

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## DVF shares personal perspective on historic landmark in documentary

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*Diane von Furstenberg has been closely aligned to the Statue of Liberty. Image credit: HBO*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

U.S. fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg is offering an inside look at a personal cause by serving as an executive producer for a new HBO documentary.

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Premiering on Oct. 17, "Liberty: Mother of Exiles" follows Ms. von Furstenberg as she learns more about the historic Statue of Liberty's legacy, sharing how it ties into the fashion icon's own personal heritage. The Belgian-born designer spearheaded fundraising efforts for the new Statute of Liberty museum, earning her the title of "godmother" to Lady Liberty.

### Lady Liberty

The world's most photographed statue, Lady Liberty has been a symbol of freedom and hope for generations. While more than 4 million people visit the statue each year, the statue's history is not as well known.

Designed by French sculptor Frdric Auguste Bartholdi, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated in October 1866. Intended as a gift to the United States from the people of France, the statue has welcomed generations of immigrants and has also become the site of protests and other demonstrations.

*Diane von Furstenberg executive produced the HBO documentary "Liberty: Mother of Exiles"*

The statue depicts Lady Liberty lifting a torch in her right hand and carrying a tablet with the date of the U.S. Declaration of Independence listed in Roman numerals. At her feet lay a broken chain and shackle, further signifying freedom.

Directors Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato tell the story of the statue beginning with the groundbreaking for the new museum, where Ms. von Furstenberg gave a speech.

"I remember arriving here in the morning and seeing her, Lady Liberty," Ms. von Furstenberg, who famously arrived in 1970s New York by boat, says in the film.

"What she represents is everything that has to be protected," she says. "The story behind her is this fight for freedom."

In the documentary, Ms. von Furstenberg visits France to meet with descendants of Gustave Eiffel, who designed the statue's metal framework, and douard de Laboulaye, who inspired Bartholdi to build the statue.

The documentary explores more than the statue's architectural legacy, and also touches on its cultural significance.

*Diane von Furstenberg has previously spoken on the influence the Statue of Liberty has had on her family*

Lady Liberty is also well known for a sonnet by American poet Emma Lazarus, which was added as a plaque inside the statute in 1903. "The New Colossus" reads in part "Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

To this end, the documentary features students from the Bronx's ELLIS Prep Academy, many of whom are recent immigrants themselves, as well as activist Patricia Okoumou. The Statue of Liberty's director of education, Peter Wong, also appears in the film.

Designer personalities

Television and film can serve to extend designers' influence outside of the fashion space.

In 2014, Ms. von Furstenberg hosted a reality television show competition to find her label's next brand ambassador.

The show cast eight millennial fashion-conscious women who vied for the opportunity to represent the brand around the world at parties and events. The designer previously appeared on "Project Runway" and "America's Next Top Model" as a guest judge ([see story](#)).

Fellow U.S. fashion designer Ralph Lauren will be at the center of his own documentary airing on HBO this fall. In "Very Ralph," Mr. Lauren will reflect on his career as his eponymous company enters its sixth decade of business.

Set to debut next month, the feature-length film chronicles Mr. Lauren's humble beginnings in the Bronx to the launch of his label. He also discusses his marriage and contributions to the field, including building a complete lifestyle brand and highlighting diversity in fashion campaigns ([see story](#)).

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