Maybe they should call Paris haute couture, Paris high-end charms.

There were nearly 30 official couture shows on the Federation schedule this week, but almost as many jewelry launches, displays, dinners and exhibitions in Paris this first week of July.

Ironically, nothing testifies to how big, and booming, a business jewelry has become as Paris couture, which is dedicated to fashion. This season, however, hard luxury is drawing almost as much attention.

Mega marques like Boucheron and Louis Vuitton had presentations, and the city had a plethora of smaller jewelry displays. In effect, the season began and ended with major jewelry statements by, respectively, Chanel and Fendi.

Chanel

Three days before the first couture show, Chanel unveiled a five-day pop-up expo inside the Grand Palais Éphémère, designed to celebrate the centenary of the sole jewelry collection founder Coco Chanel ever staged back in 1922. Coco even charged a 20 euro entrance fee to visit her Bijoux de Diamants. This pop-up was invitation only.
Over the weekend, Chanel invited private clients for tours of the show, echoing Mademoiselle Chanel’s dream of “covering women in a constellation of stars.”

Hence, a series of installations with both sapphire and opal comets; solar moon diamond rings and byzantine brooches. Staged alongside Coromandel screens, desks and lamps from Coco’s own private apartment.

Featuring well in excess of 100 million euros of jewelry, a Friday night dinner in the space understandably took place under high security. That didn’t stop Chanel ambassador Marion Cotillard from doing a hop, skip and jump over one of the oddly dark exhibition settings.

With a jazz band serenading guests, editors and VIPs were feted at a dinner inside the space. Though quite why the wealthiest luxury fashion brand on the planet cannot manage to serve turbot warm to 100 guests will remain something of a mystery.

Delfina Delettrez

For a cooler sense of modern jewelry, insiders gathered on Monday in Place von Furstenberg, where Delfina Delettrez Fendi showed off a witty new creation. A single solid silver ice cream cone laced with mini diamonds.
“It’s a reminder of some of the happiest moments of my youth,” smiled the Roman born Delettrez, who served real ice cream to her guests.

Three floors above the pretty square, a rock guitarist played – perched on the window sill of Delfina’s private Paris apartment played some great ballads. A cool moment, for a cool brand with a cool clientele.

Mené

Around the corner, Diana Picasso, scion of the great painter, presented her novel jewelry concept – Mené. An entirely online brand, where clients are charged the exact raw material price of any gold or platinum object they buy, plus 20% to 30% for the design.
Scanning Mené’s website, the price literally varies as the price of gold rises and falls on bullion markets.

In just three years, Mené has built a loyal following, selling annually 30,000 pieces for turnover of $30 million.

“We want customers to appreciate fine jewelry, and at a fair price,” smiled Diana.

None of this would matter if the designs were not good. Fortunately, Mené offers some great link chains; Giacometti-like mini figures on pendants; stylish rope-shaped rings and even a chess set, in either gold or platinum.

Samuel François

One indie jeweler one can only admire is Samuel François, a noted stylist with hipster magazine Numéro, and gent about town who unveiled his latest Surrealist ideas inside a Marais gallery.

His leading idea, a mordant eye, seen on very cool enamel rings; gold chain pendants and watchful brooches.

Presented on a series of colorfully battered antique market African heads or intriguing blotchy wax busts of Greek goddess, made in François’ kitchen, no less.

For the self-confident lady, great bracelets finished with metal flowers or jangling earrings completed by turquoise glass beads. Add in Dali-esque mouth pendants; lilac enamel cheetah rings and bold leaf shape bronze brooches and it all made for strong statement.

Last season, Francois sold out a virtual pop-up on Moda Operandi. Very much a brand on the move.

Hermès

The venerable house took a novel path, a mini concert performance staged inside La Gâité Lyrique theatre in the
The venerable house took a novel path, a mini concert performance staged inside La Gâité Lyrique theatre in the 3rd arrondissement, to launch its new high-end jewelry collection.

Entitled 'Les Jeux de l’Ombre' or the 'Play of Shadows', it was created by Hermès long-time shoe and jewelry designer Pierre Hardy.

For a marque all about discreet luxury, it was an impressively risk taking and adventurous debut, often using soft contours to provide shadow. Blending elements of Art Deco and baroque with pavé diamond rings finished with a large displaced diamond, and even breast-plate sized necklaces, featuring titanium, black spinels and dazzling sapphires.

Presented both in cabinets, but first by a score of black clad performers chanting phrases like "We disappear in the sun, we disappeared in the light."

A tad twee perhaps, but the results were stimulating at least.

Fendi

The final major show, Fendi, featured the final major jewelry collection, starring necklaces, earrings, and cocktail rings. Themed around the idea of a Fendi Flavus, from the Latin word for blond.
Creating a set of jewels, cascading, geometric assemblages of stones, made to be worn together. And an ideal accompaniment to the opening caramel-colored vicuna suits and deerskin ensembles in couturier Kim Jones collection.

Talk about harmony in all things, the ultimate Renaissance idea of perfection.

By Godfrey Deeny

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