

# WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

## New Ball Game

Louis Vuitton has become the off-the-field apparel sponsor of the Real Madrid men's and women's soccer teams.

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## Italian Journey

Damiani showed off its latest high jewelry collection in Rome, taking Italy as the source of its inspiration.

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## Family Affair

Two generations of the Zegna and Saab clans discussed how to maintain a family-founded fashion brand.

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# Couture Creations

The Couture Show wrapped in Las Vegas last week with exhibitors focusing on truly special collections and one-of-a-kind styles, like those seen here, to entice customers to open their wallets for new heirloom designs. *For more on the show, see pages 6 to 8.*

Jade Ruzzo; Silvia Furmanovich; Roberto Coin; Zahn-Z; Busatti 1947; Francesca Villa; Melissa Kaye; Cicada; Temple St. Clair; Harwell Godfrey

## BUSINESS

# At VivaTech Awards, LVMH Spotlights AI Innovation and Sustainability

● LVMH CEO Bernard Arnault missed the ceremony due to "diplomatic duties."

BY RHONDA RICHFORD

**PARIS** — Bernard Arnault, chairman and chief executive officer of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, was working his second job Thursday morning, missing the annual Innovation Awards at the VivaTech fair.

LVMH's head of communication, image and environment, Antoine Arnault, stepped into his father's shoes to apologize to the crowd and congratulate the winners.

"You might have noticed that, on top of his multiple hats, he also became recently a diplomat, and his diplomacy skills made him unable to attend today," said the younger Arnault of his father's whereabouts. "But it's nothing more than that, and he's very sad that he couldn't be here," he added, heading off any speculation at the pass.

The winners were selected from LVMH's Maison des Startups and judged on new criteria this year, including the ability to collaborate with brands and capability to scale quickly.

Real-time predictive audience segmentation AI Kahoona, partnered with Dior, took the best business prize for its ability to read the "digital body language" of anonymous site visitors; soil health measurement system Genesis, collaborating with Moët Hennessy, took the Impact Prize; and digital twin 3D AI content creation studio OMI, partnering with Guerlain, took the Most Promising prize.

Tiffany & Co. stepped in for the first time to create the trophy, and on stage, representatives from each winning team asked Arnault a question on business leadership.

"You need a little bit of craziness sometimes, and you need to take crazy decisions once in a while," he said, citing the decision of Bernard Arnault hiring John Galliano to head the house of Christian Dior when he was just a "young British [designer] with a bit of a bad reputation."

Imparting the lessons he's learned from the luxury business, Arnault said that when Amazon started growing into the shopping behemoth it is today, his father went against the grain and opened bigger, flashier retail spaces to transform shopping into entertainment.

"He tried to prove that you needed temples — not to worship luxury products — but at least to have a great experience, and to go in there and meet people, drink a glass of Champagne, take your time, and then maybe take a crazy decision on buying very expensive products," he said.

After the ceremony, winners were treated to a live engraving of their name on the trophy, Oscars-style.

Other heavy hitters made their way to the convention center in the south of Paris, including French President Emmanuel Macron and prime minister François Bayrou. The newly minted superstar speaking slot went to Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang.

Overall, this year's programming bid bye-bye to blockchain and adios to AR — the exhibitor and speaker lineup was heavy on companies with an AI angle.

However, this is a generational shift and not just another trend, said LVMH chief information officer Franck Le Moal.

"AI and genAI are definitely a strong transformation," he told WWD. "It will not be a kind of buzz word, a bit like 'metaverse' was. It's really becoming part of the day-to-day processes" integrated throughout systems across the company, he said.

Le Moal said LVMH is supporting its workforce in learning AI as a tool and has created two academies within the conglomerate to educate staff at all levels on a "new way of working."

He highlighted several use cases being tested at LVMH, including using AI in marketing to adjust content for different countries and social platforms, and using generative AI to create photo-realistic content.

The company also renewed its partnership with Google Cloud, focusing on developing new AI, including an internal version of Google's Gemini called MaIA, and is developing AI agents for retail sales and client outreach. AI is already deployed in supply chain forecasting and inventory optimization.

"We can use technology to adjust and make our supply chain even more efficient in a very unpredictable context," he said, framing production within the current climate and geopolitical challenges. "We are facing agility, being able to answer very quickly to the context in China, in the U.S., in Europe, being able to adjust our production and distribution."

Kahoona's tech uses what cofounder Gal Rapoport called "digital body language," finger size, movements, and signals that can be analyzed by AI to identify and understand the personality of an anonymous shopper. Rapoport said research shows that 96 percent of visitors to a website are anonymous, and only 0.5 to 3 percent of those visitors convert to a sale. Early data demonstrates that the hyper-personalization and segmentation that comes along with personality detection drives engagement up over 10 times.

## Brands in Control of AI Advertising

Advertising is now in the hands of the brands, which can create product campaigns or use virtual models that can be ordered up in minutes.

Most Promising Prize winner OMI's tech makes a digital twin of any item, which can then be used inside an "endless photoshoot," manipulating positioning, light reflecting, and altering ratios for platform compatibility. OMI's rendered images are photorealistic and give the power to the brands to create their own ads and media, be it the design, marketing or e-commerce team — pretty much any team in an organization — with the same 3D model at the core.

"The main advantage is that it's a non-technical skills-related solution," said OMI product manager Swen Hueber. Without need for an engineer, it significantly reduces ad production costs and time down to a few hours.

Elsewhere, brands can now mix-and-match model features, much like shopping online, with AI photo studio Veeton. The start-up's tech can replicate

Kahoona's Gal Rapoport, Genesis Soil Health's Adrienne de Malleray, LVMH's Antoine Arnault and OMI's Hugo Borensztein.



a full photoshoot within two hours, said cofounder and CEO Flore Lestrade.

Fashion brands have been working with existing tech like Midjourney to create images, but they can still wander in the uncanny valley. "That's something fashion brands are actively working on — de-AI-ifying those images," said Lestrade.

Veeton offers a menu of virtual models to select from, adjustable for body types, pose, race, style and age. Users can upload flat pack shots, and the AI will create a look from its dataset of over 50 million fashion images. Subtleties such as facial expressions or posture can be adjusted with prompts to match creative direction without the need for engineers or editors, she said.

Veeton has already worked with Showroomprivé and will roll out to more fashion brands and retailers soon.

## Smart Tech vs. Style

EssilorLuxottica CEO Paul du Saillant and Publicis Groupe Chair Emeritus Maurice Levy took the stage to tout the eyewear maker's partnership between its Ray-Ban brand and Meta to create connected glasses. Levy said Google's attempt at connected glasses didn't work a decade ago because they "did not address the style element."

Levy said he doesn't go into a meeting these days without wearing a pair of the glasses — which can record video and audio, amplify sound, and alert wearers of emails and text messages in real time.

The eyewear company is preparing to "expand aggressively" and will roll out more styles and possibly partnerships with other brands soon.

## Sustainability as a Long-term Strategy

EBay France general manager Sarah Tayeb and Vestiaire Collective chief impact officer Dounia Wone both addressed the apparent contradiction of using AI, which consumes significant amounts of energy and water, to simplify resale or refurbished goods shopping. Both use tech that can help create and translate listings, as well as assist with search to help nudge consumer behavior.

"We need to take a step back," said

Wone. AI can help these businesses "grow in an industry that is very much a huge polluting industry," she said, and help create a circular economy. By adding ease, AI support enables more people to enter the resale ecosystem and has helped double sales of ecosystem items.

"It's an opportunity, because sustainability tech needs to be aligned with growth," she said.

Sustainability data management platform Sweep works with fashion brands including Burberry, Lacoste, and The Kooples, and beauty brands such as Caudalie, to collect and monitor environmental and carbon data throughout their supply chains, as well as build transition plans.

Sweep cofounder and CEO Rachel Delacour emphasized that companies should see sustainability as a key driver of transformation, as it helps break down departmental silos and establishes sustainability as a core business pillar.

It's a tricky global moment with the new Trump tariffs upending global trade and the EU potentially rolling back some sustainability reporting regulations, but Delacour said that while fashion brands are becoming more cautious, they aren't abandoning sustainability altogether.

"The fashion brands we are talking with are telling us, 'We can't waste four years of data collection,'" she said. Instead, the uncertainty is acting as an accelerator for companies to make a stronger business case for sustainable supply chains.

Regardless of how the regulations play out, both European and U.S.-based companies see sustainability as necessary to future-proofing their businesses.

"It has actually accelerated the sustainability understanding and how they must engage with their value chain and [demonstrate] the ROI of all this for the CEO and the board members," she said. "There are finite resources on this planet. There will be winners and losers. The ones who are not able to transition to a low carbon economy in their business and in their value chain, they won't be here in the next 10 years."

## FASHION

# Louis Vuitton Signs Partnership With Real Madrid



Éder Militão, Daniel Carvajal, Kylian Mbappé, Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Júnior and Thibaut Courtois standing on Louis Vuitton trunks, wearing the LV x Real Madrid formalwear collection.

Pietro Beccari



● The French luxury house will design off-field outfits for the men's and women's soccer teams, as well as the men's basketball team.

BY JOELLE DIDERICH

**PARIS** — Jude Bellingham's work wardrobe is about to sync with his off-duty looks.

Louis Vuitton has unveiled an official multiyear partnership with the Real Madrid soccer and basketball teams, marking yet another high-profile sports deal for the world's biggest luxury brand, which is active in disciplines ranging from sailing to Formula 1.

The French fashion house last year signed Bellingham, who plays midfield for Real Madrid, as a brand ambassador, and has dressed him for prestigious events such as the Ballon d'Or ceremony.

Now he and his teammates, including Kylian Mbappé, Thibaut Courtois and Vinicius Júnior, will wear a wardrobe designed by Pharrell Williams, creative director of menswear at Vuitton, for major travel and events.

"It's football royalty meets luxury royalty," Pietro Beccari, chairman and chief executive officer of Louis Vuitton, told WWD.

"Because ultimately, football is the number-one sport worldwide, and Real Madrid is a legendary team, on top of that. Louis Vuitton has just as much aura, being the global leader. I think it's a perfect marriage and an authentic one," he added.



Jude Bellingham, Endrick Felipe Moreira de Sousa and Antonio Rüdiger wearing the Louis Vuitton x Real Madrid formalwear collection.

The announcement, on the eve of the FIFA Club World Cup in the U.S., confirmed speculation swirling in sports circles since February that Vuitton was poised to succeed Zegna as the team's official off-field outfitter. The club's jerseys are designed by Adidas.

"At Real Madrid, we relentlessly pursue excellence as the path to remain at the top. That same philosophy defines a brand as iconic in the luxury industry as Louis Vuitton," Emilio Butragueño, Real Madrid's director of institutional relations, said in a statement.

"Both of us have managed to transcend time, and we share not only the responsibility of building a legacy, but also the purpose of inspiring the world — beyond our respective industries," he added.

Beccari, a former professional soccer player, noted that the brand has partnered with FIFA, the sport's international governing body, since 2010 to create the trunk for the World Cup winner's trophy. "Today, this partnership with a football club marks a new era and predicts a very positive future," he said in an emailed interview.

The house has also created carriers for the Rugby World Cup, the NBA Championship trophy, the Formula 1 Grand Prix de Monaco prize and the sailing America's Cup, among others, and reached a pinnacle of global visibility last year by crafting special trunks for the medals and torches for the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

"This partnership is a natural fit for Louis Vuitton and our continued focus on sports. As we like to say, 'Victory travels in Louis Vuitton,'" Beccari said.

## Bouncing Back From Defeat

Fresh off the signing of Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dean Huijsen, Real Madrid and its new coach Xabi Alonso have a lot riding on the Club World Cup, after a season that saw it beaten by historic rival Barcelona at home, and bow to Arsenal in the Champions League.

Real Madrid leads a pack of favorites in the competition that also includes Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester City, Bayern Munich and Chelsea. Beccari lauded the resilience of the club and its supporters.

"Sports people embody the ultimate journey: a pursuit of excellence. Overcoming failure is part of the process, just as there are challenging times in business. What matters is the team spirit, and the values represented by the club and its federation. Real Madrid remains a legendary club, the most decorated in the world of football," he said.

"And I think the mentality of Real Madrid is exceptional. They are able to celebrate for 24 hours and then move on to the next chapter or be sad for 24 hours because they didn't win a trophy, then forget about it and focus on what's next," Beccari added, noting that he tries to apply the same spirit at Vuitton, which is navigating a global slowdown in luxury demand.

The label's positioning as a "cultural" brand with broad reach across segments including sports, gaming, music and art, is all about diversifying revenue streams as consumers switch their focus from status-conferring luxury goods to once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

"We see fashion, culture, entertainment and sports merging like never before, and as a house of culture, we want to be at the forefront, celebrating those who excel. Our house ambassadors inspire us as the competitions we are supporting do," Beccari said.

Soccer holds a special place for the Arnault family, which controls LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the conglomerate that owns Vuitton alongside brands including Dior, Tiffany & Co., Moët & Chandon and Sephora. Its holding group

Agache last year acquired a majority stake in Paris FC, which in May vaulted back into France's first division after almost half a century in the second tier.

Beccari would not be drawn on the possible implications for Vuitton's link with soccer, but noted: "At Louis Vuitton, we have a genuine passion for sports and are always looking for new opportunities that resonate with the values of Louis Vuitton."

While the terms of its deal with Real Madrid were not disclosed, Vuitton noted it was the first time it was placing its tailoring expertise at the service of athletes beyond the pitch.

The formal wardrobe for the men's and women's football teams, as well as the men's basketball team, includes ready-to-wear, shoes and accessories that will be worn during official representations.

## Soccer Players as 'Cultural Icons'

A label made of natural cowhide leather, embossed with the Louis Vuitton signature, is sewn onto jacket lapels and the back pockets of trousers. Accessories include a leather belt with a palladium LV buckle, a navy cotton embroidered cap and LV Soft sneakers.

Players will also have a choice of luggage pieces including the Horizon 55 carry-on suitcase, the classic Keepall weekend bag, and the Christopher backpack, as well as travel accessories such as a toiletry bag and passport holder.

The items come in the brand's signature Monogram canvas decorated with stripes and the initials "RM." Each one also features an exclusive leather charm adorned with the club's colors.

While items from the collection won't be available for purchase, clients can buy pieces like the Keepall and Horizon in store and personalize them via the Mon Monogram service, potentially adding the club's colors or initials. "It is a good way to experience a touch of that collaboration," Beccari said.

Ahead of the 2018 World Cup in Russia, Vuitton had launched a licensed collection of upscale leather goods in the flag colors of the participating nations. And in 2020, it dropped its first menswear capsule collection designed by Virgil Abloh as part of a three-year partnership with the National Basketball Association.

These days, soccer fans are as likely to take their cues from individual players as their favorite club. In France, stars like Jules Koundé have turned their arrival at the training ground for the national team into style statements, akin to NBA tunnel arrivals.

"We see Louis Vuitton as a universal brand, not just a fashion house. So, these athletes aren't just playing a game; they're shaping culture and influencing tastes on a global scale," Beccari noted.

"These players are today's cultural icons, and their style choices resonate with the ones of the Louis Vuitton community. And during the shoot and the fittings in Madrid, all the players wanted to participate and take part in the shoot as they deeply wanted to be associated with Louis Vuitton," he added.

If in Formula 1 the brand has a strong trackside presence as title sponsor of key races, including the Australian Grand Prix, don't expect to see its logo writ large inside the renovated Santiago Bernabéu stadium in Madrid.

"Instead, we'll be there to support the players, team representatives and members during international trips, official events, ceremonies and occasions when they will be representing the club. We're focused on being a part of their journey and their representation of Real Madrid on a global scale," Beccari said.

## BUSINESS

# Net-a-porter CEO Taps Company Vets for New Team

- Claudia Plant, who was the first employee and a cofounder of Net-a-porter, will be returning as chief brand and customer officer.

BY SAMANTHA CONTI

**LONDON** – Net-a-porter has named a new leadership team, including some company veterans, who'll be working with the recently appointed chief executive officer Heather Kaminetsky.

New owner LuxExperience said the team will "reenergize" Net's "value proposition and brand appeal, and benefit from the efficiencies and resources of a bigger group in the back-of-house operations."

Brigitte Chartrand has been named chief buying and merchandising officer and will oversee all categories. Previously she was vice president of womenswear, kidswear and all other categories at Ssense.

Prior to Ssense she was the founder of Reborn, a boutique that garnered acclaim for being the first to bring directional brands to the North American market.

Claudia Plant, who was famously "employee number one" and a cofounder of Net-a-porter when it launched in 1999, is returning as chief brand and customer officer, overseeing marketing, brand and content.

She is credited with helping to establish Net's voice, identity and editorial approach. She was most recently chief marketing officer at Stella McCartney, and prior to that, she held senior executive positions at Hunter and Burberry.

Jeffrey Trosch has been named president of North America, overseeing marketing, personal shopping and PR. Most recently he served as marketing director and country lead for North America at Net. His previous experience includes communication roles at Shinola and Moët Hennessy.

Chris Chan has been promoted to APAC region president, overseeing marketing,



Heather Kaminetsky



Claudia Plant



Michael Kliger

PR and personal shopping in the region. He joined Net in 2012 and has served as marketing and communication director APAC at Yoox Net-a-porter for the past three years.

Many other people will continue in their leadership roles. They include Anna Milne, merchandising director; Ankit Bhargava, director of digital marketing, and Victoria Knight, site trading director.

Michael Kliger, CEO of LuxExperience, said: "Heather's appointment as CEO, combined with the newly formed management team, marks an exciting new chapter for the business."

"Her deep understanding of the Net-a-porter customer from her previous tenure, combined with her proven track record of driving significant changes and growth, make her the natural leader to re-energize the customer proposition of the brand and streamline the business for

future financial success."

Kaminetsky served as Net-a-porter's vice president, global marketing, until 2016 before joining Mytheresa in 2021 as president of North America. She said she feels "closely connected to the brand, which has always set the standard for fashion, discovery and exceptional customer service."

She added: "I look forward to working alongside our talented teams and partners around the world as we build the next chapter of Net-a-porter's exciting journey."

Kaminetsky's appointment was first revealed in April just as Mytheresa was completing its purchase of Yoox Net-a-porter from Richemont.

As reported, the publicly listed parent of Mytheresa has rebranded as LuxExperience, with retailers Mytheresa, Net-a-porter, Mr Porter, Yoox and The Outnet in its portfolio.

In the medium term, LuxExperience said its goal will be to grow to a 4 billion euro GMV per annum business with an adjusted EBITDA margin of more than 8 percent.

The restructuring is expected to take 24 to 36 months and is being funded with a net cash position of 555 million euros at closing.



Ruth Warder

## BUSINESS

## Chanel Names Global Chief Communications Officer

- Ruth Warder will join the French fashion house's global leadership team in London.

BY JOELLE DIDERICH

**PARIS** – Chanel has named Ruth Warder as global chief communications officer, a newly created position based in London, effective in September.

Warder, who was most recently chief executive officer for the U.K. and Ireland and EMEA brand chair at global communications firm Edelman, will report to Leena Nair, global CEO of Chanel, as part of the global leadership team, Chanel said on Thursday.

"Ruth is a highly accomplished and globally recognized expert in successfully positioning brands within an increasingly complex and fragmented communications landscape," the house said in a statement.

"Building on the strengths of Chanel's existing global communications teams, she will continue to develop a cohesive, proactive reputation strategy and amplify our voice as we grow our positive influence and impact in the world," it added.

The nomination comes as Chanel charts

a new path under the creative direction of Matthieu Blazy, while navigating a global slowdown in luxury spending. The French fashion house said revenues fell 4.3 percent at comparable rates to \$18.7 billion in 2024, following several years of strong growth.

Warder joined Edelman in 2013 and has experience across the tech, retail, entertainment, luxury and FMCG sectors. She is credited with introducing new specialisms at Edelman in the fields of workplace advisory, sustainability and AI, while driving the company's strategy on topics including DEI and leadership development.

Prior to that, she was managing director at Jackie Cooper PR, and she started her career at Freud Communications.

Meanwhile, Michael Giugliano, former head of brand expansion at Bottega Veneta, confirmed on Instagram this week that he was starting at Chanel.

WWD reported in April that Blazy, who officially started on April 1, was building out his team and looking to bring Giugliano on board. A spokeswoman for Chanel said Giugliano would head its celebrities team and would be based in Paris, but did not confirm his exact title.

## ACCESSORIES

# Damiani's High Jewelry Collection Is an Ode to Italian Beauties



A detail of the Marea Rosa necklace from Damiani's high jewelry collection.



The Promessa di Luna bracelet.



The Bagliori di Murano earrings.



The Aethernitas necklace.



Guido Grassi Damiani

● Paraiba tourmalines, Colombian emeralds, changing-color sapphires and opals were among the precious gemstones set on the one-of-a-kind pieces the brand presented in Rome.

BY SANDRA SALIBIAN

**ROME** – Those longing for a summer getaway on the Italian Riviera are dreaming small. What's a dive into Mediterranean waters when you can get lost in the green-blue shade of a 46-carat Paraiba tourmaline?

The gemstone sat at the pendant tip of one of the creations Damiani presented at Palazzo Ripetta here on Thursday as part of its high jewelry collection. A range of 76 one-of-the-kind pieces, the line was conceived as a tribute to Italy and its natural and architectural beauties, while offering a display of the company's craftsmanship, design ethos and research into precious gemstones.

"This is an ode to Italy because we are proud to be Italians and convinced that it's the most beautiful country in the world, one that never ceases to inspire us," said Guido Grassi Damiani, president of the Damiani Group, which also comprises the Salvini and Bliss jewelry brands, as well as Calderoni, retailer Rocca and glassmaker Venini.

Grassi Damiani underscored that the brand's celebrations for its centennial last year and the roving "Damiani 100 x 100 Italiani" exhibition of unique creations staged for the occasion built additional momentum around its high jewelry collection, drawing the interest of new customers, too.

"Last year we celebrated our history, now it was time to celebrate the country we love. And it felt right to do it here in Rome," said Grassi Damiani.

References to the city were seen throughout the collection, which was divided into three chapters, each spearheaded by hero creations spotlighting standout gems.

For example, Paraiba tourmalines in various carats defined the "Lights of the Sea" line dedicated to the Italian coast and its most famed destinations. Cue the stunning Marea Rosa, or Pink Tide, necklace evoking the colors of Sardinia

and the glare of the sun on the sea with its array of marquise-cut pink morganites and diamonds, culminating in the central oval-cut Paraiba tourmaline pendant.

Smaller cuts of the same gem punctuated the Gioia del Mare, or Joy of the Sea, necklace in white gold and diamonds that was inspired by Portofino, while the statement Agrumia rings paid tribute to Taormina, framing oval- or cushion-cut Paraiba tourmalines with yellow diamonds or in pink and orange sapphires.

A different vibe was channeled into the Landscapes of the Soul chapter, inspired by other natural settings, such as blooming hills, alpine peaks, placid lakes and volcanoes. Highlights included the Dolce Stil Novo necklace and matching watch inspired by the Tuscan countryside and alternating flower- and daisy-shaped elements in yellow and brown diamonds to support an emerald-cut, 31-carat emerald pendant.

The Promessa di Luna, or Promise of the Moon, bracelet featuring blue sapphires with portrait- and rose-cut diamonds was a nod to the peaks of the Dolomites, while the Specchio della Notte, or Mirror of the Night, necklace and earrings evoking twilight on the Italian lakes charmed with their combination of oval-cut pink corals, cats-eye alexandrites and diamonds.

The Aethernitas necklace and its cut-cornered rectangular fancy yellow-green diamond was among the standout creations of the "Dwellings of Time" theme inspired by Italy's artistic cities. The piece, which nodded to Rome's piazzas through its circular pendant, could be turned into a brooch, tapping also into the male audience that is increasingly relying on high jewelry to elevate their tuxedos on special occasions.

The piece was flanked by the flamboyant Milano Segreta and Magnifica necklaces, nodding to Milan and Florence, respectively, as well as the Bagliori di Murano earrings, evoking the colors of the island in Venice's lagoon and its signature glass-making expertise with multicolored sapphires and diamonds.

"High jewelry is a fun challenge for us. It's the space where we can freely express our creativity compared to our other lines, where we're dealing with smaller sizes and have to be more mindful about costs," said

Grassi Damiani.

He said the overall weight of the category on the Damiani business is growing, now representing a double-digit share of the brand's revenues, but he declined to provide exact figures. He also believes the share of sales generated by high jewelry "will further increase in the coming years, in part because we're growing at-large, in part because high-end customers are rediscovering jewelry, to the detriment to other luxury industries."

"Customers want to give importance to the money they spend and jewelry not only lasts for a lifetime, but it is passed down to the next generations. It has an intrinsic value and is seen as an investment, especially in moments of wars and crisis as the ones we're going through," said Grassi Damiani.

So much so that Grassi Damiani revealed the brand is looking to expand more and more into watches, too. While some pieces are already part of its high jewelry collection, a more approachable watch offering is in the works and might bow in a few years, said Grassi Damiani.

Customers' overall demand is sustaining the group's growth. To be sure, in the fiscal year ending March 31, the Damiani Group posted revenues of 380 million euros, reporting more than a 10 percent increase over the previous year. Grassi Damiani is confident that despite the geopolitical instability and macroeconomic volatility, the family business will report a sales increase in 2025.

The forecast is also due to the investments the company is making in its distribution, in activations enhancing its brand awareness globally and in strategic acquisitions aimed at strengthening its production capabilities.

The Damiani brand continues to push its retail expansion, with recent openings in Hong Kong and Seoul, followed by its debut in Saudi Arabia with a 1,614-square-foot boutique in Riyadh's Solitaire Mall. The units, which mirror the new concept the brand introduced earlier this year with its flagship in Milan's Via Montenapoleone, will be followed by outposts in Doha after the summer and in Abu Dhabi come new year.

The openings are part of an expansion the brand is making in the Middle East,

which is seen as a key market for the future. While the current best-performing markets are Italy, South Korea and Japan, Grassi Damiani said there are encouraging signs coming from Central and South America, with high-spending customers approaching the brand in Mexico, Argentina and Venezuela.

He credited the product but also the increased budget dedicated to boosting communication activities, as seen in the campaign fronted by global brand ambassador Jessica Chastain launched last year. Grassi Damiani underscored it's "a difficult battle" to fight against competitors that are part of bigger groups, but believes that being Italian and still a family-run company are aspects that set the brand apart and which will be spotlighted further going forward.

The firm also continued to invest in Italy in its M&A deals. Earlier this month, the group revealed it reached an agreement to acquire the Valenza-based, family-run jewelry manufacturer Carraro S.r.l. to further strengthen its know-how and production capabilities. Following the acquisition, the 55-year-old Carraro will continue to operate under its own name and management, ensuring the continuity of its processes. Grassi Damiani didn't exclude other acquisitions by the end of the year, but didn't disclose details.

The firm was founded in Valenza, Italy, in 1924 by the executive's grandfather, Enrico Grassi Damiani, who set the design and manufacturing bedrock of the company, managing to build a sizable business by word of mouth. The jeweler eventually turned into a full-fledged label in the 1970s thanks to Damiano Damiani, the founder's son, who propelled its branding and started to invest in communication.

The family's third generation is represented by Grassi Damiani and his siblings Silvia, vice president of Damiani Group and president of Venini, and Giorgio, vice president of Damiani Group and creative and research and development director for all jewelry brands within the group. They found themselves suddenly helming the family business following the tragic death of their father Damiano in a car accident in 1996.

A lot has taken place since, including winning 18 Diamonds International Awards for its jewels and publicly listing in Milan, only to delist 12 years later, citing misalignment between the management's strategic plans and shareholders' expectations.

The Damiani Group established the Salvini brand in 1986; introduced the Bliss label in 2000; acquired jeweler Calderoni in 2006; bought retailer Rocca in 2008, and first invested in leading glassmaker Venini in 2016.



## ACCESSORIES

# The Couture Show 2025: Resilience in the Face of Uncertainty

● Despite global uncertainty, due to tariffs and rising costs of materials, retailers showed up to Las Vegas with a sense of focus with their buy.

BY THOMAS WALLER

**LAS VEGAS** – The Couture Show touched down here last week and, despite the global uncertainty due to tariffs and the rising costs of raw materials, particularly gold, designers and buyers showed up with a sense of resilience and focus.

“There were less people at the fair from last year but it was more serious and more focused buyers for us who want to build a bigger partnership with their brands to resonate with their customers,” said Massimo Zerbin, chief executive officer of the Sobe Luxury Group, the distributor for Chantecler, Peruffo, Terzihan, Giovanni Ferraris and Chiarelli in the U.S. and Caribbean.

“Quality, unique product and value proposition were at the core of our business for Couture this year. While there is still market trepidation, heirloom high-quality investment pieces are still very meaningful in the market,” he added.

The annual trade exhibition for fine jewelry and timepieces saw around 300 brands exhibit this year, and while buyers were cautious, many brands reported opening new accounts. “We opened some new single independent accounts and redefined our presence and work with Saks Global Group, hopefully to be

a part of their new business strategy in a meaningful way,” Zerbin said.

In such uncertain times, trends tend to hold less value. Rather, the conversation at the fair was focused on special pieces with storytelling that would entice a cautious consumer to buy.

“Our clients recognize us for our commitment to quality and distinctive point of view,” explained designer Renna Brown-Taher, who was on the main show floor for the second year after debuting in The Couture Design Atelier, where she showed for three years.

Her brand Reena has seen a 250 percent increase in average order value. “This affirms what we’ve always believed: that brands with not only exceptional products but also a clear, intentional world – where design, storytelling, and craftsmanship align – will continue to thrive and earn lasting loyalty,” she said.

## Talk of Gold

Talk about the rising cost of gold was front and center across the show floor. Some creatives are leaning into the material, understanding that buyers and ultimately consumers understand that they are buying an investment piece that will retain value.

Melissa Kaye said her new collection was “gold intensive. However, at our core we are a gold and diamond brand and our retailers and clients remain loyal to us because of our commitment to design-driven, investment-worthy jewelry. We feel that it is important to stay true to our DNA.”

Other brands, like Sylva Yepremian of Sylvia & Cie, created one-of-kind pieces

that excited retailers. Her pieces use components that are millennia old, such as museum quality cylinder seals, cameos and intaglios from the ancient Roman and Mesopotamian eras.

“We always have a mad rush from buyers to see the one-of-a-kind items, even before the show starts. They are eager to book an appointment on the preview night, so they can be the first to review them and also to make their picks,” she said. “I feel like it gives the retailer an opportunity to have something to offer their clients that are truly pieces of art that cannot be repeated.”

The Design Atelier offered a mix of fresh talent eager to meet buyers and media. Hiba Husayni’s Zhan – a first time DA member – scooped up the Design Award for Best Debut. “Winning was a total surprise and such a proud moment,” Husayni said. “People arrived already knowing what they wanted. That kind of intention and brand recognition is surreal and deeply validating.”

Overall, buyers showed up with intention. Here, WWD speaks to them on the impact of the rise in gold prices, trends and key takeaways from the 2025 show.

## Alysa Teichman

co-owner, Ylang 23

**How has the show been for you, compared to previous years?** The show felt a bit quieter than in previous years but it was my sense that overall the buyers and designers attending were serious.

**Any surprises?** Our team was completely captivated by newness from Retrouvai and Jade Ruzzo. From Retrouvai it was the

Bond Collection, which is an homage to things that have been broken and put back together. Jade Ruzzo’s Gloria collection, named after Jade’s daughter, had so many modern heirlooms that we can’t stop thinking about. In an off year where gold is at an all-time high, we didn’t know what to expect but feel that overall, designers really “brought it” this year.

**How many new brands have you picked up this year?** We went to the show with the intention of going deeper into our existing brands but have one to two that we are considering adding to our assortment.

**Are you buying differently than you were a year ago?** We are more laser focused than ever on pieces that have meaning and an heirloom quality.

**How are rising gold and material prices impacting your buying decisions?** We saw a lot of designers bringing back leather and silk cords for the second year, a direct result of rising gold prices. We also saw some brands go all-in on heavier gold pieces, such as Nouvel Heritage, who super-sized their popular latch silhouette with a giant suite of necklaces, and Lucy Delius, who has continued to produce bolder-than-before gold chains.

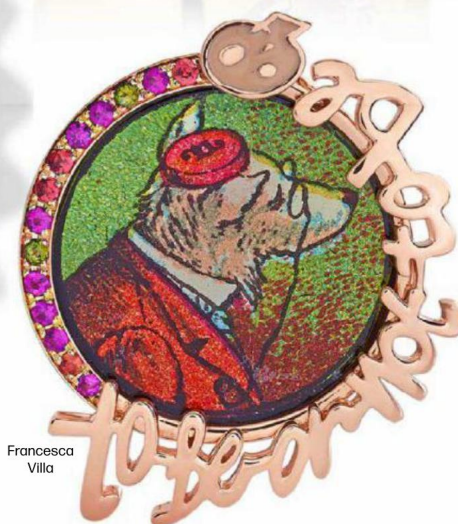
**What aesthetic trends are catching your eye this year?** Given the high price of gold, we found that designers are really leaning into the idea of heirloom jewelry. A few of our favorites were the Knot collection by Lizzie Mandler and Octavia Elizabeth’s handmade bespoke locket, both inspired by the designers’ own newborns. ▶



Ox



Anita Ko



Francesca Villa

**Any stones or motifs that feel especially relevant?** We're going all-in on whimsy and fun from brands like Sydney Evan, L'Atelier Nawbar, and Yvonne Leon. In a macro climate with so much uncertainty, we find that clients really seek jewelry that inspires feelings of joy. We were also captivated by the newness from Azlee, such as a new coin with a phoenix rising from the ashes, which signified renewal and rebirth after the Los Angeles fires. **Takeaway?** We're continuing to focus on special one-of-a-kind and personalized pieces. In an environment that feels more crowded with designers and retailers than ever before, our clients are looking for special pieces that have meaning.

**Laura Freedman**

*founder and CEO, Broken English*  
**How has the show been for you, compared to previous years?** It was a nice steady pace. It seemed as though the designers had positive feedback. All of the buyers that made appointments were serious. The events were fun and it's always a pleasure to see everyone. **Any surprises?** Lucy Delius is creating a fun spin on Victorian jewelry. She has taken into account price, design and functionality. The pieces are wearable, personalizable and fun. Selim Mouzannar is taking enamel to the next level. His pieces are timeless and well made. To celebrate Azlee's 10-year anniversary they have really stepped up to the next level but stayed true to their core. **How many new brands have you picked up this year?** We will most likely pick up three or four new brands this year. **Are you buying differently than you were a year ago?** Not really. It's all about

the diversity, finding lines that have a unique perspective, and you love working with. **How are rising gold prices impacting your buying?** It kinda is what it is. There isn't much to do about it other than staying true to your core and communicating with your clients. I am in support of the designers that we carry. Innovations like silk cords, leather, and different stones and material choices are a great way to address rising costs and pushing boundaries. **What aesthetic trends are catching your eye this year?** I'm loving color and the different uses of it like enamel, stones and alternative materials. People are not afraid of statement pieces. **Any particular stones, cuts or motifs that feel especially relevant?** Selim has come up with his own patented diamond. People are reintroducing mixed cuts. I some really pretty pieces by Azlee, Arunashi, and Anita Ko. Ox has a really beautiful and innovative rolling bezel that I was loving. **Takeaway?** I was really taken away by the amount of support and community at this year's show. The brands that we work with are so supportive and I think that is what makes working in jewelry so special. I could not imagine being part of a more tighter-knit community of artists and retailers.

**John Green**

*president and CEO, Lux Bond & Green & Store52*  
**How has the show been, compared to previous years?** Our team experienced great energy and enthusiasm from both the brand and retail community. Yes, lots of conversation about the world political climate, tariffs and the material costs but

overall business is good and if you invest in inventory and people it will continue. **Any surprises?** The more established brands such as Marco Bicego, Paul Morelli, Alex Sepkus, Temple St. Clair, and Roberto Coin all had beautiful new collections and extensions with very salable price points. **How many new brands have you picked up this year?** About six. **Are you buying differently than you were a year ago?** Asking more questions as many companies we do business with have production in several locations around the world and we need to understand the potential tariff implications. **How are rising gold prices impacting your buying?** Are brands experimenting with alternative materials, or sticking to high-value metals? We stuck to platinum or 18-karat yellow gold. Some smaller scale items were beautifully designed to meet our merchandising needs for price and value. **What aesthetic trends are catching your eye?** Beautiful colored stones, whimsical designs, naturalistic related designs and the basics with a bit of flair were what we saw to offer our clients for the seasons ahead. **Any particular stones or motifs that feel relevant?** Back to more cabachons and great use of colors, from colorful tourmalines to emeralds and sapphires. **Takeaway?** Quality and value with our approach to picking international designs and designers is proving to be a smart strategy. From the wonderful American designers to our friends in Italy and new Japanese designs, Lebanese, Turkish and Indian companies, it's smart to find the balance and build relationships around the world.

**Anne Russell**

*executive vice president, Hamilton Jewelers*  
**How has the show been for you this year compared to previous years?** The shows I attended last week – Luxury, JCK, Couture and the Antique jewelry show – had the same excitement and innovation, particularly from new designers, and beautiful and inspiring creations from Couture designers. **Any surprises?** Yellow gold is still appearing to be the dominant metal color. I noticed a lot of color in gemstones but also enamel and colored titanium, which I love. I also noticed a '70s retro influence with more modern tubogas treatments, bold cuffs and hardstones. Last year's trend of Georgian revival was present again this year. **How many new brands have you picked up this year?** We launched one new brand in Q1 2025 in Palm Beach, and we are looking to launch one additional brand and strengthen our relationships with our existing brand partners in our markets. **Are you buying differently than you were a year ago?** Yes, the price of gold and trade impacts have made us very careful in our buying. We are making sure we fully understand landed costs with any international partners. **How are rising gold prices impacting your buying decisions?** Yes of course, when gold is at a record high it makes buying decisions more complicated. Understanding and evaluating your current inventory and understanding what you need and what your client demands as prices rise. Luckily for the moment we see that client demand for luxury materials is strong in our markets and that clients see value and beauty in gold and gemstones with expert craftsmanship and design. ▶

**What aesthetic trends are catching your eye this year?** Wearability, not price, is what I think is key in terms of trends. Can our clients see themselves wearing the jewelry every day, from day to night, in the office or at the gym regardless of the price? That is key.

**Any particular stones that feel especially relevant?** Mixed cuts feel interesting to me right now. I purchased a pair of oval, step-cut diamonds that are beautiful and geometric. I can't wait to set them as earrings.

**Takeaway?:** I'm cautiously optimistic for Q3 and 4 growth with our existing designer partners. We are looking to continue to strengthen those relationships and build those businesses with curated events that allow our clients to see the most innovative and beautifully made jewelry in a personalized way.

### Alex Lippin

senior vice president of jewelry buying,  
Elyse Walker

**How has the show been for you this year compared to previous years?** I look forward to attending every year. I truly enjoy seeing all of the new collections from our designers and to discover new and emerging brands. This community is truly so supportive and collaborative, and while it is certainly work, I feel lucky to get to see all of my friends and colleagues within the industry.

**Any surprises?** There is incredible talent in the jewelry industry. I am always so blown away by the creativity and craftsmanship. Lauren Harwell Godfrey's nod to her birth year (1975) and the 1970s is just one example. From her spinning disco balls, to hotel room keys, granny blanket crochet motifs and googly-eyed pet rock pendants, Lauren creates the most beautiful and fun designs that can't help but make you smile. Susan Cohen's debut collection for Couture was also a standout favorite. Her pieces are a mix of time periods and themes that play on luck, love and protection that will resonate with a modern collector.

**How many new brands have you picked up this year?** We will probably pick up four to five new brands this year.

**Are you buying differently than you were a year ago?** Every year you buy slightly differently. You introduce trends, new designers, new styles but you are

always buying with our clients in mind.

**How are rising gold prices impacting your buying?** For the most part, brands seem to be sticking with high value metals. We all recognize that the price of gold is not going down anytime soon, so we all need to adjust.

**What aesthetic trends are catching your eye?** We saw lots of layered charms on standout chains, bold vintage-style chunky pieces and styles that incorporate dynamic movement. Also, many designers introduced one-of-a-kind designs which our clients always gravitate toward.

**Any stones that feel especially relevant?** Lots of bezel settings, bright bold colored gemstones, and fresh takes on timeless pearls.

**Takeaway?** Sometimes less is more. The real value is in curating designers and collections that have a clear, distinct point of view and a story to tell. If you love a line but cannot represent it in all categories, it's OK to tell the story in a more edited, meaningful way. I'm reminded that impact doesn't necessarily come from quantity, but also from clarity.

### Matthew Rosenheim

president, Tiny Jewel Box

**How has the show been for you this year compared to previous years?**

This year's show has maintained its exceptional quality while becoming noticeably more international in scope. The abundance of high-caliber designs and craftsmanship continues to support quality retailers nationwide. We were especially impressed by the emerging designers featured in the Design Atelier at Couture, each presenting distinctive and thoughtfully crafted collections.

**Any surprises?** One standout moment was celebrating the 25th anniversary of one of our most beloved and long-standing jewelry brand partners, Marco Bicego. Another highlight came from Alex Sepkuss, whose new bead collections showcased remarkably fresh creativity, while staying true to the style that defines the brand.

**How many new brands have you picked up this year?** We are still finalizing our selections, but there are a



Cicada

couple of new brands we are seriously considering. Among the notable emerging designers, Ox and Nefertiti really stood out with their very distinctive and compelling designs.

**Are you buying differently than you were a year ago?** This year we are focusing more on accent and highlight pieces that can diversify and elevate our existing presentation and collections in our store. We are being more strategic and selective in order to introduce a fresh energy by layering in unique pieces that complement what we already offer.

**How are rising gold prices impacting your buying?** At this moment, we are not making any major changes to our buying strategy based on the market price fluctuations. While the market has shifted, we have not seen any significant change in consumer purchase behavior at the counter and we believe many independent retailers are experiencing the same.

**What aesthetic trends are catching your eye this year?** We are seeing a strong trend toward cleaner, more modern designs, which are really resonating with our customers. This aesthetic naturally complements everyday, casual wear, and reflects the way people are dressing and accessorizing in their day-to-day lives.

**Any particular stones that feel especially relevant?** Multicolor stones, especially sapphires, are definitely catching our attention this year. We are also seeing a strong influence of geometric shapes, not only in the stones themselves but in the metals as well.

**Takeaway?** One key takeaway we are bringing home is the importance of moving beyond traditional styles toward more unique and diversified designs. Despite the uncertainty in the market, we are seeing remarkable resilience among customers seeking jewelry of high design and superior craftsmanship. There's still a strong sense of optimism, and business remains steady, which encourages us to continue evolving our offerings.

### Katherine Jetter

founder and CEO, The Vault Nantucket

**How has the show been for you this year compared to previous years?** It was a great show, many designers had exciting new collections and the energy in the room was great. The team at Couture never ceases to amaze me by making every year better than the last; it's a massive undertaking to pull this all off.

**Any surprises?** Tariffs have definitely created chaos; prices were all over the place. Some designers have chosen to keep pricing as-is until they sell through

existing, landed production, others have decided to price up their goods at the new production tariff prices, causing large variances in pricing on similar products. Then there are the newer designers starting out with new production who have to place orders and produce at the new tariff pricing and face having to consider undercutting their margins just to have a chance to enter the market. Overall, designers are being more conservative in the number of skus they are producing. Most designers were keeping their one-of-a-kind products at their existing prices and only pricing production items with the new tariff prices. I was very happy to see so much innovation despite the challenging environment.

**How many new brands have you picked?** Six or seven.

**Are you buying differently than you were a year ago?** No, but I am curious to see how the consumer will react to the price increases. My intuition is that we are more likely to sell high value specialty pieces this year and less production type product.

**How are rising gold prices impacting your buying decisions?** Brands are staying more with gold and diamonds, less with playful materials and mixed mediums, contrary to what one would expect with high gold prices. At a time where prices are so high, a lot of designers are choosing to keep things clear to the end consumer on what they are buying; gold and diamonds are easier to explain in terms of value.

**What aesthetic trends are catching your eye this year?** I'm in love with the new orange and green enamel colors from Buddha Mama, it's so joyful and fresh. Sevan Bıçakçı's collection was more beautiful than ever, with a lot of feminine, pastel hues. Lots of clever and innovative uses of gold with movement to make items feel wearable and casual, whilst optimizing use of gold weight and diamonds for maximum visual impact.

**Any motifs that feel especially relevant?** Zodiacs seem to be very prevalent, as well as letters.

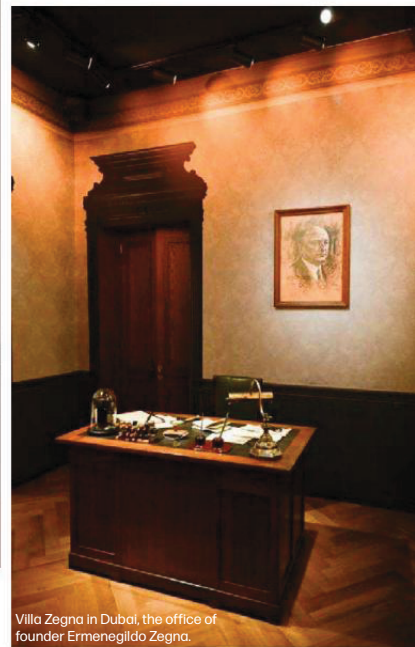
**Takeaway?** Just how important it is to stay informed, keep your finger on the pulse and be present each year to see all the collections as they grow and evolve, as the changes are often subtle and easier to understand when experienced firsthand. Also, how important the sense of community and the relationships are. It's always so nice to see each other. Even if five days in Vegas is exhausting for both the designers and the retailers, it's totally worth it. ■

Busatti 1947





Angelo and Gildo Zegna with Elie Saab and Elie Saab Jr. at Villa Zegna in Dubai.



Villa Zegna in Dubai, the office of founder Ermenegildo Zegna.

FASHION

# Zegna, Elie Saab Leaders On Long-term Success

● Gildo and Angelo Zegna, together with Elie Saab and Elie Saab Jr. discussed the importance of legacy, innovation, meritocracy and shared values in sustaining and evolving family-run luxury brands.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

**DUBAI** — What is the secret sauce for developing and managing a family business for long-term success?

While there may not be a cookie cutter response, the question triggered an interesting conversation between the leaders of two generations of the Zegna and Saab families.

On Thursday morning at Dubai's Opera theater, which has temporarily been transformed into Villa Zegna, and following the Zegna spring 2026 show the evening before, Angelo Zegna, chief executive officer of the Europe, Middle East and Africa region and global client strategy director, recalled how, growing up, school holidays were spent with his parents and his brother Edoardo, chief marketing digital and sustainability officer at Zegna.

"While other prominent families would take their mega yacht and cruise the Mediterranean in August, we would pack and head off to new markets — Thailand, Vietnam, Brazil — which, by the way, were much warmer than Dubai today, so we're used to this weather," he said, smiling.

## Leading by Example

Speaking of his father Gildo Zegna, chairman and CEO of the Ermenegildo Zegna Group, and underscoring the concept of leading by example, he said those trips were "the best retail school we ever had. And what was, in a way, special to me when I joined the family business four years ago leading the U.S. market was to see many individuals who Dad had hired on our own holidays back in the days, and often these were waiters, hotel concierges, people we met on airlines, believing in young people, giving them a

chance. And I think to give him credit, he understood before many in the industry the importance of hospitality and, in a way, we think of our clients as guests. In fact, we call them guests."

Elie Saab Jr., group CEO and vice chairman of the Elie Saab fashion house, said "a lot of what Angelo said is very relatable to our story as well, because there's a very blurred line between our life and our work, and most often, we live our work, and it's part of our life."

He proudly said his father, Elie Saab, built his namesake brand "from modest beginnings and from a country [Lebanon] that was torn by war and difficulties" and that "seeing him have a very strong vision and a very important dream which at the time was difficult to even think of, taking his suitcase on a boat to Cyprus, then a plane to travel the world and to present his collection, to be able to commit to clients all over the world, is an inspiration on its own."

He commended his father for allowing him to be able to choose his career, but said that he was so "fascinated by his dream that it was passed on to me. As far as I remember I was three, four years old, working even with the seamstresses in the atelier, with the design team, sitting with him in his office, seeing him create his collections. So really living the heritage of what the brand is today. It is a dream, and I'm very happy to be able to live it today, and I take it with a big responsibility to carry it on to the next generation."

Gildo Zegna touted the "strong values" and the company founder's legacy, as "the best example" not only for the family. "One of the things that I'm most proud of is that we have become employer of choice in the luxury world. It means we are doing things well. With positive energy, we believe in creating new dreams."

"What you saw yesterday were the wings, the future, the innovation and the roots are actually behind these doors, Villa Zegna, the house of the founder. It's a balance between the two," his son said. "And we think of ourselves and of the family business as a house where each floor, each generation builds a different floor. We are very respectful of what the

previous generations built, but we are here to disrupt that to bring it into the future," he said, tracing the changes of the company through the years, from the original textile mill to a publicly listed company in New York. He gave a shoutout to his brother Edoardo, who conceived Villa Zegna as "the future of retail, the first step of what it means to go beyond stores. This is a private club for few esteemed guests of the house."

## Nurturing the Legacy

Elie Saab Jr. said that, while legacy remains key, "for sure you cannot sleep on it. On the contrary, you have to keep on nurturing it, keep on shaping and evolving it, because if you don't do that, the legacy will disappear."

While he admitted he wanted to become a ski champion when he was young, there is no doubt Gildo Zegna continues to be passionate about leading the company. "If you love something, it keeps you going until the last day of your life."

Although now a public company, it remains a family business, he said, "but meritocracy and entrepreneurship are very important. This is the main succession plan, and this is what you instill in the new generation."

Saab Jr. concurred. "You can be part of the journey, but any person needs to have a merit and be qualified to be in the room. There is no entitlement."

He added that sharing strong values and respecting one another helps overcome any difficulty. "My father taught me everything I know, but most importantly, he gave me the foundation to go through all the challenges in life and never give up and be patient. Patience is something I heard a lot while growing up. By being patient, one day after the other, you build strength, because timing is everything in life, and you have to believe in this and that only hard work will get you there, but not everything will happen at the time that you imagine that it will happen."

Elie Saab said he was "so glad I can present to the younger generations a success story that can be inspirational. The product is key, elegant and timeless, and

never forget the brand's DNA."

Sharing that some of the artisans came from Italy to Dubai for the show, Gildo Zegna touted their skills, Italian production, the country's pipeline and the group's own vertical organization.

"We live in a beautiful country. We are blessed with fantastic people, it's like having a second engine that gives extra power at the right moment. There is always talk about stores. I like to talk about the factories because without the artisans, what [artistic director Alessandro Sartori] has done would have been impossible. I think that our biggest responsibility is to keep Italian companies in Italy. I can tell you that we'll be one of the few [Italian companies] remaining Italian."

## Generations Working Together

Angelo Zegna recalled how, when the company marked its centenary in 2010, John Elkann, chairman of Stellantis, said that "out of 1 million companies, only 44 make it to 100 years. And out of 1 billion, only one makes it to 200 years." That triggered the Zegnas to ask themselves how to reach the 200-year milestone.

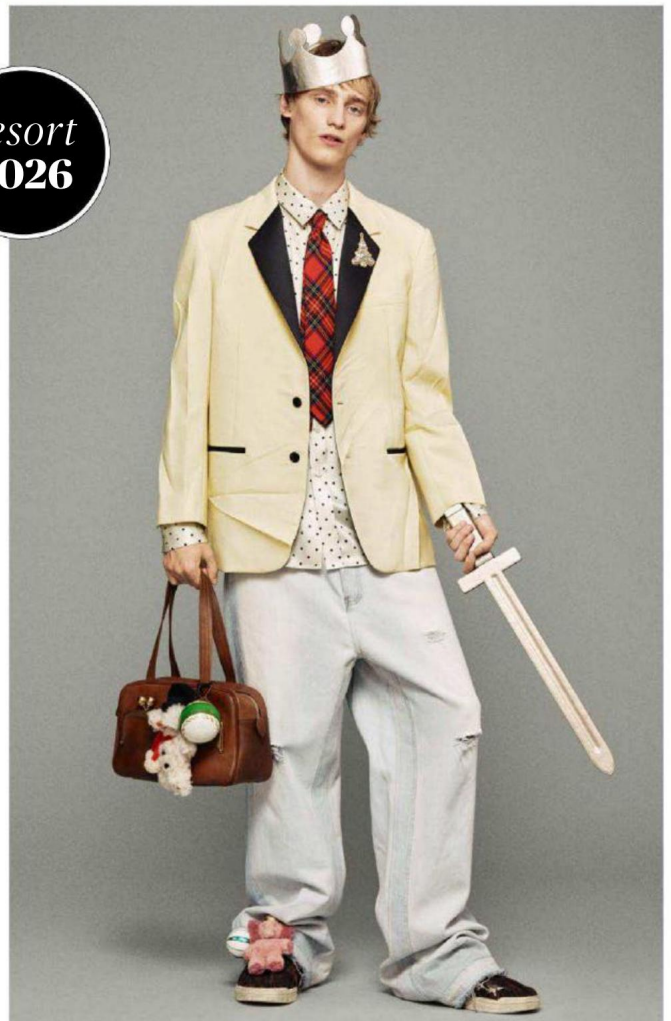
"Both generations started working together. We were young, they were wise." They mapped out what they call the "family constitution, a set of rules that govern who decides who can sell, who can join the family business. What I thought was particularly interesting was to help us think of a family in three separate spheres — the family, the ownership and the business sphere. And certain members may be in all three spheres, so we say we're wearing all three hats. For instance, if you take the three of us [Gildo, Angelo and Edoardo], we are family, we are owners, and we're also in the business."

"It's very important to know when you walk into a room which hat to wear. Because when you're having a lovely Christmas dinner, even if you are the group CEO, you're wearing a friendly hat. It's meritocracy. The wife of the cousin matters as much as a group CEO, when instead, you're walking into a, let's say, ownership board. It's more of a plutocracy, right? Who has more shares, has more say in the business, I would say something like a monarchy, where we know who the king is," he said with a hand gesture toward his father and to much laughter in the audience. "It's important to be very clear from an early age, what are the rules and what are the hats that you wear."

# The Reviews



resort  
2026



## Coach

Is there a better time than the holidays to dress up, go out and have fun?

At Coach, there certainly isn't.

For his latest resort collection, which the brand calls winter, Vevers said the season got him thinking about his own children — “how much joy they get from dressing up,” he said, adding that his own memories of doing the same inspired his collection's mix of ultra-playful accessories and festive accents.

“I was thinking about when I was a little kid. My grandmother was very creative, and she made costumes and performed in the local amateur dramatics. Me and my brother would get dressed up, sometimes in the theme of the show,” he recalled.

His new selection of nostalgia-tinged yet upscale accessories played into the idea, as seen through playful rabbit-eared headpieces; adjustable leather crowns; fairy wands and toy swords, crafted in stacked leather. All will be commercially available and likely hot-ticket gifts come wintertime.

“Then that same grandma, when I got older and started to go out, she'd help me make my outfits for clubbing,” Vevers added. “At the heart of the collection is the joy of dressing up, the joy of what we do.

And that means having some fun, being playful, being quite irreverent, and really about expressing yourself.”

It certainly was, as seen through girlish skirts (polka-dotted or in frothy tulle with sparkly star decorations); vintage '50s-esque cropped crepe blouses and dresses; silver holiday ornament-inspired baubles and bag charms, and even a pair of red ruby pumps. The designer also offered up a novel version of a tuxedo shirt that looked traditional at first glance until you noticed the three bow ties going down the front, injecting fun and playfulness into dressing up.

Vevers revived his love affair with Disney for a few of the menswear pieces, notably an oversize cardigan and a sweatshirt with illustrations of Pluto. The sweater included some dog biscuits on the front.

But it wasn't all fantasy-driven, as seen through down-to-earth American sportswear across the mostly fluid lineup that was enriched by heritage staples, including leather pleated skirts and outerwear, and two new leather bags inspired by Bonnie Cashin's '67 Swagger and '69 Double Entry styles. Other key menswear pieces included ultra-wide-legged upcycled distressed denim jeans, an oversize teddy bear coat, and a “Warhol-inspired” red plaid shirt with a polka-dot tie. — Emily Mercer and Jean E. Palmieri



La DoubleJ

## La DoubleJ

If you've always associated La DoubleJ's printed dresses and jacquard sets with chic weddings, weekend getaways on Lake Como and all-day-long parties at St. Barth, you'll be surprised that founder J.J. Martin decided to have her resort 2026 collection photographed somewhere completely different – the Dolomites.

But even if she took her fashion to mountainous heights for the look book images, the collection impressed more for its width, as it built on the ever-increasing expansion of La DoubleJ's vibrant world.

"Can you believe that now we have seven different styles of white shirt?" Martin said during a walk-through in her new – and also expansive – headquarters in Milan. She put even more emphasis on the many garments in solid colors hanging on the racks, which nicely balanced off the prints galore her brand is known for.

Martin is proving that her label has matured to the point she doesn't need patterns either to dress her bold sisterhood, as she calls her community, or to channel that "raise your vibration" mantra that informs everything she touches. Her customers can look just as good thanks to her research into fabrics, eye for color combinations and little fancy details.

Cue silk velvet coats and tailoring that felt rich and comfy in their sophisticated yellow ochre or dusty rose shades and tassel closures; easy-to-approach shirts, either fitted or workwear-inspired, enriched with sequined collars and pockets; frilly blouses and sheer capes in solid colors to style with pants or layer on matching billowing dresses, and Martin's version of a LBD, cut in a figure-enhancing jersey silhouette with a printed lining peeking out from slits.

Even when working with jacquard fabrications, Martin included tonal options for a more subdued approach, as seen in a handsome white barn jacket.

Those wanting the full La DoubleJ experience weren't disappointed, though. Between a standout, allover-sequined pink dress with floral motifs; printed crepe de chine frocks; the plethora of pleated pieces in different lengths and patterns, and new crafty vests covered in looped threads or 3D tulle embroideries, there were many new takes on the brand's flamboyant side.

A series of jacquard cropped bomber jackets with puffy shoulders and an emerald green blazer jacket option depicting monkeys and botanical elements were the peaks of the collection. – Sandra Salibian



La DoubleJ

resort  
2026

Rosetta Getty



## Rosetta Getty

Resort is a moment to re-center her brand and return to her foundation, Rosetta Getty explained, pointing to "essential forms, a restrained palette, clothes that feel right without effort."

The collection started after she visited an art gallery, where she saw a work by Ellsworth Kelly. "A single red curve – exact, bold, clear. That image stayed with me," she said.

Getty began by listening to the women she designs for and came back to the pieces they wear most: "wrap skirts, ribbed sets, caftan dresses. There's something steady in repetition. In a time when the industry feels uncertain, I wanted to focus on what endures. Clothes that are quiet, intentional and meant to be lived in."

Getty's work is in conversation with the body, movement is implied with her fabrications: ribbed cottons, scuba doubleknit, Japanese twill, crepe back satin and stretch cady. The season sees her create pieces that will live in her customer's wardrobe beyond the season: oatmeal colored knit sets, a black trenchcoat, a red caftan dress cut on a bias, several modern ideas on a little black dress.

"Every element has purpose," she said. "This vocabulary has been with me since the beginning. It's how I dress, and how I think about what a modern wardrobe should be." – Thomas Waller



Rosetta Getty

## FASHION

# Cynthia Rowley Partners With Pottery Barn



A table setting by Cynthia Rowley for Pottery Barn.

- The colorful tabletop collection runs the gamut from plates and silverware to mugs, napkins and placemats.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

Cynthia Rowley has partnered with Pottery Barn, part of the Williams-Sonoma Inc. portfolio, to introduce a summer tabletop collection.

The Cynthia Rowley for Pottery Barn

collection blends Rowley's feminine and vibrant designs with Pottery Barn's signature craftsmanship creating a colorful assortment of decorative, tabletop and entertaining pieces.

The 14-piece collection runs the gamut from plates and silverware to mugs, napkins and placemats. Prices range from \$45.40 to \$2,249.

"Designing this collection is like dressing the table in the best outfit," said Cynthia Rowley. "We approached it with the same

eye for color and prints that define our ready-to-wear. Inspired by my love of the outdoors and the energy of colorful dinner parties, I was able to create one-of-a-kind pieces that bring the true essence of our brand to life."

Rowley developed artwork for her debut Pottery Barn collection featuring scenes of trees, jewels and flowers. The collection includes artful accents like a raffia mirror, multicolored gemstone napkin rings, and colorful floral dinnerware that can be layered and mixed together.

"The Cynthia Rowley for Pottery Barn collection celebrates Cynthia's signature aesthetic sensibility for its energetic and colorful designs," said Monica Bhargava, president of Pottery Barn. "Every piece is designed to layer and delight – infusing tablescapes with vibrant color and a touch of the unexpected."

The exclusive collection is available online at potterybarn.com, starting Friday. It is also featured in the Pottery Barn gift registry.

When asked what prompted her to partner with Pottery Barn, Rowley said, "Pottery Barn has always been part of my life, and the 'go-to' for fun, colorful pieces to enhance your home, and I love the idea of a spring collaboration that can inspire colorful, summer entertaining."

Rowley said she has designed tabletop previously and did a Dirty Dishes collection with scantily clad girls, as well as one-off pieces. She's also done tabletop with a different label she used to do called Swell.

As for the most fun part of the project, Rowley said, "When you're designing everything, it's compartmentalized. Here's the dishes, here's the glassware, here's the napkin rings. When you see it come

together, it's all layered up, with print on print on print. You can create your own tabletop scape with all these different elements, it's really exciting to see. Each piece enhances the other."

Rowley said she enjoys entertaining. "I'm lucky enough to live with my daughter Kit who's an influencer who has a cookbook coming out and cooks all the time. Now the proverbial tables have turned and she's doing the cooking and I'm doing the tablescape," said Rowley.

Asked her favorite pieces in the collection, Rowley said, "I guess all of it. It's a pretty small-ish, right assortment that I think you kind of have to have all of it."

Rowley said she worked on the Pottery Barn project for about six months.

"It was a lot of back and forth. Getting the colors right and getting the art perfect. And having it come together as one cohesive collection. Pottery Barn was willing to work on it really hard," she said.

Rowley feels that women who care about their clothing care equally about their home. "I have certain bowls and dishes in my house that are my favorites. It just makes everything so much better. These will be my new favorites. I love the napkins. I just think each individual piece is really special, and when it's all put together it's layers and layers of prettiness," said Rowley.

Rowley is known for her ready-to-wear, surf and swim, snow and lifestyle products attracting an intergenerational customer. She operates flagships in major cities such as New York; Newport Beach, Calif.; Houston; Greenwich, Conn.; and Sag Harbor and Montauk, N.Y., and has a significant presence in retail and online markets worldwide.

## BUSINESS

## Anti Social Social Club Unveils First Global Flagship in Seoul

- With a flagship to commemorate the brand's 10th anniversary, the next decade will be characterized by dedicated stores around the world, said Romney Jacob of parent company Marquee Brands.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

LONDON — Anti Social Social Club, the direct-to-consumer streetwear label, is expanding into brick-and-mortar on Friday with its South Korean distributor, Kasina, to open its first global flagship in Dosan, a trendy neighborhood in the Gangnam area of Seoul.

The flagship space, designed by Seoul-based studio Archi@mosphere, is adorned with industrial pink anodized aluminum, glass-paneled walls and a cement floor.

It features a selection of the brand's ready-to-wear offerings, like the Quickstrike lines with Assassin's Creed and WWE, and a Seoul exclusive "Chapter Dosan" collection. The store also will showcase a rotating display of rare vintage cars.

Romney Jacob, vice president of brand at Marquee Brands, which acquired Anti Social Social Club in 2022, said the store has some of the best neighbors in the street fashion scene in Seoul: Supreme, Palace and Noah.

Coinciding with the opening, the store will host an archive exhibition featuring playful items such as camping gear, frying pans, lanterns and past collaborations, like the Playboy cushion and sleep mask.

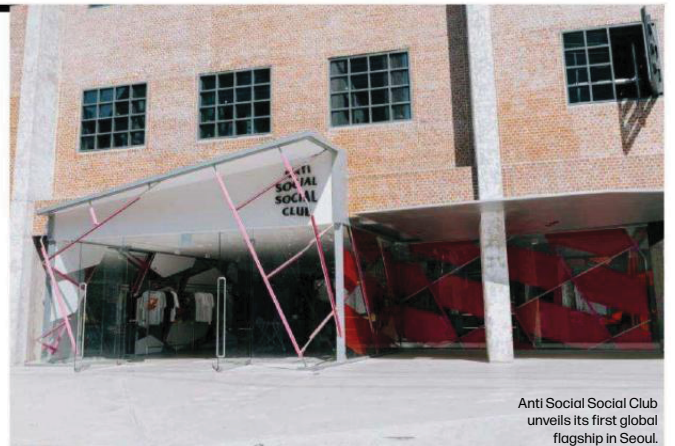
Ian Coates, founder and creative director of Anti Social Social Club, will host a series of talks with artists and fashion industry professionals in South Korea to explore the brand's evolving identity.

Jacob said South Korean culture has been integral to the brand since its inception.

"According to our lore, a bad breakup with a Korean girl was the motive behind the founding of the brand, and Korean graphics and characters have been frequent design motifs. It's fitting to commemorate our 10th anniversary with the opening of our first flagship in the country that inspired it all," she added.

The brand and its Seoul team have also codeveloped a customization program exclusive to the flagship, allowing visitors "to immerse themselves in the ASSC ethos in the physical world that will add richness and texture to the experience in a way that just isn't possible online," according to Jacob.

"Our retail environment will have ASSC Easter eggs hidden around the store, constantly changing, allowing us to create an experience that keeps both our superfans and new customers coming back. Combine that with a full slate of activation programming for future collaborations, and we will take the ASSC



Anti Social Social Club unveils its first global flagship in Seoul.

experience to the next level," she touted.

A new lineup of products is planned to be released every week.

The international expansion comes after Anti Social Social Club had largely stuck to its direct-to-consumer, drop model since its inception. In addition to tapping Kasina for a South Korea partnership, it last year signed on Luke 1977 in the U.K. to bring the brand to a larger customer base.

The brand first started offering three drops a year, with each drop lasting roughly two hours. Anti Social Social Club was founded in 2014 by NikeTalk forum member Neek Lurk, who is no longer associated with the company.

Looking ahead, Jacob said the brand's next 10 years will be reinventing the category once again.

"Much as the brand has pioneered the drop model and the use of Instagram as a

marketing channel, we will continue to be at the forefront of culture and technology, figuring out the best way to hack the latest developments in these areas to enrich our customers' experiences and build our brand exponentially," she said.

"More practically, the next decade will definitely be characterized by dedicated ASSC stores around the world, executing on a business model that is equal parts globalized and localized – a model that our 'born of the internet' brand can uniquely deliver," she added.

Jacob confirmed that the company is actively looking for like-minded brands to "join our cause and see our future business as an accelerator of a portfolio of meaningful and commercial youth brands, providing all the capabilities necessary to allow them to fully meet their global brand potential."

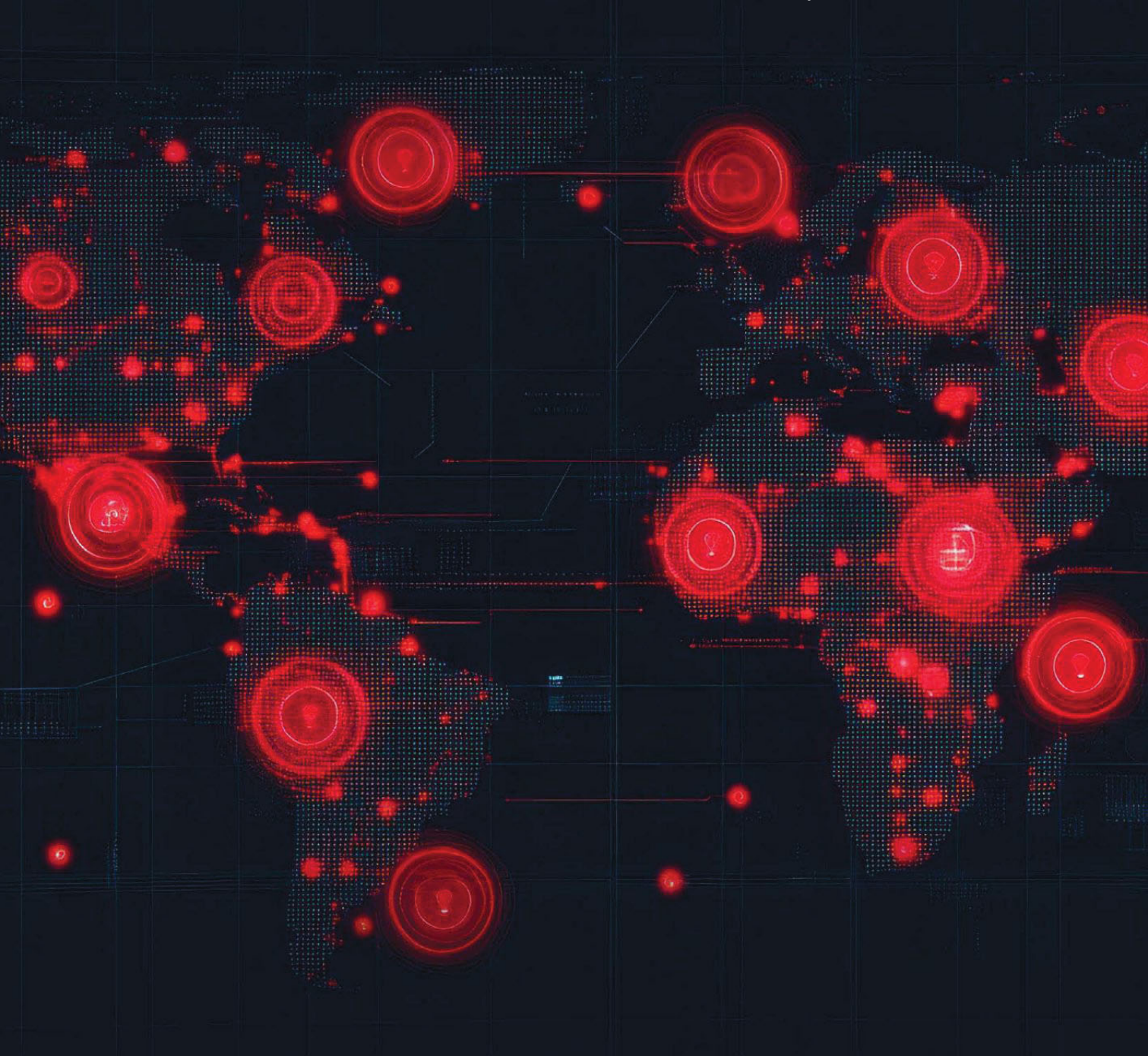
# SJSUMMIT

SOURCING JOURNAL

FALL 2025

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## BUSINESS

# Liberty Names Beverley Devonish Store Director of London Flagship



Beverley  
Devonish

● Devonish will be in charge of customer service, the in-store experience and the Liberty flagship's "commercial and cultural vision."

BY SAMANTHA CONTI

**LONDON** – Liberty, which is marking 150 years in business, has named retail veteran Beverley Devonish store director of its Regent Street flagship.

Devonish will be in charge of customer service, the in-store experience, and Liberty's "commercial and cultural vision." She will report to Liberty's managing director Sarah Coonan.

She has more than two decades of experience in retail, having held senior leadership roles at Harvey Nichols, Selfridges, and Dover Street Market. Liberty said her specialty is strategic transformation, cultivating creative talent, and redefining the in-store experience through immersive brand environments.

"Having spent the last year and a half developing my own creative practice, I'm thrilled to join Liberty, a brand that has long stood at the intersection of art, culture and retail innovation," Devonish said.

"With its rich heritage and commitment to creativity, Liberty offers an incredible

platform to continue shaping meaningful, client-focused experiences that celebrate individuality and craftsmanship," she added.

The store said that as a key member of the senior retail leadership team, Devonish "will play an instrumental role in guiding strategy, fostering collaboration across departments, and upholding Liberty's legacy of excellence in visual presentation, brand storytelling, and service."

Liberty London was founded in 1875 and is renowned for its merchandising curation, collaborations, and content aimed at inspiring customers.

As reported, the store has been marking its anniversary with a focus on design, nature and art, with exhibitions, installations, exclusive products, and collaborations with museums, artists and design institutions.

At the heart of the anniversary celebrations is the exhibition "I Am We Are Liberty," which offers visitors a glimpse into the Liberty print archive, a resource for fashion and interior designers throughout history. The exhibition is running now and will sail to Japan in August for the Expo 2025 in Osaka.

Last month it unveiled The Patchwork Collective, a quilted house made from 1,500 patchwork squares. People and brands who contributed squares included Jil Sander, Paul Smith, La DoubleJ, Barbour, and Levi's.

Earlier this year the store worked with the stylist and editor Leith Clark to curate a series of pieces from brands including Fornasetti, Diptyque, Max Mara, Erdem and La DoubleJ. There were also exclusive pieces from Cece Jewellery, Foundrae and Liberty Interiors.

## HOME DESIGN

# Fritz Hansen Forges Collab With Michael Anastassiades

● Els Van Hoorebeek, who was hired to translate the Danish company's DNA to a younger generation, talks to WWD about her plans to usher in a modern era.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

**MILAN** – Els Van Hoorebeek, the 37-year-old creative director of Fritz Hansen, one of the world's oldest furniture companies, likens it to Danish Royalty. "Almost every big, important Danish designer has passed through the doors of Fritz Hansen," Hoorebeek mused.

A Belgian, Van Hoorebeek spent five years as creative and brand director for the Danish brand &Tradition based in Copenhagen, after a stint as head of interior design for The Office Group. She also worked for Switzerland-based design firm Vitra.

After being hired in November 2024, her first project culminated in 7:14 AM, a new release of late Danish architect Arne Jacobsen's contemporary breakthrough, the Series 7 chair. Celebrating the piece's 70th anniversary, it was based on the pastel hues of the Danish dawn. She is also fueling the evolution of ReNEW, Fritz Hansen's repair services for both private and commercial customers, to ensure that its iconic pieces are passed down through the generations.

For 3daysofdesign set to run June 18 to 20 she's gearing up to unveil a landmark collaboration with Cypriot-born, London-based designer Michael Anastassiades. "It's not lighting," she anticipates, recognizing

that while Anastassiades is known well for his lighting, he's created tables, chairs, shelving and more for companies like Cassina, Molteni&C, Tacchini, Kettal and more.

Named the After Series, Anastassiades drew inspiration from Danish masters like Kaare Klint and Poul Kjærholm. The round dining table conveys a sense of clarity and play on geometry. It's flanked by the After chair, which is perceived as a stack of layers and elements.

"I have spent a lot of time with Michael. He is an amazing person and everything around him makes you fully understand the pieces. It is a really good example of the principles of Danish design. It's an evolution not a revolution collection in the sense that it's a contemporary interpretation of the past," she added.

In an interview, Anastassiades said the curved backrest in wood presented the ultimate challenge, because wood moves over time. In the end, the firm's carpenters put the wood through a multiband saw that slices the wood into sheets. These sheets were then glued back together in sequence and pressed to make the curve. Fritz Hansen's knowledge of timber was what drew him to the brand. "It is not an accident that all these beautiful Danish classic pieces came from that culture. It can only happen this way. It's not about what the photographs are like – it is how the chair is physically and how to appreciate and occupy a piece of furniture," the designer stated.

Van Hoorebeek's job since being hired has been to translate Fritz Hansen's DNA to new generations, find new avenues of storytelling and forge and strengthen

Els Van Hoorebeek and  
Michael Anastassiades



relationships around the storied brand. Founded in 1872 by Fritz Hansen and his son, Christian, the firm very early on began catering to the upper echelons of Danish society: Danish parliament, the Supreme Court, Copenhagen City Hall and more.

With collaborations like the After table and chair, the aim is to maintain Fritz Hansen's pledge to create furniture that maintains its value through generations. The company's fame, she said, remains intact. In South Korea for example, its fame is tantamount to that of Hermès, she contended. "They love the brand there," she said.

"The benefit to global consumers is that you can buy something to pass on to generations, one that adds this emotional value to the piece. It's already an investment when you buy a piece, you can sell it on the secondhand market and it keeps its value," she said, noting that her

famous piece of Fritz Hansen furniture has always been the Ant chair, also designed by Jacobsen in 1952.

The company and its new chief executive officer Henrik Steensgaard are focused on leveraging its vast archive through compelling storytelling.

Since 2021, the company has also been intent on strengthening its distribution channels and showrooms across Asia, Europe and North America. As part of its ambitious growth strategy, it bought fellow Danish firm Skagerack, an outdoor specialist founded in 1976.

There are some categories that could be stronger, Van Hoorebeek said, like sofas and chairs and the goal is unwavering. "Danish design is rooted in improving everyday life. Danish living is becoming a lot more international, as Danes are masters in improving quality of life [through their living spaces]."

# SJ LOGISTICS

SOURCING JOURNAL

SPECIAL REPORT

How do you navigate the evolving landscape of logistics? This in-depth analysis offers a look into the dynamic strategies transforming supply chains, from sustainable sourcing and materials management to innovative distribution and last-mile solutions.



## FASHION

## Haider Ackermann Unveils 2nd Snow Goose Collection

- The designer amps up the heat with a provocative campaign and focus on warm-weather apparel.

BY KATHY LEE

Canada Goose is flying south for the summer. To Lake Powell, Utah, that is.

For Snow Goose by Canada Goose's second capsule collection, creative director Haider Ackermann gathered a group of 15 creatives on a desert exploration across the wide expanse of Utah's natural wonder. Set against the dry, oppressive heat is the cool touch of Ackermann's design, visible across details like the convertible neon wind pant zipped off and worn on the trip as shorts by model Erin Wasson and cofounder of System Magazine Elizabeth von Guttman.

The journey to Lake Powell is part two of the Toronto-based company's efforts to build buzzy brand moments. For the campaign, titled "Wild Horizon," model Lara Stone wears a cropped T-shirt, short shorts and over-the-knee wader boots – a far cry from the winter layers and down coats the brand is known for. The first Snow Goose campaign featured actor and activist Ethan Hawke, with an excursion to Iceland. Both campaigns were shot by Willy Vanderperre.

"The images are just a little disorienting; to make people pause and question their perceptions of what a collection for Canada Goose could look like, how it could be styled and photographed. We're playing with

beauty, with freedom," Ackermann said of the spring summer 2025 campaign imagery.

"When Haider and I first met, it was clear we were deeply aligned. He's passionate about the outdoors, about authenticity – he understands what makes Canada Goose, Canada Goose. That connection gave us the confidence to do something different together," said Dani Reiss, chairman and chief executive officer of Canada Goose.

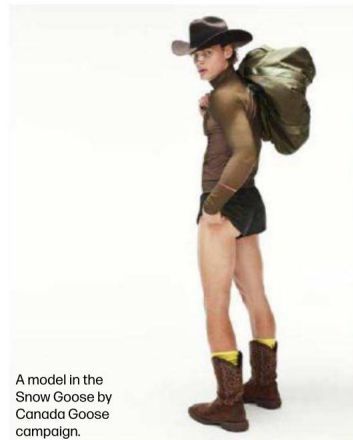
In more breathable forms for this season, the archive-inspired Snow Goose pieces reflect Ackermann's vision for performance-driven, fashionable apparel that's suitable for temperatures above arctic conditions.

"There's real momentum behind our lightweight and summer-ready pieces. Our community is showing up, not just with interest but with confidence. They trust us to deliver beyond cold weather – and we're proving we do summer too," Reiss said.

According to the CEO, apparel is the fastest-growing category ending in fourth quarter and fiscal year 2025 and of continued focus for the brand to enhance year-round relevance. "Customers who enter our brand through apparel are more likely to come and shop with us again."

While the company declined to comment on sales figures for the Snow Goose line, Canada Goose overall brought in sales of 1.35 billion Canadian dollars for the year ended March 30.

"When we launched the capsule last fall, nearly two-thirds of [Snow Goose] purchases came from existing fans



A model in the Snow Goose by Canada Goose campaign.



– which tells us it resonated deeply with our community while bringing in new audiences too. The momentum didn't stop there: it lifted mainline sales, drove U.S. brand search interest to a three-year high in December, and spiked social engagement," Reiss disclosed.

When asked how he measures the return on marketing campaigns beyond sales figures, Reiss explained that "it's about how a bold campaign underpinned by incredible product can energize an entire brand. Snow Goose did exactly that."

He added that "the impact went beyond numbers. Snow Goose marked a step-change in how we show up in the world. From the creative to the rollout, it's become our new blueprint. And we've heard from fans, editors, artists and style leaders that not only did it connect with them – it made waves. We're showing up in the right places, with the right people,

in the right way."

For fiscal year 2026, the brand will increase marketing spend, focus on upper-funnel programming and shift activity earlier in the year to build awareness ahead of peak season.

For the next few years Reiss plans to grow Canada Goose intentionally while staying grounded. "That means opening stores in the right places, evolving the experience in our existing locations, and making every consumer touchpoint a strong expression of the brand," he said.

Starting with the spring 2026, Ackermann will also be designing the mainline collection.

The Colombian-born, French designer became creative director of Canada Goose in 2024, with fall 2024 as his first capsule collection for the heritage line Snow Goose. Ackermann is also the creative director at Tom Ford.

## BUSINESS

## Luxury Retail Still Prevails on Mount Street



Mount Street Neighbourhood Summer Festival takes place through Sunday.

- The luxury slowdown has meant that brands are taking a cautious approach yet staying optimistic about the future and influx of U.S. and Middle East customers.

BY HIKMAT MOHAMMED

**LONDON** – In Mayfair, retail is bucking the luxury slowdown.

Grosvenor, which owns prime retail property across London, is strategizing to keep the momentum going this summer with the Mount Street Neighbourhood Summer Festival as it celebrates the neighborhood's fashion, food and art offerings.

The crown jewels of the Mount Street Neighbourhood include diamond jeweler Jessica McCormack, the luxury hotel The Connaught, fashion designer Huishan Zhang, the Prada-owned patisserie Marchesi and the restaurant Hideaway.

There's also openings taking place this summer from chocolatier Barnaby, perfume brand Fueguia 1833 and celebrity facialist and aesthetician Melanie Grant.

"After COVID-19, Mount Street came out of the block so strongly mainly because we'd cemented it as a neighborhood and we've made the strategic decision to really widen that tenant mix that's less dominated by fashion," said Joanna Lea, Mayfair retail portfolio director at Grosvenor.

Grosvenor has brought a set of consultants onboard to better understand the neighborhood's clientele, which makes up 5 to 10 percent of the world's global wealth.

The Mount Street Neighborhood has been rebranding itself image-wise and on social media since October, around the same time that Frieze London kicked off.

The neighborhood is being treated like a set of sails that reacts to the winds, in this case the cultural events taking place in and out of the city, from BST Hyde Park, Royal Ascot, the RCA Summer Exhibition to the Wimbledon Championships.

The English pub the Audley Public House will be hosting "A Week of Wimbledon" in July, serving up strawberries and cream with Pimm's and Wimbledon Martinis, but the beer on tap will stay put.

"When we think about programming Mount Street, we don't operate like a normal shopping neighborhood and think about Mother's Day or Easter, but instead it's about thinking about an international high-net-worth calendar," said Lea, adding that they also take national holidays such as Saudi National Day and Fourth of July.

American and Middle Eastern customers are the top spenders on Mount Street and it's a clientele that Grosvenor caters to carefully by vetting any newcomers into the neighborhood.

"No brand will come to the estate without us having met them. Ultimately, it's a people business and we want to do deals with great people because experience tells us that pays us dividends over the long term," said Lea.

Even though the luxury slowdown hasn't hit the Mount Street Neighborhood directly, luxury brands that are signing up for spaces in the neighborhood are taking a cautious approach by bidding on smaller units to test the waters before upgrading to larger spaces in the long run.



## Business Insights

TECHNOLOGY

# Is AI Ready to Revolutionize Personal Styling?



Sandy Sholl

● Sandy Sholl talks to WWD about the innovations happening in fashion that are poised to revolutionize the shopping experience.

BY ALEXANDRA PASTORE

**Sandy Sholl**, founder of MadaLuxe Group and founder and chief executive officer of Zelig, sees a bright future in AI. Her virtual try-on and styling technology company Zelig, which launched in 2023 intending to revolutionize the shopping experience, has been a disrupter in the space, reimagining how AI can be used to support consumers' style and self-expression.

While AI for personal styling is still in its early days, Sholl told WWD that she sees areas for growth and opportunities for transformation. Notably, Sholl said that Zelig launched a beta version with one of the world's leading fashion e-commerce players, known for its advanced technologies. With this partnership, the companies have openly shared data and insights that have helped fine-tune Zelig's technology in real time.

"This is more than a product launch," I Sholl said. "It's the beginning of a cultural movement. Zelig will lead the industry with AI innovation and fashion expertise to reimagine shopping forever."

As the industry looks ahead at the potential of AI in the personal styling space, Sholl spoke to WWD about where the technology is today, areas of opportunity and what makes Zelig different.

### WWD: What is the current state of AI used for personal styling?

**Sandy Sholl:** There are flashes of exciting innovation, but also massive gaps, which creates a real opportunity for transformation.

Large AI players like ChatGPT have natural language models that can process fashion image searches, but the experience is far from personal. It's not customized, consistent or connected to real-time inventory, so even if you get a decent recommendation, you often don't know where to buy the item or if it's in stock. It's a slow, disjointed process.

Many recently launched AI styling systems rely solely on machine learning

models trained on product attributes and customer data. While effective to a degree, they often miss the vision and intelligence that only seasoned industry experts can provide. And most aren't built to scale with the depth, infrastructure or context the fashion world demands.

Fashion isn't math – it's more like magic. Algorithms can't deliver the fantasy and creativity shoppers crave unless they're trained with real fashion intelligence and guided by style expertise.

### WWD: What do you see as the future of AI and personal styling?

**S.S.:** Imagine a world where fashion history and future inspiration are blended in one place. You're seeing outfits styled in real-time – layered, swapped, customized to your style – and saving the way you like to wear things, all using a natural language AI model. You'll have your own dynamic digital closet that you can revisit, clean out, update and draw from as you plan for real-world occasions.

We're now leaping into a new era where shoppers can use AI to become their own stylist by answering a few questions or simply engaging with an advanced tech platform that learns about their preferences, personalities, moods and events. All of a sudden they can mix and match styles instantly thanks to an AI model that lets each shopper create a dynamic wardrobe that's uniquely theirs.

This level of interactivity leads to stronger engagement, loyalty and, ultimately, a significant reduction in returns. For retailers, the message is clear: embrace this shift now or risk irrelevance. The virtual styling moment is no longer a nice-to-have – it's the new front line of experience. The brands that will win will offer a combination of virtual try-on, instant mix-and-match styling, and AI-generated content co-creation that will result in a highly customized shopping experience.

### WWD: How is Zelig aiming to disrupt what the industry knows about the use of AI for personal styling?

**S.S.:** We invented Zelig to revolutionize the shopping experience. We're not here to add another tool, but to completely reimagine how AI should support style, self-expression and the shopper journey.

Most AI solutions in the market today are one-off features: a basic styling widget here, a chatbot there. At Zelig, we're building something entirely different – a holistic, full-stack shopping platform powered by AI. Each capability is its own highly developed technology: patented virtual try-on, intelligent styling, social sharing, a dynamic digital closet and a fully integrated UX. Together, these don't just enhance shopping – they transform it.

Our models also blend authentic industry expertise directly into the AI learning loop. By integrating expert-curated feedback, trend forecasting insights and creative direction into the model, Zelig transforms passive learning into active co-creation. This human-in-the-loop approach accelerates model evolution and ensures output that's not just data-driven, but also taste-driven, brand-aligned and runway-ready.

In addition, Zelig is bringing groundbreaking data intelligence to retail and brand partners. Unlike traditional tools that stop at purchase logs or abandoned carts, or new AI one-off features, Zelig captures the holistic context of style.

### WWD: What makes Zelig different/more efficient?

**S.S.:** Time is the biggest pressure on all of us and today's shopper wants to be on the fastest path to looking their best. Yet in a world where milliseconds matter, consumers often have to wait and wait and wait for personalized suggestions and images to load. And then they get results that lack context, taste and cohesion. Zelig AI was built to give people back time.

Our proprietary AI, powered by advanced computer vision and machine learning, creates high-quality, real-time outfit visualizations that scale across even the largest product catalogs. And because we're embedded directly within the e-commerce experience, everything happens instantly, without you ever having to leave the retailer's site. To our knowledge, there's no other B2B solution doing this at our scale.

We're also redefining what recommendations can be. Instead of surfacing more of the same kind of item, we show you how to style that blouse – pairing it with complementary items to instantly create complete, shoppable looks.

And as shoppers interact with Zelig, they're training the system – building a personalized AI stylist that evolves with their taste. It's fast, intelligent and uniquely theirs.

### WWD: What would you say is the demand for this kind of technology?

**S.S.:** This is what the industry has been waiting for – and demand is high. We're seeing strong traction, with a robust pipeline of retail customers. Shoppers are craving faster, more customized and fun interactive shopping experiences. Meanwhile, retailers are urgently seeking brand-owned solutions that improve conversion, reduce returns and unlock meaningful styling behavioral data. They're also looking for fresh ways to build loyalty by making shopping more entertaining.

### WWD: How does Zelig reduce return rates?

**S.S.:** Zelig was built to directly address the biggest consumer pain points that lead to returns. There's no single reason

why shoppers return items. Research shows that the two most common drivers are style mismatch – like color – and fit uncertainty. Zelig addresses both.

First, we help shoppers emotionally connect to what they're buying. Zelig lets them mix and match in real time, experiment with combinations, instantly swap out items and build full looks. By visualizing what works best, they make more confident decisions – leading to fewer returns.

We're also adding new features to the Zelig experience designed to boost confidence even further by addressing design sizing concerns directly. And our future roadmap is packed with innovative solutions that keep return reduction at the core of our mission.

### WWD: What data is Zelig providing, and why does it matter?

**S.S.:** Zelig unlocks a whole new layer of insight that retailers have never had access to before: style intent. We don't just show what customers buy – we reveal how they build looks, which pieces they pair together and how their styling preferences evolve.

It informs everything from product development to inventory planning. Retailers can identify unexpected pairings that convert, understand which combinations drive higher AOV and see which items consistently get saved, but not purchased, so they can adjust in real-time.

### WWD: Has anything been surprising to you while working with AI and building Zelig?

**S.S.:** The biggest surprise was just how technically challenging it is to digitally mix and match millions (soon to be billions) of items in real-time. Learning how to best train the AI automation to abstract and create the fashion assets before they were incorporated into the virtual try-on technology was tough because each retailer is different and creates and stores their assets differently. It took years of exploration and trial and error to get it right. Those missteps led to incredibly valuable AI learning and training data.

### WWD: Has your work process shifted from luxury fashion to tech?

**S.S.:** This all began during COVID when I became focused on solving one of fashion's biggest problems: skyrocketing returns. It was clear the industry had both a responsibility and an opportunity to reduce waste – and the answer had to come from technology.

Building tech is a completely different process, but the core principles of business and leadership don't change. I did realize over time how my fashion expertise could directly support the development of a machine learning model. I've owned and operated companies for over 35 years, across every price point from entry to luxury. And my understanding of how the fashion industry operates, from manufacturing to distribution to e-commerce, proved invaluable in training AI to support brands and retailers across the entire consumer journey and backend operations.

The real evolution in my process has been applying my decades of hands-on experience and industry knowledge to build and train a technology that understands fashion rules, nuance and fit. That's what makes Zelig different – and what makes this journey so exciting.

# WWD

# Fashion Scoops

Vittoria Ferdinandi  
with Brunello Cucinelli



## Do Your Part

In yet another sign of his commitment to "humanistic capitalism" and his personal attachment to his native Umbria region, Brunello Cucinelli unveiled on Thursday a new initiative aimed at fostering civic culture and responsibility.

Conceived by the designer and entrepreneur, the project is called "Week of Guardianship" and aims to raise public awareness around the preservation of and care for urban and natural landmarks of the city of Perugia, the capital of the Umbria region, some 9 miles from Solomeo, the hamlet home to the Brunello Cucinelli headquarters.

A registered trademark, the "Week of Guardianship" is to be held Sept. 15 to 21 in the city in partnership with the municipality, as well as with the support of the Umbria Region and the University for Foreigners of Perugia.

"I like to think that this Week of Guardianship will find joyful participation from all Perugians and

beyond, urging them to recognize the importance of each person caring for a small part of our splendid city of Perugia, a heritage of humanity," Cucinelli said.

In typical Cucinelli parlance, he referenced ancient Athenians who said that "if the doorway to your home is clean, the whole city is clean," and Roman Emperor Hadrian's sense of responsibility toward beauty in the world.

The project stems from the simple premise, Cucinelli stressed, that citizens should be triggered to engage in a shared effort toward "beautification" of the public spaces, beginning with simple touch-ups to the facade of one's home, nurturing the plants in one's garden, and maintaining the cleanliness of one's gate.

"I believe that everything can begin with caring for one's own doorway. A cleaned and polished door will be more beautiful... [driving] a virtuous circle to be sparked whereby all will feel responsible for the city's beauty and respectful of its territory. You will see, I am certain, that when we restore dignity to certain

corners of the city, our very souls will benefit and feel lighter," Cucinelli said.

"We need to give back dignity to the city and its citizens and this will ensure prosperity for both," he offered.

The project is to be presented to local associations and businesses on Friday evening at the Teatro Cucinelli theater in Solomeo, laying the foundations for defining the week's agenda of initiatives and activities.

Cucinelli said that the project is intended to dismantle the misconception that public spaces only concern authorities and governments, trying instead to instill the idea that anyone can and should care.

"By learning to take care about public spaces people feel like they belong," said Vittoria Ferdinandi, the mayor of Perugia  
— MARTINO CARRERA

## Bai Lu Summer

British luxury footwear and accessories label Jimmy Choo has tapped Bai Lu, one of China's most followed actresses on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, as its Asia-Pacific brand ambassador.

She appears in the brand's latest summery campaign, shot in Beijing, showcasing the new Curve bag from Jimmy Choo, as well as popular styles such as the Adeline 60 pumps, the Diamond Sling sneakers, the Aren SB 45 slingbacks, and the Bon Bon bag.

"Bai Lu perfectly embodies the spirit of Jimmy Choo," said the brand's creative director, Sandra Choi. "Not only is she multitalented, but she radiates confidence with



A Chloé evening dress and cape by Karl Lagerfeld, circa 1978.

youthful grace and poise."

"It's an honor to join the Jimmy Choo family. I have always admired the brand's creativity and craftsmanship — each piece inspires me to express myself with confidence, bringing a sense of joy every time I wear them," said Bai, who has over 33 million followers on Douyin, 27 million on Weibo, and over 7 million on Xiaohongshu.

Bai rose to fame in China for starring in a series of popular dramas, such as "Feud," "Untouchable Lovers," "The Legends," "Story of Kunning Palace," and "Till the End of the Moon." She gained further public recognition for her continuous appearance as a host in the buzzy variety show "Keep Running."

She joins Jimmy Choo's growing family of ambassadors, which also includes Wang Yibo, Victoria Song, and Mi-Yeon.  
— TIANWEI ZHANG

## All Karl

She was quite the Chloé girl, and certainly a devotee of Karl Lagerfeld. Now she is parting ways with her groovy, historically important wardrobe, spanning some 80 looks by the famous German designer between 1974 and 1983.

Auction house Bonhams Cornette de Saint Cyr is handling the online sale, which kicks off on June 26 and runs through July 9.

An exhibition of the dresses at 6 Avenue Hoche opens on July 3, and straddles haute couture week in Paris, scheduled for July 7 to 10.

Bonhams is keeping the identity of the seller under wraps, but confirmed it's a single-owner collection.

Estimates for the dresses start at 700 euros and run up to about 1,500 euros.

Lagerfeld logged two celebrated stints at Chloé. He started working for the house in 1963 and initially worked alongside other

designers brought on by founder Gaby Aghion, such as Graziella Fontana, Tan Giudicelli and Michèle Rosier.

Lagerfeld took full creative control of Chloé in 1966 and worked there until 1983.

He rejoined Chloé for a second time in 1992, creating memorable ad campaigns with model Linda Evangelista, before leaving for good in 1997.

"This auction is an homage to Karl Lagerfeld with an exemplary collection of designs from his early years at Chloé presented alongside groundbreaking looks from his final spring 1984 Chloé collection," commented Hubert Felbacq, director of the fashion and accessories department at Bonhams Cornette de Saint Cyr.

Among lots from that spring 1984 collection is an ivory silk evening dress embroidered with gold sequins and draped for an antique effect. It's offered with an estimate of 1,200 to 1,500 euros.

Felbacq noted that under the German designer, "Chloé entered a golden era, pushing the boundaries of prêt-à-porter with bold, narrative-driven collections. From ethereal gowns and romantic silhouettes to bold, surrealist prints, these garments exemplify Lagerfeld's unparalleled ability to blend elegance with innovation."

The Bonhams sale also spans 70 other lots of haute couture from Yves Saint Laurent, Guy Laroche, Louis Feraud, Hervé Léger, Emanuel Ungaro and Pierre Balmain. — MILES SOCHA

## Having A Ball

The grand Parisian ball scheduled for July 6 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, already buzzy thanks to having filmmaker Sofia Coppola as its artistic director, has also assembled an honorary committee stacked with glittering names.

Florida invitations depicting a trellis crawling with vines and pink blooms went out this week, listing Betty Catroux, Madison Cox, Athina Onassis, Paloma Picasso, Jordan Roth, Lauren Santo Domingo, Cindy Sherman and Mathilde Stern-Pointillart on the committee. They join L'Oréal board member Jean-Victor Meyers, who is president of the honorary committee for the gala, along with Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch.

"A tribute to French elegance and art de vivre, this Bal d'Été will kick off ▶

Bai Lu for Jimmy Choo.





The Brandon-Blackwood designed kits for American Airlines.

the Paris Haute Couture week by combining fashion, art and design," according to the museum. The couture shows run from July 7 to 10.

The soaring nave of Les Arts Décoratifs, the site of fashion shows for Thom Browne and Wales Bonner last year, is hosting the fundraising gala to mark the centenary of the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris.

That showcase took place on the Esplanade des Invalides, along both banks of the Seine and in and around the Grand Palais, from April to November 1925, according to documentation on the Musée des Arts Décoratifs website.

While perhaps best known for its blockbuster fashion exhibitions dedicated to the likes of Thierry Mugler, Iris Van Herpen, Louis Vuitton, Dries Van Noten and Dior, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs also showcases its vast collections of furniture, tableware, textiles, jewelry, wallpaper, art and design objects, glass, toys, advertising, drawings and photographs.

Indeed, it boasts one of the largest decorative arts collections in the world, spanning some 1.5 million objects dating from the Middle Ages through today.

On June 25, it will open a major monograph dedicated to Paul Poiret, a key figure in haute couture at the beginning of the 20th century. — M.S.

## In the Air

Designers have a knack for getting their names in some unexpected places, and Brandon Blackwood is no exception.

The New York-based creative has teamed up with American Airlines to create amenity kits for select passengers through September. For an 11-person operation, dealing with a nearly century-old international carrier has taught Blackwood how

to navigate a corporate environment and the multilayered steps that are required for approval.

"With me, it's more about aesthetics first and maybe practicality second. We have some guys who are out there [that we use] that can only handle a credit card. You can't really do that in this scenario," said Blackwood, who learned to deal with more complex steps.

Partnering with an airline was a first for Blackwood, who took into account the carrier's signature colors and logo, so that the packs would flow with the design scheme in the airplanes. "If you look at our top [selling] places that we are hitting, it's mostly New York, L.A. and Texas. This opportunity is going to allow us to reach a whole new group of customers," he said. "It will be a great mix of people who are very familiar with the brand and who are going to be very excited. But there will also be people who haven't heard of my brand, and who will be experiencing it on these cool routes and at beautiful destinations."

The complimentary items will be offered on 125 daily flights later this month. Just as legroom and in-flight dining varies, based on the value of passengers' tickets, so too do the designer-created kits. Blackwood flagged the project in an Instagram post that touted how they are "perfect for inflight pampering or a post-landing refresh." For the project, the designer riffed on his popular "Portmore" backpack in a more miniaturized black version for Flagship First and Flagship Suite Preferred fliers. And Flagship Business and Flagship Suite passengers will find a black pouch with red accents. Premium Economy passengers will receive a blue-and-white pouch in his signature checkered pattern, and Flagship Business passengers will find a black pouch with red accents and a checkered

interior print.

Before starting the design, Blackwood and a few members of his team flew to American Airlines' campus in Fort Worth, Texas. With multiple all-glass sculptural buildings, the 300-acre site was prime territory to connect with employees, according to the designer. "That building is insane. They have everything — they have bikes. We were riding our bikes all around. During that whole process, we were hanging out with employees and talking to people," he said. "The best part was getting to know the people behind American Airlines."

They also had the chance to take a close look at displayed photos of famous passengers like Eartha Kitt and Marilyn Monroe. "Being immersed in the company culture and seeing its history really helped to direct our creative approach," Blackwood said.

Although he has never designed uniforms for any companies, the designer said that is a major goal. Coco Chanel, Halston, Yves Saint Laurent, Zac Posen, Emilia Wickstead, Oleg Cassini, Pierre Cardin and Cristobal Balenciaga are some of the designers who have suited up in-flight crews for different carriers. Acknowledging how many really well-known designers have created uniforms for flight attendants with different airlines, he said that Emilio Pucci's 1960s printed uniforms for the now defunct Braniff airlines were his favorite.

Blackwood recalled how his team wanted to perfect the kits and went through "rounds and rounds" of mock-ups, styles and prints before the end result was reached. "I'm really proud to be a Black New York-based designer, who is able to do this. Any time my company does a first, I am very proud. This is a huge one," he said. "I cannot wait to see people tag it when they get into their seats."

— ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

Cheya Thousand



## New Scholarship

The LIM Fashion Education Foundation has established the Cheya Thousand Resilience Scholarship, founded by LIM College alumna and visionary leader Cheya Thousand '09. The new scholarship represents an investment in the next generation of students who embody resilience, leadership and determination.

Thousand is a purpose-driven entrepreneur, emotional intelligence coach and founder of CT Wellness Co. With over a decade of experience at such global corporations as Amazon and Deloitte, she has dedicated her career to helping individuals and organization transform from within.

"Education changed my life — and I want to be part of changing someone else's. This scholarship is about more than money," said Thousand. "It's a reminder that perseverance and self-belief can carry you through anything. I want these students to know that someone sees their efforts and believes in their future."

Arnie Cohen, LIM FEF board chair, said, "The Cheya Thousand Resilience Scholarship represents the very spirit of what we aim to cultivate at LIM — determination, leadership and the courage to keep going in the face of adversity. Cheya's journey is a powerful example to our students, and her generosity is a reminder that success is not just about achieving our own goals, but also about reaching back to lift others. We are proud to partner with her in supporting the next generation of

changemakers."

Applicants, who must be in at least their second semester at LIM College, will be required to submit an essay answering the questions: "What does resilience mean to you? How does it show up for you in your community?" The criteria for the scholarship are financial need, demonstrated leadership abilities, commitment to LIM and their community, and a minimum grade point average of 3.0.

The Cheya Thousand Resilience Scholarship is a \$10,000 fund awarded over five years to deserving students who demonstrate resilience, leadership and a commitment to their dreams. Each year students will receive financial support in denominations of \$500, \$1,000, or \$1,500, with a maximum award of \$2,000 annually.

Last month, LIM College and Japan Educational Foundation revealed an agreement under which JEF will acquire LIM. Pending required approvals from higher education regulators, the agreement will add LIM to JEF's portfolio of four professional universities, one online university and nine professional training colleges in Japan as well as two higher education institutions in Paris with multiple campuses across France. — LISA LOCKWOOD

## Ssense Changes

Ssense, the Montreal-based multibrand retailer of designer fashion and streetwear, has made some key changes in its buying roles. Brigitte Chartrand, vice president, womenswear buying, has exited the company to join Net-a-porter as chief buying and merchandising officer, and Ssense will unify all buying teams under the leadership of Federico Barassi, vice president, buying.

Barassi, who has been with Ssense for over 17 years, was most recently vice president of menswear. He joined the company in 2008 as senior menswear buyer and rose through the buying ranks. Earlier he was a menswear buyer for Hugo Boss in Montreal.

Chartrand had been with Ssense for over 11 years, starting as womenswear buying manager. She rose to senior director of womenswear buying before assuming her current post as vice president of womenswear in February 2020. She is also the founder of Reborn, a Montreal boutique, operating that business from 2005 to 2014.

"My time at Ssense has been incredibly rewarding, and I'm proud of what we've achieved together. I leave with full confidence in the exceptional team at Ssense and look forward to watching the company's continued success," said Chartrand in a statement.

Rami Atallah, chief executive officer and cofounder of Ssense, said, "At Ssense, our purpose is to champion emerging and culturally impactful designers. With Brigitte's departure, we are proud to elevate internal leaders who embody the vision and values that define Ssense. Looking ahead, all buying categories will be unified under the direct leadership of Federico Barassi, vice president, buying."

Ssense has elevated key team members to leadership roles within womenswear, menswear and the rest of the categories. These strategic advancements reflect the company's commitment to talent development and creating significant growth opportunities within Ssense, according to the company. — LL ■

Federico Barassi

