

RETAIL

Eyeing top clientele, Gucci debuts most exclusive retail concept yet

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Gucci is kicking off its hyper-exclusive "Salon" boutique concept in sunny Los Angeles. Image courtesy of Pablo Enriquez for Gucci

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Italian fashion label Gucci has opened a first-of-its-kind boutique in the iconic Melrose Place neighborhood.

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Tailored to each individual locale, with additional locations to come, the brand's new salon concept aims to transform the shopping experience for a small subset of VIPs. The appointment-only space distinguishes itself in exclusivity, appealing to an ultra-high-net-worth clientele with ease as originally reported by *Reuters*, no one item in the space will sell for less than \$40,000, with merchandise such as high jewelry reaching the \$3 million-dollar rate.

"Melrose Place is a destination for luxury shopping and luxury lifestyle," said Thoma Serdari, author of *Rethinking Luxury Fashion* and director of fashion and luxury MBA at *NYU Stern*, New York.

"Contrary to other luxury shopping areas in the U.S., Melrose Place is known for how design-driven it is rather than heritage-driven, an idea that would be more pertinent when discussing New York City's Fifth Avenue corridor, for example," Dr. Serdari said. "A plethora of European brands that are well known in the luxury world for their singular point of view for example, Paul Smith, Vivienne Westwood, but also Agent Provocateur, and Isabel Marant and Monique Lhuillier to name just a few all contribute to the enticing and surprising retail environment that Melrose Place has to offer.

"Even the most conservative shopper will be tempted to splurge in any one of these boutiques while also having the opportunity to recover at one of the many corners that offer good food and plenty of celebrity people watching."

Dr. Serdari is not a representative of Gucci, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

California dreaming

Located at 8400 Melrose Avenue, the world's first Gucci Salon takes over a vine-covered building, the former home of U.S. fashion magnate Marc Jacobs.

The experimental retail presence is "a true one-off, devised as a transformative, creative space," according to a statement from the company. A focus on the local culture of Hollywood, of which the luxury label has embedded itself via presentations and campaigns of late ([see story](#)), creates a specialized experience.

The brand intends to pass the blueprint along throughout the year, announcing plans for forthcoming Gucci Salons in Tokyo, Japan; London; Shanghai, China; Paris; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; New York; Milan, Italy; Taipei, Taiwan and Hong Kong, China.



Gowns from the Oscars and Red Carpet alike shimmer amid the chandeliers and ivory walls at Melrose Place's new Gucci Salon. Image courtesy of Pablo Enriquez for Gucci

The salon's design and implementation were helmed by award-winning set and production designer Gideon Ponte. A longtime Gucci collaborator, the creative infused his experience on glamorous movie sets into design codes of private quarters for the project. Crystal chandeliers, glittering gowns, royal hues and luscious fabrics meet comfortable seating and draped curtains as a result.

A key feature, the extravagant, appointment-only store will solely serve Gucci's top clientele. Gucci Salon is closed to the public. Conditions track when one considered current luxury commerce trends.

In fact, a recent study published by consulting firm Luxury Institute confirmed that, as consumers, ultra-high-net-worth individuals' (UHNWI) value to luxury brands is growing by the day, as, according to the data, the demographic appears highly resilient against market woes of today ([see story](#)).



The layout is designed to encourage imagination and collaboration, allowing wealthy clients to brainstorm new fashion ideas alongside the staff. Image courtesy of Pablo Enriquez for Gucci

Findings point out that, despite making up only 20 percent of the entire luxury customer base, UHNWI are responsible for 70 percent of all sales in the sector.

While Gucci Salon limits service to the most wealthy individuals, this statistic implies that the brand could manage to avoid suffering financially in the midst of a decision to bar non-UHNWI clients from the new space.

The Melrose Place property is completely devoted to facilitating indulgence amongst the house's most prized followers, from its look to its function.

Presenting Gucci Salon Melrose: An Exclusive New Space

As a whole, luxury consumers are wanting more immersive in-store experiences from the retailers they opt to engage with ([see story](#)). In essence, Gucci Salon acts as a response to this desire, with each location positioned as a client's personal universe.

The concept offers a reinvention of what the boutique can be.

As Hollywood itself is the land of constant premieres, embracing change is characteristic of the cultural landscape. Thus, clients can expect to gain the ability to choose from a range of limited-edition clothing, footwear and accessories. Rare leathers, crystals, 18-carat gold, diamonds and other precious metals and gems are to adorn the savoir-faire pieces.



The colorful salon is inspired by Hollywood and creative living spaces. Image courtesy of Pablo Enriquez for Gucci

Each appointment is performed one-on-one with store staff, shaping the entire experience around bespoke service.

"Let's not forget that the typical Melrose Place customer has links to Hollywood or is part of Hollywood and, in that sense, is constantly looking for new, cutting-edge and spectacular experiences," Dr. Serdari said.

"I can imagine that the creatives at Gucci's retail planning will pull out all the stops to introduce a mesmerizing environment," she said. "This is nothing less than an exciting spectacle that transforms several times throughout the year to keep the experience fresh for all returning customers."

Gucci explorations

Each Gucci Salon is to either exist as a standalone space, mirroring the inaugural West Coast-oriented spot, or will be featured within Gucci boutiques amid designated areas.

The company has been expanding into new construction territory at a rapid rate in recent weeks, having just opened a circular hub in the Meatpacking District of New York City ([see story](#)).

Gucci presents its new Meatpacking District store in New York City, embodying the House's efforts to adopt greener choices within its retail spaces through programs for energy efficiency and recycling. pic.twitter.com/c0fjsMRD2m

Gucci Equilibrium (@ggequilibrium) [April 11, 2023](#)

The brand's Hollywood salon, however, odes not only the locale but Gucci's entrance into it. Echoing the decoration and mindset that went into the brand's 1968 Rodeo Drive opening, the first Gucci Salon ends up diving deep into the luxury label's rich identity.

"Gucci exemplifies a very similar DNA to Melrose Place," Dr. Serdari said.

"Both the location and the brand are playful, project a sense of abundance, are rooted in good design, and celebrate life and people through a vast array of colors and experiential situations," she said. "The new Gucci boutique will fit right in."