

The Right Earring Can Give You an Instant Facelift

And a statement pair has never been more essential than they are right now.

BY JILL NEWMAN — NOV 10, 2020



Some women never leave the house without applying lipstick or blush. I never feel dressed without a great pair of earrings. They're the most expressive and intimate accessory because they frame the face, and they have never been more essential than they are right now. Whether on a Zoom call or anonymously masked-up, earrings are one of the few remaining forms of public self-expression.

But the importance of ear candy is nothing new. Earrings have been a woman's secret beauty tool for centuries. Diamond drops reflect light onto the skin; a stylish design that sweeps up the ear draws eyes upwards (away from wrinkles); and colorful gemstones enhance blue or green eyes. And when it comes to style, statement-making earrings are the best way to get noticed: Big hoops showcase a playful side, while dramatic chandeliers add an instant dose of glamour to any outfit.

250 Years of Ear Candy

With all eyes on the ear, [A La Vieille Russie](#) recently unveiled a new selling exhibit entitled *Ear Candy: 250 Years of Style*. The famous New York antiques dealer curated a selection of 50 pairs of earrings that range from antique 18th-century baubles to contemporary designs. The earliest example is a pair of Georgian diamond pendeloque earrings from 1780, which are stylish enough to wear today with a simple white blouse or an evening dress.

But my favorites in the exhibit are whimsical designs, like a pair of 19th century earrings made of woven hair (yes, that was a thing) and 1940s diamond boater hat earrings set with delicate sapphire ribbons. A set of Schlumberger for Tiffany & Co pineapple earrings from the 1950s also appeals, because who wouldn't love peridot and sapphire fruits?



Old-Mine pavé diamond Georgian drop earrings with a bow accent.

COURTESY



18 karat gold and woven hair pendant earrings.

COURTESY

“We look for amusing pieces that you won’t find anywhere else, both signed and unsigned,” says Peter Schaffer, the fourth-generation director of the family business, which was started in 1851 in Kiev. Signed pieces are typically more valuable, but Schaffer says that great design and originality is first and foremost in his mind. That certainly includes the earrings crafted from woven hair, a material that was popular in mourning jewelry and keepsake pieces during the 18th and 19th centuries. Typically, locks of hair were woven into flat designs beneath rock crystal or into more stylized three-dimensional coils like the pendant earrings in the exhibit.



Drayson pavé diamond and calibré sapphire French boater hat earrings.

COURTESY

When it comes to color, a stand-out pair of Victorian-era peridot and diamond earrings appear incredibly sleek and modern. There are also graphic black and white Art Deco-style designs, and bold diamond-studded '50s and '60s Cartier earrings that play with shape and texture. Among Schaffer's favorites are a pair made by Georges L'Enfant during the 1970s that are crafted out of flattened woven gold "making them as flexible as a piece of cloth." That's the thing with earrings—they must be comfortable, and the exhibit shows that even large-scale models can be remarkably light and flexible.



Schlumberger for Tiffany & Co. pineapple earrings set with peridot, diamonds, and sapphires.

COURTESY

When Hairstyles Go High, Earrings Go Long



Victorian peridot and old-mine diamond pendant earrings.

The only time that earrings were out of vogue was during the 1850s, explains Schaffer, when the popular hairstyles of the day covered the ears. Earring designs have always been closely aligned with changing fashions and hairstyles. In the 18th century, for example, long earrings counterbalanced the high hairstyles of the time, and the same trend repeated itself in 1830s when hair was worn piled high on the head. The availability of

materials and technology also played a role in the evolution of earrings. At the turn of the 20th century, platinum became more available and was widely used in earrings. “And then let’s fast forward to the 1930s when the clip fitting was invented, and for the next few decades earring designs decorated the earlobe in all sorts of interesting ways,” Schaffer points out.



Cartier turquoise and diamond clip earrings, set in platinum.

COURTESY

A La Vieille Russie’s new exhibit illustrates the house’s ability to identify the very best designs of every period. In addition to a wide range of jewelry and objects, the family-run gallery is considered experts on the works of Carl Fabergé, who was once a client of their gallery. Following the Russian Revolution, the family fled Kiev and relocated their salon to Paris where it became a meeting place for Russian intellectuals, including the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. In 1941, the family relocated again, this time to New York, where they

had an iconic store in the Sherry Netherland on Fifth Avenue for nearly 60 years. In 2017, they moved to an elegant space at 745 Fifth Avenue. Today, the business is run by fourth-generation brothers Paul and Peter Schaffer, and Paul's son, Dr. Mark Schaffer.



Cartier gold bead cluster earrings with brilliant-cut diamonds.

COURTESY

After 60 years in the business, Peter Schaffer is still continuously on the hunt for great jewelry design, but it's hard to make the cut. He says, "I look for pieces that hit me in the solar plexus."

The exhibit *Ear Candy: 250 Years of Style* is accessible online at [ALVR.com](https://www.alvr.com) and by appointment in the New York gallery through December 24, 2020.