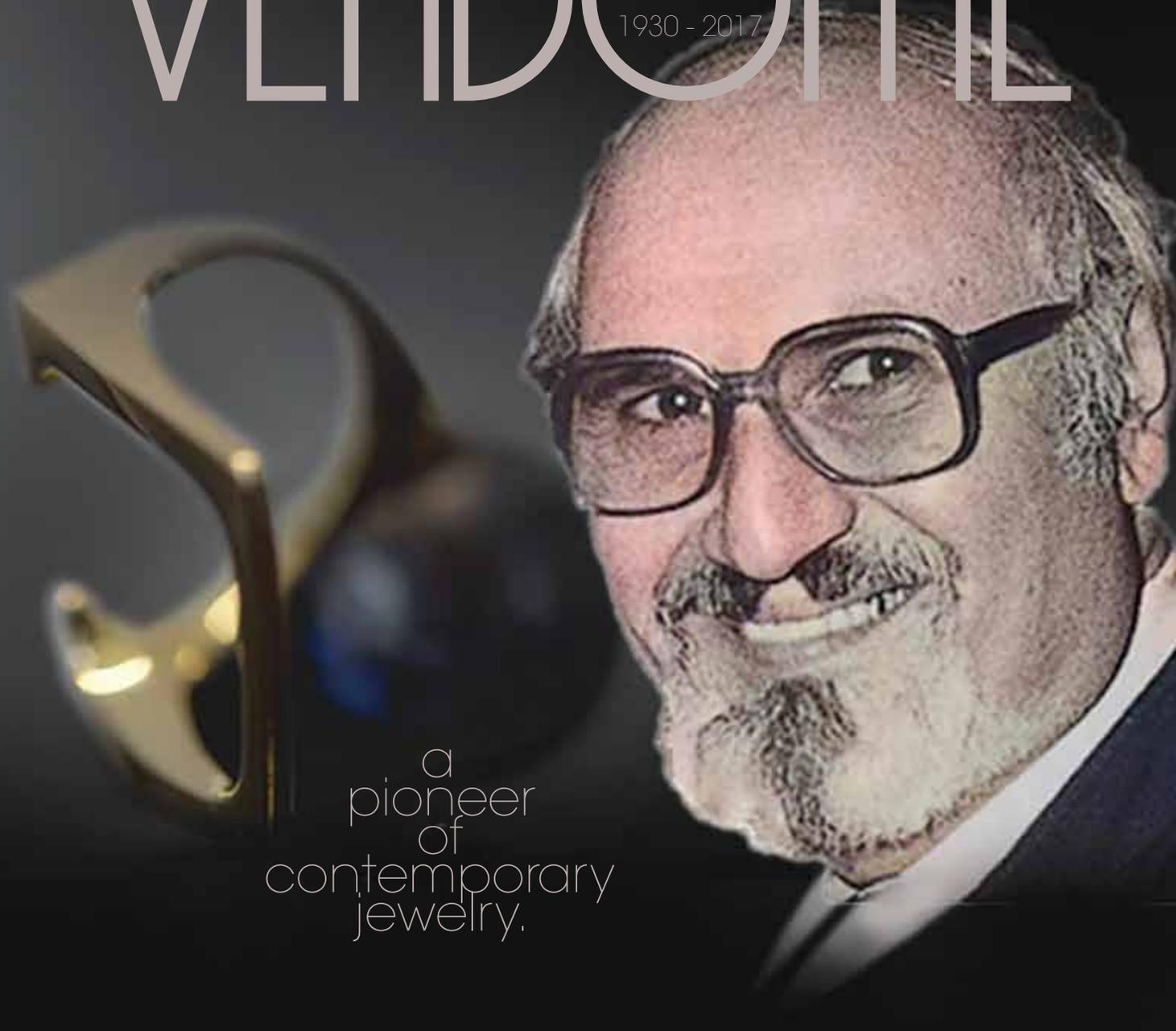


# VENDOME

JEAN

1930 - 2017



a  
pioneer  
of  
contemporary  
jewelry.

## VENDOME *continued*

Jean Vendome (Born Jean Tuhdarian, born in Lyon on April 18, 1930, of Armenian parents) and died on August 9, 2017 in Eaubonne, is a jeweler's artist.

Although largely unknown to the general public, throughout a career lasting 50 years he opened many new doors for contemporary jewelry. He was gifted in drawing and apprenticed

at 13 years old to his uncle, the jeweler Der where Jean Vendome (Born Jean Tuhdarian, born in Lyon on April 18, 1930, of Armenian parents) and died on August 9, 2017 in Eaubonne, is a jeweler's artist.

Although largely unknown to the general public, throughout a career lasting 50 years he opened many new doors for contemporary jewelry. He was gifted in drawing and

apprenticed at 13 years old to his uncle, the jeweler Der where he acquired an expertise and a flawless technique early on. By age 15 he won first prize and a state scholarship at the drawing



*Amethyst, Stalactite, Crystal, Sterling Silver, 18K Yellow Gold Necklace*

*continued on next page*

contest of the City of Paris, Taking gemology courses. At age 18 he created his first workshop in Paris, originally making pieces for major retailers, but soon got bored of the repetitiveness and turned to creating his own works, carving stones and minerals. It was a risky bet that quickly translated into huge success.



"I had no money at the time to actually make any pieces, so in my store window, I displayed my drawings, and that would get clients to come in and have their old jewelry re-designed," he said in an interview. "Those were difficult years, but I wanted to carve a new path in my profession." 2012 interview with the New York Times, he states "I did not want to go on making the same flat, sweet, 'comme il faut' jewelry my uncle was producing. In those days, the bourgeois clients wanted to be noticed for their conventionality."



Two years later, he established his first collection of jewelry and was a great success and the beginning of contemporary jewelry. "My style was built primarily upon lots of imagination to compensate for a lack of means," he explained in a New York Times interview. He used voids to structure his compositions and give them a dynamic lightness. Throughout his working years, for Jean Vendome, jewelry was never about the value of the materials: it was all about the natural beauty of the stone and originality of design. His works were made using

stones of modest value, which were used in-the-rough to make the most of their particular characteristics shaped by nature. Vendome used unheard and unconventional materials like wood and malachite as well.

“In the 1960s and 1970s, when most jewelers were showing flat, symmetrical jewelry, Jean Vendome made pieces that were an explosion of organic forms and irregular volumes,” said Marguerite de Cerval, a jewelry historian. With limited means and a passion for mineralogy, his pieces became sculptural creations, distinguishable by their profusion of color, the play of fullness against void and the graphic beauty of the natural materials. He even went as far as using organic materials like crab claws in his



designs. He is one of the first to apply the aesthetic principles of abstraction to the art of jewelry. In his early days the style of jewelry is the opposite of his: very decorative and figurative. He considers the jewel as a work of art, a miniature sculpture that can be worn; he attributes to it a specific expressive value, it is for him an adaptation of the language of the painter to the jewelry. Desiring to find a real and viable alternative to the traditional model he develops his research on several fronts: the renewal of the forms

*continued on next page*

the integration of new materials, and a work on the parts with transformations, allowing to wear elements of a necklace or a ring or brooch bracelet.

Vendome also designed with a greater consciousness of a woman's body and its contact with a piece of jewelry. "One of Jean Vendome's innovations was his awareness of the body," said Michèle Heuzé, a gemologist and jewelry historian. "His pieces were articulated and often made to slink up a woman's hand or neck and adapt to her body."

Jean Vendome made mostly one-of-a-kind pieces — more than 37,000 of them, according to his records. "Multiples are the death of creativity in jewelry making," he said. "I made jewelry for the woman who did not normally wear them," he said. "For that reason, I had to make highly personalized pieces." "There is an identity to



*continued on next page*

Jean Vendome jewelry that is immediately recognizable," Ms. Heuzé said. Plastic research leads to radical changes in the appearance of parts. Jean Vendome begins by removing the traditional frame in favor of an abstract pattern, where the stones are arranged in irregular grid. This asymmetry is a real novelty of its day, which gives the stones a particular relief and makes the mount a decoration by itself.

His designs were unique because he did not "see the interest in copying any single emotion". He revolutionized ways of wearing jewelry with his "Cravate" necklace which goes right down to the navel. His jewels fold, their elements interlock and sliding systems allow the stones to be interchanged. In 1986, with the "Compact" model he created an ingenious, highly technical set featuring a ring, earrings, two pendants and a bracelet, bringing the number of possible wearing combinations to twenty-one. The diamond is hidden inside the jewel making it visible only to the wearer. He engraved a design on the side of the little-finger ring. So many of these ideas are in vogue today.

Jean Vendome said, "with beauty, we find commonplace solutions. We must go beyond them because there is more beauty in what's unsightly to work on to bring this beauty out". His bold, sculptural pieces have transformed the way people looked at jewelry - making not just another necklace, but wearable art.

