

# JEWELLERY FOCUS

## POLITICAL JEWELLERY

Designer Mahtab Hanna on the emerging  
jewellery segment



#### Emily Newman

Emily Newman is the head designer at Lark & Berry. She trained at the Birmingham School of Jewellery and has won several awards after working in the trade for over 15 years.



#### Laura Lambert

Laura Lambert is the founder of ethical precious gemstones experts Fenton & Co. The brand aims to bring more transparency and accountability to the jewellery industry.



#### Shaun Bell

Shaun Bell is the managing director of Joshua James Jewellery. He opened the group's flagship store in 2009, and named the business after his firstborn son, with the goal of creating a family values brand.



#### Dr Mahtab Hanna

Designer and scholar Dr Mahtab Hanna is an award-winning designer who holds an MA from the Royal College of Art and a PhD from Central Saint Martins, all in the field of jewellery.

## Making a statement



**B**y the time you are reading this we will likely already know who will be occupying the most powerful seat in the world inside the Oval Office for the next four years. No matter what side of the political fence you find yourself on, the events of 2020 show that the world we live in is only becoming increasingly political.

In this issue, Jewellery Focus sits down with designer and scholar Dr Mahtab Hanna to hear about how this has blown over to the jewellery industry and the creation of its very own segment. Turn to page 26 to find out more.

Also in the issue, founded by HRH The Prince of Wales, we delve deeper into the work of Turquoise Mountain, a foundation that is striving to promote tradition, culture and heritage through traditional crafts. On page 22, we take a look at its all-new Afghan collection and explore the processes behind its talented artisans' latest creations.

Inspired by the farthest reaches of space, on page 14 Emily Newman from Lark and Berry details her Supernova Necklace which comprises of 500 trillion and baguette cultured diamonds with a 64.5 total carat count weight that was forged from Diamond Foundry's 100% carbon neutral solar and hydro powered tech.

On page 15, we hear about the next 'space race' when Mark Kaufmann of Watch Repair Piccadilly explores the developments of space mining and what the potential consequences of this may have on the diamond industry and the jewellery industry on the whole.

And finally on page 19, marketing strategist Blessing Adedoyin explains why in a crowded and confused post-Covid marketplace, customers need honest communications that show an in-depth understanding of the current climate.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

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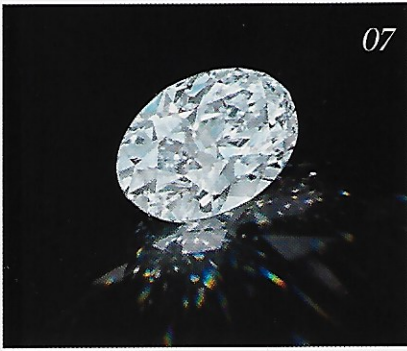
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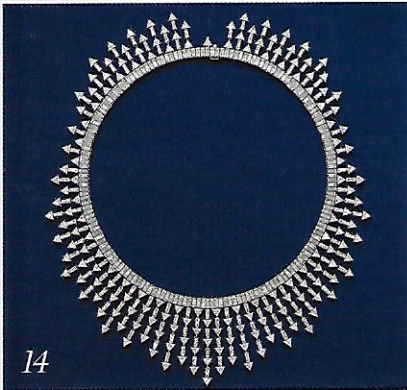
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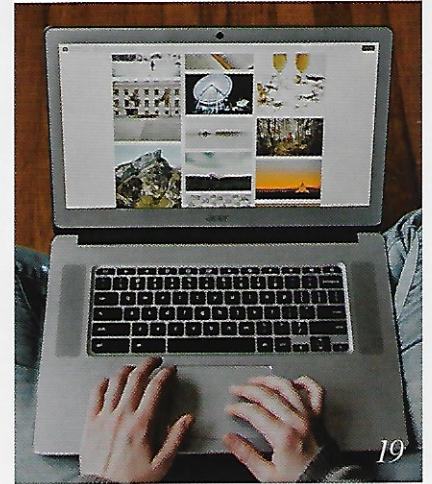
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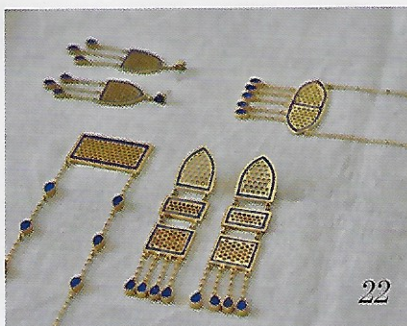
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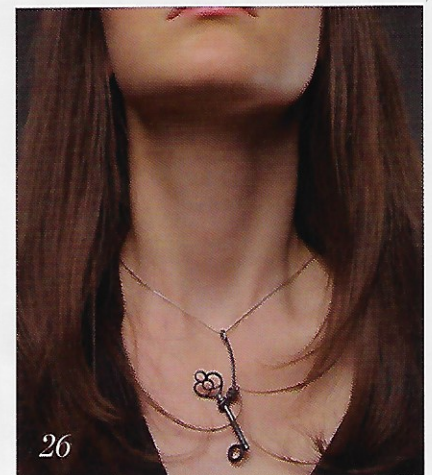
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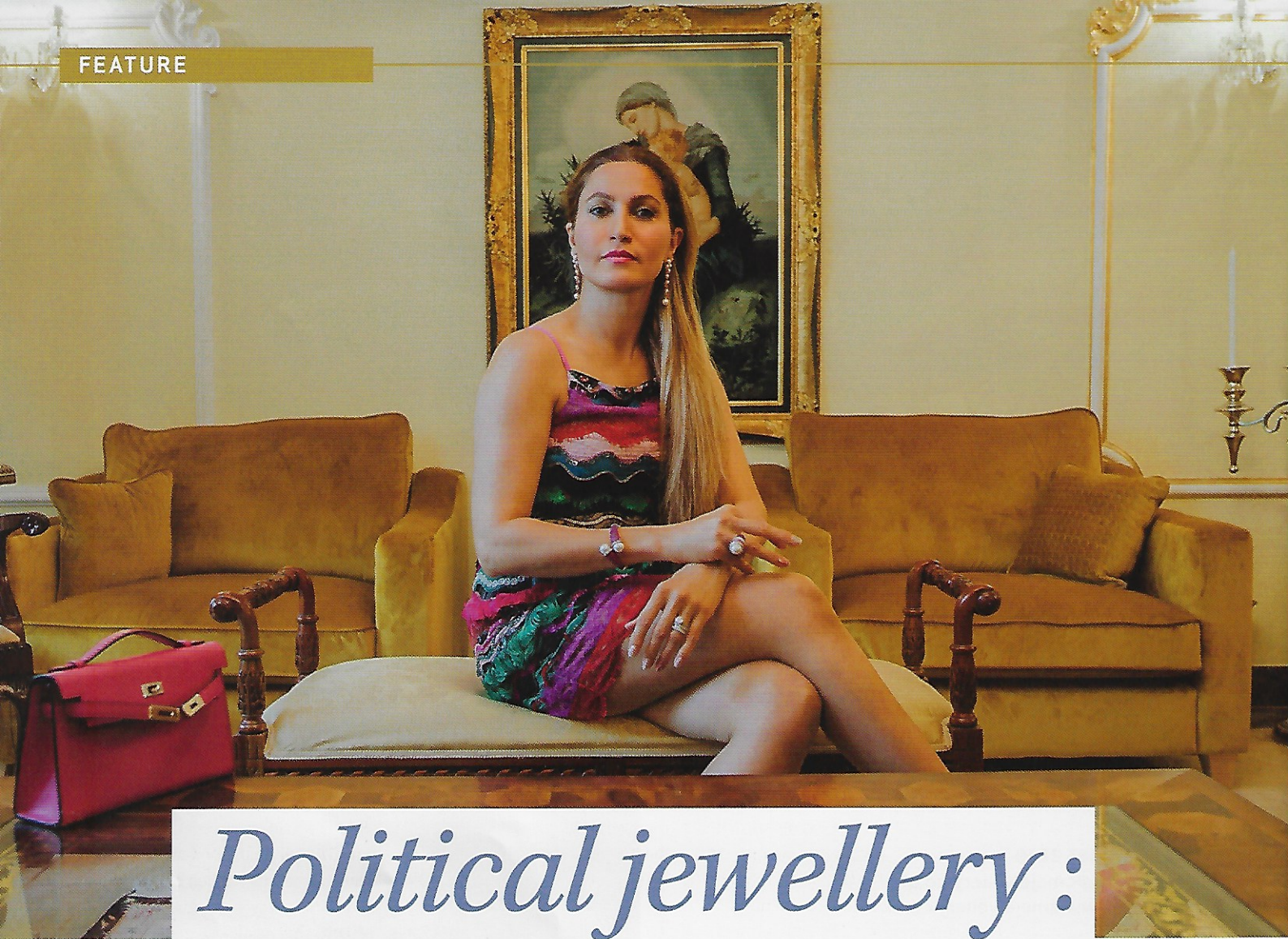
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## *Political jewellery:*

# IN A POLITICAL WORLD

With a world that appears to be increasingly political and with arguably the biggest presidential election in American history just around the corner, Jewellery Focus sits down with designer and scholar **Dr Mahtab Hanna** to hear about how this has impacted the jewellery industry and led to the creation of its very own segment.

### **Can you tell me a little about your history in relation to the jewellery industry?**

You could say I joined 'the industry' when I was just a few years old and used to draw incessantly and come up with my own designs. I even remember that sometimes I used to put a thread through the paper and wear it as if it was an object of jewellery.

I accumulated so many drawings and designs throughout those years that jewellery was effectively a part of my innate character, in everything I saw and wore. This passion led me to undertake twelve years of deep studies and design exploration in jewellery and metalwork. I gained a Diploma in Fine Art from

▲ Every segment of the arts can communicate politics, says Dr Hanna

the Hampstead School of Art, followed by a BA from Sir John Cass, leading to a Post-Graduate certificate from The Goldsmiths' Centre, an MA from the Royal College of Art and a PhD from Central Saint Martins, all in the field of jewellery.

This journey has allowed me the privilege of receiving several awards, meeting incredible visionaries and learning from master jewellers.

### **What is political jewellery and how did it become its own segment of the industry?**

Political jewellery is jewellery that has a role as a form of political messaging. It is jewellery as a response to political

events and how it can be harnessed to address social and political issues.

This is a new segment of jewellery that has been created through the language of protest and can be utilised as a political tool. This can be achieved through both contemporary and fine jewellery, there is no distinction between the materials used and the cost. Jewellery while primarily is an object of adornment, it does within itself hold the ability of language and expression, it can be a form of communication through which messages can be relayed.

Every segment of the arts can communicate politics, but jewellery as part of the arts has not been pragmatically engaged with politics in

the same way as other arts have been. This exploration is key as every artist should be able to act as a political messenger through their creativity and creations.

During this 'post-truth' and 'post political' world we must be able to not only write articles but be able to express our innermost political thoughts through creativity, be that as individuals or as a group.

There have been many thousands of books written, many many thousands of blogs filling the information superhighways, all about racism (and anti-racism), war and its anti, the same for feminism. However, the use of jewellery in this political context has been a mere handful.

### Who is the average consumer of political jewellery?

There can be seen to be a cultural, educational, and psychological barrier in some ways to the creation of an "average" or "typical" consumer of political jewellery. There is a reluctance, even fear sometimes, in outwardly expressing a political view that may lead to being judged or even labelled as one thing or another. What one person sees as a statement of anti-racism; another will see as a traitor to tradition.

So currently the majority of political pieces are consumed by collectors, galleries, and museums.

### Is this a fast-growing segment of the jewellery industry?

Judging by the level of enquiries and interest I am receiving, for sure. This is a rapidly growing segment, given

\*  
***"Political art and jewellery must be regarded as a tool for freedom of speech and freedom of views. Every member of humanity has that entitlement."***

DR MAHTAB HANNA  
 \*

we are living through not only surreal times, but times that have no precedent. This makes jewellery both a trailblazer industry, but also a retrospective looking jury of what is and was.

Political jewellery is all about engagement and communication, be it on a personal level or as part of a group. It can be as simple as a universally recognised symbol, such as the Poppy, or the use of a twisted textile in red for the AIDS movement.

### Why do you believe this is the case?

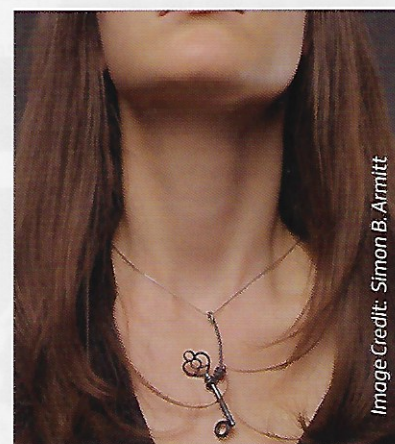
Time has been compressed. If we see the effect and speed of academia upon the business world, upon the technological world, we see an enormous transfer of information. Add to this the gargantuan amount of instant news, analysis and depth, and we are led to feel we live in a society that is constantly developing and as such we are also looking for ways to express ourselves in response.

### Is the demand for political jewellery greater abroad than it is in the UK?

There is a difference between an open democracy and a restricted country. The expression of art in political jewellery means people have a greater understanding of politics than the past and leads to protestation and agreement through the use of jewellery.

The politics of America lends itself naturally and organically to both mainstream and extreme forms of political opinions. This fuels creativity and provides the wide outlet for political jewellery to be commercialised compared to, for example, Europe.

Political jewellery is all about engagement and communication



However, in my view, wherever politics is, means political jewellery can be.

### Do brands and jewellers need to be careful of what messages they choose and how it may impact their reputation?

This is a sad consideration, regrettably. An artist should not have to consider placing a ceiling on their creativity, to not share their views or express themselves artistically because of any resources or threats. For example, should a museum have to be forced to consider whether they should showcase a political artist such as Ai Weiwei or not? All we are doing in that case is stifling not only the freedom of speech, but the speech of freedom.

Political art and jewellery must be regarded as a tool for freedom of speech and freedom of views. Every member of humanity has that entitlement.

### How do you see the demand for political jewellery and that segment of the industry developing over the next few years?

Following my solo exhibition in 2017, I received many expressions of interest from galleries, film companies and writers. This illustrates the growth in demand in this field in my own experience.

The greater the exposure political jewellery has, the higher the inclusion it will have as a growing segment of the market. It's my hope that more jewellers enter the political jewellery arena as this will accelerate the new jewellery movement.

