

## Three Innovative Jewelers Who are Going for Gold



Left to right: Pendant by Andy Cooperman, earrings by Tura Sugden, earrings by Robin Cust

One of the first metals early humans used to create pieces of adornment, [gold](#) is a time-tested classic of jewelry making. With the price per ounce coming down, yellow metals taking the runways by storm, and its unmatched luster and resistance to tarnish, gold is the darling of the jeweler's bench. There are innumerable ways to incorporate the metal into a piece of jewelry. We sat down with three jewelers who are working with gold in innovative ways to get their take on the metal and what they love about working with it.

### Andy Cooperman, Metalsmith, Educator, Writer



Specializing in mixing gold with other metals and everyday objects to create richly detailed, unexpected pieces of jewelry, Andy Cooperman works out of a studio in Seattle, where he shares a creative community with like-minded metalsmiths and jewelers.

"I enjoy working with different tones of gold and how they contrast with darker tones of other materials, such as plastics and other substances," Andy says. "I like to use compositions of 18K gold, sterling, bronze, cremains and watch crystals, which have been used in commissioned projects such as [Reliquary Neckpiece](#). I also like that gold can be spot heated, which allows me to superheat a portion and break out that semi-molten area, leaving the rest relatively intact."

In addition to creating jewelry and lecturing around the country on his craft, Andy teaches seminars and workshops, helping students develop problem-solving skills that enhance their creativity. His work is on permanent collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and Central College in Pella, Iowa.

Gold is "a beautiful material aesthetically," Andy says. "I use 18K yellow, several 14K whites and 14K rose primarily. Gold is a pretty forgiving material. It is really sweet to forge and weld. It recycles nicely, and I reuse scrap all the time, melting and pouring new ingots from which I make rod, wire, and sheet."

Andy hand-fabricates nearly every element in his pieces, rarely relying on casting or other manufacturing processes. He often combines gold with sterling, bronze, diamonds and other gemstones, such as opal.

You can see more of Andy's work at [www.andycooperman.com](http://www.andycooperman.com).

### Tura Sugden, Contemporary Jewelry Designer

### Rio's Blog

Welcome to Rio's blog, a meeting place for those who make jewelry.

This little corner of the web is your opportunity to read about fellow jewelers, learn about your craft and become better at the business of selling jewelry. Come by often and see what's new.

Whether you're just starting out or are always on the prowl for a new idea or inspiration, we look forward to getting to know you!

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Tura Sugden's subtle, light-hearted designs emphasize gemstones and Old-World goldsmithing techniques. She is inspired by the changes in the seasons and the way light reflects in a piece of jewelry. With a bachelor's of fine arts in sculpture, Tura creates pieces that have a quiet balance to them. She works in recycled 18K gold and ethical diamonds, mixing in elements of rose gold, yellow gold and palladium white gold.

Each piece is hand-fabricated for its corresponding stone, with an emphasis on traditional goldsmithing skills and hand craftsmanship. Her hammered ring designs and unusual diamond settings give her collection a distinctive look. Tura debuted her eponymous line 2013 and is exhibiting in the 2016 Rising Star section of the Design Center at JCK, Las Vegas.

"My design philosophy is that the gold work in any piece of jewelry should be as important and beautiful as the stone and the design itself," says Tura, who enjoys the fluid, clean aesthetic of gold. She uses an old German blow-pipe method that gives her the heightened control and very fine flame that are necessary for her intricate designs.

You can see more of Tura's work at [www.turasugden.com](http://www.turasugden.com)

#### Robin Cust, Studio Jeweler



There is something that feels primal and otherworldly in the jewelry of Robin Cust. "To me, a successful piece of jewelry looks as if it could have been excavated from an ancient civilization," she writes.

Residing in Deer Isle, Maine, Robin earned a bachelor's degree in industrial technology from Appalachian State University before continuing her metalsmithing education with an apprenticeship with Ronald Hayes Pearson, who won the 1996 Gold Medal Award from the American Craft Council. Her highly regarded collections have appeared in the Smithsonian Craft Show, the Philadelphia Museum Show, the Washington Craft Show and the American Craft Council Shows.

Robin enjoys working with gold because of the metal's "seductive properties," the way it moves, the way it reflects light, and the impressions her tools leave upon it.

"My hand tools, often old and bearing flaws and blemishes, impart some of their own history and imperfection as they are employed in the making process," she says.

Robin's unorthodox pairing of materials feeds the elemental, raw power she strives for in her work. She seeks a balance between precious and non-precious materials, each of which provides a rich and exciting field of exploration.

"I like to think of myself as primarily linked to the ancient people who found this mysterious substance in their environment and were drawn in by its power as a gift of nature, long before it became a monetary concern," she says.

You can see more of Robin's work at [www.robincustjewelry.com](http://www.robincustjewelry.com).

Ready to start incorporating karat gold into your own work? [Browse](#) fabrication metals, casting grain and findings in a variety of alloys and styles.

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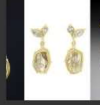
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