

EVENTS/CAUSES

## Luxury brands must learn from Louis Vuitton's Volez Voguez Voyagez

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*A desert scene at the Louis Vuitton Volez Voguez Voyagez exhibition in New York that ended Jan. 7, 2018*

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NEW YORK Ten degrees Fahrenheit or zero degree with wind chill, but it was the final days of the traveling Louis Vuitton Volez Voguez Voyagez ("Fly, Sail, Travel") Exhibition last week in New York and a visit was mandated before the exhibit closed. Exhibits such as this create advocates and admirers. Count me as both.

The exhibit wins on so many levels: it re-enchants a Louis Vuitton aficionado while stirring the heart of those new to the brand.

Moving story

To explore this brand is to discover a rag-to-riches story of a young man who took his talents to the big city Paris and created one of the world's most successful luxury brands. From its beginnings, we see a man ahead of his time, creating luggage that met the needs of a new generation of travelers.

We think we live in a disruptive time, and we do. This exhibit reminds us that other generations lived through tumult, too.



*Dressed for success*

Luxury brands that stand the test of time are especially informative as to how to navigate change, what to keep, what to discard and what to adapt. Louis Vuitton is such a learning experience.

From the birth of Maison Vuitton in 1854 following 17 years of apprenticeship Louis Vuitton, the man, combined innovation with impeccable quality and workmanship. Not happy with the status quo and rooted in practicality, he chose canvas over leather and gave birth to modern luggage with the creation on a flat top trunk a change from the domed version and a symbol of new technology and new lifestyles.



*Keeping the brand in the pink of health*

The company has since marched through history, innovating new travel accessories as well crafted and thought-out as they are lovely to look at.

#### Train of thought

A visit to a good exhibit is the beginning of an adventure, a story told by the curator woven together with objects and commentary that combine to form the basis for a learning experience that the visitor partakes in via immersion and imagination. Sounds a little like augmented reality and virtual reality.



*No flights of fancy*

From the entrance of *Volez Voguez Voyagez*, a Louis Vuitton metro stop replete with a video of a subway train that stops and invites the viewer to hop on a good selfie moment the visitor was transported back in time to an era of train travel.

One moved through the exhibit as it cataloged emerging forms of transportation and Louis Vuitton's role in the movement of people and things around the globe.

Louis Vuitton's heritage and thus this exhibit was peppered with glamorous people, and that is fundamental to luxury positioning today.

Society's nobility from the carriage set to the jet set, the tastemakers that the masses could only aspire to be, are integral in the creation of a luxury brand. We can transition from voyeur to participant in a glamorous lifestyle with the right brand and a bit of imagination.



*Not everyone's cup of tea*

The exhibit shed light on the evolution of the leisure class and its entertainment in tandem with the evolution of travel accessories and the Louis Vuitton business, from classic trunks, to trunks outfitted for the first automobiles, steamers, yachts and airplanes as well as the special demands of its wealthy clientele, from vanity cases fully stocked with ivory brushes to travelling desks and paint boxes.

The exhibit explored a varied range of uses for this adaptable brand, charming the visitor with a portable bed/hammock that one could easily imagine on safari or weekend picnic. You choose, that is the beauty of brands that are the vessels of our dreams.

Lights, action

Truth be told, I walked through this exhibit in Paris in May 2017 where the soaring ceilings of the Grand Palais along with the clear blue-sky background that all trips ideally begin with (brought to the New York exhibit as well), set off the

trunks and bags, sailboats and beach attire, and made for an ideal branding experience.

No surprise that I capped it off with a trip to Bon Marche and a new Louis Vuitton wallet. Another dreamscape of the VVV exhibit was the mahogany train interior, reminiscent of the Orient Express and a bygone era of elegant train travel.



*Swimming in trunks*

But it was the Louis Vuitton exhibit at Muse Carnavalet in 2010 when I first encountered the romance of travel in the Louis Vuitton brand and became a LV admirer.

The iconic trunks, luggage and bags owned by celebrities and royalty brought the brand to life and I understood why women carry LV-logoed totes. These exhibits anchor the brand in the stuff of dreams and aspirations, creating desire for the luxury products we purchase.

VOLEZ VOGUEZ VOYAGEZ provided an escape from New York's biting cold as it engulfed the visitor in a world of pampered travel. It was an enchanting trip to the Louis Vuitton brand roots and a reminder of the innovation that is as integral to the brand, as is the creativity, quality and marketing.

Luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton become markers of our lives, providing continuity during upheaval and beauty amid confusion.



*Shining a light on the brand, story and heritage*

The Louis Vuitton company/brand one saw at this exhibit did not adapt to changing consumer needs. It was a step ahead, creatively solving for needs with clever and beautifully crafted tools that made travel easier and more enjoyable.

What are Louis Vuitton's designers up to as Tesla and SpaceX's Elon Musk, Virgin Galactic's Sir Richard Branson and Amazon and Blue Origin's Jeff Bezos plot the course of space travel? I cannot wait to see.



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*All photos courtesy of Mickey Alam Khan*