

Bulgari in the Kremlin: Jewels in a Jewel Box

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Floating treasures **Photo by Victor Boyko / Getty Images for Bulgari Russia**

For the first time in Russia, the Italian luxury brand Bulgari is exhibiting its jewelers' art in a unique retrospective, "BVLGARI. Tribute to Femininity. Magnificent Roman Jewels."

In the Moscow Kremlin Exhibition Halls of the Assumption Belfry and the Patriarch's Palace, visitors can trace the changes in Bulgari's jewelry design from the very first silver pieces created in the Greek tradition in the late 19th century to the magnificent works of the "Dolce Vita" era and the famous collections of the end of the millennium.

The changing notion of femininity is one of the main themes of the exhibition, which is divided into seven time periods that let visitors explore the theme through the decades of the 20th century. Although always a luxury brand, the 130-year-old jewelry house began to change its watches and jewelry in the 1920s as women's lifestyles and lives changed.

Bulgari's history is inseparably linked with the names of such legendary actresses as Elizabeth Taylor, Anna Magnani, Audrey Hepburn, Ingrid Bergman, Gina Lollobrigida, and Sophia Loren — all actresses who were both models of femininity and feminism. For its first show in Russia, Bulgari has brought together an impressive selection of over 500 jewels from its Heritage Collection — more than 600 pieces of jewelry the firm has kept or acquired over the years — and private collections, magnificent jewels, video installations and a series of photos that pay tribute to women who have been independent and symbols of emancipation. “Bulgari offers a feast for the eyes through a quintessentially Italian chapter in the long history of jewelry,” the exhibition designer Fabien Iliou told *The Moscow Times*.

Among the jewels on display are unique pieces never seen before by the public, like the fascinating 1930s aquamarine and diamond tiara worn by Infanta Beatriz of Spain on her wedding day. There is also Elizabeth Taylor's famous Colombian emerald necklace and her sapphire sautoir (long necklace), and actress Gina Lollobrigida's 21-carat Colombian emerald and diamond-drop earrings set in platinum, which were acquired by Bulgari at Sotheby's in 2013.

Iliou chose an unexpected backdrop for the show. It is set in halls where tsars and church patriarchs once walked, and where the Russian vaults now safeguard 13,200 masterpieces of jewelry spanning eight centuries. “I wanted to make it like a cave full of jewels, reflecting the colors, shapes, gold, platinum of the treasure in it and make the audience part of this treasure. Visitors will explore and discover each jewel as if they found it themselves inside the Kremlin,” said Iliou, who has designed other Bulgari retrospective exhibitions since 2009.

His inspiration was, of course, the Bulgari Heritage Collection, but he always tries to innovate based on the context and the theme of the exhibition: “I decided to design the space as simply as possible, not putting much between the jewels and the architecture — linking them with the space naturally but always in the most precious way,” Iliou said.

“BVLGARI. Tribute to Femininity. Magnificent Roman Jewels” runs till January 13, 2019.

Kremlin Exhibition Hall of the Assumption Belfry and Exhibition Hall of the Patriarch's Palace. Metro Aleksandrovskiy Sad. Ticket sales and information can be found on the [Kremlin site](#).

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