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PRADA MOVES FORWARD ON ESG VERSACE? THE FOCUS IS ON US

Lorenzo Bertelli leads sustainability strategy for the luxury fashion house, which confirms all investments and opens an ocean culture centre. “Tariffs? Harmful for everyone.”

by FRANCESCA GAMBARINI

“For us, it started out almost like a dare: return what we can to the planet, through a sense of responsibility, of giving back. For me, it was a long-time awareness that began when I used to go skiing as a boy and noticed that there was less and less snow. Or when I went fishing and realized that there were fewer and fewer fish. Today, the path we began to forge three years ago has taken shape. But our work is not done. In fact, this is ‘just’ another beginning,” Lorenzo Bertelli, fourth generation top management at the Prada luxury fashion house, explained to L'Economia. We're at the opening of the first Italian centre dedicated to ocean education, the Sea Beyond Ocean Literacy Centre, founded on the island of San Servolo in the Venice lagoon, driven by the group whose Corporate Social Responsibility strategy Bertelli heads and the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. The project is part of Sea Beyond, the Prada and UNESCO initiative which has been working since 2019 to make young generations and beyond more aware of ocean conservation. At a time of uncertainty and political and economic tensions, it's good news to see the opening of the Venetian centre, two immersive, high-tech rooms that reorganize and present updated data on ocean health, plus a room dedicated to play and the sea library, co-designed by CRA-Carlo Ratti Associati. Especially for those who continue to believe that it's everyone's duty to take action for the planet.

Mr. Bertelli, one wouldn't necessarily expect this from a fashion group with 5.4 billion in sales revenues, with a 17% growth (at constant exchange rates) that's bucking the luxury trend.

"Fashion is a powerful tool for interpreting reality, a means of influencing people and achieving ambitious goals. Working as a team, the Prada group and UNESCO are producing results after much effort. I like the idea of making it possible for young generations to learn and choose to take action. Awareness is the key to change."

With tariffs, rearmament and companies backing off ESG issues, you are confirming your investments in sustainability.

"Absolutely yes. If the luxury world doesn't have to show that it's possible to be sustainable, then who should? At times like this, it's important to keep a cool head and be aware of our capabilities. We all have to weather this storm as best we can. It will pass: those who can hold the course, especially on ESG issues, will be stronger and more competitive."

This year many fashion companies will decide to worry more about their EBITDA than sustainability.

"The atmosphere is certainly different now, but it shouldn't be an excuse to backtrack. We won't do that, and in fact this is an opportunity to continue investing in the long term. It's what makes the difference in difficult times like this."

It's been a year and a half now that 1% of proceeds from the Prada Re-Nylon for Sea Beyond collection has supported Sea Beyond and the logo has appeared on the sail of the *Luna Rossa*. How's it going? Are you satisfied?

"In 2020 we launched the Prada Re-Nylon collection, made of regenerated nylon obtained from recycling plastic material collected from the ocean and landfills, and derived from textile fibre wastes. Prada Re-Nylon is now an important and integrated part of the brand collections, and its journey continues."

How does the public like it?

"A lot. We see the difference in Asia. When we launched it, Re-Nylon was perceived as inferior to other collections. But now it's sought after: a sign that even there, something has changed in awareness and choices."

Will sustainability save us from luxury shame?

"Fashion goes in cycles, it's very natural for a model's appeal to wax and wane. But sustainability is the way forward. We may slow down, as is occurring now for various reasons, but I'm confident that we won't abandon the path."

The US tariffs are alarming. Will we know how to address them?

"It's undeniably a severe blow. They'll have an enormous impact on Italy, Europe, the USA, and also China. History teaches us that protectionism stops growth and harms everyone. The USA was recovering, China was still struggling, but now everything has changed."

In Prada's geography, what impact will tariffs have?

"For us, the USA accounts for a quarter of revenues, about like China, but compared to others we're less unbalanced, and very probably luxury will be able to take the hit better than other sectors, including within fashion. The day after the announcement, US stocks suffered more than luxury ones."

Would it be good news if, as Gildo Zegna told the *Corriere*, Prada entered into an agreement for the acquisition of Versace? Exclusive

rights expire on Thursday.

“We continue to focus on our brands while remaining open to the best opportunities for the group.”

In the lagoon

The Sea Beyond Ocean Literacy Centre will be open Tuesdays and Fridays and on weekends for special events. There are already over 200 reservations. Info on the website: oceanliteracycentre.org



Venice Above, Lorenzo Bertelli, head of Corporate Social Responsibility for the Prada group. Below, the "A World of Islands" room at the Sea Beyond Ocean Literacy Centre



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Prada集团首席营销官Lorenzo Bertelli:表达者应让自己被理解,而非受众去费力思索

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姚宛

3月31日,由意大利奢侈品牌Prada开设并运营的精品餐饮空间“迷上Prada荣宅”(下文称“迷上”)正式向公众开放。这是Prada在中国以及亚洲范围内落地的首个独立餐饮空间,由导演王家卫创作构思。“迷上”一名取自米兰和上海的首字,寓意两座城市之间美学和文化的关系。

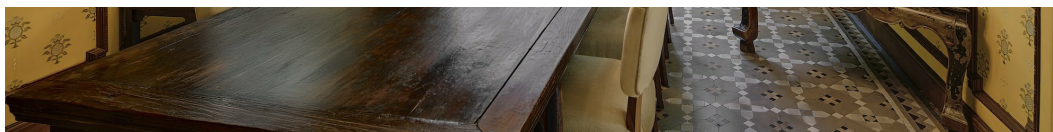
这是Prada第二次和王家卫合作。在电视剧《繁花》中,Prada为演员马伊俐饰演的角色玲子提供服装,后者重新演绎品牌在1990年代和2000年代初的经典造型。在此基础上,王家卫进一步深挖上海和米兰之间的联结,以邮学中的“对倒”(Tête-bêche)概念构思餐厅主题。

携手王家卫,Prada亚洲首个餐饮空间“迷上 Prada 荣宅”坐落上海致敬经典电影美学

“对倒”的意思是,因为工人或机器操作失误,邮票在印刷过程中出现了前后两张图案倒置的现象。

由于这类现象出现的概率极低,出现“对倒”现象的两张邮票被赋予了极高的美学和收藏价值。而Prada此前也曾运用过类似概念,例如在上海和米兰同时举办2022春夏女装系列发布会,不同的模特在两座城市内身着相同服饰走秀。





到了“迷上”这边，王家卫以镜像与对照的创意思路呼应“对倒”概念，东方和西方的美学风情融合贯穿其中。比如，餐桌上的打火机就是一种在中国较为常见的物件，酒杯则由来自威尼斯的玻璃工匠制作而成。

“从菜单再到其它餐厅里的种种元素，我们和王家卫进行了相当长时间的讨论。”Prada集团首席营销官与企业社会责任负责人Lorenzo Bertelli在接受采访时说道，“Prada一直与电影和导演保持紧密合作，可以说是最早涉足这一领域的品牌之一。”





Prada集团首席营销官与企业社会责任负责人Lorenzo Bertelli 图片来源:Prada

“对倒”之道

Prada在餐饮行业早有涉足。

除了拥有成立于19世纪的意大利甜品品牌Marchesi 1824之外，Prada目前还在新加坡和伦敦分别开有两家Prada Caffè。在位于米兰的Prada基金会内部，一处名为Bar Luce的餐饮空间于2015年开业，其同样跟电影导演关联密切：执导过《布达佩斯大饭店》的Wes Anderson构思了这一融合美学和餐饮的杰作。

“在中国开设餐饮空间的想法由来已久，我们本就在餐饮行业有所涉猎，因此这是一次良机，让我们将业务拓展至中国市场。”Lorenzo Bertelli说道，而荣宅所凝炼的历史和文化风格，使其赋予“迷上”餐饮空间特殊性，“我们确实考虑在其它城市也开设餐饮空间，但荣宅始终都是一个最为独特的地方。”

食客的美学体验之旅从步入“迷上”餐饮空间的走廊开始，富有韵律的天花板灯饰让人联想到《花样年华》里的浪漫意境。王家卫此前与百年艺术品牌朵云轩联合创作了一系列《云起花开》版画作品，其中名为《云起花开——卿云》的两幅作品在“迷上”餐饮空间里呈现，其中一副便是在走廊现身。

整体来看，“迷上”餐饮空间主要划分为三个部分，分别是西点屋、咖啡厅和正餐空间。

西点屋的家具由樱桃木和黄铜打造而成，灵感来自Prada于1913年在米兰伊曼纽尔二世长廊开设的首家精品店。这里供应的西西里蛋糕、柠檬甜点和提拉米苏，均为意大利甜品的代表，并且由Marchesi 1824的创意西点总监Diego Crosara呈现。





西点屋 图片来源:Prada

在咖啡厅里,一盏造型奢华的水晶吊灯悬挂在壁炉之前,映照出装饰有细致旋木雕花的吧台,这由修缮荣宅木作结构的原班本地匠人打造,还原1910年代至1930年代的上海社交场景。



咖啡厅 图片来源:Prada

咖啡厅外的门廊,以现代视角重塑19世纪末至20世纪初上海首个向女性开放的露天雅座“安地第”(Arcadia Hall)。露台上1930年代风格的意大利竹制桌椅,融入了中式设计元素





门廊 图片来源:Prada

此外,人们还可以到藏书室浏览一番。藏书室内选有涵盖中国工艺、装饰艺术与意大利设计主题文献和书籍。《云起花开——卿云》两幅作品中的另一幅也在此处亮相,而这两幅作品均已成为Prada集团的永久收藏。



藏书室 图片来源:Prada





《云起花开——卿云》版画作品 图片来源:Prada

如果想要继续饱餐，可以前去正餐空间，此处氛围更为私密，还原了王家卫电影中的氤氲情绪。

菜肴由意大利Ristorante Torre餐厅行政主厨Lorenzo Lunghi负责创作，他曾在Ristorante Gambero Rosso与Saturne等多家米其林餐厅任职。“在地化”是菜单的关键词，经典意饺由中式食材制成，此外还有金枪鱼酱小牛肉与柑橘风味烤鸭脯来满足挑剔食客的味蕾。





正餐空间 图片来源: Prada

这是荣宅作为跨文化场域的缩影。

百年之前，荣宅为中国面粉大王荣宗敬所有。百年之后，Prada将这处私人居所敞开，拥抱城市里来自不同文化背景的人群。导演贾樟柯曾举办以“面 MIÀN”为主题的“Prada Mode”文化俱乐部，而由Prada基金会支持筹划的每年两次展览和各类市集活动也在此汇聚。

从装修风格到餐饮菜品，“迷上”作为餐饮空间，无疑为在荣宅这处以举办展览和品牌活动为主要运作方式的居所注入新的活力。毕竟，Prada向来擅长推动种种跨界合作落地。这也让人们对品牌接下来会在荣宅推出何种新项目，抱有极高的期待值。

不过，Lorenzo Bertelli并不着急，他认为一切合作总是要基于机遇。

“如果你在任何地方都做相似的事情，它就不再具有意义，也不会引起共鸣。”他说道，“这座别墅是一个讲述历史、我们的时尚故事和我们的餐饮文化以及与品牌相关文化的交流场所，这不是一场变革，更像是我们以新的方式将品牌DNA传递给公众。”

文化透镜

毕竟，Prada从不是追赶潮流的品牌。

从2011年到2017年，Prada花费了六年的时间对荣宅进行修缮。这处位于上海陕西北路上的百年建筑如今已经成为城市里汇聚文化价值的地标性场所。尽管上海和米兰相隔千里，Lorenzo Bertelli也能感受到这种独特的文化氛围，并密切地参与到荣宅以及Prada在中国的一系列文化项目的决策之中。

“首先我们往返频繁，然后我们有一个非常强大的团队，距离问题也不大，一趟11小时的航班就能抵达。”Lorenzo Bertelli补充说道，“实际上，在餐饮空间开业前的最后一个月，很多意大利团队成员专程来到这里，以确保问题都能得到解决，尽可能做到最好。”

而从荣宅正式揭幕到现今的八年里，Prada也在中国市场更为密集地对文化项目进行投入。





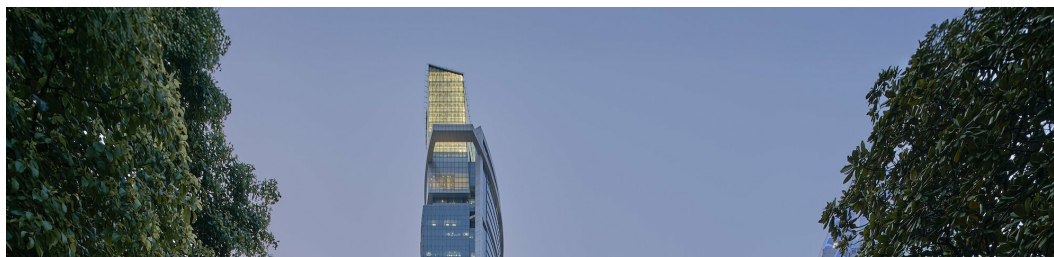
Prada会在这里为新的时装系列举办预览活动, 这是“知识分子气质”商业化的一面。与此同时, 从《人类大脑: 保护大脑——神经退行性疾病论坛》再到《镜像: Lucio Fontana与Michelangelo Pistoletto》, 一系列展览的视野横跨了绘画艺术和现在科学, 它们拓展了一个时装品牌的内涵边界, 也为观者提供新的参照。



展览《镜像: Lucio Fontana与Michelangelo Pistoletto》图片来源: Prada

这样的运作模式让许多中国消费者称Prada为一个“知识分子”品牌。Lorenzo Bertelli对这样的说法表示认可, 但也表示这些举措想要吸引的关注点核心, 是让人们明白文化最终是对自身有益, 而非只是为了取悦他人。

“文化是透镜, 又不只是透镜, 而是我们试图用来更好地理解世界、并在问题和叙事方面提供更好建议的工具。我们不仅将其视为最终结果或目标, 而更多地视为一种工具。而且你不能说文化是你拥有的东西或是你将要获得的东西。”他说道, “当文化能够体现出来时, 思维方式清晰可辨, 尤其是当中充满了热情和理解时。这是最重要的事情。”





荣宅 图片来源:Prada

正是因为文化的意涵如此独特, Prada在中国输出文化价值的方向也必不会只在艺术、电影或音乐。女性议题也是品牌颇为关注的一个领域。可以看到, Prada常在时装系列中探讨当代女性的气质与内核, 与中国女足达成官方合作, 而品牌代言人和大使中的女性则来自各行各业, 其中包括杨舒予等女性运动员和贾玲等女性导演和演员。

和当下奢侈品行业里常见的文化叙事相比, 这些举措多少都带有“反传统”的叙事特征。而除了上述议题外, 另一个常让人好奇的“反传统”做法, 便是为何Prada更看重与当代创意人牵手, 而不是赞助电影节和各种大奖, 或推进与传统工匠的合作。

Lorenzo Bertelli对此有不同的见解。

“Prada的工作始终根植于工艺, 而这在今天某种程度上被视为理所当然。因此我们相信我们有不同的方式来进行讲述, 方法不同并不意味着我们摒弃传统工艺项目。”他说道, “我们更倾向于强调这一独特视角, 因为它更能体现我们的品牌价值和DNA。工艺已深植于我们的品牌基因, 而过段时间大家也会转而寻找新的话题, 因为这种工艺相关的话题已经被过度使用, 失去了新意。”

品质的价值

的确, 输出全新却有持续影响力的价值理念, 一直以来都是Prada最为执着的事情。





每当Prada发布新的时装系列，时装评论人最热衷讨论的话题便是两位创意总监Miuccia Prada和Raf Simons怎样向观众呈现新的构思、面料、印花和裁剪。Prada留给市场和消费者最深刻的印象之一，或许也是难以被定义和归类的设计手法，因为你总是无法料到下个系列会是何种面貌。

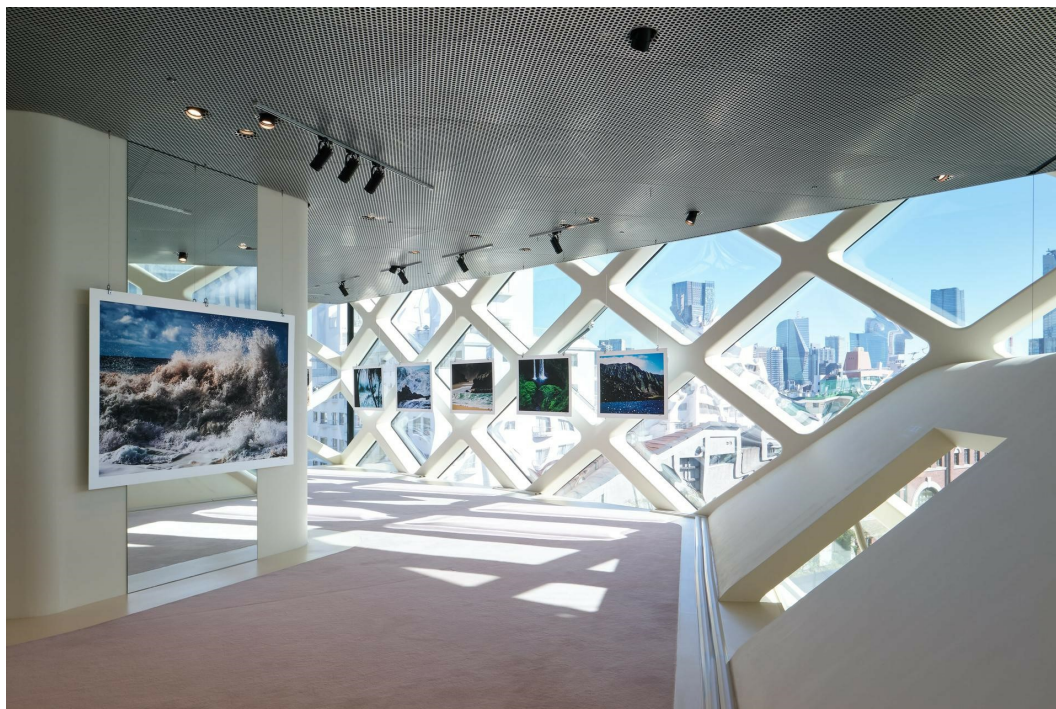
从时装领域延展，Prada对外进行文化输出的举措也向来出乎意料。它会愿意投入六年时间在中国这个新兴市场修缮一座百年老宅，而Prada集团也会捐赠Prada Re-Nylon再生尼龙Sea Beyond特别系列1%的销售额给联合国教科文组织，支持Sea Beyond项目。

该项目于2019年由Prada集团与联合国教科文组织政府间海洋学委员会共同发起，旨在提高对可持续发展和海洋保护的认知。如果你常浏览环保领域的新闻，会发现Sea Beyond项目中一系列针对年轻人的培训活动常常见诸报道，其中覆盖人群包括学龄儿童。

在走过纽约、东京等城市后，Sea Beyond项目中的“海洋与气候村”展览将于2025年下半年在荣宅揭幕。

“改变未来没有捷径可走，唯一的方法是关注儿童教育，培育他们的心智和思想。”Lorenzo Bertelli说道，“与联合国教科文组织的合作非常重要，能够捐赠Prada Re-Nylon再生尼龙Sea Beyond特别系列1%的收益，是非常重要的里程碑，这是联合国教科文组织项目在全球范围内的首创。”

这是Lorenzo Bertelli进入集团后经手过最重要的项目之一，但他做的也不止于此。2024年，Prada集团与Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli帆船队在巴塞罗那举办了“海洋与气候村”展览，Prada同年还与航天企业Axiom Space合作设计了登月宇航服。





Prada Possible Conversations携自然摄影师Enzo Barracco和Sea Byeond在东京举办活动
图片来源:Prada



AXIOM SPACE和Prada合作发布登月宇航服 图片来源:Prada

“我们的事业始终应该带着家族视角，不只是单纯地销售包袋。”Lorenzo Bertelli表示，“这是一种讲述故事的方式，一种践行信念、推动变革的方式。这不只是单纯地完成一份工作，这份工作还能带来更多可能。它让我们能够借助时尚这一媒介，从社会视角传递信息，而时尚的本质最终归结于信息的传递。”





但从时装横跨到电影、音乐甚至环保和科技领域去推进种种项目落地并不容易。在全球范围内做事，品牌必然免不了要去应对不同的经济和文化背景下的人群理念差异。如果处理不当，这极有可能会引发文化冲突，并损害品牌的形象及其文化价值。

此外，近些年的奢侈品行业并不太平。地缘冲突和零售环境波动，让全球消费者的购物欲望受到影响，导致了人们对品牌关注度下降，而以及下一代人对奢侈品价值的解读也会因此改变。在这样的时刻里，每一个品牌都要想好自身定位，基于此制定针对性方案。

“一系列变动将影响每个人的策略，但现实如此，你必须与之共存并尽可能地驾驭风暴，尽量保持既定的战略目标不变。在这个时刻，品质的价值比其他任何时候都更重要。”Lorenzo Bertelli说道，“人们比以往任何时候都更需要参照，因为他们在不断变化的地缘政治环境中感到有些迷茫。现在比以往任何时候都更需要尝试向人们解释，给他们提供工具。”

文化正是帮助人们更好地理解世界、做出更明智选择的重要手段之一。独特的视角让Prada得以在全球范围内维持统一形象，但也不断通过有效且多元的文化项目，搭建起一座融汇不同观点和见解的平台。这或许正是当下这个纷乱时代所需的一剂良药。

“世界的每个地方都有故事可以讲，我们会尝试找到共同的讨论领域并进行交流。”Lorenzo Bertelli表示，“在我的经验中，不同文化之间的共同点远远超过我们所认为的差异。从远处看，差异似乎很大，但当你靠近时，会发现很多相似之处。人们应该明白，最终我们比想象中更相似。”

让理念被听见

在采访中，他提及的一个相似之处便是，中国市场和西方市场已经不存在本质区别。

事实上，Lorenzo Bertelli正式加入集团的这八年里，中国以及全球奢侈品市场都经历了一段突飞猛涨的黄金时代。Prada也在这个时段里走上转变的道路，变得更年轻了。新一代加入了品牌，从明星合作再到社交媒体营销，他们令这个百年品牌焕发新气象。

但作为继承人，Lorenzo Bertelli要处理和面对的事情无疑更多，而外界对他也抱有极高的期待。他出生于1988年，成长过程与Prada发力高级时装业务和推进全球化扩张的发展轨迹同步。他拥有米兰圣拉斐尔大学的哲学学位，曾经做过职业拉力赛车手。

在他正式进入集团之前，Prada已经是一个以呈现和输出文化价值知名的奢侈品牌。有的消费者会用“知识分子气质”来形容其时装设计，也有人会因其举办的种种展览、电影和音乐活动而产生深刻印象。但无论如何，站在巨人的肩膀上去寻找突破始终不是一件轻松的事情。

“你必须学会与每个人合作，毕竟完美的情况是不存在的。无论如何，你必须接受现有的条件，并尽可能地发挥出最佳效果，同时以最人性的方式去工作。”他表示。而就和所有的奢侈品牌高层一样，他会在全球范围内走访品牌位于不同城市的门店，探讨文化议题的同时，也关注销售数据。





Prada在武汉SKP内开设精品店 图片来源:Prada

其中必然无法绕过中国这个庞大的市场。他在采访中说，除了上海、北京和广州等一线城市之外，他还到过内陆，走过乡村，也看过黄河。作为Prada管理层的一员，这些年来他对中国市场的感受之一，便是这里的消费者已经变得更加成熟。

“中国消费者的理解力非常到位，甚至有时更为精确，他们也旅行，有明确的参照。”Lorenzo Bertelli说道，“中国市场和西方市场可能根本没有区别，这是西方品牌花了一些时间才意识到的，如今已成为行业共识。”

但即使地区之间的差异正在模糊，代际之间以及消费者种种趋势变化推动下的认知方式，却跟以往大为不同。尤其是在当下的环境里，许多人不免会对奢侈品牌的价值感到疑惑，这必然需要品牌去重新思考如何塑造自身的期待感。

“我一直认为，表达者需要让自己被理解，而不是受众去费力思索。如何让信息清晰准确地传达给受众，是表达者的责任。”Lorenzo Bertelli指出，“这就是我们正在努力的方向，这将对我们的成功大有帮助。今天，我认为最大的问题之一是人与人之间的理解能力。这不仅仅是商业中的最大问题，也是社会中的问题。”

当然，要作出改变并不简单。

因此可以看到，Prada近年也在密集落地新的举措，来为消费者带来新的灵感。此次在荣宅开





设“迷上”餐饮空间是一个案例，而Lorenzo Bertelli则表示品牌希望在大型购物中心之外，通过更多新的门店类型来为中国消费者创造新的价值主张和体验。

与此同时，拓宽品牌价值传播渠道的策略也在推进。线下的荣宅已经成为枢纽性的文化中心，而在线上，Prada近期推出了《蛇年说蛇》主题播客，邀请巫鸿、胡如珊和贾玲等来自建筑、艺术和演艺界的知名人物畅聊各自对“蛇”这一符号的理解。这是一项品牌与受众拉近沟通距离的策划，从现实反馈来看，也的确颇有收效。



Prada《蛇年说蛇》主题播客 图片来源:Prada





“人们往往倾向于改变他们的想法来迎合大众，而非调整自己的沟通方式。”Lorenzo Bertelli说道，“这正是我们经常看到的现象。但真正关键的是，如何在不妥协自身理念的前提下适应消费者。重点不是改变理念以获取关注，而是调整表达方式，使理念更容易被听见。”

这正推动Prada在中国市场不断推出新的举措，并持续输出独特文化价值理念的动力。



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Lorenzo Bertelli, Chief Marketing Officer of Prada Group: "It is the speaker's responsibility to be understood, not the listener's burden to decipher."

Introduction:

From the newly launched "Mi Shang Prada Rong Zhai"—a boutique dining space—to the environmentally focused Sea Beyond project, Lorenzo Bertelli, Chief Marketing Officer and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Prada Group, explores the brand's dedication to artistic value, its cultural endeavors, and his insights on the world today.

On March 31, Italian luxury brand Prada opens "Mi Shang Prada Rong Zhai" (hereafter referred to as "Mi Shang"), its first stand-alone fine dining space in China and Asia, conceived by acclaimed director Wong Kar Wai. The name "Mi Shang" derives from the initials of Milan and Shanghai, symbolizing the aesthetic and cultural connection between the two cities.

This marks the second collaboration between Prada and Wong Kar Wai. Previously, Prada provided costumes for Ma Yili's character in the television series *Blossoms Shanghai*, reviving the brand's iconic styles in the 1990s and early 2000s. Building on this, Wong Kar Wai further explored the interplay between Shanghai and Milan, conceptualizing the restaurant's theme around the "Tête-bêche" principle in philately.

"Tête-bêche" refers to a rare printing anomaly where two adjoining postage stamps appear inverted relative to each other due to a production error.

The rarity of such occurrences makes them both highly valuable and aesthetically captivating. Prada has previously embraced similar concepts, notably with its Spring/Summer 2022 womenswear collection, which was unveiled through simultaneous runway shows in Shanghai and Milan—featuring models in identical outfits walking the runways in both cities.

At "Mi Shang", Wong Kar Wai draws on the creative concept of mirroring and contrast. The space is infused with a dialogue between Eastern and Western aesthetics—typical Chinese objects, like table lighter, coexist with glassware crafted by Venetian artisans.

"From the food menu to the restaurant's design elements, we and Wong Kar Wai had a long discussion," explains Lorenzo Bertelli, Chief Marketing Officer and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Prada Group. "Prada has long stories of cinema and working with movie directors. Actually we are one of the first brands taking this room."

The Art of "Tête-bêche"

Prada's involvement in the culinary world is nothing new.

Alongside its ownership of the renowned 19th-century Italian pastry brand Marchesi 1824, Prada has expanded its reach with Prada Caffès in both Singapore and London. In Milan, within the Fondazione Prada, Bar Luce was opened in 2015. This dining space is closely associated with filmmaker Wes Anderson, known for directing *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, who envisioned this remarkable fusion of aesthetics and cuisine.

"Opening a dining space in China was an idea since the beginning. We are already in the business of the food and beverage. This was a great opportunity to enter the Chinese market," says Bertelli. Rong Zhai, with its rich history and cultural resonance, makes "Mi Shang" particularly special. "We have idea of other potential locations, but Rong Zhai is a unique place."

From the moment guests step into the corridor of "Mi Shang", their aesthetic journey begins. The rhythmic sequence of ceiling lights evokes the romantic atmosphere of Wong Kar Wai's *In the Mood for Love*. In collaboration with Duo Yun Xuan Art Center, a century-old Chinese art brand, Wong Kar Wai created a series of woodblock printing titled *Rising Clouds, Blooming Flowers*. Two pieces from this series, *Rising Clouds, Blooming Flowers - Blessing Clouds*, are showcased in the "Mi Shang" space, with one displayed in the corridor.

Overall, the "Mi Shang" dining space is divided into three areas: The Pastry Shop, The Caffè, and The Dining Room.

The Pastry Shop features furnishings crafted from cherry wood and brass, inspired by Prada's first Milan store, opened in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in 1913. It serves Italian classics like Sicilian Cassata, Delizia al Limone, and Tiramisù, presented by Diego Crosara, the Creative Pastry Director of Marchesi 1824.

At The Caffè, a luxurious crystal chandelier hangs before a fireplace, casting light over a bar counter featuring intricate turned-wood scrollwork crafted by local artisans who restored the Villa's wooden elements, reminiscent of 1910s - 1930s Shanghai social hubs. Guests can also explore The Library, which houses a carefully curated book collection spanning Chinese craftsmanship, decorative arts, and Italian design. Another piece from *Rising Clouds, Blooming Flowers - Blessing Clouds* completes the ambiance. Both artworks has been permanently acquired by the Prada Group.

For those looking to continue their culinary journey, The Dining Room offers a more intimate atmosphere, evoking the dreamy mood of Wong Kar Wai's films.

The menu is crafted by Executive Chef Lorenzo Lunghi of Ristorante Torre, whose experience spans multiple Michelin-starred restaurants, including Ristorante Gambero Rosso and Saturne. The key concept of the menu is "localization", from the classic Italian ravioli paired with exquisite Chinese ingredients, to the vitello tonnato or the citrus duck breast, tailored to satisfy the most refined tastes.

This is a microcosm of Rong Zhai as a cross-cultural space.

A century ago, Rong Zhai was once the property of Rong Zongjing, the "King of Flour" in China. Now, Prada opens this private residence to embrace diverse cultural groups from around the city. Director Jia Zhangke previously curated a "Prada Mode" cultural club centered around the theme of "面 MIÀN". The exhibitions, held twice a year with the support of Fondazione Prada, along with various fairs, are also hosted here.

From its interior design to its culinary offerings, Mi Shang brings fresh vitality to Rong Zhai—a space primarily used for exhibitions and brand events. After all, Prada has long excelled at orchestrating successful cross-industry collaborations, further fueling anticipation for the brand's future projects at Rong Zhai.

However, Lorenzo Bertelli is in no rush, as he believes every collaboration should be driven by the right opportunities.

"If you create standardized venues, they become less and less relevant. In contrast, Rong Zhai is a unique and irreplicable place," he explains. "This villa is a place for the talk about what from history, our fashion stories, our food and beverage perspective, but also the cultural part related to Prada. It's not a revolution; it's more an evolution of how we started telling our DNA to the people."

Cultural Lens

After all, Prada has never been a brand simply chase trends.

From 2011 to 2017, Prada dedicated six years to restoring Rong Zhai. Today, this century-old residence on Shanghai's North Shaanxi Road has become a cultural landmark within the city. Despite the vast distance between Shanghai and Milan, Lorenzo Bertelli deeply resonates with its unique cultural atmosphere and remains closely involved in decisions regarding Rong Zhai and Prada's cultural projects in China.

"We travel a lot first, and then we have a very strong team and the distance is not a problem. An 11 hour flight was impossible," Bertelli adds. "And actually, for the opening in the last month, a lot of the people from Italy came here to ensure that any issues would be minimized as much as possible."

Since the official unveiling of Rong Zhai eight years ago, Prada has also intensified its cultural investment in the Chinese market.

Prada hosts previews for new collections here, a commercialized aspect of its intellectual atmosphere. At the same time, exhibitions like "Liu Ye: Storytelling" and "Human Brains: Preserving the Brain - Forum on Neurodegenerative Diseases" stretch the boundaries of a fashion brand's reach, presenting painting and medical science, and offering new references for the audience.

Such initiatives have led many Chinese consumers to describe Prada as a brand for intellectuals. Bertelli acknowledges this, but he also points out that the core purpose of these initiatives is to make people realize that culture ultimately benefits them, not just to please others.

"Culture is the lens, but not just the lens; it is the tool that we try to use to have a better understanding and to put up better proposition of what we create in terms of problems and storytelling. We consider it not just as the end result or the objective, but more as a tool. And also you cannot say culture is something that you have it or you will take it," he says. "When culture is possible, thinking is very recognizable especially when there is a passion for it and an understanding. And this is the most important thing."

Given the distinctiveness of cultural significance, Prada's engagement with cultural expression in China extends beyond art, film, and music. Women's issues are another area of focus for the brand. Prada frequently explores contemporary femininity and its meaning in its fashion collections, establishes an official partnership with the Chinese women's national football team, and counts among its ambassadors women from diverse fields, including athletes like Yang Shuyu and filmmakers and actresses such as Jia Ling.

Compared to the prevailing cultural narratives in the luxury industry, Prada's approach carries a distinctly "non-traditional" perspective. Beyond these themes, another unconventional aspect of the brand's strategy often sparks curiosity—why does Prada prioritize collaborations with contemporary creatives over sponsoring film festivals, awards, or traditional craftsmanship initiatives?

Bertelli offers a different perspective.

"At the base of Prada's job, there is always craftsmanship and it is somehow taken as granted today. And I believe it's just a different approach, doesn't mean that we don't do some of those projects," he says. "We tend to give more relevance to this kind of approach compared to the other one, because that one mainly characterizes ourselves and our DNA, because it's something that we're into. After a week is up and find someone else something else to tell about that because it's been so much exploded.

The Value of Quality

Indeed, Prada has always been deeply committed to introducing fresh yet enduring value concepts.

Whenever Prada launches a new collection, the topic that excites fashion critics the most is how the two creative directors, Miuccia Prada and Raf Simons, present new ideas, fabrics, prints, and cuts to the audience. One of Prada's most profound impressions on the market and consumers may also be its undefinable and unclassifiable design approach, as you can never predict what the next collection will look like.

Extending from fashion to the realm of cultural output, Prada's initiatives have also been unexpected. The brand is willing to spend six years restoring a century-old house in the emerging Chinese market, and the Prada Group also donates 1% of the sales from its Re-Nylon for Sea Beyond collection to UNESCO to support ocean conservation.

The Sea Beyond project, initiated by the Prada Group and UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission in 2019, aims to raise awareness about sustainable development and ocean protection. If you follow environmental news, you may have come across reports about a series of training activities targeting young people under the Sea Beyond project, which include school-aged children.

After its exhibitions in New York and Tokyo, the "Ocean&Climate Village" exhibition from the Sea Beyond project will open at Rong Zhai in the second half of 2025.

"To change the future, there are not shortcuts. And the only way is to work with the people to nurture their minds and hearts when they're younger kids," says Bertelli. "Being able to give 1 % of the Prada Re-Nylon for SEA BEYOND Collection has been a very important milestone. It has been the first of a kind for UNESCO worldwide."

This is one of the most important projects Bertelli has handled since joining the group, but it doesn't stop there. In 2024, the Prada Group hosted the "Ocean&Climate Village" exhibition with the Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli sailing team in Barcelona and, in the same year, collaborated with Axiom Space to design a lunar spacesuit.

"I believe we should always carry the family perspective, like we don't sell bags just for selling bags," says Bertelli. "It's more like a way to tell stories, a way to do something you feel like and a way to do something different. It is not just a matter of doing this job, and there are also other things that can be done. Fashion is a way to communicate from the society perspective. So the communication to fashion will be at the end of the job."

But executing projects that span fashion, film, music, environmental protection, and technology is no easy feat. When operating globally, brands inevitably face challenges in reconciling the differing values of people in diverse economic and cultural backgrounds. If mishandled, this can lead to cultural conflicts and damage a brand's image and cultural value.

Moreover, the luxury industry has faced turbulent years, with geopolitical conflicts and retail fluctuations affecting global consumer spending. This has led to a decrease in brand attention, and a shift in how the next generation perceives luxury. During such times, every brand must reassess its positioning and develop tailored strategies.

"A series of changes will influence everybody's strategies. But it is what it is. And so you have to live with it and to navigate the storm as better as possible, and still try to maintain the same strategic objective. And in this moment, quality counts much more than another moment," says Bertelli. "More than ever, people need reference because they feel a bit lost in this geopolitical environment that continues to change. More than ever, it is very important to try to explain people, to give them the tool."

Culture is one of the essential means to help people better understand the world and make wiser choices. Prada's unique perspective allows the brand to maintain a consistent image globally while continually building a platform through effective and diverse cultural projects that merge differing viewpoints and insights. This may be the antidote that is needed in today's chaotic times.

"Every part of the world has a story to be told. We would try to find common area of discussion and to talk about them," Bertelli says. "There is much more commonality in my experience between the different culture that we think with the difference. So there is a lot of differences from far away. But when you get closer, there are so many similarities. The people should understand that at the end, we are much more similar than we think."

Making Ideas Heard

In the interview, one similarity he mentioned was that the Chinese market and the Western market no longer have essential differences.

In fact, during Lorenzo Bertelli's eight years with the group, both the Chinese and global luxury markets experienced a rapid growth phase. During this period, Prada also embarked on a transformation, becoming younger. A new generation joined the brand, from celebrity collaborations to social media marketing, all of which breathed new life into this century-old brand.

However, as an heir, Lorenzo Bertelli inevitably faces more challenges, and the expectations on him are high. Born in 1988, his growth trajectory has aligned with Prada's development in high-end fashion and its global expansion. He holds a philosophy degree from Milan's San Raffaele University and even worked as a professional rally driver.

Before he officially joined the group, Prada was already a luxury brand renowned for presenting and producing cultural value. Some consumers describe its fashion designs as possessing an "intellectual" essence, while others are deeply impressed by the exhibitions, films, and music events it hosts. Nevertheless, standing on the shoulders of giants and seeking breakthroughs is never easy.

"You have to learn to work with everybody, after all perfect situation doesn't exist. Somehow you have to live with what you have and pull out the best out of it and working as much as possible as a human," he said. Like other top executives of luxury brands, he travels around the world to visit the brand's stores in different cities, discussing cultural topics while keeping an eye on sales data.

One market that cannot be overlooked is China, a massive market for Prada. He mentioned in the interview that, aside from first-tier cities like Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou, he has also traveled to inland areas, walked through villages, and visited the Yellow River. Over the years, he has come to feel that Chinese consumers have become more sophisticated.

"Chinese consumers understand exactly the same if not even more. And they travel as well. They have a clear reference," says Lorenzo Bertelli. "Between Chinese and western markets, perhaps there is no difference at all. The western brands took a bit to understand, but now it is clear in the mind of everybody."

Although regional differences are becoming blurred, the way people think, driven by generational and consumer trend changes, is vastly different from before. Especially in today's environment, many are questioning the value of luxury brands, which requires brands to rethink how to shape their expectations.

"I always think that the one who speaks has to make himself understood, not the one who listens struggle to comprehend, in the sense that it's always the problem of who speaks to make issues understood by the audience," Lorenzo Bertelli points out. "And then this is a bit what we are trying to do. And there will be success for our group. Today, I think one of the biggest problems is the capability of understanding each other. This is the biggest issue, not just in our business, but in our society."

Of course, making changes is not easy.

As a result, Prada has been rolling out new initiatives in recent years to bring fresh inspiration to consumers. The opening of the "Mi Shang" dining space at Rong Zhai is one such example. Lorenzo Bertelli stated that the brand hopes to create new value propositions and experiences for Chinese consumers through new types of stores, beyond large shopping malls.

Meanwhile, the strategy of broadening the channels for brand value communication is also being pushed forward. Offline, Rong Zhai has become a central cultural hub, while online, Prada recently launched a podcast called *Speaking of the Snake*, inviting well-known figures from the fields of architecture, art, and entertainment, such as Wu Hung, Rossana Hu, and Jia Ling, to share their interpretations of the "snake" symbol. This is an initiative to bring the brand closer to its audience, and from the feedback, it has indeed been effective.

"People tends to change their ideas to be heard instead of changing their way of communicating," Lorenzo Bertelli says. "This is the thing what very often happens. The point is how to adapt without adapting yourself to the consumer. It is more like, instead of changing your idea to be heard, is about how to change my way of communication to be heard."

This is precisely what drives Prada to continually launch new initiatives in the Chinese market and to consistently deliver its unique cultural values.