

Unfettered



By CECILY MOTLEY

“Just extraordinary—
unfettered imagination,
wild exuberance . . .
and great names”

MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AFTER this ringing endorsement by scholar Graham Hughes in 1961, artist-made jewelry remains a relatively unknown corner of the art world. While the list of sculptors and painters who made jewelry reads like a curator’s wish list—Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Salvador Dalí, Lucio Fontana, Max Ernst, Jean (Hans) Arp, Alexander Calder, Louise Bourgeois, Anish Kapoor, Niki de Saint Phalle, Claude

American Jeff Koons (1955–) worked as a Wall Street commodities broker before embarking on his career as an artist. Following the example of pop artists of the 1960s, he uses his work to reflect the commercial systems of the modern world. His Rabbit necklace of 2005–2009, in platinum, was made in an edition of fifty. Height 2 inches.

Alexander Calder (1898–1976) made this untitled brooch in the form of a spiral—a recurring motif in his work—in 1940 from a single length of brass wire hammered and twisted into shape. Length 6 ¾ inches.

Jewelry by Artists



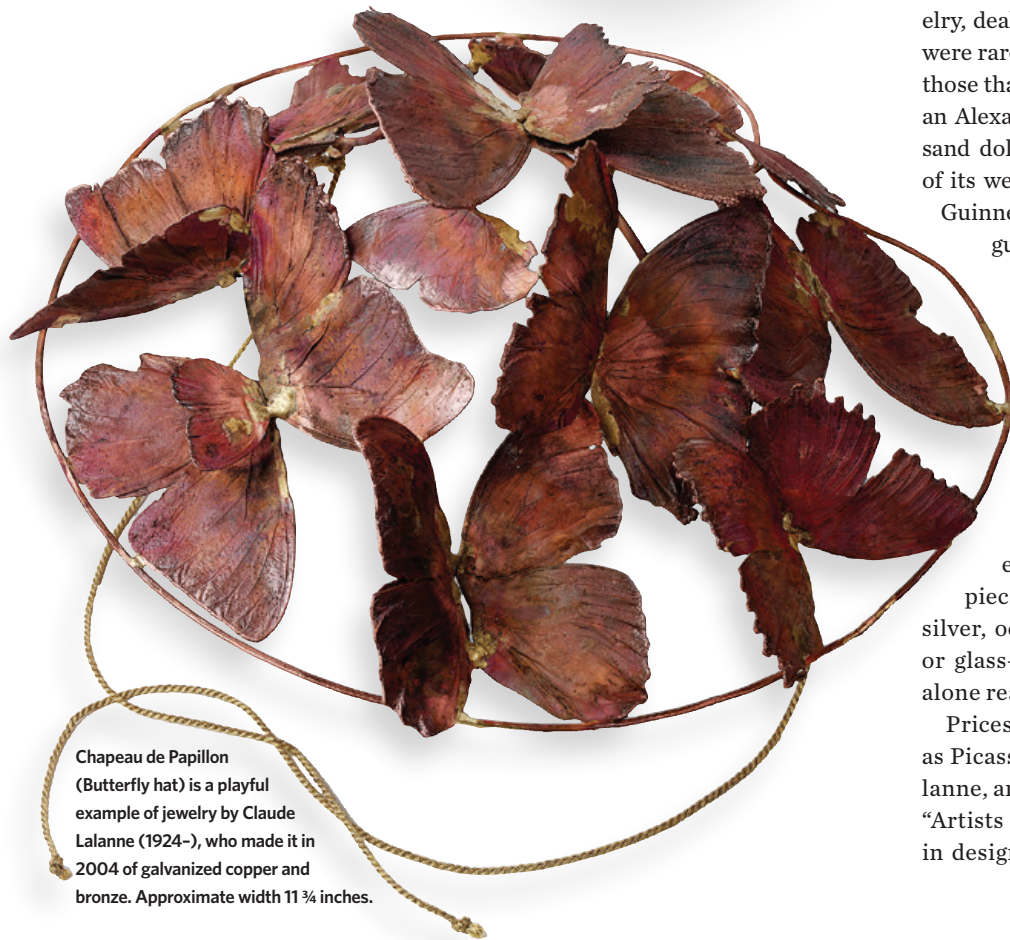
imagination



◀ Max Ernst (1891-1976) began to study philosophy at the University of Bonn in 1909, but became increasingly preoccupied with painting; self-taught, he was influenced by van Gogh and August Macke. His Groin pendant was fabricated in 23-karat gold by François Hugo in an edition of six. Diameter 4 inches.



▶ Le Rond pendant, no. 1344, designed by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), was made in 23-karat gold by Hugo in an edition of twenty. Each is signed, numbered, and stamped with the maker's mark. Diameter 2 inches.



Chapeau de Papillon (Butterfly hat) is a playful example of jewelry by Claude Lalanne (1924-), who made it in 2004 of galvanized copper and bronze. Approximate width 11 ¼ inches.

Lalanne, Alberto Giacometti—for many, their jewelry remains a revelation. And this despite the fact that in the past half-century major museums have held exhibitions of this work, starting with the *International Exhibition of Modern Jewelry 1890-1961* at Goldsmiths' Hall in London in 1961, which included the most comprehensive collection of artist-made jewels ever assembled to that time. Numerous artists were invited to create work for the show, which included examples by Dalí, Emil Nolde, Calder, and Giacometti as well as by such contemporary British artists as Elizabeth Frink and Kenneth Armitage. A decade later, in 1973, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston showed a selection of artists' jewels in *Jewelry as Sculpture as Jewelry*, followed in 1984 by *Modern Artists' Jewels* at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Most recently, in 2011 Diane Venet organized *Picasso to Koons: Artist as Jeweler* with the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, and it has since traveled to Europe and Asia.

A decade ago, when Louisa Guinness opened her London gallery specializing in artists' jewelry, dealers were few and far between. Pieces were rarely seen on the secondary market, and those that were could be picked up for a song—an Alexander Calder necklace for a few thousand dollars, a Picasso pendant for the price of its weight in gold. Apart from those whom Guinness invited to participate in her inaugural exhibition, *Past and Present: Jewellery by Artists* in 2003, few contemporary artists were making jewelry.

Skip forward a decade, and the market tells a different story. Wearable sculpture has become a new and accessible way of collecting and enjoying art. At Sotheby's New York in November 2013 eighteen pieces of Calder jewelry in the Hope Makler collection—pieces for the most part made of brass or silver, occasionally including found ceramic or glass—brought \$8,046,500. One necklace alone reached nearly \$2 million.

Prices for examples by other artists, such as Picasso, Man Ray, Ernst, Fontana, and Lalanne, are likewise steadily rising. Still, while "Artists Jewels" now have their own section in design auctions and contemporary art or

Anish Kapoor (1954-), one of the most influential sculptors of his generation, creates work that ranges vastly in scale, from huge to small pieces of jewelry, such as Water pendant, Form I, Large, designed in 2013 and produced in 22-karat gold and cold enamel in an edition of five plus two artist's proofs. Diameter 2 7/8 inches



German-born Meret Oppenheim (1913-1985) was a surrealist artist whose Tête de Poète (Head of the Poet) necklace, 1977, was made in an edition of nine in 18-karat gold and enamel after her 1967 design. Each is signed and numbered on the reverse. Face: 3 7/8 by 3 3/8 inches.

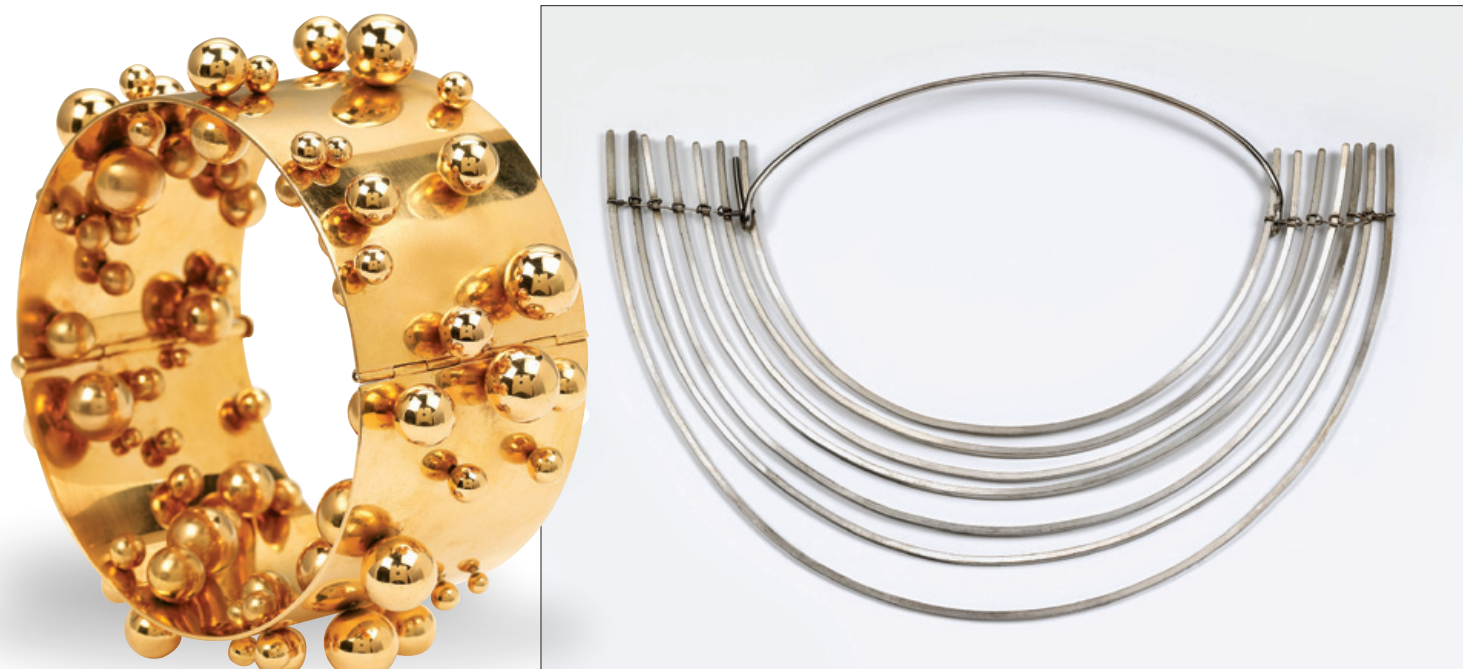
jewelry sales, the price tags for these works in precious metals by the harbingers of modernism are but a fraction of those attached to their canvases or bronzes.

Jewelry is a deeply personal manifestation of an artist's work. Diane Venet's collection (which formed the basis of *Picasso to Koons*) began with a wedding ring her husband, sculptor Bernar Venet, spontaneously fashioned for her from a length of silver. Amidst the Picasso paintings and sculptures at the sale of Dora Maar's estate in 1997 nestled painted pebble pendants and lockets enclosing tiny paintings the artist had crafted for his lover. Yves Tanguy painted a pair of earrings for his inamorata Peggy Guggenheim. Alexander Calder made jewelry for his wife, Louisa, throughout his career. Indeed, his first gift to her was a bracelet he hammered from a continuous brass wire spelling out the word "Medusa," a reference to her wild hair when they first met.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the hierarchy that placed "decorative arts"



Made in 1971 from a 1944 design, the Oculist brooch/pendant designed by Man Ray (1890-1976) was fabricated by GEM Montebello in an edition of twelve. Made of green and red 18-karat gold and malachite, each is signed and stamped with the maker's mark. Width 4 3/8 inches.



low in the “serious art” pile, and “craft” lower still, began to erode. Calder rejected such hierarchies. In a 1929 exhibition at the Fifty-Sixth Street Galleries in New York, his toys and jewelry were presented as equal to his sculpture and painting. As a metalworker he created some eighteen hundred pieces of jewelry in his lifetime, each one unique. He would hammer and twist silver or brass wire into pieces that, unlike other jewelry of the time, were valued for their artistic rather than their material content. Working some years later, French artist Claude Lalanne, who likewise made jewelry throughout her career, took a similar attitude to hierarchy in the arts. Her first exhibition at Galerie J in Paris in 1964 included wearable sculpture alongside surreal and whimsical large-scale works. Displayed next to a life-size rhino that metamorphosed into a fully functional desk (*Rhinocretaire*) by her husband were her golden belts made from vine shoots and grapes and necklaces featuring metallic human lips. Lalanne perfected the arts of electroplating and molding for both her jewelry and her sculpture. Using this method, she would transform flora and fauna into delicate copper fossils that she would weave and solder into remarkable copper necklaces, bracelets, and earrings.

Lalanne and Calder aside, when it came to making wearable sculpture, most artists of the twentieth century lacked technical know-how. Instead, they worked in collaboration with goldsmiths, who were tasked with translating their visions into precious metals. For the most part, this was achieved through exhaustive sketches and prototypes, the resulting jewels not only showing imaginative solutions to problems of scale and function, but also being instantly recognizable additions to each artist’s oeuvre.

The French goldsmith François Hugo began making jewelry with artists in the 1950s, collaborating with many great names of the time—Picasso, Ernst, Dorothea Tanning, and

Arp among them. Perhaps his most extensive collaboration was with Picasso, for whom he created medallions, in addition to a series of platters and dishes. Working in Italy a decade later, jeweler GianCarlo Montebello, who was married to the sister of sculptors Arnaldo and Gio Pomodoro, also invited artists to design jewelry, which he produced in limited editions at GEM Montebello, the firm he started in Milan in 1967. Sadly, the venture was closed only a decade later when the workshop was burgled in 1978. Montebello was responsible for some of the most imaginative examples of the genre, and the list of artists he worked with is impressive: Lucio Fontana, Man Ray, and Niki de Saint Phalle, to name a few. The famous photographer Ugo Mulas was so taken with Montebello’s creations that he offered to photograph them in exchange for a few pieces for his wife.

Nowhere are artwork and viewer more closely entwined than in artists’ jewelry. Happily, a growing number of dealers and the inclusion of these works in art fairs and auctions and in exhibitions such as Diane Venet’s *Picasso to Koons* are heightening awareness of these expressions of artistic imagination and of the infinite possibilities of functional sculpture. ■

Louisa Guinness Gallery’s By the Hand of the Maker at Design Miami (December 3–7) focuses on the work of Claude Lalanne and Alexander Calder.

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Pol Bury (1922–2005) was a Belgian kinetic artist, painter, and filmmaker. When worn, the multitude of 18-karat gold spheres on his *Boules des Deux Côtés d’un Cylindre* bracelet of 1968 are in constant motion. It was made in an edition of twenty-five by Italian jeweler GEM Montebello, each signed by Bury and stamped with maker’s mark. Diameter 2 7/8 inches.

This 1948 silver necklace by Calder references his interest in African jewelry. Typical of an artist known for his mobiles, each silver bar moves—the mechanism holding them together created only with twisted lengths of wire. 9 3/4 by 14 3/4 inches.

Mariko Mori (1967–) is widely regarded as one of the most important artists to emerge from Japan in the past fifty years. Her *Planets* brooch, 2013, made in an edition of ten, is fashioned of 18-karat white gold with South Sea pearls, Akoya pearls, a broken glass bead, aurora beads, and crystal. Diameter 2 3/4 inches.

These bracelets designed by Italian Lucio Fontana (1899–1968) echo his artistic concept of “spatialism.” Designed in 1967, with GEM Montebello, the bracelets are of lacquer mounted in silver. Originally conceived as a large edition with the idea of creating affordable art, only a few were made as Fontana died before the edition could be finished. Length 6 3/4 inches.

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Self-taught as an artist, Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002) was a French sculptor, writer, stage designer, and filmmaker. Monsters and other fantastic creatures were among her favorite themes, as seen in *Serpent Jaune*, 1977, made in an edition of eight (plus four artist’s proofs) in gold, enamel, turquoises, and diamonds. 1 7/8 by 3 3/4 inches.