

WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.



Busy Shein

After doing a deal with Authentic's Forever 21, Shein has acquired online fashion retailer Missguided.

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Eilish and Gucci

Billie Eilish is fronting Gucci's campaign for its first bag using the animal-free material Demetra.

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Reimagining Tommy

Tommy Hilfger has tapped Greg Lauren for a capsule reinterpreting pieces from Hilfger's fall 2023 collection.

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China Vision

Leaders from Cartier, Prada, LVMH, Tapestry, OTB, MCM and Kosé, as well as a panel of young designers, all seen here, traveled to Chengdu, China, for the WWD x SKP Fashion & Beauty Global Summit, giving their views on the trends shaping the key market and the outlook both for the year ahead as well as longer-term. For full coverage of the summit, see pages 10 to 17.



Gianfranco D'Attis

BUSINESS

Prada CEO Gianfranco D'Attis on Building a Brand of Substance

● The executive used the occasion to reveal that the brand will stage its second Pradasphere event in Shanghai starting Dec. 7 until Jan. 21.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

Gianfranco D'Attis, who was appointed Prada brand chief executive officer last December, recalled buying his first pair of Prada America's Cup sneakers at the age of 14 with money he saved from carrying groceries for the neighbor, mowing lawns, and getting good grades in school, while persistently harassing his parents for financial support.

"So from a young aspiring teenager full of dreams to one of the guardians, one of the architects of the brand alongside Patrizio Bertelli, Miuccia Prada, Lorenzo Bertelli, and all teams around the world, including the China team that is here with me today, you can call it destiny. It's the magic of life," said D'Attis at the WWD Global Fashion & Beauty Summit, hosted in partnership with Chinese retailer SKP.

The executive then took the audience on a journey of how Prada has been building a brand of substance throughout the years.

"The first thing I did to understand the Prada brand was to consider its roots, to understand the twists and turns, the detours that the company took to become what it is today, the fundamental elements of the Prada DNA, Italian roots, entrepreneurship, the importance of material and manufacturing," he said.

Started in 1913 by Mario Prada as a luxury luggage and leather goods house, the brand has transformed over the decades to become a major player in the

luxury industry by consistently breaking boundaries and creating dialogues between the arts, luxury and fashion.

Among all the numbers he has been looking at as the CEO of the brand, he was most proud of its 14,000 employees worldwide.

"We are building an empowering organization that is people-centric, that is entrepreneurial, structured to both scale and win. And we want people to come to Prada to be themselves to do their best work and certainly make a difference," he noted.

The other important number for the brand, in the eyes of D'Attis, is its 24 industrial facilities.

"The first thing you're invited to do when you start at Prada is to experience the artisanal craft in Tuscany, the beating heart of the maison. Prada is the first luxury brand to control all aspects of sourcing, creation, and distribution to guarantee the highest quality. Don't just picture old, dusty ateliers. Although we respect history, we love to challenge tradition. Old manufacturing processes reflect both the traditional know-how and handwork combined with cutting-edge technologies and infrastructure," he said.

On top of top-notch manufacturing capability, D'Attis believes that the core of Prada's success is its "creative vision, the collections, and the products that are so incredibly desirable."

"We have a very unique creative setup," explained D'Attis. "Raf Simons joined Prada in April 2020 as co-creative director working in partnership with Miuccia Prada with equal responsibilities. This partnership includes all creative facets of the Prada brand. The proposition

comes from both ways, and decisions are mutual. This opens a new kind of collective dialogue between two of the most important and influential designers of today. Their designs connect with the lives of people, reinventing the language of luxury, and subverting stereotypes."

The other pillar of Prada's unique proposition is the intellectual considerations behind everything it does.

"Let me read you the declaration of Miuccia Prada because it's so clear and powerful. 'My primary concern in all my roles is ideas. That's the reason for everything. Deep down my role through the lens of Prada is to make culture attractive. If it's not attractive, no one listens. It needs to make people understand that culture is necessary. Intelligence and ideas make life more interesting, and more beautiful. They are a pleasure, not a duty, art and fashion culture are for me tools, something fundamental and essential to help your life.'"

"So when you read this, you realize that the Prada brand can't be reduced to just a value proposition. The Prada brand is not just a brand positioning. The Prada brand is much more than a lifestyle. Did you notice that she did not say, 'My role at Prada'? But she said, 'My role through the lens of Prada.' This is very significant as it underlines that Prada is a vehicle to communicate a unique perspective on the world. It's about cultural engagement. It's about curiosity. It's about ideas. It's a manifesto in favor of substance," said D'Attis.

Also, D'Attis believes that since the brand's mission is to provide cultural commentary, this gives Prada permission to play in different fields in different categories, such as hospitality with the Prada Caffè at Harrods in London,

architectural collaborations with Rem Koolhaas on store and show set designs, and cultural institutes like Fondazione Prada in Milan and Vince and Rongzhai in Shanghai.

"So to recap, Prada-ness provokes you to sink to arts. Prada-ness is around the corner with architectural statements, and you can even taste Prada-ness. And of course, in venturing all these different worlds, each time we learn something that we integrate and deliver to our client in our boutiques, more and more Prada-ness is infused in our touch points," he added.

He also touted that Prada-ness is not meant to stay stable. In the past year, the brand revealed several major initiatives to accelerate the evolution of the Prada brand, such as a beauty line with L'Oréal, a fine jewelry collection made with recycled gold, and a partnership with Axiom Space, the architect of the world's first commercial space station, on creating NASA's lunar space suits for the Artemis III mission.

"For Prada, even the sky is not the limit anymore," said D'Attis.

Toward the end of his session, D'Attis also unveiled that Pradasphere II will run in Shanghai starting Dec. 7 until Jan. 21 with a selection of stories curated by the brand's co-creative directors.

More than 500 artifacts, both physical and digital, will be on display, drawn from the fashion archive as well as from Prada's activities, showcasing its impact on the luxury industry and in the fields of art, architecture, culture and sport.

"How do we convey the richness of our point of view? Words alone don't work. It really has to be experienced. Pradasphere II is an immersive experience designed to give every single visitor a unique taste of the Prada-ness," he added.