Green ENERGY

A giant Zambian emerald caused a huge buzz in the jewellery world, catching the eye of Chopard's Caroline Scheufele, who has created 15 masterpieces from it *By Kate Matthams Spencer*



Clockwise from this picture: Insofu Collection necklace and ring; 6,225-carat Insofu stone; Insofu Collection ring, Chopard co-president and artistic director Caroline Scheufele wearing an Insofu necklace.







UNDER GOLD-LEAF cornicing and ornate mirrors, models wearing a series of spectacular jewels glided through a plush suite at the Chopard hotel, 1 Place Vendôme, during Paris Fashion Week. Emeralds sparkled and diamonds dazzled under the early spring sunshine, as they breezed in and out in ethereal gowns custom-designed for the occasion. So far, so luxe, but this high jewellery presentation was like no other this season: all the pieces on show featured emeralds cut from a single, magnificent 6,225-carat rough stone.

Caroline Scheufele, Chopard's co-president and artistic director, had unveiled the stone in 2022, not long after acquiring it for the house. It had been mined by Gemfields in Zambia and christened Insofu, which means "elephant" in the local Bemba language, for its astonishing size. "The first time I held it in my hands, I was mesmerised," says Scheufele. "The original owner kept it for 10 years, and then it stayed in my safe for another two. I just couldn't bring myself to start on it; but one day, it just felt right."

It's not the first time Chopard has created a collection from a single rough stone. In 2017, the Swiss jewellery house presented the Garden of Kalahari Collection, using diamonds from a 342-carat rough stone mined in Karowe, Botswana. For Scheufele, acquiring the rough gem before cutting is a chance to work closely with the artisans at the start of its journey to the jeweller's bench, as well as a guarantee of crystal-clear traceability. Compared with diamonds, which can be scanned and mapped, enabling cutters to precisely work out the final yield of a rough stone, emeralds are something of a black box in the gem world. They are more fragile and unpredictable, which lead to a fraught, nine-month cutting process by expert Indian lapidaries who were brought to the Chopard headquarters in Geneva. "I went in every day to see how they were getting on," says Scheufele. "We had prepared a bench for them, but they preferred to work on the floor in the way they were used to. It was a fascinating process." Before making a single cut, the team spent two weeks observing and studying the stone. It would eventually reveal its secrets to the tune of nearly 850 carats of polished emeralds, testament to human skill in the face of awe-inspiring nature.

Most of those stones have found their way into the Insofu Collection, a 15-piece capsule comprising six necklaces, two chokers, three pairs of earrings, four rings, a bracelet and a jewellery watch. After a taster last year—a parure featuring the first available stones, set with rubellites and turquoise, was released during Oscars week—the collection was presented in full to editors in Paris. "In every stone lies a story, and my role is to listen and honour the natural magic they carry as treasures from the Earth," says Scheufele. "With the Insofu Collection, it was about respecting this inherent beauty. I chose the finest-quality stones from the heart of the emerald, pairing them with diamonds, pink sapphires and pearls."

By turns abstract, feminine and opulent, each jewel was created to reflect a different facet of the Insofu emerald's character. But according to Scheufele, they are all united by "the embodiment of the *joie de vivre* of F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*," published 100 years ago this year. A heart-shaped emerald is given an ornate halo of diamonds in a cocktail ring, while geometric stones blaze in a pair of Art Deco drops, and pear-cut emeralds form the stamens of blue titanium flower earrings. Necklaces are by turns refined, like the diamond choker featuring a 2.88-carat emerald-cut emerald; and decadent, like the waist-grazing sautoir of pink pearls and emeralds. The star of the show was the ethical white-gold and platinum elephant pendant worn—trunk upwards, for good luck and prosperity—by its designer, Caroline herself; a patchwork of Insofu emeralds ringed with diamonds, on a custom diamond and emerald chain.

Chopard takes responsibility seriously and was one of the first major houses to switch to the exclusive use of ethical gold from responsible miners in 2018, accredited by the Swiss Better Gold Initiative and Chain-of-Custody certified by the Responsible Jewellery Council. "Traceability and sustainability are always top of mind for me," affirms Scheufele. "Luxury should stand for transparency—whether it's jewellery or sneakers, consumers like to know how the product has been produced. With Insofu, we know that the mine was safe and the miners well-treated. We have Kimberley Process Certification for diamonds, but there is still a long way to go for coloured gems."

Equally important is giving back to local communities. The collection was launched with the charity Elephant Family, which works to mitigate human-elephant conflict, preserve migratory corridors and tackle the challenges facing wildlife. Part of the profits of each jewel sold will support the charity; a fitting way to create tangible impact and pay tribute to the majestic animals who inspired the collection. ■



From left: pearl, white-gold, emerald, paraiba tourmaline and diamond Insofu Collection bracelet; Insofu emeralds; white-gold, platinum, emerald and diamond elephant Insofu Collection necklace; white-gold, emerald, sapphire, diamond and pearl Insofu Collection triple necklace; wildlife charity Elephant Family works with Chopard. **Below:** Insofu Collection earrings.

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CHOPARD.