

# WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

## Massenet Sues

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## Serious About Men's

Pabletics has built a \$300 million men's business, fronted by actor and investor Kevin Hart, over the last five years—and wants to grow it even more.

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# Together Again

Henry Zankov used to work at Diane von Furstenberg and the two have linked up again for a special capsule collection designed by Zankov for DVF that will be sold at Bergdorf Goodman and at DVF's own store and [dvf.com](http://dvf.com). "We both have a strong fascination with color and patterns and prints, and it made sense to come together and work on something," the CFDA's Emerging Designer of the Year told WWD in an exclusive preview. *For more on the capsule, and a look at DVF through the years, see pages 4 to 9.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEXIE MORELAND





Erik Torstensson and Natalie Massenet in 2014.



Massenet and Torstensson at The Fashion Awards in 2017.

## BUSINESS

# Natalie Massenet Files Suit Against Erik Torstensson

- The Net-a-porter founder is suing for fraud and intentional deceit and claims she has spent more than \$95 million during their relationship.

BY HIKMAT MOHAMMED

**LONDON** — Natalie Massenet, the founder of Net-a-porter, has filed a civil case against her former partner, Erik Torstensson, the cofounder and creative director of the denim brand Frame.

According to the paper filed, Massenet is suing for breach of contract; fraud and intentional deceit; promissory estoppel, and intentional/negligent infliction of emotional distress.

The case was submitted on Wednesday at the Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles.

Massenet and Torstensson first met in 2009, when Torstensson approached Massenet about launching a menswear arm of Net-a-porter, which is now Mr Porter.

The pair started a relationship in late 2010, after Massenet had sold her portion of the business for “tens of millions of dollars,” according to the court filing.

Massenet and Torstensson were in a 14-year relationship and welcomed a son together in 2017.

In the filing, Massenet claims to be “not only heartbroken, but also cash strapped with his child” in the paper. The paper adds that Torstensson is demanding joint custody of their child.

She alleges that she has spent more than \$95 million during their relationship on “expensive properties, lifestyle expenses, vacations and more based on Torstensson’s promises to repay her in kind.”

The Net-a-porter founder, who is currently a New York resident, is demanding “a fair, equitable return on the

investments she made, value she created and costs she carried.”

Signs of trouble in paradise began to occur in 2024, according to the paper.

Massenet claims Torstensson became “emotionally distant, drank more heavily, disappeared for nights and became physically and emotionally unwell,” and that she found him to have “frequent bouts of bad stomach infections, influenza, panic attacks and hives.”

In the paper, Massenet alleges that in May 2025 she found her partner to be a “liar, drug addict, alcoholic and sex addict,” who had been actively doing drugs including cocaine, ecstasy and oxycodone, hiring and sleeping with prostitutes, and engaging in multiple affairs with younger women during the majority of their 14-year relationship.”

The paper goes on to add that “Massenet found a prescription bottle of Valacyclovir filled by Torstensson in January 2025, which he told her was for the hives. Massenet later learned that Valacyclovir is used to treat herpes infections.”

Massenet claims that Torstensson was using their relationship for “social clout” to rack up investment and equity positions

worth “hundreds of millions of dollars.”

The filing specifies that when Torstensson launched the label Frame, Massenet supported him by launching its first collection on Net-a-porter.

In the paper, Massenet states that she used her expansive Rolodex to introduce Torstensson to the likes of Vogue U.S. editor in chief Anna Wintour; designer Diane von Furstenberg; Michael Ovitz, the cofounder of Creative Artists Agency; Jimmy Choo’s cofounder Tamara Mellon; Glossier founder Emily Weiss, and British power couple, David and Victoria Beckham.

The filing features a text message sent to Victoria Beckham by Torstensson asking to “Send me sizes for yourself, David and Brooklyn and I will send you a package of Frame goodies. So glad you like them.”

In Massenet’s and Torstensson’s 14-year relationship, it’s clear that the lines between their professional and personal lives became intertwined and blurred.

The reason for Massenet filing in California is because of its links to her and Torstensson’s life.

She was born in Los Angeles and attended the University of California, as



Christopher Kane, Erik Torstensson, Natalie Massenet, Victoria Beckham and Erdem Moralioğlu.

well as building “extensive personal and professional ties to California,” said the paper.

The paper reveals that Torstensson is also a New York resident, but a majority of his business operations are based in California. Torstensson was an early shareholder of Skims and Good American, the shapewear brand founded by Kim Kardashian and the denim-centric brand cofounded by Khloé Kardashian and Emma Grede.

According to the paper, “The equity value of Torstensson’s stake in Skims alone is estimated to be in excess of \$300 million.”

The filing details that the couple used a relationship counselor based in Los Angeles and both work with a physician in the city that “routinely provides prescriptions to Torstensson.”

The paper alleges that Torstensson’s drug use and infidelity materialized in California.

Torstensson is yet to file a response to the claims made by Massenet.

Massenet was unavailable to comment. Torstensson could not be reached for comment at time of press.

In 2000, Massenet founded fashion online retailer Net-a-porter. In the year before she stepped down from her role in 2015 following the Yoox Net-a-porter merger, the Net-a-porter Group recorded net revenues of almost \$1 billion.

In 2016, she was named Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her contributions and services to the U.K. economy.

In 2017, Massenet became nonexecutive co-chairman of Farfetch, a role she left in August 2020.

She teamed up with Nick Brown, formerly a partner at the venture capital firm 14W, to set up Imaginary Ventures in 2018, focusing on innovations at the intersection of retail and technology.

The firm closed its first fund of \$75 million in 2018, which included investments across the beauty, wellness, food and beverage, lifestyle and fashion sectors.

Its brand investments have ranged from Glossier, Camp, Bread Beauty Supply, Dirty Lemon, Universal Standard and Goodfair to Mejuri and Skims.

Torstensson found his business footing in 2003 with his business partner, Jens Grede. The pair founded their own agency Saturday, which would later be renamed as Saturday Group that rapidly expanded into 12 separate companies spanning advertising, branding, public relations, e-commerce, entertainment and apparel distribution with offices in New York, London, Paris and Milan.

In 2012, Torstensson and Grede launched Frame with one pair of skinny jeans and quickly grew into a lifestyle label for women and men that generated \$170 million in sales by 2022.

## OBITUARY

# Sharon Chuter, Uoma Beauty Founder, 38



Sharon Chuter

- Chuter also founded Pull Up for Change, an organization that sought to increase Black representation in corporate ranks.

BY NOOR LOBAD

**Sharon Chuter**, beauty veteran and founder of Uoma Beauty, has died, a family member has confirmed to WWD.

She passed away on Aug. 14 on a patio in Los Angeles, according to the Los Angeles medical examiner's office. The cause of

death is still being investigated. Chuter was 38 years old.

The Nigerian-born beauty executive held roles at L'Oréal, Revlon and LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton before founding Uoma in 2019. The line, which included a hero foundation that offered 51 shades as well as other complexion, lip, cheek and eye products priced from \$18 to \$40, debuted at Selfridges and rolled out to Ulta Beauty shortly after.

The line was born in part from Chuter's aim to bring meaningful inclusivity to beauty at a time when, following Rihanna's 2017 debut of Fenty Beauty, other brands in the space were scrambling to be more inclusive, and sometimes missing the mark.

"Diversity became a hot topic that every corporation was trying to tick off their list," Chuter told WWD at the time. "As a person of color, I was looking at it and there was no depth to it – it was shallow. Everybody was looking for quick wins."

In 2020, Chuter introduced Pull Up for Change, a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing Black representation in the corporate world. The organization debuted in June that year, when Chuter posted a video to Instagram challenging companies to make public the number of Black employees in their organizations and on their leadership teams.

Coined "Pull Up or Shut Up," the social media campaign sought to galvanize companies to make more substantial commitments to diversity than donating money and posting black squares on Instagram, as so many did and publicized following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

"Every single brand and every single company has an Equal Opportunity

Employment policy," Chuter told WWD when the campaign launched. "All these brands are now standing in support and donating, meanwhile, within their organizations they don't actively employ Black people – they have no Black leaders. We need to move this conversation forward."

Exactly one year later, Chuter launched another beauty brand – this time for the mass market – called Uoma by Sharon C. Aiming to deliver what Chuter described as "radical inclusivity," the line debuted in June 2021 at Walmart with a range of skin care and makeup products priced from \$6 to \$24.

"It's one of the biggest launches we're doing in Walmart history," said Musab Balbale, former vice president of beauty at Walmart Inc., at the time.

In 2022, Chuter was named a CEW Achiever Award honoree for her innovation and resolve to make beauty better.

"Sharon is very gutsy," said CEW president Carlotta Jacobson of Chuter at the time. "Even though companies had programs in place, Pull Up created an acute awareness that there was a big need there."

"For me being a catalyst for change means passion," Chuter said then in an interview. "That passion drives the courage to lead and challenge the things you cannot accept. But most of all, to love enough to carry the burdens that inevitably come with being a changemaker in a world that is fiercely opposed to change."

In 2023, Chuter debuted a "We See You" campaign via Uoma, which starred muses from Jasmine Sanders to Leomie Anderson and confronted the notion of "not seeing color" when it comes to race, instead encouraging people to not just see racial differences – but embrace them.

Later that spring, Chuter departed her

post as chief executive officer of Uoma, also relinquishing her board seat.

"Although I am stepping away from my role as CEO and board member, my vision for Uoma and its mission remains dear to my heart. I remain a shareholder and will continue as an industry-leading product and creative visionary for the brand," she told WWD in an email at the time.

The brand tapped Cyndi Isgrig, the former president of Dermstore, to serve as interim CEO of the brand, whose assets were then acquired that December by MacArthur Beauty, an offshoot of The MacArthur Companies. All investors exited the company upon acquisition except Braintrust Fund, which stayed on.

Uoma went silent on social media from August 2023 through most of 2024, when it announced that it was "back" via an Instagram post in November. In February 2025, Chuter filed a lawsuit against The MacArthur Companies and Braintrust Fund alleging that Braintrust "pushed Chuter out" of her operational roles under false pretenses, and that the sale of Uoma's assets was "unlawful" and conducted "to satisfy Settle's \$6.2 million loan, all without Chuter's knowledge or consent."

Currently, Uoma still sells via Ulta, JCPenney and direct-to-consumer.

"I've always been a misfit," Chuter told WWD in 2019 when she debuted the brand. "The [beauty] industry has historically decided who is beautiful and who is not. I understand how it feels to be born feeling different – not different good, but different bad...I appreciate uniqueness and stories. Who is behind the shade? What is their origin story and what do they want? And how do we create a world that allows for these different views?"

## BUSINESS

## S&P Downgrades Saks Global, Moots Potential Reappraisal

- The rating agency's move was expected and follows Saks Global's completion of a debt restructuring involving an exchange of notes providing the luxury retailer with increased liquidity.

BY DAVID MOIN

**Standard & Poor's**, in a move that was largely expected, on Friday downgraded Saks Global.

The ratings agency downgraded Saks Global to "selective default" from "CC" and its issue-level rating on notes issued in December 2024 to "D" (default) from "CC." S&P has been concerned about Saks' liquidity, revenue declines, overdue payments to vendors, and inventory shortages.

While being downgraded is not a good look for Saks, S&P's anticipated move is viewed as more of a technicality that shouldn't have any tangible impact on the retailer's operations or near future financing ability.

The downgrade comes in the aftermath of Saks Global completing its debt restructuring on Wednesday, which included the exchange of notes issued in December 2024 used to finance Saks' \$2.7 billion acquisition of the Neiman Marcus Group.

Referring to the debt restructuring, S&P stated, "We view the transaction as tantamount to a default because it included a debt exchange at a discount and the re-tiering of its outstanding senior secured notes issued in December 2024," which means certain creditors were deprioritized. "Therefore, we lowered our issuer credit rating on Saks Global to 'SD' (selective default) from 'CC' and our issue-level rating on its notes issued in December 2024 to 'D' (default) from 'CC,'" which is already a very low rating suggesting a company's vulnerability.

"As part of the exchange transaction, the company has received new money totaling approximately \$600 million from participating lenders, improving its liquidity position," S&P stated. "We view the transaction as tantamount to default because of the company's weakened liquidity position leading up to the transaction and free operating cash flow deficit. Furthermore, initial senior secured note lenders are getting less than originally promised due to the below par debt exchange, which resulted in an overall discount of about \$115 million compared with pre-transaction amounts and the re-tiering of its position in the capital structure....We expect incremental annual interest expenses will represent an additional hurdle to the company's ability

to generate free operating cash flow."

Still, S&P also indicated it will evaluate the company's revised capital structure and its recent strategic initiatives "when we have sufficient information on the go-forward capital structure and expect to raise the issuer credit rating to the 'CCC' category at that time." That should happen very soon.

S&P expects that Saks Global will use the \$600 million to rebuild its inventory position, which has been depleted due to certain vendors either discontinuing or reducing shipments. S&P also expects the money will be used to pay the retailer's vendors and invest in synergies from the Neiman's acquisition.

Responding to the downgrade, a Saks Global spokesperson said, "This update was anticipated following the close of our recent transaction, in which we secured \$600 million in financing from existing bondholders. It is important to note that

these rating actions apply to the notes issued in December 2024, and not to the new notes issued in August 2025, which are currently unrated.

"S&P expects to upgrade its rating as it learns more about our new capital structure and go-forward strategic initiatives," the spokesperson added. "There is no default under Saks Global's existing agreements, and the rating has no impact on our operations. We remain confident in our ability to deliver for our stakeholders."

In addition to the debt restructuring, Saks Global's liquidity position should improve because the company is working hard to capture synergies through the addition of Neiman Marcus Group into its portfolio, involving consolidating various functions and layoffs to reduce costs. Saks Global expects to reduce annual costs by \$600 million within the next few years.

The Saks Fifth Avenue flagship in Manhattan.



## FASHION

# DVF x Henry Zankov Collection to Debut At Bergdorf's, DVF Flagship, DVF.com

● Zankov, the CFDA Emerging Designer of the Year, previously worked at DVF and set up his own brand in 2020.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEXIE MORELAND

**Diane von Furstenberg** has recruited Henry Zankov, the CFDA's Emerging Designer of the Year, to design a special capsule that will be sold exclusively at Bergdorf Goodman, the DVF flagship in the Meatpacking District and [dvf.com](http://dvf.com).

"I used to work here [at DVF] as well. We are very close. We both have a strong fascination with color and patterns and prints, and it made sense to come together and work on something," said the 44-year-old Zankov in an interview at DVF's offices in New York's Meatpacking District.

Zankov and von Furstenberg, who worked together for four years, stayed close once he left to start his own designer company in 2020.

Taking a reporter through the DVF x Henry Zankov capsule, he pointed out looks such as a Bali floral garnet sequined mesh dress, a fringe knit cardigan, a merino wool and cashmere dress, and an Infinity geo merino wool turtleneck.

The color palette features acid yellows, rich brown, and baby blues offset by deep burgundies. Elevated fabrics include chiffon, silk and cashmere, with materials including metallic Japanese lurex, satin, and cashmere intarsia braid with embellishments such as digitally printed sequins, paillettes, and intricate hand embroidery. Prints include broken polka dot, paisley, batik, and ombre polka dot. Silhouettes are long and loose, and shapes borrow from the world of menswear, with subtle wrapping techniques that nod to DVF's legacy.

"You see Diane's energy in here, but it's never literal. It's really looking at her life when she started, to now. This woman who has lived in the city and spent a lot of time in her country house in Connecticut and spent a long time in Bali," said Zankov, adding that it represents the duality of city and country living.

Without being nostalgic, Zankov said he looked through the DVF archives and came up with pieces that are hand-embroidered, some are cashmere, and there's the paillette idea in broken polka dot.

"All of her prints have movement in them. We have this beautiful polka dot that's not static, but irregular. There are batik prints from Bali mixed with geo," Zankov said. "I took a Bali floral and did an embroidery version of that in tulle with a little overlay. Even though it's very feminine, it's also about this urban woman. It's about somebody who can mix all these pieces that are meant to interchange and clash, and they're not supposed to be matchy-matchy.

"Obviously this is a wrap dress house," Zankov said. "We didn't want to do anything literal. We have scarves and bandanas. And a top that's not a traditional wrap dress."

Zankov said he worked on the collection, which has 30 stock-keeping units, for six months. While his name won't be on the label, it will be a different color than the label on the main DVF collection, which is designed by Nathan Jenden, vice president of creative and design at DVF, who returned to the brand in January 2024



A look from the DVF x Henry Zankov collection.

as a consulting designer and was named creative director in January 2025.

Joining Zankov in the interview were Graziano de Boni, chief executive officer of DVF, and Jenden, who spoke about the rationale for the DVF x Henry Zankov capsule and what they hope to accomplish with it.

De Boni explained that after DVF took the business back in-house in February 2024 from its Chinese licensee and distributor Glamel, 2024 was a transition year. For 2025, the strategy was to basically "go live" with the business in February, and "test, evaluate and adjust."

Jenden, who has been with DVF on and off since 2001, and most recently left in 2020, was responsible in the past for some of DVF's bestselling styles. The first collection under Jenden's creative direction was spring 2025. They're now six months into it and have been learning. ▶



A look from the DVF x Henry Zankov collection.

"Diane was thinking of the legacy of DVF, the business. The legacy of the brand has been longtime secure and it's a forever brand, but the business has had its ups and downs, there's no secret in that respect. That's why I also came on board," said de Boni.

According to de Boni, there are two things at the core of this: One is to make sure whatever they do reflects the authenticity of what the brand is about. He said the brand has an iconic DNA, with its wrap dress, prints and other signatures. The other element is to elevate the product, and go back to the level it had when it started out, using better materials and better quality overall. He said it was having an attitude of thinking they are a designer brand.

"It has nothing to do with the price positioning because we like where it is, but the spirit started with Diane and what she's done and what she represents, not just in the world of fashion, but in general."

De Boni said they discussed, "What do we need to do so the company is relevant for today's customer, and how do we bring in a young customer?"

"I'm a heritage brand [of 53 years]. We have three generations who love this brand. I want to make sure I'm right for all of that. I want them to be happy wearing our product. We also want to be in the conversation and in her mind. Sometimes a heritage brand doesn't need an overall shake-up, it just needed an evolution," de Boni said.

To that end, he wanted to do something unexpected "injecting elements of modernity and elements of novelty, elements that sometimes are unexpected, they surprise, and she [the customer] says, 'look what DVF is doing.'"

They began thinking about talent that is New York-based, both creatively and on the communications, narrative and storytelling

side. De Boni said he was talking to their vice president and head of design, Morgan Hill, and she recommended he meet with her friend, Zankov.

De Boni and Zankov befriended each other last year and had conversations. De Boni found out Zankov used to work for von Furstenberg. "Diane has always done things in a unique and unexpected way. If we're going to do a collaboration, it needs to be authentic. What's better than going back to an alum designer — someone who worked with Diane, knows Diane, and worked with her sketches and fabrics. It becomes a natural collaboration."

Jenden said, "Diane is the designer. We have codes and a brand vocabulary, and it felt that Henry's vocabulary worked with, exploded a little bit and added another level in. Using the same playful sense of color and a slightly 'devil may care attitude,' felt like it was told in a different way, it wasn't a random collaboration. Henry is part of the family."

Zankov definitely feels the connection with von Furstenberg. "I think Diane and I have a very strong personal relationship. We definitely have a fascination with color and pattern. Aesthetically it also made sense, I think, for me [and] my brand. I mostly do knitwear, and it gave me an opportunity to experiment with wovens and silk and embroidery and really look at the whole wardrobe and not just through the knitwear lens," Zankov said.

"We're taking Diane's heritage and what she represents today. What's also strong is Diane herself. She's timeless and her energy and wisdom are timeless and transcend age. It's really about this woman who has this inner confidence. And this duality makes her who she is. A woman



Here and below: Images from the DVF x Henry Zankov campaign.



who lives in the city but also spends time outside the city," Zankov added.

Reached in Europe, von Furstenberg said Zankov brought a fresh point of view to the capsule. "It's his interpretation. They all went to the same school. They all grew up at DVF. So it's in their DNA," she said.

Asked if the Zankov collaboration will go beyond one season, she said, "We'll see. DVF is formula dressing, and I want to go back to this formula dressing, and then you bring in groups that tell a story."

She said it's very exciting that the capsule will be sold in Bergdorf's. "I think it's very nice first thing that we are doing. I like the direction that it's going, and I like the direction of the alumni....It's always interesting to see the interpretation of young people," von Furstenberg said.

Jenden said there have been collaborations at DVF — such as the one with Target — "but never like this. This is very different, almost like an artist-in-residence." Jenden said he worked closely with Zankov on the collection, and they were on the phone with each other every day. "He would take the clothes and

reinterpret them and we would challenge each other," Jenden said.

The DVF x Henry Zankov collection is priced about 10 percent higher than the main DVF line. It retails from \$300 to \$1,300. Zankov said whether it's beaded or print, "everything has to have a sense of ease to it. How does it transcend time and your life day to day?" Zankov said.

The capsule is available to preorder Aug. 27 on bergdorfgoodman.com and will be available to purchase in-store and online at Bergdorf's from Sept. 3, before launching on Sept. 15 at DVF's Meatpacking boutique and at dvf.com.

Yumi Shin, chief merchandising officer at Bergdorf Goodman, said, "Bergdorf Goodman is proud to celebrate the creative reunion of Diane von Furstenberg and Henry Zankov with the exclusive global launch of a limited-edition capsule collection. This collection marks the reintroduction of DVF at Bergdorf Goodman — an iconic brand reimagined through the lens of two visionary talents. We're honored to present this capsule to our customers, offering a distinctive, inspired wardrobe edit exclusively available for a limited time at Bergdorf Goodman."

Bergdorf's plans a party for the DVF x Henry Zankov collection at the store, with Zankov and Jenden in attendance, on Sept. 4. Bergdorf's will also carry DVF's main line this fall. That line hasn't been carried at Bergdorf's since fall 2019.

The DVF x Henry Zankov ad campaign was shot by photographer Willow Williams and styled by Jermaine Daley.

Zankov said his favorite part of doing this collaboration "was working with all the patterns and colors that don't match and the prints that are jarring. Also thinking about the longevity of this. How do the pieces live in your wardrobe for a long time and how do they become heirlooms?"

Asked how they attract a customer who may have not shopped DVF for a while, Zankov said, "I think she'll be surprised in a good way. She'll say, 'This is so DVF.'"

"She may be surprised to see it's DVF, and she may just like the clothes," Jenden said. ■

**WWD**
*From the WWD Archive*

# DVF: Authentic Style, Power And Allure

More than 50 years after Diane von Furstenberg made history by reimagining the wrap dress, fashion continues to champion the voice and the vision she brought to women everywhere. **BY TONYA BLAZIO-LICORISH**

Diane von Furstenberg, spring 2007



Portrait of Diane von Furstenberg wearing her DVF fall 1976 collection.



Von Furstenberg at Francesco Scavullo's birthday party at Studio 54 in New York City on Jan. 17, 1980.

In a Sept. 9, 1976, article taken from the WWD archives, DVF talked fashion and self-expression.

**"I like to see the body in clothes,"** says Diane von Furstenberg, who established herself with a business based on the body-conscious print dress, plus 14 other licensee divisions, including shoes and fine jewelry.

Von Furstenberg sees herself as a glamourpuss. She shines bright at night. The light usually bounces from her mélange of expensive jewelry, which can be a mix of David Webb Lucite and diamond cuffs with elegant antique Victorian chains inlaid with stones to her own designs of diamonds and gold.

"I spend a lot of money on jewelry because I love it. I have a feeling for it," von Furstenberg says. ▶

Always up front are bangles, pendants, shoulder scrapers and her favorite night accessory – an elegant 18-karat gold minaudière.

“Minaudières are my favorite type of things and I hope to design them myself someday. I love minaudières.”

Furstenberg often dashed out at night wearing fussy boas and long-haired furs over frilly dresses with too much jewelry before she gained enough confidence as a businesswoman to wear her own doggy print dresses at night events. ▶

Diane von Furstenberg at the “Royal Flash” movie premiere at the Magno screening room in New York on Sept. 16, 1975.



A look from Diane von Furstenberg’s spring 1975 collection, photographed at the designer’s home in New York City.

Diane von Furstenberg, fall 1976



Iman on the runway at Diane von Furstenberg spring 1983 runway show.



Barry Diller and Von Furstenberg at the 2024 Met Gala in New York on May 6, 2024.

Fall 1976 photograph by Tony Palmer; At “Royal Flash” movie premiere and Iman by Fairchild Archive; Spring 1975 by Pierre Schermoun; With Barry Diller by Gilbert Frazee/Warney



Diane von Furstenberg, spring 2005

When she has an important date with the man in her life at the moment, she resorts to a drop-dead black slinky gown. Consistent day or night is the Furstenberg lioness mane of hair framing a face that looks as if it has minimal makeup, although it is applied with maximum detail.

Von Furstenberg walks through the four seasons in her favorite color of pantyhose: black. She always wears pantyhose because she sits in an unorthodox manner. She feels right at home anywhere, including her own bordello peach banquette, with her legs tucked up or her feet propped on the seat. She always feels feminine in very high, high heels. Rarely is she seen in a shoe that looks flat, comfortable or easy to walk in.

"Fantasy should come from the woman herself – how she talks, how she moves and accessorizes herself," says the tycoon, who no longer uses her acquired-by-marriage title of princess. ■



Diane von Furstenberg, spring 1973

Diane von Furstenberg spring 2005 show by David Turner. Spring 1973 by Falchiff Archive. With Egon von Furstenberg by Peter Siminis. At the premiere of "The Great Gatsby" by Pierre Schermmann and Peter Siminis

Von Furstenberg at the premiere of "The Great Gatsby" at the Loewys State Theatre in New York City on March 27, 1974.



Diane and Egon von Furstenberg at the International Diamond Jubilee tribute to Sol Hurok at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City on May 21, 1973.



Diane von Furstenberg at her fall 1977 ready-to-wear show in New York.



Model Elsa Benitez in a wrap dress from the Diane von Furstenberg spring 1998 ready-to-wear fashion show.



A model on the runway in a look from Diane von Furstenberg to celebrate Barbie's 50th anniversary during New York Fashion Week on Feb. 14, 2009.



Diane von Furstenberg, fall 2017



Von Furstenberg at the First Americans Gala, for the American Indian Development Association, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City on Nov. 26, 1974.

EXCLUSIVE

# Korean Brand Time Makes International Retail Debut



A rendering of the Time pop-up at Samaritaine Paris.



Time, fall 2025

● The Samaritaine Paris pop-up comes along with a Seoul flagship and international expansion.

BY RHONDA RICHFORD

**PARIS** – After presenting three seasons of runway shows in Paris, South Korean fashion brand Time will make its official European retail debut on Aug. 30 with the opening of a two-month pop-up at the Samaritaine Paris department store.

It's the first retail location outside of South Korea for the brand, and marks a significant step in parent company Handsome Corp.'s global expansion strategy, as it seeks to elevate Time into a luxury lifestyle label recognized well beyond its native country.

Backed by the Hyundai Department Store Group, which acquired Handsome Corp. in 2012, the 30-year-old Time brand is well-established in South Korea. Now it aims to push into becoming an international brand and it's counting on its positioning in Paris to take it to the next level.

"We felt that this was the right momentum to expand globally and to have our brand competitiveness tested in Paris," said Min Duk Kim, chief executive officer of Handsome Corp.

"Paris is a city where global fashion standards are made. It's really important for us to gain recognition there," he said.

With the explosive global popularity of all things "K" – including -drama, -pop and -beauty – Kim believes now is the right time to expand abroad.

"We believe we can lead the luxury segment of Korean fashion globally," he said. "Our goal is to become a beloved K-fashion brand with international credibility."

The pop-up will be the first to feature pieces from Time's fall 2025 collection, shown on the runway last March. On offer will be curved jackets, voluminous coats, and structured knits, as well as accessories that have proven hits in Korea – including shawls and leather handbags.

"This is a response to the feedback we've been getting at our past fashion week shows, which is: 'where can we actually buy the collection?'" said Kim. "Now customers can touch and feel the products and experience the quality directly."

While ready-to-wear has traditionally accounted for roughly 90 percent of Time's sales, the company is seeing fast growth in accessories and handbags, which have "soared" to 15 percent of sales in recent seasons.

The upcoming runway show in October during Paris Fashion Week will feature a new bag line created in collaboration with a Paris-based handbag designer, with the ambition to capitalize on this category as an entry point for new customers.

The pop-up will also preview elements of Time's expanding lifestyle offering, including tableware, decorative objects, and a soon-to-launch fragrance – all branded under the Time name.

The latter category builds on Handsome Corp.'s experience in fragrance with French concept store Liquides Bar a Parfums and Argentinian brand Fuegoia 1833, which it has operated and distributed in South Korea since 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Time's lifestyle play will also feature heavily in the strategy for its upcoming

Min Duk Kim



stand-alone store in Seoul, set to open Nov. 7. The four-floor flagship will serve as a brand experience center, with dedicated spaces for ready-to-wear, accessories, lifestyle, a private VIP suite, and a café. The Seoul flagship is intended as a blueprint for future locations, including a planned Paris store.

Slated to open in the second half of 2026, the company said it has narrowed down its Paris flagship location to either Rue Saint-Honoré or the Marais, pending the results of the Samaritaine pop-up.

"We hope to connect our Seoul flagship with the future Paris location to express the same brand essence," Kim told WWD.

The pop-up will feature the global collection, which is tweaked to adjust for European fits, textures and silhouettes, as well as the eye of an international client who is more style-forward, trend-aware and willing to experiment with what is a relatively new name on the global stage.

Creative direction is led by Choi Jung In, one of the few female creative leads at a fashion house. Though the brand is based on a creative studio system, it leans on Choi's vision to anchor its aesthetic and brand communications.

Time's pop-up follows in the footsteps of its sibling brand System, also under the Handsome Corp. umbrella, which opened a permanent Paris flagship in June 2024. System's success has provided a roadmap for Time's expansion, Kim said.

From the System launch, Handsome Corp. learned the importance of cultural fusion by enlisting Korean and European artists for collaborations, which has positioned the coed brand's Marais store as part exhibition space.

"We learned how to operate the store and activate our marketing, but more focused on locals," said Kim of broadening the brand's appeal. "We also learned that what is really important is not just the product, but also what encircles the products; for example, it is also an entertainment [venue]."

While Time has shown off-calendar since the fall 2024 season, the brand has been bolstered by support from FHCM executive president Pascal Morand, said Kim.

"Pascal has helped us with advice on timing, presentation, and how to build visibility in the Paris market," he said, noting that the partnership with the LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton-owned Samaritaine and its credibility as a fashion hub will be a key milestone for the brand.

Opening events for the pop-up include a customer-facing coffee cart and special gifting, with an industry cocktail event the night of Sept. 4. The brand's next runway presentation is set for Oct. 2.

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MEN'S

# For Grigor Dimitrov, Life Is Not Slowing Down

- The Bulgarian tennis player has found recovery to be “way busier” than when he was on tour.

BY HIKMAT MOHAMMED

**LONDON** — Having a short memory is the success to any tennis player's path forward.

When Grigor Dimitrov retired against Jannik Sinner at the 2025 Wimbledon Championships, he was two sets up against the world number one. Sinner had been on an unchallenged streak on the grass court until he was faced with Dimitrov's captivating performance of hitting aces and winning points.

In the third set, however, Dimitrov injured his right pectoral muscle, forcing him to retire from the match.

The emotional moment touched many hearts as Dimitrov shook the umpire's hand following his exit, which was turned into a mural at the Aldersbrook Lawn Tennis Club in east London earlier this month.

“Ever since I walked off the court, I let myself not think about what happened because it was a tough moment. It was a physically painful moment, but that doesn't really bother me, it's more of the mental aspect of things that really kicked in for me, it was just so surreal,” said the Bulgarian tennis player in a candid interview.

“The one thing that I remember is as soon as it happened, I went into the locker room and cried straight up for a couple of hours and then my mind just completely changed right after. I got up, I showered and I was already thinking about focusing on the rehab.”

This has been the first time in Dimitrov's 18-year career that he's been able to step back from tennis and reflect. He's been spending time at home in Monaco with his friends and girlfriend, the actress Eiza González, cooking, riding motorcycles, running and swimming.

“At some point actually, I was way busier than when I'm playing tennis, so that was very odd. I'm finding a good balance for now and I'm not really



Grigor Dimitrov for Lacoste.

stressing too much,” he explained.

That doesn't mean Dimitrov hasn't stopped thinking or dreaming about getting back on the court though.

“There's always something that keeps pulling me back into it and I'm always trying to stay in shape and pushing myself to do the best that I can. The rehab is taking longer than what we actually thought, but at the same time, I'm in no rush to try to come back at the moment,” he said.

He will be skipping this year's U.S. Open, one of the final Grand Slams of the year, taking place in Flushing Meadows, N.Y., through Sept. 7.

Dimitrov admits that it “stings” not to be playing in the tournament and that skipping a Grand Slam is “one of the worst things as a player,” yet he's still optimistic about the future and the possibilities ahead. The handsome 6-foot-3-inch player is a stylish personality on the tennis circuit. He's been an ambassador for Lacoste since 2023 and is never caught in a run-of-the-mill kit on or off court. He has a tendency to veer toward color, especially pink. At the 2025 French Open, he wore a navy polo with a splattered pink print to emulate the red clay from the tournament, while at the 2025 Madrid Open he opted for a pink polo with blocks of navy and white. He also worked in pink details at the 2025 Indian Wells Open and adopted a full baby pink polo at the 2024 Rolex Paris Masters.

On close inspection, there are personal touches to his on-court look. At the 2025 Miami Open, he carried a custom Lacoste duffel bag inspired by the three colors of Bulgaria's flag.

“The encore look has always been very important for me since I could actually remember myself playing. I've always wanted to have different outfits and I like putting effort into that because we're alone on the court and it's important to feel good and comfortable out there,” Dimitrov said, adding that he's very vocal about his taste.

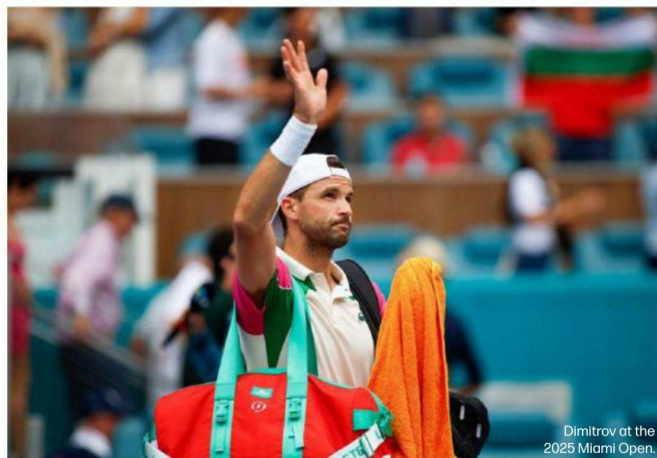
“When you play tennis at such a high level, the small things make a huge difference,” he contends.

His relationship with Lacoste has only been a motivational boost.

“They really believed in me at a time when I was not doing so well. They stepped up and said, ‘Listen, we believe in you. We'd really like to have you.’ What helped me was being able to come back to the top 10 [in ATP ranking in 2024]. That was my way of saying thank



Dimitrov has been a Lacoste ambassador since 2023.



Dimitrov at the 2025 Miami Open.



Dimitrov at the 2025 French Open.

you for believing in me,” Dimitrov said.

He's also a brand partner and ambassador for the watch brand Bianchet where he's involved in the Swiss luxury watchmaking brand's design and development.

“I'm a little bit tough at times in business because I always believe in [making everything] better. [Joining Bianchet] was a challenge that I really wanted to take on, and I've been able to navigate that the best that I can. There's so many things I want to

do outside of sports,” said the 34-year-old.

Naturally as a tennis player, he's always had a knack for going for gold. He's often wearing a few Van Cleef & Arpels Alhambra bracelets and has a selection of necklace pendants from FoundRae.

“I was one of the first ones to really wear it, [even when people would say ‘This is for girls.’ For me it doesn't matter, it looks cool and I want to take credit for starting the trend a little bit,” Dimitrov said half-jokingly.

## MENTALITIES

MEN'S

# Fabletics Has Built a \$300M Men's Business

- The brand uses actor, comedian and equity partner Kevin Hart as the face of its men's collection.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

When most people think of Fabletics, they think womenswear. But here's a secret: Menswear actually accounts for nearly one-third of the company's total sales, which are approaching \$1 billion.

Touted as the country's largest digitally native activewear brand with a compound annual growth rate of 30 percent, Fabletics was founded as a women's-only brand in 2013 in El Segundo, Calif., by Adam Goldenberg with Don and Ginger Ressler.

The idea for the business, which is owned by Goldenberg and Don Ressler's TechStyle Fashion Group, came from Ginger Ressler who didn't believe that leggings should cost \$100. They also found most women's active product at that time to be either bland and boring or overshadowed by the testosterone-fueled

marketing from the industry leaders that didn't connect with women.

So they came up with the idea to offer fashionable performance product at an accessible price point. And it worked.

In 2020, they applied this same mission to menswear. "We started as a women's brand first, which is a little unusual in activewear," Goldenberg said. "And people often think about us as a women's brand, but our men's is a very big segment. We'll do a little over \$1 billion in sales this year, and men's will be about 30 percent. That's a big number considering it's still a relatively new part of our business."

What's also interesting, he said, is that about two thirds of the men's sales are coming from male customers, with the other third coming from women's customers who are now buying menswear as well.

"We say we have the five Fs," Goldenberg said. "Fashion, fit, function, fabric and fun. We have really leaned into the fun part with men's because we find that humor works even more so with men than women. So we try to integrate that into our campaigns."

When men's launched five years ago, actor and comedian Kevin Hart came on board as an investor and the face of Fabletics' men's business and stars in its commercials, many of which have gone viral.

"Kevin has been such a phenomenal partner for men's because if you look at him, you know he's super into health and wellness," Goldenberg said. "He works out every single day and is in incredible shape — it's part of his life. But he's also one of the funniest people on the planet. Kevin was really able to help us quickly get the message out that we have men's product as well."

But while the ads are laugh-out-loud funny, the product is anything but a joking matter.

"We are very, very serious about the performance of the product," Goldenberg said. "It needs to be absolutely performing at the highest level. You can wear it to the gym, you can play sports in it. You can compete in it. But we just think there's a more creative way to market than what you see with some of [our competitors]

and we've seen a lot of success from that."

Among the most popular men's products are the company's One shorts and joggers that retail for \$69.95 and \$119.95 at full price, along with its 24-7 T-shirts that average \$10.98 or three for \$19. But one of its hero franchises is the Don pant, which was introduced in September 2024 and now accounts for nearly \$32 million in sales. The pant, which took three years to perfect, costs \$119.95 and is now offered in four fits and there are also shorts, vests, polos and other complementary products.

"It's really more lifestyle product that performs," Goldenberg explained. "You can golf in it, do a light workout, wear it to work or out in the evening."

Looking ahead, Goldenberg believes there's lots of growth still to come in menswear.

"The biggest source of new customers is word of mouth, but we also spend a lot on advertising across all different channels," he said. "And then we want to expand our revenue per customer to become a bigger portion of his wardrobe, and how we do that is through product and category expansion."

When men find a style they like, they tend to buy it again and again in slightly different variations. So with the Don pant, for example, the company builds momentum each quarter with new colors and fashion elements. "That's really been our tried-and-true approach to growing men's that we keep leaning into," he said.

In addition, Goldenberg said, Fabletics will continue to scale the men's business by expanding its retail footprint. Today, the company operates 107 brick-and-mortar stores and the plan is to add about 20 to 25 additional units annually. In those stores, sales are split nearly evenly between men's and women's.

Goldenberg believes that ultimately, Fabletics can have between 200 and 250 stores in the U.S. "We comped up over 20 percent in the first half of last year with almost 21 percent same-store comps. And then the first half of this year, we did about 14 percent same-store comps. We find that when we open retail stores, we bring new customers in and the revenue goes up with



Kevin Hart in a promotional ad for Fabletics.

our existing customers. And our digital advertising also becomes more effective in that geography. So the more stores we open, the more they build on themselves."

In addition, he believes there's "a tremendous amount of international opportunity" as well. Right now the company has stores in Germany, the U.K. and France and will be expanding into Mexico through a partnership with the retailer Liverpool.

Fabletics currently boasts a little more than 3 million active customers and 80 percent of them are part of the company's VIP membership program. Members get discounts of 20 to 25 percent on all purchases and get billed \$59 monthly for an optional membership credit that can be used to buy two pieces worth up to \$100. They also get first access to new drops and member-only products.

The program is free, and "really creates engagement and loyalty," he said. "And what's interesting is that members make up almost 95 percent of our revenue.

You might go into a retail store and buy something as a traditional customer, but then for your second purchase, you become a member. There's very little obligation, you don't have to buy every month and you get great savings."

Although this membership program has been in place since Fabletics launched, Goldenberg admitted he wasn't sure it would work with men. But he was pleased to see that about 80 percent of the company's male customers also become members.

"One of the reasons it may work even slightly better with men is, if you look in a woman's closet, you'll typically see a lot more brands than in a guy's closet," he said. "So if Fabletics is a guy's favorite brand, it's predominantly the activewear brand in their closet."

Goldenberg is confident that Fabletics can continue to chip away market share from some of its largest competitors, such as Lululemon, Alo and Vuori. "Forty percent of our customers are trading into our brand from a more expensive brand," he said. "And the other 60 percent are buying their activewear at Old Navy or Kohl's, and we're their luxury brand."

Looking to the future, Goldenberg has lofty aspirations. "We're in this for the long haul. We really believe we can build the next multibillion-dollar international activewear brand."



Adam Goldenberg



The men's department in Fabletics' NorthPark store in Dallas.

## MEN'S

# Drôle de Monsieur Opens Seoul Flagship

- The cozy, retro-tinged unit at The Hyundai marks the French brand's first outpost in Asia.

BY MILES SOCHA

**French menswear brand Drôle de Monsieur** has effectively doubled its retail footprint, recently opening its first Asian address at The Hyundai Seoul shopping center.

The new South Korean unit mirrors the spirit of the brand's two-year-old Paris flagship, which straddles elements of the 1990s and 1970s, including the kind of loud, floral carpeting you might have encountered at a cineplex in that era.

Founded in 2014 by Dijon natives Dany Dos Santos and Maxime Schwab, Drôle de Monsieur is probably best known for its knits and caps bearing the slogan "Not From Paris Madame," suggesting ambition and creative talent are not the preserve of large cities.

For their boutique designs, Dos Santos and Schwab take cues from the golden age of grand hotels, with hints of Art Deco and Hollywood Regency opulence.

In Seoul, elm burl wood paneling frames emerald-shaped niches for clothing racks, shelves and a nifty stereo system. A slouchy leather sofa in anise green heightens the retro cool.

A marble and wood cocktail bar backed with flocked wallpaper and loaded with crystal decanters, cognacs and whiskey invites guests to linger – as do coffee table books and a selection of record albums.

"It's more than a shop," Dos Santos said in an interview. "The goal was to extend our vision and to create a special place where people can feel at home."

Indeed, he characterized the bars – reminiscent of those found in hotel

lobbies in the '70s – as part of the "art of receiving people."

"Maxime and I are very inspired by hotels and the hospitality sector, so that's why we did this cocktail bar in the flagship store."

Dos Santos sourced all of the vintage furnishings, ceramics and objects, scouring markets in Paris and online sellers, just as he does for his own apartment, amassing objects that will ultimately inhabit future Drôle de Monsieur pop-ups and flagships: Milan and London are top priorities for the next freestanding boutiques.

Meanwhile, the brand also ships to about 250 wholesale doors in 46 countries.

"It's important to find the right vases, the right sofa, the right vinyls – everything – because for me, it's part of the brand it's more than a shop," Dos Santos explained.

The designer noted music is also an essential element of Drôle de Monsieur.

"For example, when I listen music, I can easily find inspiration for runaway show, for the collection. So that's why it's important to bring music into the shop," he explained. "When customers come in, I want them to really feel at home. Even if they don't know some reference, some music, I want to make them happy, to discover something new and feel good in this space."

Dos Santos and Schwab curate the eclectic playlists, which can stretch from Barry White, Phil Collins, Luciano Pavarotti and Michael Jackson to French rap, soul and hip-hop.

"I think it's very important to create an experimental place," Dos Santos said. "It's a whole world that we want to sell, not only T-shirts....So the goal is to sell something bigger, and it's all about lifestyle."

At present, the Drôle de Monsieur



The new Drôle de Monsieur boutique at the Hyundai Seoul.

collection spans ready-to-wear and accessories, plus some footwear.

Dos Santos said expanding its leather goods and jewelry offering is on the horizon, as is a collaboration with a sneaker brand. "We are ambitious," he remarked, mentioning watches as a possible category for the future.

The Seoul store stocks the brand's signature short-sleeved polo cardigan with an embossed logo, baggy jeans in raw denim, and T-shirts with its "Not From Paris Madame" slogan embroidered across the front and back.

The founding designers plan to travel to Seoul in October for an official opening event. The 650-square-foot unit is operated with its distribution partner Kolon Group.



Dany Dos Santos and Maxime Schwab

## MEN'S

# Christian McCaffrey Joins While On Earth

- The San Francisco 49ers player will join as cofounder and investor.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

**Nike has lost another** high-profile athlete from its roster.

Christian McCaffrey, a running back for the San Francisco 49ers, has left his longtime sponsor to join While on Earth, a performance apparel and footwear brand, as cofounder and investor. McCaffrey had been associated with Nike since his high school days and officially joined its athlete roster in 2017.

While on Earth was launched in the fall of 2024 by Todd Meloney, who spent a decade leading marketing at No Bull. The team also includes CrossFit athletes Mat Fraser and Brooke Wells. The brand has been making inroads among fitness and wellness enthusiasts thanks in part to its signature Move Trainer shoe and apparel collection made from recycled materials.



Christian McCaffrey has joined While on Earth as an investor.

"I fell in love with what Todd and the team are building," McCaffrey said. "I am at a point in my career where I wanted to build something from the ground up and to be part of something bigger than myself. This isn't just about putting my name on something. I wanted to share a vision with like-minded people that is represented through footwear and apparel. This is the perfect fit, not just because I resonate with the actual products, but because of the people and the name itself. I've already been very hands-on with product direction specifically, and I'm very excited about the

opportunity we have in front of us."

He said the decision to join While on Earth was "about challenging myself on a new level and seizing the opportunity to become part of something bigger than myself, to transcend my days as a football player. I was seeking an opportunity that I could bring into the rest of my lifetime, not just into my playing career."

He pointed in particular to While on Earth's shoes that can be worn for everything from lifting weights and running to going out to dinner, as well as the apparel that he described as

"timeless and classic, without being overly branded."

"For an athlete like Christian, in the prime of his playing career, to commit to an early stage brand like While on Earth is extremely unique," Meloney said. "Any brand would be fortunate to work with Christian and it's a testament to his belief in our vision. He will help introduce While on Earth to an entirely new audience, and have a meaningful voice in shaping our future. We have already kicked off some exciting new products together and his feedback and contributions have been so valuable. This is a defining moment for our business and I can't wait for all that's ahead of us."

The campaign video revealing McCaffrey's involvement was shot in a secluded home and private coastal gym where he plays the classical song "Clair De Lune" on the piano.

McCaffrey stressed that joining While on Earth "isn't just another brand deal or putting my name and face on something. I want to help make the best products possible. We've had multiple design meetings and structural meetings together already. So from both a shoe integrity and structure standpoint as well as from a design perspective, I'm lending my input and am very involved. We're always thinking about how we can make each shoe perfect in terms of what someone's everyday life and activities require."

To celebrate the announcement, While on Earth is offering customers a gift of its Pathway Hat with purchases over \$150.

# WWD Luxury BRIDAL ISSUE

**THIS OCTOBER**, the WWD Luxury Bridal Issue returns with a spotlight on the designers, trends and tastemakers redefining the modern wedding. From couture gowns and bespoke beauty, to elevated travel, jewelry, and lifestyle, this special edition offers a high-gloss look at how this momentous occasion is evolving.

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EXCLUSIVE

# Place des Tendances Bets on Loyalty, Logistics to Fuel Growth



Guillaume Grimbert

● In his first interview since taking the helm, CEO Guillaume Grimbert talks about his plan to grow the e-commerce player to 100 million euros in turnover.

BY RHONDA RICHFORD

**In an era where** fashion e-commerce is being reshaped by social media shopping and massive global platforms, Place des Tendances, the French multibrand retailer owned by Printemps Group, is betting on mid- to premium brands, longtime customer loyalty and speed-focused logistics to fuel its European expansion.

For Guillaume Grimbert, who quietly stepped into the chief executive officer role in February, it was a return to his roots. As the platform's very first employee when it was a startup back in 2008, he helped the cofounders launch the e-commerce pioneer before embarking on a 20-year career in luxury fashion and real estate tech.

He understands the potential of his origin story. "As far as storytelling, it's pretty good," he joked.

Now at the helm of the company where he started his career, he's focused on expansion in a market butting up against decreasing consumer confidence. Grimbert emphasizes a data-driven approach.

"We're not here to be everything for

everyone," he said.

That means pulling back from the home and decor category, which had been tested in recent years as a potential lifestyle play. Home will now be left to Made in Design, a sister company within Printemps Group.

"Our customers come to us for fashion and beauty," Grimbert said. "It's not a moment to go in a different direction. We want to focus on where we are very strong, and that's fashion, accessories, shoes and beauty."

Instead, the company is expanding its offer within its two core verticals. In women's fashion, Place des Tendances has added popular and up-and-coming names like Farm Rio, while also seeking out emerging labels from the Nordic countries and Spain – creative hubs Grimbert believes are "underexposed" to French consumers.

"We are going to continue to search, like detectives, across Europe for new independent, trendy brands to propose to our customers," he said. The team regularly travels to Barcelona, Berlin and Brussels – just to name a few cities off the beaten fashion track – in search of new labels.

But Grimbert is not betting the house on Gen Z. The site's core customer is a woman between 40 and 50 who lives outside of Paris and wants access to the latest fashion trends and brands from the capital – and even further afield, like Scandinavia or South Korea.

It currently hosts more than 400 brands

from French stalwarts like Sandro to rising Scandi names like Rotare and Rue de Tokyo.

Recent additions include British brand Damson Madder, Danish labels Tiny Big Sister and Minimum, and indie French brands including Hod Paris, Rouge Edit and Socque. Other Nordic names including Filippa K and Baum und Ptergarten; Spanish brands Laagam, Toral and Bibi Lou, and Korean men's brand Solid will launch soon. Nars will soon be added in the beauty category.

While Amazon has entered the fashion category – not to mention the low-cost volume play of Shein and Temu, which are facing political blowback and potential regulation in France – Grimbert sees limited competition from the international giants, particularly in the accessible luxury and premium segments.

"Some brands just don't want to be on Amazon. It doesn't align with their brand identity," he said. "Or they don't want to be seen with too many wholesalers at the same time and be [overexposed]." Case in point is French label Sandro, which prefers to be on a curated platform that reflects its positioning as accessible luxury.

Men's fashion, currently just a 10 percent slice of the business pie, is also receiving fresh investment with the addition of new brands. "It's one of the big white spaces in the French market," he said. A renewed focus on shoes, accessories and premium brands for men is part of the expansion plan, as is adding more brands for children down the line.

Many have been shopping on the site for more than a decade – and Grimbert intends to keep them.

"Some of our customers have been with us since 2008. They place 50 orders a year. That's about one a week," Grimbert said. He is building new strategies around these frequent buyers.

The team has introduced segmented loyalty levels, including a VIC tier, and is rolling out exclusive services such as invitation-only sales and bespoke gifting. "We think about our customer every minute," he said. "I tell my team: see your customer, call them, listen to them."

Grimbert's first focus has been on "quick wins," including a revamp of the site to make it more intuitive for users, international rollouts and expanding the brand portfolio. Following the tech upgrades, Grimbert has set a clear target of reaching 100 million euros in turnover within his first year while strengthening profit margins.

He emphasized the need to grow revenue efficiently by using a lower-risk marketplace model to test new brands, targeting high-value customers through the new loyalty perks and expanding outlet offerings for price-sensitive shoppers.

"We want everyone who visits our site to be able to buy something, whether it's a 10 euro accessory or a 500 euro jacket. That's our vision," he said. The current average basket is 200 euros.

Place des Tendances has its own warehouse just outside of Paris, which handles everything from product photography to order fulfillment. "We can often shoot and launch products before the brands themselves," Grimbert said.

Staff can triple in size during peak months, and every team member uses tablet-based tools to pick and ship products in under 24 hours, with one-day

delivery in Paris for its VIPs.

"We built our own logistics software from the beginning," said Grimbert, of the company's proprietary warehouse management system.

Grimbert intends to leverage this logistical edge to scale internationally, with a test-and-learn approach targeting the U.K., Belgium, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

The site now ships to 15 countries. International growth is already up more than 20 percent year-over-year, and expected to be a key growth driver for his revenue goal. French market sales have grown in the single digits – which Grimbert framed as "still pretty good" considering the current macroeconomic climate.

Grimbert's three-year roadmap includes launching new services and building out both the men's and children's categories. He also plans to expand both the full-price and the outlet offerings to broaden the customer base and elevate the customer experience.

## Expanding Social Campaigns With Influencers

Place des Tendances will launch a new campaign with French TV host Marine Vignes. The 52-year-old is popular with the brand's core demographic, and the campaign is timed with France's rentrée, a period where the country roars back to life after the traditional August vacation – and a key shopping season.

Vignes will curate a selection of looks that will be available on the site, structured around a chic day-to-night wardrobe. The campaign will roll out across both Place des Tendances and Vignes' personal social platforms, and those who come to the site from Vignes' social channels will have special discount codes.

"Marine Vignes is really inspirational for our customer, and represents the lifestyle of our community," he said, noting that it reflects the company's new influencer-focused content strategy. "We want to use personalities who represent our customers. We'll continue to do more activations like this."



EXCLUSIVE

# Thomas Saujet Has a New Venture

● The former president of ICP, which sold to Kering as part of its acquisition of Creed, is back in the mix with a new business.

BY JAMES MANSO

**Thomas Saujet is getting** back in the fragrance game.

Saujet, the former president of distributor ICP, which sold to Kering as part of the conglomerate's acquisition of Creed, has a new venture. Simply named Saujet Fragrances Group, the distributor-investor

combo sits under Saujet Holdings, which also recently invested in Barberino's.

"I've seen too many people just sell their business and not do anything afterward," Saujet said. "I felt like I needed to do something and leave a legacy behind."

To that end, Saujet Fragrances Group takes equity in each fragrance brand it distributes and, thus far, has four in its portfolio: Fabricca Della Musa, Anti, Chambre52 and What We Do Is Secret.

"We're staying as an independent, family-owned business venture," Saujet said. "We have the ICP track record. We're still boutique, but while holding an equity stake

in these brands, we have the ability to be aligned with the brands on vision, strategy and what to do for the long term."

Part of the long-term playbook, he said, would be keeping distribution tight. "We started dabbling with presenting to very select accounts," Saujet said. "It is going to be so strategic in terms of specialty stores, and when we get to the point of launching with department stores, it will be very, very, very select doors. The goal is not hundreds of points of sale."

He's also been playing in the fragrance category long enough to see the tectonic shifts in its retail landscape, from the formation of Saks Global to the privatization of Nordstrom Inc. and the power of Amazon and TikTok.

"There's going to be more downsizing, merging, consolidation," he said. "I think there are other players who will be able to take advantage of that."

The focus is still on relationship – and heritage-driven brands, similar to how he built the ICP portfolio. "I am all about

relationships," he said. "It's first about getting to understand the founders, and whether it's a long-term marriage or if it'll end in divorce. And next, it has to be about innovation."

Saujet acknowledged that fragrance – still the fastest-growing prestige category in the U.S. market – is quickly becoming oversaturated.

"Everyone's launching things," he said. "There has to be an understanding of the points of differentiation. The brands I've selected each have that innovation, disruption or credibility that we can go ahead to make them successes."

Pointing to Fabricca Della Musa, "We're talking about incredible perfumers," he said. "They use technologies that not everyone jumps on," like smell-to-taste, which creates gourmand accords based on how foods taste.

Anti, for example, also replicates scents from centuries past, while What We Do Is Secret has tapped perfumer heavyweights such as Maurice Roucel of Symrise. Paris LA, architected by Laurent Le Guerne, brings a Coca-Cola accord to market. "We've got some stuff that's cross-generational, and there's a younger customer who's all about fragrances," Saujet said. "Accounts and customers all think they're disruptive. We've got some amazing stuff."

Saujet doesn't have a portfolio size he's aiming for, saying he evaluates new business on a case-by-case basis. "It's crazy, the amount of brands that are coming forward, but I have to be mindful and realistic," he said. "I'm here to build something new, this time around, keep it in the family for generations."



Thomas Saujet



Fragrances from Saujet Fragrances Group brands.

EXCLUSIVE

# Paul Mitchell Taps Paris Hilton For Global Ambassadorship

● Hilton appears in a campaign for the storied hair brand.

BY JAMES MANSO

**It's a good hair day** for Paris Hilton.

The multi-hyphenate celebrity entertainer and entrepreneur has a new global ambassadorship for the Paul Mitchell hair care and styling brand. She fronts a campaign that will span the company's digital, social and in-store touchpoints. It was lensed by Giel Domen and Kenneth Van de Velde.

"Hair has always been a part of my identity. I've always loved being blond. It's always been such a form of self expression," Hilton said. "I'm very selective about who I partner with, it has to feel real and organic. I look for brands that share my values and have amazing quality, and a story I can connect to. Paul Mitchell is iconic, it's family-founded, cruelty-free and philanthropic. And I love that they've stayed true to themselves while still innovating."

Hilton grew up using the brand, remembering the fragrances in her favorite conditioner, and has since come to appreciate upcoming innovations like its Multitasking Dry Shampoo, Dry

Conditioner Spray and Texturizing Spray that were used by the campaign shoot's hairstylist, Paul Mitchell School alum Sienree Du.

"We really went all out," Hilton said. "It's very playful, very extra, leaning into my signature playful and glam vibe."

The brand's chief executive officer, Michaeline DeJoria, said the collaboration comes at a time of "really strong growth."

"It's stuff we've been laying the groundwork for for years. When I came into a top leadership position, I had a clear vision on what I wanted the brand to look like, where I wanted to go and how I wanted to get there," DeJoria said. "Even our restage, which has been phenomenal for us, definitely took time to do."

The strategy is a mix of catering to existing customers while accruing newer and younger ones, so an ambassador with universal appeal was paramount.

"It's easy to share messages in the places that we always do," DeJoria said. "There's an entire global population that did not grow up with Paul Mitchell, and they're now tweens and teenagers. We've earned that 45-year trust and loyalty, but we haven't earned that yet with a newer demographic that's younger. Having the

celebrity alignment lends a megaphone to reach a lot of people."

DeJoria posited that it's not just about reach, but about an alignment of values.

"She's iconic, she spans generations, she's all about doing good and giving back and leaving the world a little better than she found it. She loves animals, we pioneered cruelty-free. Paris is fun. Paris is happy. She doesn't take herself too seriously, and we don't either."

The campaign also amplifies XO Your Pro, Paul Mitchell's initiative, which "highlights the relationship between stylist and client," DeJoria said. "Those personal moments with a stylist are so special. They're your therapist, your makeover captain, your friend. There are certain things AI just can't replace."



Paris Hilton for Paul Mitchell.

EXCLUSIVE

# NatureWell Enters Walmart With Lip Care Line

- This marks the beauty brand's first placement in Walmart U.S.

BY EMILY BURNS

**NatureWell** is betting on the lip care hype.

The 10-year-old wellness-forward skin and body care brand on Monday is launching at 3,000 Walmart doors with a lip care line, including Shimmering Vanilla Mint Lip Butter, Vanilla Glaze Lip Butter, Pink Velvet Lip Butter, Vanilla Lip Mask and Berry Lip Mask. The brand, owned by AX Beauty Brands, has been available in Walmart Canada and is at other retailers like Target, Amazon, DSW, Marshalls, Sam's Club and T.J. Maxx.

"Lip care is one of the fastest growing, most dynamic categories. It's the mix of skin care and beauty. It's one of the easiest entry points for new consumers, and it's one of the places that NatureWell can be introduced to Walmart shoppers," said Collette Trejo, executive merchandising and sales leader for AX Beauty Brands, adding that NatureWell partnered with the Walmart team to create the line.

Kristin Bibb, president and chief commercial officer at AX Beauty Brands, added: "We looked at our surrounding brands that are now our competition, and thought there's an opportunity to go in and create a small assortment for a retailer like Walmart and extend our trusted assortment to our loyal consumer."

With this launch, NatureWell is emphasizing its commitment to fragrance and flavor across its product portfolio.

NatureWell launches at Walmart with lip care collection.



NatureWell lip care collection launches at Walmart.



According to Bibb, the brand, which is nearing three times sales growth in 2025, is homing in on its partnerships with key fragrance houses to further highlight this side of its products.

In terms of where fragrance is headed, Bibb said, "Gourmands aren't going anywhere...Where we're going next is elevated gourmands sinking in with musks and fruity florals. That's where we're seeing things evolve and transition. The beauty of that fragrance development and trend is that they nicely tee into flavors. We're dealing with two wonderful

fragrance categories of gourmands and fruits that lend themselves nicely between beautiful body sprays, body lotions, oils and body washes, and then you can expand into lip care nicely."

To announce the launch, NatureWell will be tapping into its digital strategy, particularly with nano-, micro- and mid-tier influencers.

"On TikTok and Instagram, we have a lot of educational content as we lean into this category, also content at the store and showing where the product is," said Keran Look Loy, vice president of marketing

at AX Beauty Brands. He added that the brand will be geo targeting content to potential customers who are with 10 to 15 miles of a Walmart.

According to NatureWell's marketing manager Heather Cook, the content that has been standing out the most, which the team will be doubling down on for the lip launch, is day-in-the-life style videos that showcase how creators incorporate the products into their daily routines.

For the team, the launch is a stepping stone for future growth with Walmart in the U.S.

"This is the beginning for us. We see Walmart as the perfect launch pad for NatureWell to continue growing," Trejo said. "We are committed to bringing innovation, both within and outside of the beauty aisle, to Walmart nationwide in the future."

WELLNESS

# Fertility Content Creator Demi Schweers Launches Iris Nutrition

- The brand launches direct-to-consumer and on Amazon on Monday with an electrolyte drink mix formulated with hormone balancing ingredients.

BY EMILY BURNS

In 2022, content creator Demi Schweers began sharing her infertility journey online. Now, three years later, with 382,000 followers on Instagram, she's launching her own hormone health brand to support her community.

"Hormone health deserves to be talked about every single day," Schweers said. "It's not something that just happens when you are right at that phase, ready to start your family."

Iris Nutrition launches on Monday direct-to-consumer and on Amazon with its first product, an Electrolyte Drink Mix, \$60, available in Blood Orange Blackberry, Lemon Raspberry, Peach Prickly Pear and a variety pack. Industry sources said the brand could reach \$3.5 million in revenue its first year. The name Iris is inspired by the Greek goddess, who is the goddess of messengers and rainbows, also a nod to Schweers' daughter, who is a double rainbow baby (one born after two losses).

"Iris was born out of my personal journey. I navigated a year of infertility, had a miscarriage, found out I had PCOS,

then we went through the IVF route," said Schweers. "With that whole entire journey, the number-one thing was just balancing my hormone health and getting my body in the best position. There was months that I was spending upwards of \$400 just to find the right vitamins and supplements."

Schweers' cofounder Allison Escovedo Owen had similarly been struggling with PCOS since she was a teenager.

"I remember when I was 18 and diagnosed with PCOS, my doctor gave me birth control pills and was like, 'This is what you have to take for the rest of your life,'" she said.

With this and her background in CPG, Owen knew they could create better products for women struggling with hormone health. Therefore, in January 2024, the duo set out to create an on-the-go formula. The final result is a powder-to-drink formula with vitamin B6, folic acid, and magnesium for cycle support; a 40:1 myo and d-chiro inositol blend for ovarian and hormone function; electrolytes for hydration, and a prebiotic fiber for gut health. To ensure the formula met all the key needs for women navigating hormone health and fertility issues, ages 20 to 40, Owen and Schweers also collaborated with Isabel Garza, a registered dietitian and women's health expert.

"So many women are going through these different struggles and these challenges, and it's confusing and overwhelming, and we don't really even



know where to start," Schweers said.

Having witnessed the confusion in the market, Schweers and Owen, who are both busy moms, opted for an easy-to-consume drink format over a fistful of capsules.

"The reason we landed on this was we knew we wanted it to be something that was easy to take every day and easy to integrate into people's everyday lives. Demi and I found ourselves drinking these electrolyte drink mixes because having electrolytes and being dehydrated does affect your energy levels. We were like, 'What if we could add even more benefits to it and make it so that you could have a one-stop shop every day that's super tasty?'" Owen said, adding that the duo tested hundreds of flavor varieties.

Schweers added: "The electrolyte business has started to boom, and creating things that [have] electrolytes in it, but also packing in other vitamins and supplements is something that's nuanced to this space still. I feel like we're coming in at a great time."

To spread the word of the launch, Schweers has been tapping into her community, which has steadily grown over the past few years as she shared her fertility journey.

"When I was going through it, we stayed silent for a little bit, and I was looking for someone who was speaking on it, and I couldn't find anyone, let alone someone who looked like me," she said. "I said, 'Well, if there isn't anybody, I have no problem being that voice,'" she said, adding that she has tapped her community to provide feedback on packaging and flavors.

While the brand is starting out with a solution for women in childbearing age, Owen and Schweers plan to develop products that target the entire women's health journey.

"We want to be a one-stop shop when it comes to women's hormonal health, so no matter what phase of your journey that you're in, we hope to be the go-to brand for that," said Schweers.

## FASHION

# Nest, CFDA, UNHCR Launch Refugee Artisan Collection

- Artisan groups from the Middle East, Africa and Asia have collaborated under the mentorship of designer Mimi Plange.

BY RITU UPADHYAY

Nest has launched a limited-edition collection of accessories in collaboration with the Council of Fashion Designers of America and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, part of its refugee artisan accelerator program.

The collection of handcrafted items ranging from crocheted bags to straw bucket hats and beaded scarves was created in partnership with UNHCR's Made 51 and the CFDA. It features work from six social enterprises that work directly with refugee artisans in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The groups – Artisan Links, Bebemoss, Indego Africa, Roots, Weave, and Xoomba – worked with American designer Mimi Plange to create items that would be both commercially viable and culturally authentic.

"The most important thing is for all of us to share our stories and create designs that not only fascinate and surprise but also generate economic opportunities," explained Plange, whose own work bridges her African heritage with contemporary sophistication. "The collection represents a new model for ethical fashion."

Available to purchase online through Nest's refugee artisan marketplace, the capsule collection showcases the potential

for refugee artisans to take their work to global audiences.

Nest is a nonprofit that supports a global network of more than 3,000 women artisans through free programs and resources that help their craft-based businesses grow. Their refugee artisan accelerator marketplace gives refugee artisans a platform to both retail and present their heritage craft techniques and products to leading fashion and home decor brands, creating pathways into global markets.

"We're committed to supporting artisans worldwide by providing them resources and education to sustain their enterprises, even in the face of adversity," said Rebecca van Bergen, founder and executive director of Nest. The organization focuses on ensuring craft work is recognized as a vital component of global supply chains.

Steven Kolb, chief executive officer of the CFDA, added that for their members this partnership represents more than social responsibility – it's strategic business development. "This program offers our members a chance to see different crafts, people, artisans and types of production that could be incorporated into their brands, distinguishing them or positioning their product in a way that

ultimately resonates with the customer," he said.

The numbers driving this initiative to work specifically with refugees are sobering. UNHCR's Heidi Christ said that "20.3 million people are forcibly displaced, with 71 percent hosted in low-income countries."

The statistics reflect populations with rich cultural traditions, and often, specialized skills. For refugee women



Syrian refugee artisans create a unique style of crochet with lace-like patterns.

The Syrian Crochet Rose Clutch created by artisans through the social enterprise Bebemoss.



bearing the dual burden of displacement and limited economic opportunities, craft-based enterprises provide both income and dignity.

The project has garnered support from some of fashion's most influential voices. Carmen Busquets has joined in championing the initiative through mentoring and craft advocates Lori Weitzner and Krista Stack bring expertise in traditional techniques and cultural preservation.

"Refugees are not just people in need," emphasized Christ. "They are people with skills, creativity, and the ability to contribute."

## HOME DESIGN

# Buccellati, Tom Dixon To Make Their Dubai Design Week Debut

Tom Dixon

- Now in its 11th edition, the Gulf's premier design event is set to host a robust roster of brands in November.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

Dubai is still holding strong as the Gulf region's arbiter of style. After a decade on the international design calendar, the upcoming Dubai Design Week 2025 is expected to be the largest ever. Under the aegis of a "Community" theme, the 11th edition of the event will take place Nov. 4 to 9, with a global roster that will include Italian jeweler Buccellati and industrial designer Tom Dixon.

It will be the first time the British designer and Buccellati have appeared at Dubai Design Week. Both will be featured within the week's anchor event Downtown Design at the city's d3 Waterfront Terrace Nov. 5 to Nov. 9. Buccellati will showcase a pop-up collaboration with design studio David/Nicolas. Dixon will headline the Forum, a series of live talks.

The fair will also feature experiential concepts and immersive installations, including the Solaire Lounge by Veuve Cliquot.

Returning European exhibitors like Kartell and Poltrona Frau will be joined for the first time in Dubai by France's Roche Bobois, Denmark's Framo, Italy's Porada, and Desalto. Designer duo Draga & Aurel will present a solo exhibition for Collectional, and French designer Stephanie Coutas will showcase high-end interiors and collectible design pieces. In a showcase curated by Emirati designer Omar Al Gurg, Shanghai-based Stellar Works will display its collaboration with U.S. brand Calico Wallpaper.

The delegation of UAE-based participants is also growing and will include brands like Bottega Living, Caspaiou, Clayark, Dixten Studio, Frontieres, Lal & Ghosh, Studio Obliq and Tanween by Tashkeel. Saudi collective Designed in Saudi's debut will be a focus, as the country continues to invest in propelling local creativity through the nation's Arts and Creative Industries at the Royal Commission for the ancient city of Alula.

Another spotlight will be on India, another strong market for design brands amid ongoing economic challenges, with brands like Jaipur Rugs, Jagdish Sutar, Orvi and Hands Carpets, as well as Strata from Pakistan.

As tariffs grip transatlantic relations, and U.S. and Chinese consumers grapple with an uncertain economy, the international design world is interested more than ever in expanding their

reach in the Gulf region in terms of both retail and events. This year Downtown Design Dubai, the Middle East's leading contemporary design fair since 2012, cut the ribbon on Downtown Design Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's first design trade show. The four-day fair at the JAX District was held in May.

The demand for more immediate interior design solutions is fueling Downtown Design Riyadh and the Design Doha biennial, which debuted in Qatar in 2024. In 2026, Riyadh will host the first Salone del Mobile.Milano in the region.

The Saudi Arabian contract boom is spurring growth across the whole region, thanks to the proliferation of giga projects and development of vacation islands like Shura and Sindalah and an uptick in branded homes and upscale villas and apartments.

Mette Degn-Christensen, founder of fair organizer Downtown Design, told WWD earlier this year that the whole region is in the throes a transformational chapter.

"We're all witnessing the pace of development that the dynamic market of Saudi Arabia has experienced in recent years. Driven by some of the KSA's [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] most ambitious projects and growing real estate developments across retail, hospitality and luxury residential properties, there is strong demand particularly in the interior design industry – and at the same time, there is a surge in great creative talent here," she said, adding that there's a new focus on modern aesthetics and materiality, innovation, quality and identity.





U.S. President Donald Trump has been more than ready to ratchet up tariffs to push his America first agenda.



Claudio Feltrin

HOME DESIGN

# Furniture Stocks Likely to Extend Losses on Tariff Rate Threat

- The furniture industry is under threat of higher tariffs, sending stocks plummeting in after-hours trading on Friday.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

The prospect of new tariff hikes continues to threaten the global furniture industry.

Late Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump said on Truth Social that his team has launched an investigation into all furniture coming into the U.S.

"Within the next 50 days, that investigation will be completed, and furniture coming from other countries into the United States will be tariffed at a rate yet to be determined. This will bring the furniture business back to North Carolina, South Carolina, Michigan and states all across the Union," the post said.

Ironically, Trump's trade policy has already taken with it two homegrown American brands that operate in two of those states. The Howard Miller Company, which also owns Hekman, revealed its closure in July. Both Howard Miller and Hekman are two Michigan-born firms steeped in history. Since the beginning of the housing market downturn due to higher interest rates, Howard Miller's sales had suffered. Higher tariffs were an added hurdle, resulting in unsustainable costs for materials and components, it said last month.

Claudio Feltrin, president of FederlegnoArredo, the Italian federation of woodworking and furniture industries, which accounts for the majority of Europe's luxury furniture-makers, said the outlook remains more uncertain than ever.

"Of course we're worried; we're in

limbo," he said in an article published in Italian daily *La Repubblica*, adding that the "dark tariff uncertainty" caused Italy's wood furniture exports to fall 6.6 percent in May.

Shares of furniture stocks will likely extend their losses on Monday. On Friday, in after-hours trading, shares of RH and Williams Sonoma were down almost 7 percent. Wayfair was down 8 percent.

According to U.S. Commerce Department data, China and Vietnam are among the U.S.' top exporters to the U.S. of furniture. Confartigianato – the Italian lobbying group that supports artisans and 1.5 million businesses, 12 trade federations and 41 craft associations, including those representing furniture, decor and fashion – estimates the nominal value of the impact at risk at 17.8 billion euros in exports from Italian micro- and small businesses that trade with the U.S. Small and micro businesses represent a large part of the industrial backbone of the Italian economy.

The furniture industry received a mild reprieve after the European Union and the U.S. reached a trade deal in July, fixing tariffs on EU exports at 15 percent for most categories. However, Feltrin has said the EU needs to broker a better deal with South America to mitigate losses in the U.S.

The Brazilian market, for example, is highly protected with an applied customs averaging duty of 13.5 percent, according to the European Commission.

Feltrin met with Italy's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Tajani in July to discuss supporting a historic deal that would lift tariffs on goods to the region.

The 27-nation EU and Mercosur, the

South American trade bloc that includes Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia, have been discussing a trade deal since 1999. A draft deal was unveiled in 2019, but it has not been backed by major EU countries like France. The European Commission said the deal will save EU companies 4 billion euros' worth of export duties a year.

The European Commission reached an agreement with South American countries in December 2024 but delayed submitting it as it awaits ratification by the member states and the European Parliament. The goal of the EU-Mercosur trade deal is to increase bilateral trade and investment and lower tariff and non-tariff trade barriers, notably for

small and medium-sized companies. It would also create more stable and predictable rules for trade and investment through better and stronger rules, in the area of intellectual property rights, for example, as well as competition and good regulatory practices.

Feltrin said the spotlight was also on India, a country that is imposing mandatory certifications that will create roadblocks for Italian goods.

According to economists at Istat, Italy's statistics bureau, forecasts in June said the Italian economy is expected to grow 0.6 percent in 2025 and 0.8 percent in 2026, lifted by improving domestic demand.

Italy's largest industry confederation, Confindustria, insisted that amid difficult times, geographical diversification is key. The report also said Italian exporters should focus on markets with high growth potential, such as the South American trade bloc, which contributed 7.5 billion euros to Italian exports. The report also mentioned India, Australia and South East Asia. According to Confindustria's estimates, sales of goods to the rest of the world could increase by about 13 billion euros cumulatively in 2027, offsetting U.S. export losses.

Trump and his supporters are hoping trade policy will reinvigorate Made in America and its domestic supply chains, which saw its manufacturing prowess decline significantly in the 1970s and 1980s and beyond. At that time, companies began shifting production outside the U.S., facilitated by trade agreements with China and the entry of China into the World Trade Organization.



From the RH Outdoor "Striata" Teak collection.



## Business Insights

Charles Leclerc, Antoine Truchet and Nicolas Jayr are cofounders of creative studio Sidequest.



### BUSINESS

# Charles Leclerc Unveils Sidequest, a Creative Studio Bridging Sports, Culture

- The Monegasque Ferrari driver has teamed with his longtime filmmaker, Antoine Truchet, and brand strategist Nicolas Jayr for the new creative venture.

BY KANIKA TALWAR

**Charles Leclerc is embarking** on yet another side quest – the launch of his own creative studio.

Aptly named Sidequest as a nod to his outside Formula 1 ventures, the creative studio is being cofounded by Leclerc alongside photographer and filmmaker Antoine Truchet and veteran brand strategist Nicolas Jayr.

Sidequest said it was born out of Leclerc's personal interest in off-the-track endeavors, which led to the creative studio's launch – it encompasses the intersection of storytelling across sports and culture.

Truchet told WWD that Leclerc is a “modern Renaissance man” and “polymath” who expresses himself across various creative mediums. Thus far Leclerc has created a fashion collaboration with Ferrari Style, launched his own ice cream brand LEC, made and released classical piano music, signed with WME, been named a global brand ambassadorship for various brands and more.

“I’ve always seen creativity as a way to explore different parts of who I am,” said Leclerc. “Making music, launching an ice cream brand, exploring fashion and creating content. These aren’t distractions

– they’re part of how I think, express myself and create. Over time, I’ve become increasingly curious and intentional about how things are made: the emotion, the detail, the story. Sidequest is a way to bring that mindset to life and to share it with others.”

Both Jayr and Truchet have been instrumental in shaping the personal brand and creative universe of Leclerc over the years. Truchet has been Leclerc's personal photographer and filmmaker for his social media platforms and helped manage the drivers' social media accounts. Jayr's expertise lies in brand strategy; he's previously worked at Wieden+Kennedy, BBH for Google and Nike, led brand marketing at Formula 1 from 2018 until 2021 and most recently led global partnerships at motorsports creative agency Race Service in Europe.

Based out of Monaco and Amsterdam, Sidequest said it will converge the worlds of brands and talent, such as athletes, to create authentic storytelling with long-lasting impact. Truchet explained that this creative studio will also enable athletes to express themselves beyond their sport – he pointed to Leclerc's success off the track as proof of how athletes are today's cultural leaders.

While content is an integral part of how people experience culture today, the studio said it's open to exploring a variety of formats and not box itself into one set formula. Whether it's physical experiences, analog formats, documentaries and publishing, Jayr and Truchet said they're open to exploring with

the freedom to experiment and push the boundaries of storytelling.

“Athletes live at the crossroad of three worlds: on-track, off-track and brand partnerships,” Jayr said in an interview. “Too often those three look and feel disconnected. With Charles, the focus has always been on weaving them together into something coherent, authentic and inspiring – that is truly and authentically him. That's the same principle we now apply with Sidequest.”

The trio has built up relationships with top contacts across the film, design, photography, fashion, production and music spaces who will be tapped into when curating bespoke and tailored teams for each project; collaboration is at the core of the creative studio ethos. Thus far, Sidequest has already worked on campaigns for clients such as Chivas Regal, APM Monaco and LEC.

“Sidequest is about turning curiosity into images and stories that people can connect with visually and emotionally – not just the athlete as a performer, but as a human being,” continued Truchet. “It's in those in-between moments – beyond the competition – where culture and sport really meet. And where we, as fans, can relate.”

Jayr said that the endeavour will allow young talent a chance and keep opening doors for new and diverse voices to collaborate with the studio.

“Today, with AI, social media and new tools, you see more and more talent who are self-taught but deeply skilled. We want to harness that energy: people who are obsessed with craft, storytelling and

curiosity. We also carry the influence of Nike, Formula 1 and Race Service, where Antoine and I worked on early projects for Charles. Our experience has shaped our thinking, given us a creative community, and remains a genuine part of our story.”

While Formula 1 has been an integral part of all three of the cofounders' worlds, Jayr said that they're self-proclaimed “sport geeks” and just as passionate about football, basketball, tennis, and extreme sports. Pointing to how Formula 1 has exploded over the years and turning the drivers into cultural figures in their own right, the studio wants to bring that to other disciplines with brands that also share that ambition.

“We want to work with bold partners who are not afraid to own their vision, who care about details and who want to build something true to themselves, not chase trends or replicate what's already out there,” said Truchet.

When discussing how the launch of Sidequest will impact Leclerc's legacy and reach beyond Formula 1 and sports, Jayr noted that his legacy goes beyond trophies and Grand Prix wins – “it's all about influence, creativity and the way you inspire people.”

The studio's long-term goals are to build a space that empowers athletes, creators and brands to create projects that make a cultural mark, Jayr said. Truchet added that the studio's overall mission is to honor “like-minded people's different backgrounds and perspectives” and bring “honesty, humanity and beauty into how sports and culture is told.”



Amanda Anisimova

Amanda Anisimova and Madison Keys

The scene at the First Serve U.S. Open party.

# eye Amanda Anisimova, Madison Keys Kick Off U.S. Open

Lalo Tequila took over the Thompson Hotel on Friday to celebrate the start of the Open. BY LEIGH NORDSTROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEXIE MORELAND

**Ahead of the U.S. Open,** American tennis stars Amanda Anisimova and Madison Keys joined Lalo Tequila and IMG for a celebratory cocktail party to kick off the tournament.

Through Sept. 7, Lalo is popping up at The Thompson Central Park with a clubhouse where matches will be screened and specialty Lalo cocktails will be on offer. The kick-off party featured custom cocktails for the two players: a passion fruit margarita for Anisimova and a spicy margarita for Keys.

"I'm super excited. It's my favorite tournament," Anisimova said of getting ready for the Open. The 2025 Wimbledon finalist had been spending the week in town training in the mornings and said she was feeling ready to get started.

"I've been training a lot. It's a super-important tournament for me, so I'm just trying to do everything," she said.

Aside from it being a home tournament, the energy of the city is what makes the Open her favorite.

"It's always the most exciting one and I just find it very fun compared to all the other tournaments. Even though I'm a player, I feel like I'm part of the environment of the chaos and I thrive on the pressure and all the tension," she said.

In her limited spare time while in town, she likes to catch up with friends and go out for dinner.

"I always see my friends; I don't get to see them often. Then obviously shopping, and then just dinners and walking around the city," she said. "I normally am not much of

a walker, but I love walking around here."

Keys, the 2025 Australian Open winner, had arrived on Monday and during her downtime had gone out for dinner and done an escape room with her friends.

"We crushed it," she said.

"Unfortunately, I haven't had a ton of time to see a lot of New York, but I know the 25 blocks around Midtown," she added.

The week had been busy with press commitments, but once the tournament officially was underway her schedule would turn entirely to tennis.

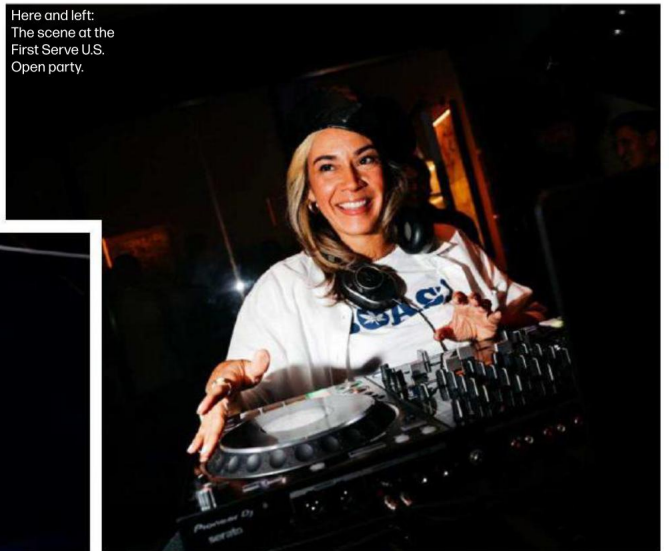
"New York to me is the rowdiest, loudest, biggest, and it's an event," she said of the tournament. "Everything else is very – Wimbledon is very classy and 'tennis' and all that, but here it's like you get all the celebrities, the athletes. You can just tell it's the U.S. Open."



Madison Keys and Lalo Gonzalez



Here and left: The scene at the First Serve U.S. Open party.



# Fashion Scoops



GIVENCHY  
PARIS

Adut Akech in Givenchy's new fall 2025 campaign.

## Team Spirit

The Sarah Burton era at Givenchy has kicked off as a woman-centric one, with photographer Collier Schorr turning her lens on many of the top models from Burton's hit debut show – and some of the backstage crew – for the brand's 2025 campaign.

"The beauty of all women inspires me – including my team," Burton said.

"I wanted to capture the brilliant women I work with amongst the cast – real moments with everyone working together."

English makeup artist Lucia Pieroni and English stylist Camilla Nickerson, two of Burton's longtime collaborators, flash big smiles, and wear loose all-black outfits, which never cease to be de rigueur for fashion professionals. (Hairstylist Olivier Schawaldler and nail artist Ama Quashie remained off-camera.)

Asked how she felt appearing in the campaign, Pieroni replied with a chuckle: "To be honest I was petrified! I've lived my entire professional life behind the camera, and my initial reaction to being on the other end of the lens was object terror!"

"But I knew I was in the hands of a great team of women. Collier, Sarah and Camilla made it a really fun experience," she added. "We were in it together."

Nickerson styled Pieroni's outfit. "She put me in the most beautiful cashmere coat and a shirt, which I

loved," the makeup artist related.

The campaign is full of smiles and unposed hand gestures, as if the women were captured in the middle of a lively conversation. Emeline Hocareau, one of the curvier models in the show, approximates a rear double-bicep pose in her backless dress with a tiered skirt.

The images echo the range of Burton's debut collection – sometimes young and zesty, but most often the pinnacle of adult sophistication.

Veteran model Eva Herzigova is pictured in a sculptural skirt suit, while Liu Wen broods in a puffy leather bomber jacket.

Also appearing in the campaign are models Adut Akech, Nyadaoula Gabriel and Vittoria Ceretti, who is also pictured with her arm resting on Schorr's shoulder. Kaia Gerber, who appeared in Burton's first campaign for Givenchy – that one lensed by

Dutch actress, writer and film director Halina Reijn – makes an encore appearance.

The diverse casts amplifies Burton's vision of "multigenerational womanhood," according to Givenchy. – MILES SOCHA

## Lacma's Choice

This year's LACMA gala will be held Nov. 1 in Los Angeles and will honor artist Mary Corse and filmmaker Ryan Coogler.

Now in its 14th year, cochaired by Eva Chow and Leonardo DiCaprio, the event recognizes leaders in art and film; proceeds support the museum's exhibitions, acquisitions and educational programs.

Gucci has been the presenting sponsor since the gala's inception in 2011, dressing many of the VIPs. This year the house's new artistic director, Demna, who was appointed in March, will make his debut.

"We are grateful for their continued generosity to the museum, and we're especially excited to welcome Gucci's new artistic director, Demna, to LACMA and the creative community in Los Angeles," Chow said in a statement.

Corse, 80, a California native born in Berkeley, is a pioneering artist associated with the Light and Space movement, noted for her work in painting. She's known to experiment with light as both subject and material, exploring the boundaries of human perception.

Coogler – also a Californian from the Bay Area – is the 39-year-old writer, director and producer behind "Sinners," the 2025 supernatural period film starring Michael B. Jordan. Cofounder of Proximity Media, he also wrote and directed "Black Panther," a winner of three Oscars and the most successful domestic

Sharon Stone fronts the fall 2025 Antonio Marras ad campaign.



release of 2018, as well as its sequel, "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," along with "Creed" and "Fruitvale Station."

The gala will unfold alongside LACMA's nearly finished David Geffen Galleries, the project by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Peter Zumthor that's set to open in April.

The night's performer has yet to be revealed; past acts have included Sir Elton John and Charli XCX. – RYMA CHIKHOUNE

## Stone's New Turn

Sharon Stone has become quite a fan of the Italian designer Antonio Marras – and now she's fronting the brand's fall 2025 ad campaign.

Staged in Alghero, Marras' hometown on Italy's Sardinia island, the images lensed by photographer Eric Michael Roy depict the Hollywood actress wandering through the picturesque town, with its pastel-hued buildings, late 16th-century Cathedral of St. Mary the Immaculate and crystalline sea water in the background.

A consummate storyteller, Marras envisioned the

campaign as a cinematic movie sequence portraying Stone as she waits for her lover to come back from the sea. A series of images in the ads are fronted by the actress alongside model Gabriel Aubry.

"I was looking for a woman who could interpret the spirit of Antonio Marras and those values that are so important to us: memory, roots, nature. Someone who understands the essence of Italian-ness. It wasn't easy. In Sharon I found someone in a league of her own, who was able to portray exactly what I meant. Only a sensitive and extraordinarily exceptional woman like her could have succeeded. After all, the choice was not accidental, there is no such thing as chance," Marras said.

"We already knew each other in another life. We were already friends. Sharon and I share a love for the arts, and the marriage between the many art forms that exist. We speak the same language: a love of beauty, of truth, of friendship. After all, I love cinema and Sharon is an icon. She lives on the Mount Olympus that is Hollywood and has made the history of cinema, how could I not love her?" he added.

The actress made an unexpected appearance at Marras' fall show last February during Milan Fashion Week. Back then, the designer enthused backstage about his relationship with her, revealing for example how he and Stone – also an artist – exchange sketches and drawings on a regular basis.

In the campaign she dons fall 2025 runway looks ranging from a mannish Prince of Wales relaxed suit with bustier-like waistline layered under a kimono-

style parka bearing painted roses to a ruffled black tuxedo blazer over wide-legged pants and a sensual, body-hugging ivory frock with a pink roses pattern.

The "Basic Instinct" star has worn Marras designs on several occasions over the past two years, for example watching the men's singles tennis finals at the 2024 Paris Olympics in a floral suit featuring a peak lapel blazer, which she paired with a matching tie-neck blouse.

As reported, Antonio Marras opened its first store outside Italy in New York's SoHo last month to be celebrated with an official event on Sept. 12 during New York Fashion Week. – MARTINO CARRERA

## On the Track

Tommy Hilfiger, which is part of PVH Corp., has unveiled its fall 2026 campaign, titled "The Hilfiger Racing Club," featuring supermodel Claudia Schiffer and actor Nicholas Hoult.

Launching worldwide Monday, the campaign's aesthetic is inspired by luxury motorsport nostalgia, reimagined with a modern twist. It will be amplified by activations running the gamut from bespoke brand experiences to creative collaborations and racetrack-inspired events. The program will showcase how this version of prep is less about rules and more about reinvention.

"Reimagining prep has been at the center of my creative vision for 40 years," said Tommy Hilfiger. "From the beginning, I've blended classic American style with vibrant cultural influences, and I'm excited to continue that legacy ▶"



Ryan Coogler



Mary Corse



Claudia Schiffer and Nicholas Hoult star in "The Hilfiger Racing Club" campaign.

of gatecrashing tradition. This season marks the start of a new chapter with 'The Hilfiger Racing Club' opening our latest campaign series and bringing a fresh twist to a celebrated moment in the preppy social calendar."

The campaign was photographed by Glen Luchford and features Hoult, who is starring in "Superman," and Schiffer. The ads will run across out of home, print, retail, digital and social channels.

"Tommy's take on this collection has the same energy I love about the racetrack," said Hoult, who is a trained race driver and fan of vintage motorsport. "There's tradition, but it's full of life and a sense of fun. It reflects the classic American prep style he's known for — timeless and effortlessly cool."

Schiffer added, "Tommy has an extraordinary talent for creating collections that

feel timeless and playful. It's that joyful spirit of self-expression that he's encapsulated with this campaign. He invited us into his world and it was wonderful to be a part of it."

The campaign marks the first chapter of "You're Invited, No RSVP Required," a new style statement inspiring the coming seasons that reimagines prep with defiance, freedom and individuality. Hilfiger began in 1985 when a billboard in New York's Times Square placed his name alongside the great designers of the time. Since then the brand has brought its signature spirit of playful rebellion to defining moments in culture, from hip-hop and the Formula 1 paddock to fashion's red carpets.

For fall, the brand's prep heritage offers new takes on layering and texture-play. Shirting is revisited with new tartans; barn

jackets are updated with water-repellent finishes; a lightweight women's trench in a responsible wool blend features a standout check pattern. As the season progresses, Oxfords are layered under rubys, and ties are loosely knotted for a sense of ease.

The fall collection will be available on [tommy.com](http://tommy.com), in Tommy Hilfiger stores worldwide and through select wholesale partners throughout the season.

—LISA LOCKWOOD

## Picking Pittman

Lafayette 148 has enlisted award-winning actor Karen Pittman as its brand ambassador.

Pittman is the star of Apple TV+'s drama series "The Morning Show," and appeared in the first two seasons of "And Just Like That."

Lafayette 148 participated in the costume design for the third season of "The Morning Show," including creating bespoke looks for Pittman's character, Mia Jordan.

"I'm thrilled to be working with and representing Lafayette 148. Meeting Emily Smith [creative director] and her team, I was struck by Lafayette 148 being a modern luxury fashion house for women — created and overseen by women. To me, that's tangible: It comes across in the way Lafayette 148 clothes are designed and crafted using exquisite materials, how they feel to wear, and how they inspire us women to accomplish the best we can, whatever it is we strive to do in our day-to-day lives," Pittman said.

Creative director Smith added, "I'm so excited that Karen is Lafayette 148's new brand ambassador. It's

an honor and inspiration for us to be partnering with Karen, who, with her acting career going from strength-to-strength, built on talent and integrity, represents the idea of the modern accomplishing woman. Lafayette 148 collections have long celebrated female artistry in all its forms, and to know that Karen embodies the commitment to one's craft that we've always valued means a lot to us. Plus, we're all massive fans of "The Morning Show" and cannot wait for season four to drop."

Born in Mississippi and raised in Nashville, Pittman came to prominence in 2012, starring in the Tony-nominated, Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play "Disgraced." Since 2019, her performance in "The Morning Show" alongside Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon has earned Pittman SAG and Emmy award nominations.

Pittman will appear in

Lafayette 148's fall 2025 campaign, which was shot in Brooklyn and includes both stills and video. It was shot by Bryan Liston, along with videographer Robert Nethery. Sasha Kelly was the stylist. The campaign, which goes into full gear Monday, will run on Lafayette 148's owned channels including the website, email, SMS, social as well as paid media, along with Pittman's social channels.

Pittman will also attend key Lafayette 148 events including spring 2025 New York Fashion Week and the CFDA Awards along with Smith. —LL

## Gallagher's Latest Gig

While thousands have been waiting years for Oasis' upcoming concerts in the U.S., singer and songwriter Noel Gallagher is giving fans incentive to stay cool.

The 58-year-old has joined forces with British eyewear company Finlay to launch a limited edition of sunglasses called "The Chiltern." He has worn their shades for years, according to a Finlay spokesperson. Fans of "Wonderwall," "Don't Look Back in Anger," "Half the World Away" and other Oasis tunes who buy a pair of the \$260 sunglasses will help support the Teenage Cancer Trust with 25 percent of each purchase going to the charity. All of Gallagher's royalties will benefit the organization, which supports cancer-stricken people between the ages of 13 and 24.

He was one of the Teenage Cancer Trust's first ambassadors, and he has continued to support the charity, which is the only one in the U.S. that provides specialized nursing care and support for young people with

cancer. He also has headlined Teenage Cancer Trust shows at the Royal Albert Hall as part of Oasis and partnering up with other rock legends. At Sir Roger Daltry's request, Gallagher even stepped in to curate the lineup in 2013, when The Who's frontman was on tour with the band in the states.

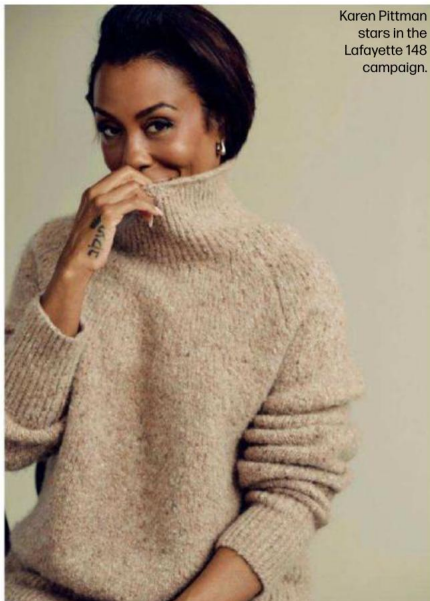
Gallagher has also donated signed guitars and created a limited-edition pair of Adidas trainers to raise money for the Teenage Cancer Trust. He also curated an artwork with The Connor Brothers, which sold out in moments, according to the spokesperson.

The U.K.-based eyewear brand codesigned the styles after a Finlay silhouette that Gallagher wore for years. The Princess of Wales Kate Middleton has also been known to wear the brand's sunglasses.

Gallagher and his brother Liam will touch down in the U.S. next week, with a North American opener scheduled for Thursday at Soldier Field in Chicago. There will also be stops at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., and at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., before moving on to Toronto and Ciudad, Mexico, and more.

Those who didn't score tickets can console themselves with Oasis Live '25 loot like \$49 or \$56 T-shirts, \$49 to \$104 hoodies and other memorabilia like \$28 tote bags and \$56 posters. But the majority of the Oasis and Adidas collaborative collection is long gone. All of the styles were sold out Friday afternoon except for a \$138 black Live 2025 Adidas coach's jacket, but a \$118 black Live '25 Adidas football shirt was flagged as coming soon.

—ROSEMARY FEITELBERG ▶



Karen Pittman stars in the Lafayette 148 campaign.



A lens cloth and sunglasses from Finlay's collaboration with Noel Gallagher of Oasis.



Hotel Gabrielli

## Restored Glory

More than 700 Murano glass chandeliers and wall sconces are alight once again inside the luxurious halls of Venice's Hotel Gabrielli.

On Monday, just as the lagoon began to welcome cinema's A-list for the Venice Film Festival, guests were able to view the five-star hotel for the first time since Starhotels took over the property in 2022. Boasting sweeping views of San Giorgio Maggiore island, the structure was opened as a hotel 1856 and has been owned by the Perkhofer family ever since.

The restored luxury hotel offers 66 exclusive rooms and suites starting at 650 euros. The revamp was spearheaded by Milan-based Andrea Auletta and lined with hardwood floors and furnished with antique furniture enhanced

by contemporary details. The doors of its Venetian-style facade open up to welcoming spaces characterized by beam ceilings, arched windows and original frescoes.

"Today, we open the doors to what we hope will become Venice's new living room, a place where hospitality becomes the art of welcoming. Every guest here will not just be a visitor, but part of an exclusive community sharing in the beauty of Venice from the lagoon's most privileged vantage point," Starhotels chief executive officer and president Elisabetta Fabri said. Hotel Gabrielli is located just a few steps away from Piazza San Marco on Riva degli Schiavoni, a promenade that hosts a string of world class hotels like the Hotel Danieli.

One of the most alluring features of the hotel is its 6,458-square-foot private garden, which Starhotels

said is one of the city's largest. In addition to a panoramic terrace, it also boasts a luxury spa and a private dock for guests.

Throughout the ancient city, hotel groups have salvaged the fate of aging historic palaces. Orient Express, for example, has begun taking reservations for its highly anticipated second hotel location in Venice, which is scheduled to open April 1. The Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli was built as a noble residence built in 1436 and is located in the Cannaregio district. It was redesigned by Paris-based architect and designer Aline Asmar d'Amman.

The Venice Film Festival will run on the Lido di Venezia from Wednesday to Sept. 9. —SOFIA CELESTE

## Pour Debut

For its first official ad campaign, billed as a peek into its creative process, fashion's favorite niche wine label Katkoot is straddling raw Millennial glamour and the celebration of craftsmanship.

Dedicated to a newly introduced label, the White Burgundy Premier Cru, Katkoot's first still white wine, the campaign spotlights the artisanal and artistic approach that the brand's cofounders, brothers Giovanni Leonardo and Francesco Vittorio Bassan, have poured into their indie luxury winemaking venture.

The campaign "focuses on what matters most to us, craftsmanship and material beauty. Through their lens, we explore the idea that true luxury is found in the smallest details, the subtle gestures, and the quiet mastery that goes into every single piece we create," Francesco Vittorio Bassan said.

Under the creative direction of the two brothers, the campaign was developed in

collaboration with director of photography Nicola Inderle and art director Marco De Rosso.

Minimalist images against workshop backdrops of wine bottles with Katkoot's signature metallic base — which can double as an ashtray or knickknack — mingle with shots of the different stages involved in the production of a wine, from grape harvesting to bottling and the forging of the metallic base.

The juxtaposition, Francesco Vittorio Bassan said, spotlights "the artisans and collaborators who are the heart of this project...the silent protagonists of every piece, whose work, patience and precision make every bottle a masterpiece."

The White Burgundy Premier Cru adds to the existing roster of Katkoot's wines, which include the sparkling Prosecco Asolo Superiore DOCG Brut white wine; the red wine Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG; the sparkling Rosè Metodo Classico Riserva wine; the Amarone della Valpolicella Riserva 2005 DOC, and the winery's first Champagne, a Dosage-Zero Premier Cru wine produced in France's Chigny-les-Roses region.

The new addition produced in France's Burgundy region from grapes of the Pouilly-Fuissé Premier Cru is a still white wine aged in oak barrels for 24 months.

Beloved by fashion figures and celebrities alike, including Rick Owens, Michèle Lamy, Bella Hadid, Pusha T, ASAP Rocky, Offset, Skepta and Luka Sabbat, Katkoot was launched in 2018.

The Millennial brothers behind the brand channeled their diverse backgrounds into the project.

Giovanni Leonardo Bassan is an artist and sculptor represented by Paris-based galleries including White Cube, Sainte Anne and Gallerie Filles du Calvaire, as well as an art and design consultant who left his native Italian region of Veneto to jumpstart a career in Paris, where he is based working as Owens' head of furniture, among other gigs. Francesco, an economics and management graduate, nurtured his passion for winemaking by training as a sommelier. —M.C.

## Bolstering The Ranks

The Milan-based ES\_PR firm helmed by fashion communication veteran Emanuela Schmeidler is bolstering its consultancy and strategic activities

Emanuel Schmeidler



via new hires aimed at providing all-encompassing services.

"The goal is to put in place an infrastructure that provides 360-degree services to our clients, to flank existing activities with new opportunities," Schmeidler said.

"I want us to be ready for change, and shifting communications approaches," she said. "We're rounding off our offering to avoid fragmentation, so that clients know they can have a single go-to agency for all their communications needs. I feel ready to grow and maintain the same standards [across new ventures], especially because I believe storytelling is essential across all segments today."

Established in 1999, ES\_PR is beefing up its talent and celebrity relations division, onboarding a new manager, Ludovica Tiso, to the team. She recently held a similar position at fashion e-tailer Mytheresa.

Additionally, the PR firm is expanding its clienteling department and VIC experiences division by promoting Verde Castelbarco to head of the business unit. Castelbarco joined ES\_PR in 2024 and previously worked at live entertainment group Balich Wonder Studio.

"I believe consumers are the new brand ambassadors...it's a great component of brands' amplification strategies," Schmeidler said, explaining the rationale for investments in the clienteling department. "It's

becoming a separate entity from the event division, with a focus on database, client experiences and client networking, locally and internationally."

The promotion of Laura Lombardo, a long-standing member of the team, to the role of chief creative is seen driving the agency's consistent creative direction approach amid the evolution and growth of its scope.

"There are two kinds of communication challenges today. On one hand, adapting storytelling to always reflect the brand's soul, even through changes in creative leadership. The second is fostering brand loyalty, which today is increasingly difficult because there are so many more brands and so much more on offer," Schmeidler said.

After beginning her career as head of PR at the side of the late Gianni Versace and spending 15 years at the Italian brand as Versace group PR and communications director, Schmeidler moved on to Condé Nast Publications, opening the PR and special events division for Vogue Italia and working alongside late editor in chief Franca Sozzani on the magazine's branding, events and PR activities.

In 1999 she established ES\_PR, which counts clients across fashion, design, food and beverage and lifestyle, such as Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, Starbucks, Bulgari, Schiaparelli, Roger Vivier, Valentino and Ca' del Bosco, among others. —M.C. ■

Katkoot's first ad campaign for the newly introduced White Burgundy Premier Cru wine.

