

Yika Shonibare, *Duel*

Fascist Accessories

Luxury goods are the only area in which it is possible to make luxury margins.

Bernard Arnault, CEO, LVMH

NATION: LUXURIA

CAPITAL: Paris, France

POPULATION: 360,000 (employees, Top 10 luxury brands)

GDP: \$250 billion (revenues, 2020)

Welcome fashionistas, to the shamelessly lurid and grotesque annual spectacle that everyone in our industry eagerly awaits:

The Dior Autumn/Winter 2015 Haute Couture Show at Paris Fashion Week!

As we await the lovely and talented Sophia Mechetner—the ‘new face of Dior’—to glide down the catwalk and open this year’s show, allow me to answer any questions you might have about our sponsor, **LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton.**

“Why is LVMH sponsoring the show?”

With three times the revenue of its nearest competitor, frankly, who else has the bling?

Gucci?...Don’t make me laugh. The only reason they are still in business is that Bernard Arnault hasn’t completely gobbled them up yet. Same for Hermes and Chanel.

“How did Bernard Arnault get so rich?”

Monsieur Arnault—one of the world’s three richest men—benefits from the best tax advice money can buy.

Although he reluctantly revoked his application for Belgian citizenship in 2012 after the French government proposed jacking up taxes to 75% on high wage earners (he didn’t take kindly to the newspaper headline *Get Lost you Rich Idiot!*), that doesn’t stop him from taking advantage of the usual offshore tax havens and loopholes all filthy rich people enjoy.

“Why is Arnault known in the industry as ‘The Wolf in Cashmere?’”

That’s easy. The man is bad-ass wheeler-dealer. He started out in business acquiring the floundering textile company which owned Dior, fired most of its workers, dumped the profits into buying LVMH stock, and took over the company in an infamously bloody boardroom coup.

Since then it’s been one ruthless takeover deal after another, and with over 75 brands, LVMH is now the undisputed king of the worldwide luxury goods market.

“What about claims that LVMH’s Dior brand employs sweatshop labor?”

That New York Times story was a hatchet job. Sure, LVMH was contracting to squalid factories in India with dirt floors, caged off windows and no emergency exits. But every clothing company does that. How else are we supposed to rack up our exorbitant profits?

“What happens to all the surplus clothing that the company can’t sell?”

They burn it, of course, like any other brand does with their overstock. Sure, it’s incredibly dirty and releases more carbon dioxide emissions than burning coal does, but it simply wouldn’t do to have all that discounted clothing out there diluting the value of our brands, now, would it?...

Besides, don’t forget that 85% of discarded textiles aren’t burnt, but end up in landfills.

“Does LVMH plan to increase its promotion of the ‘fast fashion’ fad?”

Absolutely! Any fashion trend predicated on buying a piece of mass-produced clothing, wearing it a few times and then throwing it out has got to be an unprecedented boon to our bottom line. In fact, with so many young people now viewing fashion with open contempt and derision, ‘fast fashion’ has virtually saved our dying industry.

“Whatever happened to the industry’s pledge to promote healthy body images?”

Ah!...here she comes down the walkway now: the statuesque Sophia Mechetner! Sophia is dressed in a **LVMH-Christian Dior** silk-chiffon nightgown (\$8,950) with just enough see-through to reveal her skeletal body and petite 14-year old boobs.

The size 0, frighteningly anorexic Sophia wears a **LVMH-Tiffany** Silver Choker Necklace (\$232) and can barely lift her **LVMH-Givenchy** Mini Tote Bag (\$2,305).

Sucking on a lollipop while she texts her teenage friends, the giggling and bubbly Sophia effortlessly floats by the leering crowd on **LVMH-Celine** platform loafers (\$245), sporting a chic **LVMH-Bulgari** Serpenti watch in rose gold (\$31,100).

The dewy-skinned Sophia paints her flawless (although still occasionally pimply) face exclusively with LVMH-branded cosmetics from **LVMH-Sephora** shops, and positively reeks of **LVMH-Guerlain** Cherry Blossom Perfume (\$280).

Finally, the petulant and pouting Sophia is trailed by her adorable white toy poodle, sporting a **LVMH-Louis Vuitton** leather dog collar with matching leash (\$1070).

The modeling business is no place for a shy, prepubescent teenager, so after working a gruelling 16-hour day, an exhausted Sophia will no doubt be popping a few Valiums and retreating to her suite at one of LVMH’s opulent **Belmont Hotels** to read about her debut in LVMH’s **La Parisien**.

Or perhaps she’ll be getting drunk on **LVMH-Moet & Chandon** champagne or **LVMH-Hennessy** cognac on one of Monsieur Arnault’s **LVMH-Princess Yachts**—probably somewhere far out at sea since this ‘barely there’ waif is still four years under the legal drinking age. ■