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Art Smith
Goldsmith and
Siversmith

High Jewelry
Designer Édéenne

Redefining
Jewellery as Art
Worn on the Body

A History of Jewelry

Jewelry Art
History & Techniques of
Goldsmithery

Looking at the Future



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JAS

ART SMITH: GOLDSMITH AND SILVERSMITH

By Toni Lesser Wolf

In a promotional flyer from the early 1950s, Art Smith offered a “fanciful ring of space, silver and gold.” The main ingredients in his work, from about 1946 until his death in 1982 at the age of 65, were sheet, wire and “space . . . which I use very accurately, very concretely . . . somewhat because of my orientation towards designing that way but also as a very cheap component. . . . You can find it and make it tangible.”

The emphasis on space and its implication of human structure is essential to be understanding of Smith’s design. “A piece of jewelry,” he said, “is a ‘what is it?’ until you relate it to the body. . . . Like line, form and color, the body is a material to work with. It is one of the basic inspirations in creating form.” The question is “not how do bracelets go, but can be down with an arm?”

Art Smith had graduated from Cooper Union in 1945, where he was exposed to three-dimensional objects (sculpture and constructions) for the first time. Having been encouraged by a dean to major in architecture because he could easily find a job in the nondiscriminatory civil service, he rejected this proposition because he didn’t want to abandon the other artistic discipline. Although he had an instinct for the design of exciting structural form, mathematics escaped him. Ever-present was the conflict of whether to give in to the niche provided for the Black man in mid-century American society or to make a place for himself in the New York art world.

Constructions interested Art Smith more than painting. He wanted to “create something that was tangible, not just illusion.” Entertaining and then abandoning thoughts of going into advertising, he took a part-time job as Crafts Supervisor at the Children’s Aid Society in Harlem, where he would design prefabricated objects for the children to assemble. However, attendance was poor and the trustees of the organization were reluctant to explore ways of making the program truly effective. After four years, he quit. But while there he had met another teacher, a black woman named Winifred Mason, who was to be instrumental in his career. Mason was a jeweler and after seeing her work, Smith became very excited about the possibilities for creative expression through jewelry. When she offered him a job in the shop that she was to open on Third Street in Greenwich Village, he jumped at the opportunity.



Hand Piano cuff, copper, brass, forged and constructed, c. 1948. Collection: Fifty/50, NYC. Photo: Amos Chan, 1985.

"A piece of jewelry is in a sense an object that is not complete in itself."

- Arthur Smith

In the Village he met other artists and metalsmiths who were to influence and encourage him. Always a great lover of jazz, Smith would go with painter Charles Sebree and choreographer Talley Beatty to hear Billie Holiday sing in a club around the corner from the Third Street shop. Ralph Ellison, Gordon Parks and countless other writers and intellectuals, both Black and White, were customers and friends. A mecca for both craftsman and consumer alike, Greenwich Village was already home to several other innovative metalsmiths: Paul Lobel, Sam Kramer, Arthur King and the Rebajes brothers. Lobel, actually, offered Smith a job when he eventually became disenchanted with Mason. Although he admired Lobel a great deal, he decided it was time to strike out on his own.

Upon leaving Winnie Mason, Smith opened a tiny shop on Cornelia Street, in Little Italy, where he remained for four difficult years, subjected to both racial prejudice because he was a Black man and social antipathy because he was an artist. His shop windows were broken, apprentices heckled when they came to work and his very life was threatened in a hit-and-run attempt. The Civil Rights Congress came to his aid after his plight was publicized in The New York Times, resulting in his store receiving police protection. But the time was right to move back to the artists' colony in the Village. With financial backing



Art Smith, Photo: Ralph E. Morgan

from Craftsmen's Equity, an organization dedicated to maintaining high standards in the craft field (of which he was president), he turned his energies to a new, and what was to become, permanent space at 140 West 4th Street.

By this time his reputation had spread, due mostly to his inclusion in the second national exhibition of contemporary jewelry, held in 1948 in the Everyday Art Gallery at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The purpose of the Everyday Art Gallery was to promote good design in ordinary objects. This exhibition included 282 pieces of jewelry by 30 craftsmen. The Spring 1948 issue of the Walker Art Center's publication, *Everyday Art Quarterly* (later renamed *Design Quarterly*) lamented the fact that although innovative design and new materials had entered the realm of other common objects, such as dwellings, furniture, pottery, fabrics and clothing, jewelry had remained tediously the same. "In jewelry . . . hardly a change is noticeable. A search of jewelry stores reveals only the same stars, clusters, rosettes, floral motifs, and other traditional shapes that have been used for centuries." "Modern Jewelry Under Fifty Dollars," as this exhibition was entitled, traveled around the country for two years, thereby stimulating widespread interest in contemporary handcrafted jewelry.



Bones earrings and cuff, sterling silver, forged, fused and constructed, c. 1949



History had been made two years earlier, however, when the landmark exhibition, "Modern Jewelry Design 1946-47," at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, created a watershed in the appreciation of modern jewelry. This exhibition displayed the work of 26 makers (seven of whom were artists working primarily in another medium) "whose design show that the artist had considered the characteristics of the materials used and made us aware of their intrinsic beauty in contemporary terms." Paul Lobel, one of the jewelers represented in the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, whose shop was a few stores away from Smith (at 130 West 4th Street) and whom Smith admittedly admired as previously mentioned, exerted a strong stylistic influence on him. In Lobel's work, Smith saw formal freedom.

American studio jewelry design, in its seminal stages (c. 1936) had continued the trend of anti-historicism and rejection of traditional design conventions begun by Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts Movement some 40 years earlier. A pioneering spirit spurred craftsmen on in their exploration of dynamic form, asymmetry and ornamental approach to structure. Those principles coupled with a creative observation of the images seen in the modern art movements just preceding and contemporary with it, led post-World War II studio jewelers to redefine jewelry.

Question Mark neck-piece,
sterling silver, quartz,
forged, assembled, c. 1953.
Private collection. Photo:
Madeline Capp



Fundamental to this new approach was a respect for material. Form was no longer to be imposed on metal. The integrity of the material and the concurrent empirical exploration of its formal possibilities were to be primary avenues of investigation. Cheaper materials were used, such as brass, copper, nickel, chrome and stainless steel. Technique was subordinated to expression, which often produced a "primitive" result. Just as the tribal metalsmith learned the limits of his craft by trial and error, so did the modern studio jeweler. Just as the Western European metalsmithing tradition had conventionalized technique, the modern metalsmith rejected that principle, as such. This is not to say that he was purposefully sloppy, only that craftsmanship, per se, was irrelevant. And when one perceives a piece of jewelry made by Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia, Sam Kramer, Ed Wiener, Paul Lobel or Art Smith, the expressive energy—the "hand" of the craftsman—is evident.

Biometric forms, as seen in the painting and sculpture of the Surrealists were appropriated and reinterpreted in the metal imagery of Art Smith. The huge silver cuff bracelet comprised of two undulating masses superimposed one upon the other, brings to mind the amorphous shapes used by Miró and Arp. The duet of forms seems to slither amoebalike around each other, attached securely at some points, while at others the upper mass strains to free itself. The whole projects the characteristics of some primeval entity. Imagining the bracelet on a wrist, the ends would curve away from the human element, negotiating its protoplasmic "escape." The areas where the silver is curved most deeply contain dramatic negative spaces—to be filled in by a forearm; air replaced by skin—always a strong element in Smith's design. "Things should really play with each other and they should play with the body. It should be fun, it should be an exploitation. It should be an investigation. A good piece of jewelry literally caresses the body and fondles it and as I say, plays with it . . . it enjoys itself and it enjoys you and you enjoy it."

"Jewelry is a 'what is it?' until you relate it to the body. The body is a component in design just as air and space are."

- Arthur Smith

By drawing with wire in space, Smith created graceful neck-pieces, intensely asymmetrical yet visually balanced. Tension was produced by an uninhibited linearity, perhaps arising from the unconscious mind as in the "automatic writing" of the Surrealists. Curves of silver encircle the neck and are then punctured by pendant spheres of rock crystal. In the "scribble" neck-piece, the closure is incorporated into the overall design by providing the necessary counterpoint to the hanging stone and echoing the linear element from which it hangs. A "question mark" grips the neck from which a clear quartz ball dangles, counterbalanced by a smaller stone at the top end.



Loop neck-piece, sterling silver, forged, c. 1950

Smith had a flair for the theatrical. He often designed for the dance companies of Talley Beatty, Pearl Primus and Claude Marchant. There were always special challenges involved in such jewelry, as the pieces had to be large but light enough not to encumber the dancers. Very often costumes had to be changed frequently, so great care had to be accorded to the fasteners. The jewelry had to be worn under abnormal conditions—to withstand somersaults and the like. Additionally, the pieces had to fit into a narrative context like the costumes. However, frustrations notwithstanding, the moving body had always been the armature upon which Art Smith, most satisfactorily, hung his jewelry.

As mentioned earlier, when any maker approaches metal empirically, he allows the materials and tools to dictate form, and the result will be visual phenomena that the untrained eye might read as "primitive" in character. This is not to say that direct exploitation of metal's properties causes unsophisticated jewelry but jewelry that seems basic and primal upon first inspection. Closer scrutiny reveals, however, ingenious methods of connection and conscious technical display, as in the "loop" neck-piece. The whole consists of intertwined S-shape units, the bottom of each becoming a flattened open loop placed perpendicular to the body, and the top a row of parallel hammered tongues. Technique is used as an element of design in its proud display. Smith wants us to know how he forged this piece. The small flattened edges stand parallel to the neck, which they partially encircle, providing a counterpoise to the knife-edge loops sweeping across the chest.



Stones ring, sterling silver, semiprecious stones, forged, constructed, c. 1970. Private collection. Photo: © Coreen Simpson, 1987

Reminiscent of ambira or African "hand piano" is a cuff bracelet made from copper sheet and brass wire. A single, round-edge copper rectangle was cut to within about ½" of the edge; the two halves were splayed in opposite directions, then curved towards each other to enclose the wrist. Oxidation emphasizes the recesses on top of the bracelet. Brass wires, their ends flattened, pierce the copper and gently curve to complete the cuff. The overall effect is one of tribal strength. Allusions are made to the primitive, both in the simplicity of a direct technical approach and the humble material used, as well as in the anthropological associations. Yet the juxtaposition of solid with vacuum and mass with line and suggestions of human skeletal structure leave the viewer with a very sophisticated product.

- Arthur Smith

"Like line, form, and color, the body is a material to work with. It is one of the basic inspirations in creating form"

Never wanting to be identified with any particular style or technique, Smith explored fused forms and textural effects, as well as plain wire and sheet. He abhorred mannerisms gimmicks and was, reportedly, thrilled when a friend commented that a piece "didn't look like him." His foray into fused metal was, however, restrained when one compares it to Sam Kramer or Ibram Lassaw and in many bracelets and earrings there is a staunch linearity. The earrings, especially, are figural in character, the end blobs representing appendages or joints, the whole making reference to bones.

Finger rings were an area that Smith researched completely. "What could I do in and around the finger, not just on the finger; what could I do in relation to a hand? . . . You have to call [these ring] hand decorations." One of the most ingenious engineering feats was a three-part ring designed for a customer with arthritis. The three rings, connected by chains, add poignancy and dignity to distorted joints. The human structure fascinated him in its contorted as well as natural presence.



3-Part ring, sterling silver, forged, constructed, assembled, 1968. Private collection. Photo: © Coreen Simpson, 1987

Smith wanted to create big, bold rings. Very often stones would travel up the hand or across three fingers. The effect he wanted to achieve was as if someone had dipped a sticky hand into a batch of stones and their random placement, when the hand emerged, formed the ring's configuration. Smith found calmness in stones; he chose them for the quiet energy they generated, for his emotional response to them. They were almost always semiprecious, often flawed or defective. He created "families" of stones in one piece. If he utilized precious stones it was usually for a commissioned work, which he did not enjoy as much as following his own muse, unless the stone or person was particularly exciting to him. Among his most noteworthy commissions was a brooch for Eleanor Roosevelt, presented to her by the Peekskill NAACP, and a pair of cufflinks for Duke Ellington, which incorporated the first five notes of "Mood Indigo."

In 1969 Smith was given a one-man show at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now the American Craft Museum), and in 1970 was included in "Objects: U.S.A.," the Johnson Collection. He enjoyed a certain amount of recognition while he was still alive. He was invited to lecture and exhibit his work at institutions around the country, such as Bennington College, Indiana University, Brookfield Craft Center, The Studio Museum in Harlem and the Staten Island Museum of Art and Sciences. In addition, due to the traveling nature of several museums exhibitions in which he was represented throughout his career, his work became nationally known. Several regional galleries and department stores carried his jewelry, although he found it far more satisfying to sell solely through his own shop and to devote his time and energy to creating jewelry instead of to managing a business.

Never on to follow fashion's dictates, he did benefit from style because his jewelry was always designed for the body—very wearable, yet dramatic. When large earrings became popular, for example, he gained many new customers, who remained even when the trend was over. They were "hooked" to his jewels that made a new kind of personal statement, that depicted the wearer as adventurous and in touch with her body and its visual presence. In 1979, Smith developed heart trouble and because of ill health as forced to close his shop.

What struck me, in listening to several former customers discuss their patronage, in conjunction with the Hatch-Billops Collection's Art Smith project⁹, was the close friendship which often developed between them, how Smith would invite customers to the studio at the back of the shop to have a snack and a conversation with him while he worked. The radio was always on as he shared his other passion: music. He was a member of the Duke Ellington Society until his death, and, certainly, his jewelry can be viewed as a visualization of the rhythms, melodies, harmonies and balance of his beloved jazz. Mel Tapley, in Art Smith's obituary in the *Amsterdam News*, March 6, 1982, wrote, "... his ... creations ... had [the] elegance, creativity and distinction of an Ellington composition."



Arthur Smith was a man who grew up in a period in American history when achievement for a member of a minority group was an uphill battle. His father had been a militant in his own day, an officer in the Marcus Garvey movement and felt that he was "a maker of destiny." Brought up by a loving and supportive mother, Smith felt, early on, that he was different from his peers in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. He liked school and had ambition, aspiring to more than a practical but demeaning job. "A good job for a Negro, in those days was an usher at the Paramount of a porter at A.S. Beck." He always wanted to be an artist but didn't want to go to a Negro college. Although he wasn't philosophically a nihilist (militancy was suppressed in those days), he railed against social injustice and the concept of segregation. Without money for higher education, he applied for, and was awarded a scholarship to Cooper Union. There were six Black students in the entire school, and, because of the tenor of the times, they always felt as if they were second-rate. He always praised Cooper Union, however, as a school that encouraged innovative ideas and not simply mimicry of the past.

Arthur Smith was a self-taught metalsmith. His years with Winifred Mason gave him the technical skills necessary to practice his craft while his innate sense of how to combine form and space resulted in his art. Understanding of the body and the possibilities for its embellishment gave rise to his jewelry. There are few jewelers who have used the human silhouette so effectively in creating three-dimensional wearable forms as Art Smith. He drew inspiration from anatomy—bodily structure. He reflected it, took off on it, made allusions to it, added to it, went further than it, at times laughed at it, but consistently respected and applauded it.

Biomorphic bracelet, sterling silver, forged, constructed, approx. 5½" L, c. 1946. Private collection



High Jewelry Designer Édéeenne

By Sotheby's

When did you first realise you wanted to pursue a career as a jewelry designer?

"After having lived many lives (coming from Montreal to study at Sorbonne University, working in Paris as a festival organizer at Pompidou Center, a movie producer, a CEO's coach...) my life changed suddenly one day in September, 15 years ago, during my first scuba diving at the Lake Maggiore in the North of Italy.

Actually, I had an accident. I went too fast to the surface of the water, after being squeezed into a whirlpool of dust, and my instructor told me that I was obliged to dive again to recover. Against my fear, I went down again. I was so surprised I felt better that I turned around and at this precise moment, the sun created a refraction phenomenon around me. I was surrounded by a rainbow which turned all the rocks underneath into sapphires, rubies, emeralds...it was a sign. I will be a jeweler, even if I knew nothing about this universe before. I took the most golden-looking stone as a memento. Two weeks later I was at the gemology school and I made the 4 year study into 5 months, I was in a rush, I was already 45 at that time.

I founded my House of High Jewelry under my name, Édéeenne, on 23 December 2003."

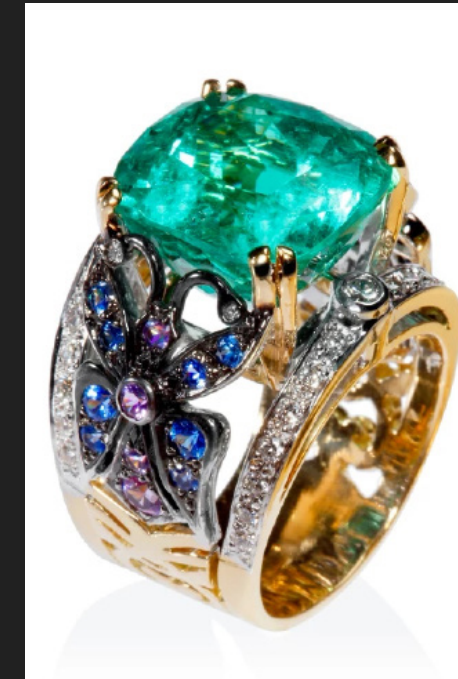
Who have been your biggest mentors in this industry and what is the best advice they have ever given you?

"I cannot say that I had a mentor in the industry, my vision was from the beginning too far away. After two years, I went to jewelry school, on rue du Louvre in Paris, and at the first lesson, working with the wax and a file, I discovered that, one, I was there to see how limitless is this world; two, that we can make pieces of art with gold and precious stones and three, that I was a sculptor.

From then, I decided instead of looking for 'the' piece that everyone would love around the world, I would spend my time showing what was incredible in each person who would come to see me. Since then, I meet people, asking them many very private questions and, about two or three hours later, I stop him or her, and say that I see. To make it short, I design a piece of High Jewelry that moves me from their life. Like a painter would do a 'portrait', I do it with precious materials. All my work is based on the notion of 'resonance'.

I had no mentor in the industry but so many people helped me since fifteen years to believe in my work, in my vision and to keep my faith. I could write a book about that. Well... maybe one day!"

CHEVALIÈRE MULTICOLERE - BAGUE



FOUR SEASONS - SPRING



If you could go back and tell yourself one thing before beginning your career what would it be?

"I would change nothing, really. I feel every day that I am blessed, to meet all the incredible customers who come to me, sharing their life stories to see how I will enhance their memories and values into a portrait. It is something that deeply gives me meaning in my own life. You cannot imagine the joy I feel when I look to their eyes when they open the box with the piece they are waiting for."



FULL MOON

What was your biggest fear when starting Édéenne?

"From the very start, I was crazy enough to believe so much in my vision of High Jewelry, that it made me overcome all my practical fears. I wanted to use jewels to carry emotions, stories, human feelings. I feel something greater than me, pushing my dreams and those of my customers."

What do you want women to feel when wearing your jewelry?

"To feel how strong they are. Because they wear a jewel that is not only bespoke, but tells their own stories. It is according to me a real tribute to how 'unique' they are."

Who would you most like see wearing your jewelry?

"Michelle Obama. I had the pleasure to meet her and talk with her. Her aura is even bigger in real life. She is what I love most in women: determination, feminine power, awareness of mankind and no fear to 'say what shall be said' in such a graceful way."



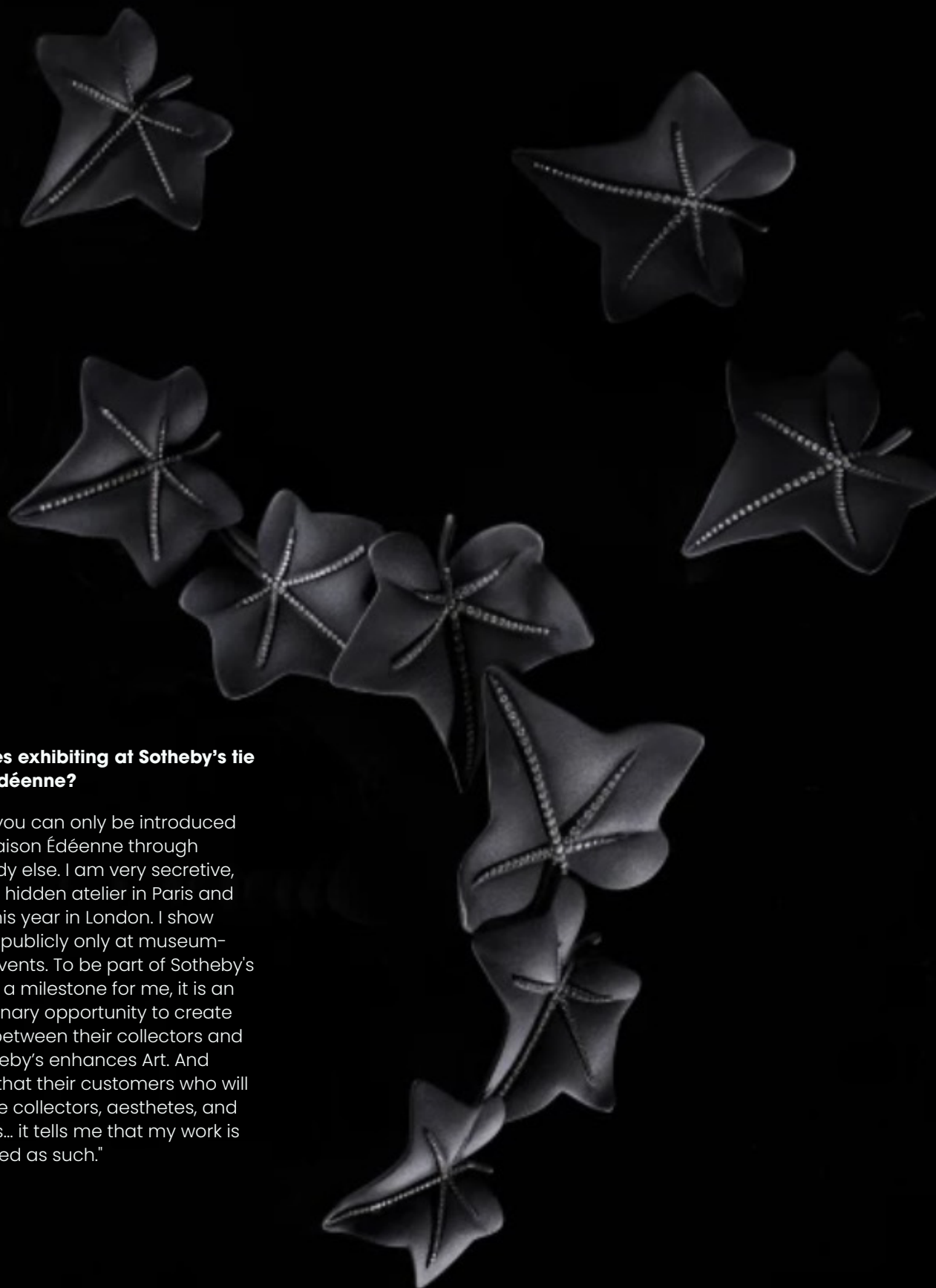
KISS AND FLY COLLIER

Name two icons you admire - one living, one dead.

"My mother who showed me that I could totally restart my life at 45 years old. She herself went back to university at this age even if my father was suspicious about 'why'. She had a new career, running a hospital, a job that at that time was held mostly by men. She made me understand I could make my dreams come true, all of them. I unfortunately lost her three years ago. Somehow she is still alive..."

Do you have a most treasured item in your personal jewelry collection?

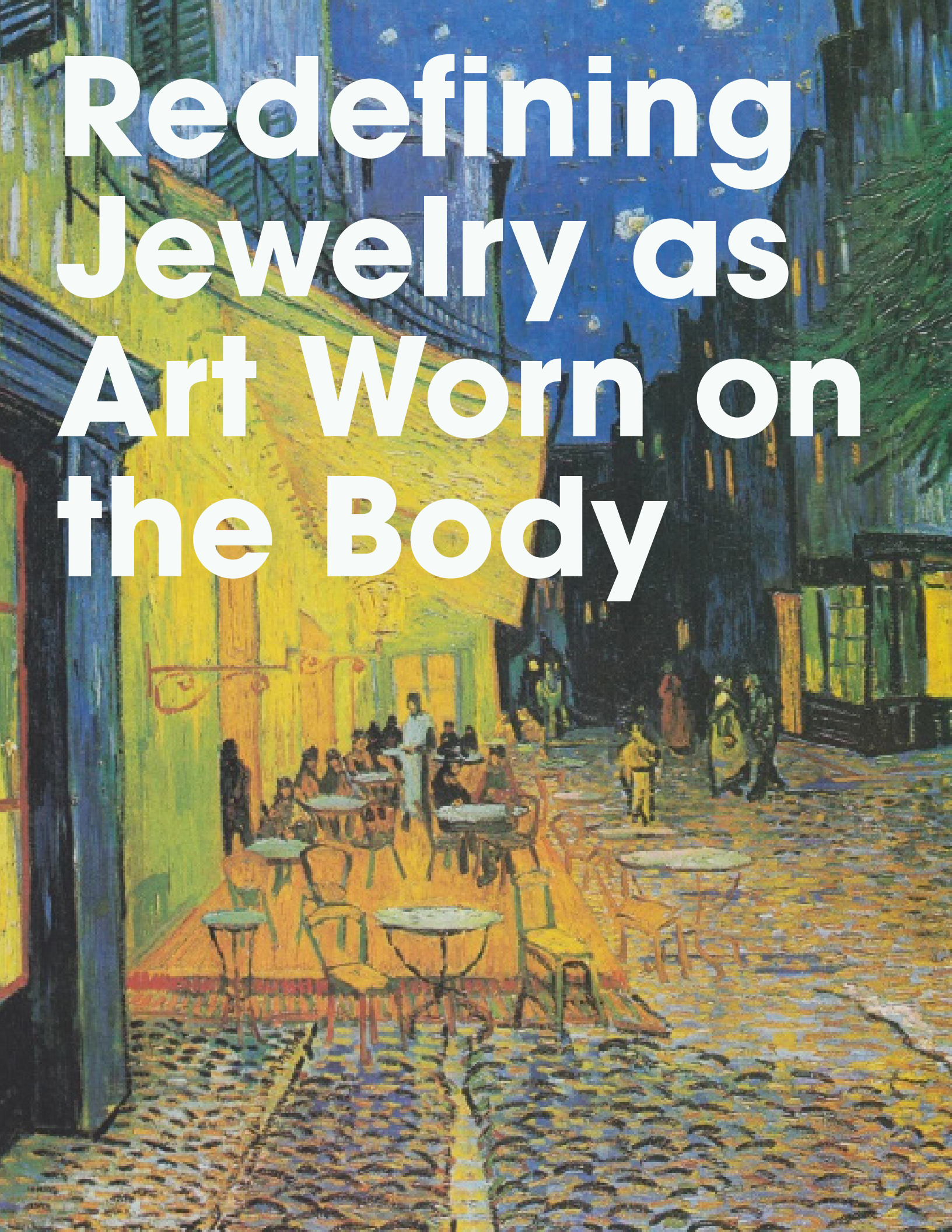
"When I was seven, my father, a chemist, disguised me as a princess, (which we don't have that much in Canada, except in former Native Americans' tribes), and he transformed my mother's strass necklace into a tiara. For me, suddenly, I was 'his' princess. You can see it every time in my exhibitions. As well as the stone I picked up in the Lake Maggiore."



How does exhibiting at Sotheby's tie in with Édéenne?

"Usually you can only be introduced at the Maison Édéenne through somebody else. I am very secretive, work in a hidden atelier in Paris and shortly this year in London. I show my work publicly only at museum-quality events. To be part of Sotheby's events is a milestone for me, it is an extraordinary opportunity to create this link between their collectors and me. Sotheby's enhances Art. And thinking that their customers who will come are collectors, aesthetes, and art lovers... it tells me that my work is considered as such."

NEXUS



Redefining Jewelry as Art Worn on the Body

VINCENT VAN GOGH, CAFÉ TERRACE AT NIGHT

Jewelry is one of the oldest and most universal art forms. From simple pieces such as stud earrings to an extravagant diamond necklace, every jewel is wearable sculpture, a mode of creative expression, each telling its own story through the interaction of precious materials and the human body. Through head ornaments, brooches, earrings, necklaces and rings, the adorned bodies can be transformed, accentuated or amplified in such a way that they may become living expressions of art.

Beauty, power, and divinity – the ideas which have influenced great artists throughout history have also guided the designers of magnificent jewels. In the late-19th century, the emergence of the Vienna Secession saw a moment that questioned the traditional understanding what constitutes art – blurring the lines separating fine

art and decorative art. Later, artists from all disciplines would embrace multiple forms of expression, and famous artists from the Bauhaus, Surrealist and Cubist movements began experimenting with their art in 3D – moving their way into jewelry design. Thus, the idea of ‘wearable art’ was conceived, creating an outlet from the conventions of traditional jewelry allowing these artists to create unique designs, often with sculptural qualities. In this respect, the distance between sculpture and jewelry are not so far apart. The intention to give expression to the energy of nature – such as flowers, wildlife and the ocean – or to integrate the geometries and embellishments of architectural styles have been a key inspiration. With examples from the upcoming Magnificent Jewels: Part I & II auctions, we look at some of history’s most important designers who created jewels as masterpieces of wearable art.



INSPIRED BY VINCENT VAN GOGH'S 'CAFÉ TERRACE AT NIGHT'. KRÖLLER-MÜLLER MUSEUM X NALAS 'SHINING STARS' PAIR OF DIAMOND EARRINGS

HISTORY OF Jewelry

ANCIENT WORLD JEWELRY

Jewelry is a universal form of adornment. Jewelry made from shells, stone and bones survives from prehistoric times. It is likely that from an early date it was worn as a protection from the dangers of life or as a mark of status or rank.

In the ancient world the discovery of how to work metals was an important stage in the development of the art of jewelry. Over time, metalworking techniques became more sophisticated and decoration more intricate.

Gold, a rare and highly valued material, was buried with the dead so as to accompany its owner into the afterlife. Much archaeological jewelry comes from tombs and hoards. Sometimes, as with the gold collars from Celtic Ireland which have been found folded in half, it appears people may have followed a ritual for the disposal of jewelry.

This collar was found in a bog in Shannongrove, Co. Limerick, Ireland, sometime before 1783. We do not know what it was used for, but it was probably a ceremonial collar. On the inner side of the collar, under each of the circular terminals, is a hole. The collar probably rested on the chest and was held in place by a chain running between the two holes and passing the back of the neck.



Collar known as The Shannongrove Gorget, maker unknown, late Bronze Age (probably 800-700 BC), Ireland. Museum no. M.35-1948. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

MEDIEVAL JEWELRY 1200-1500

The jewelry worn in medieval Europe reflected an intensely hierarchical and status-conscious society. Royalty and the nobility wore gold, silver and precious gems. Lower ranks of society wore base metals, such as copper or pewter. Color (provided by precious gems and enamel) and protective power were highly valued. Some jewels have cryptic or magical inscriptions, believed to protect the wearer.

Until the late 14th century, gems were usually polished rather than cut. Size and lustrous color determined their value. Enamels - ground glasses fired at high temperature onto a metal surface - allowed goldsmiths to color their designs on jewelry. They used a range of techniques to create effects that are still widely used today.

The images decorating the back of this cross were often used as a focus for meditation in the late medieval period. The scenes on the lid show the Instruments of the Passion - scourge, whip, lance, sponge and nails - which were used during the Crucifixion. A tiny fragment of one of them may have formed a relic, stored within the cross's now empty interior. Pearls symbolized purity, and the red gems may have symbolized sacrificial blood shed by



Pendant reliquary cross, unknown maker, about 1450-1475, Germany. Museum no. 4561-1858. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

ANCIENT WORLD JEWELRY

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Ring, maker unknown, setting 15th century, center 2nd century BC-1st century BC. Museum no. 724-1871. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



17TH-CENTURY JEWELRY

By the mid-17th century, changes in fashion had introduced new styles of jewelry. While dark fabrics required elaborate gold jewelry, the new softer pastel shades became graceful backdrops for gemstones and pearls. Expanding global trade made gemstones ever more available. Advances in cutting techniques increased the sparkle of gemstones in candlelight.

The most impressive jewels were often large bodice or breast ornaments, which had to be pinned or stitched to stiff dress fabrics.

The swirling foliate decoration of the jewels shows new enthusiasm for bow motifs and botanical ornaments. The central bow in this necklace is a magnificent example of a mid-17th century jewel. The painted opaque enamel was a recent innovation, said to have been developed by a Frenchman, Jean Toutin of Châteaudun. This striking color combination was frequently used in enamels around this date.

Necklace with Sapphire Pendant, bow about 1660, chain and pendant probably 18-1900, Europe. Museum no. M.95-1909. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

18TH-CENTURY JEWELRY

The end of the previous century had seen the development of the brilliant-cut with its multiple facets. Diamonds sparkled as never before and came to dominate jewelry design. Frequently mounted in silver to enhance the stone's white color, magnificent sets of diamond jewels were essential for court life. The largest were worn on the bodice, while smaller ornaments could be scattered over an outfit.

Owing to its high intrinsic value, little diamond jewelry from this period survives. Owners often sold it or re-set the gems into more fashionable designs for display.

From around 1640, light swords with short, flexible, pointed blades appeared in response to new fencing techniques that emphasized thrusting at speed. They were worn increasingly with civilian clothes as 'small swords', offering a means of self-defense but largely denoting status for the well-dressed gentleman.

Small swords were items of male jewelry. By the 1750s, their elaborate gold and silver hilts, mounted with precious stones and fine enameling, were the products of the goldsmith and jeweler rather than the swordsmith. They were often given as rewards for distinguished military and naval service.

This sword is inscribed: 'PRESENTED by the Committee of Merchants &c OF LONDON to LIEUT.T FRANCIS DOUGLAS for his Spirited and active conduct on board His Majesty's Ship the REPULSE. Ja.s Alms Esq.r Commander during the MUTINY at the NORE in 1797. Marine Society Office, May 1o 1798 } Hugh Inglis Esq.r Chairman'.

Sword, mark of James Morisset, 1798-9, England. Museum no. 274-1, 2-1869. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

19TH-CENTURY JEWELRY

The 19th century was a period of huge industrial and social change, but in jewelry design the focus was often on the past. In the first decades classical styles were popular, evoking the glories of ancient Greece and Rome. This interest in antiquities was stimulated by fresh archaeological discoveries. Goldsmiths attempted to revive ancient techniques and made jewelry that imitated, or was in the style of, archaeological jewelry.

There was also an interest in jewels inspired by the Medieval and Renaissance periods. It is a testament to the period's eclectic nature that jewelers such as the Castellani and Giuliano worked in archaeological and historical styles at the same time.

Naturalistic jewelry, decorated with clearly recognizable flowers and fruit, was also popular for much of this period. These motifs first became fashionable in the early years of the century, with the widespread interest in botany and the influence of Romantic poets such as Wordsworth. This large spray of assorted flowers has a pin fastening at the back and would have been worn as a bodice ornament. Some of the diamond flowers are set on springs, which would increase their sparkle considerably as the wearer moved. Individual flower sprays could be removed and used as hair ornaments.

By the 1850s the delicate early designs had given way to more extravagant and complex compositions of flowers and foliage. At the same time, flowers were used to express love and friendship. The colors in nature were matched by colored gemstones, and a 'language of flowers' spelt out special messages. In contrast with earlier periods, the more elaborate jewelry was worn almost exclusively by women.



Bodice ornament in the form of a floral spray, about 1850, possibly made in England. Museum no. M.115-1951. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

ARTS & CRAFTS JEWELRY

Developing in the last years of the 19th century, the Arts and Crafts movement was based on a profound unease with the industrialized world. Its jewelers rejected the machine-led factory system – by now the source of most affordable pieces – and instead focused on hand-crafting individual jewels. This process, they believed, would improve the soul of the workman as well as the end design.

Arts and Crafts jewelers avoided large, faceted stones, relying instead on the natural beauty of cabochon (shaped and polished) gems. They replaced the repetition and regularity of mainstream settings with curving or figurative designs, often with a symbolic meaning.

The designer of this brooch, C. R. Ashbee, was a man of immense talents and energy and a defining figure in the Arts and Crafts Movement. In 1888 he founded the Guild of Handicraft in the East End of London with the intention of reviving

traditional craft skills and providing satisfying employment in a deprived area of the city. Trained originally as an architect, he is known also for his highly innovative furniture, metalwork, silver and jewelry designs.

The peacock was one of Ashbee's favorite and most distinctive motifs and he is known to have designed about a dozen peacock jewels in the years around 1900. Family tradition is that this brooch was designed for his wife, Janet. It was made by Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft Ltd. at Essex House on the Mile End Road, London.



Pendant-brooch (detail), designed by C.R. Ashbee and made by the Guild of Handicraft, about 1900, England. Museum no. M.31-2005. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



ART NOUVEAU JEWELRY AND THE GARLAND STYLE 1895–1910

The Art Nouveau style caused a dramatic shift in jewelry design, reaching a peak around 1900 when it triumphed at the Paris International Exhibition.

Its followers created sinuous, organic pieces whose undercurrents of eroticism and death were a world away from the floral motifs of earlier generations. Art Nouveau jewelers like René Lalique also distanced themselves from conventional precious stones and put greater emphasis on the subtle effects of materials such as glass, horn and enamel.

However, the style's radical look was not for everyone or for every occasion. Superb diamond jewelry was made in the 'garland style', a highly creative re-interpretation of 18th- and early 19th-century designs.

The maker of this orchid hair ornament, Philippe Wolfers, was the most prestigious of the Art Nouveau jewelers working in Brussels. Like his Parisian contemporary René Lalique, he was greatly influenced by the natural world. These exotic orchids feature in the work of both. The technical achievement of enameling in plique-à-jour (backless) enamel on these undulating surfaces is extraordinary.



Hair ornament, made by Philippe Wolfers, 1905-7, Belgium. Museum no. M.11-1962. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

ART DECO JEWELRY TO THE 1950S

Although buffeted by cycles of boom, depression and war, jewelry design between the 1920s and 1950s continued to be both innovative and glamorous. Sharp, geometric patterns celebrated the machine age, while exotic creations inspired by the Near and Far East hinted that jewelry fashions were truly international. New York now rivaled Paris as a center for fashion, and European jewelry houses could expect to sell to, as well as buy from, the Indian subcontinent.

Dense concentrations of gemstones are characteristic of Art Deco jewelry. From about 1933 gold returned to fashion, partly because it was cheaper than platinum.

Artists and designers from other fields also became involved in jewelry design. Their work foreshadows the new directions jewelry would take.

This brooch commemorates the breaking of the World Land Speed Record by Captain George Eyston in 1937. The car depicted is Thunderbolt, which Captain Eyston designed, built and drove. It was powered by two aero engines made by the firm of Rolls-Royce, which presented the brooch to Captain Eyston's wife.



Commemorative Brooch, 1937, England. Museum no. M.115-1993. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY

Since the 1960s the boundaries of jewelry have been continually redefined. Conventions have been challenged by successive generations of independent jewelers, often educated at art college and immersed in radical ideas.

New technologies and non-precious materials, including plastics, paper and textiles, have overturned the notions of status traditionally implicit in jewelry.

Avant-garde artist-jewelers have explored the interaction of jewelry with the body, pushing the boundaries of scale and wear-ability to the limits. Jewelry has developed into wearable art. The debate on its relationship to Fine Art continues.

Brooch, designed and engraved by Malcolm Appleby, made by Roger Doyle, 1975, England. Museum no. M.314-1977. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Modern Harmony Earrings
from Suzanne Schwartz
22 Karat Gold Bimetal
Baroque Freshwater Pearl



JEWELRY ART HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUES TECHNIQUES OF GOLD SMITHERY

INTRODUCTION

Considered to be decorative art, jewelry is one of the oldest categories of precious metalwork. There are many different types of jewelry, including: crowns, tiaras, necklaces, earrings, amulets, bracelets, rings, studs, brooches, torcs, chains, tie-pins, hat-pins, hairpins, belt and shoe buckles, ankle bracelets and toe rings. Made by goldsmiths, as well as other master-craftsmen like silversmiths, gemologists, diamond cutters/setters and lapidaries, jewelry is prized for both its aesthetics and the value of its components, which typically include gold or silver, and a variety of precious and semi-precious stones. Such decorative adornments were first made in prehistoric times – as confirmed by cave paintings showing figures wearing necklaces and bracelets – and have since become a regular feature of most cultures throughout the ages. An important type of Egyptian art as well as the more nomadic Celtic culture, jewelry was a feature of Byzantine art in Medieval Kiev, African art throughout the Dark Continent, Oceanic art across the Pacific and both Aztec and Inca culture in the Americas. Indeed, jewelry – like body painting and face painting – has been a fundamental element of tribal art for millennia. Jewels have also been used to adorn weapons, as well as ceremonial and religious objects. During the era of modern art, movements like Art Nouveau and the later Art Deco, inspired new ranges of decorative jewels, while a number of famous artists dabbled in jewelry design including: Picasso, the sculptor Alexander Calder, the surrealists Meret Oppenheim and Salvador Dalí, and the assemblage artist Louise Nevelson. Among the most famous jewelry-makers are Fabergé of Russia, Tiffany & Co of New York and René Lalique and Cartier of Paris.

JEWELRY MATERIALS

One of the most expensive types of art, the basic components of jewelry include metal sheet, metal cast in a mold, and wire. The most widely used metal is gold, because of its malleability, ductility, color and value. Gold sheets may be embossed into shape, or pressed or pierced into decorative forms, while gold wire is often employed to join jewels together or to make chains. Less expensive precious metals used in jewelry-making include silver and platinum, as well as alloys like bronze, and non-precious metals like copper and steel.

As well as metals, other materials used in the art of jewelry manufacture include precious and semi-precious gemstones. Diamonds are traditionally the most highly prized gems, and vary in color from yellow to bluish white. Other precious stones are rubies (red), emeralds (green) and sapphires (blue), plus less costly chrysoberyl (yellow/green) topaz (yellow/blue) and zircon (brown/translucent). Pearls, though of animal origin rather than mineral, are also regarded as gemstones. Popular semi-precious stones used by jewelry designers include: amethyst (violet/purple), garnet (deep-red), opal (milky white), aquamarine (bluish/green), jade (green), lapis lazuli (blue), malachite (bright green). Another important material used to create coatings, is fused-glass or enamel.

All these components are fashioned into the desired form and shape through the use of techniques, carried out with help of tools.

Jewelry Techniques

The most common metalwork techniques used by goldsmiths, silversmiths and lapidaries to create jewelry, include casting, cutting, welding or soldering, and cold-joining (the use of staples and rivets to assemble parts). More advanced decorative techniques include embossing, repoussé work, engraving, enamel-work (types include champlevé, cloisonné, basse taille, plique-à-jour) granulation and filigree decoration. When it comes to stone-cutting, gems may be cut to create incised/engraved designs on the stones themselves, or they may be cut (from variegated stones like onyx or agate) to make cameos.

Embossing

This is a process used to create raised or sunken designs in a sheet of metal. One popular type of embossing is Repoussé – a technique in which a malleable metal sheet is shaped by hammering from the reverse side in order to create a design in low relief. Another related embossing technique is known as Chasing. This is the opposite technique to repousse, in that while repousse works on the reverse of the metallic sheet to create a raised pattern on the front, chasing is used to create designs on the front of the sheet by sinking the surface of the metal.

Enameling

The traditional goldsmith's technique of enameling, which dates back to late Roman and early Byzantine art, involves the coating of metal with vitreous enamel (porcelain enamel), a material made from molten glass which hardens to a smooth, durable coating. Enamel can be transparent, opaque or translucent, while a wide range of different colors and hues may be added to the smelted glass by mixing it with various minerals, like the metal oxides cobalt, iron, neodymium, praseodymium and others.

Champlevé

Named after the French word for "raised field", champlevé enameling is an ancient technique designed to add color and luster to metal jewelry – in which troughs are sunk into the surface of a metal object, filled with vitreous enamel and fired. When cooled, the surface of the object is polished to create extra shine. The method was first fully exploited by Romanesque goldsmiths, in the ornamentation of plaques, caskets and vessels, as exemplified by the Stavelot Triptych.

Cloisonné

More difficult than champlevé, Cloisonné is another type of enameling process. While champlevé creates sunken compartments of decorative enamel work, cloisonné enamellers solder flat metal strips (or silver/gold wires) onto the surface of the metal object, creating mini-walled compartments (cloisons, in French) which are then filled with enamel and fired.

Basse-Taille

Yet another method of enamel work, it is similar to cloisonné, except that the floors of the 'compartments' are engraved with a low-relief design. The compartments are then filled with translucent enamel allowing the design to be seen through it. An excellent example of the technique is the French Royal Gold Cup (14th century), made during the age of International Gothic art.

Plique-à-jour

This technique of goldsmithery is also similar to cloisonné, but the compartments created have no backing. (A temporary backing is eliminated once the enamel has cooled after being fired.) This allows light to shine through the transparent enamels used, in the manner of stained glass. Plique-à-jour is a notoriously difficult and time-consuming technique with a high failure rate.



Niello

Invented by the Egyptians and used by the Romans, Niello is decorative technique used by goldsmiths and silversmiths in which a black mixture of sulphur, copper, silver, or lead, acts as an inlay for designs engraved on the surface of a metal object (typically silver). Objects decorated in this manner are known as nielli. The technique reached its zenith in Early Renaissance art, at the hands of the Florentine goldsmith Maso Finiguerra (1426-64).

EARLY HISTORY

Although jewelry originated during Paleolithic culture, the oldest surviving examples are those excavated from the royal tomb of Queen Pu-abi at Ur, in Sumeria, dating from the Third Millennium BCE. (See also: Mesopotamian Art and Mesopotamian Sculpture.)

Other early pieces include those taken from King Tutankhamun's tomb (c.1320 BCE). Jewels were an important element in Minoan culture and later Greek art, whose influence and styles permeated throughout the eastern Mediterranean - notably during the era of Hellenistic culture - inspiring jewelry design in Etruscan art (Italian mainland) as well as the Black Sea region. Hellenistic artists, who achieved a complete mastery of miniature designs - were influenced in turn by Ancient Persian art, following the defeat of Emperor Darius by Alexander the Great.

As Greek political power waned (300-200 BCE), La Tene Celtic culture - notably items of personal jewelry - began to penetrate from central Europe into France, Italy and the Ukraine. During the Pax Romana, the use of jewels became more widespread, as Rome became a center for goldsmith workshops. In the Roman provinces of Western Europe, a renaissance of Celtic handicrafts took place, exemplified by the Petrie Crown - created using the repoussé method during the period 200-100 BCE - and the exquisite Brighter gold collar (torc), created during the 1st century BCE.

Celtic art generally refers to works of the ancient Celts, created during the Hallstatt Culture (c.800-450 BCE) or the La Tene Culture (c.450-50 BCE): later Celtic metalwork art, including the beautiful Tara Brooch (silver gilt with a knitted

silver wire, decorated all over with intricate Celtic interlace), is categorized as "Insular art" from Early Medieval Britain and Ireland. Other bejewelled artworks from this Hiberno-Saxon era include the ecclesiastical illuminated manuscripts, and treasures like the Sutton Hoo Belt Buckle, made in the 7th century, which is noted for its affinities with Celtic-style jewelry and patternwork. (See also: Celtic Jewelry Art.) For other examples of Medieval manuscript illumination requiring jeweled



the Ram in the Thicket pre 1998 restoration.

ornamentation, see: Romanesque illuminated manuscripts (1000-1150) and Gothic illuminated manuscripts (1150-1350).

Very little jewelry was made during the Dark Ages in Europe, except for those items created during the era of Byzantine art (c.500-1450), centered in Constantinople. In contrast to the Romans, and tribes like the Celts and the Franks, Byzantine designers employed gold leaf rather than solid gold, and

placed greater emphasis on stones and gems. In Kiev, during the period c.950-1237, jewelry-making in general and the art of both cloisonné and niello in particular were taken to new heights by Byzantine goldsmiths. A large collection of jewelry and other precious objects can be seen at the Ukrainian Museum of Historic Treasures, in Kiev.

Another influential regional school of Romanesque metalwork was the school of Mosan art which grew up in the valley of the River Meuse in Belgium, during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. Centered on the Bishopric of Liege, Mosan goldsmiths like Nicholas of Verdun (c.1156-1232) and Godefroid de Claire (c.1100-73) demonstrated an absolute mastery of enameling, including champlevé as well as cloisonné.

ITALY

The wealth of inspiration which Renaissance art brought to Europe at the close of the quattrocento (15th century) and beginning of the cinquecento (16th century) had a profound influence upon the jeweler's art. The new aesthetics came from Italy, the true home of the love of the antique. This is faithfully reflected in the jewels of the period; and when one remembers that the workshops, the botteghe, of the goldsmiths were the schools where some of the greatest practitioners of Renaissance art received their training, it is easy to explain the beauty and quality of the jewels produced.

Lorenzo Ghiberti (1380-1455) had begun his career as a goldsmith, before the end of the 14th century; after him came Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), Antonio Pollaiuolo (1432-98), Luca Della Robbia (1400-1482) and Andrea del Verrocchio (1435-1488), all trained as goldsmiths. In Germany, Albrecht Durer (1471-1528) was the son of a goldsmith. Thus it is that in the portrait art of the time, jewels are portrayed with very great care, and with affection and understanding.

Fashions spread from Italy through Europe with much rapidity, and within a few years the stock subjects of decoration had completely changed; nymphs, satyrs and Olympian goddesses invaded courts and great princely mansions with their pagan seductiveness.

Engraved plaques occupy a position of marked importance in the midst of this exuberant activity. A painter such as Hans Holbein (1497-1543) and an architect of the calibre of Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, did not disdain, to create designs for jewels; and other artists in ornament, some of them also goldsmiths, followed suit. The drawings of Virgil Solis (c.1540) of Nuremberg, of Hans Mielich (c.1570) of Munich, of Etienne Delaune (c.1560) in France, of Erasmus Hornick (1562) of Nuremberg bear witness to the existence of what might be called an international style, and indeed there are such strong similarities between jewels of this period that it is sometimes almost impossible to state their origin precisely. The problem becomes even more difficult when it is a question of identifying the goldsmith who made them. Contemporary documents do mention many goldsmiths, but for the most part these are nothing more than names

his day in this particular sphere. We possess only the descriptions which the master has left in his writings and autobiography. Those show that Cellini attached much more importance to his lavori di minuteria, for altars or princely tables in gold, than he did to jewels in the strict sense of the word.



The Angels before Abraham & Sacrifice of Isaac
By Ghiberti

One point which stands out clearly in the pieces which have come down to us, is that precious stones played an accessory role in relation to the use of enameled gold. Besides this the stones show but little variety in the cutting; colored stones are frequently cut en table, flat, en cabochon, rounded, without facets and polished. Diamonds were usually cut as pyramids en pointe, flat cut, or rounded dos d'ane (donkey's back). Cut in this manner they could hardly show the fire for which they are famous.

Among the pieces of jewelry preserved from this time the most numerous are the enseignes, a type of medallion worn by men on the hat, and the pendants which were worn on the breast or as the central ornament of chains and necklaces. The Portrait of an Unknown Woman, by the great Venetian painter Tintoretto (1518-94) gives us some idea as to how they were worn.

The enseigne traditionally chased by Ghiberti for Cosimo de' Medici, would seem to be of later date (note: "chasing" is a type of enameling); the interest in the piece primarily consists in the very sculptural nature of the medallion's center representing St John in the Desert. This tendency is again evident in the enseigne which shows St John the Evangelist, in which the composition is on a grand scale considering the small dimensions of the piece. Another enseigne is nothing less than a minute gold bas-relief; the battle scene is handled with mettle and virtuosity. In some other works enamel takes a larger place, partly covering motifs and figures, bringing with it an attractive element of color, but minimizing the fine quality of the chasing. This is the case with the enseigne which is said to have belonged to Don John of Austria which portrays the Conversion of St Paul; the profusion of figures, and the effects of perspective bear witness to a certain clumsiness of design.

Simply by virtue of their shape the enseignes tend to monotony, but the pendants bear witness to a charming richness of invention. On the reverse of one Apollo and Daphne are to be seen amidst an abundance of intertwined foliage, among which sirens, boys and warriors prance and turn. The richly polychromatic combination of different enamels gives the piece gaiety and striking effect. Ornamental designers and goldsmiths alike were provided by antiquity with a source of inspiration from which both profited greatly, but jewels dating from the Greek or Roman eras were, in the 16th century, practically unknown, and could not serve as models, with the exception of some antique cameos, treasured through the Middle Ages, which were not only zealously collected but also imitated.



Ghiberti's 'Gates of Paradise', Florence

Looking at the Future

Traditionally, the mandate of the silversmith was to make functional, liturgical and secular holloware to meet the needs of the church and the elite of society. The term "holloware" referred primarily to hammer-raised vessels. We know that the Industrial Revolution had an irreversible, detrimental effect on the craftsman, only slightly held at bay by the Arts and Crafts Movement at the turn of the century and the Bauhaus movement of the 30s. The latter, in turn, strongly influenced first Scandinavian design and subsequently the North American approach to holloware in the middle of this century, when silversmithing skills were reborn. We are equally familiar with the resulting interaction of technique with design, which became the battle cry of "holloware."

Now, some 30 years later, the scope of silversmithing has expanded to encompass sculpture, objects where function is of secondary importance, an increasing variety of techniques, some of which are an application of high-technology and all kinds of metals and nonmetals, which now include synthetic as well as natural.

Rather than accepting a mandate imposed on us by demand in the marketplace, we are evolving our own and asking that our work be accepted on our terms. Or are we? And what are those terms?

Certainly, in the public's perception, and probably in our own, there is confusion as to what it is we make and what it is we are. We may call ourselves artists, though our work is not recognized as art. We may call ourselves silversmiths yet rarely raise a form or use precious metals. We may call our works holloware, though they have no function. We may say we are making sculpture, yet it has a function. We may call our work "architectural" sculpture, though it is never meant to be applied to a building but instead uses the architectural vocabulary. This confusion, even among ourselves, about our work and the terms we use to describe it, is symptomatic of a state of flux and is important to address because it denies our public the vocabulary essential to acceptance of what we do.

Consider, for example, the phrase "revitalizing holloware." This cliché is often used to imply a "redirection" of silversmithing, too. But, with its functional connotations, is "holloware" the appropriate term when the smith's redirection is towards nonfunctional objects and sculpture?

Whatever the terminology, any examination of the broadening scope of metalwork and its redirection needs to consider the reasons behind the changes, their consequences and how best to expedite those changes we consider to be valid.

In discussing possible reasons for the change, we should ask whether it is due to the fact that many of the metalworkers who create sculpture are, in fact, artists, who happen to work in metal, or whether it is an attempt to evoke a response in the marketplace that is withheld from functional holloware. In other words, is it an attempt to share in some of the status (and

correspondingly higher prices) accorded the recognized art forms? If that is the reason, will our craft origins and the public's perception of those origins always work against acceptance of our work as art?

As to the consequences of the change in direction, can we afford to remove ourselves from our traditional place in the market to compete for a place in the art market? If we can, what do we do to convince the galleries, consumers and critics that we are making art?

Whether we decide to function as artist or craftsman, what do we do to convince the public that functional holloware has an importance in our society? Does part of the answer lie in a clearly defined vocabulary used by metalworkers and understood by the critic and consumer? How much public resistance of our works can be attributed to aesthetic, and how much to practical, considerations?



Kevin Grey
Cygnus, 2013

Esthetically speaking, is some of our work too derivative of past and recent sculpture? Are the forms of our functional holloware too boring and repetitive? Is our work too exotic and "precious," aiming primarily at attracting immediate attention and offering little ongoing reward to the viewer? Is there too little content and concept in our works and too much display of self-conscious virtuosity?

On the practical side, we should consider whether our work is resisted because of a public idea that it is costly, even though the prices may be quite comparable to those of a good painting or print. Is the fluctuating price of precious metals a factor? Is resistance increased by the idea that our objects (holloware or sculpture) will require constant cleaning and/or are too delicate and susceptible to damage?

Obviously, then, we do not lack self-analyzing questions. My hope for this discussion is that, as a group comprising a variety of viewpoints, we can engage in mutually beneficial discussion and perhaps arrive at a conclusion or two.



Kevin Grey
Animus, 2015

925



925 is an independent, one man print magazine established in 2023 published once a year.

Empowering creativity, celebrating craftsmanship, and igniting passion for creation, **925** is a beacon for enthusiasts, artisans, and connoisseurs alike. We strive to share pages full of techniques, and stories from the world of jewelry, fostering a community that thrives on artistry, innovation, and a deep appreciation for the timeless allure of precious metals and gemstones. With each issue, we aim to spark connections, elevate skills, and illuminate the boundless possibilities within the realm of jewelry design and creation.



