

# Gucci: The Artistry Behind the Brand

Art, design and fashion converge in the house of Gucci in Florence, Italy—and the company’s other stores around the world.

by Allison Malafronte

International luxury brands are in the business of creating an elevated in-store experience for their clients, with some of today’s high-end stores turning into veritable sets and stages for one-of-a-kind presentations. Some companies, however, raise the experience beyond retail into the realm of fine art. On a recent visit to Rodeo Drive, the gallery row of luxury retail in Beverly Hills, Calif., I was lured into the Gucci store by their distinctively designed window displays. Enchanted by the ornate architecture, vintage furniture and wallpaper, custom-designed textiles, and artfully displayed couture and ready-to-wear collections, I concluded that the Gucci store felt as much like a gallery or museum as it did a retail space. Presuming there must be some extremely colorful minds behind this Bohemian-meets-luxury presentation, I reached out to Gucci to learn about the artistry behind their visual and creative team. As it turns out, Gucci’s connections to art reach far back into its nearly 100-year history.

## FLORENCE, ITALY

Although Gucci has locations around the globe, its home is in Florence, Italy, where it began in 1921. From its inception, Gucci cultivated a climate of creativity, innovation and the finest Italian craftsmanship. That legacy continues to shape the company’s future as Alessandro Michele, creative director since 2015, honors Gucci’s roots by preserving items that date back to the company’s origins while incorporating



## THE FINE ART OF DINING

A finely curated selection of ceramics and textiles, including tableware featuring the signature Gucci Flora print, help create the colorful yet elegant dining experience of the Gucci Osteria, the café located inside the Florence store.

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## GUCCI GARDEN GALLERIA & MUSEO

Adjacent to the Uffizi Gallery, Gucci’s Florence location honors the legacy of its hometown while incorporating contemporary art and fashion.

innovative fashion, fine-art, design and décor elements.

In 2018, Gucci opened Gucci Garden Galleria in the Palazzo della Mercanzia, in Florence, a 14th-century building adjacent to the Uffizi Gallery. This palazzo also houses the Gucci Museo, opened in 2011, which took the concept of a conventional museum and reimagined it as a creative collaborative space showing historic and contemporary fashion. The Gucci Garden Galleria takes a similar tact with various vintage and contemporary art forms exhibited together—clothing, accessories, video installations, artwork, ephemera and artifacts—all organized by

theme and displayed throughout two floors amid Gucci fabric-patterned wallpaper and paintings.

The Gucci Garden Galleria even has an elegant café (the Gucci Osteria) with a colorful presentation that, like the rest of the Galleria, flaunts Gucci’s passion for flora and fauna. Ceramics and textiles throughout the café and the two floors of the Galleria feature Gucci’s signature Flora pattern along with original artwork from Vittorio Accornero, who was commissioned to create the print in 1966. Creative culinary arts are folded into the Gucci experience here, with chef Massimo Bottura taking a cue from the design house’s past-meets-present motif to compose a menu based on Italian classics, with several unexpected conceptual twists. Whether in the café, the bazaar-like retail space featuring bespoke creations, the second-floor shop with home and décor items, or the main galleries displaying vintage and contemporary clothing and accessories, the Gucci Garden Galleria honors its flagship city’s historic reputation for the handcrafted while incorporating inspiration from the 21st century.



## VISUAL DISEGNO

Throughout the Gucci Florence store, clothing, accessories and décor items designed exclusively for Gucci Garden are artfully displayed. There’s also a selection of innovative magazines and publications, and a collection of antique and rare contemporary books from the Antica Libreria Cascianelli in Rome.





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## NEW YORK

Other Gucci stores that continue to merge the worlds of fashion and fine art include several of their stateside locations, including those in New York City and the Miami Design District. Opened a year after Gucci Garden Galleria, the New York location brings the Florentine bohemian spirit of the Gucci brand across the sea into the heart of SoHo, where cutting-edge fashion, art and music have thrived for decades. Inside its carefully curated interior, the Gucci Wooster Street space brings technology alongside its traditional and vintage wares with attractions such as an interactive LED wall, a 3-D video display and a Gucci DIY digital interactive tool.

In homage to the art, music and fashion icons active in SoHo in the 1970s and 1980s, Gucci also spearheaded several creative projects, including a collaboration with SoHo-based *Interview* magazine (founded by Andy Warhol) to reprint the historic 1985 Music Issue, with the Drawing Center, the New York Academy and other SoHo neighbors featured in the article.

### ▲ THE SOHO BOHO SPIRIT

When Gucci opened its New York location on Wooster Street, in SoHo, the company connected to a history of bohemian-spirited creatives—including Andy Warhol, Madonna and Basquiat—who lived, worked or played in the area during the 1970s and 1980s.

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### MODERN IN MIAMI

Gucci Miami opened in 2017. The boutique's two floors, connected by a red-lacquered wood staircase, feature a creative layout of clothing, shoes, jewelry, Gucci-printed fabric, vintage rugs, velvet chairs, 3-D digital displays and more.

### MIAMI

Gucci's Miami Design District location brings further modern art-and-design flair into its layout with a façade constructed of marble and pale-green industrial metal and a customized illustrative mural installed on the adjacent storefront. The interior's design aesthetic is a hybrid of industrial and romantic, with soft elements such as velvet armchairs offsetting harder surfaces and industrial architectural features. The combination of unexpected materials is curated in such a way as to create a seamless transition between various sections of the store and otherwise disparate time periods and movements. Of course, it wouldn't be a Gucci boutique without this marriage of traditional and modern, past and present, weaving its way throughout the distinctively designed, one-of-a-kind visual experience. ♣

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