

JEWELRY

Focus of next week's Gold Conference is creativity, community and collaboration

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RR rings with stones

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Initiatives in Art and Culture will debut the seventh annual edition of its Gold Conference in New York, focusing on the three themes of creativity, community and collaboration.

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The three-day event will throw together industry experts with a focused audience to explore the underpinnings of gold's abiding emotional power, allure and enduring value. In particular, the conference will dwell on great jewelers and their works, highlighting the interplay between artists and their materials and tools, their collaborators, and the influences on them as well as their influence on others.

"There's a great emphasis on individuality, both with regard to the jewel and to the experience," said Lisa Koenigsberg, president of Initiatives in Art and Culture, New York.

"There also appears to be a greater abundance of choice as culture and therefore the market more widely acknowledges people's innate tendency to adorn and to imbue objects with meaning," she said.



Lisa Koenigsberg is president of Initiatives in Art and Culture

In this dialogue, Ms. Koenigsberg outlines the key themes of this year's Gold Conference and the rationale behind

them, trends in gold and jewelry, design, branding of jewelers and the interest of younger consumers in the precious metal. Please read on.

What's the focus of this year's event?

The three principles of the conference are creativity, community and collaboration, and the focus of the conference is those principles and how they intertwine with regard to gold at large.

How did you choose the mix of speakers?

Speaker selection is really governed by the issues we want to address.

IAC also strives for the best. That is a hallmark of our work. IAC chooses a very collaborative, organic approach in which I work together with others to shape a vision.

The conference, with its many voices and perspectives representing every aspect of the gold world, has been and continues to be an incubator for projects, relationships, aspects of change.

Through this organic process and as a result of the choice of speakers and their engagement at the moment and throughout the process, the conference has created a community that continues and grows from year to year.

How do you define creativity in gold jewelry?

Creativity captures a narrative or a period's aesthetic in a startling way: providing the viewer or wearer an authentic reflection of the moment.

Creativity is also expressed in surface treatment, for example, blackening. In the use of techniques, for example, mokume gane. In the color of gold, such as Reinstein Ross's peach, as well as in the selection of other elements, such as stones or feathers even, that can be included in distinctive ways.

There is an extant vocabulary, augmented at times by a new tone or color, and the greatest creativity captures the spirit of the era or an individual by making exceptional, selective and sensational use of the elements within it.



Kara Ross earrings

What trends are you seeing in gold jewelry more pendants or more rings versus earrings?

Rings are omnipresent because they are so often given to mark meaningful human occasions and they symbolize those events and moments, and that is a historical constant.

At the same time, I think we can affirm the increasing wish to personalize in order to assert individuality and to reinforce meaning or represent narrative, which has become ever important.

Stacking is another way to achieve the personal, since each individual would combine the separate elements differently.

I have noticed many distinctive cuffs and bracelets, but it also true that this form photographs well and that can adjust

our perspective regarding trends.

From a fashion point of view, I think the focus on earrings is tremendous.

Far from simply seeing variations on the notion of a traditional pair of earrings, consumers are offered single earrings, mismatched pairs, ear climbers and other embellishments, and this is occurring at every price point.

Additionally, variation on length, including extremely long earrings, is arguably an expression of jewelry as fashion, one that bridges the gap between two worlds.



Atelier Zobel honeycomb bracelet

The younger generations are they into gold?

Yes. They are particularly interested in sourcing and sustainability, and ensuring the ethical dimension of a purchase.

With regard to aesthetic, they seem to favor light pieces that are either more linear or naturalistic, some with an unfinished or raw quality that might be seen as representing a form of authenticity, an attribute or characteristic highly prized by this demographic.

Both the ethical and sustainable and the personal relate to the industry's identification of narrative or story telling as new.

While there is no doubt that narrative and tales of origin and fabrication are important, story telling is not new to culture, but is in fact tied to the caves of Lascaux, to religious painting, Beowulf and Chaucer.

As long as humans have existed, they have told stories as a way of passing on history and shaping culture.



Attendees at a previous Gold Conference gathering

How are jewelers branding themselves and their products differently now compared to seven years ago when you hosted the first gold conference?

There's a great emphasis on individuality, both with regard to the jewel and to the experience.

There also appears to be a greater abundance of choice as culture and therefore the market more widely acknowledges people's innate tendency to adorn and to imbue objects with meaning.

The focus on sources and sustainable and ethical practice has grown.

Story telling has become increasingly important as makers and retailers demystify, by exploring with the customer how pieces are made and the techniques and materials involved.

The nature of the exchange between the customer and the retailer or maker seems to be much more personal than it has been in past 30 years or so.

Designs can be made with the customer's stone of choice, and can include hidden stones or design elements that convey a message intended solely for the wearer. And packaging is more universally an expression of the store and its aesthetic.

Additionally, pieces are more often accompanied by documents that, for example, tell the story of the stone, thus linking both to story telling and to individualization, which, in this case, could be a by-product of the concern for sourcing.

How do you see gold design and sales evolve this year and the next?

With regard to design, it would seem that jewelry is either quite naturalistic or very geometric in its tendencies.

Movement in pieces, whether they have en tremblant features or fringes, that the piece is itself expressive is a trend.

Arguably, static highly sculptural pieces relate to this trend because they lead the eye to explore different aspects and dimension and, in the words of Diana Vreeland, to "travel" differently.

Sales also seem to be evolving in a different way.

Given the broad access to knowledge and products, a greater emphasis is being placed on the personal with regard to sales: how can the experience be differentiated and how can the product be set apart from all others?

In discussing the evolution of design and sales, it is also critical to keep in mind that sales are impacted by economic circumstances, both of the individual but also of the time.

Since certain categories, bridal specifically, remain key to life's experience they are therefore more inured to the buffeting of challenging times.

[Please click here to access the Gold Conference's program](#)

[Please click here to register for the Gold: Creativity, Community and Collaboration conference in New York April 26-28](#)

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