



FOR ARGENTOV JEWELRY
PHOTO RIGHT:
FOR ANDREY MIKHAYLOV

PORTRAITS of jewelry

BY EVGENY
LAPTEV

Interview: ANNA PINCHUK



A live image, giving rise to emotion, subtle interaction of the viewer and the object can expand the horizons of memory perception, establish contact and extend the time that is allotted for admiration and contains aesthetic pleasure that polishes the delicate perception of pieces of art. In our case, we are looked upon from the portraits by the soul of a precious object that contains in itself the energy of the artist and nature, enclosed in the form of jewelry. There is an opinion that the best way to show the purity of jewelry is to demonstrate it in the format of a video—a video shot by the best camera, best director and operator, that conveys dynamically all the nuances of the play of light on the surface of the metal, the depth of the color of the stone. It is quite difficult to capture a precious product in one picture. To meet the aesthetic standard and not to devalue is not an easy task for the masters of jewelry photography. One of them, EVGENY LAPTEV, was recently interviewed by commercial artist Anna Pinchuk.



EVGENY, HOW DID YOU COME
TO TAKING PICTURES OF JEWELRY,
ESPECIALLY AFTER A RATHER SUCCESSFUL
CAREER IN FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY?

→ It is quite simple: jewels cannot talk... Just kidding, never mind. Prior to this period I had a long-term cooperation with many fashion and virtually all men's magazines... In fact, it all began in 2006 when the designer Victor Bravarenko and I organized Studio *Alba-Longa*, and at some point we were invited for negotiations at the *Junwex* jewelry exhibition, then held in Sokolniki. Negotiations come to nothing, and we left to wander around the huge exhibition. We were very impressed and, in the end, decided to tackle this market. It was so addictive that it quickly became the focus of our work.

TAKE A RING, FOR EXAMPLE. WHEN YOU LOOK AT IT,
WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU SEE?

→ In reality, jewelry photography is different from other areas of photography only in one nuance, which I will explain later. What does any photographer who shoots fashion, interiors, landscapes, or portraits look at? First and foremost, he is looking for—and creating—harmony in the frame. Often this is pompously called “stylistics”. In addition, in jewelry photography, at least in the frames where there are no objects except for the self-sufficient product, harmony (stylistics) is called just “camera angle”. Therefore, first I try to find the most harmonious angle for the product, I make a decision about what is important and what will have to be sacrificed. So, it's like in shooting nude models—evaluation of lines, bends, transitions to one another, the harmonious positioning of the foreground and background... the main thing is the choice of acceptable compromises. As to the technique, as I mentioned above, there is just one difference of jewelry shooting from the other areas of photography, and this is the lack of ready-made equipment with which the photographer can achieve a good result. In our case,

we have to simulate the play of stones and make the metal glister, if only enough for it not to look like plastic. So everyone who takes photos of jewelry is forced to come up with something of their own, use self-made light-forming devices and equipment, and you have to constantly improve not only stylistically but also technically.

As for whether you like the product or not... I will once again make an analogy with photography of people: regardless of my own sympathies, I must do everything I can—after all, I am engaged in a creative trade and am not a free artist.



RINGS WITH
A CHUNKY TOP
AND A THIN RAIL
require special attention
when choosing
perspective. Often the
visual fusion of these ring
parts distorts the shape
of the product.
FOR IZMESTIEV
DIAMONDS

PERHAPS IT'S A NAIVE QUESTION,
AND NEVERTHELESS: WHY
ESSENTIALLY ARE PHOTOGRAPHS
OF JEWELRY MADE?

→ I think, pictures of products are taken, first of all, for the sake of memory—after the products are sold, there will be nothing left. There will be nothing to show to the customer, nothing in your portfolio. Heritage, in a word. But that is just prose. Moreover, if you are going to take photos of your product, then you, as cliché as it may sound, should go to a decent photographer, who will appreciate you as an artist, will not mess up your idea and will highlight the beauty of the product.

THERE IS AN OPINION
THAT IN PHOTOSHOP
YOU CAN DRAW
ANYTHING. While this may
be true, it should
be understood that people
prefer «live» images
in terms of lights and shades,
so correspondingly,
they sell better.
FOR KONSTANTIN
CHAYKIN



TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS “PROSE”. AN ARTIST
JEWELER IS ONE THING, BUT THERE IS ALSO A LARGE
JEWELRY BUSINESS...

→ Sure. Businesses need to sell jewelry. This is the time of “distance” sales. Furthermore, how can you sell them if you do not have any quality illustrations? It is necessary to post photos on your websites and on social media. There is an opinion that photos for catalogs can be just anything, as long as they are quick and cheap. However, it is important to understand the main requirement for such photos. I will ask you a clarifying question: what is it you are selling? Grams, carats? We in Russia have developed a tradition of selling gold by kilos. Moreover, the prestige of the company, in particular, is measured in kilograms of gold and silver processed per month. But what is jewelry actually? Kilograms or art? You are selling people emotions, right? Some believe that the main emotion is the joy of the fact of purchase.

True, times are tough. Nevertheless, imagine that the buyer has enough money for just one product, while there are many companies. Whose jewelry will he buy? The one that will give him more emotions, right? So why take pictures? Well, exactly for the reason that we are trying to convey emotions to the buyer remotely, the same emotion that was enclosed in the product by the designer. The cost of decent photography is not comparable to the lost profit.



ROUGH DIAMONDS
DO NOT LOOK AS
SPECTACULAR AS
POLISHED DIAMONDS,
which are obtained after gem
cutting, to accentuate the
texture of this stone it was
illuminated with more than
ten light sources.
FOR ALROSA.

WHAT IS IT IN PHOTOGRAPHY THAT HELPS YOU IMPROVE,
LOOK AT YOUR JOB FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE, MAKES YOU
SEARCH, EXPERIMENT?

→ In my case, it is simple. Assume there was a shooting that I particularly enjoyed: I could feel the harmony, and the light fell just as I wanted it to—altogether, it was brilliant! Precisely until the moment when I looked at the footage on the monitor and at the same time held the product in my hands. You come to the realization that even the best photo of jewelry is just a weaker copy; it does not convey how the jewelry glistens and shimmers... These are the moments that help me personally to go on, keep inventing something new in lighting, imitating that play in a static image.

THIS GRADUALLY AND QUITE LOGICALLY LEADS US
TO THE ISSUE OF VIDEO...

→ Yes, video. With proper implementation, this “emotional” difference between the original product and the video is much smaller than in

a similar comparison with static photography. Why is it that, with this obvious fact in mind, jewelry videos are so poorly developed? There are three reasons. First, neither photos nor videos themselves are of any value to the jewelry business. They acquire importance exclusively in conjunction with the ways of their publication and promotion,



SUCH
COMPOSITIONS
ARE USUALLY MADE
IN PHOTOSHOP,
*but real reflections make
a greater impression.*
FOR GRACE & YOUNG



in other words, in which way the photos and videos catch the eye of the potential buyer. Just a few years ago, there was only one way to distribute video, the TV. I see no sense in commenting on the costs of TV advertising. However, over the past few years, the speed of the internet has increased manifold, so a way of video distribution arose, and so did the demand for videos. The second reason, as in the case of jewelry photography, is that nobody produces the necessary equipment for macro video shooting. The most expensive computerized shooting systems that cost several million dollars stop working on objects 2-3 centimeters in size. Smoothness, focus transition, micro trembles and suchlike—there is a huge list of problems that equipment developers do not see the point in solving because of the very narrow market. No surprise that those rare examples of fascinating videos of jewelry that are made both here and abroad are taken by the same handmade

equipment designed by enthusiasts.

However, the main reason is that the production of advertisements in the jewelry industry mainly relies on the *Photoshop*. Therefore, it is not important how the photographer shoots, the main thing is how the retoucher will “draw” it later, and this is a common approach. When shooting video, you immediately need to perfectly illuminate the object, but there are almost no such specialists left.

THE CLIPS I HAVE SEEN
ARE CLEARLY NOT CHEAP.
DOES THIS MEAN THAT MASS-
MARKET SHOULD NOT HAVE
VIDEO ADVERTISEMENTS
IN SIGHT JUST YET?

→ Why not? I, for example, have never seen TV advertising anything “exclusive”, and advertisements of mass-market companies are quite common. Besides, except for advertisements with complex drama, there are other solutions, both effective and not too expensive. *Instagram* clips are made much faster and therefore cheaper. The age of photography as an illustration of a product is coming to an end, and video presentations have long been used in other business sectors. I think that in the very near future we will see the practical application of holography and other innovative technologies in advertising. ■



MELANCHOLIA
Julia Bazanova

A LARGE NUMBER OF LIGHT SOURCES CREATES VOLUME,
which allows to show the excellent work of the master.
FOR YULIA BAZANOVA, SCULPTURE «MELANCHOLIA»

CONTROL OF DEPTH
AND DEGREE OF BACKGROUND
BLUR with the help of special optics.
*this method allows you to draw
attention to certain details.*



FOR ARGENTOV JEWELRY



ANOTHER
EXAMPLE OF
"DRAWING
LIGHTS" PHOTOS
*with minimal
application of
Photoshop.*