



THE
Alchemist

In landscape-inspired jewels
with radiant ombré metalwork,
virtuoso designer **Adam Neeley**
unlocks elemental intrigue.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
JEFF HARRIS

PRODUCED BY
RACHAEL BURROW

WRITTEN BY
ALICE WELSH DOYLE

VANGUARD ALLOYS

Neeley's diamond-trimmed
Riviera cuff is crafted of
SpectraGold, the designer's
custom mix that creates
lustrous transitions in tone.

ALSO SHOWN: **Panaché**
earrings (top left) and
Opposites Attract
earrings (bottom right)



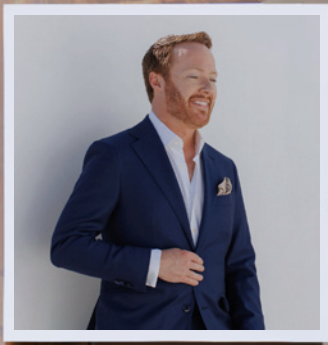
SINUOUS CURVES

Pearls in Neeley's **Nautilus earrings** (below) stage a disappearing act, grading down in size as they trace gradient curved discs.



JEWELS OF THE WEST

The **Oriana ring's** fiery orange sapphire (right) appears to float in its ombré gold setting, like the sun rising over the hills of Southern California.

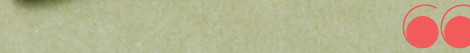


IF YOU TAKE THE crystal gemstones of Colorado and the ombré sunsets and sculptural succulents of Southern California, then you get a sense of the world that informs the work of jewelry designer and goldsmith Adam Neeley.

“As a young man holding a crystal that you just found and realizing that you are the first person to see this treasure is magical,” says the Laguna Beach–based artist. “I was hooked right away.”

Hooked, and understandably so. At the age of 14, Neeley sold out his first art fair in just two hours (Daryl Hannah was among his buyers). For the last 25 years, his pieces have sold to private collectors and museums, including the Smithsonian Institution, and the Laguna Art Museum is running a retrospective of his work through July.

Neeley’s passion for discovering, cutting, and polishing gems began with his father, a “rock hound,” but the nudge to start designing came from his mother. “She said, ‘With all those polished



I grew up painting, and today *mixing my own alloys* reminds me of the *subtleties of the colors* of a *finished canvas*.”

—JEWELRY DESIGNER ADAM NEELEY

stones, don’t you think you should make your mother some jewelry?” He did, learning silversmithing from local artisans and goldsmithing through a mentorship in high school and studying at the Gemological Institute of America. But it was at a program in Florence that he became fascinated with the Italian method of mixing gradient alloys and creating transitions in color. With four custom alloys he’s developed to date, perhaps his most compelling is Spectra,

an ombré treatment that transitions from rich yellow gold to pure white gold. “I think a piece of jewelry should tell a story, slowly reveal itself,” says Neeley, whose designs often include feats of intrigue (a suite of Akoya pearls on the inside of a 12.24-carat aquamarine ring, for instance). “Of course, your eye immediately goes to the magnificent stone,” he says. But akin to his early Colorado gem-hunting, the delight is in the discovery. ♦