

## **5000 Years of Jewellery**

### **Historic and Modern Collection**

#### **Early Jewellery**

The origins of jewellery go far back to the dawn of man's history. Life at that time was mainly determined by magical and mythical conceptions. Fertility and hunting magic, belief in the power of amulets and talismans together with a desire for distinction and affirmation of one's self were the crucial elements in bringing about the phenomenon of personal adornment. The oldest pieces of the collection go back to the 3rd millennium BC.

#### **Ancient Goldsmithery**

One of the high points in the history of goldsmithery is the Etruscan jewellery of about 600 BC, when granulation and filigree techniques reached a perfection never again achieved. Greek goldsmithery flowered between the 5th and 2nd centuries BC. Diversity of motifs and vividness of individual elements, craftsmanship and mastery of metal document the outstanding level of ancient goldsmithery. Mainly gold was used, while precious stones at first played a minor part, except for finger rings. Only in the late Hellenistic period, during the transition to Roman times, did gems and paste become more frequent.

#### **From Rome to Byzantium**

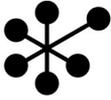
Roman jewellery develops from Etruscan goldsmithery combined with a strong Greco-Oriental influence. As already noticeable in the late Hellenistic period, jewellery is now more colourful and opulent. While individual items are of less refined workmanship than their earlier models, the number of items worn together increased. With the partition of the Roman empire, in its eastern part -Byzantium - art is inspired by the Christian faith. Persian-Indian influence is evident in the sumptuous gem- and pearl-studded Byzantine jewellery, yet its greatest glory is its superb enamelling.

#### **Jewellery of the Middle Ages**

During the Middle Ages, the goldsmiths' main clients are the nobility and the Church. The bourgeoisie is often restricted in its freedom to wear ornaments by rigorous regulations. From a period when generally little jewellery is worn, the survival of objects will be correspondingly rare. Only in the late Gothic, as south of the Alps the first sprouts of the Renaissance are appearing, does a new culture of luxury begin to flower at the royal and ducal courts in Paris and Burgundy. The jewellery is characterized by figural scenes, and organic forms like leaves and plants are also much in evidence.

#### **Renaissance and Baroque Splendour**

Blazing colours and a wide range of materials as well as a multitude of shapes and motifs typify the jewellery designs of the Renaissance. The luxury at European courts, but also among the wealthy bourgeoisie of cities grown rich, is reflected in ever more



elaborate ornamentation. The goldsmiths often work after designs illustrated in copperplate engravings sold all across Europe. In the early Baroque, the play of colours and gems still dominates jewellery, but increasingly diamonds with ever more brilliant faceting tend to dominate. Given their high value, imitations made of glass become frequent.

### **Classicism and Biedermeier**

After the sumptuousness of the Baroque and Rococo, the second half of the 18th century sees a growing reorientation towards Classical art, partly inspired by the excavations at Pompei (since 1748). The main interest focuses, however, on the architecture, fashion and jewellery of Classical Greece. The Biedermeier period presents no coherent style of jewellery, although an important feature are items meant as souvenirs and tokens of friendship. Sentimental and backward-looking approaches foreshadow Historicist fashions.

### **Historicist Styles of Jewellery**

The period after 1840 is called Historicism. Several styles of the past, like Gothic and Renaissance, and the language of forms of Etruscan, ancient Egyptian, Assyrian and Moorish art contribute to the jewellery fashion of the period until the turn of the century. Often several styles are combined in a single piece, so that one finds Renaissance motifs with Gothic gem mounts or Egyptian and Greek elements side by side. In jewellery, famous names of the period are Froment-Meurice, Castellani, Carlo Giuliano und Alexis Falize, each of whom produced his own inimitable Historicist style.

### **Art Nouveau and the 20th century**

Around 1900, a movement in fine arts, handicrafts, and architecture, known as Art Nouveau in France and Jugendstil in Germany, flourished for a few years and reached its pinnacle at the 1900 Paris World Fair. In contrast to historicism, Art Nouveau, which dominated the art scenario at the turn of the century, found its inspiration in nature: Human beings, animals, and plants were metamorphosed into ornamental motifs that were often laden with symbolism. An outstanding protagonist of Art Nouveau was the Frenchman René Lalique, who revolutionized jewelry design with his unconventional and creative choice of motifs, materials, and forms.

### **Modern Jewellery**

At first little noticed except by connoisseurs, a new era of jewellery develops from the 1950s onwards, emanating from a few centres and then rapidly establishing itself with highly varied and individual characteristics in many countries. Very soon, goldsmiths no longer regard themselves simply as artisans, but seek to position themselves within art proper. This development is still continuing, with each new generation of jewellery designers taking up the challenge to combine artistic creation and functional viability.