

MELBOURNE



Clockwise from left, Rihanna shining bright in Cartier on the cover of W magazine in 2016; colour and light play a big part in the NGV exhibition's design. Picture: Sean Fennessy; Cartier necklace commissioned in 1932 by Beatrice Mills, Countess of Granard. Picture: Vincent Wulveryck; a room of 24 tiaras, including one that survived the sinking of the RMS Lusitania. Picture: Sue Yeap



Cartier exhibition shines bright



SUE YEAP marvels at a collection of masterpieces with a fascinating history



Portrait of Sir Yadavindra Singh, last Maharaja of Patiala, wearing the Patiala necklace circa 1940.

Elaborate diamond jewellery is out of reach for most of us, so a ticket to Melbourne Winter Masterpieces: Cartier is an affordable way to add a bit of sparkle to everyday life.

Since it began in 2004, more than eight million people have attended Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibitions at NGV, Australia's oldest and most visited art gallery.

Cartier has been adapted and expanded in partnership with the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, showcasing nearly 400 pieces of jewellery, timepieces and other items, 300 of which have never been seen in Australia.

Heritage pieces from the Cartier Collection are supplemented by pieces on loan from public museums and private collections.

Colour and light play a big part in the NGV exhibition's design, a collaboration with Rotterdam's Studio Sabine Marcelis and CLOUD.

Daniel Slater, director of exhibitions at the V&A, says the smash hit was enjoyed by almost 400,000 people in London last year.

He's happy to see it at the NGV — "the only place that makes exhibitions with the boldness, the



Patiala necklace, Cartier Paris, 1928. Picture: Vincent Wulveryck

ambition and the passion of the V&A".

Maison Cartier was founded in Paris in 1847 by Louis-Francois Cartier, with the exhibition exploring Cartier's development and global expansion from 1900 under his grandsons Louis, Pierre and Jacques.

The Cartier family was excellent at record keeping, as demonstrated by letters, sketches, design books and photographs from the Cartier

Archives in Paris, London and New York.

The heritage house's hallmarks include the iconic panther motif to the signature "Garland style" use of bows, ribbons and shimmering platinum.

In the early 20th century, Cartier became the first internationally recognised jewellery house, with an enviable client list of royalty and aristocracy, and later, stars of music, cinema and fashion.

Dame Nellie Melba was an early fan, and the Melbourne-born soprano had an enviable collection of Cartier jewels, some commissioned, others received as gifts.

On display are some of her corsage ornaments, a hairpin, evening clutch bag, brooches, tiara and a 1904 photo autographed by Dame Nellie that Pierre Cartier kept in his living room.

Pieces owned or worn by Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor and Princess Margaret are on show but the one that catches my eye is the enormous and elaborate ceremonial necklace created for Maharaja Sir Bhupindra Singh.

The job to reset the Patiala royal treasury of gemstones in its modern style was one of Cartier's biggest commissions. The

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The Cartier exhibition is on display at NGV until October 4. Picture: Sean Fennessy



Daisy Fellowes' 1936 necklace is regarded as the most spectacular example of Tutti Frutti jewellery created by Cartier. Picture: Vincent Wulveryck

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centrepiece 1928 ceremonial necklace featured nearly 3000 diamonds and other precious gems including a 234.65 carat yellow De Beers diamond.

The necklace and choker disappeared after Indian independence in 1947 and were rediscovered decades later, stripped of the biggest gems. These have been replaced with topaz, quartz, a citrine and other stones. Accompanying the necklace is a portrait of Sir Bhupindra's son, Sir Yadavindra.

I'm not surprised he's seated; wearing this necklace looks like it would give you a stiff neck.

Another eye-catching piece is



Louis Cartier's ideas notebook, 1908-09. Picture: Sue Yeap

the 1936 Indian-inspired necklace commissioned for Parisian socialite Daisy Fellowes (whose mother was heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune), regarded as Cartier's most spectacular example of the Tutti Frutti style.

A striking image of Rihanna on the cover of W Magazine in 2016 hangs at the entry to the darkened

tiara room in which 24 celebrated "celestial halos" appear to be floating.

To quote her lyrics, Rihanna shines "bright like a diamond", dressed as a warrior queen in a dystopian future, wearing Cartier's famed 1902 Scroll tiara and a 1906 choker.

Crafted in the Garland style, the tiara features more than 1000 diamonds mounted in silver and gold rather than platinum.

It was commissioned in 1902 for Adele, Countess of Essex, and later worn by Lady Clementine Churchill, wife of British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, to the coronation of Elizabeth II in June 1953. These shimmer even more during a return evening viewing.

In the same room is a "cursed" tiara given by Canadian businessman Sir Hugh Montagu Allan, to his wife, Lady Marguerite Ethel Allan. She and the tiara survived the German U-Boat sinking of the RMS Lusitania in May 1915. Two of her daughters did not.

Allow enough time, pardon the pun, to check out the innovative watches, and mystery clocks with



The 1902 Scroll tiara crafted in the signature Garland style, worn by Rihanna and Lady Clementine Churchill, and a 1906 choker. Picture: Sean Fennessy

hands that appear to turn by magic.

A 1923 Large Portico mystery clock in the shape of a Japanese tori gate was acquired at auction in 1973 for the permanent collection of extraordinary creations that became known in 1983 as the Cartier Collection.

Diamonds are forever but Melbourne Winter Masterpieces: Cartier only runs daily and Friday evenings at the NGV until October 4. Tickets start from \$19 for children (five to 15), \$39 for concessions and \$43 for adults.

Sue Yeap was a guest of Visit Victoria. They have not influenced this story, or read it before publication.
ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/cartier/



Some of the jewellery on display at the NGV exhibition. Picture: Sean Fennessy