

RETAIL

Barneys pairs Bourgeois' sculpture art with Comme des Garçons windows

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Barneys New York's new window display combines the art and fashion

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Retailer Barneys New York is bringing together art and fashion in a window display combining the work of artist Louise Bourgeois and designer Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons in one exhibit.

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Barneys' new display incorporates Ms. Bourgeois' sculptures into Ms. Kawakubo's designs to highlight the similarities between these two acclaimed women. The retailer worked with the Easton Foundation, an organization devoted to preserving Ms. Bourgeois' reputation and "cultivating new interpretations of [her] work," after she passed away in 2010.

"The context of Louise's work in the windows at Barneys will bring a different audience from the traditional museum," said Jerry Gorovoy, president of the Easton Foundation, New York. "Louise liked fashion and street life, and therefore I believe she would enjoy this context."

Art and fashion

Luxury retailer Barneys New York was looking to make an impression with its new window display, something that would suggest an air of sophistication and art beyond simple clothing.

To do this, Dennis Freedman, the former creative director at Barneys New York, worked with the Easton Foundation, which is dedicated to showing Ms. Bourgeois' work in new contexts, to bring her sculptures to the window display.

Mr. Freedman combined the artist's work with designs from Comme des Garçons' Ms. Kawakubo in an evocative exhibit, marking the first time that Ms. Bourgeois' art has been shown in conversation with fashion.



Ms. Bourgeois' famous Maman sculpture

Barneys put these two together to celebrate the legacy of two acclaimed women in their respective fields. The windows at Barneys New York will show pieces from Ms. Bourgeois and Ms. Kawakubo juxtaposed side-by-side.

One of the combinations includes Ms. Bourgeois' 1968-69 piece AVENZA alongside a white knotted piece from Ms. Kawakubo's Ceremony of Separation collection from fall/winter 2015-16.

Other combinations will be displayed at other windows around the store.

These displays will remain up for five weeks at Barneys' Madison Avenue and Chelsea locations, coinciding with the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2017 Costume Institute exhibition, which focuses on Ms. Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons.

An elevated experience

While ecommerce has undoubtedly been on many luxury retailers' minds, this move clearly shows that Barneys is still placing value on its physical retail locations, turning them into an aesthetically-pleasant experience for in-store customers.

This is similar to recent initiatives from the retailer, such as a customization event Barneys recently held at its Madison Avenue location where customers could come in and get items personalized in-store before they purchased them ([see story](#)).



A Commes Des Garçons dress designed by Ms. Kawakubo

And in addition to the fine art of this new window display, Barneys has recently turned to social media, and Instagram in particular, to scout new talent.

Guided by the social network's visual medium, the buying team at Barneys uncovered a number of "buzz-worthy" labels outside of the traditional showroom environment. Taking the social media approach a step further, Barneys' buying team used Instagram's messaging feature to make first introductions and negotiate wholesale purchases ([see story](#)).

But for the next five weeks, the focus will be on art from the past as Ms. Bourgeois' work graces the windows of Barneys in complicated interplay with the designs of Ms. Kawakubo.

“Due to the nature of the pieces themselves, we kept all other elements very clean and minimal in the style of a gallery,” said Matt Mazzucca, current creative director at Barneys New York.

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