

JEWELRY

Brands need to be creative, enticing in jewelry: industry experts

May 21, 2021



Sharon Alexie for Louis Vuitton's fine jewelry collection, LV Volt. Image credit: Louis Vuitton

By KATIE TAMOLA

Luxury brands are continuously seizing the opportunity to branch into the jewelry sector.

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Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Gucci and Hermès are some of the fashion brands that have launched their own jewelry lines. Speaking at the [FT Business of Luxury Summit](#) on May 20, artistic director of watches and jewelry at Louis Vuitton and a creative director from an independent jewelry brand shared their takes on how brands can successfully implement jewelry, burgeoning trends, competition and more.

"The jewelry category has had a valuation now that's gone even higher through the pandemic, and, and we are at an ultimate place to be taken very seriously," said Francesca Amfitheatrof, artistic director of watches and jewelry at Louis Vuitton. "It's very important that Louis Vuitton has entered this category in such a way and in the last three years to have really had an impact."

Collections, signature cuts and versatility

Ms. Amfitheatrof has worked in her artistic director position at Louis Vuitton since 2018. Earlier this year, Louis Vuitton released their second high jewelry collection, Stellar Times, under her leadership.

During the session, Bedazzled, Ms. Amfitheatrof spoke about meeting consumers where they are and remembering that jewelry should be versatile. Experts believe that creativity is crucial, and so is intention. Brands must consider the quality of their products and how they will be worn.



Ms. Amfitheatrof designs jewelry and oversees the design of all watches at Louis Vuitton. Image credit: LVMH

"For our buying criteria, we only buy the best of the best of the best for every single piece," Ms. Amfitheatrof said. "Every single stone in the high jewelry collection is of the ultimate quality and I think we've positioned ourselves to be the brand that has the best-colored stones out there."

"I think it's really understanding what women want and how they wear jewelry today and how it doesn't need to be so formal," she said.

Michael Burke, CEO of Louis Vuitton, also examines and approves every stone in all the brand's jewelry lines.

Ms. Amfitheatrof also explained how Louis Vuitton has created their own diamond cut, referring to the feat as "the holy grail in jewelry design." The artistic director is releasing her third collection with Louis Vuitton next month.

As more and more fashion houses and brands venture into jewelry, experts believe it's imperative that they strive for creativity. If creativity is squelched, jewelry stands the chance of not being as well received.

"I think that the brands need to go back to embracing, creativity, and need to take a few risks and stop being so institutional," Ms. Amfitheatrof said. "At Louis Vuitton, because it has a very different approach, because it does believe in creativity, and because it wants to constantly move forward look at the results we've had, look at the incredible success, and the impact that we've had very, very quickly."

Charlotte Chesnais, creative director at her eponymous independent jewelry brand, fell in love with jewelry design after working to find pieces that complimented products from Balenciaga, where she worked several years ago.

When fashion houses began to branch into fine and high jewelry, the bigger ones like Chanel and Dior were some of the first because they had the resources to do so. Ms. Chesnais also highlighted the importance of creativity and purpose of expression through jewelry.



Glamorous necklace, part of the Pretty Woman high jewelry collection. Image credit: LVMH

"It was a beginning for the feeling of I'm expressing myself through jewelry like we used to do before with clothes and bags," she said. "I launched my brand in a very organic way."

Ms. Amfitheatrof and Ms. Chesnais also discussed the disparate resources bigger brands have and inherent competition within the sector.

"I'm fighting again big, big houses with crazy stories, crazy archives, crazy savoir-faire, like, like Francesca, she's working for such a huge organization who has so many tools," Ms. Chesnais said. "It's a very hard market for a

young brand when it comes to like fine jewelry and even more like high jewelry."

What consumers are looking for

Brands of different sizes and styles are continuously trying to innovate and entice consumer attention.

As Louis Vuitton's Ms. Amfitheatrof mentioned, consumers are searching for versatile pieces.

Last August, Louis Vuitton introduced a line of genderless fine jewelry with an energetic and fresh campaign.

LV Volt is a jewelry collection that plays on the graphic shapes formed by the initials "L" and "V." The letters come together in various ways for different pieces that are meant to mix and match, while remaining refined enough for everyday wear for everyone ([see story](#)).

In the wake of current climate change advocacy, many consumers are now actively searching for transparent sustainability practices from brands.

Luxury groups LVMH Mot Hennessy Louis Vuitton, Kering and Richemont are helping launch a joint initiative to encourage sustainable change across the jewelry industry.

The Colored Gemstones Working Group (CGWG) which was founded by Gemfields in 2015 and who counts LVMH, Kering, Richemont, Chopard and Swarovski among its members has revealed the Gemstones and Jewelry Community Platform. In development for several years, and first announced last year, the platform is now live and serves as a free sustainability resource for the entire industry ([see story](#)).

When it comes to keeping the demand alive, Ms. Amfitheatrof believes brands have to set themselves apart and try to create a desire for the unattainable.

"There's always new territories to gain and there's always, you know, new ways to grow bigger, but with jewelry to really keep that desire it cannot be completely accessible, all the time to everyone," she said. "The most incredible thing is to create a design that has an impact and that people want, and therefore can become timeless."

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