

# FINANCIAL TIMES

How To Spend It Jewellery

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## Calculated wrist: what do your bangles say about you?

We stack up the current status symbols



Vivienne Becker. Photography by Lara Angelil. Styling by Raphaëlle Helmore 3 HOURS  
AGO



I am looking at one of my favourite photographs of Babe Paley, taken by Horst in 1946, when I do a double take. Along with her [strands of pearls](#) – a signature of the midcentury style icon – her elegantly raised wrist is heavily layered with bangles and bracelets. More than 70 years after the photograph was taken, her style chimes loudly with the current craze for “curation” – stacking and wrapping our wrists with a wardrobe of different pieces.

Layering is nothing new, I hear you say, and you’re right; from maharajahs to millennials, it’s a style that has reinvented itself time and again. But there’s a distinctive vibe to this year’s wrist uniform – one of the standout fashions to thrive during lockdown. According to inveterate wrist-stacker Carolina Bucci, [different sets of beads, charms and bangles can bring joy](#), colour and personality to our days without the need to change out of our sweatpants. Meanwhile, the pastime of choosing, composing, arranging and rearranging one’s wristwear has a therapeutic, pseudo-ritualistic feel.



Left arm, from top: Carolina Bucci Forte beads, from £450. Chaumet pink-gold and diamond Liens Evidence bracelet, £9,850; white-gold and diamond Bee My Love bracelet, £9,620; and pink-gold Bee My Love bracelet, £4,530. Boucheron white-gold Quatre Clou de Paris bangle, £6,400. Annoushka gold Cable Chain bracelet, £1,800. Carolina Bucci Forte beads, from £450. Boucheron pink-gold Quatre Grosgrain bangle, £5,800. Van Cleef & Arpels white-gold Perlée Signature bracelet, £5,600. Messika gold and diamond Move Seven-Band bangle, £10,900. Pippa Small gold, diamond, ruby, pearl, coral, yellow sapphire, emerald, hessonite, blue sapphire and cat's eye Baby Navaratna bracelet, £600. Right arm, from top: Dedalo by Gismondi 1754 rose-gold, ceramic and diamond cuff, \$8,260; and rose-gold, ceramic and diamond cuff, \$8,680, neimanmarcus.com. Hermès brass and enamel Clic Clac H Zèbres de Tanzanie bracelet, £660. Tiffany & Co white-gold and diamond T1 bracelet, £17,600. Van Cleef & Arpels gold and diamond Perlée Clovers bracelet, £21,600. Fernando Jorge white-gold Fluid bracelet, \$2,590; and gold Fluid bracelet, \$2,590. In both hands: Hermès metal and enamel Calèche Fin bracelets, £345 each © Lara Angelil

This year's wrist candy revolves around a basic "uniform" of classic, immediately recognisable brand icons. There's [Cartier](#)'s seminal Love Bracelet – minimal, modern, mechanistic – designed in 1969 by Aldo Cipullo and now available in all colours of gold, with or without diamonds. Another favourite for the stack is Cartier's Juste un Clou, the nail that wraps around the wrist, also designed by Cipullo to capture the beat of New York in the grungy, rebellious, exhilarating '70s. Pierre Rainero, Cartier's director of image, style and heritage, attributes both bracelets' enduring popularity and stackability to "their strong and original design, unique spirit and symbolism. They are talismans of modern times."

“

**I notice our clients stack their bangles with a beaded piece made by their child or bought on holiday”**

Pippa Small

Brand loyalty plays a part in curation, as a signal of belonging to a particular group. So Van Cleef & Arpels devotees might mix a Perlée bangle, its silky gold ribbon with beaded edges, either plain or dotted with diamond Alhambra clovers, with an Alhambra chain bracelet. [Boucheron](#) fans might layer the classic Quatre bangle, which comes as single, narrow gold bands textured either with Clou de Paris, inspired by Parisian street cobbles, or grosgrain, the ribbon that invokes Frédéric Boucheron’s original family drapery business. Chaumet keeps clients’ wrists full with stackable versions of its signature designs: Bee My Love is translated into a stream of hexagonal honeycomb motifs studded with diamonds, and Liens, another ’70s design, is refined into the slender Evidence bangles, some with diamonds and others with vibrant lacquer for a pop of colour.

More recent stacking stalwarts include [Dior](#)’s delicate Rose des Vents bracelets, with mini-medallions that twist to show an underside of stone or neon-bright lacquer, or the Tiffany T1 bangle, the band with the chamfered central motif that adds a note of sleek modernity to the wrist mega-mix. Originally in rose-gold, it now also comes in yellow and white gold, with or without diamonds. Wrist stacking, after all, is about the art of choice.

For colour and immediate recognisability, it’s hard to beat [Hermès’s enamel bangles](#), first launched in 1978 and inspired by the house’s famous silk scarf. Both the prints that smother the bangles and the technique for creating them in enamel come from Hermès’s silk department. The range is continually evolving, with the latest Clic Clac H bracelet, first introduced in 2000, now in a panoply of lively prints that even cover the clever branded clasp.





From top: Dior rose-gold, diamond and lacquered ceramic Rose des Vents bracelet, £1,500; gold, diamond and malachite Rose des Vents bracelet, £1,750; and gold, diamond and lapis lazuli Rose des Vents bracelet, £1,750. Margaret Jewels gold and diamond Name Tag bracelet; and white-gold and diamond Name Tag bracelet, both POA. Chaumet yellow-gold and brilliant-cut diamond Bee My Love bracelet, £12,200. Messika white-gold and diamond Move Noa bangle, £4,310. Chopard fairmined ethical rose-gold bangle, £3,740; fairmined ethical white-gold and diamond bangle, £6,930; and fairmined ethical rose-gold and diamond bangle, £6,930, all from The Ice Cube Collection. Garrard white-gold, diamond and mother-of-pearl Fanfare bangle, £10,000. Tasaki gold and Akoya pearl Danger bracelet, £2,380. Pippa Small gold Snake bracelet, £1,950. On finger: Cartier gold Juste un Clou bracelet, £2,900 © Lara Angelil. Models, Bee Page & Bryony Hatrick. Casting Director, Shawn Dezan at Home Agency. Model agency, Body London. Manicurist, Marie Louise Coster at Caren Agency. Photographer's assistant, Callum Inskipp. Digital Operator, Cameron Williamson. Stylist's assistant, Bryony Hatrick

The trick is to make these ubiquitous brand classics your own by sandwiching them with unexpected additions – bracelets by independent designers such as Emefa Cole, whose gold bangles have an organic, sculptural quality. She says the layering reminds her of the “beautiful, nomadic tribes of Africa who adorn themselves with stacks of bangles”. Wrist curators also search for the newest designs by Gismondi 1754, whose geometric Dedalo bangles are inspired by the back streets of Genoa, where the company was founded in the 18th century, or the new, sleek and slender Ice Cube collection, a collaboration between Marion Cotillard and [Chopard](#).

“A thousand people can wear the same Love bracelet, but by mixing it with different colourations and combinations, it can look completely different every time,” says Bucci. “There’s no right or wrong.” Varying colour and texture, as well as scale and material, creates rhythm and flow, as does mixing rose, yellow and white gold. Combining solid bangles with chain bracelets, such as Fernando Jorge’s Fluid style, builds a sense of organic accumulation. They can then be punctuated by [an occasional charm](#), such as Bucci’s Florentine rough-textured gold initials that sit within a chaotic tangle of beads. Textural contrast also comes from introducing materials such as pearls, as in Tasaki’s gritty Danger bracelet or the mother-of-pearl in Garrard’s Fanfare collection.

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#### [Designer-jeweller Pippa Small’s](#)

impressive armful of bangles, jangling around a massive shell cuff, have been a style signifier for as long as I’ve known her. She rarely takes them off, she says, and loves the simple purity of the bangle and its cultural connections. “It reminds me of the wandering Rabari in India, with their shoulder-to-wrist ivory bangles.” She favours high-carat gold bangles that, over

time, mould to the wrist. Of today’s craze, she says: “I notice our clients stack their bangles with [a beaded piece](#) made by their child, or bought on a beach on holiday but filled with memories and sun, or our gold beaded pieces mixed with stone. The ancient Indian amulet Navaratna is often worn on the wrist under the other pieces, so the skin touches the stones, as is required by Indian tradition.”

