

EVENTS/CAUSES

Valentino retraces roots with Roman creative project

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Image from Valentino's "From Memory to Creativity"

By SARAH JONES

Italian fashion house Valentino is further entwining itself with its hometown of Rome through a performance installation at Art Basel Miami.

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"From Memory to Creativity" offers a rare inside look at the artisan craft of Valentino's seamstresses through the foil of artist Pietro Ruffo, who will create alongside them in a reproduction of the label's Roman atelier. This stop in Miami is the first in a series of Valentino's celebrations of the eternal city, "Mirabilia Road," which will begin next May.

"I believe Valentino chose to launch this initiative at Art Basel as a strategic opportunity to highlight their history, core-values and most importantly workmanship," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York. "This is an opportunity to highlight the creative insight and behind-the-scenes details that went into the collection.

"They are strongly communicating that their culture and inspiration is a core part of the brand's story," she said. "In order to truly appreciate their designs, you need to emotionally connect with their brand values and history."

Ms. Strum is not affiliated with Valentino, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Valentino did not respond by press deadline.

Italy in Miami

In July, Valentino staged its haute couture show within its Rome boutique to bring attention to the newly opened flagship. The Rome storefront is symbolic for the brand because of its deep Roman heritage and its next door proximity to Valentino's creative headquarters ([see story](#)).

For the runway show event, christened "Mirabilia Romae," Mr. Ruffo designed the set to look like a modern Roman forum.



Image from Valentino's Mirabilia Romae show

This installation in Miami serves as a follow-up to the couture show, again featuring the connection between Valentino and Rome, which is the source of its design inspiration.

In Valentino's performance piece, Mr. Ruffo will recreate the map of Rome first drawn by Giovan Battista Nolli in the 18th century. Keeping to handcrafted methods, the artist will work as if in ancient times.

"We are extremely proud to continue the journey we started with Mirabilia Romae," said Valentino creative directors Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli in a brand statement. "The artistic installation of Miami From Memory to Creativity' is an important moment to narrate how our stylistic direction can develop from personal to universal.

"The concept of bottega dell'arte', recreated through the work of Pietro Ruffo, glorifies the values of time and the precious manual skills of our haute couture atelier," they said. "[It is] a performance that celebrates our creative identity, transmitting it towards the future."

This installation is the first "act" in Valentino's "Mirabilia Road" project, set to kick off in May 2016. Collaborating with Filippo Cosmelli, Daniela Bianco and Simone Ferrari, Valentino developed a seven and a half mile tour through the center of historic Rome that will point out monuments and spots that may have been missed otherwise by visitors.

Mirabilia Road / From Memory to Creativity

Valentino's Ms. Grazia Chiuri and Mr. Piccioli are donating the project to the "Eternal City" to help its citizens and tourists delve into the past to inform the present and future.

Artisan art

From fashion boutique gallery displays to ridesharing yacht applications, Art Basel Miami Beach has become a sanctuary for luxury brands looking to make an impression on discerning affluents and art enthusiasts.

Held on the weekend of Dec. 3-6, Art Basel Miami Beach, a contemporary and modern art fair, gathered artwork from 267 galleries based in North America, Latin America, Asia, Europe and Africa. Alongside gallery exhibitions, performances and film screenings, luxury brands staged events and exclusives to further their interactions with Art Basel's wealthy crowds, who have a penchant for artwork and experiential happenings ([see story](#)).

Other luxury labels have made the connection between artisans and art in special projects.

Spanish apparel and accessories house Loewe explored the functional capabilities of leather in a sculptural exhibit at select stores.

The Bowls Project, first presented during Salone del Mobile, featured three sets of 50 bowls that transform leather, molding it into new forms and shapes. Through this laboratory approach, Loewe was able to showcase its innovation, something it has held central to its branding since its founding ([see story](#)).

"[Valentino's] approach was extremely strategic, because they reached a market and established a connection without being surrounded by their competition," Ms. Strum said.

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York