

Galerie

Live Artfully

**RALPH LAUREN
CELEBRATES IN STYLE**

**SIMON DE PURY'S
SECRETS FOR BUYING
AT AUCTION**

**HOMES IN NEW YORK,
PALM BEACH, AND
MARTHA'S VINEYARD
WHERE ART COMES FIRST**

the
collectors

**Inside their passionate pursuit of
art, design, fashion, jewelry, and more**

A workbench at the Cartier glyptics atelier in Paris includes a sketch of a custom commission, inspiration from nature, raw stone, and works in progress.



Face Value

The ancient art of stone carving, called glyptics, is alive and well at Cartier, where a new generation of master craftsmen flourishes

JEWELRY

“Every stone responds differently, and every project is a new challenge”

EMILIE MARQUES



Emilie Marques, head of Cartier's glyptics workshop. LEFT: Cartier Panthère necklace with a pendant carved from petrified wood.

Cartier's newest Panthère pendant has a deceptively gentle expression. “We want to portray a sense of realism in our work,” says Emilie Marques, head of Cartier's glyptics workshop, from the maison's atelier in the heart of Paris. Unlike a lapidarist, who facets gemstones to maximize their sparkle, a glyptician sculpts and engraves hard stones into intricate designs, including flora and fauna. It's an ancient technique that has played a starring role in Cartier's aesthetic, notably through its iconic Panthère designs.

“There are few glypticians in the world today, and it's hard to find a new generation who want to learn the craft,” says Alexa Abitbol, head of Cartier's high-jewelry workshops, who oversees Cartier's artisans. To preserve the dying art, Cartier established a glyptics department in 2010, led at that time by Philippe Nicolas, who recently retired. Marques began as Nicolas's apprentice at age 17 while still a student at the École Boulle, the prestigious school for fine arts, crafts, and applied arts in Paris, then joined him at Cartier. Now she is responsible for passing down the savoir faire he shared with her to the all-female team of four glypticians, along with four apprentices. It takes four to five years to learn the skills, she says, and “a lifetime of training, because every stone responds differently, and every project is a new challenge. Nothing is repeated.”

The magic of glyptics begins with the stone, which inspires not just the design but also the spirit of the piece. Marques and her team search for interesting rough specimens—such as petrified pine cones, fossilized dinosaur bones, and sky-blue chalcedony—at gem shows in Tucson, Arizona, and Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, France. “They study the stones and see which one speaks to them,” explains Abitbol. Once the artist selects her medium, she sketches her vision, submits it to the design team for approval, and sculpts it in clay before carving and engraving the final piece.

Although jewelry creation is a rigorous, well-defined process, stone carving allows for more freedom of expression. It imbues elaborate high-jewelry pieces with volume, dimension, and character that couldn't be achieved with gemstones and gold alone. That unbridled creativity also captivates collectors, who appreciate the artistry and individualism of the designs, waiting approximately a year for a commission. For a recent special order, a client wanted a panther bangle with an attitude. Marques presented him with various stones and sketches, and after some discussion, she carved the feline from a block of black jasper and imparted it with a distinctly sly expression. For a pendant featuring an emerald-eyed panther with a warm demeanor, Marques utilized petrified wood that, over the course of millions of years, hardened into a striated rock. “When I first saw the rough stone, I envisioned a panther with his markings,” she says.

But the maison's longtime mascot isn't the only beneficiary of these talents. For Cartier's floral designs, including a recent blooming brooch with velvety petals shaped from purple agate, Marques looked to the house's copious archives for inspiration, and, of course, real botanicals. “Philippe always insisted that we have the actual flowers in front of us, so we can re-create the lightness and movement.” It's work that is as much about passion and precision as it is poetry. *cartier.com* —JILL NEWMAN