

## Return of the Brooch: Bigger, Bolder and More Beautiful than ever

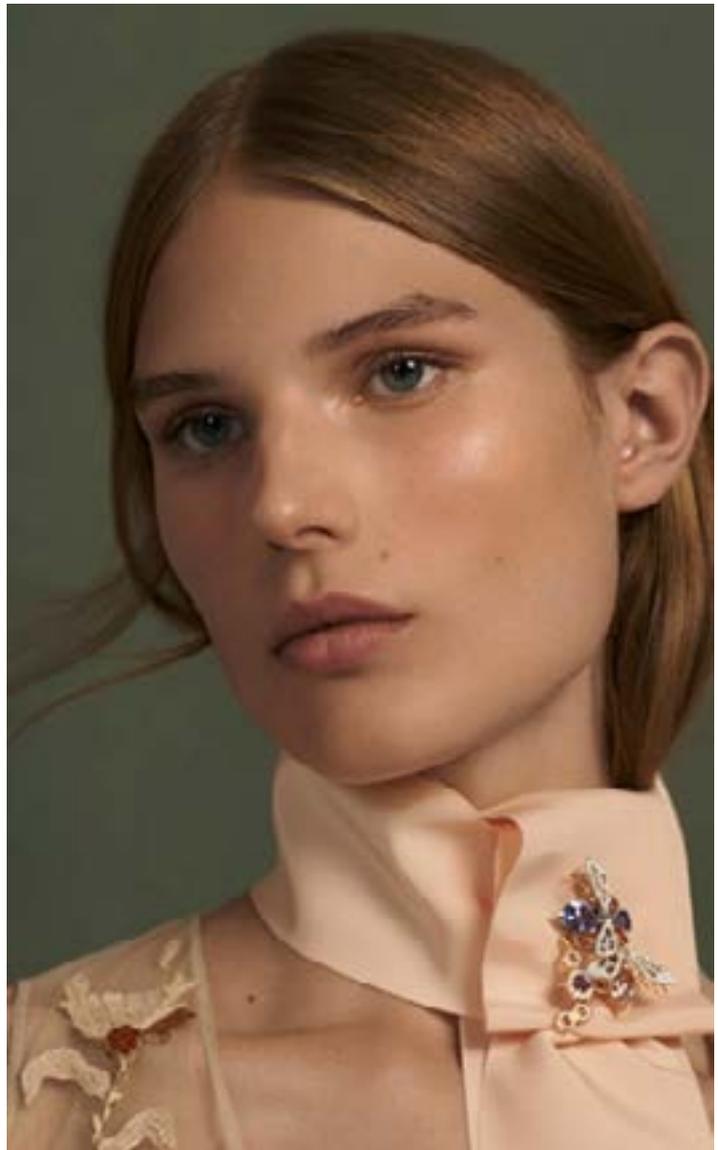
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“*B*rooches are an amazing way to express personality,” enthuses Claire Choisne, creative director of Boucheron, from her light-filled studio above Place Vendôme. “Today, they are one of the most exciting and dynamic decorative accessories – really, a signature of style.”

Choisne, it turns out, isn’t alone in her support for a piece of jewellery that has languished in the doldrums for several decades. A return to favour among well-known houses – from Chaumet to Dior, Chanel to Bulgari – has seen them taking pride of place in many collections of late.

Historically, the brooch was a staple in the jewellery boxes of most women of means. Adornment as a signifier of wealth was the norm, with any self-respecting Victorian or Edwardian pinning one (or a number) around her neckline. Larger brooches known as stomachers would cover the space from décolletage to waist, their bejewelled weight supported by the stiff fabrics and corsets of the time.



"It was a part of a woman's wardrobe in the 19th century," says Emily Barber, director of jewellery at Bonhams. However, the relaxing of dress codes after the First World War, and the introduction of lighter fabrics, saw the brooch's gradual demise. "Women no longer had the upholstery to keep a brooch in place," Barber says. But how things have changed.

Van Cleef & Arpels, which has offered brooches for decades – most iconically, its ballerina and fairy clips – created a significant stand-alone collection last year. L'Arche de Noé comprises pairs of animals from toucans to kangaroos, owls to elephants and has grown to 140 clips. Nicolas Bos, CEO and creative director, knew that brooches would be the only way to represent all the animals in the same scale, creating a "consistent overall effect".

The issue of whether all the pieces would sell didn't even cross his mind. "Brooches have a special versatility due to the fact they can be worn in so many different ways: on clothes, in the hair or on accessories. They're like miniature sculptures, but with a precious dimension."

