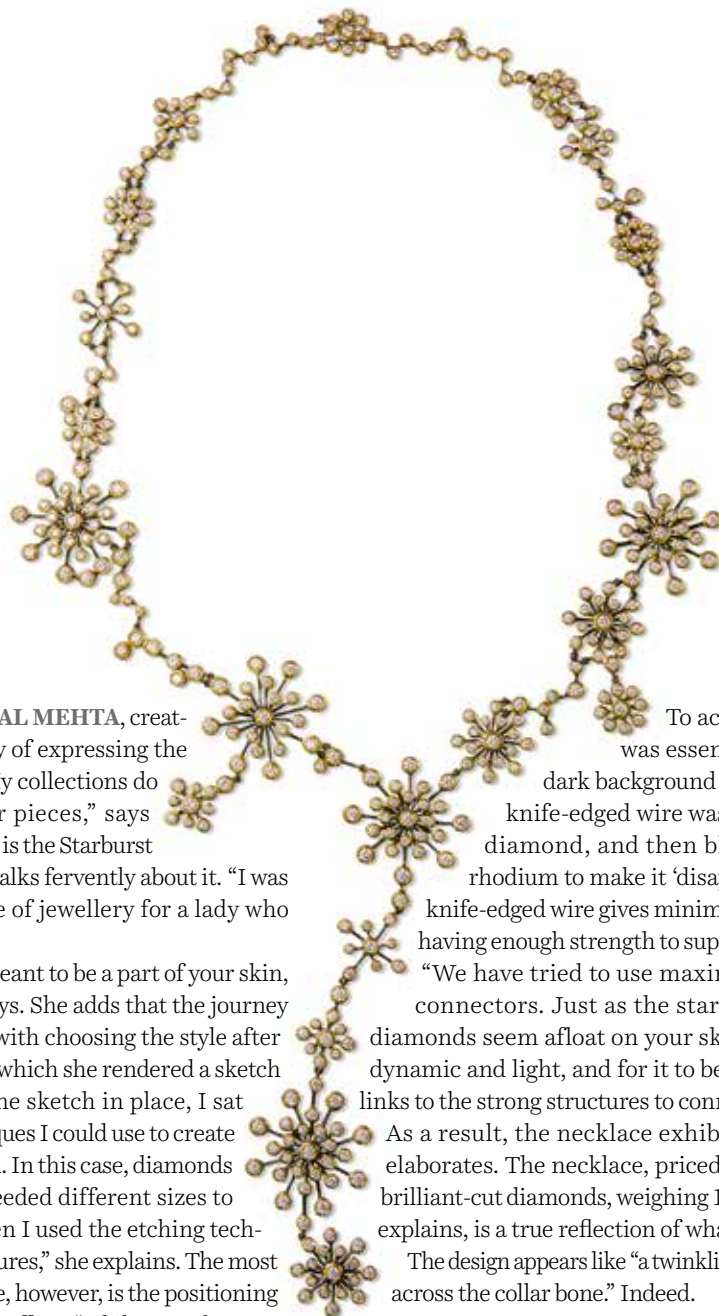


# One of a Kind

NEW YORK-BASED PAYAL MEHTA TAKES CUSTOM-MADE JEWELLERY TO A NEW LEVEL WITH HER TATTOO-LIKE MASTERPIECE



**F**OR DESIGNER PAYAL MEHTA, creating jewellery is a way of expressing the artist within her. “My collections do not hold any ready-to-wear pieces,” says Mehta. The latest in the offing is the Starburst Collection, and the designer talks fervently about it. “I was asked to commission a piece of jewellery for a lady who loved tattoos.

The Starburst necklace is meant to be a part of your skin, giving a ‘tattoo effect,’” she says. She adds that the journey of creating the piece started with choosing the style after meeting with the client, post which she rendered a sketch of the design. “Once I had the sketch in place, I sat down to decide on the techniques I could use to create the kind of flexibility required. In this case, diamonds were the first choice but I needed different sizes to create the desired effect. Then I used the etching technique to add patterns and textures,” she explains. The most unique feature of this necklace, however, is the positioning of the stones for a starry night effect. “I did not make a cast of the piece so that I could change the original design if needed,” she says.

To achieve the ‘starburst’, it was essential for her to create a dark background on gold. Accordingly, a knife-edged wire was used to connect each diamond, and then blackened using black rhodium to make it ‘disappear’ completely. The knife-edged wire gives minimum visibility while still having enough strength to support this long necklace. “We have tried to use maximum vertical links as connectors. Just as the stars float in the sky, the diamonds seem afloat on your skin. To make the piece dynamic and light, and for it to be able to move, I added links to the strong structures to connect smaller diamonds. As a result, the necklace exhibits flexibility,” Mehta elaborates. The necklace, priced at \$50,000, holds 298 brilliant-cut diamonds, weighing 19 carats. The piece, she explains, is a true reflection of what she had imagined.

The design appears like “a twinkling constellation tattooed across the collar bone.” Indeed.

— SAROSH MODY

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The Starburst necklace holds 298 brilliant-cut diamonds in a rhodium finished gold design, creating a tattoo-like effect on the skin.