



# Gucci puts a tiger in its tank with designer Demna to claw back some excitement



◀ Tasked with spicing up the brand, Gucci's new designer Demna, left, and one of his creations for Milan fashion week, right

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Milan

Gucci has become bland, and its new designer, Demna, has been hired to bring the hot sauce. But will the Italian brand's walk on the wild side be a renaissance, or a mid-life crisis?

The first chapter of Demna's Gucci, which opened Milan fashion week, appeared online a day ahead of schedule (very culturally modish, like a surprise album drop) and ditched the traditional catwalk format for a film by Spike Jonze and Babygirl's director, Halina Reijn, about a fictional Barbara Gucci - "President of Gucci and of the State of California" - played by Demi Moore.

The film, a high-fashion mashup of House of Gucci and The Substance, was "about how we are all trying to be so perfect, and how impossible it is", said Demna at the opening. The



▲ Demi Moore stars in *The Tiger* the short film directed by Spike Jonze and Halina Reijn that showcases Demna's first collection for Gucci

film's wardrobe told a story about the Gucci family - the nerd, the narcissist, the party boy, the diva - which sent up the brand while celebrating it at the same time. In other words, Demna showed that he understands right away what Sabato de Sarno, his predecessor, never seemed to grasp, which is that Gucci has to be about more than just clothes.

De Sarno was abruptly let go from the Gucci top job earlier this year, as his brand of understated urban chic proved too dull for restless modern attention spans. Demna was a surprise replacement, a provocateur whose signatures are an almost-ugly bulky silhouette and headline-grabbing stunts including a catwalk show that turned out to be a Simpsons cartoon, and wrapping Kim Kardashian in duct tape. A bold hire for the home of handbags and sensible loafers.

Before the film's premiere in Milan, Demna said that he wanted to define

"the allure" of Gucci. "If Gucci was a person, it would have a decisive and daring character, someone fun but intelligent, who wanted to enjoy themselves," he said.

The 37 new Gucci looks, which will go on sale immediately, remain recognisably Gucci. Bamboo-handled bags and silk blouses still rule. But Demna found a sideways kind of synergy with his new home. There are headscarves, which are both Gucci (Jackie Onassis on holiday) and Demna (more eastern-bloc street style).

Gucci led the fashion conversation when Tom Ford spiced it up with X-rated adverts, and when Alessandro Michele gave it pussy-bows-for-all gender fluidity. Demna has arrived at a flatlining company: sales at Gucci dropped 25% in the second quarter of the financial year, a serious problem for Kering, where it is the biggest brand in the group. A shake-up is what is on the cards.

