

The Telegraph

The price of gold soared in 2020: what does it mean for your jewellery box?

Independent jewellers have been hit hardest by the stratospheric rise in gold prices, with varying responses

By Annabel Davidson

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The price of gold climbed by more than 30% in 2020

There's a little misunderstanding between jewellers and their clients that almost always occurs when it comes to having old pieces remade. The client brings in granny's ring to have the stones put into a new design, and often seems to think the scrap gold is worth hundreds and hundreds of pounds, if not more. They then baulk when told that their scrap metal has gone into the gold recycling bin that every jeweller has.

Truth be told, that worn-out band, now cut into a few shards, isn't worth more than a few measly pounds. It's an unspoken rule that chucking that tiny amount of metal into the jeweller's pot is an accepted quirk of the trade – albeit not a widely known one.

The price of gold climbed by more than 30% this year, an extraordinary rise that affected independent jewellers hugely. The value of that tiny amount of gold you wanted reimbursed from your local jeweller when upgrading a setting may not have amounted to much on its own, but when added up across the year, to a small business, it matters.



18kt gold Poppy stud earrings and brooch, POA, [Christopher Thompson Royds](#)

“I love gold: its colour, its associations, its ease to work with, but boy does it make me pay for this love,” says Christopher Thompson Royds, a jeweller whose paper-flower-like creations in 18kt gold require intensive hand craftsmanship.

“It is my main material as a jeweller, but it is also a global commodity and with every shock and knock to the economy, investors seek protection in its safe-haven status,” he continues. “This year became a nightmare; everyone flocked to it, seeking financial refuge from corona-chaos, prices soared, and I stopped buying.”

Thompson Royd’s solution was to stop making new pieces and instead develop models in brass, eking out his existing stock of gold sheet and wire to cover orders and refraining from buying any new metal. “Why was I going to buy at the top of the market, especially considering that all the galleries I show with were closed and most exhibitions cancelled or postponed?” he says wisely.



18kt gold Tube ring, POA, [Emefa Cole](#)

Emefa Cole, who works with a range of metals and carves from wax, relies on the casting company she uses to price up her models. “Customers often expect quick answers regarding how much a design will cost in various metals,” she says. “But it’s not that straightforward. It depends on the accuracy of the weight of the wax model, constantly fluctuating prices, service charges, and so on. I imagine big brands have a large stock of gold to rely on. I often end up giving quotes across several metals, not just gold.”



18kt gold and diamond Milestone Triple Band ring, £2,750, [Roxanne Rajcoomar-Hadden](#)

Roxanne Rajcoomar-Hadden, whose work is often created on commission, makes no bones about this year's particular challenges. "The rise in gold price has had a direct effect on my business," she says, "prompting a need to adjust pricing across my entire portfolio to reflect the fluctuation in material costs – which I had never needed to do before."

What's most interesting is the effect she has seen on customer choices. "The resulting rise in retail prices has led some prospective clients who have gold pieces on their wish lists, to reconsider their purchases," she explains. "In another first for my time in the industry, the price of gold has surpassed platinum – which has led to a rise in platinum sales, especially in my bridal collection."



18kt yellow gold and diamond cuff, POA, [Jessica McCormack x The Haas Brothers](#)

Jessica McCormack, who is known more for diamonds than gold, made the decision not to raise prices just because the value of gold went up so much during the pandemic.

“I just trusted that the price would be correct,” she says. “And in fact, gold has come down significantly already. Brand new designs I can of course price according to current values, but I don’t change the price of existing designs because of market value. You have to roll with the punches. At the end of the day I’m selling jewellery and design, not metal.”


One upside to the rising price of gold? Just look at the extraordinary Opium Poppy Crown that Thompson Royds has just unveiled – a lush bouquet of golden blooms to adorn the most deserving of Ophelia’s crowns.




18kt gold and citrine Blaze earrings, £24,000, [Fernando Jorge](#)





Fernando Jorge, a London-based Brazilian designer whose collections range from all-gold to barely metal-based at all, has a steady-hands approach to fluctuating gold prices. “We always keep an eye on the gold price and try to avoid changes [to our prices],” he says. “If an adjustment is required we usually sync it with a new collection and a more general update.

“With the steep increase that happened this year it was no different; we adjusted our pricing across all of our collections alongside a new launch, which was already priced in line with the current gold cost. Jewellers cannot change their pricing every time there is a change in gold value or currency fluctuation, so it is normal to have a buffer to accommodate this.”


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“The biggest irony of this year was finally I had uninterrupted time for over half the year because of the various lockdowns to design and make, and yet the gold price was unaffordable,” he says.

“Luckily though I wasn’t idle, and with the gold price now beginning to stabilise I am about to start converting all those lockdown brass models into post-Covid gold treasures.”