

A Portrait of Jewels following missing treasures through canvas
with Andrew Prince
Thursday 3rd January 2019



A lecture inspired by Andrew Prince's visit to the National Portrait Gallery, and seeing all the Tudor and Stuart monarchs, in all their finery, and wondering where were and what are all the jewels that they wore.

Among the many jewels he traces, Andrew follows some pearls that belonged to Catherine De Medici then Mary Queen of Scots, Queen Elizabeth I and now are worn by Queen Elizabeth II. Also a spectacular diamond that belonged to King Charles I, later worn by Marie Antoinette, which was stolen then purchased by a Russian Aristocrat and later mounted in a tiara by Cartier for an American Heiress, when she became a British member of parliament! Jewel hunting has never been more fascinating.

Andrew Prince has had a passion for the jewellery since he was a small child. In fact his enthusiasm can be traced back to the time when, at the age of three, he

swallowed his one of his mother's pearl earrings having found her jewel box hidden from him in a cupboard. The very first piece of jewellery he created was a ring made of copper wire pulled from the back of a television. He presented it to his grandmother (it turned her finger green and gave her a rash). He then created a necklace for his mother using beads taken off her wedding dress (she was not at all happy).

In 1980, when he was nine, Andrew's mother took him to the Princely Magnificence exhibition at the V&A, exhibiting Renaissance jewels dating from 1500 to 1630. It proved a revelation. Dazzled by the splendour and opulence of the jewels on show, Andrew decided then and there that creating jewellery was what he wanted to devote his life to. His passion for jewellery grew when, in 1984 on his first ever visit to Bond Street, Andrew viewed an exhibition by Castellani and Giuliano at Wartski & Co's. While there, he was allowed to handle beautiful 18th century gold boxes and magnificent imperial Russian pieces by Fabergé. In 1987, just before leaving school, he took time off to visit Geneva to view the astonishing Sotheby's auction of the Duchess of Windsor's jewellery collection. Here, for the first time, he held pieces created by some of the world's greatest jewellers, fashioned from only the finest of stones and set in designs of outstanding quality. For the young Andrew, it was a life-changing experience.



In August of that year, two weeks after his 16th birthday, Andrew started work in London's Bond Street, working for The Antiques Roadshow expert Ian Harris. Under his guidance, Andrew developed an appreciation for jewels that were valued for their quality of design and craftsmanship, rather than for how much the stones in the piece were worth. He then joined the renowned contemporary jeweller Elizabeth Gage and worked with her on the design and production side. Through her and her private collection, Andrew was able to see and handle rare and extraordinary stones with names such as Sphene, Andalusite, Spinel and Diopside, many of which are far rarer than diamonds. Elizabeth Gage was to have an enormous influence on Andrew's sense of what was possible within the realm of jewellery design.

Andrew's taste for fine 'costume jewellery' can be traced back to an antique market, where he came across a late Victorian brooch set with what he initially thought were emeralds and diamonds. They were, in fact, crystal and green glass set in silver and gold. He realised that beautiful jewellery didn't require expensive stones, and that it was the elegance of the design and the quality of the workmanship that truly mattered. Private commissions then started to trickle in. The trickle turned into a flood, as celebrities such as Michael Jackson (a large crystal and pearl shoulder jewel) and Shirley Bassey (necklaces) were seen wearing Andrew's creations.

In 2002, the V&A commissioned a collection of jewels to accompany the resplendent Tiaras, Past and Present exhibition which became one of their most popular exhibits. The exposure gained by the show then led to Andrew's jewellery appearing in film.

In 2005, he was asked to make tiaras and jewellery for Mrs Henderson Presents starring Judy Dench. In 2009, pieces were commissioned for The Young Victoria starring Emily Blunt and Miranda Richardson. In 2012, he was chosen by

the creators of Downton Abbey to supply a large collection of jewellery for the third series. The characters played by Maggie Smith, Shirley Maclaine, Elizabeth McGovern and Michelle Dockery were all adorned with elegant tiaras, combs, earrings and necklaces designed and created by Andrew Prince.