

She's Got It All!



"I'm reminded of Princess Diana when I see this ring. It's just so elegant and regal."
Ruby, diamond and platinum art deco ring



"This once belonged to Debbie Reynolds."
Ruser pearl, diamond and gold ring.



"I bought this emerald on a trip to Africa."
Zambian emerald set in diamond ring by Martin Katz



"My husband gave this to me as a Valentine's Day present."
Neil Lane vintage rose gold and diamond locket



"Pearls that are weirdly shaped feel more edgy and modern to me."
Martin & Stein grey South Sea baroque pearl necklace

"I designed this cuff with Robert Lee Morris for the World Gold Council benefitting Youth AIDS. It has two leaves opening like hands."
Robert Lee Morris gold and diamond bracelet

Bohemian beads, art deco rings, bold bracelets, sentimental baubles. It's an eclectic collection for sure, but ever-chic **Debra Messing** makes it work.

BY MARION FASEL

How did you first fall in love with jewelry? It started with my dad, who was an executive at a jewelry manufacturing firm. Beginning when I was about five, he would bring home big bags of jewelry and let me play with them. I loved it so much. I was in Rhode Island, growing up watching horses being born, so it was an entree to another world—which for me was New York City.

What about your mom? She must have had an amazing collection. She had a crazy jewelry drawer because my father always brought home pieces. I was mesmerized watching her get dressed up.

When did you start collecting? I floated into antique stores in New York City when I was a graduate student there. The very first piece I bought was a 1940's tri-color gold ring with an emerald cut amethyst, which I paid \$112 for. I thought, "How can I do this? I'm an off-Broadway understudy and make no money, but I want it!" The owner let me pay her \$10 a month.

What's your jewelry style? I like strong pieces with clean lines. I love oversized pieces. It started from a place of insecurity actually. I have always thought of myself as not a classical beauty, but someone who has a more exotic, ethnic tilt. I felt my face wasn't pretty enough for diminutive pieces. There's something more "me" with large pieces.

"My pieces are like sculpture. They're visual, playful and a fantasy. I get to enjoy them more often than a painting on a wall."



the Look | MY JEWEL BOX



"This Hear No Evil ring reminds me not to listen to naysayers."

Lorraine Schwartz gold and diamond ring.

"I bought these for myself for my 40th birthday!"

Fred Leighton 5-carat vintage diamond studs.



EVERY CHARM HAS A STORY

1. Lila is our dog.
2. I got a boxer's glove because I consider myself a fighter.
3. The British tram because Roma, my son, was conceived there.
4. A Roman/Greek gentleman who looks like my husband.
5. A book because I am a voracious reader.
6. A Moroccan tea kettle because I shot a mini-series in Morocco and loved it.

Debra got them all online. (Gold and gemset charms; Charmco.com.)

Do you ever give jewelry as gifts? For me, every birthday and every Hanukkah is always jewelry. It was all I wanted and all I would get. I give jewelry too. As a wrap present for *The Women*, I had pinkie rings made for Meg Ryan, Annette Bening, Jada Pinkett Smith and myself with four little diamonds and our names engraved on the inside of each.

Where do you shop? Seventy-percent of everything I own comes from Fragments on Prince Street [in New York City]. I've been shopping there for 15 years. I send everyone there. You can find something for \$50 or \$15,000. Ylang23.com is heaven to me. You can check out lots of brilliant jewelry designers on that site. I've also bought pieces from Potero.com.

Any tips for buying jewelry online? I don't buy anything that I can't return.

Do you buy pieces when you travel? Yes. Jewelry is a way to remember really meaningful experiences and times in my life, to physicalize it and take it with me.

Anything we'll never see you in? Any pieces you always avoid? Southwest. I can't go there. I love turquoise but not in that kind of way. No silver, no turquoise and no feathers.

What are some of your favorite gemstones? Is it true you shake when you try on diamonds? I love diamonds. My hands shake. It's known around town. People joke about it, but it's a very real thing. I think of it as a magnetic or chemical thing that happens. I just go with it. White diamonds are my favorite. I am drawn to rubies and emeralds, too. Once I tried on a Lorraine Schwartz sapphire ring and my eyes watered just coveting it. The color green in stones is great too. There is something so lush about the opaqueness of chalcedony.

You have so many different styles of jewelry, from costume to fine. How do you make sense of it all? If I'm going to a charity lunch, I'll wear my antique pieces. I'll wear only one or two rings and maybe a nice pair of earrings. When I testify on Capitol Hill in my role on behalf of Youth AIDS, I wear my pearls.

What do you wear on the red carpet? I always wear big rings. I played piano when I was little, and have large hands. For a long time I thought I needed large rings to make my hands look more feminine. Now big rings are part of my personality. I wear necklaces the least. Generally I like to have big bracelets on my arms as well. There is no other place where you can get away with having four diamond bracelets stacked.

Do you wear your own pieces on the red carpet? Those opportunities allow me to experience a piece that is not my own. It's a highlight for me.

"If I'm feeling my East Village, hippie, creative art student roots, I grab my chunky colorful stone pieces."

