

# The Refined Elegance Of High Jewelry

An Interview with Martin Katz, Martin Katz, Ltd.

**EDITORS' NOTE** Renowned for his exquisite taste and an unparalleled eye for transforming stones into artistic creations, Martin Katz ([martinkatz.com](http://martinkatz.com)) founded his eponymous company in 1988. The company quickly gained international prominence with a clientele that includes Forbes 400 business leaders, U.S. Ambassadors, and other individuals of affluence with a collector's spirit. Katz's passion for gems has earned him wide acclaim for designing beautifully-crafted,



Martin Katz

couture-quality pieces inspired from his love of vintage jewelry. Each piece is one-of-a-kind or limited in production, signed, numbered, and made with meticulous attention to detail. His work has been auctioned at Christie's and Sotheby's with the hammer prices being significantly higher than the original price they sold for in his salon. Having been one of the first to lend jewels to stars on the Hollywood red carpet, he opened doors for the many others that do so today. Many of his spectacular pieces have adorned the covers of Vogue, W, Town & Country, People, Elle, and InStyle magazines. Katz also designed the Victoria's Secret \$5 million diamond bra in 2009, created jeweled sunglasses for Ray-Ban, a \$1 million perfume bottle for Donna Karan, and designed The Jewel Suite by Martin Katz, a 5,000-plus square foot, three-story penthouse suite at Lotte New York Palace hotel. Katz attended Indiana University, where he began selling jewelry on campus.

## Will you discuss your career journey?

My career began in an unplanned entrepreneurial way. While I was in college, I began selling puka shell necklaces and silver necklaces to the female student body. After graduating, I drove to California and ultimately took a position at a high-end jewelry store. There I became familiar with Art Deco, craftsmanship, and developed my eye.

After the stock market crash of 1987, I launched my own business in 1988. I quickly established a reputation as a high-end vintage jewelry dealer because I had a particular artistic eye for exceptional Art Deco finds – especially those signed by the legendary jewelry houses. In time, I found it increasingly difficult to find complementary pieces to build ensemble sets for my clients. That challenge motivated me to

design the styles and color combinations I sought in vintage jewelry. I had too much respect for original vintage jewelry to create a reproduction, so I was careful to design and build pieces that were clearly new but inspired by the old world with a sense of history.

1992 marked a milestone for the company, helping to create the brand. I became the first independent jeweler to bring high jewelry onto the modern Hollywood red carpet, beginning with Sharon Stone at the Academy Awards. That visibility introduced my work to a much broader audience and was followed by many memorable moments throughout my career, working with international figures and more than 500 celebrities, including Nicole Kidman, Kate Winslet, Jessie Buckley, Salma Hayek, Sterling K. Brown, Kylie Minogue, Kieran Culkin, Angela Bassett, Sandra Bullock, Gillian Anderson, Christina Ricci, and Zoë Kravitz, among many others.

In 2002, I launched my Beverly Hills boutique, which remained open for more than

20 years. Post-COVID, we evolved the brand into a private jewelry firm centered around the Penthouse atelier in the iconic Fred Hayman building, where I can work personally with collectors in a more intimate setting.

I remain independent and deeply involved in every aspect of the creative process. I think the common thread throughout my career has been following my instincts, remaining independent, and never compromising on the quality of the stones, design, or craftsmanship.

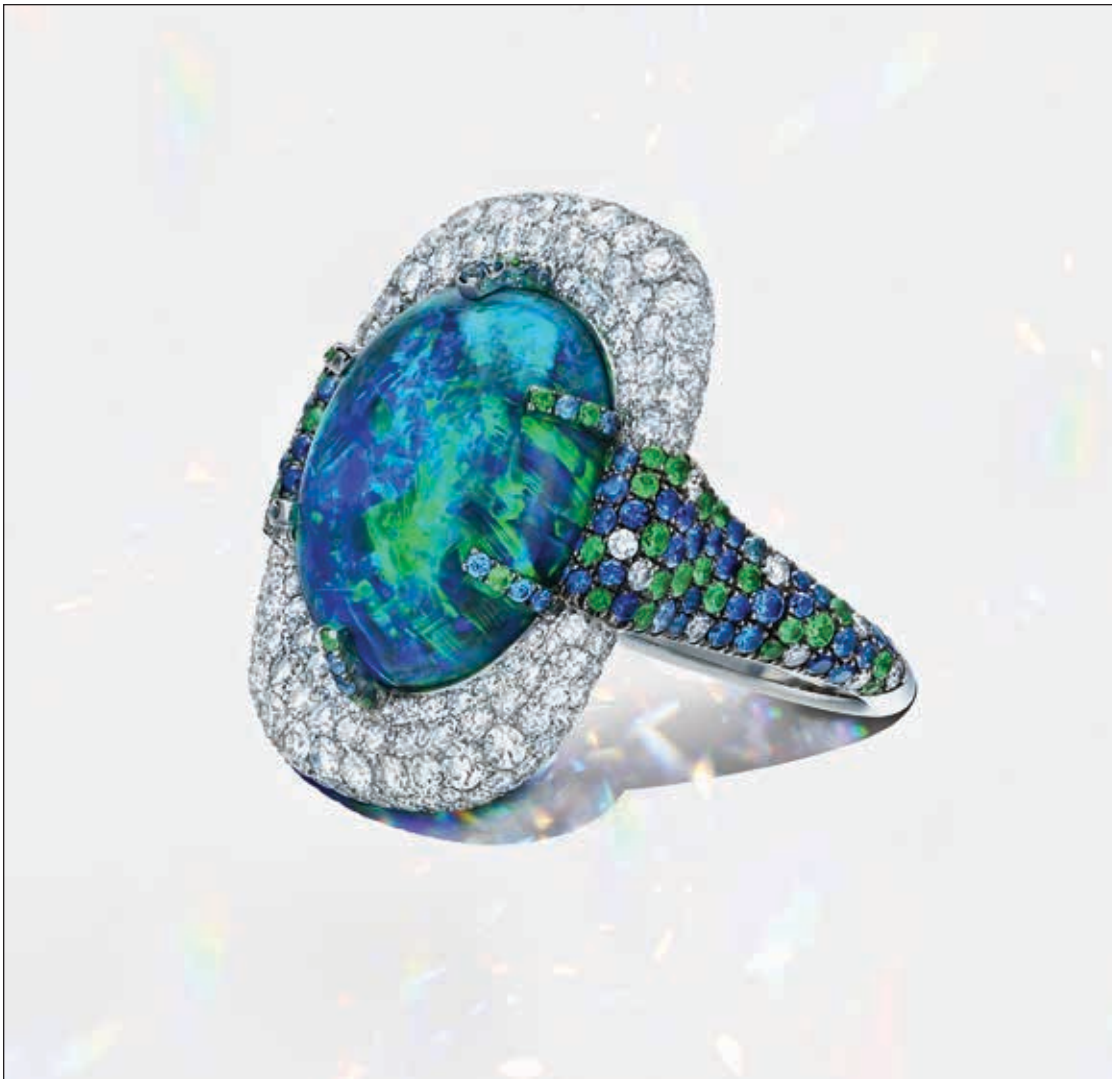
## Where did you develop your passion for jewelry?

I have childhood memories of visiting a jewelry store with my parents and sister at a very young age. I must have been all of 10 years old. I had never seen such splendor – one magnificent jewel after the next.

My passion really developed later, when I began working with vintage and Art Deco pieces and developing a taste for them. I had the privilege of working with some of the most beautiful pieces. I was particularly drawn to the geometry, the proportions, and the extraordinary level of artistry.



Martin Katz Penthouse Atelier in Beverly Hills



*Martin Katz creations (this page and following page)*

### **What have been the keys to the strength and leadership of the brand?**

Independence has been one of the greatest strengths of the brand. It has allowed me to maintain a very personal point of view rather than designing according to a corporate formula or commercial cycle. Over the years, my standards have remained the same: exceptional gemstones, original design, impeccable fabrication, and very personal relationships with our clients.

Throughout my career, our business has evolved, but those principles have not. Moving from a traditional Beverly Hills boutique into the private Penthouse Atelier was part of that evolution. It allows us to offer collectors a more intimate and highly personalized experience.

Lastly, trust, creative freedom, and an uncompromising dedication to excellence are essential. I would much rather pay too strong a price for the best there is than purchase something mediocre at a bargain. After the money is forgotten, quality remains. Quality and beauty remain to be appreciated. Mediocre doesn't get any better.

Whether I'm creating a jeweled perfume bottle, crafting couture eyewear, designing a hotel suite, a bronze and jeweled sculpture, or a tennis bracelet inspired by the Manhattan skyline, every piece or partnership must tell a compelling story and be executed with the precision of high jewelry.

### **What distinguishes a Martin Katz piece from other high-end jewelry?**

My design language is rooted in the refined elegance of vintage jewelry, with a lasting homage to the architectural formalism of Art Deco. Each creation is conceived for the modern woman and designed to feel individual and personal, intended to be collected and worn over time. Every Martin Katz jewel is meticulously crafted, often created as a singular unique work or in limited, signed and numbered editions. I focus carefully on refinement, artistic nuance, and mesmerizing gemstones, so each piece balances beauty with wearability, refinement revealed through thoughtful detail rather than overstatement.

There are also certain design elements that have become signatures of my work – the distinctive colorization of stones, ombré settings, intricate latticework, and recurring motifs that give each piece its own identity.

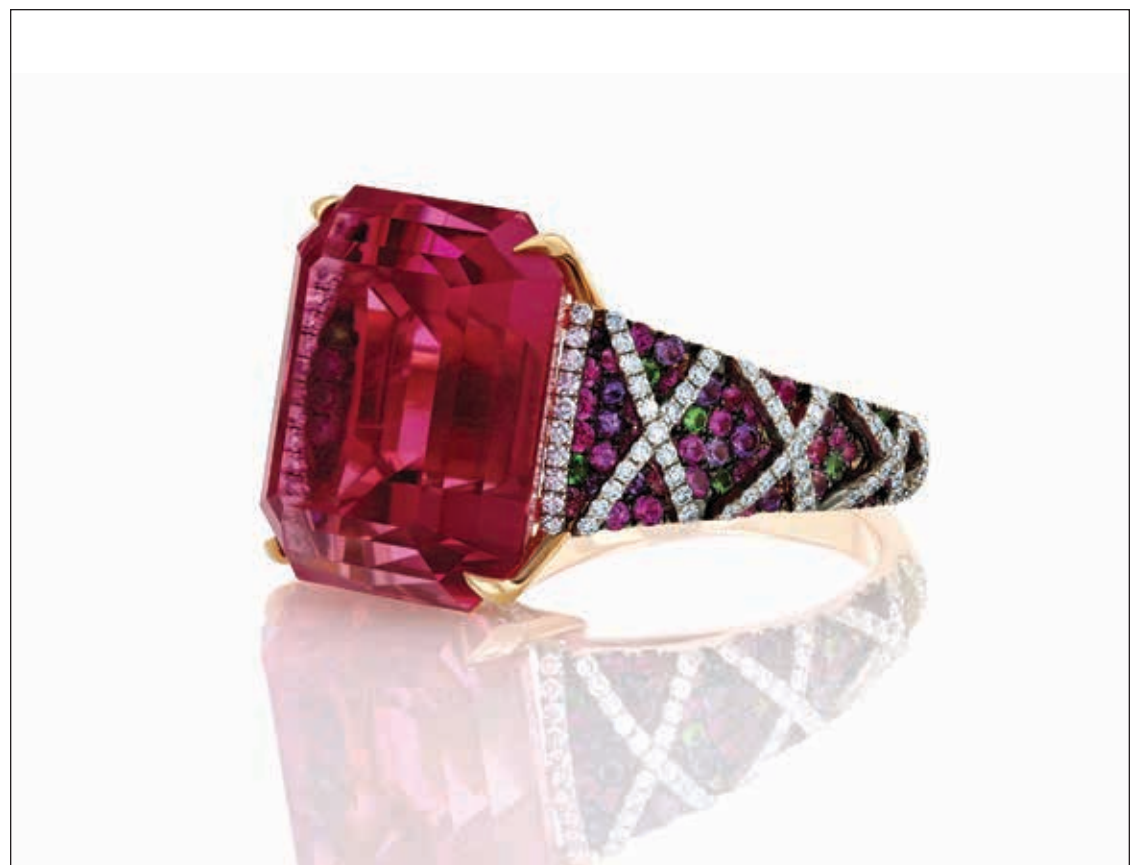
Ultimately, I want someone to recognize a Martin Katz jewel before they ever see the signature.

### **Will you highlight the collections?**

Most of our pieces are one-of-a-kind or created in extremely limited editions, and each is individually signed and numbered versus collections.

Collecting unique colored gemstones has always been a passion of mine, particularly Paraíba tourmalines, Colombian emeralds, sapphires, rubies, and rare colored diamonds. Paraíba has been especially compelling to me because of its almost Windex-blue color and extraordinary rarity.

Rather than designing traditional collections around a single theme, I often allow exceptional stones to inspire individual pieces.



On occasion, I have introduced a few limited collections, including the Bella Mia collection, inspired by my wife and focused on pink and white diamonds; the Dolce collection, featuring aquamarines and sapphires; as well as the Divine and Parasol collections.

Ultimately, whether it is a piece that is unique or part of a limited edition, I want each piece to feel distinctive, collectible, and unmistakably Martin Katz.

**Will you provide an overview of some of your collaborations?**

Throughout my career, I've had the privilege of extending my jewelry design into fashion, décor, sculpture, and beyond. Collaborations have included the Penthouse Martin Katz Jewel Suite at Lotte New York Palace, designed with my wife, Kelly; Victoria's Secret, for whom I created the \$5 million Black Diamond Fantasy Bra worn by Adriana Lima; DKNY, with a \$1 million jeweled perfume bottle that toured the world to launch the Golden Delicious fragrance; Ray-Ban jeweled sunglasses worn by Celine Dion on the red carpet; a jeweled Motorola StarTAC case; and a sculptural collaboration with Italian artist Andrea Roggi. In every case, the constant thread has been a shared respect for craftsmanship, creativity, and storytelling.

One of my most meaningful collaborations has been my long-standing relationship with Lotte New York Palace. Designing the Jewel Suite was a transformative experience – it allowed me to imagine an entire environment as a single, faceted jewel. The Art Deco-inspired interiors in rich jewel tones, the dramatic crystal chandelier, and the floating jewelry displays create the feeling of living inside a jewel box, surrounded by treasures. Sweeping views of Manhattan – best enjoyed from the outdoor veranda with its elevated jacuzzi spa – complete this immersive expression of the Martin Katz world. The suite was honored with the Gold Key Award for Excellence in Hospitality Design, and there is truly nothing else like it in New York.



**How do you balance timeless design with changing fashion trends?**

I am aware of fashion, but I don't design by following trends – I rather enjoy starting them. My starting point is always the stone, and the design has to honor that stone. My wife, Kelly, is very fashionable and, because of her discerning taste, she is also a constant source of inspiration for me. I value her eye immensely and often ask for her perspective on my designs. She enjoys the same taste as many of my collectors – her style is fashionably intuitive, and quite confident. Having that kind of partnership, both personally and creatively, is something I truly cherish, and I feel I am blessed to have her by my side.

Wearability is also very important to me. The way women and men wear jewelry changes over time, and I think jewelry should feel relevant to the person wearing it today. So, while the underlying design principles remain timeless, I may explore new proportions, new ways of layering pieces, or unexpected ways of wearing traditional jewelry.

The goal is never to make something fashionable for a moment. It is to create something that feels modern now and will still feel extraordinary decades from now.

**What is the process of creating a piece from an idea to the finished jewel?**

My creative process usually begins with an extraordinary stone. I look at its color, proportion, cut, rarity, and personality, and I begin imagining how the design can reveal what makes that particular stone so special.

I sometimes say that magnificent stones are like words I use to tell a beautiful story. The gemstone is the centerpiece of that story. Some gemstones require restraint. The design should never overwhelm an exceptional stone. Sometimes the greatest challenge is knowing exactly how much – or how little – to do.

From there, the idea develops into sketches and then into the engineering of the piece – how



the stone will be set, how the proportions will work, and ultimately how it will feel when worn. My artisans then bring that vision to life through their talent, craftsmanship, innovation, and years of learned experience, combined with the understanding we have developed from working together over time.

The finished jewel emerges refined and effortless.

**With all that you have accomplished, are you able to take moments to reflect on your impact?**

I probably don't stop to reflect on it as often as I should. However, there are certain moments that give you perspective. Looking back at the red carpet in the early 1990s, when neither independent designers nor international brands were represented in the way they are today, I do realize that I had a significant impact on evolving that landscape. Seeing my jewelry become such an important part of the red-carpet fashion conversation – and seeing independent designers have a place within it – is very meaningful to me.

More recently, being invited to Monaco for the inaugural Grand Prix de la Haute Joaillerie as the only independent American designer selected to attend among 11 of the world's most prestigious high jewelry maisons – including Boucheron, Dior, Bulgari, Chanel, Chopard, Louis Vuitton, and Tiffany & Co. – was another moment that made me stop and reflect. To have decades of my work and craftsmanship recognized alongside some of the world's great jewelry houses was deeply meaningful and rewarding.

But ultimately, I think about legacy through the jewelry itself. These pieces go into private collections; they mark important moments or milestones in people's lives. Knowing that something I created may continue telling its story long after it leaves my hands is probably the most rewarding reflection of all. ●