

GEM TRENDS

BY MICHAEL SHULMAN

THE POWER OF BLACK

Edgy Elegance Makes Black Diamonds All the Rage

Black has always been a mystical and glamorous color, so why is it any surprise that black diamonds hold an alluring quality that makes them all the more coveted? While the absence of color is the way the majority of diamonds are valued, black diamonds fall under the category of “colored” or “fancy” diamonds, and the heightened interest in them lately has raised their worth many times over in recent years. Another difference between white and black diamonds is that natural black diamonds receive their “color” via natural abnormalities in the structure of their crystal lattice; many levels of graphite inclusion make them quite fragile. This is why upon close inspection many black diamonds show nicks and flaws both on their surface and within.

Famed Swiss jeweler Fawaz Gruosi, who started

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when he launched his own company—de Grisogono—in the mid '90s. Today, as an haute-couture jeweler and horologist, de Grisogono creates some of the world's most dazzling and exquisite collections of watches and jewelry, many set with black

smaller black diamonds and 14.10 carats of tsavorite garnets, set in white gold. Heck, Gruosi has even made a pair of black-and-white diamond handcuffs.

Leor Yerushalmi, vice president of The Jewelers, attributes the interest in black diamonds to their “subtle brilliance.” “They add uniqueness and depth to different pieces,” says Yerushalmi. “Guys can wear black diamonds because they give color to jewelry while maintaining a masculine edge.”

Another authority on the subject is estate-jewelry expert Leon Remonko, who has been the secret weapon of many of the biggest jewelry aficionados for years. Handling everything from the estate of Consuelo Vanderbilt, Duchess of Marlboro, to “important” vintage pieces by Verdura, Bulgari, Tiffany & Co. and Cartier, Remonko credits black diamonds with making jewelry more accessible to men in general. A little zing without full-on bling, if you will.

Echoing Remonko's statement is Rosalina Lydster, whose Jewelry by Rosalina collection is sold exclusively at Neiman Marcus stores around the country. “Black diamonds add a more masculine touch to certain pieces, making them more wearable for my male clients,” she says. She mentions that she has always loved colored diamonds, noting that while they've been popular in Europe and Asia for years, the slightly less avant-garde United States is finally catching on and catching up. “You'll notice a lot of black diamonds in my collection this year; they make the pieces look both edgy and elegant. One of my favorite combinations is putting black diamonds



Panther bracelet in white gold set with 119 carats of black diamonds, one one-carat white diamond and two .40-carat tsavorites by de Grisogono, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach.



From left: Black Monaco ring set in 18K yellow gold with a faceted onyx surrounded by 4.37 carats of black diamonds by Judith Ripka, available at Judith Ripka, Bal Harbour; the Spirit of de Grisogono ring, with the world's largest cut black diamond, by de Grisogono, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach; ring in white gold with 4.80 carats of black diamonds and an emerald-cut blue sapphire of 14.67 carats by de Grisogono, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach.

in the business at luxury houses such as Bulgari and Harry Winston before designing the iconic Ice Cube collection for Chopard, is widely credited with initiating the current trend in black-diamond jewelry

diamonds. As a matter of fact, Gruosi fashioned two of the world's largest black diamonds. The Spirit of de Grisogono is the world's largest cut black diamond (312.24 carats) and the fifth-largest diamond in the world. It is set as a ring in a white-gold mounting with 702 white diamonds totaling 36.69 carats. The Gruosi Diamond—the world's largest heart-shaped black diamond at 115.34 carats—is surrounded by 378 white diamonds to form the centerpiece of a necklace made from 58.77 carats of

PANTHER AND CENTER RING PHOTOGRAPHS BY MONIQUE BERNAZ.

BLACK DIAMONDS

together with white diamonds and rubellite.” Lydster concludes by saying that “a lot of designers have started making more interesting and cutting-edge designs recently, and black diamonds are perfect for these creations.”

And Judith Ripka, whose work can be found at Neiman Marcus and at her own eponymous boutiques, has this to say: “Black diamonds add just the right amount of glamour to my designs. Subtle yet dramatic, they are the very essence of elegance, moving easily from black tie to blue jeans. Whether I’m working with 18K white or yellow gold, black diamonds have a striking, almost mysterious quality that my customers find hard to resist.”

Purveyors of the black diamond have even gone after the upscale niche market by advertising on aSmallWorld.net—often referred to as MySpace for the jet set. Two of aSW’s largest banner advertisers are de Grisogono and H.Stern (pitching their new Stern Star collection, which is set in black diamonds). Other jewelers who are using these stones in their collections are Diamond in the Rough and VBH. Respectively, these are the jewelry world’s leading pioneer of natural uncut and unpolished diamonds and the in-the-know purveyors of luxury goods. VBH’s underground jewelry vault on New York’s Upper East Side is filled with lit display cases, showcasing many pieces set with black diamonds.

So, the next time you stroll through Neiman Marcus, make a stop in the men’s department, where black diamonds are all the rage; you’ll find designers such as David Yurman, Konstantino Treasures and Stephen Dweck, who have launched men’s jewelry collections that rely heavily on the black diamond, with rings, cuff links and studs, and even dog tags. Then, if that merely whets your whistle, hustle on over to the Precious Jewelry Salon, where collections include Diamond in the Rough, Judith Ripka (most notably her Town & Country collection) and Jewelry by Rosalina. But bring your Amex Black Card wherever you go, because like that tool of commerce, these stones are considered “fancy,” and in diamond-ese that translates to *mucho dinero*. Whether you’re looking for cuff links for him or an engagement ring for her, black-diamond jewelry makes for an exciting, unique and savvy option that works for virtually any occasion. 

“Black diamonds add just the right amount of glamour. Subtle yet dramatic, they are the very essence of elegance.”

Earrings in white gold set with 2.50 carats of white diamonds and 13 carats of black diamonds by **de Grisogono**, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach.

Ring in white gold with 10.70 carats of black diamonds and one white pearl by **de Grisogono**, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach.

Panther bracelet in white gold set with one emerald and black diamonds by **de Grisogono**, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach.

One-of-a-kind ring with an uncut black diamond totaling 56.90 carats accented with 1.21 carats of pavé white diamonds set in a handcrafted 18K-white-gold ring by **Diamond in the Rough**, available at Neiman Marcus, Bal Harbour.

Necklace in white gold set with 52 South Sea white pearls, 5.47 carats of black diamonds, and 7.33 carats of white diamonds by **de Grisogono**, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach.

Earrings in white gold set with 18.20 carats of black diamonds, 6.80 carats of white diamonds, and 13.75 carats of white-diamond beads by **de Grisogono**, available at East Coast Jewelry, Sunny Isles Beach.

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