

By Alison Burwell

Portrait by Adam Friedberg



Clockwise from left: Nina Griscom at home wearing Faraone Mennella jewelry; a selection of items available at Nina Griscom; ruby chandelier earrings, \$3,000; and citrine cross, \$2,500, both at Nina Griscom, New York, 212.717.7373.



Nina's New Arena

Social fixture Nina Griscom delivers her exotic finds to Manhattan with a new boutique.

For as long as many New Yorkers can remember, Nina Griscom has made headlines. With a reputation that's morphed from wild child to femme fatale, this trendsetting, gravel-voiced blond and stepdaughter of master financier and onetime ambassador to France Felix Rohatyn has been a darling of the social press since she was a teenager. Whether it's her love life or her business endeavors—which have included everything from a Food Network show to modeling—what Nina's up to is sure to set tongues wagging.

The latest word? Nestled amid the leopard pillows on a caramel-colored couch in her luxe East Side town house, a Marlboro Light in hand and her hair still in pincurls, Griscom confirms the growing buzz. Yes, she is opening an eponymous lifestyle boutique in December on Manhattan's Lexington Avenue, which will include fine jewelry. But it's all part of a bigger plan. "I'd like to build a lifestyle company," she says matter-of-factly, adding that, indeed, a Nina Griscom candle is already in the works.

The quest to bottle her *joie de vivre* began this summer when she and Antony Todd launched a tabletop boutique in Southampton filled with their favorite tchotchkes, such as bone ivory lobsters and Ashley Hicks trays. The new 700-square-foot Upper East Side store, which is Griscom's alone, will have a more diverse inventory: more furniture, more one-of-a-kind *objets* culled from her scouting trips to exotic locales—and more jewelry.

To that end, Griscom recently returned from a three-week buying trip to the Far East. Thumbing through a tray filled with her treasures, she fingers her finds: gold beads from Jaipur, chandelier earrings with emeralds and sapphires from Delhi, citrine crosses and Mallah beads dipped in gold. There will also be jewels by Prince Dimitri of Yugoslavia and design duo Faraone Mennella. Griscom and designer Virginia Witbeck are also collaborating on an exclusive line of earrings, cuffs and boxes in ebony, sandalwood and bone ivory. Another friend, designer Garrison Rousseau, is in talks with her to produce a line of shagreen pieces paired with semiprecious stones, gold and pavé diamonds.

According to Griscom, all of these wares will fall into the self-purchase category. "At the moment, my plan is not to be selling \$20,000 jewelry," she says. "A woman will buy jewelry for herself if she can get it under \$5,000. After that, it's call the boyfriend or the husband." Among her own such pieces are a pair of Art Deco diamond cuffs that an ex-husband (she has three) bought her at auction. Another is a stunning emerald and ruby Cartier clip from Gem Palace's Munnu.

Griscom even adds jewels to her table centerpieces at times, draping a string of ruby beads or an earring over coral branches. Her philosophy is that all things for the home—jewelry included—should be interchangeable. "Amortize your belongings," she enthuses. "Love them, and use them in all aspects of your life." That is what the Nina Griscom lifestyle is all about. ♦