

RETAIL

The RealReal hits Canal Street with counterfeits to raise awareness

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From now through fall, shoppers can head to the temporary installation and forfeit any fake luxury handbags they may own, no questions asked. Image credit: The RealReal/Olympia Shannon

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Luxury resell platform The RealReal is drawing attention to the true costs associated with buying fraudulent items.

Calling attention to the pervasiveness of counterfeit sales, the company has stocked a Canal Street pop-up with fakes, hosting conversations and activations from the non-shoppable space and educating audiences all season long. Additionally, from now through September, The RealReal is accepting high-end handbag dupes at the New York City location, no questions asked, in exchange for a chance to win real products as part of the initiative.

"Authenticity is at the core of everything we do," said Rati Sahi Levesque, president and chief operating officer of **The RealReal**, in a statement.

"Over the past 13 years, as counterfeits have evolved they're being made more quickly and accurately than ever we've continually invested heavily in advancing our technology and the training of our expert authenticators, ensuring we're keeping them off the market," Ms. Levesque said. "Unlike fast fashion, the underbelly of counterfeit culture is less discussed; counterfeits harm the environment, are often produced unethically and undermine genuine brands.

"Our commitment to authenticity goes beyond our business; it's about protecting the planet and ethical practices."

Counterfeit culture

While The RealReal's new storefront may appear to be a real opening, closer looks will reveal a shell of a shop that only stocks knockoffs.

None of these bags are for sale at the site, constructed in collaboration with branding and advertising company Mythology. Instead, the accessories on display at 301 Canal Street were confiscated during the reseller's authentication process.

"When TheRealReal approached Mythology, we set out to create an honest dialogue on consumerism and authenticity," said Ted Galperin, partner and director of retail at Mythology, in a statement.

"Every passerby must do a double-take, questioning the validity of our perpetually closed store, much like they would when judging a handbag's authenticity."



The bags inside the installation are all fake luxury items. Image credit: The Real Real/Olympia Shannon

Timed to align with New York's tourism high season, the installation is running during the busiest period for counterfeit purchases. Aspects of the branded experience mimic niche elements of the underground market.

On Canal Street, the most convincing counterfeits are sold in backrooms. At The RealReal, offices above the new store mimic this model, though instead of illegal trades, the corner will be used for special guest talks.

The preloved luxury platform plans to foster discussions about one of fashion's biggest issues ([see story](#)) in programs led by members of the industry.

"Identifying what's real and what's fake has never been harder, and it matters now more than ever," said Kristen Naiman, chief creative officer at The RealReal, in a statement.

"We value authenticity, and our experts are constantly improving their ability to identify the bogus from the bona fide (something we are all doing every day)," Ms. Naiman said. "So, we are going to share everything we know, and hear what designers, thought leaders, craftspeople and our community have to say."

Starting on June 22, shoppers will be able to exchange their inauthentic handbags for a spot in a drawing that rewards its winner with real wear. Additional in-store submission dates include July 20, 2024, and Aug. 17, 2024,

Today, June 13, a Canal Street-inspired curation of totes and accessories that are frequently replicated, such as the Louis Vuitton Speedy, Hermes Birkin, Chanel Flap Bag, Dior and Goyard totes. Rolex watches, Cartier Love bracelets and Gucci belts go on sale at therealreal.com.

"Fakes are a complicated topic (like The RealReal, they were originally a response to the exclusivity of luxury fashion)," said Ms. Naiman, in a statement.

"So, let's talk."