

EVENTS/CAUSES

Nicolas Ghesquière takes a subdued approach for first Louis Vuitton show

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Nicolas Ghesquière takes a bow after his first Louis Vuitton runway show

By SARAH JONES

Compared to the spectacle Louis Vuitton runway shows became known for under the creative direction of Marc Jacobs, the label's latest fashion show, the first by new creative director Nicolas Ghesquière, showed a focus on simplicity.

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The set was much quieter, allowing the clothing to be the focus, which also showed a new direction for the label. Because Mr. Ghesquière is only the second designer to interpret the Louis Vuitton brand into apparel, he will help shape the aesthetic of the house's ready-to-wear.

"Mr. Ghesquière seems to be adapting the most recent collection at Louis Vuitton from contemporary to modern classic with an edge," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York.

"His inspiration clearly stemmed from the late '70s and early '80s and while he couldn't utilize recent inspiration, it was evident that Louis Vuitton's leather heritage was a major influencing aspect in the style direction," she said.

"There was no indication that Mr. Ghesquière was looking to make a splash, but rather turn

around the brand and set a precedent for the future," she said. "While this can be extremely challenging, Mr. Ghesquiere was able to showcase his areas of influence and inspiration and merging it with the current brand's identity.

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

Louis Vuitton did not respond by press deadline.

New direction

During Marc Jacob's time at Louis Vuitton, the runway sets included a life-size train for fall/winter 2012, a carousel for spring/summer 2012 and a set of moving escalators for spring/summer 2013. Most recently, at the label's spring/summer 2014 show, the set was an ode to the designer's tenure at the house, combining multiple elements.



Louis Vuitton, under Marc Jacobs, spring/summer 2014

The announcement of Mr. Ghesquière's appointment at Louis Vuitton came very quickly after the announcement of Mr. Jacob's departure in October 2013.

Louis Vuitton acquired Mr. Ghesquière, who was formerly Balenciaga's creative

director Nov. 4 as artistic director of its women's collections to fill the gap left by Marc Jacobs.

The new creative director will help the heritage brand groom its ever-expanding global assets and instill the aura of exclusivity that he mastered at Balenciaga ([see story](#)).

Mr. Jacobs was the first designer to interpret the Louis Vuitton brand, originally only a leather goods maker, into a ready-to-wear line. All eyes were on Mr. Ghesquière, wondering what direction he would take the house in, since he had more room to roam due to the lack of history in the house's fashion line.

According to Style.com, LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton CEO Bernard Arnault was sitting front row for the show.

Mr. Ghesquière personally wrote a note to attendees, in which he declares his happiness in presenting his first collection, "knowing that [his] stylistic expression is at one with the Louis Vuitton philosophy." This "philosophy," according to Mr. Ghesquière, is one of "timelessness," and simultaneously "authenticity" and "innovation." He also said he hoped to honor the legacy of Mr. Jacobs.

This first show by Mr. Ghesquière was by contrast very understated, with a set that featured blinds that let in sunlight. The show was held at the Cour Carrée, the courtyard at the Louvre Palace in Paris, the venue of many previous Louis Vuitton shows.

Mr. Ghesquière's fashion vision for the brand this season had a slight 1970s-vibe, with a-line skirts in earth tones, amber floral prints, wide collared coats and skinny high-waisted pants.



Louis Vuitton fall/winter 2014 runway look

Leading up to the show Louis Vuitton promoted the live-stream, but did not mention the fact that it was Mr. Ghesquière's first show for the brand on social media.

Mixing things up

The fashion world has been playing musical chairs, with new creative directors at many different houses.

A luxury brand's heritage will likely carry it through creative role changes within a company. However, the appointment of a widely-known designer such as that of Alexander Wang to creative director at Balenciaga can stir up a brand's reputation in the fashion industry.

From a marketing perspective, the hiring of Mr. Wang at the PPR-owned brand could mean a refreshed public image as he is known by his design personality in addition to his skills. Fifteen-year Balenciaga creative director Nicolas Ghesquière propelled the label when he began his role and the same will likely follow as Mr. Wang brings his own youthful aesthetic to the label ([see story](#)).

Also, fashion designer Jason Wu was appointed the new artistic director of Hugo Boss' Boss womenswear, which brought a fresh, young attitude to revamp the brand, experts say.

Bringing a new designer to a brand can help it stay top of mind with consumers and reach a new customer base. The appointment of Mr. Wu is likely to help Hugo Boss remain relevant in a constantly changing world of fashion ([see story](#)).

Louis Vuitton's recent change up might help the brand feel more down to earth and applicable to the average consumer.

"This recent collection feels more streamlined and attainable for Louis Vuitton's current target market and realistic in their daily lifestyle as opposed to being aspirational, which should help increase their bottom line," Ms. Strum said.

"However, there was definitely a major missed opportunity regarding a social media strategy around Mr. Ghesquière's first collection for the brand along with a digital integration," she said. "This approach could have created stronger awareness to increase desire and demand as well as additional touch points to the current and potential clientele.

"Some behind the scenes footage to vicariously experience Mr. Ghesquière would have been valuable to humanize the brand and connect with the designs through the process."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York