

HOME FURNISHINGS

Roche Bobois, Christian Lacroix encapsulate art de vivre in furniture collaboration

June 22, 2016



Christian Lacroix for Roche Bobois

By SARAH JONES

French home furnishings brand Roche Bobois is fusing the worlds of fashion and interior design in a collection developed in partnership with Maison Christian Lacroix.

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In a series of 20 exclusive pieces, Christian Lacroix translates its signature over-the-top aesthetic into more accessible interior pieces, ranging from accessories to larger upholstered and wooden furniture. Representing Christian Lacroix's first foray into furniture, the capsule collection follows Roche Bobois' collaborations with other high-end fashion labels, including Missoni, Sonia Rykiel and Jean Paul Gaultier.

"I think that we should really build links between design and haute couture," said Gilles Bonan, CEO of **Roche Bobois**. "It's not a different discipline, a different sector. We have so many things in common starting with the creativity, the emotional part that we have in fashion and in design as well, the materials, the fabrics.

"So there are many things in common, and with Maison Lacroix, we had values in common as well," he said. "It's a French brand, Christian Lacroix was a great talented couturier and it's well-known in France, of course, but all over the world as well. It represents France as well, and with Roche Bobois, we think we have a mission to be an ambassador of France and French art de vivre, and Maison Lacroix is totally in this objective of l'art de vivre la française.

"And so we've combined our creativity, our sense of design, of fashion, and we put all this together and we came up with this new collection. So in this collection, you can see all of the values of Christian Lacroix, and all the savoir-faire of Roche Bobois as well, in terms of design, in terms of manufacturing furniture."

Coming home

Maison Christian Lacroix was founded as an haute couture house in 1987 by Christian Lacroix and Jean-Jacques Picart. Following a bankruptcy filing in 2009, the women's wear and couture collections were put on hold, but the house's aesthetic lives on under the creative direction of Sacha Walckhoff.

Mr. Walckhoff was Mr. Lacroix's assistant for more than a decade, and was brought in to lead the design and rebuilding of the brand after Mr. Lacroix exited his eponymous house.

As opposed to the pre-recession extravagance Christian Lacroix was known for, today the brand focuses on more accessible luxury, with a licensed menswear line, decorative items and accessories.

Christian Lacroix produces upholstery fabrics, wallpaper, cushions, stationery and tableware, but this collaboration with Roche Bobois represents its first foray into furniture.



Christian Lacroix items for Roche Bobois

For this capsule collection, which took only two months from design to completion, Mr. Walckhoff was given carte blanche by Roche Bobois. The resulting 20 pieces pay homage to decades past, combining and remixing eras in design to make something new.

Lacquered wood cubes are screen printed with stripe patterns, their minimalism making them at home in the 1930s or 1970s. Brass details make the bright design simultaneously traditional.

Dining room chairs feature backs shaped like hourglasses, an homage to mannequins.

A double-sided standing screen features a nineteenth century scene from Mr. Lacroix's hometown of Arles, France on one side and a garden print on the other. Amid the foliage are images of palm trees taken from throughout time, ranging from illustrations to a modern photograph.



Christian Lacroix pieces for Roche Bobois

Within the collection, there are also lighting pieces, a dining room table, mirrors, consoles and rugs.

Crafted for Roche Bobois' Nouveaux Classiques collection, the capsule was designed to integrate with a consumers' existing furniture, allowing for mixing and matching.

"I think there are many common points between fashion and design," Mr. Bonan said. "Maybe the energy that we have in both disciplines, the creativity, the colors. And both design and fashion are related to society, to the trends that we have in society. So it participates with the same elements as well.

"So that's why there is no reason to have a border between the two of them," he said. "And people are very entranced by fashion everyday, and they want to recreate this modernity at home.

"And it's true that Roche Bobois was a pioneer to have both fashion and design put together, because we started the first collection 15 years ago with Kenzo, and at that time, it was totally new to have fashion into design. And afterwards, we built on this experience and with the last experiment with Maison Lacroix. But definitely I think that both disciplines have to be mixed together and that's what our customers are expecting from Roche Bobois as well."

Growth strategy

Today, Roche Bobois has stores in 53 countries, and its presence is growing rapidly, with at least one new showroom added each month for the past five years. Last year had a record 15 openings, and this year is slated to be more of the same, with upcoming openings in Kiev, Ukraine and Tehran, Iran.

Through a mix of franchise stores and corporate showrooms, which are concentrated in the U.S., Europe and Canada, Mr. Bonan expects it to reach 300 locations worldwide in a few years.

Roche Bobois is currently undergoing a digital transformation along with the rest of the luxury industry, as digital media takes up a larger portion of its budget than it did before.

In France, which is the brand's largest market, 90 percent of the budget used to be allocated to print a few years ago, and digital was around zero. Today, about 40 percent of the total budget is spent on print, 30 percent on television, with the remainder, about 25 percent going to digital and some radio.

Each market is different, with digital in the U.S. taking up more than a third of the budget, growing each year.

These channels also interact, feeding into each other.

Home furnishings maker Roche Bobois is diving back into television with a "French Art de Vivre" commercial.

For its return to the small screen, Roche Bobois worked with Wendy Morgan to direct its television commercial featuring its Mah Jong modular sofas and a cast of synchronized "swimmers." To further promote the commercial before it hits television screens, Roche Bobois relied on its social accounts ([see story](#)).

"Digital is growing, it's very important into our media investments," Mr. Bonan said. "We've split part of our budget from print to digital.

"We have a TV commercial, so we're using digital to promote it all over the world," he said. "We have a new Web site that was launched last year and it's totally digital oriented with a configurator in it.

"And more and more we're going into digital, and that's the trend of society, because they expect Roche Bobois to be even more present into the digital, so that's definitely a phenomenon that we're working on in the U.S., France and all over the world."