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Kikui Kazuo

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Whimsical Jewelry from a Secret Garden By Manish Saha



perspective on the nature within beauty and a resolve to create a sense of perfection in his designs. This sensitivity to the resilience of nature can be seen in Kazuo's his most recent jewelry collections. His playful diamond-studded reverences to nature's dark icons: spiders, and owls create an enigmatic contrast to the empirical gowns and lapels they will grace. Soon after his recovery Kazuo found himself as a major player in a high stakes world of precious stone jewelry design. Kazuo's designs first appeared at high end

Japanese jewelry designer Kikui Kazuo is a rare thing: a wholly innovative and whimsical artist gaining fast exposure in the Occidental world. While Kazuo has been a celebrated designer in his native Japan for almost a decade, and his Osaka boutique, *Feel*, is a staple for Asia's diamond wearing, fast car driving, and trend setting elite, Kazuo's signature designs are only now being presented in New York for the first time.

Born to a middle class family, Kazuo's early biography reads as a fable of his time. His mother was a hair dresser (it isn't difficult to imagine that watching Japanese women constantly made over fed young Kikui an early taste for glamour and transformation). His father was a veteran of World War II and largely absent during his upbringing. It is possible that Kazuo would have led a typical, ordinary middle-class existence in the smaller cities of Japan if not for a near fatal automobile accident that left him partially handicapped during his teenager years. Through Kazuo's brush with mortality and his gradual recovery the artist developed a

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department stores in Japan, and later at Gimmel. Turning down offers from both Cartier and Tiffany, Kazuo opened his boutique, *Feel* in 1996.

Because Kazuo has remained in Asia, resisting the restrictions of western design, his jewelry is radiant with the elegance of ancient Asian tradition, tempered by his always fresh contemporary eccentricity. A master of the "Pave" technique of setting stones, Kazuo creates jewel- encrusted ribbons with diamonds, emeralds, silver, sapphire and other precious stones. In Kazuo's world, jewelry is a fairy tale. Kazou's designs break down the barrier between the jewel object and the wearer, creating a synthetic process through which the wearer enters Kazou's secret garden.

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His Spring 2005 collection includes an owl brooch, crafted out of diamonds, sitting on an emerald tree-branch. The wearer of the owl, becomes a tree, a supporter of the branch that holds the owl. In another brooch, a spider with an onyx back weaves a delicate and intricate web of diamonds and rubies. In Kazuo's traditional Royal ring, a gentle gold crown is encrusted with diamonds and rubies. The finger with the royal ring is, a Cinderella, a sleeping beauty, a queen or a dandy prince.

Kazuo is a true original. Recovering from near death, Kazuo fought his way out of a cage like a fleeing onyx bird pin. One can be sure that

the legacy of Kazuo in the United States is only just beginning as Kazuo makes his New York debut.

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