



LOUIS VUITTON

A story of creation.

In 1928, Ernest Hemingway put two small trunks into storage at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. There they remained until 1956, when the staff gently suggested that it might be time to claim them. Hemingway did, repacking the notebooks and drafts (source material for *A Moveable Feast*) in a brand new monogrammed steamer trunk from French company Louis Vuitton. Hemingway would not be the first creative person to entrust his precious belongings to Vuitton, which over the years has catered to artists as various as Harry Houdini, Leopold Stokowski, Damien Hirst, and Sharon Stone.

"Moveable feasts" could well be a synonym for luxury luggage, a concept that did not really exist until 1854, when Louis Vuitton began crafting trunks that reflected the changing nature of travel. Ocean-going liners and steam trains called for baggage beyond rough wooden chests and domed trunks; with its stackable flat-top construction and easily identified livery, Vuitton's designs reflected the new transportation. Melding function with style, these assemblies of leather, canvas, and wood could also be purpose-built, their interiors fitted to hold toiletries, caviar, and even travelling libraries. Many of these landmark pieces feature in the newly published *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks*, an almost 500-page look at the changing definition of luggage. Patrick-Louis Vuitton, a fifth-generation descendent of the founding Louis, writes "My ancestors possessed an incredible

flair for their times." The company still does. Today, you can pack your distinctively monogrammed bag with clothing, shoes, watches, jewellery, and even guides to 50 cities, all labelled "Vuitton".

Parallel with its forays into a broader, deeper world of fashion is Vuitton's artistic involvement, expressed in its publishing arm, a spectacular arts space on the Champs Élysées, and a variety of projects and exhibits. Art is especially integral to its Maisons, located worldwide, which Yves Carcelle, chairman and CEO of Louis Vuitton, defines as environments that merge "luxury product, leisure, art, and culture to provide the ultimate customer experience."

The eleventh opens early December in the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. The city was chosen, Carcelle says, because it "made sense as the location for our first Maison in Canada, in that it represents a truly diverse, sophisticated cultural centre." Lovers of fashion will be able to experience a two-storey-high bag bar, a private VIP suite, "personalization" (read customization) services, and an array of exotic leather goods and runway collection pieces.

In line with its close ties to the arts was the company's appointment of Marc Jacobs in 1997 as artistic director. Over the years, Jacobs has continued to narrow the gap via collaborations with art world luminaries like Stephen Sprouse and Takashi Murakami. Says Carcelle, "The intersection between fashion and art is of long-standing and enduring

interest. A strong interest in contemporary art has become something of a way of life for the house, and actually dates back to Louis Vuitton himself."

While the 10,000-square-foot Vancouver Maison will adhere to the global store concept created by New York architect Peter Marino, Carcelle says, "The key signature of all Louis Vuitton Maisons is not architecture based. Rather, the one common element ... is that they permanently house an original piece of artwork."

In Vancouver, the honour goes to Steven Shearer, who has been chosen to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale in 2011. "When we select an artist to contribute to a Louis Vuitton Maison, we are less concerned with the exact nature of their individual style than we are with their overall talent and cultural relevance to each specific environment," Carcelle explains. "Steven Shearer made perfect sense for Vancouver in that he's an important figure within that region's artistic community."

What also makes sense is that the work to be showcased, Shearer's *Geometric Healing*, is a richly coloured set of serigraphs that plays with the idea of decorative versus functional forms—the beautiful and the practical in close alliance. Louis Vuitton himself would have approved. **ANGELA MURRILLS**

FROM LEFT: The newly published book, *Louis Vuitton: 100 Legendary Trunks*; a Louis Vuitton bookcase trunk, 1923.