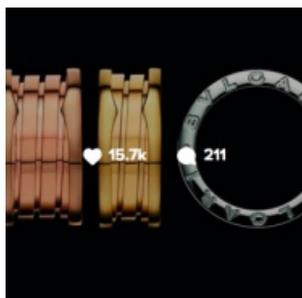


MULTICHANNEL

Bulgari reveals “perfect mistake” after more than a decade of waiting

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New B.zero1 jewelry; image courtesy Bulgari

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Italian jeweler Bulgari is reinforcing the timelessness of craftsmanship and design with a new B.zero1 collection.

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Back in 1999, Bulgari designed three different prototypes to usher in the new millennium, with the uniform gold design ultimately being revealed to the world under the name B.zero1. Reviving a design from the same period as a continuation of the line embodies Bulgari's ethos of fusing the past and present in its products.

"The piece that was introduced [at the start of the millennium] was innovative in its symbolism (zero one, the binary code that describes all life and allows it to evolve as well) but safe in its choice of material, a uniform shade of gold," said [Thoma Serdari](#), Ph.D., founder of [PIQLuxury](#), Co-editor of [Luxury: History Culture Consumption](#) and adjunct professor of luxury marketing at [New York University](#), New York. "Today, more than fifteen years later, the brand is ready to capitalize on the other two designs that were proposed.

"In doing so, Bulgari is creating a new narrative for its brand. It relies on the new face of the brand, the one that characterizes life post Y2K, but pushes it even further, taking on a bolder and even more confident persona," she said.

Ms. Serdari is not associated with Bulgari, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Bulgari was unable to respond by press deadline.

Perfect mistake

The new B.zero1 products are hailed by the brand as the "perfect mistake." The ring, which features three rings of gold, with white gold in the outermost layer, yellow gold in the middle, and pink gold on the inside, creates an unusual and bold contrast.



B.zero1 ring; image courtesy Bulgari

In 1999, the design was seen as unconventional and ill fit for the occasion, but too remarkable to do away with altogether. Sixteen years later, the design now has a story that suggests the continued significance of Bulgari's heritage into its contemporary products.

Because the design was not right for the new millennium, it could be referred to as a mistake. However, Bulgari's signature reliance on novel design, such as unexpected color combinations and materials means that something that can be perceived as a mistake could instead be repurposed as a creative and innovative design.

"To introduce a new design as a 'mistake' is very bold to begin with," Ms. Serdari said. It is also unexpected and, as such, it marks a much more conspicuous entry that is meant to provoke and fascinate the brand's clientele at the same time.

"Other than its vivid and curiosity-arousing name, the 'perfect mistake' is meant to bridge the perfection of classicism, upon which the Bulgari brand DNA is built, with the accidental that characterizes a lot of creative work," she said. Rather than relying on the conservative appeal of uniformly colored gold, the B.zero1 introduces a refreshing quirkiness that stems from the happenstance of creative freedom.

"Yet, the new collection is well linked to earlier Bulgari designs, such as the iconic tubogas, Roman history as expressed in the Colosseum's architecture, and the brand's tendency to break the rules, to deviate from the classical so as to allow advancement. On a symbolic level, the brand is associating the idea of 'imperfection' with real life experiences, such as love that is challenging and evolving only when each other's mistakes are worked through. In other words, Bulgari is making the perfect pitch as we approach Valentine's Day."

Bulgari notes that this approach has led from the discovery of everything from everyday materials such as fireworks and chewing gum to the creation of artistic masterpieces in Leaning Tower of Pisa and Michelangelo's Statue of David. In doing so, Bulgari is comparing its own design "flaws" or abnormalities to those of famed artworks whose differences have made them stand the test of time.

The perfect mistake notion also adds uniqueness to the design, making it a more appropriate and personal gift to embody love, passion and commitment, traits that are universal in experience but particular and imperfect to each individual.



Bulgari B.zero1

To help tell this story, Bulgari's Web site has been updated with a video explaining how the new design is both classic in its ties to ancient jewelry traditions and Italy but revolutionary in its implementation.

It begins with images of ancient Roman sculptures, illustrating the link between Bulgari's own design with the art of its country. A brief history of the brand's heritage, including its founding and design aesthetic, follows.

"Underpinning these aesthetic revolutions are sophisticated craftsmanship, sparkles and masterpieces, eagerly sought after by artists and Hollywood stars," the voiceover says, linking the jeweler with exclusivity, aspiration and artistry.

Afterward, the narrator explains, "Bulgari's drive for experimentation leads to repurposing established jewelry techniques," followed by examples including the use of coins in jewels common centuries and millennia ago and the use of materials such as silk in the jewelry.

Bulgari "Classic is Revolutionary"

"The new video is a well edited précis of what the brand stands for: Mediterranean heritage, Roman classicism, innovation in design and boldness expressed through unexpected combinations of raw materials that make classic designs revolutionary," Ms. Serdari said. "In doing so, the brand capitalizes on its long history and offers a well-defined context within which the new B.Zero1 ring and bracelet are introduced"

The B.zero1's form is linked to the Roman Colosseum, thereby embodying both tradition and innovation at once and demonstrating again that "classic is revolutionary."

Images of the jewelry, as well as the prototype designs from 1999, were posted across social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with #BeRevolutionary. The heavy branding and emphasis on innovation in the campaign along with the social media push suggests Bulgari is hoping to attract the attention of younger consumers.

Timeless jewelry

Heritage is important for jewelers, who often find different ways to tell their story.

For example, jeweler Harry Winston is reflecting on its 80-year history through an exhibit at the Cit du Temps in Geneva.

"Facets of Harry Winston" looks at the career of the house's eponymous founder, making a comparison between the many angles through which Mr. Winston approached his business and the multidirectional faces of a gemstone. Opened on Jan. 18 alongside the start of the Geneva-based watch event Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie, this exhibit enabled Harry Winston to share its story with watch and jewelry enthusiasts as they gathered in the city ([see story](#)).

As for Bulgari, its promotions often center on Italy and its Colosseum.

Over the holiday season Bulgari brought consumers home through an interactive feature that explores #RomanTreasures.

Centered on a microsite, Bulgari's campaign enabled consumers to virtually travel to iconic spots within the ancient city, such as the Spanish Steps and the Colosseum, by way of 360-degree imagery, allowing them to send social media postcards from each locale. While this effort did enable consumers to discover holiday gift ideas,

consumers first had to embark on a journey to find the jewels, taking the concept of gift guide beyond a flat edit ([see story](#)).

"B.zero1 is an audacious design that is also well rooted in classical principles," Ms. Serdari said. "It exudes strength and intensity while remaining unisex. This is a great angle that is gaining in favor in jewelry design—young people in particular are more attracted to designs of a unisex appeal because they reveal more about the person rather than its gender.

"Finally, the idea of a design that exemplifies rules of mathematics is very much aligned with everyone's pronounced interest in all things scientific, and more so, in all things binary, which is the essence of all creative industries."

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