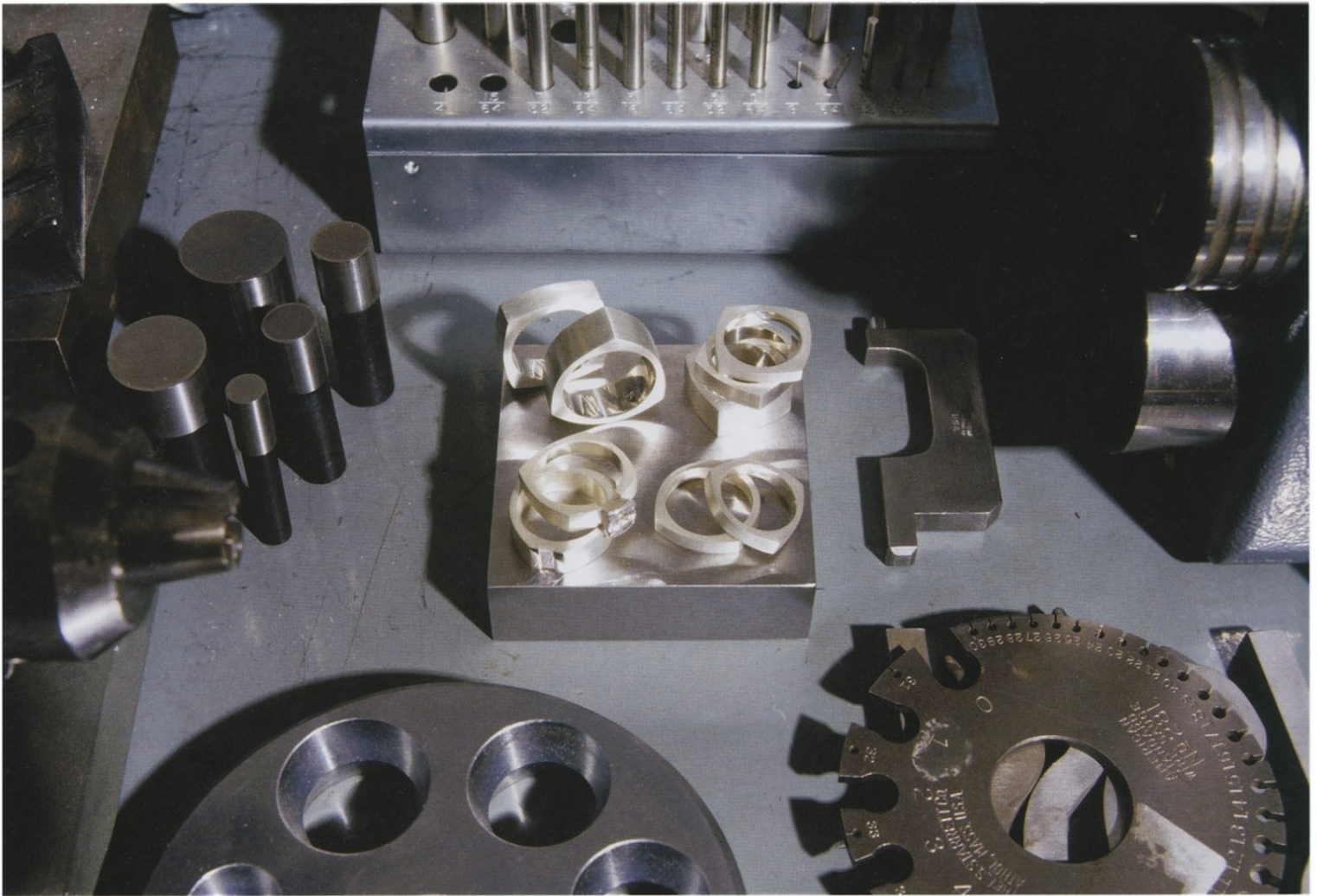


Gems You Can Live With

Karin Jacobson's diamond-free wedding and commitment bands





Photos: Cameron Wittig

Billed as the galaxy's most stylish superheroine in her comics-based Web site and promotional catalogue, jewelry designer Karin Jacobson crafts playful, splashy, futuristic baubles inspired by science fiction, comic-book imagery, and Japanese animation. Her new collection of commitment rings, exclusive to the Walker Shop, demonstrates the same sculptural elegance as her more whimsical pieces, but displays a more restrained attitude: "The wedding line is inspired by Scandinavian design—it's my heritage and I'm very partial to it—clean, crisp, tailored, and something you can live with every day."

These commitment bands, fashioned with palladium and the gemstone Moissanite, handily fulfill her mission to design modern, innovative, affordable jewelry. And her choice of socially responsible and ecologically sound materials reflects her commitment to sustainability for people and resources many years into the future. Jacobson thinks Moissanite (named for French Nobel Prize-winner Dr. Henri Moissan, who discovered the colorless mineral silicon carbide in 1893) is a good choice for this series, as "it's a high-quality gem that is very refractive (sparkly) and durable, but a lot less expensive than a diamond. And with Moissanite, there's no chance that you will be getting a 'conflict diamond,' nor does it incur the same environmental impact as a diamond mine."

When Jacobson does buy diamonds, she gets them from a dealer who handles only U.N. Certified Non-Conflict Diamonds. Blood diamonds or "conflict" diamonds are mined in war zones and sold, usually clandestinely, in order to finance an insurgent or invading army's efforts. The recently released film *Blood Diamond* caused some major ripples in the global gemstone industry, and to help counter fallout, the World Diamond Council spent about \$19.5 million on an awareness campaign that highlights the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), which was agreed upon in 2002 by

nations involved in the diamond trade (including the United States), in order to help ensure that conflict diamonds do not enter the world diamond trade. But three years after its establishment, the essentially self-enforced KPCS has not been able to fully monitor and end the international trade in conflict diamonds. "Nor does it legislate for good working conditions for miners or against environmental devastation," Jacobson says. "So while I have worked with diamonds and think that progress is being made in that area, I feel better about using a synthetic stone and am very happy to provide Moissanite as an ethical alternative to my clients."

Palladium belongs to the platinum family of metals and shares many of the same properties, including color, but at a fraction of the cost (platinum has skyrocketed to more than \$1,000 per ounce). "The other great thing about palladium is its newness in the U.S. market, which I think will create a buzz," she says. The downside is that this precious metal is mined in much the same way as platinum, so it's only slightly better for the planet. Jacobson wants to learn more about working with new materials such as recycled composites. "Maybe I could make wedding rings out of compacted, recycled cellulose—they might not last long enough for you to hand down to your grandkids, but at least you wouldn't be passing global warming and giant landfills on to them."

—Kathleen McLean, editor

Prices range from \$460–\$2,025. 612.375.7633 shop.walkerart.org All proceeds support the artistic and educational programs of the Walker Art Center. For more information about the artist, visit www.superkarin.com.