Fashion and luxury flock to the Venice Biennale

By Dominique Muret - April 29, 2022

After the Cannes Film Festival, the Milan Furniture Fair, and Art Basel in Miami, the luxury and fashion industries have set their sights on a new playground: Venice and its Art Biennale. Between social dinners, parties, cultural initiatives, artistic projects or simple sponsorships, major fashion houses and brands are spreading the word about their stay in Venice, as the 59th International Art Exhibition kicks off in the Arsenale and Giardini until November 27.

Art and fashion have of course always been linked, weaving creative bridges between one world and the other. But never before has the luxury industry invested so much in a major contemporary art event as it did this spring. The leading fashion groups have long understood the importance of the role of art in fashion and have each set up their own foundations. The Pinault Foundation and its contemporary art collections on display at Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, and the Prada Foundation, housed in the Ca’ Corner della Regina palace on the Canal Grande are just two examples of these foundations in Venice.

In parallel with the Biennale, the Prada Foundation has just unveiled the 'Human Brains: It Begins With An Idea' exhibition, exploring the multiple dimensions of the brain, from neuroscience to artificial intelligence. Kering-owned brand Bottega Veneta joined the Pinault collection, sponsoring performances by choreographers William Forsythe, Lenio Kaklea, Ralph Lemon and Pam Tanowitz, inspired by the exhibition 'Bruce Nauman: Contrapposto Studies', on display at Punta Della Dogana until November. Matthieu Blazy, the label’s new creative director, designed the dancers’ costumes and welcomed a slew of illustrious guests to a gala dinner organized for the occasion, including the Biennale’s curator herself, Cecilia Alemani.

Meanwhile, Bottega Veneta recently launched a capsule collection of bags inspired by Olivetti typewriters and their famous showroom-boutique in Venice built in 1958 by architect Carlo Scarpa, which served as the backdrop for the campaign. The brand chose Venice to reveal the first shot of its new advertising campaign starring model and photographer Malick Bodian standing in front of the San Geremia church.
The two powerhouses of the LVMH group, Dior and Louis Vuitton, have not been overlooked. Dior joined forces with the Venetian Heritage Foundation, a non-profit organization whose president is none other than architect Peter Marino, designer of the brand's boutiques, among other projects, organizing an evening to raise funds for the Ca' d'Oro palace's restoration and for Ukrainian refugees in Italy. Louis Vuitton, also a patron of Venetian Heritage, organized a fundraising gala dinner for preserving this historic palace located in the Italian city.

At the same time, the company invited German artist Katharina Grosse to exhibit her artworks, including her 'Apollo' installation, in its Louis Vuitton Venezia space. It also utilized eight historic Venetian newsstands restored by the company to display, alongside traditional newspapers, the complete collection of its travel book series: 'City Guide', 'Fashion Eye' and 'Travel Book'. Meanwhile, Valentino, which is sponsoring the Italian pavilion at the Biennale for the first time, also hosted a VIP evening.

Chanel brought forth another special initiative, bringing together the first 10 winners of its Chanel Next Prize in Venice; creatives hailing from 11 different countries specializing in design, cinema, theater or visual arts. The goal of this initiative was to immerse these creative people in the stimulating atmosphere of the Art Biennale through a sneak preview of the exhibition and meetings with the exhibited artists. Of course, the program also included a dinner to celebrate this first batch of winners with a few distinguished members of the jury in attendance, such as the Scottish actress Tilda Swinton and the British-Ghanaian architect Sir David Adjaye, as well as other prominent figures.

Two other interesting cultural projects backed by fashion brands were worth mentioning. First on the list, the 'AllTogether' exhibition, sponsored by Italian denim label Diesel, which presents the Foundation Tom of Finland collection in Venice, artworks created by the gay community's emblematic artist, of which a second chapter will be unveiled from May 8 at The Community Center in Pantin, near Paris.

The second initiative concerns the Italian brand, Drome, known for its designer Marianna Rosati's leather pieces, and which is supporting the French artist Pauline Curnier Jardin's project. The visual artist realized a permanent community installation in collaboration with the inmates of Venice's women's prison, the Giudecca. Drome set up two workshops, where the creative director and her team made a series of portraits with some of the inmates inside the space they built with Curnier Jardin. The installation, unveiled during the Venice Biennale, was created as part of the Lofoten International Art Festival in Venice scheduled to be held in September.

These multiple initiatives taking place during Venice Biennale’s 2022 edition underscore the fashion and luxury industries’ commitment to position themselves alongside major international art events, capitalizing on the outstanding momentum they generate, while allowing brands to refine their image as benefactors supporting both...
outstanding momentum they generate, while allowing brands to refine their image as benefactors supporting both artists and the heritage of one of the world's most popular tourist destinations.

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