

IN CONVERSATION
WITH

GEM GENÈVE'S VIVIENNE BECKER

BY
SMITHA SADANANDAN

What is your vision for Vivarium?

My idea for Vivarium is to create the ultimate authoritative destination for jewelry lovers and connoisseurs – I want to show and share the richness of jewelry, history, culture, its role in different civilizations, fashion, great women and their jewels, the romance, meaning, gemology, the science, art and craftsmanship....and so it goes on, overall to give the subject the depth it deserves. I am fortunate that the founders of Gem Genève have given me the opportunity to create a Designer Showcase, which this year is called the Designer Vivarium.

I imagine you do an extensive review of the work, craftsmanship before shortlisting the designers for Vivarium. What key aspects enable you to arrive at the decision?

Yes, I am looking all the time for new or hidden talent: I have strict criteria and am fortunate in being helped in this by Ida Faerber, daughter of Thomas Faerber, co-founder. Ida has superb taste and an incredible



eye and we often make final decisions together. I look particularly for a strong point of view, an individuality of artistic expression, a certain sophistication of craftsmanship and execution – and we look too for something fresh, a new expression for the art of the jewel. Sometimes it's hard to define what I'm looking for but I know when I see it! Also, the jeweler has to be somewhat under the radar, so that the vivarium – as

its name suggests – becomes a place of discovery.

Does emotion influence your decision?

Yes, emotion definitely comes into the decision – as I say, I know when I see something, if I have an immediate emotional response, I know I've found something or someone exciting and innovative. Jewelry is all about emotion.

How many designers did Vivarium start off with, last year?

I think we had nine last year, we have 11 this year – six returning and five new names.

DESIGNER VIVARIUM
ARTISTS:

Alexander Tenzo, Alexandra Jefford, Cora Sheibani, Milio, Ming Lampson, Nadia Morgenthaler, Nicholas Lieou, Ninotchka, Racine, Sean Gilson and Tatiana Verstraeten



MING LAMPSON



TATIANA VERSTRAETEN



ALEXANDER TENZO



NADIA MORGENTHALER



CORA SHEIBANI



NICHOLAS LIEOU

What do you like about Nicholas Lieou's craft?

Nicholas Lieou is a great talent I think – I love his attitude to his work, quite cerebral, his creative take on what I see as a noble classicism – he has an amazing book, a portfolio of ideas and designs that is simply breath-taking and points to his so far untapped potential.

What drew you to the works of Nadia Morgenthaler and Ming Lampson?

Nadia Morgenthaler is one of the most talented and exciting designer-jewelers, artist-artisans in the world today. Her work has a nobility, very new yet with subtle echoes of the past, which of course I love, the mix of 18th century splendor, romance with very modern technology that enables unimagined structures, lightness. Ming too has a wonderful approach to jewelry, the jewels are modern but not self-consciously so, I love her storytelling, her interpretation of themes, especially the newest Reverence for Nature, inspired by Japanese rituals around the natural world.

Tatiana Verstraeten has a fledgling brand. What makes her jewelry interesting to you?

Tatiana Verstraeten is a breath of fresh air in the traditional diamond world of the Place Vendome – she brings fashion and a touch of fantasy, the fantasy of fashion jewelry to High Jewelry and I find this exciting. As soon as I saw the jewels, in her tiny showroom in Paris, I knew these were the jewels women, me included, would want to wear right now.

What, would you say, sets Racine apart from many others in the industry?

For Racine, they are making jewels in the modern idiom, of dégradé pave work but with a subtle twist – they are non-figurative, which I like, beautifully made and I feel that their style is really evolving.