



Stellar stones

The historical magnitude of classic luxury jewellery brands Cartier, Graff, Harry Winston and Van Cleef & Arpels is quite astonishing, just like the diamonds they pride themselves upon. Jewellery expert **Rachael Taylor** reports

CARTIER

From the wife of wealthy financier, Morton Plant, to the Duchess of Cambridge, Cartier has been in vogue and in demand since master jeweller Louis-François Cartier took over his mentor's Parisian workshop in 1847.

When Cartier's grandson, Pierre, knocked on the door of Plant's fifth avenue neo-renaissance mansion 65 years later, he fell in love with the place. Plant's wife fell in love with Cartier's double-stranded necklace

of 128 flawlessly matched natural pearls (valued in 1912 at \$1m – close to \$20m today) and a deal was done, with Plant pocketing an additional \$100 cash. Today, that Manhattan mansion is Cartier's New York flagship store, and one of three Cartier Temples (Historical Maisons).

Paris' Rue de la Paix is home to the global headquarters and

Above: Van Cleef & Arpels Pétale de Papillon brooch and the Papillon secret watch

New Bond Street houses London's flagship store with an additional 200 boutiques in 125 countries.

Ever since Pierre Cartier and his brothers, Louis and Jacques, travelled to Russia and enchanted the imperial family and aristocracy, Cartier has been considered the jeweller to royalty and the UK's Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, has not broken tradition. Featuring almost 1,000 diamonds, Middleton wore a 1936 Cartier halo platinum and diamond tiara (on loan from her mother-in-law-

to-be Queen Elizabeth II) when she married Prince William in 2011.

The Prince of Monaco, Prince Rainier III, proposed to Grace Kelly with an exquisite platinum Cartier ring boasting a 10.47 carat emerald-cut diamond flanked by two baguettes. The piece was matched with a three-strand Cartier diamond necklace, totalling 58 carats, and a Cartier platinum tiara set on their wedding day in 1956.

None of the aforementioned were the most expensive Cartier item ever sold however. The Hutton-Mdivani Jadeite Cartier necklace, made up of emerald green jadeite beads and secured with a ruby, diamond, platinum, and gold clasp, sold at auction in 2014 for \$27.4m to the Cartier Collection. This famed necklace was owned by socialite Barbara Hutton, heiress to the Woolworth fortune, and Georgian Princess Nina Mdivani.

(cartier.com) ▶

VAN CLEEF & ARPELS

As if the Cartier pieces were not enough, the Prince of Monaco later gifted Grace Kelly a Van Cleef & Arpels diamond and pearl three-strand necklace with matching diamond ear clips from the jeweller's New York boutique. The Heritage Collection of jewels, once owned by famous names, including American socialites Brooke Astor and Barbara Hutton, share in the brand's rich and illustrious history.

Only five of Van Cleef & Arpels stores in the world carry this collection, one of which is the ION Orchard boutique in Singapore.

One of Van Cleef & Arpels' wearable icons is the Alhambra collection, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, with precious cuts of gems like mother-of-pearl or onyx in the shape of four-leaf clovers, designed to bring luck. Fitting, perhaps, as the Parisian brand born out of a romance, when Estelle Arpels, daughter of a gem dealer, married Alfred Van Cleef, the son of a lapidary and diamond broker at the end of the 1800s.

Together, in partnership with Van Cleef's brothers, they would create a world of fantasy and intrigue to complement the sweetest of fairytale moments.

One of Van Cleef & Arpel's most enduring motifs, first introduced in the 1940s, are its ballerinas and fairies, which can be found dancing



Clockwise from above: Cartier Magicien Quetzal bracelet and ear cuffs; Graff Eternal Twins earrings and diamond; Harry Winston holds some of his most famous stones; The Harry Winston Hall Sapphire necklace

on brooches. Craftsmanship is also at the heart of the jewellers heritage and in 1933, its setters invented the Mystery setting, which allows gems to be secured in gold rails so that no metal is visible from above. (vancleefarpels.com)

HARRY WINSTON

Harry Winston bought a 2ct emerald from a junk shop for 25¢ in 1908, aged 12. Two days later, he sold it for \$800. The King of Diamonds, as he is now known, founded the brand in 1932 and went on to acquire some of the world's most spectacular diamonds.

His insurance company famously refused to insure a 726 carat rough Jonker diamond, when he wanted to cleave it into 12 separate stones, for fear of breakage. He succeeded though, and the largest of those stones was a 125.35ct emerald cut.

The Hope Diamond, an extraordinary 45.52ct deep blue diamond that some believe carries a curse (it is said to have been stolen from a sacred temple in Golconda, India), was purchased from royalty in 1911 by superstitious socialite Evelyn Walsh McLean.

The gem was returned to Harry Winston in 1949, who added it to his philanthropic travelling gemstone exhibition, The Court of Jewels, to raise funds for local charities before donating it to The Smithsonian – via regular US mail. (harrywinston.com)

LAURENCE GRAFF

British jeweller Laurence Graff has rare diamonds around the world. His latest offering is the Tokyo store at Nihombashi Mitsukoshi where brushed gold showcases line the walls displaying the very finest jewels incorporating scintillating diamonds and vivid gemstones.

Graff's beginnings however, were far more humble. In a tale of rags to riches, he masterminded his own rise from a tough working-class 1930s background in East London and an apprenticeship in Hatton Garden to the Central School and his multi-million dollar empire today.

The transformation of four significant rough stones into five exquisite new diamonds marked 2016 as a record breaking year for Graff. The 105.07-carat pear-shaped Graff Vendôme, the 52.41-carat cushion cut Star of Audrey and the 50.23-carat emerald cut Graff Eternal Twins were revealed, topped off by The Graff Venus which, at 118.78 carats, was certified by the GIA to be the largest D Flawless heart shape diamond in the world. Just last year, Graff acquired four exceptional

rough diamonds, including the Lesedi La Rona (1,109 carats) the second largest rough diamond ever uncovered. (graffdiamonds.com)

