

DESIGNER



GENERATIONS OF STYLE

Family-run Italian maison Buccellati is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year with a branded cut, a vintage line, and a future as part of luxury group Richemont.

BY MARIE CHABROL

Ever since founder Mario Buccellati opened the first Buccellati store in 1919 in Milan, the luxury jewelry house has been making gorgeous pieces for the refined customers of Italy and the rest of Europe. Those have included royals as well, such as the founder's friend Gabriele d'Annunzio, prince of Montenevoso, who dubbed him "the Goldsmith Prince." Buccellati's opulent signature rigato technique, so different from the geometric designs of Art Deco jewelry, became a favorite among clients.

International recognition came after World War II when Mario's son Luca opened the company's first New York store in 1951, and then a second in 1954 on Fifth Avenue. Locations in Paris followed, along with many other stores from the US to Asia and the Middle East. The house continued to grow throughout the 20th century, becoming increasingly famous for its beautifully handmade pieces. This year — its 100th anniversary — Buccellati became part of the Richemont Group when the Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels owner bought the company in October. Andrea Buccellati, who serves as the jewelry house's creative director alongside his daughter Lucrezia, discusses the brand's storied past and its current projects.

"It is a timeless style because [the house's] core DNA and stylistic concepts are deeply rooted in our heritage"



Clockwise from top: Rue de la Paix boutique in Paris; Mario Buccellati; Milano Basilica di San Lorenzo silver box by Gianmaria Buccellati, 1986; Andrea Buccellati bracelet and sketch, 2003; first Buccellati boutique in Milan. Opposite: Andrea and Lucrezia Buccellati; Vega earrings in white and yellow gold with diamonds, including two Buccellati cuts.

HOW HAS BUCCELLATI'S DNA EVOLVED SINCE 1919?

The house's DNA [has been] the same since 1919, the year of our foundation, based on inspiration from the Italian Renaissance, nature and classic architecture, expressed through ancient goldsmithing techniques. Since then, the creative direction has always been in the hands of a family member, and of course it has evolved in time and taste. Every family member has brought his influences, but the core DNA has remained unchanged.

WHAT IS MAKING NEW GENERATIONS OF BUYERS FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR CREATIONS, IN YOUR OPINION?

It is a timeless style because its core DNA and stylistic concepts are deeply rooted in our heritage. It also fits the new generations because it is not a static style; it is influenced by the way the family designer lives his own life and sees the world around him. In this sense, the Buccellati style is both timeless and always up-to-date.

HOW DO YOU AND LUCREZIA WORK TOGETHER? HOW DOES EACH GENERATION CONTRIBUTE TO THE COLLECTIONS AND DESIGNS?

We work together on specific projects and collections. For the Art Collection, for example, ►



[which was] based on inspiration we drew from impressionist paintings, we were sitting side by side, sketching our sensations, and the collection was beautiful. We cannot always sit side by side, because my daughter lives in New York, but we make Skype calls if necessary when we have to discuss designs and make our comments. Each generation has contributed to the evolution of the house's design because each one of them has lived in a different period, which had its influence on their lives. It's a kind of natural evolution.

WHERE ARE YOUR MAIN CLIENTS BASED?

They are everywhere in the world, and they travel a lot. At the moment, I would say Asia.

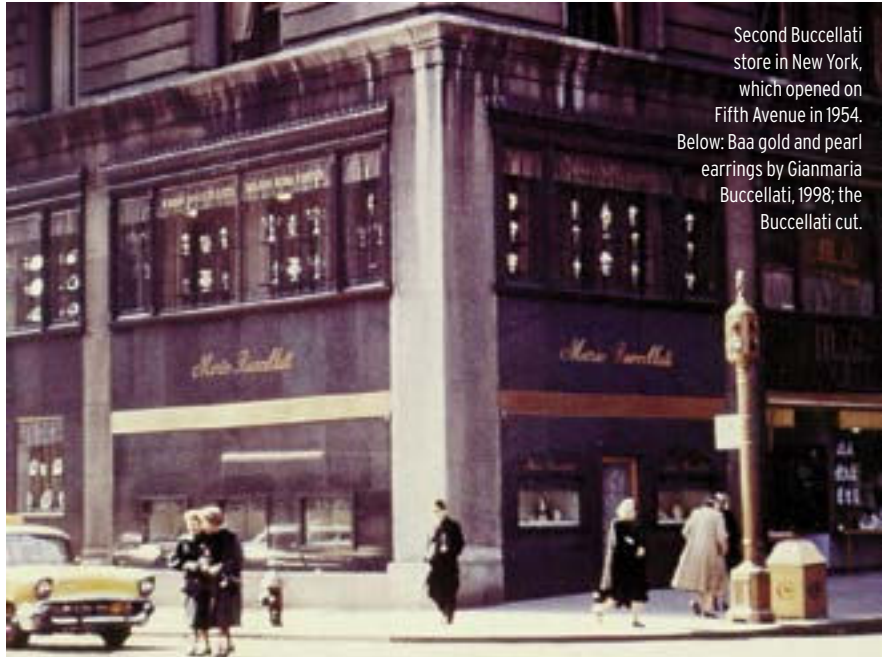
WHICH PIECES ARE THE MOST POPULAR?

We have different iconic jewels representing our style and our specific techniques, but the most important ones are cuff bracelets and band rings, which are admired all over the world and loved by all of our customers.

HOW DID YOU MARK THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOUSE, AND DID IT INFLUENCE YOUR LAST COLLECTION?

The 100th anniversary has been celebrated by launching the new Buccellati-cut diamond, a special cut stone with an innovative design inspired by the house's logo. The diamond is certified by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) as Buccellati-cut. With this new diamond, we have designed a very special high-jewelry collection of one-of-a-kind jewels.

On the occasion of our anniversary, we have also proposed the Vintage collection, made up of historical items that are still presented in many of our stores worldwide and that can partly be purchased. Every object [comes complete] with the original packaging, when available, and a certificate of authenticity. We have also



Second Buccellati store in New York, which opened on Fifth Avenue in 1954. Below: Baa gold and pearl earrings by Gianmaria Buccellati, 1998; the Buccellati cut.

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launched a limited-edition collection of Opera pendants set with colored stones, and [this classic line] is still a great success.

Finally, we [entered] a partnership with Sotheby's Paris, offering a large part of our own vintage collection which [raised approximately] EUR 600,000. We also created an exhibition with historical pieces from some of our customers. Visitors were lucky to admire rare and gorgeous jewels [designed by] Mario [and his son] Gianmaria. It was a short event, but was truly appreciated by everybody.

WHAT WILL BECOMING PART OF A GROUP LIKE RICHEMONT MEAN FOR THE COMPANY?

It's definitely an important step for the Buccellati house. We expect a year of growth with our new partners, based both on strong commercial development and the commitment to preserve our traditions.

buccellati.com ■

FLORAL FACETS

The new Buccellati diamond cut, which the GIA has compared to a flower, is the result of a long collaboration with Antwerp-based Taché Diamonds. Buccellati uses diamonds from Botswana, South Africa and Russia for this fancy cut, with its 57 facets and carefully studied angles. The first stones available to customers will weigh between 0.50 and 2.39 carats, says honorary president and creative director Andrea Buccellati, with grades of D to G color and VS2 to VVS1 clarity.

