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**TOP DESIGNERS UNVEIL UNIQUE JEWELRY COLLECTION AS PART OF OCEAN CONSERVATION EFFORT**

*Collection To Be Auctioned Off To Benefit Coral Protection*

(February 26, 2009 - NEW YORK, NY) Renowned designers Hannah Garrison of AZU, Frank Gehry, Kimberly McDonald, Melissa Joy Manning, Jennifer Meyer, Monique Péan, Paloma Picasso, Jean Schlumberger and Vena Cava's Sophie Buhai and Lisa Mayock have joined forces with SeaWeb's *Too Precious to Wear* campaign to launch a unique jewelry collection titled Coral Reinterpreted. Each designer has created or donated a piece of wearable art that evokes the beauty and inspiration of the ocean, without harming corals or other living marine animals.

Corals are among the most vital animals in the sea, yet they are facing a multitude of threats such as climate change, pollution, destructive fishing methods and consumer demand for their use in jewelry, aquariums and home décor items. A recent arrest of a coral smuggler in Alexandria, Va., highlights the significance of this threat. The man is accused of smuggling 40 tons of illegally harvested corals from the Philippines into the United States. The Coral Reinterpreted collection seeks to raise awareness of these threats, while highlighting the beauty and availability of sustainable alternatives to real coral. The pieces will be auctioned off on the online auction site Charitybuzz, and proceeds will go towards increased trade protection of precious corals. To view the pieces and bid on the items, visit [www.tooprecioustowear.org](http://www.tooprecioustowear.org).

Dawn M. Martin, President of SeaWeb said, "It is a privilege to partner with such acclaimed designers for the urgent issue of coral conservation. The jewelry pieces presented in Coral Reinterpreted are a source of inspiration and serve as a reminder that real corals are living animals worthy of protection. They are truly too precious to wear. Thanks to the passionate designers involved in Coral Reinterpreted, those that love the look of coral can own an exquisite, one-of-a-kind piece that will help safeguard these fragile marine animals for future generations."

Michael Kowalski, chairman and chief executive officer of Tiffany & Co. added, "Tiffany & Co. has long believed that the only material to take from a coral reef is inspiration. This principle is behind our decision to remove coral from our stores in 2001, and it is why we have chosen to take part in Coral Reinterpreted which we hope will raise awareness of this important issue."

Corals supply shelter and food for 25 percent of all marine animals, and provide services such as fishing, tourism and coastal protection estimated to be worth US\$375 billion annually. Yet corals around the world are in decline. Recent scientific studies estimate that we have already lost 20 percent of the world's coral

reefs, and could lose another 24 percent within our lifetimes. A study released last July found that one-third of all reef-building corals are threatened with extinction.

Coral Reinterpreted proves that today's jewelry does not have to harm living corals, and the evidence is in the exquisite pieces by the nine designers. Socialite and ocean advocate Olivia Chantecaille wore Coral Reinterpreted jewelry during New York's Fashion Week. Pieces from the collection also featured in eco-designers' David Peck and Laurel Anderson's Untitled 11:11 Fashion Week show 'Into the Woods.' A recent survey of fashion industry professionals revealed that 68 percent feel that coral and the look of coral are important in jewelry; 54 percent of professionals polled say the look of coral is important in clothing. Photos, measurements and detailed descriptions of each piece are available on [www.tooprecioustowear.org](http://www.tooprecioustowear.org). The auction begins today and closes on April 30, 2009.

One of the most valuable and widely used corals in jewelry and home décor industries is red and pink coral, also known as *Corallium*. Red corals are among the world's most valuable wildlife commodities, with a finished necklace retailing for up to tens of thousands of dollars. The United States, as the world's largest documented importer of red and pink corals, has placed significant pressure on these threatened animals, importing more than 26 million pieces from 2001 to 2006. *Too Precious to Wear* is urging the United States and other countries to list red and pink corals under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) at the next Conference of Parties meeting in 2010. The proceeds from the Coral Reinterpreted auction will go towards *Too Precious to Wear's* efforts to ensure this vulnerable marine species receives protection from unsustainable trade.

Dr. Andrew Bruckner, scientist at the Living Oceans Foundation, said, "Over the past twenty years, overfishing of red coral for jewelry and home décor pieces has put these animals at great risk. A CITES Appendix II listing for *Corallium* can help safeguard the species as well as the future of the industries that depend on red and pink corals."

One of the most tangible actions consumers and designers can do to protect corals is to simply avoid purchasing them. As demonstrated in the Coral Reinterpreted collection, there are numerous alternatives to real coral available. If threats to corals such as over harvesting and consumer demand are reduced, these marine animals will have a better chance of surviving other challenges, such as climate change. To view the pieces and place a bid on a Coral Reinterpreted item, visit [www.tooprecioustowear.org](http://www.tooprecioustowear.org).

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For interviews with Coral Reinterpreted designers and high-resolution photos of each piece along with estimated retail values, please contact Lauren Cuneo (+1.917.543.2008 or [lcuneo@kruppgroup.com](mailto:lcuneo@kruppgroup.com)). For interviews with *Too Precious to Wear* spokespeople, high-resolution coral photos and b-roll, please contact Corinne Knutson (+1.808.497.3360 or [cknutson@seaweb.org](mailto:cknutson@seaweb.org)). Photos and detailed descriptions of the Coral Reinterpreted pieces are available at [www.tooprecioustowear.org](http://www.tooprecioustowear.org). The Coral Reinterpreted auction ends April 30, 2009.

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*Too Precious to Wear* is a SeaWeb campaign to create a demand for coral conservation. *Too Precious to Wear* is made possible with support from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, Kingfisher Foundation, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and The Ocean Foundation. [www.tooprecioustowear.org](http://www.tooprecioustowear.org).

SeaWeb, founded in 1996 to raise awareness of the growing threats to the ocean and its living resources, is a communications-based nonprofit organization that utilizes social marketing techniques to advance ocean conservation. By increasing public awareness, advancing science-based solutions and mobilizing decision-makers around ocean conservation, SeaWeb has brought together multiple, diverse and powerful voices for a healthy ocean. [www.seaweb.org](http://www.seaweb.org)

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