

Q-P

watches and jewellery
through the lens of art and design

the

new

carrera

with my little finger

Once the purview of PHARAOHS AND KINGS, the PINKY RING is a surprising addition to LUXURY JEWELLERY — *FELIX BISCHOF* picks up the MUST-HAVES FOR 2023

"The idea came to me because I wanted to wear a diamond on my left hand, since I don't wear an engagement or wedding ring," explains Nina Runsdorf. Speaking from her townhouse-atelier on Manhattan's Upper East Side, the American jeweller explains what first led her to design All That Is, her latest collection of fine jewellery that has garnered many a devotee since its launch – in particular, for its offering of pinky rings. "I thought a classic yet modern twist to the traditional pinky ring would be fabulous," she says.

In a play on tradition, questioning conventions of designing and wearing jewellery, both independent brands such as Runsdorf's, as well as heritage houses such as Cartier, Bulgari and Tiffany, have lately embraced the humble pinky ring.

Intended to be worn on either the right or left hand's smallest finger, the pinky ring is a gem with a more vaunted heritage than its

current connotations might suggest. There are many varieties, chief among them being the signet ring. Made with a flat top surface, the signet ring is traditionally intaglio-engraved to bear a wearer's initials, coat of arms or family crest. Its history can be dated as far back as Ancient Egypt, when it was worn by ruling pharaohs. Later, across Europe, the male members of royal families turned to the signet ring as a signifier of wealth, status and long-standing influence. By the 19th century, Queen Victoria had adopted the style, a move that was soon followed by all her sons.

The signet ring has continued its hold on royal families: as Prince of Wales, King Charles III wore a yellow gold example that dates back 175 years. Its previous owner was Prince Edward, the Duke of Windsor; it will now be passed on to Charles' son William, Prince of Wales. Hollywood royalty also began sporting the

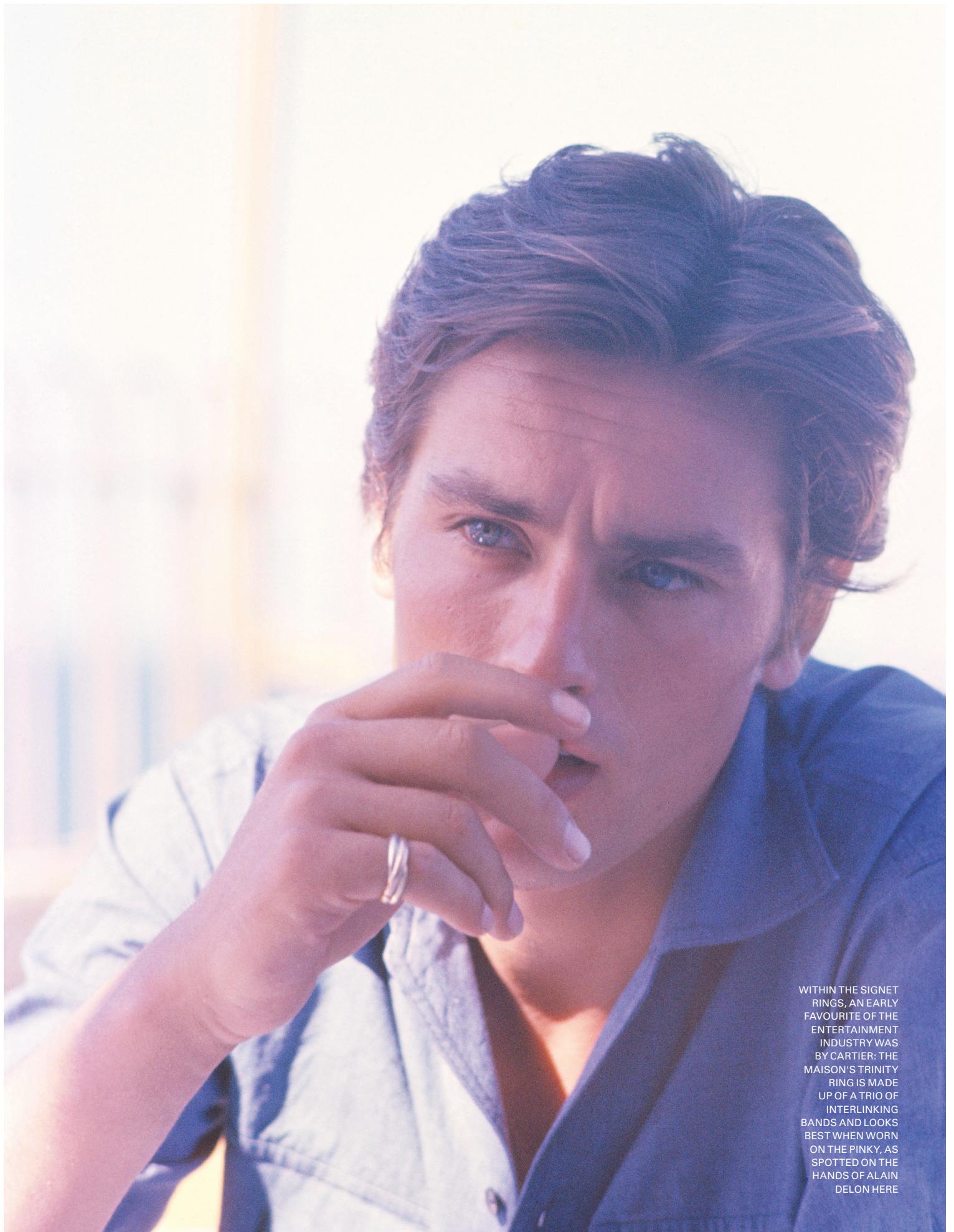
pinky ring in the 20th century: names across the decades include Gary Cooper, Marlene Dietrich and Cate Blanchett, as well as stars of both sound and screen like Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra.

An early favourite of the entertainment industry was made in Paris, by Cartier: the maison's Trinity ring is made up of a trio of interlinking bands and looks best when worn on the pinky, as spotted historically on the elegant hands of Alain Delon, and the somewhat more gnarled ones of Jean Cocteau.

Fast forward to now, and Runsdorf has cast her All That Is pinky rings from either yellow gold with a bezel-set round diamond of three carats, or one topped with an Asscher-cut diamond. Each stone is framed in a band of black rhodium, for maximum impact. "In the context of the collection, which really plays with the balance of masculine and feminine codes," Runsdorf »

THE AMERICAN
ACTOR GARY
COOPER WEARING
CARTIER'S TRINITY
RING, MADE UP
OF A TRIO OF
INTERLINKING
BANDS, ON HIS
PINKY FINGER
(1931)





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"Wearing a pinky ring for me is a SIGN OF POWER AND SELF-LOVE. It signifies courage, independence and SELF-RELIANCE" — Nada Ghazal



PINKY RINGS

- 1 — **DE BEERS, RVL SIGNET RING**, WHITE GOLD AND DIAMONDS
- 2 — **NADA GHAZAL, MY MUSE STORM WINTER OVAL RING**, YELLOW GOLD AND DIAMONDS
- 3 — **FERNANDO JORGE, OBLONG RING**, ROSE GOLD AND JASPER
- 4 — **ELHANATI, TOKYO RING**, YELLOW GOLD AND BRILLIANT-CUT BLACKENED DIAMONDS
- 5 — **BULGARI, MONET RING**, ROSE GOLD, ANCIENT COIN, MALACHITE ELEMENTS AND DIAMONDS

describes, "the pinky ring with an Asscher cut diamond adds a layer of sophistication that's both classic and subversive."

At her atelier in Copenhagen, designer Orit Elhanati has also nodded to the trend, dotting the square escutcheon of a yellow gold ring with black diamonds as part of a new collection for men. Diamonds – this time white and heart-shaped – also top a duo of white or yellow gold Akh pinky rings by Venyx, the brand of Eugenie Niarchos.

Glenn Spiro authored a line of Pepple rings in reaction to an artwork he spotted while in the South of France. "During a visit to St Paul de Vence a couple of years ago, I saw a wonderful sculpture by Alberto Giacometti," Spiro recalls of the inspiration behind his rings that encircle the pinky organically, each set with rare diamonds of kite or lozenge-cuts.

"Signet rings are a classic piece of jewellery," explains Celine Assimon. "Traditionally used to sign important documents, they became heirlooms and today they're mostly worn as a personal style statement." The CEO of De Beers Jewellers highlights one of the brand's recent creations: in white gold, De Beers' RVL signet ring features parallel lines of white diamonds. "We wanted our signet rings to feel fresh and modern and to convey confidence," says Assimon.

It's a sentiment shared by Beirut-based jeweller Nada Ghazal, who

loves wearing a ring on her pinky. "I sometimes choose a ring from the same collection for my ring finger, so both are side by side." From her eponymous line, Ghazal might select a "My Muse" oval ring that sparkles with champagne-hued diamonds, or one in matching yellow gold with a showering of bright green tsavorites. Conventional designs these are not – much like the directional Oblong rings by Fernando Jorge – on view at Jorge's new Mayfair pied-à-terre, these come with a choice of colourful gems, among them green nephrite jade and midnight blue lapis lazuli.

Elsewhere, new pinky rings are somewhat closer to their archetype. Classic creations can be found at Garrard and at Tiffany & Co – the square signet rings at the latter are finished in silver contrasted with yellow gold. Storybook-like drawings decorate rings by Theo Fennel, whose team of artisans use hand-engraving to paint a wild menagerie, and by Cece Jewellery's Cece Fein Hughes, who uses hand-enamelling. Meanwhile Roman jeweller Bulgari specialises in classic pinky rings ennobled with ancient coins.

But no matter the direction of the pinky ring, there is clearly something empowering about an object so vested with heritage across the centuries. Each one has the potential to tell a story. "Wearing a pinky ring for me is a sign of power and self-love," Ghazal states of hers. "It signifies courage, independence and self-reliance." ●

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