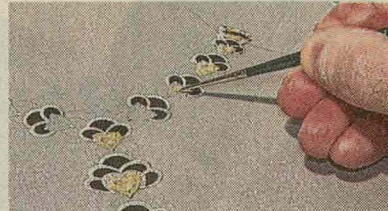


# Watches & Jewellery

JEWELLERY SPECIAL

**Banging the drum**  
Tambour redesign starts LV's shift to boutique horology

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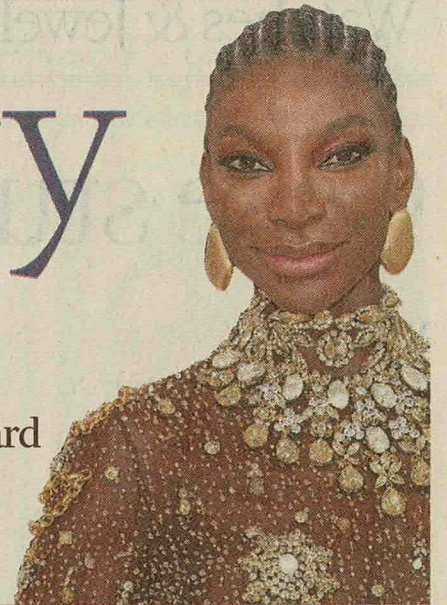


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## Brands say 'lucky' buyers undeterred by inflation

Economic woes are not holding back wealthy jewellery buyers. By *Ming Liu*

A complicated environment of inflationary pressures and economic uncertainty has not damped the outlook for high jewellery, which is looking especially dynamic and resilient.

Erwan Rambourg, global head of consumer and retail research at HSBC, says brands are catering to the "lucky few" with curated, experiential events. Such clients are no strangers to "inflationary pressures and volatility in the equity and property markets, but they're relatively isolated from short-term stress because of the wealth they've accumulated", he says. "I'm bullish on jewellery, full stop, but the high end will be particularly supported."

Art and travel are strong themes this year in high jewellery. Van Cleef &

Arpels' collection, unveiled in Rome last month, evokes the experience of the 18th and 19th-century European Grand Tour and the spirit of artistic enrichment. Boodles, too, has its own kind of grand tour around Europe, launching 19 jewellery suites inspired by the local art and architecture of 19 different cities.

Louis Vuitton's Deep Time collection is more ambitious, with an epic geological journey spanning billions of years – from the formation of the continents to the origins of life. Meanwhile, other houses rooted themselves in more singular locations: Bulgari in the Mediterranean, Dior and Chaumet in nature.

It is no surprise that high jewellery houses are aligning themselves with the art world. "Art, by definition, is bespoke; it's one piece," says Rambourg. "If luxury products can come across as being bespoke instead of being mass produced and mass distributed, that helps the perception of those goods."

Art is clearly part of the strategy for the LVMH-owned Tiffany & Co. According to LVMH's annual report for the year ended December 31 2022, revenues from high jewellery sales doubled, driven by a "flurry of events", such as a

special exhibition at London's Saatchi Gallery celebrating the jeweller's 185th anniversary, and a special collaboration with the contemporary artist Daniel Arsham that recalled a historic partnership with Andy Warhol.

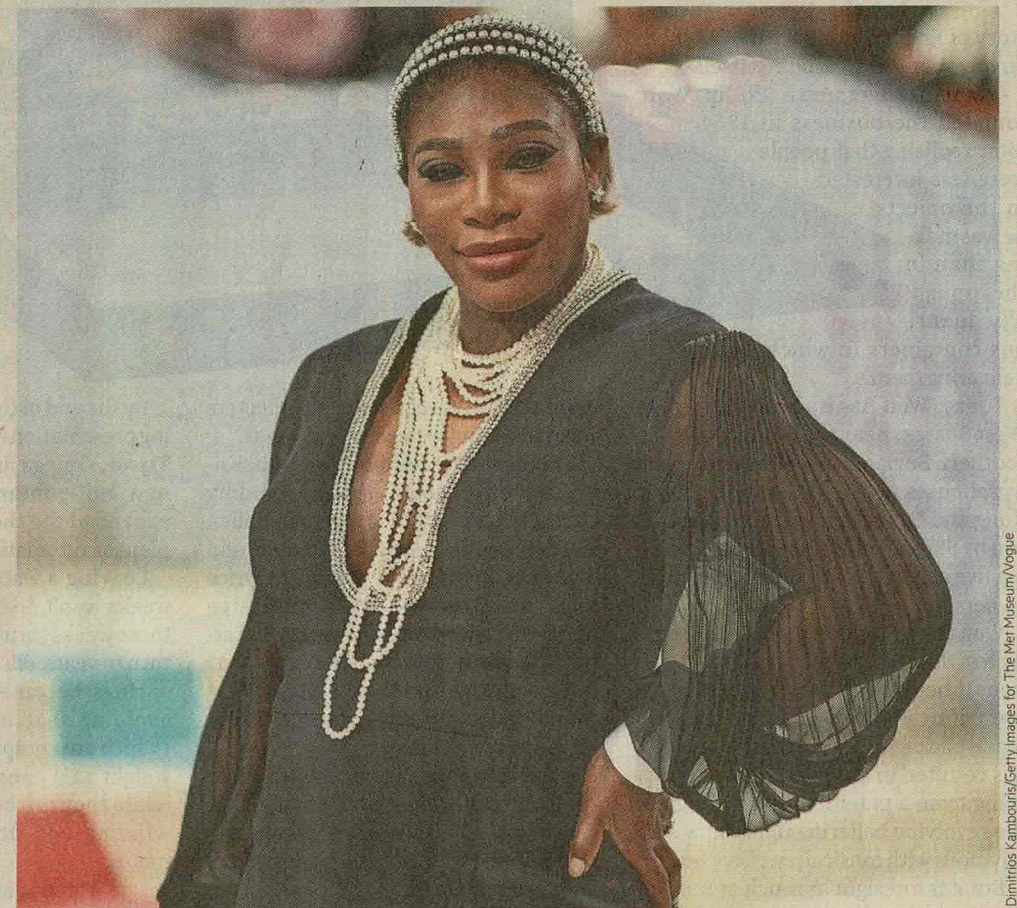
Tiffany's new high jewellery collection, Out of the Blue, launched in June and expands on the fantastical sea creatures created by the maison's most celebrated designer, Jean Schlumberger, who began working with Tiffany in 1956. The collection covers seven themes, including "Star Urchin", highlighted by a striking suite of hand-carved chalcedony spikes paired with tanzanite and diamonds.

The 71-piece collection was unveiled at Tiffany's newly renovated Fifth Avenue flagship, renamed The Landmark. The 10-floor, 10,000 sq m space is home to nearly 40 artworks, including bespoke pieces by the likes of Damien Hirst and Julian Schnabel – which turns the store into a destination in itself.

An HSBC industry report notes that visitors to the flagship now include "keen consumers and casual tourists alike, asking sales associates where this

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**'All our jewellery feels quite young – it's linked to fashion'**



Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images for The Met Museum/Vogue

### Playing with pearls

This year's Met Gala had pearls at centre stage, with tennis star Serena Williams one of the many guests to wear them. At one time, pearls were regarded as a symbol of bourgeois elegance.

Now, prices are surging due to the gem's new-found lustre and disruption to pearl farming's typical two-year production cycle in the pandemic. **Page 10**

**Emefa Cole** The Ghana-born jeweller wants greater transparency on the origin of raw materials and greater diversity showcased. By *Kate Youde*

# In search of new gold standards for industry ethics

When Met Gala co-host Michaela Coel said she wanted to walk the red carpet “dripping in gold”, jeweller Emefa Cole made the actor two rings, a pair of earrings and a hair brooch for the May event. These pieces are among 11 bold, yellow gold designs that form Cole’s new collection, designed to be statement jewellery in more ways than one.

Cole wants Worth Its Weight, launching this month, not only to showcase gold, its “beauty and rawness”, but also to raise awareness of the provenance and traceability of the precious metal. It is another way that the London-based designer, who is the V&A museum’s first curator of diaspora jewellery, is seeking to foster change in the industry.

Cole’s collection is made from gold supplied by Single Mine Origin (SMO). This UK joint venture partners with mines achieving responsible sourcing standards to provide gold that is segregated and tracked through the supply chain. The gold for Cole’s collection came from Endeavour’s Ity mine in Ivory Coast, which borders the Bono region of Ghana where she was born. “I don’t actually see the two places as separate lands so, for me, it’s like using gold from Ghana,” says Cole, adding it was also a “great choice” for Coel, whose parents are Ghanaian.

Cole is aware of the serious issues illegal mining causes in Ghana, including child labour, environmental damage and violence. It is “not good enough” for her to use recycled gold because “some of that gold may have been mined by a small child,” she says.

She wants more makers to know who

is mining their materials and to use SMO gold. “This is not a saviour complex issue, this is a human issue that we have to deal with, otherwise it will keep on spiralling out of control,” she says.

It is important to Cole “to weave Ghana” into all her work. She grew up there, and stories of people finding gold nuggets inspired her love of the metal. She moved with her family to London at the age of 12.

It was near the end of her silversmithing and jewellery degree at London Metropolitan University, in 2011, that she wrote a five-year business plan including a wish to learn Ashanti casting. This ancient lost-wax casting technique, developed in the Ashanti region of southern Ghana, involves carving a model in beeswax that is then encased in a clay and charcoal mould.

The beeswax is burnt out and the mould filled with molten metal and fired in a furnace.

Cole’s wish came true when Asantehene Osei Tutu II, king of the Ashanti, gave permission for her to undertake an ongoing apprenticeship with his goldsmith, Nana Poku Amponsah Dwumfour, chief of the furnace. The first woman granted such access, Cole has made two trips to his workshop so far – the most

recent was in May – and plans to return later this year. The experience has taught her to be “a lot more patient”.

She will use her new skills as she adds more jewellery to Worth Its Weight. The current pieces – the four Coel wore plus three more rings, another pair of earrings, a bangle, a brooch and a pair of £300,000 cuffs – are made from solid 18-carat gold, down to the brooch pin and earring posts.

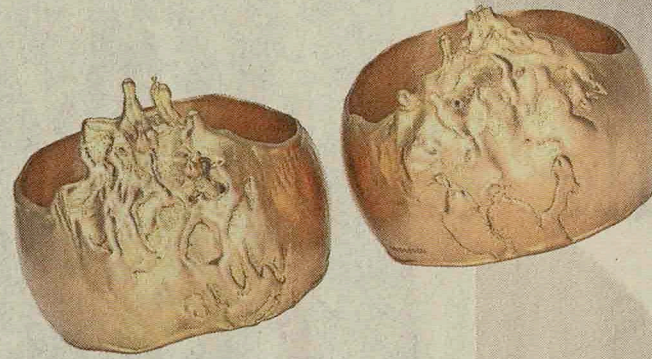
Cole has placed the hallmarks, which show the maker, metal and fineness, year and place of hallmarking, and that the gold is SMO, on the outside of the jewellery to reinforce the source of the gold. An accompanying QR code links to a video about the mine.

Alongside her making, Cole’s role at the V&A helps the museum address colonial history and identify gaps in its collection. Nearly halfway into this two-year post, Cole says she has found “a gap in the representation” of contemporary makers. As a result, she says, the V&A has acquired works including the Beautiful ring from the A Beautiful Life series by London-based American jeweller Jacqueline Rabun and an Ebony Revolution necklace by Simone Brewster. A newly acquired bespoke Vicki Sarge headdress worn by pop star Beyoncé is on display in the museum’s *Diva* exhibition.

Cole says there is “a

Clockwise from right: Emefa Cole; Vicki Sarge headdress; Michaela Coel wearing items from the Worth Its Weight collection at the 2023 Met Gala; 18ct gold cuffs

Casey Moore; Michael Buckner/Variety via Getty Images



lot more work to be done”, including bringing in jewellery by other designers. “I’m not focused on it being African or African Caribbean, I’m looking at the wider diaspora because I’m looking for excellence,” she says.

“I’m not here to tick boxes, to say, ‘We’ve got 10 pieces from 10 black people.’ That is not good enough for me. When we’re being honest, we need to be honest in every aspect of it, so it’s purely based on excellence.”

As for change in the industry since she started her eponymous business in 2012, Cole says that while “you started

to see more makers of African heritage” being celebrated in 2020, “some of it felt performative”. So it is necessary to wait and see if there is real change. The only way to create lasting change with diversity is to start at the grassroots level in schools, she says. “Being given a level playing field is very important. So, once you have that equal playing field, it’s what you do with it that counts.”

Cole says responsibility lies with her to keep producing her best work and telling her story, which may encourage others: “The main thing is that I’m actually practising what I preach.”