

THE ART OF CARTIER



24 October 2012 to 17 February 2013

An exhibition of the Cartier Collection at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

From 24 October this year to 17 February 2013 the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza will be showing *The Art of Cartier*, an exhibition featuring more than 420 works from the Cartier Collection, from its origins to the present day.

One of the most important on the subject organised to date due to the number of pieces on display, the exhibition reflects the spirit and artistic evolution of Cartier from the time it was founded in Paris in 1847. The Cartier brothers' energy and their interest in the art of distant and ancient cultures laid the foundations for the artistic identity of the *maison*. From the Garland style to 1930s Art Deco, and from the inspiration of China to the "tutti frutti" style, the exhibition spans more than 165 years of creativity, presented in a wide-ranging survey that encompasses numerous different types of jewellery, techniques and design styles. This exhibition has benefited from the collaboration and sponsorship of Telefónica.

The Cartier Collection

Acquired from private collections, jewellers and auctions, the more than 1,450 pieces of jewellery that make up the Cartier Collection have been individually selected on the basis of their style and inspiration, origins, materials and technical virtuosity. The result is a collection of such quality and variety that it represents a complete overview of the evolution of the designs and techniques that Cartier has used over the course of its history, while also constituting an outstandingly important item of cultural and artistic heritage.

Images Cartier Paris, from left to right: bib necklace, special order 1947;
Panther clip brooch, 1949; chimera bracelet, special order, 1929.
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Flamingo brooch. Cartier Paris, 1940. Nils Herrmann, Collection Cartier Paris © Cartier

The remarkable historical archive that Maison Cartier has preserved over the decades is a fundamental part of its collection and is consequently given considerable prominence in the present exhibition. Comprising preliminary designs, drawings, watercolours and sketches of outstanding aesthetic merit, the archive is a treasure trove largely unknown to the general public but one that offers exceptional information for an understanding of the collection in its fullest sense and for an explanation of how many of these works were created, who they were made for and why.

The designer Jorge Varela, co-curator of the exhibition with the Museum's Artistic Director Guillermo Solana and Paula Luengo of the Thyssen's Curatorial Department, has designed a spectacular installation. Alongside the pieces on display there will be wall projections of the corresponding designs, as well as drawings photographs of the individuals who wore them, offering additional information of enormous historical importance and interest.

Unique pieces and exceptional loans

Some items recently acquired for the Collection will be on display here for the first time. They include the ruby and diamond necklace that was given to Elizabeth Taylor by her third husband the producer Mike Todd, and the brooch in the form of a flamingo belonging to the Duchess of Windsor, made in collaboration with Jeanne Toussaint, Cartier's artistic director at the time. The brooch is a colouristic piece, illuminated by the bird's multi-coloured plumage of sapphires, rubies and calibrated emeralds. This bold interpretation of a pink flamingo represents a tradition that is both naturalistic and poetic.



Retrato oficial de la Princesa Gracia de Mónaco. © G Lukomski

The exhibition also includes various exceptional loans such as the Garland-style tiara that belongs to the Spanish royal family, given by Alfonso XIII to Queen Victoria Eugenia in 1920. It is still worn by Queen Sofía at official ceremonies today. In addition, the Monagesque Palace has loaned various pieces including the jewels that Princess Grace wore for her official wedding photographs in 1956, given to her by Prince Rainier III.

A chronological and visual survey of the history of jewellery

1. From jeweller's apprentice to the rue de la Paix



In 1847 Louis François Cartier opened his first jewellery shop in a small workshop in Paris. His eldest grandson, Louis, took over the company in 1899 and moved to number 13, rue de la Paix, just a few steps from the Place Vendôme in the elegant heart of Paris with its luxury shops.

Alfred Cartier y sus 3 hijos. De izquierda a derecha: Pierre, Louis y Jacques (1922). Cartier Archives © Cartier

Cartier achieved renown for his creations during this period, which were avidly acquired by the European aristocracy and American social elites. Among his clients were Princess Mathilda, wife of the Emperor Napoleon III, Queen Alexandra of England, the Russian princess Olga Paley and Elisabeth, Queen of Belgium. It was another monarch, George VI of England, who commissioned Cartier to create numerous tiaras for the guests at his coronation in 1937. Some years before, his grandfather, Edward VII, coined the famous phrase in praise of Cartier: “King of jewellers, jeweller to kings”, honouring him with the first title of Supplier to the English Royal Household, which was soon followed by similar recognition from the royal houses of Spain, Portugal, Russia, Belgium, Greece, Italy and the Principality of Monaco, among others.



Elisabeth, Reina de los Belgas
© Collection Cyrille Boulay, Cartier

The exhibition is divided into sections. The opening room displays a range of jewellery from the second half of the 19th century that deployed the traditional technique of gold and silver mounts to create the so-called Louis XVI or Garland style. This style reached its peak in 1890 and would last until World War I. It was further enhanced by Cartier’s revolutionary introduction of platinum, a new metal in the jewellery world. Its flexibility, whiteness and resistance allowed for lighter mounts that resulted in lace-like or garland settings for diamonds. It reached its height of refinement with the development of the millegrain setting technique in the final years of the 19th century.

The second section presents a comprehensive display of tiaras. Exclusive symbols of royalty, the tiara evolved over the centuries to become a piece of jewellery that indicated sovereignty or nobility. Cartier’s large tiaras date from the early 20th century and are generally made of platinum. They were commissions from royalty and from the wealthiest classes on both sides of the Atlantic, who rivalled the old European courts in terms of splendour. The tiara evolved in line with changing fashion and aesthetic influences, from the Garland style to the *Kokoshnik* form (Russian for “cockere’s crest”) based on the traditional Russian headdresses. Another style was the bandeau, which reflected women’s fashion of the interwar period.



Scroll tiara. Cartier Paris, 1910. Nick Welsh, Cartier Collection © Cartier

2. Modernism and Art Deco

In the early years of the 20th century Louis Cartier opened two new branches in London and New York and encouraged his designers to develop a new aesthetic that moved away from the Garland style. New designs began to appear from 1904 that were based on geometrical and abstract forms, initially applied to small pieces such as brooches but soon adapted to jewellery of all types. In 1909 Cartier was fascinated by the explosion of colour created by Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes company, which triumphed at the Châtelet theatre in Paris. The result was the first combinations of different colours in bold designs: the blues and greens of turquoises, lapis lazuli and jade or of sapphires and emeralds and the black and red of coral and onyx. A fine example is the “panther skin” design of onyx and diamonds that appeared in 1914 and would become one of the icons of the *maison*. New forms of gem cutting were also invented at this period, including the brilliant, bullet, trapezoid, square and triangular cuts. They joined the

earlier baguette cut, which had a simple rectangular form that perfectly harmonised with the geometrical lines of Art Deco.

3. Oriental influences

In the early 20th century the Cartier brothers decided to travel round the world in search of new and exotic inspiration. They went to the Persian Gulf to acquire the finest Oriental pearls and also visited India where they convinced numerous maharajas to mount their gem collections in Cartier settings. They also went to Russia where the virtuoso skills of Carl Peter Fabergé offered a challenge that resulted in jewels made with exquisite enamel work, rivalling the beauty and elegance of Fabergé's own pieces. Other destinations that inspired Cartier's new designs included Egypt, China and the Far East.



Collar *Tutti Frutti*. Cartier Paris, encargo especial, 1936, modificado en 1963. Nick Welsh, Cartier Collection © Cartier

This passion for exotic cultures led the brothers to assemble a comprehensive library that offered an endless source of inspiration, as well as to collect fragments of ancient art from these countries, which they incorporated into their jewels. The result was a unique interpretation of the Art Deco style of the 1920s with Egyptian, Persian, Hindu, Chinese and Japanese influences that fused the past with contemporary taste: a fascinating mix that made

Cartier's pieces unique and unrepeatable. The result was the Scarab and Goddess brooches, jewels such as the famous "tutti frutti" pieces made from carved stones using traditional Indian techniques, watches, vanity cases and cigarette cases decorated with Oriental motifs (buddhas, dragons, etc), as well as a varied range of other decorative items.

4. The power of style. Famous clients

The period after the end of World War I saw the emergence of a new, wealthy, cultured, open and adventurous social elite comprising members of the leading European aristocracies and the great American fortunes. Many of them became regular Cartier clients, including the Duchess of Windsor, Daisy Fellowes, Mona Bismark, Millicent Rogers and Gloria Guinness. In the 1950s other famous names commissioned unique pieces from the *maison*, including some of the leading actresses of the day such as Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor and María Félix. Some of these remarkable pieces are on display in this room, complemented by wall projections that show their owners wearing them.



Elizabeth Taylor en Las Vegas, 1958. © Photofest

5. Precious time, precious objects

The design and creation of watches has been a fundamental part of Cartier's activities since its outset, starting with pocket watches then moving on to wrist watches, which appear in the firm's account books in 1888 although they only came into widespread use in the second decade of the next century. An important one-off piece in the history of Cartier was its creation of one of their first wristwatches in 1904, which was designed for the Brazilian aviator Alberto Santos-Dumont. This model would be followed by numerous others that had the famous fold-over clasp patented in 1909. They include the Barrel and Tortoise models and the popular Tank model, created in 1917 in homage to the Allied tank squads that liberated Paris in World War I. By the 1930s watches for women, which were generally made in platinum and diamonds, had become authentic jewels with dials that were narrower than the bracelet. Another innovation of this period was a new type of table clock that was frequently inspired by Oriental motifs, reproducing Egyptian or Japanese architectural forms.



Egyptian Striking clock. Cartier Paris, 1927. Nick Welsh, Cartier Collection © Cartier

The luxurious and sophisticated lifestyle of Cartier's clients often meant that pieces of jewellery were not only precious in terms of the metal and stones used but also for the fact that they were specially designed for a particular person. A fashion arose in the 1920s and 1930s for engraving a personal message on them for the person to whom the item was given. In addition, the celebration of specific events in the world of the arts, literature, politics and sport led to special commissions and the creation of exceptional objects such as the sword made for Jean Cocteau when he became an academician and the replica of Apollo 11.

6. Flora and fauna

In 1933 Jeanne Toussaint became head of the Department of *haute joaillerie* at Cartier, imposing a personal taste that was so influential that it became known as the *g ut Toussaint*. The *haute couture* creations of designers such as Schiaparelli, Dior, Chanel and Balenciaga offered her a constant source of inspiration when designing jewels. Her work gave rise to a new sensibility that was quite different to the geometrical style of Art Deco as it was based on the inspiration of nature and of flowers and vegetation. It resulted in a fantastical, imaginative world of motifs in the form of birds, ladybirds, butterflies, tortoises, dragon flies, exotic flowers and palm trees. Particularly famous, for example, were her magnificent feline creations with their high degree of realism and technical mastery. Some of them incorporated articulated elements that gave a unique sense of movement. The Duchess of Windsor's Panther brooches, Barbara Hutton's Tiger brooches and the magnificent necklace made for Mar a F lix, formed from two crocodiles set with diamonds and emeralds that could be worn as brooches or a necklace and which crossed over at each end, are good examples of this type. All of them are unique creations within the history of jewellery.



Crocodile necklace. Cartier Paris, special order, 1975. Nick Welsh, Cartier Collection © Cartier

EXHIBITION DETAILS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

Title: *The Art of Cartier*

Dates: 24 October 2012 to 17 February 2013

Organiser: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

Sponsor: Telefónica

Curators: Guillermo Solana, Artistic Director of the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza; Paula Luengo, Exhibitions co-ordinator, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza; and Jorge Varela, designer

Number of works: approximately 420

Opening times: Tuesdays to Fridays and Sundays from 10am to 7pm. Saturdays 10am to 10pm

Venue: Moneo Galleries (First Basement level)

Publications: catalogue, published in Spanish and English

Ticket prices:

Temporary exhibition:

- General ticket: 8 Euros
- Reduced price ticket: 5.5 Euros for visitors aged over 65, pensioners, students with proof of status and Large Families
- Free entry: children aged under 12 and unemployed Spanish citizens with proof of status

Temporary exhibition + Permanent Collection

- General ticket: 12 Euros
- Reduced price ticket: 7.5 Euros
- Free entry: children aged under 12 and unemployed Spanish citizens with proof of status

Pre-booked tickets available at the Museum's ticket desks, from its website and on tel: 902 760 511.

More information: www.museothyssen.org