

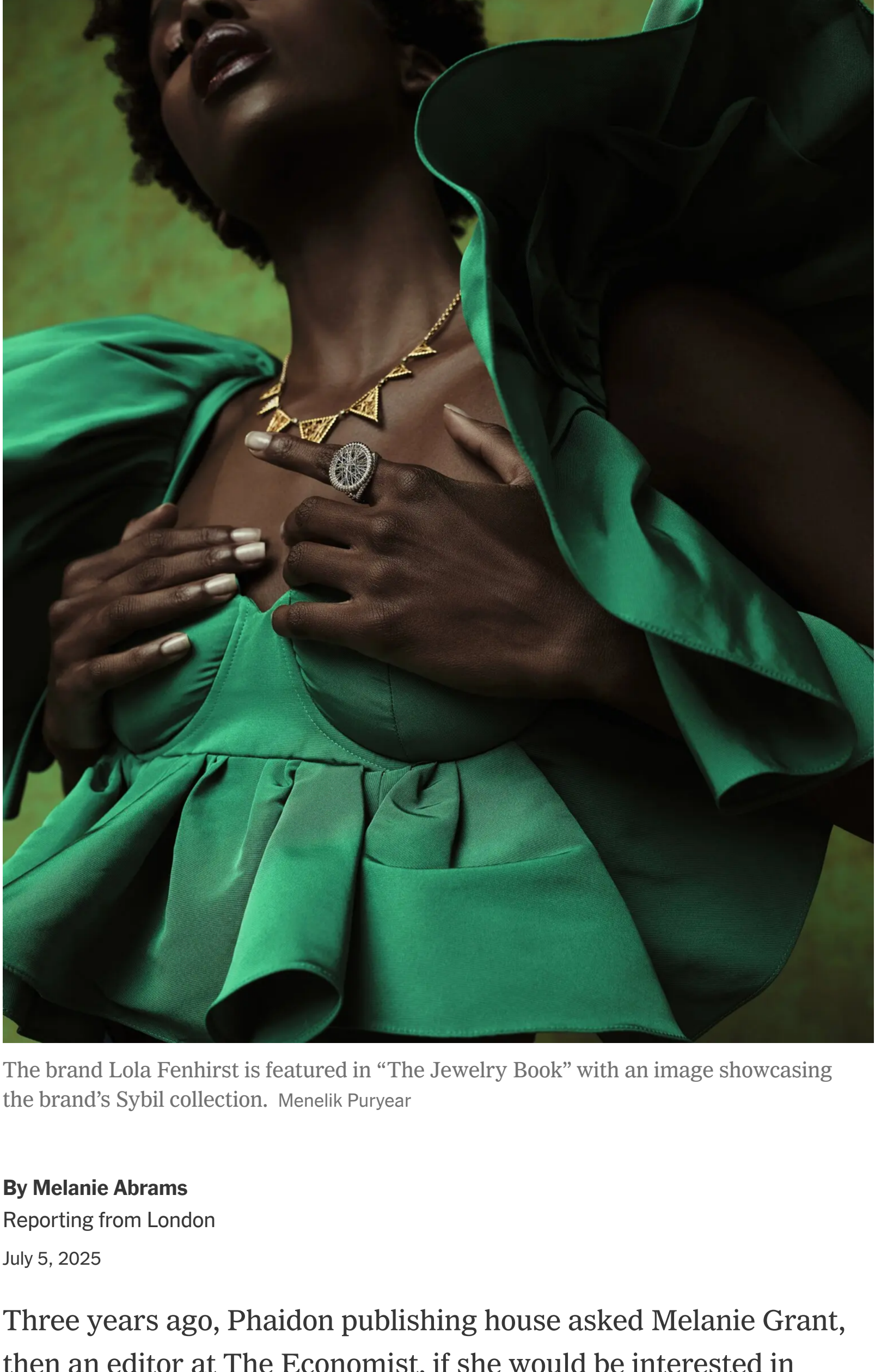
From Adler to Zendaya: A New Jewelry Encyclopedia

Its editor, Melanie Grant, described how difficult it was to choose just 300 designers, makers and other jewelry-related personalities.

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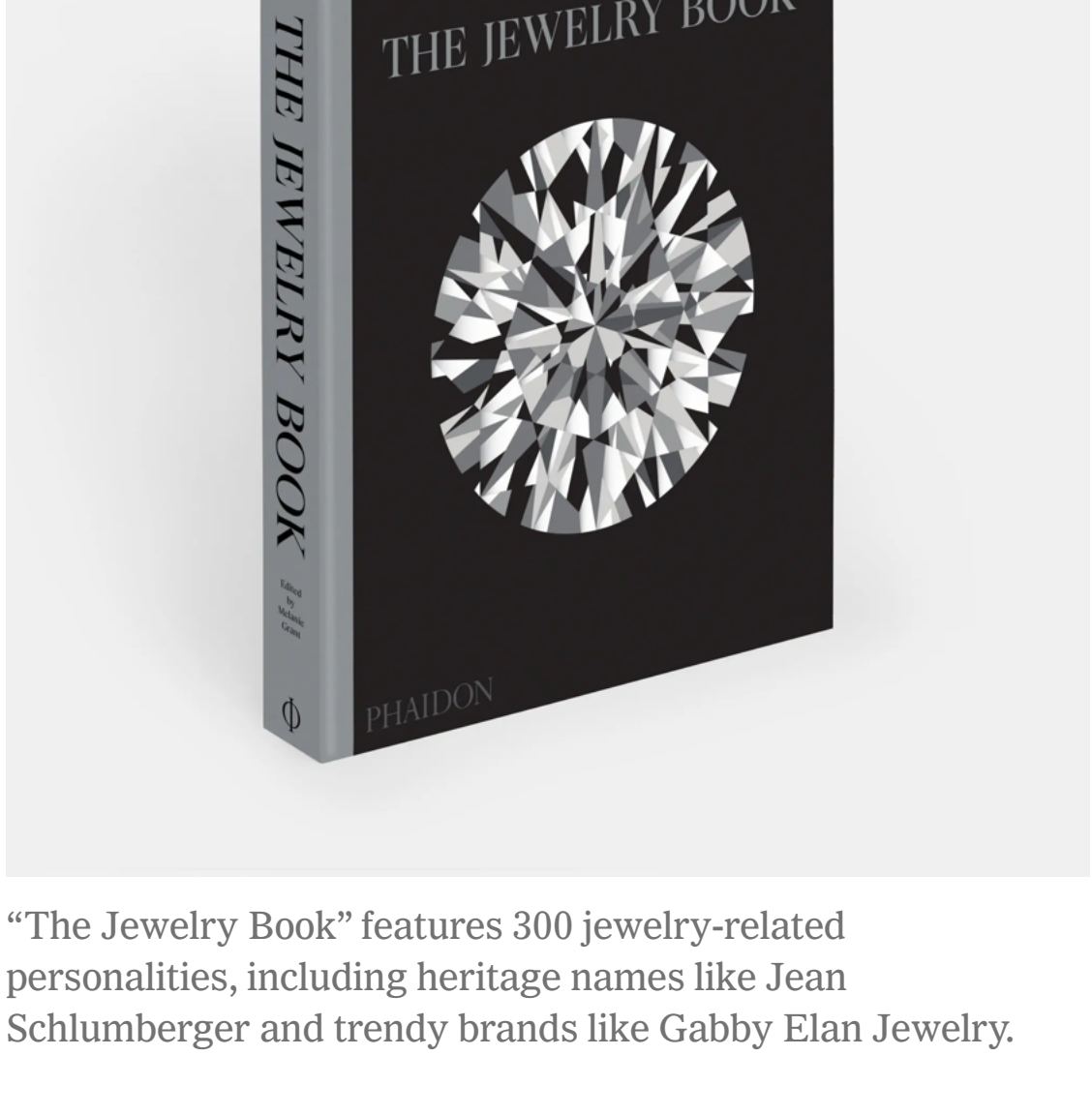


The brand Lola Fenhirst is featured in “The Jewelry Book” with an image showcasing the brand’s Sybil collection. Menelik Puryear

Three years ago, Phaidon publishing house asked Melanie Grant, then an editor at The Economist, if she would be interested in compiling a new encyclopedia of jewelry.

She just about “bit their hand off,” she said during a telephone interview from her home in London. “I thought, ‘We could put some interesting people in there.’”

Now “[The Jewelry Book](#),” a 328-page volume (\$79.95), is scheduled for publication Sept. 24. It features 300 jewelry-related personalities, including collectors, dealers and jewelers from the 16th century to today.

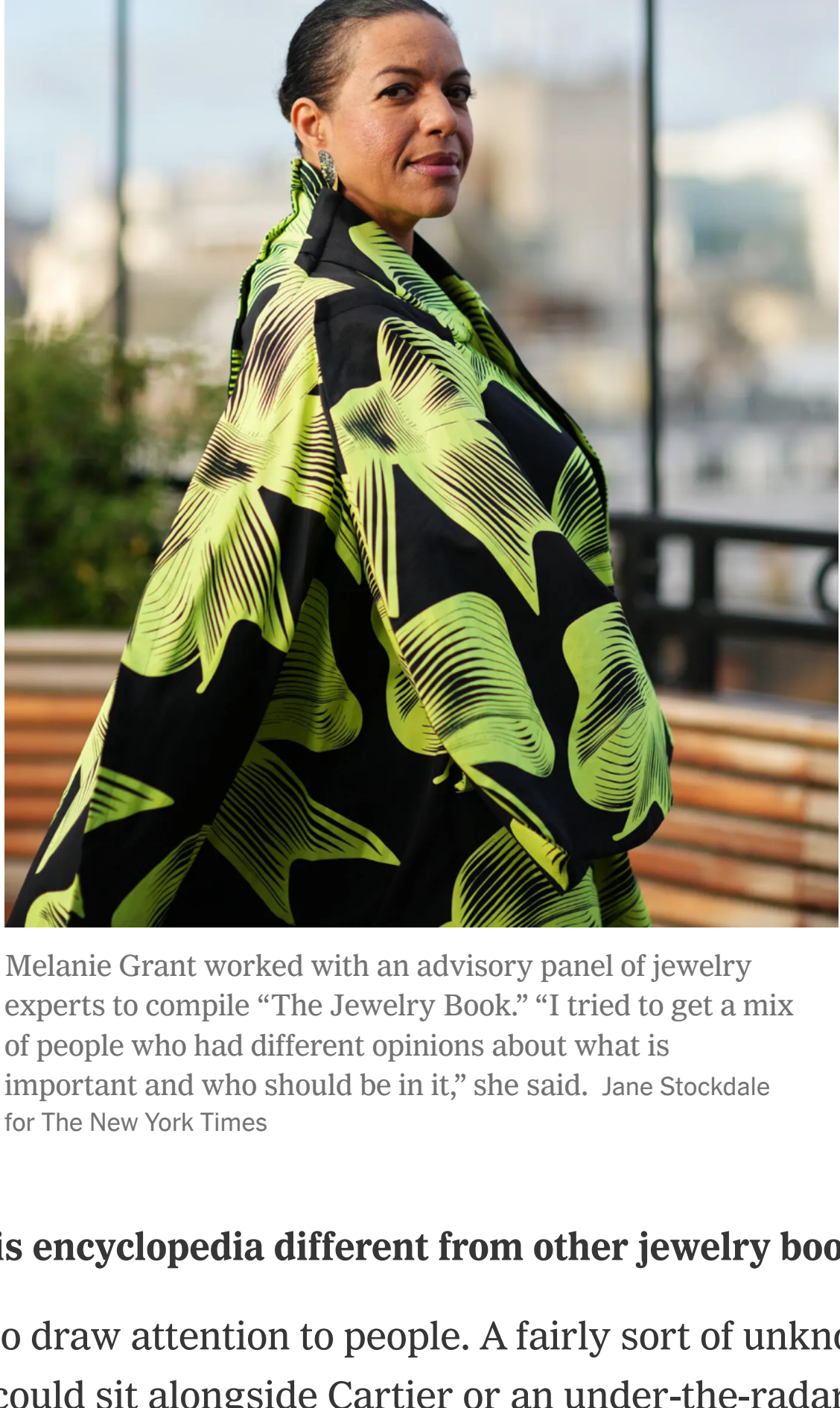


“The Jewelry Book” features 300 jewelry-related personalities, including heritage names like Jean Schlumberger and trendy brands like Gabby Elan Jewelry.

Organized in alphabetical order, the book begins with A, for the Swiss jeweler Adler, and runs to Z, for Zendaya, a Bulgari ambassador. Heritage names include Jean Schlumberger, who designed the [Bird on a Rock](#) for Tiffany & Company in 1965. There are also contemporary designers such as [Valérie Messika](#) of Paris and [Feng Ji](#) of Shanghai and trendy brands like [Gabby Elan Jewelry](#) of New York City, which has made custom grills for the likes of Rihanna and Marc Jacobs. (Free exhibitions of work by some of the jewelers in the book are scheduled at Sotheby’s New York from Sept. 10 to 21 and the Elisabetta Cipriani gallery in London from Sept. 22 to 27.)

Seventeen jewelry experts, including Emily Stoehr, the senior curator of jewelry at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, agreed to be on an advisory panel. They were “much more knowledgeable of antique and vintage jewelry,” Ms. Grant said, as “my speciality is more contemporary jewelry.” (She collaborated with Sotheby’s in 2021 on “[Brilliant and Black: A Jewelry Renaissance](#),” an exhibition featuring 21 Black jewelry designers that Sotheby’s described as the first of its kind by a major auction house.)

During the interview, Ms. Grant talked about the importance of an advisory panel, the difficulty of representing cultures with verbal traditions and the man who cut a 545.67-carat diamond. The conversation has been edited and condensed.



Melanie Grant worked with an advisory panel of jewelry experts to compile “The Jewelry Book.” “I tried to get a mix of people who had different opinions about what is important and who should be in it,” she said. Jane Stockdale for The New York Times

Why is this encyclopedia different from other jewelry books?

We have to draw attention to people. A fairly sort of unknown designer could sit alongside Cartier or an under-the-radar collector could sit alongside, you know, Victoria, as in the queen.

Obviously, the designer is the key element, but there is a whole village that, you know, supports that creativity.

How did you choose the advisory panel? And why did you want one?

I tried to get a mix of people who had different opinions about what is important and who should be in it.

You should always be challenged. You shouldn’t have the group think of everyone agreeing with you. You need to have people who don’t agree with you telling you why.

What were your criteria for inclusion?

People who have affected or changed the course of jewelry in more than the last 200 years. So, you know, if we take, say, Gabriel — or Gabi — Tolowsky, a sixth-generation diamond expert, he’s somebody probably a lot of people wouldn’t know.

He cut the 545.67-carat Golden Jubilee diamond given to King Bhumibol of Thailand, you know. So, he’s an interesting character and somebody that I would want to read about in a book, but don’t necessarily get to read about in the average jewelry book.

How did you arrive at the final 300?

It was very hard. Because, you know, everyone has their own thing to offer. I think we started off with a list of about, I’d say, 700 to 750, and then over time you have a series of meetings and you whittle it down. And obviously we were very keen to get a spread so that there’s a good representation of men and women and people from different geographical locations. So, sometimes you’ve got two great jewelers from similar periods in history and you have to choose between them.

Fashion houses are often accused of being too safe in their designs. As you were going through the book, did you see more creativity in the houses or from independent designers?

Obviously, the independents are very innovative in terms of pushing the boundaries with materials. And radical design tends to come from the independents because they can take more risks and they don’t have to sell two million units — they can go out there and go crazy.

The creativity is different. It’s broader in heritage houses and maybe a bit stranger sometimes in the independents. If you look at [Otto Jakob](#), he’s got some medieval modern jewelry, based in Germany, which is quite strange, but I’m sure he’s got a traditional ring in there somewhere.

What was the toughest thing about putting the book together?

It was very time consuming. And I don’t have a lot of time. It’s trying to keep the balance, not going too far into one category, listening to everyone.

You have to ask yourself every day, “Is the balance right?” It’s the responsibility. It’s a bit like how do you know a design is good? You can feel it.

Which cultures were harder to represent?


I found some good information on Ghana. But some Native and African cultures have much more of a verbal history so it’s hard to find specific information about how jewelry was worn at certain times in history. And, you know, some Arabic cultures, again, it was hard to find things in English. So it’s just some people had more documentation in their culture than others.


What are plans for a second volume?


I tend to like to try to do new things.

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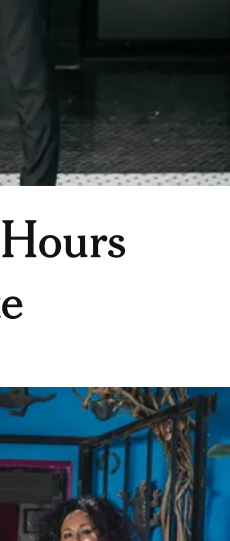
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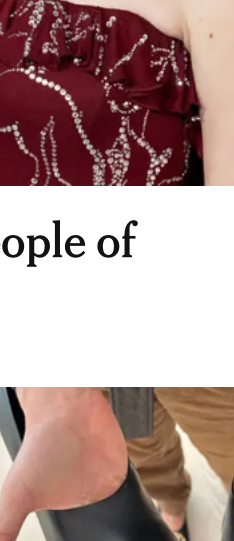
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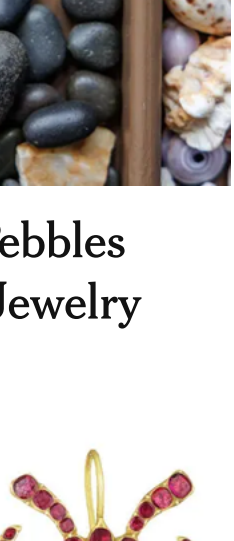
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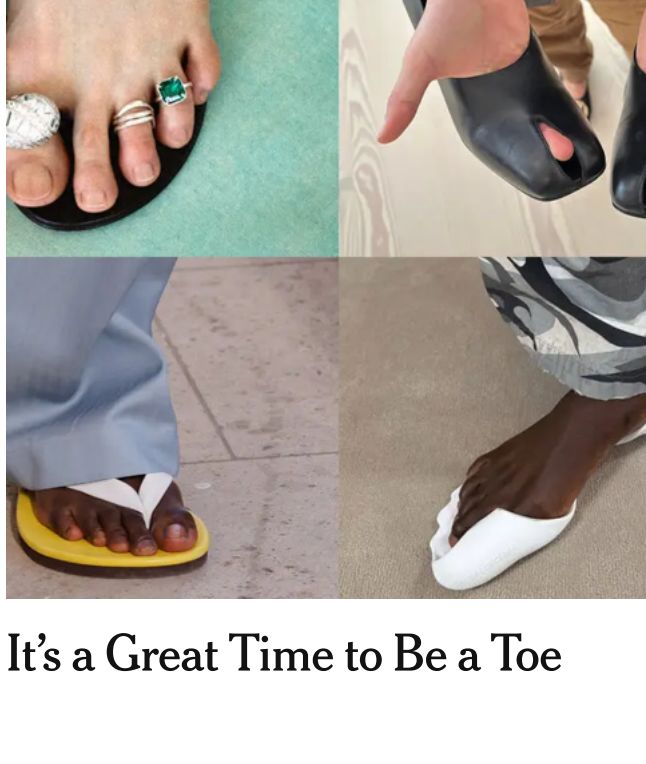
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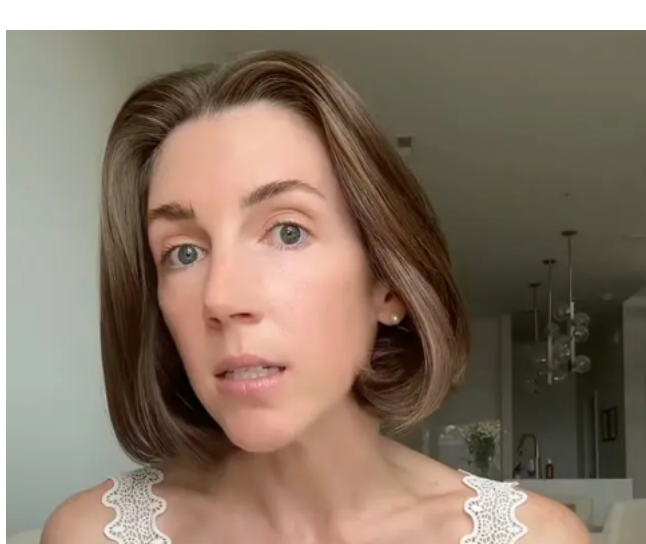
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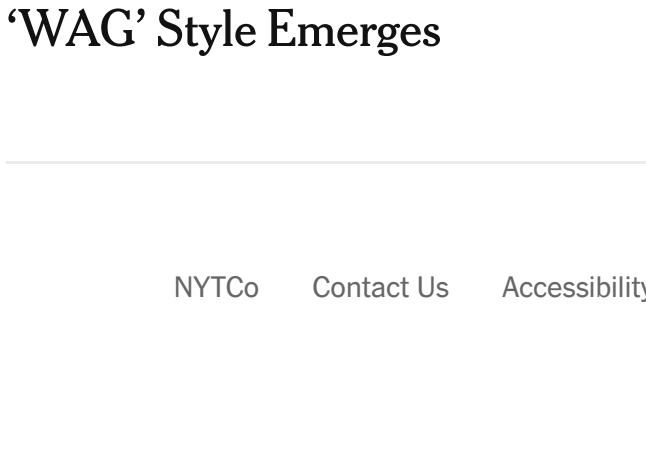


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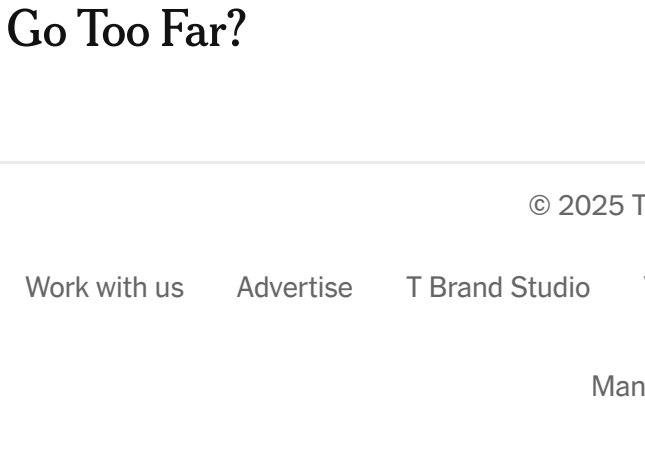


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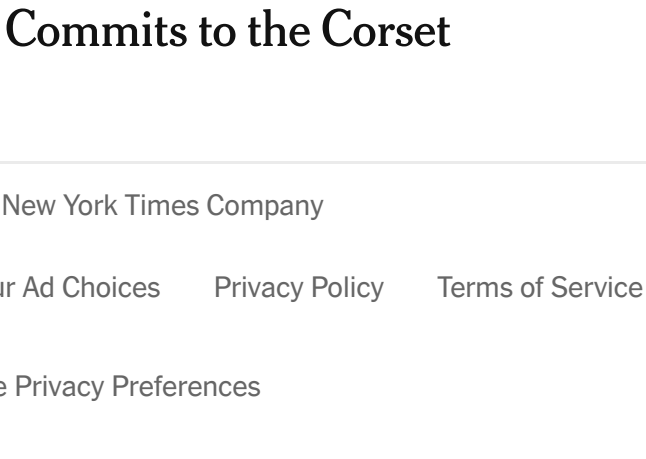
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