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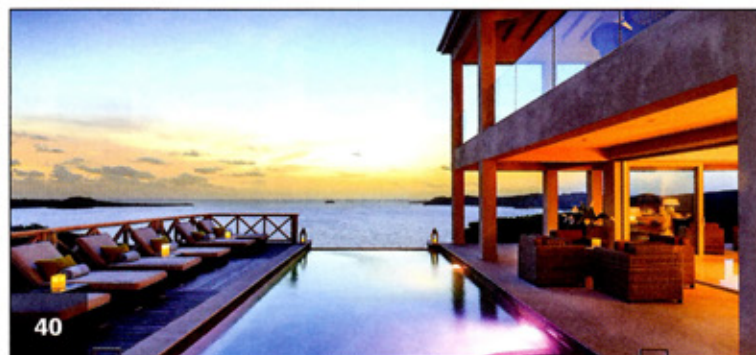
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GLOBETROTTER

Reflecting her own wanderlust and sense of fancy, jewelry designer Liv Ballard takes opulence on a wild journey.

By Roger Grody

The highly personal, wearable sculptures of the jewelry world extend far beyond the red carpets ruled by Cartier and Harry Winston, or the legendary blue boxes from Tiffany & Co. Innovative jewelry designers are creating pieces that challenge staid perceptions of what luxury jewelry should look like. Constantly pushing the envelope but never sacrificing the romance of the industry is the exquisite collection authored by Liv Ballard.

A Mississippi native with a passion for adventure, Ballard now splits time between Los Angeles and Paris while overseeing the artisanal production of her unique jewelry in Rome, a city that inspires her craft. "It would be impossible to work in Rome for as many years as I have without being influenced by Italian design, ancient and modern," she says. Ballard adds, "Eventually all those centuries of beauty inform your eye — and probably seep into your soul."

An art student who enjoyed a successful career in television production, Ballard explains with finesse her gravitation to jewelry design. "I suppose the 'why' was the insistent urge to realize in three dimensions an object I had in my mind," she says. "But the 'how' is a tale of adventure with some bravery, a little naiveté, a measure of danger, and mostly, perseverance.

"Sometimes jewelry is sculpture in miniature," grants Ballard, who cites Alexander Calder — "His jewelry is so whimsical and pure ... so free" — as an artist whose work she admires. Another is Bruno Martinazzi, whose jewelry designs are exceptionally sculptural, and Ballard admits being enchanted by the Baroque façades of Roman architect Francesco Borromini.

While other artists may enrich her perspective, Ballard's jewelry is anything but derivative, and she cherishes a fiercely independent spirit and journey of self-discovery. Never certain of where her constant exploration will take her, she suggests philosophically, "If I don't surprise myself, I won't surprise anyone else."

Ballard's original item, and the piece she's best known for, is the Caput Mundi, an extraordinary three-dimensional, precious gem-encrusted globe. Spinning on its axis inside a brilliant diamond pavé armillary is an earth of unprecedented glamour: continents of 18-carat gold floating in a sea of tiny sapphires, with the waters' depth suggested by graduated shades of blue. A delicate diamond



equator provides accent, and the customizable orb may include diamond-crusted ice caps, the designer's subtle nod to the issue of global warming.

Ballard notes this \$60,000 piece is frequently purchased as a gift, something husbands and boyfriends find relatable. For additional sentimentality, a singular ruby can be placed at the site of the recipient's birthplace or the couple's honeymoon destination. In an alternative version of Ballard's Caput Mundi design, less realistic but arguably more stunning than the signature blue, the oceans are conveyed in brilliant emeralds. Yet another rendition reveals a diamond-scaled dragon wrapped around the earth.

Ballard's signature globe reappears in her more limited collection for gentlemen, in a pair of cufflinks one might find himself subconsciously spinning during boring business meetings. Another men's gift is a gold or silver bracelet whose minimalist design and matte finish appeal to more conservative tastes. Because the bracelet is constructed in two pieces (it actually requires assistance in putting

CAPUT MUNDI



on or taking off), this is by definition an intimate, romantic gift.

Another testament to Ballard's wanderlust — she actually arrived at the idea for Caput Mundi while on an airplane from Rome to Paris — is a matte-finished gold cuff embossed with a map of the world and diamond-studded compass. Customizable like many of Ballard's pieces, precious stones can identify as many significant destinations as desired. An even more striking piece is the Cisterna cuff, eight ounces of polished, pleated yellow gold with diamond pavé bordering that demonstrates the avant-garde designer's appreciation for more conventional expressions of elegance.

A celestial theme appears in a one-of-a-kind pendant (\$150,000) that features a solid gold moon face encircled by two concentric diamond armillary rings. When the gilded face is rotated, a translucent gemstone — a rare, vintage 60-carat moonstone with an ethereal quality — is revealed. Consistent with the fanciful details that permeate the entire Liv Ballard collection is a ruby bindi attached to the forehead of the exotic moon face. "My work appeals to women who aren't afraid of getting a lot of attention," says Ballard of her celebrity-studded clientele, and adds, "These pieces always spark a conversation."

Ballard's Sacro Vincolo rings consist of a pair of diamond-encrusted gold bands connected by a gold chain that binds them for eternity. Blurring the lines between passion and obsession (a symbolic diamond ball is at one end of the chain), these "sacred bond" rings make a whimsically romantic gift. Additional tongue-in-cheek mischief appears in the Scaccia Diavolo charm bracelet, ideal for pop culture vampire buffs or those seeking protection from any type of evil spirit. The apotropaic piece features a mirror, crucifix, stake, sun face, and garlic, all intricately embellished with diamonds and rubies.

"I like making objects that are quite precious but that can be worn casually ... or not," says Ballard of her approach. "Mine is a small brand — my pieces don't arrive with a box that validates its own existence — so the women who wear Liv Ballard jewelry almost inevitably have their own personality, style and strength." **U+I**

Liv Ballard Jewelry livballard.com



MOON-SUN FRONT

MOON-SUN BACK



MOTIVI ROMANI EARRINGS