

# ALHAMBRA ANNIVERSARY

Every jewelry house wants a signature design: a standout that singularly evokes the house's style codes and goes on to be a commercial best seller.

For Van Cleef & Arpels, that surely would be Alhambra.

The four-leaf-cloverlike design came onto the scene in 1968 as the accents on a yellow-gold sautoir, the detail's amuletlike shape evoking a modern exoticism. Grace Kelly and Romy Schneider were early fans; more recently, Blake Lively and Sharon Stone have worn the style. And the design has been extended to earrings, between-the-finger rings and bejeweled watches created with malachite, tiger's-eye, onyx and turquoise, among other stones.

To celebrate Alhambra's 50th anniversary, Van Cleef & Arpels has created four limited-edition designs (from \$6,350 to \$63,500) that are to be introduced Thursday at select flagship stores around the world. A gray tone of mother-of-pearl, the most popular material for Alhambra designs, has been used in a rose-gold suite that includes a necklace, a bracelet, earrings and a ring.

In addition, a yellow-gold necklace and bracelet have been set with rock crystal, or with a lapis lazuli and diamond combination. The two styles pay homage to the early Alhambra sautoirs: lapis lazuli had not been used since 1968, and rock crystal's last outing was in the 1980s.

The spirit of the '60s also is being celebrated, said Nicolas Bos, the house's president and chief executive. "It was a period where many things changed culturally," he said. "Jewelry and fashion were opening up to a wider clientele with modern lifestyles — that of the active woman who was buying for herself, with pieces worn for pleasure on a daily basis."

And Alhambra has had an enduring appeal. At Collector Square, an online consignment shop based in Paris that specializes in luxury jewelry, watches and handbags, Alhambra pieces gener-



## Signature design

A gold Alhambra necklace by Van Cleef & Arpels in gray mother-of-pearl and diamonds.

ally are snapped up within 24 hours of posting. "We sometimes don't even have time to put them on our site because we already have buyers," said Constance Lauvinerie, Collector Square's head of jewelry. "We see dozens of alerts created every day for Alhambra."

Collectors are drawn to the design because it is "easy to wear and casual — not too flashy or branded," she said, and "everyone knows the clover pattern."

Sautoirs, especially 1970s pieces in hard colored stones, are the most desirable, Ms. Lauvinerie said, referring to a coral design bought in the '70s for the equivalent of 2,000 euros that recently sold for about €20,000 (about \$24,000).

"The prices are totally crazy," she said. "And with the 50th anniversary, will be even crazier." MING LIU