

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

At this moment, everything is mass, says Loewe's Jonathan Anderson

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Loewe fall/winter 2016 campaign

By SARAH JONES

LISBON, Portugal The term luxury is in need of a rebrand, according to the creative director of Spanish leather goods house Loewe.

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Using handbags as an example, the designer pointed out that many brands simply produce the same shapes that are already on the market, looking to feed consumer demand rather than prioritizing risk-taking and individuality. In a discussion at the FT Business of Luxury Summit on May 15, the creative director said that more than anything, consumers are buying into the emotion surrounding a product or brand, calling for marketing that establishes a distinct personality and sense of feeling.

"I think we're in this moment that ultimately everything is mass," said Jonathan Anderson, creative director of **J.W. Anderson** and **Loewe**. "Because that's what the world wanted. Everyone wanted a certain bag and a certain woman. And I think we're just up against this problem where you come out with a t-shirt at 5 euro and you come out with a luxury t-shirt at 400 euro.

"I don't think there is [a difference]," he said. "Because I think it's about the story. We buy the emotional story about a product."

Personality as promotion

Mr. Anderson started out wanting to be an actor, but after dropping out of acting school, he began working in fashion retail. This experience inspired a late aspiration for fashion design.

When Mr. Anderson joined the LVMH group three years ago after selling part of his label and being hired to head Loewe, he said he went on a "crusade" against luxury. Not a luxury consumer himself at the time, he looked at the term "luxury" as a word used solely for branding.

Instead, he prefers the idea of a cultural company, establishing a character and a story around the label. Stores and products cannot be void of emotion, nor can marketing.

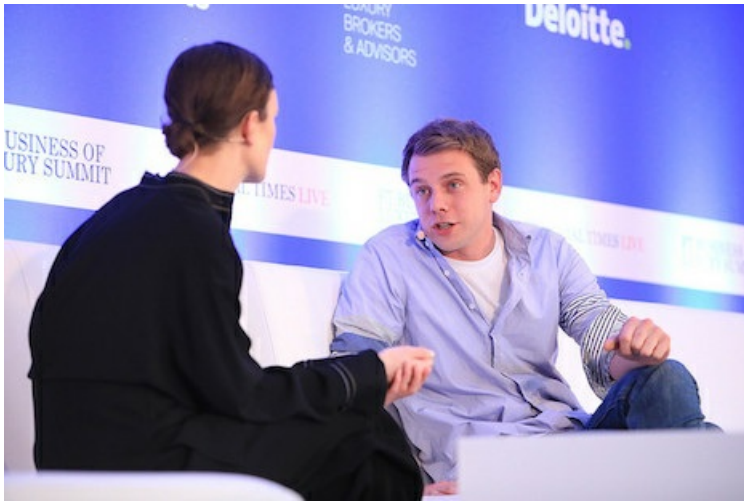


Loewe installation at Dover Street Market

One of the ways that brands can develop this point of view is through social media. Mr. Anderson said that labels need to pull back the curtain on everything and participate, much like followers have come to expect from celebrities.

For emerging labels, social media also provides an opportunity to speak directly to potential customers. When Mr. Anderson started his own label about a decade ago, there was no boundary to posting online, compared to the hurdle of being featured in a magazine.

Even with the rise of digital media, the fashion editor and runway shows remain relevant. While there was speculation that the fashion show was waning in necessity, the designer looks at the show as a platform for storytelling that extends beyond the venue as attendees post content.



Jonathan Anderson talking with Jo Ellison, fashion editor of the Financial Times

Talent search

The fashion industry is currently grappling with similar issues the music industry faced years ago. As recording artists were forced to go on tour to make money as album sales dropped, fashion designers have to do everything.

Mr. Anderson said that only about 5 percent of his time is actually spent designing. Part of what occupies the remaining 95 percent is hiring, something that the designer places great importance on.

Rather than measuring success on financial figures, his motivation lies more in hiring more people.

Loewe People

Having the right employees can have a measured impact on a brand's profits and economic growth, especially in executive and leading creative roles. Brands that successfully deliver on recruiting, on-boarding and retaining new employees and managing their talent see between 2.1 and 3.5 times more revenue growth and around 2 times the profit margin of brands that do not do the same successfully.

Because of this luxury brands may need to rethink their existing recruiting strategy to locate the personnel necessary (see story).

Another cause Mr. Anderson feels strongly about is craft. The Loewe Craft Prize launched by the brand's foundation last year honors artisanship, looking back on the brand's beginnings as a collective of craftsmen in the 1800s (see story).

"I just think [the vision] has to be something that when you put it out there, every single thing is thought about," Mr. Anderson said.

"I'm obsessed by craft...And it's not nostalgic craft. I don't have to show a man on a sewing machine making a bag, because that's not what it's about," he said. "It's about how do you invest in modernity, because craft is about that."

I thought on "At this moment, everything is mass, says Loewe's Jonathan Anderson"

1. **Roberto Miranda** says:

May 16, 2017 at 6:53 am

Mens craft, story telling and tradition are elements expected in a luxury brand, not substitutes of the term luxury. They are all part of it. You can acquire tradition, create a story from your creative mind and hire brilliant craftsmen to work for you.

Roberto Miranda | Rector

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