

BRAZIL RISING | CHICAGO'S COMEBACK | ARTIST JEWELERS

ART+AUCTION

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
FOR ART COLLECTORS

BLOUINARTINFO.COM

SEPTEMBER 2013



Robert Indiana

POP PIONEER

hul Kadakia
velry
w York

MICHELLE ONG

Working in partnership with gem dealer Avi Nagar, Michelle Ong creates jewels that are highly prized around the world. Unable to find what she wanted to wear, she began designing simply for herself in the 1980s. When admiring friends inquired after the pieces, going so far to ask her to make items for them, Ong undertook an apprenticeship with a family friend who was one of the city's first diamond importers, and her Hong Kong-based business was born. Under the name Carnet she now operates two boutiques, one of which was designed by architect Ed Tuttle, where work is displayed on landscapes of suede organic forms contained in lacquered wood vitrines.

Born in Hong Kong and having spent much time in the United States, Ong pioneered a jewelry style of East-West fusion, referencing European nobility in her interpretations of lace and organza and use of rose-cut diamonds, and blending these with Asian motifs such as dragons, floating clouds, bouncing magic hoops, and the use of jade. Her designs are characterized by a lyrical yet powerful femininity, combining and contrasting fragility with strength and tradition with modernity. "She has developed a unique style in the world of jewelry, both bold and

extremely refined," says François Curiel, president of Christie's Asia.

For instance, Ong was one of the first to use large slices of gray dendritic diamonds, set as long drop earrings,

framed in fine trails of brilliant-cuts, or used as the cover of an evening watch. Pieces are seen with some frequency at auction; a pair of ear pendants, featuring 1.75- and 2.27-carat diamonds, achieved £16,250 (\$24,895) at Christie's London this past June.

Her starting point, she has said, is often the stone itself, its intense color or play of light, around which she weaves creations of casual glamour and supreme fluidity and flexibility. "Her jewels have become collectible items for a niche market of collectors attracted by her unconventional and elegant aesthetic vision," says Curiel. Like great 20th-century female designers such as Jeanne Toussaint or Suzanne Belperron, Ong instinctively understands the relationship between a woman and her jewels.



Clockwise from above: Yellow and brown diamonds make up a pear brooch's natural color. Some 3,000 white diamonds in platinum create a dramatic necklace. Amethysts, emeralds, and white diamonds compose a Dancing Dragon brooch. Thirty carats of purplish-blue sapphires and white diamonds are set in white gold and titanium in the Bejeweled Nile ring.



"She has developed a unique style in the world of jewelry, both bold and extremely refined."

