

SOLITAIRE

THE FINE ART OF JEWELLERY

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FACTETS

cuffs

A CUFF'S TALE

More than just your ordinary bangles

Words by Smitha Sadanandan

THESE ARE EXCITING TIMES FOR CUFFS. Films such as *Wonder Woman*, *The Last Jedi*, and *Black Panther* have rekindled a fascination for these statement pieces. Studded with diamonds, gems, and voluminous centre stones, whether in cut-out shapes with strong solids, or in uniquely abstract or organic forms, cuffs make for a mega wrist statement.

“Cuff bracelets have been worn by many different ethnic groups for a variety of cultural reasons. The Egyptians crafted bracelets from bones, stones, and wood to serve religious and spiritual interests,” says Paola De Luca, Founder and Creative Director of *The Futurist*, a trend forecasting and intelligence platform focusing on the luxury sector. “Cuff bracelets are often associated with brides, especially in India,” says De Luca.



“The cuff is a bold accessory, differentiating itself from other articulated bracelets as it maintains its shape, which can allow for a more three-dimensional design,” observes Jessica Wyndham, Head of Sotheby’s Jewellery Department, Asia. The wide, textured gold cuff bangles from Van Cleef & Arpels and owned by Jacqueline Kennedy, as well as the *Gold Split Bone Cuff* designed by Elsa Peretti for Tiffany, are some iconic jewels that have inspired variations since.

Reminiscent of forearm guards or armours worn by the Amazons and longbow archers, the cuffs gradually evolved into contemporary versions. Archaeologist-turned-jeweller **Polina Sapouna Ellis** has sought inspiration from the Greek mythology and warriors to create long, sculptural cuffs. “My inspiration for the *Mycenaean* collection is triggered by the militaristic and austere Mycenaean culture and art,” says Ellis. The *Dorian* collection sprung out of the minimalistic, strong, and clean design of the Dorian.



Azza Fahmy’s pieces for her eponymous jewellery brand are a cross-cultural exchange.

Balancing intensity and strength with motifs of ancient Egypt, the *Tale* cuff re-imagines the Pharaoh’s jewellery and their striking shapes. Created after three years of research into the Armana Dynasty — a period that saw the rise of famed Pharaohs like Tutankhamun — the *Tale* cuff shines the light on the era’s craftsmanship as well as Egypt’s love of nature. The cuff features scarabs crawling amidst fruits, flowers, and hieroglyphs. “They tell a myriad of stories symbolising and celebrating life, transformation, love, wisdom, and prosperity,” says Fahmy. She has ensured the integrity of each detail in the design by having them authenticated by a former Christie’s Egyptologist.



FROM TOP

Gold cuff bangle, VAN CLEEF & ARPELS

Dorian bangle, POLINA SAPOUNA ELLIS

Tale Cuff in 18K gold and sterling silver, AZZA FAHMY

*“Cuff bracelets have been worn by many different ethnic groups for a variety of cultural reasons”
– Paola De Luca, Founder and Creative Director,
The Futurist*



Model wearing jewellery by Polina Sapouna Ellis

FACETS
cuffs



Textures and interesting silhouettes infuse designs with an edge and a trendy spirit. Italian designer **Mauro Felter's** textured cuff morphs into a gold bark. Called *Bark of the Trees*, the cuffs are injected with originality, character, and glamour, strapping them up with a slender leather strand. Inspirations from nature in all its rawness underscore *Felter's* distinct designs, which are executed with great finesse.

Model wearing the *Bark of the Tree* ring and cuff by Mauro Felter



For French jeweller Marie Cabirou of *Marie Mas*, it is all about kinetic art specially when it comes to her pastel-hued *Swinging Stones* collection. Cabirou's *Dancing Cuff* is a reversible interpretation in pink gold, employing a patented technique that allows the jewel to change colour with the movement of the arm. The cuff features blue gems on one side and purple on the other. "When you dive into the sea, the colours closer to the surface are warm. But as you go deeper, the warm shades of red, purple, and pink disappear to reveal the deepest of blues," says the designer. With her choice of gem colours, Cabirou offers us a peek into the hidden depths.

Italian brand **Garavelli** bagged the 'Best in Diamonds Below US\$20,000' award for its bold, sculptural cuff at the Couture Design Awards 2017. Titled *A Little Chaos*, the diamond-accented black gold cuff gives a strong statement about life. "We wanted to express our understanding of the beauty, the choices, the peak and valleys, the paths we follow and finally, how we end up where we are today," explains Elisabetta Molina Garavelli, the brand's Creative Director.



Celebrated international architect Zaha Hadid first collaborated with the House of AW Mouzannar on the limited-edition white gold and diamond *Silene* cuff. "Creating a piece of jewellery, making sure it fits, evolving from an idea to a cuff, is like architecture. It was a meeting point between architecture and design," says Founder and Designer Alia Mouzannar about the family's memorable collaboration with the late Iraqi architect. A year later, the series was extended with the *Silene II* and *Silene III* latticed cuffs and rings.

On the other hand, clean lines and geometry lend elegance to the cuff bracelets designed by Charlotte Dauphin de la Rochefoucauld for her jewellery brand *Maison Dauphin*. "Variations are based on recurrent themes, borrowing line and volume from architecture and sculpture," says the designer. The cuffs for Collection I delve into abstraction, geometry, and expressionism to create new visual interpretations, while Collection II explores the opposition between creation and destruction allowed by time.



Wild colours erupt with happiness in Australian-born luxury jeweller Margot McKinney's cuffs, while Brazilian designer Fernando Jorge's creations are a great example of contemporary design. Cuffs, it seems, will continue to be a big part of the jewellery wardrobe, as more and more designers experimenting with creative freedom on the workbench expand our options for these coveted arm candy. 💎



FROM TOP

- Transformable *Dancing Cuff*, MARIE MAS
- A Little Chaos Cuff*, GARAVELLI
- Silene Cuffs*, HOUSE OF AW MOUZANNAR
- Collection II Cuff* in rose gold, MAISON DAUPHIN
- Colourful cuff, MARGOT MCKINNEY
- Cuff in contemporary design, FERNANDO JORGE