



FEATURED DESIGNER «

LUDMILA NAVARRO

Fine artist and jewelry designer Ludmila Navarro creates an unconventional, upcycling line of jewelry, encapsulating an international and empowering spirit. Individually handmade by Ludmila herself, the collection consists of statement rings, necklaces, bracelets and brooches. The eye catching and dynamic pieces, often featuring nature, skulls and animals, are "A tribute to all those women who know what they want."

Interview by Stephanie USZUBA

SW: How did you transition into designing jewelry from fine art? Did you always want to be a jewelry designer?

LM: I did not want to be a jewelry designer, but I used to wear a lot of jewelry and accessories and, usually, it was quite difficult to find the right ones. The transition was in a very natural way. In fact, I think it was an evolution in my career. I always had a strong desire to explore two-dimensional spaces with different volumes and, as you know, all is susceptible to being aesthetically manipulated. At the same time, fashion jewelry interested me always and I wanted to give it an artistic approach and to occupy the right limits of the world of art. I started to create, first, jewelry for me because it did not exist.

SW: Define your Jewelry.

LM: This is quite complicated. Of course, first, it is a clearly masculine jewelry. I think that it's the result of mixing with different colors, materials, shapes, textures, compositions, etc., during a lot of time, and finally applying all the techniques and a lot of drama in a jewel. Otherwise, I believe in sustainable and eco work. For that reason, I usually work with vintage jewelry and diamonds and I practice up cycling, of course.

SW: Where are you based? Tell us a bit about your upbringing.

LM: I am from Zaragoza, north of Spain, where I grew up. I actually lived between there and Barcelona, where I studied History of Art and Fine Arts. I painted for a long time and I also worked as a fashion illustrator for a very well-known French fashion magazine before starting with jewelry design.

SW: Where do you draw your inspirations and your passion?

LM: First, since I was a girl, at my parents' house art was very present daily. That's why I usually said that art was like a friend for me, it always accompanied me. Then, at school, and finally at university, my curiosity and sensitivity brought me to jewelry design. In fact, it was a quite long process. I also worked as a fashion illustrator for a fashion magazine for more than ten years. It was, definitely, a point of inflection.

SW: Your jewelry has international vision. Which locations in the world have been your strongest influences?

LM: Thank God I travel very often and I have been almost everywhere. I love cultures and societies. For me, they are a great source of inspiration. I try to do a mix among all of them. In fact, I love to mix influences. I do not think I have a stronger influence, but if I had to choose one it would probably be Asia. Such a millennial culture...

SW: What materials do you use in your jewelry and where do they come from?

LN: I usually use quartz and crystals of a very high quality to create the structure of the piece, which is always gold plated. Then I work with vintage elements and jewelry that I find everywhere I go: auctions, antiquarians, markets, second-hand markets, flea markets, on-line shopping, etc. I try to get vintage elements with each value as an antique or rare piece. I do luxury up-cycling. What it means is that I transform vintage jewelry into new jewelry of a better quality by means of an artistic process.

SW: Your personal style is very distinctive and unique, how would you define your style?

LN: Very complicated, also. Normally, it is something that I feel; it is just intuition. Usually, I do not think about my own style. I just try to be and to feel free. It's not just my own style, it is also my creation, as I suddenly think about the idea of "duality": it is very inspiring for me. Right now, I think that to create my own style requires a permanent exercise. I want to create a composition for jewelry that I can say is my personal style and it's far from ordinary fashion and it close to my feelings. It is a style made with soul.

SW: You have said your jewelry "are a tribute to those women who know what they want, who are seductive, free, powerful and unique." Do you believe that jewelry can empower a woman?

LN: Of course, *Truly! Definitely!* That is the history of the adornment. Let's think about the Tribes, the crowns of Kings and Queens... I listen. "Very often, this ring makes me happy, makes me feel beautiful, makes me feel stronger, makes me feel taller etc." Anyway, my intention is just to provide a kind of awareness. All these women, all of us, we are power and uniqueness and when wearing one of my pieces, I just want them to be in contact with their inner power and to remember how wonderful that they are.

SW: It appears that you tell a story in the pieces you create, is that not? Does each piece have a meaning?

LN: For you yes, for me you see the finished work. In fact, each finished jewel is like a story by itself. For me, let's *Paint!* I discover the meaning during the process, meanwhile, I create the piece. When the jewel is in process, for me, it's like a game where trying, playing, testing, and everything can be possible. I just try to create a dialogue among the different elements that I use in the piece.

SW: Do you personalise any designs for your clients?

LN: Usually, and now it's happening increasingly often. Since I have a massive stock from all around the world of vintage elements, usually some clients ask me about a subject and I propose many projects to some extent bring me their own vintage jewelry or materials. During the last two years I made many very unconventional engagement rings as well.

SW: What is a typical day for you?

LN: I am an early bird! I wake up very early from 07 (just in the night, overall, for wedding) and I usually do a lot of things. I am a workaholic. I usually spend 2hrs of time in my studio where I do all of my jewels and I go to my atelier daily where I work with my favorite jewels. I am also involved in terms of social media and communication of my brand "Lacini - Unconventional Jewelry". I also do sport and yoga and nice time for my family: my little daughter and my husband, of course.

SW: What are your hobbies?

LN: First of all, I love to travel. Then, I love to read, listen, listen to music, I am a real music lover and I always listen to music while I work. Music inspires me a lot. I also love gardening. I am very lucky to have a big garden at home! I love flowers, so you may have understood looking my jewelry.

SW: Who do you admire?

LN: I am not a technician; I really admire many creative people, from any sector which is independent with their own criteria and which produce originality and does not care about what is politically correct. I also admire all those artists, from any culture or place, in love with their art. Actually, I also admire my mother, of course.

SW: Where was the last place you traveled to?

LN: Two weeks ago I was in Lisbon. A very charming city, quite unique and very inspiring.

SW: What are a few of your favorite designers?

LN: Fashion Designers: Alexander McQueen, Miuccia Prada, Jony Ive, Spitalo, Alessandro Mendini, Dries van Noten, Viktor & Rolf, Raf Simons, Lucy Meyer. Sometimes they are very different, but I love opinion and I love to mix their idea.

Industrial Designers: Philippe Starck and Andrei Fuksas **Jewelry Designers:** Ardenne NY and Etienne Desnoes

SW: If you could only wear one piece of jewelry for the rest of your life, which one would it be?

LN: A white shell ring which I wore recently. Each time I see it I remember how beautiful life is. I like to wear it on the same hand with another ring to produce a big contrast.