



FOR ART'S SAKE

A new book celebrates London dealer Tadema Gallery and the exceptional jewels that have made it a favorite of collectors. BY PHYLLIS SCHILLER

Tadema Gallery in London is the brainchild of two professional photographers — married couple Sonya and the late David Newell-Smith — who founded the store to showcase their love of art and its expression in jewelry. Now, the gallery and the fabulous finds it stocked over the years are the subject of a new book, *Tadema Gallery London: Jewellery from the 1860s to 1960s*.

The journey toward opening the store was a “natural progression,” relates Sonya Newell-Smith, who co-wrote the book with jewelry historian Beatriz Chadour-Sampson. It began with “dealing [on a small scale] in the Georgian Village near Camden Passage in Islington with decorative arts objects and art pottery, mainly from the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods. We were offered the chance to take on [the store’s current location at] 10 Charlton Place nearby and jumped at the opportunity because of its favorable and prominent location for antiques. With the eyes of photographers, we viewed all of the arts with a keen visual sense, so the leap to expand was obvious for us. Over the years, we followed our different interests, ranging from the decorative arts to abstract modernist paintings, and ultimately specialized in jewelry.”

A CENTURY OF STYLES

From an original vision focusing “on Art Nouveau and Aesthetic Movement furniture, sculpture, paintings, ceramics and glass [from] 1880 to 1900,” says Newell-Smith, “eventually we found that our real niche was jewelry from the 1860s through the 1960s. Gradually, the decorative arts were faded out, providing space for jewelry cabinets, and we never looked back.”

What she and her husband purchased for the gallery were jewels that “appealed [to] and impressed us,” she explains. And the pieces that most appealed to them were from that 100-year span, which encompassed an impressive list of jewelry styles — among them Art Nouveau, Arts and Crafts, Jugendstil and Art Deco. It was a period that “included amazing developments in

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the field of jewelry,” she continues. “David and I were particularly drawn to the Art Nouveau period, maybe originating in our fascination [with] the decorative arts, and how the opening of the borders of Japan after 300 years in 1854 inspired the arts of the Western world, and Japonisme was born.” What they chose to stock was ultimately “ruled by our hearts, pockets and visual appreciation,” and each piece “has a story to tell.”



THE JOY OF DISCOVERY

Author Chadour-Sampson elaborates on this emotional element in the book, noting that their purchases were “made from the heart rather than from the head, but the choice always proved to be something special.”

In the process, recalls Newell-Smith, “we discovered a number of less-known Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts jewelers. The quality or originality was immediately recognizable, even if little information was available when we acquired them. We were fascinated to find out as much information about them as possible.”

In addition, she says, “we became passionately interested in the British Modernist jewelers of the 1960s, who at the time were being newly discovered. Our enthusiasm for their work ran alongside our attraction [to] abstract art of the period, in particular 20th-century British modernists.”

As the reputation of Tadema Gallery grew, the book relates, it became a go-to source of exceptional jewels for serious collectors and world-class museums, from New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art to London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as others in Europe and the US.

“We always endeavored to meet everyone’s requirements and personal wishes,” says Newell-Smith, “be it a museum curator, private collector,

or those searching for a sentimental gift or engagement ring. Through the years, the personal contact with our clients has always been an exciting and fulfilling journey of discovery and gratification.”

PRESERVING THE PAST

The idea of writing a book about the gallery was a meeting of the minds, says Newell-Smith. She and Chadour-Sampson were good friends “and always had the idea of maybe working on a book of rings, as this is her specialist field. After David ►



Clockwise from top left: Gold, enamel and diamond Lobster ring by René Lalique, France, c. 1900; Sonya and David Newell-Smith; Feuilles d'Automne pendant by Philippe Wolfers in gold, plique-à-jour enamel, diamonds and pearls, Belgium, c. 1902.



From left: Gold, enamel and moonstone Nocturne brooch by Ferdinand Hauser, Austria, c. 1912; silver, gold and shagreen pendant by Jean Després, France, c. 1928.



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passed away, I mentioned to Beatriz how wonderful it would be if we could make a book together about Tadema Gallery.... Much to my delight, she agreed to work on this project.”

For her part, Chadour-Sampson felt it was “hugely important that the history of such an important gallery be documented.” The resulting lavishly illustrated tome presents not only beautiful jewelry, but also information about the periods represented, as well as details on the featured pieces, such as close-ups of maker’s marks.

“Forming the basis for the research,” the jewelry historian notes, were “the

archive books that David and Sonya had compiled over 25 years. In fact, the themes within this publication are based on the original themes of the archive books. These themes allow the reader to experience how certain subjects have been interpreted in jewelry in different periods and countries, and reflect on the varying ideas and styles.”

The chosen images were the ones most suitable to telling the history of jewelry and conveying the assorted meanings, adds Newell-Smith. “We hope the Tadema Gallery book will give the reader a more comprehensive view of the amazing developments in jewelry design of this period, [help people] understand the diversity of jewelers of the period, and — with [the detailed information] on the pieces, including maker’s marks and the over 350 biographies — assist jewelry lovers and specialists alike for future generations.”

Tadema Gallery London: Jewellery from the 1860s to 1960s by Beatriz Chadour-Sampson and Sonya Newell-Smith will be published in August by Arnoldsche Verlagsanstalt. tademagallery.com ■