

“Ornamental” Gems Go High-End

Colorful “ornamental” gems are making a welcome comeback in fine jewelry lines. During the 1970s, they were highly fashionable and, between 1975 and 1985, these gems were used in key models of the major jewelry brands before the strong emphasis on the trendy Big Three—ruby, sapphire and emerald—as well as garnet, tourmaline, colored diamonds and spinel, now generally used in the jewelry industry.

By Marie Chabrol

Forgotten for a number of years, “ornamental” stones have been rediscovered by many designers and creative departments. At the end of 2016, they started showing up in the latest statement collections by several renowned houses including Piaget, Cartier, Boucheron and Van Cleef & Arpels with such names as *Possession*, *Alhambra*, *Cactus*, *Rose de Noel* and *Serpent Bohême*. We are now also seeing them used by independent creators, among them Harumi Klossowska de Rola, Lydia Courteille, Belmacz, Amelie Viaene and Solange Agazury-Partridge.

So, what is meant by the term “ornamental” gemstone? This is a somewhat loose and unscientific label that is used mostly in the decorative arts field to designate “semi-precious” gems, which, under this definition, means hard gems that are generally not transparent and usually not faceted. By extension, then, the term “precious” gems would be used to indicate those that are faceted and generally transparent. This definition is, however, not a hard-and-fast rule, and has a number of exceptions.

Often wrongly considered as “less precious” than their “precious” counterparts, the ornamental stone category includes common opal, rhodochrosite, chrysoprase, agate, malachite, rhodonite, sugilite, lapis lazuli, aquaprase and others.



5

1. *Rose de Noel* yellow gold brooch set with lapis lazuli and diamonds by Van Cleef & Arpels.
2. *Hortensia* ring in yellow gold, diamonds and turquoise by Chaumet.
3. Rhodochrosite and lacquer ring in 18K gold in the *Chromance* collection by Solange Agazury-Partridge.
4. Earrings with red jasper, garnet, orange and yellow sapphire in 18K gold by David Yurman.
5. *Bousier* ring in azurite, hauyne, andradite, hessonite garnet, white and brown diamonds set in gold by Lydia Courteille.



1



2



3



4



6



9



12



13



7



10



8



11

6. *Alhambra* yellow gold earrings with diamonds and malachites by Van Cleef & Arpels.

7. *Rose de Noel* yellow gold brooch set with onyx and diamonds by Van Cleef & Arpels.

8. *Tortuga* earrings with Tahitian pearls and chrysoprase in 18K yellow gold by Belmacz.

9. *Pain de Sucre* interchangeable pink gold ring with amazonite and diamonds by Fred.

10. *Lost in Translation* white gold set with white dendritic opal and diamonds by Amelie Viaene.

11. *Cactus* yellow gold bracelet with carnelian, chrysoprase, emerald and diamonds by Cartier.

12. *Serpent Bohême* yellow gold ring with lapis lazuli by Boucheron.

13. *Jeux de Liens* gold and pink opal pendant by Chaumet



Rose des Vents yellow gold necklace featuring diamonds, pink opal, turquoise, onyx, mother-of-pearl and lapis lazuli by Dior.



Possession bangles in gold featuring carnelian, turquoise and diamonds by Piaget.

Potion bottle in rhodochrosite with gold chain by Jacquie Aiche Jewelry. (Photo: Marie Chabrol)



As tastes evolve and re-evolve, consumers are once again looking for “ornamental” gems. Enhanced with diamonds and gold, these lovely, affordable and easy-to-wear collections now have a high-end touch! Moreover, these jewels are being popularized by fashion icons and jewelry bloggers through social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) and print advertising campaigns to entice Millennials to adopt new trends. Piaget recently chose Olivia Palermo and her 4.9 millions Instagram followers to launch its new *Possession* collection of bangles and pendants.

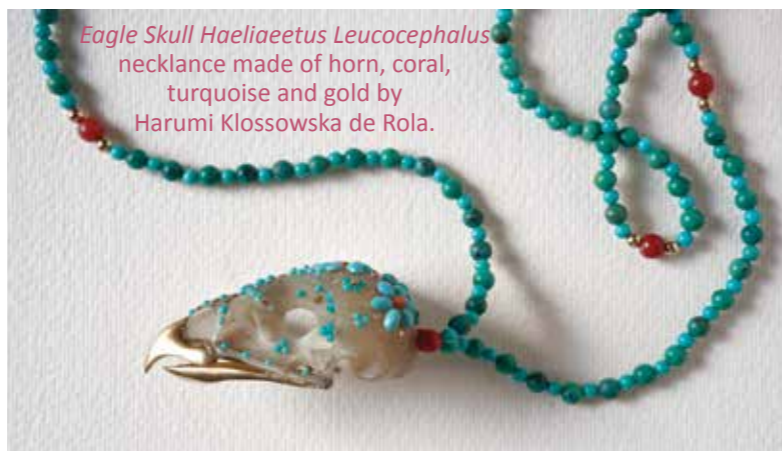
Very trendy, ornamental stones are now found everywhere. Are they less expensive than “precious” gems? No, most probably not, since top quality and consistency in color and structure are not that easy to find. They also must be completely natural and untreated as far as possible.

Ornamental stones are my favorite gems, and I am really happy to see them used again in high-end jewelry and iconic models. Graphically interesting and pleasing, they offer a creative touch to a way-too-often conservative industry.

Photos are courtesy of the brands cited, unless specified.



Film shoot with Olivia Palermo for the launch of Piaget’s *Possession* collection.



Eagle Skull *Haliaeetus Leucocephalus* necklance made of horn, coral, turquoise and gold by Harumi Klossowska de Rola.