





Conference Paper

The New Aesthetics and Traditions of the Russian Stone and Jewellery Art in the Collections of Yekaterinburg Jewellery Houses

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Abstract

This article presents a review of the leading jewellery companies in Yekaterinburg. We present a comparative analysis of the range of products, focussing on the new stylistic design techniques and technological features of the jewellery collections and stone-cutting works produced by the leading jewellery houses. Examples of the most significant works in the premium class segment are discussed. We demonstrate how modern Russian jewellery art creatively combines and develops Russian and European historical jewellery tradition while striving to absorb and utilize cutting-edge techniques, materials and technologies. The wide range of resulting artworks and approaches to modern jewellery-making highlights the successful combination of historical and modern approaches. More sophisticated technology allows the jewellery artists to implement new ideas while creating increasingly technically-complex works. We analyse the works by the leading Yekaterinburg jewellery houses: MOISEIKIN, CHAMOVSKIKH, Natasha Libelle, Ringo, Maxim Demidov, Jewellers of Ural.

Keywords: jewellery collection, design, translation method, quatation method, transformation

1. Introduction

Russian jewellery has always been famous for its expressive style and exquisite level of technique. According to the contemporary researcher of Russian jewellery art [1], any talented master, by interpreting creatively cultural achievements of his/her era, inevitably creates original artworks that reflects aesthetic ideas and tastes of the time. Centuries of experience, deep knowledge of designs and techniques of various jewellery schools, as well as the channelling of tradition, combined with the new materials and techniques in stonecutting and jewellery have created an environment in which present-day Ekaterinburg artists and designers are reaching extraordinary levels in jewellery art, especially in luxury items. Ekaterinburg has several leading jewellery

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companies which produce exquisitely artistic pieces. By preserving the traditions of Russian jewellery art and skilfully using stylistic elements of modern designs (complex structures, cluster modelling of jewellery inserts, increased size of rings as art objects), artists and designers develop the unique designs of future jewellery pieces. More sophisticated technology allows the masters to bring the artists' idea to life creating increasingly technically complex works, for example transformer pieces. Advanced digital technologies used for design, modelling and visualisation of items, prototyping technologies for models and finished parts, as well as the new technical skills (for example, in gem cutting, fixing, new construction of jewellery) are actively used to create artistically and technically unique items by Ekaterinburg leading jewellery houses: MOISEIKIN, CHAMOVSKIKH, Natasha Libelle, Ringo, Maxim Demidov, Jewellers of Ural.

2. Materials and Methods

The most widely used technique of designing in contemporary Russian jewellery art is constructing standalone items and collections based on "quotations", "translation of other types of art into jewellery design" and "historical stylisation". In general, history left us a lot of names of remarkable jewellers. They are the founders of existing and famous until nowadays French houses of Louis-Francois Cartier, Frederick Boucheron and incomparable Carl Faberge, the historical classic of Russian jewellery art. [1]

3. Discussion

Today Natasha Libelle jewellery house uses "quotation method" to create their Alphonse Mucha collection, thematically divided in the series The Four Seasons, The Months and The Precious Stones. [2] The collection includes 20 items, each of them an interpretation of the works of the remarkable artist. Each pendant item is compositionally based on an exquisitely made classical agate cameo brooch with detailed imaging and drawing of luxurious and sensual young women in various poses and angles. Just like the works of Ancient Greek masters, these cameos are called "painting in stone". They are distinguished by a fine artistic taste. [3] In the works of Natasha Libelle, stone images represent the exact copies of graphical and pictorial works of Czech artist Alphonse Mucha who worked in Ars Nouveau style. All collections are made of 585 hallmark gold inlaid with diamonds, sapphires and chrysolites. These luxurious pendants cast in a rather touching light the authentic classical Ars Nouveau silver enamel-decorated jewellery pieces made by French jeweller Georges Fouquet based on the drawings of



Alphonse Mucha. [4] Before creating incomparable cameos based on Alphonse Mucha's paintings, Natasha Libelle jewellery house obtained an official permission from the famous artist's descendants.

In his graphical series *The Four Seasons*, Alphonse Mucha strikingly conveys the mood corresponding to each season: spring innocence, summer sultriness, autumn fertility and winter cold. In his series *The Months* he depicts the magical strength of each month, the merging of woman and flowers, and in the series *The Precious Stones* Mucha utilizes a particular colour scheme to depict female figures reflecting the nature of different stones. The series of cameos in this collection constitutes a unified stylistic ensemble. All cameos show the common relief style, common technical approaches to cutting and polishing. Although the cameos were made of agate using modern ultrasound technique, each item was finished by hand. German masters, traditionally considered the best glyptic masters in Europe, finished the items making sure that they represented exact copies of their original prototypes. Indeed, despite automation of some technological processes in jewellery making, the final finishing, especially for premium items, still requires painstaking manual work of jewellers and stonecutters.

Technological bend is a characteristic feature of CHAMOVSKIKH jewellery house. The objects produced by this company are not only luxurious and elegant – they are often equipped with complex mechanisms. The company offers alternative ways of wearing their items and equips them with additional functions. CHAMOVSKIKH original technological designs are patented. For example, the key pendant Secret has a hidden mechanism that can be used to conceal pin codes, passwords, numbers or important dates. [5] Singapore and Night Singapore earrings with rubellite, Ethiopian opals and a multitude of diamonds (the cluster mechanism of inlays' fixture) are equipped with a unique rotating mechanism. The earrings' pendant element has a rotation degree of 360°, with the possibility to fix it at every 15°. This mechanism allows to position the earrings perfectly to match the wearer's face. The earrings can even be adjusted for asymmetrical piercings. [6] Innovative decorations of the Jazz Age collection are also transformers: pendant ball can be worn as a standalone accessory or serve as a removable pendant with earrings and a ring [7]. The Sophia ring from the Perfection collection combines two pieces in one: two rings, one big, another small. The main (big) ring looks like a monolithic item. Thanks to an intricate technical solution, it can be actually separated in two halves containing an internal (small) ring inlaid with gems. [8] The items from the Infinity collection demonstrate stylish and meaningful design and unique transformer construction. [9] Golden modules inlaid with precious stones are standalone jewelleries – but, at the same time, they are parts of an unusual



"set". By adding removable modules with various precious stones (diamonds, emeralds, sapphires) and specially designed fixing mechanism, the laconic jewellery pieces can be transformed into the elegant evening ones. As a result, the removable elements can combine and interchange creating multiple combinations of elements fit both for the office and for the evening occasions. Today this is a strong trend in contemporary commercial design, though the first attempts to create functional jewellery construction sets can be found as far back as early 20th century. The first who experimented in this area were jewellery houses Boucheron and Cartier [10].

CHAMOVSKIKH jewellery house works in different styles. Since today historical jewellery trend is popular (sautoir, cascade compositions with tear-shaped pendants, cuff earrings), artists and masters of this house utilize Russian jewellery tradition of classical period recreating cultural and historical heritage. Thus, the jewellery house, in collaboration with Alexander Vasilyev, a famous fashion historian, an honorary member of Russian Academy of Arts and a TV personality, created original collection Jewelleries of Imperial Family. Alexandra Feodorovna dedicated to the wife of the last Russian emperor Nicolas II. [11] Malachite and diamond decorated pieces have reflected lustre and luxury of the jewellery made in Russian Empire. The entire collection is made of 750-hallmark gold, and its hanging elements (tear-shaped pearls) is an homage to Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, who famously adored pearls, which occupied important and very special place in Russian jewellery art. [12] The luscious ornamental details express deep symbolism: a trefoil that brings luck and prosperity; wings that symbolize inspiration and protection; stylized crown as a sign of superiority and highest dignity.

Also, CHAMOVSKIKH jewellery collection includes luxurious cuff earrings. Today, as in the long-ago 18th century, cuff earrings are very popular in Russia. These items used to be an indispensable part of the wealthy women's wardrobes. Cuffs were made from precious metals and decorated with precious stones - predominantly diamonds, sapphires and rubies. The jewellers preferred to use florid ornaments for decoration. As of 2013, the Kremlin's Diamond Fund has several cuffs dated from 18-hundreds. We believe that the white gold cuff earrings Brunei decorated by opals and diamonds, created by CHAMOVSKIKH jewellery house [13], are even more representative that their historical 18-th century prototype made of silver with rubies and old-fashioned "rose" cut – an item that belongs to the collection of the Diamond Fund of Russian Federation.

One of the trends in contemporary global design is a method of "translating" one kind of art into another. In jewellery design translation of painting and architecture has proven to give good results. Particularly impressive is *Peterhof* collection by JF Carat Holding, which became Russian national heritage. [14] This collection is unique, because it is

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based on the image of Peterhof Palace, a masterpiece of landscape and architecture and a fountain capital of Russia. The collection comprises twenty items made of 750 gold with colourless and fancy yellow diamonds, sapphires, rubies, enamel and blackening. The collection's grandiose and sumptuous look hides deeper meaning. The collection items put together form a mosaic with a panoramic view of the Peterhof palace and gardens. At the same time, each item is an individual piece. All major landmarks are recognizable: the Grand Palace, the Grand Cascade, Cascade and Russian Versailles fountains, the Emperor's Walks. It is important to note a careful translation of architectural objects into the jewellery design. Company artists and jewellers showed great respect in creating this set of items. All items of *Peterhof* collection are functional, ergonomic, they satisfy all the requirement of the premium quality jewellery. Developing the idea, its implementation and the choice of stones required over one year of work. The collection was awarded grand prix at the Priznaniye Peterburga-2016 competition, a part of the JUNWEX international exhibition. The collection was made in eleven copies, with one of them gifted to the Peterhof Palace museum, where it is currently on display in the museum's Special Treasury.

Some of the shining examples of commercial design are Maxim Demidov and TULUPOV jewellery houses. These companies use fashionable in Russia but less familiar gems: tanzanite, morganite, rubellite, "baroque" pearls, tourmaline, white and black opals. Each item can combine more than two stones of different colours: this is a trend of the last decades. Such stone combinations are found in the collections Fashion Style, Cocktail and Summer time by TULUPOV jewellery house [15], as well as in the Animals collection from Maxim Demidov jewellery house. [16] However, despite the colour variety of precious gems used in jewellery items, most of the time the colour scheme – even in items with exotic Australian opal in *Night Shimmer* [17] collection, or with noble Ethiopian opal in *Extravaganza* collection [18] – belong to European 18th-century tradition, which was later copied by Russian jewellers: to design jewellery sets around one leading coloured stone surrounded by small diamonds.

Today we often hear about the resurrection of imperial Russia's cultural heritage. In particular, this thesis refers to Russian jewellery and stonecutting schools whose prestige reached European levels in late 19 – early 20 hundred. The broken line of historical development is being restored through the inter-generational links, through preservation and transmission of the precious skills in metal and stone works [1]. The masters of MOISEIKIN jewellery house develop traditions of leading schools of jewellery: Bolin, Grachev Brothers, I.P.Khlebnikov, C.Faberge and P.A.Ovchinnikov. These were the leading names among the jewellery companies of the latter half of the 19th century



[19]. Enriching the classical experience with modern technologies, the masters handcreate jewellery items and souvenir miniatures. Jewellery and souvenirs from MOISEIKIN widely utilize fancy cutting of quartzes, jade and obsidian. Sometimes it is used only as a decorative element of a genre composition stand (for example, the stands of the souvenirs *A Crane Taking Off* and *Toucans* [20]); sometimes it becomes a vessel of meaning and a main element of a souvenir, such as *A Drop of Oil*. [21]

But the most striking feature of the souvenirs from MOISEIKIN jewellery house is a combination of stonecutting and jewellery arts. Examples of such works are provided by flower compositions in vases. The company masters recreate, improve and develop world-renowned traditions of C.Faberge firm. It is well-known [22] that Faberge flowers represent the beauty of nature grasped in precious stones. Unlike simply shaped Faberge crystal vases and glasses with naturalistic flower bouquets, MOISEIKIN artists offer wide variety of shapes and minerals, such as chalcedony, jade, quartz, decorated by precious metals and gems of fancy cutting. The shapes of flowers and leaves follow precisely their natural prototypes; however, master stonecutters use their individual styles to imbue this full-blown natural floral beauty with the stylized elements. This is exemplified by the souvenirs from the collection Berries and Flowers of Russia. [23] The motives used in this collection are the plants most popular in Russian culture: wild strawberries, raspberries, currants, rowan berries, poppies, bluebells and lilies of the valley. A special charm of this collection is found in creative ideas by the company artists and masters, such as a dew drop covered with small diamonds that seems to be about to fall from the souvenir's leaf.

MOISEIKIN company uses Neo-Russian style highly popular in the 19th-century Russian art. According to the authors [24], in the latter half of the 19th century and early 20-hundreds the desire to create Russian national forms and the subsequent interest in old Russian art led to the jewellers recreating long-gone items of everyday life – dippers, "bratinas", goblets, stoups etc. – with strongly modernized forms and "Russian style" ornaments. Such objects could function as decorative vessels, awards, presents or presentational items. An example is *Bratina* souvenir, a presentational gift commissioned by Lukoil company. [25] Golden ornaments and oxidised silver strikingly combine with the shape of old Russian silver wine bowl on a stand made of Ural Muldakayev jasper and faceted citrines. A creative discovery that became one of the trademark features (a silver structure decorated by faceted citrines) required a lot of skill and patience from the company employees. They utilized both the traditional jewellery techniques and the latest digital technologies. **KnE Social Sciences**



Following the traditions of C.Faberge school which created unique small-scale stone cut items using volume mosaic technique, MOISEIKIN masters also produce unique stone cut figurines that obviously show the so-called "Faberge style". In general, polylithic anthropomorphic compositions became increasingly popular in the Urals in late 20th – early 21st century. [26] They possess all the characteristics of a standalone genre, although Ural traditions of polychromic sculptures made of composite stones were already established in Yekaterinburg in late 18-hundreds. The Falconer souvenir [27] made in three-dimensional mosaic technique is expressive in its shape and colour scheme. This item shows the deliberate positioning of its character, harmonious colour scheme and subjugation of all elements to the whole. The "kaftan" (frock) is made from bright lapis-lazuli; saffiano leather boots, heat and bag – out of the Ural red and brown jasper – subtly match the stand in colour. Golden ornaments and accessories precisely represent historical old Russian costume. The falconer's face, masterfully made of stone, creates a full impression of a living human face of a young bearded man, which is the highest level of technical and artistic achievement in three-dimensional mosaic technique.

Another item worth noting is *Horn of Plenty* by MOISEIKIN company [28]. An image of festivity and luxury is represented by this souvenir that uses historically popular motif successfully imbuing it with sparkling gold and precious stones, as well as with multiple jewellery techniques and materials. Despite the complexity of composition, each decorative element is easily detachable from the jade horn and can be studied closely: the precious emerald grapes, garnet barberry and faceted citrine pineapple. The horn itself is fixed delicately yet firmly on a functional stand made of collector's agate.

MOISEIKIN Jewellery House not only develops the traditions of Russian stonecutting and jewellery art. Innovating methods of fixing the stones – the so-called "dancing diamonds" – was patented by the company. This technical approach allows not only to make the cascade jewellery structures but also to create a "ludic" effect – a "trembling" effect of faceted gems, totally mesmerising, especially in the collection *Ball of Colour*. [29]

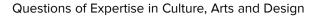
The *Vincent* collection is designed and made using fashionable method of translating paintings into jewellery design. [30] Deep opalescent blue of the opals creates a highly precise and vivid recognizable impression of a night sky painted by Van Gogh; the white and yellow gold setting resembles the painter's brushstrokes; and the blue sapphires complement and accentuate his favourite trademark blue. The *Sunflowers* ring from the same collection is such a nuanced homage to the famous masterpiece that it is



perceived as a "precious hymn" to the great painter. Golden alloy and a laced rim made of whole golden citrine highlight the sunny golden colour of the sunflower's golden petals.

Ringo Jewellery House is famous by its creative approach to jewellery deign, its use of new technological approaches (ruthenium plating) and non-traditional jewellery materials (nanoceramics). A distinguishing technical feature that provides striking visual effect of many collections is a contrast between the shine of white or yellow gold and either shiny or textured black metal surface. The new jewellery line targets completely different customers. MODI, Lucia and Russian Princesses collections [31–32] are made in classical style: their target clients are those who prefer classical jewellery. Avant-garde connoisseurs are offered URBAN and PULSAR collections with impulse, periodicity and parametrism [33–35]. There are unisex club collections Million and ALL OVER AGAIN [36–37] and even humorous jewellery from the collection MATRENA DE URAL [38]. The company's strategy is based on the design of stylistically different jewellery, sometimes very non-traditional in their shape and colour. An example is Bionic style jewellery from the ALILU collection. [39] ALILU collection is characterised by graphic combination of textured surfaces: the precise black ones and the brightly coloured ones, with bright lustre. In all pieces, the texture coloured with black rhodium or ruthenium has an incomparable "natural" pattern. In terms of style and design, the most successful project of Ringo company is its Black Square collection, due to the use of new technology of fixing small diamonds and a 3D prototyping. [40] The collection is dedicated to the art of Kazimir Malevich and develops the concept of Russian abstract art of early 20hundreds. The square has become a basic element of every item in the collection. Clean shapes, the contrast of white gold alloy and black ruthenium electroplating, as well as the combination of white and black diamonds, dramatically translates the Black Square painting into the commercial jewellery design.

Jewellers of Ural is the oldest company in Yekaterinburg. The company acquired world recognition only after a century of work. In 1896, a small workshop opened in Yekaterinburg; in 1996 the fourth-generation heirs of this workshop reached the world market. [41] The company is famous for its collections of lightweight and inexpensive jewellery items, although the range of its products includes some premium items and awards from Russian and international jewellery exhibitions. The Ural school of jewellery artists achieved deserved respect in their own country. [42] Typically the company's jewelleries are made using classical design with floral motives, with exuberant patterns following the style of Russian 19th-century art. Against this background, the innovative





Planetarium collection deserves particular attention: it contains avant-garde elements, complex structural design, composite overlaid details and fantasy cut inlays. [43]

4. Conclusion

The jewellery items made by these companies have been repeatedly nominated for awards at professional competitions within JUNWEX and Hong Kong International Jewellery Show exhibitions.

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