

Recessionista Americana: luxury jewellers hedge their bets

CLAIRE ADLER, WGSN 04.05.09

American luxury jewellery designers are hedging their bets against economic uncertainty, reaching out to cash-strapped customers by upping the silver quotient and lowering entry price points.

Luxury jewellery designers usually target celebrities with their high-priced gold and diamonds. Now they are increasingly **appealing to fans of celebrities**. As fashion magazines focus on the 'less is more' school of accessories and gold prices have soared, **demand for silver is on the rise**.



Britney Spears wearing Dara Dubinet Tourmaline Power Ring, \$5,700, People magazine, March 2009



Dara Dubinet Britney-style Power Ring in rose quartz and silver, \$230



Dara Dubinet's Fire Agathe Horizon Ring in sterling silver, \$200



Nina Basharova's silver and gemstone Pod Rings



Nina Basharova's silver and gemstone Pod Pendants

Los Angeles-based jeweller **Dara Dubinet** - a feng shui consultant and mural painter - has supplied the likes of Britney, Madonna and Cameron Diaz. Her Dubinet Tourmaline Power Ring, worn by Britney, is **\$5,600 in 18 carat gold and pavé diamonds**. But Dubinet has been negotiating hard with her vendors and cutting margins. In February she revealed the **\$230 version in sterling silver and rose quartz**. Multiple-award-winning Russian-born New Yorker **Nina Basharova's reclaimed silver line, Pod, with a new entry price point of \$25**, has seen a 30% increase in sales since January.



Rhonda Faber Green's silver and diamond bangles



Rhonda Faber Green's silver and diamond rings



Vicente Agor fine silver and white sapphire bracelets



Leslie Greene sterling silver diamond Cambridge Cuff, \$2,450



Leslie Greene Chanteclair oxidised earring, \$925



Karen Sugarman Leila bracelet

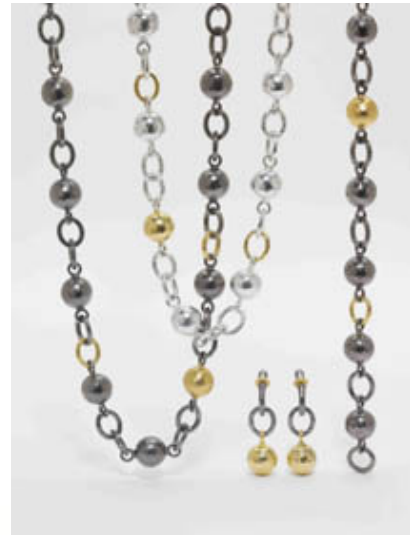
More American ventures in silver come from award-winner **Rhonda Faber Green, with her Verde collection, and Vicente Agor, with his seventynine47 collection** (79 and 47 being the periodic table references for gold and silver) - which uses **white sapphires instead of diamonds** - as well as designs from couture jeweller **Leslie Greene**, whose jewellery has appeared on *Sex and the City*, and Arizona-based industry veteran Karen Sugarman.



Scosha 14k fill and silver engraved love story pendant



Scosha silver and 18k yellow gold and diamanté pendant



Gurhan silver, blackened silver and gold necklaces and earrings



Gurhan silver and gold imperial ring



Gurhan silver, gold and diamond cuff

Contrast is an important element in these new silver designs. For New York designer Scosha, **blackened or oxidised silver is a dramatic foil for gold**. Gurhan, the poster boy if ever there was one, for gold, surprised many when he introduced silver in early 2009. Famed for working exclusively with delicate 24 carat gold, **each silver piece contains at least a whisper of gold** so pieces can be comfortably combined.



Stephen Webster ad featuring Christina Aguilera wearing Superstud jewellery



Stephen Webster stacked silver and blackened silver Superstud bangles

Upscale department store Neiman Marcus's third-biggest jewellery vendor, **Brit Stephen Webster**, introduced silver collections in 2007. His new, edgy and androgynous silver Boyfriend collection includes **blackened gold plating**. Webster now partially attributes his aggressive expansion plans to the success of this diversification.



Bylu Graffiti enamel bangle



Bylu Art Crimez Graffiti ring



Pippa Small ethical jewellery

Meanwhile, former Gucci and Chloé designer **Pippa Small's** Santa Monica store is seeing huge interest in her **fairtrade and ethical jewels**, much of it made on slums from **recycled brass and glass**, while New York fine jeweller **Bylu's** hip hop-inspired 145.60 collection is also fashioned from brass.