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The Icon of Cartier at Museo del Gioiello

Pascale Lepeu, curator of Cartier Collection, speaks about the most curious items in the new Symbol Room at Vicenza's Museo del Gioiello

MONDAY, 21 JANUARY 2019, BY LORENZA SCALISI

How did you select the pieces for the museum? A short description of some of them.

Throughout history jewellery has served as a universal form of symbolic adornment, animating and encapsulating the most important elements of the human experience. These often highly personal pieces therefore act as markers of our personal as well as collective histories. It is for this reason that in this exhibition I chose eight themes (Religion, Royalty, Patriotism, Luck, Protection, Friendship and Family, Love and Lust, and Empowerment) that articulate the most important experiences and emotions that we might experience. A few emblematic pieces of these showcases would be: the Arc de Triomphe brooch (Cartier Paris, 1919), part of the "Patriotism" showcase, whose sapphire cabochons represent the helmets of soldiers parading down the Champs-Élysées celebrating Allied victory in World War I on Bastille day 1919; the Love bracelet (Cartier New York, 1977), part of the "Love and Lust" showcase and originally owned by Elizabeth Taylor, an iconic Cartier piece that is opened and closed with a gold-plated screwdriver and meaning that the owner cannot work the "shackle of love" alone; the Panthère ring (Cartier, 2004) part of the "Empowerment" showcase, that, symbolising both elegance and female power, has come to be one of the Maison's most recognisable motifs. These pieces really represent Cartier's ability to reflect and interpret the emotions and symbols that we as humans hold most dear.

Your favourite 2 or 3 jewelry pieces exposed?

I have a particular soft-spot for what I refer to as the Touch Wood pendant (Cartier, 1993), whose design is so very tactile – you could touch it all day – and which also has one of my favourite features, the three intertwined golds (yellow, white and pink), a motif that has been present in Cartier designs since 1924, adored the world over. I also have a weakness for the Panther-patterned cuff (Cartier, 1990), which for me represents the Maison's constant search for inspiration in the world's various cultures, here the inspiration being Ancient Egypt, and also features the Panther motif, which for me symbolises a sense of strikingly elegant female strength and independence, and has such an important role in the history of the Maison.

Jewelry preferred style or designer?

Unquestionably, Cartier. What is so undeniably special about the Maison's 170 year heritage in the making of jewelry, horology, and objects, has to be its ability to innovate, incorporate, and reinvent multiple aesthetic styles. This beautiful interweaving of styles and inspirations has in itself become what we might call the timeless "Cartier style".

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