

# SOLITAIRE

THE FINE ART OF JEWELLERY

ASIA PACIFIC EDITION

*golden  
legacies*

Bulgari  
Mousson  
Robert Mazlo

**PLUS:**  
Emma Stone  
Wearable Tech  
Multi-Finger Rings

*ornate  
horology*

Rose Gold Watches  
SIHH Masterpieces  
Ruby-Set Timepieces

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April – May 2015



*The  
Gold  
Edition*

ROBERT MAZLO

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by Katrina A. Balmaceda

# The Memory Relay

*Timeless tales narrated  
through ornamental jewels*



*M*emories can manifest themselves in dreams, or be churned out as helpful advice. Some seek them out willingly to turn them into stories and cautionary tales. For artist and craftsman Robert Mazlo, the most natural evocation of the past is to reshape it into timeless jewels.

Of all his memories, this may be one of the most precious: one day in the early 1970s, as he was helping out at their family-run atelier in Beirut, Lebanon, a stylish lady came to express dissatisfaction with a bespoke ring that they had made for her. “My father told me to come and see if I could find a way to create something different,” recalls Robert. He remembers being impressed by her elegance and asking why she disliked the ring. The lady explained that the diamond was smothered by the closed setting. Robert then suggested staging the stone on the body of the ring by sculpting a coral branch shaped like five fingers, only two of which would seize the stone. It was the first original piece he had ever created — and the lady loved it.

“During a lifetime, you sometimes have the opportunity to meet a few remarkable persons who, hopefully, will change the way you think, without even measuring the influence they have. Thanks to this woman, I was comforted with the idea that I was in the right direction,” says Robert. He was studying at an art institute in Italy at the time, and eventually established his own studio in his hometown. At the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon, he moved to Boulogne, France, where the Mazlo workshop is located today.

*“During a lifetime, you sometimes have the opportunity to meet a few remarkable persons who will change the way you think”*



FROM TOP  
Robert Mazlo at work

*Joan in Love ring*

*The Diver*

OPPOSITE  
*Jack ring*

As opposed to modern studios where one person specialises in a given task and a jewel goes through a dozen pair of hands, Robert has mastered all the stages of the creation of jewellery — allowing him to materialise his ideas faithfully. His creations typically spring from an emotion or a memory, which germinates throughout a long period of research and conceptualisation before his hands finally fulfil his vision. Sometimes, happy accidents help form the final product. “This is called serendipity. Art is an improbable mix between skill, curiosity and luck,” says Robert. “The craftsman literally thinks through his hands. Honestly, I often only understand what I have done afterwards. There’s no room for reflection during action.”



*Mazlo's creations typically spring from an emotion or a memory, which germinates throughout a long period of research and conceptualisation*



When reflection does commence, it yields much insight not only about the materials and the creative process, but also about the jeweller himself. Robert views the materials — gold, coloured diamonds or other precious stones — as “sparring partners” that reveal their strengths and weaknesses, as well as his own. Such materials, he says, have memory, as well as a “singularity” or imperfection that render them unique and irreplaceable.

He views his clients the same way, and thus listens to their stories and soaks in their personalities when they come asking for bespoke creations. Similarly, personal talismans worn around Robert’s neck hint at his story and beliefs. An amber bead helps channel his inner tensions. An ancient Phoenician pendant made of a sheet of gold formed as a female divinity harks back to his Lebanese roots. His family is represented by his late mother’s wedding band, and by a gold medal depicting Saint George and the Dragon, which his grandfather gave him when he was a child. These hang on a handmade gold chain, also from his grandfather:

With his penchant for the past, it is no surprise that Robert’s next exhibit, *Une Vie* (A Life), will comprise 22 unique jewels that represent “emblematic moments that anyone, in this world, is likely to experience during a lifetime”. He aims to take the conversation beyond mere memory by focusing on the links between “objects and souvenirs in the contemporary world, which is mostly influenced by virtuality and immaterial supports”.

On the other hand, to become timeless, jewels must be both art and ornament, offering a universal message that transcends their anecdotal value. He laments the fact that few jewels last. “Some people bring them in the afterlife, some are lost, many are sold or destroyed and recycled, many are transformed. Like no other object, jewels are destroyed to erase memories, and particularly souvenirs of love stories that people do not want to recall,” says Robert. This is why we rarely possess or wear jewellery owned by our ancestors — especially those still in their original form. 

*To become timeless, jewels must be both art and ornament, offering a universal message that transcends their anecdotal value*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

Mazlo’s prayer beads

Personal talismans that Mazlo wears hint at his story and beliefs

His mother’s ring

OPPOSITE

The 2000 Years necklace

