

RETAIL

Loewe kicks off experiential retail's golden era with Studio Ghibli offering

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As luxury consumers exhibit a desire for in-store interaction, brands like Loewe are pulling out all the stops, attempting to lure fans in with special perks, exclusive discounts and shop-in-shop openings abound. Image credit: Loewe

By AMIRAH KEATON

Spanish fashion label Loewe is exemplifying the power of physical retail experiences in a post-pandemic landscape.

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As luxury consumers exhibit a desire for in-store interaction, brands are pulling out all the stops, attempting to lure fans in with special perks, exclusive discounts and shop-in-shop openings abound. In light of Loewe's most recent launch a multiyear collaboration with Japanese animation company Studio Ghibli, culminating in a final clothing and accessories capsule the luxury label provides a master class in the art of experiential shopping.

"Experience plays a massive role in the selling of luxury," said Nora Kleinewillinghoefer, associate partner of the consumer practice at [Kearney](#), Vancouver.

"Moreover, luxury thrives on scarcity," Ms. Kleinewillinghoefer said. "In this case, between the Balbost pop-up culinary [takeover of Selfridges' Dolly's Caf] and the Loewe Studio Ghibli capsule release, the level of scarcity is doubled."

Ms. Kleinewillinghoefer is not affiliated with Loewe but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

"So, beyond the Moving Castle bag, those customers, the number of which will be limited by the size of the physical facility, will get to take home the memory of the culinary and sensory experience Selfridge's is offering, and beyond that, a physical object invested with that memory."

Loewe x Studio Ghibli x Selfridges

Having produced such classics as "After Spirited Away" and "My Neighbor Totoro," the fruits of Academy Award-winning director Hayao Miyazaki's work grace a referential collection rooted in Mr. Anderson's love of an Oscar-nominated anim selection.

"Blending hand-drawn and digital animation, 'Howl's Moving Castle' is technically innovative, exemplifying the power of craft as a bridge between the old and new a creative approach that Loewe is proud to share," said Jonathan

Anderson, creative director at Loewe, in a statement.

The careful nature with which the artful selection is constructed serves as a source of inspiration for Loewe's latest, as Mr. Anderson and his team attempted to infuse the same high caliber of craftsmanship inside of his atelier.

The result is the new "Loewe x Howl's Moving Castle" capsule.

LOEWE x Howl's Moving Castle

The Calcifer Puzzle bag features the outspoken fire demon using a handcrafted leather marquetry technique.

Collection dropping February 2 in selected stores and on

<https://t.co/V7jZ2gc8SM#LOEWE#LOEWEhowls pic.twitter.com/NIK8zcwRh f>

LOEWE (@LoeweOfficial) February 1, 2023

Main characters "Sophie," "Howl," "Calcifer" and other figures from the film have had their likenesses applied to Loewe's signatures, including the Puzzle, Flamenco, Hammock, Amazona and Luna handbags.

Besides leather goods large and small, the cast shows up on ready-to-wear pieces such as sweaters, jackets and shirts, all donning anim scenes. The craftful use of finishings like applique, raffia and feathers lend a multidimensional effect to the imagery applied.

"Key pieces embody the beloved characters and backdrops, giving wearers the chance to identify with the film on a deep level and escape into its rich layers," said Mr. Anderson, in a statement.

"It's almost like virtual reality in wearable form."

The house's work is now up for grabs. Rolled out on Feb. 2, a limited-edition line based on the 2004 Japanese animated fantasy film landed in select global locations this week its campaign has all of the makings of a blockbuster fashion marketing moment.

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A post shared by LOEWE (@loewe)

Online, Loewe began seeding images shot by German fashion photographer Juergen Teller in late January, featuring

frequent famous brand collaborators, such as newly-appointed global brand ambassador Taylor Russell, front and center. With the injection of these familiar faces, an air of authenticity carried the project's digital components.

Branded elements from Loewe's own boutiques aside, Loewe's physical engagements prove forces to be reckoned with offline. A partnership with British department store chain Selfridges continues the narrative with expert precision.

Housed at the store's permanent pop-up space Corner Shop from Feb. 1 through Feb. 25, all experiential elements work to truly immerse shoppers in fashion's interpretation of the Studio Ghibli universe.

To start, Loewe invited French culinary studio Balbost to take over Dolly's Caf at London's Selfridges, staging a once-in-a-lifetime dining experience based on the film. An expansive window display and fragrance pop-up complement efforts.

A step further, the partners beckon fans behind the scenes with content showing the creation of the Moving Castle bag, a \$15,850.00 invention with direct reference to the film's star apparatus.

LOEWE x Howl's Moving Castle

Register for early access on <https://t.co/X2NEJsnIAJ> to shop the LOEWE x Howl's Moving Castle capsule collection, one day ahead of the global launch on February 2. [#LOEWE pic.twitter.com/Yh1ynHil5m](https://pic.twitter.com/Yh1ynHil5m)

LOEWE (@LoeweOfficial) [January 28, 2023](#)

Dubbed "The Cloud Room" for this execution, the accessory, as well as a live installation that allows shoppers to take to the sky in scenes similar to the film, are hosted in Selfridges's off-site exhibition space at The Old Selfridges Hotel.

Last, but not least, the luxury retail giant leverages its unique ability to offer screenings of the film at The Cinema at Selfridges on LG. In 2019, Selfridges became the first department store in the world to open a permanent movie theater ([see story](#)).

"To some extent, [positive reception reflects] the alignment of values between the two partners, but also, it's the ability of one brand to draw in a new set of fans for the partner brand, and vice versa," Kearney's Ms. Kleinewillinghoefer said.

Third time's the charm

At the top of 2022, the brand and the studio released a penultimate capsule, in honor of the classic title, "Spirited Away" ([see story](#)).

Loewe's third and final collaboration builds on this momentum.

Contextually, the celebration of an epic tale of loyalty, loss, war and the pitfalls of technology complete with a bit of magic arrives at a particularly fitting time.

LOEWE x Howl's Moving Castle has arrived at [#SelfridgesLondon](#), bringing with it a host of extraordinary experiences.

Find out more: <https://t.co/UXcZG9CF0G#LOEWE#LOEWEhowls> pic.twitter.com/YxYmwa9Mbj

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"The world we are living in needs a counteract not as an escape, but as a different outlook," Mr. Anderson said, in a statement.

"This, to me, is what Hayao Miyazaki's animated films for Studio Ghibli are about: a commentary on the moment and an alternative to it, always heartfelt, fulfilling, full of fantasy and sentiment," he said. "This is also the reason why the final installment of our collaboration with Studio Ghibli feels more timely than ever."

Besides stand-alone locations, ecommerce solutions giant Shopify ([see story](#)) is calling shop-in-shop concepts the [future of retail](#) – many have popped up to date, as the likes of French couture label Schiaparelli's arrive on the first floor of London's Harrods in mid-January ([see story](#)) and Celine Homme makes its U.S. debut inside of U.S. department store chain Saks ([see story](#)).

Plan your LOEWE x Howl's Moving Castle store visit: <https://t.co/UNJrB69TE0#LOEWE#LOEWEhowls>
pic.twitter.com/nz5L6OTTEw

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The larger campaign notably and strategically borrows a few other tactics from its luxury counterparts. Take Loewe's 3D promotional billboards for instance, also tapped for Louis Vuitton's "Creating Infinity" campaign ([see story](#)).

Dive into LOEWE x Howl's Moving Castle with a 3D animation as seen in London, featuring beloved characters and some of the collection's intensely crafted bags.

Live until February 5 at Piccadilly Circus, London W1 [#LOEWE#LOEWEhowls](#) pic.twitter.com/9PjUai8NFI

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Others represent purely novel, innovative approaches to market entry, an inflatable castle installation in London and a pop-up shop in Tokyo among them.

Our inflatable castle is landing at Marble Arch in London to end its whistlestop tour. See the castle up close until February 5. [#LOEWE#LOEWEhowls](#) pic.twitter.com/3M8knfUqfw

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While some luxury entities at the heritage level have had partnerships called into question as of late ([see story](#)), an authentic connection between the subject of this collaboration and the creative director of the house appears to be boding well for the brand thus far.

"[The campaign] adds dimension, not unlike how visitors to Harry Potter World in Orlando get to live in three dimensions the characters and physical locations described in the novels," Kearney's Ms. Kleinewillinghoefer said.

"Moreover, with luxury dipping its toes in the metaverse and NFTs beckoning consumers into the virtual world, this is a reversal of sorts where real physical retail is inviting its customers to come back, as if saying, experience the real and the physical, it's tangible, even tasty, and you're not going to get to share such an experience with a roomful of like-minded souls by staying in your room and donning a virtual reality headset," she said. "It offers luxury consumers the opportunity to enter a world beyond the physical product for sale."