

Interesting, rule-breaking and ultra-original best describes the jewelry and personal style of Wendy Brandes.



I'm totally infatuated with Brandes, previous editor (*Wall Street Journal*, *CNN* and *People.com*) who is now living her "entrepreneurial dream." "It was like a staging area for me. I doubt I would have ever gone from journalism directly into jewelry. Still, there was some drama involved in starting my jewelry company." Brandes' personal blog "Wear What You Want" documents the jewelry designer's wardrobe adventures. On the topic of her blog, Brandes says "I chose ["Wear What You Want"](#) as my blog's motto because I want people to know the style rules ...and then break them! Forget the self-appointed fashion police who snark on anyone who shows a little creativity. If you're going to a party, it's just a few hours of your life. Don't wear a [boring black dress](#) because you're scared of standing out. Be the belle of the ball, not a wallflower!" Brandes' jewelry has landed on celebrities like Britney Spears and even debuted on Kim Cattrall in "Sex and The City 2" in which Samantha was rocking a pair of Brandes' snakelike Cleopatra earrings. One of my all-time favorite pieces is the Marie Antoinette Ring, a 27-carat amethyst surrounded by a ivylike setting of tsavorites and 18k gold.

When did you begin designing jewelry?

The first pieces I ever designed were my own wedding band and engagement ring in 2001. I started my jewelry business in 2005 ... and, shortly thereafter, redesigned that engagement ring.

Before your vocation in design, you were a journalist; tell me about that.

I was an editor at Dow Jones News Service, the *Wall Street Journal*, *CNN* and *People.com*. I do miss it. That's part of why I started a blog.

Has your days of being a journalist had any affect on your newest venture of being a designer?

Social media has been a big part of my business since 2007. I definitely wouldn't have been so committed to that strategy if I hadn't had my journalism experience. And designing the jewelry feels a lot like editing to me. I do the designs but have other people manufacture the pieces. Once again, I'm bringing diverse people and skill sets together to present a coherent idea.

What is your design aesthetic?

I'm influenced by antiquity and addicted to mechanics and other unusual details. I have rings and necklaces that [pull apart](#), [unscrew](#), [whistle](#) and [swivel](#). Even if a piece doesn't have a mechanical element, I still incorporate a happy surprise. [My Oak Leaf pendant is a good example](#). The back is as beautiful as the front.

If your jewelry could land on anyone's body, who's would it be?

New Oscar winner and mom-to-be Natalie Portman needs to have the [Black Swan version of my Cleves ring](#). Her fiancée should buy it for her as a push present!

What are the essential items of jewelry no woman should be without?

A pair of hoops, a petite pendant for every day and a big cocktail ring for evening.

Any exciting projects we can expect in the future?

I'm about to launch my diffusion line, WendyB by Wendy Brandes. And, indeed, a book based on my blog is in the works.

What's been the most memorable moment in your design career?

Celebrity-wise, it has to be [Britney Spears "borrowing" a ring in 2007](#).