

What makes high jewellery design so haute? There are prosaic explanations, of course, the obvious one being the precious stones that exalt it beyond everyday jewellery. The frisson of rarity, the fact that each piece is entirely a one-off taking up to two years to bring to fruition, only heightens the whole effect.

But if it was simply about high value, precious stones might as well stay in the bank vault or museum. It's the design where the magic begins.

Current offerings include a Graff waterfall necklace with trademark yellow and white diamonds so voluminous that they radiate around the neck like a sunrise. Bulgari has presented the rose-gold Divas' Dream High Jewellery watch: its tiny dial, with equally teensy scarlet-enamel hands, is hidden like a secret tool in an Egyptian-style cuff radiating beams of juicy rubellites and diamonds.

Then there is Van Cleef & Arpels' flamboyant Cornucopia brooch, which spills forth ripe ruby and sapphire fruits and budding diamond flowers. "Our jewellery designs often display colourful and vibrant combinations of stones," confirms Nicolas Bos, president and CEO of Van Cleef & Arpels. "It's why we really like to create clips, because they can be compared to art objects – like genuine miniature sculptures."

"Craftsmanship at this level is extremely demanding, so everything about the design process, the sheer skill of the design, is totally unusual, crazy even," says Pierre Rainero, Cartier's director of image, style, and heritage. This year, the Paris jewellery house presented the



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Left: GUCCI gold, white- and fancy-diamond, garnet and rubellite Allegoria high-jewellery hair band. KERAMIKKVERKSTEDET KRISTIN ANTONSEN glazed vitreous stoneware birdhouses with gold and platinum lustre details, from about £198

Above, from top: HARRY WINSTON platinum and diamond Couture Diamond bracelet and necklace. J SCHATZ stoneware Egg birdhouse, \$265