Balenciaga unveils Gucci linkup 'Hacker Project' in 74 spaces worldwide

By Godfrey Deeny - November 15, 2021

Balenciaga unveiled its much-anticipated Hacker Project on Monday morning in scores of international locations, with a series of pop-ups and pop-ins to debut the linkup with its fellow Kering brand Gucci.
In Paris, Balenciaga opened four spaces for the Hacker Project, unveiling a strikingly new store with semi-industrial design in the process. Besides its two existing Paris boutiques and a pop-in in Galeries Lafayette, Balenciaga also unveiled a 150-square-meter store in the lower basement of the still largely unopened new Dover Street Market, located in the Marais in a 17th century mansion.

Surveying the Hacker Project products, nearly all carry Demna Gvasalia’s new double ‘BB’ logo, in his ironic version of the Gucci double ‘GG.’ All very obviously based on exciting Gucci totes, handbags, clutches, purses, wallets, scarves and ready-to-wear but no footwear, the fresh monogram added plenty of allure to the range.

The brand unveiled the Hacker Project goods to a select group of editors at 11 a.m., while customers could start buying them online in stores at noon CET. All products were made in limited ranges of up to 600 pieces, like the weekend duffle bag or a classic tote with green and red vertical stripe – both scrawled with the message This Is Not A Gucci Bag, in a homage to surrealist artist René Magritte. Both items, priced at €2,500 euros or €2,200 respectively, had already sold out in online pre-orders, as were double ‘BB’ A-line black logo puffers and matelassé gilets.

For less pain at the cash register there are entry level business card holders, or double-‘B’-logo baseball caps at €350. Pretty much everything is available in black or Gucci’s classic camel color.

Fans of Gucci had already enjoyed their first looks at its take on the Hacker Project in the house’s runway Resort 2022 show back in April, when Alessandro Michele introduced a series of Gucci silhouettes brandishing the Balenciaga logo – part of the house’s 100th anniversary Aria collection.

However, Gvasalia did not return the compliment by showing Hacker Project bags and accessories in any Balenciaga live show so far. Though he did feature his hacked versions of Gucci in a spring-summer show video released on June 6.

Indeed, given how Gucci’s rapid sales growth of the past few years has rapidly cooled, unlike Balenciaga, people will inevitably ask which brand needed the collab more? Most observers will agree that it is Gucci.

That said, Balenciaga has clearly got behind the Hacker Project this week, especially when it came to the selling space in the Marais.

Besides the collection, Demna’s ubiquitous double-BB logo was seen on gunmetal wool carpets, caramel curtains and even wall hangings in the store windows. The house also developed a new oxidized aluminum shelves stained with acid to mimic scrubbed graffiti, a far cry from the shiny steel and pale gray walls of existing Balenciaga flagships.

A huge graffiti-style Gucci logo greets visitors in the Marais entrance, while local artists have been hired to hand-tag double-BB monogram shopping bags - customized and personalized in each customer’s first name.

With Balenciaga due to open a new London flagship early next year, it will be interesting to see how many of these elements migrate into that new UK store.

In a release, Balenciaga insisted that these new “unique displays and structures will introduce Balenciaga pieces that reinterpret Gucci codes and in so doing, question notions of branding, appropriating, and counterfeiting.”

The standalone Hacker Project pop-ups are scheduled to stay open for three weeks.

By Godfrey Deeny

Copyright © 2021 FashionNetwork.com All rights reserved.