

Family Jewels

As Italian jewellery house Buccellati celebrates its 100th anniversary, fourth-generation designer **Lucrezia Buccellati** chats to AIR about connecting its past to its future and carving her own signature

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Miami-born, Milan-raised and New York-based, Lucrezia Buccellati has jewellery in her genes. A century after her great-grandfather Mario Buccellati founded his eponymous boutique near Milan's famous La Scala opera house, the 30-year-old is the brand's first female designer. "In my opinion, the biggest inspiration is that all generations have been able to express themselves through the jewellery," she says. "As the first female designer, I am excited to continue the tradition through my style."

Buccellati tradition dictates that two generations of designers work together to absorb the DNA of the brand, while also contributing their own design sensibility to allow the house to evolve. "I'm conscious that my family successfully maintains the integrity of the Buccellati style and craftsmanship

through generations," she says. Each piece is still handcrafted by artisanal families that have worked for the jewellery house for generations, using intricate engraving techniques that date back to the Renaissance.

Lucrezia works closely with her Milan-based father, Andrea Buccellati, who is responsible for the creative direction of the brand, just as he worked alongside his own father, Gianmaria Buccellati. "Working with my father can be both hard and easy at the same time," she admits. "We are very similar in how we get inspired, but we are different in the precision of the design; I would say I am liberal and he is stricter."

Her approach to the creative process changes, depending on whether she's working on a collection or a one-of-a-kind piece. "When I design a collection, I think about wearable





jewellery, which can stand out day and night, following the new trends,” she says. After analysing the market, she brainstorms with her father and then starts sketching. “For one-of-a-kind pieces, I say to myself that what I am creating is unique and out of the box; it will be a big statement but always keeping a modern touch of Buccellati style,” she says.

The Italian marque expanded into the US in the 1950s, opening its first international boutique in New York, but her grandfather Gianmaria is credited with taking Buccellati truly global, opening stores across Asia and Europe in the decades that followed. Lucrezia, meanwhile, is now tasked with injecting youthfulness into the 100-year-old brand.

“We live in an era where sporty/chic style has become the norm, versus formal wear. Fine jewellery is being curtailed towards a more wearable and suitable style,” she says. Balancing Buccellati’s heritage with 21st-century trends may sound daunting, but the young designer is sanguine about the challenge facing her. “The balance is very natural because each generation, from my great-grandfather to me, incorporate new trends into the Buccellati style,” she says.

Lucrezia joined the family firm in 2014, after studying at one of Milan’s top design schools, followed by the Italian Institute of Gemology and New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology. She immediately made her mark, unveiling gold-and-diamond iPad cases featuring rigato etching – a technique whereby lines are cut in parallel to create a silky sheen – and Buccellati’s first-ever line of engagement rings, with each design named after a noted literary heroine. The house had been creating custom engagement rings for decades, but the Romanza collection combined Buccellati’s famed engraving with a modern, lighter touch.

The company has been quick to react to the changing dynamics of the high-end jewellery market. It has expanded into China and embraced e-commerce, launching on Net-a-Porter in 2017 and becoming one of the first high jewellery makers to sell online. The best-selling Opera Colour collection, meanwhile, aims to appeal to a younger

audience that favours more informal fine jewellery. The collection features a recurring floral motif, borrowed from Renaissance design, inlaid with semi-precious stones such as pink opal, lapis and onyx.

Buccellati has always been popular with royalty and A-listers, but millennials such as Rhianna and Jessica Biel have also discovered the brand, stacking Buccellati bracelets and layering necklaces. Lucrezia adopts a similar experimental approach. “I like to wear jewels in a minimal way during my daily life. I usually like to play with chokers and necklaces, but often I like to go over the edge,” she says.

A keen horsewoman and mother of two young boys (her husband, David Wildenstein, is the scion of the Wildenstein art dynasty), Lucrezia says her lifestyle also influences her designs. “I always tend to create effortlessly wearable jewellery, which follow trends but always keeping them timeless,” Lucrezia says. She describes her pieces, and the women who wear them, as “progressive, yet modern and chic.”

To celebrate the centenary of Buccellati, the jewellery house has developed the Buccellati-cut diamond. Resembling a flower, with 57 facets cut to optimise its brilliance and sparkle, the signature-cut stone features in pendant necklaces, bracelet cuffs, earrings and rings. Among the exquisite pieces is the Elsa Eternelle ring, where a Buccellati-cut diamond sits in a rigato-engraved bezel on a band of fancy yellow and white diamonds, while the Sterlizia rigato-engraved cuff features three openwork rosettes, inspired by the bird of paradise flower, inlaid with Buccellati-cut diamonds and further enhanced by ornato engraving.

Buccellati has also curated a Vintage Collection featuring 200 one-of-a-kind creations – half are offered for sale, while others will be returned to the archive – and opened a new flagship boutique in Paris on Rue St-Honoré. “We have just opened two new boutiques in the Middle East too, including in Kuwait City,” Lucrezia says, adding to the brand’s presence in the region in Dubai and Beirut. For this venerable Italian brand, the future looks bright indeed.

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Opening pages, from left: Leo Pendant, Vintage Collection; Lucrezia Buccellati
These pages, left to right: Orologio, Buccellati-cut diamonds; a craftsman works on a Cnosso Pendant

