

RETAIL

La Samaritaine struts into Paris bolstering immersive event roster

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La Samaritaine is utilizing its expansive space after its almost two-decade-long renovation. Image credit: LVMH

By KATIE TAMOLA

LVMH-owned department store La Samaritaine is going all out in its spring celebration of Parisian fashion.

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Through May 17, La Samaritaine is transforming its space into an enormous design studio, from display windows to exhibitions and events. The store also released a teaser video to garner excitement which humorously follows the hectic day of a fashion designer.

"Contrary to the popular imagination that associates La Samaritaine with the typical department store, this film is set to provide a completely unexpected aspect of what is happening behind the scenes," said Thoma Serdari, director of fashion and luxury MBA at [NYU Stern](#) and author of *Rethinking Luxury Fashion*, New York. "Indeed, the renovated department store has positioned itself as a retail hub committed to creativity rather than commercialism.

"It helps that it is located in the heart of Paris and that the timeless character of the building makes it look otherworldly," she said. "And so this short film, completely surprising, entertaining, and witty is more of an invitation to enter the world of the Samaritaine in the physical although LVMH made sure that a lot of this content is available through the store's website as well for those who cannot be in Paris."

Celebrating Parisian fashion

Lauded as a pillar of Paris, La Samaritaine is a must for fashion lovers. Consumers continue flocking to the newly renovated department store following its reopening in July 2021.

La Samaritaine is embarking on a special commemoration for the art of fashion, dedicating its window spaces on rue du Pont-Neuf and rue de Rivoli to illustrate and examine the creative processes behind the disparate trades in the sector.



Some work from iconic avant-garde fashion photographer, Erwin Blumenfeld. Image credit: LVMH

The windows spotlight stylists, draping specialists, model makers, jewelers and other professionals, drawing people into both the art of crafting apparel and the actual opportunity to shop looks inside of the store.

La Samaritaine's interior features an entertaining excursion entitled "Fashion is a Game." The exhibition showcases work from iconic avant-garde fashion photographer, Erwin Blumenfeld.

Additional exhibitions include the "Designer's Office" in the Pont Neuf building which portrays the creative process of Guillaume Henri, creative director of Maison Patou, for his 2022 spring-summer collection.

The Loulou concept store is also being transformed into a couture workshop, filled with large sewing tables, mannequins and sales associates dressed in white blouses with the words "Atelier Mode" inscribed on them.

La Samaritaine is also displaying sketches from ESMOD fashion school and selections from up-and-coming brands, celebrating the fashion industry leaders of tomorrow.

Other offerings include a collaboration with the online resale startup NONA Source and "Studio Samaritaine" which invites fashion lovers to pose for the cover of the store's fashion magazine.

The department store also released its "Atelier Mode" vignette, garnering excitement for its commemoration of Paris fashion season.

In the short film, an eccentric fashion designer named Mr. De Luca humorously acts out the hectic days of the profession, from throwing sketches in his office to shocking other designers with his plans for the store model.

Mr. De Luca plays an eccentric fashion designer one simply cannot stop watching

The entire cast then has an intimate fashion show where Mr. De Luca and the other designers applaud an initial look followed by Mr. De Luca making a cacophonous sound of disgust for the following dress. The exaggerating, humorous tone of the film continues.

The fashion show ends with Mr. De Luca strutting with the model before he begins taking promotional photographs.

Atelier Mode closes with Mr. De Luca working in his office diligently, with one of the photographs he shot framed

behind him, symbolizing the hard work of the past fostering the work of the present.

The vignette starring the eccentric fashion designer successfully generates excitement for all that La Samaritaine is offering through May 17.

Worth the wait

The expansive renovation of La Samaritaine came to a conclusion in June 2021, after nearly 16 years.

During that time, LVMH had been attempting to convert the former department store into a luxury complex including a hotel, duty-free shopping, designer stores, offices, affordable housing and a daycare center ([see story](#)). The new Samaritaine places diversity at the heart of its raison d'être: diversity of function, architectural forms, construction methods, as well as social and intergenerational diversity ([see story](#)).

LVMH fought diligently for its vision regarding La Samaritaine, having winning a court battle in 2015 which allowed the conglomerate to continue construction for good ([see story](#)).

This spring, it is abundantly clear that La Samaritaine is utilizing its expansively wondrous space after its almost two-decade-long renovation.

"Almost every week in Paris is fashion week, or at least this is what Parisians like to say," Ms. Serdari said. "La Samaritaine's transformation into an exploratory artistic, educational and commercial space that provides plenty of opportunities for Instagrammable moments is a testament to how much fashion consumption has changed.

"Today, both general consumers and fashionistas alike are looking for immersive experiences that will reinforce their connection to their favorite brands or that will expose them to brands that are not yet part of their lifestyle," she said. "The proposed transformation is a great opportunity to stop clicking away on digital ecarts and to actually experience new brands and a photography exhibit in person.

"Remember that La Samaritaine was one of the first stores to open after COVID and it managed to attract people, in spite of the general COVID-phobia," she said. "It was successful because it incorporated unexpected moments that interrupted traditional retail for the pure joy of the customers who were at a public space in person."