

# LOVE STORY

Meet Pamela Love, the style-setting Brooklynite behind the fierce jewelry line coveted by cool girls everywhere.

BY EMMA GRADY PHOTOGRAPHED BY DREW REILLY

“When I was little, I [remember noticing] my mom had holes in her ears and wore long earrings,” says Pamela Love, creative director and founder of the jewelry brand that over the past few years has made hers a fashionable household name. “I was obsessed with the fact people would puncture themselves to be able to wear jewelry.”

That memory left an indelible impression. Known for creating eye-catching and edgy pieces, Love, 31, uses animal iconography and universal symbols to channel what she describes as a “timeless kind of strength.” Talon cuff bracelets, arrowhead pendants and rosary necklaces with a dagger in place of a cross represent her diverse repertoire.

Born in Brooklyn, Love grew up in Florida and graduated from New York University with a degree in film production. Upon graduating, she styled photo shoots and assisted Italian painter Francesco Clemente while getting deeper into her longtime hobby—jewelry design. “I had been making pieces my whole life, but I wanted to take it to the next level and learn traditional skills,” explains Love of her turning point: the decision to apprentice with master jewelers in New York’s diamond district. “That’s when I fell in love with wax carving, which was really how I launched my line.”

Love’s unique pieces quickly attracted attention. Friends including Julia Restoin Roitfeld, daughter of former French *Vogue* editor-in-chief Carine Roitfeld,

wore her baubles; Love’s big break was a full-page feature in that very magazine. But it wasn’t until 2011, when the designer was named a CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund runner-up, that she first recalls thinking, “Maybe I’ll actually be able to do this full time (she was nominated again in 2012). In June, Love won the CFDA Swarovski Accessories Designer of the Year award. “It was surreal,” she says of the honor. “I didn’t think I was going to win.”

Today, Love’s statement jewelry is sold worldwide, from Barneys and Henri Bendel to Net-A-Porter and Shopbop. She has collaborated with illustrious fashion labels—Zac Posen, Suno, Topshop, Zadig & Voltaire and Nine West—and made her mark on pop culture, designing jewelry for HBO’s *True Blood*, a rosary for Lady Gaga and a collection with Spike Jonze for Opening Ceremony. Never the conformist, Love presented her Spring/Summer 2013 collection at New York Fashion Week with a pop-up tattoo parlor where visitors received actual ink inspired by her designs.

The effortlessly cool, striking brunette is known to regularly rock ripped jeans, vintage T-shirts, motorcycle boots and leather jackets. “My style is a little bohemian and a little tough,” says Love, who last year married illustrator Matthew Jamison Nelson in Montauk, New York, wearing a custom dress by her best friend, designer Mara Hoffman.

“I feel like a storyteller, and [pieces of] jewelry are artifacts in that story,” she says. For Fall/Winter 2013, that tale is



about secret societies and the iconography of cults. One of her favorite designs from that collection is her Oculus Ray earrings, which resemble eyes and have silver rays shooting out from the back of the ear. “We do everything domestically, with 90 percent of it being done in my studio in Chelsea,” says Love.

“It’s important to have things done by hand.”

Though her career trajectory has hardly been a straight one, Love is completely committed to her craft. “Becoming my profession didn’t ruin it for me,” she says. “It only heightened my obsession with making jewelry and my dedication to it.” *EF*