

# Cuff Love

Photograph by Ruven Afanador

A collection of artist-designed jewelry makes more than a fashion statement.

"Gold and precious gems are in many places the one form of wealth a woman can use to protect and enhance herself within the elaborate structure of patriarchy," Wangechi Mutu says. Mutu, right, is one of three artists who were asked to create a piece of jewelry for the Whitney Museum's annual Gala and Studio Party. Commissioned by Versace, this year's gala sponsor, the jewelry, including Mutu's elbow-length gold cuffs, a diamond-eyed deity-inspired pendant by Julian Schnabel and a ruby-encrusted pendant in the shape of a pair of lips by Marc Quinn, will be sold at a live auction during the Whitney dinner on Oct. 20. "I have long been a fan and enthusiast where art is concerned," says Donatella Versace, who, following in the footsteps of her brother Gianni, recently collaborated with the Dutch artist Tim Roeloffs on a series of printed fabrics for her women's collection. "Gianni was a true pioneer in that he blurred the boundaries between fashion and art — and fashion and music, and ballet, and celebrity, too." But like any monumental piece of bling, Mutu's bracelets, which are like those seen in north and central Kenya and in the past were often worn permanently as external, protective bone structures, can be interpreted as both shackle and adornment. "I wanted to create a sheath that ran the length of the wrist and arm," Mutu says, "that seemed as restraining and heavy in appearance as it was porous, shimmery and handsome." ALIX BROWNE

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