

Get Inspired by these Recycled Diamond Jewelry Designs

Top designers share why they use recycled natural diamonds in their jewelry.

In the hands of the creative designers, old and reused diamonds are being transformed into stylish new jewelry and engagement rings for the next generation, the generation that calls for eco-friendly, ethically sourced natural diamonds.

Reimagining old diamonds in contemporary jewelry isn't a new trend. Jewelers like Jessica McCormack and Single Stone have been doing it for years because they prefer the charisma of old-cut diamonds over modern stones. Just ask Russell Zelenetz of Stephen Russell, the Madison Avenue jeweler which offers a curated mix of vintage and contemporary designs. "Old diamonds have a character and charm that can't be reproduced," he explains. "They were cut by hand over a century ago, and each cutter had their own style, like a painter. So, each stone is like a work of art."

Recycled Diamonds are Sustainable

Aside from the romance of old diamonds, we are in the age of the circular economy, where people want to recycle, reuse, and reimagine everything from designer handbags to furniture. It's motivated more jewelers to start sourcing old diamonds and secondhand or used modern diamonds.

That is also what inspired Thelma West, the Lagos-born London-based jewelry designer, to focus on recycled diamonds. When creating a bespoke ring or jewelry design, West says her first choice is a recycled diamond, and when that's not available in the size and shape she wants, she purchases an ethically sourced diamond from a certified, responsible mine.

The demand for recycled stones is relatively new, says West. Twenty years ago, when she began her career in the diamond trade in Antwerp, she said nobody wanted a recycled diamond. "They only wanted newly mined diamonds because they didn't want a stone with a past," she says. Now, the spin has changed.

"The diamond industry is more transparent, and it has pushed people to demand more, and they want more options," says West. "But they still want natural diamonds."

For the Love of Old Diamonds

Beyond the feel-good factor of recycled diamonds, designers simply fall in love with the beauty of old diamonds. "We love old diamonds for their uniqueness," says Corina Madilian, who established Single Stone, the Los Angeles-based jeweler that has specializes in vintage diamonds. "We love the fact that no two stones are alike, much like the clients that wear our jewelry."

"It is also of great importance to us that we're giving these precious stones a new life," explains Madilian. "Using vintage stones is not only responsible, but also preserving a bit of history."

Dana Bronfman was drawn to the idea of recycled diamonds, but she also quickly became captivated with the beauty of old diamonds, and now she's chasing them down for her new pieces. "I became hooked on the sentimentality of the stories and histories behind these cuts and stones in particular, and the forever-lasting heritage quality of these diamonds and jewelry in general is so beautiful to me."

The Hunt for Old Diamonds

Now that more people want old diamonds, it's increasingly hard to find them, says Zelenetz. He points out that some older jewels are simply too beautiful to take apart for the diamond. He relies on his network of dealers, clients, and estate sales to uncover vintage diamonds. But adds that prices have risen over the past several years. That's also motivating designers to look at reusing contemporary diamonds in new settings.

Vintage Diamonds Imbue a Sense of Style

Just because a diamond is vintage doesn't mean the design is old-fashioned. Styles range from modern minimalist to bold, and sometimes with a vintage flair. Madilian says the soft, romantic faceting of vintage stones provide a subtle beauty to even bold designs. Her favorite cuts are elongated cushion cuts from the late 1800s and old European cuts.

The best part of recycled diamonds is that if your style changes, it's easy to recast your stone in a new design. That's the life of a diamond, it never ends