

Everything Old Is New Again

Bogh-Art employs ancient techniques to create thoroughly modern jewelry.



WE HAVE IT on biblical authority that there is nothing new under the sun. And while King Solomon was not thinking specifically of jewelry design when he wrote these words, his wisdom applies. Designers of the most modern pieces frequently take their inspiration—often to breathtaking effect—from styles and techniques pioneered thousands of years ago. Case in point: The Swiss jeweler Boghossian recently launched Bogh-Art, a retail venture offering modern jewelry crafted with inlay techniques that date back to ancient Egypt.

According to Boghossian's CEO, Albert Boghossian, his nephew Ralph (who works in the family firm) was fascinated by various antique pieces of inlaid jewelry that are part of the family's personal collection, and recognized the ancient art form's potential for use in the creation of more modern designs. Ralph, who interned with Hong Kong jewelry designer Edmund Chin, hoped to develop a line of jewelry that would give the family company a new identity in the retail market—an identity defined by the best of the old and the new. Boghossian fully supported his nephew's vision: "We wanted to create jewelry that was out of the mainstream," he says.

And so Bogh-Art was born. To create the inlaid pieces, artisans carve and shape stones precisely to match the circumference of a transparent, faceted center gemstone. These pieces must fit together seamlessly, and therefore the gold rims that hold each stone in place must be manufactured to the most exact measurements. To achieve such a high degree of precision, Bogh-Art uses computer numerical controlled

equipment, commonly known as CNC machines, to design tiny metal parts. The parts are cast in a Swiss workshop that develops components for high-end watches, and the final mechanical assembly takes place in Geneva.

The resulting jewelry would, no doubt, please the ancient Egyptians. Layers of colorful stones in bold, unexpected configurations define the various pieces in Bogh-Art's three lines: Haute Joaillerie, Catwalk, and Collections. Designs include a high-jewelry ring with a deep-blue Kashmir sapphire set in white jade and accented with diamonds, as well as more informal pieces composed of semiprecious stones, such as charoite inlaid with a faceted amethyst.

While the family's roots in the jewelry business stretch back more than a century, brothers Jean and Albert did not found Boghossian until 1980, in Geneva. Until recently, the firm operated exclusively behind the scenes as a producer of jewelry and a procurer of rare gems for some of the world's most illustrious jewelry brands and private collectors (the names, Boghossian says, are confidential). With the 2008 debut of Bogh-Art, Boghossian took its first steps into the retail spotlight. For the family, Bogh-Art is a chance for the younger generation to make its own imprint on the legendary yet discreet jewelry house. "We want to drive innovation and to start a new direction that mixes materials with audacity," says Boghossian. "We also want to make our contribution to the long history of jewelry making."

—LAURIE KAHLE

Bogh-Art, +41.22.732.75.55, www.bogh-art.com

This yellow-diamond choker—inlaid with white jade and decorated with diamonds—exemplifies the style of Bogh-Art's designs.