

'On bad days, I wore carnivorous animals'

My favourite pieces Madeleine Albright signalled the political mood with the help of her symbolic brooches. As told to *Kate Youde*

When I arrived at the UN as US ambassador in February 1993, it was after the first Gulf war. The ceasefire had been translated into a series of sanctions resolutions. My job was to make sure the resolutions stayed [in place], which meant that I was instructed to say all kinds of things about [the then president of Iraq] Saddam Hussein.

A poem appeared in the papers in Baghdad comparing me to many things but, among them, "an unparalleled serpent." So I decided to wear an antique snake brooch (*far right, bottom*) when I talked about Iraq. Some camera zoomed in, and the press asked, "Why are you wearing that snake brooch?" I said, "Because Saddam Hussein compared me to an unparalleled serpent."

I thought, well, this is fun, so I went out and bought a lot of costume jewellery – most of my things are costume – to depict what I thought was going to happen on any given day in the UN Security Council. On good days, I wore flowers, butterflies and balloons, and on bad days, horrible insects and carnivorous animals.

I was the only woman on the Security Council at the time. The ambassadors noticed, and they asked, "Why are you wearing..." whatever brooch President [George] Bush had already said "Read my lips: no new taxes," so I just said "Read my pins." I have two brooches that are my favourites and they are a symbol that inanimate objects can have great emotional connections.

I owned a round ceramic heart (*far right, top*) that my daughter, Katie,

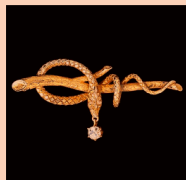
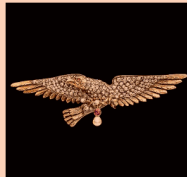


made for me and that I have always worn on Valentine's day. My daughter is 46 years old. She said, "Mom, you have to tell people I made the pin when I was five."

Another I call my Katrina brooch (*right, bottom*). I was in New Orleans about a year after Katrina, the [2005] hurricane. A young man came over and said, "My father is a veteran and he earned two Purple Hearts [US

military medals]" This young man opened a box and there was a beautiful brooch with two amethysts and some diamonds. He said: "This is the brooch my father gave to my mother but she died as a result of Katrina and we want you to have the brooch."

I said: "I can't possibly accept," but they said: "No, our mother loved you and she would want this to happen." I went to a shop I like, Tiny Jewel



Box [in Washington DC], and they showed me an eagle brooch (*above, top left*) with spread wings and diamonds. It was really pricey, I thought, "There's no way I'll get this brooch."

Nobody believed that a woman could become secretary of state, so I thought to myself, "On the off-chance, I will buy that brooch." But I really did not think I would be. When I was named secretary of

state, I bought the brooch. I decided that I would wear it when being sworn in. I was swearing with one hand on the bible and one hand up and I look down and this pin is just flapping because I had not fastened it properly.

I thought: "I'm going to screw this up, the pin will fall on the bible". Because it was an antique brooch, I had not fastened it right. So, after all that, during the swearing in you can't see the eagle.

I got a brooch [as a gift from Leah Rabin, the widow of Yitzhak Rabin, who had been the [Israeli] prime minister and somebody that I had known when he was ambassador to the US. She gave me a Cécile et Jeanne brooch (*copy worn in main picture*), a peace dove, and I wore it whenever I gave a speech on the Middle East.

I arrived in Jerusalem and there was a necklace of doves in the hotel room with a note that said something like, "It takes more than one dove to make peace in the Middle East." I have a copy of that brooch and I wore it when Shimon Peres was given the Congressional Gold Medal [in June]. I'm known for brooches. When I don't wear a brooch, which I don't when I exercise or go shopping, or when I'm on an airplane because it's too complicated taking everything off, people ask, "Why aren't you wearing a brooch?"

*Madeleine Albright was the 64th and first female US secretary of state. Her travelling exhibition of brooches, *Read My Pins: the Madeleine Albright collection*, is at Franklin D Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in New York until November 2.

Foo's gold leads this groovy 1960s revival

Modernist designs from the mid 20th-century are the new saleroom stars, writes *Helen Barrett*

As a rule, fine jewelers avoid "foo's gold", and not only that, but its name is unflattering to the wearer.

Pyrite is often next to valence. What is more, it is a brassy coloured material, formed of jagged, cuboid crystals. But pyrite's awkward forms and low value did not stop an abstract-style 1967 gold evening watch with a pyrite hinged face cover by John Donald, the British designer, fetching more than £2,000 at auction at Bonhams in London last year.

Modernist jewelers, such as Mr Donald, working in the 1960s and 1970s were not interested in rules, nor in persisting with demure designs of previous decades. They were preoccupied with abstraction, texture and scale.

He and his UK contemporaries such as David Thomas and Andrew Grima, and Scandinavian and US counterparts such as Georg Jensen and Pierre Sterlé, sought to subvert jewellery design in the early 1960s.

"We had just come through a long period of austerity," says Mr Donald, who continues to work as a jeweller in London.

"From a designer's point of view, we could do anything we liked in the 1960s. People were looking for different jewellery."

In a move away from the "boring" materials used by his predecessors, he looked for pyrite. The material was typical of the playful and counter-intuitive approach at the time. "I struck out into using geometric shapes and pyrite fitted perfectly. They formed into square rods, and

it matched all that was happening in fashion." Many collectors have overlooked work from this period for decades, experts say, and those designers' uncompromising approach might partly explain why.

But dealers and auctioneers are noting a resurgence of interest in modernist designs. A highly geometric, 1970 white gold and aquamarine pyramid watch by Grima was sold by Bonhams this spring for £18,750, more than £10,000 over its estimated value. A gold and diamond ring and earrings suite also by Grima and designed to resemble a pile

of logs, fetched £15,000 – more than £11,000 higher than the estimate.

Modernist jewellery is sought by "private collectors who have grown up with that modern mindset. They don't want pearls on double clips," says James Nicholson, international head of jewellery, silver and watches at Drewatts & Bloomsbury Auctions.

The change, he says, can be explained in part by a generational cycle. Estate collections of those who bought pieces directly from the designers' studios are coming up for auction.

"It is certainly the turn of jewelers from the 1960s and 1970s, the products of the art school movement with postwar ideas," says Mr Nicholson, who had sold an

abstract amethyst and gold ring by Grima in July for £2,356 – double its pre-sale estimated value. "We're finding more of it on the market, so there's more exposure."

In the 1960s and 1970s, leading jewellery houses copied the modernists' style to strong effect, says David Bennett, chairman of Sotheby's jewellery department, Europe and the Middle East. "Grima in particular had a huge effect on a lot of European jewellery."

The appeal for women then and now, says Daniela Mascetti, Sotheby's international jewellery specialist, is accessibility.

"They are recognisable because they were on the border between costume and real. Women feel more comfortable wearing them than a diamond necklace."

Sotheby's auctioned a pair of 1960s spuntle-shaped gold ear clips by Cartier in July for £6,500, and an abstract 1970s gold ladies' belt, also by Cartier for £8,750.

Jacques Gray, creative director of Grastliver, a dealer specialising in rare modernist Scandinavian jewellery, says finding pieces of high quality is increasingly difficult as competition increases. "Ten years ago the 1960s were hopelessly out of fashion. But now, the people that like it are wealthy [and] from all over the world."

David Chu, chief executive of Georg Jensen, says designers at the Danish company draw inspiration from its modernist roots. He points out that Georg Jensen jewellery is today manufactured in Thailand with the same tools and with materials from the same suppliers the company used in the 1960s.

Andrew Grima died in 2007, but the Grima brand and atelier continue in London under the stewardship of his wife and daughter.

Joy Grima says her late husband's work is worn by women who enjoy sculpture as much as jewellery, and "who have reached a certain point. They have enough big diamonds." Today's Grima, she says, tries to stay loyal to the design principles of the original pieces.

How does she feel about the fresh interest? "More happy than surprised," she says. "I always had huge faith [in his work]."

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