

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Gucci takes its Chinese fans beyond fashion and into the creative world of Alessandro Michele

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The 'A Magazine Curated By' art exhibit in Beijing featured favorites of Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele. This room showcased a "Cabinet of Curiosities," featuring several high jewelry themed art pieces. (Courtesy Photo)

By [Jessica Rapp](#)

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Luxury fashion houses are no strangers to the art world, and this is becoming increasingly so in China. Gucci's new art exhibit in Beijing, curated by the high-end fashion publication A Magazine Curated By, is the latest example of how a brand's art collaboration can fuel the expression of brand identity and engage aspiring consumers.

At 77 Theater, a few steps from the National Art Museum of China, there was a line out the door on Monday afternoon [April 3] for a traveling exhibition that gives consumers a look into the mind of Gucci's creative director, Alessandro Michele.

Most visitors were young, with some sporting Gucci handbags and apparel for the occasion, but the majority dressed fashionably in more accessible clothing. A few had professional digital cameras, but most had their smartphones out and ready. They teamed up with friends, taking turns striking poses in front of the dramatic A Magazine backdrop at the theater's entrance.



77 Theater opened Gucci's 'A Magazine Curated by Alessandro Michele' exhibition on March 30. (Photo by Jessica Rapp)

"A lot of people just want to come here and take photos," a gallery guide for the event, who wished to remain unnamed, said. "I try to show them artwork, and they're not interested they tell me, 'I just want to take pictures' and then they leave."

The guide gave tours through the three-room space to those willing, guiding them first along walls filled with photographs and prints representing the love-themed muses of Mr. Michele, who guest edited the November 2016 issue of A Magazine.

Mr. Michele took the role of Gucci's creative director in 2015, and is credited for the brand's comeback, giving it a fresh, more artistic, head-turning makeover. He was also responsible for the Chinese-inspired Gucci Tian pattern as well as Gucci Gram, an online collaboration with emerging contemporary artists from around the world.

Last year, the Gucci Gram Tian campaign spotlighted photographers and illustrators in China, including the late Beijing-based photographer Ren Hang and Guangzhou-based artist Cao Fei.

That particular campaign was prominent on Instagram, highlighting social media's major role for the brand.

Gucci CEO Marco Bizzarri has said the brand's goal, both in China and around the globe, is to target millennials, and there is no doubt Gucci has succeeded in creating a bridge with this group of digital natives in Beijing, many of whom were sharing their A Magazine exhibit photos on China's social media platforms WeChat and Weibo.



Chinese youth brought their style and cameras to Gucci's Beijing exhibition, which is on until April 9. (Photo by Jessica Rapp)

One of the attendees, Levi Xiao, came to the event in cosplay fashion and took pictures in front of a series of prints by London-based Instagram sensation Unskilled Worker. She said she and her friend, both students in Beijing, came to the exhibition because Gucci was a famous brand name, but despite her penchant for fashion she did not own any Gucci products, mainly because it was "too expensive."

The guide said it is these groups they are hoping to reach through the exhibition.

"We're here to tell people there are a lot of stories behind the brand, not just that it's expensive, it's beautiful, and nothing else," the guide said. "There are stories, there are love stories."

The exhibition also features work from Spanish photographer Coco Capitt, who did one of her installations on site on opening day for VIPs in Beijing. The event runs from March 30 to April 9 before it moves on to Taipei [capital of Taiwan].

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