

ESCP Business School

Master Thesis

How Luxury Brands Benefit from Artistic Collaborations

Artistic Collaborations



Overview

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Introduction

The luxury industry stands at a crossroads balancing heritage and innovation, exclusivity and accessibility.

As Millennials and Gen Z become the dominant consumers, they seek brands that are culturally relevant, creative, and emotionally engaging.

In this landscape, artistic collaborations have become a strategic way for luxury brands to reinvent their identity.

These partnerships between brands and artists from fields such as painting, architecture, and digital art allow brands to express creativity, refresh their storytelling, and connect with new audiences.

Research Problems



- Artistic collaborations are everywhere — but poorly analyzed academically



- **Missing** : Absence of clear KPIs to evaluate cultural and commercial impact.



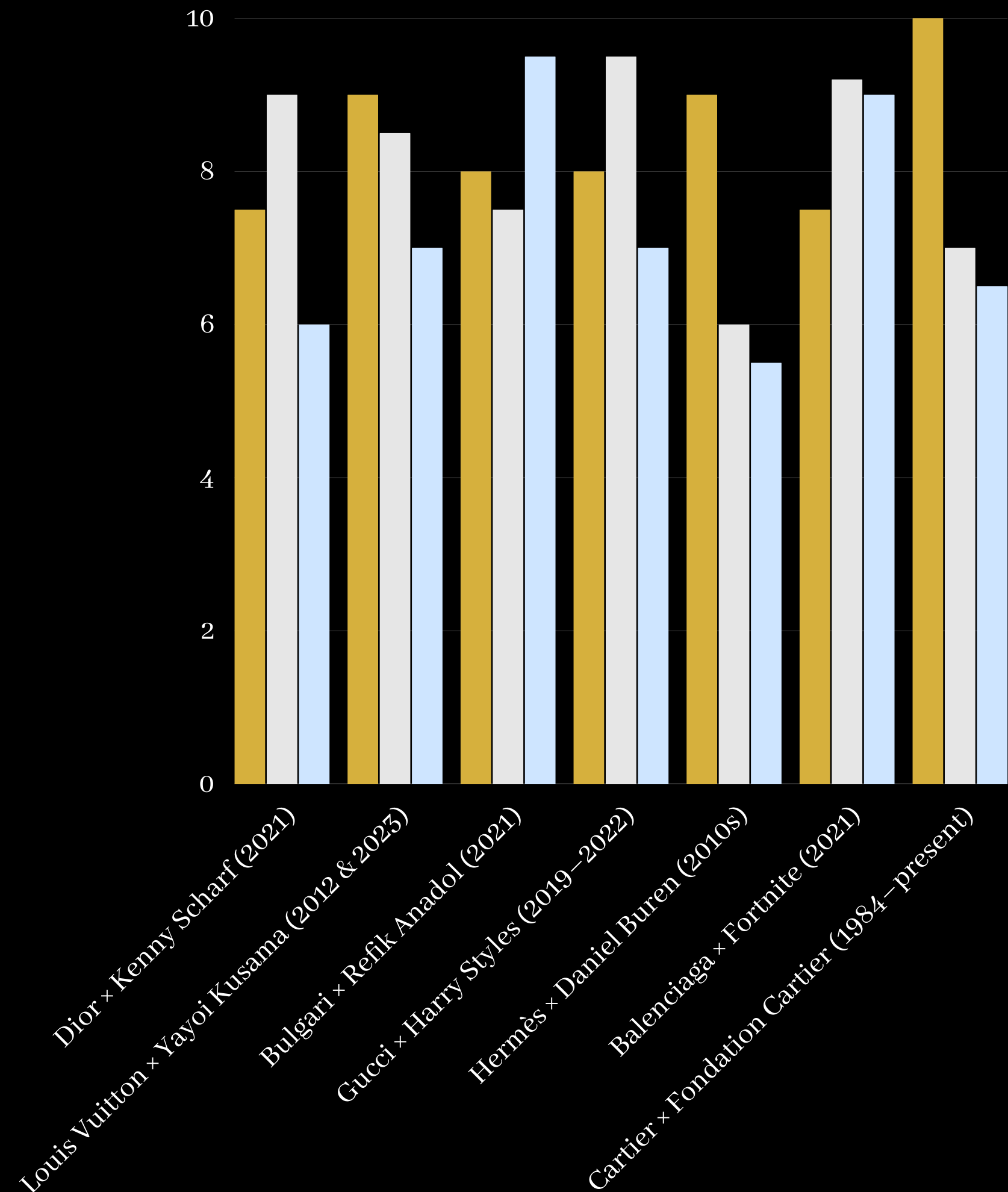
- Very Few studies link artification theory with managerial tools

Literature Review

- 1 Luxury Brand Management (Kapferer, Okonkwo) Luxury brands rely on heritage, storytelling, and symbolic value but must innovate to remain relevant — a “luxury paradox.”
- 2 Cultural Capital (Bourdieu, 1984) Artistic collaborations enhance a brand’s prestige and legitimacy by transferring the symbolic value of art.
- 3 Digital Transformation : New media — NFTs, AI, metaverse — expand how brands express creativity and reach Gen Z audiences. Examples include Balenciaga × Fortnite and Bulgari × Refik Anadol.



Quantitative



Results

01

 **Audience Extension** →
attract new consumers

02

 **Exclusivity & Legitimacy** → reinforce
heritage & prestige

03

 **Innovation** → explore
technology & creativity

methodology



methodology 01

This thesis adopts a qualitative multiple-case study approach. It focuses on how artistic collaborations function as strategic tools in luxury branding, emphasizing meaning, creativity, and cultural value rather than only financial metrics.



methodology 02

Seven iconic collaborations were analyzed — Dior × Scharf, Louis Vuitton × Kusama, Bulgari × Anadol, Gucci × Harry Styles, Hermès × Buren, Balenciaga × Fortnite, and Cartier × Fondation Cartier. Each case was assessed through a common framework of objectives, tools, KPIs, scope, and format to identify emerging typologies and strategic patterns.



Conclusion

Artistic collaborations are not superficial marketing tools — they are strategic mechanisms that merge creativity, culture, and commerce.

This study offers both academic contribution (a structured typology) and managerial guidance (a decision framework for collaboration formats).

They allow luxury brands to:

- Stay culturally and socially relevant.
- Reaffirm authenticity through artistic association.
- Expand audiences without diluting exclusivity.
- Bridge tradition and innovation via hybrid experiences.

Future Recommendations

Guiding the Next Era of Artistic Collaborations in Luxury



Dior x Zaha Hamid
Architecture



BVLGARI X Refik Anadol



Gucci x Billie Eilish



Cartier x AI Weiwei



Hermès x Olafur Eliasson

Hermès x Olafur Eliasson

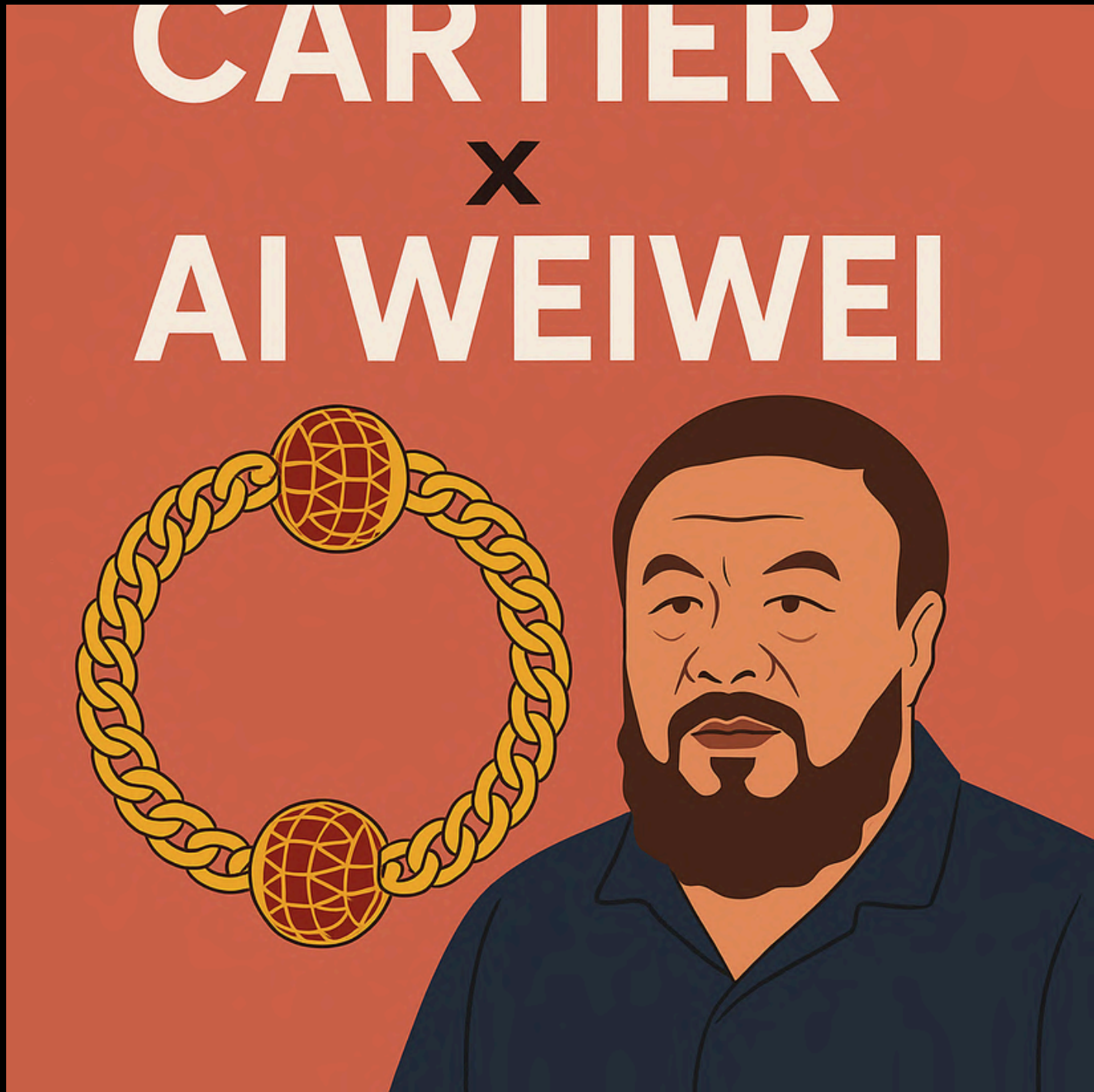
Aspect	Description
What	An immersive exhibition using Eliasson’s solar-light installations, paired with limited Hermès silk scarves inspired by color/light experiments.
Why	Hermès values craftsmanship and nature; Eliasson is known for environmental art. Together they reinforce exclusivity while signaling sustainability.
Impact	Strengthens Hermès’ image as a house of timeless craft and ecological responsibility; builds cultural capital through museum partnerships.



Gucci x Billie Eilish

Aspect	Description
What	Capsule collection styled by Billie Eilish, extended into VR/AR concert experiences featuring Gucci outfits.
Why	Gucci thrives on inclusivity and bold self-expression, while Eilish represents Gen Z and sustainability.
Impact	Expands Gucci’s reach to younger audiences; boosts digital innovation narrative; enhances cultural legitimacy through music crossover.

Cartier x Ai Weiwei



Aspect	Description
What	Series of installations at Fondation Cartier combining recycled materials, political art, and Cartier jewelry reinterpretations.
Why	Cartier has long invested in art foundations; Ai Weiwei adds depth with his global recognition and activist edge.
Impact	Positions Cartier as a cultural leader engaging with global issues; differentiates it from purely commercial players.

Louis Vuitton x Studio Ghibli

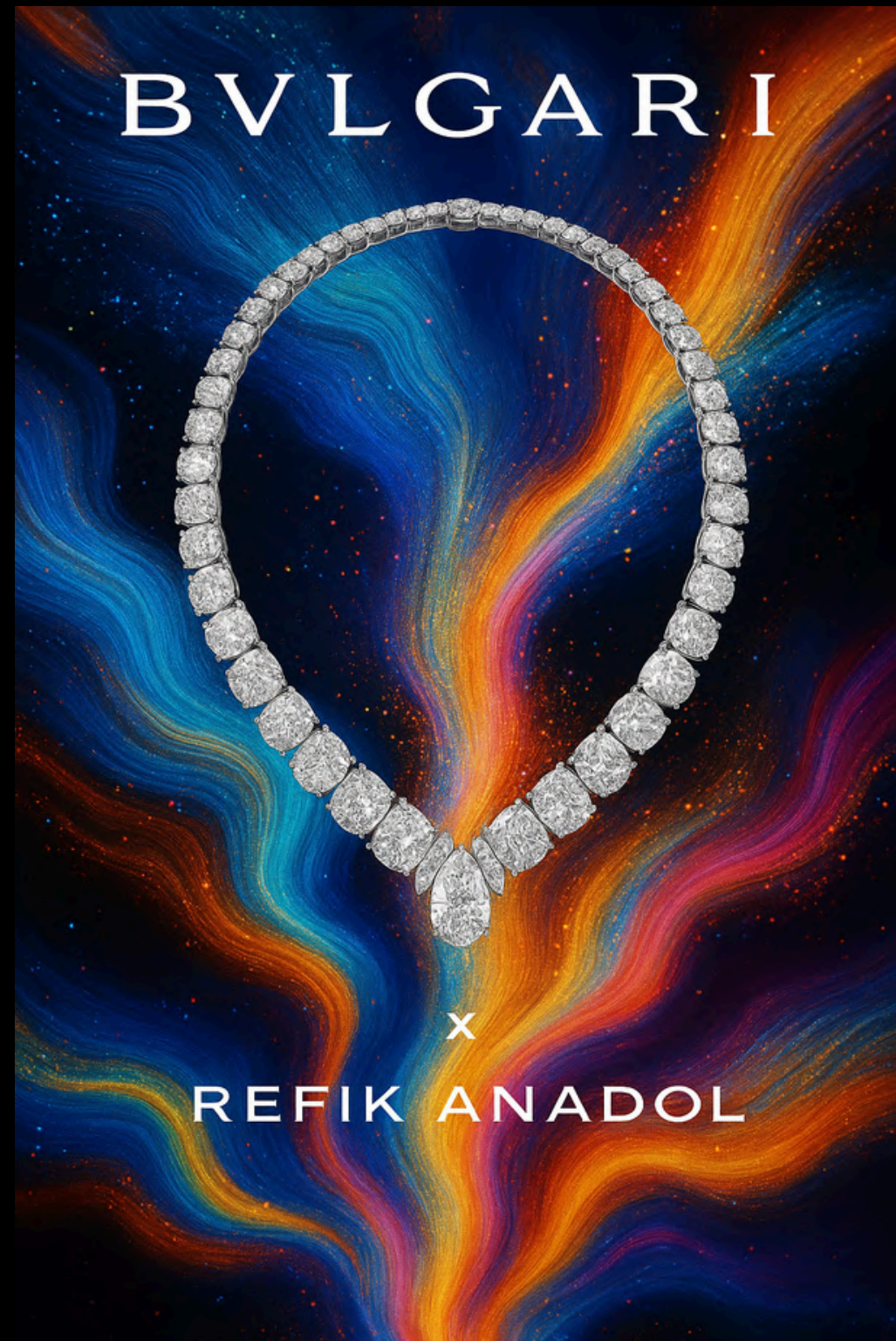


Aspect	Description
What	Capsule collection of trunks, leather goods, and immersive pop-up spaces inspired by Spirited Away and My Neighbor Totoro.
Why	Vuitton has a history with Japanese artists (Murakami, Kusama); Studio Ghibli merges heritage, fantasy, and cross-generational appeal.
Impact	Extends Vuitton’s cultural relevance in Asia; strengthens narrative storytelling; balances exclusivity with broad emotional appeal.

Balenciaga x Banksy



Aspect	Description
What	Guerrilla street installations where Banksy artworks reveal AR-linked Balenciaga pieces. Limited capsule drop in urban spaces.
Why	Balenciaga thrives on disruption and anti-luxury codes; Banksy embodies street credibility and subversion.
Impact	Reinforces Balenciaga’s position as avant-garde provocateur; attracts global youth audiences; high viral potential.



Bulgari x Refik Anadol

Aspect	Description
What	AI-designed Serpenti jewelry as NFTs linked to limited physical pieces. Digital exhibitions in Milan and Tokyo.
Why	Bulgari already collaborated with Anadol; extending it to blockchain/AI strengthens innovation leadership.
Impact	Positions Bulgari as a pioneer in digital luxury; creates scarcity through NFT-linked exclusivity; appeals to tech-savvy audiences.



Chanel x NASA

Aspect	Description
What	Space-inspired couture capsule with metallic tweeds, astronaut accessories, and immersive AR/VR “spacewalk” exhibitions.
Why	Chanel has futuristic runway heritage; NASA embodies innovation and exploration. Together they merge tradition with cutting-edge science.
Impact	Extends Chanel to tech-savvy audiences, strengthens innovation narrative, and creates strong global media buzz.

Dior x Zaha Hadid Architects (posthumous studio)



Aspect	Description
What	Runway shows staged in Hadid-inspired structures, with couture collections echoing her curvilinear forms.
Why	Dior's elegance meets Hadid's futuristic architecture, reinforcing artistry beyond fashion.
Impact	Creates a spectacle that merges fashion, design, and architecture; elevates Dior's brand equity through cultural innovation.



Thank You