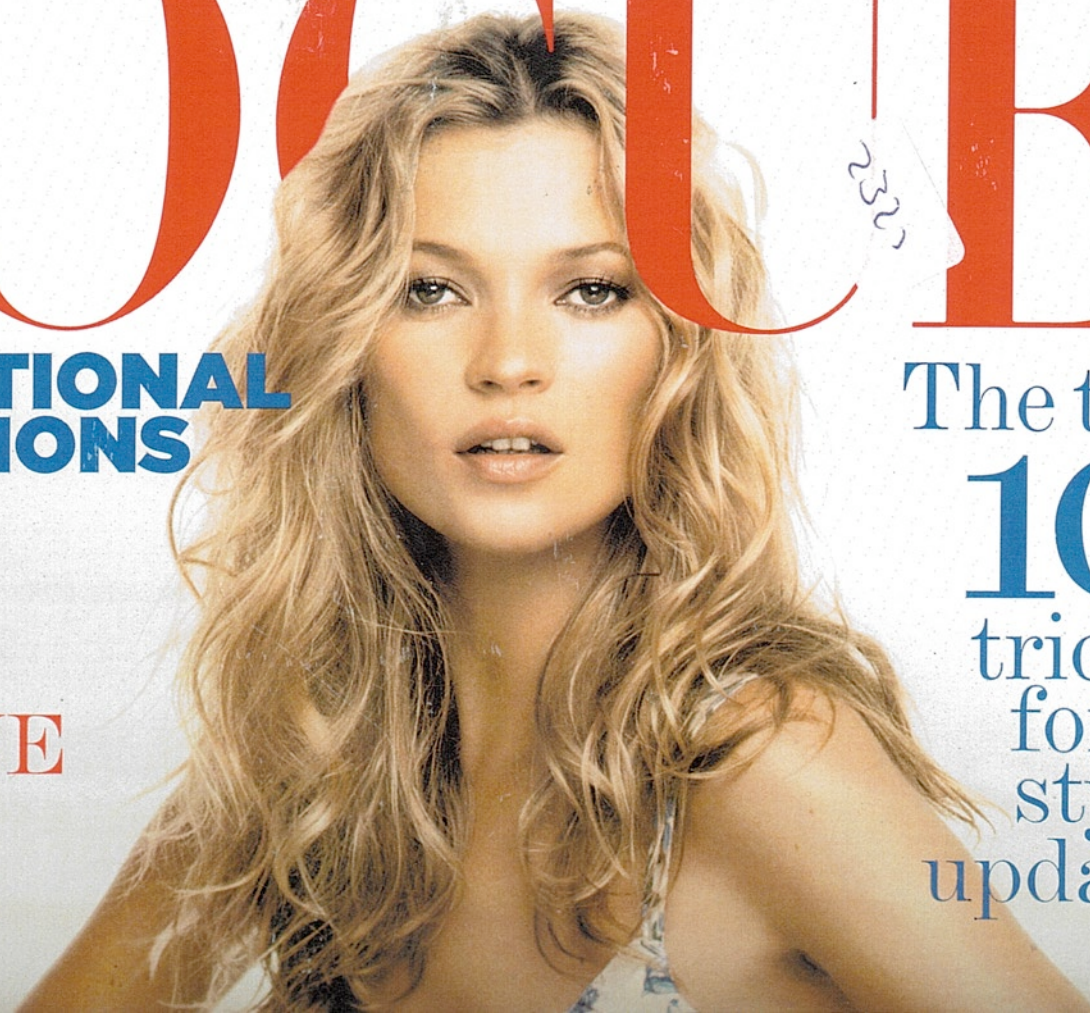


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Mellow yellow

Gold has moved on from its brash and bling days. Instead of chunky medallions and heavy chains, there are fluid shapes and supple weaves. Go with the flow, says Carol Woolton

We've been so entranced by candy-coloured gems, decorative beads and multi-faceted crystals recently that we've hardly noticed just how fabulous yellow-gold jewellery is looking these days. Shrugging off its Eighties image of chunky medallions and Nineties vibe of hip-hop chains once and for all, gold has a new style: it's all about sculptural, textured pieces, some with the flexibility of fabric. Because this precious metal has been worked in new ways, it can also be made to achieve a more subtle sheen, transforming it into a positively glittering material.

Traditionally, gold has been loaded with references to luxury and antiquity, but these new pieces – for example Boucheron's gold mesh necklace, which has been spotted on Nicole Kidman – are light and delicate, allowing you to wrap yourself in their golden strands. "You don't want a big, shiny gold necklace – it stands out too much," says goldsmith Roger Doyle. "You need a subtler look with some texture and contrast to give it a little life." Doyle engraves leaf shapes for chokers and earrings with such a delicate hand that every vein detail is visible.

Another talented goldsmith, Catherine Martin, has adapted a silk-weaving technique for use with ultra-fine gold and platinum wire. Her necklaces shimmer from silver to yellow and back again as you move.

Elsa Peretti, the mistress of ergonomic jewellery design, has created golden mesh scarves and earrings for Tiffany inspired by the evening accessories of the Twenties. These pieces feel soft against the skin, and drape on the body as seductively as silk.

"I make necklaces in the old-fashioned way using 20 carat gold," says gold weaver Lucie Heskett-Brem, "because I like the colour and weight, and it gives a good flexibility to my pieces." At her recent show for Bentley & Skinner in Bond Street, she displayed large, woven spider-web-fine scarves made from gold that lightly dusted the models' shoulders. To illustrate quite how delicate these pieces can be, jeweller Loekie Heintzberger weaves a 7ft chain from just one gram of gold. "She makes gold as pliable as wool," says Francis Raeymaekers of The Metal Gallery, where Heintzberger's pieces are sold.

Unlike Brem and Heintzberger, most jewellers are taking advantage of new technologies and machine techniques that enable them to make gold pieces as supple and slender as the ribbons that tie the box in

which they are packaged. Of course, the Italians have a long history of beautifully textured gold in the famed work of Buccellati, which is due to open its first store in London this year, but new company Calgaro has initiated a process of working fine gold threads and silver mixed with silk, which so resembles a fabric that it's described as "jewel-cloth".

If you hanker after a golden oldie, you can still wear substantial, strong-shaped gold pieces – just make sure they have some movement. The Nougat ring by Victoire de Castellane for Dior, inspired by the French confection, has been created to imitate the rippling effect of molten gold. And in the spirit of the moment, Cartier has revived its three-coloured twisted gold Trinity design.

Also convinced of the trend is Chopard. "Yellow gold is definitely making a comeback," says the company's Caroline Gruosi-Scheufele. The brand's innovative Golden Diamonds, used in necklaces, pendants and earrings, are nuggets of gold cut into pear, cushion, heart or baguette shapes. Perhaps yellow-gold diamonds are forever, too...

Above, clockwise from bottom left, necklace with diamonds, £1,600, from Jarretiere; fringed ring, £3,000, at Solange Azagury-Partridge; tube bracelet, £1,080, at Robinson Pelham; woven-bead necklace, by Loekie Heintzberger, £2,400, at The Metal Gallery; bracelet, from £630, at Chaumet; Fluid Gold necklace, £5,250, at H Stern; sapphire and diamond ring, £7,250, at Buccellati, Rome; hand web, by Lucie Heskett-Brem, £1,500, at Bentley & Skinner; ring, £700, at Dior Fine Jewellery Boutique; hoop earrings, £1,325, at Cartier; ring, £1,515, at Chopard; mesh earrings, by Elsa Peretti, £845, at Tiffany