

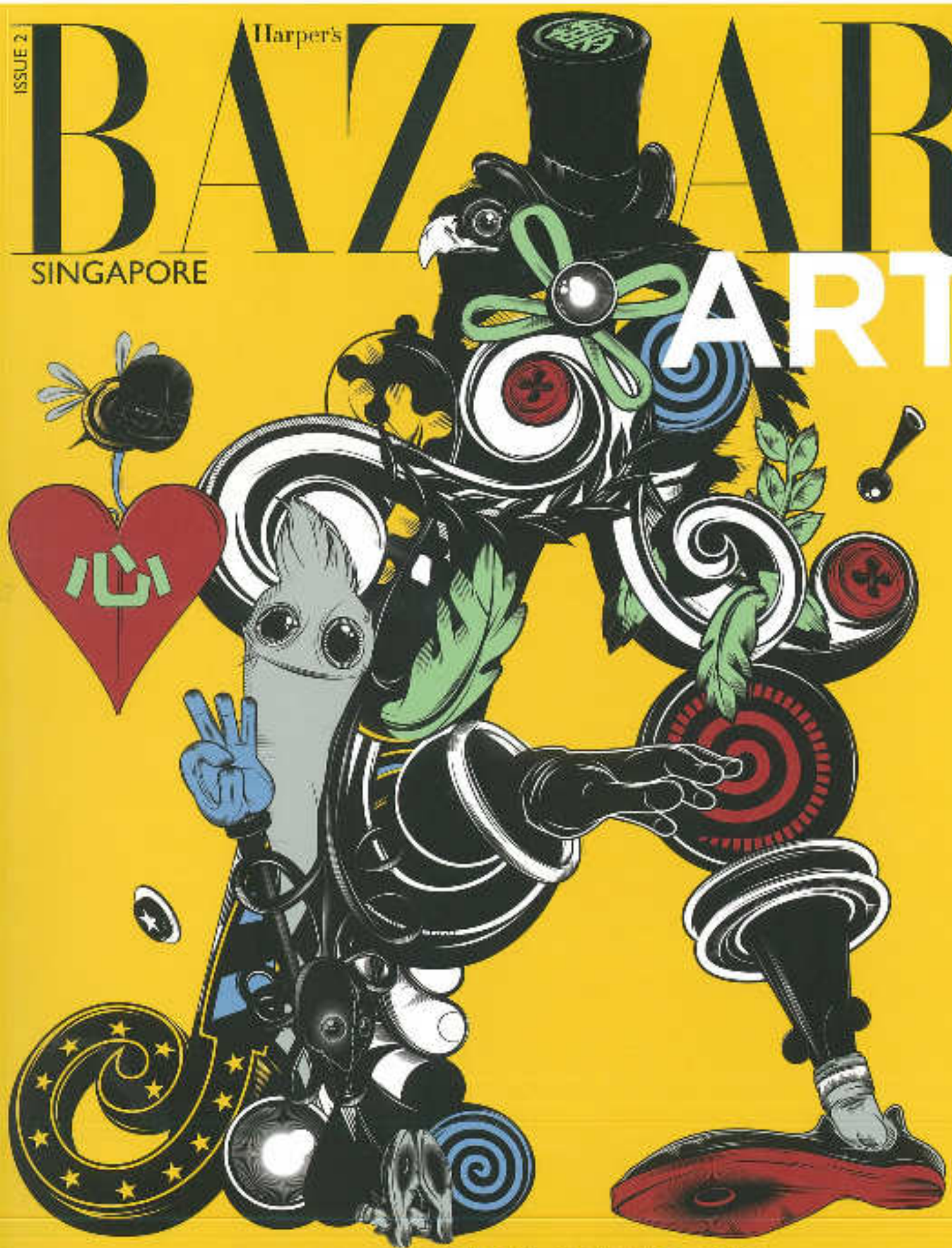
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Harper's

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THE GRAND DAME

The best antique dealers in the world will be heading to Paris next month for the legendary Biennale des Antiquaires, says Claire Turrell



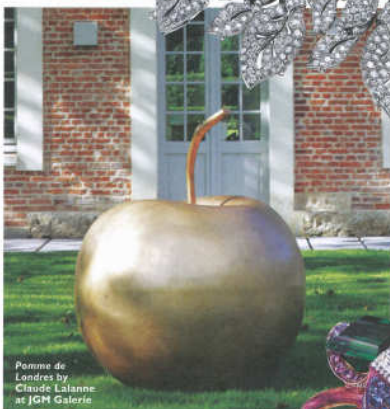
Necklace, Bulgari



Torchere Regence by Galerie François Léage



Trésor de Perse necklace, Boucheron



Pomme de Londres by Claude Lalanne at JGH Galerie



Pigeon by François Pompon at Galerie Xavier Eeckhout



Gilded Louis XV clock at Kraemer Gallery



Goddess of Harvest ring, Wallace Chan

La Marine à Nogent Le Perreux by Raoul Dufy at Stoppenbach et Delestre



Sol Lunaires by Ado Chafe at Galerie Yves Gastou



Christian Deydier, President of Syndicat Nationale des Antiquaires (The Antiques Dealers Association), is about to lift open the lid of the world's biggest jewel box. Every two years, antique and jewellery houses throughout the world are invited to put their most sought-after pieces on display at the Grand Palais in Paris at the Biennale des Antiquaires. There's no doubt that not only does this biennale come with a huge insurance policy, it also comes with another enormous burden... When it launched in 1962, the organising committee said that they wanted to "create an event where the beauty of the objects displayed would rival that of the women who would visit the exhibition." A bold claim, seeing as some of Hollywood's most beautiful women have been among its guests, but that claim has gone unchallenged nonetheless.

And now it falls on Deydier from 11 to 21 September 2014 to create a biennale that will leave everyone weak at the knees. "Unlike any other art fair in the world, every edition of the biennale is different. For each one we change the scenographer, the layout and the atmosphere," says Deydier. "Each time it's like creating a new fair. So, yes, I can still have some sleepless nights..."

However, if there's one thing that Deydier doesn't have to worry about it's the quality of the items on show. Not only does every exhibitor have to be a member of the Syndicat National des Antiquaires, but to take part in the biennale they need to be vetted by its selection committee. "We want to ensure that all the pieces that are exhibited are of top quality," says Deydier. "And we want to convey the French 'art de vivre.' We want the biennale to be an experience and not only an antiques fair."

This experience includes a setting created by Jacques Grange, that resembles the Gardens of Versailles, and a gastronomic restaurant, which has an array of Michelin-starred chefs overseeing the menu. But as fine as the dining will be, it's the jewels and antiques that everyone has come for. Among the exhibitions showing is the oldest family-owned company in Paris, Maison Kraemer, who will be exhibiting 18th-century objets d'art; Bulgari will be showing its new MVSA line; Boucheron will be unveiling its high jewellery collection Rêves d'Ailleurs; and there's Asian jeweller Wallace Chan, who sold a jade and diamond necklace at the previous biennale for a heart-stopping 56 million euros. This will be of particular interest to the Asian visitors, who have shown such interest in the event that Deydier is now said to be launching a similar event in China. "My advice is to simply enjoy what can be considered as the best 'ephemeral museum' in the world," says Deydier. And who needs more of an invitation than this? ■
For more information visit www.sna-france.com

Château Enchanté clip, Van Cleef & Arpels

Gilded bronze fire dog at Kraemer Gallery



STARTING YOUR GEM COLLECTION

His auction house achieved a world record when it sold a Ceylon sapphire in 2012. When it comes to rocks there's not much gem expert Graeme Thompson of Bonhams doesn't know...

What should you start your collection with?

Colourless diamonds are very wearable. Start with earrings or a pendant and buy at the right price. Once you understand gems you can move onto different categories, such as coloured gems, jadeite... You could start a collection from as little as \$600. You can buy a nice pair of diamond studs for that. If you want to start collecting fine jewellery you need to be looking at spending \$6,000 upwards.

Is collecting costume jewellery a good idea?

Eighteenth-century costume jewellery is the only thing worth investing in. Spending \$15k doesn't make a lot of sense seeing you can get a gem for that price. Costume jewellery has no resale value.

How should you look after your collection?

You need to be careful how you treat it. When women sit at a dressing table and place their rings on the glass they can scratch the gems. You also need to clean your jewellery. You need to oil emeralds regularly with baby oil and you can clean diamonds with toothpaste.

Which modern jeweller will soon be as collectable as Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels?

One modern designer's work which is very collectable is Andrew Grimar. He was an engineer and became a jeweller. He died [in 2007] and his wife Jojo now runs the company. His brooches look as if they are iced over and he used crystals straight out of the ground. His pieces are really buyable.

What's the biggest mistake you can make when buying jewellery? You can never really make a mistake when buying jewellery if you wear it and love it.

PHOTOGRAPHS: BIENNALE DES ANTIQUAIRES