



The Joy of Jewelry

COLORFUL GEMS FIT FASHION'S BRIGHT OUTLOOK
BY LORRAINE DEPASQUE

This season, there's one simple rule on the road to great jewelry style: Don't get stuck in neutral! Get into gear and follow the direction of spring 2011 fashion, which is all about color.

Does this mean that neutrals like black—so strong these past few years—are no longer fashionable? Is it time to abandon your Little Black Dress? "Absolutely not," says Meredith Smith, designer and cultural trend analyst at The Doneger Group in New York City. "Even though fashion's biggest names flooded the spring runways with bright-colored clothes, you can still wear your classic LBD. However, the perennial cocktail classic and other neutral-toned attire needs to be popped with colorful jewelry and accessories. Right now, our culture is all about finding joy; adorning ourselves in happy, escapist colors (like bright blues and greens) is one way to do that."

THE GEMS

Adam Graham, marketing director of The American Gem Trade Association (AGTA), agrees that bright blues and greens, as well as shades of purple, are leading trends in colored gemstone jewelry this year. Among the azures, he points to traditional blue sapphire, aquamarine and blue topaz, but emphasizes that lesser-known stones like labradorite, turquoise, blue moonstone, chalcedony, tanzanite and blue shaded black onyx are extremely significant as well. With dramatically-sized jewelry in vogue, it helps that many of the latter gemstones can be purchased in high quality at affordable prices.

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“This year, you’re also going to see more engagement ring center stones in blues and greens,” notes Graham. “Kate Middleton’s blue sapphire from Prince William has re-ignited the trend that his mother, Princess Diana, started back in 1981, when she received the engagement ring from Prince Charles. Blue sapphire is a great option for women who don’t want to be too ‘bling,’ and at the same time, it’s a high-end gem of great color.”

At the AGTA’s annual Spectrum jewelry design awards for 2011, Graham tells us, “One of the winning pieces was a platinum ring with a neon-green tsavorite center stone. Our panel of judges, all in the fashion or jewelry industries, said it represents a definite style direction.”

In fact, many of the best jewelry designers are also premiering dazzling fashion collections with great green gems, especially green tourmalines, peridots, green diamonds, emeralds, green agates, green sapphires and tsavorites. “And for the past year,” says Graham, “celebrity stylists have been requesting to borrow green gemstone jewelry for their A-list clients to wear to awards shows.”

The green jewelry they’ve been borrowing will coordinate with many red carpet fashion styles according to Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of The Pantone Color Institute, which named ‘Peapod’ green as one of its top fashion colors for spring/summer. “We’ve learned that green really works well as a neutral and we see people more inclined to wear it on a regular basis,” she says.

This past fall, Pantone chose ‘Purple Orchid’ as its number-one fashion color and, for spring/summer, the passion for purple continues, with ‘Lavender’ in its top ten selection. Jewelry designers are showing violet gem creations in everything from deep amethysts and fancy purple sapphires to pastel pinky-purple sugilites and quartzes.

FIVE TO BUY

Now that you know what these post-winter pick-me-up colors and coordinating gemstones are, which jewelry pieces in particular should you be considering? Ultimately that depends on your individual style as well as what jewelry you already own, but here are the five jewelry must-haves we highly recommend:

BIG BANGLES The number-one jewelry item adorning spring runway models was the big bangle, and they usually wore two or three per arm. The uber bangles—not slim stackables and not ultra-wide cuffs—almost always featured stones, beads, or some sort of bright embellishment.



LAYERING NECKLACES While models strutted down the runways wearing mega-necklaces, in this case you have another option. Instead of investing in one massive neck piece, a more practical purchase might be to buy several long chains and links that can each be doubled or tripled. With layering necklaces, you can experiment and create many different looks, for both daywear and evening. Play with the necklaces, graduating the lengths differently to accommodate the neckline of whatever you’re wearing. To complete the look, add a 16-inch chain with a pendant or enhancer. In this season of bold color, choose one with a bright gemstone center.

EPIC RINGS Typically, you ladies buy these super-sized and super stylish rings for yourself. (Well, why not—you deserve it!) They’re statement pieces that reflect your personality and personal style, so be sure to select gemstones you really like—plus, since it’s on your hand, you’ll be looking at it all day. Should you invest a lot of money in this epic ring? That depends, to some degree, on whether you’ll be wearing it every day or if you’ll want to buy several and switch—much like some people do with watches. Unlike the big cocktail rings of eras past, the epic ring is no longer a dress-up-only accessory.

GUMDROP EARRINGS And you thought gumdrops were just those chewy sugar-coated candies you shouldn’t be eating! Think again: It’s the season’s strongest earring silhouette. More medium-large than ultra-large in size, this drop-style earring focuses on one prominent colored gem that hangs to about mid-neck. It’s classic, yet, at the same time, fashion. Ask your jeweler about the earrings’ stone shape and cut. Some gumdrops have slices of color with a flat bottom, allowing light to pass through the gemstone, much in the way natural light shines through a stained glass window.

MORE THAN ONE METAL COLOR No, you can’t be a yellow-only or white-only jewelry lover anymore. It just isn’t fashionable. If most—or all—of your jewelry is still the same metal color that you’ve been wearing forever, this is the season to start collecting pieces made in different surface colors. If you want to stick to karat gold for your precious metal, that’s okay, but there are many different gold colors to choose from: rose, blackened and sometimes peach. Even the texture on a piece slightly changes the look of the color. (For example, a high-polished blackened gold bracelet will appear to have a different hue than a satin-finished or matte blackened gold piece.) Once you begin to add different colored pieces to your jewelry wardrobe, you’ll see how all the shades really do work together. And no need to worry if you don’t have “enough” of a certain color when you start. Part of the fun of jewelry is collecting it over time.