

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Hennessy, Baccarat celebrate relationship with Frank Gehry

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Designed by Frank Gehry and brought to life by Baccarat craftsman, the decanter retailed for more than \$170,000. Image credit: Hennessy

By NORA HOWE

French Cognac brand Hennessy and crystal maker Baccarat are sharing an inside look at the esteemed relationship between two heritage brands and one world-renowned architect.

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In October 2021, in collaboration with the two French brands, Frank Gehry designed 30 custom Cognac decanters made of crystal. Now, the brands invite customers to discover the inspiration and process behind the exclusive Matusalem sculptural masterpiece.

"The design takes Frank Gehry's signature sculptural style, Baccarat's know-how and Hennessy's daring sensibilities to the next level," said Laurent Boillot, president and CEO of **Hennessy**, in a statement.

"With crystal expertly carved in a way that mimics the look of the classic serve of Hennessy X.O over ice, this sculptural masterpiece showcases the richness of the spirit while paying homage to the craftsmanship that goes into making this exquisite product."

Daring collaboration

The design and dimensions of the one-of-a-kind Frank Gehry creation, which included thirty individual molds for each decanter, presented unique technical challenges for the Baccarat team.

"At first, we weren't sure whether it was going to work we made many maquettes," Mr. Gehry says in the film. "I think [Baccarat] craftsmen liked that because it's an experience, it's a challenge they like to be challenged."

Mr. Gehry's inspiration for the decanter came from the formation of ice cubes

Over the course of several months, Baccarat craftsmen implemented new techniques, used special tools and adapted thermal cycles to create the masterpiece.

The 6-liter Matusalem decanter intends to elicit imagery of mounted ice cubes, a main point of inspiration for Mr. Gehry.

"When you put ice cubes in an open bowl, you see this kind of sculpture and it catches the light," Mr. Gehry says. "The

shape came from the original, so it's recognizable like a member of the family that was important.

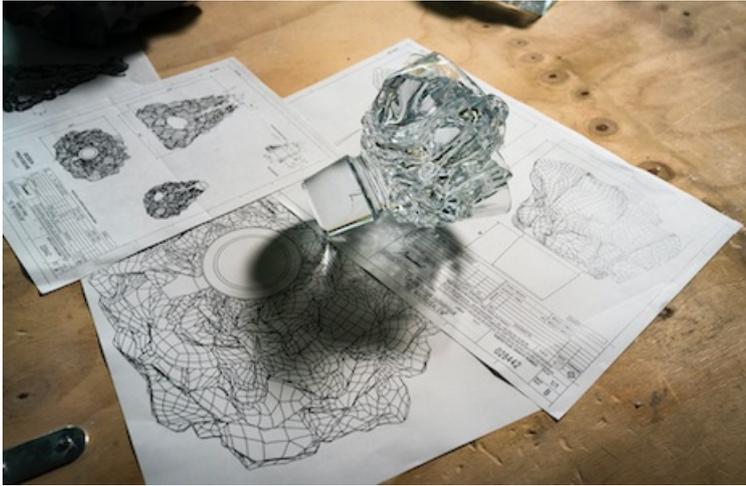
"I like when people ask me to do things that haven't been done before," he says. "We've never seen anything like this."

According to a statement by Hennessy, Mr. Gehry cried when he first saw the finished decanter because it was unlike anything he had seen, and hopes it will elicit the same response in others.

The Mathusalem decanter went on sale in October 2021 in exclusive retail and private sale points for 150,000 euros, or \$171,867 at current exchange rates, each.

Influence of Frank Gehry

Considered one of the most important architects of this age, the American-Canadian architect has designed some of the world's most recognizable structures and buildings, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris.



Illustrated designs for the Mathusalem decanter. Image credit: Hennessy

Recognizing his apparent influence on the world of design, luxury brands have collaborated with Mr. Gehry on a number of projects.

In October 2021, Louis Vuitton unveiled a new Les Extraits fragrance collection with a Frank Gehry-designed bottle his first fragrance project.

Taking a sheet of aluminum and crumpling it like paper, Mr. Gehry topped the bottle with a hand-polished cap stamped with an LV seal on the interior.

Influenced by this unique design aesthetic, a dynamic style focused on distorting elements, Louis Vuitton perfumer Jacques Cavallier-Belletrud created the fragrance without top, heart or base notes ([see story](#)).

Hennessy previously collaborated with the legendary architect to design a limited-edition decanter in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Hennessy X.O in 2020.

Drawing inspiration from the French culture and Hennessy's illustrious heritage, Mr. Gehry made sure to preserve the general structure and integrity of the emblematic Hennessy X.O. bottle, yet embellished the design with an impressive surface of crumpled gold and glass, to mimic the movement of the Charente River ([see story](#)).