

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Gucci to trim number of shows as pandemic-led fashion pivot begins

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Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele. Image credit: Gucci

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Under creative director Alessandro Michele, Italian fashion label Gucci has been willing to tilt at windmills and chart its own course.

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Monday, May 25, Mr. Michele sprung yet another surprise that should give cover to other fashion designers contemplating something similar: cutting the number of fashion shows and reducing the focus on seasons.

The COVID-19 lockdown period gave Mr. Michele plenty of time to think about the future of fashion and its shape.

What seemingly troubled him and has irked many others was the pace of the shows and the collections and the travel to posts such as New York, London, Milan and Paris. Of course, reading his diaries "Notes from the Silence" is a trip in philosophical musings, but the message eventually frees itself.

So now, with the blessing of Gucci management, Mr. Michele will host two shows for Gucci instead of the five.

Show and tell

In a video news conference from his Rome apartment, he said **Gucci** would do away with the fashion-show distinction between menswear and womenswear and traditional monickers of fall/winter and spring/summer for collections. The cruise show may end after the final virtual showing July 17 during Milan's digital fashion week.

Also, per Mr. Michele, fall and spring were the right times to host shows for the collections.

While other designers such as Giorgio Armani, Dries Van Noten and Saint Laurent like Gucci, part of the Kering stable have expressed intentions to pare back presence at fashion shows and collections, this latest decision will likely move tectonic plates within the business.

Many management consultancies, industry experts, media pundits and observers, as well as designers themselves, have tired of the old structured fashion show circuit, going so far as to call for an overall overhaul.

Well, the COVID-19 lockdowns have done what the punditry could not: convince a major luxury brand to scale back its footprint to a manageable scale in a world that has been considerably scarred by the coronavirus' after-effects.

Gucci's moves will likely have a domino effect on other players. It will also impact the business of fashion show and the overall ecosystem and the constituents that depend on the events, such as photographers, equipment rental services, fabric makers, tailors, shippers, hotels, restaurants, PR and ad agencies, security services, car services, florists, media, bloggers and influencers.

To put it mildly, the fashion pivot has begun. Or it could be brilliant marketing cost-cutting under the guise of pandemic rethink.

Please read below for Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele's "Notes from the Silence," his personal diary written at home in Rome during the lockdown over the past few months.

ROME - 29 MARCH, 2020 - WE TURNED OUT TO BE SO SMALL

These days of confinement, in a suspended time that we can hardly imagine as free, I try to ask myself what is the meaning of my actions. It's a vital and urgent questioning for me, which demands a careful pause and a delicate listening. It's trying to name, with the precision of love, my fears and my desires. It's the possibility to face the aphasia that every trauma provokes. After all, the tragedy we are living is providing new reflections. We could never have imagined to feel so connected to life through a bond of trembling and heartbreaking tenderness. We could never have thought to reconnect, so deeply, with the fragility of our creatural destiny. Our need for reciprocity. We turned out to be so small. A miracle of nothing. Above all, we understood we went way too far. Our reckless actions have burned the house we live in. We conceived of ourselves as separated from nature, we felt cunning and almighty. We usurped nature, we dominated and wounded it. We incited Prometheus, and buried Pan. So much haughtiness made us lose our sisterhood with the butterflies, the flowers, the trees and the roots. So much outrageous greed made us lose the harmony and the care, the connection and the belonging. We ravaged the sanctity of life, neglectful of our being a species. At the end of the day, we were out of breath.

ROME - 7 APRIL, 2020 ABOUT WHAT WE WOULD NOT WANT TO BE THE SAME AS IT WAS

Now that the devastation caught us unprepared, we have to think about what we would not want to be the same as it was. Because the greatest risk, for our tomorrow, is abdicating our responsibility for a true and necessary discontinuity. Our history is littered with crises that taught us nothing. With economic collapses and social devastations that were tackled by imposing the same recipes from which they originated. With wounds that were not able to regenerate our minds. With a mourning that we were not able to live in order to change ourselves and our relationships. This crisis represents a fundamental test for us all. It's a test, because there is sorrow, exertion, danger. But also because there is an evaluation and a judgment. Through sorrow we can look at our recent past with a critical eye. At our list of debts, misunderstandings, false notes, mistakes. At our missteps and recklessness. At the thunderous absence of thoughts we dared not express. This present, then, entrusts us with important responsibilities. Everyone can take on responsibilities, according to one's role and actions, to play a part in a constellation of molecular and widespread changes. As for me, in my own small way, I feel the urgent need to change a lot of things in the way I work. I have always been professionally inclined to change, after all, bringing with me a natural and joyful creative restlessness. But this crisis has somehow amplified such transformative urgency, which can't be deferred anymore.

ROME - 27 APRIL, 2020 THE MOTIVE OF A CHOICE

The change I imagine involves the capacity to reconnect with the deepest reasons that inspired my entry into the fashion realm. I feel the need to renew a bond, purifying the essential by getting rid of the unnecessary. I crave the authentic motive of a choice. The full set of reasons that set me on my way. I understood, as time went by, that these motives have different names and different intensities, but they inevitably gather around the same urgency: the possibility to tell. This possibility, so ancestral and powerful, always gave me the chance to build expressive passages, to make room for that core of the unspeakable that shakes my dreams, to celebrate the nostalgia for the imperfection, to praise the beauty that blossoms from shape to shape. This possibility allows me to catch, with bites of infinity, the daily falling in love with the existence.

ROME - 2 MAY, 2020 A NEW CREATIVE UNIVERSE

I am fully realizing though, that this possibility to tell cannot be constrained by the tyranny of speed. Now we know that too furious was our doing, too insidious was our ride. In this renewed awareness, I feel the need of a different time, released from other-imposed deadlines that risk to humiliate creativity. A time that can stand still, awaiting; that can go through the gift of inactivity, slowly. A time that can bring forth the promise of an epiphany, and that can

linger on the dream, on the play, on the prefiguration. A time that now, more than ever, is necessary to build new and more powerful narrations. That is why I decided to build a new path, away from deadlines that the industry consolidated and, above all, away from an excessive performativity that today really has no *raison d'être*. It's a foundational act, audacious but necessary, that aims at building a new creative universe. A universe that essentialises itself in the subtraction of events and that oxygenates through the multiplication of sense.

ROME - 3 MAY, 2020 THE SACRED POWER OF PRODUCING REVERBERATIONS

Therefore, I will abandon the worn-out ritual of seasonalities and shows to regain a new cadence, closer to my expressive call. We will meet just twice a year, to share the chapters of a new story. Irregular, joyful and absolutely free chapters, which will be written blending rules and genres, feeding on new spaces, linguistic codes and communication platforms. And beyond. I would like to leave behind the paraphernalia of leitmotifs that colonized our prior world: cruise, pre-fall, spring-summer, fall-winter. I think these are stale and underfed words. Labels of an impersonal discourse that lost its meaning. Containers that progressively detached themselves from the life that generated them, losing touch with reality. I believe that we can build our tomorrow also starting from a renewed capacity of denomination. Here comes the desire to baptize our new encounters by naming them after a language that has marvelously ancient roots: classical music language. Accordingly, there will be symphonies, rhapsodies, madrigals, nocturnes, overtures, concerts and minuets in the constellation of my creative path. Music, after all, has the sacred power to produce reverberations and connections. It travels beyond the borders, reconnecting the fragility to the infinity.

ROME - 5 MAY, 2020 COMMUNITY OF PURPOSE

In this silence, that is a living thing, my listening embraces all the extraordinary people that I'm connected with. Recalibrating time, to set the pace at a human level, wants to be a promise of revived care towards this amazing community of purpose I proudly belong to. It's my project, *pro-jectum*: the art of extending the existence in the future. A plural future, where "we" provides a foundation. A future that contains the hug that today we cannot give each other, but to which we will return with an expanded comprehension. With a herd understanding and recovered breath. It will be the time when we will learn to listen for the sound of the forest growing, at night.

ROME - 16 MAY, 2020 IN THE THROES OF WHAT IS MISSING

Now that we are still apart, my love for fashion burns. Our species, after all, is like that: we love like crazy in the throes of what is missing.

4/6 * Revealing The New Creative Universe' is @alessandro_michele's diary entry for May 2, 2020, "I feel the need of a different time, released from other-imposed deadlines that risk to humiliate creativity." Read more: <https://t.co/9gg86GN3pc> pic.twitter.com/KaKyV4aC5n
gucci (@gucci) May 23, 2020