



THE MOTHER OF REINVENTION

Chopard's Caroline Scheufele pushes her annual Red Carpet high jewellery collection to surpass itself year after year, discovers ZARA ZHUANG



FROM LEFT:
CAROLINE
SCHEUFELE;
A PAIR OF FIRE
OPAL EARRINGS

CREATING HIGH JEWELLERY isn't easy; creating an annual high jewellery collection that grows larger with each year is even harder, but that's exactly what Chopard Co-President and Creative Director, Caroline Scheufele, has been doing since 2007, when the Swiss Maison introduced its Red Carpet collection of 60 jewels to mark the 60th anniversary of the Cannes Film Festival, having first become the festival's official partner in 1998. Over the years, as actresses walked up the steps of the Palais des Festivals decked out in

Chopard's dazzling Red Carpet creations, the luxury brand has become synonymous with the Riviera's high-wattage glamour and trendsetting style.

Scheufele exercises her artistic talent with every collection launched, pushing the boundaries of design, incorporating new elements and charting the course for each year's offerings. This year's 69-piece collection features flowing, supple, openworked designs, based on rounded shapes and evoking delicate lacework, while also showcasing the immense possibilities achievable when innovation and technology meet creative mastery.

An element that appears frequently in the collection is titanium, a metal that has been,

until now, more often associated with aerospace engineering and military applications. Titanium offers Chopard a boost of flexibility for its designs: The company developed a way to reproduce gemstone colours in titanium through electrolysis, a chemical treatment that fuses pigment into the pores of the metal. This technique makes the metal seem to disappear once coloured gems are set, Scheufele explains. "I think we're the only house using this for the time being," she adds. "For sure somebody will soon copy it, but that comes with success."

Remarking that setting high jewellery with only platinum and gold is the old-fashioned way, Scheufele says clients are open to the company's adoption of titanium used chromatically. The lightweight metal offers Chopard greater room for creativity and more elaborate, extravagant designs. "The worst thing is a woman who sits down in a restaurant and takes off her earrings; that means they hurt," she explains. "Gold has a lot of weight; so often, big earrings are very heavy. By using titanium, we can make really big earrings that don't weigh you down at all when you wear them."

Gemstones less prominent than diamonds or the big three jewels



FROM LEFT: GREEN JADEITE AND
DIAMOND EARRINGS; WHITE JADEITE
EARRINGS; OPAL FLOWER BROOCH



— rubies, sapphires and emeralds — are given a chance to shine in the 2016 Red Carpet collection by being set in chinoiserie-inspired high jewellery pieces. Chinese jade, used for the first time in Chopard's high jewellery, owes its inclusion to Scheufele's personal love and admiration for its beauty and long history. Carved in-house by Chopard's jewellers and showing up in three pairs of earrings this year, jade is set to join the Maison's stable of gemstones. Timepieces bearing jade dials will also make an appearance at Baselworld next year, Scheufele adds.

Unexpected gems such as black and fire opals also star in exquisite creations, looking no less outstanding next to the traditional stones. "I think it's very nice to mix

emeralds with semi-precious stones because you can get a completely different shading of jewellery," she says of the approach to cater to the more youthful tastes of younger customers. "I always like to use new stones or gems that have not been as commonly featured by other houses."

Coloured stones also debuted this year in the Green Carpet capsule collection, a subset of the Red Carpet range that comprises pieces crafted exclusively from ethically extracted Fairmined-certified gold. Through a partnership with the Gemfields group, supplier of responsibly sourced coloured gemstones, Chopard added emeralds from certified Zambian mines to this year's designs. Building on the house's four-year effort to raise awareness of sustainable high jewellery, the inclusion of ethically sourced raw materials redefines the pinnacle of luxury, according to Scheufele. "It's added value that you know there were no children working in the mine, the mine is secure and we didn't spoil the planet by

extracting the stones," she says. "So I think there are a lot of aspects that [reflect] true luxury and maybe people are not yet aware enough that it can be done."

Scheufele's crusade to minimise the environmental impact of creating luxury items goes beyond high jewellery — she believes the battle of ensuring sustainability ought to extend into arenas including fashion, cars and even furniture. But the rest of the jewellery industry hasn't taken up the pursuit of sustainability quickly enough for her liking, she admits. "They're not very active yet, they do a lot of blah-blah (empty talk), but the real thing is to do it," she says. Her dream remains to create her jewellery with Fairmined gold and gemstones. Of that, Scheufele says: "Hopefully, one day." ■