

The Sentiments of Precious Stones

Letizia Airos Soria (September 20, 2018)



We sat down with Patrizia Di Carrobio, an international dealer in jewels, diamonds and precious stones, to talk about her latest book—in both English and Italian—in which she shares with readers her passion for jewels with anecdotes and stories from her own life.

[Patrizia Di Carrobio](#) [2] isn't just a friend of those who have had the fortune to get to know her in person. Those who know her through her books also consider her a friend. Her friendship is the first rare gem that you'll find in her writing. It permeates every paragraph. Her words take you by the hand, look you in the eye, answer your questions, smile and reflect with you. This sense of companionship is particularly true of the very first pages of her latest book, a delicious personal journey through the world of jewels, edited by Francesca Joppolo and illustrated by Marco Milanese.

Born in Canada, Patrizia Di Carrobio has lived in Brussels, Rome, Milan, London, and New York. But you don't know Patrizia if you don't know about her strong connection to her Sicilian roots. Pantelleria and Palermo have always been a part of her life. Even when she's in New York or



traveling around the world. They're present in the music she listens to and plays for others, in her cooking, in her affection for her daughters, in her dress, and in her attitudes toward art and work. Her story would make a great film. It all began when she was a kid, with her grandmother's love for jewels and her discovery of a jewel that her parents had lost. She was only six-years-old at the time. She earned a degree in Political Science, but diplomacy was never her real passion. She would soon become one of the first female auctioneers at Christie's and later Head of the Jewelry Department. For over thirty years, Patrizia has led a successful career dealing jewels and precious stones around the world.

We can't help but feel like her friend in *Be Jeweled!* Her stories are morsels to be savored, touching on jewels as well as letting us eavesdrop on her comments and feelings about lifestyles, fashion and her personal anecdotes.

The book invites you to read it a little at a time. It's a book to pick up, put down, pick up again, and carry to a corner of your house where you can enjoy it, like a warm cup of tea in friendly company.

"I published two previous books," says Patrizia, "both in Italian. I began them during my second divorce. I realized that it was up to me whether things were going to take a turn for the worse or the better after that dramatic separation. Divorce doesn't have to be the end of the world; it can be the start of many other things."

So she decided to write—but certainly not about divorce. "I spoke to my sister," she says, "who told me to write about jewels instead. Months later, I went to Palermo to visit a friend. She introduced me to an editor at Feltrinelli who loved my book. I wrote the second one after that. It's what led me to rediscover Italy—the sights, the language—after being away from it for years."

Patrizia's first two books were big hits and immediately went into a second printing. The books piqued many readers' curiosity. "But I swore that I wouldn't do another book if it didn't come out in English too. And I wanted to collaborate with someone on it. One editor appeared and said I absolutely had to do it and that he'd publish it in two languages... My hands were tied."

What is the structure of *Be Jeweled?*

"Each chapter opens with a jewel or a stone and then moves on to talk about life. That's what my readers had asked for: to open up about myself. It's not a book exclusively about jewels, but life, my life. A necklace strung with pearls and chapters to form a book."

Be Jeweled! was masterfully edited by Francesca Joppolo and thoughtfully illustrated by Marco Milanese, who drew several vignettes featuring Patrizia as a dark-haired, graceful, sweet figure who at times possesses a veiled irony. We seem to follow Patrizia as she goes about her life in these drawings.

"They're brief stories in images, pills that go with written pills," comments Patrizia. "I think it works wonderfully."

When we talk about "jewels," we often think of something frivolous or superfluous. But your book could hardly be described as frivolous. How come?

"Because when I say 'jewel' I don't say 'frivolous.' Jewelry makes us feel beautiful and if we feel beautiful, we feel good. If we feel good, we smile and are open to life. A jewel—and maybe this is where frivolity comes in—can be worth 5 Euro or a million Euro, but you still achieve the same jewelry effect."



“It’s not a matter of how much it costs. I can be equally happy putting on an earring made of tin or one made with more precious material. Each of them can be fun in its own way. Each has its own place. But it’s not as though I like one more than the other.”

According to Patrizia, we should definitely wear precious jewels and diamonds. But we should also wear contemporary jewels made with paper, plastic, and other playful, alternative materials. It’s easy to picture her wearing the latter with more traditional jewels, totally at ease, challenging onlookers to let their own personality, creativity and seductiveness shine.

Tell us about your line of work.

“I’m a jewelry dealer. I buy and sell, though I never buy with one particular client in mind. I buy something when I think it’s worth it, then I sell it. Sometimes it takes a month, sometimes a year, and sometimes as many as ten years.”

What is a jewel today?

“It’s an adornment. An ornament. An important complement to one’s wardrobe. But it’s more than that. It has a ‘value’ above and beyond its ‘value.’ How many things in this world give you pleasure to buy, make you feel good, and don’t lose their value once bought?”

Are there rules for wearing jewels?

“No rules! It depends on how you wear them, how you feel... A valuable necklace can also be worn over a sweater. The opposite is also true: paper earrings can go perfectly with an evening gown.”

So jewelry doesn’t just mean jewels. It’s almost a feeling...

“That’s true. Jewelry can also remind you of people and past moments. For example, all women have a deeply symbolic and sentimental relationship with their jewels. It’s linked to the rituals of our loves...”

Patrizia’s secret lies in her naturalness, her timeless elegance, the way she is unmistakably herself. So go on, open Be Jeweled as if it were a jewelry box, and let each page sweep you off your feet as you take a trip back in time and beyond time.

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