

Old-cut diamonds and fantastical gems: TEFAF Maastricht's unmissable jewels



Silver, aluminium, white gold, jade and tsavorite earrings, Hemmerle

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It may be a royal pain to get to, but TEFAF (The European Fine Art Fair) in Maastricht, the Netherlands, is worth the trip. This year's fair (16 – 24 March) is the 32nd such event, and has become the most respected exhibition of art, antiques and collectibles in the world (apparently the private jet landings at the local airport during the fair are sight enough).

Collectors of a vast array of independently vetted items (TEFAF takes the vetting process of every single exhibitor and item extremely seriously) swarm to get first dibs on everything from early 19th century sculpture to 13th century illuminated manuscripts.

But increasingly, they're also swarming to see important antique, vintage and contemporary jewellery from all over the world.



Suzanne Belperron silver, platinum, diamond and black lacquer 'Bande' ring, circa 1934, at Siegelson

This year sees major collections from modern jewellers Wallace Chan, Cindy Chao, Glenn Spiro, Hemmerle and Otto Jakob, alongside examples of antiques from dealers such as London's Wartski, Symbolic & Chase, Hancocks, and SJ Phillips, New York's FD Gallery and A La Vieille Russie.

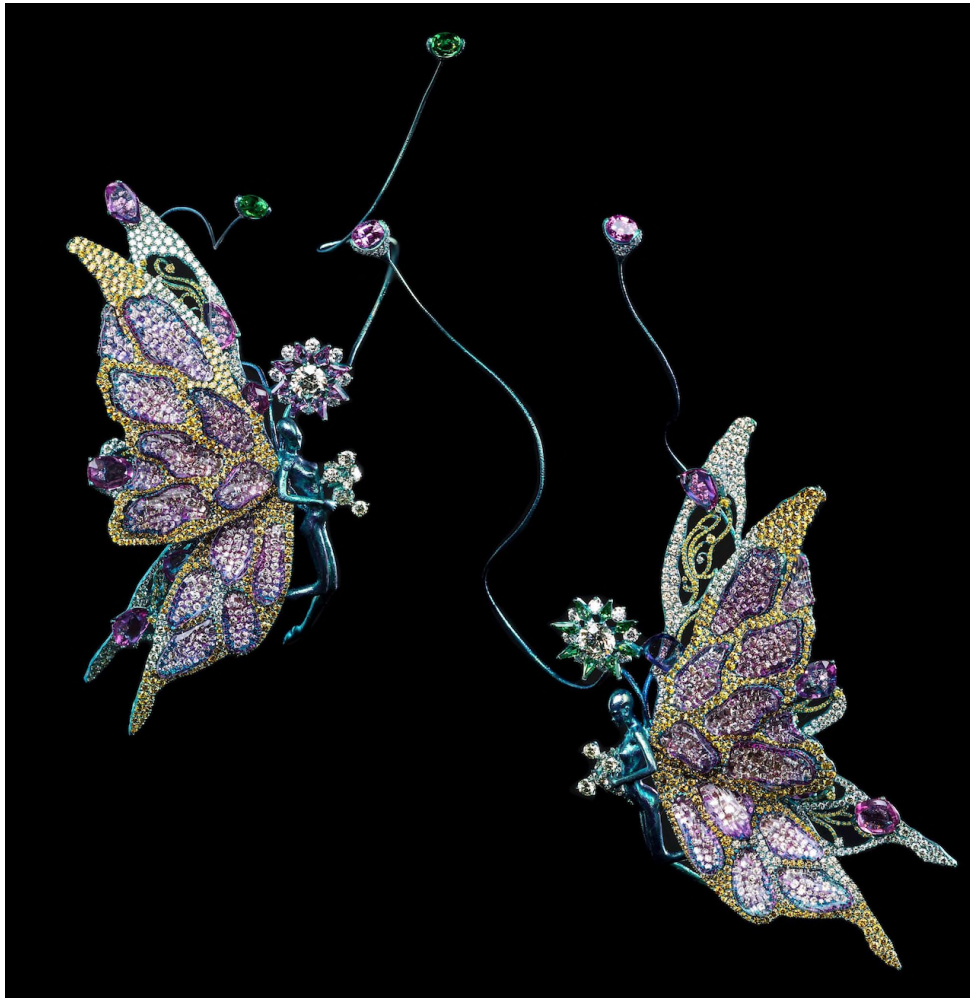
There's also a combination of both categories at Van Cleef & Arpels, which is showing contemporary examples of high jewellery next to glorious examples from the past, like a boldly-hued amethyst and yellow sapphire necklace from the 1960s.



Yellow gold, pink gold, white gold, yellow sapphire, amethyst and diamond necklace with detachable clip, signed Van Cleef & Arpels, New York, 1965

So who to turn to? Hong Kong-based Cindy Chao will be showing some of her Black Label masterpieces – one-off designs using extraordinary stones.

Her Greenovia brooch pitches an olive green Chrysoberyl Cat's Eye of 105 carats at the center of a flower with petals made from green sapphires, alexandrites, tsavorite, demantoids, emeralds and fancy coloured sapphires, set in titanium, gold and silver. It's an extraordinarily hyper-realistic fantasy of a piece that has to be seen to be believed.



Yellow diamond, diamond, tsavorite garnet, pink sapphire, amethyst, ruby and titanium Butterfly Nebula earrings, Wallace Chan

Also operating from Hong Kong is Wallace Chan, whose fantastical, insanely innovative work includes a pair of butterfly-winged, fairy-like creatures in titanium with super-long antennae and headpieces studded with coloured diamonds, tsavorite garnets, pink sapphires, amethysts, and rubies. They're the stuff of fantasy.

Less fantastical but no less innovative is the work of Munich jeweller Hemmerle, whose bold, architectural pieces manage to combine a certain type of minimalism with astonishing materials. Discs of jade suspended from tsavorite-studded aluminium drops make up vast earrings, while a huge tsavorite is set in matte aluminium and white gold in a bold cocktail ring.



Titanium, sapphire, diamond and spinel Fan ear clips, G

Londoner Glenn Spiro's G label isn't for the faint-hearted either – his love of stones comes to life in a pair of fan ear clips in graduating shades of purple; baroque-shaped, watery purple sapphires, the palest natural blue spinels and half-moon cut diamonds all set in diamond-paved titanium, as delicate and translucent looking as a dragonfly's wings.



Mauboussin Burmese ruby and diamond transformable necklace, 1930, at Symbolic & Chase

New York's Siegelson will be showing a black lacquer and diamond 'bande' ring by the audacious mid 20th century jeweller Suzanne Belperron, while Symbolic & Chase demonstrates flawless taste as ever, with an incredible transformable 1930s ruby and diamond necklace by Mauboussin Paris.



Silver and gold Victorian bracelet featuring 29.80 carats of old-cut diamonds, at Hancocks

Burlington Arcade's antique jewellery specialist Hancocks, which specialises in old-cut diamonds, is highlighting a Victorian bracelet sporting nearly 30 carats of them. The Hancocks booth is worth visiting for the sheer breadth of the team's knowledge when it comes to old stones alone.

This is just a drop in the ocean of what there is to be seen at TEFAF, but more than enough to convince me to attend.