



diamonds are forever

*Scottsdale jewelry designer to
the stars, Jacqueline Nerguizian,
talks about what's hot in
jewelry now, where she gets her
inspiration, and how she creates
her one-of-kind pieces*

**BY WENDY RUBICAM
PHOTOS BY CARRIE REISER**

What do celebrities like Jennifer Lopez, Rachel McAdams and Sofia Vergara have in common with certain Scottsdale women? They have the good fortune to be sporting Scottsdale jewelry designer Jacqueline Nerguizian's creations. Nerguizian's dazzling jeweled pieces have been spotted on the red carpet at the Oscars and other awards shows, at high profile events here and abroad, and right here in Scottsdale as the hippest must-have accessories.

The talented designer is currently working with JLo, who has been wearing Nerguizian's jewelry on *American Idol*, and young rising star, Lily Collins. Collins has a number of Nerguizian's pieces and will be incorporating the jewelry into her look for the premiere of *Mirror Mirror*.

Nerguizian has been making television appearances herself, from *Extra!* to *Access Hollywood*, giving her expert take on jewelry trends.

The energized mother of five kids takes her growing popularity in stride, saying, "There's a lot going on! I kind of like my plate full—it makes me feel alive."

all in the family

Jewelry has always been a family business for Nerguizian, who graduated from the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) at age 18 and worked for 20 years with her father at the Jewelry Mart in Los Angeles. When she followed her husband, Brent, to Scottsdale five years ago, it was only natural that her passion for custom jewelry design would find a new home here. Of course, that home is shared with the kids, ranging from age 2 to 18, dogs and a full family life.

Daily life finds Nerguizian and Brent up at 5 a.m., juicing for the family, and then off to the gym. She runs her business out of a 3,000-square-foot office in North Scottsdale that she says looks like Fort Knox, with dogs and kids coming in and out throughout the day. "We're very fortunate. We've got a great support group. I couldn't do it without help," she admits. "But you know, I get to tuck them [my kids] into bed and I get to read them the bed-



time stories. When they're in here I have my 9-year-old who sits there and helps me sort out diamonds and asks me a hundred questions. Then I have my 2-year-old who just wants to walk around like a princess wearing a whole bunch of jewelry. It's very great."

It is so great that the couple is in talks with Sony about a possible reality show centered on the family. "I don't want to say too much—I don't want to jinx it," she confides. "But they want to see a mom with

five kids running around and think, 'how does it work?'"

What's important to her is that her kids are involved and have the opportunity to participate in the art that she loves. She laughs as she talks about the cover shoot for this magazine at her home. "I had my 2-year-old running in circles around me, while [the photographer] is trying to take photos of my face. I mean, it's hilarious. You've gotta love it."



one-of-a-kind

The Scottsdale office is where each custom piece begins—first with an idea, then a drawing, then putting it into a CAD program. From there, Nerguizian's California craftsmen create a wax mold, then the gold mold, and finally the stones are set.

"Everything is one-of-a-kind," Nerguizian stresses. "Nothing is made in China or mass-produced or purchased overseas. Everything is made in the U.S., and to me that's truly important."

Clients have input at every step of the process, and plenty of face time with the designer during the three-week process. "Once the wax mold is made they look at it, they try it on. If there are any changes, they can be done then," Nerguizian explains. "Most times after the mold, they see it in just the plain gold mold...so they can get an idea and feel it. Does it feel good to them, you know? That's truly important, because if you're spending money on a piece of jewelry you want to make sure that first of all, nobody has something like it, and that it's been custom-made for that person. The experience alone is great," she concludes.

The designer is in talks with Neiman Marcus, but says she's not sure which way she's going to go. "Probably every 10 days I'm flying to New York, to L.A., to Vegas, to all of these places where my clients are and I make personal calls. And to me, that's more important," she says.

inspiration is everywhere

When asked where she finds her inspiration for new designs, Nerguizian says, "That's like the worst question for me, because it's almost bittersweet. I could be driving down and see a leaf hanging from a tree and think, 'Oh, that would be the perfect pair of earrings.' And then I just start drawing. Or, as my daughter plays with her little princess tiaras and beautiful shoes, little things like that just pop up in my mind and I just tweak it," she says.

She admits to getting her best ideas in the middle of the night, saying, "Literally, I don't sleep. My brain does not shut down, which is really a bad thing. I have a little note pad next to my bed and there are a lot of ideas. Inspiration comes up from just being alone and having that quiet time," she explains.

Another major source of inspiration for Nerguizian is antique jewelry. One of her favorite pieces is a Tiffany & Co. art deco bracelet adorned with 35 carats of diamonds that she keeps in her vault. "I'm a huge antique-lover," she gushes. "Everything's just a little more intricate, more detailed. It took them months to finish one piece and you see the beauty in that. I totally respect that."

what's hot now

Incorporating her love of antiques and "classic with a bit of a twist" approach, Nerguizian says she designs what feels right to her. She spots trends in Hollywood and in fashion and influences her pieces with hints of the latest fashion directions.

"You try not to follow trends completely, because trends are for a short period of time, but you can take a little bit of that and add it to your everyday jewelry pieces," she advises.

Nerguizian predicts that we will see a lot more yellow gold, vibrant colors for spring, more chunky jewelry, and lots of bangles.

"We've actually just sent about 13 bangles to JLo in black diamonds and white diamonds. I've done them in [everything from] black and white diamonds to rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, and we're actually making some in pink sapphires because it's spring. It's going to be a huge hit," she says.

While Nerguizian has just finished work on a 2,600 stone, 125-carat bra, set with black and white diamonds, rubies and colored sapphires that she is hoping JLo or Fergie might wear to the Music Awards, for everyday wear in Scottsdale she is a fan of large hoop earrings and pieces made with black diamonds. "I love them because they give depth to the piece. It gives more of an edge to a piece," she explains. "It's something you could wear all day and carry it on to evening. Whereas, if you wear something that's all diamonds you think that's more of a cocktail piece—I can't wear it all day. If you add color to it, like a black diamond or sapphires or any precious stones like that, you can wear it every day."

Nerguizian is adamant that custom jewelry is worth the investment, and that it doesn't cost more than what you might buy from a chain jeweler. "You don't want to have the same wedding dress as someone else, or be at a party wearing the same thing—why does jewelry have to be the same as everybody else's? It shouldn't," she declares. Proud of the value in her pieces, she says, "I'm not here to make money. I'm here because I love what I do."

Wendy Rubicam can be reached at www.rubicamwriting.com