

RETAIL

GUM aims to challenge outdated Chinese clichés in New Year campaign

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GUM Moscow is celebrating Chinese New Year for the first time. Image credit: GUM

By SARAH JONES

Russian department store GUM is turning its Moscow store into a multisensory exploration of Chinese culture in honor of Lunar New Year.

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"Happy Chinese New Year at GUM" includes art, food, performances and shopping that aim to present a modern perspective on China. This campaign marks the retailer's first celebration of Chinese New Year, and is indicative of the increasingly growing power of the Chinese consumer.

"In celebrating Chinese New Year we strive not only to treat Chinese traditions with special care, but also combine cultural heritage of two great countries China and Russia," said Nino Gaiashvili, project director of "Happy New Chinese at GUM," Moscow. "Tourists are extremely important for GUM. Chinese tourists in particular visit our stores and buy various products more often than other foreign guests.

"Celebrating Chinese New Year in GUM, we will present a new standard of what they can expect from a retail experience, not only in Moscow and Russia, but on an international scale," she said. "In addition to this, we encourage our everyday guests to discover art of young Chinese artists, photographers, dancers and chefs."

Retail festival

At **GUM**, Chinese tourists outspend visitors from other nations. Beyond the retailer, it is projected that Chinese consumers will account for 45 percent of luxury sales by 2025 ([see story](#)).

Despite being an economic powerhouse, GUM believes that much of the world holds outdated notions about China's culture. The retailer is looking to showcase Chinese culture as it is today through a campaign running through the end of the month.

GUM enlisted Chinese artist Jacky Tsai to makeover its interior design for the event. Mr. Tsai's work often blends Western pop-art with Eastern painting, and he brought his aesthetic to installations that combine both Russian and Chinese culture.



GUM is decorated for Chinese New Year. Image credit: GUM

The artist, who was behind Alexander McQueen's skull motif, is also showcasing two original paintings he created for the festival. His work for GUM will also be showcased at his self-titled exhibit at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art from March 12.

"Given Jacky's background born in Shanghai and trained at Central Saint Martins in London Jacky's environment is reflected in his artwork as a clash of cultures, making him perfect for this project," Ms. Gaiashvili said. "He managed to establish a balance and harmony between cultural extremes, in this instance, Russia and China.

"As a Chinese artist, he is incredibly daring. If we evaluate the artists of China you can see that Pop art is just evolving," she said. "Many Chinese artists try to express politics in their artwork, where as Jacky's work is an intelligent play of a collision of worlds East and West.

"Overall, the key message we wanted to send to the world through the collaboration with an artist was to hone into cultural misunderstandings. When we met Jacky for the first time and discussed the project, it was vital for us that the artist we collaborated with wanted to send the same message to the world as us. We believe he achieved this wonderful, with amusing sculptures and hanging installations throughout the store, truly transforming the space."

GUM will also be hosting two art exhibits of its own. "Great Silk Way: Art of Chinese Embroidery" will focus on some of the most popular styles for the textile art, while "China New 100" will showcase photography from Cond Nast Traveller China.

Painting a cinematic picture of China, GUM will host screenings of popular films, such as John Woo's "The Crossing" and Zhang Yimou's "Hero." These will be followed by talks with experts in subjects such as sinology and orientalism.



GUM's Great Silk Way exhibit. Image credit: GUM

GUM will also screen a number of Chinese language films for free with Russian subtitles. Presenting a view of its home country for Chinese tourists, "Flight Over Moscow" will also be shown.

Along with the visual celebration, GUM is inviting consumers to explore Chinese culture through their taste buds. Three-Michelin-starred chef Albert Au Kwok Keung will be serving up an authentic Chinese menu in GUM's Bosco Fresh&Bar restaurant that includes fried squid and roast duck.

Kiosks in GUM's Lines, or passageways, will also be selling fare such as mooncakes and timber fungus with spicy sauce.

While rooted in celebrating contemporary China, GUM's event series will also provide visitors the chance to experience traditional tea ceremonies or dance of the dragon. Consumers can also take workshops in calligraphy or the creation of caramel figures.

GUM's event series is being produced in partnership with auction house Sotheby's, watchmaker Omega, media brand Buro 24/7 and Unionpay. The Chinese embassy and the Ministry of Culture of China in the Russian Federation are also teaming up with the store on its project.

China outreach

With the growing spending power of Chinese consumers, luxury is reaching out to this audience for Lunar New Year, which starts on Feb. 16.

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.

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 ([see story](#)).

Numerous travel brands in China are hoping to attract the millions of travelers coming into the area celebrating the New Year by focusing on experiences rather than themed goods.

Feb. 16 will ring in the Year of the Dog as celebrations for the Chinese New Year begin and luxury travel brands work to attract the millions of visitors. Hotel brands such as Shangri-La and Mandarin Oriental are offering unique packages and experiences to celebrate the New Year ([see story](#)).

"The philosophy of this project is simple: to sell an atmosphere not an item," GUM's Ms. Gaiashvili said. "Therefore GUM is not aiming to increase sales throughout this project, but to increase the wellbeing and satisfaction of our customers.

"With the FIFA 2018 games being a couple of months away, and GUM being the number one sightseeing destination, we believe it is our obligation to welcome customers of any nation in a warm and embracing way," she said. "To educate on cultural misunderstandings, we made it to our mission to represent Russia and our locals in the best manner we can, and we hope by celebrating Chinese New Year in GUM to accomplish this mission and launch successfully our new project 'Welcome to GUM.'"