

SOLITAIRE

THE FINE ART OF JEWELLERY

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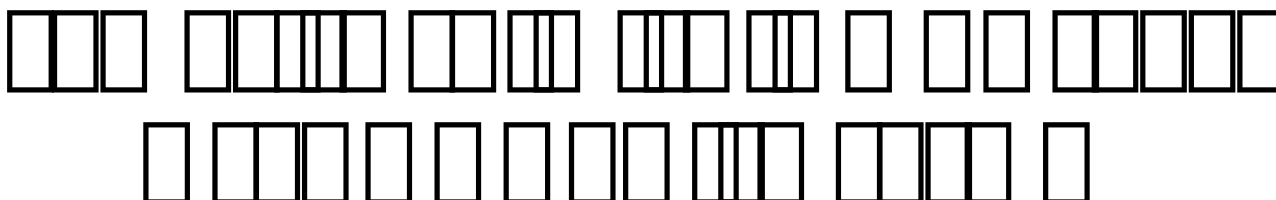
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A BRIDAL AFFAIR

MARGOT ROBBIE | ODE TO GRACE KELLY | ALEXANDRA TOLSTOY | PERANAKAN BRIDE
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STYLE
alexandra tolstoy



On horses, personal style, and favourite jewellery

Words by **Smitha Sadanandan**

SHE RODE ON CAMELS AND HORSES 5,000 MILES ACROSS CENTRAL ASIA AND CHINA TO UNRAVEL THE SECRETS OF THE SILK ROAD, wrote a book about the journey, married a simple Russian horseman, and, later, fell for another Russian, this time a billionaire. Alexandra Tolstoy's life — full of adventures — has all the right ingredients for a memoir. Perhaps, that's why she has, at last, decided to pen it all down in her forthcoming book.

A distant cousin of Leo Tolstoy, London-based fashionista, writer, and presenter of BBC2's *Horse People*, Alexandra has long been admired for her sense of style, elegance, and often quirky sense of fashion. Here, the jewellery ambassador and mother of three talks to *Solitaire* about her life and style, and how she wants to put Russian designers on the style map.

THIS PAGE

A pair of *Tsarina* earrings in blue topaz and diamonds, NADINE AYSOY

OPPOSITE PAGE

Countess Alexandra Tolstoy wearing Chopard High Jewellery

Photo by Hoda and Tanya



*Alexandra Tolstoy's life has all
the right ingredients for a memoir*

STYLE

alexandra tolstoy



A distant cousin of Leo Tolstoy, Alexandra has long been admired for her sense of style and often quirky sense of fashion



Tell us about your life in England and Russia. How was it growing up in the famed Tolstoy family?

I grew up in the English countryside and at 11 went to a girls' boarding school. My mother is English, but my father always instilled a feeling of pride in our Russian roots. When I was 18, my father, historian Count Nikolai Tolstoy, sent me to Moscow to live with a Russian family. I didn't speak a word of Russian and spent six months studying the language. It was 1992 and Russia had only just opened up after the Cold War, and was very grey and forbidding. But I fell in love with the city and the people. I returned to Britain to study Russian language and literature at the University of Edinburgh.

How did you end up trekking the Silk Route? You also wrote a book, *The Last Secrets Of The Silk Road*, about it.

After university, I won a place on the graduate training scheme at Credit Suisse First Boston, the investment bank. The training was in New York and I had a wonderful few months enjoying the city, but when I returned to work in London, I found the work boring and stifling. I wanted to leave, but I didn't want to get an inferior job.

I wanted to do something exciting and different. At this time, I bumped into an old friend from university, and she told me how she was planning to ride the Silk Road on horses and camels. I immediately asked to join her and we found two other friends, and spent a year planning the logistics and raising money. After the expedition, an agent approached me to write a book about it. So I did, and it was published in 2003.

Besides horses, your other passion is jewellery. What are your earliest jewellery memories?

My great-grandmother gave me some wonderful jewellery when I was younger, but tragically they had been stolen. Then my grandmother left me a beautiful topaz ring. I adore blue and it's not hugely valuable so I wear it a lot. Sergei (Pugachev), my children's father, gave me a pair of earrings and a brooch designed and even worn by Coco Chanel, which I love.

Which jewellery would you wear to summer events?

I may go to Ascot and then, probably, I will wear my large Mikimoto pearl earrings and necklace.

What kind of jewellery do you usually wear? Any favourites?

I love wearing fine but fun jewellery — by Solange Azagury-Partridge and Philippa Holland — and I wear either silver or yellow gold and I don't like to mix them. I love Solange and I have her pink ball earrings. I love the black gold accent that she uses a lot in her designs. She is unusual to me in that her jewellery is fashion; most jewellery has not much relation to fashion.

What prompted the collaboration with Loquet?

I love my heart-shaped locket by Loquet and I have charms in it of my children's initials. I have been asked to design a Russian collection for the brand and I used Bilibin, the artist, as my inspiration to produce enamel, folk style charms. Loquet's charms are witty and original, something very different from other brands.

What's in your jewellery box and what do you pair them with?

Unfortunately, I had a lot of jewellery stolen, but I still have a beautiful square-cut Cartier diamond necklace that I wear, as well as my Mikimoto pearls. I love big pearls — I wear them a lot, sometimes just the earrings and sometimes with the necklace as well as a pearl ring by Sophie Bille Brahe. I have some beautiful Chanel fine jewellery with star motif set with diamonds, which I wear a lot, too. It's fun and can be mixed with jeans and trainers. I also have fashion jewellery by Chanel, and I wear the iconic CC earrings very often. I also love vintage jewellery.



“I love wearing fine but fun jewellery”

How would you describe your casual, everyday jewellery style?

I like fun and fashionable jewellery, which are carefully coordinated with my outfit.

What do you wear on a fun day out?

I love wearing little hoops, or my enamel heart and enamel lips by Delfina Delettrez, which I mix with the hoops. I would love to wear bracelets more often.

You have a special connection with Russia. Which Russian jeweller is on your radar?

I love Axenoff Jewellery. Peter Aksenov uses pre-revolutionary inspiration, which resonates with me and my family history. I love his use of Russian folklore motifs, as well as more sophisticated designs.

How did you become a brand ambassador for Nadine Aysoy jewellery?

I met the designer, Nadine, through a friend and it seemed such a natural collaboration. She was inspired by the Russian Imperial family and their jewellery, and this is obviously hugely appealing to me. I adore all the Tsarina range, in particular, the blue stoned pieces.

Are you also a watch person?

I have quite a few watches and I usually coordinate them with my outfit. I love Jaeger-LeCoultre — they are stylish and discreet. I also have some by Hermes with different coloured leather straps. 💎

THIS PAGE

In the country, Alexandra likes to wear simple jewellery, like a pair of stud earrings by Anita Ko

OPPOSITE PAGE FROM LEFT

Alexandra wearing *Tsarina* earrings in baroque pearls and peridots by Nadiine Aysoy

Photo by Hoda Davaine

A close-up of the *Tsarina* earrings in baroque pearls and peridots, NADINE AYSOY