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## Brands accentuate dedication to form, elegance through ballet-inspired efforts

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*Boodles video still for Pas de Deux collection*

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By JEN KING

Luxury brands such as Alexander McQueen and Boodles are on pointe with initiatives supporting the art of ballet through one-off slippers to full collections.

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**Luxury Daily**

From traditional artworks to cinema and opera, luxury houses support a wide range of art forms to ensure that their programming offers an aspect of culture that appeals to affluents. This all-encompassing approach benefits the interest of the wealthy consumers shopping these brands because they too are often patrons of the arts.

"Luxury brands that elect to be involved in a wide range of arts — from ballet to cinema to opera are seen as 'cultural tastemakers,' said Rebecca Miller, CEO of [Miller & Company](#), New York. "They recognize that culture and the arts are an important part of the affluent lifestyle.

"Those who contribute to and guide consumers to cultural excellence benefit by elevating their own image by affiliating themselves with high-net-worth individual's passions," she said. "The attraction of ballet among affluent consumers is believed to have developed in the 15th and 16th centuries when lavish entertainment was given in the courts of Italian

Renaissance.

"These elaborate spectacles, were precursors to ballets, uniting painting, poetry, music, and dancing, and took place in large halls used for banquets and balls. With the help of Catherine de' Medici, ballet developed under her aristocratic influence. It was the affluent that were invited to attend."

The affiliation between ballet and the affluent remains attractive to luxury brands seeking to market to this established group of wealthy, educated consumers. The refinement, precision and discipline associated with ballet translates well into partnerships and product honoring the beauty of the human body.

Periotting parallels

2015 is the 75th anniversary of the American Ballet Theatre, and for the milestone, Vogue asked fashion journalist and "balletomane" Hamish Bowles to curate a show to honor the company.

The exhibition, held on three floors of New York's Metropolitan Opera House, features items handpicked by Mr. Bowles and American Ballet Theatre's wardrobe supervisor Bruce Horowitz.

Historic pieces include founder of the company Lucia Chase's velvet gown from "Swan Lake" in 1967 and an ivory doublet worn by ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov. Costumes on display also include pieces designed by Ralph Rucci, Christian Lacroix and Isaac Mizrahi.

To further the anniversary celebration Mr. Bowles looked to fashion designers for the reinterpretation of a single pointe slipper. Designers such as Christian Louboutin, Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, Sarah Burton for Alexander McQueen, Manolo Blahnik, Dolce & Gabbana and Peter Copping for Oscar de la Renta were participants in the tribute exhibit, each designing a pointe slipper representative of their aesthetics.



*Pointe slipper by Christian Louboutin on display at the Metropolitan Opera House*

In the jewelry space the grace and aesthetic of ballet is similar to that of a collection. Jeweler Van Cleef & Arpels explains in its blog that jewelry and dance “inspire similar emotions: the pursuit of perfection, the dedication to precision and finesse and a giddy sense of excitement.”

To this effect, jewelers, including Van Cleef & Arpels, have routinely teamed with ballets to create designs inspired by ballet’s form and the beauty of ballerinas.

Most recently, Van Cleef & Arpels supported “O’de,” a choreography by Julia Eichten and performed by the L.A. Dance project, founded by Benjamin Millepied. The project was created to generate funds to restore the bosquet du Théâtre d’Eau at the Château de Versailles.

The piece created, Pas de Trois, is a detachable clip inspired by Mr. Millepied’s choreographies and features dancers made of white gold, round, baguette-cut and rose-cut diamonds, round and baguette-cut black spinel, onyx and white mother-of-pearl.



*Van Cleef & Arpels' Pas de Trois clip*

Van Cleef has also strengthened ties to ballet through sponsorship roles. The jeweler returned as a sponsor for the School of American Ballet's 2015 Winter Ball for the eighth consecutive year.

Held on March 9 at Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Center, the event was a black tie dinner and dance that included a special performance by advanced students in the program. Having a presence at this ball helped Van Cleef & Arpels reach an approximate group of 500 guests, who included corporate and cultural leaders, many of whom were likely affluent individuals ([see story](#)).

As with the designers aligning with The American Ballet Theatre and Van Cleef & Arpels, British jeweler Boodles has drawn inspiration from Britain's Royal Ballet for a collection set to launch in June.

The Pas de Deux collection "translates the very essence of dance into intricate diamond and platinum designs" and stems from Boodles' head of design Rebecca Hawkins' fascination with ballet since a young age. During the creative process, The Royal Ballet allowed Ms. Hawkins to sit in on rehearsals, visit the costume departments and browse the rarely seen archives for additional inspiration resulting in pieces that "move away from the more traditional and stereotypical ballet associations" to concentrate on the "purity" of dance itself.



### *Boodles' Pas de Deux collection and dancers from The Royal Ballet*

Boodles' Pas de Deux collection includes 30 individual pieces such as stud earrings, pendants and rings and statement collars, cuffs and cocktail rings using materials such as Ashoka diamonds, rock crystal, rare pink diamonds, morganite and paraiba tourmalines. Each piece compliments its suite mates, but also can be worn alone.

To promote the collection, which will be available in Boodles boutiques June 8, the brand shared a teaser video on its social channels. The full video's release will coincide with the collection launch next month.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/VIMnEtzsyec>

### *Boodles Pas de Deux teaser*

The poise and grace of ballet has been explored by other brands as well.

"While Van Cleef & Arpels jewelry designs show a dancer in motion, JAR in contrast accomplishes the same movement in his nature inspired jewelry," Ms. Miller said. "Each piece invites the play of light shown in the refraction of light from the stones similar to stage lighting, the curves of the jewelry expresses movement like that of a ballerina supported by the settings which are the jewel's costumes.

"Tod's video, 'An Italian Dream' lavishly celebrated Italian craftsmanship, through the movement of ballet dancers from the Teatro alla Scala visually interpreting the artisanal creation process of their iconic D-bag and Gommino driving shoe," she said. "This interpretation of the passion, creativity and workmanship are the foundation of Tod's iconic brand. This short-film shows how performing arts, attention to details, devotion and creativity can work together to create something unique" said Tod's director, Diego Della Valle.

"L'Odyssée de Cartier was another exquisite artistic presentation of the brand through its photographic interpretation of its rich history and jewels using its iconic figure, the panther as the principal dancer moving effortlessly across the screen."

### Positioning in form

Beyond traditional jewelry pieces, watchmakers and fashion labels have turned to dance to explore form and elegance as well as to better show to consumers the expertise and dedication involved with a craft.

For instance, Switzerland's Vacheron Constantin explored the similarities between watchmaking and choreography with a short film screened at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival.

Vacheron's film, "Mastery of Movement," took viewers behind-the-scenes of the watchmaker's Geneva factory and the ballet to highlight the passion and precision involved in these arts. Mastery of Movement also included footage from "Ballet 422," a documentary film about the New York City Ballet, a premiere that was anticipated among film festival attendees ([see story](#)).

Also, British fashion label Alexander McQueen reasserted the connection between dance and fashion with a video in collaboration with French ballet dancer Marie-Agnès Gillot for AnOther Magazine.

There are many connections between the worlds of ballet and high fashion as both art forms focus on the beauty of the human body and how to accentuate it. Collaborating with artists from other industries can help brands remain artistically relevant and reach a wider audience ([see story](#)).

"One can easily see a natural correlation between the grace and form of jewelry with that of a ballet dancer," Ms. Miller said. "This grace and fluidity or 'fusion of movement' has always been core during the creation and ultimate delivery in fine arts.

"Today, collaborating with artists from other industries helps brands remain artistically relevant and reach and engage a wider and often younger audience," she said. "It creates an environment of understated elegance that luxury brands strive to achieve in the most authentic manner possible."

Final Take

*Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/O8EQbR87z2s>

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