

Jewellery design



*Frederic Boucheron of Maison Boucheron
Gold belt buckle
1900
cornelian, glass, gold*

Frédéric Boucheron established his celebrated jewellery workshop in Paris in 1858. He employed some of the best designers in Paris to create a freer, more naturalistic style. Fashionable ladies were quick to recognize his originality. His work appealed to the monarchy, society hostesses and actresses alike, and remained popular until as late as the 1930s.

Boucheron often used precious and base materials alongside each other. This belt buckle, for example, combines gold leopards with a type of semi-precious chalcedony stone called cornelian, and a sculptural lion's head relief made of cast glass. The latter was probably supplied by René Lalique (1860-1945), who began his career as a jeweller, and later became a glassmaker.

Although the design contains Classical elements, particularly the lion's head mask, it also shows the influence of the prevailing Art Nouveau style in the sinuous bodies of the two outstretched lionesses.

The buckle was exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. It demonstrates exceptional craftsmanship as well as considerable artistic flair, especially in the modelling of the animals and striking colour contrasts of the different materials. It was designed by the sculptor Lucien Hirtz (1864-1928), who worked for Boucheron between 1893 and 1928, and was also famous as an enameller.