

JEWELRY

Van Cleef & Arpels weaves fairytales through high-jewelry

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Van Cleef & Arpels took inspiration from the Brothers Grimm for its latest high-jewelry designs. Image credit: Van Cleef & Arpels

By SARAH JONES

French jeweler Van Cleef & Arpels is immersing consumers in a storybook world to debut its latest haute creations to a digital audience.

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Van Cleef & Arpels' latest high-jewelry collection takes reference from four Grimm Brothers' tales, translating the literary classics into precious stone pieces. While these works of craftsmanship will only be owned by a select number of individuals, Van Cleef & Arpels' marketing allows all consumers to explore the collection and relive familiar tales in a branded way.

"The Grimm brothers' stories are classic fairytales that have remained beloved and timeless, at least in the Western world," said **Thoma Serdari**, brand strategist and professor of luxury marketing at New York University and coeditor of "**Luxury: History Culture Consumption**," New York.

"A pure expression of 19th century culture through beautiful language, the tales evoke magical scenes filled with emotion," she said. "And this is exactly why they befit the Van Cleef & Arpels brand DNA as this is also meant to closely relate with the world of fairies, dancers and benevolent princes and princesses.

"A brand committed to the performative art of dance, Van Cleef & Arpels is right at home when reinterpreting these four 'jewels' of storytelling."

Ms. Serdari is not affiliated with Van Cleef & Arpels, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Van Cleef & Arpels** was reached for comment.

Storytelling

Van Cleef & Arpels' Quatre Contes de Grimm collection is inspired by "The Golden Bird," "The Three Feathers," "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" and "Town Musicians of Bremen." Based on folklore, these tales were put into print in the early 1800s.

The brand's interpretation of The Golden Bird includes an avian-shaped clip adorned in yellow sapphire and a ring

that holds a large yellow sapphire, meant to portray a yellow apple in the tale whose disappearance sets off a quest for the titular magical creature. Van Cleef & Arpels also translated the bird's plumage into a necklace with a 3.31-carat fancy vivid orangy yellow diamond.



Van Cleef & Arpels clip depicting The Golden Bird. Image courtesy of Van Cleef & Arpels

Meanwhile, the 12 dancing princesses' worn-out slippers from nights of clandestine revelry are depicted in a clip, which features two diamond-encrusted heels sitting atop a luxe pillow. Van Cleef & Arpels also created clips featuring gemstone-adorned figures in gowns and a bracelet that mimics the boats that the women and their dance partners would take to a magical ball.

In the Town Musicians of Bremen, four animals set off on a quest to join a band. On their way there, they see a home being robbed, and they scare off the criminals with their music.

The window that catches the quartet's eye is fashioned into an emerald-cut sapphire ring, while a clip depicts the four animals standing atop each other while performing.

Van Cleef & Arpels created a dedicated Web page for its Quatre contes de Grimm collection.

An introduction film takes consumers inside an animated castle, where a man and woman are seen rowing in a boat or dancing in a grand hall. It later travels to a forest where the golden bird is found soaring through the trees.

Indicating The Three Features, in which a magical frog helps a prince gain his father's favor to inherit the kingdom, an amphibian wearing a crown is seen perched on a throne. Lastly, the Musicians of Bremen are indicated with images of a dog, rooster, donkey and cat within an elegant room.

Van Cleef & Arpels' Quatre Contes de Grimm

Along with the video, consumers can explore the collection in more detail through the online feature.

Each of the pieces in the collection is featured along with a line from the fairytale, showing how inspiration led to design.

In addition to the animated film, Van Cleef & Arpels tapped photographer Sonia Sieff to create a live-action film and image gallery showing models decked out in the collection and elegant attire.

While Van Cleef & Arpels' high-jewelry is not available via ecommerce, this online feature educates and engages consumers around the collection.

"The digital platform designed to launch this new collection is very effective because of mainly two reasons," Ms. Serdari said.

"There is such impeccable attention to detail in how the worlds of illustration and photography blend so seamlessly

together," she said. "Gouache, a visual art form often used by jewelers to develop their ideas, is the main point of departure for the graphic elements of the digital platform and reinforces the connection of the digital experience to the one the customer might have at the store.

"The platform is very well designed in terms of user experience. It is well organized, easy to navigate and intuitive. It allows the viewer to get as brief or as long a glimpse into Van Cleef & Arpels' magical world as she wishes."

Thematic creations

Van Cleef & Arpels often creates elaborate Web pages around its collections, allowing consumers to uncover jewelry in interactive content.

The jeweler hid secrets and invited consumers to uncover them in a previous high-jewelry collection and accompanying campaign.

Van Cleef & Arpels' Haute Joaillerie Le Secret collection of high-jewelry includes pieces with secret mechanisms and transformations. A short film, titled "Le Secret" uncovers these hidden transformations with assistance from a silver fairy ([see story](#)).

The brand's high-jewelry is typically centered on a familiar theme. In 2016, Van Cleef & Arpels took consumers inside Noah's Ark through an immersive exhibition in Paris.

The brand tapped American set designer Robert Wilson to create a stage for its high-jewelry collection inspired by the biblical story. Before the exhibit bowed at Htel d'vereux, the jeweler took to Snapchat for a humorous first look ([see story](#)).

"This type of jewelry is not meant for ecommerce," Ms. Serdari said. "The quality and size of the precious stones and the artistry that went into creating the pieces communicate a value that may render the price too high for an ecommerce transaction.

"Digital is much bigger than ecommerce," she said. "It expands the brand's reach beyond what happens in physical retail, reinforces the cues that customers get from physical retail or print advertising and even highlights components that would be impossible to communicate via other media, for example the educational component on the 'know-how' or even the technical attributes of the stones and their settings.

"All of these elements together illustrate the inner workings that make Van Cleef & Arpels a consistently timeless brand in luxury jewelry and delight the viewer, who, if in the right budget, will be well prepared to visit the store."

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