

Watches & Jewellery

Craftsmanship A precise technique of colouring jewels features in a modern collection inspired by archival wing designs. By Kate Youde

Chaumet revives enamel to rework a historic motif

The American sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney bought a platinum tiara from Chaumet's boutique in London's New Bond Street in 1910. Crafted in the French jeweller's workshop a couple of years previously, the jewel featured a pair of wings made from blue translucent enamel, and 500 brilliant-cut and 706 rose-cut diamonds.

More than a century on, this piece is the inspiration behind nine transformable high-jewellery designs being unveiled in Paris on Monday. The wing-themed Envol capsule is what Olga Corini, creative studio director at Chaumet, believes to be the brand's first entire jewellery collection in enamel.

Wings have long featured in designs at Chaumet, founded in 1780. The earliest example of the motif among the more than 66,000 sketches of jewellery in the house's archive is a drawing dating from around 1810 of a tiara with two bird wings at its centre, according to Thibault Billoré, archive curator at Chaumet.

The motif reached the height of its popularity during the Belle Époque period, when Joseph Chaumet gave his name to the brand and was at its helm. Billoré says wings had long been a symbol

of power, freedom and love but that the art nouveau movement was "crowded by creatures with wings, especially fairies, Valkyries, griffins, chimera (and) olives", which invited "journeys into dreams". Customers for Chaumet's jewels in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were often fond of the music of Richard Wagner, composer of *Ring of the Nibelungen*, he adds.

Billoré says Joseph Chaumet was reflecting the taste of the period, but that the volume of his creations shows the house was "renowned for jewellery wings". Typical designs included necklaces with a pair of wings that could be removed and worn as brooches, and tiaras and tiarets with diamond-set wings. Such pieces were popular as a wedding present; Empress Eugénie of France gave her goddaughter, Victoria Eugénie, a platinum and diamond winged tiara on her marriage to King Alfonso XIII of Spain in 1906.

Whitney, who later founded the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, paid \$650 for her winged tiara in 1910. By the time Chaumet acquired her jewels at auction for its archive in 2017, the tiara frame was missing so the brand created a new one in white gold and diamonds.

The original wings are made from blue plique-à-jour enamel, a technique



In which enamel is applied in cells but there is no backing so light shines through in a similar way to a stained-glass window. "What was incredible about the Vanderbilt example is that Joseph Chaumet found a way to... give a bombe effect similar to real stones," says Corini, adding that he received a patent for the achievement of sculpting enamel in a rounded shape like a cabochon.

For the white gold design in its collection, the brand has used grand feu enamel to allow for a colour gradient. Corini describes this enamelling technique – used in high-end watch dials – as "one of the most incredible representations of precious savoir-faire".

After hand-carving the metal, three shades of blue pigment (a powder) – chosen to complement sapphires – were mixed with water. These were applied by brush and blended into a gradient on the wings of the designs. The pieces were fired in a

Clockwise from right: American sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney; an Envol tiara brooch; and necklaces at 1810 tiara from the archival gem-setting, and the plique-à-jour enamelling

kiln at a temperature of 750-800 degrees centigrade after each layer. When the desired depth of colour

was achieved, the enamel was polished and a transparent finish applied. The gradient effect was only achieved after much testing. "Because it is manually done, to repeat it is quite difficult," says Corini. The house called on the expertise of an artisan who was a winner in the Meilleur Ouvrier de France, a competition for craftspeople, to oversee the application of the enamel.

The design that posed the biggest technical challenge was a tiara that required 850 hours of work. Corini says this was due to its size – the bigger a piece, the harder it is to apply the enamel in a consistent way – and its unique construction. The tiara can be



worn with its pair of 22cm-long enamel wings, composed of individual feathers with tips set with brilliant-cut pavé diamonds, or without them to put the focus on a central 3.92-carat pear-shaped sapphire. The wings can also be detached and worn as brooches, or attached to an enamel and diamond stem to create a mask for a ball. "With this piece that is certainly audacious and a little bit crazy, we wanted really to embody the self-expression that defines the collection," says Corini.

The other new designs include a pavé diamond necklace featuring a 10.96-carat cushion-cut sapphire, two pairs of earrings, two cocktail rings and two brooches. A clock can be placed on a table or worn as a pendant on a pearl, enamel and diamond sash. Rounded wings hug the dial. Corini says the collection's wings are not identical so "to give a sense of naturalism".

In keeping with the theme of freedom and self-expression, she says each piece can be transformed in an "unexpected" way.

Couture meets fringed fantasy

Dior's latest high jewellery collection, being unveiled in Paris on Sunday, showcases fringing. Belle Dior is "a celebration of femininity, the beauty of gardens and the magic of couture", according to the French house. Among artistic director Victoire de Castellane's 50 colourful designs is the Solène Cédote set, which includes a bib necklace, a matching yellow diamonds, and star and moon motifs carved from black opal doublets set on turquoise. Completing the set are a bracelet, which can be turned into a chain, a ring, a pair of earrings, and a brooch that can also be worn in the hair.

Winter rarities

The New York gallery La Vieille Rueuse is showing rare pieces by Tiffany & Co at the Winter Show, which opens in the city today. Design being offered by the 175-year-old business, which is participating in the annual art, antiques and design fair for the 58th time, include a one-of-a-kind polished nephrite and black jade bracelet with a 14-carat gold spring hinge by Elsa Peretti (c. 1980), and Montana sapphires, aquamarine and diamond earrings by Jean Schlumberger (c. 1965). Non-Tiffany highlights include a Victorian butterfly brooch with tremulant wings set with sapphires and rubies in silver and gold.

Roman reinvention

Bulgari's latest collection, Bulgari Eternal, launching on February 1, reintroduces heritage designs from the Italian house's archives. The inspiration behind the first chapter of the line, *Viminis*, which translates into English as "wicker", is a yellow gold bracelet from 1942. This vintage piece has been reimagined in a new yellow gold bracelet, a ring, a bracelet, a pair of earrings and an earring. These designs are being released alongside one-of-a-kind high jewellery pieces including chokers, necklaces and poncho-style jewels, which are crafted from yellow gold, black diamond like

carbon and carved-cut, pavé-set diamonds.

Return of the bee

The British jeweller Alex Monroe is kicking off celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of his eponymous brand with the launch of a limited edition necklace on February 2. The design, made in sterling silver plated with Fairmined gold, features a small Mozambique ruby and his signature motif of a bee. The brand first featured the insect in its Original Sin collection in 2008, which was "bigger and bolder" than previous releases, according to Monroe, with the popularity of the design helping fuel the business' growth.

Masters of illusion

A white and yellow gold high jewellery cuff by Graff (below) features more than 144 carats of diamonds. The design, being shown at the British brand's boutique in Rue Saint-Honore, Paris, during Couture Week next week, centres around a 18.29-carat cushion-cut fancy intense yellow diamond. This is suspended above 835 snow-set pavé white diamonds, which total 126 carats. The placement of the stones is designed to give the impression that the diamonds are floating on the surface of the piece.

Stars in gold

Van Cleef & Arpels has expanded its Zodiac collection by introducing bracelets for the first time. Twelve designs – one for each of the signs of the western zodiac – feature small versions of the yellow gold medals the French jeweller launched in 2021. The reverse side shows the symbols for the signs and the corresponding dates in Roman numerals. The brand has also released white gold versions of its existing yellow gold medals to slide on a 50cm or 70cm chain. Zodiac signs have inspired Van Cleef & Arpels designs since the 1920s.

Tradition recast

Boodles is reimagining the signet ring for a series of three new one-of-a-kind high jewellery pieces launching early next month. The Paradox Trio swaps the traditional approach of a chunky gold ring featuring a family crest for

colourful designs with a cushion-cut sapphire. Two platinum rings have a blue sapphire of 5.57 carats and 4.24 carats respectively, with channel-set, tapered baguette blue sapphires on the shoulders plus additional brilliant-cut white diamonds. A third rose gold piece features a 5.02-carat pink sapphire with channel-set tapered baguette diamonds on the shoulders and additional brilliant-cut diamonds.

Chromatic legacy

David Morris is unveiling a new high jewellery collection during Haute Couture Week in Paris next week that celebrates colour through rare diamonds and gems. The 10 pieces of Legacy of Colour – four pairs of earrings, two rings, two necklaces and two bracelets – include purplish pink, orange and green blue diamonds. An 18-carat pink gold ring features 2.541-carat Padparadscha Ceylon sapphires (left) – a colour blend of orange and pink – set with fancy pink and white diamonds. Another ring showcases a 41.38-carat pear-shaped natural pink, green and orange diamonds.

A diamond landmark

De Beers London opened its largest boutique worldwide last week. The new Paris flagship, the diamond jeweller's third standalone store in the French capital, spans three floors of a Haussmannian style building in Rue de la Paix. It includes rooms for retail exhibitions and events, as well as a retail space. The décor is inspired by the brand's British heritage and connections to the diamond-mining regions of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. There is a wall of kimberlite, the host rock in which diamonds are found.

Contemporary voices

The Goldsmiths Fair will show new work by British contemporary jewellers Jo Hayes Ward, Jacqueline Cullen and Emeline Hastings at Collect art fair in London February 26-March 1. This year Hayes Ward's 20th as a jeweller. While she has previously worked mainly in gold, she is developing a new collection of cast aluminium designs for the event. Cullen will explore the elemental power of nature to shape the world in new pieces inspired by ice, while Hastings will present work that is made using her signature technique of embedding metallic elements into hand-carved acrylics and resins.

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Event The Maastricht show aims to appeal to more historically curious collectors.

By Milena Lazazzera

The European Fine Art Fair, better known as Tefal, has established itself as the pre-eminent fair for Old Masters. But over the past five years, a series of strategic shifts has made clear that a younger generation of collectors is increasingly in focus.

Among the changes is the expanded space devoted to contemporary jewellers, who "demonstrate how techniques, materials and design languages evolve, often in direct dialogue with historical precedents," according to Will Korneer, Tefal's head of fairs. This approach aligns with the event's broader ambition to present important works from across cultures and periods, encompassing not only Old Masters and antiquities, but also Chinese porcelain, Mughal paintings, Venetian glass, and 20th- and 21st-century art and design.

Unlike London, Paris or New York – where comparable events may also attract the casually curious – Maastricht appeals largely to professional collectors. Last year's fair drew more than 50,000 visitors, a 15 per cent increase on 2014, though still well below the 75,000 attendees recorded before the pandemic.

Last year, London-based jeweller Santi and US-based Ana Khouri joined the fair. The upcoming edition in March will see the debut of independent jewellers Cora Sheilani, Fernando Jorge, René Bolvin and Dries Criel, all of whom will bring brands long associated with Tefal, such as Buccellati, Hemmerle and Van Cleef & Arpels.

While Tefal attracts the deep-pocketed clients jewellers seek, gaining entry as an exhibitor is far from straightforward.

Korneer says fewer than half of all applicants are accepted. A committee comprising more than 200 museum professionals and independent specialists examines every object destined for display. Jewellery faces additional scrutiny, with all mounted diamonds and coloured gemstones – rubies, sapphires and emeralds – over two carats, as well



Santi Jewels joined Tefal last year

as natural pearls weighing more than 30 grams, requiring laboratory verification.

The rigour of the vetting process lends exhibitors a distinct credibility. "Visitors come with knowledge, and that kind of audience is invaluable," says Christian Hemmerle, the fourth generation to lead the Munich-based jewellery house. Having participated continuously since 1997 – a period during which his parents infused the brand with a more rustic, Bauhaus-inspired aesthetic – the fair has become part of Hemmerle's development. "For us, it has shaped not only visibility, but also the quality of engagement."

For Nicolas Luchsing, chief executive of Buccellati, no other fair offers such breadth of wares. "One can acquire contemporary art, Old Master paint-

ings, Art Deco furniture or Chinese snuff boxes all in one place," he says. "And because Maastricht is not easy to reach, only genuinely passionate connoisseurs attend."

ings, Art Deco furniture or Chinese snuff boxes all in one place," he says. "And because Maastricht is not easy to reach, only genuinely passionate connoisseurs attend. Being both a jeweller and a silversmith makes Buccellati especially appealing to this clientele, which we don't always reach in stores. "We have clients who only shop at Tefal."

Meanwhile, Richmond-owned Van Cleef & Arpels has used its participation to promote its Heritage Collection – an ensemble of pieces reacquired from the market, restored and offered for sale once more. This year's highlight is a transformable diamond necklace from 1963, drawing on motifs from both couture and nature. "We have met new clients who might never have entered a boutique," says Natacha Vassilchouk, the brand's heritage retail director. "We also regularly invite loyal collectors, who take great pleasure in discovering our creations in the context of the fair, where their artistic dimension and enduring appeal are even more evident."

Bridging history and modernity also appeals to Krishna Choudhary, a 10th-generation jeweller and founder of Santi Jewels, whose work blends Mughal motifs with modern materials. "Historians were appreciating contemporary craftsmanship, while modern jewellery collectors were captivated by the historical depth," he says.

For the new jewellers joining this year, the fair also offers practical business advantages. "As a small business, wholesale is difficult and expensive – a fair is a middle ground," says Cora Sheilani, who has deliberately chosen not to open a permanent store, citing financial and security constraints, as well as a desire to remain flexible.

At Tefal, she will present existing collections, including her recent Facets and Forms, which explores a wide range of diamond cuts. Antwerp-based Dries Criel takes a similar approach. Alongside his core pieces, he will unveil a one-of-a-kind creation intended to "offer a proper appreciation of the wide spectrum of my creative universe," he says, adding that forging relationships will matter more than immediate sales.

Ty Murphy, a lawyer and fine art specialist, sees jewellery at Tefal as "a strategic move." While [Art] Basel and Frieze own the 'conceptual' and the 'now', Tefal owns the pedigree," he says. "By placing a contemporary ring next to a 17th-century still life, the fair is 'museumifying' jewellery – signalling that this is not merely a luxury good, but a piece of history we ought to be re-examining." "We're seeing the death of the 'silobed collector', Murphy adds. "People don't just buy in one category any more."