

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

London Design Festival draws luxury art alliances

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Gemfields' "Void" at London Design Festival. Image courtesy of Gemfields

By SARAH JONES

Fortnum & Mason and Lexus are among the luxury brands using art to engage consumers during the London Design Festival.

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Now in its 17th year, the London Design Festival will see citywide installations and events ranging from talks to workshops from Sept. 14 to 22. Coinciding with London Fashion Week, the festival saw a record 588,200 visitors last year, who hailed from 75 countries, enabling participating brands to reach a global audience.

"Established heritage brands, such as Fortnum & Mason, need to constantly be in a creative mode concerning all aspects of their brand from product design to inspirational and experiential delivery mediums, using a 360-degree approach to generate a holistic, multi-dimensional experience with the brand," said Rebecca Miller, founder/CEO of **Miller & Company**, New York. "The breadth of consumers that shop in an 'legendary establishment' need to have a well-defined and executed set of motivations for both local and international trade to attract repeat business.

"Newer business entities, such as Gemfields, have entered the market mirroring their use of technology for product development by embracing other aspects of technology to engage consumers, creating immersive experiences, taking the consumer inside the structure of their product versus offering only an external view," she said.

"LDF provides the perfect venue for both brands to expand their perception in the consumers eyes through more artistic endeavors encompassing new insights into scale and design two key elements in art."

Design displays

British department store Fortnum & Mason and gemstone miner Gemfields have both commissioned works for the festival.

Fortnum & Mason is working with artist Liz West to stage an installation within the atrium of its Piccadilly store. Titled "Iri-Descent," the piece features a series of 150 cubes that were covered in dichromatic film, causing them to change color as visitors move throughout the store.

"Fortnum & Mason is no mere shop, but is an immersive destination, sensorial experience and place of wonder and joy," said Zia Zareem-Slade, customer experience director at Fortnum & Mason, in a statement.

"Throughout every floor there is a visual feast and an explosion of color and so with that in mind, we're delighted to be teaming up again with London Design Festival and Liz West to present Iri-Descent," she said. "A piece that creates curiosity, captures joy and plays with light and sparkle in such a beautiful way, we're excited to see in our atrium and to share it with our customers."



"Iri-Descent" by Liz West. Image credit: London Design Festival

Gemfields is taking a closer look at its emeralds and rubies in an immersive installation at Collins Music Hall. A collaboration with designer Dan Tobin Smith and creative studio The Experience Machine, "Void" invites visitors to step inside gemstones through projections of blown-up photographs.

With the larger-than-life imagery, the stones' natural mineral formations turn into landscapes or galaxies. Creating a multi-sensory experience, the visual formations are set to a soundtrack from female electronic drone choir NYX.

Gemfields' gemologist/jewelry specialist Joanna Hardy and Mr. Smith will be leading guided master classes on Sept. 17.



Gemfields' "Void." Image courtesy of Gemfields

For the London Design Festival, Lexus is working with engineering studio Tangent, building on a relationship that began in 2013 when the firm's team Hideki Yoshimoto and Yoshinaka Ono won the automaker's Design Award.

The marque is sponsoring what will be Tangent's first major solo exhibition, which will be housed at the multi-use Paddington Central development. For the London Design Festival, the organizers have turned the former railway yard into a Design Route.

Pieces featured in the Tangent exhibit include Inaho, the work that won the studio Lexus' grand prix.

Inaho is an interpretation of grains of rice blowing in the wind, with illuminated tubes that sway based on motion sensing technology. Since the Lexus Design Award, Inaho has become available commercially through Crafted for Lexus, and it is part of the marque's co-branded lounge at Brussels Airport.

Another piece on display is "Here," which was originally commissioned by Herms for Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie earlier this year. An 11-foot ball is covered in 20,000 recycled solar cells, creating an interpretation of the earth, or the "blue planet."



"Here" by Tangent. Image courtesy of Lexus

Along with Tangent's work, Lexus is showcasing its LC 500h.

"The Lexus LC embodies our passion for exceptional design and craftsmanship that differentiates us in the luxury market," said Spiros Fotinos, global head of brand management and marketing at Lexus, in a statement.

LG Signature is participating in London Design Festival for the first time. The appliance maker will be staging a showcase of its products in an exhibition designed in partnership with *Wallpaper* magazine.

Up at the East Wing of Somerset House from Sept. 18 to 21, the installation will include a range of creations including LG Signature's OLED TV W, refrigerator, wine cellar, air purifier and washer and dryer.

LG Signature will also be hosting a panel discussion with architects Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas, watch expert Antoine Preziuso, United Visual Artists founder Matt Clark and LG Electronics' head of home appliance and air solution design lab Chung WookJun. Moderated by *Wallpaper*'s editor at large Jonathan Bell, the talk will be centered on the theme "Art Inspires Technology. Technology Completes Art."

"LDF's approach to art is designed to promote the 'city's creativity and status as a global design capital' by 'exploring the relationship between art and technology and their impact on contemporary design' intended to educate and inform, giving life to contemporary masterpieces," Ms. Miller said. "Unlike other art events, it incorporates and extends its exhibits to more functional elements of design often found in familiar domestic products showcasing 'how process informs the physical outcome.'"

"An example is Paddington Central's official Design Route, complete with a 'program celebrating design across architecture, interiors, furniture and lighting.'"

Art appreciation

Art festival affiliations are popular among luxury brands, as marketers seek face time with an affluent crowd.

This year, contemporary art fair Frieze descended on Los Angeles for the first time, helping expose galleries and luxury brands to West Coast affluents and art lovers.

German automaker BMW, retailer MatchesFashion and Swiss beauty group Valmont were among the brands that participated in the inaugural Los Angeles edition of the event. Since the art world is often associated with exclusivity and refined taste, events such as Frieze are enticing to many companies who seek out clients with money to burn ([see story](#)).

At Art Basel Miami Beach, luxury brands across industries descended on the city for the opportunity to engage with thousands of festival attendees.

Brands including Prada, Douglas Elliman and Lexus hosted events, exhibitions and other creative efforts at Art Basel, and the concurrent Design Miami fair. The worlds of luxury and art often converge at large-scale art events such as Art Basel ([see story](#)).

"Luxury brands depend on creativity to flourish," Ms. Miller said. "Those who affiliate themselves with art projects, exhibits and installations have the opportunity to demonstrate to their consumers a broader appreciation and respect for mankind and the arts by becoming involved with more unconventional artistic endeavors like social housing

projects, public sites or emerging talent competitions.

"Luxury brands must retain their existing consumers through innovation and strong design, but they must also remember to speak to their future prospects," she said. "Art affiliation, in some mode, is a perfect conduit. Art allows brands and consumers to be visually expressive."

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