

MARKETING

Luxury brands link with London Design Festival to reach creative crowd

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Fortnum & Mason is hosting "Time for Tea" at its store. Image credit: London Design Festival

By SARAH JONES

Fortnum & Mason and Poltrona Frau are among the luxury brands looking to engage consumers through art at this year's London Design Festival.

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Up from Sept. 15 to 23, the 16th edition of the fair will see a series of installations, programs and events, with the Victoria & Albert Museum serving as the official center of the event. Last year's London Design Festival drew 991,000 attendees, almost half of whom were international visitors, offering participating brands an opportunity to make an impression with a global audience.

"Luxury brands are seeking collaborations that are able to place them in new environments that not only promote their core offerings, but provide exposure to a broader and more diversified audience that may be less or even unfamiliar with them while remaining loyal to their DNA," said Rebecca Miller, founder/CEO of **Miller & Company**, New York.

"These types of collaborations provide luxury brands the opportunity to invite consumers to interpret them on a new stage, giving credence to how they might incorporate the brand into their lives," she said.

Design show

At Fortnum & Mason's Piccadilly store, it will be hosting an artistic interpretation of a daily tea ritual by Dutch design duo Scholten & Baijings. The designers took inspiration from Fortnum & Mason's iconic green color, creating furniture and products in the retailer's chosen shade.

Scholten & Baijings commissioned flooring and a table from Italian marble manufacturer Luce di Carrara, while curtains by the U.S. brand Maharam were woven in the U.K. Fortnum & Mason also worked with 1616 / arita japan and Maharam to create a porcelain tea set.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with London Design Festival to celebrate the capital's status as the global center of design and are excited to house the installation and give a platform to Scholten & Baijings around the topic of the ceremony of tea a subject very close to our hearts." said Zia Zareem-Slade, customer experience director at Fortnum

& Mason, in a statement.

Furniture maker Poltrona Frau is among the supporters of the installation "Memory and Light" at the V&A. Composer Arvo Pärt worked with design firm Arup to create an audio experience in the museum's Norfolk House Music Room.

The display, curated by Clare Farrow and Eva Woode, is inspired by Mr. Pärt's quote, "I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colors. Only a prism can divide the colors and make them appear; this prism could be the spirit of the listener."



Poltrona Frau is participating in "Memory and Light." Image credit: Poltrona Frau

Translating this idea to a physical display, the installation creates a space for visitors to listen to the composer's creations through speakers. A bench covered in Poltrona Frau's leather is situated next to a curved screen made out of acrylic.

Along with Fortnum & Mason and Poltrona Frau, watchmaker Officine Panerai is a headline supporter of the London Design Festival. The Republic of Fritz Hansen also serves as the event's official furniture partner.

Running concurrently with the London Design Festival, the London Design Biennale is up at Somerset House. Here, Princess Yachts is acting as both a headline and medal sponsor.

"Poltrona Frau, famous for their exquisite leather furniture often found in theaters, built a subtle 'listening' bench for one to settle into, by creating a 'multi-sensory encounter' between music, touch and design," Ms. Miller said.

"Quality, no matter the application, begins with fine raw materials, integrates the hand of man and requires great design," she said. "Anything short is insupportable."

"The London Design Festival embodies these three core elements which luxury brands ascribe to."

Art affiliations

Design fairs are appealing partners for luxury brands, as they allow brands to position themselves as trendsetters and innovators.

Earlier this year, luxury brands gathered for Salone del Mobile and Milan Design Week to celebrate home decor and design in one of the world's fashion capitals.

Throughout the week, luxury brands and design firms showed off some of their most innovative new designs with a number of initiatives already out. Brands such as Bentley, Loewe, Marni, Fornasetti and Max Mara put out some major new design works at the weeklong fair ([see story](#)).

LVMH-owned Fendi similarly supported artists from its home country via patronage of the Italian Pavilion at the 57th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale in Italy.

The Venice Biennale occurs every two years and features a collection of contemporary art galleries dedicated to the creative talent of specific countries, much like the World's Fair concept. From its restoration of Rome's Trevi Fountain to its work conserving art with the Italian Cultural Ministry, Fendi is heavily involved in Italy's cultural scene ([see story](#)).

For the brands involved in the London Design Festival, it is one more way to showcase heritage and positioning.

"True to form, Fortnum & Mason, staged an installation around the topic of the 'ceremony of tea,' incorporating Fortnum's iconic Eau de Nil color, a soft green hue used on the furniture and products produced by the duo Scholten & Baijings," Ms. Miller said. "This event extends the brand's most iconic elements in a manner that resonates with their celebrated 'whimsical designs' and desire for the exceptional which has been at the 'heart of the brand for three centuries.' Nothing speaks louder than authenticity to a consumer.

"These placements support this endeavor," she said. "Luminaries Fritz Hansen, Officine Panerai and more recently Arvo Prt have all benefitted from the opportunity to reimagine and showcase their brands' core values and mtier by participating in an event that espouses their dedication to quality and good design."

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