

How Pearl Jewelry Got Its Groove Back

Long considered the favorites of blue-haired ladies and brides on their wedding days, pearls have a fresh new look. Yan Berry, design director at San Francisco's Premium Pearl, says, "We're seeing a lot of interest in our exotic pearls from young Hollywood. Baroque, silvery Tahitians and gold South Sea pearls have been all over the red carpet this year."

Berry, whose pearls have recently been photographed by leading fashion magazines and featured by television stylist, Lloyd Boston, says that the golds, blacks, and silvers found in some of the rarer pearls lend opulence to evening clothes, giving them a richer, more exotic look.

She says, "The rarer pearls, with their beautiful colors and shapes, look much more modern and really make this season's neutrals come alive. They lend texture and interest to an outfit that white pearls cannot."

One of Berry's favorite pearls is the golden South Sea, the rarest and largest pearl in the world. A brilliant natural gold color, the surface of the South Sea is mirror-like, satiny. Harvesting of the gem is strictly controlled by the Australian government so only a very limited number of these pearls can be obtained every year.

"The South Sea is extremely unusual," she says, "It's much richer looking and far sexier than less exotic pearls, sort of the Gucci of the gem world."

Another favorite of Berry's, the Tahitian multi-colored necklace, uses blacks and silvers overlaid with hues of lavender, pistachio, and chocolate. She uses teardrop-shaped pearls called "baroque," to lend individuality to her pieces. The colors of the pearls themselves range from pale blue and pink pastels to midnight blacks. By pairing different colors of Tahitians, her designs can have either a tropical feel or appear richer, darker.

For her jewelry Berry uses only Mikimoto-quality pearls so she flies around the world to select each gem individually, spending a good part of each year in French Polynesia and Tahiti. She explains, too, that she also spends a lot of time thinking about how each of her collections will fit with the upcoming season's clothes, trying to create new, original designs.

"I think that's why Hollywood has been so interested in my jewelry," she says, "I like to do things that are new and different."

When asked if Hollywood's romance with pearls will go away in the near future, she laughs, "I very much doubt it. There's an old legend that says that pearls have the ability to restore youth. I expect to be in business for a very, very long time."

Berry's fall collection can be found at <http://www.premiumpearl.com>. Items in the collection range from \$80-\$1200.