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Wolf CEO Simon Wolf on celebrating 190 years of the brand and the future of luxury storage

Luxury watch and jewellery box brand Wolf recently celebrated its 190th years of heritage and has earned the prestigious Butterfly Mark by Positive Luxury. Talking to Jewellery Focus CEO Simon Philip Wolf V takes us back to 1834, reflecting on the company's rich history, how it transformed over the years to become the brand it is today, and its vision for 2025.

 Cynera Rodricks  • Wednesday, 26 February 2025, 11:27  7 minutes read



Luxury watch and jewellery box brand Wolf celebrated its 190th anniversary last year and in December was also awarded the prestigious Butterfly Mark by Positive Luxury. It all began when Wolf's great-great-grandfather, Philipp Wolf I, who was a silversmith in Hanau, Germany, an area still renowned for silver and goldsmithing today, had an idea to place the silver jewellery he crafted in beautifully designed boxes.

"He quickly realised that these boxes not only enhanced his own products but also attracted the attention of other artisans, who soon asked him to create packaging for them as well. And so, almost by chance or perhaps through a stroke of ingenuity, the foundation of our business was laid,"

Wolf explains. He adds that for generations, the company has been driven by “a spirit of innovation, constantly reinventing itself to meet new challenges”.

At its core, the company’s DNA is about “problem-solving”. Sometimes, that means tackling complex engineering like designing a watch winder that keeps timepieces perfectly wound, with precise turns per day in the correct direction, all while preventing magnetisation. Other times, it’s about creating something as simple yet essential as a travel jewellery box.

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“One of our standout innovations is LusterLoc, a specially treated lining in our jewellery boxes that prevents tarnishing, keeping your pieces pristine for longer. This commitment to innovation and practicality traces back to my great-great-grandfather’s original goal: enhancing the presentation and preservation of fine jewellery. Although we moved away from packaging many years ago, our mission remains the same, to create products that make people realise they need a Wolf,” he explains.

Wolf also talks about how the constant drive to do better has been key to the brand’s longevity and success for nearly two centuries. He says: “Of course, everyone aspires to improve, but actually executing on that desire is far more challenging.”

Over the past 190 years, just like any other company the brand has experienced its share of ups and downs, including near bankruptcies and countless obstacles. However, working alongside his father for most of his life, Wolf states that despite the challenges his father had unwavering determination and mindset and always said: “We’ll find a way through and we’ll solve the problem.”

That resilience, Wolf says, is deeply embedded in the Wolf family DNA. He adds: “When I joined the business at 21, I didn’t fully grasp what I was

stepping into, but looking back, I've realised that the same instinct is in me too. It's simply part of who we are."

Having started in the sales team and now leading the company as CEO, Wolf plays a key role in overseeing the design of every Wolf creation. The London team currently has five designers alongside Wolf who is also the creative head of the company. "Most of the collections you see today originated from my own ideas, while others come from our talented designers," he says.

Designing a Wolf product starts with a blank slate, focusing first on its purpose. The team considers key details such as its function, will it be a travel case or a home storage solution? Will it organise jewellery or keep a watch properly wound?

Once the function has been defined, the team focuses on the aesthetics, as Wolf says that "functionality alone isn't enough, the design must also be aesthetically pleasing". Every piece the group creates needs to have "perfect proportions, a balanced sense of form, and an intuitive feel in the hand". Additionally, Wolf states that its perspective should be "just as striking from the back as it is from the front".

After perfecting the structure, the team focuses on materials they use, whether it's vegan leather, bio-based alternatives, or other sustainable options. According to Wolf standards, the colours must be "timeless yet modern, balancing fashion trends without being overly trend-driven".

He notes: "Our new Bella collection features mocha and bone shades, which align perfectly with Pantone's colour of the year. While they feel current, they're also classic enough to remain relevant for years to come. All in all it's a multi-layered process that I personally oversee, and some pieces take up to a year to develop. But that's okay because for us, getting it right is what truly matters."

This meticulous approach to design goes hand in hand with Wolf's commitment to sustainability, ensuring that every product is not only beautifully crafted but also responsibly made, a dedication that has earned the brand the prestigious Butterfly Mark by Positive Luxury.

Wolf says that he believed as a company they were already doing a great job, because they don't use plastics in our products or packaging, and have banned polythene plastic bags long ago, but he quickly realised "there was

still much more they could improve” during the process of receiving the Butterfly Mark.

Today, all Wolf products feature 100% recycled leather and its packaging is made of 70% post-consumer recycled waste. Wolf says: “I became vegan about eight years ago, and I no longer see animal hides as an elegant or ethical choice. It’s important to shine a light on these issues, and that’s why we’re transitioning to 100% bio-based, vegan materials by the end of this year, we’re already at 70%. I personally feel that in today’s world, we need to recognise that animals experience emotions, family bonds, and suffering. We would never treat our pets the way factory-farmed animals are treated.”

He adds that today, one can create a product using bio-based materials like apple leather, Piñatex from pineapples, or mycelium from mushrooms, and the result is not only sustainable but also elegant.

“The beauty of these materials is that they are grown naturally as part of a regenerative process, rather than relying on traditional leather production, which involves force-feeding cows, pumping them with steroids, and ultimately stripping their hides in a cruel and harmful way. That perspective made it easy for me to reflect on our company’s impact and ask what else can we change to reduce our footprint on this planet?”

The UK Wolf office has recently installed solar panels alongside other green initiatives such as composting food waste, monitoring water and energy consumption and allotting eclectic cars for every salesperson.

Wolf believes that even small individual changes can make a difference. He says: “If you eat meat one day less per week, choose to walk instead of drive or opt for an electric car, those choices add up. Recycling, while valuable, is complex, much of it is incinerated for energy, which is frustrating, but awareness is key according to me.”

He also highlights that the Butterfly Mark has allowed the group to spark important conversations promoting small individual changes that matter. He says: “When people ask about the Butterfly Mark, I explain its significance, and they often leave inspired to make changes themselves. Consumers also recognise how difficult it is to qualify, which reinforces that this isn’t just a marketing ploy, it’s a genuine commitment.”

Looking ahead to 2025, Wolf has realised that connecting with the consumers through social media has been challenging yet wonderfully

rewarding over the years. As a result, he wants to expand the brand's outreach even further. Wolf states that as a company, they embrace social media "as it allows us to engage directly with our audience in ways that weren't possible before".

Building on its success with social media, the group has also embraced technology to streamline operations and enhance efficiency. Its sales force uses an app to place orders seamlessly, and its ERP system provides real-time data insights. Additionally, with five global warehouses, the company can efficiently ship anywhere in the world.

The group also engages with its customers through events and its extensive network of retail partners from department stores like Harrods to specialised watch retailers like Watches of Switzerland, as well as independent boutiques around the world. "These relationships are crucial to our growth, and we invest significant time in nurturing them," Wolf says. He adds: "What truly sets us apart is our global sales force, no other company in our industry has representatives on the ground like we do. We have dedicated agents in France, three sales representatives in the UK alone, and nine in the U.S. This means we maintain a direct, hands-on connection with our customers, constantly gathering insights on what's selling, what isn't, and what they need from us."

As a result, the group's focus remains on deepening these connections by listening, adapting, and strengthening its brand.

A commitment to innovation has also shaped Wolf's approach to leadership. Remembering the day he started working with the brand, Wolf talks about how he was simply asked if he'd like to work with one of the sales guys, and he thought, "Yeah, that would be fantastic." From that moment, he says he fell in love with the business. "My father was always supportive, offering simple but reassuring advice: 'Don't worry, it'll be alright. You'll figure it out.'"

"Growing up, I watched him closely, whether he was cutting the grass, fixing a wall, or building a doghouse, he always did things the right way. He never cut corners. He also flew light aircraft from his mid-twenties. Seeing him balance running a company, managing a factory, and flying a plane instilled a mindset in me that has shaped how I work today," he adds.

Even in the modern world, Wolf states that those values remain "completely relevant". His ultimate vision for the business is to be a truly "enduring brand that holds a distinct place in people's minds".

He says that when someone wants a jewellery box or a watch winder, they don't just say, "I need a jewellery box" or "I need a watch winder", they say, "I want a Wolf." And when others hear that, they immediately understand.

"Oh, you want a Wolf? I have a Wolf." That, to him, is the definition of success.

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