

STAR JEWELS

IRENE NEUWIRTH'S ONE-OF-A-KIND DESIGNS



Irene Neuwirth's eponymous jewelry has star quality. Presenting a whimsical sensibility alongside undeniable femininity, her pieces have garnered a celebrity following, with the likes of Julianne Moore, Tracee Ellis Ross, Lily Collins, donning her one-of-a-kind creations.

Showcasing precious and semi-precious stones set in 18-carat gold, Neuwirth's handmade earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings may sound traditional. But as anyone who knows her work can vouch, her aesthetic is fun and festive, and the luxury jewelry she designs has no pretense. Instead, her trinkets assume a free spirit reflecting

her own personal style, her upbringing, and her travels.

Drawn to jewelry-making as a young adult, the native Angeleno began playing with gemstones and stringing glass beads after college. Those designs soon caught on, and she found herself flooded with requests for her rare, opulent pieces.

It was landing an order at Barneys New York in 2003, though, that gave Neuwirth the exposure she needed to launch her jewelry house and become a partner of the longtime luxury department store until it closed in February 2020. A flagship boutique on Melrose Place in Los Angeles followed in 2014, and in 2019, she collaborated with friend Laura Vinroot Poole to open Capitol—an upscale shop with roots in Charlotte, N.C.—in the Brentwood Country Mart. Neuwirth's collection is also sold in select boutiques across the U.S. and in Puerto Rico and London.

Neuwirth, 45, credits her mother's Bohemian flair as a significant influence on her style as well as her business. "My mom [Geraldine Neuwirth] is an artist, and without a doubt, I get so much from her," Neuwirth says. "She made me unafraid to love color and express myself through it."

Color is indeed at the heart of her jewelry; she says nothing in her closet is black. Her collection takes its inspiration from the ocean, with hues of blue-green and cotton-candy pink among the top choices. In her designs, she specifies unique shapes and combinations that complement one another wonderfully when layered.

A substantial aspect of the process is the time Neuwirth spends selecting each colorful gemstone. To do so, she travels around the world to seek out and purchase the stones she's drawn to. Those that finally make the cut aren't heat-treated, artificially enhanced, or altered in any way, but completely natural. According to Neuwirth, she finds beauty in the imperfections.

She's attracted to myriad gems, including aquamarine, sapphire, and opal—a kaleidoscopic mineraloid that's known to be her favorite. "For the past few years, I haven't taken off my huge opal heart and opal candy necklace," Neuwirth says. Sometimes she accents the chosen gemstones with diamond pavé—a setting paved with small diamonds.

At first glance, Neuwirth's exquisite jewels look red carpet-worthy. But the designer's pieces aren't for special occasions only. Be it a pair of tanzanite and tourmaline Tropical Flower Earrings or a chrysoprase Gumball Charm Bracelet, they're meant to be worn.

And like the collection itself, the individuals who wear Neuwirth's work are confident, playful, and feminine. "The women who collect my jewelry don't shy away from interesting color combinations and bold choices," she says. "Most are buying the jewelry for themselves, which I think says a lot." ■



Irene Neuwirth, shown at left, has garnered a celebrity following.



Color is at the heart of Irene Neuwirth's jewelry.

Courtesy of Irene Neuwirth (4)