

FASHION

As much fun to wear as they are to collect, cufflinks are making a come back with fashionable men and women.

COLLECTIBLE

Whether they are discreetly peeking beyond a coat sleeve or flamboyantly filling a shirt sleeve, the pleasure of donning cufflinks has little to do with their utility. Like Pellegrino instead of tapwater or linen's feel over a poly/cotton blend, cufflinks are a pleasure savored for themselves — not their necessity.

Actually, the coiffed kings awash in jewels depicted in period movies did not wear cufflinks. Cufflinks as we know them developed toward the end of the eighteenth century as a means to close sleeves in a distinctive manner. Styles varied, with the last Great American Cufflink Period waning as Americans stopped dressing for dinner. Think of a dapper and witty Cary Grant enjoying martinis in the parlor

BY CYNTHIA RENÉE



Catherine
Iskiw



Bersani



Michael Sher



ART

before dinner. During the sixties the cultural backlash against formality and tradition started our culture's embrace of casual.

Today the pendulum is swinging back. There is a weariness of constant casual and a desire to feel better dressed and special. Today's well-dressed man may not frequently don a black tie for dinner, but he cares how he looks and feels and he enjoys setting himself apart with distinctive accessories. Worn funky with a white shirt, vintage tie and jeans or classic with a wool suit, cufflinks are luxe and make an individual style statement.

Traditionally, cufflinks were passed from father to son. When passed down through the ages, sometimes only one link remains. If that is the case, let your daughter clip it in her lapel buttonhole. But she may also enjoy wearing a complete pair. Cufflinks can be



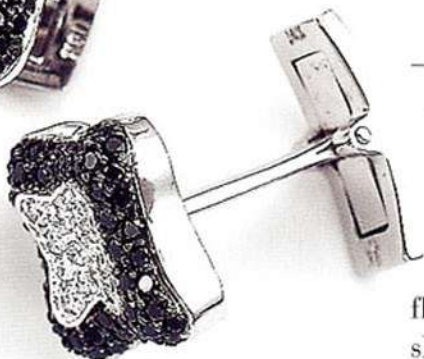
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worn anytime, by anyone. Consider the iconic image of Marlene Dietrich in a man-style suit, fedora slanted over one eye, cigarette swirling smoke and a pair of Van Cleef & Arpels cufflinks. But a woman doesn't need to wear a man-style suit to wear cufflinks. Imagine cufflinks on a fitted organdy long-sleeve shirt paired with a tailored skirt — enticingly feminine.

Cufflink styles are as varied as their wearers. Basic styles are gold, silver and two-toned metal. These metals can be enameled or jewel-set. Simple flat metal plaques or gem intaglios with an engraved family crest or monogram were traditionally passed from father to child, linking past with future.

Cufflinks can be a visual way of linking you with your hobbies, sense of humor or profession. One can creatively collect by profession. A physician could have cufflink motifs of a bone, the caduceus symbol, a heart for a cardiologist, a baby for a pediatrician or storks for obstetricians. Musicians might like musical notes or an instrument. Men collect for themselves; women collect for their men and for themselves!

Animal motifs can be worn to show an affinity for a particular animal. Elephants can symbolize one's political affiliation, a trip to East Africa, a lucky person or maybe just a love of elephants and the design! Cufflinks can be keepsakes of a treasured time, such as crab cufflinks purchased during a vacation at a sea resort. A bird motif might suggest a wearer with a high, soaring imagination or drive. Sports enthusiasts can very easily select sports motifs such as golf, equestrian, fishing, sailing or baseball. Some vintage cufflinks have

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actual fishing flies tied under crystal cabochons.

Vintage cufflinks on their own are open to tremendous opportunities for wear and collecting. They can be elaborate showpieces of techniques, materials and skills of a less industrialized era or they can be fun and inexpensive, often made out of metal plates or silver with delightful colored enamel patterns.

Cufflinks can also be a showplace for a gem collection. While women certainly love jeweled cufflinks, they have more opportunities to wear jewelry as rings, earrings and necklaces. Men are often extremely intrigued by gems, cufflinks being one of the few ways they can wear them. Overt rebels put a twist on the socially acceptable idea and look for links that are large, opulently designed or outrageous. Men and women can wear their cufflinks in untraditional ways, such as in their jacket's lapel.

Best of all, cufflinks link lovers. In earlier times, it was traditional for the groom to be gifted with a pair of "wedding portrait" cufflinks joining painted portraits of himself and his wife. Today it's a tender touch to engrave a message on the cufflinks' back side, which also tells future generations about the recipients' great love. Before she was betrothed, Wallis Simpson gave Edward, Prince of Wales, a pair of diamond cufflinks engraved "Hold Tight," referring to the immense pressure behind his decision to renounce his throne for a life with her.

Designing cufflinks is an engaging, creative challenge. The shirt cuff's hole imparts a size limitation, they must be easy to use, they must sit balanced on the cuff, and the front and back should relate to each other. Ornamental, sometimes sentimental, cufflinks link the past with the future. ♦



Christoph Krahenmann



Brixton & Gill



Asprey