

JEWELRY

## Sotheby's second Brilliant & Black exhibit epitomizes African grandeur

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*The hands of featured Black jeweler, Roxanne Rajcoomar-Hadden, in a scene from Sotheby's advert film. Image credit: Sotheby's*

By AMIAH TAYLOR

Luxury auction house [Sotheby's](#) is presenting the second installation of "Brilliant & Black: Age of Enlightenment," giving much deserved praise and attention to contemporary Black designers.

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The exhibition will run from Sept. 22 to Oct. 2 in London, and dually highlights the work of returning designers and new voices. The theme of this year's exhibition is the remembered legacy of Terry Castro, a New York-based jewelry designer whose distinctive designs granted him upward mobility from selling on the sidewalks of New York to adorning celebrities like Rihanna and Steven Tyler.

"Going from African-inspired' to people of African origin being the actual creators shouldn't be revolutionary, but it is," said writer Melanie Grant, curator for the "Brilliant & Black" exhibition, in a [statement](#).

A celebration of melanated jewelers

New designers that will be featured in this year's installation include "Brilliant & Black" are Disa Allsopp; Gina Love for Auvere; Karen Smith; Latoya Boyd; Ndid Ekubia; Pascale Marthine Tayou; Roxanne Rajcoomar-Hadden and Sewit Sium.

The featured designers draw inspiration from distinctly disparate sources but come together to create cohesive and aesthetic jewelry that is representative of the rainbow of the African diaspora.

*Sotheby's "Brilliant & Black: Age of Enlightenment" film*

Disa Allsopp is inspired by jewelry from ancient Greco-Roman and Egyptian cultures whereas the twin muses of Pascale Marthine Tayou's work are voodoo and African tribes, both jewelers create fascinating wearable pieces.

Another brand new featured artist, Karen Smith, is a master metalsmith whose work embodies the eclectic beauty of African masks and textiles. Ms. Smith established a visionary training program, [We Wield the Hammer](#), to teach metalwork to girls of African descent.

Returning designers include Satta Matturi; Angie Marei for Marei Fine Jewelry, Jarriet Oloy, Johnny Nelson; Lola

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A post shared by Matturi Fine Jewellery (@matturijewellery)

*Matturi is one of 25 jewelers exhibiting at Sotheby's from Sept. 22 to Oct. 2*

Angie Marei is an exemplary Black talent who uses her passion for Old Hollywood films, architecture and esoteric symbols to craft jewelry that has been donned by celebrities like Beyonc, Rihanna and Billy Porter.

Harwell Godfrey is both a jeweler and a philanthropist and helped establish the Art Smith Memorial Scholarship Fund to support Black students concentrating in jewelry at the Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC.

Johnny Nelson, who is influenced by fashion greats like Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen, fuses hip hop and empowerment in his pieces which have been worn by music powerhouses like Mary J. Blige, Lil Nas X and Nick Cannon.

Ethical diamonds

Ethical diamonds are a theme amongst Sotheby's curated list of Black jewelers with transparent supply chains and ethical gem sourcing being repeated points of emphasis.

One of the featured new designers for this year's "Brilliant & Black: Age of Enlightenment," exhibition, Roxanne Rajcoomas-Hadden, has previously partnered with the Natural Diamond Council, mentoring young designers through RRH Diamond Academy.

This is not the only partnership that the Natural Diamond Council has fostered with a jeweler. In collaboration with jewelry designer, Lorraine Schwartz, the gem authority launched the first collections from the inaugural class of the Emerging Designers Diamond Initiative (EDDI) at online retailer Moda Operandi in October of last year ([see story](#)).

The Natural Diamond Council has also been active this month and appointed British actress Lily James as its global brand ambassador ([see month](#)).

Ms. James has caught the eye of more than one major European fashion house and has previously been the spokesmodel for Burberry ([see story](#)). She is also currently the face of Versace's latest handbag campaign ([see story](#)).