

Hennessy X.O Mathusalem by Frank Gehry

Q&A

Why did you want to collaborate with Hennessy?

"I originally took on this collaboration around the 150th anniversary of Hennessy X.O and was enticed by the rich history of Hennessy X.O and the Maison Hennessy. It was an honor to take on the challenge of designing a symbol of an iconic cognac that represents 150 years of technique, labor, and emotion from a storied lineage of family and craftsmen.

The opportunity to continue the collaboration and work with another iconic French brand, Baccarat, who also has such an incredible legacy was really exciting to me as I knew we could continue to push the boundaries and create something even more daring which really drew me to this."

What did you most enjoy about this collaboration?

"I was originally invited to experience Hennessy through a trip to Cognac, where I met the people, went to see the barrels, and I studied the history of the Maison. I was impressed by the deep culture and the individuals who have dedicated their lives to crafting Hennessy X.O, like a form of art. For this Mathusalem collaboration the collaboration took on even more depth as we had another partner, Baccarat, with whom we were doing something that had not been done before and creating new ways of working with the Baccarat material which posed challenges for us all and makes it incredibly rewarding to see the final product that has been created."

What was the inspiration for the Mathusalem design?

"I wanted a bottle that would reflect the beautiful rich glow of Hennessy X.O. When we designed the bottle for the 150th anniversary, the glorifier that we created was made out of large blocks of glass. The way the glass played with the light made me want to explore this more in the larger format."

How would you describe the design of the Mathusalem?

"The Mathusalem retains the underlying shape of the iconic Hennessy X.O bottle but now in this magnificent size it is incased in Baccarat crystal which has a strikingly different surface texture of shimmering, reflective crystal - a combination that evokes the ice that Hennessy X.O is so well paired with."

Have you worked with a material like Baccarat in the past? Why did you want to use Baccarat crystal for this project?

"This is the first time I have worked with Baccarat and it was really an honor to get to work with them as there is so much knowledge, heritage and history with their craft its really incredible. I've previously worked on projects with large chunks of glass where we created a few large objectives and I've always loved the translucent quality and illuminating quality it has when encasing something as beautiful and rich as Hennessy X.O cognac. And we were very excited about the possibility of bringing together two iconic French brands, Hennessy and Baccarat for

this. I had never collaborated with Baccarat and when I realized we would be creating a Mathusalem size and the challenges this posed for the material I was even more excited as I knew it would push all of us to create something really unexpected and never been seen before. As a designer I really love to push the boundaries and I knew Baccarat and Hennessy would be perfect partners to do this with.”

Each Mathusalem is unique in its own way, can you elaborate on this further and what this design process was like for you? What were challenges you faced in designing this decanter?

“We had quite a few challenges but nothing we could not overcome! Firstly, to create a decanter of this size with Baccarat Crystal we had to create all new molds and tools. Each mold is unique making each of these. Sculptures one of a kind! With Baccarat we worked with several Meilleurs Ouvriers de France (Best French Artisans) and guest stars Nathalie Blaise and Raymond Regnault, modelers and Knights of the order of Arts and Letters to bring the vision to life using 30kg of Baccarat crystal each. It was an incredibly collaborative process coordinating between the Hennessy Maison and the Cognac team to ensure the design would fit their needs and with Baccarat on bringing the design to life.”

How would you describe your creative process?

“Creativity is at first curiosity. Creative ideas come from being curious about the subject, asking questions and discovering along the way, not being afraid to try new things. When I design, I try new things, I make multiple designs and models until I land on the final product that feels just right.”

What is the common thread in your designs, whether it be a decanter or a building?

“Whether it be a building or a product, I want design to create an emotional reaction – whether it’s to add something striking to your everyday experience with the building you go to everyday or it is when you get home to admire a piece of art on your shelf I want that design to have an impact and leave an impression. When I first saw the Mathusalem for Hennessy X.O I was so struck by it I cried! I really appreciate the efforts, the time, the history that goes into the knowledge of creating and I hope that my designs pay homage to that whether it is a small object or a large building.”

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