



DAISY FELLOWES WEARS HER TUTTI FRUTTI NECKLACE FROM THE CARTIER COLLECTION (PARIS, 1936):

[ICON]

LASTING LEGACY

Daisy Fellowes — heiress, style icon, novelist and fashion columnist — was known for many things, none more so than her jewellery collection. So enamoured were we of Fellowes' irrepressible flair that we sought to recapture her spirit in an inspired photoshoot with modern pieces. BY JESSICA TAN

PHOTOGRAPHER **SIMON SIM**
STYLIST **ONG WEISHENG**
HAIR AND MAKE-UP ARTIST **JOANNA KOH** FROM INDIGO ARTISANS
MODEL **LIDIANA** FROM CALCARRIES



THE VAN CLEEF AND ARPELS' MANCHETTE BRACELETS (1926 AND 1928) THAT EVENTUALLY SOLD AT SOTHEBY'S IN NOVEMBER 5 FOR 3.38 MILLION SWISS FRANCS

It may be hard to imagine for those who know of the vivacious style icon Daisy Fellowes, but sometime in her early 20s, just before World War I, the French-American socialite was plagued with a dull personality and plain looks.

It wasn't until she saw her portrait that she commissioned from Jacques-Émile Blanche, a well-known society portrait-painter then, that her transformation began. "It is my responsibility to pay for the canvas. And I will pay for it. But I don't want it. And you must promise me that you will never show it to anyone," she reportedly chastised the artist before dismissing him.

Thereafter, she was convicted to forever banish that uninspiring image of herself. Toward this end, she had her nose touched up, hired a new hairdresser and revamped her entire wardrobe. Nothing was impossible. She was, after all, the daughter of a French Duke and the heiress to the Singer fortune. Her maternal grandfather was Isaac Merritt Singer, the self-made tycoon, who invented the sewing machine. Fellowes wasn't one who was easily satiated too. She went deeper and further in her quest for a new and refined Daisy. She also started to read ferociously and soaked up everything she could learn about art in museums and galleries.

MOTHER OF REINVENTION

As it turned out, Fellowes was gifted in reinventing herself. What emerged at the end of her metamorphosis was a lady of immaculate style, poise and wit — one who went on to live a charmed life with much rigour and panache. Interestingly, this was how Fellowes assembled her jewellery collection. The style icon was a master in redefining common jewellery designs of her day, plying her interests with travels to the East and all things exotic for inspiration. In fact, it is through her jewellery collection, which boasts exquisite pieces from Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels and Boivin, that one gets an insightful glimpse of her life.

Such a jewellery trendsetter was Fellowes that she even garnered a cult following. Jewellery designers during her time would go to the theatre and opera armed with binoculars just so that they could examine her jewels from afar. They would then hastily reproduce similar looking ones for their clients. Whatever jewellery Fellowes had, the other ladies wanted. In fact, it has come to pass that she owned some of the most prominent pieces of jewellery from that era. French writer, artist and filmmaker Jean Cocteau once proclaimed that Fellowes "launched more fashions than any other woman in the world."

CARTIER'S HINDU NECKLACE

One of the most prominent jewellery pieces in her collection was none other than the *collier hindou* (Hindu necklace), which she commissioned her all-time favourite jeweller Cartier to make in 1936. At that time, it was not uncommon for the upper crust in society to commission such jewellers to make jewellery using either the clients' own gemstones or newly acquired ones. By then, Cartier was also given the moniker "the jeweller of kings and the king of jewellers" (as proclaimed by British King Edward VII) and received royal warrants from courts in England, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Siam and Greece.

In the mid-1930s, Fellowes must have had chanced upon a photo or design of a necklace that Cartier made for the Maharaja of Patna, a son-in-law of the Maharaja of Patiala. Since setting up a trading post in Delhi in 1911 to buy emeralds, Cartier was quick to win over several Indian maharajas as loyal clients, many of whom patronised the jeweller. As years went on, Cartier was soon tasked with redesigning the jewels



BAHIA SMOKY QUARTZ EARRINGS;
BAHIA MADEIRA QUARTZ RING;
BAHIA LONDON BLUE TOPAZ
RING; VICTORIA RING. ALL FROM
POMELATO; BUSTIER TOP FROM
CHRISTIAN DIOR; FEATHERED COAT
FROM EMPORIO ARMANI

worn by Indian royalty.

Fellowes was so smitten by the design that she wanted a similar one of her own. And she did it cleverly so with the use of three existing Cartier jewellery pieces of hers, redesigning them into something spectacular. According to Cartier's order books, this *collier hindou*, as it was named then, comprised of stones from a necklace and two bracelets. The necklace had over 1,000 stones, including emeralds, sapphires, rubies and diamonds in an open-back

platinum setting. At the centre of the piece were two square-carved emeralds, sized at 50.8ct and 42.4ct. In its original design, as presented to Fellowes, in 1936, the Hindu necklace had an Indian-style cord fastening round the back.

The *collier hindou* remains a highlight at many of Cartier's retrospective exhibitions. In an exhibition catalogue from an exhibition held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1997, curator Judy Rudoë noted that the necklace made for the maharaja in 1935



TANZANITE DIAMOND EARRINGS IN WHITE GOLD; TANZANITE NECKLACE IN WHITE GOLD; TANZANITE RING IN WHITE GOLD. ALL BY FLOWER DIAMOND; DRESS FROM PAULE KA. AVAILABLE AT TYAN

incorporated some of his old-cut diamonds, rubies and emeralds. It must be stated, though, that the colours of the gemstones in both the maharaja's and Fellowes' necklaces were not identical at all. The Maharaja of Patna's necklace comprised the traditional red, white and green of Indian jewellery, while Fellowes' necklace was set with huge carved sapphires and sapphire briolettes. "The sapphire is an unlucky stone in the Indian tradition and would never have been worn by an Indian client, even one who wanted his stones reset in the Western style," the catalogue added.

For all the work, time (it took one year to produce) and money that went into it, Fellowes wore the *collier hindou* only once in her life: In 1951, when she wore it to a grand ball in Venice that was hosted by Mexican millionaire Carlos de Beistegui to celebrate his restoration of the Palazzo Labia. At that ball, she was famously photographed by celebrity photographer Cecil Beaton, wearing the *collier hindou* with a Christian Dior leopard chiffon and yellow satin gown.

In 1963, Fellowes' daughter, the Comtesse de Castéja, replaced the distinctive cord of the *collier hindou* with a complete collar of gems and also rearranged the placement of some of the larger stones. "The alterations made by her daughter destroyed the original appearance of the necklace," exclaimed Rudoe in the catalogue, as the main characteristic of the original was the Indian-style cord strings.

The redesigned necklace was later renamed Tutti Frutti by Cartier. More than 50 years after it was made, Fellowes' great-grandson consigned the necklace to Sotheby's, where it was auctioned and sold to Cartier for its private collection for US\$2,655,172. Reportedly, this was then a record price for art deco jewellery sold at auction.

INDIAN-INSPIRED

Indian-style jewellery was all the rage in the 1920s and 1930s. The fad was also largely ignited by Cartier's work for several Indian maharajas then. Fellowes, along with other wealthy heiresses, such as Marjorie Merriweather Post of the Post cereal empire, was one of the very first few in high society then to don such pieces.

"On her travels to India, [Fellowes] acquired gemstones and on her return to Paris, had them constructed into pieces with barbaric motifs — emerald handcuffs, exotic necklaces of Indian stones..." said authors Annette Tapert and Diana Edkins in their book, *The Power of Style*. "She was the first to order (jewellery designer) Jean Schlumberger's naturalistic diamond leaves, which became so popular in the 1930s. Of course, Daisy created her own twist by adding a fresh flower."

Fellowes' youngest daughter, Rosamond, was once quoted as saying: "She tended to go for exotic pieces. Ladylike jewels bored her." Cartier's records also showed that Fellowes had several other made-to-order pieces that were Indian-styled. These included a pearl choker necklace with a pearl tassel (1932), a set of emerald fringed bracelets (1933) and a maharaja brooch (1936) that was made of an agate figure set against a turquoise screen.

Another highlight of Fellowes' collection is a pair of *manchette* bracelets made by Van Cleef & Arpels. Also Indian-inspired, these beautiful emerald-beaded and diamond-fringed bracelets were timelessly designed. What makes them even more stunning is the fact that these two bracelets can be worn together as a choker necklace. And because the diamonds were set in a geometric pattern, some have described it as being reminiscent of a Persian carpet.

As with most of her other pieces in her collection, her bracelets tend to come in pairs. She was obsessed with having some symmetry in the presentation of her jewellery. "Everything she ordered was ordered and worn in duplicate. Why unbalance your hands and arms?" she was once quoted as saying. This was perhaps something that was subliminally imbibed from the art deco style during her time since one of the key features of the era is the use of geometric shapes and symmetry.



DAISY FELLOWES AT THE BEISTEGUI BALL IN 1951 WEARING A TUTTI FRUTTI HINDU COLLAR DESIGNED BY CARTIER IN 1936



SPECIAL-ORDER TUTTI FRUTTI NECKLACE FROM CARTIER PARIS MADE IN 1936 AND ALTERED IN 1963

HIGH JEWELLERY COLLECTION
NECKLACE IN WHITE GOLD, RED
CARPET COLLECTION BRACELET IN
WHITE GOLD, L'HEURE DU DIAMANT
COLLECTION RING IN WHITE GOLD,
ALL BY CHOPARD; DRESS BY DOLCE &
GABBANA; JACKET BY CHANEL



CHARACTER OF DISTINCTION

Fellowes didn't see jewellery simply as a status symbol of her wealth. To her, it was an expression and statement of her distinctive character.

"Daisy would go to extraordinary lengths to maintain her status as a character of distinction," according to *The Power of Style* (Tapert & Edkins). "Once, when Lady Kenmare, a noted hostess, gave a party in the south of France, everyone was plastered in diamonds, but Daisy's adornment was a necklace made of corks." At another social event, after discovering that another lady had on the same outfit as her, she brazenly took a pair of scissors to cut off the ostrich-feathered trimming and made it into a fan. She also made it a point to go to the races hatless, just so she could differentiate herself from other women.

To Fellowes, making dramatic and unforgettable entrances meant taking risks. "A good fashion is a daring fashion, not a polite one," she was once quoted as saying. In the same book, the authors noted that "unlike many women of her era whose clothes were backdrops for their jewels — Mona Williams and The Duchess of Windsor, to name just two — Daisy's clothing and jewels were complements to one another."

"When the designer Suzanne Talbot made her a pair of long black lace gloves, Daisy was inspired to rush off to Cartier to have matching diamond bands made to hold the gloves up. Jewels for Daisy were simply a part of life — she even wore them with swimsuits," wrote Tapert and Edkins.

In fact, photographer Cecil Beaton once said that what made Fellowes one of the best dressed women was due to her "studied simplicity." Even though she became widely known as the muse of Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli, Fellowes' taste in fashion was sharp and simple. Whenever she saw a dress that she liked, she'd simply buy several colours in that same style. She was also unlike the other ladies of luxury who could never be caught wearing the same dress twice. Jewellery was as important, if not, more so than her dresses. She once had Hubert de Givenchy make an extremely simple leopard coat, which she reportedly wore out with a huge necklace of topaz flowers.

Interestingly, her gems also inspired fashion. It was one of Fellowes' finest piece of Cartier jewellery, a 17.27-ct rose-coloured Cartier diamond, the *tête*

de bélier (Ram's head), that inspired Schiaparelli to create a colour called Shocking Pink for one of her dresses, just so that it would complement the rose-coloured Cartier diamond.

Boivin brooches were also Fellowes' passion. Her collection boasts several spectacular pieces from the jeweller, with records showing that in 1939, Fellowes ordered several brooches, including an orchid, a chameleon, an arrow and two tourmaline leaves.

One of these leaf brooches was a single leaf set with oval-shaped tourmalines in different hues of pink and green. Another famous Boivin brooch owned by Fellowes had the design of a pigeon's wing. The brooch was 13cm wide and came to life with a beautiful setting of diamonds and sapphires. According to Sotheby's, the sapphires in this brooch were stones Daisy procured in Ceylon during one of her fabled cruises aboard the *Sister Anne*. This particular brooch was sold in a Sotheby's auction in Geneva in 1991.

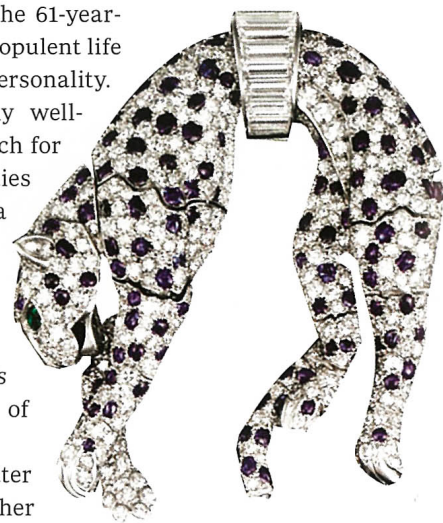
So coveted were her jewels then (and now) that it came as no surprise when she was picked as a prime target for thieves who broke into her home in Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1939 and took off with \$159,000 worth of jewels.

By the time of her passing in 1962, the 61-year-old had lived an illustrious, colourful and opulent life that showcased the extreme sides of her personality. In her younger days, she hosted many well-chronicled parties and was known as much for her style and wit, as she was for her abilities to be mean (she was famous for being a detached mother and a husband-stealing flirt) and caring (during World War I, she knitted socks for soldiers) all at the same time. Her writing career saw her taking up the post of editor-in-chief for *Harper's Bazaar* in Paris and writing a handful of unmemorable novels in her later years.

Even beyond all that colour and glitter that her life story told, it is clearly her jewellery collection that shines through it all, proving itself to be her most lasting legacy. ■



LEFT: RENÉ BOIVIN PLATINUM RING WITH A STEP-CUT EMERALD WITHIN AN ARTICULATED BEZEL DESIGNED AS A FRINGE OF BAGUETTE DIAMONDS, SOLD AT SOTHEBY'S IN NOVEMBER 2005 FOR 126,000 SWISS FRANCS



AN ARTICULATED SAPPHIRE, EMERALD AND DIAMOND PANTHÈRE CARTIER CLIP FROM 1950 (SIGNED AND NUMBERED BY CARTIER PARIS) THAT WAS SOLD AT SOTHEBY'S IN MAY 2008 FOR 470,000 SWISS FRANCS