



FOR THE FUN OF IT

Precious and joyful are the hallmarks of some unorthodox new jewellery collections.
By Sarah Royce-Greensill



High jewellery is usually presented in glass vitrines and admired in solemn tones under the watchful eye of security guards. This summer, at Boucheron's Place Vendôme flagship, a different scene unfolded. Grinning models in primary-coloured shift dresses and hoodies danced, clapped and sang to Eighties pop songs while an audience of journalists bopped along.

The unorthodox presentation had nothing on the jewellery itself: instead of stately diamond pieces there were flamboyant hair bows, scrunchies and hoodie toggles, surreally oversized necklaces and cuffs that morphed into multi-finger rings. A high jewellery "pocket" combined titanium with Lycra, and a set of

brooches resembled the embroidered iron-on patches emblematic of teenage rebellion.

Entitled More is More, the collection was conceived during lockdown in 2020, when Boucheron's creative director, Claire Choisne, found herself drawn to images from the Eighties Memphis Design movement. She likens the pure lines, vibrant colours and incredible volumes to those employed by the architects Ettore Sottsass and Martine Bedin. Childhood toys also proved inspirational: the Solve Me necklace resembled a deconstructed Rubik's Cube, its squares dusted with diamonds, spinels, sapphires and mother-of-pearl.

Trompe l'oeil details, unconventional materials and a sense of fun blow a mischievous raspberry at established codes. "I decided that it was fine if the More is More collection did not look like

high jewellery. I wanted to prove that precious is not opposed to joyful," Choisne says.

Dior Joaillerie's artistic director, Victoire de Castellane, is also on a mission to redefine the rules. The Jardins de la Couture collection features a mother-of-pearl collar adorned with rainbows, flowers, bees and butterflies – archive florals updated for the emoji generation. Such creations follow a move towards irreverent design, accelerated by the pandemic.

"Now we all appreciate travelling even more," says Nina Dzhokhadze, the co-founder of London-based brand NeverNot, whose gold, diamond and gemstone miniature suitcases and sunglasses were influenced by Covid-induced wanderlust. "We wanted to capture that dreamy, happy feeling you get when looking through the window of an aeroplane."





From left: high jewellery from Les Jardins de la Couture, POA, Dior Joaillerie (dior.com). Honey bear pendant in gold, fire opal and sapphire, \$7,995, harwellgodfrey.com. Fork bracelet in gold and diamond, \$18,350, nadineghosn.com

us not to take life too seriously,” Ghosn says.

Her Youtensils collection sees solid-gold spoons, knives, forks and chopsticks styled as weighty bangles, finished with a smattering of gemstones. “Food brings us together,” Ghosn explains. “I wanted to elevate these tools that are used during moments of connection and community.”

Lauren Harwell Godfrey believes the meaning behind her designs is what affords them heirloom status. Her collection includes a psychedelic snail, its shell studded with a geometric rainbow of stones, which represents the importance of slowing down. “A deeper symbolism is what people connect to. Without that it would just be silly – which I’m not opposed to – but these are investment pieces that will have meaning for years to come,” she says.

When design is light-hearted, the craftsmanship must be more meticulous than ever. Jessica McCormack recognised that fact when creating Carmela, a collection designed “to capture the sexiness of embracing pasta and red wine and late nights”. Earrings and necklaces recall a forkful of spaghetti, and while their curves lend them a casualness that suits McCormack’s diamonds and denim devotees, they required precision. “This collection is a feat of engineering,” she says. Gold was hand-twisted into asymmetric swirls and set with custom-cut diamonds individually trimmed into place.

Nadine Ghosn admits that it’s “very challenging” to make playful jewellery that feels luxurious without tipping over into kitsch. “I’m obsessive when it comes to designing – I revisit, test, start again until I perfect it.” Her jewels are for those who’ve had their fill of the classics. A £15,000 hamburger ring is probably not going to be a debut fine jewellery purchase.

And there’s another boon to irreverent jewellery: it wears its preciousness lightly. While traditional bling is increasingly being relegated to the safe, frivolous designs are less likely to attract the wrong sort of attention. “I want my clients to wear their jewellery and enjoy it,” Brent Neale says. “It’s such a shame if it’s not making somebody smile every day.” ■



Above: necklaces, from £1,570 to £6,820, nevernot.co.uk. Opposite, clockwise from top: Van Robot pendant in gold, diamonds, tourmalines, emerald and sapphire, £4,950, vanrobot.com. Magic Mushroom pendant in gold, sapphires and emeralds, £7,475, Brent Neale (net-a-porter.com). Solve Me necklace in white gold, diamonds, spinels and sapphires, POA, boucheron.com. Smile ring in gold, orange sapphires and enamel, £10,320, francescavilla.it

Fashion editors use the term “dopamine dressing” to describe the mood-enhancing power of bright colours and prints. Even more than fashion, jewellery is capable of changing emotions. It’s difficult to feel glum when wearing a gemstone-studded gold robot – the brainchild of Van Robots founder Tatiana Van Lancker – or a neon-hued pinkie ring resembling a Mexican wrestling mask by Francesca Villa.

There’s a cartoonish, innocent quality to Brent Neale’s chubby hardstone mushrooms inspired by *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and to Harwell Godfrey’s honey bear carved from luminescent fire opal. “People love a wink and a little humour,” says its designer, Lauren Harwell Godfrey. “Jewellery is made from such serious materials – it’s fun to turn that on its head.”

These feel-good items reflect a break with the ubiquity of classic designs. “My pieces have been conversation starters because they are unexpected,” says Nadine Ghosn, who reimagines mundane objects of modern life – hamburgers, earphones, iPhone batteries – as witty, wearable jewels. A solid-gold pencil wraps the wrist, complete with sapphire-studded tip and eraser; blocks of Lego are carved from hardstones. It’s reminiscent of the work of Aldo Cipullo, who in the Seventies transformed screws and bolts into iconic Cartier designs. “Revisiting and repurposing things reminds