



A Cut Above the Rest

Caroline Scheufele's latest capsule collection for Caroline's Couture isn't just a celebration of the intricate Insofu emerald that inspires it—she's also paving the way for a more ethical, sustainable and comfort-led couture

By Madeleine Mak

Haute couture is designed to go with haute joaillerie. This concept, while seemingly obvious, was left uncharted until Chopard co-president and artistic director Caroline Scheufele unveiled Caroline's Couture at the Cannes Film Festival in 2023. And this sudden leap into the upper echelons of fashion was not the only trick up her sleeve.

In March, Chopard unveiled the first pieces from its Insofu collection, a chapter of high jewellery centred around a 1.22kg, 6,225-carat emerald that was originally extracted in Zambia. At the heart of the collection is an elephant-shaped pendant set with 50 carats of the Insofu emerald and two carats of diamonds.

Scheufele also announced an accompanying capsule collection by Caroline's Couture in which she paid tribute to the precious stone's original rough state. Consisting of five gowns, the capsule collection goes beyond celebrating the emerald's deep green hues. To emulate the uncut gem's depths and inclusions, Scheufele ruched and draped fluid materials such as silk gauze, silk cady and taffeta; the silhouette of a column dress meanwhile, marked by an iridescent green silk neckline and a high leg slit, also resembles the Insofu emerald's original slanted geometry.

Scheufele also included more direct ties back to the Chopard Insofu collection. Case in point: the back of a voluminous, floor-sweeping cape is discreetly printed with an elephant. And reflecting her use of pink sapphires

in a set of art deco-style necklaces, the gowns are sprinkled with shades of amethyst. "Normally, the piece of jewellery is more important," she says. "So I think that whatever the gown is, it should not overwhelm the jewellery."

There is also a practical reason behind Scheufele's onus on timeless rather than over-the-top couture.

Her priority is to ensure that the person wearing her designs feels comfortable. This similarly motivates her embrace of titanium—a lightweight but finicky material to work with—for her jewellery at Chopard.

In her latest capsule for Caroline's Couture, this notion of wearability is most apparent in a mermaid-cut maxi skirt

styled with a lightweight white taffeta blouse. Like all couture, her creations are customisable to a client's specific needs; some of the label's past designs have been reimagined as separates for easier mixing and matching.

To the designer-businesswoman, these functional considerations can be easily overlooked

Caroline Scheufele.
Opposite page: A gown from Caroline's Couture Insofu capsule collection





Clockwise, from above: Inside look at the Caroline's Couture atelier; Caroline's Couture Insofu capsule collection; makings of a Caroline's Couture dress; Caroline's Couture Insofu capsule collection. **Opposite page:** Caroline Scheufele with her Caroline's Couture Insofu capsule collection



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in the theatrical world of couture. “Many couture houses are sort of killing the woman inside,” she says. “Apart from looking good, a woman has to feel good. There should be a sense of joy when one wears a dress.”

Scheufele’s pared-down take on couture, however, doesn’t mean sacrificing quality materials or exquisite craftsmanship. Another aim is to spotlight traditional garment-making

collaboration supports the training centre’s goal of upskilling and supporting the livelihoods of hand embroidery artisans. Last year, when Caroline’s Couture debuted a collection inspired by fairy tales, the pieces featured embroidered 3D butterflies brought to life by artisans from the Miao ethnic minority in China’s Guizhou province.

Chopard has similarly

diamonds from entering the mainstream rough diamond market, Chopard has also barred the use of stones mined in war zones and sold to finance war efforts or terrorism.

“It really all started with the jewellery and watches,” Scheufele says. “So when [Caroline’s Couture] started, I said, I cannot make fashion where I don’t care where the materials come from. It would not

no waste. So if we need five metres, we make five metres. At some other couture houses, they produce 5,000 metres of a material. Maybe then the creative director doesn’t like it and it all just gets burnt. It’s really a shame; it’s terrible.”

While Scheufele is still relatively fresh to the couture game, her expertise in jewellery and watchmaking comes



techniques and empower its practitioners. Consider the delicate hand embroidery that decorates her Insofu emerald-inspired creations. Brought to life by artisans from the Kalhath Institute in Lucknow, India, a corseted short dress exhibits a delicate interplay of pearls, stones, sequins, crystals and ethically sourced ostrich feathers. This

been at the forefront of championing ethics and transparency in the jewellery and watchmaking world. Since 2018, its creations have used 100 per cent responsibly mined gold. By only using stones that meet the standards of the Kimberley Process, an international system established in 2003 to prevent conflict

match and I won’t sleep well at night.”

Sustainability is also key at Caroline’s Couture. According to Scheufele, the couture label—which develops its fabrics at artisanal workshops such as Jakob Schlaepfer, a renowned lace maker in St Gallen, Switzerland—produces only as much material as it needs. “There’s

with its own advantages. Specifically, she is used to designing down to the millimetre. She also applies this high level of precision to her made-to-measure couture designs. “While I’m stepping out of my comfort zone, I’m as demanding and complicated when it comes to my couture,” she says. “I’m learning a lot and I’m very happy with the results.”