

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

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“Jewels of the Imagination” brings one of the world’s most beautiful and extensive collections of jewelry to the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg

Exhibit showcases mid-century elegance from Jean Schlumberger, the Tiffany & Co. jewelry designer who was a favorite of Jacqueline Kennedy, Audrey Hepburn and Rachel “Bunny” Mellon

St. Petersburg, Fla. (November 27, 2018) – When independent, jet-setting women of the 1960s and ‘70s wanted to sparkle a little brighter, they frequently turned to renowned French jewelry designer Jean Schlumberger. Best known for his work for Tiffany & Co., Schlumberger was a master at using the beauty of the natural world as inspiration for creating unique, brightly colored works of jeweled art that were both elegant and whimsical. After premiering at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in 2017, *Jewels of the Imagination: Radiant Masterworks by Jean Schlumberger from the Mellon Collection* is making its first appearance outside Virginia at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, opening December 15.

The exhibition highlights 135 spectacular pieces from the personal collection of philanthropist and art collector Rachel “Bunny” Mellon.

The glittering jewelry designs of Schlumberger were the epitome of mid-century elegance. Drawing inspiration from the natural world and such exotic locales as Bali, India and Thailand, Schlumberger’s lively, experimental designs graced the necks, wrists and lapels of style icons of the era like Jacqueline Kennedy, Audrey Hepburn, Diana Vreeland, Elizabeth Taylor and of course, Bunny Mellon. Mrs. Mellon’s love of gardening inspired many of Schlumberger’s botanical jewelry pieces, such as *Flower Pot (Pot de fleurs)*, 1960, an ornate flowering plant emerging from a tiny terracotta pot, encrusted with emeralds and diamonds, with an amethyst flower bursting with gold petals. Another famous piece, *Jellyfish*, 1967, is a brooch that floats mysteriously on the wearer’s lapel, with a body of moonstones, and dynamic tentacles made of diamonds and sapphires appearing to move through flowing lines.

A special friendship between the artist and Mrs. Mellon inspired many of Schlumberger’s pieces. Her love of gardening, combined with his creative takes on color, movement and shape, resulted in whimsical creations that are unmistakably Schlumberger. More than 30 years after Schlumberger’s death in 1987, Tiffany & Co. still carries many of his designs. Mrs. Mellon’s extensive collection of Schlumberger pieces is the largest, most comprehensive public collection

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of his work in the world. It was donated to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts between 1985 and 2015. *Jewels of the Imagination* will be on view at the MFA from Dec. 15, 2018 to March 31, 2019, giving visitors an opportunity to view everything from jewelry to cigarette cases to salt cellars.

Companion exhibition: *Drawn to Beauty*

A companion exhibition, *Drawn to Beauty: The Art and Atelier of Jean Schlumberger*, was created by curators at the MFA to explore Schlumberger's process as an artist and designer, while offering insight into his relationships with the jet set. The exhibition, which features sketches, photographs, objets d'art and personal items belonging to the artist, also includes jewelry from the Tiffany & Co. archives and from private collections. The MFA has also created a catalog for *Drawn to Beauty*, which features a number of pieces that are being exhibited for the first time. The two exhibitions will be on view in the Hazel Hough Galleries, which will be transformed into a space reflecting the natural elements from which Schlumberger drew his inspiration. Nationally regarded design firm WRJ Design, which is designing the exhibition space, has designed more than 40 exhibition spaces for Sotheby's New York.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Morisot, Rodin, O'Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. Selections from the photography collection, one of the largest and finest in the Southeast, are on view in a gallery dedicated solely to the medium. Kristen A. Shepherd is the Executive Director. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, until 8 p.m. on Thursday, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Regular admission is \$20 for adults; \$15 for those 65 and older, Florida educators, college students, and military; and \$10 for students 7 and older. Children under 7 and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$14 per person and children \$4 each with prior reservations. Also, admission is only \$10 after 5 p.m. on Thursday. The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. For more information, please call 727-896-2667 or visit mfastpete.org.

PHOTOS AND IMAGE CREDITS

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