

# 3 Women Grew Up Surrounded by Art. Guess What Their Jewelry Looks Like.



The jewelry designer Mary MacGill at her studio and shop in Germantown, N.Y. *Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times*

By **Bronwyn Cosgrave**  
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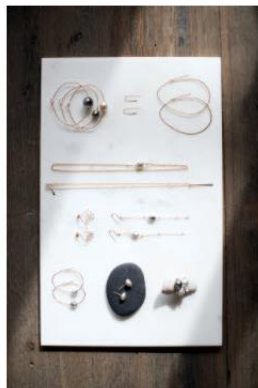
Chances are that the career path will be creative for someone whose nursery walls were adorned with works by Edgar Degas, Pablo Picasso or Andy Warhol — and whose childhood included gallery openings, studio visits and studying old masters in museums.

While the offspring of important art-world leaders often carry on the family business, lately a number of them have been making their marks in other creative fields. In Hollywood, for example, some of the most dynamic film producers are the children of important dealers. For example, [Jason Blum](#), the son of Irving Blum (whose Ferus Gallery first showcased Mr. Warhol on the West Coast), produced the Oscar-nominated films “Get Out” and “Whiplash.” Toby Emmerich, son of the New York dealer André Emmerich (who represented David Hockney and Anthony Caro), became chairman of Warner Brothers Pictures Group in January.

And in the realm of fine jewelry, a trio of thirtysomething designers — Mary MacGill, Eugenie Niarcho and [Cora Sheibani](#) — are the daughters of celebrated gallery owners and collectors. While the styles and price points of their independent brands diverge, the women all create strong original designs, sharing a daring vision that clearly was shaped by their immersion in the rarefied world of fine art.

The earliest artwork that Ms. MacGill recalls?

“Robert Frank,” she said, referring to the Swiss-American who [a 2015 \*T\* magazine article](#) described as the “world’s pre-eminent living photographer.”



Some of Ms. MacGill’s creations, made of gold and semiprecious stones. *Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times*

Mr. Frank is famed for his stark, realist style — as well as directing a fly-on-the-wall documentary (with a name this newspaper won’t print) chronicling the Rolling Stones’s 1972 North American tour for “Exile on Main Street.” Ms. MacGill, however, experienced a softer side of the virtuoso lensman. “When I was a little girl, Robert gave me a garden gnome of a bird and a box of red beads,” she said. “Robert told me to feed the bird with the beads every day. And I did. It was a lovely little gift.”

Editors’ Picks

Ms. MacGill is the daughter of Peter MacGill, the gallerist, curator and director of Pace/MacGill Gallery in New York. Along with Mr. Frank, Pace/MacGill represents Paolo Roversi as well as the estates of Richard Avedon and Irving Penn. “I used to bake Irving Penn cookies: chocolate chip, shortbread and lemon bars,” Ms. MacGill said.

Discussing her career rise — from a design department assistant at [David Yurman](#) to overseeing her own atelier in Germantown, a small town along the Hudson in upstate New York — Ms. MacGill credits her father as the key motivating figure.

After graduating from Brown University, when her friends were taking off for Europe, Mr. MacGill encouraged his daughter to work for Mr. Yurman. Then he lent her his garage when she decided to strike out on her own and design jewelry. And Mr. MacGill provided his daughter with her first big break.

It was an introduction to Kazuko Oshima. A muse to Mr. Frank, Ms. Oshima, the Japanese-born polymath (who died in 2007), became a darling of the downtown New York art world after Madonna wore a lace veil she had crafted in the video of the 1984 hit single “Like a Virgin.” Bianca Jagger was among the fashion icons who flocked to Barneys New York to buy the one-off pieces that Ms. Oshima created by twisting gold wire around semiprecious stones. “I was 14,” Ms. MacGill said with a laugh, recalling when she realized, over tea with Ms. Oshima, that jewelry was definitely her calling.

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Eugenia Niarchos, at her home in London. Tom Jackman for The New York Times

"We had a serious conversation," she added. "Kazuko said she would introduce me to her gold vendor and her bead vendor. I still work with them. Kazuko set me up."

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Here's What We Would Nominate for Best Picture



7 Cooking Tips Our Food Staff Swears By



The Dark Reality Behind Great Anime's Utopian Dreams



Two of Ms. Niarchos's Elementa necklaces in 18-karat, yellow gold, with intarsia designs. Tom Jackman for The New York Times

Ms. Niarchos's father, Philip Niarchos, has significantly increased the value of the collection with his own additions, including self-portraits by Jean-Michel Basquiat and Van Gogh.

"I never sit down and think about it, but, somehow, there will always be an artistic reference on my mood board," Ms. Niarchos said, referring to the inspirational images she collects at the start of her design process.

For example, Van Gogh's "The Starry Night," inspired lustrous star-shaped jewels in her 2014 Theiya collection. A Dan Flavin fluorescent light piece proved the motivation for the glow-in-the-dark enamel that lends an otherworldly quality to Oseanyx, a 2015 collection inspired by aquatic life and outer space.

In her 2017 Elementa collection, Ms. Niarchos credits her admiration of Monet's shimmering Houses of Parliament series for her use of vibrant stones, including carnelians, fire opals, orange sapphires and amethysts.

And a trio of Elementa necklaces, showcasing striking intarsias (polished stones set within marble), appear to be miniature masterpieces.



The designer Cora Shelbani at her home in London. Andrew Tanna for The New York Times

But Ms. Niarchos said she discovered the intarsias at the Tucson Gem, Mineral and Fossil Showcase, an annual trade fair in Arizona that she attends in Arizona, and then created the precious metal and gemstone frames: "I thought it would be nice to wear a little painting around your neck."

The first jewelry Ms. Sheibani designed were gold brooches that also resembled picture frames.

The designs, now a motif in her collection of bold 18-karat pieces, were motivated by her memory of a pin, a small Picasso etching encased in gold. Claude Picasso, the artist's son and legal administrator of his estate, gave it to Mrs. Sheibani's mother, Christine Bischofberger.

Mrs. Sheibani's father is Bruno Bischofberger, the Swiss art dealer generally credited with introducing Pop Art and Neo-Expressionism in Europe and propelling the career of Gerhard Richter.

He represented Mr. Basquiat (with whom Mrs. Sheibani painted as a child) and Mr. Warhol, with whom he co-founded Interview magazine. And he has opened his own museum outside Zurich to showcase his collection of furniture by Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, Frank Lloyd Wright, Eileen Gray and Jean Prouvé, which W magazine has called the world's most extensive.

"I loved making jewelry always," Mrs. Sheibani said. "The first money I ever earned, from working in my father's gallery, I put half in the bank and spent the other half on a Roman and Greek bronze ring which I wore every day, for like, five years.



"Looking at art has influenced me — 100 percent," she added. "But I'm not copying anything. I just love color and interesting shapes."

If there is a forerunner — or inspirational figurehead — to this band of designers, it is another Picasso offspring, Paloma Picasso. She once described her childhood with her father: "I used to spend hours drawing next to him."

Channeling this experience into jewelry making, Ms. Picasso trained as a goldsmith, studied jewelry design and made her first pieces for Yves Saint Laurent, who credited her flair (which relied on inventively mixing vintage flea market finds as well as turbans and red lipstick), for inspiring the '40s flair of [his spring 1971 Scandal collection](#).

In the early '70s, Tiffany & Company noticed her after a limited-edition collection of weighty gold necklaces and bracelets for the Greek jeweler Zolotas regenerated the brand.

In 1979, it introduced her namesake Tiffany line, which continues to thrive.

This year she turns 69, and her natural successors seem to be among this group of female jewelry powerhouses.

Tiffany, take note.

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