

Vartkess Knadjian, CEO of Backes & Strauss

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What do you think is special or unique about the Backes & Strauss product line?

Founded 225 years ago, Backes & Strauss is a company with a long illustrious history. In reflection of that legacy, our product lines are inspired by four fundamental cornerstones: our heritage as the oldest diamond company in the world, our time-tested expertise in diamond cutting and polishing, our partnership with the Franck Muller Group – the Masters of Complications, and last but not least, our London provenance celebrating the 19th century Regency style of architecture.

Tell us more about your products and what we can expect to see in the future.

We will be expanding our bespoke services to meet a re-emergent demand. We want our customers to seek us out when they would like to commission pieces crafted from the finest materials, tailored to their preferences, and should they wish to do so, take a hands-on approach in the design process from the very beginning.

Where do you live and spend most of your time?

I am usually based in Switzerland, but I spend most of my time travelling, acting as a “missionary” for the brand.

How did you end up working for Backes & Strauss?

It's a long story. I joined Backes & Strauss as a trainee in 1976 shortly after graduating from the London School of Economics with a BSc honour degree in Economics.

How passionate are you about luxury products?

Very.

In your spare time, what do you like to get up to?

Family, family, family.

Which is your favourite Backes & Strauss product and why?

My personal favourite is the Piccadilly Princess Royal Colours. It embodies the very soul of Backes & Strauss' expertise in diamond timepieces. This remarkable creation by our master craftsmen features 66 different colour hues and 10 different cuts on the dial, case and bracelet.

In fact, the Piccadilly Princess Royal Colours is a “true” pièce unique, because no two pieces of the Piccadilly Princess can ever be alike – since each and every white and fancy-coloured diamond selected was hand-picked and are individually set to create an unrepeatable, one-off pattern.

Where can you see the company in five years' time?

I envisage the Backes & Strauss brand being globally recognised as the Master of Bespoke in the diamond watch industry. Our production is unlikely to increase since we position ourselves in the uber-luxury niche.

How long has the business been operating now? And is the business a life-long concern, how invested in Backes & Strauss are you?

As the oldest diamond company in the world, the company has been in operation since 1789. In fact we are celebrating our 225th anniversary this year. The company's first collections of timepiece were launched in 2007, and we are constantly looking to reinvent ourselves while staying true to the core of the brand.

Describe your typical working day?

Each day is different, and it quite often depends on where I am at the time. A sizeable proportion of time is spent on exploring new business prospects. Throughout the week I have regular staff meetings with our design, production and marketing teams, as well as our distributors.

How important is social media to the business?

Social media is an increasingly relevant marketing channel, and Backes & Strauss is active on all major social platforms.

How important is PR to the business?

PR is a vital component of what we do as we reach out to high-net-worth audiences. It's important to communicate the many different aspects of craftsmanship that goes into making a Backes & Strauss watch.

You have already had your products featured in many magazines thus far, what would be your dream piece of publicity?

It would be to witness Her Majesty the Queen wearing her Backes & Strauss Diamond Jubilee watch at the State Opening of Parliament.

How did the business fare in the last downturn of the economy?

Our timepieces were first launched in 2007 at the beginning of the global financial crisis. Despite the challenges our collections have been very well-received.



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