

Condé Nast Traveller

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WATCHES AND
JEWELLERY
The guide for globetrotters



GLOBAL CRAFT



Le Roi Leon brooch (convertible into a ring) in gold, zirconia, micromosaic inlaid in black lava and diamonds, POA. Below, Maurizio Fioravanti



Redcurrants ear pendants in gold, micromosaic inlaid in carbon fibre, bronze and diamonds, POA. All jewellery, **Vamgard at Symbolic & Chase** (s-c.com). Below, Roman mosaic in Tivoli



VAMGARD ROME

'A theatre of illusions' is how micromosaic artist Maurizio Fioravanti describes his creations. His almost-photographic depictions of fantastical creatures appear at first glance to be miniature paintings, but look closer and a mind-bogglingly intricate composition of thousands of minute tesserae, each measuring less than a millimetre, reveals itself. Hundreds of years ago, wealthy aristocrats on European Grand Tours acquired similar micromosaic paintings by artists who had honed their skills on St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City. An art collector with an architecture degree, Fioravanti became entranced by the work of 18th-century master mosaicist Giacomo Raffaelli and taught himself the ancient craft. Today, from his studio in Rome, overlooking a historic palazzo in the city he says 'transcends civilisations', Fioravanti is almost single-handedly reviving this dying skill. Over the past 30 years he has composed a palette of more than 30,000 colours, which he uses to bring his 'imaginary nature' to life. In 2015 he teamed up with gem dealer Virginie Torroni to launch the label Vamgard, setting his astonishing micromosaics alongside exceptional gemstones in innovative alloy backgrounds. A single piece can take up to nine months to create, but designs are often conceived over years; the artist lists his inspirations as 'life, history, relationships, the cosmos, matter, love and art'. Like the original pioneers of the craft, he has elevated a painstaking technique into museum-quality works of art, destined to be collected for centuries to come. SR-G

