

INTERNET

Valentino blends past with present through customizable collection

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Valentino Rouge Absolute Signature pumps

By SARAH JONES

Italian fashion house Valentino is pointing to its heritage with a new collection of customizable accessories in shades of the brand's iconic red color.

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Valentino's Rouge Absolute Signature collection allows consumers to place personalized studs on pumps, handbags and small leather goods. This collection melds the trendy, ever popular Rockstud line with the house's codes in a hands-on way for consumers.

"The intended audience is one that includes the core customer who is already a brand loyalist while also introducing additional shoppers whose interest is piqued due to the focus on hues and customization," said Kimmie Smith, accessory expert and co-founder/creative director of [Accessory2](#), New York.

"The idea of making things personal and incorporating a brand's heritage into your own in a new way is universal to those that have frequented the brand as well as those that were either on the fence in terms of purchasing or are completely new to coveting these items," she said.

Ms. Smith is not affiliated with Valentino but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Valentino did not respond by press deadline.

Seeing red

Valentino introduced its Rouge Absolute collection in an email along with its Shanghai collection designed for its store opening in the Chinese city, which is now available elsewhere in the world.

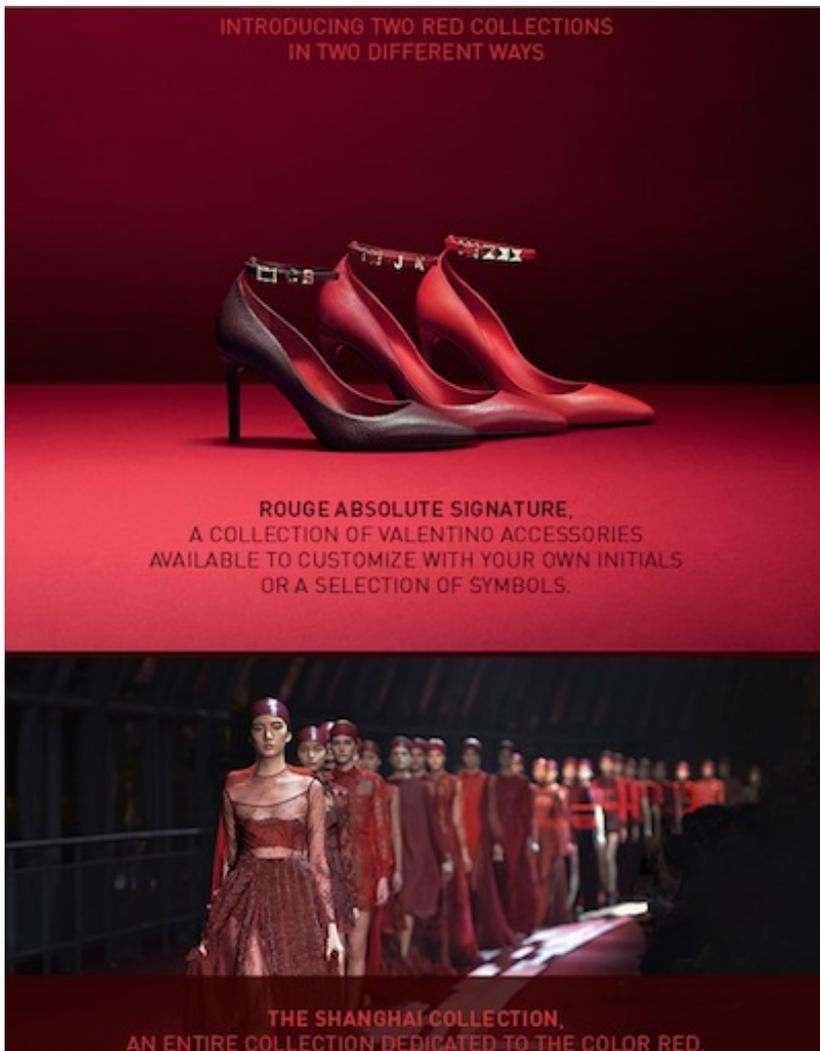


Interior of Valentino Shanghai flagship

The house took an unconventional approach to promote the opening of its new store location in Shanghai by unveiling an exclusive collection Nov. 15 that was available at that location months before it hit the shelves in other stores.

Valentino's creative directors, Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli, designed the Shanghai collection that premiered Nov. 14 on the Bund and via a live-stream on its Web site ([see story](#)).

The email had the subject line “Iconic red,” referring to both the collections’ primary hue. Inside the body of the email, Valentino explained that it was “introducing two red collections in two different ways.”



Email from Valentino

On top was an image of two ankle strap pumps from the Rouge Absolute Signature collection. Below was a photo from the runway show in Shanghai.

The click-through takes consumers to Valentino's Web site, where a video begins automatically playing. A pair of pumps moves by itself, and a group of metallic letters and characters appears magically and slides onto the straps.



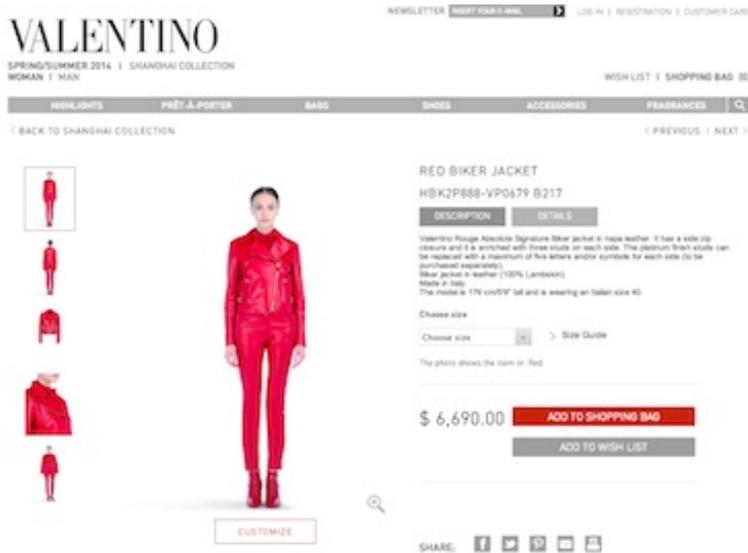
Video still

Studs melt together and form into a dragon, which then perches on top of a clutch bag.

The stud pieces continue to move and transform accessories, attaching and detaching themselves from the waistband of a jacket or handle of a bag. At the end is the message “Make it yours.”

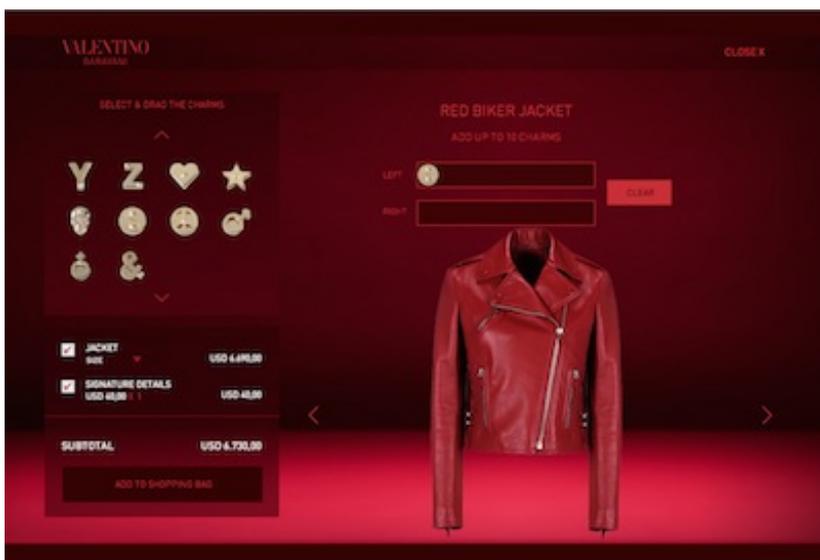
Once the video ends, consumers can enter the site, which has a look consistent with the email, with the same images for the two red collections sitting side by side.

Both are available online for purchase, and some items belong to both lines, like a red leather biker jacket that can be personalized. If customization is available for the Shanghai collection, a button appears on the product page, which takes consumers to its corresponding details within the Rouge Absolute Signature collection.



Valentino Shanghai eCommerce page

Consumers can add letter charms or ones in the shape of a heart, star, skull, yin-yang, peace sign, male or female sign or ampersand.



Valentino Rouge Absolute Signature eCommerce page

Valentino’s social media is heavily focused on its Rouge Absolute Signature collection. Its Facebook cover photo and Twitter background have been changed to an image of high heels from the line.

On Facebook, the brand shared advertising campaign photos for the Rouge collection, which feature photographer Terry Richardson's tattooed forearms holding accessories.



Valentino ad for Rouge Signature Absolute

Personal touch

Customization is appealing for consumers, since it allows them to have their own unique piece of a brand.

French handbag label Longchamp is commemorating the twentieth anniversary of its iconic Le Pliage handbag by opening up its bag customization options.

Consumers can pick out the color for each of the parts of the bag and add their initials in a number of different finishes. Giving consumers the opportunity to make a one-of-a-kind bag can instill loyalty ([see story](#)).

Customization can also be a way for brands to revamp a classic piece in their arsenal.

For instance, U.S. footwear label Stuart Weitzman offered consumers the option to customize their own version of the pump sandal often seen on celebrities at red carpet events timed to synchronize with awards season buzz.

From Feb. 12 to March 12, consumers could create their own version of the brand's "Nudist" pump, choosing their own colors and heel height. This interactive shopping experience was able to engage both consumers and aspirational fans of the brand, who likely played with the design program on Stuart Weitzman's Web site ([see story](#)).

For brands that are known for one look, customization shakes things up, opening the potential for new consumers.

"Heritage brands have such an advantage in the marketplace due to their years of existence, depth of assortment, endorsement via celebrity as well as brand loyalists," Ms. Smith said. "However, to survive for the long term there is a need to stay competitive.

"In order to maintain their market share, they must find ways to add twists to keep their current customers intrigued while bringing in new ones," she said. "Having the option to place rock studs on an iconic heel is a way to enjoy a style that is an essential within the

brand while updating it.

"It's a new way to enjoy the code of red within Valentino and provides a new meaning. This also encourages those within the house to see how it was received in order to make decisions on other kinds of enhancements within the brand."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/CZOwG0ssLv0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/CZOwG0ssLv0)

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