

## STRANGE TIMES SPARK UNUSUAL JEWELRY

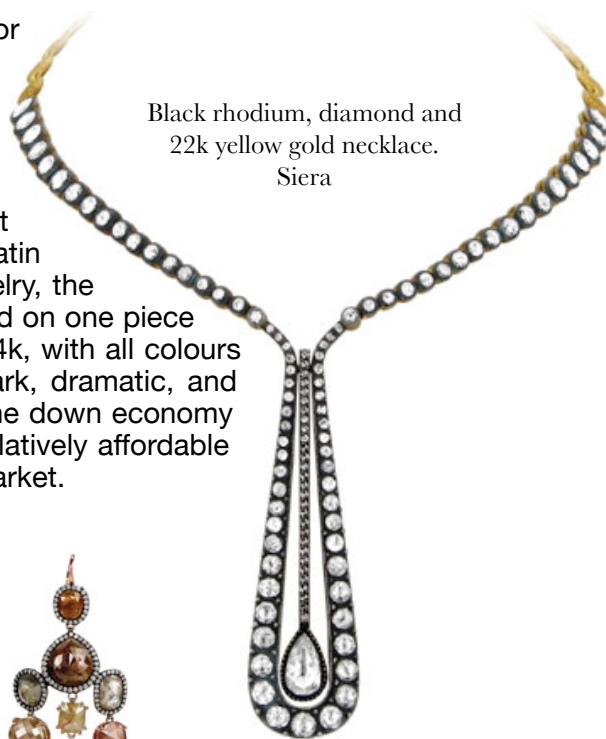
Like Pablo Picasso in his “Blue Period,” fine jewelry designers are creating some of their most creative and diversified work in this blue economy. Rather than take the safe road of traditional and tried-and-true, most contemporary jewelers are, instead, journeying into foreign and exotic places with their designs. Even classic classifications—hoop earrings and chain links especially—have new twists that are making buyers’ heads turn. Here’s a roundup of some of the best, most creative tactics, which are leading the trends for fourth quarter.



“Moonlight Ice” bangles in sterling with pave diamonds in black rhodium. David Yurman

### Fade to Black

The single strongest trend in fine jewelry for fall is blackened metals. Most often it is dark silver, but a few top designers are also strong in black steel. The darkened medium looks different in every collection, as some brands keep the surfaces polished, while others make it matte, and still others give it a sleek satin finish. Because it’s being done in fine jewelry, the blackened silver and steel typically is mixed on one piece with high-karat gold, especially 22k and 24k, with all colours of diamonds worked into the designs. Dark, dramatic, and daring--the finished pieces also address the down economy since silver, most notably, has remained relatively affordable in the otherwise volatile precious metals market.



Black rhodium, diamond and 22k yellow gold necklace. Siera



“Paper Chain” triple hoop earrings in black oxidized cobalt chrome and 18k. Sarah Graham



Multi-colour rough rose cut chandelier earrings. Nina Runsdorf



Button earrings in sterling with oxidized silver. EnA/Elements+Alloys

**Champagne is the New Gold**

Last year rose gold was the newest shade for the age-old precious metal, but modern innovators are ignited by beige –preferring, of course, to call it more glamorous names like “champagne.” Leaders include Brazilian mega-brand *H. Stern*, longtime Italian leader *Annamaria Cammilli*, and newcomer American company *Sandy Leong*. The sophisticated champagne hue is a natural, say those working in it, because it’s a low-key colour—in between white and yellow gold—that works well with the current trend of inconspicuous consumption and less ostentatious shows of wealth.



Champagne gold and diamond studs. Sandy Leong



Ring in 18k yellow and beige Noble gold. H Stern

Irregular gold pendant with diamonds. Meira T



**Irregularity Rules**

Whether it’s the shape of a piece of jewelry, the setting for a stone, the link in a chain, or the actual gem, “perfect” simply doesn’t cut it anymore. The more irregular and unfamiliar, the better; making the silhouette or setting asymmetrical is part of the strong and continuing organic trend. Using far-from-round cuts, however, speaks not only to organic but also to the economy. Round pearls are costlier than baroque. Perfect precious and semiprecious gems command greater prices than their rough-cut counterparts. In off-shapen gems, inclusions don’t matter and, in fact, become part of their organic beauty.



One-of-a-kind baroque pearl ring. Yvel

In this genre of unusually cut stones, gem slices are gaining popularity—due, in part, to their one-dimensional nature, which, again, means a bigger look but at a lower cost than the conventional 3D gem.



Sliced pink sapphire pendant. Yvel

Organic diamond slice earrings. Nina Runsdorf



Shell shape ring with inclusions. Danielle Meshorer

Within this category of not-so-perfect pieces, many items evoke at least some elements of the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, revered for handcrafted looks as opposed to mass-produced. Today, the new asymmetric earrings, rings, and the like often also exhibit surfaces that are hammered, scratched, or detailed in some way to appear almost blemished. In general, more natural looking.



Raw diamond and 18k ring.  
Todd Reed



Hammered silver earrings with chalcedony cushion cuts.  
Lori Bonn



Bold organic inspired ring.  
Boaz Kashi

**Classics with a Twist**

Perhaps the new hoop should be called the un-hoop. Remember when its wire or tubing was circular? Not anymore. Hoops *a la* 2009 have strange proportions: wavy, crooked, and crushed are words that come to mind.

The same adjectives often describe the latest links. Another strong classic, the link in its newest incarnation looks anything but ordinary. Many differences define the new links from those of the '40s, '70s, and '80s. First and foremost, it's their heft: the overall look is much lighter than in decades past. Most of the new light links also have that imperfect, non-uniform shape. Additionally, their colour is frequently not yellow gold but rose or white, and they are dotted with diamonds or interspersed with links of gem colour, enamel, wood, or ceramic. Again, a style strategy that accomplishes two things: brings down the price and pumps up the artisanal factor.



Wavy irregular links in 18k with champagne diamonds.  
Antonini



"Ruffle" hoops in sterling silver.  
Thistle & Bee



"Golden Echo" natural shape earrings.  
Sandy Leong

### All Mixed Up

When one speaks of artisanal, individuality is key. Over the past three years, fashionable consumers were being guided to create their own unique jewelry statement through layering. But for 2009 and going forward, the fashion statement is created by a statement piece of jewelry. It's no longer as much about stacking bangles and rings or piling on pendants and necklaces. Now the focus is on wearing signature pieces of jewelry that often combine several metals, gems, cuts, and more than one texture. The rule? Anything goes, and everything comes into play.



Oxidized silver cuff with 18k and gemstone accents.  
Konstantino



Oxidized silver brooch with granulated gold and turquoise.  
Tschetter Studio

Asymmetric brooch with ancient Chinese gambling chip.  
Donna Chambers



### Key Concepts

- lower price points inspire creativity
- blackened metals: silver or steel
- champagne is the new gold
- less ostentatious luxury
- rough shapes, cuts and textures
- asymmetry
- new irregular hoops and link shapes
- handcrafted, artisanal looks
- mixing materials/textures in a single piece instead of layering