

Kanye West's muse Abloh takes over Louis Vuitton menswear

PARIS - American designer and celebrity DJ Virgil Abloh is to take over menswear at Louis Vuitton, the brand said on Monday, in a dramatic shake-up at the top of men's fashion.



Virgil Abloh

The appointment of rap star Kanye West's longtime friend and creative director to the French luxury label shows the massive impact street style is now having on fashion.

Abloh, 37, a former architect, who has won plaudits for his own Off-White label, posted a picture of a vintage Louis Vuitton travel chest to his 1.6 million Instagram followers to announce the move. He had earlier teased them with a post of a white T-shirt with the initials "SHM", which stood for "something huge Monday".

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A post shared by @virgilabloh on Mar 25, 2018 at 9:43pm PDT

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He is the second black man to head one of the big Paris fashion houses, with French designer Olivier Rousteing responsible for both Balmain's men and women's lines. They follow in the footsteps of British creator Ozwald Boateng, who led Givenchy menswear from 2003 to 2007.

"It is an honour for me to accept the position of men's artistic director for Louis Vuitton," Abloh said in a statement released by the brand, the largest in the luxury giant LVMH's stable.

"I find the heritage and creative integrity of the house are key inspirations and will look to reference them both while drawing parallels to modern times," he added.

Abloh takes over from British designer Kim Jones - who has gone to Dior Homme - and will stage his first Vuitton show during Paris men's fashion week in June, the label said. He looks set to continue Jones' high-profile hook-ups with street style labels, with Jones famously teaming up with New York street brand Supreme.



British designer Kim Jones takes over at Dior Homme

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Abloh - who has an address book full of celebrity friends that goes from the Kardashian clan to the art world - is responsible for some of the most sought-after trainers of the moment. "The Ten" trainers his Off-White label designed for Nike have reportedly sold for as much as \$2,000 (€1,600) a pair, with his Air Jordan 1s on sale for up to €950 on eBay.

Described by *Vogue* magazine as "one of fashion's consummate purveyors of cool and hype", and "a master of irony, reference and the self-aware wink" by the *New York Times*, he has not been afraid to court controversy. Last year he teamed up with the famed American artist Jenny Holzer for a show in Italy that shone a light on the migrant crisis there.

Raised in the US state of Illinois by Ghanaian parents, his mother was a seamstress who taught him her trade before he went on to study civil engineering and later architecture. He began his fashion career alongside his friend Kanye West as a 500 euro-a-month intern at Italian label Fendi, setting up his own label in 2012. The following year West made him his creative partner.

"I feel elated," the designer told the *New York Times*, saying he would move his family to the French capital.

"This opportunity to think through what the next chapter of design and luxury will mean at a brand that represents the pinnacle of luxury was always a goal in my wildest dreams."

Source: AFP

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