

Gifts



Hidden gems

Jewellery | Think outside the trinket box this season and look for sparkling new designers and traditional gems with a twist, says Lucie Muir

Now the confetti has settled, what will 2014's most famous newlyweds, the Clooneys and Jolie-Pitts, give each other for their first Christmas as married couples? Will it be cufflinks? A silver locket inscribed with a sentimental message? Or will George skip jewellery and bestow a coffee maker on his new wife instead?

Perhaps they will take the advice of Dalia Oberlander, founder of New York-based online Jeweller Latest Revival, who says: "Statement jewels are taking centre stage this holiday season - think bold accents and striking, powerful shapes." Jewellery designers and retailers are helping consumers think outside the trinket box by embracing dramatic

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pieces, designs with personal meanings, and lesser-known independent labels.

Oberlander recommends one-off festive pieces from Monique Péan and Maiyet, and other Latest Revival exclusives including Zaha Hadid for Swiss jeweller Caspita. Then there are second-hand or "estate" pieces, which Oberlander buys from private collectors. These include a pair of 18-carat yellow gold and diamond earrings by Boucheron, priced at \$9,300.

When it comes to collectability, Henry Graham, co-founder of the pioneering Wolf & Badger boutique on London's Dover Street, thinks Christmas is a good time to champion new talent. The store he runs with his brother George now houses around 100 independent jewellers from the capital and beyond.

"I always make sure to buy an investment piece and spend a little more on

Clockwise from top left: 'Evil Eye' friendship bracelet, Astley Clarke, £225; Brass earrings, Marni, £260, thecorner.com; 'OMG' lips ring, Raphaelae Canot, £780, available at Dover Street Market (DSM); pear-shaped diamond pendant, William Welstead, £3,250, DSM; Keystone moonstone ring, Boodles, £1,750; Figurative high jewellery watch, in pearl, diamond and onyx, Cartier, poa; 'Clusterbud' earrings (part of a pair), Solange Azagury-Partridge, £19,000; Woodland charm bracelet, Asprey, £7,000; Diamond Ellipse, Sophie Bille Brahe for DSM, £2,700; 'White Noise' black ring, with diamonds, Repossi, £8,160; 'Sugar Stack' rings, by Paloma Picasso for Tiffany, from £550; 'My Dior' earrings (part of a pair), Dior, £1,650; 'Imperiale' cocktail ring with amethyst and diamond, Chopard, £5,120



How to find the perfect piece: a guide

Finding the perfect piece requires a fair bit of homework and research. If you don't feel confident about your partner's style, then sneak a photo on your smartphone of their existing jewellery collection and show it to store staff, or alternatively mail it to an online adviser.

When buying a ring, Wolf & Badger's Henry Graham warns: "Don't invest unless you know the correct ring size. Try not to present a gift in a ring box unless it's an engagement ring or you might find yourself having an awkward conversation." As for purchasing jewellery online, Bec Astley Clarke, founder of Astley Clarke, suggests interacting with the brand early on. "As soon as you have researched your gift, call the personal shopping team

and talk to an expert. They can really help you choose the right thing." Presentation should also be carefully considered: "If buying an expensive piece of jewellery, packaging is vital. The wrapping should be really special."

Finally, dare to try something new. Or, as jeweller Raphaelae Canot says: "It's nice to visit the big brands, but also check out the independent jewellers with a great eye. After all, women don't always want to be seen wearing the same signature pieces that everyone else has just because it is Tiffany or whatever. Oh and always buy with your heart, not the money!"

something made from precious metals as this holds its value," says Graham. In his opinion, if bought from an up-and-coming brand this can actually be a smart long-term investment.

Among his latest discoveries is Kastur Jewels. Founded by Indian jeweller Rajvi Vora, pieces such as a pair of ornate pearl earrings are reasonably priced at £150, despite taking nearly eight hours to make at her London studio.

In May, Raphaelae Canot launched her first eponymous collection in neighbouring Dover Street Market. Before this, the French-born fine jeweller spent 20 years working as a creative director at Cartier and then at De Beers, and has been on a mission to give diamonds a cooler edge ever since.

"The idea that diamonds are meant to celebrate love is an old-fashioned

one, created in big brand advertising campaigns," she says. "When buying diamonds, men especially should try not to get too bogged down in the seriousness of it all.

Small diamond jewellery is now around the same price as a luxury handbag, so focus on the woman's personality and style when gifting her jewellery this Christmas."

Canot enjoys making light of traditional jewellery pieces such as eternity rings, solitaire diamonds and sleepers. Her lip-shaped eternity design (£880), for example, features a pop of red enamel and a sprinkling of diamonds.

At Liberty of London, managing director Ed Burstall says that current Christmas trends centre on a confident shopper who is well educated and wants to make his or her own decisions. "No longer is it all about the stone or the weight of the base metal, but more about the designer - their inspirations and aesthetics and design techniques," he says.

Burstall's top stocking-fillers include Nak Armstrong earrings (£1,000-£5,600), a statement necklace in smoky quartz by Iradj Moini (£1,715) and a rose gold Victorian lock charm, £450, from Annina Vogel.

Meanwhile, Bond Street-based fine Jeweller Boodles is gunning for unusual semi-precious stones such as moonstone and chrysoberyl this Christmas. These are crafted into pendants and rings and priced at around £3,000.

Company director Michael Wainwright also points to Boodles' first ever

own-label watch, the Blossom, which features 403 diamonds on white mother-of-pearl and 18-carat rose gold, and took Swiss craftsmen some three years to perfect. The full pavé version will set you back £29,750.

At Astley Clarke, the luxury British jeweller, layering is big this Christmas. Bracelets in the current Biography collection (£95) can be worn in rows on the wrist. There are also stacking rings (£85), which make gift-giving easy as the year goes on. Founder Bec Astley Clarke also predicts a good Christmas for gemstones, pointing to morganite cocktail rings (£2,300) and London blue topaz earrings (£2,250).

Something sophisticated in which to store baubles also makes a good gift. Jewellery rolls and cases are making a comeback and Stow London, launched by entrepreneur Carol Lovell last year, produces hand-crafted leather jewellery cases (£230) in pops of bright colour. Each piece is named after a historic adventurer.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Solange Azagury-Partridge's ornate jewellery cases in her Metamorphosis collection carry names such as Ark of the Covenant (£134,000) and Snake Pit (£188,000). But rather than simply storing jewels, the boxes dismantle to form rings, bracelets and necklaces.

"Christmas is such a sentimentally loaded time of year," concludes Maia Adams, co-director of Adorn Insight, which provides market intelligence on the global jewellery industry.

"It's the perfect opportunity to give that special someone a stunning piece of jewellery to which its new owner can add her own story."

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