



Lori Bonn "Splash Collection" oval circles earrings in sterling silver with small white quartz stones set in an asymmetric circles pattern; suggested retail price is \$165. (877) 507-4206 or LoriBonn.com

Talisman Unlimited's South Sea keshi pearl pendant with leaf cap on 18-karat gold chain; suggested retail price is \$2,860. (818) 888-3708 or TalismanUnlimited.com



From Antonini's "Anniversary Collection," feting its 90th year, comes this 18-karat rose gold necklace featuring champagne diamonds and detachable small and large pendants; suggested retail price with both pendants is \$16,850, necklace alone is \$4,400, small pendant alone is \$2,050, and large pendant alone is \$10,360. (305) 534-0000 or Antonini.it



Todd Reed eternity band in 18-karat gold with 10.18 carats of organic "broken" rose-cut diamonds; suggested retail price is \$7,700. (303) 442-6280 or ToddReed.com

Shape-shifters

Crooked, hammered and fancifully free-form, the latest designs capture the twists and turns of vertigo-inducing times.

BY LORRAINE DEPASQUE

The jewelry industry and the economy aren't the only things that look off balance and unfamiliar these days—so, too, does the very shape of the new jewelry being designed.

Depending on one's bent, there are several ways to describe jewelry's newest silhouettes. Sci-fi buffs might say pieces look like shape-shifters, kids could call them bubble-like, and architecture aficionados may assert that they're Gaudi-esque. The one thing all would agree on is that most of the newest collections haven't got a hard edge in sight. While deco isn't dead, free-form styles have surely sent it into dormancy.

This new jewelry goes beyond organic, though, because while it is ill-proportioned it is also craftsman-like in its final execution. Even for the pieces that are mass-produced, the words "artisanal" and "one-of-a-kind" come to mind. For example, links are often far from uniform, settings appear crooked and crushed, and surfaces are sometimes scratched, hammered or scribed.

"What we are seeing is organic at first glance but, more importantly, there is a new modernist design movement coming into frame, which is

much more experimental than in past decades, when everything was derivative of the past," says Ellen Sideri, founder and chief executive officer of New York-based forecasting firm ESP Trendlab. "Today, designers are finding new ways, new interpretations and new approaches to materials, finishes and proportions."

A NEW AGE OF DESIGN

Like the strange proportions and unusual finishes, out-of-the-ordinary gems and cuts are also integral to jewelry's new irregular and handcrafted looks, as a growing number of manufacturers are creating collections around gems not generally associated with fine jewelry.

Witness the increase in companies using unconventional slices of sapphires and other colored stones. Or consider jewelry designer Todd Reed, whose unusual diamond bort jewelry, using darker, included stones, is already a smash hit, and who recently launched a collection based on broken diamonds. Yes, broken.

"I get them from overseas," says Reed, a goldsmith. "They're rose cuts that nobody wants."

Someone must want them now, however,



Todd Reed necklace in 18-karat gold with 221.58 carats of multicolored diamond bort crystals and 6.96 carats of round brilliant-cut diamonds; suggested retail price is \$176,000. (303) 442-6280 or ToddReed.com



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because Reed sold every piece he had at the Las Vegas shows. To Sideri, the popularity of such pieces reflects not only an artistic shift, but a cultural one.

"Make no mistake," Sideri says. "A new age of design is emerging that pushes the edge of jewelry design into new places and, in the most startling way, it offers a new audience of consumers jewelry that resonates with their lifestyle. This is a new way forward that fits the times and the moment in which we live."

Luxury retailer I. Gorman Jewelers of Washington, D.C., sees firsthand a new and growing audience of consumers who want unusual jewelry that is made by smaller artist workshops rather than mass-produced, says sales associate Zue Stevenson. She believes baroque pearls may have fueled the fixation on "imperfect" jewelry.

"Baroque pearls are much more popular than they ever were before," Stevenson says. "People used to want perfectly round pearls, but now that designers are giving them odd-shaped pearls in jewelry that has great craftsmanship and attention to detail, they are willing to buy this jewelry—even with materials they never saw before."

I. Gorman hasn't picked up Todd Reed's new broken rose-cut merchandise, but its bort line has been a success.

"The muted grays, tans and lavenders aren't clear stones—they're imperfect, of course, but the way the


designer facets them, they pick up light and the customer loves that," Stevenson says. "Not everyone wants the classic diamond. Or the typical engagement ring, for that matter."

Playing on that notion is the setting of Noam Carver's new \$25,000 diamond platinum ring, which seems to swerve and sway and was, in part, influenced by organics.

"My inspiration was from the forms that exist in nature as well as elements from classical architecture," Carver says, adding that he wanted to "push the limits of design."

Sarah Graham, whose collections also sell at I. Gorman, is in the same barrier-breaking mode, as evidenced by her "Paper Chain Collection," which seems to borrow from the arts and crafts movement (known for its disdain of anything machine-made) while also integrating oxidized cobalt chrome with precious metals and gems.

"This collection was inspired by the paper chains made from irregularly cut strips of construction paper that kids make themselves and put on a Christmas tree," Graham says. While her inspiration couldn't be less high-tech, it's very of the moment, says Sideri, who believes off-balance designs are a sign that jewelry-making has evolved.

"[It] speaks to what is finally a move to 21st century design, which values innovation, sustainability and inventiveness," she says. "Today's design takes advantage of many of the new technologies that never existed before." 



Noam Carver's custom-designed engagement ring in platinum with a 1.6-carat round brilliant-cut diamond, surrounded by 35 diamonds; suggested retail price is \$25,000. (514) 952-6626 or NoamCarver.com

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