

GEMFIELDS

BIBI VAN DER VELDEN MEMENTO MORI RING - FIRST EVER CONTEMPORARY JEWELLERY PIECE EXHIBITED AT HERMITAGE AMSTERDAM



Bibi van der Velden Memento Mori ring featuring Gemfields Zambian emeralds and Mozambican rubies

Over 300 exceptional treasures this autumn in the Hermitage Amsterdam in the exhibition 'Jewels! Glittering at the Russian Court Jubilee Exhibition #2 14 Sep 2019 | 15 Mar 2020

Inspired by the rich history of the Russian jewellery and artefacts that will be under the spotlight in the upcoming Hermitage Amsterdam exhibition “Jewels! The Glitter of the Russian Court,” Bibi van der Velden unveils a beautiful, one-off piece.

The Memento Mori ring is symbolic of the perpetual cycle of life and death, with Bibi infusing this piece with the regal flamboyance that characterised the Russian court and its jewels. The ring is designed as a parrot tulip in 18k yellow gold and sterling silver, whose petals glisten with Gemfields’ responsibly sourced Mozambican rubies and Zambian emeralds, alongside pavé tsavorites, dark pink sapphires, and white diamonds. The ring is fashioned with oxidised sterling silver leaves that bloom across the hand, accented with 18k yellow gold, while its shank is crafted as a tulip stem in 18k yellow gold, which winds around two fingers. At the “cut” end of the stem is a moonstone, to resemble a dew drop. The leaves are set with all manner of insects - a rock crystal maggot, a gold spider, gold ants, seed pearl eggs, and a gold slug and caterpillar, the latter both embellished with gemstones. And also alluding to the cycle of life is an 18k gold human figure that emerges from an embellished mammoth tusk egg at the centre of the flower. This 60,000-year-old mammoth tusk is found under Russia’s Siberian permafrost, another connection to the country.

“In my role as ambassador for the Hermitage Amsterdam exhibition I visited the awe-inspiring Winter Palace in St. Petersburg,” says Bibi. “I was struck by how romantic assignations at the Russian court were crucial to the twists and turns of the royal family tree, and how they propelled the cycle of life. This Memento Mori ring represents the beauty of life and its inevitable decay, while the rubies nod to the opulence of the Russian court, with the green of the emeralds and the gold man hatching from the mammoth tusk egg symbolising new life, too.”

In this piece and all her designs, Bibi strives to preserve what’s precious. From working with responsibly mined gemstones and 60,000-year-old ivory from the extinct mammoth, Bibi is a champion of sustainable sourcing. Her entire jewellery-making process is informed by sustainability, both in terms of its effect on the environment and the wellbeing of the people involved in sourcing the precious materials and crafting the jewellery.

Gemfields holds a strong belief that coloured gemstones should create a positive impact for the country and community from which they originate. Responsible sourcing for Gemfields means industry-leading policies and practices across operations, projects to improve health, education and livelihoods for the communities surrounding mines and conservation efforts to protect Africa’s great wildlife and biodiversity.

The Memento Mori ring will be exhibited as part of “Jewels! The Glitter of the Russian Court,” which opens 14 September 2019 and runs until 15 March 2020 at Hermitage Amsterdam.

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Editor’s Notes:

ABOUT GEMFIELDS

Gemfields is a world-leading supplier of responsibly sourced, coloured gemstones. Gemfields is the operator and 75% owner of both the Kagem emerald mine in Zambia (believed to be the world’s single largest producing emerald mine) and the Montepuez ruby mine in Mozambique (one of the most significant recently discovered ruby deposits in the world). Gemfields believes that those who mine gemstones should do so with transparency, legitimacy and integrity.

Gemfields introduced the most technologically advanced coloured gemstone sort house in the world at its operations in Mozambique, with state-of-the-art equipment, like optical sorting machines. In addition, a proprietary grading system, pioneering auction platform and an active marketing presence means Gemfields plays a significant role in the rise of African gemstones. This endeavour is coupled with a strong belief that coloured gemstones should create a positive impact for the country and community from which they originate.

Responsible sourcing for Gemfields means industry-leading policies and practices across operations, transparency in our auction sales process, an active role in working groups to modernise the sector, projects to improve health, education and livelihoods for the communities around our mines and conservation efforts (#conservationgemstones) to protect Africa's great wildlife and biodiversity.

As well as supplying the majority of the world's rough rubies and emeralds, Gemfields initiates activations to build desire for coloured gemstones. Gemfields creates collaborations with many partners and international jewellery brands. Often surprising, unexpected and unique, these collaborations are chosen to promote consumer awareness, appeal and education of coloured gemstones, raising their profile and, in turn, providing greater benefit to their place of origin in Africa.

ABOUT BIBI VAN DER VELDEN

Bibi van der Velden's jewellery might be fashioned from haute, precious materials such as 18k fairtrade gold, diamonds, and baroque pearls, but there's a very human quality to her intricately crafted designs. Bibi believes that jewellery should imbue the wearer with energy, with her pieces offering a playful, personal, and highly artistic take on fine jewellery.

This personal touch comes from a jewellery-making process that's grounded in traditional craftsmanship. Working with sustainable and unexpected materials, among them 60,000-year-old mammoth tusk, ostrich eggs, and scarab wings, Bibi hand-sketches and hand-carves each piece in wax. Bibi describes her jewellery pieces as "miniature sculptures."

This artistic sensibility is woven into Bibi's background. Born in New York and raised in England and the Netherlands, Bibi studied fine arts in Florence, Italy, before honing her eye at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam and the Royal Academy of Arts in The Hague. Bibi now creates jewellery and sculpture from her studio in Amsterdam. And Bibi's Dutch heritage can be seen in her jewellery today, with the country's rich art history one of the many influences on her work.

Nature and the animal world are another constant in Bibi's designs, from earrings fashioned as swirling tornadoes to statement alligator earrings carved from mammoth tusk and gold, to a noble mammoth unicorn that sits on a gold ring. Movement and transformation are a hallmark of her work. A Tahitian pearl spins in the Galaxy Spinning Pearl Ring, while ornate cocktail rings whose design spotlights monkeys or panthers hide a smaller, sleek gold ring within. With this unique element of surprise, there's always more to a Bibi van der Velden piece than meets the eye.

ABOUT JEWELS! THE HERMITAGE EXHIBITION:

OVER 300 EXCEPTIONAL TREASURES THIS AUTUMN IN THE HERMITAGE AMSTERDAM IN THE EXHIBITION JEWELS!

GLITTERING AT THE RUSSIAN COURT JUBILEE EXHIBITION #2 14 SEP 2019 | 15 MAR 2020

The second jubilee exhibition presents brilliant pieces from the Winter Palace

From 14 September 2019 until 15 March 2020, tens of thousands of precious gems will sparkle at the Hermitage Amsterdam. From agate to zirconium, almost every type of precious stone will be on display. They were turned into the most exquisite jewels and accessories, worn by Russian high society. Together with an abundance of richly decorated ball gowns, imperial costumes and majestic portraits, the jewels tell the personal stories and give a fascinating impression of over two centuries of fashion and jewellery from Rococo, Empire and Romantic, to Art Nouveau.

Jewels! Glittering at the Russian court the fabled collection of jewels forms one of the great treasuries of the State Hermitage in St Petersburg. The impressive collection has grown into an absolute treasure trove, with thousands of exquisite jewels. From this collection, over 300 breath-taking pieces are coming to the Netherlands this autumn for Jewels! Visitors will meet flamboyant, powerful tsarinas such as Elizabeth and Catherine the Great, as well as later, fashion-conscious tsarinas, whose countless personal belongings are on display. One of the highlights is the flower bouquet made of precious gems (1740–50): Empress Elizabeth's brooch made with over 400 brilliant-cut and over 450 rose-cut diamonds, as well as blue and yellow sapphires, rubies, topazes and emeralds. A showpiece like no other.

Catherine the Great's personal jewellery box will also be on view. An inconceivably rich masterpiece weighing three kilos and littered with almost 400 colourful precious gems, including some real eye catchers: 26 rubies, 24 emeralds and various cameos. Anna Pavlovna also makes an appearance, the 'Dutch' Romanov, Queen of the Netherlands from 1840 to 1849. Glittering alongside the Romanovs are the extremely wealthy noble families of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the Yusupov princes. Together they were (inter)national fashion trend setters, putting famous jewellery houses even more prominently on the map. Masterpieces by Cartier, Lalique, Tiffany and of course court jeweller Fabergé, will soon be on display in the exhibition.

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