

SINGAPORE EDITION

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GEMS & TIMEPIECES

the
designers
issue

garden of temptation

Jewels that seduce, Barbara Hutton's
treasure trove, emerging designers

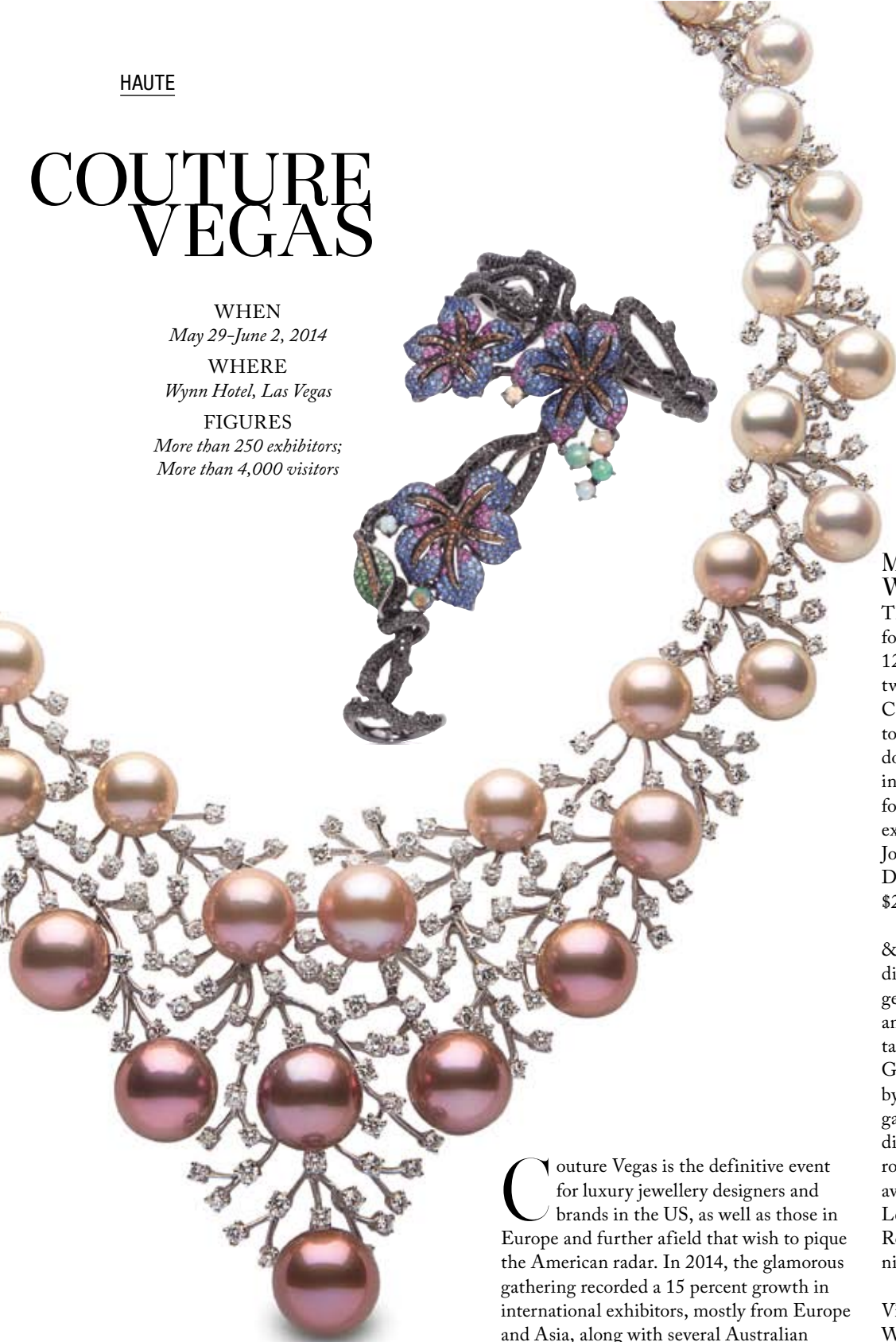
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COOUTURE VEGAS

WHEN
May 29-June 2, 2014

WHERE
Wynn Hotel, Las Vegas

FIGURES
More than 250 exhibitors;
More than 4,000 visitors



From top: Wendy Yue's Diamond Tree; and Yoko London's Pearl Necklace

Couture Vegas is the definitive event for luxury jewellery designers and brands in the US, as well as those in Europe and further afield that wish to pique the American radar. In 2014, the glamorous gathering recorded a 15 percent growth in international exhibitors, mostly from Europe and Asia, along with several Australian additions. Couture veteran Stephen Webster spearheaded the Brit charge and for the second year running, led a collective of nine designers from the British Fashion Council and London Fashion Week initiative Rock Vault, who set up their displays in Webster's dedicated ballroom.

MAKING PLAY OF WORK

The Couture Design Awards are known for creating a buzz and 2014 saw entries in 12 main categories, with the addition of two new categories: Innovative and Haute Couture. The People's Choice Award went to Magerit, the Madrid-based house that does not shy from depicting animal instincts in its collections. Nam Cho was winner for Best Design for Coloured Gemstones exceeding US\$20,000 retail, while Fernando Jorge, a star of Rock Vault, took out Best Design for Coloured Gemstones below \$20,000 retail.

The Innovative award went to Henrich & Denzel, the German platinum and diamonds experts who produce some very geometric wedding and engagement rings, and have an online tool that lets customers tailor their own designs. Meanwhile, Giovanni Ferraris flew the Italian flag high by taking home the Haute Couture laurel garnered by his long and sinuous titanium, diamond and sapphire earrings. The British roster of talent made their presence felt at the awards too, with Stephen Webster, Shaun Leane, Yoko London and Jo Hayes Ward, a Rock Vault exhibitor, all heading out into the night with prizes.

The jury included jewellery historian Vivienne Becker, *Harper's Bazaar's* Amanda Weiner, London Jewellers' Candy Udell and Ylang 23's Alex Sepkus and Joanne Teichman. Rounding out the rest of the Rock Vault line-up were Tomasz Donocik, Imogen Belfield, Melanie Georgacopoulos and Yunus & Eliza, as well as Couture first-timers Ornella Iannuzzi, Jacqueline Cullen and Alice Cicolini.

DESIGN AND CONQUER

Unearthing new talent is the *raison d'être* of the Design Atelier and it was again one of the busiest sites at the show. Qayten is an emerging company from Bologna on its first outing in Las Vegas, with a presentation that impressed attendees as well as the Couture Awards judges. It won Best Design for Diamonds exceeding \$20,000 retail with a wavy necklace that seemed invisibly articulated.

Turkish jewellery designer Pinar Oner of Pinar Oner Design Atelier revealed an unusual blackened 18k yellow gold flora blossom ring that had undulating walls of pavé diamonds, and red and orange enamel floral motifs in its centre. The piece is an interpretation of the mosaic ceilings and walls of Istanbul's famous Chora Church, considered one of the finest examples of Byzantine cathedral architecture. Oner says she was encouraged to find that her peers at the Design Atelier were also looking to flora and fauna for inspiration: "It was interesting to see so many new, pretty designs. Flowers, birds and even insects were reinterpreted into high-end, fine jewellery creations throughout the show."

MIXED INTENTIONS

There was an adventurous spirit when it came to material use. Among the enormous range of possibilities was enamel, seen in Alice Cicolini's rings featuring vivid coloured champlevé or *meenakari*



enamelling work carried out by Jaipur craftsmen skilled in this ancient tradition. Cicolini also used hardwoods such as ebony and maple as raw material. Interestingly, Brooklyn-based brand Sorellina's mixing of metals was partly inspired by the founders' love of the Victorian era, a period where mixed metals in fine jewellery was a common occurrence.

Also reinterpreting Victorian traditions from a contemporary perspective was Jacqueline Cullen, who creates jewellery from Whitby Jet (a kind of fossilised wood), sourced from disused mines and caves in the North Yorkshire seaside town after which it is named after. Elsewhere, the proclivity towards the use of disparate metals was also expressed in the stacking or layering of multiple pieces, so that rings, necklaces or bracelets in yellow gold, rose gold and silver commingled.

LURE OF LUSTRE

Pearls of all descriptions were seen throughout the show, but pastels were particularly popular and irregular shapes were celebrated too. Yoko London's CEO Michael Hakimian says the type of pearl that generated the most interest at the booth was the very rare natural pink and radiant orchid Freshwater variety: "It is extremely unusual to find Freshwater pearls of such high quality, in these intense natural colours and exceptionally large sizes. Buyers loved them both for their rarity and their fresh, feminine look."

Clockwise from top: Qayten's Bologna Necklace; Sorellina's Otto Two Tone Bracelet; and Jacqueline Cullen's Ring



SHOW HAND

There was a profusion of hand jewellery exhibited at Couture. Yeprem is a Lebanese brand that references bridal henna tattoos in its twining, precious hand bracelets. Virna Chakardemian, the daughter of Yeprem's founder Yeprem Chakardemian, has been instrumental in raising the brand's modern luxe profile among younger and fashion-forward women in international style centres. Father and daughter share a preoccupation with jewels that move with its wearer. Yeprem's intricate hand jewellery sat in counterpoint to the more relaxed aesthetic of boho-chic advocate Jacque Aiche's pieces. Rihanna is known to be an admirer of the latter's hand and body chains that languorously trace the body's silhouette. Whichever one's preference, donning hand jewellery still appears to require a certain level of confidence. — *Melissa Pearce*

