

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## How 'House of Gucci' may impact the house of Gucci

November 19, 2021



The internet buzzed after Lady Gaga posted a picture in costume with Adam Driver in March. Image credit: House of Gucci/MGM

By NORA HOWE

With the highly anticipated biographical crime drama *House of Gucci* arriving in theaters later this month, the Italian fashion house is striking a delicate balance with its association with the Ridley Scott film.

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Coming to theaters in the United States Nov. 24, *House of Gucci* tells the story of Patrizia Reggiani, who was convicted of organizing the assassination of her ex-husband Maurizio, grandson of founder Guccio Gucci. While there has been conflict between members of the Gucci family and the filmmakers, the brand could potentially benefit from the exposure, suggesting a notable shift in how family legacy may or may not impact a brand.

"Historically, luxury fashion brands and the world of entertainment are collaborative and enthusiastic partners," said Daymon Bruck, chief creative officer at marketing agency [The O Group](#), New York.

"There exists a natural symbiosis between the two industries, both preoccupied with the impact of identity, image and creativity," he said. "That being said, entertainment and luxury brands do not always have the same agenda, as projects that deal with narrative storytelling must develop conflict to drive a story forward."

### Tragic histories

In March 1995, at the age of 46, Mr. Gucci was shot and killed by a hitman outside his office in Milan.

Three years later, Ms. Reggiani was tried and convicted of arranging the murder and served 18 years in prison. The prosecutors claimed she was driven by jealousy and money, and ultimately wanted control of the family estate.

Based on Sarah Gay Forden's 2001 book *The House of Gucci: A Sensational Story of Murder, Madness, Glamour, and Greed*, the film stars Lady Gaga as Patrizia, Adam Driver as Maurizio, Al Pacino as Aldo Gucci, Jared Leto as Paolo Gucci and Salma Hayek as Pina Auriemma.

### *House of Gucci* first official trailer

There are obvious implications on a person or company when a film's main purpose is to shed light on their negative aspects. From a brand's perspective, this could go one of two ways: the narrative either pushes people away

from the brand or draws them closer.

When the official trailer for the film debuted in August, searches for Gucci spiked 173 percent, according to Lyst. Pageviews for polka dot and lace dresses, worn by Ms. Gaga as Ms. Reggiani, doubled ([see story](#)).

On the other hand, however, some brand families who prefer to maintain a positive legacy and some semblance of privacy take umbrage with this level and style of exposure.

"Luxury brands enjoy the alignment with the glamour, sophistication and aspirational nature that film and television projects can embody," Mr. Bruck said. "But when a brand itself becomes the center of conflict or drama, every aspect of the project is held under a new kind of scrutiny."

This was certainly the case with FX's "The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story."

Released in 2018, the Ryan Murphy-produced television series was inspired by the true events surrounding the 1997 death of designer Gianni Versace and was based on Maureen Orth's *Vulgar Favors: Andrew Cunanan, Gianni Versace, and the Largest Failed Manhunt in U.S. History*.

The Versace family distanced itself from the project ahead of the show's premiere, issuing a statement, saying: "The Versace family has neither authorized nor had any involvement whatsoever in the forthcoming TV series about the death of Mr. Gianni Versace. Since Versace did not authorize the book on which it is partly based nor has it taken part in the writing of the screenplay, this TV series should only be considered as a work of fiction ([see story](#))."

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by House of Gucci (@houseofguccimovie)

### *Lady Gaga as Patrizia Reggioni*

Similarly, since *House of Gucci* was announced, the family has vocalized its disappointment and disdain for the film and its ability, or lack thereof, to accurately and appropriately convey the truth about the family and its history.

As the film primarily follows the subsequent trial and conviction of Ms. Reggiani, the real-life Patrizia Reggiani [expressed her "annoyance"](#) with the fact that Ms. Gaga did not meet with her prior to accepting the role.

In response, during a Good Morning America interview on Nov. 16, Ms. Gaga stated she was not interested in meeting Ms. Reggiani as she believed Ms. Reggiani was solely interested in being glorified for her crime.

### Brand power

The Gucci brand, however, does not seem to share the same type of disdain for the film and its narrative as the

Gucci family.

While the label has not explicitly supported nor denounced the film, it is intrinsically part of the project by the very nature of the subject.

According to the [Associated Press](#), the brand opened its archives for the film's wardrobe and props department. For the London and New York premieres, the brand dressed various cast members including Lady Gaga for their red carpet appearances.

Seen here in a still from [#RidleyScott](#)'s forthcoming [#HouseOfGucci](#) film is protagonist [@ladygaga](#) wearing a long-sleeved dress drawn from [#Gucci](#)'s archives by Oscar-winning costume designer [#JantyYates](#). [#LadyGaga pic.twitter.com/zO89Wtvjzo](#)

gucci (@gucci) July 30, 2021

It should also be noted that Mr. Leto, who is starring in the film, has been a longtime friend of the brand, while Ms. Hayek is married to Francois-Henri Pinault, chairman/CEO of Kering, Gucci's parent organization.

"We often explain to our clients that the founders of brands are not the brand themselves," Mr. Bruck said. "The Gucci family has primarily been focusing on the mischaracterization of family members portrayed by the film, which is understandable it's their right.

"The Gucci brand, however, has a different response to this project because they understand the value of reinforcing their place in world of luxury fashion through a high profile medium," he said. "Luxury fashion brands are in a constant state of creating relevancy for their customer base, and no doubt this film will generate a robust source for Gucci, especially with the star power of the cast."

Nothing has been stated in writing, but it is clear, through continued tangible cooperation, that the brand wants to remain at the forefront of this process as *House of Gucci* arrives in theaters.

"Ultimately, no one likes their dirty laundry hauled out for all to see, but if a brand can embrace their unique history the good, the bad and the tragic it's possible to better connect with a new luxury consumer who requires more transparency and authenticity," Mr. Bruck said.

"Even if the picture does not paint a perfect image of the family, it could foster a deeper understanding and connection between consumers and the brand through cinematic storytelling."

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