

SHOES AND THE POWER OF GUCCI

Something quite overlooked in our journey through life is shoes. A bulky garment that we consistently use in our daily lives. It defines how we walk, how we move, how we stand, and how we converse with other people (Steele & Hill, 2022). Depending on your shoes, this can easily change how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you (Steele & Hill, 2022). Take the *Gucci Brown printed canvas mules* from the Spring 2016 collection. From an outsider's perspective, they look like a weird mix of shoes/slippers and are impractical to walk in. But because they look like a mix of dress shoes, slippers, and loafers, they completely change this perspective. When standing, you look proper, somewhat ostentatious, but proper because they resemble loafers. However, once you walk, it's a different story. You're perceived as a casual city person, someone who just threw on the slippers walking through the streets of NYC with no purpose but to stroll around. You are comfortable with uncomfortable because you want to look stylish. Once someone looks more intently at the shoes, the hues of color bring out the individual's personality. From proper to now city casual to ostentatious casual. You like your simple trousers and cardigan, but you like to bring pops of colors with the patterns. It brings attention to your shoes and stature because you walk with flashy mules. Just a simple pair of slippers defines how you walk, how you dress, and your personality.

Gucci is a brand that likes to play with color and juxtapose it in its garments. The canvas mules show that many patterns and colors are happening simultaneously. Because of the simple Gucci monogram juxtaposed with the motifs of nature, it draws the attention of the consumer. The monogram is a minimalistic beige/brown, which can be overlooked. However, the nature motifs aren't just a simple complimentary color. They are mixed with primary and secondary colors. Bright blues, oranges, and yellows in different shades add a personality to the mules. It may seem outlandish, but the tones of the shoes complement one another. And it works for the mule without losing focus on the bigger picture.

Taking a micro level on the shoe's design, we can identify the eight design elements and how it is worked into one of the most popular mules of our times. Lines in design come in various forms. From vertical lines to horizontal lines, these can symbolize pride or calmness. As a world-renowned Italian luxury brand, it comes as no surprise that most, if not all, of the lines in these Gucci mules, are vertical. The GG monogram is printed in diagonal lines, symbolizing strength and pride. The nature motifs are drawn vertically to symbolize this as well. Intentional or not, it was done in a way that represents the pride of Gucci. Rhythm, the harmony between the elements, are shown in these mules, but in a dynamic way. The subtleness of the GG monogram, intertwined with the motifs, leads the viewer's eyes to the dominant objects first and then the background objects. Balance of the shape of the Gucci mules is a mix of both symmetrical and asymmetrical. The mules are symmetrical, complimenting the figure of the wearer. On the other hand, the fabric and the design are asymmetrical, giving a stark contrast. With contrast in mind, we can see the sharp difference of vertical/diagonal lines mixed with the objects in front. This leads to the juxtaposition and dominance of the Gucci mules. The dominant objects, the nature motifs, juxtapose the minimalism of the GG monogram in the background. Due to the subtlety of the canvas, we can see the bird/butterfly on the fabric. Furthermore, the proportion of the nature motifs adds more dominance to them. Their scales are larger - drawing attention to them before seeing anything else. While the monogram canvas is clearly in repetition to deliver the idea of Gucci's pride, the proportion of the motifs hides that to show the luxury brand's edge and dynamics.

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The texture and composition of the mule further defines the juxtaposition. The contrast of colors and the smooth canvas with drawings resembling softness, make this mule popular with consumers everywhere. The visual look of the mules are smooth and shiny. This makes them look light, airy, and slim - elongating the legs of the individual wearing them. Additionally, the drawings and GG motif canvas give it a soft, feminine, and dainty feel. The most dominant fabric showcased in the mules is PVC-coated cotton. While it may seem that the GG motif and nature motif are leather, it is a durable canvas made to last. It is a natural fiber that is dyed a certain color and then coated. The base is made from leather, natural animal skin that is tanned, dyed, and then used as a base for its durability and quality. As a result, you have a high-quality garment that can last years with little wear. Ultimately, all these eight design elements and mixture of textures are formulated into this one pair of shoes that have been an incredibly popular mule for many consumers.

Overall, shoes are a reflection of how we dress and how others perceive us. Many luxury stores use shoes as an indication of status and wealth. In fact, shoes are actually one of the hardest objects to possess for people in poverty (Reyes, 2019). We can make clothing and grow crops, but a durable pair of shoes requires intensive labor and materials that are likely inaccessible (Reyes, 2019). While it may be a stretch, these shoes subtly take a jab at wealth inequality. The shoes use a mix of canvas and leather, contrasting expensive and inexpensive materials. We already know that Gucci shoes are expensive, so it comes as no shock that these mules cost almost \$1K when sold. When you also look at the symbolism of the patterns, it is based on Chinese tapestries. These motifs of flora and fauna symbolize wealth and social status. (Cornell, n.d.). Thus, we can see that when one wears these Gucci mules, we come to think that they may have money or financial stability. We question why people buy such expensive shoes that will wear and tear over time. But many financially sufficient people do not think of that. They want high-quality garments that will last longer than fast-fashion garments. Whether Gucci intentionally made this jab or not, it subtly shows the inaccessibility of shoes, and that even canvas can sell for large amounts as long as a luxury logo is slapped on it.

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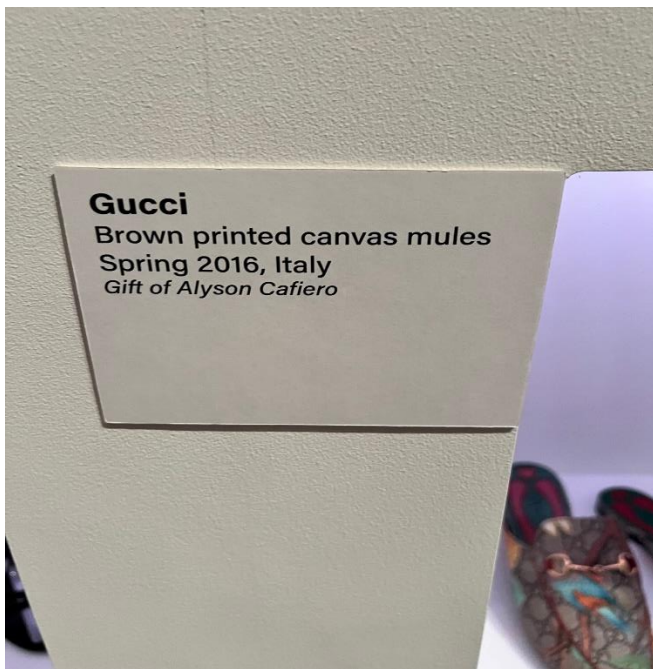
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Appendices

Appendix A:



Appendix B:



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