

Times of turmoil can be great for Hollywood plot lines, but they are a nightmare for those preparing to walk the red carpet during awards season. Stars and stylists find themselves in an awkward position, having to determine to what extent their sartorial choices should mirror the concerns of the age. Replacing sumptuousness with subtlety may seem counterintuitive in Hollywood, but in the past such compromises have provided compelling evidence of just how buoyant the film and fashion industries can be. After Sept. 11, for example, the show did indeed go on, while the red carpet featured understated gowns and tastefully toned-down jewels that both respectfully registered the tenor of the times and sent a powerful message about the resilience of American culture.


By Trisha Tucker

(In)conspicuous Consumption

ANNE-CHRISTINE POUQUET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Diamonds and the Movies

special report



Penelope Cruz in Chopard
at the 2008 Cannes
International Film Festival

On the Cover:
Beyonce in a diamond
fringe necklace from
Lorraine Schwartz
at this year's
Golden Globes

**On the
Section Cover:**
Fred Leighton 19th century
diamond necklace

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Family Jewels:

Clockwise from above:
Fred Leighton 1925 diamond
bracelet; Vardiva rose-cut
diamond earrings; Martin Katz
rose-cut diamond ring set
with cognac diamonds;
Bochic bracelets

This year, the industry's best and brightest will celebrate their accomplishments in the midst of one of the worst economic downturns in U.S. history. While the mood at the awards shows will likely be warm and the fashions lovely, insiders are expecting the country's financial crisis to affect red carpet jewels in subtle but significant ways. Diamonds won't go away, but where and how they'll be worn will be influenced by a new focus on simplicity.

Subtle Sparkle

One of the most important jewelry trends of the past few years — a move away from blinding bling toward sophisticated shimmer — will likely become even more significant this year as actresses and stylists strive for tactful elegance. According to Helena Krodel of the Jewelry Information Center, "Jewelry in general is becoming less pristine and perfect" because high-end designers are increasingly embracing unusual cuts and colors of diamonds and other gemstones.

Rose-cut, rough-cut, single-cut and slice-cut diamonds

all offer plenty of romantic sparkle without too much overt

flash. As Krodel puts it, "Rough-cut diamonds and gemstones are

still precious and organic, but they display an appreciation of nature rather than saying, 'Here, I

have money, let me show it off.'" Designer David Aaron Joseph of Bochic, a company well-

known for its innovative use of unusual diamond cuts and colors, is careful to point out

that less bling doesn't mean less beautiful. "The idea is that there's a story behind

this jewelry. It's unique, it's glamorous, it's one-of-a-kind — but it's understated in

the way that it's done. It can still be bold and colorful, but it's not about diamonds in

your face — it's the opposite of that."

Additionally, while traditional white diamonds and bright jewel-toned gems

will surely have a strong presence on the red carpet, industry insiders are

expecting a significant showing of black-, brown-, grey- and champagne-

colored diamonds — colors that have been shunned in years past. Such stones

are becoming increasingly popular due to their subtler sparkle. Sally Morrison,

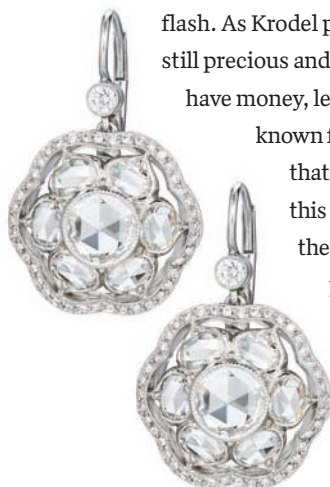
director of the Diamond Information Center, says the trend toward these colors

compliments the lower-wattage diamond cuts. "They're subdued, they're stylish, they're classy, but they don't scream at you. You have to look to see them."

Classic Chic

Of course, not all stars will embrace the trend toward unusual diamond cuts and colors. As Krodel points out, "There will always be some beautiful pieces (on the red carpet) that are just awe-inspiring and amazing with their Old World glamour."

Morrison concurs. She expects to see plenty of "big, clean diamonds in classic shapes, like very simple studs or drop earrings with a lot of wattage, as well as tennis bracelets and maybe a few big, statement necklaces."



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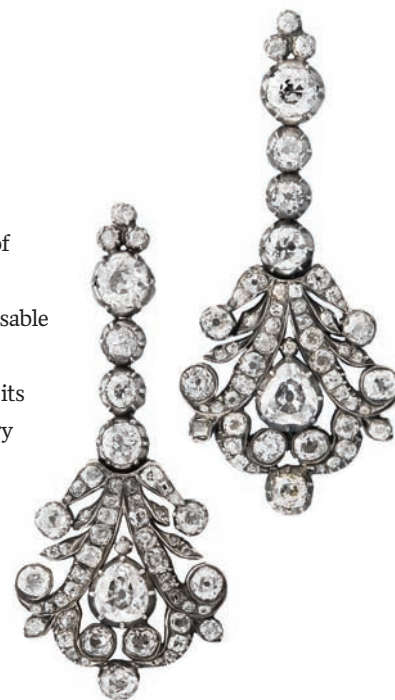


Carats and Sellery:

Clockwise from above: Fred Leighton 1950s diamond bracelet; Cartier necklace and earrings; Fred Leighton 19th century diamond earrings; Bochic cuff; Fred Leighton tortoiseshell haircombs

However, Morrison also reveals that such classic pieces — though less subdued than those featuring rough-cut gems — display their own kind of subtlety and economic thrift. “I think there’s a wish to have fewer, better things — simpler things,” she says, “and to not use fashion in such a disposable way, as maybe we’ve done until recently.”

Rebecca Selva of Fred Leighton has noticed a similar sentiment among its customers and expects the company’s 19th century and early 20th century pieces to make a strong showing this awards season. As Selva puts it, “These are timeless, classic looks. People remember the jewelry worn on the red carpet, and these pieces stand the test of time.” Frederic de Narp, president and CEO of Cartier North America, also anticipates that traditional diamond shapes and settings will have a strong red carpet presence because, as he notes, “femininity and glamour are always up to date, no matter what.”



Make a Statement

While traditionalists and bohemians may disagree on what style of bauble represents the best response to the current economic situation, there does seem to be one trend that everyone can agree on: 2009 is the year of the single, statement-making ornament. “It’s all about a power piece,” jeweler Lorraine Schwartz says. “You might not do as much, but you’ll do a great cuff with a small pair of earrings. It’s very individualized.”

Selva agrees: “We’re seeing a much more modern approach to jewelry: making it about one piece, the key accent.”

Instead of piling on the bangles, the chandelier earrings and the giant cocktail ring, actresses will likely pick a statement piece like an oversized necklace or large cuff, which de Narp says will help keep the overall look simple.

But Morrison indicates that we shouldn’t confuse simple with run-of-the-mill.

In fact, jewelry will not be confined to the ears, throat and wrist

this year. Instead, diamond brooches will likely be showing up in the hair, on headbands, on the straps and sleeves of gowns, and at the waist and neck. Such creativity in placement is one way to ensure that the trend toward the tasteful and elegant stays fresh and exciting. As Schwartz is quick to point out, “celebrating fashion

with genuine ingenuity on the red carpet is the surest way to inspire consumers at all price points to invest in a beautiful piece for themselves.” **THR**



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From Marilyn to Carrie Bradshaw, check out our pics of all the fabulous jewels at THR.com/awards.