

IN-STORE

Louis Vuitton looks to creative giants for limited-edition collection

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Louis Vuitton Mini Icon Alma BB bag

By SARAH JONES

French leather goods house Louis Vuitton is combining its past with present creative forces through a special project.

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For Louis Vuitton's "The Icon and the Iconoclasts: A Celebration of Monogram," a group of six artistic minds were asked to design their take on the brand's iconic monogram. As Louis Vuitton continues its transition to a new creative director, looking back at its heritage will help show the brand's continuity and timelessness.

"Louis Vuitton organized this project as a brand refresher," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York. "It provides justification to create 'limited edition' items and create a demand for their existing clientele as well as connecting with a broader demographic whom may be interested in this special collaboration.

"The customization and attention to detail from each collaborator allows them to put their own personal spin and nod to modern craftsmanship on the reinterpretation of the monogram," she said.

This strategy gives the iconic brand and opportunity to embrace modern perspectives through the eyes of these well-renown collaborators, which should be extremely desirable to each of these strategic social influencers' followers."

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

Louis Vuitton did not respond by press deadline.

Reinterpreting an icon

For this project, Louis Vuitton chose shoe designer Christian Louboutin, photographer Cindy Sherman, architect Frank Gehry, fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld, industrial designer Marc Newson and fashion designer of Comme des Garçons, Rei Kawakubo.



Frank Gehry designed the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles

Each artist was asked to create either a handbag or piece of luggage that incorporates personal inspiration and the brand's monogram. The designs are meant to also reflect "the brand's spirit of innovation, collaboration and daring."



Comme des Garçons runway looks

Delphine Arnault, the executive vice president of Louis Vuitton, and the current creative director of the house, Nicolas Ghesquière, thought up the project and handpicked the artists.

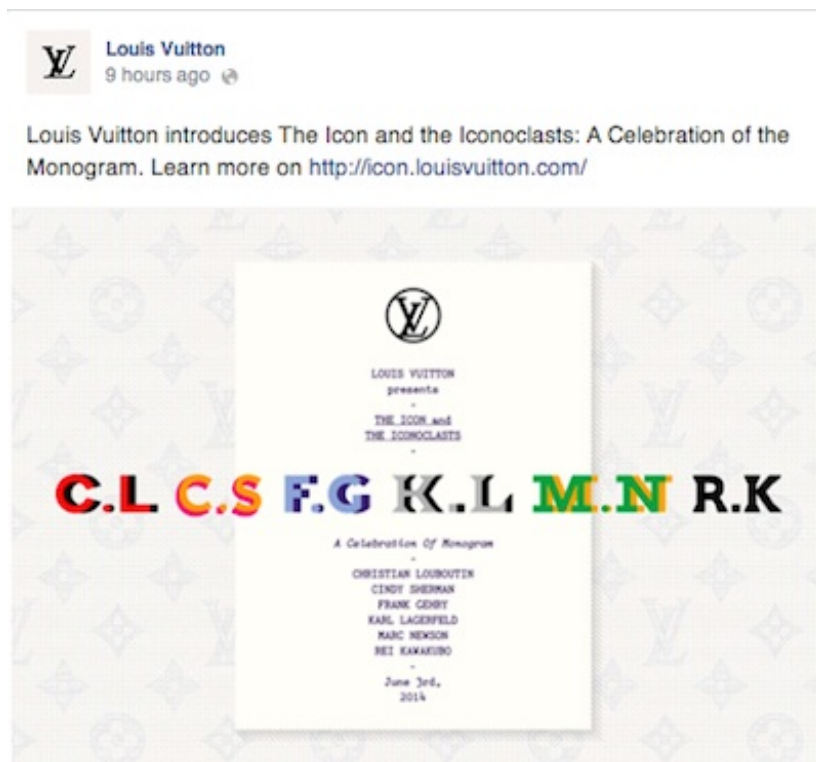
In a branded statement, Ms. Arnault said the six were chosen because they represent the “best in their fields” and for their different points of view, coming from different mediums but all having in common working with their “minds and hands.” She went on to call the group “geniuses.”



Car by Marc Newson

The result of the project is a limited-edition collection of bags that will be available in Louis Vuitton stores globally in mid-October this year. Following the soft launch, there will be an official event celebrating the special collection on Nov. 7 in New York.

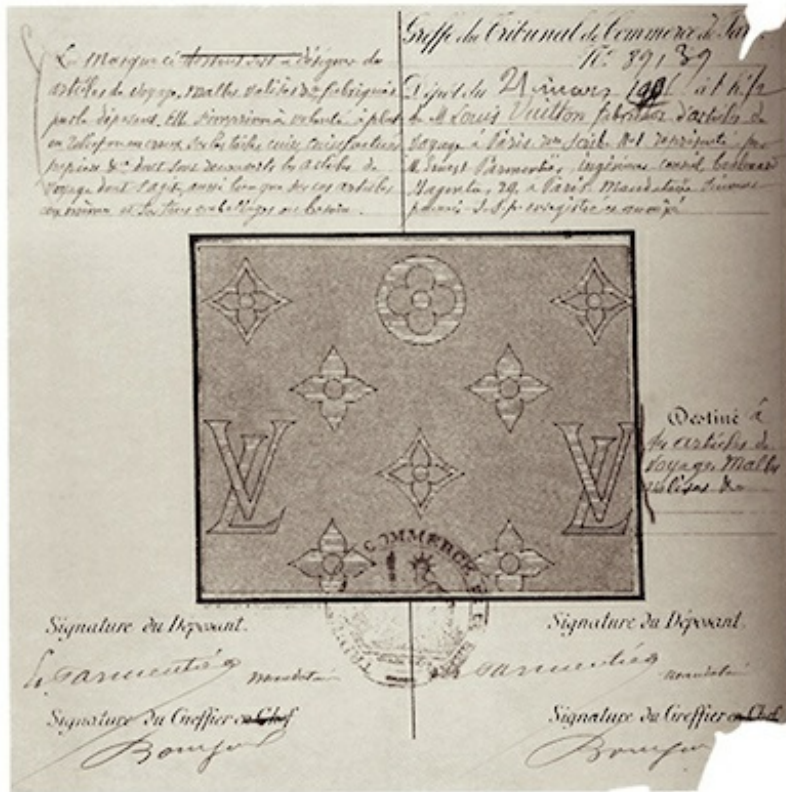
To introduce the project ahead of the bags’ appearance in stores, Louis Vuitton posted to social media, sharing an image designed to look like an invitation on Facebook and posting just the participating artists’ initials on Twitter. In the posts, Louis Vuitton linked to a microsite for the project.



Facebook post from Louis Vuitton

On the Web site, a news item about the collection automatically loads. This both explains the project and outlines the history of the monogram, which first appeared on Louis

Vuitton products in 1896, a tribute to the eponymous founder from his son George Vuitton.



George Vuitton's sketch of the original monogram

If a consumer exits out of the text, the initials appear, which consumers can click to read brief biographies of each of the artists.



Louis Vuitton Icon microsite

Past and present

Louis Vuitton is in a transition period, making it a good time to simultaneously look back at the house's heritage while also updating it.

The label acquired Balenciaga's creative director Nicolas Ghesquière Nov. 4 as artistic director of its women's collections to fill the gap left by Marc Jacobs.

Mr. Ghesquière began his post immediately and showed his first autumn collection March 2014. 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](#)).

Other luxury brands have looked to artists in other disciplines for special collaborations. For instance, Brazilian jeweler and silversmith H.Stern is celebrating the influence of architect Oscar Niemeyer with an expansion of its jewelry collaboration and new campaign effort.

Although Mr. Niemeyer, a native of Brazil, is responsible for the design of the United Nations building in New York and architectural works throughout Brazil, H.Stern's collaboration was inspired by the architect's sketches. Since the pieces were created directly from Mr. Niemeyer's sketches, the designs have an organic quality and will likely appeal to consumers with a penchant for artful lines as well as fans of the late architect ([see story](#)).

This collaboration will likely be a boost to both Louis Vuitton and the brands of the creatives involved.

"The benefits of this collaboration are multi-faceted," Ms. Strum said. "Louis Vuitton has a huge opportunity to gain immense amounts of value, monetarily as well as increasing their brand equity by creating demand for products from consumers whom were not originally their target clientele.

"The collaborators on the other hand, have an opportunity to increase their social credibility by creating a demand for the products that they designed," she said. "This could align future partnerships and/or relationship to continue elevating their status and visibility in their target market's eye."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/IN-RA4gEOiQ](https://www.youtube.com/embed/IN-RA4gEOiQ)

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