

AMERICAN ORIGINAL

Prairie skirts and cowboy boots. Blanket shawls and turquoise jewelry.

This season's mix of frontier classics and indigenous crafts is the legacy of forties style icon Millicent Rogers, an East Coast trendsetter turned Taos jewelrymaker and collector who pioneered southwestern chic.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD MARSHARD



THE EMBELLISHED SELF

The bluish green shades of turquoise light up any neutral, from a flared brown leather patchwork skirt with cowgirl-ish whipstitching (Strenesse Gabriele Strehle, \$1,195) to a sexy interpretation of the white cotton shirt (Charles Chang Lima, \$400). Turquoise is gorgeous by itself (Camilla Dietz Bergeron multistrand; Aaron Toadlena ring); with horn (Barbara Cary), opals (K.C. Thompson), and silver (Kathleen Cadunz) in mixed-media necklaces; or set off by the unexpected glamour of a crystal pin (Roxanne Assoulin for Lee Angel).

INSPIRATION: An organic-looking turquoise belt (Ralph Lauren Vintage) could be the signature piece you wear every day—just buckle it on with leather or denim or black, and you're done.

This page and page 256 were photographed at Turtlewalk, Millicent Rogers's rambling adobe house in Taos, New Mexico.

A certain **PURITY OF SPIRIT** drew Millicent Rogers to Native American culture—and to simple white shirts with shots of turquoise.

TURQUOISE AT WORK

The new office strategy is to soften daytime tailoring with a bit of after-hours fantasy: This textured wool felt jacket (Alberta Ferretti) and jacquard-weave pencil skirt (Palmer Jones, \$430) have a tender moment with a silk camisole (Miguelina, \$310) and satin heels (Gina). Even the jewelry is less rustic, more polished: discreet topaz earrings (David Yurman), a turquoise pendant with diamonds (Cinta by John Hardy), and a sleek ring (DiModolo). The bag (Shanghai Tang) revels in Rogers-style eclecticism, with its tribal stripes, beaded handle, and big, juicy sequins.

INSPIRATION: Embrace the vintage charm of today's below-the-knee skirts—just make sure the hem stops at the slimmest part of your calf.

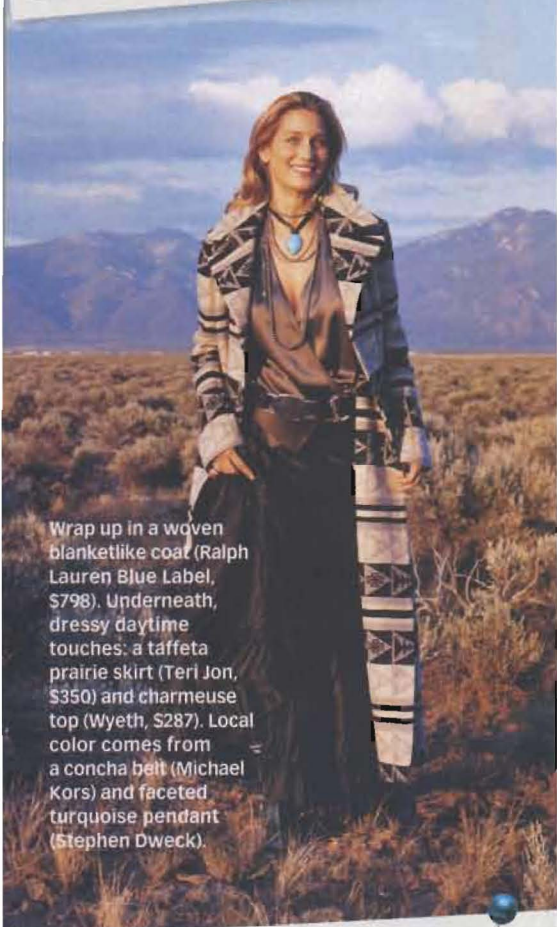
Photographed at the Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos (millicentrogers.org), founded in 1956 by her youngest son, Paul Peralta-Ramos, to showcase her stellar collection of southwestern art and design.

TOFFEE BREAK

Send in the browns: With its poufy sleeves and long train, this drop-dead gown (Peter Som) radiates feminine strength. The red-carpet glamour reminds us of Rogers's Hollywood connections—she was introduced to the Southwest by thirties star Janet Gaynor (the first to win a Best Actress Academy Award). Lush touches: a striking “collar” of beads (Stephen Dweck) and a huge ring (Bess), both turquoise, and a piquant basket-of-flowers brooch (Iradj Moini). **INSPIRATION:** Try a more covered-up look for evening—skin is not synonymous with sexiness.



A kimono dress in a splashy orchid print (Alexander McQueen) looks great with exotic, Rogers-inspired jewelry (Gas Bijoux chandelier earrings; a rectangular Aaron Toadlena ring).

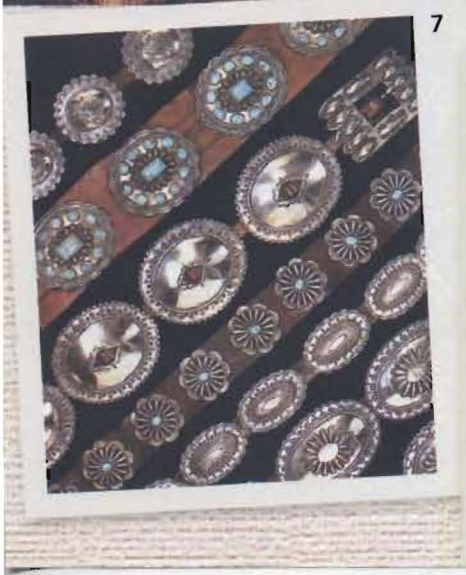


Wrap up in a woven blanketlike coat (Ralph Lauren Blue Label, \$798). Underneath, dressy daytime touches: a taffeta prairie skirt (Teri Jon, \$350) and charmeuse top (Wyeth, \$287). Local color comes from a concha belt (Michael Kors) and faceted turquoise pendant (Stephen Dweck).

THE ROGERS MYSTIQUE

It sounds like vintage Hollywood: a thrice-married heiress who was courted by the likes of Clark Gable and James Bond creator Ian Fleming, and who died tragically young. But Millicent Rogers (1902–1953) wasn't a poor little rich girl—she had a forceful character and a powerful aesthetic imagination. Although she was dressed by very haute couturiers, she invented her own style by synthesizing elements from many cultures. Her last and greatest passion was the Southwest: in 1947 she moved to Taos, New Mexico, where she acquired jewelry, textiles, baskets, and ceramics (almost 4,000 pieces, now housed in the museum that bears her name); wore indigenous clothing and masses of fabulous necklaces, cuffs, and rings (some she hammered out herself using traditional metalwork techniques); and was an early advocate of Native American rights. "I want to be buried in Taos with the wide sky," she wrote to her son Paul before her death. At last this fashion gypsy had come home. —KATHERINE B. WEISSMAN

- 1. "Felipe's Cross," designed by Millicent Rogers.
- 2. Roxanne Assoulin for Lee Angel brooch.
- 3. Rogers, circa 1948, wearing modern rings, Indian bracelets, and a Russian brooch.
- 4. Photographed for *Vogue*, February 1949.
- 5. David Yurman necklace.
- 6. Adobe walls at the Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos.
- 7. Navajo concha belts from her collection.



In the Southwest,
RICH REDS
are everywhere—blazing
away on rugs and
sunsets, rocks and
pottery and clothes.



MAGIC CARPETS

Millicent Rogers, a friend remarked, could look ravishing in "a rug off the floor." Maybe she never actually wore one, but her Taos home was rich in handwoven textiles, amazingly modern in their use of color and line. Here, a bright skirt (Ralph Lauren Collection) and cashmere ballerina top (Ralph Lauren Collection, \$798) are cinched with a dazzling concha belt (Ralph Lauren Vintage) and finished with granny-goes-west boots (Henry Beguelin). Elaborately scrolled silver and turquoise jewelry (all Ralph Lauren) includes beaded earrings and magnificent cuffs. **INSPIRATION:** This season's most influential silhouette is fit-and-flare; a classic leotard or a scoop-neck top is a great base.

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

Start with tweed work pants, like these striped wool (Gap, \$50), and a cashmere sweater (Strenesse Gabriele Strehle, \$345); dress them up with a sequined jacket that borrows Navajo motifs and earth colors (Chico's, \$198). More sparkle: a gemstone lariat (Lauren Harper Collection), triple rings (David Yurman turquoise and diamond; Camilla Dietz Bergeron citrine and turquoise with gold), and beaded sandals (Jimmy Choo).

INSPIRATION: Jewelry with a symbolic resonance is better than merely decorative. These earrings, designed by our model, Manon von Gerkan, are gold feathers—a shape associated with the creative force in Native American lore.

Fashion editor: Jenny Capitain.
Hair: Dan Sharp for Cutler/Redkin NYC.
Makeup: Fabiola Arancibia for the Wall Group. Locations: Millicent Rogers Home, Millicent Rogers Museum, El Monte Sagrado Resort (elmontesagrado.com).

For details and more information on the El Monte Sagrado Resort, see Shop Guide. For more southwestern style, see "Best of the West," page 273.