

San Francisco Social Diary: Winter Social Events

Posted on [February 22, 2017](#)



— The grand opening of the Manetti Shrem Museum of Art was among the dazzling events I attended in the Bay Area this winter.

Three fabulous events bedazzled San Francisco this winter: Attilio Codognato's extraordinary jewels went on display at the Sorokko Gallery, the much-anticipated Manetti Shrem Museum had a gala opening celebration, and Shreve & Company moved to a shiny new flagship store. And I have first-hand reports on all of them!

ATTILIO CODOGNATO JEWELRY EXHIBITED FOR THE FIRST TIME OUTSIDE VENICE, ITALY

"Where has this remarkable jewelry been all my life?" I wondered, completely bowled over by the distinctive, bold, oversized collection from Venetian master jeweler Attilio Codognato at the Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco.

One reason it was new to me was that the works of Codognato and his forebears—celebrated Italian jewelers for generations—have never been offered for sale or exhibited (other than in selected museums) beyond the walls of their 1866 original shop in Venice, near Piazza San Marco.

It's not that gallerist **Serge Sorokko** and his wife **Tatiana Sorokko**—a top model, fashion editor, and couture collector who has been a friend and client of Codognato for 25 years—hadn't tried for years to make it happen. "I have always been reluctant to exhibit outside of my place in Venice," Attilio explained. "After more than two decades, the Sorokkos' persistence has paid off."



— Katya Sorokko-Spencer, with gallerists Serge and Tatiana Sorokko.



- The House of Codognato jewelry, founded in 1866 by Atillio Codognato's grandfather, Simeone, is still at its original site in Venice.



— A necklace from the estate of the late Italian Countess Marta Marzotto, the former model turned fashion designer.



— A selection of 19th- and 20th-century rings from Casa Codognato, rendered in combinations of gold, platinum, and precious stones.



— A diamond and blackamoor brooch, circa 1970.

CASA CODIGNATO, A VENERABLE JEWELRY HOUSE

The exhibit at the Sorokko Gallery, located at the heart of Union Square, was timed to honor the 150th anniversary of Casa Codognato. Entitled *Coveted: Jewels by Codognato*, the San Francisco show comprised a collection of fifty works from the House's archives and the designer's private collection.

"The absence of a distinction between jewelry and art is what makes Codognato's works so desirable and collectable," said Tatiana Sorokko, citing also its originality, uniqueness, beauty, artistry, and instantly obvious timelessness.



- Tatiana Sorokko wearing her own Codognato necklace and pendant from the 1950s, inspired by an ancient sculpture in the Roman Church of Santa Maria del Popolo.



— A selection of works from the 19th and 20th century, including, on the model, a grand serpent ring with diamonds in 18-karat gold and silver, circa 1960.



- Inside its original display case, a 19th-century necklace set in 18-karat gold with diamonds and antique rock crystal skulls, designed by Simeone Codognato.



— Codognato's bold designs are not for shrinking violets.

CELEBRITY FANS

Jewelry by the Codognato family has long attracted high-profile clients, among them members of the 19th- and 20th-century Italian and Russian royal families; writers and artists such as **Jean Cocteau**, **Ernest Hemingway**, and **Andy Warhol**; and celebrities like **Maria Callas**, **Elizabeth Taylor** (her husband **Richard Burton** bought her a serpent bracelet), and **Luchino Visconti** (who browsed nightly while filming *Death in Venice*).

Other fans include arbiters of style such as **Barbara Hutton** (who, like Visconti, never asked the price), **Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis**, **Diana Vreeland**, and **Coco Chanel** (who acquired her famous pearls from Casa Codognato).



- A photo of legendary fashion icon Diana Vreeland wearing Codognato jewels, inside a rare Codognato frame of silver and semiprecious stones.



- In the 1920s, Russian ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev gifted Coco Chanel with a Codognato “samorodok” ring that inspired her own jewelry designs.



— Suzy Kellems Dominik with Zeno Zennaro, who has worked for Codognato nearly 40 years.



— San Francisco Symphony President Sako Fisher with Tatiana Sorokko.



— Katya Sorokko Spencer in front of artist Hunt Slonem's "Bunny Wall."



— Shreve's Diane Adams, in front of a Hunt Slonem "Lories" painting.



— Publicist Claudia Ross.



— Sorokko Gallery VP David Nash with Reorient founder Jess Ng.



— Jennifer Benham and Suzy Kellems Dominik admiring a Codognato ring.

THE DISTINCTIVE STYLE OF ATTILIO CODOGNATO

Since he took over the firm in 1958, Attilio Codognato has become particularly well known for work rooted not so much in religion, as Serge Sorokko pointed out, but rather themes of alchemy, Byzantine imagery, symbolism, and especially memento mori.

Created to remind people of their mortality, memento mori jewelry and objects date to ancient times. The iconography included images of death, such as skulls, bones, and snakes. Such items, inspired by the Latin phrase “remember you must die” (supposedly uttered to humble vainglorious ancient Roman generals), are reminders of the cycle of birth and death.



— This two-headed serpent ring, designed by Attilio's father in the 1930s and produced by Attilio in the 1960s, features 20 carats of diamonds.



— An 18-karat gold and citrine serpent bracelet, circa 1970.



— From the Casa Codognato archives: A 19th-century ring in 18-karat gold with elements from the 13th century, with a secret compartment on one side.



— Tatiana Sorokko wearing a Codognato necklace featuring serpents and skulls.



- Gorretti Lui (right) and Suzy Kellems Dominik, in her own Codognato necklace that once belonged to the late San Francisco fashion and arts patron Dodie Rosekrans.

Codognato's influence, especially his skull motifs, can be seen in the work of many artists and designers, notably **John Galliano** and **Alexander McQueen**. The recent exclusive "club" of Attilio's enthusiasts and collectors, fans of the fantastic, includes **Princess Firyal of Jordan, Elton John, Kate Moss, Tom Ford, and Nicole Kidman**.

ATTILIO'S LEGACY

"Attilio is truly an influential contemporary artist," said Tatiana Sorokko, "who for over half a century has been creating objects of unparalleled beauty in line with a fabled family tradition."

In recognition of his singular talent, the government of France bestowed upon Codognato the prestigious honor of *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in 2012.

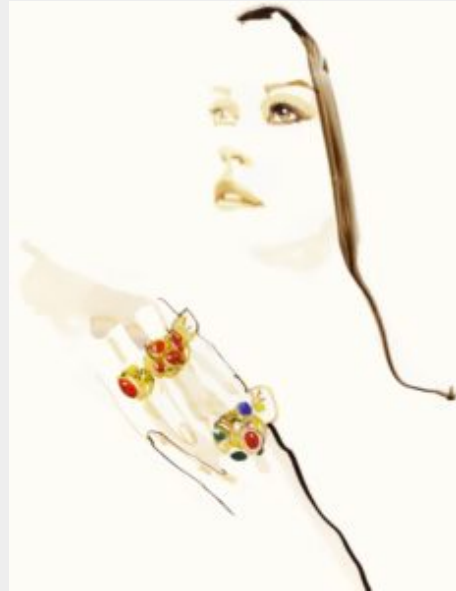
In the hands of a master like Attilio Codognato, jewelry is art, to be acquired just like painting and sculpture. Better still, it can be worn as well as displayed. The Sorokkos' exhibit was a huge success: it almost completely sold out, and, what's more, this distinctive art genre attracted a brand-new set of collectors in San Francisco.

GRAND OPENING: MANETTI SHREM MUSEUM AT UC DAVIS

With the 2016 opening of the **Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art** on its campus, the University of California at Davis has perpetuated its artistic legacy of nearly 60 years and put itself on the map again as an art school.

Its reputation as a cauldron of artist creation dates from the 1960s, when the faculty included such world-renowned artists as **Wayne Thiebaud, Robert Arneson, William T. Wiley, Manuel Neri,** and **Ronald Peterson.**

To see the buildup to the Museum, read my previous column [here](#).



- A portrait of Tatiana Sorokko by renowned illustrator David Downton, in which Sorokko models a group of Codognato rings.