

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Gucci aims to sustain momentum with futuristic facility

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The exterior walls of Gucci ArtLab are handpainted by artists who have worked with the house. Image credit: Gucci

By STAFF REPORTS

Italian fashion label Gucci is responding to increased demand for its designs by opening a center of excellence for leather goods and shoes.

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Dubbed Gucci ArtLab, the almost 400,000-square-foot facility will focus on activities such as prototyping, experimentation and research and development. Demand for Gucci products has nearly doubled in the last three years, spurring the brand to invest in craftsmanship, innovation and infrastructure that will shorten its lead times.

Innovation lab

Gucci ArtLab is located in Casselina, the historic headquarters of the company. While active since the beginning of 2018, Gucci announced the opening on April 19.

In the space, 800 employees work on both leather goods and shoes under the same roof, which Gucci says is a first for luxury. This enables craftspeople to share best practices and skills across both categories.

Within ArtLab, employees work on prototyping and sampling for handbags, belts, luggage, leather goods and footwear. Other activities of the facility include researching and developing new materials, metal hardware and packaging, and testing merchandise under different climate and chemical conditions.

Gucci ArtLab also allows space for experimentation alongside workers from factories and the brand's supply chain.

Fifty percent of Gucci's leather goods and shoes are made in its own factories in Italy, with certain steps of production carried out by external suppliers in Italy.



Inside Gucci ArtLab. Image courtesy of Gucci

Gucci plans to hire 900 workers for the production of shoes and leather goods this year. In 2017, sales of leather goods and shoes represented 70 percent of Gucci's total revenues.

Gucci grew its revenues 41.9 percent in 2017, contributing to its parent company Kering's record revenues and operating income for its luxury activities throughout the year. For the first time, Gucci's revenue topped 6 billion euros, with total revenues of 6.2 billion euros, or about \$7.7 billion at current exchange ([see story](#)).

"The unveiling of Gucci ArtLab definitely represents one of the most remarkable achievements of Gucci's unprecedented journey of the last three years, and one of the most significant industrial investments today in our country," said Marco Bizzarri, president and CEO of Gucci, in a statement.

"It is a testament to our belief in creativity, artisanal craftsmanship, innovation and technology, and sustainability, and our bond with our territory," he said. "I couldn't be more grateful to all those who have made this dream come true, from the local and national authorities, to Kering, to all of our colleagues who have been so visionary in absorbing new ideas from best-practice all around the world, to further strengthen our leadership.

"Gucci ArtLab is the perfect expression of the corporate culture that we have been building and nurturing within the company. It is the tangible expression of a place to learn skills and techniques, a workshop to generate ideas, and ideas are the lifeblood of culture."

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