

GALLERY NOVEMBER 4, 2019 SHEILA GIBSON STOODLEY

Legendary Antiques Dealer Exhibits Stunning Mid-Century Jewelry



1940s Gold Gas Pipe Bracelet

A LA VIEILLE RUSSIE

Founded in Kiev in 1851, A La Vieille Russie is best known for specializing in the works of Carl Fabergé. A selling exhibition that opened at the Fifth Avenue gallery in Manhattan on October 23 shows a new facet of the business. *Deceptively Modern Jewelry: 1940s – 1980s* showcases 72 pieces, by Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, Gucci, Angela Cummings, Mauboussin, Chaumet, and other notable jewelers. The product of 18 months of work, it's the first exhibit of mid-20th century jewelry curated by A La Vieille Russie.

“We came across some pieces from that period that were so much better than the average. We realized we were missing out, so we started looking around,” says gallery director Peter Schaffer.



George L'enfant Bracelets and Earrings

A LA VIEILLE RUSSIE

The selling exhibit places its emphasis on accessible, wearable mid-century pieces—those that reflect a cultural shift toward jewelry that's subtle enough for the office and elegant enough for an evening soiree.

“These pieces mean a lot to the people who buy them, but they don’t look like [they’re worth] a tremendous amount of money,” he says. “You don’t look at them with a dollar sign. You look at them because they’re fun designs.”

Deceptively Modern Jewelry features enough gold to make King Midas smile: a Cartier Paris gold triangular bracelet and necklace, George L’Enfant bracelets and earrings fashioned from linked discs and ovals of gold, and a striking circa 1940s “gas pipe” bracelet, to cite just three. Schaffer explains that wartime restrictions placed gold off-limits to jewelers. Once the restrictions were lifted, designers re-embraced the metal with gusto. “They had almost, in essence, forgotten the use of gold,” Schaffer says. “It was like a new material. It exploded on the market and people took advantage of it.”



Aquamarine and Diamond Necklace

A LA VIEILLE RUSSIE

Another well-represented trend of the era is for citrines, aquamarines, turquoise, coral, and similar materials that fit the emerging preference for jewelry that could multi-task. “Nobody wanted pieces that were all-diamonds,” he says. “People moved away from wearing their wealth on their sleeve to wanting [something they could] wear every day, all day. Coral, aquamarine, you can wear all day long and go to the opera at night.”



Cartier, Paris Yellow Sapphire and Diamond Ring

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Deceptively Modern Jewelry continues through November 15 at the A La Vieille Russie gallery, located at 745 Fifth Avenue, New York.