



VIVIENNE BECKER

ALL THAT GLITTERS

LOUISA GUINNESS AND WEARABLE ART

A surge of collecting interest, record prices at auction and a dedicated exhibition at Sotheby's S|2 this May reaffirms what Louisa Guinness has known all along: artists make great jewellers.

It is not often in these days of informed connoisseurship that a corner of art collecting goes relatively unnoticed. But when the Makler collection of Calder jewellery – jewels conceived and crafted by Alexander Calder in the 1940s – fetched astonishingly high prices in Sotheby's Contemporary Art Day sale last November, both art and jewellery collectors sat up and took notice as a new collecting genre emerged blinking into the 21st century.

London gallerist Louisa Guinness, however, had known this moment would arrive. In 2003, she held her first exhibition of artists' jewellery, *Past and Present: Jewellery by 20th-Century Artists*. That first experimental show, she says, was an idea sparked by a piece of Calder jewellery owned by her mother-in-law. The exhibition heralded a new career direction for her, a shift into the arts after twelve years as a stockbroker. "I borrowed pieces for the exhibition, began to do some research, started looking into the story of artists' jewellery and found a gaping hole in the market."

Today Guinness is globally recognised as a leading dealer in artists' jewellery. She has watched the genre quietly grow for the past ten years but now sees a huge surge of interest, demonstrated in spectacular style by last November's prices for Calder jewellery. A dramatic silver necklace,

estimated at \$400,000–600,000, fetched nearly \$2 million, and a pair of earrings, expected to make \$60,000–80,000, realised \$1 million. Every jewel soared wildly beyond expectations. "It has taken a while for people to wake up," says Guinness. "These results put artists' jewellery firmly on the map. People have come out of the woodwork, wanting to build collections. Now there is more buzz, more buyers."

With impeccable timing, this blossoming of enthusiasm has coincided with a broadening of horizons for the Louisa Guinness Gallery. Last year, she moved into her own, new gallery space on Conduit Street, Mayfair (she had previously borrowed a corner of her art-dealer husband Ben Brown's gallery), exhibited at Design Miami/Basel and Design Miami and organised a series of exhibitions. In May, she holds her first New York selling exhibition of artists' jewellery at Sotheby's S|2 gallery. For this, Guinness has decided to focus on the work of three contemporary artists, Claude Lalanne, Anish Kapoor and Sophia Vari, a Greek-born sculptor.

There are two aspects to Louisa Guinness's business: one specialising in jewels by the great 20th-century artists who turned their talents to jewellery – a roll call of illustrious names such as Picasso, Lucio Fontana, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Man Ray and Calder; while the other looks at what

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES DAY

Sophia Vari's *Les Pléiades III Ring*, 2011 is in an edition of 6, and made of 18 carat gold and ebony



(Left) Anish Kapoor's *Water Ring, Form I*, 2012 is in an edition of 10, and made of an 18 carat white gold polished exterior with a rose gold polished interior

(Opposite) Claude Lalanne's *Untitled Necklace* is unique and made of galvanised copper

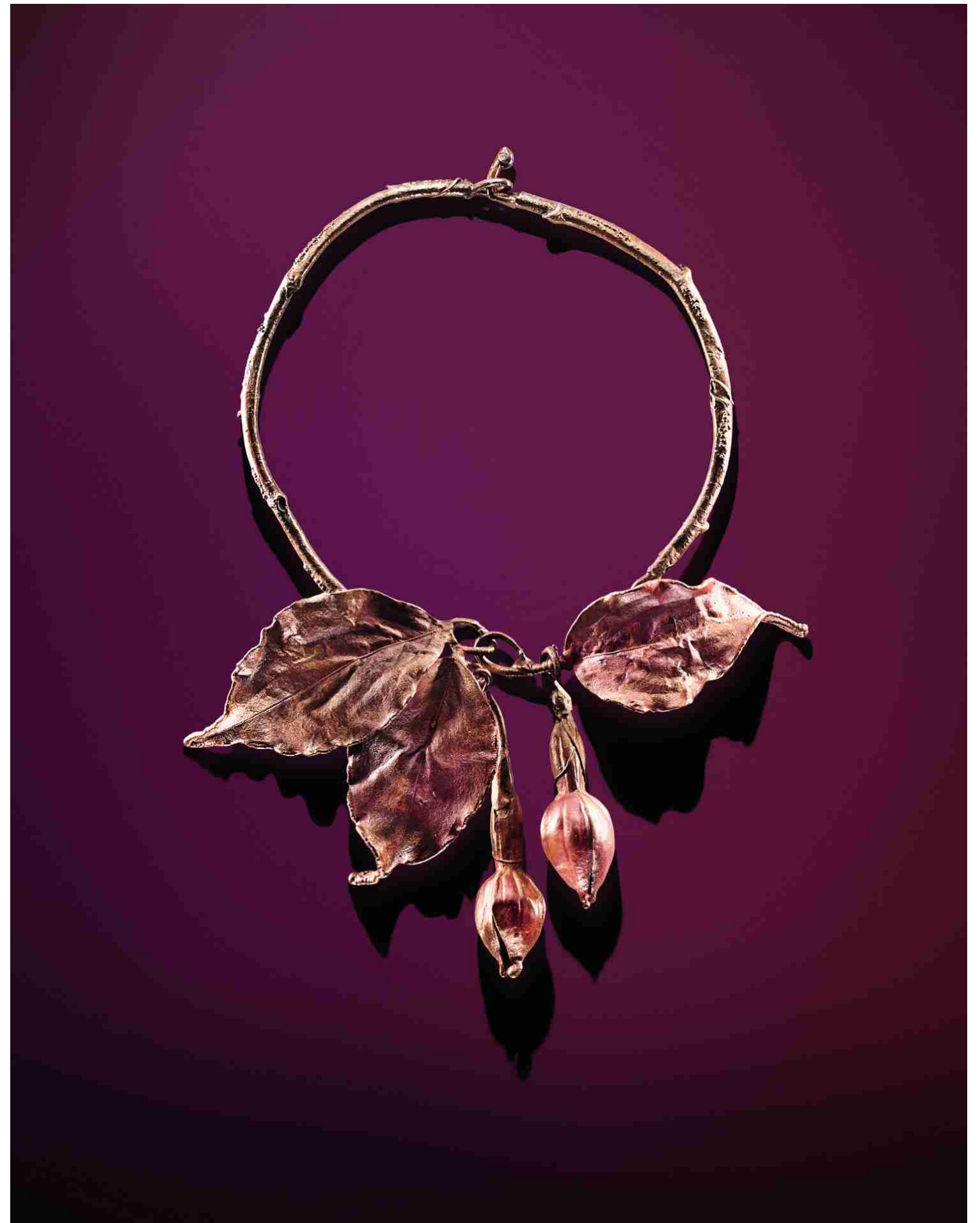
mirrored sculptures. Massive rings, pendants, earrings and cufflinks are sculpted with great precision in 18-carat gold as concave discs, tear-drops or crisp, elongated torpedos, their innermost centres polished to a mirror-like finish that acts almost as a gem. Lalanne's jewels are opposite in style and spirit: sculptural, soft, naturalistic, the burnished, sensual world-weary leaves and petals individually hand-wrought in her signature rose-toned galvanised copper, transforming a tough, industrial metal into precious, poetic, dreamy decadence. Vari's monumental jewels, of gold and ebony, have a strong 1940s vibe in their echoes of machine-age structural forms, blended with a flavour of architectural classicism. Each of these artists' jewels, however different in style, is intensely individual, numbered and made in very small editions. Most importantly, says Guinness, "Every jewel is presented as a small sculpture; it has to stand alone, as an object, even when it is not being worn."

The exhibition at S|2 this May is very much a response to today's growing market for what is, in effect, a perfect collision of two present-day preoccupations, jewels and art. Guinness believes that the fresh, bold aesthetic of this highly original jewellery will appeal to contemporary art collectors and art lovers, who make up 90 percent of her clientele. "I am seeing more committed collectors today. People don't know that Fontana, for example, made jewellery, and when they discover this, they're intrigued at first and then they find they like the jewels. They enjoy wearing them while seeing them as artworks in their own right. This is about wearable sculpture, wearable art."

Vivienne Becker is a jewellery historian and contributing editor for *FT's How to Spend It*.

Artists' Jewelry by Louisa Guinness Gallery will be exhibited at Sotheby's S|2 from 3–27 May, page 130.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES DAY



"EACH JEWEL IS PRESENTED AS A SMALL SCULPTURE; IT HAS TO STAND ALONE, AS AN OBJECT, EVEN WHEN IT IS NOT BEING WORN."

—LOUISA GUINNESS

Guinness calls "modern masters of the future:" today's artists, including Damien Hirst, Ron Arad, Grayson Perry, Jeff Koons, Claude Lalanne and Sophia Vari. Taking this concept further, she also commissions jewels from contemporary artists such as Anish Kapoor, Peter Blake, Marc Quinn, Gavin Turk, Ed Ruscha and Cornelia Parker. As the liaison between the artists and her London-based goldsmiths, Guinness links art and craft and helps to translate the artists' ideas and sketches into objects.

Guinness began collaborating with artists shortly after her first 2003 exhibition, when she started talking to artist-friends and found they were interested in exploring the medium of jewellery. They saw jewellery both as an extension of their work and as a new and challenging discipline. For many of today's artists, Guinness says, jewellery offers a chance to explore a new intimacy of form, theme and scale, to concentrate emotions into powerfully intriguing, cerebrally beautiful and provocative jewels.

Kapoor's characteristically sleek but sensual Water Jewels relate to his famous