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Sienna Patti on Collecting Art Jewelry, Celebrating Womenx Designers

By Amy Elliott



As the owner of a respected Lenox, Mass.–based contemporary art gallery, **Sienna Patti** would normally have spent this year participating in fairs and festivals all over the world. But the pandemic has forced many such events to shift to a virtual platform. The latest of these is **a special exhibition** staged in conjunction with September’s **LA Design Festival**.

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Titled **Evolved Resolve**, the exhibition places three of Patti's jewelry artists—Gabriella Kiss, Mallory Weston, and Kalkidan Hoex—among a gathering of womenx makers curated by **Female Design Council** (FDC) founder Lora Appleton.

“I've known Lora for years from doing other projects and fairs in the design world, and linking the gallery to FDC and to the other great artists and designers that are part of the council is a no-brainer for me,” says Patti.

Kiss, Weston, and Hoex represent a very small jewelry contingent, while the rest of the Evolved Resolved artists work in other mediums such as furniture, sculpture, lighting, and ceramics.

Clearly, the lines between contemporary art and collectible jewelry continue to meld into each other (not unlike jewelry artist **MJ Tyson's melty creations**—also represented by Patti). As such, jewelry collectors find themselves in a very unique moment with an unprecedented amount of unique voices to choose from.

But for Patti, this has been a longtime specialty, the very foundation with which she curates her gallery.

“I have always represented and worked with people who were artists first and jewelers second, so experimental and avant-garde pieces both in concept and in technique are nothing new to me,” she says. “I understand that in the fine jewelry world there has been more risk-taking than in the past and that [some] jewelers are looking to artists for inspiration.

“I think this can be challenging for a collector: Just because something is experimental or ‘new’ doesn't make it good. As simple as that sounds, we are all influenced by what is freshest. If you look at Schiaparelli's jewelry from the 1930s and 1940s you can see a similar trend—her work with Dalí and Cocteau not only informed her work, but it changed the way many people saw adornment. This was happening right around World War II, and the playfulness, escapism, and creativity in all of that surrealist style was a response to a cultural intensity not dissimilar to now.”



Praying Mantis brooch (2019) in 18k gold, \$4,400; Gabriela Kiss at Sienna Patti. Kiss studied sculpture at New York's Pratt Institute, and her delicate, figurative jewelry draws inspiration from flora and fauna and the life cycles of the natural world. The pieces are meant to have a personal meaning to the wearer, beyond adornment.

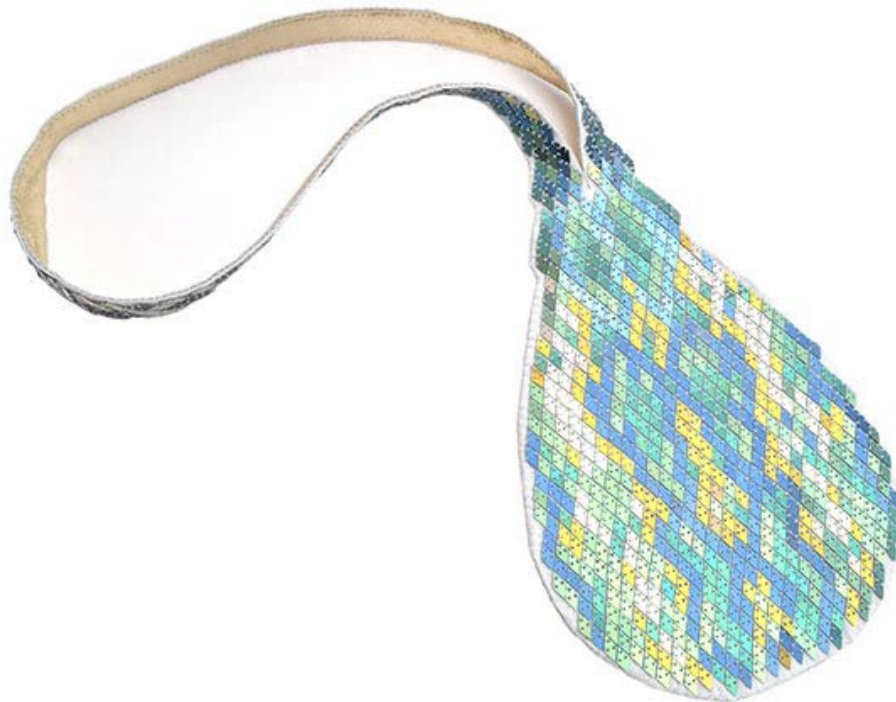
And how does the virtual format impact reception of an artist's work?

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“Jewelry is so personal,” says Patti. “Seeing it online means you have to put yourself in the image somehow. The work I am showing is wonderful and varied, and this comes through in the images without a problem. I think most people, especially those engaged in the finer points of design, come to a virtual format with a pretty good sense of perspective.”



The NEWtribe ring 17 (2019) with tourmaline in 24k gold-plated silver, \$995; Kalkidan Hoex at Sienna Patti. A recent Master’s graduate from Maastricht Academy of Art, Hoex was born in Ethiopia and raised in the Netherlands. Her NEWtribe series explores the intricacies of her identity, using a range of techniques, materials, and aesthetics as a way to find connections between Western and African cultures.



Snakeskin necklace (2019) in anodized titanium, sterling silver, leather, and cotton, \$2,800; Mallory Weston at Sienna Patti. Marrying jewelry techniques with textile arts, Weston received her MFA in jewelry and metalsmithing from Rhode Island School of Design in 2013, and her work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Arts and Design in New York; and the CODA Museum and Design Museum Den Bosch in the Netherlands.

Certainly browsing the Evolved Resolve exhibit, or making a pilgrimage up to the Berkshires to visit Patti's gallery in person, presents collectors with unique retail channels for indulging their passions.

Patti believes that artist-made jewelry is a sound investment:

“The connection between the maker and the wearer through the piece transcends normal market maneuvering, and it rarely goes out of style—because it wasn't about trend in the first place,” she says. “With expert knowledge and some money, one can gather a museum-worthy collection of wearable, unique, and exquisitely made pieces that balance between jewelry, art, and design equally. Buy what you love, and know that the added bonus is someone made it lovingly. Not such a bad deal in this crazy time.”

Top: A portrait of Philadelphia-based jewelry artist Mallory Weston, who is represented by Sienna Patti Gallery and is among the makers on view in the Evolved Resolve virtual exhibition through Oct. 23 (all photos courtesy of Sienna Patti Gallery)