

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Valentino joins luxury in centering arts for spring/summer 2024 show

October 16, 2023



The artist's "Unearth Her" performance reflected the emphasis creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli put on raw materiality for the collection. Image credit: Valentino

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Italian fashion house Valentino took to Paris Fashion Week to present a new collection.

The brand tapped English singer-songwriter FKA Twigs for the spring/summer 2024 show, which took place in the city's fine arts school, cole Nationale Suprieure Des Beaux-Arts. The "Unearth Her" performance reflected the emphasis creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli put on raw materiality, and together, he and the musical talent are establishing Valentino among the ranks of luxury labels embracing fine arts.

Female form

Surrounded by classical statues in the 17th-century building, which has been teaching artists since 1671, Valentino's latest fashion show leans into multiple creative genres.

Music, sculpture, architecture, land art, dance and of course, design, are all worked into the presentation.

FKA twigs Performs at Valentino L'cole

In her second collaboration with the house, FKA Twigs directed a performance with a London dance company's female dancers, made specifically to express the sentiments at the heart of the collection. As not only someone who has worked with luxury before ([see story](#)) but as a proponent of sex positivity and liberation, two themes the company's peers are currently diving into ([see story](#)), the artist suits the moment.

According to the fashion show's notes, the spring/summer 2023 collection has a "fundamentally feminist aim; independence of the body from the male gaze or societal expectation, an agency."

FKA Twigs and the other women dressed in skin-toned, minimalist outfits. Meanwhile, models walked around the perimeter of the space, letting the British performer's art literally be centered.



The fragmented stage was topped with sand, dirt, rocks and gravel, which the dancers interacted with as models walked around them. Image credit: Valentino

Mr. Piccioli's creations explore pleasure, sexuality and the ways that fashion can be an "essential exchange between the garment and the woman within," per the show's notes.

Allowing for movement, the collection includes cut-outs and a new technique called "Altorilievo," or High Relief, which takes inspiration from sculpting and is a way of "honoring the woman," as it allows her to be an "active participant in its design," according to Valentino.

The relationship and interactions between cloth and body anchor not only the apparel but also the "Unearth Her" performance, which set the tone for the occasion. These feminist themes arguably align deeply with luxury consumers' desire to buy from brands that reflect their values, which as Gen Z attains more power, tends to emphasize inclusion, diversity and gender rights.



The dancers and FKA Twigs moved fluidly, pouring sand on each other or smudging dirt on themselves in a unique type of land-based performance art. Image credit: Valentino

FKA Twigs and the others moved as one, embodying sensuality and physicality. Together and individually, they played with ebony dirt, white sand, silver rocks and other elements from nature.

As light poured into the space, the performers further engaged with the earth. In a post-show interview with the singer, she points out that this creative decision complements the raw materiality of Mr. Piccioli's designs.

Cotton, silks and linens come together for the shirts, jeans, evening gowns and accessories, which include flat shoes and the Valentino Garavani Vlogo Moon bag. The latter is especially emphasized, getting its own hashtag on social media for the presentation.



Similar to sculptures, a High Relief technique was applied to the fabrics for the collection, resulting in three-dimensional elements of nature. Image credit: Valentino

The fabrics of the clothing also nod to the natural world, depicting three-dimensional shapes like foliage, flowers, fruit and animals in Mr. Piccioli's technique.

In FKA Twigs's interview, she talks about feeling close to the earth as a woman, granting consumers an inside look at how this figured into the fashion show and the bond she shares with Valentino's creative director.

Additionally, viewers and the guests who were able to attend in person got a preview of the artist's unreleased music, as she sang a song from her upcoming album at the end of the performance.



Celebrities like Vogue editor in chief Anna Wintour and English actor Florence Pugh attended the show, the latter calling FKA Twigs's performance "otherworldly" on Instagram. Image credit: Valentino

Based on this year's slew of 2023 luxury campaigns that are grounded in crafts such as these ([see story](#)), the programming, although unique, fits right into trending topics taking over the sector.

Framing art

This summer alone has churned out quite an array of art-focused activations and campaigns.

In May, Italian fashion house Fendi opened a new exhibit showing the work of sculptor Arnaldo

Pomodoro. Called "The Great Theatre of Civilization," the collection ranged in pieces dating to the 1950s through the present ([see story](#)).

In conversation with FKA twigs for Valentino

Other luxury maisons are likewise embracing the art form, from LVMH-owned hospitality group Cheval Blanc ([see story](#)) to fellow LVMH-owned champagne house Mot & Chandon ([see story](#)). Both of these brands specifically highlighted classical styles, mirroring the setting of Valentino's show, the building first in service during an era when the Renaissance was a mere generation away.

The time period has garnered the attention of luxury names like Italian fashion house Ferragamo, which recently released a collection called "New Renaissance." Its accompanying campaign was made in partnership with the famous Uffizi Gallery, home to some of the most famous paintings in the world ([see story](#)).

Richemont-owned Belgian leather goods house Delvaux looked further back for its spring/summer 2024 release.

The art of the Vikings decorates its purse collection, which was in part made possible by Belgian creator Kasper Bosmans ([see story](#)). Norse symbolism, longships, animal imagery, jewel tones, themes of heraldry and celestial bodies dance across the animal skin bags.



Covered in dirt and sand, her feet imprinted with patterns from rocks, FKA Twigs finished out the show with an exclusive performance of unreleased music. Image credit: Valentino

It seems that categories across the luxury landscape are pairing their products with secondary creative genres, bringing forth new contexts and the prestige of fine arts in their marketing.

With the Paris Fashion Week presentation, it appears that Valentino is on board with this industry-wide movement.

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