

# SOLITAIRE



THE FINE ART  
OF JEWELLERY

ASIA PACIFIC  
EDITION

**INSPIRED  
JEWELLERY**

Cartier  
Chanel  
Sarah Ho  
Lynn Ban

**HAUTE HOROLOGY**

New Tourbillons  
Oriental Dials

**TRENDING**

Conch Pearls  
Snake Jewellery  
Lucky Gemstones

**PLUS**

Blake Lively on  
Style

85

October - November 2016



THE  
ORIENTAL  
EDITION



## CONCH PEARLS

by Preeti Agarwal

### CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

*Peony earrings* in 18k white gold, diamonds, conch pearls, and mother of pearl inlay, SARAH HO

*Atollo conch precious pendant*, ALESSIO BOSCHI

*Enchanted Orchid ring* in conch pearl, ANNA HU



Amongst a sea of pearl varieties, there lies an unusual combination of rarity and beauty. The conch pearl, often referred to as the pink pearl, and its naturally-occurring features are intriguing. Produced in shells of Caribbean queen conch molluscs, this pearl is not a result of layered nacre but of calcareous concentration, thus making this gem incomparable.

Although available in a variety of colours such as white, cream, beige, yellow, and brown, the conch pearl's pink shade is most coveted. Its flame-like surface that marks the identity of each pearl leaves no two conch pearls exactly the same. Commonly found in baroque shapes, the final form of the pearl depends on the shape of the stimulant and the movement of the shell itself in the water.

Yet, the most desired shape is spherical, while other shapes include oval, teardrop, and triangle. Conch pearls are typically found in an average of 3 to 10 carats, with rare exceptions as large as 45 carats. Ironically, the very feature that makes the conch pearl enticing also proves to be its weakness. Due to its organic origin, the pearl's pink colour tends to fade upon prolonged exposure to the sun.

Fishing for conch meat for local consumption is now a restricted practice to save the mollusc from extinction. Found only in the waters of the Caribbean and Bermuda, these pearls are fished by local fisherman. Only one conch pearl is said to be found in 10,000 to 20,000 shells, with only 10 percent of gem quality. Due to the extremely limited supply of these natural pearls, it's not surprising that conch pearls are imitated using other gemstones like pink coral, or glass and other artificial materials.

# LIKE DROPS OF SORBET

THE EXOTIC  
LUSTRE OF  
CONCH PEARLS



A complete parure of earrings, necklace and ring featuring conch pearls and diamonds, MARIA GASPARI







AVAILABLE IN  
A VARIETY OF  
COLOURS, THE  
CONCH'S UNUSUAL  
PINK SHADE IS  
MOST COVETED

Conch pearl and  
diamond bracelet and  
earrings, SCHREINER  
FINE JEWELLERY



## CONCH PEARLS ARE COMMONLY PAIRED WITH OTHER PINK GEMSTONES

With a growing worldwide fondness towards shades of pinks in the world of jewellery, such as rose gold or morganites, the conch pearl is catching attention. Its delicate colour and texture appeals to designers and consumers alike. The pearl's toughness makes it easy to mount and set. Designing a necklace or a ring is easier around one rare conch pearl in the centre, but trying to source a matching set for a pair of earrings has been an uphill task for many.

Conch pearls were initially reserved for royalty. Their first recorded jewellery use date back to 1839, followed by appearances during the Art Nouveau period. After decades of absence, the pink beauties are making a comeback of late. Jewellers like Schreiner, Anna Hu, Bogh Art, and Hemmerle, as well as industry grands like Mikimoto, have produced some stunning jewels.

Mostly studded in an all-diamond approach, conch pearls have also been paired with other pink gemstones like sapphires and morganites. Occasionally,

we see them being used alongside various shades of pearls, or with bright gemstones like Paraiba tourmalines. But most of the time, it is set in white or rose gold, adding a gentle shimmer to the jewellery.

Like most pearls, the size, shape, and colour play an important role in the price of the conch. But in this rare case, the addition of distinct flame patterns adds a substantial element in the overall pricing.

Amongst the many attempts to culture conch pearls, an effort in the first decade of 21st century was the most successful so far. Dr Héctor Acosta-Salmón and Dr Megan Davis have managed to produce cultured pink pearls without sacrificing the life of the queen conch in the process. Perhaps this means that one day in the future, cultured conch pearls will be readily available to jewellery lovers all over the world. 💎

### CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

Conch and quahog  
pearl necklace, BOGH  
ART

Necklace in 18k white  
gold with conch  
pearl and diamonds,  
MIKIMOTO

Conch pearl and  
diamond hair comb,  
BOGH ART

Conch pearl and  
diamonds ring,  
MIKIMOTO

Conch pearl and  
diamond *Flower*  
ring. Image courtesy  
of TIANCHENG  
INTERNATIONAL

*Ocean* ring in Paraiba  
tourmaline, conch  
pearl, cultured Pearl,  
and yellow diamond,  
Image courtesy  
of TIANCHENG  
INTERNATIONAL

Earrings with conch  
pearls, spinels, white  
gold, and copper,  
HEMMERLE