

La belle femme

Oscar Wilde said, "Women are made to be loved, not understood." Perhaps he was right. For centuries, the enigma that is woman has been written about, sung about, and painted about and yet we're probably no closer to revealing her many delicate and at times vexing intricacies, than when we first begun.

Cartier pays homage to the beauty and mystery of women and the timeless city of Paris with their recently unveiled Paris Nouvelle Vague Collection. In seven stylish short films, 'the jeweller of kings' highlights just a few of the many facets of her personality.

Photos: Stephan Abry © Cartier 2013

Cartier



Nouvelle Vague Cinema

In the 1950s, Nouvelle Vague Cinema came to the fore, breaking free from the constraints of typical Hollywood films of this era. It portrayed a real and vibrant Paris and her inhabitants, through magnificent extended shots, realistic dialogue communicated through natural performances, and socio-political commentary. Endings were ambiguous or unresolved and expression and meaning were favoured over story or narrative.

Nouvelle Vague Directors shared an intense passion for cinema, and believed that the mainstream releases at the time were not a true expression of human life, thought and emotion. The movement was led by the likes of Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, and Jacques Rivette, (who were the core of the movement and were all writers for Cahiers du Cinema), as well as Alain Resnais, Louis Malle, Agnès Varda, Jacques Demy.

Through their thought-provoking and inspired films, these impassioned directors attempted to share the mysteries of human nature through the inner psyche of their characters, often fearlessly tackling controversial subjects in inventive and philosophically complex ways. Their aim was to express truth and to make the viewer think and feel something of their own lives, not just about what was happening on screen.

Modest budgets forced technological and stylistic innovations. It is common to see hand-held cameras, rapid editing, location shooting, natural lighting and direct sound recording in Nouvelle Vague productions.

There are a number of noteworthy Nouvelle Vague films, which are an excellent starting point for those who are interested in understanding more about this movement. Les Quatre Cents Coups (The 400 Blows, 1959), and Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim, 1962) directed by Francois Truffaut. À Bout De Souffle (Breathless, 1960), Le Mépris (Contempt, 1963) and Pierrot le Fou (1965) directed by Jean-Luc Godard. Ma Nuit Chez Maud (My Night With Maud, 1969) directed by Eric Rohmer and Le Boucher (The Butcher, 1970) directed by Claude Chabrol.

While not a formal movement – and by no means the only cinematic revolution occurring across Britain and Europe at the time – Nouvelle Vague was the most well-known and is seen today as the fore-runner of modern independent film, one which has influenced many celebrated contemporary directors such as Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, Bernardo Bertolucci and Quentin Tarantino. As Scorsese said, “The French New Wave has influenced all filmmakers who have worked since, whether they saw the films or not. It submerged cinema like a tidal wave”.



Cartier Collection Paris Nouvelle Vague

The directors of the Nouvelle Vague era attempted to delve into and share the essence of what makes us human. With their newest jewellery collection 'Paris Nouvelle Vague', Cartier too, has attempted to both interpret and celebrate the quintessence of the modern woman.

Through seven short films, directed by critically acclaimed film, commercial and creative directing duo, Isabel Whitaker and Marc Hawker, Cartier have attempted to capture and share the unguarded, personal moments of a Parisian woman during the course of her day. In the collection, they have focused on the mischievous, voluptuous, impish, emancipated, sparkling, delicate and glamorous facets of a woman. Their creative gallery of jewellery and cocktail rings is an embodiment of these wonderful flourishes of character.

The French capital and Cartier have been inextricably linked since the Maison's establishment in Paris in 1847 by Louis-François Cartier and it is fitting therefore, that the films were shot on location in and around this enchanting and evocative city. The directors employed seven eclectic versions of Cole Porter's 'I Love Paris' to run as the backdrop for each of the films, cleverly setting the mood and spirit of both the woman and the moment.

The coquettish voice of Vanessa Paradis perfectly complements 'L'Espiègle' - The Mischievous side of a woman as you catch a glimpse of her unadulterated happiness. The vibrant city is her playground and she knows how to have fun. Cartier's designs for L'Espiègle are just as vivid and playful, confetti clusters of blue and green lapis lazuli cabochons and dazzling diamonds.

In 'Voluptueuse - Voluptuous' the seductive and eternally feminine side of a woman is unveiled. Here the exquisite baroque-inspired designs of



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the Voluptueuse collection reflect the ever-intertwining streets of Paris and her neo-classical architecture, as well as the complexity of a woman's grand passion and her love affair with life. 'Voluptueuse' is a sophisticated collection of pearls and diamonds ever-circling elegantly back upon each other in life-reflecting dance.

There is an 'Impish' side to every woman, when she is living her life in full colour, where she is breathless with delight. Cartier's 'Impertinente' film and jewellery collection speaks to the excitement of stolen kisses, a life in constant motion, and a child-like humour that slips out when a woman's guard is down. Onyx, diamonds and lapis lazuli set an avant-garde mood as they spiral across the skin in a segmented rainbow of colour.

In 'Affranchie - Emancipated', the mood is darker, edgier and more sexy, reflecting the radically modern French woman. She is intelligent, cultured and precise, a woman who knows what she wants and how to get it. At the same time, she is uncomplicated, with simple allure. Here too the collection is a beautiful modern geometric complement of graduated colour, with ribbons of smoked quartz, haematites, amethysts and calibrated diamonds.

There is just something about her, she sparkles. She shines. Cartier's 'Pétillante - Sparkling' Collection reveals a woman's cheeky, festive and flirtatious side. She is the brilliant centre of attention and commands your eye. Inspired by a blaze of fireworks and the starry night's sky, this dazzling collection evokes movement and light with its gold bead frills studded with diamonds and pink sapphires.

Never mistake the delicate nature of a woman for weakness. It is in her delicate state that she is at her most authentic, her most beautiful, her most free. In Cartier's 'Délicate - Delicate' we witness the subtle nuances and hushed secrets of a woman alone with her thoughts, but not lonely. We are taken in by her serenity and poise, knowing she is a woman of



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 – Catherine Deneuve

substance, who can bear all things and flourish. Emulating this quiet, gentle strength of a woman, the Délicate collection is a charming, subtle twist of white and pink gold, half adorned with diamonds, half laid bare. In the last of their seven short films, Cartier pays homage to 'La Glamour – The Glamour' of a woman. They salute her unconventional, bold and beguiling nature. She is in command with the world at her feet. Her many facets revealed like the layered petals of an exquisite bloom. The La Glamour collection too, unfurls in gorgeous curves of rippling black lacquer and sparkling diamonds. Luscious jewels for a luscious, glamorous woman.

Strong but vulnerable

The actresses from the Nouvelle Vague era were forthright, strong, intelligent, beautiful women. Over the years these enigmatic women have imparted insights into the many facets of a woman. Catherine Deneuve once said, "A woman has to be intelligent, have charm, a sense of humor, and be kind. It's the same qualities I require from a man." About herself, she said, "People who know me know I'm strong, but I'm vulnerable."

Jean Seberg is quoted as saying, "I'm unapologetic not because I'm strong-willed or overconfident, I'm unapologetic because this is it; this is my life. There is nothing I can do, no one I can please. I am a person with a strong sense of being, that's all."

Brigitte Bardot, perhaps one of France's biggest stars in the 1950s and 1960s, who shunned cinema and the fame that came with her foray into film said, "I am shocking, impertinent and insolent that's how it is."

While it might be near impossible to unravel the many layers of a woman, Cartier has certainly highlighted and paid tribute to many of her exquisite facets and created a striking collection for each of her many moods. ■ Lindsay Grubb

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