



Since it was founded in 1884, by silversmith Sotirio Bulgari, Bulgari has established its pedigree as one of the leading creators of precious and timeless high jewellery in the world, and is renowned for creating rare, modern and colourful designs of exquisite beauty.

BURGEONING BVLGARI

The grand Maison, with foundations in the Eternal City of Rome, exemplifies Italian excellence and artisanal craftsmanship. It has always held onto its golden roots as a purveyor of haute joaillerie, having jewelled historic icons such as Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, Jacqueline Onassis, Elizabeth Taylor and Carla Bruni. Today, the Bulgari empire also includes handbags, perfumery, restaurants and hotels. Yet, its most significant quantum leap forward in the luxury sector is in the field of haute horlogerie, where Bulgari has been gaining street credibility with its ground-breaking timepieces. Sold from its iconic flagship store in Via Condotti in Rome, and into its worldwide network of over 300 stores, including its new store in Sandton City (Johannesburg), Bulgari timepieces are garnering interest from collectors in the know.

The rise of Bulgari has not always been easy. In 2010 Bulgari was independent, and not immune to the recessionary woes of the time. In addition the Maison experienced logistical challenges, and this combination of factors led to its acquisition by holding company Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH), after it slid briefly into loss. The uncertainty in the luxury sector remains, with some of the leading luxury houses taking strain following the slowdown in China. The unforeseen risks of political change on the economy in the US, and exchange rate volatility affecting luxury pricing, are also factors affecting many year-end results. Since the acquisition however, the true value of the brand has been unlocked. The path after purchase is not always a smooth one for many family owned companies. The effectiveness of Bulgari's turn-around strategy can, certainly in part, be attributed to the dynamic leadership skills of Jean Christophe Babin, who joined the Maison in 2013, after a decade as CEO of Tag Heuer. It comes as no surprise therefore, that under Babin, the pace of horology at Bulgari has increased. A number of strategic acquisitions, including the purchase of two high-end brands - Gerald Genta and Daniel Roth - led to the first, full, in-house development for Bulgari in 2010 in Le Sentier.

Bulgari's watches are a revelation of skill, complexity, and style. At Baselworld 2016, the Maison celebrated the launch of the Octo Finissimo Minute Repeater, hailing it as the thinnest, clearest-sounding, minute-repeating wristwatch in the world. The wonderfully whimsical and feminine women's collections feature exquisite ornamental bracelets, intricate, elaborately jewelled dials, and vivid, shimmering colours, a testimony to the jewelled heart of this iconic brand. As a counterpoint to the indulgence of the ladies line, the men's watch range offers understated style, with the linear finesse of a tailored Brioni suit.

Babin understands that agility, and answering market requirements for innovations which fall outside of the typical boundaries of this tradition-based industry are important to the success of the business. He has embraced the demand for functional watches that meet the customers' desires such as the monitoring of health and fitness, and the securing of personal data. The Maison has recently launched a range of men's watches for example that have electronic chips with digital vaults to secure data and passwords, a move that helps Bulgari to connect with a younger audience and build up a long-term client base.

He is focusing on re-opening India and seeking out new emerging markets, such as South Africa. Dubai-based Kolia Neveux, also ex-Tag Heuer, has been brought in to head up Bulgari Middle East and Africa, and has overseen local distributors Picot & Moss's development of Bulgari's South African market presence. He recently hosted a private dinner for clients, where he introduced collectors to some of the rarest exemplars of the Bulgari watch and jewellery collection, at the Spirit of Craft event held at the exclusive Saxon hotel in Sandhurst. Neveux said, "Our partnership with Picot & Moss - one of the leading distributors of luxury brands in South Africa - has ensured that we are well placed for both presence and growth with our inaugural store in Sandton City, which is executed in line with the grandeur of the new global design concept, by world renowned American architect, Peter Marino."





Serpenti Collection

Bulgari reinvents the legendary snake with even broader creativity and expression through its captivating and contemporary high jewellery, haute horlogerie ceramic and five-coil Tubogas interpretations. The graceful Serpenti Incantati ("Enchanted Snake") gives the snake symbol a new lease on life as it coils around the wrist, and wraps itself around the case of a round watch, twining itself around the watch dial, and framing an entirely skeleton-worked Manufacture tourbillon calibre. The finesse and the quality of the gem-setting, as well as the ways in which the stones are assembled and adjusted, are truly remarkable. One also notes the amazingly flexible feel of the gemset bracelets that are extremely pleasant to wear, since Bulgari focuses on achieving a distinctive sensuality for its jewellery that makes each piece supremely comfortable as well as radiant.

The Serpenti Spiga is fresh and full of youthful charm and features a touch of precious metal evoking the jeweller's DNA, and is bound to turn heads wherever it appears, while the Serpenti Jewellery line gives pride of place to colour combinations created by diamonds, coloured mother-of-pearl, coral, onyx and turquoise, all set on an underlying pink gold structure.

Discover the unmistakable designs inspired by the city of Rome and the exuberance of Bulgari through their unique jewellery and watch collections at Bulgari's new Sandton Store, Shop U28A/B, Diamond Walk, Sandton City, Johannesburg. T+27 11 883 1325, bulgari@picotandmoss.co.za www.picotandmoss.co.za



Octo Finissimo Minute Repeater

Bulgari's 2016 Octo Finissimo Minute Repeater sets a horological milestone at 6.85mm, which is a millimetre less than the previous record. The watch comes in a strictly limited 50-piece edition, and has the power to combine the complexity of a hand-wound movement of 362 individual components (BVL Calibre) into its incredibly thin frame. Its titanium casing and dial ensure strength and lightness and that sound is not compromised. The dial has been opened up, featuring hour markers with slits that act as acoustic gills allowing sound to escape for superior sound transmission. The timepiece, crafted at Bulgari Haute Horlogerie centre in Le Sentier, Switzerland, offers a 42 hour power reserve once hand-wound, has the capacity to be water resistant at 5ATM (165ft) and comes with a vulcanised black alligator leather strap and triple-blade titanium folding clasp. Named Octo for the 8 facets on each side of the watch face, which are echoed by an outer octagon on the watch casing, this timepiece is fast becoming a signature of Bulgari's burgeoning success in horlogerie. ■ [Silvana Bottega](#)