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Jewellery with craft at its heart

Exquisite handmade jewellery that relies on extreme craft skills is becoming as sought-after as the rarest gemstones themselves – and these extraordinary pieces are bringing their maker and wearer closer together. Vivienne Becker reports

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Nadia Morgenthaler, based in Geneva, believes that today's most discerning jewellery clients are actively seeking a strong, personal artistic expression conveyed through uncompromising craftsmanship. This idea of a powerful individual identity captured in a jewel, she says, is eroding the boundary between art and craft. "The creative identity of the designer-jeweller gives a soul to the creations," she says. She also feels that today's unlimited access to images nurtures this appetite for uncovering something utterly, uniquely astonishing. A highly trained, experienced artisan herself, Morgenthaler worked for years in a Geneva high-jewellery atelier, making pieces for the world's leading houses, before taking over the workshop in 2009. She launched her own collection in 2013. Today, her jewels are characterised by a quiet yet awe-inspiring refinement of workmanship, an intricacy that, she says, enables her to create fluid, light, three-dimensional structures – jewels in the round, particularly earrings (price on request), her speciality, that are contemporary in form yet have a flavour of antiquity. She works with natural pearls, stringing them into draped, graduated loops, with echoes of 18th-century aristocratic grandeur, inside which you might find a hanging pink tourmaline – all meticulously set in blackened silver. Technical perfection, she explains, is at the service of concept and design, the two inseparable. "Working without compromise, designing, crafting, thinking of every minute detail, without commercial limitations – this is a vital part of the process."

The studio is not just the centre of her world, it is an energising force, the source of her creativity, and the springboard for the stories she shares through her work. She holds intimate events, setting the jewels, in bell jars, on the workbenches, and inviting clients to revel in the journey of transformation, where imagination is turned into matter, where craft is transformed into art.

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