

An Interstellar

Van Cleef & Arpels draws inspiration from the heavens in its latest high jewellery collection, *Sous les Étoiles*

By Ho Yun Kuan

Journey

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In 1865, more than a century before the first moon landing, French author Jules Verne had already envisioned humankind achieving the feat. In his popular novel, *De la Terre à la Lune* (From the Earth to the Moon), he devised a fantastical way to make the journey. It involved an oversized cannon with enough firepower to shoot a rocket into space.

From groundbreaking science to imaginative literature, humankind's reach for the stars has continuously inspired excellence in our earthly pursuits. At Van Cleef & Arpels, it has shaped a deep tradition of celestial collections.

The maison's fascination with space dates as far back as the turn of the 20th century, with the sale of a star-shaped pearl and diamond brooch in 1907 recorded in one of its first accounting ledgers. The zodiac signs, the stars, sun and moon quickly became favoured motifs. Lapis lazuli, with its deep blue colour and golden flecks, was often used to depict the night sky.

This unwavering affinity for cosmic designs has continued into the 21st century. In 2010, the brand took inspiration from the above-mentioned novel by Jules Verne in its *Les Voyages Extraordinaires* collection, referencing the dazzle of the stars with diamonds and marquise-cut rubies. The post-2000 years were also marked by the desire to encapsulate the universe in the minute workings of timepieces, such as the *Midnight in Paris* timepiece and the *Extraordinary Dials* collection.

The latest high jewellery collection, *Sous les Étoiles* (Under the Stars), once again takes the wearer's gaze into the skies.

Standing out among the 150 masterpieces is the *Céphéide* necklace, named after cepheids, stars that pulsate with regular luminous and less luminous periods. Eleven chalcedony cabochons exude an ethereal quality with their soft lavender blue hue and natural adularescence, an effect in gemstones best

described as an iridescent lustre that shifts with the light. Totalling 159.72 carats, the homogeneity in the transparency, colour and proportions of the chalcedonies are a testament to Van Cleef & Arpels' unparalleled expertise in gem sourcing and matching.

Paired with the chalcedonies are 21 baguette-cut dichroic tanzanites adding up to 30.16 carats. Selected for their unusual tri-coloured properties, with blue, violet and cyan seamlessly merging in each stone, these gems frame a chalcedony in the detachable pendant, which can also be worn as a brooch. Completing the necklace are mauve sapphires, tsavorite garnets and diamonds.

Just as spectacular are the options for the wrist, including the *Sentier d'étoiles* (Trail of Stars) bracelet. Taking centre stage here is a 68.63-carat velvety blue sapphire from Sri Lanka. Around it, yellow

The model wears the *Sentier d'étoiles* bracelet in white and yellow gold with a 68.63-carat sapphire, sapphires, tsavorite garnets, and yellow and white diamonds, as well as the *Mosaïque d'étoiles* clip in white and yellow gold with lapis lazuli, sugilite, turquoise and diamonds

IMAGE: LESLIE ZHANG / VAN CLEEF & ARPELS

and white diamonds, sapphires and tsavorite garnets spiral in a whirlpool design, a favourite motif used by the maison when a sense of movement is desired. The bracelet calls to mind the mesmerising glitter of the Milky Way.

Leading the journey to the stars in this collection are three brooches: *Déesse Mercure* (Goddess Mercury), *Déesse Neptune* (Goddess Neptune) and *Fée Cassiopée* (Fairy Cassiopeia). They are the newest additions to the maison's now-famous troop of ballerina clips, which made its debut in the early 1940s as a tribute to Louis Arpels' love for the ballet.

Wearing a dress of pink sapphires and diamonds, with ruby accents, *Déesse Mercure* proudly raises her namesake planet, represented by a 5.10-carat opal surrounded by rays of yellow gold and diamonds. *Déesse Neptune* dances while cradling her planet, depicted by a cabochon lapis lazuli, in one arm. Her diamond and blue sapphire dress swirls around her legs. *Fée Cassiopée*, blessed with the beauty of the Cassiopeia constellation, draws the eye with her dress of blue and mauve sapphires.