

THE PEARL SHOW

<http://www.marlm.com/the-pearl-show/>

Victoria and Albert Museum, London
21 September 2013- January 19, 2014



Above: Grand Jete, gold with diamonds and two cultured baroque pearls by Geoffrey Rowlandson. London 1999. —© Geoffrey Rowlandson.

Magnificent pearl tiaras worn by British and European high nobility, a pearl-drop earring worn by Charles I at his execution in 1649, and a necklace of cultured pearls given to Marilyn Monroe by Joe DiMaggio in 1954 will be among the incredible array of jewels and other objects on display in a new exhibition at the V&A this autumn. Organized in partnership with the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), the exhibition will be the highlight event of the Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture.



Lady Rosebery, a pearl and diamond tiara.
The Qatar Museums Authority Collection.London c.1878.
Photo —© Christie's Images

On display will be **over 200 pieces of jewellery** and works of art showcasing the extraordinary variety of colour and shape of natural and cultured pearls. The exhibition will examine how pearls have been employed from the early Roman Empire to the present, in both East and West, as a symbol of status and wealth, how tastes vary in different cultures as well as the changing designs of jewellery with pearls.



Necklace, natural pearls set in coloured gold
Probably England c.1850 —© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The central focus of the exhibition will chronicle the representation of pearls in jewellery through history, showcasing Ancient Roman jewels made as early as the 1st century AD and taking the exhibition up-to-date with contemporary work made by designers practicing today.



Gold hair ornament, set with natural pearls, emeralds and sapphires .
Roman, 3rd Century AD —© The Trustees of the British Museum.

Through Antiquity myths and legends surrounded the pearl and early examples of Roman and Byzantine jewellery will show how they were used as a sign of power and an indicator of rank in society. In Medieval times pearls were transformed from a symbol of luxury and ostentation into a Christian symbol representing purity and chastity.



Cross pendant, gold with rubies and natural pearls.
Germany 1500-25.—© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Delicate compositions of **Art Nouveau Jewels** sparsely decorated with pearls contrast with the opulent application of pearls in fashionable sautoirs of the 1920s and a three-stranded Cartier necklace with Gulf pearls designed in the 1930s.



Necklace, natural pearls from the Gulf with platinum and diamond clasps.
The Qatar Museums Authority Collection 1930s by Cartier.
Photo —© Sotheby's

An **Art Nouveau bodice ornament** by **George Fouquet (c1900-1)** was in its period as innovative as the contemporary designs of the the figurative creations of Geoffrey Rowlandson (1999) (see top featured image). Likewise, the complex use of pearls in Sam Tho Duong's necklace (2012) will illustrate the diversity of contemporary jewellery designs with pearls.



'Frozen' by Sam Tho Duong. 2012. Collection of Qatar Museums Authority.
—© Marc Pelletreau & Samaar Kassab, QMA

The jewellery and works of art will be drawn from the V&A and QMA's collections, alongside objects from British collections including Tate Britain, the British Museum and the Royal Collection and established jewellery houses such as YOKO London, Mikimoto, Tiffany & Co, Bulgari, Cartier, Chaumet and **René Lalique**.