

EVENTS/CAUSES

Dior explores brand history, culture through Shanghai art exhibit

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By JEN KING

French label Christian Dior is partnering with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Shanghai, China, in an exhibit titled "Esprit Dior" to display brand history in relation to art, fashion, society and culture.

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The Esprit Dior exhibit, running Sept.13 - Nov. 10, explores the haute couture fashions created by Dior throughout its history alongside contemporary works of art by Chinese artists. Showing the connection between cultures allows a brand to engage consumers that may be unfamiliar with the brand.

"It's important that Dior set up a spectacular exhibit in Shanghai due to the current growing trend of luxury brands and labels engaging with China's middle class and focusing on their culture," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York.

"China is being looked at as 'the big market of tomorrow' and this strategy provides the opportunity to communicate Dior's brand image," she said.

"This prestigious event will play an instrumental role in maintaining existing consumer relationships and establishing new ones."

Ms. Strum is not affiliated with Dior, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Dior was unable to comment directly.

A look inside

The two-month long exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Shanghai features items from Dior's archives.

On exhibit will be approximately 100 Dior dresses, sketches, objects of art, jewelry and perfumes from throughout Dior's history.



Dior dresses on display

Photographs taken by Patrick Demarchelier are found throughout the exhibit and serve as a guide for museum visitors.

The exhibit shows visitors historical and cultural references of Dior to create a conversation between the fashion brand and contemporary Chinese artists.

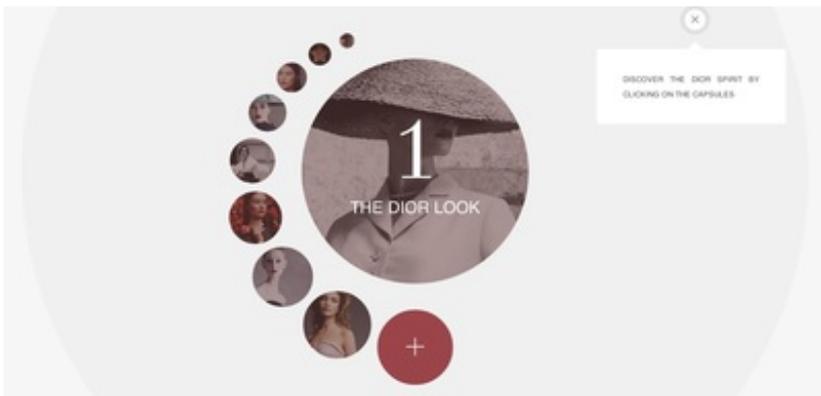
Within the Dior exhibit are paintings, sculptures, videography and photography created by Chinese artists such as Yan Lei, Yan Pei-Ming, Zheng Guogu and Liu Jianhua.



Liu Jianhua's exhibit section

Brand enthusiasts can get a sneak peek of the inspiration behind the exhibits on Dior's Web site.

The exhibit will be broken into nine capsules that give background information to visitors on topics which include "The Dior Look," "The Dior Garden," "Dior and Artists" and others. The titles of the capsules also appear in Mandarin.



Capsule collection

Dior has created a video to show the creative process behind the museum exhibit.

The video shows the museum's promotional banner on the building's facade, the exhibit space being prepped and curators preparing the artifacts, apparel and artwork.



Museum banner/video still

To further promote its museum exhibit in Shanghai, Dior has used its social media pages to generate interest among brand enthusiasts worldwide. By promoting the exhibit and featuring daily updates, Dior is able to engage with consumers who may not be able to attend.



Dior's Facebook

A day at the museum

Exhibits resembling a museum can help brands expand into new regions and engage consumers who are unfamiliar with the brand's history or products.

For example, Swiss watchmaker Omega attracted Asian consumers through a temporary museum installation in a popular Singapore shopping center that showcases the brand's devotion to craft.

Located in Singapore's Paragon Shopping Centre, the temporary Co-Axial exhibit runs Aug.23-Sept.1 and allows Omega to display the mechanics of its timepieces. Exhibitions can provide fresh, unexpected encounters for consumers while generating substantial exposure in highly-traversed spaces for brands ([see story](#)).

Brands that organize exhibits are likely to see a spike in interest from brand enthusiasts.

For instance, The North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC, is celebrating German automaker Porsche's innovations throughout the years with an exhibition showcasing 22 quintessential models.

The "Porsche by Design: Seducing Speed" exhibition Oct. 12– Jan. 20, 2014 gives visitors a well-researched look at Porsche's origins and its development. Teaming rare Porsche models with comprehensive multimedia displays will likely bring together car enthusiasts and history buffs ([see story](#)).

Brands should set their sights on the Asian market as it continues to grow.

"The Chinese market is a strong and growing, and brands are focusing immensely on developing their brand equity within that market segment, Ms. Strum said.

"This is following trend in the recent Chanel/Karl Lagerfeld exhibition of the 'Little Black

Dress' to continue the momentum of that staple wardrobe item."

The combination of art and fashion is an attractive model that appeals to consumers.

"There are a lot of luxury shoppers in Asia and Shanghai seems to be one of the biggest beneficiaries of the boom," said Paula Rosenblum, managing partner at [RSR Research](#), Miami, FL.

"Plus, the exhibit is at MOCA so it appeals to people who also like art," she said. "Finding products that show both art and design can be challenging in today's commoditized world.

"The same folks who put on Art Basel in Basel and Miami have also started a third Art Basel in Hong Kong, so clearly there's appetite for art around the region."

Final Take

Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/JABqrddNsDA](https://www.youtube.com/embed/JABqrddNsDA)

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