

The exterior of the new Dior flagship in Tokyo's Ginza Six development.



BUSINESS

Dior Plans Two Shows To Mark Japan Boutique

- The house will stage both couture and men's presentations in Tokyo on Wednesday.

BY KELLY WETHERILLE

TOKYO – Ahead of the opening in Ginza of its largest-ever store in Japan on Thursday, Dior is holding a series of events here, including both a haute couture and a men's show.

For couture, creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri will show eight new looks directly inspired by Japan. For Dior Homme, Kris Van Assche will present the pre-fall line, the first time the brand has ever done a show for a men's pre-collection. The line will be available in store the following day.

"A house like Dior has to make surprises," said Sidney Toledano, chief executive officer of Christian Dior Couture. "The surprise of the couture show. The surprise of this pre-fall presentation and selling the next day."

Chiuri has also designed a special cherry-blossom themed ready-to-wear and accessory collection that will be sold exclusively at the Ginza store, which officially opens to the public Thursday. A wide range of dresses, jackets and bags are strewn with images of the delicate Japanese blossoms and the words "Jardin Japonais Christian Dior 1953," referencing similar items designed by Christian Dior himself over six decades ago.

The five-story Dior boutique anchors the new luxury shopping destination Ginza Six, where other tenants include Céline, Valentino and Saint Laurent. As the number of international tourists to Japan continues to increase, Ginza has become a popular destination for visitors – so much so that the developers behind Ginza Six added a tour bus terminal to the complex. Even so, Toledano said the company's strategy in Japan has not been



affected by the influx of tourists.

"The market has been more impacted by the tourist business because of the yen, and mostly Chinese. You know, the Chinese they go where they can shop under good conditions, so we see them coming back to Europe for instance and less here," the executive said. "But our strategy and the investment we did here in Japan was really to develop the local customer. We have a long-term view on this market. We have been here since '53 and all the investment we do in any country is to develop the local customer. So regarding this strategy we are meeting the objectives."

Toledano said that he is also noticing more Japanese traveling – and shopping – abroad than in recent months.

"We focus here on the local clients, and not only is [business] good in Japan with the Japanese customers, it is good outside Japan. We see Japanese traveling. You know, they didn't come to France because of what happened in France,



but now they're feeling more secure and they're coming back. And because of the yen being strong, we see them even buying outside. And our local customers here are also growing," he said.

The new store features a spacious men's floor on the lower level, three smaller floors dedicated to women's wear and accessories, and a café that is the result of a collaboration with Pierre Hermé. It is the second such café in the world, after one that opened in Seoul in 2015. Toledano said he had spoken with Hermé about opening such a café and had

hoped to add it to the brand's Omotesando store, which opened in 2003, but there wasn't sufficient space.

The interior of the new store, which was designed by Peter Marino, is light, open and spacious, with the emphasis placed firmly on the product. Toledano said this decision was made deliberately due to the brand's experience with Japanese customers.

"The Japanese, their eyes want to see the product. If you put too many things around, if it looks like a furniture store, it becomes a problem. It distracts. They don't know what you're selling," he said.

He also reflected on the Japanese eye for quality, service and ceremony, as well as the unique way in which they wear Dior.

"If you see a Japanese wearing a Dior dress or handling a Dior bag, or even the shoes, it looks like they bought it the day before. They maintain, they respect, you know, even inside of a bag," the ceo said. "The way even they wear it, it's always perfection."

Dior's history in Japan dates back to the early Fifties, and Empress Michiko even selected the house to create three dresses for her civil wedding in 1959. Toledano envisions a strong presence in the country in the future as well, even as he sees noticeable changes in the market.

"I think women are changing a lot again [in Japan]. I see a big change in the women's behavior. I think something will happen more what Maria Grazia calls 'feminist.' I don't want to refer to political feminists, but I refer to my fashion feminists. I think in their work, in their family life, things are changing," the executive said. "In fashion we feel phenomena happening without giving a real social explanation. It's just in the air. So I think this is an opportunity for us. It's feminine feminists."

While he feels the men's market experiences fewer changes than women's fashion does, he thinks fashion is on the cusp of one such change now.

"It happens, for me, every 20 years when you see changes in men's fashion. A big breakthrough in Japan happened in 2000 because they were wearing all the same suits. Or crazy, crazy, very edgy, but that was just a niche or very young. But when they were starting working they were putting on the same suit, the same tie, and so on," Toledano said. "And then Dior Homme came to move all this. And I think this will continue to develop in Japan for men's, so we're ready with the evolution of both genders."

Overall, he is optimistic about the future of Dior in Japan.

"The important thing in Japan is that we want to continue. We believe in the market. We believe in the market as one of the key luxury markets in the world," he said. "Japanese customers are loyal and they are looking for quality."

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– SIDNEY TOLEDANO, DIOR