



JEWELRY | AUCTION PREVIEW | DECEMBER 8, 2015

The singular, creative imagination of Line Vautrin

Line Vautrin's jewels and sculpted objets are the epitome of Parisian Neo-Romantic chic. Here, author Patrick Mauriès recalls his first meeting with jewellery maker, while gallery owner Louisa Guinness and interior designer Fabrice Bana discuss their favourite pieces from our online auction

Patrick Mauriès on meeting Line Vautrin

Line Vautrin always maintained an air of mystery. This was immediately apparent when I first came face to face with this physically slight, extraordinarily energised woman in 1987. She was 75 at the time, and showed signs of an understated vanity, her hair stylishly coiffed, an elegant ankle shown off by Capri pants. She lived quietly and frugally in a small

apartment; she may have retired, but she was one of those people who could not conceive of slowing down, and was always in a state of creative excitement.



Line Vautrin in Paris, about 1930



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *Soleil à pointes No.1,*
A Mirror, circa 1955. Estimate: £4,000-6,000.

This piece is offered in the Line Vautrin online sale, 8-15 December

She was preoccupied by boxes with mother-of-pearl covers, new experiments, and what she dubbed ‘pellimorphoses’ (surfaces or forms in resin, charged with psychic powers), just as she had once been by her

Talose mirrors or jewellery and objects of gilt bronze. Not that her commitment to one category precluded another; she developed them in parallel, investing in each her skills and poetic sensibility.

Line Vautrin's family ran a foundry, which explains her early attraction to working with metals. But it was not technical mastery that mattered most to her. She gave primacy above all to the singular creative imagination which pushed her to develop new techniques and materials that might fulfil her vision. Her destiny was to work for herself, and in relative isolation from the business and social worlds.



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *Saint Nicolas*, A necklace, 1945-1950. Gilt bronze. Estimate: £800-1,200.
This piece is offered in the Line Vautrin online sale, 8-15 December

The buttons inspired by the ancient world that she was making in the mid-1930s were the first seeds of what was to grow into a sumptuous body of work. Despite her desire for privacy, Line Vautrin was soon enjoying a considerable renown, which enabled her in the 1940s to invest in the Hôtel Mégret de Serilly in the Marais, transforming it into a thriving workshop in collaboration with her husband, Jacques Armand Bonnaud, and creative talents including Gilbert Poillerat.

A second chapter in her career was devoted to experiments with cellulose acetate, which she set with small fragments of mirror. It was a meticulous, fastidious and — because of the toxic fumes — dangerous medium, for which she registered the name Talosel. She moved to the Quai des Grands Augustins, opened a boutique on the Left Bank, and then a workshop where she endeavoured to pass on the skills associated with the techniques she had invented.

Her only concerns were for tactile sensitivity, subtlety of modelling and logic of form. Each object in Talosel — boxes, lamp bases, tables, mirrors — was made to a design conceived by her, yet each was unique, a singular, hand-crafted piece.

Louisa Guinness on the chic appeal of Line Vautrin

I first discovered Line Vautrin while in Paris. I always thought only very chic Parisian ladies wore the jewellery, and I could never be one of them. After many years, though, I have become part of that chic, understated club that recognises each other's jewellery. It is rather like being part of the 'Calder jewellery' club that began in the 1940s. People look at your jewellery, give a knowing look and say nothing. I like that.



Louisa wears Line Vautrin (1913-1997), A necklace, circa 1955. Resin, mirror fragments inlay. Estimate: £700-900. This piece is offered in the Line Vautrin online sale, 8-15 December



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), A necklace, circa 1955. Resin, mirror fragments inlay. Estimate: £700-900. This piece is offered in the Line Vautrin online sale, 8-15 December

I love the talosel pieces and like to layer them. I wear them with a long gold necklace and something very modern. I like the contrast of materials. Talosel is very light and therefore comfortable to wear. I also like the colours and reflections you get from the little pieces of mirror fragments.



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *Les Grenouilles*, circa 1949. A brooch, gilt-bronze. Estimate: £800-1,200.

This piece is offered in the [Line Vautrin](#) online sale, 8-15 December

I've always been drawn to the original way of 'hanging' the pieces. Line Vautrin specialised in the non conventional. The 'Grenouilles' brooch, above, can be worn in so many ways. There are two ends to it. It can be worn across the lapel or hanging down, over the shoulder or simply bunched up into a smaller work. I like the movement offered by the use of

a chain in a brooch. There are pins on both ends, so really, you are free to create your own sculpture on your clothing.



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), A group of three pairs of earrings, circa 1945. Mother-of-pearl, enameled and gilt-bronze. Estimate: £600-800. This piece is offered in the [Line Vautrin](#) online sale, 8-15 December

These geometric earrings in this group are super modern — they even go ‘up’ the ear. Light and colourful, they would go with many things, including a nice simple ring. The star earrings and large disc earrings, on the other hand, sit well with a long, elaborate necklace.



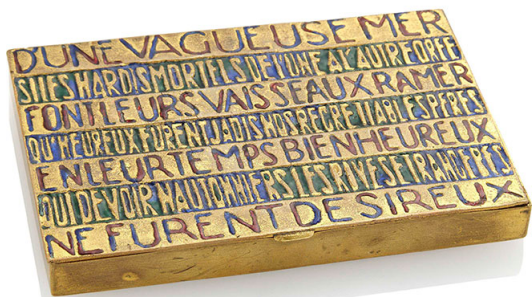
Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *La pêche miraculeuse*, a necklace, circa 1945. Gilt-bronze. Estimate: £2,000-3,000. This piece is offered in the [Line Vautrin](#) online sale, 8-15 December

This gilt-bronze necklace is very typical of the work of Line Vautrin. Featuring hanging and articulated ends, suspended on a piece of chainmail, the piece can be worn by a man over his shoulder on a jacket or by a lady — with the chainmail to the front and the details hanging down the back.

Even though these pieces are all precious and gorgeous, I feel I can wear them freely on the street. The mirrored discs may glint in the light but not like a diamond. The secret club can walk the streets.

[Louisa Guinness Gallery](#) works with today's leading sculptors and painters to create jewellery as well as collecting and dealing in works by master artists

Fabrice Bana's makes his selections from the sale



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *D'une vagueuse mer*,
A box, 1940-1945. Enamelled And Gilt-Bronze.

Estimate: £1,200-1,800. This piece is offered in
the Line Vautrin online sale, 8-15 December

Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *L'altruisme est
amour*, A compact, 1943-1945. Gilt bronze,

mirror glass. Estimate: £1,200-1,800 . This
piece is offered in the Line Vautrin online sale,
8-15 December

One of Line Vautrin's many talents, and a trademark of her work, is the use of poems and wordplay on gilt-bronze boxes and compacts. On the left, *L'altruisme est amour* features an extract from the play *Porcie* by Robert Garnier (1534-1590). The inscriptions are enamelled into the bronze — how wonderfully, aesthetically beautiful and poetic! I always feel Vautrin's pieces are very intimate — as though she writes only to you. Made in the midst of World War II, *L'Altruisme est Amour*, or *Selflessness is Love* also has a fantastically peaceful message.



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *Palmette*, an ashtray, circa 1945. Gilt-bronze. Estimate: £1,000-1,5000. This piece is offered in the Line Vautrin online sale, 8-15 December

This wonderful gilt-bronze gem comes from the Collection of Helene Theodoropopoulos. She was the first sales assistant in the boutique that Line Vautrin opened when she moved from Paris to Casablanca in 1949. The palm leaf-shape is a wonderful reminder of that period in her life, with a very Moroccan vibe; like her boxes, it is a piece that shows her mastery in bronze.



Line Vautrin (1913-1997), *Soleil a Pointes no.1*, circa 1955. Talosel resin, mirror fragments inlay.

Estimate: £5,000-7,000. This piece is offered in the [Line Vautrin](#) online sale, 8-15 December

Line Vautrin first began to work with talosel, a new kind of resin, in 1955. This is one of the earliest examples of a piece featuring the material, inlaid with coloured mirror fragments. The *mirroirs soleil à pointes*, as she named them, can come in a great variety of colours and sizes. This example leaves an amazing luminous impact in an interior.

Fabrice Bana writes the interior design blog [A-Gent of Style](#)