

JEWELRY

## Cartier readies for reopening of Fifth Avenue flagship next month

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*Image courtesy of Cartier*

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By JEN KING

French jeweler Cartier is preparing consumers for the reopening of its flagship store on New York's Fifth Avenue.

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Cartier began renovations of the 653 Fifth Avenue maison in 2014, choosing to open a temporary storefront further up the New York high street to ensure there was no lapse in service for locals and travelers alike. The flagship's renovations are now near completion, and Cartier must set out to spur awareness of the store's design and services before its grand reopening in September.

"September is a good month in New York, an opening that dovetails with the fashion shows will benefit from the city's (and the media's) preoccupation with all that is fashion," said Marie Driscoll, CEO and chief consultant of [Driscoll Advisors](#), New York. "The New Yorkers I know would love to get their mind off of the election and a visit to a sumptuous Cartier flagship is a perfect escape.

"The store is where the brand comes to life, the environment where one can 'try it on,'" she said. "For luxury brands, a flagship houses the DNA, the brand essence and allows shoppers to interact with the brand and its codes.

"It is the best embodiment of all that a brand is from product, to service and amenities, to store ambience and store design. The brand allure created in flagships and marketing propel the shopper to engage with the brand and imagine the role the brand can have in one's life and one's self conception."

Ms. Driscoll is not affiliated with [Cartier](#), but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Richemont-owned [Cartier](#) did not respond by press deadline.

Moving back in

As of 2014, Cartier moved its storefront to the 59th Street boutique, found at 767 Fifth Avenue, while its flagship underwent extensive renovations to its interior.

The move to 767 Fifth Avenue, a distance of seven blocks north from Cartier's flagship, limited travel for consumers living in the area that frequent the jeweler's boutique for service, cleanings and purchases.



*Image courtesy of Cartier*

Cartier's temporary location also positioned the jeweler closer to competitors such as Tiffany & Co. and Van Cleef & Arpels, both on the corner of 57th Street. The boutique is also closer to New York retailer Bergdorf Goodman and Fairmont's The Plaza Hotel ([see story](#)).

No word has been shared if the 59th Street boutique will remain open once the flagship reopens. The jeweler also operates a standalone boutique on nearby Madison Avenue, suggesting that three storefronts in such a small radius will be unnecessary.

"The two stores on Fifth Avenue are really in different neighborhoods and appeal to a different customer," Ms. Driscoll said.

"[Cartier's] flagship at 52nd appeals to brand advocates, luxury shoppers and those interested in an heritage experience, the location across from The Plaza has the Apple shopper and soon the Under Armour brand advocate. Not a bad idea to keep both, costly though."

With the renovations nearly complete, Cartier has begun to promote its newly updated flagship through sponsored social posts and an email blast sent to those already subscribed to receive its newsletters.

Both the sponsored posts and email messaging feature a computer rendering of Fifth Avenue at night. In the center of the message is a larger-than-life Cartier red gift box, slightly ajar to show the flagship boutique as if it were a piece of jeweler being unveiled from its packaging.



*Message promoting Cartier's Fifth Avenue flagship*

The click-through redirects consumers to Cartier's Web site where a timeline history of the maison and its relationship to Fifth Avenue can be explored.

While exact details of the renovations have yet to be shared, Cartier tells of the location's history instead. For example, the building was designed in 1904 and used as a private residence until 1917.

In 1917, the building was acquired by Pierre Cartier, son of Louis-Francois Cartier, the brand's founder. The neo-Renaissance style property came into Mr. Cartier's possession by trading the homeowner a pearl necklace, valued at \$1 million, for the mansion on Fifth Avenue.

The pearl necklace has now been reproduced by Cartier and will be on display at the Fifth Avenue flagship as it reopens after its two-and-a-half-year transformation. Including an anecdotal touchpoint to the opening assists Cartier in expressing its history at the mansion and its importance to the brand's DNA.

Per [WWD](#), Cartier is planning a grand reopening fete at the flagship maison for Sept. 7.

Heritage halls

Reopenings often experience a lot of fanfare among brand enthusiasts. When a storefront or hotel property has a longstanding history, but has been shuttered for a time, recalling heritage is often used as a marketing tactic to sync with consumer nostalgia.

For example, The Ritz Paris Hotel recently reopened after four years and \$450 million in renovations.

To create buzz for its reopening, the Ritz Paris Hotel produced a social film that recalls its luxurious heritage.

"Behind The Door," directed by Zoe Cassavetes and starring Ana Girardot and Andrs Velencoso, was posted to Facebook and Twitter after teasing it on the networks for a number of weeks. Since the remodeling took longer than

expected, a strong social campaign will help revitalize interest among consumers.

The hotel was a preferred spot for everyone from Ernest Hemingway and Marcel Proust to Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel. Behind The Door aims to capture this history ([see story](#)).

"Restoring the flagships of heritage brands links the past with the present and the future, and in doing so authenticates the brand's continuity as a luxury 'marker,'" Ms. Driscoll said.

"Other brands may come and go, but a heritage flagship is subliminal in its communication that this luxury withstands the vicissitudes to time and is eternal and relevant," she said. "Digital commerce, augmented reality and artificial intelligence all can play a role in the path the purchase and brand storytelling.

"A flagship store is where the imagined is realized."

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