

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Gucci commemorates full century of Florentine design

April 27, 2023



Chinese actor Ni Ni, a representative of the maison since 2017, is among the talent featured in the programming. Image credit: Gucci

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Italian fashion label **Gucci** is taking a journey alongside a few familiar faces.

As the Gucci Archive begins its worldwide tour of Gucci Cosmos, ambassadors of the brand are exploring the house's sense of heritage. Premiering in Shanghai at the West Bund Art Center from April 28 through June 25, the immersive exhibit tells the story of the maison's 102-year journey through a collection of some of its most enduring pieces.

"As a creative endeavor and expression of the times, the house and its history over the past century can be mapped through an ability to evolve and, more broadly, to expand on the mutability of our own consciousness and ability to make cognitive shifts," said Es Devlin, English artist and installation creator, in a statement.

"Rather like a garment itself that is able to be changed and re-tailored, like a shed skin that constantly renews itself."

Past and present

Ms. Devlin worked alongside Italian curator Maria Luisa Frisa to create the exhibit featuring eight rooms, each of which depicts scenes of different eras in Gucci's history and highlighted pieces that defined them.

The artist is known for her large-scale sculptures and installation work that combines music, language and light, showcased at museums around the world. Her experience spans dance, drama and opera, infusing this new project with her unique level of creative versatility.

Portals is the entrance into the universe of **#GucciCosmos**, passing through an installation in which the brand's origins spin around in an endless loop. Discover more <https://t.co/oPcTS7uoWz> pic.twitter.com/zPikxmiDy

gucci (@gucci) April 28, 2023

Bringing in this intersectionality, Ms. Devlin used audio, visual and kinetic technology to take visitors through the past, present and future of Gucci. Many of the items presented in the rooms or "worlds" as Gucci is calling them have never been seen publicly, according to the brand.

From above, the layout of the space looks like wheels and cogs in homage to the industrial history of the host building and that of Shanghai itself.

. #GucciCosmos arrives in Shanghai, bringing a constellation of ephemera and immersive experiences to the West Bund Art Center until June 25. Discover more <https://t.co/oPcTS7uoWz> [pic.twitter.com/49rWoZePDU](https://t.co/49rWoZePDU)

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The worlds include "Portals," "Zoetrope," "Eden," "Two," "Archivio," "Cabinet of Wonders," "Carousel" and "Duomo."

The first centers on the maison's founding, telling the story through revolving doors and suitcases to symbolize the era's constantly evolving nature. The present is also at play in the space, as around the outer ring lies a series of dioramas dedicated to celebrities and brand ambassadors alike.

Zoetrope draws on the equestrian ties Gucci holds. Galloping sounds and horse-related words are recited overhead, as archival pieces such as the Horsebit ([see story](#)) shine.

Outside of Florence at Gucci ArtLab, Global Brand Ambassador #XiaoZhan observes the creation of the House's signature Horsebit loafers, introduced precisely 70 years ago. Discover more <https://t.co/QrZDycJ1MD> #GucciCosmos [pic.twitter.com/IFJsfqDBg4](https://t.co/IFJsfqDBg4)

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From fauna comes flora, as Eden explores the plant-forward looks of the 1960s. Luscious prints, silk scarves, gigantic flower suspensions and hypnotic midi dresses fill the space.

In the room called Two, unisex fashion is represented by a duo of white statues, standing at over 32 feet tall each. Images of men's and women's suits from the 20th century are projected onto the surfaces of them.

Heritage bags are revealed in a room full of mirrors in Archivio, and in Cabinet of Wonders, singular designs are shown off with curio objects in the spirit of eclecticism.

The experience of #GucciCosmos comes to select boutiques through a special installation of the Eden world displaying the iconic #GucciBamboo1947. Discover more <https://t.co/oPcTS7tt71> [pic.twitter.com/G7fFiUJLw](https://t.co/G7fFiUJLw)

gucci (@gucci) April 30, 2023

The last two spaces, Carousel and Duomo, bring the exhibit full circle.

In the former world, 32 mannequins don house clothing from the 1970s to the present day, gliding on a constantly-moving catwalk wearing looks throughout the decades.

. #GucciCosmos culminates in Duomo, a spectacular homage to its birthplace of Florence with a mirrored reproduction of the Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral dome. Discover more <https://t.co/oPcTS7uoWz>

Courtesy of Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore. [pic.twitter.com/q4Nwm9TrGx](https://t.co/q4Nwm9TrGx)

gucci (@gucci) April 29, 2023

Duomo, the final world, hones in the exhibit's overall tribute to untethered creativity.

Two large models of Santa Maria del Fiore's dome, a famed 15th-century cathedral in Florence, anchor the room. One is inverted below the other, suspended to show endless patterns and designs from Gucci's 102 years put together, it creates a striking array of colors, shapes and references to ages gone by.

Setting it up

Before the Shanghai debut, Gucci's anticipatory programming starts in Florence, the brand's birth city.

Chinese actor and singer Xiao Zhan travels to the Italian locale, visiting the Gucci Archive within the Palazzo Strozzi. Mr. Zhan works with a number of other luxury brands, including Italian fashion brand Tod's ([see story](#)).

Beyond Heritage with Xiao Zhan

Mr. Zhan is among those featured in the "Portals" world of the exhibit, alongside Chinese actor Ni Ni, and Chinese singer and actor Chris Lee.

Ms. Ni and Ms. Lee are both included in the preliminary campaign visuals both of them are seen in Shanghai amidst the historic districts and modern skyscrapers alike, tying together the past and present in the same way that the exhibit itself does.

Global Brand Ambassador [#ChrisLee](#) walks around Shanghai in anticipation of [#GucciCosmos](#) arriving April 28 at the West Bund Art Center. Discover more <https://t.co/oPcTS7uoWz> pic.twitter.com/mcsLmokiHq

gucci (@gucci) April 25, 2023

In Florence, Mr. Zhan met with Ms. Frisa, who led him through the Gucci ArtLab, a space dedicated to the work of artisans, showing him iconic handbags, accessories and gowns spanning decades.

Among the pieces are the Gucci Bamboo 1947 ([see story](#)) and the Jackie 1961 ([see story](#)) handbags, both of which are set to be showcased at the Shanghai exhibit.

Exploring the Gucci Archive housed within Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, Global Brand Ambassador [#XiaoZhan](#) is surrounded by the iconic designs behind the [#Bamboo1947](#), [#GucciJackie1961](#), and [#GucciHorsebit1955](#) handbag collections. Discover more <https://t.co/QRzDycJ1MD> [#GucciCosmos pic.twitter.com/FzokqqTN8R](https://pic.twitter.com/FzokqqTN8R)

gucci (@gucci) April 14, 2023

"This project was an extraordinary opportunity for me to traverse the universe of Gucci once again and tell its story through the ever-different lens of the clothes, objects, elements, people, and contexts that have made the House an iconic trailblazer within [the] fashion and collective visual culture for over a century," said Ms. Frisa, in a statement.

"The Gucci Cosmos exhibition is an immersive experience in which the House's origin story and its history are continuously put to the test by the imagination of the future."