

SOLITAIRE

THE FINE ART OF JEWELLERY AND LIVING

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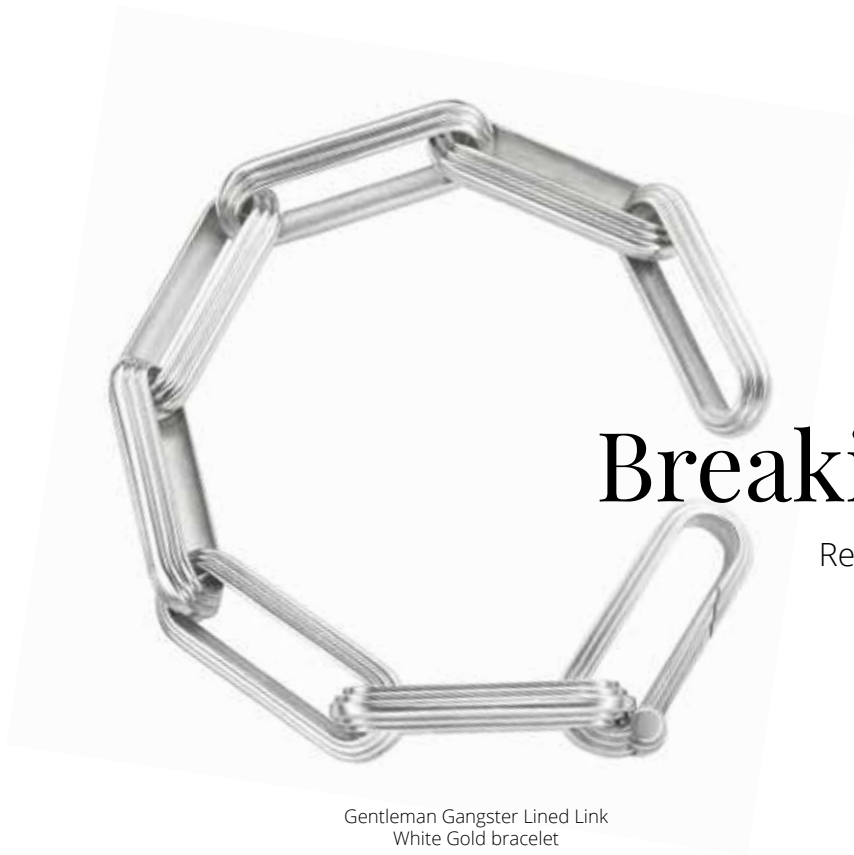
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Gentleman Gangster Lined Link
White Gold bracelet

Breaking Barriers

Redefining the jewellery industry with
gender-neutral designs

Words by **Smitha Sadanandan**



Pearl necklace with Yellow Gold pendant



Rock and Roll Yellow Gold bracelet

The jewellery industry has been hit with a wave of gender-neutral designs that are setting a firm stage for inclusivity. According to fine jewellery expert and brand strategist Meeling Wong, jewellery trends follows our lifestyles and today's men's fashion offerings are vast and diverse.

"Younger men are more adventurous about wearing jewellery – especially rings, pendants, bracelets, and brooches; jewellery is often the next purchase after a watch," observes Wong. "Jewellery can dress up an outfit, command a style, and distinguishes the wearer with a point of view. I've found that men often like the designs in many jewellery made for women – a good design is a good design after all!"

As an example, Boucheron's Jack de Boucheron bracelets, inspired by jack cables, can easily be sported by men. Embracing a strong geometric form, Tiffany's T1 collection is a reimagined version of the iconic 'T' motif and is realised with a distinctive beveled edge. "The goal was to reinvent the 'T' motif in a new bold symbol that felt very modern," says Reed Krakoff, Chief Artistic Officer. Those craving for subtlety, could explore daily wear gold and silver unisex jewels by Polina Ellis. Inspired by her Greek heritage, the charms from the

Mitos capsule line and rings from the Minotavros collection feature a bold and androgynous spin. In Singapore, Jouer by Simone has brought out its unisex Rockstar collection that plays with geometric shapes and spikes.

We spoke to designers to learn why they gravitate towards bold, gender-neutral designs – and to our joy, we discovered some of them are already working on new pieces.

Hannah Martin

Hannah Martin started her brand in 2005 with the idea that it was 'men's jewellery that girlfriends could steal.' "I never understood why jewellery couldn't just be for a person who loved it no matter their gender." When Martin first started out on this path, fine jewellery for men was barely thought of, and there was only a handful of

men looking for it. "It's great that it has become more recognised and in demand – just as it should be! Men look amazing in jewellery," she exclaims. The first collection she launched commercially, 'It's Only Rock N Roll,' was designed as jewellery for both men and women. "I have always wanted jewellery that is strong and sexy. Something that makes you feel powerful and confident when you wear it."

The designer also finds the clash of opposites exciting and uses this a lot in her work. Her latest designs for 'A New Act of Rebellion' is a rebellion on many levels, and one of those, she adds, is a rebellion against jewellery itself. "I chose to make a fine jewellery collection without using any stones at all. Gender fluidity is a big part of my ongoing personal rebellion against putting the wearers of jewellery in boxes."

Adorn – Trend



Rounded Rutilated Quartz pendant



Nephrite Jade Cushioned Tourmaline and Tourmaline Bar pendants

Fernando Jorge

When Fernando Jorge came up with Parallel in 2017, he had been designing jewellery for around 15 years. The motivation to design a gender-neutral line was personal – it was Jorge’s strong desire to design pieces that both men and women could wear that led to this collection. “A few years since the launch of Parallel, I can say this collection has seen a positive response from men and women alike.”

For the jewellery, Jorge wanted something bold with an organic and effortless feel. So, he focused on “simple shapes and hefty structures, making use of graduating gold lines and cushion cut stones for a decorative effect.” The materials used were yellow gold, beige gold, nephrite jade, green tourmalines, brown diamonds, and buffalo horn. “The collection was intended to look good on everyone and celebrate harmony amongst human diversity,” explains Jorge. What’s more, brands have been coming up with gender-neutral jewellery, and this hasn’t gone unnoticed: “I see this a natural response to a wider and better understanding of gender fluidity in all areas,” says Jorge.



Doubled bracelet



Doubled ring

Tomasz Donocik

With the collection, 'Russian Aristocrat', Tomasz Donocik tried to blur the boundaries between gender – androgynous men wearing jewels that would break away from traditional ways of wearing jewellery. "It was my first collection and I graduated with it from the Royal College of Art." When designing for men, Donocik uses motifs that are familiar like stars and studs, all while throwing in recognisable shapes and symbolic elements that represent power. He uses alternative materials like leather or bronze in his designs as well.

Gender-neutral jewellery, says Donocik, is a huge undiscovered area. He also makes an interesting observation: "When you design for men, it's very easy for women to wear it too. It's like a pair of jeans. Women can easily nick their boyfriends' trousers and jewellery. However, when designing for women it is not as easy to transcend."

Dart ring



Rhodium Rose Hematite Double necklace



Chain bracelet



Shaun Leane

Most of the pieces in Shaun Leane's collections are gender-neutral – it's a big part of his work. The silhouette is clean, understated, powerful, and underpins all of the collections. This silhouette has found a strong appeal among men and women, particularly the Sabre collection – the interlocking rings have been sold to men and women since he started his brand in 1999.

Leane, who creates a lot of diamond jewellery for men, says it warms his heart "to see that men are becoming more experimental and freer in their choice of jewellery and braver and more experimental in their sense of identity." Although, while Leane feels that brands still segment men and women's jewellery, he is buoyant about the slight movement towards unisex jewellery. The designer believes it's an area that needs to be explored further. He is currently working on a fine jewellery collection, which arguably will be his best gender-neutral collection yet. "The collection touches on human emotions and sentiment, which do not discriminate against gender; I feel this collection will appeal to everyone."

Gold Quill necklace



Small Gold Quill earrings



Black Rhodium Hook earrings



Gold Chain necklace



Gold Anniversary Collection rings



Tom Wood

Mona Jensen's Norwegian roots play a huge role in her esthetics and design. The Founder & Creative Director of Tom Wood Project says she favours functionality and a modern, androgynous expression, and that has led to an endless array of unisex signet rings and bracelets.

Link band rings and chain rings are sought-after styles by men and women. The newest signet rings from the brand are an updated series of rings with finer stones, such as green quartz and orange amber. The Cushion shape rings are the best sellers and its updated version, Cushion Open, has an open space in the middle. "Women wear more masculine and bolder jewellery now than they did a few years back, but we also see a tendency where men have started to wear jewellery that before were looked upon as 'feminine.' They layer chains, mix vintage with new jewellery and silver with gold," reveals Jensen.

Gold ring with Smoky Quartz



Ara Vartanian

The majority of Ara Vartanian's creations (with the exception of the obvious women's jewels) are unisex. "Some pieces are structured differently due to the body shape of a male. I see it often among my clients – men wearing pieces that I have designed for women and women wearing jewellery that I designed for men!" The Brazilian designer is quite chuffed to be witnessing a shift in styles, with more luxury brands and independent jewelers designing gender-neutral pieces.

There is definitely a strong crossover in men's and women's jewellery. "Even though sometimes I design a particular piece for men, women love the pieces for themselves and vice versa. I don't believe there are labels of who should wear my jewellery be it a woman's design or a men's piece. Anyone has the freedom to wear anything they like and are comfortable in," he says. 🌟



Ara Vartanian bracelet



Ara Vartanian Double Finger rings



Ara Vartanian rings