

Coco Chanel's infatuation with Russian culture inspired the company's new jewelry.



Russian Revelry

IT WAS THE 1920S in Paris and Coco Chanel found herself enamored with the Russian cultural elite and nobility, who had fled upheaval in their homeland and brought a new sensibility to the city. That Russian spirit appeared in Chanel's 1923 collection, with long tunics, fur-lined cloaks and large belted blouses modeled after the Russian *rubashka*. During this period, she enlisted the czar's perfumer, Ernest Beaux, to create her iconic Chanel No. 5 perfume. The Russian influence even permeated her famous rue Cambon apartment, with specially commissioned pieces like the large mirror with a sculpted frame depicting the two-headed eagle of Imperial Russia and sheaves of wheat, a sign of the sun and good luck, forged in bronze by Robert Goossens. Chanel's fascination with Russia endured throughout her life, and today it's the impetus for the company's new high jewelry collection, *Le Paris Russe de Chanel*.

Unveiled at the Grand Palais during the Paris haute couture shows in July, the jewelry is a master class in symbolism and artistic technique, entirely modern even though it's rooted in the past. Among the 63 pieces, a series of necklaces and earrings in delicate diamonds and pearls

echo patterned embroidery and lace, but on a large scale. A colorful headpiece features an array of gemstones in a cut-out design that is light and feminine, and big yellow diamonds represent the sun in bold rings and necklaces.

"Gabrielle [Coco Chanel] was influenced by Russia's icons and symbolism, and we referenced those in jewelry designs that are symbolic yet feminine and stylish," says Patrice Leguèreau, who has been director of Chanel's jewelry studio for the past decade. Those motifs, along with Coco's favorite flower, the camellia, are present throughout: The double-headed eagle is the center of a regal brooch, and intricate and colorful pieces reference the costumes in *Ballets Russes*, which Chanel designed.

"This isn't trophy jewelry," says Leguèreau. "It's not about big stones; this is elegant, chic and feminine design. It tells a story." Over a span of more than two years, he visited Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where he spent several days exploring the Hermitage Museum, taking notes on embroidered fabrics, lace, jewelry, enamel and paintings, which also informed the new collection. It's rich in history and substance, and Coco Chanel would have loved it. **J.N.**

The Vault: A New Source for Discovery

New York has its share of jewelry and watch stores, but the Vault—a new department at Saks Fifth Avenue—is something else: delivering brands and designs not found elsewhere in the city and, in some cases, anywhere. The shop-in-shop from Boucheron, the historic Parisian jeweler's first in the US, is worth the visit: You can view the brand's new pieces, which combine precious stones with edgier rock crystal and quartz in bold designs. Opened on September 4, the nearly 11,000-square-foot jewelry and watch space is also home to collections from Lorraine Schwartz, whose statement pieces are red-carpet mainstays, and artisan jeweler Adam Foster, who is creating colorful hand-forged designs from his St. Louis workshop, plus shop-in-shops for Graff, Chanel and Chopard.

There are several viewing rooms where you try on limited-edition timepieces from IWC Schaffhausen, Franck Muller, Roger Dubuis and more in private. Amenities have been upgraded to include a watch and jewelry repair service and an International Lounge with a concierge to help visiting shoppers navigate the city. **J.N.**

