

AN INDEPENDENT WOMAN





In this photograph by Cecil Beaton, Doris Duke is wearing the pair of pearl bracelets (Fig. 22) on one wrist, as was the custom in the early 1930s.

AN INDEPENDENT WOMAN:

Doris Duke's Jewelry from the 1930s

In 1933, when Doris Duke turned twenty-one, she took a controlling interest in her affairs, from financial matters to her personal life, and the change is certainly reflected in the jewelry she wore. She now preferred important diamond and precious gemstone jewelry from important jewelers. With her mother as an expert guide, she shopped at prominent jewelry *maisons*, such as Cartier and other establishments that catered to an elite clientele and offered only the finest gemstones and designs.

In the early part of the decade, Doris Duke's taste was influenced by her mother's jewels, which featured the two-dimensional, rectilinear art deco patterns of the 1920s. By the end of the 1920s, the all-white diamond look reigned

supreme, and imaginative designs made it possible to convert one piece of jewelry into one or more different pieces. Within a few years, that style evolved into a bolder more sculptural look. In 1935, Doris Duke and her husband, James Cromwell, traveled extensively in the East on their honeymoon. This trip would have a major influence on her taste for the rest of her life. She became enchanted with India—its people, architecture, decorative arts, and jewelry. It would inspire her to build Shangri La, her magnificent home in Hawaii, and to begin collecting the arts of the East. It was also at this time that her Western jewelry choices began to favor those with Eastern influences. This new direction signaled her independence, her beginning to assert herself as her own person. No longer under the direct influence of her mother's taste, from then on she would buy only what she liked.

Doris Duke, like many of her contemporaries of similar social and financial position, was surrounded by fine things and wore the latest fashions. Whereas many of her peers owned objects for status rather than artistic value, Doris Duke chose to surround herself with articles of artistic importance, from porcelains, glass, oriental carpets, and furniture to her jewelry. Her upbringing and resources enabled her to develop a more refined taste than most. She trained her "eye" to distinguish between what was good and what was mediocre. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in her collection of jewelry.

31. Emerald bead necklace

c. 1935

Emerald beads, cabochon emerald, diamonds, silver, gold

Approximate weight of beads: 120.00 carats

Although mined in Colombia, emeralds have a history with India; they were the stones favored by the maharajahs, who only wanted the best.



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32. Double strand emerald bead necklace

c. 1935

Emerald beads, cabochon emerald, diamonds,
silver, gold

Approximate weight of beads: 280.00 carats

To find one strand of emerald beads of high quality
is rare; to find two such strands is remarkable.



33. Cabochon emerald, pearl, and diamond clip brooch

Cartier, New York, no. 54/52481

1934

Cabochon emeralds, diamonds, pearls, gold, platinum

H: 2 ⁷/₁₆ inches

On December 31, 1934, Doris Duke purchased a bracelet at Cartier. On January 11, 1935, she had Cartier convert it to a plaque brooch. In 1954, she asked Cartier to alter it, yet again, to a double-clip pin.



34. Cabochon emerald, pearl, and diamond bracelet

Cartier, New York, no. 2717519

1934

Cabochon emeralds, diamonds, pearls, gold, platinum

L: 6 ¹/₂ inches

This bracelet was purchased by Doris Duke at Cartier, New York, on December 31, 1934. On January 11, 1935, the following work was done: "Mounting diamond motif as a bracelet, supplying pearls. Credit for pearls & clasp."



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35. Pair of diamond bracelets convertible to choker necklace

Cartier, New York, no. 3410

c. 1930

Diamonds, platinum

Length of one bracelet: 6 ¾ inches

Length of one bracelet: 7 ¼ inches

Length of choker: 13 ¼ inches

Unlike her mother who loved large diamonds, Doris Duke seems to have focused more on the design of her jewelry. On these bracelets, the diamonds, while lavish, are subordinate to the severe, ice-like geometric design.



36. Pair of diamond clip brooches with double-clip fitting

Flato, New York

1942

Diamonds, gold, platinum

H: 2 inches

W: 3 ½ inches

Doris Duke purchased the clip brooches from Paul Flato on July 13, 1942, for \$10,000. They show the increasing flamboyance of the early 1940s and a rejection of the stark geometry of the art deco style.



37. Pair of diamond clip brooches with gold bangle fitting

Cartier, New York

1930

Diamonds, platinum, gold

Width of clip brooch: 2 ½ inches

On December 23, 1930, Nanaline Duke purchased the clip brooches with the gold bangle fitting from Cartier. There is evidence that later Nanaline may have given this piece as a wedding gift to Doris Duke when she married James Cromwell.



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38. Pair of diamond chandelier ear pendants

Cartier, New York

1937

Briolette diamonds, diamonds, platinum

H: 1 3/8 inches

Approximate weight of briolette diamonds: 12.00 carats.

Doris Duke purchased the ear pendants from Cartier, New York, on April 30, 1937, for \$4,950.

39. Pearl and diamond ear clips

Flato, New York

Pearls, diamonds, platinum

D: 3/4 inches

On January 2, 1940, Flato assembled the ear clips for Doris Duke Cromwell, noting, "Remounting your pearls and round diamonds and supplying necessary diamonds and pearls as a pair of platinum mounted ear clips."



40. Pair of diamond hair slides

Cartier, New York

1937

Diamonds, platinum

L: 2 inches

Like several of her pieces, these hair slides were converted from one form to another. On April 30, 1937, Doris Duke purchased a clip brooch/hair barrette from Cartier, New York, for \$1,900. At a later date, she had it changed into hair slides.



41. Lapis and gem-set vanity case

Cartier, New York no. 1479

1937

Lapis lazuli, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, enamel, gold

W: 2 inches

L: 3 ½ inches

The *nécessaire*, or vanity case, became a standard feminine accessory of the 1920s and 1930s, often embellished with Eastern motifs. The decoration on this vanity case with the central enamel decoration is reminiscent of Persian carpets. Doris Duke purchased it from Cartier, New York, on April 13, 1937, for \$2,500.



42. Diamond and rock crystal Taj Mahal clip brooch

c. 1935

Diamond, sapphires, black onyx, rock crystal, platinum, white metal

H: 1 1/8 inches

When Doris Duke and James Cromwell went on their honeymoon to India, they traveled to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. It was reported that when she saw the Mogul temple, she said, "I want one of those." Perhaps this brooch is a remembrance of their journey.



43. Diamond "junk" brooch

c. 1940

Diamonds, sapphires, ruby, platinum

H: 1 3/8 inches

Although glamorous in their own right, such little jewels as these were most likely of personal importance to Doris Duke.

