

No One Wears Peacock Brooches Anymore

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Fortunately, there are people who can help you refashion these treasures into something other than a ballerina.

If what you have is really nice, i.e. worth money, you will find those people on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Reinstein/Ross (29 East 73rd Street) has worked with “an enormous brooch, probably from the 1930s or ’40s, that had a lot of amazing stones on it but unfortunately looked like an unattractive floral octopus,” says Andrew Schloss, the company’s director of brand. In this case, the stones were extracted and transformed into eight diamond rings. Some were set in gold, some in platinum, and each of them were then distributed to members of the family. The brooch had been the property of a beloved family member, and—all joking about the hideousness of the original piece aside—Schloss says, “The rings were stunning, and it was very emotional when the family received them.”

Another favorite of Schloss’s: “Someone brought in a peacock pin missing a lot of stones, but the peacock’s eye did have one very nice one-carat ruby, which was made into a beautiful ring.” And not only into a ring, but into a story to alleviate at least two minutes of dead space at cocktail parties for the rest of the owner’s, and her heirs’, lives. “This used to be the peacock’s eye on a brooch!” “No way. That is really cool. I just love jewelry that has, like, stories.”

Down the road and ’round the corner at 673 Madison Avenue, Judith Ripka eagerly awaits the opportunity to give old treasures a second life. “When a client brings in a piece that she doesn’t wear, and I transform it into something she loves, it brings me enormous satisfaction,” Ripka says. Among her favorites: A very large Paraiba tourmaline stone was provided by a long-



JESSICA HRONMAS/GETTY IMAGES

time client. Ripka surrounded it with full-cut white diamonds to intensify the gem’s facets and used pavé blue diamonds on the shank to complement the incredible color. “The signature setting works perfectly with the other pieces in the client’s collection and the design suits her personal style.” Hmm. Might that personal style also involve private jets?

If you happen to have a strand of pearls and it’s not necessarily your idea of a good time, you are not alone. “A common request is to transform old pearls into something fresh and fun,” Ripka says. One of her first designs was a custom necklace for a woman

In place of a plain, preppy strand of pearls was a necklace that could be worn eight different ways.

who inherited her grandmother’s pearls. Ripka divided the strand into two pieces with “mystery screws” and added 18k gold links with a loop & toggle clasp. Now, in place of a plain, pre-

ppy strand of pearls was a necklace that could be worn eight different ways—as a bracelet, as a necklace, and with or without the pearls. This refurbished piece became an iconic design in Ripka’s collection.

And you know, these reinvented items don’t have to be inherited. It could be your engagement ring from the ’80s that prompts you, undesirably, to hum “Love is a Battlefield.” Kara-Daniel Jewelry in Kalamazoo, Michigan, took a diamond ring—which they labeled as “begging for an update”—extracted the stones, set them in stainless steel and turned it into four way-cooler stackable rings. “We have

always done a lot of custom work, and more and more that is about recycling and upcycling,” says Kara Aubin, who works with her husband Daniel. “It’s great when a client can enjoy a piece on an aesthetic level but also keep a sentimental connection to it.” Kara-Daniel Jewelry offers fair-trade gems, and they are also part of the Ethical Metalsmiths Directory, so their work is not only beautiful but made with sustainable practices.

Ok, so you don’t happen to be related to any of the Rockefellers or even have an old diamond ring gathering dust. You are by no means excluded from this fun game of giving old jewelry a second life, because it can just as easily be done with raw materials closer to the cost of a utility bill than the downpayment on a townhouse.

More affordable and no less beautiful is the work done by Chicago’s Two Girls Gems, who describe their brand as “heirloom-quality jewelry with a modern perspective.” (Their stuff is so nice, in fact, that after years of going on Etsy and wondering why people get so excited about it, I am now beginning to understand.) If you happen to have an old watch-fob chain hanging around, these girls—with the addition of some vintage red glass chandelier crystals and 14k gold filled lever backs—can make you a pair of dangling earrings. They also know their way around an old brooch, so if you have a nice one that’s not terribly useful, (really, is anything useful as a brooch?) they can transform it with strands of semi-precious beads, like Russian amazonite, into a more stylish necklace.

As far as DIY options go, well, I am sure they exist. But let’s be honest. If jewelry is worth keeping, it is worth preserving well. Not to mention the fact that for the majority of us, a checkbook is so much less unwieldy than a soldering iron and a glue gun. **NO**

Keeping Up With the Times

IT’S NOT THE SAME WATCH QUEEN VICTORIA WORE

The best watch companies continuously reinvent themselves

By Keith W. Strandberg

There’s no shame in wearing a watch that looks like it might have belonged to your grandfather. Wearers can proudly boast watches that would fit right in in a 19th-century scene. That might even indicate that it’s a far more tasteful watch than the kind of ultra-modern, bling-studded specimen you’d see flashed about on a reality show.

That said, while you might not mind it looking the same, you don’t want a watch to work like your grandfather’s watch.

Which is why, despite their long, rich histories, major players in the watch industry have to constantly innovate.

Still, their histories should be taken into account. The senior member of the group, Vacheron Constantin, was established in 1755 and somehow managed to survive the French Revolution. Not every company can boast that Napoleon Bonaparte owned one of their watches. Girard-Perregaux can trace its history to 1791 and Jaeger-LeCoultre to 1833. Shortly after its founding, LeCoultre’s system eliminated the need for keys to set watches. The French joined the Swiss on the scene when Cartier opened for business in 1847. The youngster of the group, Patek Philippe, was founded in 1851 and immediately started supplying watches to Queen Victoria.

But history is not enough for today’s demanding consumers. They want to know that they’re getting a significantly better watch than Queen Victoria.

Patek Philippe has worked hard to stay innovative on three fronts—with their dedication to precision in high watchmaking, by integrating new systems and new materials, and with their commitment to making the most elegant, beautiful watches in the world.

“Fundamentally we have always been known as a dress watch company, with the exception of the Nautilus line,” said Larry Pettinelli, president of Patek Philippe North America. “Today’s buyer not only wants a dress watch, but one that is more contemporary looking without losing the DNA that collectors have come to expect from Patek.”

“Patek has always been a company of innovation,” Mr. Pettinelli continued. “It is not new that we are trying to push the envelope with new materials for complications. As part of our heritage people have come to expect Patek to forge new directions in watchmaking.”

As one of the oldest continuously operating watch companies in the world, Vacheron Constantin are always looking for new ways of doing things. Their decoration, in particular,

is done with a modern twist. “The very first watch conceived and manufactured by Jean-Marc Vacheron in 1755 was already decorated with hand-engraved patterns,” said Christian Selmoni, artistic director of Vacheron Constantin. “Since the early years of our brand, we have been developing and consolidating our expertise and craftsmanship in watchmaking and in the decoration.”

You still probably won’t find any bling-filled versions in neon colors, though.

“Vacheron Constantin makes no compromises in the design and the production of métiers d’art watches: We believe that they are



‘I made the decision several years ago to have a Cartier engine in Cartier watches. I want to make sure that my customers buy for the design and the mechanics.’



All eyes will be on you when you flaunt one of these elegant, floral faced timepieces.



all examples of a living tradition, a heritage of more than 250 years of the finest craftsmanship,” he added.

Cartier has shifted in its focus. Primarily a design company 10 years ago, Cartier has reinvented itself as a high-end watchmaker, manufacturing complicated timepieces and working hard to innovate while maintaining its aesthetic. This new direction for Cartier came from the top—as in Bernard Fornas, the former chairman of Cartier and now the head of its parent company Richemont Group. He wanted Cartier to be a force in high watchmaking, without abandoning its position as a design house.

“We are based on design and beauty, while at the same time we can be really a watchmaker, with the right movements, the right complications and the right precision,” he explained. “I don’t want just one side; I want both sides, especially for men’s watches. It’s like with cars, you want the right designs and the right engines. I made the decision several

years ago to have a Cartier engine in Cartier watches. I want to make sure that my customers buy for the design and the mechanics.”

Girard-Perregaux has long been known for its classic designs and excellent traditional watchmaking know-how. This year, the brand has introduced the Constant Escapement, a revolutionary breakthrough in watchmaking that will apply to everything the brand does in the future. Essentially this radical innovation ensures that the watch ticks away at a perfectly constant rate no matter how much energy is left in its spring—and that is exciting.

Jaeger-LeCoultre is a true manufacturer, capable of making every watch piece and part in-house. Already blessed with a catalogue of many in-house movements, Jaeger-LeCoultre continues to introduce new and improved movements every year, including breakthroughs in high watchmaking, like the Duomètre Travel Time.

We’re sure Napoleon would be extremely jealous. **NO**