

ADVERTISING

Mr. LVMH: Can Marc Jacobs do it all?

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By RACHEL LAMB

The rumor mill has been churning out whisperings of designer Marc Jacobs moving from Louis Vuitton to LVMH sibling Christian Dior, making the industry wonder if the designer can do it all or if he is spreading himself too thin.

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Mr. Jacobs is creative director for his own self-named brand Marc Jacobs as well as creative head for LVMH cornerstone Louis Vuitton. Now that he has been non-officially linked to the Dior, without a head since John Galliano was fired earlier this year, is the talent being moved over to anchor the famed luxury brand?

“He’s done such a beautiful job with Louis Vuitton that I don’t know if he would be spreading himself too thin,” said Milton Pedraza, CEO of the Luxury Institute, New York. “He’s brilliant and has proven that with everything he has done throughout his career, but if he left to work for Dior, what would happen to the other brands?”

“However, he knows how to optimize his own creativity while keeping in mind the DNA and history and heritage of a brand, which is very important,” he said.

Neither Marc Jacobs nor LVMH responded by press deadline. Mr. Pedraza agreed to comment as an industry expert.

What to look for

When choosing a new creative director for a luxury brand, it is crucial for companies to take into consideration a multitude of things.



Marion Cotillard for Dior

“Experience and skill are the main things, no exceptions,” Mr. Pedraza said. “But just as important is someone that can play on the team.”

This may be especially important for Dior, whose former creative director Mr. Galliano's recklessness – impolite words uttered while inebriated – could have seriously damaged the brand's reputation.

Some experts have also wondered whether or not Mr. Jacobs will be able to separate the brands, as there is only so much bandwidth, both creatively and time-wise, that designers have.

However, the two brands that Mr. Jacobs works on now are not confused.



MARC JACOBS

Helena Bonham Carter for Marc Jacobs

While the designer takes on a more light-hearted and personal role with Marc Jacobs, Mr. Jacobs knows to have a more sophisticated take in his leadership role with Louis Vuitton.

Rather than posting personal messages or silly pictures of himself dressed in women's Prada as he does with Marc Jacobs' Facebook page, Louis Vuitton's social media ads focus on the brand's history and more sophisticated messages.

Additionally, Marc Jacobs' print ads starring the eclectic and funky Helena Bonham Carter mesh perfectly with that brand's vibe, where as Louis Vuitton's ads focus on a more serious superstar crowd such as Angelina Jolie, Madonna and Bono.

Mr. Jacobs definitely has the power and experience to take on Dior, but too much experience can be a detriment on creativity, per Mr. Pedraza.



Angelina Jolie for Louis Vuitton

Some designers go on autopilot and do not always fully take advantage of new opportunities.

Sometimes, it is the most hungry and young designers that are the best fits for taking over a brand, per Mr. Pedraza.

"The two juggernauts that he has worked on, Marc Jacobs and Louis Vuitton, really need him to continue to deliver his creativity and stewardship of these brands," Mr. Pedraza. "It's doable, but it's a stretch."

Separation anxiety

Dior has been without a creative head since Dior's former creative director Mr. Galliano was removed in March for allegedly spewing anti-Semitic and racist remarks.

There have been reports saying that if Mr. Jacobs were to move from Louis Vuitton to Dior, he would be unseated from his current position at Louis Vuitton where he has been creative chief since 1997.

Having a competent creative director is key, especially the case for luxury brands that pride themselves on their pristine reputations more than other aspects.

Following in the wake of Mr. Galliano's indiscretions, it would be beneficial for Dior to find someone that could refresh the brand's image.

However, it is not as if Dior is struggling by any means.

LVMH's first-half 2011 results reported "robust growth at Dior, which gained market share," specifically mentioning the success in its fragrance and watch sectors.

Therefore, it is integral that Dior and LVMH make careful considerations when choosing Dior's next creative head.

"Dior is not in trouble creatively, and it has always been a brand that is highly-recognized and iconic," Mr. Pedraza said. "There will be a number of designers out there, some yet undiscovered, who could take on the task and challenge of interpreting Dior in its historic and contemporary way.

"However, the brand will always outlast any designer," he said. "LVMH is too skilled an organization to let down any of its top brands."

Final Take

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