



ART DECO DIAMOND AND AQUAMARINE NECKLACE BY OLGA TRITT, CIRCA 1939

that is equally as beautiful or technically proficient as a signed one may be considered less attractive to collectors.

"In a way it's slightly disappointing because there are great things out there that are completely anonymous that sold for a fraction of the price," he says, adding, "Context and provenance is at a huge premium."

Munn believes an item of jewellery is a very high form of art that encapsulates something culturally and aesthetically unique about its era of creation. He emphasises that the greatest artists in the world, such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein, Cellini and Nicholas Hilliard, were all trained as jewellers.

In this sense, Munn regards his work as a voyage of discovery, commenting that it can be just as exciting as digging up an ancient barrow and finding gold. "There are wonderful, wonderful things to be found."

Thousands of viewers ride this journey of discovery alongside him each and every week. Reflecting upon the popularity of the show, Munn says people are lured to fabulous jewellery like butterflies to a candle flame.

#### DISMISSING SALES TECHNIQUES

Interestingly, despite a lifetime promoting the industry, he cautions against becoming intoxicated with the world of jewellery, suggesting that truly grand jewellery can never really belong to anyone and that humans are merely on the outside, peering into a miraculous world.

Thus, a degree of modesty and prudence is important where jewellery is concerned. In terms of selling jewellery, Munn dismisses sales techniques that are based on the art of persuasion, and instead firmly believes that beautiful jewels will always sell themselves.

"You can't sell anything to anybody ever. You can only articulate what is wonderful about a particular piece," he muses. "If you do that then you're a good salesman but if you think that you can sell something to somebody against their will then I think you need to go into a hat shop where you'll do a lot better."

The best tip Munn gives to retail jewellers is that they should deal only in what interests them. If they do that, their enthusiasm will not only be obvious but also infectious and consumers will come from far and wide just to share in it.

Second-hand jewellery dealers are not immune to many of the key issues faced by everyday bricks-and-mortar jewellery stores around the world, including Australia. In particular, the rise of wholesalers who open 'salerooms' for the purpose of selling directly to the public is, in Munn's opinion, applying



GEOFFREY MUNN EXAMINES JEWELLERY ON THE BBC'S *ANTIQUES ROADSHOW*



ART NOUVEAU GOLD AND PEARL PENDANT BY RENÉ LALIQUE, CIRCA 1902

significant pressure to small and medium-sized jewellery businesses.

"The international salerooms have made the jewellery trade very tricky to compete for a tiny organisation such as our own," he explains. "It's jolly hard because we have the same expenses, the same insurance, the same rents and rates but we can't possibly access that power, so a lot of jewellery shops are being completely subsumed by the salerooms."

#### CHANGING CONSUMERS

Consumers' views on jewellery have also changed enormously in the UK. The grand, bejewelled decadence typical of high society in the 1960s and 1970s has declined in modern times to the point where diamond tiaras and opulent necklaces are now only seen at public events like the State Opening of Parliament or the Lord Mayor's Banquet.

Munn explains that consumers view the purpose of jewellery differently to yesteryear and jewels that were once bought for display are today bought for investment purposes.

"I think there is a very strong sense of hoarding going on here [UK] with very valuable things," he says. "People buy them in the hope that they're going to be a good investment and perhaps they will or perhaps they won't."

In his experience, when people do wear jewellery, conservative pieces by famous makers are especially popular, such as slinky little diamond line bracelets by famous French companies that are immediately identifiable.

Munn reflects that branding has become a powerful motivator for consumers when choosing more modest jewellery, a sentiment that is shared by Australian consumers.

Despite these changes, the style of pieces sold by Wartski hasn't changed too much over the years. The business has embarked on a couple of new areas of interest, including antique French jewellery and Munn's speciality – 19th-century revivalist jewellers Castellani and Giuliano.

Otherwise, Munn believes that Wartski's strength is that it doesn't really change. He asserts that the store's small number of staff, conventional attitude and conservative nature is valued at a premium today because the rest of the world is very quickly changing.

"People feel comforted by something that's very old and established." \*

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