

IN-STORE

Bulgari boosts New York foot traffic via in-store Serpenti exhibit

February 11, 2013



By TRICIA CARR

Italian jeweler Bulgari is encouraging affluent consumers to visit its New York flagship store with a month-long retrospective that highlights the history of the Serpenti line.

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The display was created by French artist and designer Fabien Illou who has worked with Bulgari since 2008 with pieces curated by jewelry historian Marion Fasel. Ms. Fasel is also the author of a companion to the exhibit called “Bulgari: Serpenti Collection” that will be published March 2013 by Assouline.

“Many brands are trying to capitalize on Chinese New Year and the Year of the Snake in order to attract the Chinese luxury consumer,” said Jordan Phillips, author of ["The Lure of Luxe,"](#) New York.

“Bulgari, however, has a legitimate claim to heavily promote the Year of the Snake,” she said. “Its legendary Serpenti design is one of its house codes.”

Ms. Phillips is not affiliated with Bulgari, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Bulgari](#) could not respond before press deadline.

Year of the Snake

Bulgari is presenting the Serpenti exhibit to the public Feb. 10-Mar. 6 in its New York flagship store at 730 Fifth Avenue. The exhibit will then travel to other cities in the United States.

The exhibit opening date was meant to overlap with Chinese New Year Feb. 10 which will make it the Year of the Snake.

On Feb. 9, the store hosted an invitation-only preview of the retrospective and a celebration of the Year of the Snake.

The in-store display was created by Mr. Illou who has worked as the head of Bulgari exhibits in Europe since 2008.

The exhibit includes light panels that show images of female fashion icons wearing Serpenti pieces such as Elizabeth Taylor, Marisa Berenson, Veruschka and Benedetta Barzini.

Also, historic jewelry items on display at the store include snake bracelets, belts, watches and rings made by Bulgari in last 70 years.

Pieces on display include enamel, gold and gem-set watch bracelets from the 1960s; a one-of-a-kind diamond, emerald and gold mid-century snake bracelet; an emerald, diamond and gold snake bracelet from the 1970s; and tubogas snake watch-bracelets made 1940-1980s.



Serpenti bracelet-watch from 1967

Materials from the Bulgari archives in Rome will also be incorporated into the exhibit such as original drawings, works of art and past advertising campaigns.

Guided tours will be offered to store visitors.

The Serpenti collection stems from the snake symbol that has been feared and revered because of its multifaceted powers of wisdom, eternity and renewal, per the jeweler.

Exterior lighting

The in-store Serpenti retrospective coincides with Bulgari's exterior light display at its New York flagship store that marks a three-month celebration of the collection. It was designed by Mr. Illou as well.

The sculpture that appears on the exterior of the boutique resembles a larger-than-life version of the jeweler's Serpenti necklace. It was also installed at Bulgari boutiques in Tokyo and Rome.

At the New York boutique, the snake seems to emerge from the top of the building.

The snake's head and tail come together at the corner of the building just as the neck and tail intersect on the Serpenti necklace.

The display is a 200-foot-long structure around the store comprises more than 53 scales lit by thousands of LED bulbs ([see story](#)).

"Anything that a luxury brand can do to promote its heritage and house codes in a positive way is a good thing," Ms. Phillips said.

"The Serpenti Collection has a long and glamorous history, and the Year of the Snake is an opportunity for Bulgari to remind current and potential clients of this heritage," she said.

Final Take

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