



Behind the Craft of Mark Patterson Jewelry

Marie Spada April 30, 2015

How to Pick Out Your Perfect Ring

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Walking into Mark Patterson's jewelry studio that he founded with his wife, Josette, is like walking into Willie Wonka's Chocolate Factory, only the chocolates are diamonds. For over 30 years, Mark Patterson and Josette have worked in the jewelry industry and have set the standard for ethically made, quality pieces. Their history is both vast and fascinating, and together they have created a legacy in jewelry making by taking their experience directly to the consumer, thus creating the perfect, personal touch.

Mark Patterson offers a truly one of a kind experience when the time comes to shop for that perfect ring. Working directly with Mark himself and seeing exactly where the ring is being made offers a personal touch that truly makes the whole experience priceless. "The biggest thing is that we make all of our designs in our

studio completely from start to finish. That's rare today. Many designers use trade shops that make the product for them. It's becoming somewhat of a lost craft."



Q: What are the five best tips you can offer for picking out an engagement ring?
Mark Patterson:

- 1) Do as much research as you can online; there is so much information available. Look at as many images as possible. Have a sense of the general design. You will come across forks in the road and ask yourself questions like: Does my ring have a halo? Do I not want a halo? Do I want the Solitaire or Pave look? Do your research rather than walking in cold.
- 2) Research your diamonds. There is a lot of information about how to buy a diamond, and the factors that go into determining quality and price.
- 3) Make sure to establish a budget, and then you can start getting into size and quality. The center diamond is the most expensive element of the ring, so make sure to come up with a budget you're comfortable with.
- 4) Approach it more as a custom made ring as opposed to having something taken out of a showcase and altered in order to fit the diamond you might be honing in on, or the finger size. Approach it as, "I want my ring made for my diamond and

my finger.” It is a lifetime accessory. It is with you 24/7. Why not have something made exactly to your specifications?

5) If you are struggling between quality and quantity (size), err on the side of quality, because you’ll never regret it. It might be a few thousand dollar difference on a \$20,000 ring. If you can, do it. If not, stay with something slightly smaller in size and keep the quality.



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Q: What is something that most people don't know, but should know, when picking out a ring?

MP: Let me break that up into two parts, rather than just the ring. What they should know about the diamond, is that it should always be GIA Certified (Gemology Institute of America). They are the platinum standard for diamond grading. For the ring itself, choose platinum over all other metals. Platinum is a lifetime metal; it never disappears or wears away. It is a pure metal, meaning it isn't alloyed with any other metals. Golds are alloyed with other metals to make them different colors. White gold, for instance, has nickel in it, which some people have an allergy to. Yellow gold has copper in it.

Q: If someone were going to choose a different stone for an engagement ring, which stone would you recommend and why?

MP: I would recommend Sapphire. Traditionally, it has always been a definite alternative to a diamond. It is also one of the hardest gemstones that are softer than a diamond, but still very hard, so it will endure over many, many years.

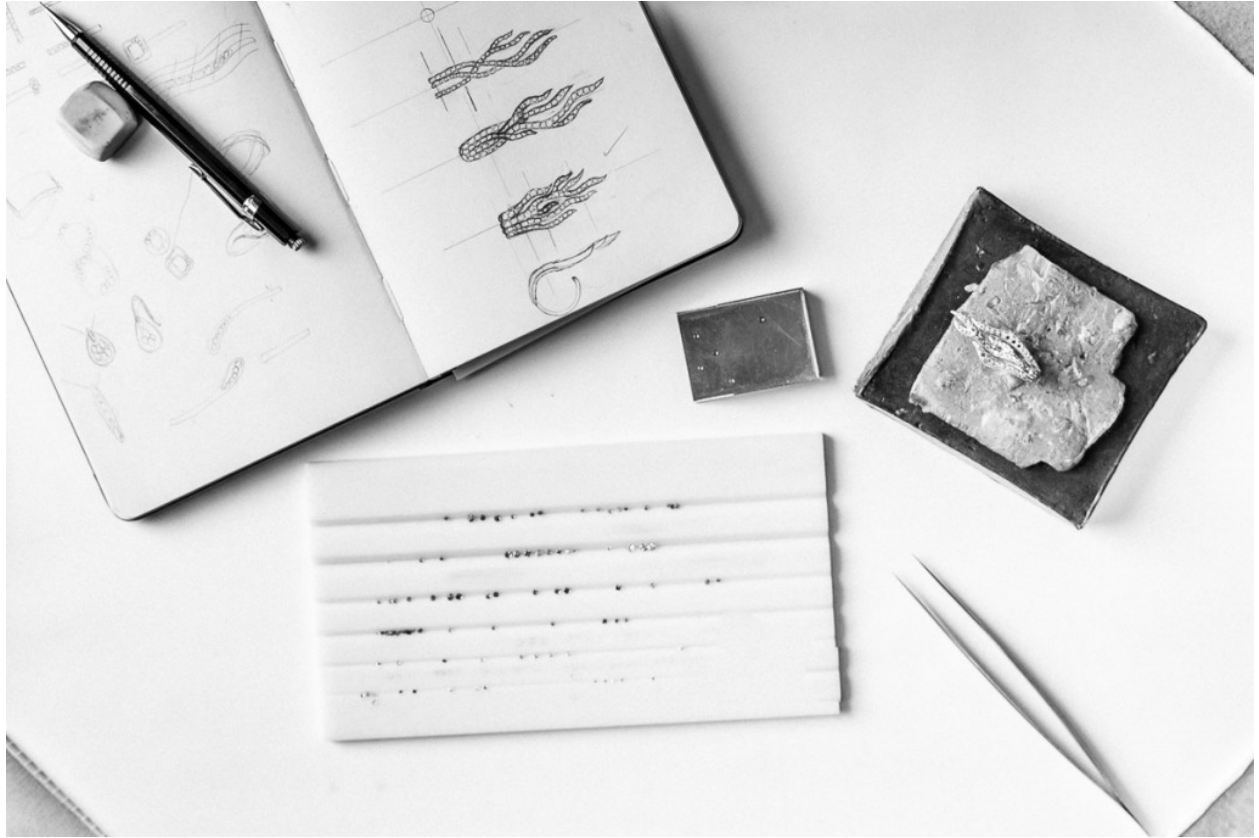


Q: Rose gold. A new classic or a trend you see fading away?

MP: It is not fading away. We sometimes like to suggest doing the engagement ring in platinum and adding a rose gold wedding band, so that they will still get the rose gold without having regrets down the road.

Q: What do you suggest for diamonds that go all the way around the band?

MP: I suggest it for the wedding band because they do rotate. When the diamonds don't go all the way around, it is easier to change the size of the ring if need be. This is why we don't recommend diamonds all the way around for the engagement ring.



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Q: What do you notice to be the biggest trends in bridal collections? What do you see fizzling out, and conversely, coming into the limelight?

MP: I think in the last year or so, we've had a lot more requests that do not have the halo of diamonds around the center stone. It used to be 80% of the rings had a halo, and now it is less than that. I can't say exactly what the percentage is, but we are seeing a lot more ring orders from retailers around the country without them.

Q: What would you say is the most popular cut of diamond for an engagement ring? Most unpopular?

MP: Most popular is round, followed by cushions. The most unpopular is the marquise, pear shape, anything with a point.

Q: You started your Promise Bridal Collection in 2002. What made you introduce bridal into your offering?

MP: We started bridal as a result of 9/11. In Manhattan, our studio faced the World Trade Center, and we saw the planes fly into the towers. We kind of thought the world was coming to an end. We could see Rockefeller Center when the anthrax incident happened, and we watched people running out and screaming. We realized that the only category of jewelry that would be important was bridal.



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Q: What insider tip do you have to keep your engagement ring looking as spectacular as possible for as long as possible?

MP: Clean, clean, clean! Diamonds are very hard to keep clean. They have a natural affinity to anything with petroleum, which is all of your lotions, soaps, waxes, etc. The diamond literally attracts it, so it can build up, particularly on the bottom of your diamond. You need really hot, hot water to melt away the petroleum. You can't really hurt a diamond. Don't use a brush; they don't do anything. It's the heat. If you do it regularly, maybe once a week, it's a lot easier than if it has a large build up on the diamond.

Q: You say that your jewelry is ethically made. What exactly does that mean and how do you achieve that?

MP: Primarily, the diamonds are ethically sourced. That means that any company that is in the process of getting the diamond to us, whether that's the cutter or the sorting office in New York, has to have a statement that the diamonds are not conflict diamonds. They are subject to the Kimberly Process, which was set up as a means to make sure that diamonds are ethically sourced and conflict free.

Q: What is your least favorite trend in the jewelry industry and why?

MP: The sheer volume of jewelry made in China. At first, it was just a few companies. Now, it just seems to be a general rule: If you want to be competitive and have large marketing budgets, then you need to make your product in China.



Q: If you could give one solid piece of advice for someone picking out an engagement ring, what would it be?

MP: Find out where it was made, and who made it, just like you would if you were purchasing the wedding dress. Some of the retailers can be old school, and their idea is, “Don’t let them walk out without buying the ring, cut and fit.” That’s how it was before the actual designers were involved. She’s going to wait three to six months for a wedding dress that she’s going to wear for one night. Why not wait 3 weeks for an engagement ring that she’s going to wear for a lifetime?

Q: You and your wife have worked together for over 30 years. What is your advice when it comes to working with your significant other?

MP: I would say you have to complement one another. Josette is often far ahead of design trends, and I always look to what she’s presenting as the future. I think she relies on me to be more of the eye for what clients are looking for and buying right now.

Q: What do you think is the best hidden gem (no pun intended ...seriously) in Orange County for a romantic dinner?

MP: A little French place on Balboa Island, Basilic!



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