



MISTINGUETT WHITE GOLD  
NECKLACE, MADE WITH  
DIAMONDS, RUBIES, PEARLS  
& EMERALDS.

# Running In The Family

Sophie Mizrahi-Rubel is busy reinventing the tradition of an esteemed family jewellery brand.

by Eleonor Picciotto

Born 100 years ago, high-jewellery house John Rubel has been brought back to life by the great-grandniece of the founders, Sophie Mizrahi-Rubel.

Back in 1915, brothers John and Robert Rubel migrated from Hungary to open a high-jewellery workshop in Place Vendôme, Paris. Van Cleef & Arpels (VC&A) was its first client. In 1939, VC&A, then on a mission to conquer the US market, took the brothers along. A year later, John was getting acquainted with New York's nightlife: in a Latino nightclub in the Lower East Side, he scribbled on the corner of a tablecloth the silhouette of a flamenco dancer. He later showed it to Maurice Duvalet, head designer at VC&A; the drawing marked the beginning of VC&A's memorable ballerinas.

After three years of successful collaboration, the Rubel brothers started their eponymous brand in 1942. Most of Europe was under German occupation, so the brothers were forced to stay in the US while their nephew, Marcel (Sophie's grandfather), ran the workshop in Paris. Meanwhile, the John Rubel flagship on 777 Fifth Avenue was getting a lot of attention.

In the early 1950s, the brothers were ageing, and Marcel did not want to re-open the workshop or move to the US. Therefore, he asked the brothers to come back home to help him develop the new strategy of the company. As the John Rubel brand slowly died, by 1955 the family business was focusing on diamonds, turning Marcel Rubel into one of the most important diamond dealers in France.

Sophie Rubel was born in 1963. A young law graduate, she started studying gemmology, adding knowledge to what her grandfather had been teaching her in his workshop as a child. She built her career working in and around Place Vendôme and even became Mauboussin's deputy chief executive officer, in 10 years with the maison.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE ICONIC ACTRESS  
AND DANCER FROM THE EARLY 20TH  
CENTURY, THE MISTINGUETT NECKLACE  
IS MOUNTED ON WHITE GOLD WITH  
DIAMONDS; MARQUISE-CUT, BRILLIANT-  
CUT AND BEAD-CUT RUBIES; WHITE  
PEARLS AND EMERALDS.  
© COURTESY OF JOHN RUBEL



*“Every time I found drawings, I spent time studying them, analysing them closely; the details were exceptional.” — Sophie Rubel*

In 2012 she decided to relaunch the family brand. Rubel stumbled upon a wooden trunk in the attic of the family house. When she finally looked inside, Rubel found dozens of original jewellery designs that her great uncles had drawn. Researching the family brand, she quickly realised John Rubel was highly esteemed at auctions and jewellery sales.

“I called François Curiel at Christie’s, who confirmed John Rubel was a must in terms of excellence, craftsmanship and creativity, ” she says. Turning the spotlight back on John Rubel became her sole goal: “Every time I found drawings, I spent time studying them, analysing them closely; the details were exceptional,” adds Rubel. With the help of Christie’s, Sotheby’s and Bonhams, she gathered original documents, including texts and designs, which she eventually turned into a coffee-table book that tells the story of the Rubel brothers.

While respecting the tradition her grandfather taught her, Rubel’s Vies de Bohème 18-piece jewellery collection has translated older references into new forms. It pays tribute to emblematic women of the 20th century: figures such as Amelia Earhart, a US aviation pioneer who disappeared into the Pacific with her plane; and the actresses Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Brooks. For each legendary woman, Rubel has imagined an extraordinary jewel. ◇

[www.johnrubel.com](http://www.johnrubel.com)



LIBERTY RING  
WHITE GOLD, 4 PEAR-CUT BLUE  
SAPPHIRES, ONYX, BAGUETTE-  
CUT WHITE DIAMONDS AND  
SAPPHIRES WITH A CENTRAL  
NATURAL EMERALD FROM  
ZAMBIA OF 6.22 CARATS.