

On View | Victoire de Castellane's Blinged-Out Sculptures at Gagosian By SARAH MOROZ



Dior Joaillerie creative director Victoire de Castellane has launched her latest sculpture and fine jewellery exhibition, 'animalvegetablemineral', at London's Gagosian Gallery

The minimalist surrounds of London's Gagosian Gallery are a stark contrast to the natural habitat of Dior fine jewellery creative director Victoire de Castellane. Far removed from the creative stimuli that make up her Parisian workspace – famously littered with all matter of Disney figurines, snow domes, artificial sundaes, Manga cartoons and carnivorous plants that have infiltrated her bijou collections over the years – last night de Castellane presented her latest sculpture exhibition, titled 'animalvegetablemineral'.

Housed under the same glass cloche domes you might find in a natural history museum, each glittering sculpture is crowned with a high jewellery piece that can be lifted from its perch and fittingly worn. Showcasing her objets d'art, from magical jewelled snakes draped over solid silver rocks, to carat-clustered diamond earrings adorning futuristic silver blocks, this fine art collection is the haute jeweller's follow-up to her 2011 'Fleur d'excès' exhibition, shown at the Gagosian's Paris satellite.

Renowned for her life-giving ability to reincarnate the natural world as enchanted jewels, de Castellane's avant-garde use of colour, hyper-hued enamel work and her unorthodox pairing of precious gemstones is once again exercised with light-hearted splendour. 'I like to put freedom around classical stones,' she explains motioning to her 'Honey Florem Peach Fruitti' bracelet, while narrating its tale of dual showmanship.

'I think it's so sad when jewellery just gets left on the overnight table, mixed in with other jewellery,' she continues, alluding to the impetus behind her sculptural sojourn. 'So the idea is that you take out and wear, but if you don't it's another life for them.' And judging by her

admirers on the night, from both genders and sides of the pond, they also allow her male fans to join in: 'Some men love jewellery, but what are they to do? Put it in their pocket? So it's an opportunity for them to enjoy the jewellery without it being worn.'

Not for the conservative, or anyone who lusts after a classically set solitaire, de Castellane relishes the paradox of real jewellery that looks so larger-than-life it could almost be fake. 'I always like to think inside myself,' she says of her starting point for this series, dreamt up in the realms of her Technicolour imagination, 'of what inspires me, be it nature, relationships between human beings, romanticism. I think that we are losing romanticism in the world.'

It's a cause she's passionately championed in her 'Poppy Tomato Baby' knuckle-duster cocktail rings, each blooming from a bouquet of sparkling gems. 'What is important is life energy,' she adds. 'I think colours are energy and give you energy, and I love to make the stones fight with different materials.' This tension also extends to scale; the designer favours big jewels on fine hands, playfully referencing a child dipping into its mother's jewellery drawer.

Born into the French aristocratic de Castellane family - which boasts the odd prince or bishop throughout its lineage dating back to the 10th century - the designer is certainly no stranger to the finer things in life, which is perhaps why she is so charmingly skilled at distorting them. Self-taught, de Castellane began her career as an assistant at Chanel, before Karl Lagerfeld asked her to oversee costume jewellery at the house, where she remained for 14 years. In 1998, Bernard Arnault asked her to envisage Dior Joaillerie where she remains to this day reigning over the Place Vendôme, having been awarded the Légion d'Honneur in 2007 for her sartorial services.

With her trademark blunt-cut fringe (a signature since she was five) and poppy red lips, de Castellane is a French style icon in her own right. On this occasion, however, she has chosen to let her sculptures bask in the spotlight - instead donning black with a simple gold wedding band as her only adornment. 'For me I don't want to wear, I just want to see,' she qualifies with a smile.



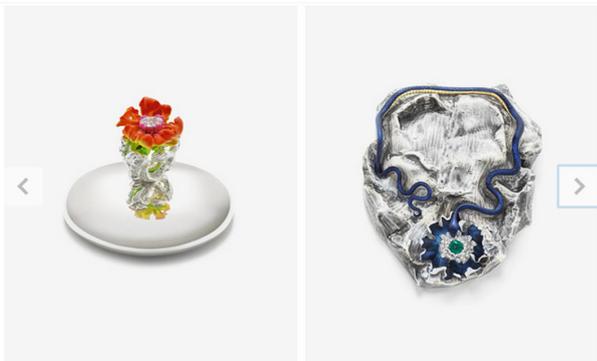
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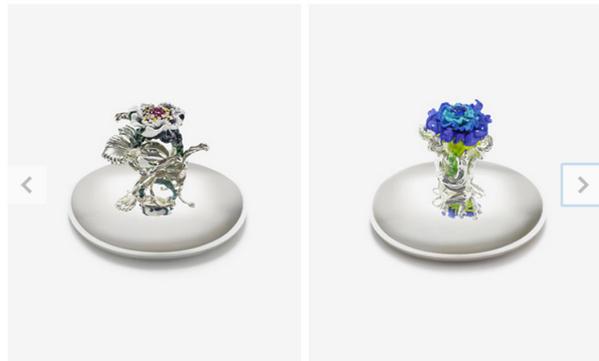
Victoire de Castellane began her career overseeing costume jewellery at Chanel, before helming Dior Joaillerie

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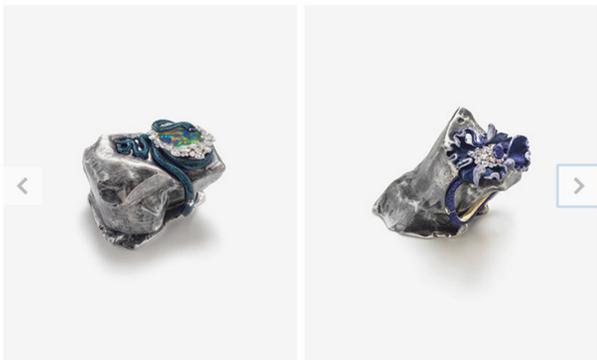
'I think that we are losing romanticism in the world,' explains de Castellane. A cause she's passionately championed in her 'Poppy Tomato Baby' knucklebuster cocktail rings (pictured left), each blooming from a bouquet of sparkling diamonds and coloured lacquer. 'Lunae Lumen Satine Mummy Blue' (right), 2013, is composed of yellow, white gold and platinum, emerald, diamonds and coloured lacquer

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'I think colours are energy and give you energy' continues the designer. Left: 'Opium Tiger Baby' 2013, composed of yellow gold, platinum, ruby, diamonds and coloured lacquer. Right: 'Acid Blue Sky Baby', 2013, made from yellow and pink gold, sapphire, diamonds and coloured lacquer

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Magical jewelled snakes drape over solid silver rocks. Left: 'Lunae Lumen Holly Colours', 2013, is made from yellow gold, opal, diamonds and coloured lacquer. Right: 'Lunae Lumen Glitter Blue', 2013, composed of yellow and white gold, diamonds and coloured lacquer

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'I always like to think inside myself,' says the jeweller of her starting point for the series, dreamt up in the realms of her Technicolour imagination. Left: 'Honey Florem Jelly Green' 2013, composed of yellow gold and emeralds. Right: 'Honey Florem Red Frutti' 2013 featuring yellow gold, diamonds, multi-coloured sapphires and rubies

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De Castellane's carat-clustered diamond earrings, which adorn futuristic silver blocks. Left: 'Vitam Industria Abstract Multi Candy' 2013 featuring white gold, multi-coloured sapphires, rubies, emeralds and fine stones. Right: 'Vitam Industria Abstract Sugar' 2013 composed of white gold and brilliant diamonds

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