

GO BIG
DAZZLE

Jewellery box

"Any man can throw on a bracelet," says painter Christopher Estridge



I wasn't from his mother's jewellery box that painter Christopher Estridge developed his taste for things sparkly. "She had a couple of nice, understated pieces," says Estridge. "But my love for jewellery came from watching movie stars like Marlene Dietrich, Lana Turner, Rosalind Russell and Liz Taylor: Eve Arden always had great jewellery, even when she was playing a secretary."

The Bronx native moved to Toronto in 1992 with his partner John Bailey (CEO of Famous Players Canada). Estridge's abstract paintings have shown at numerous US galleries and can be seen at Toronto's Trias Gallery.

Collecting jewellery — bracelets, in particular — is just one of Estridge's many passions; he also collects art, shoes and clothes of all sorts. "Those aren't collections," he protests. "That's just my closet, that's what I wear."

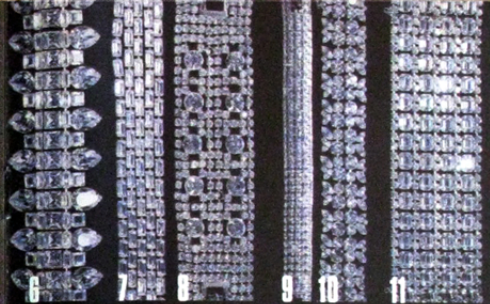
Nonetheless, the Royal Ontario Museum recently accepted a few of his outfits for its collection.

Except for maybe the giant topaz ring formerly owned by Eartha Kitt and his father's dog tags, Estridge is unsentimental about jewellery. Over the years he's received bequests from friends; he either gives the pieces away or melts them down to be refashioned. "How do you think the Duchess Of Windsor kept up-to-date? She'd have her jewellery redesigned every decade."

"Jewellery is no good if it sits in a box and never gets worn. And if it's not my taste, I'm not wearing it."

Though he has a number of favourite designers, Estridge says he buys jewellery "because I think it's a nice piece, not because there's a name behind it."

Photographs by Paula Wilson. In conversation with GB.



Here's a small sample of Estridge's fave bracelets.

1 Woven silver by John Hardy (his Balinese-inspired designs are available at Birk's)

2 Old ivory bracelet remodeled with silver and two citreens by James Morton at Metamorphosis in Toronto

3 Panther heads by Ciner (known for its good knock-offs, the US firm switched from precious to costume jewellery in the 1950s)

4 Silver and blue topaz by John Monteau of Philadelphia

5 Gold Givenchy cuff from the 1960s

6 Robert Sorrell (based out of New York, his designs are featured by Thierry Mugler in Paris, in various Broadway shows and in the movie *To Wong Foo*)

7 Sorrell

8 Unsigned

9 Kenneth Jay Lane (operates out of New York and London, also designed jewellery for Avon)

10 Sherman (Estridge has about 10 different coloured versions of this bracelet by the celebrated Canadian designer)

11 Unsigned

12 Unsigned

13 Sherman

14 Hattie Carnegie (Vienna-born US fashion designer who made jewellery to augment her clothing; she revolutionized women's sportswear in the 1940s to '50s)

15 Elsa Schiaparelli (Italian-born French fashion designer famous for, among other things, inventing shocking pink)

16 Unsigned, what Estridge calls '60s peppermint lounge

