

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Waiting is a kind of luxury: Nicolas Ghesquire

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*Louis Vuitton cruise 2017 campaign*

By SARAH JONES

LISBON, Portugal While houses such as Louis Vuitton have craftsmanship at their core, they also need to innovate, said the creative director of the brand.

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Speaking at the FT Business of Luxury Summit on May 15, the designer explained his approach to creating Louis Vuitton's collections, including his takes on new technologies and digital media. Changing consumer tastes and behavior are propelling innovation in fashion, pushing luxury labels to adapt.

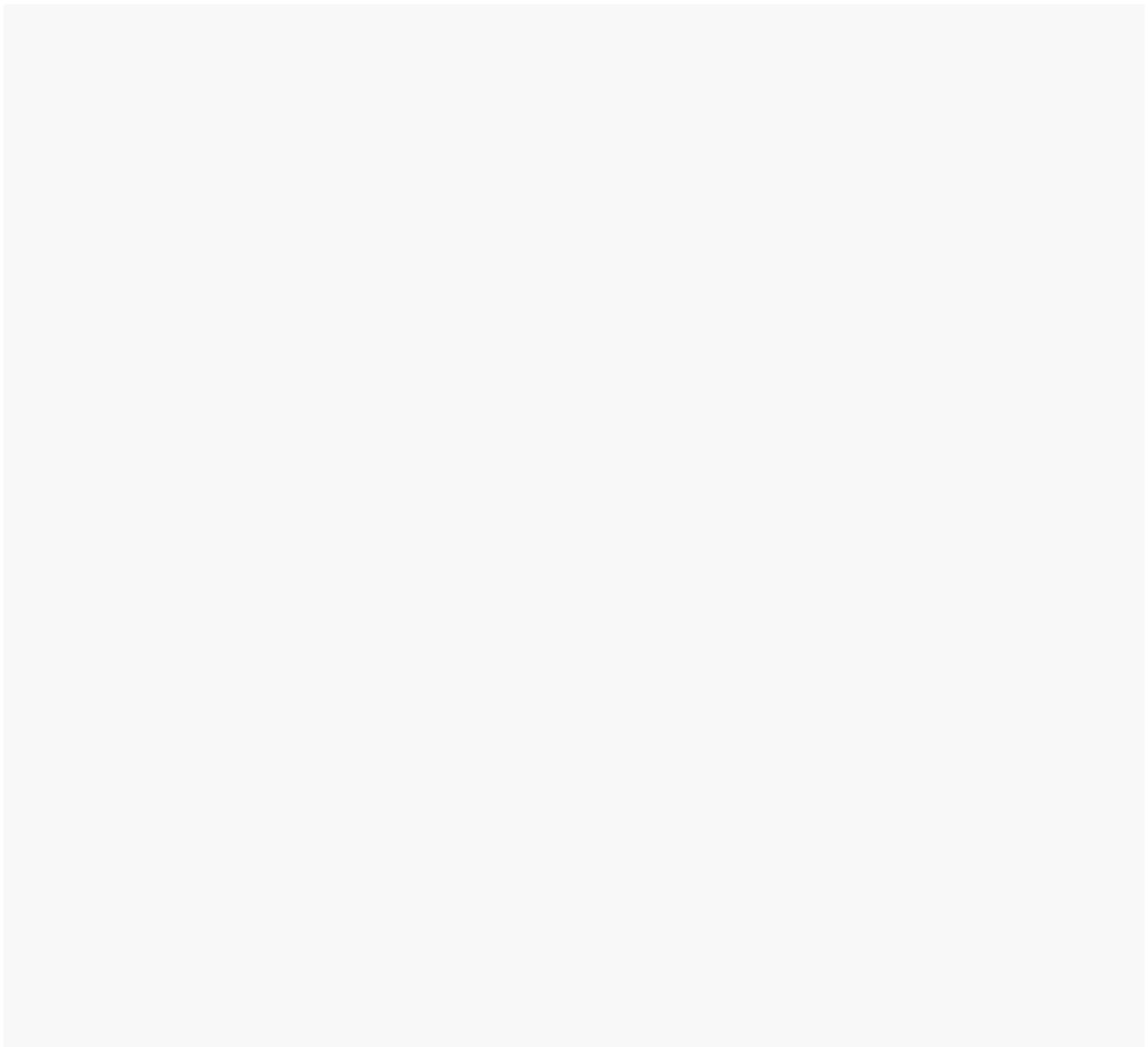
"I think it's the role of the designer to look forward and to be different, and to be unique, and to have point of view, and to shape things," said Nicolas Ghesquire, artistic director of **Louis Vuitton**. "And to say, You might not understand right now, but my role and why you want my point of view is because I have to be brave and courageous and I have to try to imagine what will be cool in six months and it is why I did that."

"So it's a role that I embrace and I think it is essential to keep that spirit," he said. "But when sometimes there is insecurity, because there is a lot of insecurity when you design, I try to never forget that if I was asked to do that, it's because the people who asked me to design want my opinion."

On the road

Cruise collections are a relatively new development for Louis Vuitton, compared to many of its peers. With the brand's heritage of travel, the resort-ready collection was a natural extension for the house.

Since it launched cruise four years ago, Louis Vuitton has taken the seasonal collections to destinations such as the Bob Hope estate in Palm Springs, CA, Rio de Janeiro and the Miho Museum nearby to Kyoto, Japan.



#LVCruise Finale. Watch the show by @nicolasghesquiere now at [louisvuitton.com](http://louisvuitton.com)

A post shared by Louis Vuitton Official (@louisvuitton) on May 14, 2017 at 12:56pm PDT

Mr. Ghesquire likened the development of these shows to producing a movie, as the setting and situation are carefully orchestrated.

Compared to the fashion statements made during fashion week in Paris, cruise is more about filling out a woman's wardrobe. A more commercial season with apparel that spans winter and summer, the cruise designs will spend the most time in-store, arriving in November and staying until May.

For the designer, cruise offers a chance to be more literal with his references than he would be for fall/winter or spring/summer. For instance, this year's Japan theme included odes to the country's landscapes.

Designers are focused on creating newness, with the goal of bringing to life designs that are so unique that they will stand the test of time.

One aspect that is evolving is textile design. Artificial fabrics such as polyester are being mixed with natural fibers, giving them an appeal for high-fashion that they did not have before.



*Nicolas Ghesquire spoke with Financial Times fashion editor Jo Ellison via video conference*

Another area poised for innovation is wearable clothing, something Louis Vuitton is open to.

Aside from designers changing the face of fashion, consumers have also pushed design with their behavior. Women's concern with activity and bodies has propelled the rise of athleisure, even on high-fashion runways.

Louis Vuitton also took inspiration from consumers' consistent connectivity with their phones for a recent accessory. Its iconic trunk morphed into a smartphone case, reflecting what travelers today are carrying with them on their journeys.

#### Digital evolution

Technology itself is changing how luxury brands operate, forcing them to embrace some level of inclusivity.

Digital channels offer brands fighting for a relatively small group of consumers the opportunity to appeal to new audiences, according to panelists at The New York Times International Luxury Conference in 2016.

While overexposure on social media has some worried about losing exclusivity, panelists from Facebook and The Paris Opera emphasized the opportunity it presents to appeal to an audience that could not be reached any other way. To be successful going forward, businesses will need to find ways to incorporate new channels into their story in a genuine manner that will reach new customers ([see story](#)).



*Instagram image from Louis Vuitton's Nicolas Ghesquire in Rio*

For a brand such as Louis Vuitton, which sells merchandise across the price spectrum, digital media allows it to reach a larger audience.

However, with everything shared on social media, consumer expectations today are not in line with the time it takes for the creative process. In the three to four months between a runway show and retail, some consumers who saw the show in-person or on Instagram may lose interest by the time they can purchase items.

While see-now, buy-now has been a buzzy topic in the industry, it has not taken off as much as expected.

Tom Ford recently announced that after only one year of supporting the see-now, buy-now business model, the brand is dropping it, suggesting that the once popular trend may be dying out among the big names of the fashion world.

The fashion brand cited difficulties relating to the store-shipping and fashion show schedules that made it challenging to have a collection for sale and on the runway at the same time. With other big fashion houses such as Thakoon also dropping see-now, buy-now, the fire of the business model looks like it could be slowly dying out, while some still defend this retail innovation ([see story](#)).

"I love the fact that the digital world and Instagram is inclusive," Mr. Ghesquire said. "We are all working on the idea sometimes of exclusivity for luxury, but I think luxury is very inclusive, too. Instagram and the digital communication is showing a different aspect of what we do, and it's reaching much more people.

"And I believe in youngness," he said. "They know what they want and what they like, and I think this digital world is exciting curiosity in people."

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