

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, STYLISH HOTEL PROPERTIES ARE BECOMING HOME TO **A NEW BREED** OF RETAILER, SWAPPING 50-CENT POSTCARDS FOR \$5,000 JEWELS

By Michele Meyer

Sig Ward, a Manhattan Beach, Calif.-based jewelry designer, scored a coup at a recent trunk show in Hawaii. She sold \$34,000 worth of earrings, opal and diamond chains, and a bangle to a local resident, who dropped by on her way to the gym. (She never made it.)

"She wasn't coming to see me or the jewelry," says Ward, who also sold \$27,000 of jewelry to a Japanese customer that week. "You just never know—and the shopper never knows."

The most surprising aspect of those sales? The less-than-traditional location: Makamae at Four Seasons Resort Lanai at Manele Bay in Hawaii. The boutique was designed and is curated by Seaside Luxe, a Los Angeles company specializing in high-end resort retail.

"We're not your airport souvenir shop," says Michelle Roland, the resort's retail director. "Our guests expect the very best."

If you haven't visited a luxury hotel in a while, it's time to check out the shops—not to stock up on sundries, but to scope out your growing and undeniably strong competition. Among the Oscar de la Renta floral caftans, fringed Lanvin clutches, and Jimmy Choo flat sandals, you'll find top jewelry lines—as well as lessons on marketing and merchandising.

TAKE IT TO THE PEOPLE

While upscale hoteliers have offered a dusty vitrine or two of jewelry over the years, it took the 2009 arrival of a Seaside Luxe shop at Four Seasons Resort Hualalai in Kona on Hawaii (the Big Island) to open retailers' eyes. Seaside Luxe's subsequent success with 32 stores across seven resorts—and about \$30 million in annual revenue—is a testament to the power of top-tier travelers' pocketbooks.

HOTELS



Makamae at the
Four Seasons
Resort Lanai



Boom

“People stroll in wearing a bathing suit, holding a piña colada. Everything’s so relaxed.”

—Kimberly McDonald



Necklace with 27.15 ct. opal in 14k gold with 1.07 ct. t.w. diamonds; **\$12,000**; **Rock & Gems**, Manhattan Beach, Calif.; 310-871-5360; rockandgems.us



Stop It Right Now X choker in gold-plated brass; **\$375**; **Jennifer Fisher Jewelry**, NYC; 888-255-0640; jenniferfisherjewelry.com



Jennifer Fisher 14k gold XL reverse burnish white diamond cuff with monogram and date; **\$9,000**



Kimberly McDonald earrings in a window display at the Seaside Luxe boutique at the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai

Now jewelers are hot on the trail.

Ward reaches U.S. travelers via three Four Seasons locations in Hawaii, plus another in Palm Beach, Fla., and Europeans at the Viceroy Anguilla in the Caribbean; the hotels are her only points of sale beyond her website (rockandgems.us).

Designer Kimberly McDonald racked up more than \$1 million in sales at hotels last year. Her jewels recently popped up at boutiques at Four Seasons resorts in Hawaii, Lanai, and Maui.

By timing her 2011 bridal debut to New York Fashion Week and renting a suite at the hip Standard High Line hotel, jewelry designer Anna Sheffield connected with top editors, buyers, and fashionistas who were staying and attending parties at the hotel. “The Standard...has its finger on culture’s pulse,” says Sheffield.

Savvy designers have become traveling salespeople whose Instagram feeds double as marketing tools, tantalizing prospective clients. More important, moving trunk shows, pop-up shops, and meet-and-greets have changed the way jewelry sells. As Roland notes, these outlets allow retailers to introduce lines without costly commitments, while designers can court a well-heeled new audience through one-on-one exchanges.

“The consumer feels more compelled to buy on the spot when the designer is present,” says Amanda Gizzi, public relations director for Jewelers of America. “Being able to ask, ‘Why and how did you make it?’—they’re buying an emotional experience that’s renewed every time they share the story.”

Plus, vacations provide ample time and set a mellow mood for impromptu and leisurely shopping sprees. “People stroll in wearing a bathing suit and sarong, holding a piña colada,” McDonald says. “Everyone’s so relaxed and, unlike at home, not trying to get out in time to pick up kids from soccer practice.”

GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE

Designer Jennifer Fisher had turned down numerous requests to sell at hotels until she was approached by Limited Edition, the sleek boutique in The Miami Beach Edition. “[Retail consultant] Kate Foley has a great eye and sense of style,” says Fisher, who also sells her celeb-coveted gold-plated brass earrings, cuffs, and chokers at Barneys and Net-a-Porter. The hotel “fits our modern aesthetic,” she adds, “and its guest demographic matches our jewelry’s demographic.”

Similarly, the beachside settings in Hualalai and Lanai suit McDonald’s eco-conscious recycled diamond and gold jewelry, carved onyx bowls, and agate bookends. “You’re surrounded by nature. There’s a very organic vibe between the stores and my stuff,” McDonald says. “While David Webb’s jewelry is lovely, the connection wouldn’t be as seamless.”

McDonald is so seduced by the Hawaiian vibe that, when she visits, she becomes a client herself, buying caftans, sandals, and sunglasses from lines previously unknown to her, such as Australia’s Camilla Franks and L.A.-based Brit Gregory Parkinson. “It goes back to the buyers’ edits,” she says. “They don’t overpopulate the store with merchandise, and they understand their client instead of trying to be all things to all people.”

AMP UP THE EMOTIONAL FACTOR

Like Sheffield, you can stage a party at a nearby inn when guests reflecting your target market are expected. Arrange a VIP shopping experience for travelers, or place catalogs in rooms or lobby cases. “Look for the right partner with the right consumer demographic and sensibility,” Gizzi says. “Also think about the vacation mindset in planning your collaboration.”

While traditional jewelry stores located far from tourist haunts can’t import the sand or view, they can



Rock & Gems ring in red gold with 34.46 ct. purple chalcedony and 0.42 ct. t.w. diamonds; **\$4,600**

“The consumer feels more compelled to buy on the spot when the designer is present.”

— Amanda Gizzi

replicate the slower pace and serene setting, says Lee Ann Sauter, founder and CEO of Seaside Luxe LLC; her boutiques strive to evoke a luxurious living room, with sofas near the fitting rooms and ever-present flutes of Champagne. Consider creating a cozy corner where guests can relax over a cup of coffee or glass of wine. Train your associates to dial down their sales approach, heeding unhurried customers rather than launching promptly into a conversation about carats and karats. The vibe in the store should “make you want to hang out—and take everything home,” she adds.

Another way to mimic the service at your favorite hostelry: Make like a concierge. Arrange shopping or museum packages for guests at fine hotels, or offer to accessorize fashion shows at other like-minded properties, with displays featuring gems and jewels credited to your store. Consider placing jewelry pieces in a museum lobby to complement a particular exhibit, cohosting charity events, and providing accessories for runway shows, Gizzi says. “It’s a no-brainer partnership,” she says, “a win-win for everyone involved.”

In cases like these, two vendors are often better than one. Jeweler Misahara, for instance, invites Parmigiani Fleurier to sell its timepieces along with Misahara’s signature green diamond, emerald, and yellow gold necklaces at its shop in New York City’s Plaza Hotel.

As part of the Happy Suite Diamonds package at the Mandarin Oriental in Geneva, guests are invited to Chopard’s private atelier. And Piaget watch buyers at Florida’s Bal Harbour Shops receive a free treatment at The Spa at Mandarin Oriental in Miami. In another promotion at the Miami hotel one evening, each guest received a gold key, one of which unlocked a Judith Ripka display case housing a sterling silver and 18k gold Montana ring.

Above all, listen to your customers’ stories. If they’re out-of-towners, identify pieces that will remind them of the destination and experience, Gizzi says: “The beauty of jewelry is, our hearts guide our purchases.” ■

JCK **5**

BE THEIR GUEST

Ways jewelry brands have enticed top-tier travelers:

1 Mexico City-born sisters and Andhra Neen designers Annette and Phoebe Stephens created a six-piece capsule collection exclusively for **The Beverly Hills Hotel** last year. Their rose quartz, alpaca, and brass handmade clutches, cuffs, necklaces, and rings replicate the hotel’s pink-wash walls and palm-frond wallpaper.

2 At the \$25,000-per-night Jewel Suite at **The New York Palace** hotel, designed by Beverly Hills jeweler Martin Katz, guests receive a complimentary diamond microband ring and a private consultation with a Martin Katz rep. They also sleep close to a floating (permanent) Lucite tableau of \$1.5 million in Katz’s jewels.

3 The **Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong** serves a \$1,400 afternoon tea for two from a vintage trunk that displays hundreds of carats of Graff diamonds, available to try on and buy. The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas previously offered a Bulgari shopping package; each month, a Bulgari watch was randomly placed under the pillow of one lucky guest who signed up for the package.

4 The **Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas** debuted a timepiece concierge service in 2013. Watch trade veteran Amit Dev Handa advises travelers on pieces and helps them acquire watches from 50 watch and 15 jewelry brands. Additionally, the hotel has hosted “Scotch and Watch” and “Wine and Watch” events, where guests sample special vintages and try on high-end watches in a casual setting.

5 Manhattan’s luxe boutique hotel **The Quin** offers an in-room “provisions cabinet” selling high-ticket jewelry, handbags, and cufflinks from Bergdorf Goodman. —MM