



Dolce & Gabbana's Alta Gioielleria collection brings together a compendium of rainbow-coloured stones and traditional Venetian techniques, echoing the brand's bold fashion aesthetic

The City's Finest

In their quest to support and nurture Italy's craftsmen, *Tatler* speaks to Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana of Dolce & Gabbana about their latest Alta Gioielleria collection

By Ho Yun Kuan

To arrive in style in Venice, try Dolce & Gabbana's solid gold gondola. With a hull elaborately carved with filigree scrolls, it is adorned with rubies, emeralds and blue sapphires, and has a seat made from a baroque keshi pearl. Manning it is a gondolier dressed to the nines in a shirt with blue enamel stripes, holding an oar decorated with blue sapphires to match.

Alas, the barge is not sea-worthy, not even in the calm waters of Venice's narrow canals. But it does dangle from a double necklace almost big enough to cover the décolletage. Citrines,

amethysts and tourmalines come together in a soft pastel palette, interrupted by milky aquamarines that are almost the size of quail eggs.

The bejewelled gondola wasn't the only head-turner that made an entrance in Venice on August 28 this year. Royalty—of the fashion, Hollywood and distantly related kind—descended upon the city's historic Palazzo Ducale in their finest Dolce & Gabbana regalia for the brand's Alta Gioielleria (high jewellery) presentation.

The event was only the first in a three-day,

three-part extravaganza that also included presentations for Alta Moda and Alta Sartoria—respectively women's and men's couture in the brand's context. This high-octane glamour plays out annually in spectacular settings based in Italian locations that hold meaning to founders Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana.

Venice was this year's destination, chosen, in Gabbana's own words, for its "perfect harmony of opposites attracting each other". "It is romantic yet sensual, melancholic yet joyful, rational yet visionary, luminous yet

nocturnal," he says of the city. "Returning to Venice always makes us feel rare emotions that we cling on to. Everyone dreams of Venice!" Perhaps, but no one dreams of the city the way he and Dolce do.

The designers have paid tribute to the City of Water by combining some of its most respected traditional crafts and high jewellery: Murano glass in saturated jewel tones mingling among precious stones; murrine portraits finding favour within gold bezels; glass mosaics depicting Venice's most iconic sights.

"All our Alta Gioielleria collections are born from



the desire to tell a story; to give a dream and a memory. Each piece is a narration of the artistic excellence of our country," shares Gabbana.

In a pair of mismatched earrings shaped like chalices, Murano glass in blue and yellow forms the main body of the cups and the stems, peeking through the voids in a gold filigree structure. The glasswork was created by Cesare Toffolo, a renowned stained glass master who comes from a long line of glass artists.

Perhaps the most literal interpretation of the Venetian theme comes in

the form of glass mosaics portraying two of the city's many well-loved bridges. Used in yet another pair of mismatched earrings, one depicts the Rialto Bridge and the other, the Bridge of Sighs. Both mosaics sit in elaborate gold frames decorated with pear-shaped yellow sapphires and diamonds.

"We allowed ourselves to be inspired by the beauty of Venice and its treasures. Every image, every memory, was a source of inspiration," says Dolce of the design process.

Working with local craftsmen has become modus operandi for

Dolce & Gabbana in recent years. It's all part of an effort to contribute to the preservation of Italian heritage arts and crafts, a mission that has become increasingly important to the brand.

"The pieces made in collaboration with local artisans are perhaps the most representative creations of the collection," says Dolce. "They tell the beauty of Venice and allow us to highlight the excellence of the place, which was a real mission for us."

"To us, 'made in Italy' is a value that has to be preserved and promoted,"

adds Gabbana. "We always get excited thinking about how much beauty human hands can create and how many treasures there are still to be discovered in the artisanal workshops of Italy."

Evidently, Dolce & Gabbana has created an Alta Gioielleria collection that is very Venetian in more than just aesthetics. It is also a celebration of Venice in its intent, and a salutation to the city's history and heritage. As Gabbana passionately proclaims, "it is a declaration of love for a city that is unique in the world!"