

Interview Sandra BERETE



Sandra BERETE, High end jewelry artist wearing NOBILITY ring

INTERNATIONAL LEADER

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INTRODUCTION

Coming from the world of contemporary art, high end jewelry artist Sandra BERETE based in Paris gives us the outlines of her profession where high standards are mixed with a relentless quest for perfection.

INTERNATIONAL LEADER: Can you tell us about your background, what led you to make high end jewelry your profession and what are the inherent requirements of this profession?



Pharaona, mixed ring

SANDRA BERETE : It was through contemporary art and rock crystal that I came to high end jewelry. Born in Paris of a West African father and a Caribbean mother, I did a year of hypokhâgne in Classic Letters at the prestigious Lycée Victor Duruy in Paris located in the district of Ministries and Embassies after have obtained a Bachelor of Arts & Mathematics with honors, with the idea of joining L'Ecole Normale Supérieure.

During the same period, I discovered contemporary art through friendly encounters, this universe immediately fascinated me. I started working in contemporary art galleries and foundations. I took part in the organization of exhibitions and workshop visits, I received collectors.

Great artists encouraged me to take the plunge, obviously being myself an artist. However, I did not see myself entering Fine Arts. Fate proceeded in a completely different way: Following the discovery of an impressive sculpture carved from a mass of Plexiglas by the avant-garde artist and alchemist Henri Gargat, I sought to meet this brilliant plastic artist., without knowing that he was also one of the greatest master jewelers of Place Vendôme, maker of extraordinary automata and visionary friend of jewelry designer Jean Dinh Van.

He was the one who comforted me and gave me the green light after seeing my very first prototypes designed after returning from a visit to a crystal factory in Bohemia, in the Czech Republic. What is the connection, you will tell me? I later realized that gemstones were crystalline structures of great beauty. The master Henri Gargat had warned me that the path would be difficult because historically the corporation of French fine jewelry was (very) conservative and that more often it was the United States which allowed innovative artists to live, that this was true for Jean Vendôme, considered as the inventor of contemporary jewelry, as for him. So I knew very early on which was the first market to turn to for export.

Furthermore, as a self-employed worker, I had to identify the right workshop that could make an artistic piece of jewelry bringing together several skills; This does not obvious. Patience and good communication with the foreman to convey his vision are necessary.



Crazy Love – Love declaration ring

INTERNATIONAL LEADER: When it comes to stone cutting, could you remind us of the French Touch, the particularities specific to Place Vendôme which makes it possible to have exceptional jewelry?

SANDRA BERETE : The manufacture of high end jewelry pieces in the workshops of the Place Vendôme is of remarkable precision of execution. Very pure crystal gemstones are perfectly calibrated and can therefore be perfectly set. French high end jewelry was already known worldwide from the 18th century, in particular thanks to the development of technical of gemstone cut.

France has a culture of excellence, the **Meilleurs Ouvriers de France** (Corporation of the Best Workers of France) in particular perpetuate the French influence by constantly developing techniques during very prestigious competitions.

INTERNATIONAL LEADER : What are your sources of inspiration and how are your products distributed in the different genres?

SANDRA BERETE : Coming from a mixed culture, my sources of inspiration are multiple. My leitmotif is a tribute to African Art via Art Deco. Exotic flowers are another important inspiration theme, this aspect of my work has been called "naturalistic". There is certainly a longing for the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve, an aesthetic search for the magnificence of God's Creation.

I also really like Hollywood glamor and the diamonds associated with it in the collective subconscious of American culture. Generally, I create rings or earrings that I then decline in sets or half-sets. For special orders, I also create high jewelry watches and glasses, as well as specific collections dedicated to investment diamonds.

INTERNATIONAL LEADER : High end jewelry remains very popular with luxury players, how can you explain such a craze?

SANDRA BERETE : High end jewelry is both a precious object combining the added value of a brand, the perceived value of its aesthetics and the so-called intrinsic value of the piece of high end jewelry linked to the value of stones and precious metal. Currently, high quality, unheated gemstones with pure crystal, beautiful saturated color well distributed and heavy weight are very expensive because they are becoming scarce. In addition, mining comes at a considerable cost.

High end jewelry made from important certified stones is a safe haven, especially in times of crisis. It can help diversify its portfolio as an alternative investment. To be convinced, just browse the auction catalogs.

INTERNATIONAL LEADER : As a high end jewelry artist, what are the real measures put in place to ensure real respect for quality standards and a real implementation of a code of ethics?

SANDRA BERETE : For the sake of transparency, the Place Vendôme workshops adhere to the RJC / Responsible Jewellery Council certification. This good practice certification guarantees the conditions of extraction and traceability. Obtaining certification follows a very strict process, including an audit carried out by an organization recognized by the RJC such as Bureau Veritas Certification.

RJC certification reassures consumers of the ethical and responsible approach of workshops of excellence who wish to practice their craft while respecting the environment and following good management practices.

Personally, I am in contact with village community leaders in West Africa to understand and understand the ethical and virtuous local production of precious metals and precious stones.

INTERNATIONAL LEADER : The coronavirus crisis has not spared the high end jewelry industry. Do you think a rebound is possible in the short and medium term?

SANDRA BERETE : We must qualify. The big luxury houses have a multi-channel business model, their challenges are different, they need to look at their networks of wholesalers, franchises, retailers and proprietary stores.

My designs are usually sold directly at fairs and private presentations, or at film festivals whose red carpet and stair climbing rituals are highly prized by my clients and collectors. The coronavirus crisis has canceled such events. As an artist, I definitely have to rethink my digital communication, as well as marketing.

However, it is striking to see in Paris that the demand for luxury / hyperluxury products with very high added value and personalized has increased significantly. There are therefore real opportunities for independent creators who have developed a universe likely to interest the "HNWI" and "U-INWI" clientele.