

2006 Jewelry Trends: Designer Carl Blackburn Talks Engagement Rings

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California jewelry designer, whose handcrafted diamond jewelry is sold across the United States, recently sat down with the media to discuss popular ring trends among today's brides:

Let's start by talking diamonds, a favorite topic for many young ladies. What's hot right now in diamond engagement rings?

One of the hottest looks in engagement rings now is the revival of antique cut diamonds, such as the cushion-cut. This is also known as the "pillow cut," and it's the kind of engagement diamond worn famously by singer Leann Rimes. Very popular a century ago, cushion-cut diamonds have rounded corners and larger facets to increase their brilliance under candlelight. Although this cut isn't as fiery as a round or princess cuts, it has a lovely romantic and classic look.

How about size? Is bigger better these days?

That certainly seems to be the trend. Traditional one carat solitaire diamonds have grown to three, four carats, and beyond. Rimes' engagement diamond, for example, is 5 carats. This bold trend really took off several years ago when Catherine Zeta-Jones sported her 10-carat antique diamond engagement ring from Michael Douglas, reminding us of the year Liz Taylor stunned the world with the famous Taylor-Burton diamond.

Ok. Let's turn to styling? What's the style that will win her heart?

In keeping with antique diamond cuts, vintage-inspired designs continue to drive engagement ring fashion trends. Everyone still remembers Madonna's beautiful Edwardian-style engagement ring, with its classic hand-engraved scroll work. One vintage style that is extremely popular this wedding season is the filigree engagement ring. Filigree is the ornamental work of fine gold or platinum that's carefully crafted into an openwork design. It's an art form that can be traced all the way back to 3rd century Greek jewelry. During the 1930s, platinum and 18K white gold filigree engagement rings were among the most sought after rings in both America and Europe. Today's jewelry designers have brought back the romanticism of this age-old art, taking elegance and sophistication to a whole new level. Enhanced with geometric patterns, floral cutwork, and milgrained edges (which lend the appearance of fine antique embroidery), these new filigree rings capture the breezy elegance and femininity so often found in today's young brides.

Why the continued fascination with vintage jewelry?

A beautiful thing about vintage styles is that they match perfectly with not only antique diamond cuts, but also the round brilliant cut (the most popular of all diamond cuts), and fancy cuts, such as the heart. They also are often dazzling enhanced by pavé diamonds set to form a halo around the center stone, symbolizing love's unbroken eternal commitment between future newlyweds. An added benefit is that pavé diamonds make it difficult to distinguish individual stones, so the setting makes admirers believe the piece has more (and larger) diamonds than it truly does. Pavé set diamonds are also used to enhance the band and frequently are handcrafted into the shoulders of a split shank to give it a shimmering radiance and stunning look.

Carl Blackburn distributes its couture lines to more than 300 premier jewelers throughout the United States and worldwide. These collections range from garden-inspired eternity bands and micro-set engagement rings to petite chandelier earrings, iconic pendants, and pavé diamond bracelets. Each piece reflects the Old World hallmarks that elevated fine jewelry from the realm of simple ornamentation to the realm of wearable art.

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