

VANITY FAIR

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Emefa Cole Shares Her Inspirations

The jeweller shares her broad and beautiful sources of inspiration.

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Structures

Dwellings and buildings have always been a source of inspiration, from mud huts to igloos to the traditional turf houses of Iceland. My pieces are quite bold structures that stand alone like buildings, rather than being designed to be at one with the body. They use the body as a foundation then build up from there.

Moroccan Riads

The way the Moroccans build their dwellings to withstand that fierce heat resulted in those lovely cool central areas that are hidden from outside view. My pieces often draw the eye into an internal area of interest to discover rather than be immediately obvious. I love that journey of discovery where the heart of the building is the most beautiful, not the outside.

West African Goldsmithing Techniques

I am lucky enough to be half way through an apprenticeship with the Asantehene's goldsmith (the Asantehene is the overall king of the Ashanti people of Ghana). I'm inspired by the quality, craftsmanship, finesse and resourcefulness of their work—it's a much gentler, more thought-through approach to goldsmithing. What you can achieve with their techniques is limitless.

Music

When I work I need music playing. At the moment my playlist includes Ali Farka Toure, a Malian singer; Miriam Makeba, a South African singer-songwriter who was a huge anti-Apartheid activist and whose work was a mix of jazz and Afropop. Fela Kuti's music is quite political but fun—he was Nigerian. I don't feel like musicians today make music to reflect the times—it's more ego driven. I like the storytelling and commentary on the world around them that these musicians brought to their music.

Philosophy

I'm listening to loads of philosophy podcasts at the moment and reading philosophy books. I'm working out which branch I most adhere to, but I'm very much just learning. Descartes, Sartre on existentialism—there's so much out there. I'm part way through Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "Existentialism & Humanism" at the moment. I can't read it fast enough.

Emefa Cole