

# NOT JUST A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND



WORDS: Lucy Knight



“**E**veryone thinks I spend all my time designing,” says Fawaz Gruosi, “But I don’t.” Taking ideas from everything around him, from lamps to trees, the man behind jewellers de Grisogono sketches ideas and then hands them over to a more than reliable design team who help him to realise whether or not his visions are possible. And taking ideas from all things is represented perfectly in his most recent collection, Sugar. A series of timepieces for women inspired by a sugar cube being plopped into an Italian espresso, they are an homage to frivolity and beauty. Stones surrounding the clock face resemble a sugar cube melting away, with the collect-set stones cascading off to the side, set to have slight movement. Such a playful and luminous approach is typical of Gruosi’s taste, one that has been long in the making. Leaving Lebanon at the age of seven, he was brought up with his mother’s family in Florence. At the age of 18 he started carrying trays for jewellery salesmen; now he hosts birthday parties at venues named ‘The Billionaires Club’. For Gruosi, the road to international fame and fortune in the jewellery market has been a

rather less travelled one, and as a self confessed non-businessman, he doesn’t mind one bit. For a man who has been labelled as the most sought-after jeweller of his generation, it is surprising that the starting moment was pure fluke: “I was 17 and married with a child, and I got a job at a jewellers.” Thus began a career of buying and selling around the world. The 70s and 80s were spent with two of the great jewellery houses, Harry Winston and then Bulgari, in London and Saudi Arabia. It was a time of opulence and unspeakable wealth, or as Gruosi puts it, “It was the oil boom, money was falling from the sky.” But, finding himself detached from reality, Gruosi decided that the private jets and penthouses were not the path to be taken, and it

was time for a risk – designing. “I started to design without knowing whether or not I could,” he says. Luckily for Gruosi he could. Going against the minimalist trends of the early 90s, for this Italian, bigger was better. Bold and baroque designs were not immediately popular, but, once the ladies were interested, Gruosi took “the biggest risk” of his life – working with black diamonds: complicated stones that don’t sparkle and which no one had previously used. “Other jewellers said I was being crazy, but after two years of frustration and sadness, competitors started to use the diamonds, and this is what saved me,” he says. It is now 20 years since de Grisogono began and celebrations are in the offing, and while Gruosi couldn’t reveal any details, we like to think they’re very big ones. ◆

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