

DESIGNER

A legacy OF HIS OWN

Olivier Reza reveals how he has made his mark on the legendary brand his father created. By Marie Chabrol

High-end jewelry house Alexandre Reza made its debut as the official sponsor of the Art Monte-Carlo fair in April, and then displayed its new collection at the TEFAF New York show in May. *Rapaport Magazine* spoke with Olivier Reza, CEO of the renowned Parisian label.

Almost 10 years ago, you joined the eponymous house your father founded, profoundly changing the face of this elegant brand. How did you envisage this professional transformation?

With a lot of doubts initially, knowing I had little experience in the business. It's a long, empirical process with a steep learning curve.

The concern for excellence in design and execution was an ongoing priority for me, which allowed me to face the surprises this transition brought with it head-on.

The in-house creations launched each season are very different from the more classic ones we used to see. How would you describe your creative journey?

First of all, I find it is driven by the stone we choose to mount, but also by the woman or man we want to surprise and accompany.

The need to impress an increasingly educated and courted audience is a daily challenge we want to meet. I find a lot of inspiration in contemporary art and architecture.



They inspired our Ruban, Dune, Delhea and Tour Carrée collections.

I hope our jewels are infused with the same modernity and freshness.

For the past four years we have been admiring your creations in your Ritz Paris flagship store. What motivated you to choose this location, which is more private than the old store in Place Vendôme?

Our house is dedicated to the creation of extraordinary pieces, with an approach that is artistic, traditional and passionate. We do not believe our brand is compatible with a retail model. It is too unique and very limited.

The Ritz was an opportunity to give our creations some visibility at an intimate

location. Ultimately, this place is a symbol of savoir-faire and savoir-vivre.

Your designs have become more technical in recent years, with every piece revealing its maker's mastery and expertise. How would you describe your relationship with your craftspeople?

We are in a constant dialogue, exchanging our points of view. But above all, it is about the desire to push them to give more and better. They like these exchanges, but it is not easy.

Our pieces take a long time to create — anywhere from six to 18 months. It is very slow. It's true craftsmanship.



Ruban Bracelet featuring 5.43 carats of pink sapphires and 5.74 carats of brilliant-cut diamonds.



Above: 1. Necklace set with 14 unheated oval Ceylon sapphires weighing 366 carats, and 144 carats of round diamonds, 1976; 2. Necklace featuring a 6-carat cabochon emerald, Burmese rubies, and diamonds; 3. Zamarat necklace with a 19.78-carat Colombian emerald, cultured pearls and diamonds; 4. Y-Dol earrings with sugarloaf cabochon red spinels and diamonds.

Right, from top: Le Navire gold and diamond necklace set with 52 carats of Ceylon sapphires, 1989; Suite composed of diamonds, emeralds, and untreated cabochon Burmese rubies, 1983; Trembleur Emerald suite composed of Zambian emeralds and diamonds, 1979.



The stones have been part of Reza's DNA since its inception. The collection has created its own legend, and many jewelry houses used your father's talent to procure beautiful gems for them. What inspires you in your acquisitions?

Reza currently possesses one of the world's largest inventories of unheated and untreated colored gemstones. I would like to buy more, which I will do as soon as I can. I am truly motivated by beauty and emotion, and obviously the gaps in our stock. So I am also on the lookout for opportunities to buy well, to keep prices reasonable for our collectors.

How do you find the right balance between contemporary creations and exceptional stones?

I think both matter, and the recipe is in the balance of choices. Ultimately, it is this balance that makes the piece.

What do think the future holds for the Alexandre Reza house?

As always, I look ahead with enthusiasm and a healthy dose of skepticism. I think these two feelings go hand in hand and allow you to move forward.

alexandre.reza.com ■

Who is OLIVIER REZA?

Olivier Reza, 44, the son of master jeweler Alexandre Reza, has a bachelor's degree in economics and business from Sciences Po Paris, and a master's in law, business and tax law from Panthéon-Assas University. After he graduated, he served as managing director in the mergers and acquisitions department of Lazard in New York. Later he was founder and managing partner of financial-services company Myro Capital. Since his father retired in 2008, he has been running Reza, the family jewelry brand. At the same time, he holds several high-level positions: He is director of Collector IQ, a private art database of more than 320,000 artists and millions of works of art; he was appointed CEO of digital high-end watch membership company Eleven James in 2017; and until early this month, he was on Sotheby's board of directors.