

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Gucci plays with pop-culture rodent for Chinese New Year

January 3, 2020



Mickey Mouse stars in the Gucci campaign for Chinese New Year. Image courtesy of Gucci

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Italian fashion label Gucci is ushering in the Year of the Rat by taking inspiration from a popular culture icon, as Chinese New Year collections become must-haves for luxury brands.

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Disney's Mickey Mouse is featured prominently in creative director Alessandro Michele's Chinese New Year capsule collection, which drops on Jan. 3 online and in-store. A whimsical film, the first to coincide with one of Gucci's Chinese New Year collections, follows Mickey's adventures in Disneyland.

"This campaign is playful from start to finish, and Gucci is a playful brand," said Lauren Bates, senior storyteller at **Blue Moon Digital**, Denver, CO. "Gucci, notoriously, doesn't take itself too seriously. And what better way to not take yourself seriously than by playing to the whimsy of Disney?"

Ms. Bates is not affiliated with Gucci, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

### DisneyXGucci

The Rat is the first animal in the Chinese zodiac, and is often associated with wealth and prosperity. People born during the Year of the Rat, set to begin on Jan. 25, are also thought to exhibit characteristics such as optimism and cleverness.

Gucci chose Mickey Mouse, one of Walt Disney's classic characters, to represent the Year of the Rat.

### *Gucci goes to Disney for Chinese New Year*

Harmony Korine, a frequent Gucci collaborator, directed the label's Lunar New Year effort. Gucci ambassador and actress Ni Ni stars in the film, alongside actor Earl Cave and designer, stylist and poet Zo Bleu.

DisneyXGucci begins with a group of young people arriving at California's Disneyland, anticipating a day of fun. Mickey is seen walking arm-in-arm with Ni Ni and leads her to the group of friends.

Mickey serves as the friends' tour guide, cheering everyone on while they enjoy the rides.

Dressed in pieces from the collection, such as Mickey-print bucket and baseball hats, the friends ride iconic Disney attractions including Splash Mountain, Mad Tea Party and It's A Small World.

"Both Disney and Gucci exemplify the quirkiness that is this campaign, collection and video short," Ms. Bates said. "Take yourself on that Disney vacation with your friends and no kid, wear that designer label and plummet down Splash Mountain."

Gucci features the Mickey Mouse motif on a variety of pieces, including handbags, footwear and silk accessories. Lunar New Year accessories, including a white leather quilted GG Marmont bag, will be sold as online exclusives.

The friends also participate in other classic theme park activities, such as eating cotton candy and watching a parade, before Mickey finally waves goodbye.

Although it coincides with the Chinese New Year, GucciXDisney feels universal due to its large dose of childhood nostalgia.

"There isn't a generation alive that is untouched by Disney," Ms. Bates said. "Featuring Disney, mainly Mickey since it is the Year of the Rat, almost reinforces the oddity and nuance that is the Gucci brand."

"The Disney spirit is that childlike wonder that we can all tap into," she said. "And I think that the Gucci customer has a little more of that sense of wonder than perhaps some of the more traditional fashion houses."



*The GucciXDisney campaign feels universal because of its nostalgia factor. Image courtesy of Gucci*

Expanding the campaign's reach, Gucci will promote the Lunar New Collection through digital channels and dedicated window displays. Mickey will also make an appearance on Gucci's mobile application through virtual Mouse ear try-ons and other features.

Gucci also looked to classic cartoons for its Chinese New Year collection last year. Characters from Disney's 1933 cartoon "Three Little Pigs" were featured on watches, sneakers, backpacks and apparel.

In addition to the existing characters, Gucci made up its own protagonists. Among the inspirations for the brand was the expression "pigs might fly" ([see story](#)).

#### Year of the Rat

As luxury labels continue to court Chinese consumers, Lunar New Year capsule collections and campaigns are growing in importance.

Since 2020 is the Year of the Rat, luxury retailers have been proposing a wide range of rat-inspired luxury objects, from high-end watches, expensive jewelry and top-quality bags to leather accessories and cigars. Unlike many past luxury holiday offerings that lacked cultural sensitivity, the 2020 capsule collection products highlighted for this Lunar New Year are classy and offer high sales potential ([see story](#)).

British fashion label Burberry debuted its Chinese New Year 2020 collection, a vibrant celebration in red to connote joy, health and happiness in the Year of the Rat. The campaign stars brand ambassador Zhou Dongyu, along with models He Cong and Liang Jiyuan.

The collection features tailoring and sports-influenced separates and other pieces, as well as new iterations of Burberry's iconic Union sneaker and the Lola runway bag in a vivid red. Appearing throughout is a limited-edition

Thomas Burberry Monogram motif, inspired by the Chinese zodiac and animated with an original illustration in honor of the Year of the Rat ([see story](#)).

"With China is a market that is still emerging and evolving, it would be a misstep for a brand like Gucci to overlook the cultural significance of the Lunar New Year," Blue Moon Digital's Ms. Bates said.

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