

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Holt Renfrew highlights skate culture, diversity in summer film

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Skateboarding is the star of Holt Renfrew's latest campaign. Image credit: Holt Renfrew

By NORA HOWE

Canadian department store chain Holt Renfrew is turning the spotlight on local skaters to bring summer's skateboard-inspired style to life.

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Although streetwear and skateboarding culture was popularized on a global scale in the 1990s and early 2000s, it has only recently begun to permeate the luxury fashion space. Holt Renfrew's summer advertising effort, "Holts Playground," features skaters who share their love for the culture, what skating has taught them and the importance of diversity in the sport.

"Earlier this year, we updated our mission to empower self-expression and ignite positive change," said Wes Wolch, vice president of marketing at [Holt Renfrew](#), Toronto. "We loved that these skateboarders were expressing themselves through their sport and we were so excited to collaborate with them."

"Another key note is that all of the cast are Canadian trailblazers in the sport," he said. "Being Canadian is a key part of our ideation when it comes to our marketing campaigns, and we're really proud of this."

Open playground

Shot in Windsor and Toronto, the campaign features members of [Bliss Skateboard Shop](#) as well as skaters from across the country who are trying to pave new ground in the sport.

In the short film, close-up shots of skate tricks are edited with groups of friends in urban settings. Through voice-over, the skaters share their thoughts on the importance of skate culture and how it should be represented more.

Skaters share their love of the sport and the importance of diversity

The film cast includes: Sasha Senior, owner of Bliss Skateboard Shop; Nathaniel Dean; Devan Predas; Ethan Letourneau; Stafhon Boca; Dylan Barnes; Justin David; Aimee Garrett; Joel Watamaniuk; Dana Alwazani and Aaron Jones.

"Skateboarding is both anti-establishment and mainstream now, which is bittersweet," says Ms. Alwazani in the

campaign. "Today, we see skateboarding represented in things like the Olympics and high fashion, which exposes people to the joys of skateboarding while offering skaters way more opportunities.

"That being said, the subculture will always exist, there will always be core skaters who skate just to skate, because they love it, not to compete or make money," she says. "DIY spots will always be made, streets and pools will always be skated, and no matter where skateboarding goes from here, the best parts of it will always be there."

The campaign touched on themes of commitment and creativity, revealing how skateboarding, like most sports, requires practice and commitment but also provides a space for innovation and individuality.

"People can express themselves through skateboarding," says Mr. Letourneau. "Whether it's through their clothes or skate style, or the designs of their boards, stickers, and grip tape, it shows each person's individuality and personality.

"I make my own style," he says. "I can show off my determination, perseverance and courage to do the impossible."



Sasha Senior is the owner of Bliss Skateboard Shop in Windsor. Image credit: Holt Renfrew

The Holts Playground campaign features looks including the recent sacai x KAWS drop, Make, Carne Bollente, La Detresse and Maisie Wilen, as well as pieces from Balmain, Gucci and Burberry.

"We think this story was a great fit to speak to these new brands that a skateboarder could actually skate in and speaks to a fresh take at Holts," Mr. Wolch said.

Streetwear in luxury

At the height of the pandemic, lounge- and activewear were in high demand as consumers spent extended time at home. Although streetwear was on the rise before the pandemic, it has taken over luxury fashion in the last 15 months.

French luxury conglomerate LVMH Mot Hennessy Louis Vuitton is acquiring a majority stake in Virgil Abloh's streetwear brand Off-White ([see story](#)), which slipped from its top spot on the Lyst Index of hottest fashion brands in Q2 2020 ([see story](#)).

Before the pandemic, Italian fashion house Gucci illustrated the inspiration behind its Grip timepiece through a visual project centered on global skateboarding communities. Creative director Alessandro Michele modeled the watches after the grip tape that skaters use on their boards to create friction.

To showcase the unisex timepiece, Gucci tapped skateboarders and artists to capture the stories of skaters in different corners of the globe ([see story](#)).

Then, earlier this month, Gucci and online fashion platform Hypebeast explored the subculture of streetwear in a video collaboration.

The first episode of "Gucci Stream" follows artist Dominic "The Shoe Surgeon" Ciambrone, who created three limited-edition collection pairs of Gucci Basket sneakers. The shoes themselves are inspired in part by how the sport of basketball has influenced street culture and style ([see story](#)).

"We have seen the emergence of skateboarding in the luxury fashion space with Supreme x Louis Vuitton, the LV

skateboarder shoe line and Gucci releasing skateboards and, of course, the sport's inclusion in the summer Olympics," Mr. Wolch said. "Our teams researched Canadian trailblazers in the sport and we all agreed that the stories around these skateboarders were incredible."

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