



Snake Charmer

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However, one reptile in particular has been around for centuries and still captivates the attention of many designers and jewelry lovers across the globe. Slippery and crawly by nature, real snakes may not be a woman's favorite pet, but when dipped in gold and studded with diamonds, they are sure to woo them quite effortlessly.

From the oldest story ever written around Mesopotamian mythology, where the serpent ate its own tail representing the renewal of life, to the Garden of Eden, where the serpent played a major role in the fall of Adam and Eve and was punished to crawl on his belly forever; connotations surrounding serpents can be found across history and mythology. Having played important roles in the religious and cultural life of ancient Egypt, Rome, Greece, Africa, India and even the Americas, the serpent today represents multiple beliefs, symbolizing protection, eternal love, rebirth, wisdom, revenge and even desire.

The influence of the serpent can be seen across the luxury sector from garments to jewelry and from accessories to even home decor. Europe by far takes the lead as renowned fashion houses and couture designers have repeatedly charmed the world with their interpretations of this coiled creature. The most noted references to snake jewelry is how Cleopatra adorned herself with gilded snakes from head to toe. Even, it became a worldwide trend when Prince Albert proposed to Queen Victoria



Damiani's Eden collection aspires to the design of the bracelet of the same name, winner of the Diamond International Award, the world jewelry Oscar. Shown here is the ring in burnished black gold with white, grey and black diamonds



Above, the iconic 'Serpent Bohème' by Boucheron. The collection was launched in 1968, but the snake motif has a long history with Boucheron itself, first seen back in 1885.

Opposite page: María Félix in Venice, 1959. The Mexican actress was a jewelry connoisseur and an ambassador for Cartier. Since her death, the iconic pieces she commissioned to the French house have been displayed as part of *The Art of Cartier* exhibitions and, in 2006, the debut of *La Doña de Cartier* collection paid tribute to the actress.



with an emerald-headed snake ring, symbolizing his eternal love for her. Followed by various naturalistic reinterpretations during the Art Nouveau period, the serpent today is being explored in a more contemporary fashion while exploiting technology to its advantage.

If folktales were to be deemed truthful, rare species of snakes are believed to carry snake stones in their head and are very protective of them as they were thought to contain magical powers. The same characteristic has often been expressed in fine jewelry with either a gemstone-studded snake head or a snake coiled possessively around a precious gemstone. In the **Stephen Webster**'s 'It Started With Eve' Couture Ring, the pavé-set diamond white snake is coiled around a 5ct Forevermark Diamond. Similarly, four snakes are seen protecting a large white pearl in the ring designed by Farah Khan.

The long and slim body of the snake makes for a fascinating design element when wrapped around objects or body parts. Thus, in most jewelry pieces, the snake is seen coiled around a finger, an arm or even the neck. The **Buccellati** ruby snake necklace perfectly exemplifies how designers use the linear body of the snake in jewelry.

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Inspired by their European heritage, Boucheron and Bvlgari, two famous jewelry houses, have both paid homage to the serpent over decades. Their realistic-looking gemstone and diamond-studded serpents have appealed to one and all and have often been spotted at red-carpet events. **Bvlgari** has revisited their Serpenti collection year after year. To make their bracelets, watches and necklaces easily slip around the arms or neck, Bvlgari invented a special Tubogas technique, now patented by the brand. The Serpenti watch by Bvlgari has acquired a symbol of style, status and a daring attitude.

Emblematic of **Boucheron**, their Serpent collection has also seen many avatars over the years. Their latest Serpent Bohème collection is an unconventional version of the serpent. Playing with the scales on its body and the shape of its head, the collection is an artist's way of looking at the reptile, backed with a freedom of style and taste.

The Italian jeweler **Damiani**'s latest Eden collection paints the serpent with a minimalistic appeal. Emphasizing the rope like the body of the reptile, the collection uses black enamel and shades of gold along with diamonds to make contemporary

snake jewels perfect for today's woman.

Snakes have also been heavily associated with darkness, revenge and have a gothic appeal. Thus, most jewelry has hints of black, variously studded with black gemstones, layered with black enamel or plated with black rhodium. Even when creating colorful variants, designers often add a devilish overtone with black patches or wicked red eyes.

Snakes also make for very stylish question mark-shaped necklaces, reminiscent of the Indian God Shiva who is believed to have carried a snake around his neck all the time. The Roberto Coin snake necklace also comes in various combinations with devilish ruby eyes denoting a bold attitude.

The snake is a motif that has been explored extensively and will continue to inspire for years to come. Yet, we find that with each passing season and with new talents pouring into the industry, interpretations of the snake theme keep evolving and keep being revisited •



Opposite page, from top:
"Serpenti" bracelet-watch
in gold with polychrome
enamel and emeralds,
from the **Bulgari** Heritage
Collection, 1967; "Unique
Cobra" necklace by **Roberto
Coin**; "Serpenti Bohème"
tangle in white gold by
Boucheron.

Above, **Farah Khan**'s Snake
Around A Pearl ring and a
model rocking the **Bulgari**
"Serpenti Forever" shoulder
bag with light gold-plated
brass "Serpenti" head closure
in black and white enamel
with malachite eyes.