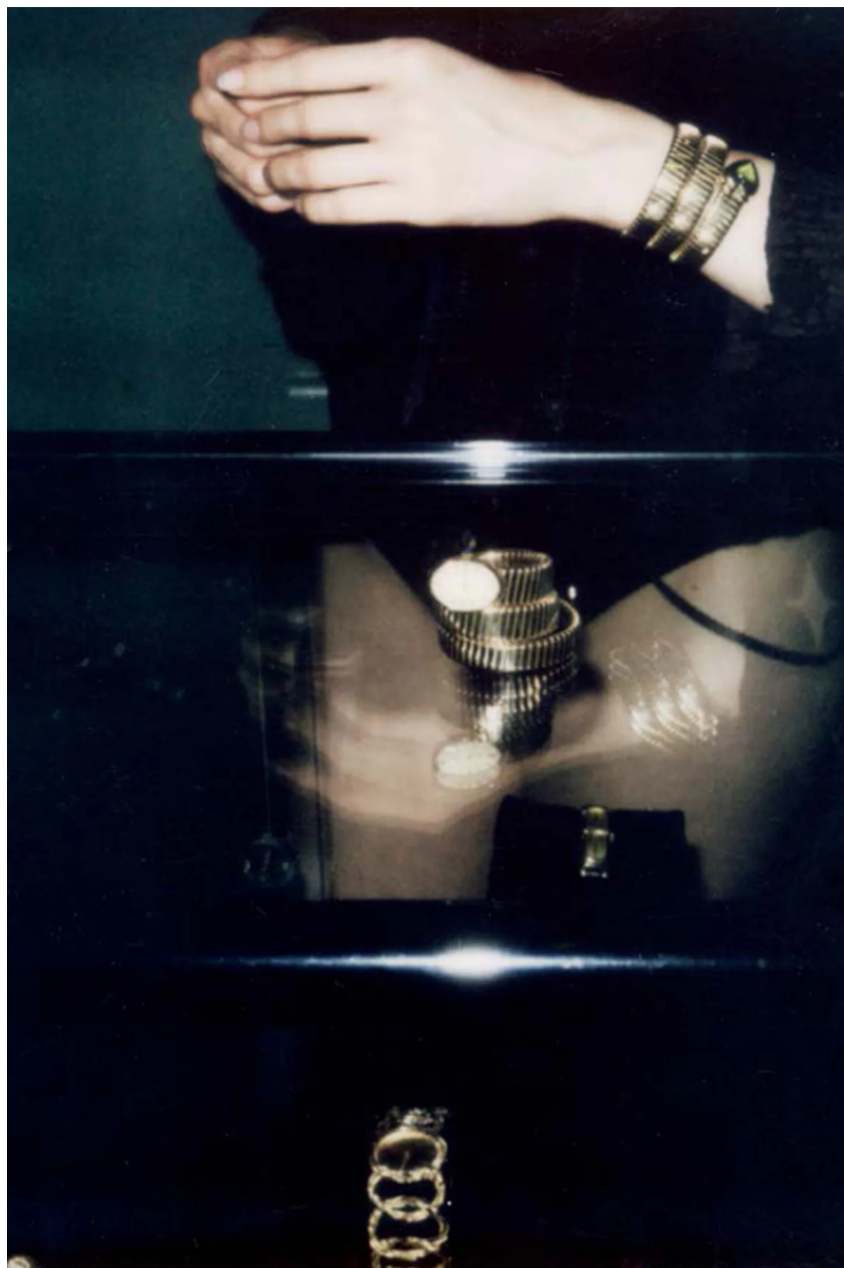


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Vintage dealers and niche designers banded together at the Joya fair in Monaco. Here, vintage Bulgari from Karry Berreby gallery. (Julien Carreyn)

LUXURY

How to Sell Jewellery Like Fine Art

At the inaugural Joya fair in Monaco last week, two former art gallerists aimed to defy luxury's current malaise with avant-garde jewellery propositions sold with a curated, high-culture approach.

By **DAN THAWLEY**

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MONACO – As industry players continue to grapple

with the meaning of luxury — looking for a way forward amid saturation and homogeneity on a global scale — niche jewellery designers and iconic dealers banded together in Monaco to offer avant-garde alternatives, vintage treasures and a cultural point-of-view.

At a four-day jewellery showcase entitled Joya, whose inaugural edition ended Sunday, a curated group of just 10 exhibitors aimed to connect directly with clients from the wealthy principality.

Engineered to pique the interest of the Monegasque local elite and international jewellery aficionados alike, Joya is the brainchild of Vanessa Margowski and Delphine Pastor-Reiss, who previously hosted art and collectible design exhibitions in the city-state under the banner of their art gallery 11 Columbia from 2003 to 2018.

Adding to their client list and experience as gallerists, the pair have family ties that run deep in Monaco — positioning them up for success in a mission to gather top-end collectors and educate them away from repetitive, commercial jewels. “We wanted to show jewellery with a story, pieces that have historical and cultural significance — where the creativity of the pieces is a testament to artistry,” said Margowski. “We are showing exceptional vintage Colombian emeralds and a trembleuse diamond brooch from Bulgari, for example, but there are also contemporary designers preserving traditional craftsmanship like cameos and pietra dura marquetry. At the same time, we have some fantasy jewellery made with the same preciousness and quality as high jewellery.”

Hoping to spotlight the position of jewellery as an art form with historical precedent, Joya partnered with local museums and art collectors to display unlikely treasures, including a Paleolithic deer's tooth from the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology, and a tiny cocoon fashioned out of gold nuggets by the caddisfly for a work by the French artist Hubert Duprat (a film of its meticulous creation played on loop inside the auditorium next door). École Van Cleef & Arpels sponsored a jewellery-themed bookstore, kids activities and series of talks. These cultural touchpoints created what players in the art market would call “good context” for exhibitors — as well as adding a pedagogic slant to the €50 ticketed event by encouraging visitors to consider jewellery's relationship to history, politics, mythology, religion, science and the arts.



Still from a video of caddisfly larvae spinning cocoons from gold and gemstones in a work by Hubert Duprat, screened at the Joya jewellery event. (Courtesy the artist and Art : Concept, Paris)

The gathering took place beneath a grid of high fashion boutiques and prestige apartments that comprise the Richard Rogers-designed One Monte-Carlo building, which has transformed the city's retail landscape since opening in 2019. Just steps from the city's most prestigious hotels and casinos, boutiques for Prada, Balenciaga, Fendi, Bulgari, Repossi and Chanel have opened in the building as well as an outpost of Swiss mega-gallery Hauser & Wirth. The development is managed by the Société des Bains de Mer — a government-controlled, publicly-listed real estate and tourism company created by Prince Charles III of Monaco in 1863 — and represents some of the most expensive square metrage in the world.

Given the unapologetically gilded grandeur of One Monte-Carlo's replica Art Deco 'Salle des Arts,' Joya sought to modernise the location with a radical set design. Basel-based architecture firm Christ & Gantbein and Milanese furniture studio NM3 created a demountable curved industrial steel structure and outfitted the space with semi-circular booths that appeared like giant cuffs or chain links, creating sleek capsules for the jewellers and a smattering of adjoining art projects. "What has been marvellous is that energy and excitement surrounding the architectural gesture and set design," said Margowski. "It somehow 'electrified' everything."



Gabrielle Greiss's booth at the inaugural Joya fair in Monaco.

The stylistic remit was wide, but with a general rule that new pieces be handmade in limited editions or one-of-a-kind, legitimising the exclusive aura and craftsmanship message that links the worlds of jewellery and fine art.

In high jewellery, as in haute couture, limited quantities also ensure customers avoid awkward ‘twinning’ at exclusive events — a first-world problem will never happen to the wearer of a unique pair of diamond clavicle wings by Belgian jeweller Tatiana Verstraeten, for example, who cut her teeth in the studio with Karl Lagerfeld at Chanel before launching her own Place Vendôme atelier crafting delicate, icy confections in showers of diamond stars or iridescent enamel butterfly wings. Nor for the bold customer of Paris-based German designer Gabrielle Greiss, whose elaborate semi-precious amulets inspired by fables are sold as both wearable pieces and as art—hanging in marbled, architectural frames.



A neo-medieval manchette by Elie Top.
(Courtesy)



Talismanic jewellery by Dortohee
Potocka. (LEO BASTREGHI)

Celebrating 10 years of his brand next January, the French jeweller Elie Top took the chance to reveal new pieces from his neo-medieval 'Avalon' collection here in Monaco, with a focus on large cabochon citrines and amethysts. Like Verstraeten, he will represent France this week at Jewellery Arabia in Bahrain this week, where both are expecting a dramatically different approach to curation, with over 600 brands showing under the one roof.

Other highlights included a display of British jeweller Eliane Fattal's repurposed high jewellery pieces nestled inside red clothbound books: she sources premium vintage pieces in London, re-setting diamond brooches and pendants into larger pieces to produce vine-like necklaces and asymmetric sets of leafy earrings. Nearby, the Polish countess Dorothée Potocka emphasised the talismanic and spiritual nature of jewellery in her display, opting to use untreated stones to preserve the natural colours and purported healing properties of raw materials. She dots yellow gold with diamond star constellations or carves it into wearable cycles of the moon. Potocka has recently added more accessible price points to her brand, introducing hand-carved Murano glass earrings, water pitchers and glassware—a smart alternative to diluting her signature designs with cheaper materials.

Vintage pieces were in abundance too, from 19th century micro-mosaic parures shown by historical Milanese dealer Gioielleria Pennisi to the Pop-Art sensibility of 60s and 70s artist jewellery by Arman or Fausto Melotti, shown by Ciaudano. These additions undoubtedly represented a safer alternative to new designers in the eyes of more conservative clients, for whom already time-tested pieces (including items from near-household names like Buccellati and Piaget) can feel like a more prudent investment.

Joya's format as a small, public-facing event is central to the salon's inclusive-yet-exclusive strategy, bucking the tradition of colossal, mostly B2B jewellery fairs such as Vincenzaoro, the Tuscon Gem & Jewellery show, and similar operations in Hong Kong or Las Vegas. It also counters the trend of jewellery being included as an annex to other art or design fairs as seen at PAD or TEFAF, where it both benefits from proximity to galleries and travelling clients, yet can at times feel like an afterthought and an opportunistic placement rather than the subject of appreciation and investment. Here, jewellery was truly the main event, and a festive mood unlocked by cocktail parties and family-friendly activities saw over 1000 visitors across the four days, with some clients making on-the-spot buys ahead of Christmas, with others returning to confirm more opulent purchases.

If Margowski and Pastor-Reiss remain strategic in their next steps to replicate Joya in other wealthy enclaves (Gstaad has been mentioned), then their genuine connection to both jetset clients and the worlds of art, fashion and design could proclaim long life to this trunkshow with a twist — sparking new dialogues among an international web of ultra-connected creatives and collectors.

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Jewellery and Watches

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→ How Brands Are Keeping the Pandemic Jewellery Boom Going

In response to heightened consumer desire for jewels that sparkle, small fine jewellery brands are finding success leaning into higher price points and more bespoke services catering to high-spending clientele.

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