

RETAIL

Luxury goes to the dogs for Chinese New Year

January 31, 2018



Gucci is one of the brands playing off this year's Chinese zodiac. Image credit: Gucci

By SARAH JONES

Looking to grab the attention of Chinese consumers as they celebrate Lunar New Year, luxury brands are rolling out canine-themed products in honor of the Year of the Dog.

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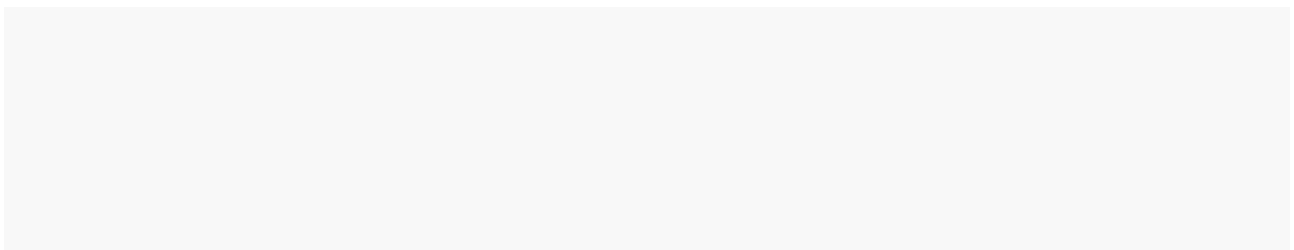
Man's best friend is being incorporated into thematic collections and one-off editions. While luxury brands typically celebrate each Chinese New Year with special editions, this year's zodiac sign has inspired significantly more playful pushes.

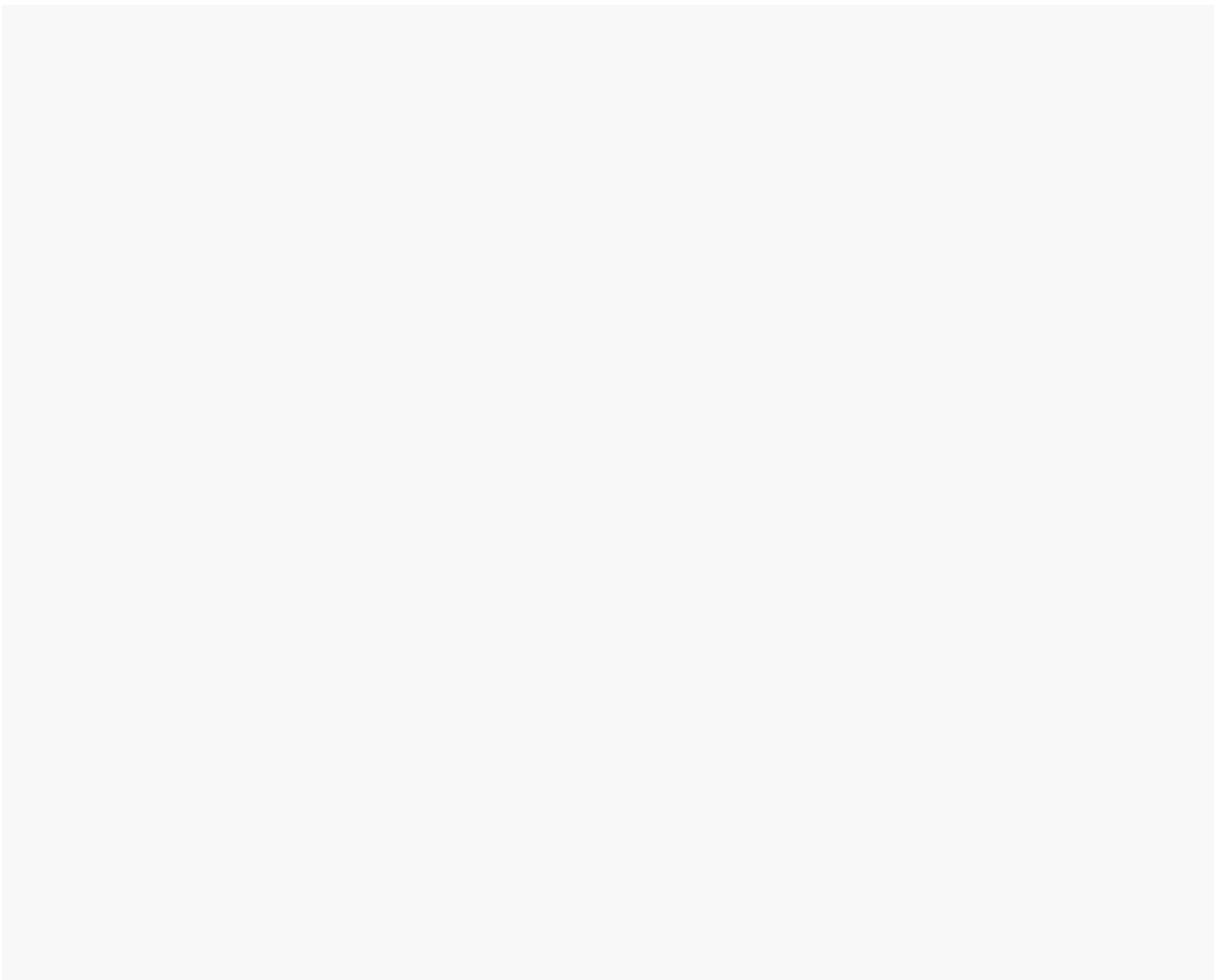
"Chinese New Year is always a strong opportunity for luxury brands to connect with their Chinese consumer," said Brian Buchwald, CEO of **Bomoda**, New York. "However, as with prior efforts to connect with the domestic buyer via monkeys and dragons, it is never without peril.

"A cute adaptation like Moschino's is fun and relatively safe," he said. "However others we have observed were remarked by Chinese consumers as 'scary,' 'slightly terrifying' or in the case of Gucci, 'dull.'"

Four-legged fashion

Both Stella McCartney and Gucci turned pooches into models to promote their offerings for Chinese New Year. In photography, the animals pose wearing human attire or alongside accessories.





The Lunar New Year is nearly here - the Year Of The Dog ! Traditionally those born under the sign of the dog are considered loyal, honest and kind... just like this little lady wearing new season Stella. . #StellaMcCartney #LunarNewYear #YearOfTheDog

A post shared by Stella McCartney (@stellamccartney) on Jan 26, 2018 at 3:38am PST

Shot by Petra Collins, Gucci's social media spread introduced each of the canine models with a short profile. For instance, the brand reveals that squirrels are Kyber's "mortal enemy," while Scout yells at his toys.

Gucci's collection for Chinese New Year features the likenesses of creative director Alessandro Michele's Boston terriers, Bosco and Orso. The product range, including bags, small leather goods, jewelry and apparel, was inspired by artwork by Unskilled Worker.

Moncler took this concept a step further, creating a coat specially for dogs in honor of their year in partnership with Poldo Dog Couture. These pooch parkas are being marketed alongside Chinese New Year-themed merchandise for humans.

While Mr. Michele referenced personal influences for Gucci, Moschino looked to a cartoon figure for its Lunar New Year range. Betty Boop's pup sidekick Pudgy features on cell phone cases, backpacks and other apparel and accessories.

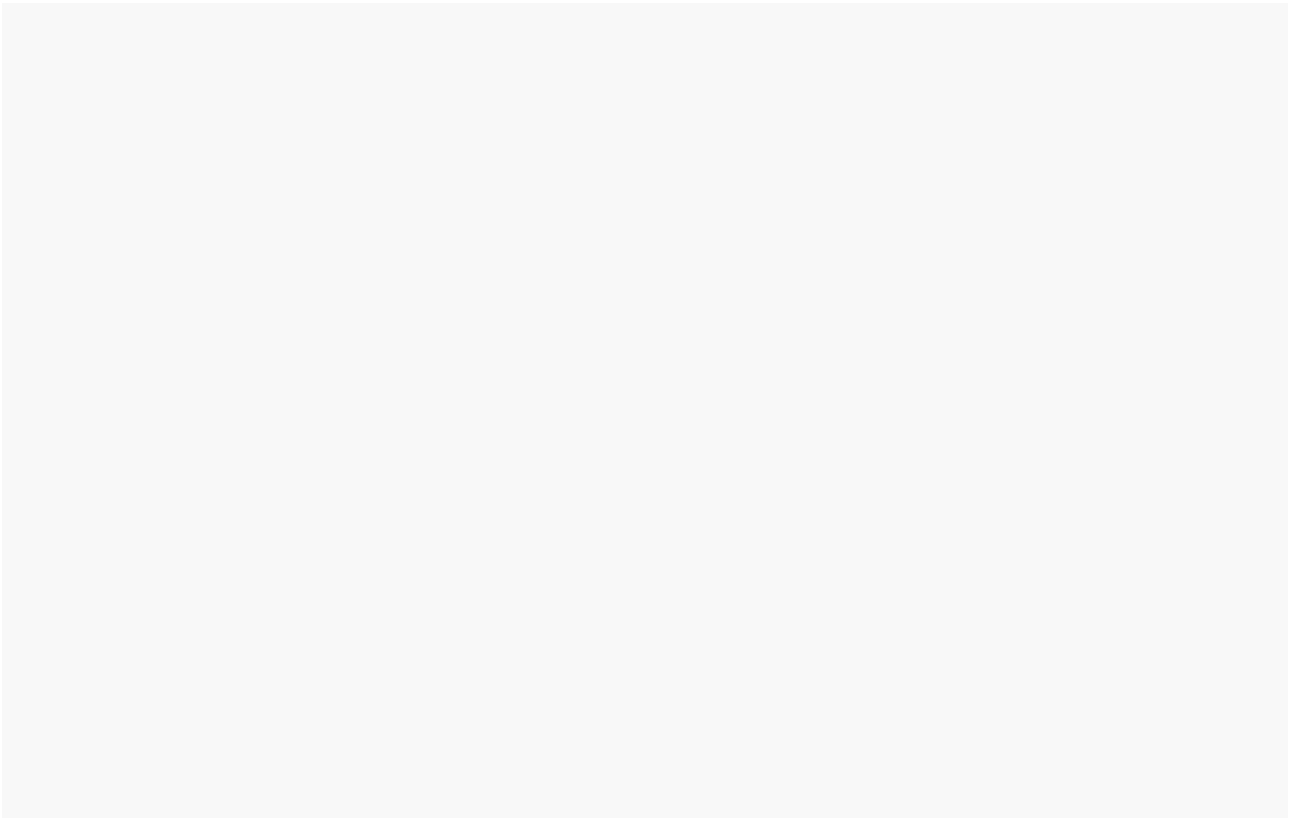


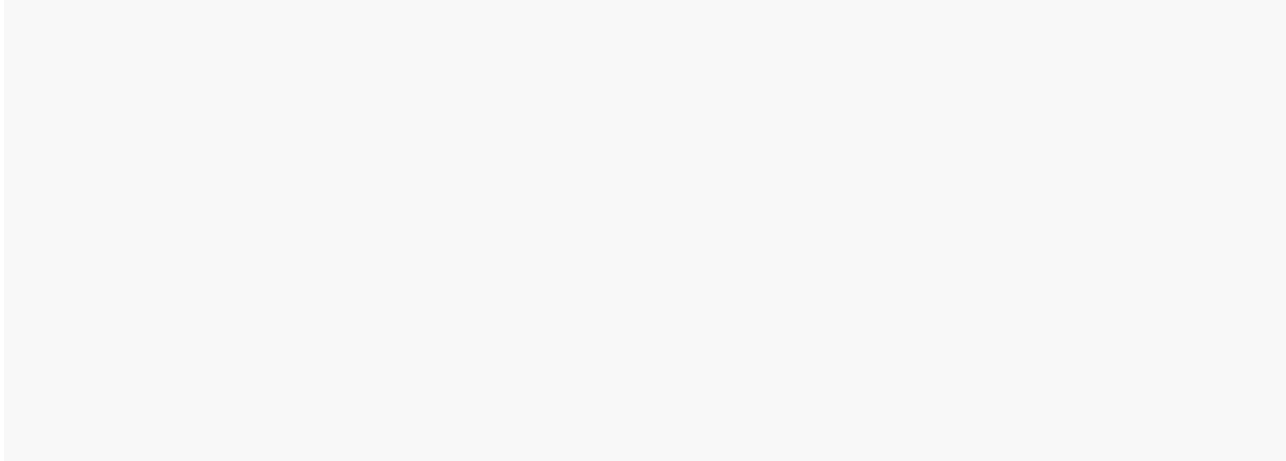
Moschino's capsule features Pudgy. Image credit: Moschino

Dolce & Gabbana's designers, who have a brood of pets between them, placed whimsical illustrations of dogs wearing crowns and tiaras on their Chinese New Year collection.

Centering its collection on "puppy love," Bottega Veneta is promoting its capsule for both Lunar New Year and Valentine's Day. Different breeds from German shepherds to poodles make an appearance on limited-edition accessories.

Taking a futuristic approach, Prada has launched a series of pop-ups that usher in the "Year of the Robot Dog." Prada Spirit pop-ups will serve customers in Shanghai, Beijing, Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taipei, Seoul, South Korea, Vancouver and Costa Mesa, CA.





Introducing the Year of the Dog #Prada Dachshunds, at the #PradaSpirit Caf. Visit a pop-up in Shanghai, Beijing, Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taipei, Seoul, Vancouver or Costa Mesa for a #ChineseNewYear treat. Discover more via link in bio. #CNY2018

A post shared by Prada (@prada) on Jan 28, 2018 at 9:05am PST

The newly created Robot Dachshund characters appear in window displays, while bulldog, dachshund and Chihuahua pups are the stars of the limited-edition collection. The full assortment will be available from Feb. 1 on Prada's Web site and in select brand stores.

From Feb. 3 to March 3, Prada will open thematic cafes in Shanghai's Plaza 66 and Beijing SKP.

Watchmaker Breguet's eight-piece limited-edition collection honors the chowchow, a beloved breed in China. The watch's face is engraved with an image of the dog, with its visible tongue a bright blue on an otherwise neutral face.

"Two brands stood out for us this year," Bomoda's Mr. Buchwald said. "One, Marni, launched a limited-edition basket bag in red with a subtle fun dog charm. The product, only available in China, plays to the audience yet does not sacrifice the ultimate design or wearability for the buyer.

"Another brand who did particularly well with their product this year is Longchamp," he said. "Longchamp's Year of the Dog initiative stood out due to its culturally-appropriate products and successful leverage of influencer ([see story](#)).

"The brand teamed up with Mr. Bag to design a Year of the Dog line in a soft and subtle way. Mr. Bag reinterpreted its well-known lambskin Le Pliage Cuir collection by adding a pair of furry puppy paw prints on the front. The line was very well received by Chinese consumers."

Dogged approach

Outside of fashion, Scotch whisky-maker Johnnie Walker is honoring the bond between man and man's best friend for a limited-edition Blue Label bottle collaboration for Chinese New Year.

On Feb. 16, 2018, the Chinese will celebrate the beginning of the Year of the Dog, and Johnnie Walker is ensuring that its scotch will be among gift considerations for the holiday. With scotch becoming increasingly popular in Asia, Johnnie Walker has been proactive in creating localized products and designing exclusive experiences for consumers in the market by way of its Johnnie Walker House lounges and travel retail ([see story](#)).

China's spectacular growth in luxury consumption recently is primarily driven by Chinese women buying ready-to-wear fashion, jewelry and cosmetics, according to Bain & Company.

Per Bain's "2017 China Luxury Market Study," China's luxury consumption is outstanding and outpaces much of the world. In addition to the value of Chinese consumers traveling outside of Asia, Bain's report also notes that Chinese domestic spending has outpaced overseas purchases in the last year ([see story](#)).

"In the luxury category, taste does not ultimately go out the window," Mr. Buchwald said. "The buyer likes the nod to the holiday and appreciates the newfound respect and interest the industry has taken in Chinese culture.

"However, a bag or a shirt or jacket will be worn after Spring Festival," he said. "If the product cannot stand the test of

time outside the holiday, it will be eschewed by the consumer.

"If the product is fun, incorporates the holiday and won't embarrass the buyer outside of Chinese New Year, there is a far higher chance for success."

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