

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Gucci announces departure of creative director Alessandro Michele

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By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Alessandro Michele is stepping down as creative director of Gucci, an Italian fashion brand that he reshaped into a contemporary icon of youth that was miles away from its more formal look under previous designers such as Tom Ford.

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Mr. Michele has run Gucci's creative team since Jan. 21, 2015, transforming the fashion-to-leather goods label into a juggernaut for parent Kering, one of the three largest luxury conglomerates worldwide. His floral patterns, flowing clothes, poetic and cause-related appeals, and hark-backs to the Seventies look defined his tenure at the brand.

"There are times when paths part ways because of the different perspectives each one of us may have," Mr. Michele said in a statement released by Gucci.

"Today an extraordinary journey ends for me, lasting more than twenty years, within a company to which I have tirelessly dedicated all my love and creative passion," he said.

"During this long period Gucci has been my home, my adopted family. To this extended family, to all the individuals who have looked after and supported it, I send my most sincere thanks, my biggest and most heartfelt embrace.

"Together with them I have wished, dreamed, imagined. Without them, none of what I have built would have been possible.

"To them goes my most-sincerest wish: may you continue to cultivate your dreams, the subtle and intangible matter that makes life worth living. May you continue to nourish yourselves with poetic and inclusive imagery, remaining faithful to your values. May you always live by your passions, propelled by the wind of freedom."

Gucci has not named a successor to Mr. Michele, but is expected to soon do so when a "new creative organization" will be announced, per Kering.

Culture change

Gucci is the biggest brand in the Kering portfolio, which also includes Yves Saint Laurent and Alexander McQueen as other top labels.

The tributes post-announcement from Gucci's business side were effusive.

"I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to meet Alessandro at the end of 2014," said Marco Bizzari, president/CEO of Gucci, in a statement. "Since then we have had the pleasure to work closely together as Gucci has charted its successful path over these last eight years.

Francois-Henri Pinault, chairman/CEO of Kering, was equal in his praise.

"The road that Gucci and Alessandro walked together over the past years is unique and will remain as an outstanding moment in the history of the house," Mr. Pinault said in a statement.

"I am grateful to Alessandro for bringing so much of himself in this adventure," he said. "His passion, his imagination, his ingenuity and his culture put Gucci center stage, where its place is. I wish him a great next chapter in his creative journey."

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