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FORGOTTEN TRINKETS FIND HIGH FASHION

What's beautiful about passion is that it's a contagious cycle. Shereen de Rousseau has breathed life into long forgotten trinkets and sentimental medallions by giving them a new purpose - fashion. By resurrecting these found objets d'art de Rousseau not only pays homage to their creator but also to the individual who wears them. I had the pleasure of speaking with the designer, whose pieces grace five pages of the 2009 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, about who and what inspires her and the stories her designs tell.

Your childhood was quite nomadic. You grew up in Brazil and spent time in various Canadian cities before settling in Vancouver. Have your travels inspired you?

Immensely. I've never quite recovered from a visit to St. Petersburg, specifically the Hermitage years ago. I was a changed person. I get lots of inspiration from art and architecture. I make a yearly trip to scrounge through Paris looking for trinkets and jewelry.

You were inspired to create your own designs after becoming disenchanted with the selection available, a common motivation for designers. Do you feel your designs speak to the mainstream or a niche market?

I'd like to think I sell to a niche market but I have such a variety of characters who like my jewelry I couldn't tell you what that niche is.

Design can be a very personal art form. When you design, do you design for you or a particular muse or theme?

I always design for myself. I wouldn't have a clue how to design for someone else. My fashion idols are all rock star girlfriends from the late 60s early 70s.

Who, in the realm of jewelry design, inspires you?

I love the work of Philip Crangi. He does this amazing stuff that looks industrial yet incredibly feminine. That's hard to pull off.

What kind of stories do your pieces tell? Does Colibri Noir speak something different than Médallions Antiques?

The found treasures in Médallions Antiques have their own story. The coins I use have amazing history. Some of the medallions are baptismal and have dates engraved on them. Some were given when family bought property. All have interesting stories behind them. I have a fellow I visit in Paris who takes the time to explain what all the different medallions were for and who the artist was who designed them. I have decided that coin collecting is an incredibly cool thing. The artistry and history is fascinating. Maybe in my next life. The collections are grouped together intended to be worn together or just aesthetically compatible.

When you started working in fashion what was your dream/desire? What about your dreams today?

The entire time I worked in the crazy fast paced world of fashion, I dreamt of leaving to paint full time. I still don't find time, but I'm really happy working in a grubby studio creating things I love.

Why jewelry?

It was an accidental career change. I had been making pieces for myself and friends when it started getting noticed and a few shops inquired about selling it. It grew from there. I have always been crazy for jewelry. It is the easiest and coolest way to individualize your style. I can wear the same clothes but change my look completely with the jewelry I wear. It's also like my security blanket.

What does your intuition tell you about forthcoming fashion trends in jewelry?

I never follow trends in jewelry. I loathe mass production as I can't imagine how it would ever make the wearer feel special. I hope the trend is towards small production, more unique jewelry.

What material would you love to work with?

Gold! Big bold beautiful gold pieces are what I dream of. Unfortunately, with gold nearing \$1000 per ounce this isn't going to happen. My designs are big and heavy and would require a second mortgage to produce them in gold. I'm experimenting with bronze right now.

When you're not living and dreaming fashion, what do you do?

I try to spend every minute I can with my son. I am also a collector of badly behaved dogs.

Shereen de Rousseau is available online at www.shereenderousseau.com and at Provide in Vancouver.