important stones in minimalist statement pieces that have proven to be the jewelry that stylish, modern women want to wear.”



A Large Pebble Pendant from By Pariah in yellow gold and aventurine.

Sophie Howard

Founder and designer of By Pariah, in London

“I think designing for women, as a woman, brings a distinct and nuanced sensibility that resonates with the multifaceted lives we lead. There are so many things to consider: Where and how do I want to wear this piece and how do I want it to make me feel? All of my jewelry is intentionally very tactile and has a distinct weight to it. My Pebble Pendants, for example — I wear a number of them each day on an extra-long length of chain that makes the necklace effortless and cool. It’s also the right length to take hold of the pendants, something I often find myself doing without realizing but I find really grounding and calming.”

Karen Giberson

President and chief executive of the Accessories Council, in New York City

Ms. Giberson wrote that Monica Rich Kosann, a designer in New York City, exemplifies the effect that a woman has on her jewelry designs. “Rich Kosann has said that everything she designs has a reason for being. She always asks herself, ‘How will this piece make a woman feel empowered and inspired?’ She leaves nothing to chance. If a piece flips backward or lays

on its side (which will happen, naturally, as a woman goes about her day), she wants to know it will still look beautiful. To that end, she ensures that there are design elements on the back of each piece and that the lines work seamlessly as it moves.”



A Razzle Dazzle Ring in blue aluminum, set with a tanzanite by Suzanne Syz.

Suzanne Syz

Designer of Suzanne Syz Art Jewels, in Geneva

“When a woman creates jewelry, she has in mind not only the glamorous and spectacular look of the design, but most importantly the comfort of the jewel. Women know that when you wear jewelry all day long it has to be comfortable. We all have certain pieces that are too heavy and that we put aside and never wear. Men often ignore that part of the creation process as most never wear them.”

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