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GOING FOR BAROQUE

Venice's first family of memento mori jewelry takes up temporary residence in San Francisco

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Over the past years, the mediums of art and fashion have grown ever more intertwined as cultural institutions have taken to exhibiting the latter as the former. Inspired by exhibits like the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty," in 2011, and "China: Through the Looking Glass," in 2015—both of which broke attendance records for the museum—the trend of exhibiting singular designs hasn't been restricted to garments. Take the Met's presentation "Jewels by JAR," in 2013, or the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's exhibitions on Cartier (2009) and Bulgari (2013). The City by the Bay is now the home of a new fine jewelry showcase, "Coveted: Jewels by Codognato," which runs from December 8 through January 7 (by appointment), at Union Square's Serge Sorokko Gallery.



Tatiana Sorokko with a selection of the exhibition's pieces, which she and her husband, Serge Sorokko, helped choose from Codognato's archive. She wears her own Codognato necklace and pendant from the 1950s, inspired by an ancient sculpture located inside Rome's Church of Santa Maria del Popolo.

Founded in Venice by Simeone Codognato, in 1866, Casa Codognato has remained a family business for four generations. Simeone's great-grandson, Attilio Codognato, has been in charge of the venerable House since 1958. Throughout the company's 150-year history, the work of the Codognato family has never been exhibited, or offered for sale, beyond the walls of its shop on Venice's Piazza San Marco (apart from being shown in select museums). "Our exhibition is both culturally relevant and deeply personal," explains Serge Sorokko. "Attilio is truly an influential contemporary artist, who for over half a century has been creating objects of unparalleled beauty in line with a fabled family tradition."



A selection of Codognato works from the 19th and 20th century.

In the last century and a half, Codognato's clientele has included the royal families of Italy and Russia, writers and artists like Jean Cocteau, Ernest Hemmingway and Andy Warhol, and arbiters of style Coco Chanel, Barbara Hutton and Jaqueline Kennedy Onasis. Today his shop is frequented by these icons' contemporary equivalents: from Princess Firyal of Jordan to model Kate Moss to fashion editor Carine Roitfeld to actress Nicole Kidman to fashion designer Tom Ford. "Codognato's art is distinct," says Sorokko's wife, Tatiana. "When you buy Codognato jewels, you join an exclusive club of extraordinary people, like Diana Vreeland, who bought Blackamoor brooches, or Richard Burton, who shopped for Elizabeth Taylor."



Inside its original display case, a 19th century necklace set in 18 karat gold with diamonds and antique rock crystal skulls, designed by Simeone Codognato, is now part of Attilio's private collection.

Sorokko's seminal exhibition is comprised of fifty *objets d'art* that have been thoughtfully culled from the Codognato archives and Attilio's personal collection. Pieces on display date from the late 19th century, but certain elements of many of these works go much farther back. "For instance," Sorokko explains, "in one ring, elements of a 13th century ornament have been added to a 19th century design to create a one-of-a-kind masterpiece."



A 19th century ring in 18 karat gold with elements from the 13th century, from the archives of Casa Codognato. A secret compartment opens on one side.

As Attilio tells it, the origins of the gallery's exhibit can be traced to Tatiana, a top model, fashion editor and *couture* collector who has been a friend and client for 25 years. For most of that time she's tried to persuade him to show at her husband's eponymous space. "I have always been reluctant to exhibit outside of my place in Venice," Attilio explains. "After more than two decades, their persistence has paid off."

All images courtesy of Sam Henschen

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