

Interview with Jewellery Master Mr Wallace Chan

藝術名家專訪：陳世英先生

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Wallace CHAN
陳世英

本會專訪珠寶設計大師陳世英先生，細味他的藝術創作歷程和設計路向，並探索其在鈦金屬和陶瓷方面的創新應用。

Wallace Chan is a creator of unique jewellery pieces. He is recognised worldwide for his skill and innovation. His numerous innovations include: The Wallace Cut (a three-dimensional illusion carving technique, invented in 1987), the mastery of titanium in jewellery making,

a patented jadeite luminosity-enhancing technology, the invention of elaborate gemstone settings without metal claws, and, most recently, The Wallace Chan Porcelain, a material five times stronger than steel.

We interviewed the master jewellery designer to get an understanding of his design directions and the process behind his artistic creations, and also to explore his development and application of titanium and porcelain in jewellery.



Fig. 1 Stilled Life | Brooch and Sculpture
Brooch: Imperial Jadeite Jade, Lavender Jade, Ruby, Fancy Coloured Diamond, Titanium
Bamboo Sculpture: Crystal, Yellow Diamond, Pink Sapphire, Diamond, Tsavorite Garnet, Titanium



悟禪知翠 | 胸針及雕塑
胸針：帝王翡翠、紫羅蘭翠玉、紅寶石、彩鑽、鈦金屬
雕塑：水晶、黃鑽、粉紅剛玉、鑽石、翠榴石、鈦金屬

Q1. Please tell us about yourself briefly, including how you got to be a design master?

I began my career as a gemstone carver in 1973 when I was 16 years old. In the beginning my carvings were mostly themed on traditional Chinese motifs or folklore. However, I soon discovered the art of Michelangelo and the way in which his sculptures expressed tension, texture, light and shadow led me to a new world. I spent hours and hours at the Western cemeteries in Hong Kong and Macau studying the sculptures of angels and saints. I became

intrigued by light. In the past 47 years, I have created carvings, sculptures, paintings, jewellery, tools, materials and more on various themes.

I never received a formal education and when I was young there was no internet to help me acquire knowledge either. Instead I had to learn from experimenting and making mistakes. My childhood was far from a fairy tale. I experienced hunger, poverty, loss and grief. I want to show people who have also experienced all of these challenges to find a way to turn hardship into something true and beautiful.

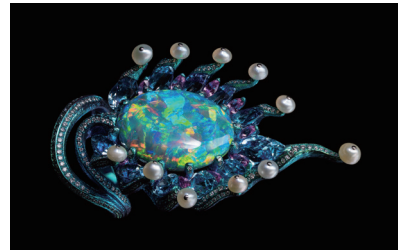


Fig. 2 Hera | Brooch and Ring
Black Opal 1 pc 14.61 cts, Padparadscha Sapphire 2 pcs
1.21 cts
Fancy Coloured Diamond, Fancy Sapphire, Tsavorite Garnet,
Emerald, Aquamarine, Pearl, Opal, Lapis Lazuli, Crystal,
Titanium and The Wallace Chan Porcelain

赫拉女神 | 胸針及戒指
黑蛋白石1顆14.61卡拉
帕德瑪剛玉2顆共1.21卡拉
彩鑽、彩色剛玉、翠榴石、祖母綠、海藍寶石
珍珠、蛋白石、青金石、水晶、鈦金屬、世英陶瓷

Q2. What would you say is the best part of your job?

The creative process is never a job to me. It is life itself.

Q3. What was your biggest fear when starting?

I didn't have the time for fear. At 16 years old it was all about survival and I needed a skill so I could earn a living. I had two options; one was to become a mechanic at a garage, the other was to become a gemstone carving apprentice. My mother made that choice for me as she didn't want me to go home every evening with dirty clothes!

Q4. Please tell us about your design style. What makes your jewellery distinctive? What makes your collections unique in the industry?

Perhaps it is because every piece is created to be unique in terms of the composition of materials, the craftsmanship, the form and the story. I don't present collections and I don't have the idea of making a collection in mind when I create my pieces. "Collection" is a fashionable term and I do not see myself as fashionable at all. Every piece is individual and stands on its own.

Q5. As a design master, where do you draw your inspiration from?

Life itself is the biggest source of inspiration for me but the one element I believe in above all else

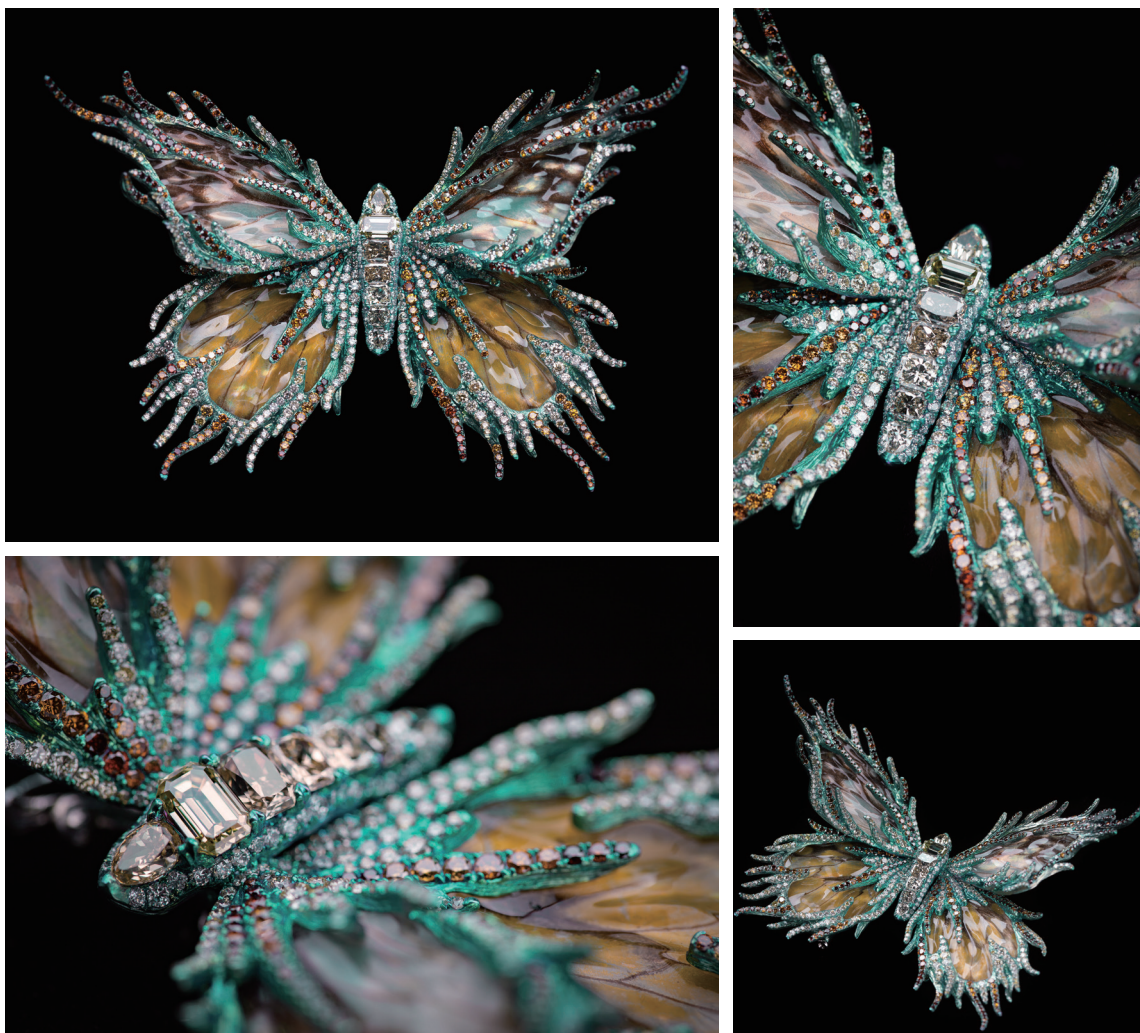


Fig. 3 Forever Dancing - Bright Star | Brooch
Yellow Diamond, Fancy Coloured Diamond, Crystal, Mother of Pearl, Titanium, Butterfly Specimen

還在飛舞 — 麗人天 | 胸針
黃鑽、彩鑽、水晶、貝母、鈦金屬、蝴蝶標本

is love. Love is key to my creations; love of people and of all things in the universe. Sadly, I grew up in a rather loveless family and only discovered love later on, in my gemstones. When I realised that, through creating and communicating with the stones and other materials, I could travel to a better world and bring home magic, I felt more love than I had ever felt in my life. I am interested in a multitude of cross-disciplinary practices, but at the end of the day it must all be about love. Without love, there is no creation and love is what I want people to feel when they see and touch my creations, and when they hear the stories of my pieces.

Q6. What is your favourite among the pieces you've created – and what made it so special?

Each piece is like my own child; my very own flesh and blood. I have got used to not looking back at the past because the only way to make progress is to move on. Every time I finish a piece, I feel this rush of satisfaction. However, this moment of great joy only lasts for a short period of time and very soon afterwards I dive into the process of creating something new. So yes, my favourite piece will always be my next creation. I don't know how it looks or feels or what its name is yet.



Fig. 4 A New Generation | Ring
Sapphire 3 pcs 6.303 cts, 3.24 cts and 3.17 cts,
Aquamarine, Diamond, Sapphire, The Wallace Chan
Porcelain & Titanium
Permanent collection of the British Museum

宇宙新生 | 戒指
藍寶石3顆6.303卡拉、3.24卡拉及3.17卡拉
海藍寶石、鑽石、藍寶石、世英陶瓷、鈦金屬
大英博物館永久藏品

Q7. What are your favourite gemstone materials? Why?

Just like I don't have a favourite creation, I don't have a favourite gemstone. All materials are my teachers. It is important to learn about each material, including its characteristics and lifespan. The more I learn, the more motivated I am. Each rough stone is a mystery waiting to be revealed. From a small window I venture into the world of unknowns to trace their colours and gleams, and learn about their path of light. I am extremely curious about their properties and the process of design, cutting, polishing and faceting is a game of hide-and-seek, a catalyst for my creativity – it's always fascinating!

Q8. Your application of titanium and porcelain brings jewellery into another arena and dimension. What are the most critical challenges & technical concerns? And what are the limitations? How do you overcome such challenges?

I spent decades of my life observing and admiring porcelain and its history. Seven years ago, I set out to create a new type of porcelain. To achieve the results I desired, I spent a great deal of time studying, researching and experimenting. I needed to discover the right techniques and the right materials – ingredients, tools and ovens.

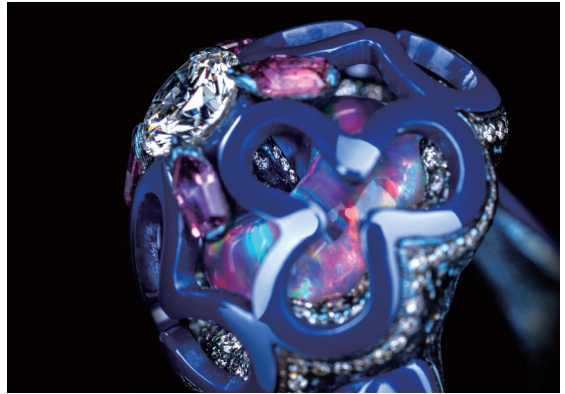


Fig. 5 Dream Planet | Ring
Diamond 1 pc 1.02 cts
Opal, Crystal, Lapis Lazuli, Pink Sapphire, Diamond,
Titanium, The Wallace Chan Porcelain

美夢星球 | 戒指
鑽石1顆1.02卡拉
水晶、青金石、蛋白石、粉紅剛玉、鑽石、鈦金屬、
世英陶瓷

Generally, porcelain is fired to a maximum temperature of 1400°C but I fire my porcelain to a temperature between 1550°C and 1650°C. The material's ability to endure high temperature and to remain stable and consistent throughout, ultimately produces stronger, harder and more lustrous porcelain.

I travelled to several countries in search of manufacturers that could build ovens to my very specific requirements. I eventually found two German manufacturers with whom I worked to build my custom ovens.

I approach jewellery creation as an art, but that is not to say maths and science don't play a role. Precise calculations are key to a successful creation. For example, the ovens have to be a certain size to provide stable heat and to allow me to standardise and regulate the oven temperature to my exact specifications for each creation. My ovens allow me to control and regulate the temperature at very precise intervals. If at a certain point the temperature increases too slowly or too quickly (by even a fraction of a degree) the chemical make-up of the porcelain may be altered, preventing me from achieving the desired result.

Porcelain also shrinks during the firing process, so to ensure the perfect fit of the various components within each creation I must study and calculate the shrinkage rate accordingly. I also place tiny porcelain beads under the piece to be fired to give it a buffer during expansion and shrinkage and prevent it from cracking.

It's also important to obtain only the finest ingredients. Even an impurity of only 0.001% could impact the porcelain's ability to endure the high heat in the oven and ultimately affect the strength and quality of the final product.

The Wallace Chan Porcelain, together with titanium, has given my creations many more possibilities. The different materials complement each other to elevate both the aesthetics and mechanical complexity of the jewellery creations. The Wallace Chan Porcelain also has a smooth, lustrous texture and adds a new palette of colours to the creative process.

Q9. What advice would you give someone interested in getting into jewellery design?

Everything is difficult, but nothing is impossible.
(無事不難，但凡事可能。)

website: www.wallace-chan.com



Fig. 6 Wallace Cut | Carving
Invented in 1987

世英切割 | 雕刻
發明於1987年