

AUTOMOTIVE

Porsche enlists Balmain's Olivier Rousteing for ambitious, defiant collaboration

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The collaboration between Porsche and Olivier Rousteing is centered around the theme of "Drive Defined." Image courtesy of Porsche

By SARAH RAMIREZ

German automaker Porsche has tapped Olivier Rousteing, creative director at French fashion house Balmain, for an extensive and personal campaign focusing on self-realization.

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A longtime fan of Porsche, Mr. Rousteing is collaborating with the marque on a series of short videos under the theme of "Drive Defined." In the first installment, the designer speaks about his uninhibited pursuit of his career in high fashion echoing the high standards set by Porsche.

"Both Porsche and Rousteing's Balmain cater to an elevated group of luxury consumers: aesthetically-minded, design-conscious people who appreciate brands that can effortlessly combine form and function," said E.M. Ricchini, freelance brand strategist, Philadelphia. "Both brands embody a spirit of timelessness, crafting a product that will transcend passing trends rather than embracing them."

"The collaboration represents something aspirational but still attainable: determine your path in life, follow it and do so in style," she said.

Ms. Ricchini is not affiliated with Porsche or Balmain, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Defining the drive

The film begins with Mr. Rousteing behind the wheel of a Panamera 4S E-Hybrid Sport Turismo. In a voiceover, he speaks about his creative philosophy before revealing part of his origin story for the uninitiated.

"Olivier Rousteing is not just an authentic Porsche enthusiast, he is also a perfect fit for us with his desire to make Balmain a modern brand with the highest standards of quality and luxury," said Jelena Batic, manager of content and campaigns at Porsche, in a statement. "Together, we explore his exceptional driving force in the films by examining the connection between the worlds of sports cars and fashion, which creates relevance for our existing customers, as well as for younger and female target groups."

Only 35 years old, Mr. Rousteing became the creative director of Balmain in 2011 the youngest creative director at a French luxury label since Yves Saint Laurent. He was also the first Black creative director of a French couture house.

The first video in a collaboration with Balmain's Olivier Rousteing and Porsche

"Fashion is my platform to express who I am," Mr. Rousteing says in the vignette. "And I will always fight for opening the minds of people."

In the short, Mr. Rousteing explains that he began pursuing fashion, rather than law, once he realized that his passion could become his career. He adds that he is motivated by the ability to make his own rules and push boundaries.

"Success is not something that you're born with," Mr. Rousteing says. "You develop, always. You push your limits."

The film contrasts stylish shots of Mr. Rousteing driving and posing alongside the Panamera with more naturalistic scenes of him at work: sketching designs, photographing models and encouraging his team. It also incorporates social media videos and footage of Balmain fashion shows, including the brand's presentation on boat on the Seine last summer.

Original content for the campaign was also filmed across France, with scenes in Paris, Normandy and Le Man. Mr. Rousteing is seen speeding on the track at the Porsche Experience Center, and later driving the hybrid Panamera in the French countryside and along the coast.

Further reinforcing the connection between fashion and sports cars, the short includes close-up shots of elaborate Balmain pieces as well as the interior details of the Porsche complimented by an inspiring score and a roaring engine.



Porsche and Balmain both balance innovation with design and tradition. Image courtesy of Porsche

"Drive, for me, is actually deciding where you want to take your life, where do you want to go," Mr. Rousteing says. "Drive, for me, is fearless, in a way."

The film concludes with a title screen including another quote from the creative director: "What drives me forward? Creating a new world. Creating my world."

Fashion in the driver's seat

Luxury automakers turn to fashion designers and brands to reinterpret their ethos through varied collaborations and efforts. These projects can also be valuable opportunities for luxury brands to reach untapped audiences, or present a different side of their persona.

Last September, German automaker Mercedes-Benz unveiled a unique take on its G-Class through a collaboration with creative director and fashion designer Virgil Abloh. Project Gelndewagen is the result of a partnership between Mr. Abloh, men's artistic director at French fashion label Louis Vuitton and founder of streetwear brand Off-White, Mercedes' chief design officer Gorden Wagener ([see story](#)).

The following month, Germany's BMW launched a capsule collection and limited-edition sports car in partnership with streetwear label Kith. Only 150 editions of the BMW M4 Competition x Kith were produced, while the more accessible Kith for BMW collection featured bomber jackets, robes, sweaters and more ([see story](#)).

The collaboration between Mr. Rousteing and Porsche, however, is notable for the designer's level of involvement and creative control. Videos will be released on social media through the end of April, and Porsche is planning other joint activities.

"With the rise of omnichannel commerce and ever-expanding advertising channels, brands are finding ways to get out of their verticals and collaborate to position themselves as lifestyle makers," Ms. Ricchini said. "Fashion and

automobiles happen to dovetail quite nicely; both becoming an extension of personality and outward expression of taste.

"In this case, Porsche and Rousteing set their brands and, inevitably those who follow along as a cut above."

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