

The pearl may be nature's most perfect circle. Designer Michael Beaudry uses matchless Tahitian pearls, swirling with iridescent colors, to drop dramatically from a necklace or be the focal point of a ring, actually a circle on a circle.

JEWELS of the SOUL

In these days of turn-of-the-century madness, let's pause and remember what jewelry really does for us. Beyond product positioning and branding, can we remember that jewelry adornment is an expression of the soul?

Jewelry is a deeply powerful form of adornment. It is not the small power achieved through might and will, but a stronger one: the personal power that arises when we feel connected to our world in a deep and authentic way. Connected to *our* world: our earth, our spirit, our god, our families . . . connected to life's beauty. When we adorn ourselves in this spirit, we move through the world being all that we are.

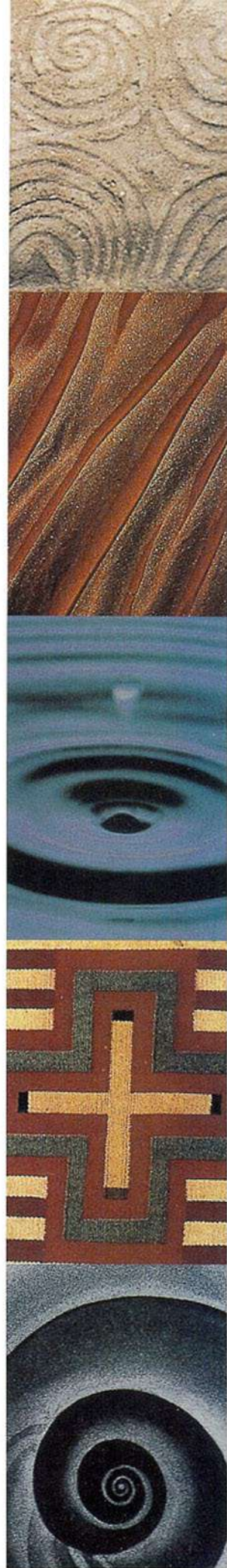
One of the ways to develop this sense of connection is by taking the opportunity to find pleasure in the world's feast of "things"—their forms, their colors, their textures, their shapes. These pleasures are nourishing in a profound and necessary way—they give our imagination the chance to fly. In this way, the beauty of the world brings us back to ourselves. It constantly refreshes.

Sometimes the soul finds nurturing in the eternity expressed by the light and color of a fine gem. Other times, a design's shape, motif or textures present a symbolic image that touches a primal chord of meaning and expression—much as enduring myths and legends speak to timeless human dramas. Jewelry unites mind, body and soul: The mind considers the jewelry, the body feels the jewelry and the soul conjures images of all kinds. Through connecting mind-body-soul with the immense beauty and imagery of the world, the wearer radiates confidence, strength and grace. When these parts of ourselves are in harmony, we feel contentment. Jewelry adornment is an expression of the soul.

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Cynthia R. Marcusson • Cynthia Renée Co.

*This story is an edited version of a talk given by Cynthia Marcusson
at the Third International Gemological Symposium.*



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There is something of the infinite in jewelry. When that is recognized, jewels become living things that beckon, that inspire imagination. Jewels, gold and gems have drawn people since humanity began. Why do babies reach for them? What is that openness you feel when you dive into a limpid blue sapphire? It is instinct to reach for the shining crystal. It's not just the jewel, but the soul behind the jewel. The process of transformation from spirit into substance balances, heals and completes us.

A millennium or more ago, we were much closer to the elements. We felt the rain on our skin and the breeze's cool flutter. Our days ended watching our children sleeping, beautiful in the pale firelight. We knew heaven had a place on earth. So we touched the earth, making communion with it through everyday rituals and objects we held sacred—objects so magically beautiful we held them close, using them to adorn our bodies. We didn't feel so alone, because in celebrating the sacredness of the world, we felt connected to something larger than ourselves.

As our society has become increasingly industrialized, we've gotten further removed from the elements of nature. Somehow we have become detached from the poetry of jewels and adornment as an expression of soul. Paradoxically, now we need this more than ever, as we push through society's uncivil frenzy, always late. Jewelry, designed to enshrine colorful jewels, is a testament to life's light and beauty. It is life-enhancing. Our jewelry becomes an overall expression of the joys in our lives.

The American poet Mary Oliver said, "Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination." It's true—this is how we replenish ourselves. Most native cultures have a tradition of celebrating life and soul through colorful adornment. Our

society, however, is swathed in basic black (like a lot of "sophisticated" black cats) with little sense of individuation. It may be fear—we're so sensitive, we cloak ourselves in scoffing cynicism. We are so sensitive we're afraid if we show our tender soul through more lyrical dress, we'll be laughed at, scorned and rejected.

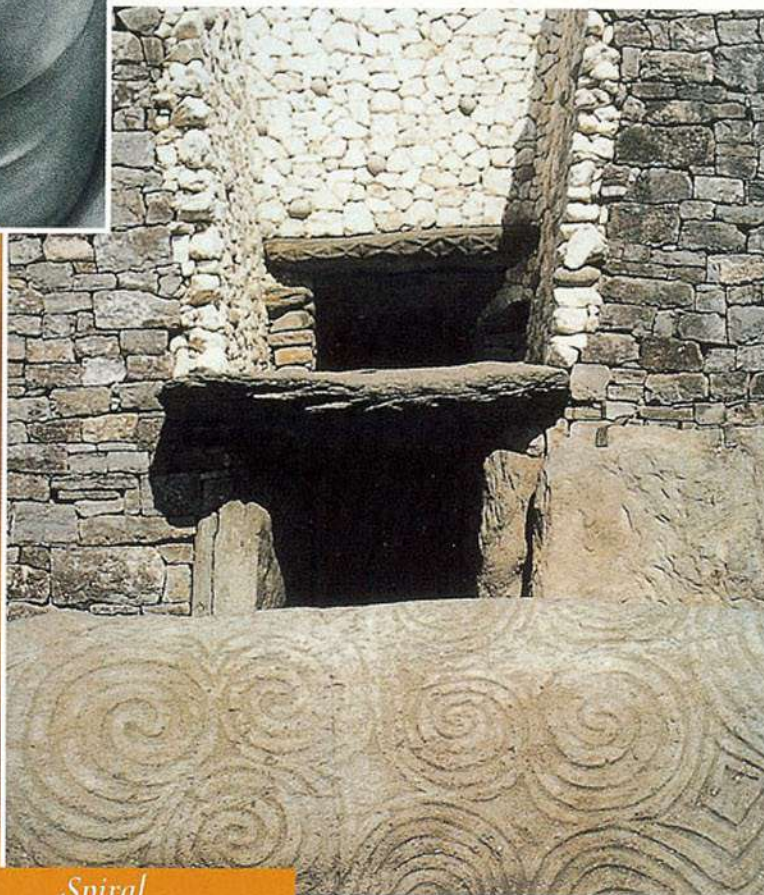
All the data of our technological age is choking us. But we can unite the whisperings of the soul with modern technology. A woman can become her own Taj Mahal—her own shrine to love and beauty, an expression of her own profound reservoir of inner beauty and strength. To do that, we need to see that jewelry is more than an expression of class, wealth and social status. And that jewelry is worn not just as a token of love between mates. Understanding—and seeing—the inherent beauty, the form, the imagination pulsing in every gem and wearing this beauty upon our bodies leads us back to ourselves. As Paul Simon's lyrics go, we walk the world with diamonds on the soles of our shoes.

Myths and legends are full of archetypal imagery that is relevant to all people—and has been since humanity's first stirrings. We are affected by these "stories," as the symbols in them are deeply embedded in spirit. These universal motifs also appear in jewelry. The wearer (and the designer) may not be consciously aware that they are adorning themselves with, say, a symbol of creation, but I believe they know it unconsciously. They feel it, just as we feel if music is harmonious or discordant.

A primal symbol can make a very sophisticated-looking jewelry piece. Have you ever wondered why we praise an artist as being "simple"? It's because he or she has distilled form down to its most essential elements. There is no clutter to block the natural resonance of form. Some of the archetypal images embedded in resonant jewelry design are described below.



Sometimes the soul finds nurturing in the eternity expressed by the light and color of a fine gem. Sri Lankan ruby from Cynthia Renée Co. Photo by Tino Hamid.



Spiral

Above: Early humans of many cultures intuited the spiral symbol. It is found on pictographs around the world.

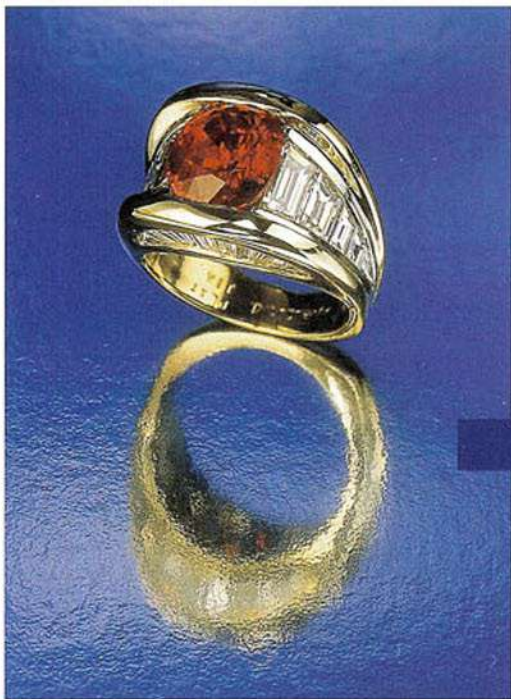
Top left: Artist Georgia O'Keeffe painted nautilus shells, the uncomplicated embodiment of spiraling outward for new life and ideas.

Left: The free-form, sensuous designs of Michael Good manifest the spiral motif in shimmering gold.

Spiral. The spiral is an eternal form representing the outward pushes of creation: expansion, evolution, striving, growth—the outward reaching for new life and ideas and life's graceful unwinding. Early humans of many cultures intuited the spiral symbol, etching it on pictographs. Among the work of Georgia O'Keeffe are paintings of nautilus shells that are the simple

embodiment of spiraling outward. Spirals come in many forms. Elongate a spiral—pull it out from its center—and it becomes more corkscrew in shape, like many seedpods. Entwine the corkscrew with another and form the ultimate in creation: DNA's double helix. Spirals, or forms of spirals, were a predominant design motif in Art Nouveau, jewelry created for looking inward to our souls.

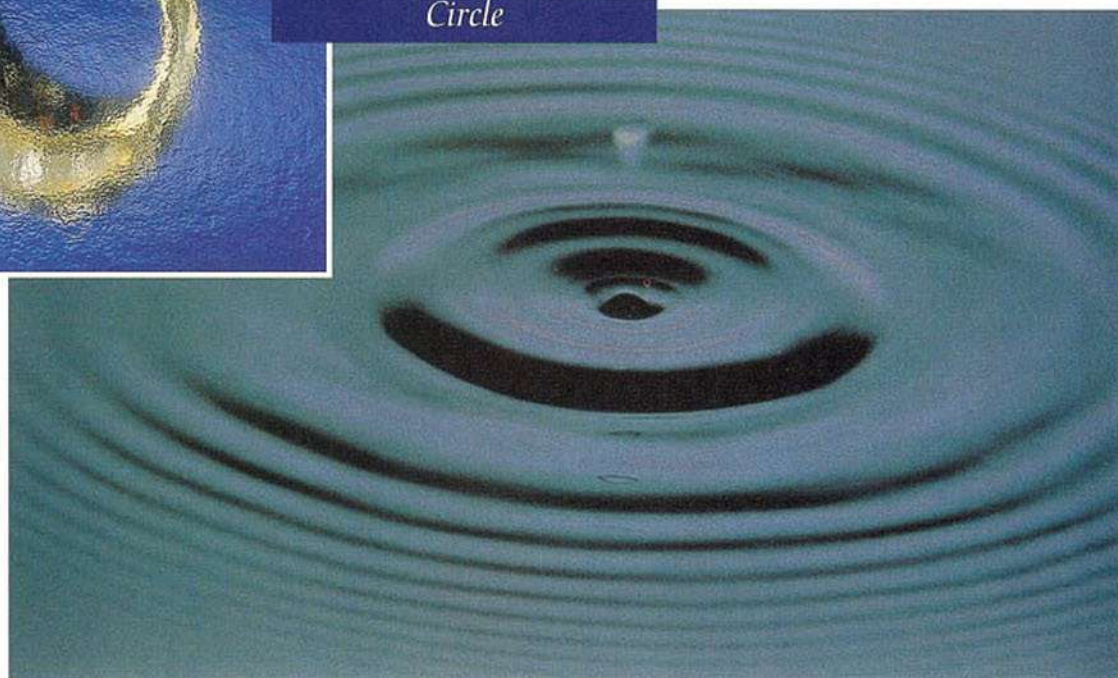
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Below: One Japanese art form is based on simple, yet symbolically profound, radiating circles, such as those made by raindrops on water.

Left: In jewelry the ring is the classic circle. Shown here: Thai ruby in a ring of eighteen-karat yellow gold and platinum accented by baguette diamonds. Jewelry by Cynthia Renée. Photo by Weldon.

Circle



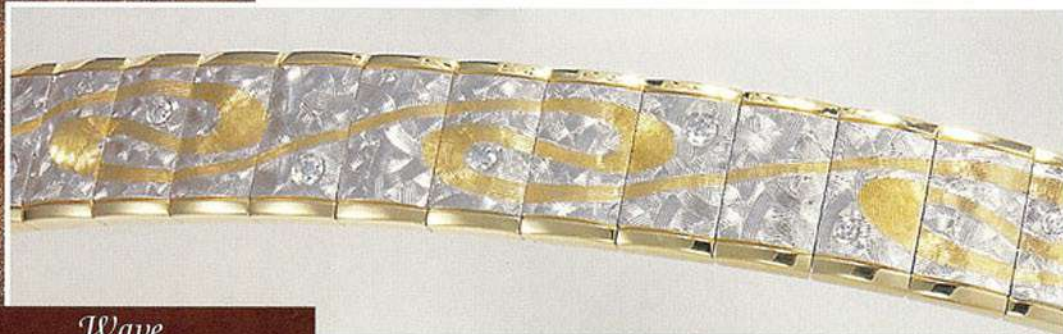
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Circle. Another elemental form is the circle. Circles unite . . . or contain. They are the wheel of life and its cycles, the heavens, the planets and the moons, a point of return or the encompassing all. Series of circles radiate, like expanding orbits or rings of wood. One Japanese art school is based on the simple, and symbolically profound, radiating circles such as those made by raindrops on water. The Wheel of Life is a powerful religious and spiritual symbol for life's cycles. The Shaker hymn,

"Will the Circle Be Unbroken," speaks of the eternal. A Chinese jade form, called a "pi," is a disk shape with a central circular cutout and is thought to be the symbol of heaven with the circular opening representing the sun shining in heaven.

Should the spiritual connotation not work for you, think of physics and unified field theory: the point of singularity before the Big Bang and the connection between everything. In jewelry, the earth's lovely circle is reflected in the heavenly blue form

of a blue sapphire cabochon. Rings, particularly those representing mated commitment, are symbols for the never-ending circle. The circle has many forms, from a wedding band, beautiful in its simplicity, to something as elaborate as interlinked circles in chains. Circles can be tugged into ovals, perhaps in the form of a majestic oval-shaped pink topaz encircled by diamonds. Pearls are an exquisite circle. What are pearls but little glowing moons with which to encircle our throats?



Wave

Left: The soft and undulating wave form sculpted in sand dunes brings to mind timelessness and serenity.

Above: An exceptionally beautiful "story" bracelet by Michael Bondanza celebrates the repeating wave motif in gold on a textured platinum ground.

Wave. Waves pulse forward in cycles, building energy, cresting then declining into rest and regeneration. Waves are cycles of energy: the gathering, decline and regeneration are much like the seasons, our moods, our relationships. The Navajos used the zigzag wave form to celebrate constant series of waxings and wanings whether in the cycle of our lives or of the moon. In jewelry design, we often see the same zigzag wave pattern in engraving

or inlay work. Some designers elongate the wave or play with different wavelengths or angles, grouping the waves in a graceful series. Sometimes the wave is so simple as to be barely perceptible. Jewelry with the soft and undulating form of waves brings to mind timelessness and serenity. Rings with the arced softness of sand dunes continue their march across our fingers...on and over our wrists, whispering, "I am eternity."

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Cross

Above: The cross form is the coming together of ideas from all directions. The connection point is the genesis from which all is possible. The cross is seen in art of many cultures. This is a Navajo rug.

Left: Cassis has taken the simple cross form and applied intricate workmanship in white and yellow gold and diamonds to make an extravagant statement.

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Cross. The cross is the coming together of ideas from all directions, the connection point (nexus), the place from which all is possible. The archetype of the cross isn't just a Christian symbol, though it is easily recognizable in that simple form. An X is a cross form we often find in jewelry. Sometimes, the legs of the X are of unequal lengths, poised in a moment of balance much like an Alexander Calder mobile. The crosses around a woman's

neck can mean many things to her. She may be Christian, though not all crosses take the familiar Christian form. Perhaps, to her, a cross means connection.

The cross form can be enhanced by adding more rays, like a starfish or snowflake. Sometimes we want to rest from the endless progression of waves and orbits in the simple order of straight lines, or in the simple serenity of channel-set stripes that encircle the finger or wrist.

Right: We are attracted to fringe-like jewelry pieces because their movement mirrors the play of wind through branches.

Below: Fringe, tassels and earring drops offer us the joy of movement from the soulful images they conjure. Jewelry by Cynthia Renée Co. Photo by John Parrish.



Fringe



Fringe. The movement of fringe, tassels and drops offers deep soulful images. Like watching waves break on the sea, is it ever tiresome watching the moving dance of wind through the leaves? This is why we are attracted to drops and fringe in jewelry pieces—their movement mirrors the play of wind through branches and leaves, each moving in its own way by virtue of an unseen force. Garlands of prayer flags, flapping in the breeze, decorate the sacred mountains of the world; we decorate ourselves with garlands of necklace strands. In a Japanese Shinto monastery, roped tassels wrap a tree as an honor to its spirit. A pearl *sautoir* with tasseled ends wraps our bodies—calling forth another spirit to honor.

While the world increases in speed and technology, we have more need to rest in the nest of our soul's inner realms. With jewelry, we get to unite earthly beauty and lyrical styling with images of spirit. This vantage point is a magical place—like watching the painting of a beautiful inner landscape. **JQ**

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