

# BVLGARI

*Celebrating 125 years*

## BULGARI

**"Between History and Eternity" 1884-2009  
125 Years of Italian Jewels**

**Rome, May 20th, 2009** – Bulgari celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its founding with the first retrospective in the brand's history, to be held in Rome at the prestigious Palazzo delle Esposizioni. The opening is scheduled for May 20, and will then be open to the public from May 22 to September 13, 2009.

The exhibition, entitled "Between History and Eternity: 1884-2009", will revisit the most significant chapters in the history of the company and the evolution of Bulgari design, from the opening of the first shop on Via Sistina in 1884 to our own day. This compelling tale will be recounted by over five hundred masterpieces of jewelry, watchmaking and *objets d'art*, some of them selected from the Bulgari Vintage Collection, an extraordinary historic treasury conserved in the company archives, and others from private collections that have heretofore never been exhibited in public.

The exhibition will be articulated in eight sections, organized chronologically. The itinerary begins with a collection of works in silver from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century crafted by Sotirio Bulgari, the ingenious and enterprising Greek silversmith who moved to Rome in search of fortune, and who in 1884 laid the foundations for what would become one of the world's premiere jewelers. These are the only extant examples of the earliest years of Bulgari's production. Next is a section dedicated to the creations of the 1920s and '30s, a series of Art Decò-inspired diamond compositions that testify to the great success the company had achieved under the leadership of Sotirio's sons, Giorgio and Costantino Bulgari. The next gallery is reserved for the creations of the '40s and '50s, a period when the Bulgari style was still clearly influenced by the French school. Then comes the section dedicated to the 1960s, the decade that marked a momentous shift in defining Bulgari's identity. Indeed, it was during this period that the distinctive features for which Bulgari is now known first appeared – decisive, stylized forms, soft volumes and unprecedented chromatic combinations – and which henceforth would characterize the *maison's* unmistakable style. The three subsequent galleries host, respectively, the creations of the '70s, strongly influenced by Pop Art; the '80s, distinguished by bold and innovative design; and the '90s. The last section of the exhibition, installed in the main gallery of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, brings together some of the most magnificent creations of the new millennium, yet further testimony of Bulgari's continuity and success, now in its fourth generation. Among the more spectacular pieces is a sumptuous diamond necklace valued at over 13 million euros.

Several of the galleries will feature special sections devoted to particularly significant moments in the evolution of the Bulgari style, such as the '*gemme nummarie*', or 'coin jewelry', which uses ancient coinage in the place of gemstones. Other special sections feature the serpent motif, an historical classic that Bulgari has masterfully reinterpreted over the years, and the BVLGARI logo, transformed into a decorative element inspired by ancient Roman epigraphy and central feature of numerous successful collections.

In addition to jewelry and timepieces, the retrospective also offers a collection of documents that have never been seen till now, including sketches and drawings from different epochs and photographs of the famous artists, aristocrats and celebrities who have appreciated the beauty of Bulgari jewelry since the very beginning. There is an entire section dedicated to the years of the 'dolce vita', with portraits and quotes from the divas of that bygone epoch, preparatory drawings for jewels worn on screen by the most famous actresses of the time, and other material that illustrates the close ties between Bulgari and the film industry that began in the 1940s and have blossomed ever since. But the real stars of this section are the jewels themselves, spectacular creations worn by the likes of Anna Magnani and Gina Lollobrigida, here on display for the first time ever. Another entire room will be reserved for the fabulous personal collection of Elizabeth Taylor, offering a unique opportunity to admire some of Bulgari's most extraordinary creations. Sixteen one-of-a-kind pieces of enormous value, each with its own story to tell. Especially noteworthy is the diamond brooch with a central emerald of more than 18 carats that was given to Taylor by Richard Burton for their engagement in 1962. Indeed, this was the only piece of jewelry that the actress wanted to wear for her first wedding with Burton, which took place on March 15, 1964.

All the material in the exhibition has been studiously analyzed against the most authoritative historical and scientific sources by Amanda Triossi, curator of the retrospective and author of the accompanying catalogue: 320 richly illustrated pages of documentation and photographs, published by Skira. Since 1997, Amanda Triossi has been director of the Bulgari archive and the Vintage Collection, as well as the author of two editions, in 1995 and 2007, of the monograph dedicated to the company's history.

Francesco Trapani, CEO of the Bulgari Group, had this to say: *“Celebrating 125 years of activity is a significant achievement that few companies, whether in Italy or abroad, can claim. It represents an immense patrimony not only of rare and precious objects but of equally valuable testimonies and memories which together constitute the heart of this retrospective. To visit the exhibition will be to embrace the entire history of a style that has endured for generations and transcended boundaries of every kind, passing down to our own time that unique taste for innovation and detail inspired by the heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as the inexhaustible quest for new creative solutions that has made Bulgari one of the world's preeminent luxury brands”*