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Fouache (2) identifies the jewelry by studying the scenic designs and costumes sketches (1) preserved in the Opera's archives, assembled in over 200 volumes. Up until the 1950s, designers were required to deposit their designs with the Opera House.

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Mme. Fouache (2) a pu identifier les bijoux en étudiant les maquettes des décors et des costumes (1) dans les archives de l'opéra, rassemblées dans plus de 200 volumes. Jusque dans les années cinquante, les décorateurs étaient obligés de laisser leurs dessins à l'opéra.

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Fouache (2) identifiziert den Schmuck, indem er die Bühnenbilder und Kostümskizzen studiert (1), die in über 200 Bänden in den Opernarchiven gesammelt sind. Bis rund 1950 mussten die Designers ihre Entwürfe im Opernhaus hinterlassen.

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without identifying labels of any kind and without benefit of protective packing. "People didn't care much after the show was struck," explains Fouache. "They were busy with five or six productions at once and couldn't be bothered with carefully labelling and packing the goodies from the last opera.

"I meet a lot of creative types from the world's great theatres," says Fouache. "And they've told me that what we have here is the most extensive, most beautiful, and most unusual collection of costume jewelry they've ever seen. Most of these pieces were designed in the late 19th century, in the spirit of Napolean III, when appearances were essential. Jewels were incredibly important at the time, an importance they've lost."

Fouache boasts that there is not a single "copy" in the collection — every item is an original design created to fit the historical context of a particular opera while at the same time accentuating the personality of a specific actress or actor. She is quick to emphasize the difference between *bijoux fantasie* (what we think of as "junk" jewelry) and *bijoux de l'art lyrique,* the latter having been created "to be seen from a distance and linked to the libretto to give it another, totally operatic dimension."

Lyrical, or operatic jewelry, was assembled in the same time-honoured way that jewelers work with precious stones. This means that although the diamonds are only paste or strass, each one was cut and mounted by skilled independent jewelers who, working from elaborate sketches rendered in colour, executed designs specifically for the Opera. (Today, in contrast, all of the jewelry worn on stage is created entirely in-house.)

Fouache effuses about the enduring quality of the materials and craftsmanship of the jewelry she works with. While there is a smattering of authenticity — the collection contains a child's costume made of real silver and gold from the 17th century that had been worn at the King's private theatre — the majority of the jewelry is made of glass, tinted glass, paste, strass, brass, brass wire, copper, gold leaf, hollow beads, and hollow pearls."These bijoux are in great condition without having received any special care or attention. They were abandoned and ignored and yet they've held up beautifully. The colour in these stones is altogether unaltered. There was no glue used, so some of the stones have fallen out, but they're in great shape. These emeralds, opals, rubies, and amethysts, aren't real, but they're of rare quality." Fouache points out that contemporary costume jewelry, which is made of tinted glass or plastic, fades and chips in record time. "When restoring a piece, if we can't find a 19th-century stone to fit the bill, then the item remains as is," she says firmly.

To Fouache's continued amazement the gilding on even the oldest pieces is intact. And many of the delicate hollow pearls of yesteryear have also survived. "They don't make them this way anymore," says Fouache with an admiring sigh. "If you squeeze them, they crumble."

The great 19th-century wardrobe master and jewelry designer Eugene Lacoste is responsible for perhaps 25% of the collection in Fouache's care. "He went all the way to Egypt to make sketches so as to insure the authenticity of his work," says Fouache. "The quality and precision of his drawings, which we have in the library, is outstanding." That these stunning original documents have survived may be attributed to the fact that designers were once required to deposit their designs with the Opera House. This requirement was lifted in the 1950s and many designers have subsequently chosen to retain their original drawings for their personal collections or for eventual sale.

Fouache matches up her wares with the productions from whence they came by studying the scenic designs and costume