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LIMITED EDITIONS: LUXURY BRANDS MEET THE ARTS

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to understand what are the characteristics of limited-edition products deriving from luxury brands-art collaborations. In particular, we will try to discern whether this sort of collaborations actually represent a valuable branding strategy for the luxury brands. In order to do that, we will follow a research process of several steps. We will start with an overview of the luxury industry, which will allow us to gain general knowledge about this vast industry and its main challenges. After that, we will proceed by drawing a parallel between the field of luxury and the artistic field, which will serve as an introduction for the central theme of this thesis: the collaborations between luxury brands and the arts. As the term “collaboration” is very broad, we will narrow the scope of our study to a specific type of collaboration: limited editions. The second chapter will be briefer with respect to the others as it will specifically focus on the definition of limited editions: we will analyse their characteristics, their aim and also the risks and benefits of using them as a branding strategy. The third, fourth and fifth chapters will consist of three case studies and will have a very similar structure. The first case study regards the collaboration between the famous luxury brand Tiffany & Co. and the Whitney Museum of American Art; the second analyses the collaboration between Louis Vuitton and American artist Jeff Koons; the third focuses on a less recent collaboration between the Andy Warhol Foundation and Christian Dior, dating from 2013 and chosen as a benchmark in order to compare the other two collaborations of 2017 with an earlier one. Each study will be divided in three parts: one about the luxury brand, one about the artist or artistic institution, and one about the collaboration. This structure will allow the reader to gain extended knowledge about the parties involved in the collaboration before discovering the limited edition deriving from it, which will ensure a deeper understanding of the cases. The last chapter, as its title indicates, will focus on consumers’ perception. We will begin with a description of the survey – which has been specifically realised as part of this paper’s research process – including its aim, the type of questions, the target and the distribution method. This brief description will be followed by a display of the data collected through the survey, together with an interpretation of the results. This final part of the paper will thus represent the heart of the research process as it encompasses a practical investigation aimed at verifying the theoretical principles studied in the previous chapters and at collecting real responses from actual consumers with respect to the collaborations previously analysed.

CHAPTER 1: THE MANAGEMENT OF LUXURY

1. Characteristics and challenges of the luxury industry

1.1. An overview of the luxury industry

In the business environment, a given set of norms can be used to generalize a basis of collective expectations of both the customers and the sellers. As a matter of fact, the negative correlation between price and demand, the positive impact of a brand's diffusion on desirability, the increase of competitiveness with business size, or the research of functionality in the consumer's shopping process, to mention a few, could all be defined as characteristics of a normal business course and could thus be interpreted as a sort of informal guidelines to understand, foresee and meet the expectations of the targeted market. Luxury, however, distances itself from said conventions and actually tends to turn them upside down: exclusivity is picked over diffusion and a higher price symbolizes quality and superiority. The parameters applied in the decision-making process of luxury brands are significantly different from the ones of other companies, as the targeted clientele has distinct needs and expectations.

According to the European Cultural and Creative Industries Alliance (ECCIA), an organization that represents the associations of the luxury industry of Italy, France, United Kingdom, Spain and Germany at the European level, the companies in the luxury segment are characterized by five main features. First of all, the *aura* is a fundamental element: it refers to the distinctive atmosphere of fascination that needs to be created in order to attract the customer. Secondly, the highest quality, measured in terms of craftsmanship's virtue and creativity, must be guaranteed through the selection of devoted and capable employees. A considerable investment is also required in order to secure intellectual property by innovating and developing the brand. Finally, a selective distribution and the development of new markets are essential to guarantee exclusivity to the customers and to adapt to, and possibly benefit from, the global economics changes, such as the increase in wealth in emerging countries.

1.2. Main challenges of the luxury industry

From a global perspective, the global luxury industry is characterized by 330 millions of consumers unevenly spread among a handful of global cities such as Paris, London, New York and Honk Kong. As the Annual Luxury Study 2014 realised by Bain & Company suggests, the luxury goods market has triplicated over the last two decades, reaching 223 billions of euros in 2014¹ (see figure 1). This represents a solid growth within the global economy, which is expected to continue also in 2017, although at a slower rate. As recent data collected by Euromonitor International indicate, the luxury industry will have to face "mounting risks into 2017" that will negatively impact both emerging and developed countries. Furthermore, because

¹ Journalist Dorothée Enskog, "Shopping di lusso: I sette maggiori trend" (April 22, 2015), *Credit Suisse Official Website*

the consumption of luxury goods is not widespread, the companies in the luxury industry have to adapt and evolve with respect to the wealthy consumers' way of thinking and spending, all that without overlooking global tendencies, that could represent both risks and opportunities for the companies in the industry.

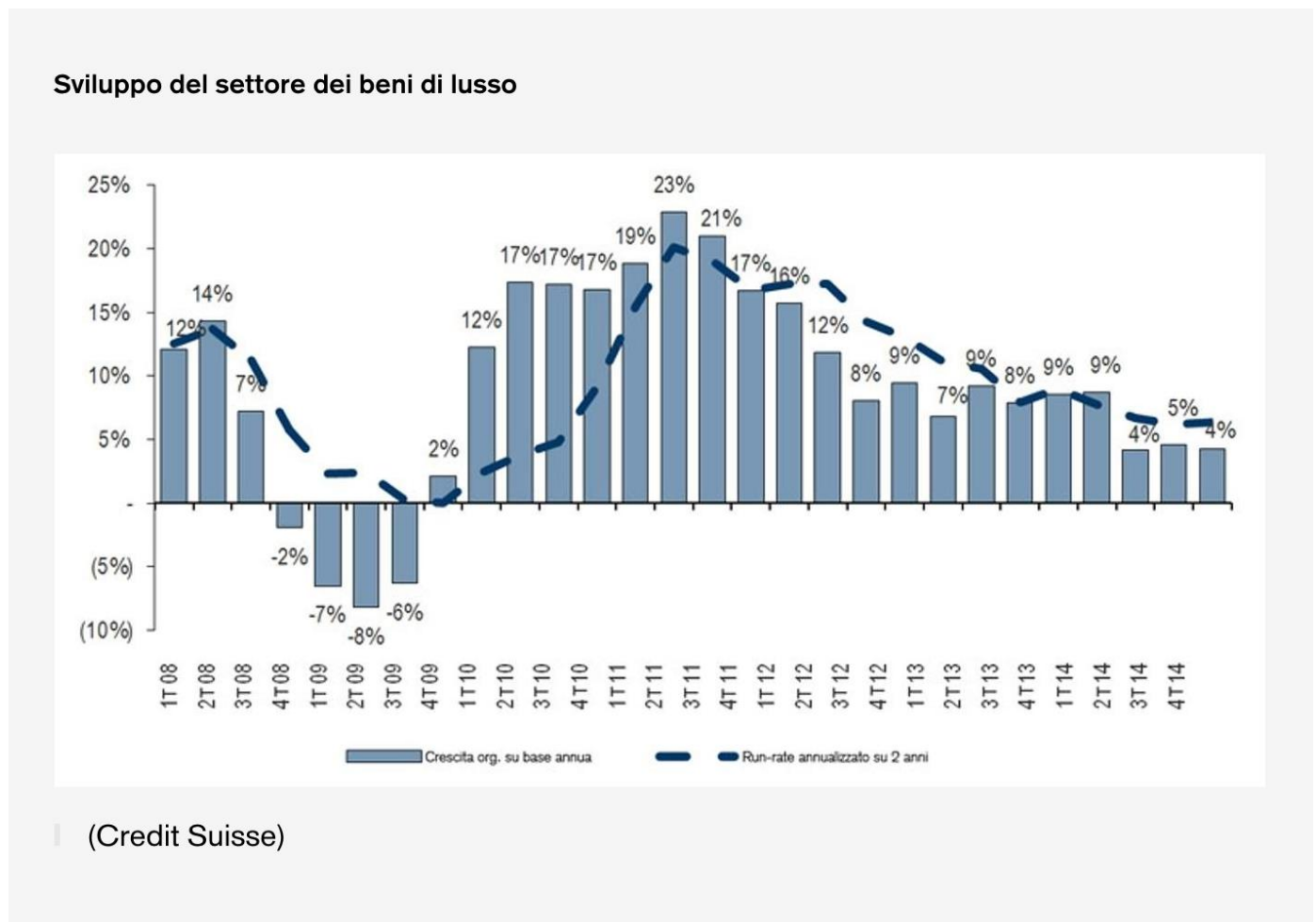


Figure 1: Evolution of the luxury goods market from 2008 to 2014

First of all, luxury goods sales cannot be supported only by the domestic demand, like in the case of mass retailers. As a matter of fact, they are mainly related to travels and international tourism, which thus makes social and political global tendencies a serious concern for luxury brands. For example, as travel decisions are mainly driven by the desire of safety, comfort and relaxation, recent events such as the terrorist attacks and the migrant crises have caused a strong decline in tourism in countries that play a key role in luxury sales. Adapting to such situations represents a severe challenge for the affected brands.

Another challenge is embodied by technological evolution. As people are becoming more and more connected, online purchases have become very popular for luxury goods, especially among young people, and represent an expanding sector. The e-commerce for the luxury goods industry is still far below its potential so luxury companies need to develop their mobile and social commerce in order to adapt to technological tendencies.

Another element that has to be taken into account is sustainability. Despite environmental issues and human rights are regularly discussed in the consumption goods market, the luxury industry is rarely associated with the idea of sustainability. However, the luxury industry will have to adapt too and this is mainly due to legislative pressure and social norms. In fact, people are becoming more and more conscious about the social and environmental problems affecting our planet and expect companies to do the same, especially high-profile ones. Luxury markets need to invest in sustainability and work on their image to appear as environment-friendly and socially-driven as possible, otherwise their reputation could be severely harmed. Speaking of reputation, the latter represents an ongoing concern for all luxury companies, as it basically corresponds to the perception that consumers have of them. It allows a brand to distinguish itself from its competitors and is thus vital to its survival in the industry. The expectations of wealthy consumers are usually higher than the average so the satisfaction of the client is always at stake. Luxury goods are characterized by high prices, which makes it easier for the consumer to complain if there are problems: high-priced items are expected to be flawless. So, in a context of growing awareness and exigency from affluent consumers, luxury brands have no choice but to meet the above-average expectations of their clients if they want to remain in the competitive landscape.

2. Collaborations with the arts

2.1. Similarities between Luxury and Art

To understand how collaborations between luxury brands and the arts came to life, it can be useful to highlight the main similarities between the two parties. First of all, they belong to similar social contexts: they are both associated to prestige and exclusivity, which allows their wealthy consumers to reinforce their social status. As a matter of fact, the consumer base of both artworks and luxury goods consists of solely rich customers due to their extremely high price. Such price derives from the symbolic value of the product rather than from its practical utility: the consumer is attracted to the visual and interpretative language of the product despite its lack of use-value. A collaboration between the two concepts thus seems an obvious strategy aimed at reinforcing each one's position in what could be defined a "social hierarchy". Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the luxury industry has to face many challenges and collaborating with the arts might be the solution to overcome some of those difficulties. First of all, the significant increase in competition forces luxury brands to find alternative ways to innovate and emerge from the crowd in order to defend their exclusive positioning: everlastingness, legacy and tradition need to merge with innovation and originality. Entering the artistic sphere represents a means for luxury brands to affirm their exclusivity demarcate from the average consumer by emphasizing their elitist image. Furthermore, it is a way to access the arts' creativity and remain innovative, all that while meeting their extremely demanding clientele's needs through inventive and diverse initiatives. By committing to the arts, luxury brands also increase their media

exposure, which allows them to express their cultural concern and effectively demonstrate their clear conscience about societal debates, thus proving that their scope goes behind commercial and self-promotion reasons.

2.2. History

From a historical point of view, the birth of luxury brands-art collaborations dates from the 1920s, when the Surrealist painters Salvador Dalí and Jean Cocteau joined the Italian luxury fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli in one of the first documented collaborations. Schiaparelli (1890-1973) was known for her sense of humour and innate fantasy, which encouraged her to create ironic and thought-provoking designs. Also her rivals recognized her as one of the most influential designers of her time: Coco Chanel defined her as “the Italian artist who makes clothes”. Her passion for modern art, and in particular for Surrealism, inspired her creative process and instigated her to start artistic collaborations (see figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2: The “shoe-hat”, designed in collaboration with Slavador Dalí, 1937



Figure 3: Jacket designed in collaboration with Jean Cocteau, Autumn collection, 1937

Schiaparelli’s example was followed in subsequent years by other luxury designers such as Salvatore Ferragamo, Gianni Versace and Yves Saint Laurent, who took inspiration or even ordered inventive creations from artist of the calibre of Futurist painter Lucio Venna, American pop artist Roy Lichtenstein or Spanish artist Pablo Picasso. However, the ongoing wave of luxury-art collaborations has its roots in more recent events: it is attributed to the French luxury fashion house Louis Vuitton, which appointed Marc Jacobs as an artistic director in 1997. This choice led to a rapid cultural change in the luxury industry, with a series of collaboration between one of the most recognized and respected luxury brands and emerging artists, such as pop artist Takashi Muramaki and graffiti artist Stephen Sprouse (see figures 4 and 5). Besides being an example for other luxury brands to follow, Marc Jacobs’s work as creative director for Louis Vuitton

marked a turning point in the nature of luxury brands-art collaborations: new experimental and unconventional artistic expressions took over traditional representations. Further analysis of Louis Vuitton's influence in the artistic sphere will be done in Chapter 4.



Items from Louis Vuitton limited edition collections by Muramaki (figure 4, left) and Sprouse (figure 5, right). Sources: Vogue Italia; Pinterest

2.3. Definition

History aside, it is difficult to give a precise definition of luxury brands-art collaborations since it is a broad concept that incorporates a series of heterogeneous strategies aimed at reaching different goals. If we consider its starting point to be Marc Jacobs's appointment as creative director for Louis Vuitton, as previously mentioned, they could be described as a relatively recent phenomenon that started to spread in recent years and is becoming more and more popular over time. Art and luxury experts tend to define the phenomenon by highlighting the advantages that luxury brands can obtain by engaging in artistic collaborations: from the rise in brand visibility, likeability and value (Boche) to the innovation and advertisement benefits given by the proximity with the arts (Chevalier, Mazzalovo), passing through the reaffirmation of the brand as an influential leader (Kapferer/Bastien) and the possibility to be up-to-date with current trends, convey a message and show the brand's social engagement (Swengley). Although these definitions provide a better understanding of the notions, it is important to give some specifications in order to demarcate the analysed collaborations from other widely used marketing and branding strategies. First of all, artistic collaborations do not include celebrity endorsement, i.e. the promotion of a product through famous and admired people (actors, singers, athletes, social media influencers...). The key difference lies in the nature of the collaborator: celebrities are part of the entertainment industry and are known by a massive public, they speak to the average consumer; artists are part of a closed and exclusive environment, which

only accessible for the elite consumer base. Secondly, the creative director of a luxury brand is not included in the concept of artistic collaboration: like Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton, he is an internal brand ambassador whose role is to determine looming trends and transform them into innovative pioneering products; he is characterized by inventiveness and creativity but does not represent the art world. Lastly, co-branding is not an artistic collaboration: it is a combination of existing brands for the creation and/or marketing of a new product, which allows them to reach new customer segments, renovate their image, improve their geographic scope or enlarge their product range. Although co-branding links a luxury brand to another image with the aim of enriching the brand's positioning like in the case of artistic collaborations, the link is made between homogeneous partners having the same commercial orientation rather than between heterogeneous partners interacting in both the commercial and the artistic domains.

2.4. The role of artistic collaborations in luxury brand management

Luxury brands cannot apply conventional marketing and branding strategies that are usually applied by mass brands and retailers: they have to preserve their targeted clientele from unsought consumers and reinforce their symbolic value. This process is called “market shielding” and consists of keeping prices high and adopting a restrictive distribution scheme in order to make the product inaccessible to the average consumer and enhance the brand's first-rate allure. However, besides being unavailable, luxury brands also need to be known and desired by the vast majority of the public, leading to an unsolvable paradox. As a consequence, luxury goods need a customized marketing mix in order to put particular attention to the revitalization phase of their specific life cycle, which is essential to remain suitable in the long run. Thus, as positioning and revitalization represent the main concerns of luxury brands, it can be inferred that luxury brands-art collaborations can be an extremely powerful resource. They can be used as an elitist tool to further distance non-targeted consumers and re-enhance the concept of inaccessibility but also as a way to gain visibility and emerge from the competitive landscape. Furthermore, artistic collaborations allow luxury brands to maintain their heritage and traditional values while avoiding the risk of becoming old-fashioned, boring or redundant. In fact, by associating the brand with an artist or a work of art, the consumer may deduce that some of the characteristics of said artist or artwork also characterize the brand and this would allow to re-emphasize some significant features of the brand or to compensate for some brand's deficiencies.

2.5. Collaboration types

As the term “collaboration” is very broad, it would be more convenient for analytical purposes to narrow its spectrum of possible definitions. According to an empirical study reported in *The Management of Luxury* (B. Berghaus, G. Müller-Stewens, S. Reinecke), it is possible to identify three main types of collaborations between luxury brands and the arts: limited editions, philanthropic collaborations and experimental

collaborations. The main difference between these three types of collaboration lies in the reason for which each one of them is undertaken: the limited edition is aimed at re-emphasizing exclusivity, while the philanthropic collaboration is intended to attain social legitimization and recognition, and the experimental collaboration seeks creativity and newness for its additional brand content.

More specifically, limited editions, as their name indicates, are characterized by a time and supply restrictions. They serve commercial purposes and are thus available for purchase from the targeted customer. Philanthropic collaborations, on the other hand, usually distance themselves from profit-making purposes: the luxury brand makes a voluntary cultural commitment within the art world. A clear example of this sort of collaboration is the restoration of the Trevi Fountain financed by the Italian (and more specifically Roman) luxury brand Fendi. Fendi described it as an act of love that reflects the Roman roots of the house and its philanthropic commitment to support the beauty and the splendour of the eternal city. Because of the strong bond between Fendi and Rome, where the brand was born and from where it always took inspiration for its designs, this financing also represents a sign of gratitude and a tribute to the city. As for experimental collaborations, they can serve both commercial and non-commercial purposes and they are characterized by a vast room for action: the arts-party is not constrained to any specific form of art and can thus fully accomplish its imaginative and visionary role by being free to experiment.

This paper will focus on limited editions, whose history and characteristics will be explained in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LIMITED EDITIONS

1. Characteristics

Limited editions are widely known for their capacity to create an increase in demand and increment the perceived value of a product. While the sense of uniqueness and exclusivity deriving from the introduction of limited edition products is always taken into consideration, the competitive implications are rarely analysed. As suggested by a study realised by Balachander and Stock in their paper “Limited Edition Products: When and When Not to Offer Them”, limited edition products allow the brand to improve its profits and its image through price premium, distinctiveness and differentiation. However, there is also a strategic effect to consider: greater price competition and potential lower profits from the introduction of limited edition products. Such effect depends on the competitive landscape surrounding the brand willing to introduce the limited edition product. Two main scenarios have been analysed: vertical differences (in terms of quality) and horizontal differences (in terms of style) among competing brands. The vertical differences scenario implies the presence of high-quality brands versus low-quality brands. In such case, high-quality brands would require not-too-high introduction costs for limited edition products while the condition for low-quality brands would be stricter: small introduction costs. This explains why limited edition products are mainly offered by high-quality brands: they can represent an offensive marketing strategy to compete against low-quality brands, which in turn tend to use limited editions as a defensive strategy. The horizontal differences scenario implies that the differences between the limited edition product and the regular product are primarily cosmetic (i.e. style or design): quality differences are less significant. In such case, the introduction of limited edition products has the same effects as in the vertical differences scenario but all competing brands see their profits increase when introduction costs are low enough. It is thus inferable that the introduction of limited edition products is less risky when the vertical or horizontal differences between brands are less significant or when customers’ desire for exclusivity is particularly elevated, like in the case of luxury brands.

2. Aim

Limited editions initiatives rarely seek profit: producing and selling a finite number of pieces (e.g. 100), although sold at a premium price, would still only account for a minimum percentage of the firm’s total profits deriving from the thousands of products generally sold by the brand. It can thus be inferred that the main focus of limited editions is not making profit but rather creating excitement, maximising exclusivity, inspiring curiosity and higher demand, and/or building customer loyalty. Positioning is also often a key driver of limited editions initiatives since it allows to communicate directly with the consumers of a targeted market and create a connection with the country at stake, like in the case of Asian markets. As a matter of

fact, in recent years, Asian markets have become more and more attractive for luxury brands: countries like China, Japan and India are significantly increasing their wealth and Asian consumers account for more than half of the purchases in the luxury industry. It is thus not a surprise that Asian consumers have seen their buyer power boost and are now expecting to be treated as special and unique, which is why Asian markets have become luxury brands' main choice to launch new limited edition products. Luxury products can be found everywhere but creating a limited edition for a specific country stimulates travellers to shop in that particular country since luxury consumers usually look for exclusive products that are not accessible back home. The concepts of inaccessibility and scarcity will be analysed further in the following section.

3. Scarcity messages

In recent years, limited editions' popularity has grown among luxury brands because of the scarcity messages associated to such products. Consumers perceive limited edition products as exclusive and valuable and consequently experience an increase in their purchase intention. There are two types of scarcity messages: limited-time scarcity and limited-quantity scarcity messages. The former, as the name itself indicates, focuses on the limited availability of the product in terms of time: consumers are encouraged to purchase as many limited edition products as they want during a limited amount of time. On the other hand, limited-quantity scarcity messages underline the product limitation in terms of quantity: only a defined and constrained number of products are available on the market. The scarcity principle lying behind limited editions increases product desirability and improves consumers' brand evaluation as it allows the product to differentiate from its competitors.

The effects of scarcity messages can be explained by the combination of two theories: the *commodity theory* and the *signalling theory*. The commodity theory states that a commodity – term used to define an object that can be possessed and is transferable and desirable – experiences an increase in its perceived value when it is unavailable or arduous to access (Brock & Mazzocco). By purchasing limited edition products, consumers manage to satisfy their need to be unique and distinguish from the wide public. Their positive perception of the product is strengthened by the so-called “bandwagon reasoning”: if everyone likes and wants the product then it must be good. The signalling theory (Stock & Balachander) suggests that limiting the availability of a product is a strategy used by brands to signal the high quality of the product to its targeted consumers. In the same way, consumers will see the possession of limited edition products as way to signal their wealth, uniqueness and elevated social status.

The main difference between the two types scarcity messages lies in their effect on consumers' perception. As a matter of fact, limited-quantity scarcity messages convey the idea of uniqueness, luxury and conformity to exclusive social groups much more than limited-time scarcity messages. Having to compete with other customers in order to obtain the limited edition product increases the perceived value of the product, as opposed to time limitations, under which clients can purchase an unlimited number of limited edition

products regardless of the number of potential consumers. Using limited-time scarcity messages is a strategy that brands usually adopt in order to maximize sales during the promotional period by stimulating consumers' purchase intention for a given amount of time. The impact of such strategy on the perceived value of the product is usually not significant, which is why limited-quantity scarcity messages tend to be preferred when luxury brands need to boost their exclusivity. A combination of the two types scarcity messages is also frequent.

4. Risks and benefits

Luxury goods manufacturer often find themselves in a strategic dilemma: being able to attract both elite customers and the masses. The origin of this dilemma lies in the simple concept of social influences. Elite consumers seek uniqueness and distinctiveness from average consumers while the masses tend to imitate elite consumers' choices. As a consequence, firms need to stimulate the masses' interest by intriguing the elite first, while at the same time ensuring that the masses' potential emulation does not discourage the elite from purchasing the product in the first place. This is why social influences play a key role in luxury brands' strategic decisions: firms need to understand how to deal with the contrasting desires of leaders (elite customers) and followers (masses) in order to discern whether offering limited edition product would affect the brand in a positive way or not. Further market research should also be done in order to gain extensive knowledge about the other essential elements that need to be taken into consideration in the development of a limited edition strategy, such as the demographics of the selling areas, the consumer's needs and desires with respect to the type of product, and the way in which the product will be marketed.

Despite all these verifications, it is impossible to ensure the success of a limited edition. Consumers could develop a love-hate relationship with the product, deriving from the unnecessary feeling of urgency created around it. Resell markets for limited edition items can also represent a problem since the extremely high demand paired with scarce availability risks to cause an over-inflation of said markets.

Nevertheless, limited editions still represent a widely used strategy among luxury brands. In particular, luxury brands are engaging more and more in artistic collaborations in the form of limited editions. In the following chapters, we will deepen our understanding of the topic by analysing three examples of limited editions originating from luxury brands-art collaborations.

CHAPTER 3: WHITNEY BIENNIAL X TIFFANY & CO.

1. Tiffany & Co: its role in the luxury market and its artistic roots

1.1. Tradition

Tiffany's story began in 1837 in New York, when Charles Lewis Tiffany arrived in the Big Apple with a visionary and revolutionary spirit and decided to open a small shop of curious objects. His emporium quickly became the destination of magnates, social elite and heads of state. Driven by his passion for diamonds, Mr Tiffany bought one of the biggest and most beautiful yellow diamonds in the world and named it the "Tiffany Diamond", making his emporium the ultimate source of luxury goods in America. He subsequently surprised the world even further by buying the French crown jewels, thus becoming "The Diamond King" in the New York press. From then on, the name of Tiffany & Co. has always been associated to the finest diamonds available on Earth. In particular, Tiffany & Co. produced the most brilliant diamond ring ever created, the "Tiffany Setting", which became the engagement ring par excellence and became an emblem together with the Tiffany Blue Box in which it was presented (see figures 1 and 2). The latter, refined by a white ribbon, fascinated the world since the beginning and became a symbol of style and sophistication. Mr Tiffany decided that the coveted boxes were reserved as an exclusive privilege for Tiffany's customers. In 1906, the New York Sun described the blue box as an inestimable good that cannot be bought but only received as a present. Tiffany Blue Boxes are now part of the house's tradition and symbolize elegance, exclusivity and flawless craftsmanship.

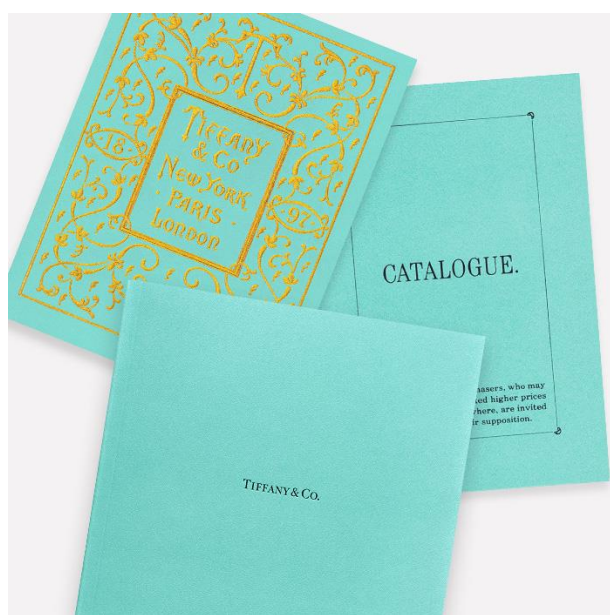


Figure 1 (left): The "Tiffany Setting", the most desired engagement ring in the world, also called "the ring of the rings"; Figure 2 (right): Tiffany Blue Box

(Source: Tiffany & Co.'s official website)

Other traditions include Tiffany's Blue Book Catalogue (see figure 3), first published in 1845. The book shows the impeccable creations of the brand and announces the brand's Autumn jewellery collection every year. The creations usually include extremely rare stones and are thus considered masterpieces from world experts, who impatiently wait for the Blue Book every year in order to be among the firsts to admire the new unique products.

Since its foundation, Tiffany has always been a pioneer in terms of global design tendencies thanks to its willingness and capacity to experiment with new creations, new materials or new gemstones. Inventiveness, discovery and ability to surprise are part of the brand's tradition, which started in 1878 with Mr Charles Tiffany's purchase of the previously mentioned "Tiffany Diamond" (see figure 4): the 128-carat yellow diamond set into the necklace that Audrey Hepburn wore for the release of the movie "Breakfast at Tiffany's". Today, the diamond is in permanent display in Tiffany's New York City flagship store. It is interesting to underline that the world started falling in love with Tiffany thanks to that 1961 Hollywood classic, which contributed to make the brand iconic. Following Audrey Hepburn's example, many celebrities continue to choose Tiffany's jewels to complete their outfits.



*Figure 3 (left): The Blue Book Catalogue; Figure 4 (right): Tiffany Yellow Diamond
(Source: Tiffany & Co. 's official website)*

At the Exposition Universelle of 1878, the world's fair held in Paris, the brand was given immense recognition for its Japanese-style silverware and at the beginning of the 20th century Louis Comfort Tiffany, Charles Lewis Tiffany's son, was recognized as one of the main representatives of the Art Nouveau. In 1902, Tiffany welcomed kunzite, a captivating lilac stone that takes its name from Tiffany's gemmologist George Kunz, followed by morganite, the enchanting pink gemstone named after the banker J.P. Morgan, a loyal Tiffany's client. Other incredible gemstones were discovered by Tiffany's gemmologists, who

travelled to the remotest place on Earth and dedicated their lives to the discovery of new extraordinary stones. This is a clear indicator of Tiffany's artistic roots, which led the brand to generate avant-garde creations in collaboration with artists such as Jean Schlumberger and Elsa Peretti among others.

1.2. Design and artistic roots

1.2.1. Louis Comfort Tiffany

Louis Comfort Tiffany followed his own path to success and reached international fame thanks to his creations. He is considered one of the greatest designers of all time and a master in many artistic sectors, including jewellery, glass, mosaics, paintings and pottery. In 1902, after the death of his father, he became Tiffany's first design director and allowed the brand to enter the 20th century surrounded by international success. In his role of artistic director, he created the *Tiffany Artistic Jewels* laboratory in the Fifth Avenue store, where his jewels and precious objects were realised.

He is considered a central representative of Art Nouveau in the whole world and he is praised for his imaginative jewels, his lamps made of coloured glass and his glass windows decorated with historical figures (see figure 5) that bring light to museums, banks, hospitals and hotels. Mixing gemstones of various colours, textures and light, he created breath-taking depictions of nature at its best: he brought gemstones to life in the form of dragonflies, wild flowers and fruits (see figure 6). His artworks were also influenced by other cultures, like his jade and amethyst bib necklaces (see figure 7).



Figure 5 (left): Coloured glass window realized for the World's Columbian Exposition of Chicago in 1893; Figure 6 (centre): Dragonfly brooch realized in 1904; Figure 7 (right): Bib necklace made of jade and amethyst (Source: Tiffany & Co.'s official website)

After more than one century, Louis Comfort Tiffany's creations are still fascinating and desired: they were, and still are today, treasured by collectors and auction houses thanks to their intrinsic beauty and excellent craftsmanship.

1.2.2. Jean Schlumberger

Parisian artist Jean Schlumberger is considered one of the most important jewel artists of the last century. He dedicated his life to create jewels that would catch the heart of the most fashionable and elegant women of the world, like Jacqueline Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor among others. His path to success started in the 1930's, when designer Elsa Schiaparelli asked Schlumberger to design jewels for her collections. The notoriety gained by working for Schiaparelli led him to other great opportunities: he started working for the renowned Vogue editor Diana Vreeland and then, in 1956, for Tiffany & Co. In his studio in the mezzanine of the Fifth Avenue store, he produced his most sensational pieces, most of which were inspired by the wonders of nature: fantastical flora and animated creatures from sea and land were created with exquisite gemstones and colourful enamel (see figures 8 and 9). Schlumberger's creations were particularly appreciated by actresses and socialites. In particular, the Tiffany diamond necklace worn by Audrey Hepburn at the publicity shot for "Breakfast at Tiffany's" was designed by Schlumberger. It thus comes as no surprise that Schlumberger was the first jeweller designer to receive a special Coty Award from the American Fashion Critics, one of the most prestigious awards in the field of fashion that was conceived by the cosmetics and perfumes company Coty, Inc. to support and praise American fashion. His legacy has also continued to be honoured over the years by important artistic institutions, like the Louvre museum in Paris, which in 1995 realized a retrospective entitled "A Diamond in the City". Today his designs continue to be brought to life in their legendary style by Tiffany's master craftsmen.

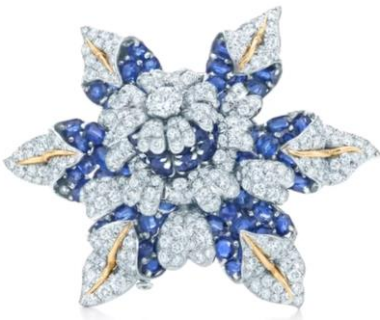


Figure 8 (left): floral-shaped brooch

Figure 9 (right): seahorse brooch

(Source: Tiffany & Co.'s official website)



1.2.3. Elsa Peretti

Elsa Peretti was an independent thinker that revolutionized the world of design and in particular of jewellery design. She enchanted the world with the originality of her evocative creations characterized by organic shapes and undulating surfaces. She believed that “jewellery is not fashion: it has to last, not be discarded as soon as something else comes along”.

Peretti was born in Florence and grew up in Rome in an important Roman family who carefully followed her in her formal education. Since an early age, she showed a strong interest in nature as well as impressive observation skills, which later on contributed to stimulate her imagination. Being a beautiful woman, she started working as a model in Barcelona, which was the heart of the European culture at the beginning of the 1960's. This experience was life changing and culminated in an extraordinary designer career. In Barcelona, she studied the visionary architecture of Antoni Gaudí, posed for the Spanish Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí and quickly became part of his Barcelona artist ring. She subsequently developed a passion for sculpture, which stimulated her interest in the creative possibilities offered metallic surfaces, and was particularly attracted by powerful sculptural shapes.

She then began to travel around the world: she went to Japan, where she met talented artists and craftsmen that significantly impacted her future works, and then to Honk Kong, where she had the possibility to admire and collect Asian art. Like Asian artists, she had a strong love for nature and the ability to transform symbols into dimensions. Her curiosity then led Peretti to New York, the perfect place for mixing cultures, ideas and creative ferment. There she met other great personalities such as the novelist, screenwriter and actor Truman Capote, the actress and singer Liza Minelli and the artist Andy Warhol. Vogue editor Diana Vreeland sought her out and made her jump in New York's fashion world. She designed her first jewels for the collection of the Italian-Argentinian fashion designer Giorgio di Sant'Angelo, worked as a model for the famous photographer Helmut Newton, and collaborated with the photographer Hiro, with whom she started a lifelong creative association. She had an instinct for style that came to her intuitively thanks to her modelling career, her friendship with the most important designers of the moment, and her obsession for craftsmanship's perfection.

In 1974, the New York press discovered that Elsa Peretti had become a designer for Tiffany & Co. During her years at Tiffany's, she created a series of successful and stunning collections of both jewels (see figures 10 and 11) and objects for the home (see figure 12), all characterized by the artist's following ideal: “style is to be simple, I love to push myself to achieve a certain quality and eliminate the excess details”.



Figure 10: Piece from the Elsa Peretti “Open Heart” collection

(Source: Tiffany & Co. ’s official website)

Peretti claims her inspiration for the collection comes from the artworks of the sculptor Henry Moore, often characterized by abstract figures with open spaces.



Figure 11: Piece from the Elsa Peretti “Diamonds by the Yard” collection

(Source: Tiffany & Co. ’s official website)

The sobriety used by Peretti when designing diamonds jewels revolutionized the way to wear those gemstones: she created very modern and bright jewels that can be worn every day.



Figure 12: Cutlery from the Elsa Peretti “Padova” collection

(Source: Tiffany & Co. ’s official website)

The collection takes its name from the Italian city where it was created. The objects of the collection are easy to hold and lay on the table: they are beautiful to see and comfortable to touch. Like Peretti’s jewels, the objects for the house are minimalist, sensual and tactile and represent the idea that beauty and utility should always coincide.

Peretti was recognized as a talented designer by fashion experts and received several rewards such as the Coty Award, the Council of Fashion Designers of America Award, and an honorary doctorate from the Fashion Institute of Technology. She was also honoured with a series of important exhibitions, such as the permanent 20th century collection of the British Museum (2009).

With their reductionist and organic shapes, Peretti's creations are revolutionary: the natural and sensual shapes are enchanting for the eyes and perfectly merge with the body of who is wearing them.

1.2.4. *Paloma Picasso*

Paloma Picasso, born in Paris in 1949, is the daughter of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso and the French artist Françoise Gilot. She inherited the artistic streak from her parents and continued the family tradition by becoming a successful artist. She became famous for the bold and original style of her creations, which she started to produce as a teenager. In early years, she worked as a costume designer for avant-garde theatre plays and designed costume jewellery for the legendary couturier Yves Saint Laurent. In 1979, Tiffany's creative director John Loring invited Paloma Picasso to design the tableware for a Tiffany's exhibition. A year later, the luxury brand presented the first exclusive collection realised by Paloma (see figure 13).

When she arrived to New York and saw Tiffany & Co.'s store for the first time, Paloma was impressed by how different it was from every other jewellery store in Europe, starting from the building itself, which is characterized by a masculine aspect but contains the most feminine creations that a woman could dream of. What she liked the most about her work at Tiffany was the freedom: she was allowed to have a dialogue with the gemstones, from which she was getting her ideas, and to experiment with them. "Jewellery is about emotion", she said in an interview when speaking about her experience at Tiffany's, "not just in the making and designing of it, but also when you buy it or when you are offered a piece of jewellery that has a special meaning for you". The Parisian artist does not see her jewels as decorations but rather as talismans: she wants the people who wear her creations to feel protected, energized and passionate. She also values the notion of family: the idea is to buy a jewel that will eventually be passed on to younger members of the family in order to create a legacy and make the jewel timeless.

As for her creative process, Paloma claims that the first step to creation is what you take in: when you look around there are always some elements that attract you and make you feel something and others that don't so the first thing to do is choosing the elements that inspire you and they will sooner or later come back in your designs. Other key elements are colours and light. Being raised by two painters, it is not difficult to imagine why Paloma developed a passion for colours. What she loves the most is mixing colours, especially those that you do not expect would go well together, and creating an equilibrium that is close to unbalance but somehow manages to work. The light also plays a fundamental role in her creative process. She is strongly inspired by the Mediterranean lights, particularly those that can be admired from the South of France and

from Morocco: different lights allow to appreciate infinite wonderful colours, like the ones of a sunset, and give Paloma new ideas for mixing the colours of her stones.

Joining Tiffany, she knew that she would have the opportunity to work with the finest craftsmen whose works are characterized by high quality and excellence. Tiffany also gave her access to wonderful new gemstones and gave her the chance to discover new materials and new creative processes. Tiffany was very receptive, it didn't stick to what was known, allowing Paloma to express her creativity with all the necessary freedom and making her job exciting. This freedom encouraged her to work not only with silver and gold but also with stones so she started trying out several combinations of stones with different colours, shapes and cuts to create great innovative jewels with the multiple wonders offered by nature. Paloma brought to life several successful collections that masterfully combine European sophistication with exotic influences, characterized by complex and sumptuous shapes and bright colours (see figures 14 and 15).



Figure 13 (left): Piece from the Paloma's Graffiti collection, the first collection of the artist for Tiffany & Co, inspired by the graffiti she saw on the streets of New York City.

Figure 14 (centre): Piece from the Paloma's Dove collection. "Paloma" means dove in Spanish and is the universal symbol of peace.

Figure 15 (right): Piece from the Paloma's Venezia collection, inspired by the lanterns of Venice and their reflections on the water of the canals.

(Source: Tiffany & Co.'s official website)

1.3. Social responsibility

Tiffany & Co. strongly believes that it is their moral duty to respect the environment and this is why they try to minimize their environmental impact as a company and to positively influence the community. Through their actions and their social influence, they constantly try to spread the message that protecting the environment is fundamental. Being a leader in the luxury industry, they have the power to drive a significant

cultural change and establish a standard of excellence, not only in jewellery and craftsmanship, but also in the definition of what it means to be a responsible member of the community. As a matter of fact, they developed a vertical integration model in order to guarantee the stability and efficiency of their chain of custody, as well as the direct supervision of their manufacturing and the possibility to improve global standards and conditions. To give a few examples of Tiffany's social engagement, the company is currently involved in sustaining human rights in Angola and Zimbabwe and in the protection of pristine landscapes, such as Yellowstone National Park and Bristol Bay (Alaska), against the mining industry's harmful effects. The long-term well-being of our planet, of its natural resources and of its people is significantly influenced by the impact of businesses like Tiffany's: the company is aware of the importance of having a positive impact on the sites in which they operate and this is why they act towards a significant change and encourage everyone to do the same. Proof of their social engagement can be found at all levels, from extraction to craftsmanship, from employees to governance.

Quality craftsmanship starts with the responsible extraction of the highest-quality materials and continues with the creation of the final jewel. As opposed to other jewellers, Tiffany & Co. extracts most of its diamonds and crude metals directly from well-known mines and from renewed sources. The provenance and traceability of their diamonds is extremely important as the company wants to guarantee complete integrity in its work and this is why their diamonds are exclusively extracted from countries that adhere to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. Furthermore, they guarantee the protection of human rights and of the environment through their production chain and the promotion of more rigorous standards. Investing in the communities in which they operate is also part of their social engagement: they hire local manpower in their cleaning and polishing laboratories everywhere in the world and include extensive training and fair salaries in the hiring process.

Tiffany & Co. takes into consideration the social, economic and environmental impact of their extraction and creation processes in order to have a positive impact in the entire production chain, from the mine to the client. This is why one of their priorities is to create and develop a culture of excellence, respect, participation and responsibility among its employees, from sales persons to designers. The knowledge and skills of every employee are an important source of organizational ability, as well as a competitive advantage, which strengthens the importance of training programs and development opportunities on all levels, including governance. As a matter of fact, nominating a Chief Sustainability Officer and establishing a Social Responsibility Committee is another clear indicator of the importance given by the company's management to social responsibility.

Protecting nature is the heart of Tiffany's philosophy: the company wants to leave a rich and wonderful world for posterity, like the one they have inherited. As part of their environmental engagement, Tiffany wants its Blue Boxes and bags to be eco-friendly: the paper they are made of comes from responsibly-managed forests and recycled materials. To reduce their environmental

impact even further, the company does its best to improve their use of recycled paper and of wood fibres materials they require in their business.

Reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions is also part of the company's effort to protect future generations from the impact of climate change. Their final aim at the moment is to completely eliminate greenhouse gas emissions within 2050. To reach that goal they are already using LED lights in both their existing and new buildings, which should allow them to reduce gas emissions by 15% within 2020. Furthermore, the company is defining the necessary objectives to derive 100% of the electricity they use from renewable sources. Their laboratories and distribution centres are also developing several emissions-reduction programs that include the use of solar panels. Energy saving, bio-construction principles, the use of renewable energies and a proactive management of the environment are thus the essential bases adopted by Tiffany & Co. to make its work environment eco-friendly.

As further evidence of their social engagement, Tiffany & Co. has a long history of support to non-profit organizations and local institutions of the communities they operate in. Besides the benefits generated by their commercial activities, donations are also an important part of Tiffany's culture. As the business' activities expand globally, also their investments in charities grow. In 2000, the Tiffany & Co Foundation was born with the aim of managing the philanthropic activities of the company in the best possible way. The Foundation supports organizations involve in the defense of natural resources and sponsors non-profit entities dedicated to the promotion of responsible extraction activities and to the protection of coral and marine resources.

Therefore, it is clear that Tiffany & Co. has a long history of cultural engagement and social responsibility and constantly works to improve its sustainable practices and honour its artistic roots. It is thus not surprising to discover that this leader in the luxury industry decided to collaborate with the Whitney Museum of American Art for the 2017 Whitney Biennial exhibition. In the following paragraphs, we will deepen our knowledge first about the Whitney Museum and subsequently about said collaboration.

2. The Whitney Biennial exhibition of contemporary American art

2.1. The Whitney Museum of American Art

2.1.1 Founding

The Whitney Museum of American Art was founded by the American sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt at the beginning of the 20th century, a period in which living artists with new ideas had severe difficulties in

finding someone willing to exhibit or purchase their artworks in the United States. Mrs Whitney acknowledge the situation and helped those artists by buying and displaying their works, thus becoming one of the most important patrons of American art in the first half of the 20th century.

In 1914, the American artists that had been disdained by well-established academies found a home for their creations in Greenwich Village, in New York City, in the Whitney Studio. Within fifteen years, Mrs Whitney's collection counted more than 500 pieces. She offered her collection as a donation to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which refused her endowment and led her to establish her own museum, characterized by a special focus on the artists of her country. This is how, in 1930, The Whitney Museum of American Art came to life. It opened a year later in Greenwich Village, on West Eight Street, and was later moved to a broader place on West 54th Street. In 1966, a third building, designed by Marcel Breuer, was acquired as the Museum had outgrown its previous home. Finally, Whitney's new and final building opened in 2015 at 99 Gansevoort Street. But Whitney's exhibitions and programming are not constrained to the museum's wall: the Whitney was in fact the first museum to expand its barriers through corporate-subsidized branch museums located in several New York City areas.

2.1.2. Permanent collection

The Whitney's permanent collection is composed of more than 21.000 pieces realized by over 3.000 different artists from the United States in the last two centuries. The heart of the collection is represented by the personal belongings of Gertrude Vanderbilt, the Museum founder, accounting for around 600 pieces at the Museum's opening in 1931. Mrs Whitney used these first works as a basis for the Museum's permanent collection, which she continued to expand throughout her life, until her death in 1954. The collection is a clear testimony of Mrs Whitney's strong support and patronage of the young or emerging American artists of her time, including Charles Demuth (see figure 16), Mabel Dwight (see figure 17) and John Sloan (see figure 18) among others.



*Figure 16 (left): Charles Demuth, "My Egypt" (1927); Figure 17 (centre): Mabel Dwight, "In the Crowd" (1931); Figure 18 (right): John Sloan, "Backyards, Greenwich Village" (1914)
(Source: Whitney Museum of American Art's official website)*

Thanks to the particular attention given to contemporary artists and to the great respect for their creative process, the Museum's collection has significantly grown over the years and now includes a vast range of artworks from all the major artistic movements that influenced American art in the 20th century: from the Ashcan School painting to contemporary art, passing through Modernism, Social Realism and Precisionism, as well as Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Minimalism and Postminimalism. The Whitney has its signature exhibition: the Whitney Biennial, which is, as its name indicates, a biennial (at certain times annual) exhibition of contemporary American art. Later on this chapter, we will come back to the Whitney Biennial and analyse it in greater detail.

The collection is carefully preserved by the Whitney's conservation department, founded in 2001 with the aim of safeguarding the Museum's artworks and making them accessible to the general public. The department, which was designed as a part of a collaboration with the *Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art at the Harvard Art Museums*, includes both a research centre and a treatment centre and experiments new approaches to the management and technical analysis of modern and contemporary artworks. Part of its work also consists of promulgating information through publications and lectures.

The conservation of the collection is also a key element of the Artist Documentation Program (ADP), founded in 1990 with the aim of gaining extensive knowledge of the Museum's artworks by interviewing the artists and their associates. Further research about materials and technique is conducted by the support group called Conservation Fellows, whose members regularly meet to discuss current trends and the challenges related to the safeguarding of current exhibitions' artworks or of the Whitney's collection's most unconventional pieces.

2.1.3. The building

The building of the Whitney Museum (see figure 19), designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano, is located in the Meatpacking District, between the High Line and the Hudson River. With around 50.000 square feet of indoor galleries and 13.000 square feet of outdoor exhibition space and terraces in front of the High Line, the Whitney's building represents a significant expansion of the Museum's exhibition and programming space, now considered the most extensive display of modern and contemporary American art. The imposing aura surrounding the building is also given by the cantilevered entrance, which encloses a public-gathering outdoor plaza of approximately 8.500 square feet, close to the High Line southern entrance. Special exhibitions are held in an 18.000 square feet gallery on the top floor, i.e. the biggest column-free museum gallery in New York, while the permanent collection currently occupies two floors. The Museums also includes a free-access lobby gallery, an education centre, a multi-use theatre with an adjacent outdoor gallery, a Conservation Lab and a Library Reading Room. A retail shop, a ground-floor restaurant and a top-floor café are further elements that contribute to make the surrounding area lively.



Figure 19: Building of the Whitney Museum (Source: Whitney Museum of American Art's official website)

The design of the building is characterised by a striking asymmetry and manages to merge with the industrial nature of the surrounding buildings and railway while at the same time proclaiming a “contemporary, sculptural presence”.

Using Renzo Piano’s words, “The design for the new museum emerges equally from a close study of the Whitney’s needs and from a response to this remarkable site. We wanted to draw on its vitality and at the same time enhance its rich character. The first big gesture, then, is the cantilevered entrance, which transforms the area outside the building into a large, sheltered public space. At this gathering place beneath the High Line, visitors will see through the building entrance and the large windows on the west side to the Hudson River beyond. Here, all at once, you have the water, the park, the powerful industrial structures and the exciting mix of people, brought together and focused by this new building and the experience of art.”

2.2. The Whitney Biennial

The Whitney Museum organizes a vast range of exhibitions, including retrospectives of major contemporary artists as well as group shows aimed at presenting young or emerging artists to the wide public. The artworks exposed also include movies, videos, photography, architecture and new media. One of the most famous exhibitions of the Museum is the Whitney Biennial, introduced in 1932 by Gertrude Vanderbilt: a show upon invitation where the works of the two previous years are exposed. Being a continuous series of exhibitions, it manages to regularly supervise evolutions in American art. The exhibition itself experienced several transformations over the years and earned the name of most mind-changing and provocative array of contemporary art in the United States. Here the landmarks of the exhibitions over the years.

The 1930s and the 1940s. The exhibition gained popularity in its early years, becoming a success by 1937 and subsequently increasing its pace by organizing two shows per year: a painting survey in the fall and a sculpture survey in the spring, offering great opportunities to Modernism tendencies surging in those years. The show of 1944 was criticized for its excess of fantasy and absence of factual representation, characteristics that inevitably derived from the choice of artists such as Georgia O’Keeffe, Raphael Soyer, and Charles Sheeler, all habitués of Whitney biennial exhibitions. The biennial 1946 was marked by the debut of Jackson Pollock.

The 1950s and 1960s. The exhibition pace started to slow down in 1959: the show became annual instead of biennial, with one year dedicated to painting and one year dedicated to sculpture. The events were used more and more by many critics as a mean to survey the evolution of American art. The comments were often harsh but by the end of the 1960s the critics started to put the blame on the Whitney Museum for accepting an excessively broad variety of artists: they wanted the exhibitions to be more rigidly curated. The suggestion was acknowledged and followed by 1969 Whitney director John I. H. Baur, who believed that approximating a sample of the current artistic trends was no longer possible. From then on, exhibitions started to be organized along specific themes.

The 1970s. 1973 was the year in which the exhibitions started to be organized along the format we know today, i.e. with the shows condensed in one big biennial exhibition. That same year, Marcel Breuer building's five floors were filled with the artworks of more than 220 artists. Both the number of artists and the size of the installations had grown with respect to previous years. In the 1975 Biennial, Whitney's curators decided to select only artists who had never displayed their works at the Whitney nor in New York City during the past 10 years, earning the name of "The Virgin's Show". Critics did not appreciate the decision as many works turned out to be bad imitations of already-established artists. To remedy, the curators included artists with solid reputations in the 1977 Biennial. However, the low ratio of female participants was still strongly criticized. This is why in 1979 the number of women artists was increased up to one third with the aim of rebalancing the male-female ratio.

The 1980s. The 1981 Biennial focused on painting trends and on the introduction of new artists. The subsequent edition was the first multimedia Biennial (with film and video) and was centred on figurative painting and Neo-Expressionism. The following 1985 exhibition was focused on East Village artists and was harshly criticized, in particular by *Time* magazine critic Robert Hughes, who described it as the "worst [Biennial] in living memory". In the 1987 edition, the ratio of female participants dropped to one fourth, triggering the "Guerrilla Girls Review the Whitney", a display realized by the anonymous feminist artists group Guerrilla Girls in order to denounce the unbalance in the ratio of women and other minorities in the Biennials since 1973. The Whitney acknowledged the situation and tried to remedy by bringing the female ratio to 40 percent in the following exhibition.

The 1990s. The 1991 Biennial chose to be more aggressive and addressed controversial current themes, such as sexuality, AIDS and race. The following edition was also very provocative and assumed a political tone, putting emphasis on social theory and giving great room to women and gay artists. That year Biennial was recognized as one of the most foresighted and awareness-expanding. *New York Times* writer Roberta Smith described it as "less about the art of our time than about the times themselves". The following 1995 Biennial focused on sensorial art rather than on social themes and included neglected artists of several types, including older-generation artists, outside artists and folk artists. The 1998 Biennial was marked by a series of administrative withdrawals.

The 2000s. The 2000 exhibition was organized by a team of external curators and was depicted as dispersive and pointless by the critics. Curator Lawrence R. Rinder included more outside artists in the 2002 edition but female participants accounted for only a quarter of the artists, leading to further critics. The 2004 Biennial was characterized by the return of painting and drawing, triggered by the Internet-age attraction for materiality, and strongly appreciated by the critics, who described it as the best show in the exhibition's history. The 2006 Biennial was a thematic exhibition titled "Day for Night" and included a section dedicated to the influence of European artists on young American sculptors. Following the financial crisis of 2008, the Whitney cut its expenditures: the 2010 exhibition was half the size of the 2006. That year Biennial was treated as the mark of a moment in time: it was titled "2010" and was characterized by a historical orientation. In the 2012 edition, artists were placed at the core of the event: they were asked to organize small shows within the exhibition, transforming the act of curating in an art itself. The show was really appreciated by critics, who described it as one of the best among the Biennials. The 2014 brought up some controversy due to its lack of diversity among the participants: of the 109 artists selected, only 9 were black or Afro-Americans. The curators decided to postpone the 2016 Biennial to 2017, in order to have more time to get used to the new building designed by Renzo Piano. We will discuss the 2017 exhibition in greater detail in the following paragraph.

3. The collaboration

3.1. Whitney Biennial 2017

Being held in a period characterized by economic unbalance, racial tension, and dividing politics, the 2017 Whitney Biennial, the Museum's 78th exhibition, challenges its visitors to contemplate how these realities affect their perception of themselves and of the community. The young curators Christopher Y. Lew, 36, and Mia Locks, 34, selected 63 participants, including individuals and collectives as well as emerging and well-established artists, working in a vast range of fields: painting, installation, drawing, sculpture, photography, film and video, performance, music, activism, and also video-game design. In particular, painting has a strong presence, including artists of all ages, from the 87-year-old Minimalist Jo Baer to younger painters such as the abstractionist Shara Hughes. The exhibition, held from March 17 to June 11, also includes a three-part film on the Biennial in which artists talk about innovative ways to create and experience art.

The Whitney Biennial reinvented itself for this year exhibition, starting from its curators: both young, symbolizing a generational shift, and of colour. Also, the number of participants was tightened with respect to the 2014 edition, which counted more than one hundred artists. The show inaugurates the Museum's new building, designed by Renzo Piano, and although the installations occupy only two floors and the lobby, the square footage is much higher with respect to its previous home, designed by Marcel Breuer.

As for the themes, economics is a central one. In particular, young New York artist Cameron Rowland's works focus on infamous economic realities, such as inmate labour in New York prisons. Rowland also encouraged the Whitney Museum to invest \$25,000 in a new financial instrument called "social impact bond". The profits of such bond are redirected to real-life social initiatives with the aim of reducing relapsing among former criminals. Identity is another controversial matter of the exhibition. The curators have selected the participants in order to fairly represent all communities, including Black, Asian and Latino artists. Questions of identity are also approached by several artists in different manners, from satire to nostalgia. Unsurprisingly, politics is also part of the addressed themes. The curators travelled across the United States during the 2016 presidential election in order to recruit artists for the Biennial and some of the exposed works focus on national politics, like the drawings of Ms Dupuy-Spencer, who depicted a Trump rally. Using Ms Locks' words, the artists are experiencing a "moment of collective self-reflection, introspection, soul-searching": addressing harsh and controversial themes is somehow inevitable and part of the exhibition's tradition.

3.2. Partnership with Tiffany & Co.

What is the role of Tiffany & Co. in the 2017 Whitney Biennial? The luxury brand decided to invest \$5 millions to sponsor the current and the next two Biennials in order to create a series of special artists editions. The curators of the Biennial personally chose five artists from the exhibition to collaborate with Tiffany's master craftsmen and create said limited edition artworks, whose prices range from \$2,500 to \$10,000. The outcomes of this collaboration are currently exposed in the windows of Tiffany's Fifth Avenue store and are available for sale throughout the Biennial exhibition period, i.e. from March 17 to June 11. Each artist was commissioned to realize exclusive window environments to display the limited editions, which gave them the opportunity to experiment new creative processes with different materials. Being silver part of Tiffany's tradition, it is not surprising that four out of the five projects revolve around silver.

Harold Mendez, together with Tiffany's artisans, realized a sterling silver vessel shaped as a pre-Colombian death mask in an edition of five (see figure 20). Mendez took his inspiration from a death mask he had seen in a museum in Medellín (Colombia) and from Tiffany's Rhode Island Hollowware workshop, from which he took the idea to decorate his window display with old silver-polishing cloths containing remains of fine metals. The polishing wheels are multi-coloured and serve as a bed for the death mask, which is filled with water. The iridescent interior of the sculpture is revealed by a mirror strategically placed at a 45-degree angle over the mask (see figure 21). Mendez clearly distanced himself from Tiffany's classic Blue Box jewels. As *New York Times* writer Ted Loos jokingly wrote, "it's hard to imagine Audrey Hepburn sliding up to the Tiffany window to check out a death mask". This caused him to be sceptical in the beginning but Tiffany allowed him to experiment in complete freedom and to follow through his idea. Obtaining the specific desired effects required several months of collaboration with Tiffany's craftsmen but thanks to the

artistic independence that Tiffany granted him, he managed to create an object aligned with the rest of its work that at the same time also satisfied the brand.



Figure 20 (left): “When the night is going wrong or when the day is full of empty promise” by Harlod Mendez (Source: The New York Times)

Figure 21 (right): Mendez’s window installation for Tiffany & Co. (Source: Observer)

Ajay Kurian created a limited edition of ten business card cases made of sterling silver and titled “Modern Secrets”. The artworks include a hidden reference to the 2001 movie “American Psycho”: the word “psycho” is blended in the complex design of the cases as an allusion to the secret handshake of the power elite. In the window display, cards are falling out of the case in such a way to depict a miniature of Whitney Museum’s staircase designed by Renzo Piano (see figure 22).

Raúl de Nieves’s artwork consists of a hand-engraved image on a Tiffany sterling silver box. The image, which subtly reminds of a relic, illustrates two individuals introducing an infant to the world. The window installation features 18 layers of glass in which the same image has been carved. The silver box is placed at the centre of the window, in front of a red backdrop (see figure 23).

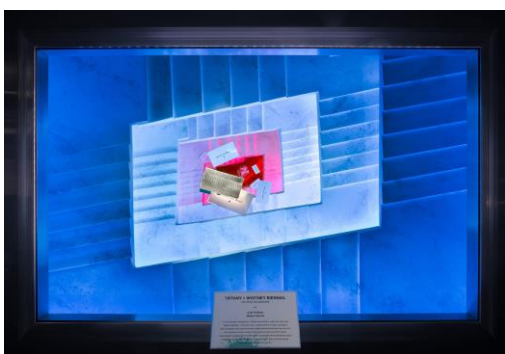


Figure 22 (left): “Modern Secrets” by Ajay Kurian, window installation (Source: Observer)

Figure 23 (right): “In the Beginning” by Raúl de Nieves, window installation (Source: Tiffany & Co. Press Release)

Carrie Moyer's creation is a limited edition of ten sterling silver stippled pendants. In her window display, the so-called “Daisy Pendant” is hanging on a colourful background, characterized by several layers of shapes and globes painted in different colours (see figure 24), which emphasizes the quality of her job from a textural point of view. The limited edition is aligned with the rest of her works, such as her flamboyant massive paintings realised with acrylic and glitter and originating from a paper-cutting collage process.

Shara Hughes realised a hand-painted bone china pitcher in an edition of ten. In the window display, the pitcher is surrounded by painted layers depicting fantastical landscapes and completes a 360-degree rotation, with interior lighting changing according to the daytime (see figure 25).



Figure 24 (left): “Daisy Pendant” by Carrie Moyer, window installation (Source: Observer)

Figure 25 (right): “Remote Twilight” by Shara Hughes, window installation (Source: Observer)

Through these window installations, Tiffany & Co. wants to give the artists a chance to express their vision through an alternative platform, enlarging their audience and advertising the efforts put into this exclusive partnership with Tiffany’s craftsmen. The collaboration also represents an opportunity for Tiffany to re-assess its artistic roots. As a matter of fact, with a long history of artistic partnerships, Tiffany saw the sponsorship of the Whitney Biennial as a beneficial alliance both for the brand, to emphasize its artistic engagement, and for the Museum, to give further visibility to the show’s artists. Whitney’s director, Mr Weinberg, stated in an interview with *The New York Times* that working with Tiffany has been a truly pleasant experience thanks to the luxury brand’s open-mindedness and respect for the artists’ creativity. Weinberg also praised Tiffany & Co. for its courage, as the Biennials are always surrounded by a layer of controversy, which makes it difficult to foresee what the critics will say before the actual opening.

CHAPTER 4: JEFF KOONS X LOUIS VUITTON

4. Louis Vuitton: a pioneer in the luxury industry

1.1. History of the brand

The Louis Vuitton house was founded in 1854 in the centre of Paris by Mr Louis Vuitton. The first item produced by the brand was a trunk, an object that was not easy to obtain but became indispensable for frequent, well-off travellers, especially in the post-industrialization period, which was characterized by a revolution in transportation means and needs. The luggage offered by Louis Vuitton was extremely practical, both waterproof and with detachable interior parts, and of the finest quality.

Louis Vuitton confirmed itself as a pioneer in the luxury industry on many levels. First of all, its products were among the first to be characterized by a visible signature, a stylistic choice aimed at discouraging counterfeiters. The signature monogram now famous in the whole world, characterized by the entangled brand's initials and stylized flower motives, was introduced in 1896 by George Vuitton, Louis Vuitton's son, four years after the death of his father. Besides serving as a deterrent for imitators, the monogram was also part of a modernization process that included new designs for the trunks but also new product lines (see figure 1). Entering the 20th century, the brand had to adapt to new customers' needs and started to produce several handbags models, many of which are still recognized as Louis Vuitton's classic design, after more than one century.



Figure 1: Louis Vuitton's emblematic Alzer suitcase, part of the brand's tradition of travel, with the characteristic Monogram Canvas

(Source: Louis Vuitton's official website)

Over the years, Louis Vuitton confirmed itself as an emblem of highest-quality craftsmanship and exclusivity, yet failing to innovate and bring excitement in the first decades of the 20th century. However, things changed in 1987, when the brand merged with Moët Hennessy to create the Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy conglomerate (LVMH), headed by Bernard Arnault since 1990. In 1996, Louis Vuitton started to tighten its relationship with the artistic sphere. To celebrate the centennial of its monogram, the company commissioned seven well-established designers, among which Manolo Blahnik and Vivienne Westwood, to

use their personal vision to reinvent the logo. The following year, Marc Jacobs became Louis Vuitton's created director and initiated a series of artistic collaborations.

1.2. Artistic engagement

Being one of the most renowned luxury brands in the world, with a long history of exclusivity and top-notch quality products, Louis Vuitton possesses a relevant share of cultural capital and power in the fashion field, which is why its runway shows and fashion events are closely followed by all fashion experts. However, reaching this level of recognition in the art field requires further effort.

The artistic field can be divided in two antipodal categories, called “autonomous pole” and “heteronomous pole” by sociologist Victoria D. Alexander. Artists pertaining to the autonomous pole distance themselves from external influences that could potentially interfere with their work, such as commercial elements, and do not create for purposes other than art itself. As opposed to that, artists in the heteronomous pole are evaluated with respect to the economic capital their works are able to generate. Members of the artistic community tend to praise autonomous artists, who are usually associated with “pure art”, while heteronomous artists are held in lower regard.

In the last two decades, Louis Vuitton interacted with the artistic field in a great number of occasions. The interactions range from limited edition collections to sponsorships and commissions of artworks. If considering a broader definition of the term “artistic collaboration”, advertising campaigns could also be included among the above-mentioned interactions. Selecting well-know photographers for the shootings and the right influencers – such as actors, musicians, politicians or athletes – is the first step to increase desirability through publicity. However, as mentioned in the first chapter, a stricter definition of artistic collaborations would not include celebrity endorsement: celebrities of the entertainment industry speak to the average mass consumer while artists speak to elite consumers who are part of a closed an exclusive environment.

The values and principles associated with a brand determine the brand's success: customers will seek brands they can relate to, brands that correspond to who they are or aspire to be. Louis Vuitton is associated with a heritage of luxury, travel and exclusivity and these are the values the brand's consumers will identify with. Choosing someone external to the brand as a representative is risky: customers will try to recognize themselves not only in the brand's values but also in the personality chosen to be the brand's face. Since a collaboration will significantly affect how the brand is perceived, one of the company's main concerns is choosing the right partner, one who would stimulate a positive reaction and allow the brand to have gains in terms of cultural capital. Furthermore, luxury brands need do find the right balance between stimulating the desire of mass consumers and maintaining its image of luxury and exclusivity. To do that, Louis Vuitton chose to collaborate with fine arts, a branding strategy adopted by several leading companies in the luxury industry, like Tiffany & Co., as mentioned in the previous chapter.

1.3. Collaboration with the fine arts

Collaborating with the fine arts represents an investment in the emblematic definition of the brand and, as any type of investments, presents some degree of risk. An unsuccessful collaboration could severely harm the reputation and the identity of both the brand and the artist involved. Similarly, both parties would be rewarded by a successful partnership, otherwise there would be no incentive to initiate it. From the artistic party's point of view, teaming up with Louis Vuitton would allow to take advantage of the brand's impressive global network and extensive resources, as well as of its leading positioning within the fashion luxury industry. Louis Vuitton would thus be a highly desirable partner for artists already established in the art field but seeking to expand their business to other horizons, such as the fashion field. Because of their interest for economic capital, it would be safe to assume that said artists would pertain to the heteronomous pole. From Louis Vuitton's point of view, the main benefit of the collaboration does not come from the sale of the artistic limited edition products, as they would only represent a modest percentage of the total revenues the brand earns from its regular products: the real gain lies in the cultural capital acquired through the artistic association. This is why Louis Vuitton only chooses artists already well-established in the art field: the collaboration is much safer and profitable if both parties are solid and reliable. A clear example of that is incarnated in the graffiti-style collection realized in collaboration with artist Stephen Sprouse: an urban modernization of the brand's traditional models that increased both sales and interest in the brand (see chapter 1). In that particular situation, Louis Vuitton managed to keep its customers' interest alive by being innovative and original, yet without becoming too unconventional. This represents a daily struggle for the company: being avant-garde while at the same time reinforcing its traditions and heritage. Using the interaction with the fine arts is thus a valid solution to deal with this issue and it includes several types strategies.

First of all, *limited editions*, a topic we are now familiar with. Limited editions are a direct type of artistic collaboration and account for most of the interactions between Louis Vuitton and the art field. Through these exclusive products, customers are given the chance to purchase not only a luxury item but also an artwork. This is why Louis Vuitton carefully selects contemporary and admired artists, usually at the top of their prestigious career, drawing a great level of attention to the artistic collections. Despite having to use already designed, traditional products as a base for their work, artists collaborating with Louis Vuitton are granted a significant level of freedom in their creative process: they are allowed to push limits and alter classic elements for the sake of inventiveness, originality and colour-playfulness. A clear example of this liberty is given by the limited editions by Steven Sprouse and Takashi Murakami, as mentioned in chapter 1. More specifically, Murakami brought the collaboration with Louis Vuitton to another level by inviting the brand to integrate a temporary store at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), where his exhibition was being held. The museum-store became part of the exhibition and travelled with it to New York,

Germany, and Spain. Murakami being one of the most important artists in Japan, the collaboration acquire a strong marketing relevance with respect to the Japanese market. As a matter of fact, Japanese customers, and Asian buyers in general, are extremely important for Louis Vuitton and their buyer power is increasing more and more. This is also true for luxury brands in general, as mentioned in chapter 2. Later on this chapter, we will analyse in greater detail to which extent limited editions form part of Louis Vuitton's branding strategy. To do that, we will study a current example of artistic limited edition realised in collaboration with artist Jeff Koons.

Secondly, *artistic sponsorships*. This type of artistic engagement boosts the brand's image with positive connotations and thus serves as an alternative, more subtle form of advertisement. Sponsoring cultural events will in fact ensure exposure on promotional material, such as posters and catalogues, and will at the same time discreetly advertising the generosity and philanthropy of the company. Furthermore, this marketing strategy allows to speak to a new attractive target: art museums visitors, who mostly consist of educated people coming from a well-to-do socio-economical background. It is thus not surprising that LVMH regularly takes part in important sponsorships, such as museum exhibitions, contemporary artworks, charity donations or even restorations (e.g. Chateau de Versailles). Being part of the conglomerate, Louis Vuitton automatically gains from these sponsorships but also carries out several activities on its own. Its most important sponsorship is the Louis Vuitton America's Cup, a supreme price in the sailing world, carried since 1983. Louis Vuitton realised a trophy trunk serving the specific purpose of transporting and presenting the America's Cup to the winning team. The 2017 edition of the trunk required more than 400 hours of work to be realised: it was handmade by three Louis Vuitton's craftsmen in the brand's historical workshop in Asnières (France) and features the new Louis Vuitton America's Cup logo, i.e. a majestic bright-red V placed on the front side (see figure 2).



Figure 2 (left): The Louis Vuitton America's Cup Trophy Trunk; Figure 3 (right): "Eye See You" by Olafur Eliasson (Source: Louis Vuitton's official website)

Thirdly, *indirect artistic collaborations*. In this type of collaborations, the artwork realised is directly associated to the brand's name but not to the brand's product. Not having to use a Louis Vuitton's product as a base, the artist are given much more liberty in their creative process and the design of the artworks is significantly less constrained with respect to limited editions. The independent artwork can be commissioned by the brand for a particular campaign or event, like the opening of a new store, and is subsequently displayed in a way that highlights the association between the brand and the artist. To give an example, in 2006 Louis Vuitton commissioned the artwork "Eye See You" to Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson (see figure 3), which was displayed as the Christmas windows in 350 Louis Vuitton's stores all around the world. In terms of gift shopping and sales, the Christmas period surely represents the three most important and chaotic months of the year. Therefore, choosing not to exhibit its own products and to use an artwork to symbolize them was a courageous move from Louis Vuitton: it proves the brand's artistic commitment and also represents a way to state that Louis Vuitton is not afraid to endorse the praised non-commercial over the less prestigious commercial. As for Eliasson's artwork, it consisted of a lamp installation shaped as a giant bright eye aimed at "creating a relationship with the onlooker outside the window looking in, thus transgressing the physical and psychological boundaries", as described on Louis Vuitton's official website. Eliasson donated the revenues earned from the project, and from the sales of some of his other artworks, to 121Ethiopia.org, a charity organization he established with his wife in order to support initiatives that bring assistance in Ethiopia.

Lastly, the *Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton*. Opened in 2006 at the top floor of the brand's flagship store in the Champs-Élysées in Paris, it represents Louis Vuitton's own art museum. The art space is open to visitors and has a free entry. Its aim is to promote the work of contemporary emerging artists and push the brand's relationship with the arts even further. The exhibitions organised in the Espace Culturel tend to be original and unexpected, featuring mostly unknown artists and artists from less "conventional" countries like Turkey or Korea (although well-known artists happen to be selected too). Besides keeping up with new tendencies and proving its originality, such choice is also driven by the desire to initiate a relationship with these countries. The Espace Culturel in Paris was so successful that Louis Vuitton decided to open other art spaces, starting from the Espace Louis Vuitton Tokyo in 2011 and continuing with the Espace Louis Vuitton Venezia (2013) and München (2014). The idea behind these art spaces is to offer to the visitors a journey through the arts: the art of travel was the starting point of the brand's history and continues to be a fundamental part of its philosophy. With respect to the three other approaches previously mentioned, the Espace Culturel, thanks to its commendable non-commercial scope, is the one providing most cultural capital and works as a bridge between the fashion world and the art world.

2. Jeff Koons

2.1. Brief biography

Jeff Koons is one of the most important representatives of contemporary art. Born in 1955 in York, Pennsylvania, he studied painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and at the Art Institute of Chicago. After graduating in 1976, Koons moved to Manhattan, where he worked as a stockbroker to finance his first works. Inflatable flowers, animals realised with balloons, comic books characters, and mirrored surfaces quickly became recurrent themes of his 40-year-long career. One his first works consists of an inflatable toy shaped as a rabbit, which became a signature of the artist, as it is immortalized in “Rabbit” (1986), a 1-meter-tall stainless-steel sculpture (see figure 4). Other Koons’ famous artworks include “Michael Jackson and Bubbles” (1988), a porcelain and gold leaf sculpture portraying the king of pop and his domesticated monkey (see figure 5), and “Puppy” (1992), a 12-meter-tall West Highland Terrier sculpture made of flowers (see figure 6). Koons frequently collaborates with specialized artisans to create pieces that are impeccable from a technical point of view. His creations, often characterized by a touch of humour, speak to the general public, not only to art galleries visitors, and have been both praised and crushed by the critics due to their kitsch character. Thanks to his pioneering and controversial artworks, Jeff Koons is now recognised worldwide as one of the most popular and influential artists of the post-war era.



Figure 4 (left): “Rabbit” (1986); Figure 5 (centre): “Michael Jackson and Bubbles” (1988); Figure 6 (right): “Puppy” (1992) – Source: Jeff Koons’ official website

2.2. Exhibitions and recognitions

Koons’ recognition began with his early artworks. The above-mentioned “Puppy” was displayed at the Rockefeller Center and later permanently moved to the Guggenheim in Bilbao. Another monumental floral

sculpture, titled “Split-Rocker” (see figure 7), was initially installed at the Papal Palace in Avignon, Château de Versailles, and at the Fondation Beyeler in Basel, and was subsequently installed at the Rockefeller Center in 2014. In 1980, he held his first solo exhibition, which marked the beginning of a series of shows in some of the most important galleries and art institutions of the world. Despite a few difficult years in the early 2000s, Koons managed to gain international fame: he got the chance to work with powerful galleries and the auction sales prices of its works started to skyrocket, reaching \$58.4 million for his “Balloon Dog (Orange)”, the most expensive artwork by a living artist ever sold at auction (see figure 8).



Figure 7 (left): “Split-Rocker” (2000)

Figure 8 (right): “Balloon Dog (Orange)”

(Source: Jeff Koons’ official website)



Among his major exhibitions, we recall the retrospective organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2014 (from June 27 to October 19), the biggest exhibition that the Museum ever dedicated to a single artist, which subsequently moved to the Centre Pompidou in Paris (from November 16, 2014 to April 17, 2015) and to the Guggenheim Bilbao (from June 9, 2015 to September 27, 2015). Considered the “Warhol of his time” by the Whitney’s director Adam Weinberg, the exhibition was aimed at taking a revolutionary step in the art world by choosing something new for both the Museum and the Big Apple. The retrospective comprised around 150 pieces, created between 1978 and 2014, chronologically installed so as to narrate the story of Koons’ groundbreaking artworks.

The Whitney’s retrospective was followed by other exhibitions in important European artistic hubs, including the *Jeff Koons in Florence* show, held at Palazzo Vecchio and Piazza della Signoria in Florence, Italy (from September 25, 2015 to December 28, 2015), and *Balloon Venus (Orange)*, installed in the Natural history Museum in Vienna, Austria (from September 30, 2015 to March 13, 2016). Koons’ most recent series, titled *Gazing Ball Paintings*, was displayed for the first time in New York, at the Gagosian Gallery (from November 12, 2015 to December 23, 2015).

Koons’ artworks earned him a large variety of international awards and honours, some of which stand out for their prestige in the art field, such as the “Golden Plate Award” from the Academy of Achievement and the “Distinguished Arts Award” from the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts. Koons was also privileged with the title of “Officier de la Légion d’Honneur” by French President Jacques Chirac. Furthermore, his exceptional engagement in the “Art in Embassies Program” led Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to honour

him with the State Department's Medal of the Arts. Koons also used his cultural influence to fight global issues concerning children, such as child exploitation and abduction: he became a board member of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, with which he co-founded the Koons Family International Law and Policy Institute.

3. *The collaboration: the Masters Collection*

3.1. *Scope*

The Masters Collection was born from a collaboration between Louis Vuitton and Jeff Koons that “remixes the iconic artworks of the old masters and presents them in a way that encourages new interpretations.” Through this partnership with Louis Vuitton, Koons tries to reflect his artistic thoughts, perfectly represented by his recent “Gazing Ball Paintings”, a series of large-scale hand-painted reproductions of the artworks of the great masters of the past (see figure 9). The main focus of the series lies in the appreciation of the artistic treasures offered by the past. In an interview regarding the collaboration, Koons praised the freedom he was granted while working with Louis Vuitton. With respect to the bags designing process, he claimed that “Having the names of artists in the reflective type is in a way performing a function like the gazing ball in the ‘Gazing Ball Paintings’... There’s also a reflective process about the person being interlinked with the bag.” Koons encourages the buyers of this limited edition to wear the products as a form of celebration of humanity and strengthens the emotional connectivity associated with each piece. The artist also did a significant creative work on the brand’s famous monogram canvas: he chose to reduce the quantity and increase the size of the popular stylized flowers and intertwined initials. He also added his initials (JK) to the canvas in the same entangled style of the LV logotype (see figure 10).



Figure 9 (left): Piece from Jeff Koons' series “Gazing Ball Paintings”, featuring an azure gazing ball

Figure 10 (right): Monogram canvas from the Masters Collection

(Source: Louis Vuitton's official website)

Through this collaboration, both Louis Vuitton and Jeff Koons underlined their appreciation for exquisite craftsmanship and their desire to experiment with materials, textures and colours in order to create something desirable and expressive, something aligned with the message the brand tries to communicate with its products and the artist with his artworks. The outcome is a limited-edition collection luxury goods but also a series of artworks, featuring old masterpieces such as “Mona Lisa” (1503-1506) by Leonardo Da Vinci, “Mars, Venus, and Cupid” (1546) by Titian, “The Tiger Hunt” (1615-1616) by Rubens, “Girl with Dog” (1770) by Fragonard, and “A Wheatfield with Cypresses” (1889) by Van Gogh. Louis Vuitton also sees the collaboration as a way to revive these traditional masterpieces and stimulate its customers’ re-engagement with the arts. As a matter of fact, the limited edition also includes an educative aspect: inside of each bag, Vuitton’s enthusiasts will find a short biography and a drawing representing the artist.

3.2. *The Old Masters*

Leonardo Da Vinci is unquestionably the emblem of the Renaissance and is considered one of the greatest geniuses in the history of humanity. He excelled in many artistic, cultural and scientific fields, including literature, music, mathematics and architecture. He created musical instruments but also invented the predecessors of the helicopter, the tank, the mechanical calculator, and the solar power generator. However, despite the incredible amount of discoveries he brought to all these different domains, he is mostly recognised for his artistic work, in particular with respect to painting. His most famous painting is “La Gioconda”, one of the most renowned portraits in the history of art, currently exposed at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Da Vinci never titled, dated or signed his masterpiece but the latter seems to be the fruit of a several-year work. The subject of the portrait also remains a mystery: hypotheses range from the Virgin Mary to the wife of a wealthy merchant from that time. The technique “chiaroscuro”, also called “sfumato” (Italian for shaded), used around the eyes and the mouth of the woman is the element that made her enigmatic look and elusive smile so famous worldwide.



Figure 11 (left): The “Mona Lisa” (1503-1506) by Leonardo Da Vinci



Figure 12 (right): “Speedy 30” bag from the Masters Collection

(Source: Louis Vuitton’s official website)

Titian, born Tiziano Vecellio, is the greatest painter of the Venetian School of the 16th century. He realised more than 600 paintings and dominated the artistic landscape of Venice, which was at the peak of its splendour at the time. He exercised a strong influence both on the Renaissance art and on the successive generations of European artists. After portraying the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1532, Titian was appointed Count Palatine and Knight of the Golden Spur. He also became the official painter of The Republic Serenissime for 60 years and consequently enjoyed the regard and admiration reserved to great artists such as Raphael and Michelangelo. His prestigious career ended with his death in 1576. Many defined him as the “sun amidst small stars”, quoting the last verse of Dante’s “Paradiso”. Among his masterpieces there is “Mars, Venus, and Cupid”, a dynamic composition characterised by a strong erotic touch, currently exposed at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The energy and interaction between the paintings’ characters symbolize Titian’s transition from Naturalism to a more mannerist style, which also emerges from the intellectual sophistication and the compositional tension.



Figure 13 (left): “Mars, Venus, and Cupid” (1546) by Titian

Figure 14 (right): “Neverfull” bag from the Masters Collection

(Source: Louis Vuitton’s official website)



Peter Paul Rubens is one of the most successful painters of the 17th century. At the beginning of his career, he travelled to Italy, where he realised several copies of the artworks of the Renaissance masters. After earning the reputation of successful businessman and skilful diplomat, he continued to travel around Europe, working for several reigning houses and earning the knighthoods from the kings of Spain and England. Rubens’ success derives from his powerful style, a synthesis of emotion, sensuality and dynamism, which is recurrent in his artworks, especially in his famous feminine nude paintings, characterized by soft, rounded shapes. At the time of his death, in 1640, Rubens was considered one of the most influential artists in Europe. Rubens’ most important paintings, most of which were commissioned by wealthy aristocratic families of that time, picture wild and exotic animals that one had seen before: tigers, lions and leopards fight against human strength and intelligence, represented by African and Asian populations that Western colonists used to encounter during their journeys. “The Tiger Hunt” is one of the four pieces that the Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria commissioned to Rubens for his palace. Currently exposed at the Musée des Beaux-

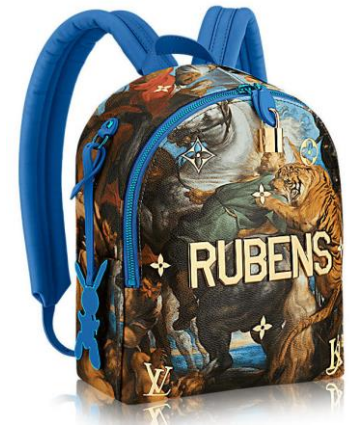
Arts of Rennes, France, the composition is inspired from a lost painting by Leonardo Da Vinci, titled “The Battle of Anghiari”.



Figure 15 (left): “The Tiger Hunt” (1615-1616) by Rubens

Figure 16 (right): “Palm Springs” backpack from the Masters Collection

(Source: Louis Vuitton’s official website)



Jean-Honoré Fragonard is one of the most important artists of the Ancien Régime: his artworks represent the exuberance and hedonistic spirit that characterised France during the 18th century. After Louis XV bought one of his paintings, Fragonard earned the recognition of the court, the aristocracy and the emerging bourgeoisie. He was admired for the expressiveness of his portraits and for his paintings picturing intimate and erotic scenes, which also happened to elicit scandal from time to time. During his lifetime, he realised more than 550 artworks. However, after his death in 1806, he was almost completely forgotten, as the Revolution had wiped out his rich customer base. Fragonard’s paintings are renowned for their enchanting lightness, which merges with allusiveness and psychological introspection. In “Girl with Dog”, the girl’s pose and the use of light would be licentious but this audacious sensuality is compensated by her innocent, naïve expression. Erotic connotations aside, the painting symbolizes the love for luxury and voluptuousness proper to the pre-Revolutionary French elitist classes. Depicting sensuality with so much ease and confidence was a groundbreaking statement for the time. “Girl with Dog” is currently exposed at the Alte Pinakothek of Munich, in Germany.



Figure 17 (left): “Girl with Dog” (1770) by Fragonard

Figure 18 (right): “Montaigne” bag from the Masters Collection

(Source: Louis Vuitton’s official website)



Vincent van Gogh is one of the most influential artists in the history of Western art. As a child, Van Gogh was introverted, with a fragile personality and a precocious interest for art. He studied in Antwerp, Belgium, where he was significantly influenced by Rubens' works. In 1889, following the deterioration of his friendship with painter Paul Gauguin, he cut half of his left ear. He committed suicide one year later, after a life marked by loneliness and mental instability. Van Gogh's story is often romanticized: the painter is considered by many as a misunderstood artist, perhaps due to the fact that his most intense artworks were realized during the hardest periods of his life. As an example, Van Gogh painted "A Wheatfield with Cypresses" while he was voluntarily interned in Saint-Paul de Mausole psychiatric hospital. The painting, characterized by bright colours and high emotional resonance, was realised one year before the painter's death and is now exposed at the National Gallery in London. In a letter to his brother, Van Gogh described it as a representation of "sadness and extreme loneliness".



Figure 19 (left): "A Wheatfield with Cypresses" (1889) by Van Gogh

Figure 20 (right): "Keepall" bag from the Masters Collection

(Source: Louis Vuitton's official website)



CHAPTER 5: THE ANDY WARHOL FOUNDATION X CHRISTIAN DIOR

1. Christian Dior

Christian Dior was born 1905 in Normandy, France, where he lived until he was ten, before his family decided to move to Paris. He began his design career only in 1935, after studying political science and serving in the military. Once he was back in Paris, he started to sell his sketches and a few years later, in 1938, he was noticed and hired by designer Robert Piguet. He served again in the military during World War II, in the south of France, until 1941, when he returned to Paris to work for Lucien Lelong at a well-established design house.

In 1946, with the help of the skilled textile manufacturer Marcel Boussac, he opened his own design house: la Maison Dior. In 1947, he launched his first collection, which earned him the reputation of one of the most talented and influential couturiers of the 20th century. In the collection, he introduced the “New Look” (see figures 1 and 2), through which he wanted to celebrate femininity and lavishness in women’s fashion. In a post-war scenario, Dior helped to reconfirm Paris as the world fashion capital. His designs represented a wave of freshness and originality, very distant from the sartorial constraints and the uniforms that had dominated the previous years. In the same year, following its prodigious success, the brand decided to expand its business and opened a house in New York: the first ready-to-ware fashion house in the luxury industry. The house also introduced Dior Parfum, followed by a series of luxury accessories, ranging from ties and hosiery to furs and handbags. This choice was criticised by luxury fashion experts, who interpreted it as a demeaning of haute couture. However, this move contributed to make Dior’s name famous all around the world and was adopted by all fashion houses shortly after.



Figure 1 (left): “The Bar Suit”, the most iconic model of the “New Look” collection (spring/summer 1947)

Figure 2 (right): “Chérie” from the “New Look” collection (spring/summer 1947)

(Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

With Dior’s premature death in 1957, the fashion world lost a leader and an icon. Thousands of people attended his public funeral to show their respect and admiration. Following Dior’s will, 21-year-old Yves

Saint-Laurent was appointed artistic director of the house. The brand continued to grow in popularity and confirmed its desirability and exquisite quality over the years. Despite, covering the role of creative designer of his own house only for a decade, Dior's influence still dominates the fashion world.

2. Andy Warhol and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

2.1. Brief biography

Andy Warhol, born Andrew Warhola in 1928 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, is one of the most important representatives of contemporary art. He studied pictorial design at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in New York, from which he graduated in 1949, and the Big Apple quickly became his new home. He worked as a commercial artist for a large variety of important customers, such as Harper's Bazaar, Tiffany & Co., Vogue and Columbia Records among others, confirming himself as a successful graphic artist. In the 1950s Warhol started to explore the fields of painting and drawing, holding his first solo exhibition in 1952. Over the years, he experimented new photo-based techniques for his paintings, which earned him recognition as a commercial illustrator. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Warhol produced many of his most popular works, most of which marked the beginning of the Pop Art movement. Pop artists used to depict objects that were part of the daily life of the typical consumer, such as Warhol's famous "Campbell's Soup Cans" (see figure 3), which became an emblem of contemporary art, together with "Marilyn Monroes" (see figure 4) and "Coca Cola Bottles" (see figure 5) among others. Besides paintings and drawings, Warhol's works include sculptures, film and video but also performance and music.



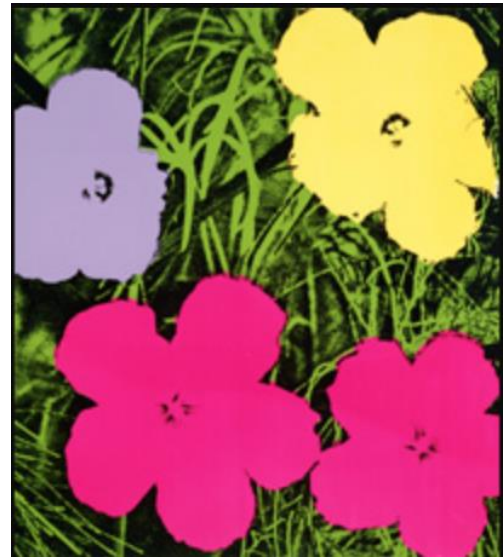
Figure 3 (left): "Campbell's Soup Cans" (1962)

Figure 4 (right): "Untitled" from "Marilyn Monroe" (1967)

(Source: MoMA's official website)



*Figure 5 (left): “Green
Coca-Cola Bottles”
(1962)
(Source: Whitney
Museum’s official
website)*



*Figure 6 (right):
“Flowers” (1970)
(Source: The Andy
Warhol Foundation’s
official website)*

After a nearly deadly incident in 1968, Warhol’s obsession for narrating his life was boosted even further, leading him to document every single one of his activities. However, he continued to be an active participant in the worlds of art, music, media and fashion through new businesses and new artworks. Warhol died in 1987 and was mourned by thousands of people, including several celebrities. More than two decades after his death, his life and work continue to inspire and influence artists from all over the world, which is a testimony of the greatness of his impact on the art world.

2.2. The Foundation

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts was created after Warhol’s death in order to use the vast inventory of artworks and personal belongings left by the artist to stimulate an “advancement of the visual arts”. Following Warhol’s will, several artists, curators and critics – among others – collaborated to create a philanthropic organization that would honour the pop artist’s creative heritage and consequently revive the influence of his genius on future generations of visual artists. The primary mission of the Foundation is to support the realization, exhibition and narration of contemporary visual art. The organization also played an important advocacy function in the 1990s’ culture wars, during which artists saw their freedom of expression being at risk. Even today, the Foundation actively supports institutions engaged in the fight against censorship and in the protection of artists’ rights.

Warhol’s work continues to be protected and accessible to the public thanks to exhibitions, loans or instalments in international museums organised by the Foundation, together with preservation and restoration processes. Furthermore, Warhol images are often used for educational and creative purposes by artists and scholars but also for commercial purposes. Being the owner of the copyright to Warhol images, the Foundation did significant efforts in order to establish responsible licensing policies that could be adapted to those different scopes. Through its multiple activities and initiatives, the Foundation thus confirms itself as a an intermediary between Warhol’s legacy and the visual arts community.

3. The collaboration

As many of Christian Dior's friends were artists, the artistic influence has always been present in Dior's fashion home. Following the founder's artistic roots, subsequent creative directors of the Maison tried to honour this tradition. Raf Simons, former artistic director of the woman collection, initiated a collaboration with the Andy Warhol Foundation in order to create a limited edition of products featuring early artworks by the famous pop artist. As a matter of fact, Christian Dior's autumn/winter fashion show of 2013 was dominated by Andy Warhol's signature artworks, which were incorporated into the pieces of this innovative collection, from decorated bags (see figure 6) to creatively adorned dresses (see figure 7).

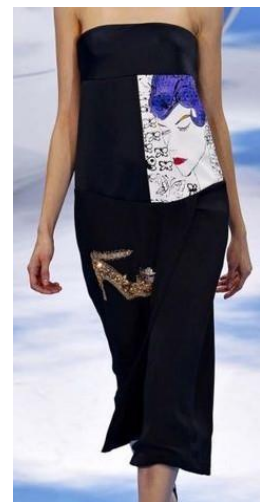
When asked about the collection, Simons claimed that his inspiration came from his interest in the "delicacy and sensitivity" of Warhol's early works. Merging them with Dior's exclusive designs allowed to convey a sense of pop-irony and at the same time of timeless sophistication. The collaboration represented a tribute to two legacies: Warhol's inventiveness and influence on the art world but also Christian Dior's enthusiasm for the artistic field.



Figure 6 (left): Bag from the Dior ready-to-wear A/W 2013 collection

Figure 7 (right): Dress from the Dior ready-to-wear A/W 2013 collection

(Source: Vogue Australia)



This collaboration dates from 2013 and is thus less recent with respect to the other two analysed in the previous chapters. The choice of a less recent collaboration has been made strategically as part of the research process. The aim is to understand to which extent consumers perceive recent collaborations as different with respect to an earlier one. The results of the research will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION

1. Description of the survey

This last chapter focuses on a research conducted in order to understand how consumers perceive limited-edition products deriving from luxury brands-art collaborations. The data used in the research process have been collected through a survey specifically designed with respect to the topics analysed in the previous chapters. The survey consists of sixteen questions divided in two parts. The first part has been structured so as to gain general information about the participants (gender, age, country of origin) and about their familiarity with the two fields of interests: luxury and art. The second part includes a brief introduction regarding the three collaborations studied in chapters 3, 4 and 5: Whitney Biennial x Tiffany & Co, Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton, and The Andy Warhol Foundation x Christian Dior. The introduction is followed by a series of questions about the participants' familiarity and interest in the collaborations.

The survey was realised in two languages (English and Italian) and distributed through several social media platforms: WhatsApp, Facebook and Reddit. There were no restrictions with respect to the target: everyone was welcome to participate to the research, although the sample available mainly consisted of a specific type of people, which will be analysed more deeply later on this chapter. The complete version of the survey can be found as annex document at the end of the chapter.

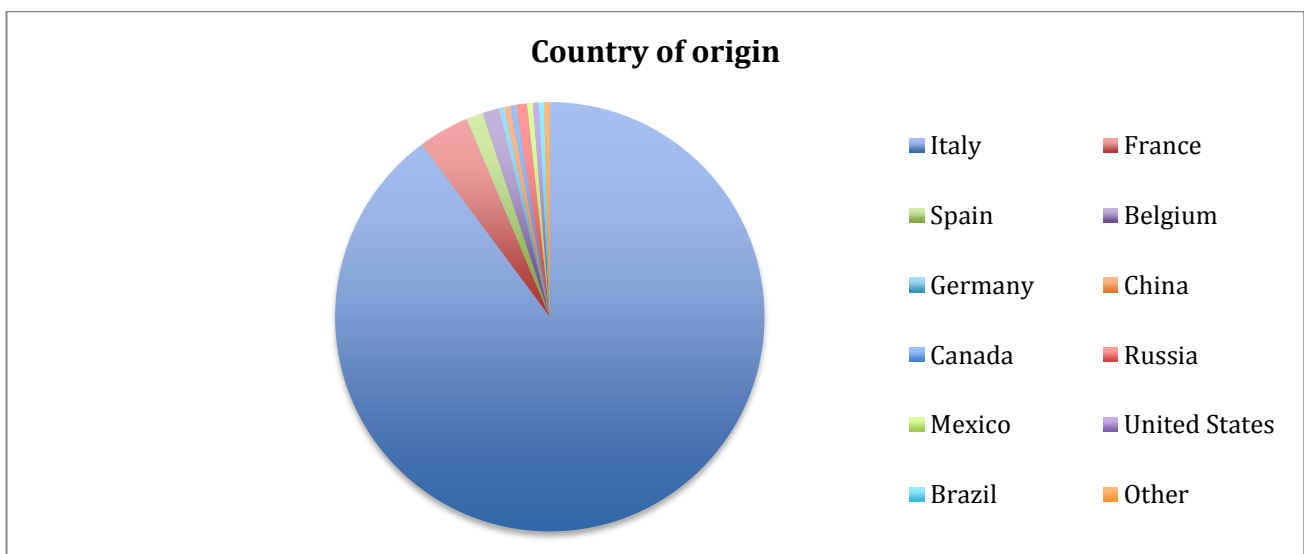
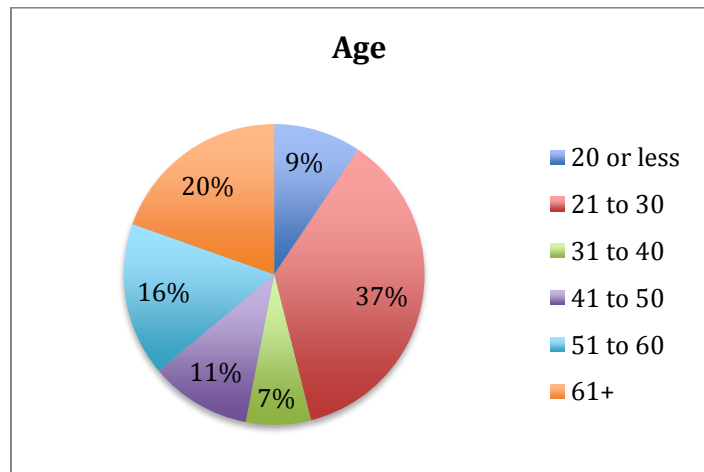
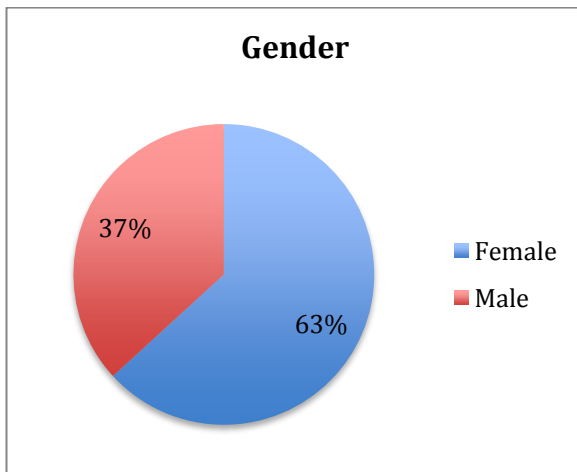
2. Results and interpretation

2.1. The respondents

As shown in the data below, the survey collected a total of 236 answers, 185 from the Italian version and 51 from the English version. The respondents were mainly females (63%), although males represented more than one third of the sample (37%), ranging from 20 to over 61 years old. The main age group consisted of people between 21 to 30 years old (37%), followed by the seniors (61+) with 20%. Twelve countries were represented in the survey, although the vast majority of the respondents were Italians (89,8%).

	Italian version	English version	Total
Respondents	185	51	236
Gender			
Female	59,0%	78,4%	63,2%
Male	41,0%	21,6%	36,8%
Age			
20 or less	5,0%	25,5%	9,4%
21 to 30	28,9%	64,7%	36,6%
31 to 40	8,9%	0,0%	7,0%

41 to 50	12,8%	3,9%	10,9%
51 to 60	20,0%	3,9%	16,5%
61+	24,4%	2,0%	19,6%
Country of origin			
Italy	97,8%	60,8%	89,8%
France	1,1%	13,7%	3,8%
Spain	0,0%	5,9%	1,3%
Belgium	0,5%	3,9%	1,2%
Germany	0,0%	2,0%	0,4%
China	0,0%	2,0%	0,4%
Canada	0,0%	2,0%	0,4%
Russia	0,0%	3,9%	0,8%
Mexico	0,0%	2,0%	0,4%
United States	0,0%	2,0%	0,4%
Brazil	0,5%	0,0%	0,4%
Other	0,0%	2,0%	0,4%

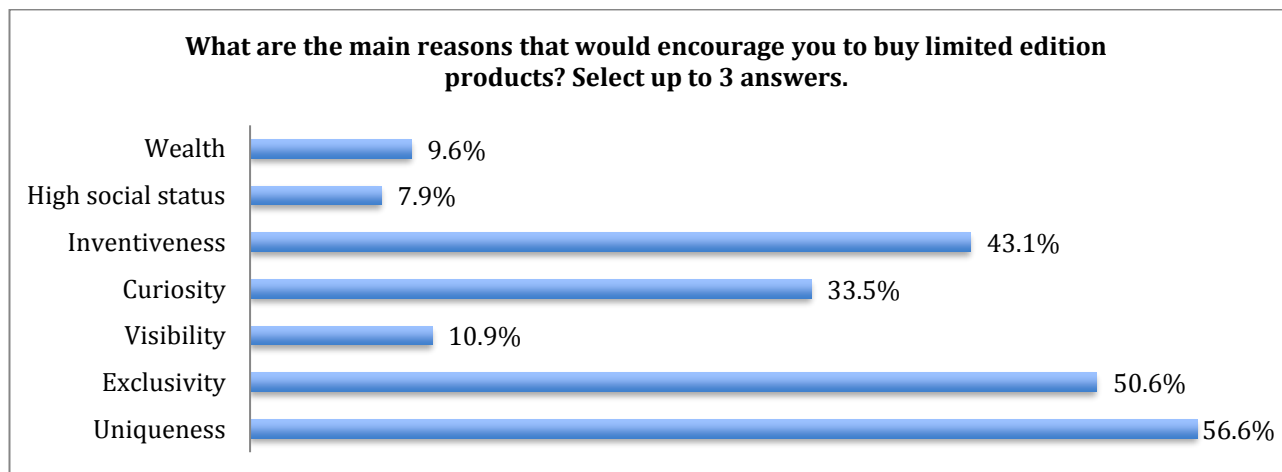
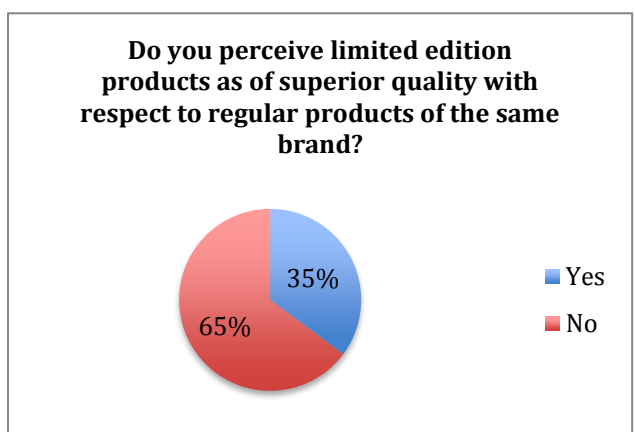
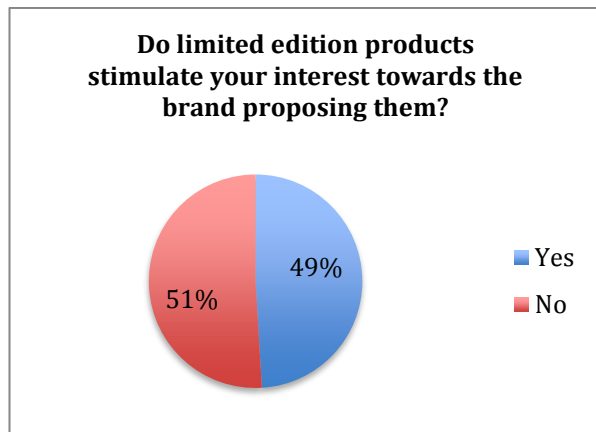
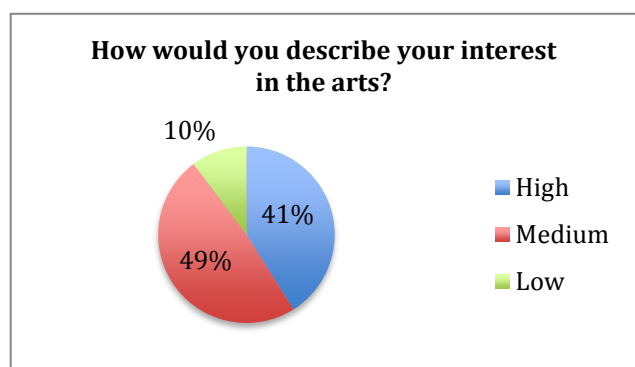
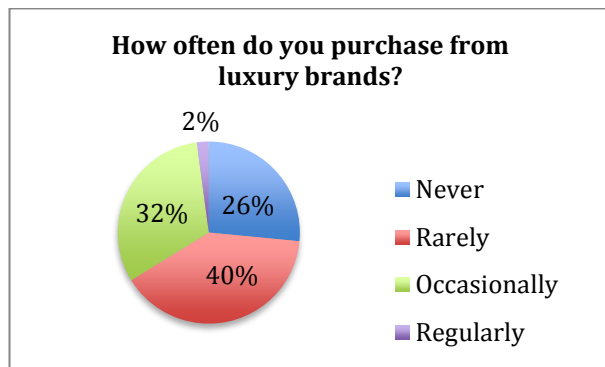


2.2. Familiarity with the luxury and art fields

Most of the sample has a medium-to-high interest in the artistic field (89,8%). Similarly, almost all the respondents realise purchases from luxury brands rarely or occasionally (71,3%) but very few describe themselves as regular luxury buyers (2,1%). Two thirds of the sample do not perceive limited editions as of superior quality with respect to regular products of the same brand, which makes it unsurprising to discover that only half of the participants are intrigued by limited-edition products in general. When limited editions do stimulate interest, they do it for four main reasons: uniqueness, exclusivity, inventiveness, and curiosity, while visibility, high social status and wealth are less significant factors. It is important to underline that all these factors have been selected with respect to the theoretical notions discussed in the two first chapters. In particular, the study realised by Balachander and Stock in their paper “Limited Edition Products: When and When Not to Offer them” reveals that limited editions are often used by luxury brands to improve their image through distinctiveness and differentiation, two elements that are strictly connected to the idea of exclusivity. Balachander and Stock also elaborated the *signalling theory*, which suggests that consumers choose limited-edition products in order to signal their wealth, uniqueness and elevated social status. Therefore, this specific question asked in the survey (“What are the main reasons that would encourage you to buy limited-edition products?”) wanted to discern which of the factors identified by Balachander and Stock represented the most powerful incentive to stimulate consumers’ willingness to buy limited-edition products. The results obtained, that can be observed in the table and graphs below, confirm that luxury brands need to be inventive, offer unique products, and constantly revive their aura of exclusivity in order to stimulate consumers’ curiosity and interest.

	Italian version	English version	Total
Respondents	185	51	236
How often do you purchase from luxury brands?			
Never	26,8%	25,5%	26,5%
Rarely	38,8%	43,1%	39,7%
Occasionally	31,7%	31,4%	31,6%
Regularly	2,7%	0,0%	2,1%
How would you describe your interest in the arts?			
High	43,2%	33,3%	41,1%
Medium	47,0%	54,9%	48,7%
Low	9,8%	11,8%	10,2%
Do limited edition products stimulate your interest towards the brand proposing them?			
Yes	42,6%	72,5%	49,1%
No	57,4%	27,5%	50,9%

Do you perceive limited edition products as of superior quality with respect to regular products of the same brand?			
Yes	35,7%	33,3%	35,2%
No	64,3%	66,7%	64,8%
What are the main reasons that would encourage you to buy limited edition products? Select up to 3 answers.			
Uniqueness	52,8%	70,6%	56,6%
Exclusivity	47,8%	60,8%	50,6%
Visibility	10,1%	13,7%	10,9%
Curiosity	30,9%	43,1%	33,5%
Inventiveness	48,3%	24,1%	43,1%
High social status	8,4%	5,9%	7,9%
Wealth	9,6%	9,8%	9,6%

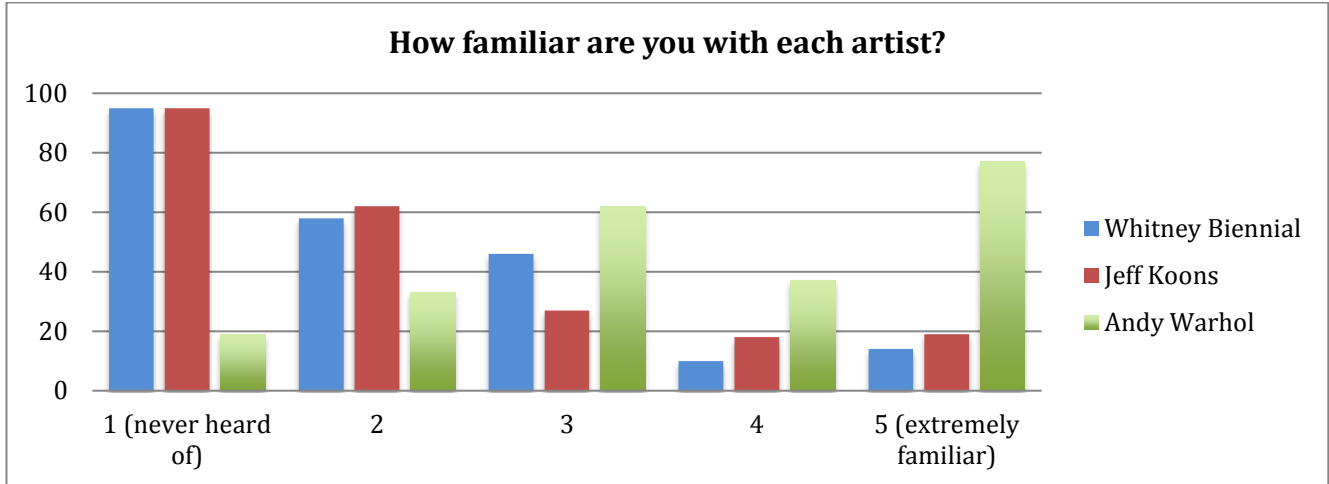
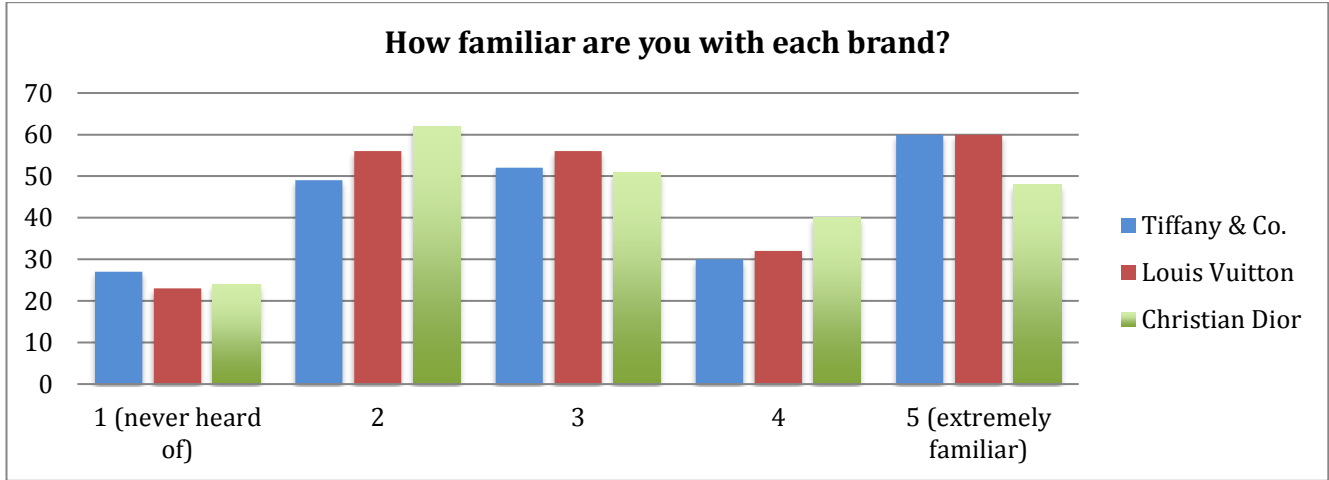


2.3. Familiarity with the case studies

As for the case studies, respondents have been questioned about their familiarity with the brands and the artists involved in the collaborations. Luxury brands appear to be generally well-known by the respondents: most of them claimed to be extremely familiar with the brands or at least to have moderate knowledge about them. Andy Warhol was the only artist following the same trend, while Jeff Koons and the Whitney Biennial were little-to-no familiar to the respondents. Furthermore, most of the participants were unaware of the collaborations: only 67 had heard about Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton, 63 about Andy Warhol x Christian Dior, and 29 about Whitney Biennial x Tiffany & Co. (over 236 in total). Those who had heard about the collaboration mainly did it through social media (49,4%) and new articles (31,9%).

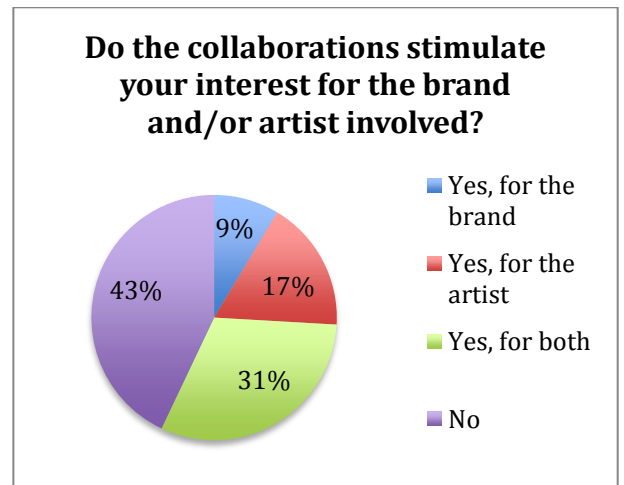
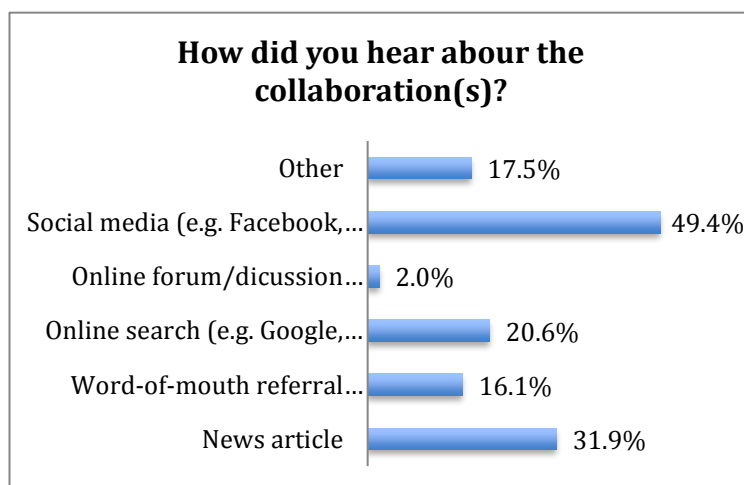
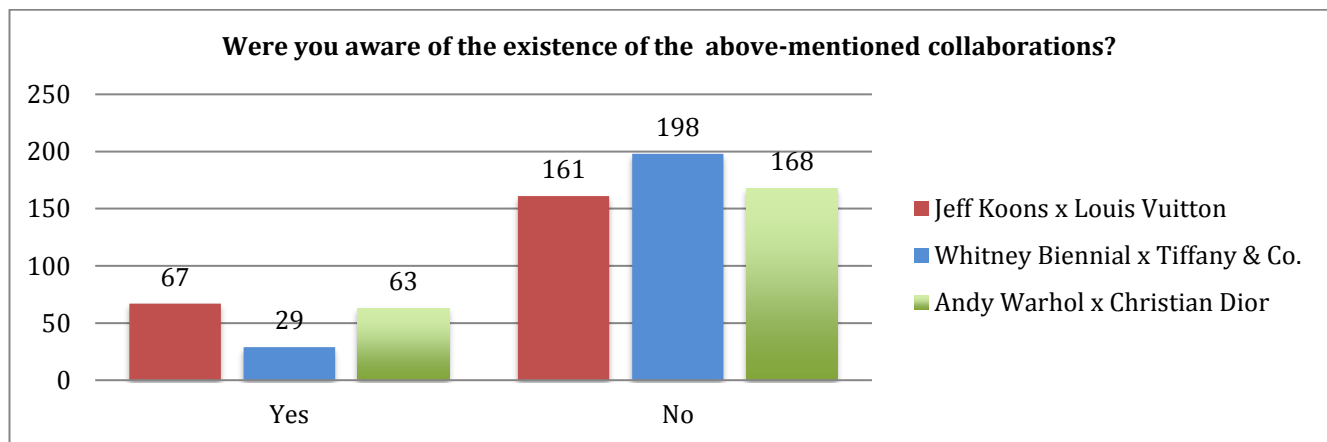
	Italian version	English version	Total
Respondents	185	51	236
On a scale from 1 (never heard of) to 5 (extremely familiar), please rate how familiar you are with each brand.			
Tiffany & Co.			
1 (never heard of)	23	4	27
2	42	7	49
3	39	13	52
4	21	9	30
5 (extremely familiar)	42	18	60
Louis Vuitton			
1 (never heard of)	20	3	23
2	50	6	56
3	41	15	56
4	23	9	32
5 (extremely familiar)	42	18	60
Christian Dior			
1 (never heard of)	20	4	24
2	54	8	62
3	40	11	51
4	28	12	40
5 (extremely familiar)	32	16	48
On a scale from 1 (never heard of) to 5 (extremely familiar), please rate how familiar you are with each artist.			
Whitney Museum of American Art			
1 (never heard of)	71	24	95
2	47	11	58
3	37	9	46
4	5	5	10
5 (extremely familiar)	12	2	14

Jeff Koons			
1 (never heard of)	75	20	95
2	47	15	62
3	21	6	27
4	14	4	18
5 (extremely familiar)	13	6	19
Andy Warhol			
1 (never heard of)	15	4	19
2	31	2	33
3	51	11	62
4	24	13	37
5 (extremely familiar)	56	21	77



Were you aware of the existence of the above-mentioned collaborations?			
Whitney Biennial x Tiffany & Co.			
Yes	23	6	29
No	153	45	198
Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton			
Yes	52	15	67
No	125	36	161

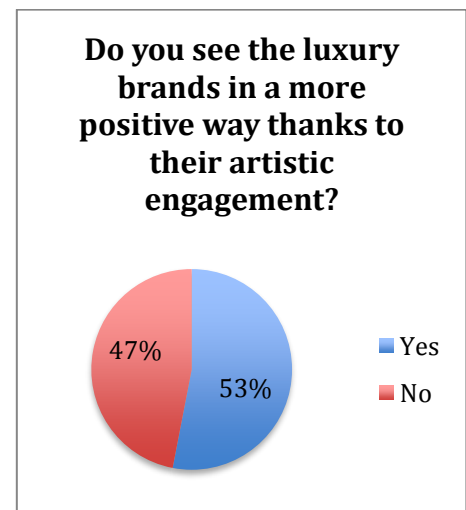
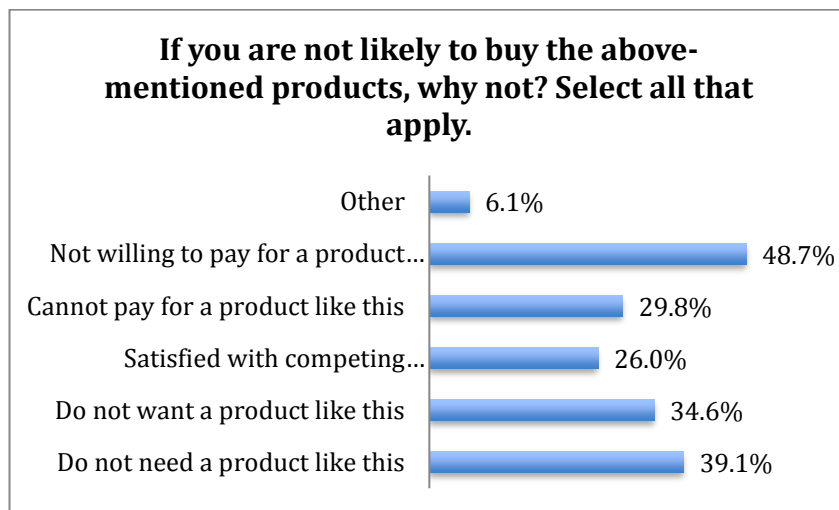
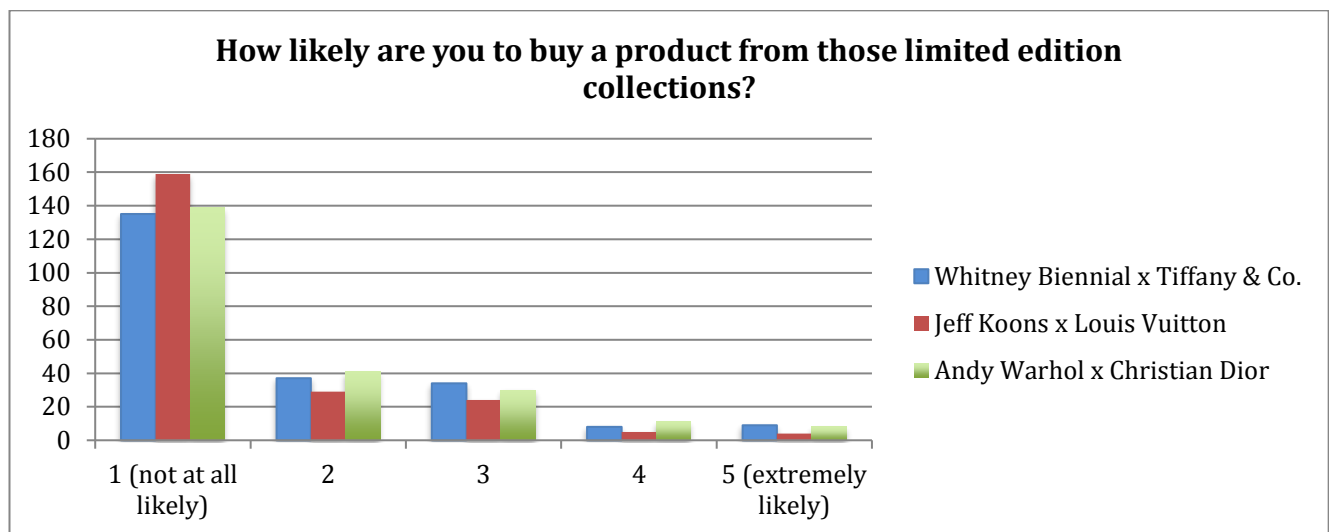
Andy Warhol x Christian Dior			
Yes	47	16	63
No	133	35	168
If your previous answer was yes, how did you hear about the collaboration(s)? Select all that apply.			
News article	33,3%	26,9%	31,9%
Word-of-mouth referral from a friend	15,2%	19,2%	16,1%
Online search (e.g. Google, yahoo, Bing)	24,2%	7,7%	20,6%
Online forum/dicussion board	1,5%	3,8%	2,0%
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	43,9%	69,2%	49,4%
Other	15,0%	26,6%	17,5%
Do the collaborations stimulate your interest for the brand and/or artist involved?			
Yes, for the brand	7,2%	13,7%	8,6%
Yes, for the artist	17,2%	17,6%	17,3%
Yes, for both	29,4%	37,3%	31,1%
No	46,1%	31,4%	42,9%



More than half of the respondents claimed that the collaborations stimulated their interest towards the brands and/or the artists involved, supporting the theory that this sort of cross-over collaboration between the fields of art and luxury represents a valuable branding strategy, which was also confirmed by the fact that 53% of the participants see the mentioned luxury brands in a more positive way after hearing about their artistic engagement. However, despite the positive impact that the collaborations had on more than half of the respondents with respect to their perception of the brands and artists involved, very few were willing to buy the products from those limited-edition collections. Most declared that they do not need and/or want a product of this sort. Price also plays an important role: almost one third of the participants declared to be unable to pay for this sort of product and almost half of them to not be willing to pay for it, regardless of the financial resources available. Furthermore, few distinctions were made between the three case studies: besides Andy Warhol's greater popularity with respect to the other artist and artistic institution, no particular difference emerged in how consumers perceived the three collaborations. They all stimulated the interest of around half of the respondents, but not enough to turn them into potential customers.

On a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (extremely likely), please rate how likely you are to buy a product from those limited edition collections.			
Whitney Biennial x Tiffany & Co.			
1 (not at all likely)	106	29	135
2	32	5	37
3	24	10	34
4	3	5	8
5 (extremely likely)	7	2	9
Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton			
1 (not at all likely)	121	38	159
2	25	4	29
3	19	5	24
4	2	3	5
5 (extremely likely)	3	1	4
Andy Warhol x Christian Dior			
1 (not at all likely)	108	31	139
2	37	4	41
3	21	9	30
4	4	7	11
5 (extremely likely)	8	0	8
If you are not likely to buy the above-mentioned products, why not? Select all that apply.			
Do not need a product like this	34,6%	55,6%	39,1%
Do not want a product like this	28,2%	57,8%	34,6%

Satisfied with competing products currently available	27,6%	20,0%	26,0%
Cannot pay for a product like this	28,2%	35,6%	29,8%
Not willing to pay for a product like this	48,1%	51,1%	48,7%
Other	4,8%	11,0%	6,1%
Do you see the luxury brands in a more positive way thanks to their artistic engagement?			
Yes	53,6%	51,0%	53,0%
No	46,4%	49,0%	47,0%



It is important to keep in mind that the research realised is based on a sample of 236 people, mostly coming from the same socio-economic background. The results observed could be altered if considering a significantly larger sample including people from very different backgrounds.

Annex: Luxury-Art Limited Editions

Thank you for agreeing to take part to this survey. I am conducting a research for my bachelor thesis in order to understand what perception consumers have about limited editions deriving from luxury brands-art collaborations. Completing this survey should only take a few minutes. Your responses are strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Your contribution will be extremely appreciated.

***Required**

1. What is your gender? *

- Female
- Male

2. What is your age? *

- 20 or less
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 60
- 61+

3. What is your country of origin? *

- Argentina
- Australia
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- France
- Germany
- India
- Italy
- Japan
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Portugal
- Russia
- Spain
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Other

4. **How often do you purchase from luxury brands? ***

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Regularly

5. **How would you describe your interest in the arts? ***

- High
- Medium
- Low

6. **Do limited edition products stimulate your interest towards the brand proposing them? ***

- Yes
- No

7. **Do you perceive limited edition products as of superior quality with respect to regular products of the same brand? ***

- Yes
- No

8. **What are the main reasons that would encourage you to buy limited edition products? Select up to 3 answers. ***

- Uniqueness
- Exclusivity
- Visibility
- Curiosity
- Inventiveness
- High social status
- Wealth

Nowadays, many luxury brands are engaging in artistic collaborations to create limited edition products. Here a few examples.

Tiffany & Co is currently collaborating with five artists from the 2017 Whitney Biennial, a biennale exposition of contemporary American art held in New York City.



Louis Vuitton and American artist Jeff Koons are working on a collaboration that “remixes the iconic artworks of the old masters and presents them in a way that encourages new interpretation”.



Dior’s Autumn/Winter 2013/2014 collection was the result of a collaboration with the Andy Warhol Foundation: a limited edition collection that revisits Andy Warhol’s early artworks.



9. On a scale from 1 (never heard of) to 5 (extremely familiar), please rate how familiar you are with each brand. *

	1 (never heard of)	2	3	4	5 (extremely familiar)
Tiffany & Co	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Louis Vuitton	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Christian Dior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. On a scale from 1 (never heard of) to 5 (extremely familiar), please rate how familiar you are with each artist. *

	1 (never heard of)	2	3	4	5 (extremely familiar)
Whitney Museum of American Art	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeff Koons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andy Warhol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Were you aware of the existence of the above-mentioned collaborations? *

	Yes	No
Whitney Biennial x Tiffany & Co	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andy Warhol x Christian Dior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. If your previous answer was yes, how did you hear about the collaboration(s)? Select all that apply. *

- News article
- Word-of-mouth referral from friend
- Online search (e.g. Google, Yahoo, Bing)
- Online forum/discussion board
- Social media (e.g. facebook, Twitter)
- Other:

13. Do the collaborations stimulate your interest for the brand and/or artist involved? *

- Yes, for the brand
- Yes, for the artist
- Yes, for both
- No

14. On a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (extremely likely), please rate how likely you are to buy a product from those limited edition collections. *

	1 (not at all likely)	2	3	4	5 (extremely likely)
Whitney Biennial x Tiffany & Co	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeff Koons x Louis Vuitton	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andy Warhol x Christian Dior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. If you are not likely to buy the above-mentioned products, why not? Select all that apply. *

- Do not need a product like this
- Do not want a product like this
- Satisfied with competing products currently available
- Cannot pay for a product like this
- Not willing to pay for a product like this
- Altro:

16. Do you see the luxury brands in a more positive way thanks to their artistic engagement? *

- Yes
- No

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, we tried to understand how consumers perceive limited editions created by luxury brands in collaboration with artists or artistic institutions. We started by analysing the luxury industry in order to discern its characteristics and challenges and later proceeded to point out the similarities between luxury and art. This allowed us to introduce the central theme of the paper: luxury brands-art collaborations. This topic was analysed in great detail through the following chapters, which included a deep evaluation of the characteristics, risks and benefits of limited editions, as well as three case studies. The case studies allowed us to concretize the theoretical notions of the previous chapters by giving real-life, present-day examples of luxury-art limited editions. They also served as a base for the survey conducted as the heart of the research process, enabling the respondents to express their opinions on specific, visual elements rather than on vague theoretical notions. The survey permitted to give an answer to the question at the base of this research, mentioned in the introduction as a sort of “guiding principle”, that is to say whether luxury brands-art collaborations actually represent a valuable branding strategy for luxury brands. The data collected revealed that more than half of the participants improved their perception of luxury brands after acknowledging their artistic engagement. Furthermore, the collaborations stimulated the interest of the consumers interviewed, although they failed to turn them into future buyers.

Although the results generated by a sample of 236 people mostly coming from the same socio-economic background could be easily altered if selecting a larger and more diverse sample, the study realised still allows to draw some conclusions. The results of the survey would thus suggest that collaborating with artists or artistic institutions in order to design creative limited editions actually represents a powerful branding strategy for luxury brands. It allows the brand to revive its artistic roots while at the same time promoting its cultural engagement, a value largely appreciated by consumers. It also represents a mean to show inventiveness and offer unique products, all while emphasizing their aura of exclusivity, which all represent essential factors in order to stimulate consumers’ interest and curiosity. Therefore, although not always succeeding to turn interest for a product into willingness to buy it, artistic collaborations still represent a powerful tool to associate the brand’s image with positive elements and thus ameliorate consumers’ perception.

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