(Designers)

French Heritage Jewelry Brand Oscar Massin Has Been Revived

by **ROXANNE D ROBINSON**
Feb. 15, 2022

Art and technology unite.

The Old World and New World meet each other at the tip of Manhattan, host to ferry terminals greeted by Lady Liberty. For this reason, **LuxImpact** chose this locale to debut the revival of French heritage brand Oscar Massin. The luxury jewelry investment firm — comprised of jewelry exec Frédéric de Narp, creative force Sandrine de Laage, and jewelry executive and investor Caroline de Fontenay — chose Casa Cipriani's Beaux Art-designed Battery Maritime Building for its resemblance to monuments like the Eiffel Tower, which is in the very city where Massin's innovative namesake jewelry brand debuted in 1867. After years of dormancy for Massin (the business ceased upon the designer's death in 1913 as he left behind no heirs), LuxImpact is reimagining the founder's designs to match today's modern lifestyle and technology.

For years, Massin has been relegated to the annals of history via museums, historians, public record offices, and Henri Vever's jewelry bible, a three-tome set chronicling **French jewelry**, often appearing unmarked from the 19th century. On the hunt for just such a niche heritage brand, de Narp discovered Massin looking through original catalogs and Vever's book.

"Oscar caught our attention because his work focused on **diamonds**, different treatments, shapes, sizes, and settings. Above all, he was interested in reinventing the setting; he was a true diamond innovator," de Narp says to TZR.

"He used settings no one had thought of at the time. Even though he invented and registered these techniques, he shared them with other jewelers allowing the industry to flourish. This is the spirit of Oscar," adds de Laage, noting the phantom, stem, filigree, and lace settings are all credited to Massin.

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Courtesy of Oscar Massin

Before launching his own label, Massin worked for major jewelry houses of the 1850s including Lemonnier, Viette, Rouvenat, and Fester. His own brand launched in 1863 while he worked for Boucheron, Mellerio, and more. His international notoriety took off when he exhibited at the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris, where he received a gold medal, his first of many honors and accolades.

Over the course of his career, the designer made tiaras for notables such as Queen Isabelle of Spain the Pasha of Egypt, and Princess Louise of Wales when she married the earl of Fife. (A belt created for Nizam of Hyderabad using the patented filigree setting is another key example of Massin’s work.)

While tiaras for royalty may have been Massin’s forte, today’s jewelry lovers are looking for an easier-to-wear look and, more importantly, sustainable jewelry. The new Oscar Massin offerings tinker with the settings the original founder invented, incorporating them beyond function as design. Aimed for everyday wear, the jewelry introduction features a roster of 50 pieces, consisting of three groups: filigree, lace, and beaded styles.

Courtesy of Oscar Massin

The delicate pieces are made from 100% recycled gold and feature **lab-grown diamonds**. “In parallel to discovering his work, we had a vision to embrace technology and explore these diamonds that even gemologists can’t tell the difference between,” notes de Narp.

The diamonds, which are transparently sourced from **WD Lab Grown Diamonds**, a leading U.S. supplier of high-quality laboratory grown diamonds (under its offspring brand Latitude) reach the highest-level grading E and F of natural diamonds. “It’s a diamond physically, chemically, and visually. It’s the real thing, a crystallized carbon diamond,” assures de Laage.

Latitude works with the Climate & Clean Air Coalition to offset its carbon impact. Driving home the transparency focus, the supplier openly lists the ways in which its gems are superior and eco-friendly on its website, including how they are the first to be third-party Sustainability Rated and to achieve the fifth C of Climate Neutrality. (This sustainability factor is actually what caught the eye of both Kate Hudson and celebrity stylist and entrepreneur Rachel Zoe. Along with becoming brand ambassadors, the two women have also invested in the new business venture.)

And while the full scope of Massin’s influence on the jewelry world may never be fully documented, his legacy has been resuscitated by modern visionaries who hope to follow in his footsteps of marrying art and innovation. The new Oscar Massin launches Feb. 15. exclusively on **OscarMassin.com**, with future retail partners to come. Prices range from $1,400 to $22,000.

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