

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Luxury roars ahead with Lunar New Year collections, campaigns

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Luxury is getting ready for the Year of the Tiger. Images courtesy of Gucci

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Luxury brands are looking ahead to the Year of the Tiger with special campaigns and collections with universal appeal.

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Lunar New Year activations are an opportunity for luxury labels to directly engage with discerning consumers in China and other valuable Asian markets. More brands, however, are embracing more universal themes for wider campaign reach.

"In addition to the billions of people around the globe who celebrate it, Lunar New Year is an important period of the year for luxury brands because of the gift giving tradition between family members," said Daymon Bruck, chief creative officer at **The O Group**, New York.

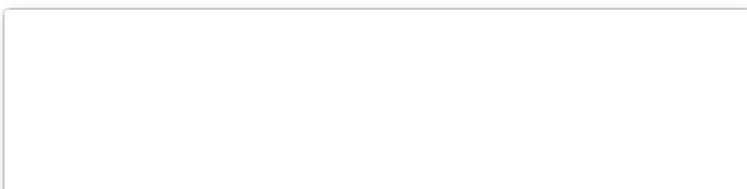
"Celebrants also purchase new clothes to start the year fresh, a significant reason why fashion brands invest in special collections for this holiday," he said.

"Designing a campaign for the Lunar New Year can provide many overlapping benefits for luxury fashion brands: strengthening audience relevancy, opening opportunities for creative collaboration and providing fresh marketing approach and messages that relate to that year's theme are just a few."

### Eye of the tiger

Luxury has wasted no time following holiday celebrations in the West to begin teasing campaigns and collections for the Year of the Tiger, which begins on Feb. 1.

Italian fashion label Gucci launched its Chinese New Year collection on Jan. 4 with a dedicated campaign.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Gucci Official (@gucci)

### *The Gucci Tiger campaign has a vintage aesthetic*

"The need to find authentic and unique messages around Lunar New Year holiday are continually more critical as audiences become more sophisticated and demand a deeper understanding of cultural sensitivity from the brands that market to them," Mr. Bruck said.

The ready-to-wear Gucci Tiger capsule includes outerwear, denim, shirts and dresses with various tiger motifs. The first part of the campaign follows tigers roaming through an upscale hotel as a group of friends gathers for high tea ([see story](#)).

While the Gucci campaign is ostensibly centered around a cultural tradition celebrated throughout much of Asia, the cast is more diverse. The soundtrack is Doris Day's 1950 track "Tea for Two," from the 1920s-set movie musical of the same name adding to the ad's slightly asynchronous feel.

Gucci's campaign is somewhat of a departure from its Year of the Ox effort, which starred Doraemon, a popular manga and anime character ([see story](#)).

The brand is also celebrating the Gucci Tiger collection with a series of pop-ups opening in Canada and the United States this month. Locations include Vancouver, New York, Chicago and Las Vegas.

Fellow Kering-owned fashion label Balenciaga has also incorporated tiger motifs in its own Year of the Tiger collection.

The capsule includes tiger print shirts, dresses, socks and sandals, as well burnt orange apparel and accessories. A silhouette tiger graphic and the Balenciaga logo are embroidered on several pieces, including a leather backpack, hoodies and baseball caps.

French fashion house Dior is also alluding to the Lunar New Year in its spring 2022 capsule collection, a collaboration from men's artistic director Kim Jones and artist Kenny Scharf.



*The Dior and Kenny Scharf capsule reimagines the Water Tiger. Image credit: Dior*

The collection includes several items in red, the traditional shade for Chinese New Year. The standout pieces, however, feature the Water Tiger and a cooler color palette of blues, gray, creams and white.

According to the Chinese zodiac, each year is also associated with a branch, or an element that also rotates. So while the upcoming year will be the Year of the Water Tiger, which is associated with wisdom and flexibility, 2034 will be the Year of the Wood Tiger.

Italian fashion label Salvatore Ferragamo tapped Chinese artists Sun Yuan and Peng to design a print celebrating the Lunar New Year. Their design, which incorporates other Chinese symbols of luck such as the monkey and the deer, is included in an installation about the Silk Road at the Ferragamo Museum.

The label also adapted the Tiger design throughout the New Year capsule collection, which includes handbags, footwear, scarves and other accessories.

#### Cultural awareness

China is a top market for luxury brands, but designers must be mindful of the culture to avoid controversy. Labels such as Burberry have made major missteps with Chinese consumers, including around Lunar New Year.

Indisputably, luxury houses that specialize in cross-cultural branding will understand local consumption patterns better than newcomers.

However, even the most established luxury players have committed serious gaffes in the past. Some have been accused of creepy ad campaigns, while others have released disastrous promos or committed grave cultural insensitivity missteps ([see story](#)).

In spring 2021, tensions between Burberry and China escalated after the Chinese government traded sanctions with the United Kingdom over accusations of human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region.

Chinese actor Zhou Dongyu reportedly terminated her contract as a Burberry ambassador, as more consumers shared support for boycotts against Burberry and other Western brands on Chinese social media ([see story](#)).

Being cognizant of cultural differences can brands honor the Year of the Tiger successfully.

"It's a challenge for brands to create a campaign that easily touches the line separating cultural appropriation from cultural appreciation and offer a fresh design that honors the holiday," said The O Group's Mr. Buck. "With a sophisticated and nuanced design approach, most luxury fashion brands tend to get it right and create campaigns that are both globally and culturally relevant."