

From Calder to Koons, the growing demand for wearable art

Annachiara Biondi | March 7, 2018

As an exhibition dedicated to artist-made jewellery opens at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, *Vogue* talks to the show's co-curator Diane Venet and other experts about the flourishing intersection of fashion and art.



Image: Damian Noszkowicz

When *Artists' Jewellery: From Calder to Koons* opens at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD) on March 7, it marks not only a curatorial coup, but the apotheosis of a burgeoning market. Conceived by Diane Venet, a leading collector of artist-made jewellery, and Karine Lacquemant, assistant curator of the modern and contemporary department at MAD, the show will feature 258 pieces created by 150 different artists. Many of the pieces will be displayed alongside original artworks by the same artist for the first time—a feat made possible by the museum's vast collection and Venet's extensive connections in the art world, which has resulted in a number of significant loans. By presenting jewellery alongside other art forms, the exhibition's design—realised by interior architect Antoine Plazanet and graphic designers Éric and Marie—makes a powerful statement about their intellectual and artistic value.

"My aim was to explain definitively that artist jewellery is art and not jewellery," Venet tells *Vogue* over the phone from Paris a week before the show opens. "An artist is doing jewellery, most of the time, for the woman they love or [for] a great friend, but it's always related to their main work," the collector and curator continues. "It's not a miniature of what they're doing big, but it's definitely inspir[ed], so that when you see the jewellery you recognise immediately who is it from." Venet's selection includes Niki de Saint Phalle's tapestries and the artist's *Nana* brooch—a wearable version of the vibrantly coloured, voluptuous female figures she started creating in 1964, some of which measured more than five metres—as well as Wim Delvoye's pigskin tattooed with an image of Christ, which inspired his "Jesus Twisted" necklace comprising eight pendants of contorted effigies—a very different exploration of the same subject.



Discovering that renowned artists with such disparate styles as Pablo Picasso, Lucio Fontana and Andy Warhol designed jewellery may still be a surprise to many, but in the last few years the market for wearable art has rocketed, with auctions multiplying and prices soaring well above their estimates. In exceptional cases, including an edition of Salvador Dali's *The Eye of Time* brooch and an *Alexander Calder necklace*, prices have surpassed the million dollar mark. According to Louisa Guinness, whose eponymous gallery in London has one of the most comprehensive collections of artist-made jewellery, the demand is a consequence of generational differences and a result of collectors and gallerists' tireless promotional work through exhibitions, art fairs and books.

"A lot of this jewellery was made in the '40s, '50s, '60s and '70s and the people who owned it are leaving it to the next generation," explains Guinness, gesturing towards a stack of wooden boxes containing numbered pins designed by Max Ernst, which she has just acquired. "The people who inherited it don't want it. They want to sell, which is exactly what's happened with this collection. So that's when people come to me or it comes up at auction."

For Imogen Kerr, associate director of Impressionist and Modern Art at Christie's, market growth goes hand-in-hand with a general increase in people's appreciation of art outside the more traditional disciplines of painting and sculpture. "It's quite a contemporary audience that looks at these works and thinks about how they can actually wear art as jewellery," says Kerr. "People are looking at the way art and design are intertwined, at the intersection of those practices, and are in a place where they can appreciate artworks in applied art form."

This appreciation of art has long manifested itself in fashion. Collaborations between designers and fine artists have existed since at least 1911, when French couturier Paul Poiret commissioned Fauve artist Raoul Dufy to make woodcut designs for his fabrics, but recently their commercial appeal has boomed. 2017 saw the release of Jeff Koons Masters collection for Louis Vuitton; a collaboration between Andres Serrano and Supreme; looks illustrated by the likes of Unskilled Worker and Angelica Hicks on the Gucci runway, and the ongoing creative partnership between Sterling Ruby and Raf Simons at Calvin Klein. The growing interest in the symbiotic relationship between art and fashion is perhaps fed by a desire for exclusive limited editions and capsule collections as a means of expressing individual style.

At the same time, designers and consumers are eager to explore new shores. "The world of fashion and design is so exhausted. There is only so much creativity, you need to have more input," says Guinness, who has noticed the pivotal change of attitude from the industry. "[They] did not accept or understand a lot of the artist jewellery world," she tells *Vogue*. "[Now] they are like sponges, absorbing the creativity of the artists who challenge the boundaries of conventional design." Artist-designed/made jewellery has already debuted on the runway, with Maria Grazia Chiuri enlisting Claude Lalanne for Dior Haute Couture in January 2017 and Victoria Beckham including Emily Young's creations in her Autumn/Winter 2017 show (all jewellery was loaned by Guinness).

Artists' jewellery is prized for its unique and conceptual value, so it's intrinsically wary of mass production, however there are parallels with the fashion industry. "The price range is for everyone," argues Elisabetta Cipriani, who commissions contemporary artists to make jewellery through her gallery in London. Her pieces, created by the likes of Ai Weiwei, Enrico Castellani and Adel Abdessemed, go from £1,000 to over £100,000. "If you have the means, the character and are intellectually sophisticated, this is the jewellery for you."

It's a sentiment shared by Guinness, who believes there is still some educating to be done around the value of artist's jewellery. "One of the things that I do get upset about is when someone comes into the gallery carrying a £20,000 Hermes handbag and they say they can't afford a £5,000 Anish Kapoor," she laments. "I say, 'well ditch the bag.'"



Diane Venet



Brooch, Niki de Saint Phalle,
1973 -1974



Brooch, Salvador Dalí, 1957



Jacqueline De Jong



Elisabetta Cipriani



Enrico Castellani



Lampshade Earrings, Man Ray,
1970



Brass Necklace, Alexander
Calder, 1950



White Slash Bracelet, Lucio
Fontana



Gold Spider Brooch, Louise
Bourgeois, 1996



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