

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Christian Dior's couturiers focus of Paris retrospective

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Designs by Christian Dior and his many successors are on display. Image credit: Museum of Decorative Arts

By DANNY PARISI

French fashion house Christian Dior is celebrating its 70th anniversary with a new exhibition at Paris' Museum of Decorative Arts where it will showcase the work of its namesake and the many prominent designers who have worked at the atelier.

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The "Christian Dior, couturier du rve" exhibition opened July 5, and will be on view until January of next year. More luxury marketers are beginning to treat their brands as historic institutions in and of themselves and cashing in on that reputation with museum-quality exhibits.

"For luxury brands, investing in museum exhibits is a very intelligent strategy if they have interesting and inspirational stories to tell," said Andrea Wilson, vice president, strategy director and luxury practice lead at **iProspect**, Fort Worth, Texas. "As success is dependent on reaching consumers where they spend their time and connecting with them on an emotional level, museum collaborations are perfect for luxury brands.

"Through museums, luxury brands have the opportunity to introduce themselves to affluent consumers passionate about culture, history and the arts while at their leisure. By being a part of museum exhibits, brands can placing themselves in the moment when their consumer targets are focused and engaged in their passion."

Ms. Wilson is not affiliated with Dior, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Dior** was reached for comment.

Historic treatment

Dior is a storied brand with origins dating back to the 1940s when the company was founded by Mr. Dior himself.

After he died in 1957, the brand was the incubation area for many prominent designers, not the least of which being Yves Saint Laurent, who started at Dior at only 21 years old.

With all of these years of history and the pedigree of the designers behind it, Dior is tapping into its legacy for a new exhibit at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris.

The exhibit will be host to more than 300 haute couture dresses designed between the brand's founding in 1947 to

the present day.



A Christian Dior dress. Image credit: Museum of Decorative Arts

Among the designers represented will be Mr. Dior, Mr. Saint Laurent, Marc Bohan, Gianfranco Ferré, John Galliano, Raf Simons and Maria Grazia Chiuri, all of whom have worked with Dior over the past 70 years.

In addition to the dresses, the exhibit will also host hundreds of sketches, canvases and blueprints for designs crafted by Dior's artists and designers over the years, giving visitors an inside look into the design process for a haute couture fashion house.

The exhibit will also feature photographs, letters and other documents, as well as accessories crafted by Dior's craftsmen.

Mr. Dior was a great lover of art, and the partnership with the Museum of Decorative Arts is meant to bridge the gap between art and fashion.

Legacy of Dior

Dior has increasingly been looking to its past for inspiration in the present.

The brand reinvented a classic cologne by playing into the scent's half-century of history.

To market the new version of Eau Sauvage, a scent first introduced in 1966, Dior has looked back to a feature film with a similar vintage. While luxury often feels a pressure to modernize its image, a sense of heritage is a major selling point for buyers of all generations ([see story](#)).

Outside of products, Dior has also used film and other mediums to tell the brand's history.



A Christian Dior dress on display. Image credit: Museum of Decorative Arts

The life and career of Christian Dior is the subject of a new documentary that aired on French-language channel TV5Monde USA June 30.

A member of the European Broadcasting Union, TV5Monde's programming is geared toward Francophiles and features several channels of French-language television. The Dior documentary is part of TV5Monde's summer lineup, and premiered in two parts ([see story](#)).

Historic fashion brands such as Dior have become institutions, with a large emphasis placed on the brand itself, in addition to its products. Dior is leaning on this reputation as a tool to increase its standing through its partnership with the Museum of Decorative Arts.

"Luxury brands, especially fashion houses with haute couture collections, are perfect fits for museum exhibits. Fashion is an art form, and while the completed piece is a piece of beautiful art, so is each step of its creation," Ms. Wilson said. "From the concept to initial design, to extensive construction and ultimately the finished product, there are many stories to tell consumers.

"In addition, luxury brands typically have moments of historical significance and celebrity interactions that consumers find meaningful," she said. "In many ways, museum exhibits are the ideal way to share these fascinating stories and designs."