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STYLE

Macabre jewelry show in S.F. marks anniversary of Codognato

By **Carolyn Zinko**

Dec 2, 2016





The macabre jewelry of the Italian jewelry house of Codognato, known for its skull motifs with gems, is the subject of new exhibition at the Serge Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco from Dec. 9 through Jan. 7, 2017.

Codognato

Watch any Hollywood awards show, and the cameras are sure to zoom in on actresses wearing glittering borrowed diamonds, sapphires and rubies from luxury purveyors like Tiffany, Bulgari and Harry Winston.

One name missing from those promotional parades is Codognato, an Italian jewelry house known for a grittier but still extravagant style of adornment — precious stones set in skull motifs — that date to the company's founding by Simeone Codognato in Venice in 1866.

A selection of macabre necklaces, rings, earrings and brooches by Codognato will shine in a local spotlight in an exhibition, “Coveted: Jewels by Codognato,” that debuts this week at the Serge Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco. The show, with pieces of jewelry up for sale, opens with a private party on Thursday, Dec. 8, and is open to the public from Dec. 9 through Jan. 7, 2017.

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The exhibition is billed as the first show of Codognato (pronounced coe-don-YAH-toe) to be held outside of a museum and marks the 150th anniversary of the jewelry house. Sorokko and his wife, former runway model Tatiana Sorokko, are collectors of the jewelry and count [Attilio Codognato](#), the founder’s grandson and a jewelry designer since 1958, as a friend.

“This exhibition is both culturally relevant and deeply personal,” Serge Sorokko said in a statement. “Attilio is an influential contemporary artist who, for over half a century, has been creating unique objets d’art of astounding beauty.”

The skulls, or memento mori, are reminders of the cycle of life and death. In recent decades, skulls have found their way into high fashion in the work of clothing designers such as [John Galliano](#) and [Alexander McQueen](#). Codognato in recent

years has been collected by pop star [Elton John](#), model [Kate Moss](#), actress [Nicole Kidman](#) and Princess Firyal of Jordan, according to an exhibition spokesman. Past clients have included opera star [Maria Callas](#), [Coco Chanel](#), author [Ernest Hemingway](#) and actor [Richard Burton](#), according to Tatiana Sorokko in an article on Codognato for Harper's Bazaar in 2014.

Clothing and jewelry exhibitions have become an increasingly popular draw for museums, as evidenced by blockbuster fashion shows like "Savage Beauty," the Alexander McQueen retrospective that drew more than 600,000 visitors to [the Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) in 2011. Locally, the new [de Young Museum's](#) top 10 shows in the first 10 years of its existence included the retrospectives of [Jean Paul Gaultier](#) (279,114 visitors in 2012) and [Yves Saint Laurent](#) (261,214 in 2009). Also popular: its "Cartier and America" show in 2009 and "The Art of Bulgari: La Dolce Vita & Beyond" in 2014.

It may not suit everyone's taste, but Codognato has dedicated fans of the fantastic. At auction, Codognato snake bracelets and necklaces with jeweled skulls have fetched \$10,000 to \$35,000, according to sales information on Sothebys.com and other websites.

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"Codognato is one of the few jewelers who have forged their own identity without pandering to commercial interests," said [Simon Teakle](#) by email, a longtime Christie's gemologist who now runs his own jewelry business in Connecticut. "Their jewelry is created with individuality, humour and style."

Carolyne Zinko is a [San Francisco Chronicle](#) staff writer. Email:

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“Coveted: Jewels by Codognato” 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday Dec. 9-Jan. 7. Serge Sorokko Gallery, 55 Geary St., S.F. (415) 421-7770.

Dec 2, 2016



By **Carolyne Zinko**



Carolyne Zinko, a native of Wisconsin, joined The San Francisco Chronicle in 1993 as a news reporter covering Peninsula crime, city government and political races. She worked as the paper’s society columnist from 2000 to 2004, when she wrote about the lifestyles of the rich but not necessarily famous. Since then, she has worked for the Sunday Style and Datebook sections, covering gala night openings and writing trend pieces. Her profiles of personalities have included fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg, Twitter co-founder Biz Stone and Emanuel Ungaro fashion house owner Asim Abdullah, to name a few. In a six-month project with The Chronicle’s investigative team, she recently revealed the misleading practices of a San Francisco fashion charity that took donations from wealthy philanthropists but donated little to the stated cause of helping the developmentally disabled. On the lifestyle front, her duties also including writing about cannabis culture for The Chronicle and its cannabis website, www.GreenState.com website.

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