

**WWD**

Fashion. Beauty. Business.



# **Leonard A. Lauder, Beauty's Chief Teaching Officer 1933-2025**

*For the complete obituary of the legendary executive, see pages 4 to 9.*

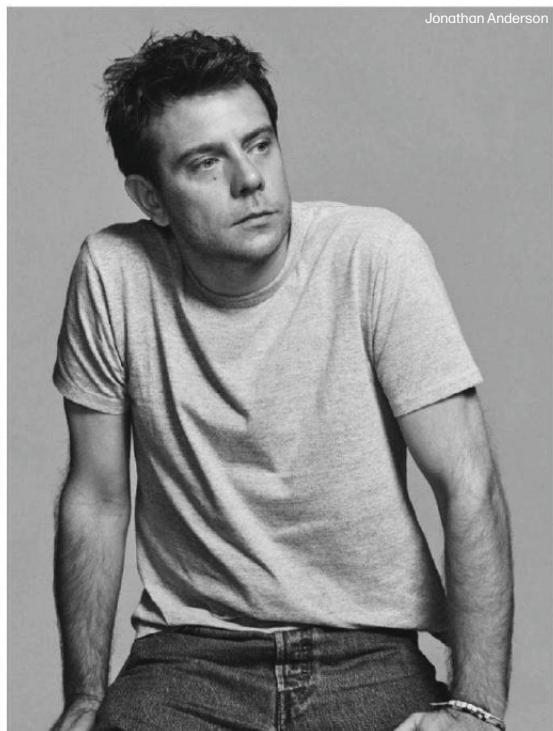
PHOTOGRAPH BY WESTON WELLS

## THE BOTTOM LINE

# Magic vs. Logic: Analysts Get Creative And Weigh In on Designer Appointments



Demna



Jonathan Anderson

● The financial types are inching into territory that was once just the province of critics and fans.

BY EVAN CLARK

**Fashion with a capital F** has always had its tribes.

There's the design crowd, where aesthetic is king and people ooze with personality.

Then there's the more buttoned-up business side that lives and dies by the spreadsheet and ups and downs of the market.

Of course, that oversimplifies things and there have always been crossovers who naturally think with both their right and left fashion brains.

But the people who really get both the dollars and fashion sense of the industry are rare.

Many — most? — people have only a vague understanding of what the other is really up to.

So there's a kind of truce that's held, with the fashion folk holding tight to their mood boards and the finance gang following their tickers.

But that delicate peace has been rattled.

Financial analysts are increasingly weighing in — not just on sales and profit margins or even stores and product, but on

the design talent pulling together the vision.

They are now more actively picking design winners, not just market share winners.

Jonathan Anderson got the thumbs up when he moved to Dior at LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton.

"Anderson has a strong track record from his time at Loewe — one of the top-performing brands at LVMH's fashion and leather in the past few years," said Jelena Sokolova at Morningstar. "It is a positive that he'll be the sole creative director of Dior, where priorly creative director roles for menswear and womenswear were split. This should help Dior create a more consistent brand representation and improve its stance amongst peers."

Likewise, HSBC's Erwan Rambourg, said: "We remain believers that 'Dior is not the next Gucci.' We trust that with Jonathan Anderson running the creative show there is more poetic positive potential than risk. We expect the brand to rebound starting from Q2 2026."

But true to form, it was Demna who was there right on the edge when Team Design and Team Dollar started to clash more this year.

Demna is loved by the fashion crowd, from his conceptualist streetwear at Vetements to his willingness to shake up everything at Balenciaga (even if dancing on the edge meant sometimes falling over it, with kids posing alongside

handbags that looked like stuffed bears dressed in bondage).

For the analyst types, that controversial, zeitgeist-grabbing approach was fine and good for Balenciaga. But bringing all of that to Gucci — Kering's now underpowered powerhouse — was just too much.

"At this stage, the announcement brings as much risks as opportunities," said Carole Madjo, an analyst at Barclays, pointing to Demna's "bold and sometimes controversial aesthetic."

Bernstein's Luca Solca rated the Gucci appointment a five out of 10 and said, "We are not sure that Demna measures up to the task, nor that he is the right fit for Gucci at the moment, but we understand their risk-minimization strategy: going for the well-known."

Not everyone who understands how to discount a cash flow was up in arms, however.

"Demna leading Gucci should drive commercial, cultural and artistic impact, which could support [long-term] growth," said Oliver Chen at TD Securities in a research note in March. "Demna has the potential to be a great leader for the next era of Gucci."

The question is: Who has the right to declare that Demna or Anderson are right or wrong for their new jobs?

Wall Street has had its say. Critics and the chattering masses on Instagram will have another chance to weigh in as the designers' first collections hit the runway.

And shoppers will get the final word when the looks finally go up for sale.

Where you stand might depend on where you sit.

Fashionistas want excitement, a chill down the spine, elegance or some

aesthetic that will move the great project of design and culture forward.

The business side wants dollars and cents and efficiencies, great machines made up of human capital and intellectual property to create the value that everyone along the way taps into to pay for those Hamptons summers.

The equity analysts weighing in on design are doing their level best to get their brains around the whole of the enterprise, to understand how it all works to see if it will succeed.

"The framework is, there's magic and logic, but you want some logic that helps support the magic," said TD Securities' Chen in a follow-up interview. "For analysts to be good at this, it's slightly a balance of pattern-hunting plus being forward-thinking about change in art and culture and also juxtaposing that with logic around merchandising policies and then making a forecast."

"What analysts try to do is understand the biography of the creative," Chen said. "Basically, you look at the past. For me, it's OK, I understand some of Demna's product attitude and I understand what Gucci needs. If anything, the Balenciaga story has been around innovative experience and excitement."

"If you're not relevant, people don't necessarily want to pay extra," he said.

And to work, from any perspective, luxury always requires something a little extra, designers have to deliver and shoppers have to pay.

It's that friction, that need to satisfy the demands of both art and commerce, that keeps fashion exciting.

*The Bottom Line is a business analysis column written by Evan Clark, deputy managing editor, who has covered the fashion industry since 2000. It appears periodically.*

EXCLUSIVE

# Bloomingdale's Unfurls Aqua x Ava Phillippe Collection

● The 25-year-old actress has designed feminine pieces that blend California charm with artistic flair.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

On Monday, Bloomingdale's will unfurl Aqua x Ava Phillippe, a limited-edition collection inspired by the 25-year-old actress' California roots and her love of art.

The collection features feminine pieces, adorned with Phillippe's original artwork.

In addition to having appeared in shows such as ABC's "Doctor Odyssey," Netflix's "Ransom Canyon" and the short film, "The Sisters of Scott County," she has also modeled for brands like Rodarte, Vince Camuto Fragrances, Ivy Park, Pat McGrath and her mother Reese Witherspoon's own brand, Draper James.

The Aqua x Ava Phillippe collaboration blends bohemian spirit with nostalgic '90s charm. The 36-piece collection includes ready-to-wear, jewelry and shoes, all featuring romantic details such as delicate embroidery, layered ruffles and intricately embroidered denim. There are also cozy sweaters and effortless T-shirts that showcase the actresses' artistic touch that rounds out the offering.

The Aqua x Ava Phillippe collection ranges in price from \$68 to \$298 and will be available at Bloomingdale's stores and bloomingdales.com.

In a Zoom interview, Phillippe said she never designed fashion or accessories before. "I'm a huge fashion fan. I've never gotten an opportunity like this, and so I just jumped on it. They asked me, 'How involved do you want to be? And I said, 'as involved as possible.' I can't sew this stuff, but I want to part of it as much as possible. And so they really embraced me with open arms," Phillippe said.

Phillippe said she was inspired by California rock stars of the '70s and sunny beach days.

"I'm a California girl at heart, so I knew I wanted this collection to reflect the

sun-soaked and carefree aesthetic of where I grew up. I wanted everything to have a sense of nostalgic dreaminess – pastels, vintage-inspired florals, lace – juxtaposed against bolder elements like studs and chunky jewelry. I've always loved drawing and creating, so I'm delighted to be able to include some of my original artwork on some of the pieces. It really feels like I've put my personal stamp on the collection in that way. Bloomingdale's brought all my inspirations to life with this Aqua collection, and I'm so proud and excited to share what we've created," Phillippe said.

Phillippe explained that they sent Pinterest boards back and forth and had calls about patterns and fabrics and what was possible on the manufacturing end. "So I really learned a lot in the process, which was really cool, as somebody who loves fashion and the process of making and designing," she said.

Phillippe said she didn't go to art school but has been creating, drawing and painting all her life. "I mean I even had a sculpture phase for a little bit. I've always loved creating art, and I really have a lot of respect for artists of all kinds. So to have them [Aqua] ask me to include some of my designs, like my little doodles and drawings that I've done, was so flattering," she said.

Phillippe sent them a couple of little emblems and sketches that she has saved up over the years and they selected which ones most aligned with the collection. "We put some really cute ones on the T-shirts and sweaters, and it just makes it feel very special and very personal," she said.

When asked what were some of her favorite pieces from the collection, she said, "I have so many. It's like trying to choose your favorite child. There's this one really cute crochet set with studs. It's like a cardigan skirt set. I'm in love with it. I've worn it a billion times. And then there's also this really pretty yellow dress that has all this beading. It's a maxidress. I don't how they were able to pull this off so quickly. They really went the extra miles with this one, but it's like my dream dress."



Phillippe, who's been working on the collection since December, said her friends are so excited to see her collection at Bloomingdale's. "I think they're so excited that it's not this crazy price point...it's totally within their budget. Some of them have already stolen pieces [from me]," she said.

As part of the collection, Phillippe also designed footwear. "Honestly it reminds me of my days at Berkeley [Phillippe graduated from University of California, Berkeley] because it's open-toed sandals. Everybody at Berkeley was wearing those kind of hippie-dippie sandals, but these are a little chicer. They've got little turquoise studs on them, which I thought was so cool. I'm obsessed with turquoise jewelry, and turquoise in general. I grew up with a mom from the South, and she was always wearing turquoise. And her friends too. So I feel like it's an homage to that. The sandals are super cool and they're comfy."

The collection also features a flare jean, which is her favorite silhouette. "We added some really nice lace embellishments to give it a romantic, feminine touch. And



Here and left: Ava Phillippe in looks from the Aqua x Ava Phillippe collection.

then it was so cool with what we came up with the studs," she said.

Discussing how she got together with Bloomingdale's, she believes that they saw that she's been doing a lot of fashion stuff on social media. "Honestly, I'm just happy they found me. I've been an Aqua lover since my teen years and couldn't help but jump right on the opportunity. And I'm always at Bloomingdale's at Century City."

In fact, Bloomingdale's Century City will host a curated launch event on Saturday including art-driven activations and a special appearance by Phillippe. She said a fashion illustrator will do little fashion illustration portraits on stationery, which Phillippe designed, and there will be friendship bracelets. Phillippe will appear in the ad campaign that was shot in Pasadena, Calif., and the collaboration will be promoted on Phillippe's social media, TikTok and Instagram.

Kelcy Ball, senior vice president and general merchandise manager of ready-to-wear at Bloomingdale's, said, "Aqua has always been about expressing individuality through fashion, and Ava brings such a fresh personal point of view to this collection. From the soft romanticism to the strong California influences, every piece reflects her creative energy and authentic style. We're thrilled to collaborate with a new voice in fashion who so naturally embodies the spirit of Aqua."

"I'm just so excited. I just want people to enjoy and have something cute to wear this summer," Phillippe said.

BUSINESS

## David Thielebeule's Role Expands To Men's, Women's Fashion Director



David Thielebeule

● The move is part of a strategic evolution of Bloomingdale's integrated marketing team.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

David Thielebeule has expanded his role at Bloomingdale's to men's and women's ready-to-wear fashion director. He joined Bloomingdale's last year as men's fashion director and has added women's rtw, reflecting a continued investment in fashion-forward content and curation.

In the role of women's fashion director, Thielebeule replaces Janelle Lloyd, who had been women's rtw fashion director since February 2024.

The move is part of Bloomingdale's integrated marketing team strategy to strengthen the connection between merchandise storytelling, brand discovery and customer engagement across all touch

points. To this end, it has streamlined its fashion director roles to three key leaders.

In addition to Thielebeule's expanded role, Marissa Galante Frank continues as accessories and beauty fashion director. In tandem, Bloomingdale's has created a beauty editorial and events specialist role to amplify event programming and brand narratives in the beauty space. This role, which hasn't been filled yet, will report to both Galante Frank and Analissa Varian, director of special events.

Kelley Carter will continue in her role as home fashion director, driving designed storytelling and trend authority in the home category.

Thielebeule was formerly the style director at WSJ. Magazine and the founding editor in chief of Grazia USA. He has also worked for such publications as GQ, Harper's Bazaar and L'Officiel.

The company also revealed a fully

integrated special events team, now reporting into Varian, who has led a strategic reorganization to align event programming more closely with regional store leadership. Four newly established senior manager roles oversee key territories across the country, in an effort to deepen the connection to local markets while enhancing central support.

Bloomingdale's integrated marketing team includes Anya Deweerdt, director of curated initiatives, Carousel; Suzy Nager, director of brand partnerships and philanthropy, and Jennifer Chadroff, director of earned media.

"This evolution is about sharpening our storytelling, aligning closely with the merchant and store organizations, and creating a more connected customer journey," said Kevin Harter, vice president, integrated marketing and fashion office at Bloomingdale's. "We're excited to see this team bring fresh energy and focused expertise to the business."

These changes are part of the company's larger Dream Big strategy, a cross-functional vision to reimagine the next era of growth for Bloomingdale's through innovation, creativity and experiential retail.

OBITUARY

# Leonard A. Lauder, Legendary Beauty Executive, 92

Leonard A. Lauder



● Lauder built the beauty company founded by his mother Estée into a global giant.

BY PETE BORN  
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY LISA LOCKWOOD

**Beauty has lost its master builder.**

Leonard A. Lauder, arguably the most influential and respected architect of the prestige beauty business, died late Saturday at age 92.

Lauder spent his career molding the Estée Lauder Companies Inc., into the global leader of prestige beauty. The company that his parents – the ever quotable Estée (“When sex goes out of business, so will we”) and her husband Joseph – founded in 1946, their son shaped into a \$15.61 billion giant in sales for the 2024 fiscal year.

What drove this empire building was an unquenchable desire to create a gold standard for the industry. In June 1995, five

months before the company went public, the then-president and chief executive officer unveiled his vision to become “the preeminent supplier of upmarket cosmetics in the world.”

Then Lauder reached out for that goal. Lauder once remarked, “Money doesn’t drive me. What drives me is to see that this great company continues its inexorable march to becoming the greatest company in the world. Not the largest, but the greatest.”

In that pursuit, he brought a passion and drive that were seemingly inexhaustible. Younger employees would flag in his wake as Lauder would visit store after store almost from dawn to dark, speaking with retail executives and customers to find out what the latest trends were. As chairman, he could walk onto a store floor anywhere from Los Angeles to London and immediately spot that a counter for one of Lauder’s brands was two inches smaller than a competitor’s, or not positioned correctly for a store’s new traffic pattern.

Even as his company’s success grew, Lauder would listen and question more than issue diktats. Throughout his life he retained a salty sense of humor – perhaps honed during his years in the Navy and Navy Reserve – and never lost his ear-to-ear grin or the twinkle in his eye, which immediately relaxed even the most intimidated person meeting him for the first time.

He was in the forefront of leaders defining and establishing the doctrine of the modern global prestige beauty business, particularly in department and major specialty stores. He was among the first to recognize the transcendent reach of globalization in the beauty business, coining its language and recognizing fundamental doctrines. His vision was driven by the role of innovation, the power of new product introductions, the purity of distribution strategy and the sanctity of brand equity. He viewed brands as living, breathing beings.

Those beliefs may have become thought of as old school as younger competitors came on the scene talking about triple-tier distribution, celebrity marketing, the power of influencers and their digital native brands. But Lauder’s tenacity of vision and Zen-like surety of purpose never faltered and his passion never ceased to fuel the vitality of the business.

Later in life, when asked how he kept his batteries charged, Lauder traced his deep reserves of energy to his practice of teaching his brand equity course to his young executives. He identified himself as Lauder’s CTO, or “chief teaching officer,” perhaps the title that made him the most proud.

“The thing that gives me the greatest pleasure and recharge is teaching,” he said once, noting that he had redone the syllabus “to make it something far deeper than I have ever done.

“The other thing is that a lot of the people who were low-level merchandisers a long time ago when I was more deeply involved with individual buyers and merchandise managers are now store principals, and what gives me pleasure is meeting with them and understanding them and talking to them.” He added with a grin, “I give them my advice, whether they like it or not.”

At least one person who heeded Lauder’s advice was Ralph Lauren. “Leonard’s life and mine have intersected for so many years and during that time I have called on him many times for advice,” the designer said in 2018. “He was always there for me. He is a man of honor, a man of integrity, a man of great energy and passion and what I’ve really learned and respected was his love and support of his family,” Lauren continued. “They always came first.”

Lauder tended to view the people who worked with him and for him as much more than employees. When asked in 2018 what was his proudest achievement, he replied that it was “the people we have brought up and who are running the company today..These are people who really started at a much lower level and they grew and grew and grew. These people are my proudest accomplishment. The wealth of a company is its people and we are a very wealthy company.” ▶



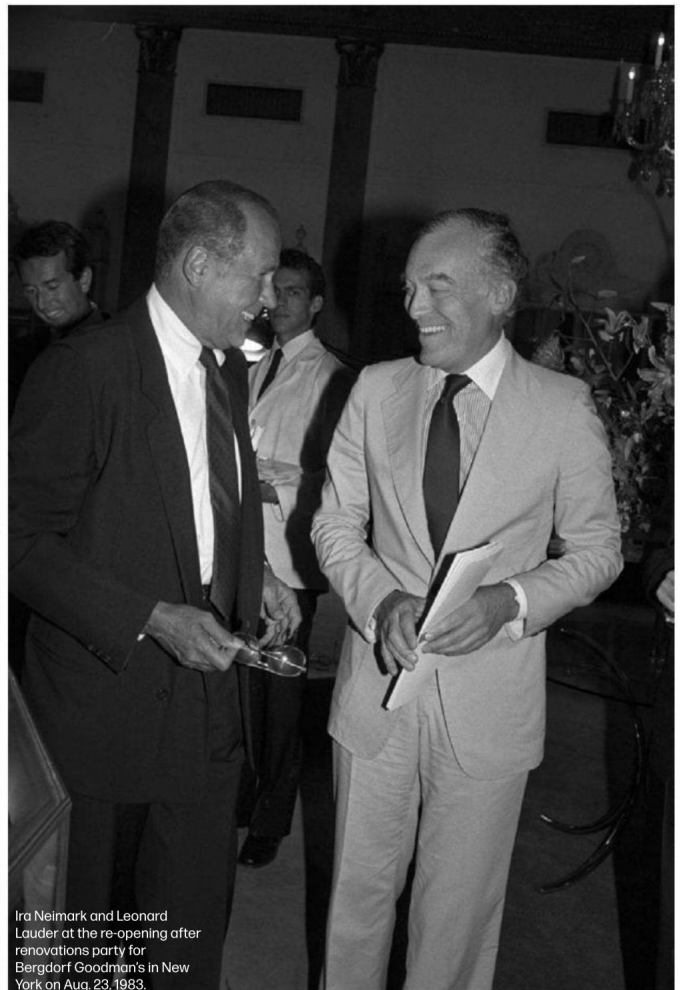
Estée Lauder with her son Leonard Lauder at her New York offices, ca. 1970.



Leonard and Ronald Lauder, sons of beauty magnate Estée Lauder pose for a photo at home in New York.



Norman Wechsler (L) and Leonard Lauder outside La Grenouille Restaurant in New York City on Dec. 5, 1974.



Ira Neimark and Leonard Lauder at the re-opening after renovations party for Bergdorf Goodman's in New York on Aug. 23, 1983.

Throughout his career, long before Lauder started teaching his classes, he was known for his mentoring skills. On more than a few occasions, a rising industry star might be asked with whom they would like to work for next. The answer was often, "Leonard."

When asked about his reputation, Lauder, who prided himself on his ability to read people, replied, "Every time I'm meeting someone, I ask myself, 'Can they grow into a great leader?'"

But the tricky part comes when giving someone a second and third chance, usually at the behest of their manager, when Lauder knew instinctively from the beginning that they wouldn't work out. "I always regret that I didn't push harder," Lauder recalled in 2018. "I wanted to let the managers say, 'let's do it.' But if you wait three or four years and the person still hasn't produced, you've lost three or four years."

"I gave a speech some time ago to a group of people at Macy's in California, and I spoke to them about this and ended with the phrase—'Just remember this, dumb is forever,'" he recalled.

But he never lost his voracious curiosity. It was not unusual for Lauder to be lunching with someone in a restaurant like Michael's in Midtown Manhattan and turn his questioning to his favorite subject—what promising start-ups are ripe for the plucking. His eyes would twinkle, he might borrow an order pad from a passing



Designer Ralph Lauren and executives Marvin Traub and Leonard Lauder choose an appropriate photo for Marvin Traub's retirement party invitations on Sept. 11, 1991.

waiter to write on, then whip out a pen and furiously start jotting down names of companies.

Even at age 92, he was still in the game, thinking about how to get the group—which has been struggling over the last few years—back onto the growth track.

The word passion crops up often when associates reminisce about Lauder, particularly when his son, William P.

Lauder, executive chairman, reflects about his days with his father. "My father demonstrated that a hugely successful business can be built on this simple concept: A passion for product, a passion for the consumer, a passion for the retailer, a passion for the brand, a passion for quality, a passion for people, and a passion for leadership. His passion for every aspect of building a lasting, world-leading cosmetics company has made our company great. His passion for teaching everybody around him has made us all better as a result."

But that great passion was not limited to the beauty game. His other great love was

collecting art, most famously the works of the Cubist painters. In 2013, Lauder sealed his artistic legacy by donating his world-renowned Cubist collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, then consisting of 81 works by Pablo Picasso (34), Georges Braque (17), Juan Gris (15) and Fernand Léger (15). The choice of the Met as the recipient of the donation came as a bit of a surprise since Lauder had long been associated with the Whitney Museum of American Art. But that museum was devoted to American art and Lauder had been quite generous there with money and painting.

Lauder had considered many other ▶



Leonard Lauder and Liza Minnelli on stage during the launch of "Metropolis" perfume at the Helmsley Palace, a hotel in New York City, on Sept. 16, 1987

museums, but he picked the Met partly because of the encyclopedic nature of its holdings – and its shortcomings. The Met had a sparse collection of 20th century art, a shortage he hoped to help remedy with the opening in the museum of the Leonard A. Lauder Research Center of Modern Art that might inspire other collectors to step forward.

"I wanted to transform the Met," he said, adding that his generosity was motivated by "my love of art and my love of New York." Above all "I wanted to make it a gift to New York," said Lauder, who was born in the city and grew up on the Upper West Side.

Lauder began his life of art collecting in a small way by buying Art Deco postcards at age 6. That fascination grew into a collection of 120,000 postcards, 700 of which were featured in a 2012 exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

He first found a seat in the art establishment by joining the acquisition board of the Whitney in 1971, then became a trustee, rose to president in 1977 and finally the museum's chairman in 1994. His gift of \$131 million to the Whitney's endowment was at the time the largest in the institution's history. This was in addition to his gift of works by Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Cy Twombly and Andy Warhol.

Years before he announced his choice of the Met as a next home of his Cubist collection, Lauder discussed his approach

to collecting and drew a parallel between building his business and art collection. "I'm building my art collection not to possess it but to conserve it," he said, because it's all going to go to a museum. "Everything I buy, the question is where will it fit into my collection and into a museum."

The same philosophy applied to the company he helped grow.

"My passion for this [beauty] business is not to make more money, because I have more than enough money for the next five lifetimes [his net worth was estimated by Forbes Magazine at \$9.7 billion as of this year]. The passion is to build something great that can be conserved. There is a parallel as to what I do with my art and what happens with our company."

This all-consuming passion was evident in every corner of his day, even when he was preoccupied with something else. He always had time to stop and talk shop, especially with retailers. Even into his 90s, he would still meet people regularly for lunch to talk business and trends. His eyes retained their sparkle and his grasp on their arm as firm as ever as he pulled them in close for a chat.

His instinct for spotting quicksilver changes in fickle consumer tastes was second to none. Lauder read the twists and turns of the market like a weather map.

He had a knack for perfecting in-store sell-through and promotional strategies.

Not that the Lauders invented every promotional tactic. He freely acknowledged

that the ubiquitous gift-with-purchase was invented elsewhere. "Charles of the Ritz had been doing it for years."

But Estée Lauder put her spin on sampling by giving a gift without any purchase, according to Lauder's book, "The Company I Keep. My Life in Beauty," which was published by Harper Business in 2020.

The Lauders took their entire \$50,000 advertising budget and ordered huge quantities of full-sized products and mailed invitations to every woman listed on the charge account files of each store in the Lauder distribution. Drop by and get full sized box of face powder for free.

That worked so well that the concept was expanded to include sending postcards – paid for by the stores – to customers whenever Lauder opened a store. The quality of the full-sized gift and the personal touch worked like catnip.

"In every case, eager shoppers mobbed our counters – then spread throughout the main floor in a relentless tide, increasing sales on the entire floor, increasing sales by well over 100 percent. It was a win/win for both of us," he wrote, referring to both Lauder and the retailers.

Gift-with-purchase and purchase-with-purchase became the engines for holiday selling, and the Lauders mastered the game. One of the more powerful promotional strategies was Lauder's holiday blockbuster. The idea hit with such impact that some department stores reportedly used the blockbuster to kick off their seasonal merchandising attack.

In analyzing the dynamics of the department store market, Lauder put the consumer at the center of the question: Who owns the customer?

Lauder cited the acceleration of the pace of business for the need to have a future vision. Another driver was the ongoing wave of consolidations of not only brands but especially distribution. "[That touched off] a new war that we have to understand and that is the war as to who owns the consumer. If the beauty industry understands that they are in that war, they will be able to thrive. If they don't, that's curtains."

He then explained, "If the manufacturers of the products own the consumer, they can put as much money as they have available into giving great product, great service, great advice and the business will thrive. However, if they give up ownership of the consumer to the retailer, as happened in the '30s with Sears Roebuck and is happening today with many of the mass retailers both in the United States and in Europe, those mass retailers will demand greater and

greater margin from you because they own the consumer, and you will not have the money to invest in the product."

As an example he pointed to "the war" in Europe between perfumery chains that were then consolidating and growing larger, demanding more margin in the process. "They are bleeding the product and the ability of the manufacturers to drive customers into their stores," he said in 2010. "Our key modus operandi is that we use our money to drive consumers into our retail outlets."

When asked eight years later, in 2018, if a peace treaty had been struck, Lauder firmly said no. "When it comes to many retailers, they truly feel they own the customer [and the sales data] because they are paying the rent," he said, adding, "this is a battle that simply has never been settled, and it goes on to this day."

That acuity in spotting issues was a trait that Lauder long displayed and which was first honed in his youth at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. He later served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, and at age 25 joined the family business fulltime in 1958. The next year, he married Evelyn Hauser, who also went to work at the company and eventually rose to senior corporate vice president.

Later she founded the world renowned Breast Cancer Research Foundation. ▶



Leonard Lauder and Evelyn Lauder attend a party at for Princess Grace Kelly at the Lauder residence in New York City on Dec. 12, 1980.



(L-R) Joseph Lauder, Leonard Lauder, and Estée Lauder attend the Library Lions dinner and benefit at the central branch of the New York Public Library on Oct. 22, 1981.



Leonard Lauder (C) attends the opening of "The Little Foxes" at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York City on May 7, 1981.



(L-R) Leonard Lauder, Jerry Zipkin, Nan Kempner, and guests attend "100 Most Handsome Men" party and launch of Estée Lauder for Men Fragrance at Helmsley Place in New York City on April 29, 1985.

Their marriage lasted 52 years, until her death in 2011. In 2015, Lauder remarried, to Judy Glickman, who survives him.

The story of the beginnings of Lauder, the company, was entrepreneurial in nature and humble in origin. First-year sales in the late '40s amounted to \$50,000, "almost all of which was eaten up by expenses," according to Lauder's memoir.

Estée Lauder began — like many industry start-ups — at the kitchen sink. Lauder recalled as a little boy watching his mother cook up facial creams. He never stopped working alongside his mother — the legend — even as the company took flight.

"Mrs. Lauder was deeply involved in the choice of the fragrances," he recalled, "and I did the makeup and the treatment — and advertising."

His father handled the finances. His younger brother, Ronald S. Lauder, who survives him, joined the company in 1964 and remains involved as chairman of Clinique Laboratories LLC. He retired as a board director earlier this year.

Decades later, Aerin Lauder, Leonard's niece who held a top job at Lauder then left to create her own brand, remarked, "He knew just what makes an ad speak to a woman, what makes it beautiful and, most important, how it reflects and strengthens a brand."

Those were also the yeasty days when the American beauty industry was emerging with bare knuckles flying. Competition was warfare.

"I miss the intensity," Lauder remarked in 2010. "I miss the hostility. I miss the competition. I miss the love of product. In the old days, earlier on, you had Elizabeth Arden competing with Helena Rubinstein. Then you had Elizabeth Arden competing with Charles Revson. Then you had Charles Revson competing with Estée Lauder. Then you had Leonard Lauder competing against L'Oréal in some areas. It was a battle, really, of founders. As those founders have moved on, you now have professional companies, and the passion between an owner and a founder and a professional manager — as much as one would like to pump that passion in — that passion for competition is different.

"However, that doesn't mean that things aren't better, because there is far more professionalism in the products today — no product can come to market until it has been tested and retested and retested again and again and again. I see a great

benefit to professional management.

"But that doesn't mean I don't mind the scrappiness of the old days."

Years later, Lauder fondly recalled telling a buyer that his ambition was to rank number one in the U.S. market — then dominated by Revlon, followed by Elizabeth Arden, Helena Rubinstein and Charles of the Ritz — only to be met by skepticism from the retailer.

By 1960, he began making a mark. Lauder was running the daily operations as executive vice president. In that year, the Estée Lauder company opened at Harrods in London, its first step overseas. "We were the first American luxury cosmetics brand to enter the post-war European market," he recalled.

Now Estée Lauder's brands are sold around the globe. "In the early '60s, I had the vision for Estée Lauder of being a multinational and multi-branded company," he told WWD in 2010.

The first turning point came with the launch of Clinique in 1968. It was a more democratic upstart, compared to the glamour-driven Lauder brand, followed by the revolutionary MAC and a host of other upstart acquisitions, some of which have worked and others that did not.

"Clinique began the transformation of Estée Lauder into the multi-national, multi-brand company I envisioned," he wrote in his book.

In the '40s and '50s, most major cosmetics companies marketed their products under a single brand name, such as Revlon, Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein. Lauder had another vision: "I hate to use the word today," he remarked in 1995, "but it was in my mind then — a General Motors of cosmetics." He continued, "The vision is to continue to expand our brand portfolio and our offering in our field, in our space, and to continue to try to take advantage of the

changing world scene."

Lauder attributed his success, in part, to a strategy of creating his own competition, rather than waiting for challengers to appear. "I created Clinique to compete against Estée Lauder," he wrote in his memoir. "When we began to acquire other companies, we started with MAC and quickly followed with its polar opposite, Bobbi Brown Cosmetics. Le Mer competes against Estée Lauder's premium product, Re-Nutriv. In the hair care area, we acquired Bumble and bumble to compete with Aveda.

"What I was trying to bring about was becoming the market leader, and we've done that: we are the largest supplier of prestige cosmetics in the world and we are the dominant player in almost every prestige market, largely because of that strategy," he wrote at the time in his book.

But there was an Achilles heel — keeping your distribution in synch with your brand equity and demand. And the company stumbled with its 1979 launch of Prescriptives, which Lauder described as a super-scientific version of the Lauder brand.

"The strategic mistake I most regret was not cutting Prescriptives' distribution," he wrote, noting that the brand was overdistributed "by far. I wanted to cut our distribution to focus on high-end stores. But we recently had gone public and we felt that cutting sales would hurt our share price. The decision led to short-term gain but a long-term loss since we had to eventually close all the Prescriptives counters."

Through it all, the company retained its original DNA, its prestige identity, its brand-driven nature and its affinity for creative innovation — all driven by a boost of adrenaline provided by a management change in March 2009. William Lauder, who was serving as CEO, moved to executive chairman and recruited Fabrizio Freda from Procter & Gamble to become the group's CEO and president. Leonard Lauder became chairman emeritus.

In a subsequent WWD interview, Freda praised a long list of corporate attributes that characterized the company, but he made clear he wanted to instill more financial discipline.

During much of Freda's tenure, the company soared, particularly as sales in China and the travel retail channel ▶

Leonard Lauder, Evelyn Lauder, Estée Lauder and models attend the launch party for Estée Lauder Fragrance "Beautiful" at Rockefeller Center in New York City on Sept. 19, 1985.



# WWD

Isabella Rossellini and Leonard Lauder attend the "Brite Nite" party, celebrating the exhibition "The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000," at the Whitney Museum in New York City on March 9, 1999.



(L-R) Leonard Lauder, Martha Stewart, and Wendy Goldberg attend a benefit preview of exhibit "The Warhol Look" at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City on Nov. 6, 1997.



Leonard Lauder (R) and guests attend the International Center of Photography's 26th annual Infinity Awards at Pier 60.

accelerated exponentially. The company's stock price hit an all-time high of 351.13 in January 2022. But during the pandemic, Estée Lauder struggled and is today in turnaround mode under CEO Stéphane de La Faverie, who took the reins this January.

"Leonard Lauder was beloved by many and will be missed tremendously. To our employees at The Estée Lauder Companies, he was an inspiration and a champion," said de La Faverie. "To the industry, he was an icon and pioneer, earning respect worldwide. His energy and vision helped shape our company and will continue to do so for generations to come. He was a deeply compassionate leader who cared profoundly about every person in the company. I feel privileged to have

worked with Leonard, who has been the best mentor I could have dreamt to learn from. He will be remembered by all of us."

As for Freda, after a few years at the company, he said, "The most lasting lesson I learned from Leonard Lauder is that even though we live in a world where products and consumers are more and more in control, the reality is brands and companies are defined by their distribution strategies and those strategies are built on trust and relationships."

Relationships, indeed. Leonard Lauder made hand-written thank-you notes on blue cards ubiquitous. Jane Lauder, who held numerous senior positions at the company during her time there and Lauder's other niece, pointed out that

when he traveled, he left a trail of thank-you messages addressed to employees and acquaintances. "His famous notes found their way all over the world," she said.

Lauder's influence has always remained palpable. Back in the '70s and '80s, when the company was locked in a market share war with L'Oréal, he was known for his vision and maintaining a long-range viewpoint.

Lauder was long known as a lifelong innovator and ground breaker, overseeing the launch of one brand after another — such as Clinique, Aramis, Lab Series Skincare for Men, Prescriptives and Origins.

He also had a knack for generally picking winners to buy. During the indie boom of the '90s, he led the company through a series of key acquisitions that later proved to be building blocks of the company's future.

But the company was not always on the leading edge. The '70s and '80s was the heyday of designer fragrances, but Lauder seemed to sit out the licensing game. By the '90s, Lauder said he had wished he had entered the fray sooner. "The only thing that I regret," he said, "is that when the designer movement came in, I didn't overrule the family and demand that we start taking up designer names."

Lauder didn't elaborate, but he later mentioned that the company had indeed signed a contract with a fashion designer, Emanuel Ungaro, in 1970. But there was a difference of opinion involving Ungaro and Estée, on fragrance direction. "I decided that there wasn't enough room for two very, very

strong points of view." Lauder recalled in 1995. "So we quietly gave up the contract."

Eventually, attitudes changed with a shift of winds. A deal was signed in 1994 with Tommy Hilfiger, ushering in a new era for the company, which by 2019 boasted seven designer nameplates, including Tom Ford, Michael Kors, Donna Karan, Ermenegildo Zegna and Tory Burch, all powerful brands. While most of those licenses are now owned by other companies, the Tom Ford brand has become integral to Lauder's growth.

"Leonard was a father figure to me. We were very close friends for almost 40 years," said Hilfiger. He was an amazing mentor to me throughout the years. We built an incredible fragrance business over the years, beginning with Tommy and Tommy Girl.

"After the success of those two, many more fragrances and perfumes followed," Hilfiger recalled. "It was such an exciting opportunity to work with such a phenomenal family business.

"Leonard also taught me so much about art over the years," the designer continued. "He was the consummate gentleman, and Evelyn was an unforgettable friend, as well. Words cannot describe how much I will miss him."

But there were changes that ran deeper than nameplates. Lauder's devotion to the prestige market meant that a different business model had to be invented. Unlike some multichannel companies like L'Oréal, which can cascade down ingredient ▶



Leonard Lauder, Aerin Lauder Zinterhofer and Michael Kors attend the Breast Cancer Research Foundation's 2009 Hot Pink Party at the Waldorf-Astoria.



Elizabeth Hurley, Mr. Leonard Lauder, Victoria Beckham attend The Breast Cancer Research Foundation's Annual Hot Pink Party on May 12, 2017 in New York City.



Executive Leonard Lauder answers questions and poses for photographs during an interview with WWD on May 27, 2016.



Leonard Lauder attends The Fresh Air Fund Annual Spring Benefit: Camp Tommy 20th Anniversary Celebration at the Ziegfeld Ballroom in New York on May 22, 2019.

innovations from higher-priced products to economical mass brands, thus amortizing the R&D costs, Lauder's focus was strictly on the upper market. Thus the marketing attack was organized on a horizontal basis with sister and brother brands attacking competitors shoulder to shoulder as quickly as possible.

"Everything in the Lauder organization operates on cross-fertilization," Lauder said. "A duty-free idea winds up in [the Lauder store] in Las Vegas. The Vegas ideas wind up at Color on Three [Bloomingdale's cosmetics counter]. These ideas will wind up in Prague or Budapest and those ideas

will perhaps wind up one day in China."

This strategy was fine-tuned when it came to product development. A star example shone brightly in the early '90s during the alpha-hydroxy and salicylic acid boom. Lauder launched one such product after another in one division after another as rapidly as the labs could churn them out.

"The Lauder corporation [got] extremely high marks for being fast on its feet with the alpha-hydroxy trend," observed Allen Burke, then divisional merchandise manager of Dayton's, Hudson's and Marshall Field's in

Minneapolis. "It was the single biggest trend to hit the market in 10 years."

Leonard Lauder once reminisced about some of the defining moments for the company. "If I had to choose one, it was probably about 1962, when the Estée Lauder brand started to really take off," he said. "To see our business go ahead 45 or 50 percent per month per year was incredible. It was exhausting but incredible. That was the first major pivotal moment. The second was seeing the success of our international expansions and ventures."

The third pivotal period came when Lauder's multibrand strategy began to click, and the fourth came with the acquisition of influential, dynamic brands like MAC and Bobbi Brown and "seeing them hit a new stride and a new era of growth," Lauder recalled.

In later decades, around 2014, the acquisition of a new wave of indie brands—like Le Labo, Editions de Parfums Frédéric Malle, Kilian, Too Faced, and Glamglow—brought a new Millennial audience. Earlier acquisitions, like Smashbox, gave the company a foothold in the newly booming direct-selling market. By 2019, Lauder listed a total portfolio of 29 brands on its website.

His curiosity, however, extended beyond new brands. His passport was well-worn; he was a ceaseless traveler. Lauder could just as easily be found in Hong Kong haggling with a publisher over a magazine ad placement or calmly sitting in Moscow's Red Square studying shoppers bustling by.

He was the grandmaster of the prestige game and reveled in the global nature of the competition. He often said the beauty business for him was like playing "a multidimensional game of chess. You

move along one plane, which is maybe your national plane. You deal in multiple other planes, which are different nations, different continents, different brands and different channels of distribution."

That was an apt description of the kaleidoscopic mental moves required to compete on a grand scale with powerhouses like L'Oréal in Europe and Shiseido in Japan, not to mention Unilever, LVMH and Procter & Gamble.

Among the elements he mastered was the power of language and Lauder chose his words carefully in giving interviews.

One of his favorite sayings was, "If you can't see the future, you can't get there. It's as simple as that."

"Leonard Lauder literally created the prestige cosmetics business," remarked Jane Hertzmark Hudis, executive vice president and chief brand officer at Lauder, when asked what she learned from him.

"His lessons are as meaningful today as when I started," she said in a 2010 interview. "Brand equity is everything and without it, nothing else matters. Protect it, cherish it—never ever let it slip away. Leonard believe(d) strongly in the power of intuition, the power of creativity and the power of a woman," she said.

That view was held by many, not the least by John Demsey, Lauder's former executive group president. "Leonard was unquestionably one of the greatest architects in prestige beauty and has established the entire business paradigm that we live in today. Aspiration, desire, creativity, product innovation, point of sale, style and effective advertising and communication were the cornerstones of Leonard's repertoire." ■

Leonard Lauder, Aerin Lauder Zinterhofer and Michael Kors photograph by Steve Elchner; Lauder, Judy Lauder and Tommy Hilfiger by Andrew H Walker; Interview with WWD by George Chinise; Lauder attends The Fresh Air Fund Annual Spring Benefit by Leslie Moreland



Leonard Lauder, Judy Lauder and Tommy Hilfiger attend the 3rd Annual WWD Honors, awards and dinner on Oct. 30, 2018 in New York City.

MEN'S

# Sease Presses on Retail Expansion and Tennis

## ● Franco and Giacomo

Loro Piana's performance brand cut the ribbon of a unit in Paris in the lead-up to a tennis-centric capsule collection and activation during Milan Fashion Week.

BY SANDRA SALIBIAN

**MILAN** – Sease has landed in the City of Lights.

The Milan-based performance lifestyle brand geared to the mountains, seas and cities has opened its first store in Paris, a 1,237-square-foot unit nestled in Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. This adds to existing units in Milan, Geneva and Dubai, as well as high-end ski destinations like St. Moritz, Gstaad, Courchevel, Verbier and Kitzbühel, and resort ones such as Forte Dei Marmi and Sardinia.

In an interview, Franco Loro Piana – who launched the label with his brother Giacomo in 2018 after working at his family's luxury textile company until it was sold to LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton for 2 billion euros in 2013 – underscored the strategic role of the location and the French market overall, especially in further enhancing Sease's positioning and brand awareness.

For the interior concept, the Sease team continued to work with Swiss designer Sebastiano Tosi and his studio, following the blueprint of the other Sease units that blend natural materials, including teak wood and upholstered furniture, with carbon fiber elements.

Novelty in the format will be introduced with the other store opening planned for this year. To be unveiled around November, a unit in Monte Carlo will come with a terrace, adding an outdoor space to the retail experience. Loro Piana plots to dedicate the area to hospitality-leaning activities to further express the lifestyle ethos of the brand.

Info-tainment and digital implementation that could enable customers to learn more about the brand are planned for the Sease store expected to open in Abu Dhabi in February 2026.

"The Middle East is a market of great importance for us. After the store we opened at Dubai Mall last year and the positive feedback we received, we decided to pursue this opportunity, too," said Loro Piana.

According to the executive, Europe – the company's best-performing market at the moment given the concentration of Sease stores in Italy and Switzerland – still has room for growth, especially in cities like London and summer resort destinations such as Saint-Tropez, Portofino, Capri and Taormina.

The U.S. is the next big target. The brand is already sold in key retailers and tested the pop-up format locally, but Loro Piana is aiming to have a retail presence there in the next two to three years.

Ditto for South Korea and Japan. "It's been two years that we've started to commit deeper in these countries. They are still small markets for us but with a lot of potential considering the nature of our products and the aesthetic codes of the brand," said Loro Piana.

By the end of the year Sease will have 11 retail locations – the one in Verbier will close in October – and Loro Piana predicted the brand's retail network will reach between 20 and 30 doors in five years, "considering that for the U.S. alone, if you want to have a minimum of critical mass, you have to have at least five stores."

As for wholesale, the executive doesn't envision "more doors than we currently



Former tennis champion Feliciano López stars in the Sease campaign dedicated to the tennis kit capsule collection.



The Sease store in Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris.

have: we would like to consolidate the relationship with these partners, which are the most important, and grow in terms of our presence there in a way that is even more curated."

Sease is available in 100 doors globally, including the likes of Bergdorf Goodman, Harrods, Isetan and Antonia, to name a few.

Speaking of Antonia, the high-end retailer's outpost at the Portrait hotel here will team with Sease for the launch of a tennis-centric see now, buy now capsule collection during Milan Men's Fashion Week later this month.

In addition to the pop-up installation, the brand will stage the Sease Tennis Club for the occasion, taking over the luxury hotel's courtyard to set up a tennis court and host activations from June 21 to 23. These will culminate on the final day with an exhibition match with former tennis champion and Sease ambassador Feliciano López, to be followed by a cocktail party.

"We're so excited of this activation. It's the first time we're really doing something important during Milan Fashion Week, so we're stepping into the fashion scene," said Loro Piana. "We have this passion for tennis and there's also all this hype around this sport, so it felt like the right moment for this project."

In truth, Loro Piana's link to tennis stretches farther back than the current trend. Three years ago, the brothers set the annual Sease Tennis Cup in Portofino as a moment of sport, entertainment and connection for the brand's community. "During the last edition we thought of bringing all these elements also to the product, with a dedicated kit," said Loro Piana.

"Sease is a lifestyle brand conceived to reconnect with nature and outdoor experiences...like skiing, sailing, surfing," he continued. "We never claimed to be a sports brand but to offer a wardrobe with a high content of design, tech and performance for everyday life in the city and outside of it, from the mountains to the sea. Tennis is a proper sport but, compared to others, is a bearer of elegance and tradition, which are values resonating also with our brand."

López is the embodiment of such a spirit. A Sease customer in Madrid, he was introduced to Loro Piana, who praised his charisma and the way he's still involved in the sport even after retirement, since he holds key roles as tournament director of the Mutua Madrid Open and Davis Cup Final 8. Now he can add another as face of the Sease campaign dedicated to the tennis capsule.

Launching on June 21 at Antonia and

Sease's online and brick-and-mortar stores, the collection is designed for men and women and made of three key looks crafted from natural and sustainable fabrics, such as merino wool, hemp and linen.

The Club look nods to Wimbledon and grass courts with its strict white palette. It features a polo shirt with details in Solaro, Sease's distinctive technical fabric boasting anti-UV technology and water-repellent characteristics. A cable-knit reversible vest, hemp shorts with a built-in belt and a casual blazer add to the look, while the women's counterpart includes a sleeveless polo minidress with a pleated skirt and a hybrid jacket in hemp and Solaro.

The Pro option is inspired by fast hard courts with shades of gray contrasting with the iridescence of Solaro fabrics, and a reversible pinstripe vest nodding to Sease's signature blend of sartorial codes and functionality.

The Resort look, inspired by red clay courts, includes a linen-cotton jersey polo shirt with nylon inserts and turquoise seersucker shorts. Two tennis bags combining performance materials like Dynema with Italian leather craftsmanship, caps and towels round out the collection.

Overall, Sease's bestsellers range from its outerwear and elevated leisurewear – like pin-striped hoodies and cashmere tracksuits – to casual tailoring with a high-tech and performance element. These attract a core target of men ages 30 to 60, but the brand has opened up to a female audience as well with the introduction of its ski capsule in 2022.

Loro Piana said he's looking to embrace a sharper approach to product and streamline the ready-to-wear offering both to give a neater image of the brand and make room for the untapped potential of womenswear and accessories.

For the former, he hopes to implement essential staples for every season, also to answer stockists' demands. As for the latter, although in the past the brand has collaborated on specific categories with specialists – including Sebago for footwear, for example – Loro Piana is eyeing expansion on its own for products ranging from shoes to luggage.

MENTALITIES

MEN'S  
**Average Boys Club Is Calling for a Hot Boy Summer**

● The brand's summer 2025 collection was shot in Dudley, a town in the West Midlands of England, where a cropped T-shirt or a jockstrap could easily cause a stir.

BY HIKMAT MOHAMMED

**LONDON** – Sex sells and nobody understands this better than the queer community. Average Boys Club, a London-based apparel brand founded by Jordan Sloan and Chris Ashley, partners in life and work, is playing into the flirty, homoerotic tropes of the '80s through the clothes and visual aesthetic of the brand.

For their upcoming summer 2025 collection, the Italian dancer and model Paolo Busti brings the pieces to life in images shot by Jesse Glazzard in Dudley, a town in the West Midlands of England, where a cropped T-shirt or jockstrap could easily cause a stir.

"Average Boys Club comes from a gap in the market. It's a brand for and by the queer community with a story, narrative and clothing that's purpose driven and elevated enough to be represented in a Dover Street Market or Selfridges," Sloan said in an interview.

"I find that the queer community is so creative and we're the creative directors, videographers or photographers, but when it comes to contemporary, commercial lifestyle brands, for some reason [they're] very underwear focused and there tends to be no apparel brand that can be taken seriously in the broader wholesale context," he added.

The brand wants to spotlight members of the community through its collections – be it the models in the look books or the

photographers taking those photos.

"The queer community is a niche culture, but at the same time, it's mass culture. There's 'RuPaul's Drag Race,' Charli XCX and Troye Sivan – we rule the world, but there's still a bit of a disconnect," Sloan said.

He was also inspired by how the queer community navigates everyday life in its sartorial choices, from a tight T-shirt tucked into jeans; a cropped T-shirt that isn't too short paired with baggy trousers, or a backward cap.

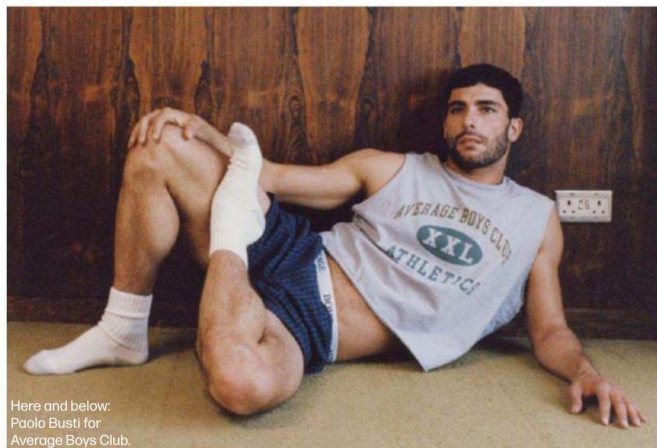
Average Boys Club is adopting the clichés with added humor and a playfulness that's nostalgic.

Even though everything around the brand has a tinge of seduction, Sloan says that Average Boys Club isn't about sex, but rather nods to a jock or athletic mentality with its apparel offerings of dyed T-shirts; boxer shorts; jockstraps, and socks.

There's plenty of tongue-in-cheek moments within the pieces. One of the gray T-shirts has a Harvard graphic, but Sloan has printed the word "Harder" at the top; the Ford logo has been used so it says "Boys" and the Property of XXL logo, which has been changed to "Average Boys Club XXXL Athletics."

"When we started researching, it's all based on the premise of an aesthetic of this '80s boy-next-door JFK Jr. type or a woman throwing on their boyfriend's T-shirt, which is how I dress. I wear a pair of Bottega Veneta trousers with a trash T-shirt and a backward hat. It's a sort of a juxtaposition of average boyfriend elements with more elevated, curated pieces," Sloan said.

"Everything in the collection triggers a feeling of, 'yeah, I know that,' and I know how that's going to make me feel. It's something easy to wear or something that



Here and below: Paolo Busti for Average Boys Club.

you found in the bottom of your closet – that's the emotion that I'm trying to convey," he added.

The collection ranges from 15 pounds to 65 pounds.

Sloan took a conscious decision when putting the prices in place.

"I've been in the fashion industry for 15 years and I truly believe that desirability is driven by relevance. Relevance has nothing to do with price point. The general opinion of a brand is agnostic of price point and I'm actually finding that due to greed and public companies needing to always show growth, this is the first time in history we've really seen the industry outpace their consumer," he said.

Sloan started the brand using his own savings up until October 2024, when Charl Clark, founder of Supa Model Management, came on as a director and investor.



MEN'S  
**Father's Day Lunch Raises \$1.58M**

● Belk CEO Don Hendricks, entrepreneur Marc D'Amelio, personality Nate Bursleson and firefighter David Dennis received this year's awards.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

"It's a scam, it's a scam."

That's what David Dennis' oldest daughter thought when she heard that her father had been selected as the recipient of

this year's Ashok C. Sani All-Star Dad award.

But she was wrong – it was legit.

Dennis, a firefighter and paramedic from Kentucky – and a father of seven – had indeed been selected to be honored at the 83rd Father of the Year awards luncheon in New York on Thursday after his daughter Nora wrote an essay. "When people think of heroes, they often imagine capes and superpowers. But my hero wears boots, a badge and the title of Dad," she wrote.

Dennis was among the four fathers who received the awards this year along with

Don Hendricks, chief executive officer of Belk; Marc D'Amelio, digital creator and entrepreneur, and Nate Bursleson, co-host of "CBS Mornings" and analyst for "The NFL Today" show on CBS Sports.

The event, which raised \$1.58 million for the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, drew a wide swath of menswear executives including Oscar Feldenkreis, CEO of Perry Ellis International, whose father George Feldenkreis was recognized at the event. The elder Feldenkreis passed away in February.

As always, the luncheon had its share of teary moments as the honorees relayed their experiences in parenting. D'Amelio, whose daughters Dixie and Charli are both social media stars in their own rights, said his father was absent when he was growing up so he was determined not to repeat that experience when he had children. "I've spent my life filling that void and being the best dad that I can be," he said.

Hendricks said that despite his success in the retail business, he believes the best thing he's ever done is fathering his two daughters. "It's the most important job I'll ever have," he said. It also means that he cherishes "face mask night," when his youngest daughter helps him apply the mask to hydrate and exfoliate his skin every Sunday.

Bursleson was joined by his wife Atoya and youngest daughter Mia. His sons, Nehemiah and Nathaniel, were off playing football and sent video messages. He was awarded the honor by his "CBS Mornings" cohost Gayle King, who also did double duty as emcee of the luncheon.

King said Bursleson was "unabashedly the biggest cheerleader of family" that she's ever met, adding that close to 50 percent of Black families come from single-parent homes.

Bursleson said he learned how to be a father from his dad, who was the quintessential role model to him and his three brothers. Although they "ate him out of house and home, our door was always open" to other neighborhood boys without fathers who needed some guidance, he said.

Growing up like that, he said, made him appreciate the "sacred responsibility of raising good humans" that he strives to achieve with his children.



Heidi, Marc and Dixie D'Amelio.



Belk CEO Don Hendricks with his family.

## [CULTURE CORNER]

# Louai Alama Talks TikTok, Modeling And Gen Z's 'Big Touch on Everything'



Jihan and Louai Alama

● The Lebanese model started traveling internationally as a youngster with his musician father Ragheb.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

**More often than not**, the model-influencer-entrepreneur moniker is an imbalanced equation for many Gen Zers. But Louai Alama appears to be living up to that professional triad.

Born in Lebanon and raised in Dubai, the 24-year-old's tousled hair and chiseled face is recognizable to many fashion types and TikTok followers. Others know his surname, due to his famous father Ragheb Alama and his mother Jihan, who started the jewelry company Djihan 20 years ago. Globe-trotting from a young age has widened Louai Alama's world view, which he now applies to his three main pursuits: modeling, social media and jewelry design.

Reached by the seaside in Glyfada, Greece, outside of Athens, Alama hadn't retreated to the place that he has owned there for eight-plus years to relax. "When I'm in Paris, it's always super busy so to get the admin work done, I need to be here," he explained, seated in a white Under Armour shirt and wearing a few bracelets from his Djihan line.

Although he started modeling professionally through a deal with IMG in 2021, he is now represented by

D'Management in Milan, Models 1 in London and Marilyn in Paris. Alama said he decided to part ways with IMG, because "we didn't have the same goals. I have two sides — modeling and social media. A big agency like IMG would always try to take you toward the influencer style stuff," Alama said. "That wasn't really what I was all about with all of my ventures."

From his view, the modeling industry has a lack of models of Middle Eastern heritage, especially male ones. Looking to use his modeling "to be that bridge between East and West," Alama said most of the brands he meets with are interested in just that, due to the shortage. He made his runway debut with Giorgio Armani in June 2023 and landed a *Vogue Man Arabia* cover last year.

After graduating from the Lebanese American University in Beirut, he studied in London, New York and Miami. Alama also has lived in Paris and Madrid, and routinely returns to Dubai, where he was raised, to see his brother Khaled. Alama and his mother spend a good amount of time together working on Djihan, when she is not with her singer husband. Alama also cofounded Plus Two Ventures "to incubate and operate" influencer and celebrity brands. Djihan is within that entity.

What's most intriguing to him in the fashion specter now is how "all these fashion brands are trying to be a part of TikTok trends, and to grow their platforms



Natasha Poly, Alama and Mohammed Ai Turki at Naomi Campbell's birthday party in May.



Alama wearing a Djihan necklace.

in different ways. Look at Loewe. It makes you think of a nice fashion brand that does not have a low price point. But if you look at their TikTok, it's all of this really humorous stuff," he said. "Jacquemus set the tone for all other brands to follow that rhythm, including myself to build a community. Everything in the world right now has a big Gen Z touch, which has made things not so serious somehow."

His lip-syncing has led to a few viral moments including a TikTok video of him singing "Slowly Drifting" on a beach with a sunset in the distance that has racked up more than 7.2 million views. Djihan's branding is sunset-inspired including a gradient-colored box. "Let me show you," he said, before going to another area in the room to find a Djihan shopping bag. Watching sunsets is something that his close-knit family enjoys doing together, he added. "Even in the logo, after the D, there is a dot that is made up of four little cubes, which of course is relevant to the Cube Mirage collection. But it's also because we're a family of four and I believe my family is the core of everything. And four is a lucky number," Alama said.

Rather than drop a full collection, Alama has created "Cube Mirage," a compact assortment of bracelets and necklaces, so that shoppers know to buy now or they will miss out. The second drop will debut Tuesday with prices starting at \$1,900 for 18-karat rose, white or yellow gold bracelets and capping off at \$19,800 for an 18-karat rose, white or yellow gold pavé pendant necklace. There will also be rings and earrings. Alama also designs jewelry with colored diamonds and other high-end pieces for private clients, including many who have been loyal to his mother for 20 years.

Djihan aims to open its first pop-up store in August at the luxury hotel Cavo Tagoo in Mykonos. Aside from the high-season timing, the Greek island is prime territory for sunset watching. He's considering opening a temporary shop during Paris Fashion Week in March where he hopes to replicate the success he's already had with the brand. The first Cube Mirage drop was said to have sold out within hours.

Interestingly, Alama said he is "very surprised" that most of Djihan orders are coming from the U.S. But as a result, his goal is to make the brand "the new Van Cleef & Arpels."

Instead of linking up with retailers immediately, Alama, who has mentor friends Stateside, is focused on building the community for his brand to maintain

its exclusivity. Alama added that Galeries Lafayette and Mytheresa reached out. He also has befriended Naomi Campbell, whom he met through mutual friends during Paris Fashion Week, and wound up in the same social circles at the amfAR Gala and other events at the Cannes Film Festival. "She's like a big sister to me. I love her so much. She was not letting go of me [laughs.] She was so cute. We just really vibed a lot," he said.

Campbell has offered Alama "lots of advice and she's obsessed" with his jewelry, so the designer is planning some pieces for her, he said. What the pair really bonded over was her life advice and their shared sobriety. "We were talking about how people who get into drugs or alcohol go on a certain path. She was very happy to see that I don't drink or do drugs. Drinking is fine. All my friends drink. I'm really young, but people my age have the tendency to be dragged into something that's bad for them," he said. "The reason I am so focused about everything I do is because I am sober in every way possible. That is something that I really appreciated about Naomi."

Alama also has Campbell to thank indirectly for his latest brand campaign. While celebrating at Campbell's birthday party aboard a boat in Monte Carlo, the Russian model Natasha Poly spotted the necklace he was wearing. "Natasha was obsessed with it. She said, 'Since I can't buy this now, let's do a mini campaign right now,'" he recalled. The duo grabbed another party guest, the photographer Matthew Brookes, and went downstairs and styled an impromptu "mini shoot. It just happened. It was really hilarious," Alama said.

Alama, who works out for five or six times a week, gets a lot of social media attention for his fitness posts, too. His secret is that any day of indulgence should always be followed by a day of clean eating — a trick he learned from his mother. "And obviously, working out is the best thing ever for the mind. I burn out without working out," Alama said, adding that his hour to 90-minute workouts include a few Pilates session each week.

"It's important to also do things that keep you flexible. As much as I can lift at the gym, Pilates is not the same. During my first days of Pilates, I would look around and all of the girls were performing so much better than me," he said. "It really works different muscles that you'd never feel otherwise. Doing different things like that is really important as well."

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# The Reviews



## Hermès

The free-spirited woman illustrated in Hermès' fall 2025 collection in Paris has evolved into a fearless urban creature in the second chapter of the collection, which was unveiled against the dazzling waterfront of Shanghai's futuristic North Bund Bay.

For Nadège Vanhée, artistic director of Hermès womenswear, modularity and function are key for the adventurous woman she had in mind.

Even though Vanhée did not get to visit Shanghai for a research trip, she had a clear image of the Chinese woman and is aware of her quirks.

"We are very close with the Chinese market, and the Chinese market was the first supporter of fashion; it is also one that has the most openness to technology and modernity," said Vanhée, who also acknowledged the viral Labubu on Birkin phenomenon, the former a fluffy figurine owned by the Chinese start-up Popmart.

The teaser film for chapter two, released on WeChat a week ahead of the show, saw Chinese model He Cong and gang traipsing down Shanghai's iconic steel bridges linking two sides of the Bund, which speaks to the idea of a woman who lives fast and demands fashion that moves just as swiftly.

"I decided to push more of this 'outdoor meets urban' concept, because I feel like Shanghai is all about this bustling energy where you have this ultra urbanism mixed with nature," said Vanhée.

Instead of a heavy emphasis on leather artistry, utilitarian outerwear became the focal point for chapter two. Key pieces included reversible quilted or shearling jackets; puffer jackets with leather collar braiding – a house signature inspired by equestrian plaits – and generous, enveloping coats in double-faced cashmere, which can be zipped halfway to reveal the waistline or unzipped fully to unveil a cropped jacket and a skirt. ▶



Reflecting on the future of fashion, Vanhée continued to describe the latest coat designs in a way that an Apple executive would describe the tech brand's latest device – user experience is key. “The idea of timelessness, for me, is very connected with flexibility, modularity,” Vanhée said. That flexibility not only transcends style and geography but also age groups. “It has the idea of being with you all along,” she observed. “The modularity is also a way to express your creativity,” Vanhée continued. “You have so many different interface with the

look, given the context, you can definitely wear it as four or five different looks. You want to look cool in a goth party, you got it; you need to go to the golf club, you got it, this is like the four-by-four coat,” Vanhée said, wrapping the bottom half of the coat around her head and then neck. Empathic fashion is what Vanhée is getting at. Textural elements, conveyed through sensuous knits in autumnal shades of warm reds, fiery orange, clay white, and inky blues, were enhanced by a layered composition. On top of knit shorts, models often had two cashmere sweaters



guests, including global press, celebrities, influencers and VIP customers.

The runway show, Vanhée's first in China, came amid an ongoing economic downturn. Despite slower traffic, Hermès remains a top choice among Chinese luxury shoppers.

In the first quarter, Hermès experienced a “very good” Chinese New Year holiday sales period and said sales were up 1 percent in the region. In Japan, sales soared 17.2 percent, some of those driven by Chinese tourism.

In recent months, the company has been training the spotlight on its craftsmanship. In May, the brand organized the traveling exhibition “Hermès in the Making” in Shenzhen, which brought the curious public and its loyal customers face-to-face with the unsung heroes behind it.

Further exploring its ties with Chinese craftsmanship and culture, Hermès worked with a Chinese ink and wash artist Zeng Jianyong, who recreated a Chinese garden-themed dreamscape on the third floor of the Hermès Maison Shanghai.

Friday's Shanghai showcase also included an eclectic mix of stars and personalities. They included “The White Lotus” cast member Leslie Bibb; legendary actor Tony Leung and wife Carina Lau; Chinese actors such as Zhang Ruonan, Qiu Tian and Tong Yao; tennis legend Li Na; Olympics gymnastics champion Wu Minxia; well-known reporters Chen Luyu and Zhou Yijun; news anchor Zhou Tao; ballet star Tan Yuanyuan, and more.

After the show, the stage was swiftly transformed into a party venue featuring a surprise musical performance by St. Vincent. — *Denni Hu*

wrapped around their waists, creating the effect of a handkerchief hem skirt. Layering outerwear, whether short or long, toughened up the sleek silhouette.

Silk scarves, also rendered in the iconic Dressage Tressage graphic motifs, were styled as ear warmers over baseball caps, secured with earrings, or looped around the neck. Layered as tube tops over silk button-downs, they evoked a Miu Miu-esque appeal. The looks were often finished off with mini Kelly bags – often slung across the chest – and paired with laced-up brogue boots or glittery riding boots, capturing playful aspirations of the Hermès customer.

“Globally, we are in a culture of wearing high [fashion] with sporty things, there is a certain lightheartedness or the lightness of the house,” Vanhée said. “She is ready to gallop.”

The elevated runway stage, an orange superstructure that unfolded along the 3,200-foot waterfront, seated around 800

**BEAUTY**

# L'Oréal Launches Campaign for World Refill Day



L'Oréal's campaign for World Refill Day.

- It is the beauty giant's first cross-divisional, multibrand, multichannel activation, called #JoinTheRefillMovement.

BY JENNIFER WEIL

**PARIS** – L'Oréal is poised to launch a corporate campaign for refills, in tandem with World Refill Day on Monday. The campaign will be the group's first cross-divisional, multibrand, multichannel activation, called #JoinTheRefillMovement.

It federates a dozen key brands from L'Oréal, including Lancôme, Yves Saint Laurent Beauté, Kiehl's, Mugler, Maison Margiela Fragrances, Prada, Valentino Beauty, L'Oréal Paris, Kérastase, L'Oréal Professionnel and La Roche-Posay.

There are to be related advertisements and social media content, alongside the hashtag the group conceived as a call to action.

The campaign is meant to raise the awareness about refills' benefits.

According to L'Oréal, 78 percent of consumers express interest in purchasing more sustainable products, but many are still not aware of how refill options can help the environment.

The campaign highlights benefits – to both the planet and pocket. For instance, there's the fact that every time someone purchases a 100-ml. refill, rather than two 50-ml. bottles of La Vie Est Belle Elixir, there's a savings of 73 percent on glass, 66 percent on plastic and 61 percent on cardboard.

"It makes the consumer the hero," said Blanca Juti, chief corporate affairs and engagement officer at L'Oréal. "They can really take a stance. What's very exciting is that we're calling the consumer to join the movement with 12 brands. We have all categories – hair products, makeup, skin care and fragrance.

"We're doing it all over the world, in all regions, offline, online for the World Refill Day," she continued.

L'Oréal's refill campaign is part of an

overarching, long-term sustainability commitment that includes reducing its environmental footprint and offering more eco-friendly options to consumers.

"We're always at the forefront of the latest technologies, latest innovations, really keeping our eye on the horizon about how we can continue to improve not only our operations, but also our ecosystem around us," said Ezgi Barcenas, chief sustainability officer at L'Oréal.

"In everything we do, we try to lower our emissions, environmental footprint and impact," she explained. "Sustainability is woven in the product design all the way to how we bring products to market."

Last year 49 percent of the company's plastic packaging was refillable, reusable, recyclable or compostable. L'Oréal also said its manufacturing facilities globally have been adapted to accommodate a 17-time increase in the number of refillable options over the past five years.

"Refills is a true new mindset in

developing products for us in our four divisions," said Jacques Playe, global head of packaging and product development at L'Oréal. "We have a very strong product design activity to provide refill solutions for all the categories of product on offer."

Designing refills, he said, "pushes us to innovate and to reinvent ourselves."

Take, for instance, a fragrance bottle. In the past, its pump was not removable, so L'Oréal worked with glassmakers and pump suppliers to create a new standard, with a pump that can be taken out.

"We propose this as a new standard for the full cosmetics and perfume industry," Playe said.

For the group, the refill campaign is an opportunity and responsibility to help drive behaviors in more circular models, according to Barcenas.

"In tackling that, what we're trying to solve for is sustainability, desirability and performance," she said. "We're really excited about this refill campaign that we're going big on this year."

This will involve ongoing activations and educational content, including brand spokespersons explaining how to refill products and people who create the refills.

"Hopefully with campaigns like this we can really make a change," Juti said.

Meanwhile, refill solutions will continue to be expanded across all of L'Oréal's product categories. Playe explained the challenge with refills is to reconcile three main issues: to keep product performance, desirability and sustainability.

"We do think that the refill is a very smart way to keep the premiumness of our luxury brands, while using fewer resources," he said.

Among the group's products with refills already is Lancôme Génifique serum with a refillable bottle that saves about 70 percent of the weight of the parent packaging.

**BUSINESS**

## Five Modes Boutiques Reopen Under New Company

- Garments Milano leased the Modes company's retail branch and reopened units in Milan, Portofino, Porto Cervo, Forte Village and Saint Moritz.

BY MARTINO CARRERA

**MILAN** – Italian retailer Modes is back in business, under a new, recently formed entity called Garments Milano.

The new company has leased some of the existing Modes boutiques and reopened units in Portofino, Porto Cervo and Forte Village in Italy, as well as Saint Moritz in Switzerland. A fifth unit, on Milan's Via Brera, is to reopen this weekend.

As reported, Modes was placed under judicial liquidation after failing to carry forward with its business restructuring plan last May.

Amid slowing sales and a deteriorated business environment, the company had filed for a "compositions with creditors" procedures with a Milan court in May 2024. In the final verdict of that procedure, the court deemed Modes no longer eligible for the court-mediated continuity procedure and ruled in favor of a judicial liquidation.

The Modes trademark was not part of the procedure, allowing Garments Milano to use it for the new course after leasing the Modes company's retail branch.



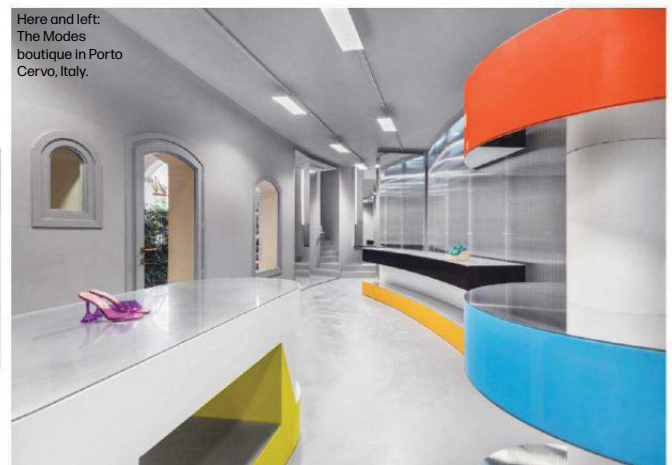
"We are hitting the market with five marquee locations, and we will try to communicate our approach to fashion retail," Aldo Carpinteri, president of Modes, told WWD on Friday. "Our units are bound to become 'white boxes' in wonderful locations allowing niche and up-and-coming brands, which don't have the means to be in those places to show their identity, storytelling and products."

"We think being a pure retail player can make the difference," he offered.

Carpinteri highlighted consumer fatigue over big brands' offerings and pricing strategies, as well as mounting competition on the latter front by online players.

"People want to get into a boutique and find objects that are timeless and durable," he said.

"In the second half of 2025, we see a consolidation of the strategy. We are



Here and left: The Modes boutique in Porto Cervo, Italy.

planning to forge ties with brands on dedicated activations," he explained, sharing that a tie-up with Redemption is lined up at the Porto Cervo boutique. "We want to do more projects in this vein."

In the year between the filing of the composition with creditors procedure and the final liquidation verdict, Modes had already retooled its business and Carpinteri said that that formula was proven effective, winning in-store customers back. His aim is to build on that going forward.

Although falling short of the court expectations as part of the procedures, filings show that in the June to November 2024 period, average monthly revenues at

the retailer stood at 900,000 euros, and at 500,000 euros in December 2024 and January 2025.

At the peak of its pre-judicial procedure business success, Modes logged yearly sales of 150 million euros and operated 19 stores globally including units in Paris, Forte dei Marmi and Cagliari, Italy, and Gstaad, Switzerland.

The Italian company had tapped industry veteran Simon Whitehouse as its chief executive officer in March 2024. Whitehouse left the company last March.

Modes was established in 1971 by Carpinteri as a multibrand boutique in Trapani, on Italy's Sicily Island.

# LEADING VOICES

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## FASHION

# Save the Duck Named Outerwear Partner of U.S. Figure Skating Team

● The Italian outerwear specialist is outfitting the team, set to compete in the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy.

BY MARTINO CARRERA

**MILAN** – Save the Duck is already gearing up for the Winter Olympics.

The Italian brand, known for its animal-free padded jackets, is the official outerwear partner of the U.S. Figure Skating team, WWD can exclusively reveal. As part of the partnership, the brand will outfit the athletes and supporting staff with dedicated uniforms, including official team jackets as well as off-competition tracksuits and parkas, the former part of Save the Duck's Smartleisure lifestyle offering.

The team will wear uniforms in the lead-up and through the Winter Olympics, which will be held in 2026 in Italy, between tony ski resort destination Cortina D'Ampezzo and Milan.

"We're proud to partner with the U.S. Figure Skating team, championing a season rooted in respect, which represents the soul of the brand," said Nicolas Bargi, founder and chief executive officer of Save the Duck. "Respect" is the overarching theme of the brand's seasonal campaigns, which spotlight its responsible approach to animals, people and the environment.

"This collaboration allows us to highlight not only elite athleticism but also the powerful human journeys behind each performance, a sentiment woven into every product we create," Bargi said.

The warm-up official team jackets in navy blue are crafted from an ultra-thin,

breathable and bi-stretch blend of recycled and virgin polyester. They come with a full-zippered front and bear the U.S. Figure Skating and Save the Duck logos, in addition to the American flag.

"We are thrilled to welcome Save the Duck as U.S. Figure Skating's official outerwear partner," said Annie White, chief commercial officer of U.S. Figure Skating. "At the heart of the partnership is a shared mission: to empower the next generation to 'Leave Their Mark.'"

A range of dedicated editorial campaigns marking the partnership is to be unveiled in the lead-up to the Winter Olympics.

"Through dynamic digital experiences, sustainability spotlights and athlete collaborations, the campaign will showcase the fusion of fashion, function and values – reminding fans that what we wear and how we show up in the world both matter," White explained. "This partnership is about sparking creative, purpose-driven conversations, building community and elevating both sport and style on the road to Milan and beyond," she said.

Save the Duck was the first Italian fashion company to obtain B Corp status in July 2019. As reported, the outerwear specialist was acquired by two private investors in 2022.

Swiss beauty company L'Occitane Group's executive director and chairman

Elle Kam and Danny O'Shea, athletes of the U.S. Figure Skating team.



Reinold Geiger and former chief executive officer André J. Hoffmann – both already minority investors in Save the Duck – raised their stakes through their personal investment vehicles Société D'Investissements Cime S.A. and Anatra Investments Ltd., buying out the private equity fund Progressio SGR, which had controlled the outerwear brand since 2018.

Following the deal, the two investors own an 80 percent combined interest in the company, while the remainder is controlled by Save the Duck founder and CEO officer Bargi, who remains in that role.



The Save the Duck x U.S. Figure Skating team official jacket.



Camden Pulkinen, a U.S. Figure Skating team athlete.

## ACCESSORIES

# Aspinal of London Plots English Summer Takeover

● The brand is betting on the vintage-inspired aesthetic with more creative collaborations with British design talent planned for later in the year, said founder Iain Burton.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

**LONDON** – British accessories brand Aspinal of London is aiming to make

an impact throughout the high summer season with a six-month collaboration featuring Eliza and Amelia Spencer, the nieces of the late Princess Diana.

As new brand ambassadors, the Spencers on Monday appeared in the brand's latest '60s-inspired campaign, shot in a rustic cottage near Aspinal's headquarters in southwest Surrey, England.

Over the coming months they will also sport key pieces from the brand's "The Great British Season" collection at major



Eliza and Amelia Spencer star in new Aspinal of London campaign.

society events like Royal Ascot, Wimbledon and the Serpentine Summer Party.

"We have been wearing the brand for several years. Aspinal has a beautiful bag for every occasion and has regularly been our handbag accessory of choice at many red carpet and formal events," said the sisters, who were born in the U.K. and raised in South Africa. They relocated to the U.K. full time in 2021.

"We are excited for the advertising campaign to launch, as the team has created something very cool and iconic. And we are also looking forward to some of the other exciting moments that will be shared later this year," they added.

In an interview, Iain Burton, chairman and founder of Aspinal of London, said the Spencer sisters evoke the spirit of classic English icons from a bygone era, yet their refined English elegance feels modern and aligns with Aspinal's brand DNA.

"We've had a blossoming relationship with them in recent years, and 2025 marks the perfect moment to make our partnership official. They bring fresh energy to our heritage, helping us connect with new audiences who value timeless style with contemporary relevance. It's a natural evolution for the brand as we continue to grow both in the U.K. and internationally," he added.

He said the brand is betting on the structured and vintage-inspired aesthetic, as depicted in the new campaign in which the Spencer sisters can be seen slouching on a sofa, walking in the garden with a dog, and filming each other with a Super 8 Camera in a vintage Jaguar.

"Our best-performing styles are always the most timeless. Everlasting investment

pieces such as the Mayfair, London Tote and Lottie continue to resonate strongly with our customers around the world," he added.

The brand attracts a broad spectrum of customers ranging in age from 18 to 80, men and women, Burton said.

"Aspinal is sometimes referred to as London's best-kept secret, and our flagship store in Regent Street remains a regular destination for international visitors from around the world to explore and rest in our members' lounge, also loved by celebrities, royals and stylists in the know," Burton added.

According to recent Companies House filings, Aspinal of London saw revenues rise 9 percent to 38.6 million pounds in the year ending March 31, 2024, while adjusted EBITDA for the period registered a 27.4 percent fall to 5.3 million pounds.

The company said the drop was caused by a substantial increase in marketing expenditure deployed in seeding new international markets.

Burton touted that 2025 marks a new era for the brand.

"Their campaign is just the beginning, we have much more from the Spencers in planning and exciting creative collaborations with the best of British design talent planned for later in the year," he added.

In the filings, the brand noted it will continue to develop and grow sales in domestic and international e-commerce channels, enhance brand awareness, overall brand value and customer perception with marketing initiatives, and add product categories, like the fragrance line introduced last year, to generate future growth.

EXCLUSIVE

## Bradley Cooper, Maluma and Vinicius Junior Front Boss Bottled Beyond



Bradley Cooper for Boss Bottled Beyond

Boss Bottled Beyond

- The idea behind the scent is to speak to the next generation of Boss Bottled users.

BY JENNIFER WEIL

**PARIS** – The Boss Bottled franchise is expanding with the new Boss Bottled Beyond scent and a big-bang campaign featuring Bradley Cooper, Maluma and Vinicius Junior.

“It is a big milestone for the Boss brand,” said Jean Holtzmann, chief brands

officer at Coty Prestige, holder of the Boss fragrance license.

The original Boss Bottled eau de toilette was launched in 1998 and today the franchise ranks second in Europe and in the U.K., first in Germany and third in Spain among men’s scents.

“It has defined, in a way, the expression of masculinity since 1998,” said Holtzmann, adding with Boss Bottled Beyond the intention “was not really only to celebrate, but also to redefine with this

idea of: What is Boss Bottled? How do you redefine leadership? How do you redefine the images of success?”

The objective is also to speak to the next generation of Boss Bottled users. “Who is this next generation?” said Holtzmann. “What are they driven by? By purpose, creativity, this power of community.”

Boss Bottled campaigns generally star one talent and are about success. This new one tells the story of the three men, each doing what they do best – and supporting each other. Karim Huu Do, of “Last Night in Paris” fame, directed the spot.

“It’s not a depiction of masculinity, which was very one-way in the past,” said Holtzmann. “We wanted to have this idea: A boss recognizes a boss, and can share this community of mind, this community of spirit. This is a different way to discuss leadership.”

In 1998, leadership was primarily synonymous with corporate values, whereas today that’s hardly the case anymore. “There is a different way to inspire,” said Holtzmann.

The original Boss Bottled fragrance took inspiration from apple strudel, which paved the way for a new type of men’s scent. With Boss Bottled Beyond, the aim was to break olfactive codes once again. Dsm-irmenich perfumer Daphné Bugey, who has long worked closely with Boss, conjured up the idea of creating the first ginger-leather fragrance.

“It is very contemporary but also very surprising,” said Holtzmann, adding the

leather facet adds nobility and the ginger note, some tension. “It’s an olfactive adventure.”

Bugey crafted the Boss Bottled Beyond scent with fellow Dsm-irmenich perfumers Frank Voelkl and Bruno Jovanovic.

The Boss Bottled flacon was reworked, too, with new volume, glass weight and two bands wrapped around the neck. All the codes of the franchise were meant to be refreshed to go “one step beyond what had been done,” said Holtzmann.

Boss Bottled Beyond’s 100-ml. eau de parfum version will retail for 132 euros. The scent is to launch in travel retail first, on July 1, followed by other markets on Sept. 1. “It’s a worldwide launch,” said Holtzmann, adding this will be one of the largest introductions for the brand ever.

He declined to discuss projections, but industry sources estimate the new scent will generate 250 million euros in first-year retail sales.

Boss fragrances’ strongest markets are Europe and the Middle East, both in domestic distribution and in travel retail.

With Boss Bottled Beyond, the goal is to not be only where the franchise is already strong, but to develop in the United States, as well. “[It is] to grow where we already have a base, but taking the brand completely to the next level,” said Holtzmann.

He noted a big transformation of the Hugo Boss brand, in terms of image, over the past four years. “Boss has a very strong place in consumers’ mind,” said Holtzmann. “It’s important for brands that have that space, that have that role, to constantly reinvent how they talk about who they are.

“It’s not about changing what they stand for, but it’s about talking from one generation to another generation,” he said. “This is something really important.”

FASHION

## Groundbreaking Fashions Focus of Tokyo Exhibition

- The exhibit has been organized by well-known vintage store Laila and features about 50 designs by everyone from Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto to the Antwerp Six, John Galiano, Margiela and Alexander McQueen.

BY KELLY WETHERILLE

**TOKYO** – A virtual fashion museum owned by one of Japan’s most influential vintage stores is venturing into the physical realm with a new exhibit.

The exhibition features groundbreaking looks from a variety of Japanese and international designers, spanning the 1970s through to the 2000s.

The brainchild of buyer and curator Hideo Hashiura of the vintage store Laila, La Museum opened as a virtual fashion archive in July 2024. It staged a small, one-day exhibit at a forest villa in Nagano prefecture in May, thanks to a proposal by the well-known architect Kazuyo Sejima of SANAA, which designed the striking building. The museum’s latest exhibit is its first to last multiple days and to tell a visual story of a particular period in fashion history.

La Museum Shibuya opens Saturday for a two-week period in the basement of a nondescript office building just steps from one of Tokyo’s most bustling neighborhoods. The building’s demolition

is scheduled to begin at the end of the month, and so Hashiura and his team were given free reign over the space.

“We have been running the virtual museum for almost a year and have done a couple of exhibits on the history of fashion design,” Hashiura said. “But to really understand the detail and the design, the most important thing is to be able to see the clothes up close, as well as at eye level. If you’re looking up at the clothes, you miss the full picture.”

The Shibuya exhibit by La Museum is broken into five sections. Each has its own theme, but all of the mannequins are arranged at floor level, with visitors invited to move between and among them, providing a unique opportunity to see looks from all angles and just inches away. But still, Hashiura’s dream is to bring people even closer to these archival looks.

“I would love to do an exhibit with 1,000 mannequins all lined up in long rows, and with 50 fitting rooms also in a row, and to invite people to actually try on the clothes. It’s a fine line, because clothing is fragile and easily damaged by the oil on our fingers, perspiration and just general use, but also fashion is a product. It’s not art – it’s meant to be worn,” Hashiura said.

La Museum’s collection consists of about 7,000 pieces, all of which are by designers and brands that Hashiura and his team source for the Laila stores. The first Laila location opened in 2002, and it quickly became an arbiter of Japanese

vintage culture for its rare, hard-to-find runway pieces.

The exhibit at La Museum Shibuya features around 50 looks from La Museum’s online exhibit “1950s-2010s Part 2 History of Modern Fashion Design,” which opened in March and continues to run concurrently. Pieces from Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, Comme des Garçons, Kenzo and Kansai Yamamoto are displayed alongside designs by Alexander McQueen, Helmut Lang, John Galiano and Vivienne Westwood. Another section focuses on the Antwerp Six designers, while a Martin Margiela trench coat with a long tail stands before a photo installation by Maison Martin Margiela, which was only shown once before, at the Grand Palais in Paris in 2006.

On another wall in the space are projected images by photographer and editor Shoichi Aoki, known for his work on the Japanese street-style magazines

Street, Fruits and Tune. Screened from an old-school slide projector, the photos were captured in Paris on Oct. 19, 1989, documenting the runway and surrounding scenes of the Maison Martin Margiela spring 1990 collection. Next to this are seven mannequins dressed in looks from the same collection, using the same styling that was shown on the runway.

Hashiura said despite the time and effort required to install and then uninstall a physical exhibition such as this one, he hopes to do others in the future if the opportunity arises. He continues to build La Museum’s collection – he recently purchased about 20 pieces from Kerry Taylor Auctions in New York – and wants to share this with the public as much as possible.

La Museum Shibuya runs from Saturday until June 29 in Tokyo, and is open to the public free of charge.



A view of the La Museum exhibition in Tokyo.

## SUSTAINABILITY

# RaiseFashion Spotlights Production Gap



Joseph Ferrara, Prabal Gurung, Bradley Taylor, Felita Harris, Aisling Camps and Gabrielle Ferrara.

● RaiseFashion and Ferrara Manufacturing convened fashion figures to support Black, Indigenous and people of color talent-building despite funding and infrastructure gaps.

BY ALEXANDRA HARRELL

“I just have to say something,” Prabal Gurung said. “Who knew Long Island City was so fashionable?”

The American designer and memoirist was joking, of course, but the sentiment was sincere.

Just above a local factory’s cutting-room floor was a group of industry figures and emerging designers, gathered in support of RaiseFashion, a nonprofit dedicated to offering pro-bono advisory services, grant resources, and network access to Black, Indigenous and people of color-owned brands.

“We’re here tonight not just to network and fundraise, but to name the production gap for what it is,” said Felita Harris, RaiseFashion’s executive director and cofounder. Considering most manufacturers require high minimums, she explained, designers need thousand of dollars upfront just to get started. Payment delays of 60 to 90 days only deepen the strain.

“Eight out of 10 designers we’ve worked with cite production financing as their biggest barrier. In 2024, just 0.4 percent of venture capital went to BIPOC founders,” Harris said. “These statistics aren’t just numbers. They represent collections that never leave the sketchpad, opportunities that vanish before they’re realized, and creative businesses that stall – not for lack of vision, but for lack of access.”

The organization’s annual Raise the Future fundraiser was held Thursday at the family-owned Ferrara Manufacturing

headquarters in Long Island City in support of the Designer Production Fund. This grant initiative was created to front production costs, broker relationships and fulfill orders at scale to, ultimately, build sustainable businesses without compromising integrity.

“Your support helps turn a sketch into a sample, a sample into a collection and a collection into legacy,” Harris said. “And who doesn’t want to be a part of that?”

Looking behind the curtain to “go deeper into realities behind the runway,” according to Harris, the evening’s panel explored “the trust cost of production” to take an honest look at what it takes to build a lasting business, highlighting production realities and power in local manufacturing.

“I love running a family business. It’s been great, it’s been an honor,” Joseph Ferrara, cofounder of Ferrara Manufacturing, said. “What I love about the industry most is the creative force that drives it. It’s the designers, it’s the creators, and they are so prolific. They are so unbelievably talented.”

To that end, Ferrara sees his role as something of a conduit.

“I like to capture that energy in a bottle, translate it into a factory activity, and produce clothes that are a representation of that vision, of that joy, of that unbelievable creative talent,” he said. “That’s what turns me on.”

That same creative force, he said, is what makes the business possible in the first place.

“Our reason for existing is because design exists,” Ferrara said. “Without design, without creativity, there’s nothing for us to do.”

Supporting the future of the industry, he emphasized, isn’t optional – it’s imperative. That means backing all emerging creators.

“Our job is to execute. It’s to interpret,

it’s to monetize, it’s to operationalize, it’s to make sustainable,” Ferrara said. “Design is a function, and if they’re not making money, we’re not making money.”

The long-term viability of the business, Ferrara argued, hinges on investing in new talent now.

“We’re going to need enough [designers] 10 years from now,” he said. “It’s all about replenishment. When we think about what sustains forests, you’re seeding new plants. And if you’re not part of that ecosystem – if you’re not part of the future – you shouldn’t be part of the present.”

This mindset persists throughout the local manufacturer. Gabrielle Ferrara, president and chief operating officer of Ferrara Manufacturing (and Joseph Ferrara’s daughter), highlighted a pervasive myth within the industry.

“Sustainability is a hot topic,” she said. “Everyone wants to buy sustainable clothing, and everyone wants to make it – but it’s pretty complicated to do that.”

She pointed out that the word “sustainability” often gets flattened in conversations despite being quite multifaceted in practice.

“There’s material sustainability: Buying something certified by one of many organizations,” she explained. “But there’s also production sustainability: Are you paying fair wages? Are the people making your clothes being treated how they should?”

Certifications tend to dominate the conversation, especially among big brands, Gabrielle Ferrara said. But they don’t tell the whole story.

“There are more holistic ways to approach it,” she added. “One of my favorite projects was with Jacob James’ American Woolen mill in Connecticut. We made a fully sustainable garment, using certified sustainable wool – but it wasn’t just about the fiber. It was about labor, materials, the full production cycle.”

The biggest myth, she said, is assuming that sustainability begins and ends with the fabric.

“It’s not just about the material,” Gabrielle Ferrara said. “It’s about the entire process.”

Aisling Camps, designer and CFDA member, as well as RaiseFashion masterclass alumna and Designer Production Fund recipient, knows this all too well.

“My background is in engineering, with a focus on sustainability,” she said. “From the start, I was committed to making products that were ethically and responsibly produced. But that comes at a cost.”

That cost? Thinner margins. And harder decisions. Even with “great partners and growing resilience,” according to Camps, the production process has been a constant challenge. And that’s where RaiseFashion comes in.

“Raise has gotten me into rooms I never thought I’d be in – connected me to C-suite leaders, opened doors, and, more importantly, helped cover production when I didn’t know how I’d pay my factory,” Camps said. “The grants go straight to invoices. It’s that real.”

The system, she argued, is structurally broken for smaller, emerging designers.

“It’s a cash flow game,” she said. “You get paid in six months, but you have to pay your entire business now – your production, your staff, your show. The barrier to entry is astronomical. These production grants don’t just help – they keep us alive.”

For founders like Camps, the challenge is less about vision and more about viability. Even the most responsible brands can’t survive on ethics alone without financial support.

That’s where people like Bradley Taylor, founder and investor of the Carrom Company, come in. For Taylor, a RaiseFashion board member, the evening was about more than fashion. It was about showing up.

“You can run a sheet metal business or a fashion label – it doesn’t matter,” he said. “If you believe in people, in nonprofits, in community, you have to actually show up. Everything is under attack right now. You can’t sit it out.”

For context, Taylor launched his own company in 2004 and sold it to Vista Equity Partners, led by Robert Smith, in 2017.

That acquisition prompted Taylor and his family to set up a donor-advised fund at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. “George Floyd’s murder in 2020 made everything we were doing feel more urgent,” he said.

Though Grand Rapids regularly ranks among the best places to live in America, Taylor pointed out the stark divide.

“If you’re white, it’s great,” he said. “If you’re a person of color, it’s one of the worst cities in the country for economic opportunity.”

Since then, he’s focused on “anything that has to do with generational wealth for people of color.”

“Everybody deserves a shot, but not everybody has the same access,” Taylor said. “That’s what we have to fix.”

## BUSINESS

# Jared Jewelers Unveils 'Love Highway' Campaign

● A young couple's journey through the desert is captured through the storytelling style of advertising and creative guru David Lipman.

BY DAVID MOIN

Jared Jewelers is redefining and modernizing itself, beginning with its summer 2025 campaign themed "Love Highway," directed by advertising and creative guru David Lipman.

The campaign, which kicks off this week, stars model Taylor Hill and her husband Daniel Fryer, a venture capitalist and private equity executive.

The campaign depicts "a real, pure relationship" between a man and a woman away on a road trip that winds up in the West, Lipman said. Shot to a large extent at the Four Aces retro movie set in the Mojave Desert, where David Lynch's "Twin Peaks" was also shot.

The campaign is framed by iconic Americana backdrops like neon-lit diners, open highways and red rock canyons and features several of Jared's elevated yet wearable silhouettes layered together — including sleek gold forms, organic diamond details and modern heirlooms.

"The intent is to lift Jared up, make it more relevant, au courant, so it's not just speaking as a retailer, but giving it a brand expression for women and men of today," Lipman said. "The codes and the DNA stay intact, while giving Jared a strong brand voice and never losing the jeweler within."

While the image is being modernized, Jared continues to be an "accessible luxury" brand.

The campaign "really talks to a modern American woman," who is not just receiving diamonds on those singular moments in life, like an engagement or a birthday, but also purchases for herself, Lipman said.

"Love Highway is a reflection of who we are as a brand and the direction we're intentionally heading," Jared president Claudia Cividino said in a prepared statement. "We understand that today's consumers are looking for more than just beautiful jewelry; they want meaning, authenticity and emotional connection. This work captures all of that. It represents our commitment to storytelling that feels real and relevant, jewelry that holds significance and a luxury experience that's emotionally grounded and accessible."

"As we continue to evolve, we're embracing a more intimate and personal lens, one that reflects the individuality and style of the people we serve," Cividino said. "This campaign is a celebration of love in all its forms, and of the journey each person takes to express and honor it."

Jared's Love Highway campaign will continue at least through the fall. The campaign also unveils a new tag line, "Jared. Your Journey," which according to a statement from the brand evokes life's journeys and the ways jewelry can celebrate and mark milestones along the way.

"With Love Highway, we wanted to convey intimacy and layered storytelling

Jared, summer 2025



in a way that aligns with how today's consumers experience love, self-expression and style," Lipman said. "This moment is about more than just aesthetics. It's about emotional connection."

Jared, a division of Signet Jewelers, is striving to increase its relevancy to today's customers in other ways as well.

In December, Cividino told WWD that Jared stores are being renovated, lightened up and elevated with new product displayed in freestanding vitrines to encourage closer, side-by-side interactions between associates and shoppers

discovering the jewelry. Those traditional, extended glass vitrines that create more of a separation between shoppers and staff are being replaced, and the color palettes of store interiors are changing from dark brown to tourmaline, sunstone and topaz. There's also an updated, shorter, scripted logo that reads Jared Jewelers, which replaces the rather long-in-tooth Jared the Galleria nameplate, among other changes.

"We've placed such an emphasis on creating a sense of intimacy," Cividino said. "We are evolving our way of selling to be more modern."

## PEOPLE

# Aileen Mehle to Be Honored by Kent State University

● An exhibition, "Sparkle: The Style and Jewelry of Aileen Mehle," will be unveiled on July 18.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

As someone who chronicled more parties and galas than she could count and who always dressed for the occasion, it's fitting that the late Aileen Mehle's designer attire will soon be in the spotlight.

Mehle — a witty, ebullient beauty, who was best known as the columnist "Suzy" — penned stories on *Nouvelle Society* and the frenzied celebrity culture that succeeded it. Her columns appeared in *WWD* and *B* between 1991 and 2005. A titian-haired temptress whose personal style echoed that of Elizabeth Taylor in the 1960s and '70s (think caftans, massive jewelry and sky-high hair), Mehle was very attractive to men and was linked with shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis, film producer Walter Wanger and Frank Sinatra. By her own account, she covered "the terribly rich, terribly important, terribly powerful celebrities and social figures."

"Sparkle: The Style and Jewelry of Aileen Mehle" will be unveiled on July 18 at the Kent State University Museum. The longtime *WWD* gossip columnist was always in-the-know, circulating in the rarefied world of New York society. She was the type of insider who received personal letters from Jacqueline Kennedy, Joan Crawford and Truman Capote among others. The "In Cold Blood" and "Breakfast at Tiffany's" author started talking her up when she was writing a society column covering Palm Beach and Miami for the



Aileen Mehle

Miami Daily News. When Mehle's second marriage to Mark Kenneth Frank Jr. fell apart in the late 1950s, she relocated to New York. At that time, the city had seven daily newspapers that each had gossip columns. Her rivals included Walter Winchell, whose readership was estimated at 30 million people, and Igor Cassini, whose brother Oleg was a fashion designer.

In a 1966 *Life* magazine interview, Mehle explained, "What I do is somewhere between ditch-digging and galley-slaving. It is a neck-swiveling, don't-miss-anything job. When I walk into a party, while I'm saying, 'Hello darling, hello dear, how are you?' to everyone I haven't seen since yesterday, I case the place. I have a fast



An Oscar de la Renta ensemble.

eye. I also listen, listen, listen. When I come home dog-tired at 1 a.m., I often haven't a line to go on. I've even put my little head down on the typewriter and cried a few rusty tears. But then I snap out of it and get to work."

Next month dozens of Mehle's designer evening gowns and dazzling jewels will go on view at the Kent State University Museum. Running through Aug. 23, the exhibition is meant to reposition Mehle not only as a sharp chronicler of high society, but also as a forgotten fashion icon. An Oscar de la Renta pink gazar slipdress with a matching jacket covered with sequins and feathers and an embellished chiffon caftan from Zandra Rhodes' "Mount

Olympus" collection will be in the mix, as well as designs by Pauline Trigère and Yves Saint Laurent. There will also be fine jewelry from Tiffany & Co., David Webb and Bulgari among others.

James Fallon, chief content officer of *WWD* and Fairchild Media Group, said, "Aileen — aka Suzy — moved in rarefied circles, or should I say, rarefied circles moved around Aileen. She was, in the years she wrote for *WWD*, almost always bedecked in frills and froth, sometimes with a boa wrapped around her. But those soft outfits covered a steely reporter whose eyes never missed anything and whose ears heard every whisper of affairs, scandals and the latest social gossip. She was repeatedly asked to write a tell-all book about her life, but would always respond that she knew too many secrets to tell them all. It is a cliché to say someone is one of a kind, but in Aileen's case, there is no better description."

Friendly with the museum's founders Jerry Silverman and Shannon Rodgers, Mehle started donating pieces in the 1990s and continued to do so up until her death in 2016. The "Sparkle" show is part of the Kent State University Museum's 40th anniversary season, which will also include an exhibition on contemporary North African fashion that will bow Sept. 5, an installation of costumes from the 2024 feature film "Wicked" that opens later that month and a retrospective of LeRoy Neiman's fashion illustration. To further engage visitors to the Mehle exhibition, organizers are constructing a closet that will be filled with some of her designer clothes. But there's no telling what "Suzy" would make of strangers digging around in her closet.

# The Reviews

## Martine Rose

Martine Rose moved to more elegant surroundings this season, with a set design resembling a haute couture salon decorated with wooden chairs and white curtains with ruffles that covered the walls and columns inside the St. Marylebone Jobcentre in London.

"I really wanted the models to enjoy posing and to have fun and for it to be charming because people are charming, aren't they?" said Rose, who worked with street-cast models for her show on Saturday.

She swapped her signature oversized silhouettes for shrunken, cinched pieces that had an undertone of awkwardness. Somehow it was still sexy, in the vein of Mills & Boon bodice-ripper romance novels.

Her characters, some of whom sported long Brian May-esque wigs, wore cropped leather jackets with biker pants; denim shorts with the pockets hanging out, and dresses with a faded tartan pattern.

There were two-in-one trousers with the top half resembling jodhpurs and the bottom nodding to soccer socks, and apron skirts with ruffles that matched the set design.

Rose said the collection was about inexplicable beauty. "You don't know why you find something beautiful or sexy, but you just do," said the designer. "I wanted people to be sort of swept up in a bit of a dream, but [the designs] are still real. It's a sort of push and pull," she said.

As always, Rose swung the spotlight on the local community. One floor down from the show space, the designer set up a street market and invited a handful of locals to take a corner and sell their T-shirts, magazines, antiques and accessories.

"The show space was an opportunity to celebrate all of the creative people in London and everyone that contributes to the cultural life and dynamism of London – and that needs celebrating," said Rose.

After the show, guests including Romy from band The xx and Simone Rocha roamed around the market, which also had a bar and an area serving pizza.

– Hikmat Mohammed

## Christian Siriano

On Thursday evening, Christian Siriano was flipping through his phone and sharing videos of what he'd been up to this week: Fashion Week Boot Camp.

Throughout the two-day crash course at his SoHo showroom and atelier, Siriano hosted ticketed participants of all ages and taught them what it takes to be a designer, complete with hands-on design, draping and sketching classes. The monthly summer program is just one example of how the designer is continually mentoring the next generations of fashion talents, also seen through his ongoing role as "Project Runway" mentor.

Speaking of the hit design competition show – Heidi Klum, who will return as host of its 21st season later this summer, was front and center of Siriano's resort collection.

"The whole collection was inspired by Heidi – she's the muse of the season. I've known her my whole career, but never done anything with her outside of a red carpet. The whole idea is about Heidi in all of her walks of life," Siriano said.

Throughout the collection, modeled by Klum, there was a mix of edgier pieces with Siriano's classic glamour to fit all aspects of the model's life. For instance, leather-looking laminated tailored styles (a cropped blazer with bold shoulders and matching slick trousers or an

Martine Rose



Martine Rose

spring  
2026

Christian Siriano



resort  
2026



Christian Siriano

asymmetrical body-con dress) – ideal for nights attending her husband Tom Kaulitz's rock concerts. Or sculptural gowns for the red carpet, spanning from a striking French blue lapel cutout corseted number to new takes on sheer dressing, ranging from a sheer radial corseted gown

silhouettes (also seen through shimmering butter yellow ensembles), with a balance of the feminine and masculine, such as strong, exaggerated tuxedo-inspired looks that nodded to the designer's expanded menswear offering on his last fall runway show.

to an asymmetrical black lace number that Klum donned during the Cannes Film Festival. Siriano said the collection homed in on sculptural

"I wasn't going to do resort because there's a lot going on in the world, so it was nice to have a focused person, because it was so much fun designing for someone. It's not something I always get to do," Siriano explained of the tight yet powerful collection. "Of course, I'm always thinking about the customer, but they're inspired by these people and want the pieces they're wearing. The customer is different now in how they shop, they're savvy and want something interesting with more of a story to it, so that was the idea. If they want to live their life like Heidi, now they can."

– Emily Mercer



## Business Insights

### BUSINESS

# Frank Darling's Kegan Fisher on Making the Move from Tech to Art

● The founder of the design-forward jewelry brand talks to WWD about her career journey and her time as “an artist who ended up in tech.”

BY ALEXANDRA PASTORE

Created with the goal of “flipping the script on bridal jewelry,” Frank Darling entered the market in 2017 led by husband-and-wife duo Kegan Fisher and Jeff Smith. At the time it was a surprising launch by the couple, who came to the jewelry space from the world of health tech.

Formerly known as a founder in the tech space with 11 years of experience in mass customization and 3D printing at Shapeways and SOLS, Fisher originally studied industrial design and manufacturing at the Pratt Institute. She told WWD that she had always felt like “an artist who ended up in tech,” making her move into jewelry design an exciting change.

With Frank Darling, Fisher's goal is to put creativity, customization and radical transparency at the center of the experience for a couple's engagement ring shopping. Today the company has eight showrooms across the U.S. with a team of more than 20 designers. In 2024 the brand sold more than 16,000 carats and has designed rings for more than 10,000 proposals to date.

Taking into consideration the needs of every couple and with more than 1,000 showroom appointments every month, the brand's motto has become: “low-profile

rings for hands that do things.”

Here, Fisher talks about her career as an entrepreneur, her move from health tech to jewelry and her advice for anyone getting a start in their career.

**WWD: Can you tell us about that major shift you made from health tech to jewelry?**

**Kegan Fisher:** I always joke that I'm an artist who ended up in tech – but it's true. [My husband and I] both found ourselves in the world of 3D printing around 2014, when MakerBot had just been acquired and Shapeways was giving independent makers the tools to launch their own 3D-printed product shops. That led me to start a company in the health tech space, where we built software for podiatrists to design and manufacture 3D-printed orthotics.

We knew we wanted to do something more creative – something that brought us back to working with artists and designers and just being around beautiful things. When we looked at the engagement ring space, both as a couple and as entrepreneurs, there was nowhere we would've wanted to shop. On one side, you had the dated dot-com brands; on the other, the legacy luxury houses. Neither of which resonated with a younger, modern consumer.

That's when we got excited about building a brand that combined the transparency of online shopping with the luxury and personalization of a boutique experience. Plus we saw lab-grown diamonds as a major disruptor and the idea

that you could 3D print a literal diamond was very in line with our experience in bringing custom products to market.

**WWD: Why is it important to have complete control over how Frank Darling's jewelry is made at every step and how do you ensure this?**

**K.F.:** We launched our first workshop in TriBeCa [in Manhattan] in 2024, and in 2025 we're expanding into [an over] 5,000-square-foot space [to in-source] a significant percentage of our production.

Jeff and I both come from maker backgrounds, and we believe that hands-on experience with how things are made leads to better design and better products. In jewelry. That means creating rings that are lower profile, more durable, and push the limits of what's possible in terms of materials, design and craft.

**WWD: What is the best career advice that you would give someone starting their career today?**

**K.F.:** I know we're in the work/life balance era – something I'm only now starting to figure out post-baby – but the truth is, building a company takes a lot of brute force. It's sheer willpower, doing things that don't scale and figuring it out as you go.

When we started Frank Darling, I wrote over 100 blog articles myself just to kickstart our SEO. I took all the product photos. We met clients in our apartment and rented Breather spaces by the hour so we could be wherever was most convenient for them.

Kegan Fisher



**WWD: What is a retail/tech trend that you're excited to see coming to life right now?**

**K.F.:** To me, the future of retail lives at the intersection of online and offline – the full omnichannel experience. I don't buy anything without researching it online first. But when it comes to a major purchase, I want to see it, touch it, try it on.

**WWD: What inspires you?**

**K.F.:** Our customers. Jewelry is such an incredible format for storytelling and memorializing life moments and there's nothing better than seeing how our customers use our designs as jumping-off points to celebrate their own stories, styles and moments through a bespoke piece. No two pieces are ever alike, and the breadth and diversity of the types of rings we make is pretty incredible.

### BUSINESS

# Tanya Taylor Finds Inspiration In Her Everyday Routine

● The founder and creative director talks with WWD about a love for summer days in the Hamptons and her ideal shopping experience.

BY ALEXANDRA PASTORE

**Founder and creative director** Tanya Taylor has certainly put in the work to create both her namesake label and her new brand, Delphine. And with summer arriving, it's time for her to find inspiration in her every day in the Hamptons.

From adding color to her wardrobe to making meals for her children, Taylor told WWD that she is often refueled by stepping away from her work and loves to explore art and culture for inspiration. Here, she speaks about the routine that keeps her inspired, her career and advice for young professionals getting their start in fashion.

**WWD: What is the first thing you do in the morning?**

**Tanya Taylor:** I wake up to Alanis Morissette's “Ironic” as my alarm clock, stretch, check emails, put together a fun colorful outfit, make breakfast and lunch for my two boys, do drop off all over the city and enjoy a big Americano at my desk before the day starts.

**WWD: As you get ready for the summer, can you tell us where you're finding inspiration?**

**T.T.:** I spend a lot of my summer out in the Hamptons and I find so much inspiration in the everyday – from grabbing weekly fresh florals to visiting Longhouse Reserve or just painting in my backyard on a weekend. It's a refreshing change from the city and helps me recharge and stay energized.

**WWD: What is a retail/tech trend that you're excited to see coming to life right now?**

**T.T.:** AI product recommendations are really interesting and provide a really subtle way to help customers find items and complete looks to their tastes faster than can be manually done.

**WWD: What is your ideal shopping retail experience?**

**T.T.:** I am an avid online shopper. I love being able to try things on in my closet and fully style and put a vision together in the comfort of my own home. When I have the time, I do also love going into a store and physically touching fabrics and interacting with store staff. It provides such a human element that shopping online can't replicate.

**WWD: What is the best advice you would give someone starting out in their career today?**

**T.T.:** Be true to who you are, stand behind your ideas and network, network, network. One of the hardest parts about this industry is breaking in, so I encourage everyone who wants to work in fashion to not be afraid to connect with established people in the industry and try your hand at as many different disciplines as possible.

I am so thankful to have had opportunities to have taken internships that exposed me to marketing, finance and start-up culture that are so important to me now as a founder. It will help make you a more well-rounded person and understand what it's like to work on a team.

**WWD: What do you do to “power down” and what does having a work/life balance mean to you?**

**T.T.:** I work really hard, and I love what I do but powering down for me means getting away from my phone and experiencing culture, art and people with freedom of time and space. I love making things whenever I can, it really refuels me. I make costumes for my kids, dinner for my husband or a piece of art for a friend.

**WWD: Looking throughout your career, what is a project/launch/product that you are most proud of?**

**T.T.:** Bringing my new party and eveningwear brand Delphine to life last year was such a proud moment. From an idea on my college application decades ago to now fully existing in the world, it's still surreal to think about.





# Inside Tiffany & Co.'s HardWear Collection Party

The artist cohosted a dinner on the flagship's terrace on Thursday night. BY KRISTEN TAUER PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEXIE MORELAND



Phoebe Gates, Laura Harrier, Chase Sui Wonders, Anna Weyant and Karen Elson.



WanTing Zhao

On Thursday evening, Tiffany & Co. and HardWear campaign star Anna Weyant cohosted an intimate dinner celebration at The Landmark on Fifth Avenue.

"I've never done anything like this before, so I was pretty nervous and intimidated," Weyant said from the flagship's eighth floor terrace. The artist stars in the line's spring campaign, which celebrates love and strength, with Mikey Madison and Greta Lee. "But it was great. Everyone made it easy, and it was awesome company with Mikey and Greta. It was a really big honor."

Weyant was decked out in a set of HardWear jewelry set, including the same necklace that she wears in the campaign photographed and directed by Harley Weir. But her familiarity with the Tiffany HardWear graduated link necklace in yellow gold with pavé diamonds runs deeper.

"So a few years ago I actually painted this exact necklace," Weyant said. The painting, which predates the HardWear campaign, currently hangs in a private client salon on the fourth floor. "I feel like I know it so well. I know the light and I know the shadows, and I've spent so much time looking at it. And so then wearing it for the campaign was surreal and really cool," she added. "I paint a lot of jewelry, and so I'm always looking at Tiffany for inspiration."

The artist is currently preparing for the opening of her next museum show, at the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum in Madrid, in July.

A long dinner table, adorned with calla lilies and Tiffany blue boxes at each place setting, greeted guests on the balmy terrace. Ruby Aldridge was on DJ duty during cocktail hour as guests including "I Know What You Did Last Summer" star Chase Sui Wonders, Laura Harrier, Phoebe Gates, Georgia Fowler, Karen Elson, San Francisco Ballet principal WanTing Zhao, Isabella Massenet and more caught up over cucumber margaritas and sunset views of Central Park South.



Georgia Fowler



Ruby Aldridge



Aweng Ade-Chuol



Beverly Nguyen and Yan Yan Chan

# Fashion Scoops



## In the Driver's Seat?

Could Kering recruit an executive from the automobile industry to lead its turnaround? The French luxury group declined all comment Sunday on a report in French daily Le Figaro that it is poised to hire Renault chief executive officer Luca de Meo.

The report appeared as Renault Group said de Meo decided to "step down and pursue new challenges outside the automotive sector."

His departure will be effective July 15, Renault said.

The Italian executive spent five years at the management helm and boasts 30 years in the industry at brands including Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Toyota, Volkswagen and Seat.

De Meo would succeed François-Henri Pinault, who became CEO of his family-controlled group, then called PPR and a \$30 billion

retail and fashion giant.

Pinault had succeeded Serge Weinberg, who had steered the conglomerate through a dramatic transformation as it shed timber, finance and electronics businesses and absorbed Gucci Group, the world's third-largest luxury player.

Now Kering is solely focused on luxury fashion houses, beauty and eyewear, though it is struggling to stem a steep slowdown at its cash-cow Gucci brand, which will welcome creative director Demna next month.

Kering has recruited industry outsiders in the past to run its fashion business. What was then Gucci Group famously recruited Robert Polet from Unilever's ice cream and frozen foods division as its president and CEO from 2004 to 2011.

Pinault told shareholders at the company's annual meeting last April that he was unhappy with Kering's results and share price performance. "I am totally committed to making sure

the stock price recovers by restoring financial performance, not in the very short term, but in a sustainable manner in order to generate a stock price that is less volatile and more solid in the months and years to come," he said. — MILES SOCHA

## Soft Sell

Callum Turner hams it up in a new Louis Vuitton campaign for the LV Buttersoft, a men's sneaker introduced on the fall 2025 runway.

In one image, he puts the shoe to his ear like a shell — or as secret agent Maxwell Smart might when dialing into Control on an episode of the original "Get Smart."

The British actor and Vuitton ambassador donned a pale denim worker jacket and jeans for the campaign shoot, lensed by Rosie Marks.

"It was a family vibe on set. Dua [Lipa] did her Spanish lesson," Turner related, referring to his pop star fiancée. "We all watched Chelsea beat Liverpool on the TV while we were shooting. A Louis Vuitton shoot is always family style."

It turns out Turner is something of a sneaker head.

"Since I was a kid, sneakers were my thing. I'm a collector of different shapes and styles, colors. I can be pretty adventurous," he told WWD.

The campaign breaks on Monday, the same day the LV Buttersoft is available for preorders, ahead of the July 10 worldwide launch in stores.

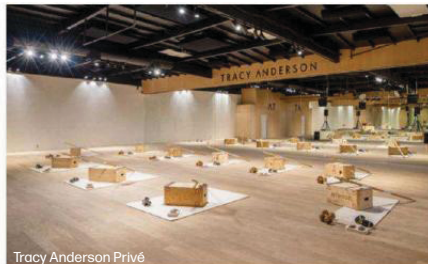
Turner, perhaps best known for "Fantastic Beasts" and "The Boys in the Boat," will next be seen in the "Neuromancer" series on Apple TV+ and the war comedy "Atropia."

While sneaker mania has undoubtedly subsided in recent years, luxury brands continue to put muscle behind key launches.

Vuitton describes the LV Buttersoft as "uniting the comfort of a runner with the quality of a formal shoe in a new versatile form."

The fall 2025 collection, which men's creative director Pharrell Williams designed as part of a seasonal collaboration with his fashion buddy Nigo, offered a mature take on streetwear, with a touch of dandyism.

The Made in Italy LV Buttersoft gets its name from the quality of the leather, the "pillow-y effect" of the design and the rubber sole. It owes a debt



to the leather sneakers first adapted into everyday wardrobes in the '60s — and the styles popularized by the hip-hop community in the 2000s.

The shoe comes in 24 variations, including one in the house's brown monogram, and with a host of details. These include a cameo of Williams on the tongue, a hidden and embossed lobster on the back of the shoe and — on certain styles — hand-painted edges near the laces. — M.S.

## Uber Private

Tracy Anderson is introducing a new studio: Tracy Anderson Privé.

Opening Monday and located at 1729 21st Street in Santa Monica, Calif., it's an invitation-only concept offering Anderson's hyper-personalized approach to fitness. Gwyneth Paltrow, one of Anderson's longtime clients, was among the first to train in the space.

"The team there is being trained on different ways of measuring how muscle changes, different ways of measuring where fat likes to fall and collect at different times," explained Anderson, an innovator in the fitness world. Privé currently has a team of 10. "It's a really customized space right now."

Those admitted to Privé will follow tailored programs that evolve every 10 days, ensuring continual progress. It's how Anderson first started working one-on-one with her celebrity clients.

"I individually created choreography for individual women that changed every 10 days," she said. "That's how Gwyneth started. That's how Madonna started. It was very tailor-made and very customized. It was re-tailored, reengineered, reinvented."

Anderson has also worked with Jennifer Lopez, Tracee Ellis Ross and Olivia Wilde. Her techniques, which have evolved through the years, feature a combination of multidirectional movement

and accessory muscle training.

"I'm constantly creating to help people become their own saviors to their own bodies," Anderson said of her evolved techniques. "I absolutely am not doing what I did 20 years ago. I created a language 20 years ago that I believe in, that I still speak. Today I'm speaking a much more evolved nature of that."

From the equipment to the atmosphere, with earth tones throughout, nature is at the core of her design philosophy at Privé, Anderson said.

"Everything is sustainably sourced," she said. "The mats that people work out on are made out of algae, the ankle weights are made out of mushrooms."

Anderson also recently unveiled her seventh membership-based fitness studio in the U.S., bringing her signature method to Bozeman, Mont. Internationally, she has locations in Madrid and London, which is a franchise. — RYMA CHIKHOUNE

## By the Book

Wolfgang Tillmans felt right at home mounting his Paris solo exhibition at the Centre Pompidou's vast library, which was emptied as the museum prepares to shutter for an extensive, multiyear renovation.

"I love books, so when this invitation came, I felt it was certainly an unusual one, but it immediately connected with me," he said, addressing the crowd at Thursday night's opening, and noting he has published 44 books to date, among the 3,000 works on display. "Now, of course, we are in a time where records are being deleted, where research is being stopped and [information] is being withheld from the public. And history, culture is always about what is being recorded."

Known as Bpi, the Pompidou library, which welcomed 1.3 million visitors last year, is prized for its free access and

almost 320,000 documents in all areas of knowledge.

"I was very touched by seeing up to 2,000 people, not all young, actually quite diverse people, sitting at all these tables everywhere, studying, working quietly and peacefully together," he said. "The Pompidou opened in 1977 and that spirit of free education or free access to knowledge is today more important than ever. And I hope that our countries, our politicians, see the value in that."

In that spirit, French fashion house Celine collaborated with the Pompidou to offer four days of free admission to the exhibition: on Friday, the opening day, July 3, Aug. 28 and the final day, Sept. 22.

The opening party marked the first public appearance for Celine artistic director Michael Rider, who is slated to show his first collection in Paris on July 6.

Formerly creative director at Polo Ralph Lauren in New York, Rider managed to see the big Tillmans retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 2022. "This one feels more personal," he opined.

Diana Picasso toured the vast exhibition with Klaus Biesenbach, director of Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie, and said being in the library brought back fond memories.

"I studied art history, and this library is public and open until very late. Even for great writers, it's kind of an institution," she said. "You would meet all kinds of weird people and plunge into that world."

Among fashion folk checking out Tillmans' photos, books and other artworks were designers Jack McCollough, Lazaro Hernandez, Sébastien Meyer and Lutz Huelle and model Mica Argaraz. — M.S. ▶

François-Henri Pinault photograph by Dominique Maitre

Callum Turner in Louis Vuitton's new campaign for the LV Buttersoft Sneaker.



Wolfgang Tillmans



The Arthur Arbesser x Hanro capsule collection.

## Arty Intimates

The multitasking Arthur Arbesser – whose résumé encompasses fashion, costume, product, furniture and interior design – is toying with a new product category: intimates.

Arbesser is the first guest designer of Swiss, but Austria-based, lingerie company Hanro's new Atelier project, geared at forging ties with designers, artists and creatives for capsule collections.

"With Hanro Atelier, we are creating a space for creative encounters at an equal level," said Stephan Hohmann, Hanro's managing director. "Arthur Arbesser's distinct aesthetic and artistic signature align perfectly with our brand. This collaboration demonstrates the powerful impact of thoughtful design."

Embedding Arbesser's flair for geometric patterns and penchant for offbeat color combinations, the unisex, 15-piece capsule comprising briefs, pajama shirts and bralettes, among other items, bears an oversize checkered motif in aubergine and periwinkle.

"It was a huge honor to be the first designer collaborating with Hanro. Naturally I went for my love of geometric prints and colorblocking, which worked beautifully with the unique quality and 140-year-old history of Hanro," Arbesser said.

"We introduced a few new bra shapes, unisex tops and shirts but every piece stays 100 percent true to the famously comfortable, understated luxury of Hanro. It's a fun capsule collection [that] feels effortless and chic but still has a lot of personality and artistic charm," he said.

Retailing at between 40 and 150 euros, the collection drops in September and will be celebrated with a special event during Milan Fashion Week, as well as an in-store activation in Vienna. It will be available in select Hanro stores including Vienna; Munich; Zurich; Rome; New York, and Beverly Hills, as well as at the brand's online store.

Established in 1884 in the Swiss town of Liestal by Albert Handschin and Carl Ronus, the company has 13 flagships globally.

The Vienna-born Arbesser, who has been based in Milan for 20 years, has been diversifying his creative gigs in recent years.

A rising player in the home sphere, he recently envisioned two rooms for the Altstadt Vienna, as reported, marking his foray into the worlds of hospitality and interior design. A roster of earlier collaborations includes corkscrews for Italian design firm Alessi and another tie up with Denmark-based firm Gubi for his Oca chair, made in collaboration with Italian artisan Alan Zinchi.

In addition to helming his namesake fashion brand, Arbesser accepted the role as creative counsel for historic Austrian furniture-maker Wittmann Möbelwerkstätten in 2023, after which he expanded his involvement into supporting Wittmann in the areas of presentation, branding and communication.

— MARTINO CARRERA

## New Reserve

Lilly Pulitzer will launch the latest drop of The Lilly Reserve Collection on June 20.



Alexa Chung, Jenna Coleman, Héïr and Sydney Sweeney at the Miu Miu store.



Pieces from The Lilly Reserve collection.

The limited-edition collection features a 10-piece capsule with limited-production prints and elevated style. The Lilly Reserve's second drop has modern heirloom qualities, distinctive detailing and meticulous tailoring.

Building on the success of the brand's 65th anniversary collection, the collection balances nostalgia with elevated fabrics and contemporary silhouettes.

Prices in The Lilly Reserve Collection go from \$78 to \$598.

This category serves as a seasonal launch and offers an elevated option for consumers.

"Following the success of our 65th anniversary and the debut of The Lilly Reserve Collection, we were inspired to create a series of limited-edition pieces that honor Lilly Pulitzer's rich legacy while embracing a modern sense of luxury. This collection blends timeless charm with refined fabrics and contemporary designs, offering our customers something both meaningful and collectible," said Mira Fain, chief creative officer.

The collection will be sold exclusively on lillypulitzer.com and at select company-owned retail locations and select specialty boutiques. It is manufactured in factories around the world.

— LISA LOCKWOOD

## All Over London

The iced fig leaf matcha served for breakfast at Miu Miu's refurbished store on New Bond Street was just the start of a celebratory

day the brand had planned.

Champagne was free-flowing all day at the store, from breakfast to cocktail hour. It was followed by black cabs taking guests to Camden's Koko nightclub.

Guests showed up in their best Miu Miu looks – some old, some borrowed and some brand new, including Jenna Coleman, Sydney Sweeney, Daisy Risley, Héïr, Emma Corrin, Luther Ford and Alexa Chung.

At Koko, the headline performer was British musician Little Simz, who last week released her album "Lotus." There were also performances and sets from DJ Taylah Elaine, OTG and Obongjayar.

"I'm going to go in with a little bit of nostalgia, a little bit funky and house," said Elaine ahead of her DJ set.

And if the crowd doesn't respond, her secret weapon is to get everyone dancing to play "Lady (Hear Me Tonight)" by Modjo. But that was unlikely to happen considering she's going on a big U.S. and Canada tour this summer.

Before hitting the road, Elaine said she will be attending Paris Men's Fashion Week and celebrating her birthday in the French capital.

"I meditate on the plane always because I'm always really stressed out and I meditate before every show. There's also usually incense in the green room. My favorite part about touring is just all the different communities in all the different cities and reaching new crowds because there's always such a vibe everywhere," she said.

For Little Simz's set, the crowd roared for her new tracks and perhaps her Miu Miu ensemble.

— HIKMAT MOHAMMED

## On the Slopes

Luxury multibrand retailer Franz Kraller is doubling down on hospitality, planning to open a state-of-the-art Chalet in Cortina d'Ampezzo, the tony Italian winter resort destination set to be the stage, alongside Milan, for the 2026 Winter Olympics.

An investment of the Kraller family, the Chalet Franz Kraller-Club Moritzino is to be managed in partnership with Club Moritzino, a popular après-ski spot in Piz La Ila, Italy, a ski resort in the Dolomites' Alta Badia region.

The new chalet – expected to bow in

November, in time for the winter season and in anticipation of the Winter Games next year – is to raise at the Socrepes location, where the Ria De Saco ski-slope lodge stood. The latter was an earlier Franz Kraller hospitality project opened in 2022.

The Kraller family tasked the Bozen, Italy-based architecture firm BlueArch with the construction and interior decoration of the new lodge, which will span three floors, two of which are underground to minimize the environmental impact, and will be decked in dark larch wood and glass panels mirroring the sky and snow dotted slopes.

Inside, a sculptural hellicoidal staircase in steel partitions the space, its base flanked by a conversation pit with a brazier. Natural materials are to define the decor concept with recycled wood, hand-hammered iron, the Dolomia stone, widespread in the Dolomites, luminescent concrete and colored glass walls dominating the location.

The ground floor is to house a restaurant, which boasts a terrace overlooking the slopes, equipped with a bar counter. A 430-square-foot wine cellar suspended over the main hall will be dedicated to wine tasting and private events.

A regular collaborator of luxury labels it carries at its boutiques, Franz Kraller is expecting the location to become the stage for brand partnerships and activations.

The company counts a network of seven stores in key ski resort destinations in the Dolomites, including Cortina d'Ampezzo, Dobbiaco and Bolzano. The latter unit has been linked since 2023 to the fine dining destination Meta, founded by Gunther Stecher, another sign of the Krallers' ambition toward experiential retail and hospitality. — M.C. ■



A rendering of the interiors of the Chalet Franz Kraller-Club Moritzino in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.