

IN-STORE

Louis Vuitton continues transparency efforts in latest heritage museum

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Louis Vuitton's flowertrunk with zinc tub, 1910

By JEN KING

French leather goods maker Louis Vuitton is giving enthusiasts a glimpse into the heart of its brand through a new atelier-based museum.

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The second Louis Vuitton retrospective space developed by the brand within a year's time offers consumers a more intimate and personal look into the house's inner workings. While the Frank Gehry-designed Fondation Louis Vuitton may serve as a fashion and cultural icon for Paris, the smaller La Galerie at Asnières-sur-Seine may be more attractive for those looking to be completely immersed in the house's heritage.

"Louis Vuitton's heritage is rooted in design, innovation, quality and craftsmanship," said Ryan Hattaway, president of **Mogul Media Group**, Miami. "[The museum is] an opportunity for the brand to create a curated experience to highlight their craftsmanship, their legacy and their milestone achievements in the fashion industry.

"This location gives context to Louis Vuitton's rich history by telling their story and educating visitors through an intimate brand experience," he said. "Because the museum is located on the family's estate, it gives guests an up-close look into the lives of the

people behind the brand and a peek behind the scenes at where some of Louis Vuitton's most exclusive products are still made."

Mr. Hattaway is not affiliated with Louis Vuitton, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Louis Vuitton was unable to respond directly by press deadline.

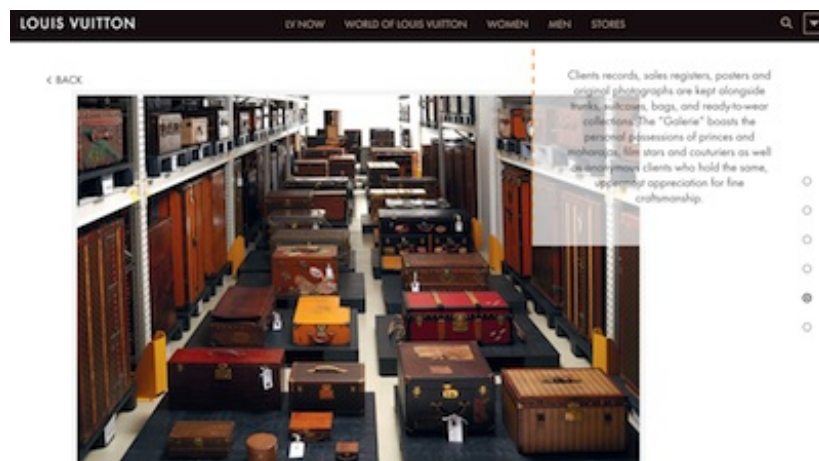
Returning to roots

As reported by **WWD**, the 6,500-square-foot museum space is found on the historic estate of brand founder Louis Vuitton in Paris' Asnières-sur-Seine neighborhood. Rather than venturing into uncharted land that may only have distant relevance for the brand, selecting a space deeply connected to its origin is attractive for those interested in learning about the house's beginnings.

On site, the Asnières complex contains the historic home formerly inhabited by Louis Vuitton and his family from the time it was built in 1859 until 1964. The site also includes active workshops where Louis Vuitton continues to produce its made-to-order goods.

Within its digital communications for La Galerie, Louis Vuitton states that the "exceptional savoir-faire of the Asnières artisans is such that, even today, key pieces are created here: rigid trunks, designs in rare or exotic leathers, special orders."

Throughout the digital component developed for La Galerie, Louis Vuitton stresses this element of Asnières. This is achieved through text explaining that one-off pieces created here "strive for perfection by bringing together technical innovation and quintessential style" alongside craftsmanship imagery.



Louis Vuitton's digital communications for La Galerie at Asnières

The Asnières property also connects to the Louis Vuitton family itself. Louis Vuitton explains that the family's sons all learned the art of trunk-making here, including Patrick-Louis Vuitton, who currently oversees all special orders ranging from shower-trunks to violin trunks.

In addition to focus paid to artisanship, Louis Vuitton's archives are heavily incorporated into La Galerie's displays. Curated by Judith Clark, these brand mementoes include clients records, sales registers, posters and original photos placed amid trunks, suitcases and

ready-to-wear for added context.

La Galeria also includes personal possessions of princes and maharajas, film stars, couturiers and even anonymous clients. La Galerie's cache includes, according to WWD, a total of 400 objects and documents hand-selected by Ms. Clark from the house's archive of 26,000 objects and 165,000 documents.



Interior of Louis Vuitton's La Galeria at Asnières, photographed by Grégoire Vieille

Standout items include couturier Paul Poiret's trunk to personal items of the Vuitton family, a pair of 17th-century Venetian women's platform shoes and a wooden Pateki cube puzzle game created by Gaston-Louis Vuitton.

Aside from craftsmanship, the free-roaming layout of La Galeria at Asnières explores themes such as globalization, client relations, the monogram, nature and the avant-garde.

As with this museum effort, Louis Vuitton boosted its transparency recently by giving consumers a look at the inner workings of its flagship fashion house's head office through an interactive feature on its corporate Web site.

"An Exceptional Place" features a 360-degree video of Louis Vuitton artisans going through their day and footage of seamstresses, architects and other behind-the-scenes employees whose efforts can be seen within its stores. This feature goes beyond most craftsmanship efforts, attaching a face and a process to more aspects of the brand than its fashion items ([see story](#)).

Show and tell

From collaborative art installations to displaying iconic pieces of jewelry, nearly every brand has curated a museum exhibit to showcase their heritage and identity from their own perspective.

By curating an exhibit a brand can bolster its identity through storytelling that reveals specific aspects of its history to consumers. Using education and creative exhibit installations may help reaffirm its position in the luxury market and elevate its standing in the mind of enthusiasts ([see story](#)).

Nearby to La Galerie at Asnières, the Fondation Louis Vuitton contains 11 galleries that promote 20th- and 21st-century artistic and creative movements.

CEO Bernard Arnault's art patronage is well-known, and this latest commission of the foundation, conceived in 2006, demonstrates a top-down commitment to the arts in LVMH. Located in the north of Paris, the 126,000 square foot foundation acts as a nexus for the conglomerate's artistic activities ([see story](#)).

But, unlike the Fondation Louis Vuitton, La Galerie at Asnières offers a much more profound and visceral picture of the Louis Vuitton family, the brand and its heritage in ways that the newly built structure cannot.

"The space will appeal to Louis Vuitton enthusiasts because it offers a more personal and authentic experience for the brand," Mr. Hattaway said. "It's where the Louis Vuitton story began.

"[Also,] the family lived on the estate, the trunks were, and some exclusive items still are made there," he said. "It's where the Louis Vuitton legacy was born."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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