

didierltd

**Jewels of the
Italian
Modern Masters**



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FOREWORD

This, our sixth catalogue, celebrates the jewels created by Italian artists - painters, sculptors and architects - from the second half of the 20th century. It is printed to coincide with our exhibition at TEFAF, Maastricht (13th-22nd March 2015), where our stand has been specially designed by 4D Projects to display this collection inspired by Giorgio de Chirico's *Cavallo e Cavaliere con beretto frigio* brooch [28] and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italia, in EUR, Rome, as reproduced on the front cover.

Assembled over the past 10 years, this catalogue contains 119 examples by 33 artists ranging from painters like Afro and Mirko Basaldella to Pietro Annigoni, and especially sculptors including Giacomo Manzù, Fausto Melotti, and Arnaldo Pomodoro, and even the influential architect and designer Ettore Sottsass. These jewels are works of art, miniature sculptures made in precious metals that often represent the most intimate expression of their creator's art.

The jewels have been grouped here into three sections: Mario Masenza and the School of Rome, Sculptural Jewels and Exhibitions, and GEM Montebello and Artist Editions. These groupings are partly for convenience, partly chronological, but they also reflect some of the core reasons behind each jewel's creation. In the first section are unique pieces dating from the late 1940s and 1950s made with the aid of, and to be sold through, a master jeweller like Mario Masenza or the Fumanti Brothers in Rome. The pieces in the second section, which date mainly from the 1960s and 1970s, were created for more special reasons, as gifts for friends and family, personal commissions from the artist, or made to be included in exhibitions. The last section includes jewels, the designs for which were commissioned directly from the artists by editors, such as GEM Montebello, Cleto Munari in Milan, and Artcurial in Paris, who wished to explore the manufacture of artist's jewellery on a larger scale thereby making them available to a much wider section of society. These latter jewels were produced from the late 1960s onwards.

While studying many Italian artists were taught goldsmithing, or specifically sought out these skills later, thus following a long tradition of the artist goldsmith that dates back to the Renaissance. Indeed, most of these jewels published here have been made in 18ct or even 20ct gold and many of those created in the immediate Post-War years are further set with precious stones. This preference for gold is especially in contrast with the contemporary artists' jewels being created in North America by sculptors such as Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia, and Ibram Lassaw, where pieces made in brass, silver and bronze predominate. Another noticeable feature is that only one of the artists represented here is a woman, in this case Amalia del Ponte, by whom some works were included in our 2012 catalogue, *The Sculptress Adorns*.

We hope that you enjoy these jewels and agree with us and Palma Bucarelli, the doyenne of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderne in Rome, who did so much to promote these jewels at the time, that "in contemporary art, jewellery has a new meaning, not only as an ornament in the naturalistic or allegorical sense, but also as a means by which the work of art comes into direct physical contact with the wearer" (Somaini and Cerritelli 1995, p. 36).

Didier and Martine Haspeslagh
February 2015

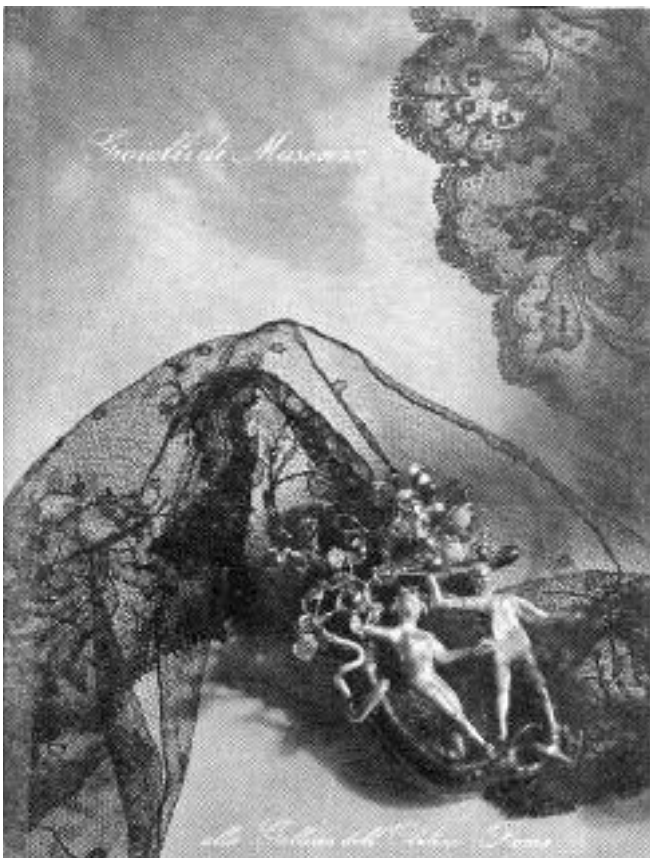
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1. MARIO MASENZA AND THE ROME SCHOOL

It was Mario Masenza (1913-1985) who was behind the rise of artists' jewellery in Post War Italy. From a family of illustrious Rome jewellers, who counted the Italian royal family among their clients, Masenza operated out of a shop on the ground floor of Palazzo Fiano on the Via del Corso. He was not only a jeweller but also an art collector who was greatly attracted to the contemporary art of the School of Rome. In an attempt to infuse a new vitality into the art of goldsmithing that had been in decline since the onset of the Second World War, Masenza approached a number of painters and sculptors with the offer of the use of his gold workshop and the possibility of creating jewels using the ancient techniques of repoussé and chasing. Masenza's own special gold mix had a soft warm colour of a tonality akin to that of the ancient Etruscans and Romans. In total Masenza collaborated with over 30 artists up until the end of the 1970s, while some of his assistants, Danilo and Massimo Fumanti, and Diderico Gherardi later set up their own workshops and continued to produce artists' jewels.

The first artist Masenza approached in 1946 was Mirko Basaldella [21] who initially refused, although he had been making jewels from 1935, originally as presents for his wife Serena. At the Milan Triennale of 1948 Mirko exhibited a gold brooch with precious stones possibly made in collaboration with Masenza. The second artist Masenza approached was Lorenzo Guerrini [13-17] who had previously studied goldsmithing at La Scuola Umanitaria di



Cover of leaflet for the exhibition, *Gioielli di Masenza*, held at the Galleria dell' Obelisco, Rome, December 1949.



Three jewels by Mirko Basaldella [21], Franco Cannilla [6] and Afro Basaldella [4], c. 1950.

1. MARIO MASENZA AND THE ROME SCHOOL

Monza. Guerrini worked in Masenza's workshop from 1946 to 1952 and then later with Gherardi. Mario Masenza also asked Mirko's brothers, Afro [1-5] and Dino Basaldella, followed by Franco Cannilla [6-12], all of whom took part in Masenza's first exhibition, *Gioielli di Masenza*, at the Galleria del Milione, Milan, 15th-25th October and then at Galleria l'Obelisco, Rome, from 16th-21st December 1949.

This section includes 24 jewels and in addition to those artists mentioned above, there are jewels by Nino Franchina [18], Edgardo Mannucci [19-20], and Giuseppe Uncini [22-4]. Uncini first became fascinated in working with gold on seeing his dentist use the lost wax process to cast gold fillings and his gold jewels were more favourably received than those he made from concrete, including a necklace he made for his wife (who never wore it). His bracelet [23] especially shows the influence of concrete in his jewels with the mass of gold enmeshed in wires resembling reinforced concrete.

The remaining jewel is a gold and ruby brooch [8] by Franco Cannilla that was produced by Fumanti. It was used as the cover illustration for two of their jewellery exhibitions and appeared in a publicity photograph being modelled by Britt Ekland before entering the collection of Dame Elizabeth Taylor.



Britt Ekland modelling jewels by Capogrossi, Cannilla [8], Afro and Uncini by Claudio Masenza, c. 1970



Cover of exhibition catalogue, *Il Gioiello d'Arte Contemporanea della Gioielleria Fumanti*, Perugia 1971

AFRO BASALDELLA (1912-1976)



4. Unique abstract landscape clip, 1950s

made in 18ct yellow gold embossed with a textured surface decorated with a raised lattice design set with 16 square cut rubies and further decorated with an applied crescent moon element set with three brilliant cut diamonds and three stylized palm trees, the first set with two circular cut emeralds and the other two with a ruby and sapphire; the lower part with four protrusions set with four brilliant and one old cut diamonds. The whole brooch with a lattice backplate with hinged double clip fitting. Designed by Afro Basaldella and made in the gold workshop of Mario Masenza, Rome.

Marks: signed on the reverse, *Afro*, MASENZA, ROMA

Dimensions: height 4.6 cm; width 4.7 cm



5. Unique Mount of Olives locket and chain, c. 1951

made in 18ct yellow gold, the front of the detachable locket embossed with the porticoed façade of the Church of All Nations (or Basilica of the Agony) within an olive grove on the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem; the reverse decorated in the centre with the sacred monogram IHS with stylized chalices and surrounded by the legend, MONTE DEGLI ULIVI. The locket opens to reveal a small stone secured by four gold claws and inscribed in blue ink (with the date?), 2 - IX - 51. The chain formed from alternating flat links comprising thorned figure of eights and circles. Designed by Afro and made in the gold workshop of Mario Masenza, Rome.

Marks: inscribed to one side across both parts of the locket, *Afro*, and on the other side, MASENZA . ROMA; the underside of clasp of the chain engraved in italics, *ama*

Dimensions: locket (max.) 6 cm; width 4.7; thickness 1.3 cm; length of chain 48 cm



The present Church of All Nations, designed by the Italian Franciscan monk and architect Antonio Barluzzi, was built between 1919 and 1924. Inside, a bronze crown surrounds the outcrop of rock on which Christ is believed to have prayed the night before his capture. It is possible that the stone inside the locket is a fragment of this rock, collected in September 1951, and subsequently mounted and turned into a gold jewel by Afro.



AFRO BASALDELLA (1912-1976)



LORENZO GUERRINI (1914-2002)



13. Unique gem-set collar, c. 1950

made in 18ct yellow gold, the rounded ends opened by hinges, decorated in repoussé with stylized grasses and set with lines of circular cut sapphires, emeralds, rubies and small brilliant cut diamonds. Designed and worked by Lorenzo Guerrini and made in the gold workshop of Mario Masenza, Rome.

Marks: inscribed on the inside, *L. GUERRINI, MASENZA, ROMA*, and stamped with Italian hallmarks and 750

Dimensions: height 1.8 cm; internal diameter 10.5 cm; internal circumference 31.5 cm



14. Unique gem-set hinged cuff, late 1940s

made in 18ct yellow gold with a burnished surface and decorated in repoussé with delicate stylized flowers and set with small brilliant cut diamonds, circular cut sapphires, rubies and emeralds. Designed and made by Lorenzo Guerrini in the gold workshop of Mario Masenza, Rome.

Marks: inscribed on the inside, *L. GUERRINI, MASENZA, ROMA* and stamped with Italian hallmarks

Dimensions: diameter 6 cm; width 5 cm