

competition+exhibition

CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN JEWELLERY: techniques and materials through art and design

THE VICENZA FAIR has organised an international competition of ideas and an exhibition with the title “Contemporary Italian Jewellery: techniques and materials through art and design”. The protagonist is a jewel that manages to rework techniques and materials from the tradition of Italian gold jewellery to bring them into line with contemporary aesthetics, where design is configured as an element of both formal and strategic innovation for the culture of enterprise. The competition and the exhibition both intend to highlight the potential of Italian jewellery, characterised by techniques and materials possessed by *made in Italy*: from coral to filigree, from micro-mosaics to lava rock, evidence of a culture of gold-working excellence that is not seen very often today. The challenge is to have artists, designers, gold designers and companies interpret the various techniques and materials with the aim of proving that ancient know-how can have a contemporary look and for this reason appeal to a wider audience. The ideal encounter between past, present and future would reveal the gold jewellery vocation and artistic tradition of the various Italian gold districts where quality and distinction configure as strategic elements for competing on international markets.

The project, coordinated by Alba Cappellieri, jewellery design professor at Milan Polytechnic, comprises an international competition and a travelling exhibition that will be inaugurated at Palazzo Valmarana in Vicenza to coincide with Vicenza Winter 2008. The Vicenza Fair confirms its contribution to valorisation of contemporary gold jewellery culture and to innovation of enterprise.

Competition

The competition is open to all designers, Italian and foreign, aged 35 or younger and aims to act as impetus for a large bracket of young designers to rediscover the techniques and materials from the tradition of Italian gold jewellery-working and to reinterpret them through design. Both competition and the exhibition are divided into 4 categories: Traditional techniques, Innovative techniques, Traditional materials, Innovative materials. A complete set of competition rules can be downloaded from the site www.polidesign.net

The most important international schools for jewellery design have been invited to take part in the competition and the jury will be made up as follows:

Flavio Albanese, Domus
Marina Bigi, Vogue Gioiello
Alba Cappellieri, Milan Polytechnic

Maurizio Castro, the Vicenza Fair
Michael Coan, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York
Hilde De Decker, Gerrit Rietveld Academy Amsterdam
Giancarlo Montebello, designer
Roger Morris, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design
Mauren Zilioli, gallery owner

Deadline for entries was 14 December 2007 and the winning designs will be presented at the inauguration of the exhibition on 13 January during First 2008.

Exhibition

The exhibition intends to highlight the co-existence and blending of traditions with current trends whereby a jewel is valuable not only because of the material used, but also due to its design. To this end the different techniques and materials from the tradition of Italian gold jewellery working will be interpreted by professional Italian gold designers and by companies following contemporary aesthetics. Over 150 designers and companies have also been invited, representing the excellence of the “Italian way” with no limits put on age, materials, locations or research themes, giving a total of more than 400 works on show.

The exhibition will be inaugurated on 13 January in Vicenza, in Palazzo Valmaran, and will run until 15 March. From 17 March until 17 April it will then move to the Sforzesco Castle in Milan and then to Turin.

It is curated by Marco Romanelli with Marcello Pinzero.

The catalogue is edited by Alba Cappellieri and published by Skira-Rizzoli International with contributions from Marina Bigi, Andrea Branzi, Maurizio Castro, Philippe Daverio, Paola de Luca, Graziella Folchini Grassetto, Françoise Izaude and Valerio Terraroli

Documentary appendices are by Donatella Ferrari, Vanni Scolozzi and Viola Vecchi.

Contemporary Italian jewellery

Alba Cappellieri

The culture of Italian gold jewellery is a particularly wide universe made up of traditions, knowledge and relations, a cultural patrimony that belongs to the culture of “know-how” that is so characteristic of made in Italy.

The gold sector in Italy is historically characterised by its geographical structure: as well as the gold districts of Vicenza, Valenza, Arezzo and Marcianise where specific traditions linked to materials and their processing exist for jewellery. So, for example, coral-working in Torre del Greco and Sciacca, the granulation technique in Tuscany, micro-mosaics from Venice and Florence, filigree in Sardinia and in Liguria represent some of the gold jewellery excellences of made in Italy, a fertile field into which innovation processes must be planted that through design focus on recognising, valorising and communicating the excellence of Italian tradition.

The Italian jewel can therefore be considered an “ethnic” jewel, using this adjective to describe the wide variety of local traditions present in Italy. Techniques and materials configure as a transversal tool for interpreting the identity of the territory but also as a reference scenario for the designer.

The competition and exhibition “CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN JEWELLERY: TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS THROUGH ART AND DESIGN” therefore intends to present techniques and materials from the tradition of Italian gold jewellery working as cultural assets to be spread, valorised and communicated. No less importantly, they also aim to promote the encounter between the culture of enterprise and the culture of design and provide new reference panoramas for gold jewellery companies, according to a design-oriented innovation product.

This exhibition shows pieces by the jewellery maestros of today: Giampaolo Babetto, Giancarlo Montebello, Giorgio Vigna, Maria Rosa Franzin, Alba Lisca, Karl Heinz Reister, Graziano Visentin, Alberto Zorzi; those of tomorrow: Stefano Marchetti, Annamaria Zanella, Rossella Tornquist, Jacqueline Ryan, Giovanni Corvaja, Roberta Bernabei, Fabio Cammarata, Loretta Baiocchi, Patrizia Bonati, Ute Kolar; maestros of design: Ettore Sottsass, Gaetano Pesce, Riccardo Dalisi, Angelo Mangiarotti, Alessandro Mendini, Paolo Portoghesi, Andrea Branzi, Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas; and designers are responsible for having freed the jewel from the "nobility" of materials, making it precious with design: Rita Marcangelo, Barbara Uderzo, Carla Riccoboni, Maurizio Stagni, Sandra di Giacinto, Nathalie Jean, Alessia Semeraro, Stefania Lucchetta, Elena Spanò, Margherita Marchioni, Elisabetta Duprè. Intense participation also from companies of excellence: from the big international jewellery maisons: Buccellati, Bulgari, Damiani, Pomellato, Vhernier; to the medium-size companies that qualify the Italian product: Sanlorenzo and Valadier but also Mattioli, Mattia Cielo, Vendorafa, Nanis, Marco Bicego, Pontevecchio, Mimi, Chimento, Franco Maria Franchi; and companies that do not belong to traditional jewellery but that have contributed to defining new meanings for the jewel in today's world: Breil, Donatella Pellini, Sharra Pagano. Companies and designers are presented in a richly heterogeneous event, where territorial values blend with the specificity of materials. The thread that sinuously links them all together is a tenaciously followed desire to rework tradition in line with shapes of innovation, materials, creation or production techniques. Jewels whose value lies in their design, here a synonym of quality, because as Enzo Mari claimed “the quality of a design depends on the amount, no matter how small, of cultural change that it triggers off”.¹

Alba Cappellieri Architect and design critic, she is associate professor of Jewellery design at the Milan Polytechnic Faculty of Design. She is responsible for research projects for Polidesign, the Milan Polytechnic consortium for applied research, training and publishing in the design sector.

She is director of the advanced specialist course in Jewellery Design for Milan Polytechnic.

She has curated jewellery exhibitions and conventions, including “Il Design della Gioia”, Milan Triennale, 2002-2003, “New Italian Design”, Milan Triennial, 2007 (jewellery sector manager) and the convention in the industrial gold districts “Design and/or Jewel?” with the Vicenza Fair (2005-2006). She has carried out research and teaching projects for major international jewellery companies such as Cartier, Van Cleef and Arpels, Montblanc and taken part in national surveys for the jewellery sector.

She writes about jewellery design for major design magazines, such as Domus, Abitare, Il Giornale del Design, AR2 and Modo.

Her latest works include *Antonio Citterio architettura e design*, Skira Editore, Milan 2007; *Moda e design: il progetto dell'eccellenza*, Franco Angeli, Milan 2007, with F. Celaschi, A. Vasile; *Lusso versus Design*, Franco Angeli, Milan 2005, with M. Romanelli and *Il design della Gioia*, Charta, Milan 2004, among others.

¹ Enzo Mari, *Progetto e Passione*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin 2001, page 52