



ChloBo

# Discover the Midas Touch

After a long spell on the subs bench, yellow and rose gold jewellery – whether pure or plated vermeil – is beginning to be noticed again. Belinda Morris basks in its warm glow.

It feels like a long time since *The Jeweller* looked at gold jewellery in any depth. It's been touched upon of course – mentioned here and there in despatches – but has not really been the focus of any great attention. That particular place in the spotlight has been held for some time by platinum, the bright shining beacon of the bridal department. As the price of gold shot through the roof (and for a long time showed no sign of returning to anything like what passes for normal these days) a clear run was given to platinum – a precious metal once considered prohibitively expensive by many.

Arabel Lebrusan



Alexis Dove

The rocketing price of gold has also seen silver, once shunned by many fine/traditional jewellers as not worthy of window space, coming into its own. To the consumer at least, here is an affordable 'precious' metal, given an extra push by the blossoming branded jewellery phenomenon.

So, has there been a massive turn-around then? Is yellow gold (and its pretty pink/rose sister) ousting platinum from its lofty perch?

Well, no, that's not about to happen. White metals are still the most popular – the strongest sellers – when the sales of jewellery in the UK are taken as a whole, but yellow and rose gold are currently fighting back.

"At Lapponia we have certainly noticed an increase in enquiries from our customers for gold jewellery, especially in recent months," reports UK sales agent Charles Vickers. "These enquiries have been generated by end-user demand which indicates that this is a consumer-led trend. Feedback from customers is that the jewellery market has become saturated with low cost silver brands

Lestie Lee



offering indistinguishable collections and consumers are now looking at aspects of gold jewellery as an alternative.”

Whether it’s to do with silver overload, or a fashion thing that emanates from the international catwalks, or a shift that signals the return of consumer confidence or (and this is probably the most likely) the fact that the price has (sort of) stabilised over the past year, there’s no denying the extra glimmer of interest in gold now.



London Road

has started to make some of her pieces in 18ct gold. “I think the price of gold is very sensible now, compared to what it was in 2011,” she says. “It has definitely made it a more viable metal to use for designers like myself. I also believe there is more interest and demand due to the quality and durability of gold jewellery. And the resale value of gold makes it more investable of course.”

For Dessy Tsoleva of Deci, the very high price of gold over the last few years has



Madjan Rocks

“... the jewellery market has become saturated with low cost silver brands offering indistinguishable collections and consumers are now looking at aspects of gold jewellery as an alternative”



Domino

### The price is (almost) right

The recent Thomson Reuters GFMA Gold Survey 2013 might show that demand for gold jewellery fell by 4.2 per cent in 2012... but that was then – 2013 figures may tell a different story. In the middle of last month gold fell to its lowest level in two years – the price of the precious metal dropped to a little under £890 an ounce. Ok, that’s still high compared to 2000 say when it hovered around a much more reasonable £250, but nevertheless it is a drop that has made gold jewellery buyers across Asia in particular clamour for the stuff, as well as some UK designers – such as Alexis Dove – consider investing in more of it for their own collections.

Another designer, Leslie Lee, who began her business with gold vermeil and silver,



Tessa Packard

**NTR provides the top-rated customer experience  
in the industry.**

**We'll always be there for you.**

NTR Metals is a full-service refiner, and that's just the start. We're the only refiner that offers a local experience and around-the-clock customer service. Our 70-plus locations worldwide allows you to conduct business face-to-face and shake hands with the professionals who serve you. We take the time to understand your business, offer expert insights, and enjoy building a friendly rapport. Whether you call our headquarters, visit your local branch, or stop by a location during a trade show - you'll experience a different way of doing business that is unique to NTR Metals.

**Birmingham**

5 Hockley Street  
Jewellery Quarter  
Birmingham B18 6BL  
0 121 233 4007

**London**

104-105 Saffron Hill  
Hatton Garden  
London EC1N 8HB  
0 207 831 9888

**Glasgow**

Oakbank Industrial Estate  
Garscube Rd., Unit 1, Block 5  
Glasgow G20 7LU  
0 141 353 3684

**Manchester**

Unit 13 Harp Trading Estate  
Guinness Road  
Manchester M17 1SR  
0 161 873 8541

- 70+ Locations Worldwide
- Same-day Settlement on Your Carat Scrap
- No Assay Fees
- Lock-in Option Available
- Free Shipping Option

*The Leading Precious Metal Refiner*

**0800 141 2310**

[Ntrmetals.co.uk](http://Ntrmetals.co.uk)



Kastur Jewels

meant that many of her clients have become used to spending less by buying gold vermeil or silver instead. "As I primarily work in gold, the stabilisation of the price has meant that I can improve on my margins rather than use more of it," she explains. "And I now feel better about designing in gold!" Ruth Sibbald of Zoe & Morgan is also taking advantage of the 'better' gold price. "It's enabled us to experiment more with our wedding collection, which will soon be launched," she explains.

"Gold continues to be an emphasis moving forward and the lower cost of raw materials will certainly allow for some higher end and more complex pieces with increased material content."

In a similar way, Finnish brand Lapponia – which has always included gold in its collections – is finding that less unpredictable prices have allowed its designers to produce



Fope

gold items at a more realistic price. "For example, the Amore collection from Björn Weckström and My Sunshine by Chao-Hsien Kuo are available in both 18ct and 14ct yellow gold and we are noticing a considerable uptake in orders for these lines," says Vickers.

There is a positive side to the recent years of gold fluctuations in Sibbald's view: "It's made people more aware of the value of



Clogau

gold – they are more open to investing in expensive items because they know they will not lose value over time," she says. Ken Brown, sales manager of Italian composable brand Nomination agrees with this premise. "A high gold price increases the consumers' appreciation of gold," he adds. "Fewer people can afford gold jewellery [so] the desire for gold increases and in turn the use of gold



Katie Rowland

Offering a big brand overview Diane Smith, head of product management at Links of London adds: "Indeed the stabilisation of gold has helped from a development perspective; the recent prices allow for more material for our design team to work with. As a brand we have been strongly developing our gold offer for the past 18 months, with two entry level gold collections launched in the past six months, focusing on the sub £1,000 price bracket," she says.

## Gold plate – setting the record straight

The British Hallmarking Council and UK Assay Offices have received an increasing number of consumer and trade enquiries concerning the legitimacy of various descriptions being used at point of sale to describe gold-plated sterling silver items.

Higher gold prices have driven an increased demand for these pieces. Many of these products are being described in a misleading way with no reference to silver or the fact that they are plated. These descriptions also often make a specific reference to gold fineness, leading the consumer to believe they are buying gold when they are only buying silver.

Examples of misleading descriptions that have been encountered include: '22ct gold clad ring' and '22ct gold vermeil ring'. In both cases the rings were silver with thin gold-plating. In both cases a gold description is applied with no reference to plating or the silver.

The British Hallmarking Council is therefore issuing a guidance document to cover the permitted descriptions for gold-plated silver articles:

- When the word 'gold' or a specific gold fineness description is used to describe a gold-plated silver article, the article must be described as silver and the word 'gold' must be directly followed by the word 'plated' in the description e.g. 18ct gold-plated silver ring.
- Other terms like vermeil, may be used in addition but the phrase 'gold-plated' and the word silver must appear within the description e.g. 18ct gold-plated vermeil silver ring.
- The term 'silver gilt' may be used to describe gold-plated silver, providing a specific gold fineness is not applied as part of the description e.g. silver gilt ring.
- The gold-plated layer must be of fineness of at least 375 parts per thousand and should not exceed two microns in thickness.



Georg Jensen

## Feature



Emily H London

detail becomes even more important from a commercial point of view." Of course the fact that Nomination combines 18ct gold with stainless steel has allowed yellow and rose gold to remain in the collection despite the high gold prices.

Nathalie Haidlauf of German jewellery brand Al Coro, which manufactures opulent pieces in 18ct gold only, adds a word of



Ute Decker

caution on the price issue. "I don't think that the price of gold has finally stabilised, since we are still in a global crisis. Gold became a good alternative for investments and went to a very high level. Even if the price went down I think that it is still high. People [want]

to invest in a solid and stable (in value) metal," she says.

Gold is, as Haidlauf points out, still expensive. "The price of gold has somewhat stabilised, but the result of the steady increase of the last few years continues to make it very difficult to achieve affordable 18ct gold collections," adds ethical jeweller Arabel Lebrusan. "The customer still expects the previous prices (before the increase) for gold pieces, so it's inevitably down to we designers to make up that difference from within our own profit margins." For Alexis Dove the high price of gold has made it "not particularly viable for wholesale collections". She does report though that commissions in gold have remained a "very strong sales area" in her Lewes shop.

Hannah Warner



Chavin

"Gold still has a fairly high price point and so it is still challenging to make gold jewellery with integrity (of a decent weight) at the competitive price points which underline our offer," says Suzanne Adams, creative director of London Road Jewellery. Designer Catherine Budd agrees: "In terms of commercial design I think it's important to recognise that with the price of gold remaining so high, we must do what we can to reduce the overall cost of a piece without compromising the quality. This is the challenge – to provide customers with high-quality gold pieces that come with a realistic price tag," she says.

**"...the stabilisation of the price has meant that I can improve on my margins rather than use more of it... I now feel better about designing in gold!"**

### However, all that glisters...

Thanks to the fashion trend for gold-look jewellery (and because of the still-high price of pure gold) gold-plated silver is a relevant option for some suppliers and retailers. While 18ct gold is used for her



Devi



## The NEW Niton DXL precious metals analyser

*Safe, fast, accurate  
- ideal for retail  
environments*

Thermo Scientific Niton handheld XRF instruments are already the industry choice for precious metals analysis.

Now you can have all the power, speed and accuracy in an attractive countertop unit, specifically designed for use in retail environments.

### Improve customer confidence and avoid expensive valuation errors with the NEW Niton DXL

- Completely non-destructive testing with instant analysis
- Results shown on full-colour, touch-screen display
- Immediate identification for 21 elements including detection of gold plating
- Suitable for jewellery, coins, chains, rings, etc
- No acids required for operator safety
- Push-button simplicity of operation

**Call 01256 397860 today for further information or to arrange a free demonstration.**

**Attractive financial lease packages available - please enquire!**

**SPECIAL PRICES AVAILABLE  
Immediate Delivery  
Interest Free Credit\***

\* Contact us for further details



## Gold jewellery trends

By Eurydice Sanchez, senior editor of accessories & footwear at Stylesight

### Yellow gold trends

- Yellow gold has re-emerged and increasingly become more important. Overall, the most important metal tone to emerge on Autumn 2013 catwalks, however the trend has been building for several seasons.
- The return of '80s opulence drives this home even further, as we are seeing the return of flashy gold chain links and luxury status motifs (medallions, coins, animals). Look to costume jewellery from Kenneth Jay Lane and Chanel.
- Rich, golden shades are being interpreted in everything from ornate, regal metalwork to sculptural designs and sleek modern styles.
- Hammered, brushed and polished finishes.

### Rose gold trends

- Continues to be important for watches and jewellery.
- Polished, hammered, brushed or smooth.
- Feminine filigree and openwork designs.
- Part of the ongoing minimalist aesthetic – clean, geometric and cage designs.
- Rose golds (as well as yellow golds) play an important role in the continuing juxtaposition of warm and cool metals from fine to fashion jewellery – in duos or ever-popular tri-tones of rose gold, yellow gold, white gold or cool and warm finish sterling silver or plated brass.
- Rose tints remain a complement to pastel stones.

'contemporary gold' and bridal collections, in order to bring the popular and fashionable touch of rose or yellow gold to her silver lines, Lebrusan has used gold-plating. Jewellery designer Ariane Rocher explains that she sells a variety of gold jewellery and, of course, it's a question of customers' budgets as well as the pieces themselves. "Some of our collections lend themselves more to silver gold plate and some more to gold," she says.

"Trend-aware consumers are seeking the look of gold at silver prices," agrees Links of London's Smith. "As a brand selling both vermeil and 18ct we need to address this



Ariane Rocher

balance carefully, so vermeil is almost treated as a colour variation. Vermeil works well for the Links brand and is ideal for new entry level introductions, allowing product with the look of gold from £130," she explains. "However 18ct gold remains at the heart of our offer, but is used more at collection level and for our gold and diamond charms, where customers are seeking products with a more timeless aesthetic."

While Sho by Sarah Ho is due to launch a new light and delicate 18ct gold collection at the Couture Show in Las Vegas this year, her



Lapponia

sterling silver gold vermeil lines are proving very popular, in particular the rose gold Florabella Collection. "We have taken this trend forward and are currently creating a new 18ct rose and white gold collection



Eleuterio

as we think rose is here to stay for a while," Ho explains. Chloe Moss of ChloBo, noted for its silver jewellery, is also finding that retailers and her own customers have reacted positively to her first line of gold-plated pieces (part of the Cloud9 range) so more will be in the pipeline from her too... including rose gold.

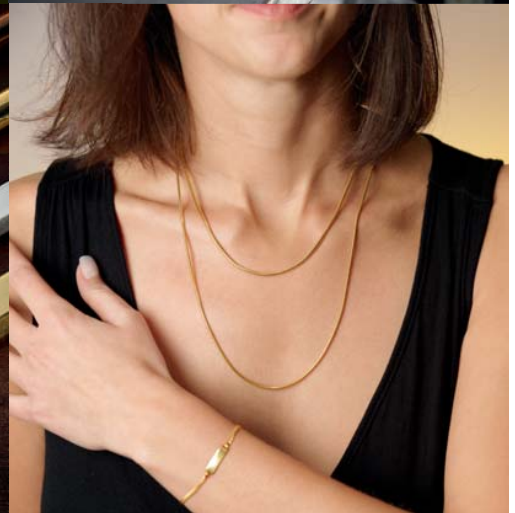


La 10



Zoe & Morgan

# Your partners in precious metal.





## A question of tone and texture

Arguably it is thanks to the watch market that rose gold is enjoying a 'moment'. The pinky-toned precious metal has been a growing favourite for timepieces for a while now and inevitably this is having a knock-on effect for jewellery. "Each piece of jewellery has its perfect gold colour, but sometimes it's a question of trend. Right now we say it's rose gold," says Susana Martins, creative director of Portuguese gold jewellery brand Eleuterio. "It's the perfect base for diamonds and it's amazing on any woman. At the moment we are focused on rose gold for all the designs that can be created with this [tone]." Sarah Ho at Sho is also seeing a trend for rose gold, which will be the focus for its next press days.

Al Coro too reports that rose gold is key. "For the last four years 70 per cent of our jewellery has been in rose gold," says Haidlauf. "Modern, fashionable and individual women like the look and its warm tone complements almost every skin tone." For Clogau rose gold is a signature element – the Clogau St David's mine was a copper mine before gold was found and the unrefined gold had a pink hue that has now become synonymous with its jewellery. The most affordable pieces in the collection are in sterling silver with rose gold accents.



Al Coro

Whether it's yellow or rose, there is certainly a shift away from white gold, says Adams of London Road, whose Pimlico Bubble (rose) and Kew (yellow) collections are the most popular currently. To mark 2013 being the Chinese year of the snake and inspired by the snake jewellery popular in the Victorian era, its Kew Serpent collection features textured yellow gold – some with gem-set eyes.

Meanwhile Fope, which attributes equal importance to yellow, rose and white gold has found that UK consumers prefer the brand's gold pieces to be yellow. And to ensure that all skin tones are considered, Dina Kamal offers her all-gold pieces in not three by five colour variations.

Besides the different gold tones, the finish of the metal can also divide opinion. At Deci it's about texture. "I tend to stay away from the high polish as I find it a little too



Florabella by Sho

predictable," says Tsoleva. I am focusing on other finishes such as matte, hammered and acid-dipped." Conversely, although it can depend on the design, Lestie Lee works mostly with polished gold. "I like the way it shines and reflects, with a finish that's clean and neat," she says. "Polished and satin are both very different finishes of the same colour and great when mixed together in one piece," says designer Hannah Warner. Alexis Dove meanwhile is finding that the polished versions of her signature textured metals seem to sell better than the matte.



Nomination



Gecko

## Ethical directions

If it's not about aesthetics, the question of ethically-sourced gold – and all that that description implies – continues to be a key one within the global jewellery industry. A briefing on the theme of 'Responsible Gold Sourcing' was held at the recent BaselWorld (jointly chaired by the Responsible Jewellery Council and the London Bullion Market Association) to once again reinforce the importance of supply chain management. At the same time Fairtrade International has acted to make Fairtrade labelling on gold to be more straightforward 'to facilitate market growth' – it will be more recognisable by consumers. The move will also, says Fairtrade, help increase jeweller participation in the Fairtrade gold scheme and bring maximum benefits back to miners.



Links of London

Just how much impact the campaign for ethical gold is having on the high street depends on who you ask – although few brands or designers would admit to having a lack of concern on the issue of course. And despite the publicity and campaigning that goes on, sourcing such gold is not seen as straightforward. "It's a very difficult process – I think it will take a long time before ethical gold is accessible," says Beirut-based jewellery designer Dina Kamal. "The idea of recycling gold and designing with recycled gold is very interesting as it requires its own

# MY iMenso

[www.myimenso.com](http://www.myimenso.com)

exclusively 925 silver



**UNIQUE**  
jewelry

Tel: 020 7405 5523

[sales@uniquejewelry.co.uk](mailto:sales@uniquejewelry.co.uk)

[www.uniquejewelry.co.uk](http://www.uniquejewelry.co.uk)



## Precious Metal Analysis Made Simple

### XRF Analysers for Testing Precious Metals & Jewellery

- **Reliable, Accurate & Precise** (to 0.05%).
- Results in a matter of seconds.
- Exact content determination.
- Karat value calculation.
- No damage to Samples.
- Easy to use Software.
- Test Items up to 300 x 290 x 200 mm or use our Handheld XRF for larger



Skyray XRF analysers are used throughout the industry for precious metals analysis:

- to accurately assess the quality of gold and other precious metals.
- to determine other metals and impurities.
- and clearly identify unmarked items.

***Avoid costly valuation mistakes - save time & money & easily test it yourself.***

***Please contact us to find out more or arrange a demonstration.***

#### **Optech Solutions Ltd**

t. +44 (0)1291 418148

e. [info@OptechSolutions.co.uk](mailto:info@OptechSolutions.co.uk)

w. [www.OptechSolutions.co.uk/precious](http://www.OptechSolutions.co.uk/precious)

(Exclusive UK Distributor for Skyray)

#### **Finance Options Available\***

\*Subject to Credit Approval.

Scan the QR code to visit our website



Catherine Budd



approach due to the gold limitations and considerations. I will hopefully have a bespoke piece this year made of recycled gold."

"I'm still happily working with some remains of Fairtrade ecological gold, but sadly Oro Verde has now decided to auction off its gold and no longer supply it into the Fairtrade supply chain," explains ethical designer Ute

If not sourced direct from the mine the alternative way of going down the ethical route is to recycle. "We have continued to see a year-on-year growth of the ethical gold market," comments Duncan Marshall, production manager at ethical, Fairtrade and recycled metal refiners Capella Manufacturing. "However, businesses that have truly embraced the realm of ethical metals within their core range and marketing have tended still to be specialised manufacturers rather than larger, mainstream, mass-producing businesses. We've noticed a consistent growth of interest and enquiry levels for ethical and recycled metals. This really has been amplified in the last twelve months with a greatly increased level of month-on-month enquiries," he continues.



Andrew Geoghegan

Decker. "For us makers who have supported and promoted Oro Verde for quite some time now this is rather a disappointment. But there is still a very good supply of Fairtrade gold and, until there is a new source for Fairtrade eco gold, I will be using the standard Fairtrade gold."



"To put it in perspective, the business has already supplied three new customers in the last two weeks who specifically want ethical or recycled metals," he adds. "It is still a niche market, but it is a growing niche that is starting to be taken seriously by manufacturers, jewellers and consumers alike. People really are starting to sit up and listen to this as a sector," he says.

While Lebrusan was one of the first Fairtrade gold licensees when it was introduced, the designer offers recycled gold (and silver) to give a less expensive option to her 'ethical customers'. Similarly, Links of London, which "scrutinises its methods of supply... endeavouring to use ethical routes", also recycles its gold where possible, especially on discontinued lines and excess stock.

Interestingly, for some designers, taking the ethical stance – combined with inspiration and pragmatism – has meant that precious

## Gold mythology

Spinning a few lustrous yarns of the mythological variety is one way to add further romance to precious metals, so here are a few fanciful (and one or two true) gold facts:

- To the ancient Egyptians the yellow blaze of gold was seen as the flesh of Ra, the sun god. It was considered to be divine and indestructible and therefore a symbol of eternal life.
- Gold represented the sweat of the sun to the Incas.
- To most civilisations gold was considered to be a symbol of power, prosperity and wealth.
- The search for gold was responsible for the discovery of America.
- In Christianity gold is considered to be a pure metal – hence ceremonial cups and chalices were often made of gold (pure enough to touch the 'blood of Christ').
- The Gold Coast is so-called because between 11th and 17th centuries West Africa supplied almost two-thirds of the world's gold.
- In Africa it was believed that gold (which came from the gods as well as the sun) has fetish powers...
- ...and as only chiefs and kings could communicate with the ancestors it was accepted that all gold rightly belonged to them.

metal prices are almost a lesser consideration. "Who knows where the gold price will be heading again," says Ute Decker. "As I use the amount of Fairtrade gold (or recycled silver) depending on what is ideal for a particular design, I never think of its commercial viability and so far this has proved to be the right priority." ■

Dina Kamal



Daisy Knights