

artist jewellery

The thrill of the hunt for an artwork handmade by a modern master is only trumped by a chance to wear it, as Paula Weidinger reveals

It's a relatively little-known fact that the creative output of Picasso, Giacometti, Fontana and other celebrated artists also included jewellery. For a long time only their collectors knew about these miniature works of art. Now, however, others are discovering that they too can wear a Picasso – and wear it.

Such pieces pack a double punch. "Wearing artists' jewels enhances both the wearer and the work of art," says Dana Kipper, based in Malibu, California. The former art dealer has been collecting and wearing jewels by artists for more than 30 years.

The design is often a small, rather than a large, and can avoid looking ornate, staid, flat or at all too over-the-top. Some, such as the French conceptual sculptor and painter, one-day packed up a length of thin silver wire and rolled it around the finger of his partner, Pierre Tsepoul. He didn't know any old trick, it stretched the ring finger of her left hand. More recent, as the decades have revealed many of Picasso's jewels, often made for his personal enjoyment, in the 27 years since she has also become a leading collector of artist jewels, as well as the editor of a book and a curator of exhibitions on the subject.

In December, her collection opens in Kyoto. The artist's jewels opened in Tokyo. Of the 227 pieces on view, 136 are from her collection. They include works by Picasso, Man Ray, Francis Fontana and, of course, Balthus. The show travels to Miami Beach's Bass Museum in March and afterwards to Seoul, Tokyo, Busan and Paris. Her motive is to share her enthusiasm for these small works of art – but the success of her exhibition is likely to push up prices, too.

Garys Farel, specialist and associate vice president at Christie's New York, reports that since the show at the city's Museum of Art and Design (from September 2011 to January 2012), artist jewellery has become a "hot topic". While the range of artists whose jewels are offered is expanding, it's true that works come up for sale, creating stiff competition when they do. Christie's, the most active auction house in this area, offers artist jewellery in its 20th Century Decorative Arts and Design, Post War and

Illustration: **Michelle Haggelund**
Black face necklace, 1995,
\$62,000 at Sotheby's; **George**
Wright necklace, 1996, part
of Dana Kipper's collection,
\$19,000; **and the \$200,000 at**
Christie's (2011) Picasso
brooch made by
Francis Farel, 1996,
\$15,000 at Sotheby's



Calder hammered and twisted his designs with his own hands

Contemporary Art, and Impressionist and Modern Art sales. And, of course, the wearing was paid for (posting and shipping by such masters as Giacometti, Picasso and other artists' artist 18 pieces for their jewels. At Christie's in New York, for example, was done by Alexander Calder sold for a whopping \$642,500 in 2011.

Artists have actually been designing jewels for centuries. Hans Holbein the Younger made beautiful drawings for elaborate gem-set gold pendants as early as the 16th century. So Alfred Gilbert, who designed the Pheidippides Driv in the late 19th century, made intricate wirework jewels. These pieces were also

intended to be worn, but nowadays very few survive in wearable condition.

And while dealers including Louise Goldson and Elizabeth Oppen in London and Edouard de Noailles (Picasso's daughter) in Paris sell jewels by living artists such as Anish Kapoor and Jeff Koons, buyers continue to be drawn to pieces by the hundreds of masters art-soldiers by the scores whose enduring importance has been proven. Didier Haggelund, a leading dealer in jewels by modern artists, comments: "With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight we are able to say: that is the best, the supreme piece – the diamonds-quality item."

Haggelund and his wife, Marianne, trade as Didier and Paris clients include members of the British and Middle Eastern royal families as well as private collectors. Their recent experience at The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) in Maastricht (but prices just how interest in artist-designed jewels has died up. Of the more than 250 international dealers who take part in Tefaf every March, not one was a specialist in artist jewellery – until last year, when Didier was asked

to exhibit to try and off the case situation. His

brother, the firm's executive vice president chairman, was so impressed by the momentum attached the gallery brought – and by the number of people lines were drawn – that he asked Didier to become a regular exhibitor at the fair. For its longest presentation next week, Didier will spotlight works by 22 western artists, including Louise Bourgeois and Steve McQueen.

In Paris, too, there is evidence that artist jewels have become a hot market. Victor Caratissimo, which provides bespoke commissioned items, includes artists as jewellers in its half-a-dozen offerings. A visit to the jewels in the Decorative Arts Museum is followed by champagne and jewellery shopping at de Noailles's Galerie Miro Maximaire, and concludes with visits to the private apartment of an important collector.

These jewels to buy should be aware that some pieces were produced in small editions, others in very large ones, while those manufactured professionally lack the input of the demanding artists who designed them. At Didier, multiples made on behalf of the artist start from 1000, and prices start at £10,000 for unique pieces. Not all multiples are equal, however. Francis Farel and Gio'Carlo Marchetti are priced. And it's worth noting that designers sometimes also make the jewels they designed. Some 1,000 jewels made by Alexander Calder have been identified and they command high prices because he hammered, twisted and turned them with his own hands: such is a unique work of art.

Haggelund says people only buy what is wearable. This is not jewellery to splurge away in the vault. Think of it as an art collection in single from the way you in a gallery, outside the artist, amongst the Regency... 4

PICTURE: BRUNO MAGLI; CALDER: GUY AROCH; HOLLBEIN: MUSEUM OF MODERN ART; KAPPOOR: GUY AROCH; Koons: GUY AROCH; LACOMME: GUY AROCH; MARCHETTI: GUY AROCH; PICTURES: GUY AROCH; TSEPUL: GUY AROCH; WRIGHT: GUY AROCH