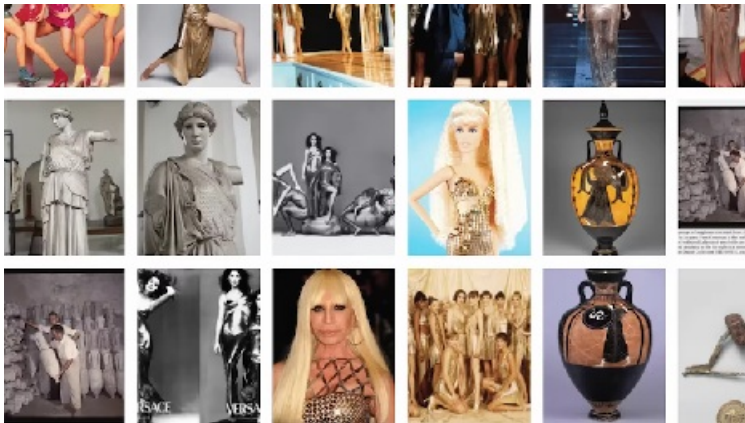


APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Versace fosters young talent through immersive design project

July 5, 2022



The brand assigned a group of designers the task of reinterpreting classic Versace codes. Image credit: Versace

By NORA HOWE

Italian fashion house **Versace** is nurturing young creative talent and incubating the next generation of designers through a collaborative project with Parsons Paris.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Creative director Donatella Versace assigned a group of students pursuing master's degrees in fashion design a four-month project to explore the brand's heritage by reinterpreting pieces and styles from the Versace archive. In a short film highlighting the initiative, audiences may watch as the project unfolds and ultimately witness Ms. Versace's reaction to the final looks.

"I love to see how the next generation of designers is inspired by Gianni's and my archives," the creative director says in the video. "Keeping the legacy of Versace going is part of my job, and the new generation of designers are the ones who are going to carry it on."

Project Versace

Students from Parsons Paris' Master of Arts in Fashion Studies and Master of Fine Arts in Design and the Arts programs were included in the project.

The students visited the Versace Archive and production facility in Novara, Italy, before being fully briefed on the project by the creative director herself at the brand's headquarters in Milan.

The film is broken into three parts of the project: the brief, the development and the reveal.

During the briefing at Versace's headquarters in Milan, Ms. Versace explained her expectations for the project, a modern take on classic styles, and insisted the designers have full creative freedom in interpreting the brand's archived looks. The students seemed thrilled to be a part of the initiative, and some were even starstruck.

Ms. Versace welcomes students to Milan

During the development stage of the project, which took place in Paris, students share their design inspirations, sketches, materials and other elements they are using to bring their ideas to life.

One student interpreted Versace's classic code of desire and hedonism, while another examined the concept of modern sexiness. Fluidity and movement served as the center point for one designer, while another was inspired by pop-punk artists Poly Styrene and X-Ray Spex.

Upon completing their designs, the group of students discussed the challenges of adapting the codes of another designer or house while successfully showcasing their own creativity.

One designer suggested there was simply an overarching pressure of working with a renowned fashion house as Versace but seemed to have found the assignment transformative.

In the final stage, the designers reveal their designs to the house.

"I did not want to see something similar to what I or Gianni did in the past," Ms. Versace says. "I expected to see something that reminded me of the future of fashion, and that is exactly what they did."

She examines each look, providing praise and feedback for every designer. While remaining mostly partial to the cohort, undoubtedly, the biggest reaction from the creative director was upon seeing her own face on one designer's dress.



A Parsons Paris design student used Ms. Versace herself as inspiration. Image credit: Versace

Ms. Versace praised the young designer for the humorous take on the brand and suggested that without fun there is no good fashion.

Investing in the youth

Brands continue to acknowledge ways they can further commit to social sustainability and supporting emerging creative talent has been a critical part of those efforts.

In 2019, crystal and jewelry designer Swarovski announced a partnership with Parsons to launch a studio course that reimagines the future of fashion design, materiality and sustainability.

The course is taught as part of Parson's undergraduate "Fashion Design Systems and Society" and "Materiality" programs to develop the next generation of conscious fashion designers ([see story](#)).

Earlier this year, Istituto Marangoni Paris announced its new 2022 I'M Mentors Projects, which includes an opportunity for students to work closely with Balmain creative director Olivier Rousteing.

During the mentorship program, the French designer will offer young fashion students his renowned expertise in design, creativity and the fashion industry. Details have yet to be finalized, but the program will include a masterclass in the spring, a Balmain-sponsored scholarship for the 2022 academic year and student participation in Balmain's Fashion Festival in September.

In 2011, when Mr. Rousteing was only 25, Balmain entrusted him with the brand's creative direction, serving as a prime example of trusting, investing in and incubating young talent in the industry ([see story](#)).