

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Answering demand for online experiences from luxury brands, Bulgari enters new arena

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*In collaboration with popular mobile program "Honor of Kings," Bulgari is releasing the world's first customized digital jewelry in-game "skin."
Image credit: Bulgari*

By ZACH JAMES

Roman jeweler Bulgari is partnering with a digital expert on an experimental release.

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In collaboration with Chinese game developer TiMi Studios, the maison is unveiling a jewelry-focused cosmetic option for one of the company's main characters from the popular mobile program "Honor of Kings." The crossover execution marks a first-time connection for both parties involved Bulgari's commitment to expanding its presence online stands out as demand for novel virtual offerings from luxury brands reaches an all-time high.

"Although 'Honor of Kings' is popular in China, this shows how trends in Asia are setting the direction for marketing today in the luxury space," said Romey Louangvilay, head of communications and creative strategy at [ELMNTL](#), New York.

"Collaborating with Bulgari is a prime example of taking calculated risks to ensure your brand stays relevant to mainstream culture."

Digital goods

The world's most-played multiplayer online battle arena (BOMA) game, Honor of Kings has swept the globe since its initial introduction in 2015.

In 2023, Bulgari is getting in on the action by releasing the world's first customized digital jewelry in-game skin. Showcasing the release, available as of July 10, leaders have launched a new documentary to mark the occasion.

Bulgari and its partner detail the process of production for the project in a new video

Spotlighting the work of software designers and luxury marketers alike, content peels back the layers of development to show the long road to completion. The project began in 2022.

"When I heard [for] the first time about the collaboration of Bulgari and Honor of Kings,' I was very excited because

it's the first time in my professional career to design digital jewelry for a game character," says Liudmila Pikova, jewelry designer at Bulgari, in a video promoting the partnership.

Augmenting the character Miyue, a hero within the multiplayer video game, the Bulgari exclusive grants the avatar an angelic, royal appearance.

The playable heroine is decked out in Bulgari-designed accompaniments, wearing golden boots and wings encrusted with diamonds as floating crystals trailing behind her feet.

Miyue's neck and waist armor are made of gold and diamond, framed by golden bejeweled bracers. The look is topped off by a signature halo which appears above the digital character's head throughout gameplay.

"It's not so much that Bulgari chose Miyue, but rather that Miyue chose us," Ms. Pikova says.

"Representing freedom with a strong attitude, she stands at the center of power, setting the brown rules, having the courage to face challenges and conventions [and] to achieve goals."

Capturing the story of our partnership with [#HonorOfKing](#) an innovative mobile game a new documentary will take you on a dazzling journey. <https://t.co/gIWIIJY9k4>
[#BulgarixHonorOfKings](#) pic.twitter.com/PiVkuOIMUx

Bulgari (@Bulgariofficial) July 10, 2023

The team at TiMi Studios describes the skin as "both noble and elegant, yet bold and avant-garde." Having previously researched other avenues for inspiration, the decision to base Bulgari's addition on the jeweler's "B.zero1" line design was set.

Prototyped in 1999, the B.zero1 range was initially deemed too extreme for audiences of the time, being modeled after the Roman Coliseum ([see story](#)). Originally released with a look deemed safer by the brand, the intended design was unveiled to the public in 2016 with a futuristic flair.

The design deemed to be too complex for general audiences many years ago today reaches an entirely new crowd: gamers.

Gaming meets luxury

While gaming isn't a traditional road for luxury to use to reach customers, it is becoming an increasingly popular tactic among maisons to target younger demographics, specifically Gen Z and millennials.

"The luxury industry is making great headway into venturing more into the digital spaces with gaming, but no luxury brands have pushed the boundaries as far as they can," Mr. Louangvilay said.

"Understandably, luxury houses have several stakeholders and legacy customers that will only sometimes allow them to pivot completely."

In June, LVMH partnered with American software company Epic Games, the makers of multiplayer action-adventure game Fortnite and the 3D computer graphics program Unreal Engine to create immersive experiences for its customers together ([see story](#)).

At [@VivaTech](#), LVMH and Epic Games announce partnership to transform the Group's creative pipeline and bring customers new types of immersive products and discovery experiences.

Learn More: [#LVMH #MetaHuman #VivaTech @UnrealEngine](https://t.co/f7phMjbhbl)
pic.twitter.com/UIUe4efVZL

LVMH (@LVMH) June 14, 2023

Also announced at LVMH's Viva Tech event, Louis Vuitton showcased its new virtual reality experience titled "Asnires Immersive," which takes players into the 19th-century home of its late founder ([see story](#)).

"Honor of Kings" has previously tried to collaborate with luxury labels, contracting Burberry to create two character

skins in 2021 ([see story](#)), before severing ties after the brand after it accused China of human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region.

The game's attempt to renew its connection with luxury is telling.

"As more iconic brands such as Bulgari and Burberry before them collaborate with gaming, the line between previously proven marketing tactics and experimental activations [will blur]," ELMNTL's Mr. Louangvilay said.

"We've seen the trend with fashion houses testing the metaverse," he said. "Still, for now, it's going to be much experimentation until both mainstream and luxury brands navigate gaming while remaining authentic to their own goals."

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