

animalvegetablemineral: Exhibition of new works by Victoire de Castellane opens at Gagosian London



Crystal Shocking Pink Baby, 2013. Yellow gold, diamonds, colored lacquer. 3 1/8 x 3 9/16 x 3 9/16 inches / 8 x 9 x 9 cm. © Victoire de Castellane. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery. Photo: Vito Flamminio.

LONDON.- Gagosian London announces ‘animalvegetablemineral’, an exhibition of new works by Victoire de Castellane at the Davies Street gallery, following her acclaimed ‘Fleurs d’excès’ at Gagosian Paris in 2011.

De Castellane’s highly original collections for Dior have redefined and revived haute joaillerie for a new generation. In 2007, she began an independent practice as a sculptor of unique precious objects, the wayward progeny of a glittering lineage that includes the jeweled bestiaries of medieval times, the mechanical golden trinkets of Hans Christian Andersen’s children’s tales, and the ingenious eggs of Peter Carl Faberge. Each contains a wearable element—ring, bracelet, or necklace—that can be detached from its sculpted base.

De Castellane uses materials like no one before her. Her work puts essence and illusion into highly animated play, aided by a wacky irreverence that sets her apart in her field. “animalvegetablemineral” takes the very nature of materials as its starting point, inspired by the popular game derived from Linnaeus’s taxonomy of the natural world. Precious stones are chosen for their sheer presence—from rough and free-shaped opals to brilliant-cut diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, and rubies of classic perfection. Solid gold settings are cunningly concealed by lacquering techniques that produce alien hues and textures—cyborg blooms in shiny bubblegum pink (Crystal Shocking Pink Baby) or sparkling galactic indigo (Cana Glitter Night Baby). Sand-cast solid silver contoured bases, inspired by the manmade “rocher de singes” (Monkey Rock) at the Bois de Vincennes zoo, provide foils for darkly fabulous jeweled serpents (Lunae Lumen Holly Clorum), conceived to be viewed by the light of the moon; or mirror-polished silver forms droplets out of which bright flowering hybrids spring (Poppy Tomato Baby). In works such as Vitam Industria Abstract Sugar, faceted silver blocks, produced with the aid of digital prototyping, cradle dazzling compositions of cut and polished gems, alluding to the processes of geological evolution by which brute carbon transforms into precious stone.

Indifferent to convention though passionate about history and technical challenge, de Castellane’s ideas are driven by her exuberant and restless imagination that derives inspiration from sources as diverse as the élan vital of the natural world and the

synthetic wonders of Technicolor; the Brothers Grimm and Walt Disney; Hollywood screen idols and manga characters; the trash and fizz of pop culture and the darkest depths of the subconscious. The resulting forms conflate opposing systems: figurative and abstract, real and artificial, beautiful and grotesque, minimal and excessively baroque. Unprecedented in form and content, de Castellane's extreme and wondrous treasures are spirited ripostes to the perverse times in which we live.

Victoire de Castellane lives and works in Paris. Essentially self-taught—she attempted to make her first piece of jewelry at the age of five—she designed costume jewelry for Chanel for fourteen years. In 1998 she joined Dior as the first Creative Director of their new jewelry department, a role she continues to this day. Her first exhibition, “Belladone Island,” took place in Monet's Water Lilies rooms at L'Orangerie, Paris in 2007.

My jewels are propositions. From the outset, this involves making an object that constructs itself out of many different things, and that sometimes ends up surpassing even what I had imagined for it. It is no longer primarily an accessory; it becomes something larger. It speaks about concept and form as opposed to objective value. It becomes sculpture. —Victoire de Castellane