



Pearl and diamond earrings

JEWELLERY

In My Jewellery Box: Vania Leles

Former model turned fine jewellery designer Vania Leles shares the most precious pieces from her own collection

BY SARAH ROYCE-GREENSILL
AUGUST 24, 2015 12:05

Vania Leles took a somewhat circuitous route into the world of fine jewellery; born in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa and educated in Lisbon, Portugal, she spent several years working as a fashion model in London, New York and Paris before pursuing her passion for diamonds by taking a course in gemmology at the Gemmological Institute of America. On returning to London she honed her expertise with customer-facing roles at Graff Diamonds and De Beers, before joining the jewellery department at Sotheby's. Craving a creative outlet, in 2010 she launched her own fine jewellery brand, [Vanleles Diamonds](#), based in a private atelier on New Bond Street.

Leles personally sources the precious stones for her own creations, frequently using coloured ethical gemstones from Botswana and Namibia, and enjoys collaborating with clients on one-of-a-kind bespoke pieces. Her characteristically feminine designs reflect her exuberant personality; her obsession with butterflies spawned its own collection while whimsical motifs of bows and flowers also feature in her jewels, which are handmade by her team of expert craftsmen.



Vania Leles
[Enlarge](#)

With a love of glamorous jewels, the designer shares her favourite pieces from her personal collection.

Pearl and diamond earrings

This picture was taken on my wedding day, the earrings are resting on my veil. I always dreamed of wearing [pearls](#) to get married. This pair of pearls has been in my family for about 40 years and they were set as simple studs. When they were passed down to me I

set them into earrings along with diamonds my husband had given me as a wedding present. He thought what can you give a jeweller as a gift and decided that it should be materials to work with. He was very pleasantly surprised on our wedding day when he saw what I had done with them. The diamonds and the pearls are the perfect match. The diamond part is too much to wear every day, so I made the pearls detachable. Now I wear them every day attached to a pair of bow earrings, they are just beautiful.

Dancing butterfly

I love butterflies, I've been collecting them for as long as I can remember. I have 200-300 real butterflies framed in a room at home as well as some pictures of butterflies in my atelier. As a child I adored their vibrant iridescent



Dancing Butterfly diamond pendant
[Enlarge](#)

colours. We lived outside Lisbon and I was fascinated by these mysterious, enigmatic creatures; I would see one in a field near my home and never see the same one again. So I started collecting them and now I have my own butterfly collection as a jeweller; it's a dream come true!

This diamond pendant and brooch is part of my Dancing Butterfly collection. I like to wear it as a brooch on my shoulder, as if the animal has just landed there. I love the wavy texture of the wings and the way it looks like it's constantly moving or dancing. It's one of the pieces I truly adore.

Contemporary 'rough diamond' ring

I found this ring many years ago in a shop on King's Road. It looks like rough diamonds inside a cage of gold claws. I always wanted to create a collection with rough diamonds and this ring just encapsulates all the ideas I'd had. It reminds me so much of Africa and seeing the rough diamonds inside the mines, they are magnificent. This ring is a huge source of inspiration for me even though it's very different to my current designs. I wear it practically every day because I love it so much. I've had to put my idea for a rough diamond collection on hold for now, but in two or three years I hope to do it because I find the idea fascinating.

Blue sapphire



Pearl sautoir
[Enlarge](#)

My husband gave me this sapphire when our son was born – blue for a boy. He wouldn't dare buy me jewellery or design a piece without me knowing, so when I opened the box and saw this beautiful velvety sapphire I told him he couldn't have found a better gift. It's an 11.20-carat cushion-cut Ceylon sapphire and is just stunning. I'm going to make it into a ring as I want to wear it every day, I don't want to lock it in a safe. So far I have two possible designs but I've been so busy with the baby and the business I haven't had the time to really play around with it. I want to make a timeless design that I'll keep for the rest of my life, and one day pass it on to my son's wife so she'll love it too.

Pearl sautoir

I love pearls; my top three stones are diamonds, sapphires and pearls. Around the time *The Great Gatsby* came out everybody was doing jewellery inspired by the roaring Twenties so I decided to make this pearl sautoir with the 18-carat white gold and diamond clasp on the side. I loved it so much that I kept it for myself. The pearls are cultured pearls from Japan and they are just beautiful. I wear this necklace all the time and I feel it really represents my personality. I love big, glamorous jewellery and because I'm always rushing around between my family, clients and suppliers I need something versatile. I could be wearing simple leggings and a silk blouse but as soon as I throw on this necklace I immediately look glamorous and dressed up. It doesn't matter what I'm wearing, everybody's attention goes straight to the jewellery. That's why I think you should never leave the house without wearing jewellery.

VANLELES DIAMONDS
[vanleles.com](#)



MORE LIKE THIS

In My Jewellery Box: Sabine G

In My Jewellery Box: Carolina Bucci

In My Jewellery Box: Rosa de la Cruz

In My Jewellery Box: Bibi van der Velden

In My Jewellery Box: Annoushka Ducas

+ SAVE TO NOTEBOOK

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE