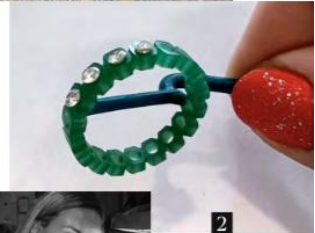




“When people redesign, they think it’s cheaper, but they should know there’s a lot of labor to it.”



BAND AID

A designer turns a luxe but dated diamond cluster ring into a sleek geometric stacking piece

BY EMILI VESILIND



When designer Elise Thompson, founder of New York City-based fine jewelry brand Mejia Jewelry, saw the ring her client brought in to have her dismantle—and use the diamonds in an entirely new, custom-made wedding ring—she paused. “I thought the vintage ring was pretty awesome,” Thompson recalls. “And I was like, ‘Are you sure you want to take this apart?’”

The original ring (1), topped with a smattering of small diamonds of different sizes set in a tight cluster, had a certain midcentury glamour to it. But the client, who’s in her mid-20s and inherited the ring from her grandmother, simply said, “I’m never gonna wear it.”

The pair’s collaboration on the completely new piece began with Thompson sketching out three different designs for stacking-type rings. Her client ultimately chose an eternity ring (a band-style ring encircled in

diamonds) composed of connected round bezels (seamless metal borders, usually encasing a gemstone).

Thompson first carved the ring in hard wax—harnessing an ancient jewelry-making process called lost wax casting (2)—and as she began filing the tiny circular bezels, “one of the bezels became an octagon shape, and I was like, ‘Ooh, I kind of like this better.’ I texted my client a photo of the shape with a note saying, ‘What do you think?’ She loved it and we went with the octagons.”

Initially challenged by the different-size diamonds she had to work with, the designer ultimately measured each diamond and organized them on double-sided tape from smallest to largest (3)—then used only the largest stones in the final style. “When people redesign, they think it’s cheaper, but they should know there’s a lot of labor to it,” she laughs. But Thompson, a mother of two who founded her artisanal jewelry brand 16 years ago, says she finds working on custom pieces gratifying and adds, “I love involving my clients in the process.”

The final 14k yellow gold ring (4) boasts a matte satin finish but is glossy on the inside, for smooth on-and-offs. The bride, who got hitched to her honey in September, loves the ring, says Thompson, especially because she played a role in its creation. “She was excited about the process, and about our collaboration of ideas.”

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