



Here's a statement not often heard in the luxury business: The recession was good to us. But talk to Roberto Faraone Mennella and Amedeo Scognamiglio of the jewelry firm Faraone Mennella, and that's exactly what they'll tell you.

"The past two years have been such a revolutionary time in the market," says Scognamiglio. "For us, it's been an opportunity to grow and focus on what we really want to do. It gave us a really strong direction and triggered our strategy to expand overseas." And the facts speak for themselves. Since 2008, sales have increased 40 percent, the two have launched the secondary line L'una by R.F.M.A.S., expanded into Dubai and Abu Dhabi and, on Nov. 1, will open their very first flagship in a surprising locale for a brand born in New York and known for its very Italian roots: London.

"Europe, probably more so than the United States, is a place where you need to have your own boutique," Scognamiglio explains. "Distribution is not channeled like in the States with department stores. And London is a great European capital for a store. It's a hub for the Eastern markets."

Which isn't to say the two didn't look for real estate in their home base of New York — they almost closed on two different locations on Madison Avenue — but once they decided to look elsewhere, London seemed the perfect fit. "We have great success in the Middle East," reasons Mennella. "[London] is where [the people from there] vacation and study, as well as all the European jet set."

The 1,000-square-foot shop, designed by architect Ante Vrban, will be modeled after the firm's New York showroom — "very 1950 couture salon," says Mennella. Walls are covered in gray silk, a vintage Italian Venini chandelier dominates the space and vitrines, mostly recessed into the walls, are "seamless," with no visible locks. Chic couches and carpeting complete the living-room feel. And just as the tables and lamps in their Manhattan space were designed by Mennella himself, the wrought-iron furnishings in the London outpost will be, too. But then, it's a design ethos that stems from Mennella's family estate in the small town of Torre del Greco, just south of Naples. "I am ready for this repetition wherever I go," Scognamiglio sighs in jest. He adds that there's a VIP room in the back for private viewings and, in the spring, the two will launch a collection of leather goods, made in Tuscany, solely at this London outpost.

Come April, the designers plan to open a store in Capri, too. "That will really be a coming home," says Scognamiglio. "In many ways, Capri is the DNA of the brand, not only because we grew up there and we still vacation there with our families, but because it embodies everything we feel in luxury. It's one of the biggest inspirations we have." And there are more stores in the pipeline: Paris, "somewhere in the Middle East" and in New York, not one but two. "We want a L'una store downtown," notes Scognamiglio. "Faraone, meanwhile, is more niche. It's destined to be uptown."