

# ECHO OF DECO

RALPH LAUREN REVISITS ART DECO WITH  
SPARKLING WATCHES AND STUNNING JEWELS

BY LAURIE KAHLE

With its strong rectilinear symmetry and clean geometric forms, Art Deco design fused modern with classic, au courant with timeless. Since the term was coined following the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts) in Paris, Art Deco has managed to stay relevant and revered while other design trends have faded into obscurity. The movement ushered in a prolific era of artisanship in decorative objects and fashion accessories, revolutionized the way women dressed, and transformed architecture around

the world, particularly in New York where Deco skyscrapers remain idealized landmarks. Nearly 100 years later, Deco continues to influence our early-21st-century aesthetic from interior design to fashion, and, yes, even watches. Designer Ralph Lauren has long found creative inspiration in the glamorous Deco era—from designing Robert Redford's suits for the 1974 film "The Great Gatsby" to his fall 2011 women's collection featuring svelte, glossy black silhouettes punctuated with scarlet Chinoiserie accents to the latest 867 watches, now updated for 2012 with sparkling diamonds on the square bezels.

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02:2012 | WATCHJOURNAL.COM



Ralph Lauren 867 watch



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— GUY CHATILLON



Ralph Lauren 867  
watch in white gold

“The new Ralph Lauren 867 watches highlight the geometric elegance and timeless sophistication of the Art Deco era,” says Guy Chatillon, CEO of Ralph Lauren Watch & Jewelry Co. “These timepieces feature distinct design elements: square cases of slim and traditional proportions, dials adorned with a series of concentric squares and an eclectic mix of Roman and Arabic numerals, as well as a classic palette of black and white, which all recall an Art Deco sensibility.”

The addition of diamonds in single and double rows effectively ups the glamour quotient of the elegant 867 watch design. The single-row version intensifies the radiance of the stones by framing them in glossy black, while the double-row version sparkles with diamonds on the lugs in addition to a single rose-cut gem set on the crown. According to Chatillon, diamonds are not only a girl's best friends. “It's not necessarily a feminine embellishment,” he says. “Diamonds can also make a powerful masculine statement. The Ralph Lauren 867 watch is about bold geometric design yet with subtly glamorous adornments that make it timeless and unisex.”

The timepieces embody tradition and craftsmanship with understated 27.5-mm-wide cases,



Ralph Lauren 867  
watch in white gold  
with guilloché



silver opaline dials, defined black numerals, and some models featuring meticulous gemsetting and elaborate hand-guided guilloché engraving. The slim, elegant profile is possible due to the 2.1-mm-thick, ultra-flat manual-winding RL430 movement developed for Ralph Lauren by Piaget, which has specialized in ultra-thin mechanical movements for more than half a century.

While classical, the watch's design is an original and modern expression of Deco style rather than a revival of a vintage piece. "The thin silhouette, smaller proportions and minimal yet refined aesthetic of Deco watch designs are all elements that can be reinterpreted for



Ralph Lauren 867 watch in white gold with diamonds and black frame



Ralph Lauren Modern Art Deco earrings

modern times," explains Chatillon. "The juxtaposition of the classical dimensions of the case with its wide alligator leather strap, or the combining of Arabic and Roman numerals, give a contemporary take on the look of a time-honored dress watch. It's about mixing tradition with modernity."

Some have attributed the return of classicism and simplicity in watch design to the dismal economic conditions of recent years. Such retraction and uncertainty, it is reasoned, prompted renewed interest in quality and lasting value. "We have observed in these times that people are returning to fundamentals—seeking classic yet unique watches with the essential functions, quality, authenticity and a style that endures," says Chatillon. "These values can be reinterpreted through Art Deco influences, focusing on precious materials, simplicity and clean lines—making for an elegant watch with a genuine yet contemporary presence."

Still, the Art Deco period is known more for fabulous jewelry than for watches. The Great Depression overlapped with the

Deco era, which lasted through the 1930s, yet despite the economic hardship, the period emerged as a Golden Age for jewelry design.

Indeed, it was a Boucheron black enamel bracelet appointed with cabochon rubies, emeralds and sapphires that captured the coveted Grand Prix at the 1925 Paris Exposition. Embraced by René Lalique, Cartier and scores of other visionaries, bold geometric Art Deco jewelry referenced Egyptian, Oriental and other non-Western motifs, often using semiprecious stones, such as onyx, jade and lapis lazuli.

Ralph Lauren's latest fine jewelry collection offers a contemporary tribute to those vintage masterpieces. Much like the period jewels that inspired them, these thoroughly modern adornments are handcrafted in Italy, France and Switzerland using traditional fine jewelry craftsmanship techniques such as the lost-wax casting method and intricate settings. Opaque green agate and black onyx are paired with emeralds, diamonds and 18-karat white and rose gold to striking effect. One extra-wide cuff, for example, spans the forearm. The gleaming band of white gold is appointed with geometric shapes—bars, a square and semi-circle—rendered in rose gold, green agate, and 5.7 carats of shimmering diamonds.



Ralph Lauren Modern Art Deco necklace

Earrings sweep the shoulders with linked diamond-set geometric shapes suspending sleek black onyx drops in circular or teardrop forms.

Of course, at Ralph Lauren, Art Deco influences extend from jewelry and watches to fashion and home décor; in fact, the brand is famous for marketing a complete lifestyle, carefully attuned to its namesake's exacting vision. With its repeatedly resurging popularity, Deco once again proves its universal appeal and longevity. "Deco is an aesthetic that has transcended time and newer design principles," says Chatillon. "It stems from an era that embraced modernity and functionality, elegance and luxury. These are timeless ideals that are as much sought after today as they ever were."

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Clothing from the Ralph Lauren men's collection