

EVENTS/CAUSES

Luxury brands honor the arts with Whitney Museum involvement

April 28, 2015



Whitney Museum

By JEN KING

Luxury brands are showing an enthusiasm for art and culture through initiatives celebrating the Whitney Museum of American Art's reopening in Downtown New York May 1.

[Sign up now](#)

Luxury Daily

From partnerships to commissioned pieces of art and exclusive handbags, brands are joining the Whitney as it moves from the Upper East Side to its new location in the Meatpacking District, as much of the city's urban landscape is redefined with a downtown focus. By being involved with the museum's relocation, these brands will become part of the Whitney's narrative as consumers stream in to see the new building.

"By interacting with cultural institutions, luxury brands reinforce and enhance the 'work of art' aspect to the brand," said Marie Driscoll, CEO and chief consultant of Driscoll Advisors, New York. "The adjacency is good for the brand and can elevate a young fashion brand into a cultural icon and ultimately a luxury brand.

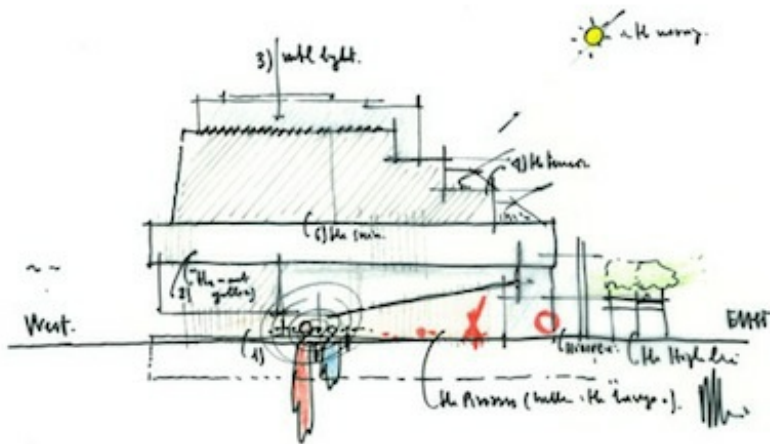
"For more mature luxury brands, the association with works of art is a plus as well as this museum context can create new mindshare," she said.

"Brand awareness will increase among museum-goers as the luxury brand becomes top-of-mind and in this new cultural venue, the brands are able to stand out from their luxury peers."

Helpful movers

The Whitney was established in 1930 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and houses a collection of American art from the 20th and 21st centuries. For the last 80 years, the Whitney had been located on the corner of Madison Avenue and East 75th Street, and on May 1 will open the doors to its new home at 99 Gansevoort Street and Washington Street.

Sitting on the southern end of the High Line park, the new space has views of the Hudson River along with 50,000-square feet of gallery space. Designed by architect Renzo Piano, the new Whitney also boasts the largest column-free exhibition area in New York.



Whitney museum sketch by Renzo Piano, as seen on Max Mara's Web site

In the weeks leading up to the opening, brands have announced partnerships that express their interest and support in the Whitney, as well as the modern art scene.

German automaker Audi will act as the automotive partner for the Whitney's opening year.

Throughout 2015 and 2016, Audi will participate in various events, chauffeuring guests to the venue or inviting attendees to a branded members-only lounge. This extended collaboration with the cultural institution furthers Audi's association with the artistic community.

Audi's partnership kicks off during the week before the official opening, and will continue throughout the year and into 2016, giving the brand plenty of opportunities to raise awareness among the museum's patrons ([see story](#)).

Similarly, U.S. jeweler Tiffany & Co. has also signed on for a long-term partnership with the museum that will extend through 2021. Within the agreement, Tiffany will act as the lead sponsor of the Whitney Biennial, an exhibition of contemporary American art that aims to discover new artists.



The Whitney museum at night

The jeweler will sponsor the next three biennials in 2017, 2019 and 2021. The 2017 edition will be the first of the biennials to be held in the Whitney's new space.

In a branded statement, Frédéric Cumenal, CEO of Tiffany said, "Tiffany, like the Whitney,

was born of a spirit of innovation and devotion to creativity, so to partner with the museum at this exciting moment in its history, is significant for both these great New York City institutions.

“Through our support of the Biennial, we are thrilled to champion the museum’s mission to give emerging artists and their work high-level exposure on a global scale, while continuing our century-old tradition of supporting cultural experiences that create meaningful conversation and bring new ideas in art, design and popular culture to the forefront.”

The sponsorship’s long duration is unprecedented for Tiffany, but reflects the shared commitment of the jeweler and museum, both considered to be American institutions, whose founders were dedicated to “art and the pursuit of originality.”

Family-owned Italian fashion house Max Mara is also involved in the Whitney’s reopening through the design of a limited-edition handbag.

The Whitney handbag, shared via social media by Max Mara, was made in a numbered series of 250 and designed by the Renzo Piano Building Workshop. The architect's team was directly inspired by the “pure design and sophisticated materials” of the museum’s new home and is considered a “homage to architectural mastery and Italian creativity.”



Max Mara's Whitney bag

On its Web site, Max Mara has created an informative hub that gives an overview of the Whitney handbag itself, content about the museum, an interview with the Renzo Piano Building Workshop and images from the opening party of the #NewWhitney on April 24.

In the travel space, Time Inc.’s Travel + Leisure commissioned a painting by artist Daniel

Heidkamp. Due to the buzz surrounding the museum opening, many consumers are likely to travel to New York to be among the first to see the new space and enjoy the festivities.

Mr. Heidkamp's painting appeared in the Beyond - Artist's View space of Travel + Leisure's redesigned May edition ([see story](#)). The oil-on-linen painting was created during Mr. Heidkamp's stay in a southern-facing room at the Standard High Line hotel, which overlooks the museum.

/beyond/ ARTIST'S VIEW



THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
by Daniel Heidkamp

The painter on his rendering of the museum's new home in New York City, opening this month (whitney.org): "I'm fascinated by the idea of the art museum as an institution, as this place that's loaded with art energy, but which is somehow separated from the works inside. I wanted to paint the Whitney as a way of connecting with what will be shown there before it even opens—like history being written in the present. I spent half a day painting oil on linen in a south-facing room at the Standard High Line hotel. The view was epic, with pure blue skies and intense sunlight that reflected off the glass façade and lit up the room like flash photography. It made this incredibly modern piece of architecture appear almost nuclear."

MICHAEL CHINI

TRAVEL + LEISURE / MAY 2015 **79**

"The Whitney Museum of American Art" painted by Daniel Heidkamp, photographed by Michael Chini for Travel + Leisure's May 2015 issue

"At Travel + Leisure, we're always looking for fresh ways to bring places to life that help our audience see them in a new light," said Nathan Lump, editor of Travel + Leisure, New York. "Our new Artist's View column, in which an artist depicts for us a place that has inspired them, is all about that.

"In the case of Daniel Heidkamp's painting of the Whitney in our May issue, we not only had a timely subject but also an artist who could speak eloquently about why the iconic institution - and its new home - is relevant, to him personally as well as to our readers," he said. "It was the perfect way for us to cover the opening."

Downtown funk

The setup of New York has seen a shift in interest to downtown properties.

For instance, part of the burgeoning luxury retail development in downtown Manhattan, Brookfield Place officially opened to the public March 26.

Following a remodel, the shopping center reopened with a mix of high-end contemporary fashion, luxury retail and a mix of dining options. In an area often overlooked by luxury, with more affluents choosing to live below Midtown and varied businesses moving into the neighborhood, Brookfield will be able to serve both locals and tourists looking for a luxury shopping experience in lower Manhattan ([see story](#)).

In addition to retail spaces, fashion events are also making the move downtown.

Another step in its evolution, New York Fashion Week is moving to two new Downtown Manhattan locations.

Starting with the spring/summer 2016 shows in September, the events will be held at Skylight at Moynihan Station in west Midtown and Skylight Clarkson Square in west SoHo. NYFW, produced by IMG, is going through changes focused on better serving the needs of the fashion industry and creating more of a cultural experience surrounding the runway shows ([see story](#)).

Partnering with the museum allows the involved brands to maintain a role in the consumer experience at the Whitney.

"These partnerships create a reason to attend an exhibit and provide an opportunity for those attending to purchase a luxury brand souvenir to take home for a remembrance of the event," Ms. Driscoll said. "This could create new brand followers while creating traffic and cashflow at the museum."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: https://www.youtube.com/embed/jr15_0RVjCw

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.