

SOLITAIRE

THE FINE ART OF JEWELLERY

*asian
artisans*

Anna Hu
Vanessa Leu
Michelle Ong

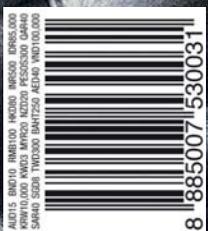
*timeless
facets*

Moonphase Watches
Oriental Elements
Jade Jewellery

*PLUS:
Beyoncé
And
The Art Of
Enamelling*

66

August - September 2013



*Eastern
Charms*

A Cultural Calligraphy Of Jewels

CARNET, MICHELLE ONG

by Sandy Tan



Deco Nouveau

A designer's unpredictable formula flourishes



When jewellery designer Michelle Ong created one of her first creations — a palm tree brooch — she wanted to capture the natural movement of leaves. Rose-cut gemstones became the magic component. Ong was always drawn to the juxtaposition of light and depth in vintage cut stones: “I love to use them as featured stones or in combination with other gemstones and cuts,” she says.

Ong’s creations come under the brand Carnet that she founded in 1990. The vintage rose cut, consisting of 24 facets resembling a spiralling flower petal, still does the trick in her new designs. Ong is also an avid collector of Art Nouveau and Art Deco jewellery, which hold a strong influence in her creations. But she would not pin down just one source of inspiration: “I may respond to a form, a line, a

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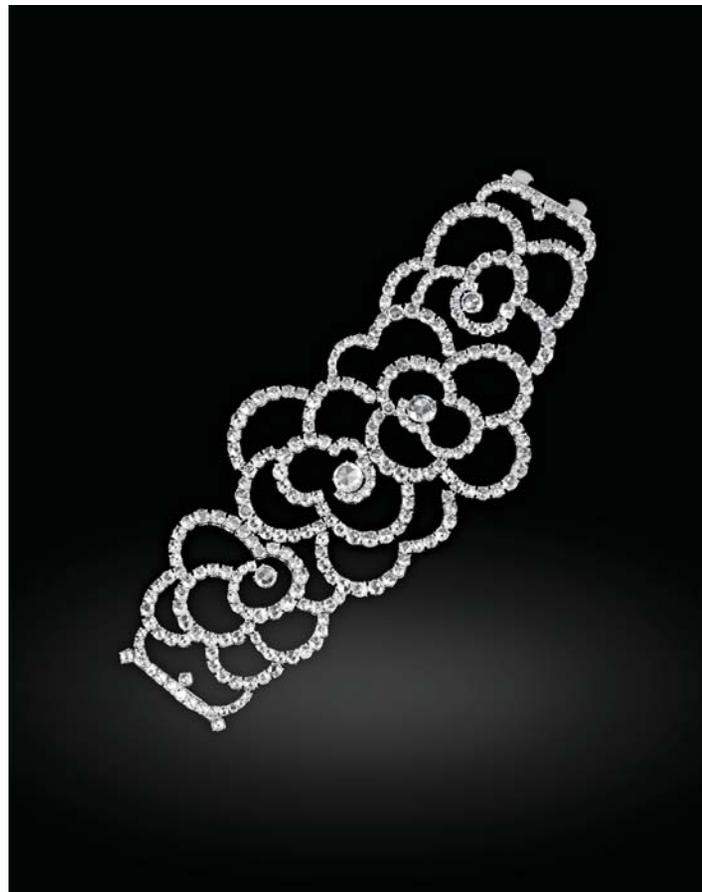
flower — even an intangible mood,” Ong explains, “I love to take these different elements and make them my own — something unexpected and beautiful.”

Aesthetic continuity is important for the 55-year-old designer from Hong Kong. Ong never works on collections in the usual sense but rather applies existing gemstones and sources of inspiration. Recently, she has been designing a jewelled plaid which displays bold yet delicate floral motifs, and evokes a dream-catcher fantasy doused in sapphires and diamonds. Ong ensures that each project represents her vision, reflects the gemstones she has chosen, and is wearable. As a perfectionist, she must feel satisfied on all levels of the creative process. Such attention to detail and result shows in statement necklaces, earrings, bracelets, rings and brooches in Carnet’s catalogue.

Some pieces carry apparent oriental themes, while others follow a whimsical direction. Unpredictable silhouettes of the *Floating Illusion* necklace are coloured in amethysts, pink sapphires, rubies, white diamonds, set in platinum and titanium. A pearl centrepiece offers a soft contrast. A sparkling bracelet weaves green garnets, emeralds and white diamonds into a lotus motif set in platinum. There are times when the chosen gemstone may dictate a piece’s storyline: the *Diamond Chimes* earrings shines the spotlight on a chandelier of white diamonds, set in 18k white gold and platinum. Clouds form a recurring theme, evident in the *CloudWave* platinum ring and *Floating Clouds*

OPPOSITE
Rainbow Clouds earrings with white diamonds, rubies, blue sapphires and amethysts set in platinum and titanium

THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT
Ong founded Carnet in 1990; *Diamond Chimes* earrings with white diamonds set in 18k white gold and platinum; *Sparkling Lotus* bracelet with white diamonds, green garnets and emeralds



18k white gold bracelet — both featuring white diamonds in cloud-shaped motifs. More elaborate craftsmanship shows in pieces like the *Celestial Dragon* brooch: a dragon motif made of jade is surrounded by a cloud of rubies, blue and pink sapphires, highlighted by white diamonds set in platinum and titanium. The *Memoirs* ring features an intricately carved jade, set in platinum with white diamonds.

Ong's designs have garnered a strong following from the elite in Hong Kong and China. Her pieces are also sold through jeweller Harry Fane's Obsidian gallery in London. The *Cruciform Key* which Ong was commissioned to design for the film *The Da Vinci Code* is another notable mention. The self-taught designer says her unpredictable and feminine style caters to women who

make bold choices in life and their careers. Carnet's atelier sits in Hong Kong's Sheung Wan district, where skilled artisans bring Ong's designs to life by manipulating gemstones and creating moulds from her drawings. The rose cut must be performed by hand using blades and scalpel-like knives. Some pieces may only be complete once Ong has found the right stone, and this may take years. But the perfectionist designer is in no hurry to compromise any element of surprise in her work. ♦



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

Memoirs ring with white diamonds and carved jade in platinum; *Floating Clouds* bracelet with white diamonds in 18k white gold; *Celestial Dragon* brooch with white diamonds, rubies, blue and pink sapphires set in platinum and titanium

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