

WWD

Liberty London Explores Its Dark Side With In-Store Summer Exhibition

The retailer has invited five creatives to design immersive installations as part of the “Dark Side of Liberty” show.
By Natalie Theodosi on July 5, 2017



Jared Madere's installation in the Liberty London atrium

A LEAP IN THE DARK: Liberty London has been exploring its dark side as part of a five week, in-store exhibition of contemporary art.

The “Dark Side of Liberty,” which officially opens July 6, takes inspiration from London’s subcultures and Pink Floyd’s exploration of the conflict and turbulence of the Seventies, to create an immersive experience complete with mixed media art installations and live music performances. It opens to the public later this week.

“This year has been about reinstating Liberty London as the home of the artistic shopper, so we wanted to revisit our cultural roots and celebrate art and culture today. Liberty London has always had a dark side, a gothic English intelligence; we look for the unique, the weird and the wonderful in everything we do,” said Liz Silvester, the store’s head of creative, who worked on the project alongside curator Victor Benady.

Benady and Silvester recruited five creatives to interpret the theme through a range of installations featured across the department store, from its windows to the main atrium and its new men’s department. Artists Jared Madere, Alex Morrison, Joris Van de Moortel and Julie Verhoeven, as well as the architect Satyajit Das have taken part in the project.

Van de Moortel, an artist and musician from Belgium, created his version of a recording studio as part of his installation, which is displayed in the store’s windows. On July 5 for the preview, de Moortel’s recording studio will be taken over by experimental musicians Mauro Pawlowski and Carlo Adriani, who will put on a live psychedelic music performance for passersby.



The Liberty London windows Courtesy Photo

Another store window will be transformed by the Canadian artist Morrison, who created a sculptural installation using Liberty prints.

Inside, the store's main atrium will feature a 12-meter comet sculpture by Madere, as well as a metallic pig sculpture by Das, which was designed to give the illusion that it's breathing and references Pink Floyd's "Animals."

Benady said these installations aimed to celebrate "the physical and the experiential," which are becoming more and more crucial for the future of retail.

"In a post-digital world of drones and artificial intelligence, of social media and fake news, where the virtual is copied and commoditized, we believe that experience, physicality and materiality are the new currency."

The launch of the exhibition coincides with the opening of Liberty's new men's department which will fully embrace the new project's eccentric spirit. Julie Verhoeven, who created an installation incorporating illustration and animation for the store, will also add her psychedelic drawings on murals in the new department.

"The campaign is quite tech, geeky cool and the Liberty London man is very smart — I needed to blow his mind a little," said Silvester, adding that her aim for the new space was to uncover its heritage and offer a mix of old and new. "We have reintroduced that mix of antiques, print and tapestries to create a modern Liberty London home, where you can shop T-shirts, accessories and magazines all at the same time."

The new space will introduce 20 new men's ready-to-wear and accessories collections, as well as a T-shirt gallery which will offer opportunities for exclusive collaborations.