

“The Golden Fleece Collection” by Giovanni Corvaja

The first public presentation of the new collection of five unique jewellery pieces, “The Golden Fleece”*, by Giovanni Corvaja, took place in spring 2009 in Munich, Germany, at the International Trade Fair, in the frame of a special exhibition “Modern Masters”.

Exhibiting the new collection in Munich was very meaningful for the artist, who celebrated 20 years since his first exhibition in the same place, in 1989.

The collection was then showcased in a number of prestigious international events in Basel, Tel Aviv, Maastricht and London.

**The Greek legend of the Golden Fleece has been told for 3,000 years. It is a classic hero's quest tale in which the hero embarks on a long journey into unknown lands, with a great task to achieve. He is in search of a magical ram's fleece, which he has to find in order to reclaim his rightful throne and power.*

The Golden Fleece by Giovanni Corvaja: The Embodiment of a Myth

*There is a symbol of the eternal nature of perpetuity, power and order:
the Golden Fleece of a divine goat.
It is guarded in a distant land across the sea where no one has been.
It brings good luck to the kings and guarantees that their kingdom would endure forever.*

Pierpaolo Pasolini, “Medea”, 1969

“I am not attracted by safe games”, Giovanni Corvaja says. One can witness this by looking at the pieces from his new “Golden Fleece Collection”, that step far beyond one’s imagination and expectation. The major piece of the collection, the Headpiece, alone has required 2500 hours of labour and 160 km of almost invisible self-made gold thread.

Anything but a “safe game”, indeed!

Giovanni Corvaja is an Italian goldsmith artist, well-know worldwide. His exquisite pieces have been acquired by the most prestigious museums and collectors in Europe, America and Australia. For Giovanni Corvaja, the artistic, formal and technical research has become more than merely a job; it is a mission and philosophy of his life.

His constant research led him, some 12 years ago, to an idea: the creation of the Golden Fleece. This idea evolved from two different influences.

Firstly, in the early ‘90s, Giovanni developed a system that enabled him to reduce gold and platinum to the dimension of one fifth of a human hair. This opened a whole new world of expressive possibilities in the field of jewellery to him. Precious metals turned into delicate fibres under his hands: soft, ethereal matter, very pleasant to the touch, possessing the intriguing spirit of symbology and the royal aesthetic of gold. The experience of touching that material was as pleasurable as caressing fur. So, Giovanni became obsessed with a desire to create objects both beautiful, and sensually tactile. “Gold is my obsession, it is a symbol of evolution and perfection, it expresses the best virtue of nature and the creation. It is therefore a necessity for me to work with it, to acquire the maximum possible knowledge of it”.

Moreover, the frequent encounters with the Golden Fleece in his studies on Alchemy provided the other impulse for Giovanni’s creativity. The Golden Fleece is often used as a metaphor for something

ultimately precious, unknown and impossible to reach. It is also associated with Philosopher's Stone, the elixir, the pursuit of perfection through the process of improvement and purification: through labour.

Thus, Giovanni decided to pursue his dream of finding his Philosopher's Stone, "the search of the Golden Fleece" became a necessity for him. But he decided to *make* it instead of *looking* for it.

The Ancient Greeks said: *O Mythos deloi, The Myth teaches*. Myth, on the one hand, and Alchemy on the other, inspired and helped Giovanni understand what that quest was about: a hermetic journey into the unknown, into the "creation of impossible". *"I needed all those years to build self-confidence, the knowledge and a clear vision on the matter. I was not ready before. Doubtlessly, the curiosity was the main force that attracted me to this project. Probably an improvement in myself will be the reward."*

The actual making of the gold fur, which started 2 years ago, presented many technical obstacles and challenges. The complete dedication and a strong, passionate belief in his dream made Giovanni overcome all the difficulties. Every single step in the process of making was carried by Giovanni in person. The philosophical attitude towards Craft has helped him to move on. The artist regards the Craft as "a journey, not a destination": reaching the end is not as important as the way itself. For the pieces of "The Golden Fleece Collection" that is crucial. Each piece requires thousands of hours of precise labour and hundreds of kilometres of gold wire. *"I wouldn't be able to undertake such a commitment if I didn't appreciate the importance of every moment of it"*, he believes.

As a rewarding result, the magic of beauty and sensuality - that had only been the realm of the Myth until now - has become a reality under the artist's hands. The energy transmitted from these five unique pieces, with symbolic forms on the theme, is that of an enormous overwhelming power. *"The shapes I have chosen for my pieces represent eternal symbols that speak directly to the unconscious. They are: fecundity for the Egg-Pendant, prosperity for the Round Brooch, fidelity for the Ring, commitment for the Bracelet, strength and perpetuity of power for the Headpiece... They have many other meanings though"*, explains the goldsmith.

Giovanni Corvaja with his "Golden Fleece Collection" has doubtlessly opened a new page in the history of art. Giovanni's technical virtuosity, love, creative and respectful attitude towards Craft made it possible for us and the future generations to touch something that had been just a Myth for centuries.

The pieces are definitely not free from their original mythical concept. No more than *the Myth* is free from the existence of those objects, now. The whole Myth has changed its meaning. The Golden Fleece had always been just an idea, and not the reality. It had never been *made* before. These pieces are unique. And the beauty of these pieces is unique. Because it is universal.

Prepared by Maria Rubtsova, March 2009

Quotes from the Interview with Giovanni Corvaja, October 2008

Images and additional info on the artist and his work are available at:
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