

Creative HERITAGE

GLASS delves into the creative processes behind one of Paris's most *beloved* jewellery houses



Serpent Bohème yellow gold earrings and ring

Founded in 1858, Boucheron is one of the oldest jewellery maisons in Paris, headquartered in the same location on Place Vendôme since 1893. In 2011, the Maison appointed Claire Choisne as Creative Director and Pierre Bouissou as CEO, and together they brought a fresh perspective to the brand. Choisne and Bouissou have spent the past three years working to create pieces that respected the Maison's heritage while providing a modern, creative edge.

Glass had the fortunate opportunity to chat with Choisne and Bouissou in Paris about two of their most iconic collections; The Quatre collection rings, which are incredibly modern, versatile, pioneering and quite simply unlike anything else in the fine jewellery world, and the Serpent collection which is romantic, bohemian and rooted in the brand's heritage – the first serpent necklace was given by Monsieur Boucheron to his wife as a symbol of love and protection.

What is the inspiration behind the Boucheron Quatre ring?

Choisne: Quatre is the modern expression of Boucheron's creativity – an exclusive, sculptural and graphic collection that celebrates the Maison's iconic visual codes. Much more than a jewel, the Quatre ring is a jewellery sculpture – a work of art. It is a bold statement of style and independence as well as a state of mind with its edgy, contemporary motifs.

What is the significance of the four bands of the Quatre ring? What do they represent about the Boucheron brand and its heritage?

Choisne: The magic of the Quatre collection lies in the extraordinary skills of the "Hands of Light" (Boucheron's name for their artisans and craftsmen in the workshop) creating each of the four iconic bands. The double gadroon (a motif that has been present throughout the Maison's history) is one of the oldest Boucheron designs. This technique, which joins individual gold rings together, was created by Frédéric Boucheron in 1889. It was then reinterpreted over the years,

through timeless and instantly classic pieces such as the famous Reflet watch created in 1947. The Clous de Paris is a reminder of the cobblestones of the City of Light especially those of the Place Vendôme. The diamond-paved band is another Boucheron legend with its mirror-setting technique resulting in magical reflections. The fourth band uses another motif dear to the Maison, the Grosgrain. This is a goldsmithing miracle made possible only through high precision hammering and chiseling. Full of volume and instantly graphic, it is the vertical and powerful counter response to the soft horizontality of the ring.

What are the differences between the four Quatre ring collections? For whom are they designed?

Choisne: Both timeless and eternal, the Quatre ring changes according to the desire, personality and mood of the person wearing it. It assumes different colours and materials in order to continually renew itself and surprise every time. Whether you are looking for a timeless classic (Quatre Classique) or a piece with refreshing modernity (Quatre White Edition), an edgy version (Quatre Black Edition) or a pure monochrome ring (Quatre Radiant Edition), both men and women can find the perfect one to accompany them through the most beautiful moments of their lives.

How does the Quatre classique differ from the other collections?

Bouissou: Although it was highly innovative, the first Quatre collection created in 2004 was immediately viewed as a classic. A purely timeless piece with its four bands in white, pink and yellow gold as well as brown PVD gold (gold that is colour treated to give it its unique brown colour), this creation is the epitome of the Boucheron savoir-faire and design.

What does choice of jewellery say about a person?

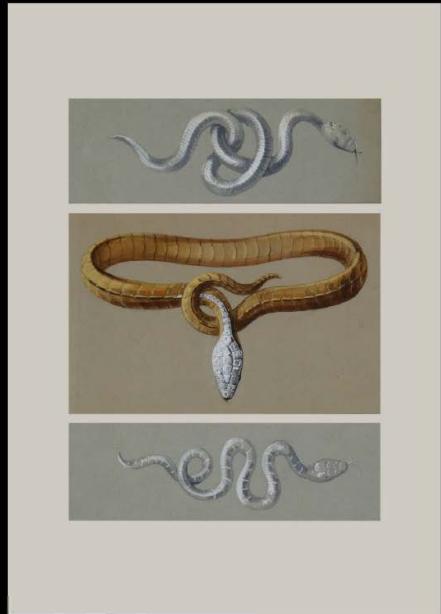
Choisne: Whilst the Quatre may attract aficionados that seek a modern twist and graphic interpretation in a jewel, the woman purchasing a piece of the Serpent Bohème collection,



Savoir-faire – Boucheron's artisans at work



Gabrielle Boucheron with her beloved serpent necklace



A design for the serpent necklace, 1878



White and yellow gold Quatre Radiant Edition rings

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All images courtesy of Boucheron

for example, looks for a protective, very feminine creation.

What sets apart a Boucheron customer?

Bouissou: Boucheron's clientele seeks excellence. They look for high quality stones, creative design and innovative technique. Our mission is to keep our high standards and to continue to strive for excellence as these customers come to Boucheron for the history of the creations, for the technique and for the emotion they capture through the piece of jewellery.

What sets Boucheron apart as a maison?

Bouissou: Boucheron was the first contemporary jeweller to open on the Place Vendôme. We have more than 155 years worth of archives. Boucheron is a Maison with a solid creative spirit, a famed technical prowess and internationally renowned bijoux, jewellery, high jewellery and watch creations. In a market that has grown in the past years with many newcomers, our aim is to ensure that anyone who knows jewellery and luxury recognises the Boucheron aesthetic, its innovations, outstanding quality and savoir-faire à la française.

What is the most extravagant story in Boucheron's history?

Bouissou: With over 155 years of history, you can imagine that Boucheron has a myriad of stories to tell. The most incredible one must be that of the largest order that has ever been placed on the Place Vendôme. Back in 1928, the Maharajah of Patiala arrived at Boucheron with trunks filled with emeralds and diamonds and commissioned Boucheron to create 149 pieces including seven truly spectacular necklaces, headpieces, belts and bracelets.

Boucheron delights royal families, but also contemporary artists, such as Beyoncé who chose the Quatre Classique ring for herself as four is her lucky number! Not only was she born the 4th of September and her husband Jay-Z on the 4th of December, but they also got married on April 4th (04/04).

What is your favourite personal anecdote from the history of Boucheron?

Bouissou: A piece of jewellery is there to witness the most beautiful moments in life and thus pass from generation to generation. Such was the case of the honeycomb tiara that once belonged to Mrs Ronald Greville and was passed on to the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Prince Charles has since given to his wife, Camilla, the favourite jewel of his beloved grandmother allowing the pieces to continue being part of the British Royal family.

Tell us about the Serpent Bohème collection. What is the idea behind it?

Choisne: Iconic of the Maison, the Serpent Bohème collection is a signature of the Boucheron spirit. On the eve of one of his many trips in 1888, Boucheron founder



Place Vendôme boutique, Paris

Frédéric Boucheron gave his wife Gabrielle a necklace in the shape of a serpent, as a token of love, protection and happiness. In 1968, the first Serpent line was created and was to never leave the collections of the Maison. Comprised of rings, necklaces, earrings and watches, this collection is the natural continuation of this story. It is a tribute to Gabrielle Boucheron, a woman of character and spirit.

What is the Boucheron strategy in the hallowed new beacon that is China?

Bouissou: Boucheron is a response to the growing knowledge and expertise of the Chinese consumer, his increasing desire for items with a unique savoir-faire, a rich history and exclusive creations in the jewellery market. With an office for the APAC (Asia Pacific) region in Hong Kong and several boutiques in Hong Kong and Mainland China, we aim to continue to strengthen our presence in the Asian market in the coming years and increase awareness of the Maison by continuing to strive for excellence.

— By Jessica Quillin

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