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Experimental crossroad:

COMMERCE

Los Angeles art museum plans boutique as element of exhibit

BY DIANE HAITHMAN
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES — In a move that seems sure to offend art world purists, the downtown Museum of Contemporary Art will merge the worlds of art and commerce this fall by including a fully operational Louis Vuitton boutique as part of a retrospective of the work of Japanese artist Takashi Murakami.

Highlighting Murakami's longtime professional association with the luxury goods label, the boutique will offer limited-edition handbags and small leather goods featuring Murakami designs. The estimated prices of the bags, ranging from \$875 to \$920, represent about a \$300 markup over the \$575 to \$665 that consumers would pay for the same line without the Murakami designs at the Vuitton store on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills.

Unlike the traditional gift shop or museum store outside the exhibition area, or a shop set up for a traveling exhibition, the Vuitton shop will be situated among about 20 rooms featuring paintings, sculpture and animation. "People have touched base with the play between the commercial arena and high art, but this is a little more confrontational," MOCA Chief Curator Paul Schimmel, who organized the show, said Wednesday.

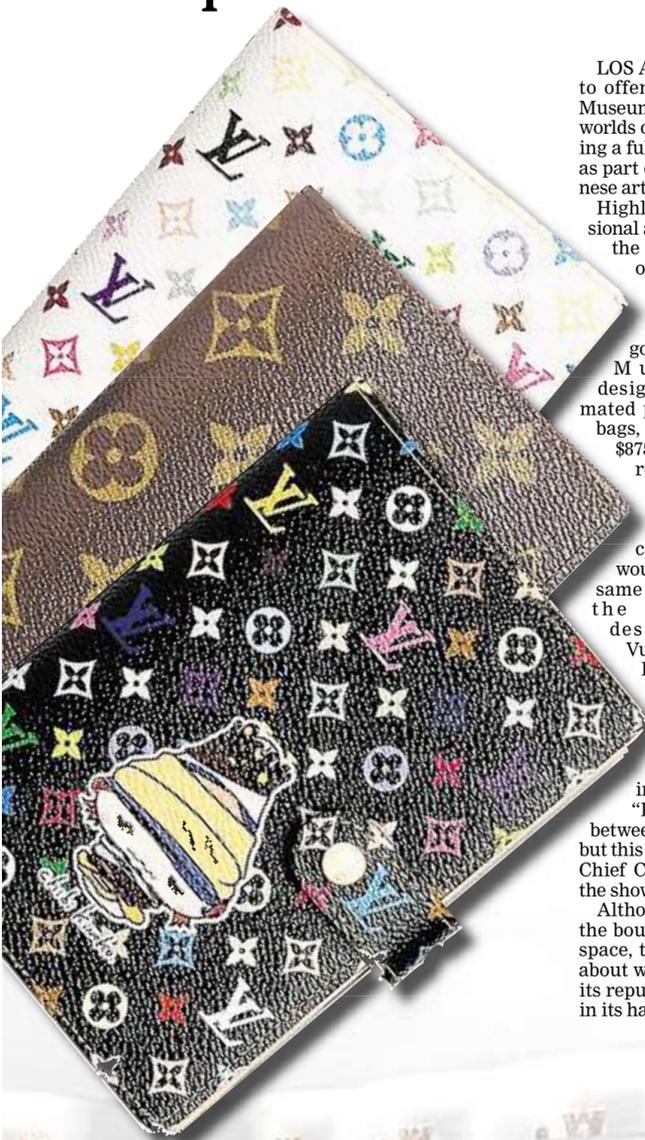
Although MOCA will receive no profit from the boutique's sales and no rental fee for the space, the unorthodox plan raises questions about whether a nonprofit museum tarnishes its reputation by peddling high-end handbags in its hallowed halls.

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"People have touched base with the play between the commercial arena and high art, but this is a little more confrontational."

Paul Schimmel
MOCA chief curator

ULTIMATE



An artist's rendering of the exhibit's Louis Vuitton shop shows a boutique offering limited-edition handbags and small leather goods featuring Takashi Murakami designs, such as the handbags pictured above.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Coming soon: Finale of the high-def DVD battle

Holiday shoppers could deliver knockout

BY GARY GENTILE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — People who own an HD DVD player can forget about watching "Spider-Man 3" in high definition when it goes on sale during the holiday season. The movie from Sony Pictures will only be available in the Blu-ray DVD format.

Likewise, people with Blu-ray players won't be able to enjoy the action-thriller "The Bourne Ultimatum," which Universal Pictures will release only in HD DVD.

These exclusive arrangements, plus aggressive price cuts for high-def DVD players, are designed to persuade consumers to finally embrace one format or the other.

But analysts wonder if the moves will anger consumers, just as the studios and consumer-electronics companies are hoping to boost high-def DVD sales as growth in standard DVDs stalls.

"The frustration for consumers is not knowing what format is going to win," said Chris Roden, an analyst at Parks Associates.

Consumers, many of whom are still smarting from the VCR format battle between VHS and Betamax, need to know their expensive equipment won't become obsolete if the competing format wins, said Steven J. Caldero, chief operating officer of Ken Crane's, specialty electronics chain in Southern California.

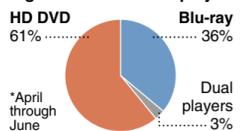
"People are still frustrated there is a format war to begin with," he said. "The studios are making people choose. What consumers want is something that will play everything so they don't have to choose."

Please see DVD, Page 16

The big picture

HD DVD players outsold Blu-ray players by nearly 2-to-1 in the second quarter.

U.S. market share for high-definition video players*



SOURCE: NPD Group AP

MONEY MATTERS

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Minersville man joins Quandel Enterprises

MINERSVILLE — Jason Quinn recently joined Quandel Enterprises Inc., a local construction firm, as a project estimator.

He received his bachelor's degree from Mansfield University and has more than eight years experience both as a project engineer and estimator. He started in construction as a mason tender and carpenter apprentice. He has worked for construction companies in Lancaster and Las Vegas.

Business owner receives technical certification

DALLAS — Nick Hitchcock, a native of Susquehanna County and owner of NHT Consulting, Schuylkill County, has recently attained certifications for Certified Ethical Hacker and Computer Hacking Forensic Investigator from Ec-Council in Dallas, Texas. Hitchcock also maintains certifications in Microsoft technologies and other industry recognized credentials.

NHT Consulting provides technical and consulting services throughout northeastern Pennsylvania, specializing in networking, network security, intrusion detection systems and firewalls, remote data management, data recovery and maintenance for both commercial and residential customers.

Tamaqua man named PPL regional director

HAZLETON — David J. Bonenberger, a 23-year PPL employee, has been appointed regional director of operations for PPL Electric Utilities.

He is responsible for design, construction, maintenance and reliable performance of the electric delivery system in parts of Luzerne, Schuylkill, Carbon and Northumberland counties, including Hazleton, Wilkes-Barre, Pottsville, Lehighton and Shamokin areas.

Bonenberger, who will be based at PPL Electric Utilities' Hazleton Service Center, previously served as manager of Field Services Operations Support.

He joined PPL in 1984 as assistant field office manager during construction of the Susquehanna nuclear power plant. In 1985, he joined PPL's financial department, where he held various job titles before accepting a position in the customer service department in 1990.

He has a bachelor's degree in accounting from Bloomsburg University and a master's degree in business administration from Wilkes University.

He resides in Tamaqua with his wife, Francine.

Pittsburgh casino site redevelopment sought

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The company that owns Pittsburgh's Station Square shopping and entertainment complex is trying to redevelop a five-acre site where it had hoped to put a new slot machine casino.

Forest City Enterprises of Cleveland lost out in its bid to host the city's first casino, and now has other hopes for the large plot of land along the southern shore of the Monongahela River.

Part of the land houses the Chevrolet Amphitheater, but that concert venue was closed last year as Forest City began pursuing the casino.

Now that the amphitheater is set to reopen in another location next year, Forest City want to do something else with the land.

The company is considering residential, office, retail and entertainment developments for the site, which is now being advertised as a "development site."

"It's pretty much an open game at this point," said Tom Schneck II, Station Square's director of marketing. "This is all really exploratory. We want to gauge interest and develop a master plan for the undeveloped part of the property."

MTR Gaming reports 2nd-quarter losses

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (AP) — The cost of opening its own slots parlor in Pennsylvania and the loss of traditional customers to other casinos in that state led to a second-quarter loss of \$502,000 for MTR Gaming Group Inc. That translates to \$0.02 per share, compared to a gain of \$472,000, or \$0.02 per share, in the same period last year, the Chester-based company said Thursday.

MTR shares fell 47 cents, or 4.2 percent, to \$10.73 on the Nasdaq Stock Market.

"The second quarter was one of tremendous transition," President and CEO Ted Arneault told investors on a conference call.