



'Crystal Shocking Pink Baby' by Victoire de Castellane
(Copyright Victoire de Castellane. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery; Photo Vito Flamminio)

Wrapping tomorrow at Gagosian London is an exhibition of new works by Victoire de Castellane, whose day job is creative director of fine jewelry at Christian Dior. The visionary self-taught designer, who designed costume jewelry for Chanel for 14 years prior to joining Dior, ruffled the feathers of the conservative fine jewelry world when she entered the game in the late Nineties. With her rebellious use of materials, gems, colors and themes (think precious interpretations of carnivorous plants in neon lacquer), her diverse sources were equally unconventional, fusing references to the natural world with odes to Walt Disney, Manga and pop culture.

Since 2007, the highly imaginative, irreverent designer has developed a personal side project based on unique bijou-objets straddling the worlds of jewelry and sculpture, with each piece containing a wearable element — ring, bracelet, or necklace — that can be detached from its sculpted base. Inspirations, once again, are broad, going from the jeweled bestiaries of medieval times, and the mechanical golden trinkets of Hans Christian Andersen's children's tales, to the decorative precious eggs of Peter Carl Fabergé.

Her latest collection, «animalvegetablemineral,» takes materials as its starting point, selecting precious stones for their sheer presence instead of rank in the gemological hierarchy system, be it rough opals or classic rubies. Lacquer in alien textures and hues, such as bubblegum pink (in “Crystal Shocking Pink Baby”) or sparkling galactic indigo (in “Cana Glitter Night Baby”) conceal gold settings. On “Lunae Lumen Holly Colorum,” a lacquered serpent coils around an opal and diamond plaque atop a contoured base in cast solid silver, inspired by the manmade «rocher de singes» (Monkey Rocks) at the Bois de Vincennes zoo in Paris. Elsewhere, vibrant flower hybrids bloom from mirror-polished silver droplets, while, echoing the process of geological evolution by which carbon transforms into precious stone, “Vitam Industria Abstract Sugar,” honed from faceted silver blocks produced with the aid of digital prototyping, showcases dazzling compositions of cut and polished gems.

Victoire de Castellane 'animalvegetablemineral,' ending February 1, Gagosian Gallery, 17-19 Davies St, London, W1K 3DE