

GLAMOUR OF YESTERYEAR STYLE OF TODAY

ROMANTIC

VINTAGE



OPPOSITE

DK Designs vintage pearl necklace designed for the White Dress by the Shore. Photo by Matthew J. Wagner Photography

TO THE RIGHT

New designs from artisans with a classic aesthetic. Necklace from Reliable Gold, photo by Dani Fine Photography. Rings from Hegeman & Co., photos by Chet Burak.

By Robin Watterson

Inspired by movies such as *Evening*, which featured some of the most respected actresses of our time – including Meryl Streep, Vanessa Redgrave, Claire Danes, Toni Colette and Natasha Richardson – vintage designs have once again become not only fashionable, but much desired. Elegance and glamour are defined by the past in styles reflective of the 1920’s through the 1950’s when femininity and grace were found in clothing and accessories worn by the most beautiful women. There is an immediate connection to the esthetics and grandeur of the past.

Kathleen Staab, President/Owner of **The Jane Pickens Theater** in Newport, Rhode Island has studied the history of clothing and costume for years. Her strong background in the fashion industry, coupled with her passion for vintage design and the filming of *Evening*, on location in Newport and Tiverton, made the significance of the opening of the film at her theater even more noteworthy. “I have tried to stay very aware of the historical influence of our theater as we take it into another century. One of the first decisions I made was to install digital so that we could show anyone’s DVD. We have taken the screen to being the number one theater in Newport. Our capacity of 550 seats and the beauty of the theater made us the place to host the opening of the film in this state,” Staab explains, adding “of course I was the first person in the country to ask for the movie!” Staab was able to gather some of the costumes from the movie after filming wrapped and showcase the dresses in the theater. “The styles are really indicative of the 1950’s. The bridesmaids’ dresses with the fitted waistline and full skirt are originally Dior inspired. Meryl Streep wears a beautiful Chanel suit as a proper woman of the time in a final scene with Vanessa Redgrave. All of the styles have become very trendy today in the application of the wedding industry and in overall fashion design,” Staab states.

The significance of vintage is not only found in modern clothing. Period jewelry and accessories have also become a very fashionable trend. “There has always been a special cadre of people who appreciate vintage,” states **Rena Ables**, owner of **Reliable Gold** in Providence, Rhode Island. “We live in a society that has so much that is disposable, it is wonderful to find pieces that last. When you hold a vintage piece, there is a personal feeling; something so romantic

about searching back in history.” Rena Ables expertise and passion for fine jewelry is clearly evident in her own history as a third generation owner of her family operated business. Their reputation is highly regarded in an industry where service and quality are desired and appreciated.

Ables explains’ “Vintage is pertaining to a specific era. The Victorian-era spanned 40 years from 1860 to 1900. Edwardian-era pieces are breathtaking designs from the late teens. The 1920’s and the Deco period offer exquisite detail and filigree jewelry. In the 1930’s, curves started to become more solid in design with heavily encrusted diamond pieces reflective of the period. The Retro-era is the style of the 1940’s.” Ables notes that while diamonds remain the most popular choice, other stones currently requested in engagement rings are sapphires, rubies and aquamarine. “In any of the decorative arts, we tend to reflect the surroundings of nature,” she continues stating. “Colors that represent the ocean and the forest tend to dominate in the Northeast.” Reliable Gold divides its offerings between original estate, vintage jewelry and new, contemporary and reproduction designs. Besides engagement rings and wedding bands, the store has a selection of fine jewelry, exquisite gifts, men’s accessories, and a new line of lovely, affordable bridesmaid jewelry designed to match the bridal dresses.

Couples are fortunate today that the market for engagement rings and wedding bands has expanded to include timely styles that replicate the past, yet offer the option of finding a uniquely owned ring to satisfy the bride who prefers new. **Richard Hegeman**, owner of **Hegeman & Co.**, Providence, Rhode Island, is a master stonemason who understands superb craftsmanship first-hand. “I started in the jewelry business as a lapidary, working initially as



an apprentice, then ultimately as a master stone cutter. For the first six years of my career I worked for other companies, and then struck out on my own in 1978. My business has been evolving for about 30 years," he explains. Hegeman carries a line of jewelry from a supplier who utilizes the original dies of the antique filigree style from the early 1900's, struck and hand engraved by today's standards. "These are old dies which are the same as what designers were using 50 years ago. They honor the time period, however, they use new materials," states Hegeman. "Many couples check online and research the style they want. They have a pre-conceived notion of what they are looking for. We carry three or four lines of antique filigree style engagement rings and wedding bands, and we also do custom designs. I often

advise couples to select their wedding bands at the time they choose their engagement ring for the contoured fit." Hegeman is proud to have a strong following of wonderful clientele that he credits with a philosophy of, "service, service and more service."

Complementing jewelry and fashion are a must for a woman of style. Fashion designer and entrepreneur of antique and vintage wedding gowns, **Karen Russillo**, owner of **Menagerie of Martha's Vineyard**, Massachusetts has been sewing and designing clothing since she was a young girl of eleven. Inspired by her mother and her great aunt, she discovered a passion for antique furnishings and beautiful fabrics. This led her to eventually open her own store and design everything from shirts, coats and bedspreads to evening wear and bridal gowns.

Russillo also designs complementary headpieces and veiling. She carries gloves, crinoline, bridal shoes and jewelry to complete a bride's entire ensemble. "I have everything a bride could want at Menagerie," Russillo explains. "I currently feature about 30 different bridal gown designs, and there are no two gowns that will be created exactly alike. I find antique fabrics throughout the United States, and silk organza and designer beadwork in Florence, Italy. My designs are reflective of exquisite styles from 1920 through the 1950's." Designer original gowns start at \$2,400.00 and range in price up to \$10,000.00. Menagerie of Martha's Vineyard is open year round and accepts and sends orders "all over the world." **LB**

Heirlooms begin here.



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