

# WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

## Bomba Time

Carolina Herrera headed to Madrid to show its spring 2026 collection, a lineup of 77 looks drenched in color, glamour and bold florals. The country was a fitting setting for the brand given its parent company Puig's Spanish roots – and played off of Herrera's most recent fragrance, La Bomba, billboards for which were all over the city. *For more, see pages 6 and 7.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY VIRIDIANA MORANDINI

### On the Block

Saks Global is seeking to sell a minority stake in Bergdorf Goodman, sources told WWD.  
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### Milan Moves

The city's retail is booming, with openings by Saint Laurent, Alberta Ferretti and Dries Van Noten.  
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### Balmain at 80

A look at the history of the iconic French brand, which innovated many of today's key fashion and beauty strategies.  
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## BUSINESS

# Bergdorf Goodman Stake on the Block as Saks Global Explores Options: Sources



Bergdorf Goodman

- Saks Global is said to be looking to sell a minority stake in the uber luxe retail banner.

BY EVAN CLARK

**Saks Global** is thinking hard about selling off part of its crown to refill its purse – if it can.

WWD has learned that the company is actively exploring “strategic options” for Bergdorf Goodman, the crowning jewel of its luxury retail empire.

While sources said the company has held discussions about “joint venture opportunities” for Bergdorf’s earlier this year and tested the market for an outright sale, the focus now is said to be on selling a minority position that would value the high-end retailer at \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion. It could not be learned just how large a stake Saks Global might be willing to sell.

A Saks Global spokesperson said, “We do not comment on rumor or speculation.”

If a deal did materialize, it would go a long way to helping Saks stabilize its finances after the company piled on debt to buy Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf’s for \$2.7 billion in December.

Saks Global is carrying over \$4 billion in debt and is in better standing with its vendors after a bit of refinancing this summer, but brands are still being cautious with their shipments to the company given its weighed-down balance sheet.

This month, Standard & Poor’s said Saks Global had \$400 million in interest payments to make over the next year on top of payments for inventory, both current and past due. That leaves it reliant on its \$1.8 billion asset-backed lending facility.

“Our ‘CCC’ rating reflects default risk in the next 12 months without improvement,” S&P said. “While the new capital structure provides a much-needed infusion of cash, we expect liquidity will be rapidly depleted by the investments required to stabilize the business amid a challenging macroeconomic environment.”

Saks Global has been racing to integrate its Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus businesses, cutting some \$600 million in costs. But Bergdorf’s has been kept separate and is being operated on its own.

A sale of Bergdorf’s – a Fifth Avenue institution – would go a long way to solving its financial problems, and free Saks chief executive officer Marc Metrick to push through a “reset” of his corner of the

luxury retail world.

But first, a deal would have to get out of the rumor phase and crystallize. And one stumbling block always remains: Whoever buys into Bergdorf’s only gets the store itself, and not the property it sits on. That continues to be owned by the Goodman family.

One financial source described the \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion valuation as “fair” or even “a bit low” for Bergdorf’s.

“It’s attractive for a buyer and a good valuation for one of the two or three marquee retailers – Harrods, Takashimaya and Galeries Lafayette,” the source said.

There are also a number of Middle Eastern funds with a taste for luxury or some other financial player that might take an interest in Bergdorf’s.

But they’ve all had a shot at buying into the retailer before.

Neiman Marcus Group’s former owners – lenders who took equity control after the company’s pandemic-induced bankruptcy – were said to have been shopping around Bergdorf’s when they first reached out to Saks Global, which led to the broader buyout.

Similarly, other buyers might not content themselves with just a piece of Bergdorf’s.

One banker said, “I heard no buyer wants a minority stake” and that prospective bidders “want to own the whole thing.”

Bergdorf’s is a rare retail property, with location, cache and legacy.

Tracy Margolies, president of Bergdorf’s, emphasized the importance of giving shoppers “everything” when talking about the business at a pre-fashion week event this month.

“Luxury is not just about the beautiful product,” Margolies said. “It’s about the experience.”

The Bergdorf shopper expects everything, she said.

“But they’re not just going to get everything. They’re going to get surprised and delighted and expect the unexpected.”

Bergdorf’s will have over 120 events this fall as the store seeks to get ever closer to its shoppers.

“We know that when our clients are in a relationship, they spend up to 12-times more,” Margolies said. “So we’re uber focused on the relationships that we have with all our clients and the experience.”

Everyone who works at Saks and Neiman’s is keen to get back to focusing on those kinds of retail concerns after such a long and uncertain stretch.

## ACCESSORIES

## Swiss Watch Exports Dove In August

● Shipments of wristwatches after the onset of 39 percent U.S. tariffs fell 16.4 percent, but brands banked on creativity and innovation during September events.

BY LILY TEMPLETON

**PARIS** – Swiss watch exports cooled significantly in August, but how much is the industry bracing for the autumn?

Shipments of wristwatches fell 16.4 percent in August, reaching 1.57 billion Swiss francs or \$1.98 billion, and more than 13 percent in units in the month, according to figures published Thursday by the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry.

On the one hand, a rush to ship to the U.S. in anticipation of the Aug. 7 application of the 39 percent tariff rate decided by U.S. President Donald Trump did not materialize, after upticks in April and July. Exports to the country slumped nearly 24 percent to 245.1 million Swiss francs.

On the other, all other territories in the top six, which account for around half of the global market for Swiss watches, saw double-digit declines.

Most affected was China, which fell 35.6 percent to 115.3 million Swiss francs.

Across Europe, exports in the month dropped. Germany shrank by nearly 25 percent, falling well short of the 100-million Swiss francs bar it had reached last year, while France saw a 9.7 percent decrease to 73.7 million Swiss francs. But Italy recorded a 3.1 percent rise to 72.6 million Swiss francs.

The Middle East showed a mixed picture with the United Arab Emirates shrinking 8.7 percent while Saudi Arabia leaped more than 48 percent, albeit on a more modest base.

Describing the performance of the American market as a “normalization”

H. Moser & Cie. Streamliner chronograph featuring a red gold case, textured blue dial and textile strap. Frederique Constant Classic Perpetual Calendar Manufacture watch, FC-776 in-house caliber, automatic perpetual calendar with perle and circular Côtes de Genève decorations in a stainless steel case with a salmon sunray dial.



after the rush to beat tariffs earlier in the year, RBC analyst Nikolaos Lafoniatis said that “interestingly, [rest of the world] Swiss watch exports declined materially in August, which may be a function of lower product flows at the expense of front-loaded U.S. inventory build, which we have also heard from recent Asia watch retailer channel checks.”

He also noted “ongoing demand weakness in Asia-Pacific, and tepid demand trends in Europe” from the bank’s observations.

Two-year gains were eroded by midsingle- to high-double-digit factors and August’s figures also showed that three-year gains were denied.

Save for the U.K. and Hong Kong, respectively flat and up 2 percent, the U.S., Japan and China’s exports fell under 2022’s figures for the same period.

No materials category was spared, with the industry body highlighting “very negative results, both in volume and value.”

Likewise, all price segments, with watches priced more than 3,000 Swiss francs – considered a key category habitually driving growth – and entry-price models less than 200 Swiss francs most affected.

Despite the dreary backdrop painted by August’s export figures, Swiss watchmakers and the industry at large had their game face on in early September. That was nowhere

more visible than at the sixth edition of Geneva Watch Days, which ran from Sept. 4 to 7 and saw 66 brands showing their latest offerings to 17,000 visitors.

Initiated in 2020 by a cadre of 19 brands including Bulgari, Breitling, Girard-Perregaux, H. Moser & Cie. and Ulysse Nardin, the rendezvous has now emerged as a major touchpoint on the watchmaking calendar.

At the opening conference, Breitling chief executive officer Georges Kern expressed confidence for a resolution “in the next weeks and months” of the tariffs situation and said he “cannot imagine Switzerland running around with 39 percent tariffs, so let’s stay positive and have a plan B.”

It’s a sentiment that echoed across the industry. Swatch even released out a tongue-in-cheek “What If...Tariffs?” watch with the 3 and 9 markers swapped on the dial. It described the piece, available only in Switzerland, as “hopefully just a limited edition,” which will cease to be available once levies change.

For those in the industry not taking such a maverick stance, there were cautious mentions of price increases as well as margin cuts that would be split between brands, retailers and distributors should negotiations fail to result in lower rates.

“Tariffs are something that we always try to manage in a way that it doesn’t penalize the appetite of the final client for purchasing a beautiful watch,” Jean-Christophe Babin, who is CEO of Bulgari and the LVMH Watch division, told WWD in an interview.

“We don’t want to create huge discrepancies either, because discrepancies are always negative, because they create a gray market, they move people from domestic to travel retail, which is a more volatile environment,” he continued. “It’s in the interest of no one to punish American clients because tariffs are [high].”

But coming across louder was the trifold of resilience coupled with agility and creative nous.

“When there is a challenge, it’s not just one but two or three opportunities that arise,” Benoît de Clerck, CEO of Zenith, told WWD. “Today [tariffs] are a challenge,

we will find a solution, we know it’s not yet final, there are still discussions and things will happen. We will react in a timely manner and in the appropriate way.”

For the 160-year-old brand in LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton’s watchmaking stable, the focus was being highly agile and “producing what we can put on people’s wrists, not just produce to put on shelves,” the executive said.

With around 150 novelties showcased in an exhibition open to the public at the Rotonde du Mont-Blanc on the shore of Lake Geneva, brands from Tag Heuer, Frédérique Constant and Ferdinand to clockmaker L’Épée and customization specialists such as Artisans de Genève had come prepared.

Across the city, momentum was also building with brands not formally taking part in the Geneva Watch Days such as Piaget or Hublot hosting intimate gatherings or Roger Dubuis unveiling a new Salon retail concept with its Place du Molard boutique.

Another idea that loomed large from the four-day showcase was that collectors and by extension consumers, were willing to face a premium when they perceived high added value, be it know-how, craftsmanship or innovation.

“Today calls for dream-worthy products,” said Manuel Emch, CEO of Louis Erard. The brand, which produces a maximum of 4,000 pieces a year, does 50 percent of its sales online with the U.S. accounting for a third of those sales.

Case to his point, the release of the Louis Erard Gravée Main, which features more than 50 hours of hand-engraving, priced at 5,450 Swiss francs.

With tariffs and state taxes added at checkout bringing its price up in the \$10,000 ballpark, Emch assumed it wouldn’t sell but “proportionally more” were acquired by U.S.-based consumers, he said.

That said, he noted that the volumes of brands like his didn’t add up to the units lost overall in the Swiss watch industry.

Babin separately noted that 35 percent of the winners of the annual Grand Prix de l’Horlogerie de Genève, or GPHG, were Geneva Watch Day participants, but that these brands accounted for “less than 10 percent of the industry’s turnover.”

## BUSINESS

## Neiman Marcus to Close Texas Store

● Saks Global says it’s selling the location to the developer who is reimagining The Shops at Willow Bend.

BY DAVID MOIN

**Neiman Marcus** has decided to close its store in The Shops at Willow Bend, located in Plano, Texas, a suburb of Dallas.

Neiman’s indicated that the property is being sold to the developer, Centennial, for an undisclosed price, and that decision to close the unit was based on Centennial’s plan to reimagine the center. The store, which opened in 2001, will remain in business until January 2027. Currently, Neiman Marcus has 36 stores.

In the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolis, Neiman’s continues to operate inside NorthPark Center, which is about 13 miles south of Willow Bend. It’s said to be a much more productive location. In addition, Neiman’s operates its original flagship in downtown Dallas, which will remain in business at least through the upcoming holiday season. Saks Global, the parent of Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Off 5th, is in talks with the city of Dallas to

see if a plan for the site can be worked out to extend the life of that Neiman’s store beyond the end of this year.

Also in the area, Saks Global operates a Neiman Marcus store in Fort Worth, a Last Call store in Grapevine, and a Saks Off 5th unit in The Shops at Park Lane, which is across the street from NorthPark Center. There are no Saks Fifth Avenue stores in the Dallas area.

Additional Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue stores are expected to close, as Saks Global seeks to cut costs in the aftermath of its purchase of the Neiman Marcus Group in December. But a spokesperson for Saks Global said in a statement Thursday: “Store closures are not a meaningful part of our strategy. Through the regular course of business, we continually evaluate our store footprint and, as in this case, may determine it necessary to reformat or close a store. There are currently no plans to reduce our store portfolio on a broader scale.”

Regarding the Willow Bend store, the spokesperson said: “The sale was a mutual decision that allows the developer to bring its vision for the area to life, building on the retail foundation with the introduction of new residential, dining

and entertainment uses. This also provides our company with the opportunity to strategically reinvest in areas of our business that drive growth and position the company for long-term success.

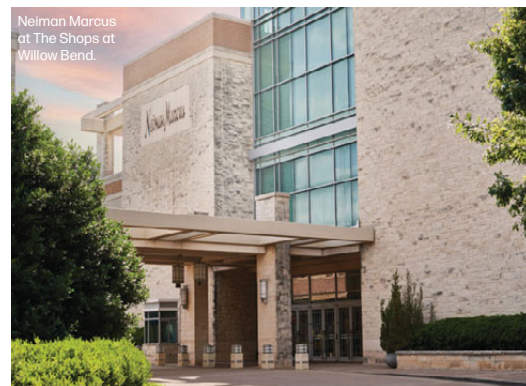
“Dallas-Fort Worth continues to be an important market for the company. We are continuing to work in collaboration with the City of Dallas on a potential reimagining of the Neiman Marcus downtown Dallas store, and are making great progress on the upcoming Neiman Marcus NorthPark transformation.”

Saks Global previously announced that it would be investing significantly to renovate its NorthPark store.

The retailer said it would offering some transfer opportunities to workers who will be affected by the Willow Bend closure and will be offering separation packages to eligible employees. The company did not disclose how many workers there are at Neiman

Marcus in Willow Bend.

Mary McGreevy, the chief stores officer for both Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus, said in a statement: “The decision to sell the Neiman Marcus Willow Bend property was reached in close partnership with The Shops at Willow Bend developer as part of their long-term vision for the area. We are committed to serving our customers through our nearby stores and our online channels, ensuring they continue to enjoy the exceptional service, curated product assortment and personalized experiences that define our brand.”



## ACCESSORIES

## Tiffany & Co. Presents a Marvel of Marine Inspirations

● The final chapter of the Blue Book 2025: Sea of Wonder high jewelry collection was unveiled in Milan's grand flagship.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

**MILAN** – Tiffany & Co. on Thursday unveiled the third and last chapter of the Blue Book 2025: Sea of Wonder high jewelry collection in Milan's grand Via Montenapoleone flagship.

The collection, designed by Nathalie Verdeille, the house's chief artistic officer of jewelry and high jewelry, continues to explore and celebrate the ocean's organic shapes and beauty through nearly 40 new designs, and reinterpreting archival creations by Jean Schlumberger.

Unveiling the collection, Verdeille enthused about presenting in Milan what she believes can change the general perception of Tiffany in Europe, where, she argued, the brand is recognized for "its collaborations with famous designers and for its bridal range of rings, but there is so much more creativity, style and imagination to be discovered. There's no limit to the layers of the brand, it's so rich in inspirations and designs." She admitted this discovery of "a pop-culture" element in Tiffany and, joining the brand four years ago, finding in Schlumberger an endless source of inspiration.

The collection comprises the Anchor, Anemone, Ocean Flora, Shell, Urchin and Mermaid suites.

The Anchor chapter reimagines Schlumberger's ruby, amethyst and pink sapphire brooch from 1939. Each centered

around cushion-cut diamonds, the Anchor pendant in platinum and 18-karat gold features a diamond of over 2 carats; the ring, a diamond of over 5 carats and the bracelet, a 1-carat diamond – all set with diamond accents.

The centerpiece of the Anemone group is a stunning necklace with sculptural gold accents and diamonds, and three unenhanced rubies totaling nearly 5 carats – sourced from Mozambique.

Tiffany's chief gemologist Vicky Reynolds underscored "the incredible, strong and pure" color of the rubies and the brightness of the diamonds, which add "power" to the jewel. She stressed that the brand works with "the best diamonds and gems sustainably sourced."

With undulating curves of platinum and gold and crests set with white and yellow diamonds, the Shell brooch stands out with an 8.62-carat green tourmaline and exquisite craftsmanship.

Reynolds, who has spent almost four decades at Tiffany and is the first woman to hold the role of chief gemologist, enthused about the "incredible reaction" to the collection in Milan from clients from all over the world, after showing the previous Blue Book chapters in the U.S. "It's been beyond our expectations," she said, adding that several pieces had already been sold the day before and could not be shown to the press in the store.

The Urchin designs incorporate *paillonné* enamel – crafted using a labor-intensive technique from the 19th century – to evoke the sea creature's iridescent textures with a



A design from the Tiffany & Co. Blue Book 2025: Sea of Wonder high jewelry collection

luminous and layered surface.

A brooch in platinum, rose gold and diamonds depicts a mermaid in motion, accented by a black opal of over 10 carats at her fin. The motif continues in a ring, earrings and necklace.

New in the Ocean Flora chapter is a one-of-a-kind high jewelry timepiece, featuring a mother-of-pearl dial, a turquoise marker at the 12 o'clock position and a diamond bracelet that echoes the motifs seen in this chapter's high jewelry pieces.

The Milan flagship is Tiffany & Co.'s largest store in Europe and was

inaugurated in April during the city's Design Week. It is also the flagship that displays the largest selection of exceptional archival pieces from the brand.

Located in the Neoclassical Palazzo Taverna built in 1835 on Via Montenapoleone, the striking store was designed by Peter Marino and opened after more than two-and-a-half years of works.

## FASHION

## Grace Coddington Debuts Louis Vuitton Travel Collection

● The collection features motifs inspired by Grace Coddington's cats.

BY RENAN BOTELHO

As much as a fashion figure, Grace Coddington is also known as a cat lover. Her affection for her pets has become part of her signature and while codesigning Louis Vuitton's newest travel collection, the Welsh-born creative director was naturally inspired by her loyal felines: Blondie, Blanket and Jimi.

"I wish I could take them everywhere with me, but they hate traveling," Coddington told WWD. "As soon as they see their box, because they're going to the vet or something, they all kind of freak out and hide. And then if you do get them in a car, they scream all the time."

Through the Louis Vuitton Travels With Grace Coddington collection, which officially debuted Friday, the former editor made her wish of exploring the world with her pets possible, at least symbolically. Patches featuring her cats on adventures through Sydney, London,

the Amazon, the Great Wall of China and even in space are showcased on an exclusive line of luggage, starring Coddington's version of the classic Stokowski trunk. The motifs are also seen on a travel wardrobe, which includes silk pajamas, T-shirts, hoodies, comfort blankets, sandals, tennis shoes and a diverse range of accessories.

Coddington, a longtime friend of Louis Vuitton's creative director Nicolas Ghesquière, first collaborated with him in 2019 when she created the Catogram capsule. This time around, her goal was to create a collection

that made traveling less demanding.

"With the whole security thing and everything, I find that traveling these days is very stressful. Before, it used to be super exciting, and now I find it stressful, so I want to do everything to help the traveler relieve their stress," she said. "I hope they get as relaxed as I am."

The secret to an easier trip, according to her, is packing efficiently. "It has a very sort of simple theory behind it, which is basically, keep everything very light, uniform and simple," she said. "I think if you can just pack everything in one little bag, keep it with you, that means it's a lot less stressful for you on that journey."

Throughout her career, Coddington had the opportunity to visit different continents, going everywhere from Brazil to Japan to the South of France and beyond. "Trips were much longer in those days," she said. "Today, if you travel, which nobody has the budget to travel anymore, you go to Africa for the day."

Nowadays, Coddington spends most of her time in The Hamptons, where her cats have a "big garden" to enjoy and she can unwind in one of the pieces she cocreated for Louis Vuitton. "I love the little dresses that I've done. I wear them all the time. They're just very easy, very comfortable, and they're sort of reminiscent of the 1930s and 1940s, which is a period that I like a lot," she said, referring to the shirt dresses included in the collection.

Louis Vuitton Travels With Grace Coddington is now available at [louisvuitton.com](http://louisvuitton.com).



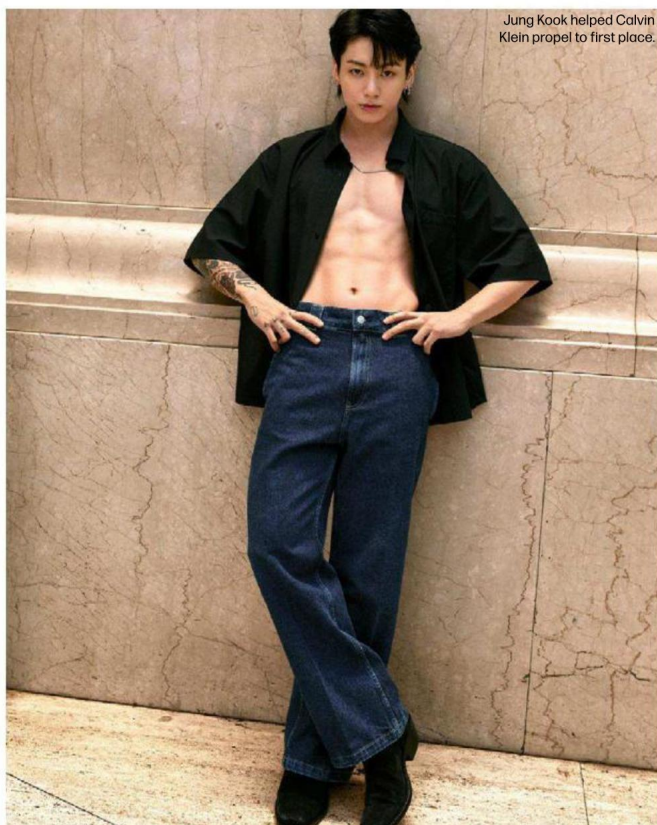
Louis Vuitton x Grace Coddington



Monogram Cat Silk Robe

## BUSINESS

# Calvin Klein Takes First Place In Engagement During NYFW



Jung Kook helped Calvin Klein propel to first place.

● Jung Kook, the brand's global ambassador, fueled the surge, driving 4.4 million engagements across its top five video posts.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

**Calvin Klein was the big winner** in social engagement during the spring 2026 shows at New York Fashion Week thanks to X, according to ListenFirst, the social analytics firm.

Calvin Klein generated a 12.9 million engagement score, up 1,168 percent from last February's fall 2025 show that debuted creative director Veronica Leoni's collection for the brand. Calvin Klein's score was more than three times the next highest brand, which was Michael Kors, with an engagement score of 4.2 million, up 83 percent from last season.

Engagement score is a measure of the conscious click-based actions — likes, reactions, shares and comments — taken either as a direct response to a brand's owned social accounts or by way of organic conversation, including new fans and engagements across social media as well as conversation volume on Twitter. The rankings were conducted from Sept. 11 through Sept. 17 and included only those brands on the official NYFW calendar. The results are compared to the fall 2025 shows from Feb. 6 to Feb. 12.

Coming in third place was Tory Burch, with a score of 1.6 million, down 48 percent from last season. Cos ranked fourth with 845,939 in social engagement. Coming in fifth place was Off-White with a 180,524 engagement score, and sixth

place was Coach with 156,105 engagement score, down 48 percent from last season. Seventh place went to Sandy Liang with 83,464 engagements, off 24 percent from last season.

Christian Siriano came in eighth place with a 76,666 engagement score, down 40 percent from last season. Coming in ninth place was Alexander Wang with 74,754 engagements, and in 10th place was Alexis Bittar, with a 66,343 engagement score, up 133 percent from last season.

Last season, Cos, Off-White and Alexander Wang didn't have runway shows during NYFW so there are no comparative figures.

According to Michelle Hammond of ListenFirst, "Another fashion week has arrived this fall, marking the ongoing anticipation of how brands will raise the bar season after season. In today's digital age, where technology demands rapid adaptation, legacy houses evolved through innovation, creativity and conversation. User-generated conversations have become a powerful driver of engagement, transforming audiences into active storytellers within narratives once controlled solely by the brands.

"Instagram emerged as the premier platform for storytelling, driving 47 percent of the industry's total engagement and captivating users through dynamic video content and high-energy gallery posts (8 million engagements). This season demonstrated that fashion week's influence lives beyond the runway, energized by digital conversations that extend its cultural footprint," Hammond said.

In assessing Calvin Klein's top performance, ListenFirst noted that the brand was propelled to the forefront

through user conversation on X (formerly Twitter), where international talent-driven fan bases amplified visibility and contributed 15 percent of the total engagement score. Jung Kook, Calvin Klein's global ambassador, fueled the surge via cinematic wide shots of his red-carpet debut to candid interviews, driving 4.4 million engagements across the brand's top five video posts, ListenFirst said.

The brand's talent roster also featured Lily Collins of "Emily in Paris," Chris Briney of "The Summer I Turned Pretty" fame, Emily Ratajkowski, Rosalia, Britt Lower and Jalen Green, further amplifying the brand's reach (33,000 engagements). Klein's presentation by Leoni took place Sept. 12 at the Brand Foundation, and benefited from the combination of star-studded talent, engaged fan communities and an innovative presentation, according to ListenFirst.

This is the second consecutive season that Kors has secured the second place ranking after coming in first place for six seasons in a row. This season Kors embraced the growing trend of backstage interview-style content, sparking conversation and driving further engagement. Collaborating with models and backstage tour guide Alex Consani, Kors brought banter and behind-the-scenes charm to TikTok, where the interview drove 686,000 engagements, making it the brand's top-performing content of the season. Another standout moment came from the second-highest performing post, a Facebook gallery featuring celebrity guests Gwyneth Paltrow, Leslie Bibb, Olivia Wilde and Kelsea Ballerini, among others at the runway show at Terminal Warehouse in New York's Chelsea neighborhood. The celebrity arrivals amplified the brand's social presence and drove 538,000 engagements.

Tory Burch, last season's winner, secured third place in this season's rankings. The designer's show took place at One Hanson Place, the former Williamsburg Savings Bank in downtown Brooklyn. On the social front, TikTok remains Burch's strongest channel, accounting for 90 percent of the brand's top 10 posts during NYFW. The brand continued to prioritize on-camera interviews with internet personalities who have highly engaged followings. Enya Umanzor and Tefi Pessoa spoke to guests in the front row, while Liana Satenstein captured behind the scenes moments with models backstage. The diverse model lineup included Alex Consani and Loli Baha, whose interviews with Satenstein earned 464,000 engagements and 86,000 engagements, respectively. Another standout video came from Umanzor's irreverent, rapid-fire questions about fashion "icks" and controversial men's fashion choices, with 192,000 engagements, according to ListenFirst.

Extending its impact beyond TikTok, Burch's Instagram collaborative post with Ratajkowski, who walked the runway, ranked sixth among their top-performing posts, driving 74,000 engagements and underscoring Burch's influence across platforms. This is the fourth season the brand filmed teaser videos in the days before the show, with narrative-driven influencer content to amplify awareness and buzz. Creator Zoi Lerma was filmed "running late" to the show, rushing from

the subway through the streets of New York in a series of looks from Burch's fall 2025 collection.

Like Calvin Klein, Cos benefited from the power of user-generated conversation on Twitter, which accounted for 26 percent of its owned social score. Spotlighting Thai actor Zee Pruk ignited strong support from Southeast Asian fans, with content featuring the star earning 135,000 engagements across Instagram and Facebook.

Instagram emerged as Cos' strongest platform, where high-profile talent amplified the brand's visibility. The top-performing post was an IG Reel featuring Briney, which drove 234,000 engagements and accounted for 54 percent of Cos' owned engagements. Reels dominated overall, making up 80 percent of the brand's top 10 posts, including a slow-motion cameo from Rosie Huntington-Whiteley set against the cool-toned, minimalist wonderland of Greenpoint Terminal Warehouse, where the presentation took place and which garnered 6,000 engagements.

Off-White, which came in fifth place with 180,000 engagements, staged its show on the rooftop basketball court of New Design High School in the Lower East Side. The guest lineup included "Love Island" couple Nic Vansteenberghe and Olandria Carthen, Mary J. Blige, Paris Jackson, Joy Sunday, Hone Dijon and others. The lineup was spotlighted in an IG Gallery that became the brand's top-performing post, driving 37,200 engagements.

Gallery posts were also important, making up 55 percent of its output. Static images of guest arrivals and portraits taken against the Off-White wall branding at the venue offered fans a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the presentation, ListenFirst said. "This mix of gallery content and Reels emphasized the brand's ability to merge cultural influence with visual storytelling, showing Off-White's continued strength in bridging fashion and community," ListenFirst said.

While Ralph Lauren was not included in the rankings as the brand presented Sept. 10, the night before NYFW's official start, the company saw notable success with an engagement score of 950,000. Staged at Ralph Lauren's Madison Avenue headquarters, the show was supported by a diversified suite of content across platforms that extended the narrative of Lauren and his latest collection. Instagram dominated engagement (84 percent), fueled by guests like Winter, the K-pop star, Oprah Winfrey, Usher, and Priyanka Chopra Jonas, among others. The top engaging post featured a still image of Winter alongside chief executive officer Patrice Louvet, earning 52,000 engagements.



Mary J. Blige, Clara and June Ambrose in Off-White's front row.

# The Reviews



Wes Gordon

## Carolina Herrera

Carolina Herrera is in a Madrid state of mind.

Walk down Calle Alcalá in the Spanish capital right now, and you can't miss model Vittoria Ceretti staring out from a monumental billboard for the brand's new fragrance, La Bomba.

It turns out the giant ads dotted across town were a teaser for an even bigger statement: on Thursday night, when Herrera took over Plaza Mayor, one of the city's top tourist attractions, to showcase its spring 2026 collection during Madrid Fashion Week.

Crowds gathered to watch as guests including singer Becky G and actresses Lucy

Hale, Sofia Carson and Alisha Boe arrived on a pale pink covered runway. Karolina Kurkova delighted photographers by swishing the cape back of her minidress.

Patrons at local bar La Torre del Oro literally had a front row seat to the sunset show, taking in the action while munching on tapas.

"RuPaul's Drag Race" star Gigi Goode showed up in a neon yellow puffball dress with big black polka dots. "I like to stand out from far away. You know, if a helicopter is flying by, I want to be the first thing that they zoom in on," she quipped.

Hale picked a sultry scarlet bustier dress. The "F\*\*\* Marry Kill" star had no doubts about which category she would file it under: "This is definitely a 'bleep' dress, I would say."

It was the first time the quintessentially New York brand showed its main line outside of its hometown, and only the third runway presentation overseas in Herrera's 44-year history, following cruise shows in Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro.

Creative director Wes Gordon rose to the occasion with 77 looks drenched in color, drama and bold floral motifs, sent out to a

feelgood soundtrack of '80s Spanish pop.

"Everything had to be big: big ideas, big sleeves, big shoulders, big trains, big colors to suit the space," the designer said in a preview.

Gordon comes to Madrid often, since Herrera's parent company, Puig, is Spanish. Though the house's founder was born in Venezuela, Madrid is home to her daughter Carolina Herrera Jr., who directs the brand's fragrance line.

"Culturally, I find it to be at the epicenter of so many conversations right now. Everyone is either rediscovering or discovering Madrid. Everyone's in love with Madrid right now," Gordon enthused.

When in town, museums are a priority. "I will never come to Madrid and not go to the Prado," he said.

That filtered through into his creations, which channeled both the grandeur of the city's 17th-century heyday and the irreverent spirit of La Movida, the cultural movement — born in the late '70s after the death of dictator Francisco Franco — encapsulated in the films of Pedro Almodóvar. (The director sat front row next to Bibi Andersen, one of his early muses.)



looks to appear as if she walked right out of a painting in the Prado and onto the streets," Gordon said.

What followed was an ode to the city, with outfits peppered with references to local culture. There were matador jackets sparkling with black jet beads, fan-shaped handbags, and chic black capes courtesy of local heritage brand Casa Seseña. But the stars of the show were the floral motifs.

Gordon homed in on three flowers with special significance: the rose, in honor of Madrid's Rosaleda garden; the carnation, traditionally worn during the festival of San Isidro, the patron saint of the city, and violets, in a nod to the violet-flavored candies that were gifted to guests.

A gold carnation motif was woven into a jacquard dress in a striking shade of marigold yellow, which echoed the Herrera gown that First Lady Melania Trump wore earlier this week to a state banquet hosted by Britain's King Charles III for U.S. President Donald Trump.

It's become one of Gordon's signature hues, alongside lilac and the label's signature bright red. He combined all three on an eye-popping off-the-shoulder ballgown worn by veteran Spanish model Esther Cañadas. "She's a spirit. It's a woman who likes to be remembered when she gets dressed, and who isn't a wallflower," he said.

Fabric violets made from six different layers of fabric were painstakingly applied to a lilac bubble dress, while bustiers came in cage constructions outlined in crystals, mirroring the square's cobblestone motif. It was also echoed in plaid patterns, which featured on looks like a kitschy cute halter neck dress that could have been plucked straight off an Almodóvar heroine.

Gordon shared his platform with local talents like '80s legend Sybilla, who contributed three of her signature cutout



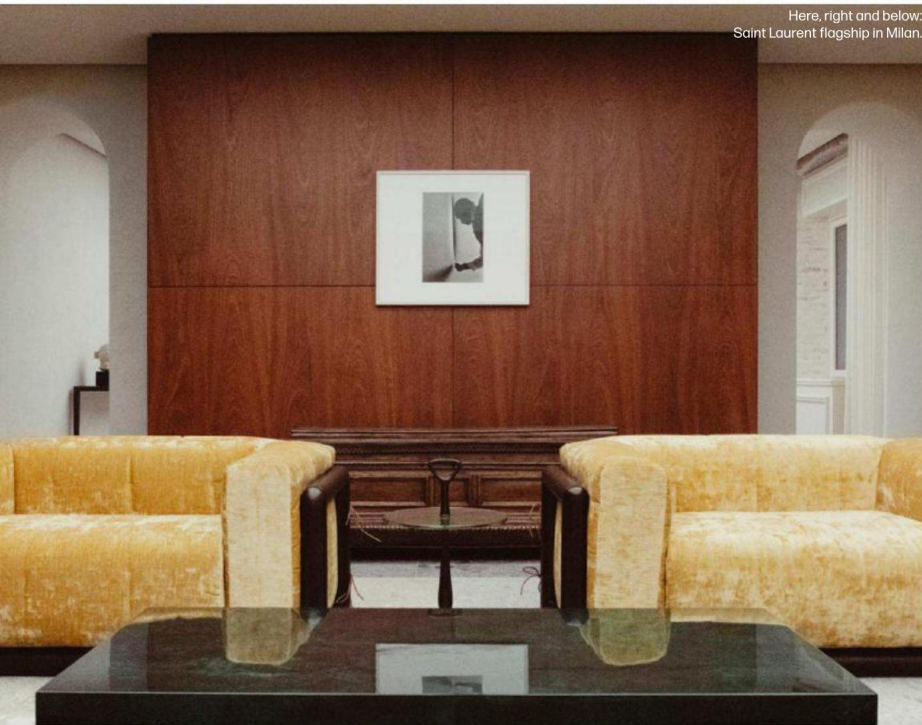
Gordon's opening look was a showstopper: a dramatic black gown with a long train, perfect for sweeping past the bronze statue of King Philip III on horseback in the center of the square. Infanta dresses with exaggerated hip constructions brought to mind the paintings of Velázquez or El Greco, which he had pinned to his mood board this season.

"In many ways, I wanted some of these

dresses, and Alejandro Gómez Palomo, tasked with reinventing the classic white Herrera shirt.

The brand's decision to skip town may have robbed New York Fashion Week of one of its heavy hitters, but it turned out

to be a smart move. In a season of cool minimalism verging on sameness, Herrera's brand of exuberant glamor might have stood out like a sore thumb. On a balmy night on the other side of the Atlantic, it felt like a perfect match. — Joelle Diderich



Here, right and below:  
Saint Laurent flagship in Milan.



EXCLUSIVE

# Saint Laurent Goes Big On Via Montenapoleone

- Almost double in size to its predecessor, the three-level boutique reflects Anthony Vaccarello's new design concept.

BY MILES SOCHA AND ANDREA ONATE

**Just in time** for the Milan Fashion Week crowds, Saint Laurent is reopening its flagship on Via Montenapoleone, which has nearly doubled in size.

The 14,200-square-foot unit at 8 Via Montenapoleone, slated to open to the public on Saturday, also carries a strong Italian accent in terms of materials,

furnishings and artworks scattered across the three-story building, which dates back to the 1500s but was rebuilt in 1952.

It's the first Saint Laurent store in Italy to reflect the new store concept of creative director Anthony Vaccarello, whose penchant for superb materials and strong design statements on the runway are echoed in his intriguing blend of Brutalist and modernist architectural codes.

Concrete, colorful marbles and dark wood are among the principal materials that made their first appearance in Saint Laurent's Champs-Élysées flagship in Paris, which opened in 2023.

In Milan, those materials coexist with a

host of other textures, including exposed brickwork and backlit onyx for what the house calls "a dialogue between memory and modernity."

Visitors alight on a majestic, spacious atmosphere where each collection piece has its own spot. Mirrors throughout the store expand the space further and add to the grandeur, enhanced by the light color palette. The staircase stands out as a focal point, despite not being centrally located.

Floors are covered in a traditional gray stone quarried in Lombardy while other parts of the store are dressed in the same pink and white marble seen at the Duomo. A variation on Venetian plasterwork and

classical moldings are among elements that honor the building's past, while the sculptural staircase in eucalyptus wood, buffed to a high-shine, adds a contemporary counterpoint.

"By carefully preserving and reinterpreting architectural details, Saint Laurent Montenapoleone embraces the unique character of the site, creating a location with a distinct sense of place and permanence," the house said in a statement shared first with WWD.

A plethora of sofas, chairs, artworks and books heighten the residential feeling, each room tailored to the items on display, much like in a private home. Soft lighting heightens the relaxed, yet chic atmosphere of a living room.

Lighting, from spotlights to radiant panels, enhances the space and creates dramatic shadows on statues, chairs and objects.

The second floor features a small terrace overlooking an internal courtyard, a common feature in grand Milanese homes.

A bespoke table by contemporary Italian designer Vincenzo de Cotiis was commissioned for the store.

The top floor, dedicated to menswear, echoes the same design of the other floors but with a bolder twist, featuring furniture that reflects the classic Milanese style.

Meanwhile, artworks and furnishings date from antiquity to the present day, with original works by important figures of Italian architecture and design including Gio Ponti, the Scarpa family, Osvaldo Borsani, Marco Zanuso, Aldo Tura and Gaetano Pesce.

One of the VIP rooms features a photo by Irving Penn, a still-life of a tomato, mozzarella di bufala and olives, originally produced for Condé Nast. Penn was a close friend of iconic designer Yves Saint Laurent.

The Milan flagship showcases Saint Laurent's full product offering, including women's and men's ready-to-wear, handbags, shoes, accessories and fine jewelry.

The new Vaccarello design concept can also be found in Saint Laurent's location on Boulevard Saint Germain in Paris, in New York's Meatpacking District, the Miami Design District and Toronto.

A new flagship on Avenue Montaigne in the French capital is slated to open before the end of the year.



## BUSINESS

# New Alberta Ferretti Milan Flagship Unveils Lorenzo Serafini Concept

● The creative director defined the opening taking place Saturday “a crucial moment for the new course of Alberta Ferretti.”

BY LUISA ZARGANI

**MILAN** – Alberta Ferretti is returning to Milan’s luxury shopping district with a new flagship on Via Spiga 26.

The store unveils the new store concept conceived by creative director Lorenzo Serafini, who defined the opening taking place on Saturday “a crucial moment for the new course of Alberta Ferretti.” The unit allows the designer to present his own retail vision since taking the creative direction mantle last year, and “the renewed aesthetics of the brand.”

The store’s design “started from the iconic elements that for me define the new image of the Alberta Ferretti brand: lightness, timeless elegance, whispered femininity, and a celebration of individuality,” said Serafini. “The architectural and decorative choices were guided by these elements, from the division of spaces to the selection of materials and colors, up to the creation of the lighting system. The effect is light, enveloping, welcoming, but always defined

by contemporary and essential elegance.”

The boutique covers around 2,700 square feet over two floors. A previous flagship on Via Montenapoleone, a few feet away from Via Spiga, closed in October 2024. There are existing Alberta Ferretti stores in Rome, Florence and Paris.

Alexandra Lamprecht, general manager of the brand, said the new store “represents an important strategic step for the brand. Over the past six months we have registered a robust double-digit growth in our retail business and the Milan flagship will significantly contribute to this development.” Lamprecht joined the brand in November last year in the newly created role, bringing an extensive experience in the sector working over the years with luxury brands ranging from Ferragamo and Valentino to Etro.

She said Serafini’s designs drove the gains, attracting “a new and young generation of international customers, as well as the brand’s very loyal existing base.”

In fact, she enthused about the “strategic position” of the Milan boutique in fashion’s luxury shopping district, which is a draw for both international tourists and the “solid and significant” local community and longtime customers of the brand.

“The structure of the boutique was conceived to offer a highly personalized and

The new Alberta Ferretti flagship in Milan.



intimate shopping experience: the spaces dedicated to fittings guarantee privacy and discretion,” concluded Lamprecht, underscoring that the “welcoming” atmosphere of the store is meant to allow its customers to have “an exclusive moment of relation with the brand.”

Serafini was promoted to the role of creative director of the Alberta Ferretti brand in October 2024, succeeding the namesake founder. His first collection for the brand bowed in February last year.

Aeffe, the brand’s parent, rewarded Serafini, who joined the group in 2014, when Alberta Ferretti handed him the design reins of the Philosophy label. The Philosophy by Lorenzo Serafini brand was integrated into the Alberta Ferretti line starting from the fall 2025 season. Serafini joined Aeffe, which also controls the Moschino and Pollini brands, from Dolce & Gabbana, where he was womenswear designer, following an experience in the same role at Roberto Cavalli.

Filled with different tactile textures, the interior layout is developed around essential architectural elements that convey the atmosphere of a wardrobe-living room, with the use of a resin especially made by a Milanese artisan for the walls and floor.

Key furniture pieces range from a precious table in Canaletto walnut and brass with curved lines; walnut bookcases conceived to showcase bags and accessories, and day-bed seats featuring an ivory bouclé fabric upholstery.

The ceiling is inspired by shed structures derived from industrial architecture and veils hide the hangers along the walls, emphasizing the sense of lightness with garments that seem to float. The neutral tones and soft surfaces, textured fabrics, walnut shelves with brass and fabric details, are also details mapped out by Serafini, who developed the store with Re-Design Studio, led by Riccardo Furlani, and AAFW – Alessandro Fantetti Workshop.

## EXCLUSIVE

# First Look at the Dries Van Noten Store in Milan



Inside Dries Van Noten’s first store in Milan.

● The house’s founder gave WWD a preview of the brand’s first store in the Italian fashion capital, dedicated to its fragrance, beauty and accessories lines.

BY SANDRA SALIBIAN

## Milan, at last.

Dries Van Noten’s Italian aficionados and fashion enthusiasts that duly pilgrim to the brand’s store in Paris every time they step in the City of Lights can now count on shorter trips for their injection of beauty.

The brand is opening its first store in the Italian fashion capital, zeroing in on an intimate location nestled in the arty district of Brera.

The 538-square-foot unit to be unveiled on Friday follows the Gallery format that is also present in Paris and Brussels, and is dedicated to the brand’s fragrance, beauty and accessories lines only.

Hence the strategic location, with the space housed in a 19th-century building standing opposite the landmark Palazzo Citterio and on the corner between Via Carmine and Via Brera, a street known for its concentration of niche fragrance retailers and beauty players, ranging from Campomarzio70 and Olfattorio Bar à Parfums to Officine Universelle Buly 1803, Montale and The Merchant of Venice, among others.

These are alternated by art galleries, which are also in sync with the approach the Dries Van Noten store was conceived. As for the brand’s other units opened recently, the interior concept was overseen by the company’s founder, who retired from the runway last year, passing the creative baton to Julian Klausner.

“Brera’s artistic language, its streets, its architecture spoke to what we wanted the store to be. This felt like ‘home’ for a Gallery of this kind,” Van Noten told WWD. He added that this format felt right for the city and the recent Brussels opening as these units are meant to “offer an immediate and intimate encounter.”

“[The goal was] to create a moment of discovery, a place to slow down and treat yourself,” said the Belgian designer. “The space holds contrast, old and new, raw and refined. And a sense of calm, for small

surprises that reveal themselves slowly.”

Such surprises not only refer to the product assortment but also the design pieces Van Noten has selected for the space and that stand out in the cozy, sophisticated environment juxtaposing materials such as polished white marble, travertine and brushed brass elements.

For one, a large travertine panel sculpted by Nerone Ceccarelli adds to the tactile quotient of the interiors, while a 2015 painting by Natalie Maier conveys a delicate chromatic quality. Other key elements comprise a rare desk designed by Silvio Berrone for Bialetti’s Milan headquarters in 1955, which dominates the store as much as the design chandelier made of Venini glass elements from the 1970s.

Van Noten said that he focused on “pieces that spoke to the space and carry history and intensity” in his scouting process.

As for customers’ own product hunting, they will find the brand’s whole fragrance collection, beauty range and accessories, including the new lipstick case “Mezzanotte Blu,” or “Midnight Blue” in English, launching exclusively at Milan’s store this month.

“Milan understands beauty. There’s a sophisticated energy and respect for details; a quiet confidence that resonates with the brand,” Van Noten said about the local clientele.

So much so that the brand decided to double its presence in town this month, and not to disappoint customers eager to find the Dries Van Noten ready-to-wear collections: The company will also have a pop-up installation at the high-end retailer Antica Milano’s outpost at the Portrait hotel. To be celebrated with an event

during Milan Fashion Week on Thursday, the pop-up will showcase the Dries Van Noten fall 2025 women’s collection “Behind the curtain” – the first under Klausner’s tenure.

As reported, the Milan store opening is part of a bigger retail rollout plan that the company shared exclusively with WWD earlier this year. The surge of expansion in 2025 was headlined by fashion and beauty flagships opening in New York City and London, in addition to the beauty and accessories units debuting in Brussels and Milan.

For each location, Van Noten focused on creating spaces deeply connected to their surroundings, honoring the local culture while staying true to the brand’s core aesthetics. The founder confirmed there are more stores to come but underscored that “we only open when we feel we can give it something unique, not just more.”

Even if he stayed mum on where the Dries Van Noten retail flag might be planted next, the designer must be in his Italian era, as this year he found in the country a fertile ground for a personal project, too.

As reported, in May he acquired the 15th-century Palazzo Pisani Moretta on the Grand Canal in Venice, with plans to create a cultural venue around craft and art. According to the release shared at the time, Van Noten’s venture at the historic landmark “will be shaped through ongoing dialogue between artists and artisans, and will include exhibitions and presentations, offering a platform for contemporary work and inviting the public into a place where heritage is respected and thoughtfully reimaged for future generations.”

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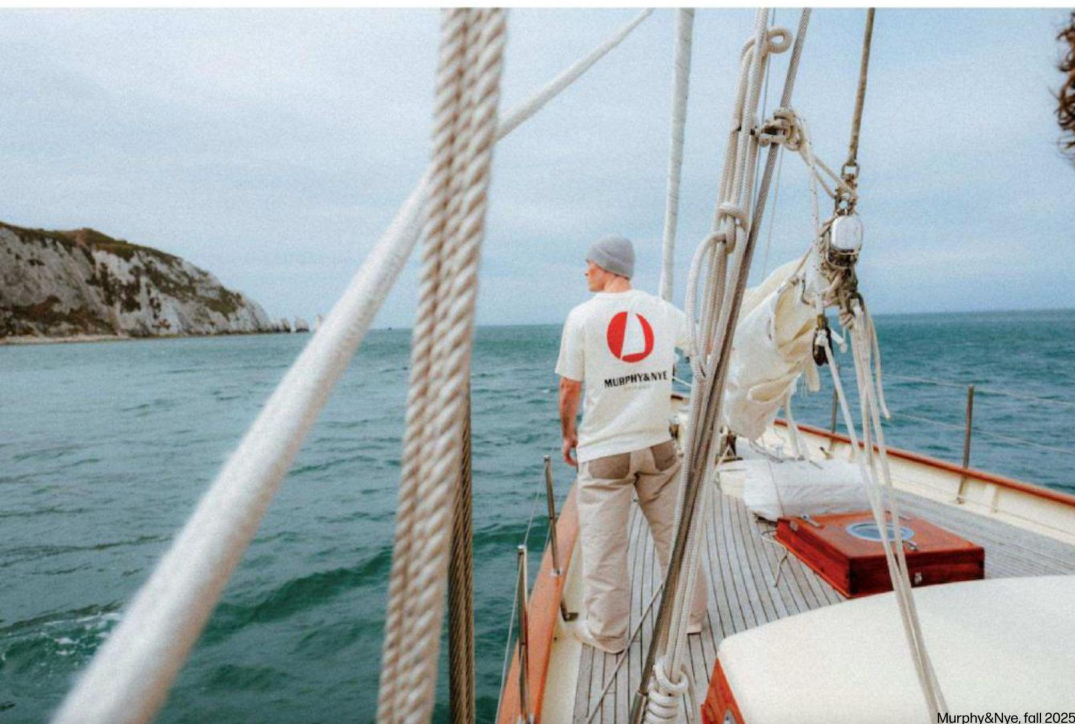


*Antonia Gentry for*

**JARED**  
JEWELERS

## BUSINESS

# Murphy&Nye Charts New Route Under 'Lighthouse' Retail Format Debut



Murphy&amp;Nye, fall 2025

● Since its rebrand last year, the nautical sportswear brand is continuing its repositioning with a retail format housed at Milan's Clan Upstairs store.

BY SANDRA SALIBIAN

**MILAN** — Murphy&Nye, the Chicago-born brand rooted in sails and sailboat equipment, is continuing to chart its new course with a retail activation.

Kick-started with a rebranding last year, the label's relaunch under chief executive officer Tommaso Rossi and creative director Chicco Barina is continuing with the debut of a long-term temporary store dubbed "Murphy&Nye Lighthouse" and installed at the Clan Upstairs retailer in Milan's Brera district, which will be celebrated with an event during fashion week on Sept. 26.

The opening is in sync with the management's mission of shifting the brand toward a more premium positioning and a lifestyle proposition, as well as its plans to focus more on directly operated distribution channels, both off- and online.

"We've noticed that in the retail world there are always the same, static formats and we wanted to be in a space where there's much else going on — a bar, events, as well as other brands that we find attuned to our positioning," said Rossi about the tie-up with Clan Upstairs. "To be in places where customers really like to spend time at, even to check out other brands — we're more than fine with that, as long as they find an enjoyable shopping experience."

"Plus this new formula enables us to really express our collection," continued Rossi. "Wholesale is playing a little bit

in defense right now when it comes to assortments, while we see that our more experimental pieces are selling well on our e-commerce. So this format gives us the chance and space to showcase them."

Barina added on the strategy, underscoring the importance of displaying a preview of the new collection or a selection of looks that stand out for the most innovative fabrics and treatments in the location.

"That's important also for my work, for the research and development of new products," said the creative director pointing to how customers' feedback to such pieces is essential for him. "The idea is to put in our space the items we most believe into, without third-party filters."

Along with the new collection, the Lighthouse space will display Murphy&Nye's collaboration with Vibram, the premium shoe sole producer and performance footwear brand known for its innovative quotient. As a result of the tie-up, two styles will be presented during fashion week, including the Optimist sneaker and Deck boat shoe. Priced at 168 euros each, the designs will be available to purchase from March.

"We tasked Vibram with creating a sole that for me had to feature three key traits: ultra grip, ultra flexibility and ultra lightness," said Barina. He stressed on the importance of having elements essential for nautical gears translated into designs fit for an urban lifestyle, too.

Ditto for the interior concept of the temporary store, which will be operating at least for a year. Barina worked with architect Sebastiano Tosi to revisit the brand's heritage with a contemporary

appeal. They focused on an essential layout to let the product stand out, but still infused references to the label's DNA, ranging from the integration of its signature all-over pattern and dominant colors — red, white and black — to nautical details.

To be sure, Barina said he wanted to include elements such as a boat mast and nautical ropes as part of the installation and was surprised when Tosi turned these, as well as carbon structures and carabiners, into hangers and functional designs.

The Lighthouse's overarching concept is to offer the company a recognizable yet low-impact tool to support its distribution expansion and a flexible format that can be easily replicated for other temporary corners, shop-in-shop activations or implementations in alternative venues, such as art galleries and cultural spaces.

Rossi said the goal is to export it to different locations, starting from mountain and resort destinations such as Cortina d'Ampezzo and Saint-Tropez — always in partnership with local retailers.

"The idea is to keep the Lighthouse for special destinations and the most receptive locations, whereas elsewhere we continue with our traditional stores," confirmed Barina.

Flanked by the future opening of new HQs in Padua — the town in Italy's Veneto region where Barina develops the collections and many manufacturing partners of the company are based at, — this distribution expansion will be among the drivers of Murphy&Nye's new business plan, which is aimed at reaching 20 million euros in sales within the next three years.

The company reported total sales of 6 million euros in 2024. Rossi forecast a flat

performance for this year, underscoring how the repositioning toward the premium lifestyle segment has influenced a reorganization of the wholesale distribution. This will count about 100 doors by the end of the year, 80 percent of which are in Italy.

"We expect the wholesale channel, which accounted for half of total revenues last year, to decrease its share to 30 to 40 percent, in favor of retail and e-commerce, as we expect sales generated online to grow 20 percent this year," said Rossi.

The brand's internationalization is also a priority for Rossi, starting from expansion in markets such as the U.K., France, Norway and the Middle East.

As the brand opens up to a more premium target and moves from competing with other nautical players to lifestyle brands, collections are pivoting toward a full-fledged assortment.

The new course under Barina opened last fall with the Silver Capsule, a seven-item range reinterpreting archetypes such as windbreakers, vests and T-shirts with a futuristic edge. For the occasion, he also introduced the brand's first sneaker, named "Challenger."

Ever since, the designer worked to expand the catalogue to offer total looks. For example, his fall 2025 had a strong focus on pants — an item that is often overlooked in the market, according to Barina — while his spring 2026 line presented during Milan Fashion Week in June flanked performance designs for men with the debut of women's styles. Next up, Barina's eyeing an expansion in accessories to include the likes of bags and backpacks.

The designer approached the project out of a personal passion. "When I started my career, Murphy&Nye was a big and authentic label, with such a strong DNA, good sales and many stores," he recalled. "I knew Tommaso [Rossi] for other projects and when his family bought [Murphy&Nye] back in 2022 I told him that the sailing world will be the next big thing."

"It has evolved so much tech-wise: these boats are like F1 cars. No wonder Ferrari is making its foray into sailing," he continued, pointing to the automotive behemoth's plans revealed last year. "And I was hoping in another sport interacting with the design world."

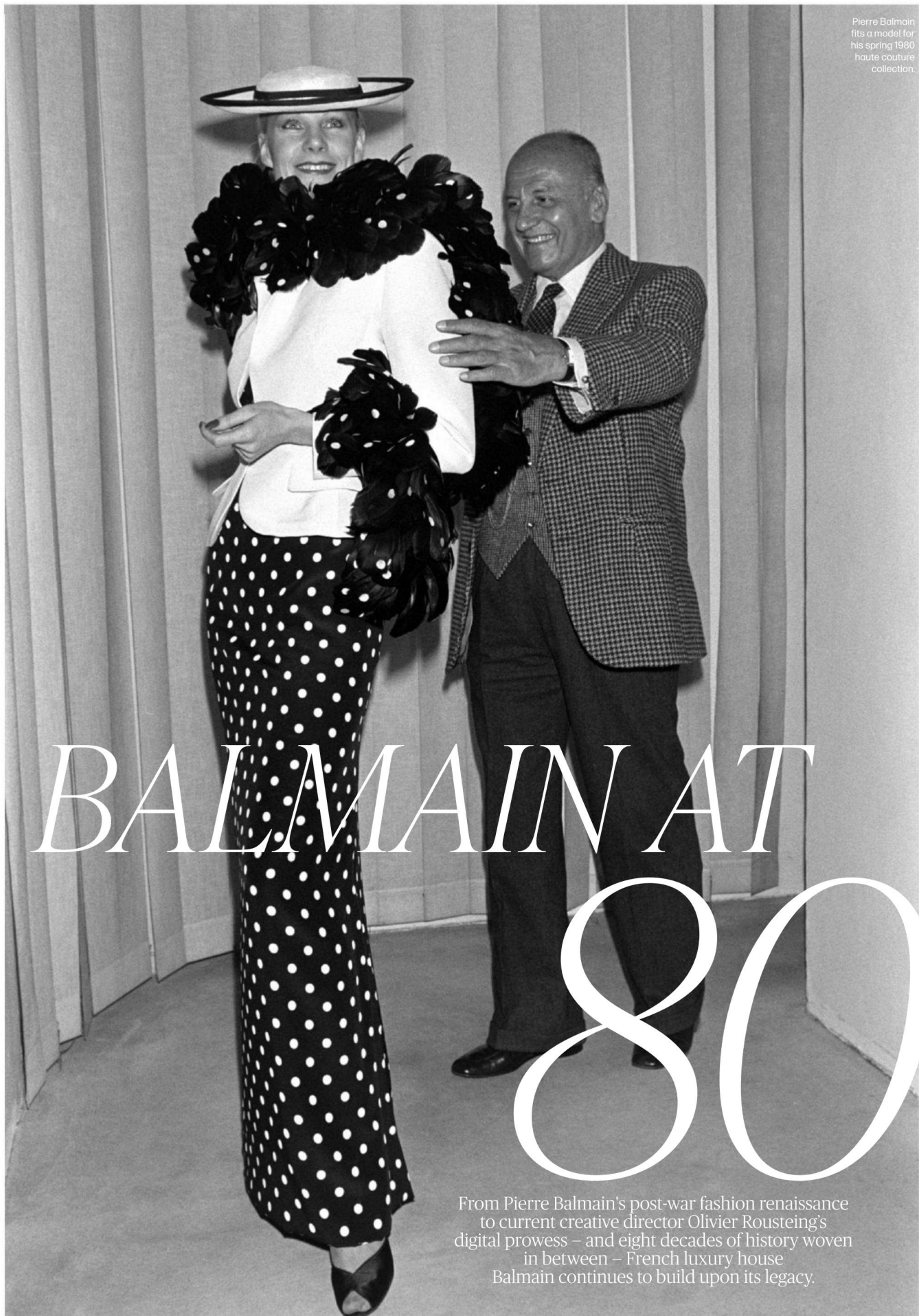
Murphy&Nye was established in Chicago in 1933 by Jim Murphy and Harry Nye Jr., who transformed artisanal sail-making techniques into advanced nautical apparel. In the 1960s, the firm was one of the most important sailing companies in the U.S. and in 1975, it opened its European branch in Italy. Five years later, the latter acquired the brand from the American parent company.

At the same time, the firm decided to optimize its know-how in the production of racing sails to produce clothing for crews, handcrafting highly technical and functional garments in the same sail lofts where the sails were made.

The Murphy&Nye Lighthouse store in Milan.



Pierre Balmain fits a model for his spring 1980 haute couture collection.



# BALMAIN AT 80

From Pierre Balmain's post-war fashion renaissance to current creative director Olivier Rousteing's digital prowess – and eight decades of history woven in between – French luxury house Balmain continues to build upon its legacy.

# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

## How Pierre Balmain Brought 'Jolie Madame' French Elegance to the World

A key player in France's post-war fashion renaissance, the couturier thrived on challenges and never wavered from his vision of Parisian elegance.

BY JOELLE DIDERICH WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM TONYA BLAZIO-LICORISH



Pierre Balmain in his Parisian fashion house on April 5, 1965.

To say that the runup to Pierre Balmain's first show was fraught with complications is an understatement.

Working out of a cramped Paris apartment where his office was the bathroom – with wooden planks on the bathtub serving as a makeshift desk – the couturier launched his label amid the chaos that followed the liberation of Paris in August 1944.

"We worked that time in what is probably the popular conception of the way fashion collections are prepared: frenziedly, with people fainting, and staff having to be plied with black coffee to keep them going," Balmain recalled in his 1964 memoir, "My Years and Seasons."

Having designed for Lucien Lelong through most of World War II, Balmain set up his own couture house at 44 rue François 1er just after occupying German soldiers vacated the building. His mother, who had a boutique in the resort town of Aix-les-Bains, plowed all her money into the brand and

supervised preparations for the debut.

But nothing went according to plan. "In every way the circumstances of that first showing seemed to be as full of drama – or melodrama – as a second-rate film. Even my opening date, which I had fixed for Oct. 12, 1945," the couturier said.

Balmain had been careful to choose a date when no other Paris designer was showing, but found out at the last minute that Madame Grès had moved her show, initially scheduled a week earlier, to the same day. Desperate, he phoned her and explained he could not afford to recall his invitations. Grès agreed to reschedule.

"I shall never forget that generous gesture. Madame Grès, one of the great ladies of the Paris fashion world, had readily altered her own arrangements to help an unknown designer. Her consideration helped me not only in a practical way, but also bolstered my self-confidence," Balmain wrote.



Women's Wear Daily cover from May 24, 1949.

But his troubles were not over. On the morning of the show, police officers arrived with a bailiff brandishing an eviction notice, seeking to requisition the premises for the French government. Balmain, who had not slept all night, had a fit and threw them out – miraculously, with no immediate consequences.

Despite these hurdles, Balmain never doubted he would make it. During the war, he had met American writer Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice B. Toklas, who were clients of his mother's boutique, and designed some outfits for them. In a letter to Stein in September 1945, he invited them to attend his first show.

"I am barely sleeping. I'm already in a state of nervous tension – but I have so much confidence in my destiny that I am sure of making a success of this house," he wrote on paper printed with the logo and address of his fledgling brand.

### 'An Apostle of Simplicity'

His confidence was justified. Early reviews were overwhelmingly positive, with the U.K. and U.S. editions of Vogue running a feature written by Stein and illustrated with photos by Cecil Beaton, who joined her at that first show.

Balmain's first look was a brown oversized tunic inspired by a Breton fisherman's blouse, worn with gray flannel slacks and low-heeled brown suede shoes. The model walked with the designer's pet Airedale, who promptly lunged at Stein's poodle.

"There was a furious battle, before Gertrude, myself, the mannequin, and some of the salesgirls succeeded in separating the dogs. But the dog-fight had caused amusement and set a note of informality which probably helped the show get off to a good start," he said.

The oversized top with patch pockets was an instant hit. He made an open-necked version for day, and added a round embroidered collar for evening. Beaton photographed the looks on models

standing in an artist's backyard surrounded by junk, signaling a new form of glamour emerging from the ashes of war.

Noting Balmain's penchant for clean lines, WWD wrote in December 1946: "He is an apostle of simplicity in fashion design or at least this is his mood of the moment. He expresses his belief in simple clothes, which, however, must not be devoid of ideas. He approves the small waist and figure lines generally but rejects fantastic exaggeration."

He rapidly emerged as a key player in France's post-war fashion renaissance, garnering a clientele of royalty and movie stars including Wallis Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor; Marlene Dietrich and Judy Garland. Balmain was also a prolific costume designer for theater and film, dressing the likes of Sophia Loren, Vivien Leigh, Brigitte Bardot and Katharine Hepburn.

Born in 1914 in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne in the mountainous Savoie region of southeastern France, Balmain had wanted to be a fashion designer since he was child dressing paper dolls with scraps of cloth. His father, who had inherited a wholesale drapery business, died suddenly when Pierre was 7 years old.

His mother, Françoise, managed a fashion boutique called Galeries Parisiennes with her two sisters, but tried to discourage her son from a career in fashion.

Balmain started studying architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1933, while freelancing for Robert Piguet on the side. A year later, he dropped out and joined the studio of Edward Molyneux, where he remained for five years before joining Lelong.

Balmain was mobilized from 1939 to 1941, shuttling between Paris and his native Savoie, though he was confined to office duties. In December 1941, he returned to Lelong, where he worked alongside Christian Dior. The two got along so well, they discussed opening a couture house together, but eventually decided to go their separate ways and grew apart.

Though Balmain's business soared, he was eclipsed by Dior, who captured the popular imagination with his New Look, launched in February 1947. Ironically, Balmain had published a booklet the year before titled "A New French Style." In it, Toklas comments on his debut collection, alongside sketches by René Gruau of eight key looks.

"For the first time we saw dresses designed with knowledge and understanding of the human body," Toklas wrote. "This completely contemporary conception of fashion truly marks the renewal of Parisian elegance." ▶



A model presents a look by Pierre Balmain on Sept. 1, 1955, in Paris.

# MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80 **WWD**



Katharine Hepburn and Pierre Balmain

## Ambassador of French Style

Like Dior, Balmain understood early the importance of establishing an international presence.

During fittings for the wedding dress of Stella Carcanos, daughter of Argentina's ambassador to Great Britain, he made inroads with the British aristocracy in London. Soon after, Helena Rubinstein came knocking, asking him to design a capsule collection to accompany a new makeup line.

The launch in September 1946 at luxury department store B. Altman & Co. in New York City was promoted with a six-page color spread in *Vogue* shot by Horst P. Horst, with a caption heralding a "New Look from Paris." After a monthlong visit, Balmain told *WWD* he intended to drop new designs every two weeks to cater to U.S. ready-to-wear manufacturers.

"With planes making travel a matter of hours it brings all the world close to Paris and in many parts of the world the seasons do not correspond to our seasons. For instance, many of our South American customers want summer dresses when we are holding our fall showings," he said.

"I aim to arrange my business so that an American buyer can come into my shop in Paris any time during the year and see new models," added Balmain, who had presented 180 looks the previous season, more than any other Paris designer, he claimed.

On his frequent trips to the U.S., Balmain would give lectures to clubs and girls' colleges, positioning himself as a representative for the French couture sector.

"Gertrude Stein had recommended me never to go there as a commercial traveler, but always as an ambassador of French civilization," said the designer, who won the 1955 Neiman Marcus Award for Distinguished Service in the Field of Fashion.

Balmain missed his own show in February 1947 after being run over the night before by a U.S. Air Force sergeant. Undeterred, he spent his convalescence planning the launch of his first fragrance, named *Elysées 64/83* after the phone number of his couture salon, and a world trip that would take him to Australia via Egypt, Bahrain, Singapore, Indonesia and Myanmar.

Italian island of Elba, where in 1958 he commissioned Italian architect Leonardo Ricci to build him a futuristic villa with an oval pool and lush Asian-inspired gardens.

Balmain's wanderlust was reflected in designs bearing names like "Boeing," "Voyage," "Train Spécial" and "Départ." He held fashion shows in locations ranging from London to Caracas, Venezuela, where he established a branch in 1954.

But Balmain became best known for his long-standing association with the Thai royal family. After Queen Sirikit commissioned the designer to create hundreds of outfits for a months-long state visit in 1960, he dressed her for more than two decades, and even helped the country to promote its traditional silks.

He also created uniforms for airlines including TWA, Southern Airways and Singapore Airlines; dressed the attendants at the 1968 Winter Olympics in Grenoble, France, and outfitted powerful women such as the first female pilot at Air France, the first female general of the French Army, and France's first female police commissioner.

## Jolie Madame

Balmain's style was best summed up by the name of one of his fragrances, *Jolie Madame*, launched in 1952. Underpinned by his early architectural training, his body-conscious silhouette rested on strict tailoring, cinched waists and strong shoulders.

During this time, the house — run for decades by the formidable Ginette Spanier — in 1954 hired a young Karl Lagerfeld, who became Balmain's assistant, and later apprentice, for three years.

Despite his reputation for decorum, Balmain could also inject a dose of sizzle. A fan of animal prints, he used leopard print with abandon and had a huge zebra-skin rug in his office.

He created a sensation with the transformable dress he made for Juliette Gréco's performance at the "April in Paris" costume ball in 1952 at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel: an austere black long-sleeve gown that slid off to reveal a gold lamé dress with a plunging bustier neckline. Press photos show Balmain, dressed as Louis XIV, kneeling near Gréco as she

flipped her jet-black hair.

Gigi Hadid's gold Miu Miu dress at this year's Met Gala was inspired by a gown that Balmain designed for Josephine Baker in 1951, and he anticipated the trend for naked dressing with his translucent sheath for Carroll Baker, who almost caused a riot when she wore it to the London premiere of her film "The Carpetbaggers" in 1964.

Among his memorable contributions to film were the costumes he designed for Bardot in "And God Created Woman," cementing her sex kitten persona, and the hourglass silhouettes that Loren wore in "The Millionairess."

While many of his peers died young — Robert Piguet in 1953, Jacques Fath in 1954, Marcel Rochas in 1955 and Dior in 1957 — Balmain remained active until his death from cancer in 1982, at the age of 68. He was succeeded by Erik Mortensen, his right hand since 1951, for haute couture and Peggy Huynh Kinh for ready-to-wear.

Reflecting on his journey in 1964, Balmain gave an insight into his complex temperament by admitting that he thrived on adversity.

"It seems that for me setbacks have always been stimulants, and it is in the midst of difficulties that I have best succeeded in fulfilling my destiny. This is so true that I have come to need problems and challenges to produce my best work. Nothing is more harmful to me than the sense of security," he wrote in his memoir.

He also detailed his feuds with critics who dismissed his flattering designs, popular with aristocrats and ladies who lunched, as staid and conventional, especially when compared with emerging '60s designers like Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Cardin and André Courrèges.

"Sometimes I regret that my character does not drive me to create an occasional horror, for I believe that the nightmare of certain models can confirm the purity of lines. But I cannot force myself to do it," Balmain retorted.

"I believe that in our determination to uphold a certain picture of Parisian elegance, without compromise and without weakness, we have now succeeded in the establishment of a style," he said. ■

Further treks followed to North and South Africa, South America, Japan, Thailand and China, inspiring collections like his 1948 beachwear line, featuring tropical-patterned cotton sarong skirts, or his fall 1948 haute couture collection, with asymmetric dresses constructed like Indian saris.

"Balmain has completely modernized the Oriental influence, avoiding familiar embroideries or picturesque treatments in favor of clean-cut lines and plain colors," *WWD* wrote of his fall 1949 couture line, which featured kimono-sleeved coats and colors named Lotus Pink, Lacquer Red and Lantern Yellow.

Balmain traveled both to scout new markets and for pleasure, exploring far-flung destinations like the Bamiyan valley in Afghanistan and bringing back numerous art objects and mementoes that filled his 19th-century villa in the Paris suburb of Croissy — including Tanagra statuettes, 17th-century Chinese porcelain, and nearly 400 Gallé vases.

Between shows, he would repair to the

Josephine Baker in a Balmain evening gown during a photoshoot at the Balmain fashion house on Sept. 23, 1951.



Janine Holland, a 21-year-old "Maid of Cotton, 1951" of Houston, is shown in a cotton evening gown designed especially for her by Pierre Balmain.

# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

## CEO Talks

### Balmain's CEO Finds the Brand '80 Years Young'

Matteo Sgarbossa has retooled the French fashion house as it gears up to tell its rich story to clients around the world. BY MILES SOCHA

**A rich and compelling fashion story, yet to be fully told.**

That's how Balmain chief executive officer Matteo Sgarbossa describes the French house as it marks its 80th anniversary, an occasion to elaborate on the legacy of Pierre Balmain, a proponent of optimistic and architectural fashions in the post-war period whose fans included Gertrude Stein, the Duchess of Windsor and Queen Sirikit of Thailand.

He also described an opportunity for the maison, still a relatively small player on the luxury scene, to leverage its agility and its track record of audacity, with current creative director Olivier Rousteing carrying the torch for bold fashion statements and social change, too.

"We have this privilege of being able to take risks, things that giant brands cannot do because they have much more to lose than us," Sgarbossa said in an interview, describing a level of brand perception that eclipses Balmain's size, which market sources estimate at around 300 million euros.

"There is a lot of unlocked potential and we have all the right ingredients," he said. "We have the brand, we have a very creative designer, and now we have a fantastic team that we have been building over the past 14 months... The fact of being a small brand helps in being agile and able to accelerate faster. So I really spy a lot of potential."

Sgarbossa arrived at the management helm of Balmain in May 2024 from Givenchy, having also worked at Gucci, Mango and Benetton earlier in his career.

Since then he's made key hires in merchandising, communications, retail and client relations, along with several new zone presidents and a reinforced design studio for leather goods, seen as a high-potential category.

Moreover, he's instilling a corporate culture based on empowerment and innovative thinking.

"We are a bold brand, so it's indeed in our identity to be courageous," Sgarbossa said. "I want this as well to be the culture inside the company with people allowed to take risks."

"Since we can be disruptive, and we can be innovative, they have really to think outside the box, and not feel scared of taking risks... I really believe that only this approach can yield good ideas and different ways of doing things. If we do things in the same way as all the other brands, we will be not successful. We need to find our own way," he stressed.

Balmain kicked off its anniversary festivities with an immersive exhibition in New York earlier this month, and will follow up with a documentary by French journalist Loïc Prigent – "It will be full of funny and untold anecdotes at the house," Sgarbossa promised – plus a slate of in-store events, some one-to-one, others one-to-few "to tell the story in a more intimate way."

In addition, Balmain will introduce a new program dubbed "The Circle" that will bring together prominent women from various industries for events around the values of the maison.

The next Balmain fashion show on Oct. 1 during Paris Fashion Week will offer another moment to celebrate the milestone, with Rousteing presenting a women's collection connected to the legacy of the house and with his new, more streamlined design approach.

"The best way to celebrate this anniversary is by using it as a pivot in the strategy for the years to come, to start telling this story, not only as specific moments, but more as momentum re-emphasizing how incredible our heritage and legacy is," Sgarbossa said.

Balmain is also unique in being privately held since 2016, having as its owner Mayhoola, the Qatar-based parent of Valentino and Pal Zileri.

Having previously worked at Europe's most prominent fashion and luxury groups – LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton and Kering – Sgarbossa described a different approach to brand development and stewardship at Mayhoola.

He described a "blend of a family spirit" and entrepreneurship.

"There are not many layers in the organization, and so we really can make things happen very quickly," he said. "There are absolutely no internal politics, which is again something very remarkable."

He credits Mayhoola chairman and CEO Rachid Mohammed Rachid, who empowers his top executives by "giving them the space and the freedom to create an impact. But you also feel his presence as a kind of a guide. He is a very visionary and wise man, and he's really the soul of our group."

When Sgarbossa arrived at Balmain last year, one of the first things he did was visit the archive.

"It was clear that a new direction was needed at the brand, but at the same time, it's very important to remember where we come from," he said. "I found a lot of great inspiration, and also felt a great sense of responsibility when you have so much behind you – 80 years of style, innovation and creativity."

He described the company as "80 years young" in terms of the attitude of the brand, and the zeal of its employees, "but with 80 years of wisdom, that's something really that we can feel," he said. "The history of the house is affecting our attitude because we feel this elegance coming from 80 years of the story."

Among other fundamentals for Sgarbossa was to understand Balmain's current clientele, and the wider one it could also reach.

"Because obviously the ambition for the brand is to become bigger," he said, without giving any specific revenue target. "Mayhoola is investing more on the medium- and long-term to really unlock the full potential of its brands. For sure, we have still a lot to do, and there is a huge margin for growth."

At present, Balmain counts 50 stores in the world, of which 11 are shops-in-shop. Fifteen locations are in Europe, Middle East and Africa, 18 in Asia-Pacific, and 17 in the U.S., its number-one market.

"We now have an important goal to grow in Europe. Obviously, being a French maison, this needs to be one of our priorities in terms of market developments," he said. "And then we have an Asia-Pacific where we are relatively small. We are not overexposed in China. However, this is the market where the brand awareness is the lowest, so here is opportunity to start telling our story."

(The only market where the brand has a markedly different expression is the Middle East, where the previous owner allowed another company to register



Matteo Sgarbossa

the Balmain Men trademark, and it's used in a logo-heavy way. Sgarbossa said he's confident clients in the region are becoming well informed about the Paris maison, its heritage and craftsmanship, so "they will easily be able to understand and distinguish what is authentic Balmain from Paris and what is not.")

Sixty percent of Balmain's revenues stream from direct channels, and the balance from wholesale.

"The ambition is to still grow retail, because it's what will really allow us to tell this story to our clients and to reconnect with them," Sgarbossa said. "But for a size of brand like ours, wholesale will always be an important channel."

Indeed, he forecast that specialty stores that truly know their clients will survive the current doldrums and regain prominence.

Today, womenswear represents roughly 75 percent of the Balmain business, and the balance men's. As soon as he arrived at the house, Sgarbossa paused menswear shows as Rousteing recalibrated, streamlined and widened his womenswear fashion statement, working with well-known stylist Marie-Amélie Sauv  and ramping up daywear and knitwear elements.

Accessories are also a priority, with the accent on new lines like Anthem, hinged on a squishy top-handle style cinched with a chunky belt. Sgarbossa cited strong consumer response, with more than half of accessory sales credited to the new lines.

"This is very encouraging, because by definition, this is the category that relies the most on carryover styles," he said.

Balmain is also widening wearing occasions for its accessories and ready-to-wear and – at a time of widespread "greed-flation" at many luxury brands – it introduced a handbag at 750 euros and a T-shirt at 250 euros in an effort to offer more access points to the brand.

Last year the brand also re-entered the beauty category with Les  ternels de Balmain, a collection of eight fragrances produced under license by the Est e Lauder Cos. – a brand extension that raised its visibility and offered a more attainable purchase than a heavily embellished jacket or dress.

"We believe that is a great advantage to be able to offer our clients a bit of everything, across all categories, and perfume is a perfect add-on item to sell and is performing better than what we had in mind."

Sgarbossa also cited strong initial consumer reaction to Rousteing's latest collections, which offered some softer, simpler styles with controlled doses of zing.

"All the new parts of the collection, a bit less loud, more daily, more wearable, more see-now, buy-now, is performing very well," he said. "Since one month and a half, 70 percent of our business is done with new clients, which is a high ratio, much higher than the one that we used to have. So we are succeeding in recruiting new clients."

The executive lauded Rousteing for his "transformative" work with the brand, bringing it more attention and cultural relevance, especially by being at the forefront in embracing diversity and inclusion, and leveraging the power of social media and celebrities. (He also boasts 9.8 million followers on his personal Instagram, dwarfing most other designers.)

Rousteing also created an identifiable silhouette for Balmain, hinged on such elements as strong shoulders, a cinched waist, gold buttons and military inspirations.

"He shaped the brand in a very, very strong way, and what surprises me the most is that he has still a lot of energy for this new chapter that we are writing together, of repositioning the brand," Sgarbossa said. "Olivier is the first one being very happy in reconnecting with the story of the brand, which is much bigger than both of us."



**BALMAIN**  
PARIS

# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

## Olivier Rousteing on Disruption, Longevity and Resilience

The fashion wunderkind reflects on his eventful tenure at Balmain as the house marks its 80th anniversary, and he closes in on 15 years at the creative helm. BY MILES SOCHA

**Olivier Rousteing's office** high atop Balmain headquarters is rich in windows – offering lovely breezes and panoramic views of Paris rooftops – but rather poor on wall space for hanging pictures.

And so they're stacked on the floor and leaning against the radiators: here advertising images featuring Rihanna and Kim Kardashian; there a touching portrait of Rousteing with the late Karl Lagerfeld, who immediately clicked with the fashion wunderkind and took him under his wing.

One of fashion's longest serving creative directors despite the fact that he's only 40 years old, Rousteing was among the first to line up for Lagerfeld's pioneering high-low collaboration with H&M in 2004, and he cites Balmain's tie-up with the Swedish retailer in 2015 as a career highlight, not only because of the 99 percent sell-through but because it proved that he brought the heritage house cultural relevance, heat and currency, attracting new generations to a brand that's celebrating its 80th birthday this year.

Like Lagerfeld, Rousteing has chalked up a lot of firsts in his career: putting diversity and inclusivity at the top of the industry agenda; embracing and leveraging the power of social media; opening up fashion shows to the general public, and also linking Balmain to burgeoning pop-culture forces, whether it's music festivals, Barbie or Tyla.

Indeed, his instincts can be eerily prescient: Consider his rather low-key Balmain Sur Seine event in 2020 when he sent a barge down the Paris river loaded with athletic dancers and the singer Yseult, handily foreshadowing many key elements of the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2024 Paris Olympics Games – let that sink in – and sparking a trend to democratic, public-facing fashion spectacles.

He's upfront about the challenges he faced as a young Black designer thrust into the limelight of a predominantly white industry, taking some lumps for his first Balmain collections and pushback for his disruptive ways, from his very first selfie on Instagram to posing nude on the cover of French magazine *Têtu* in 2015. Yet he's grown into his role and attained greater serenity, proud of his resilience, consistency and loyalty to the house.

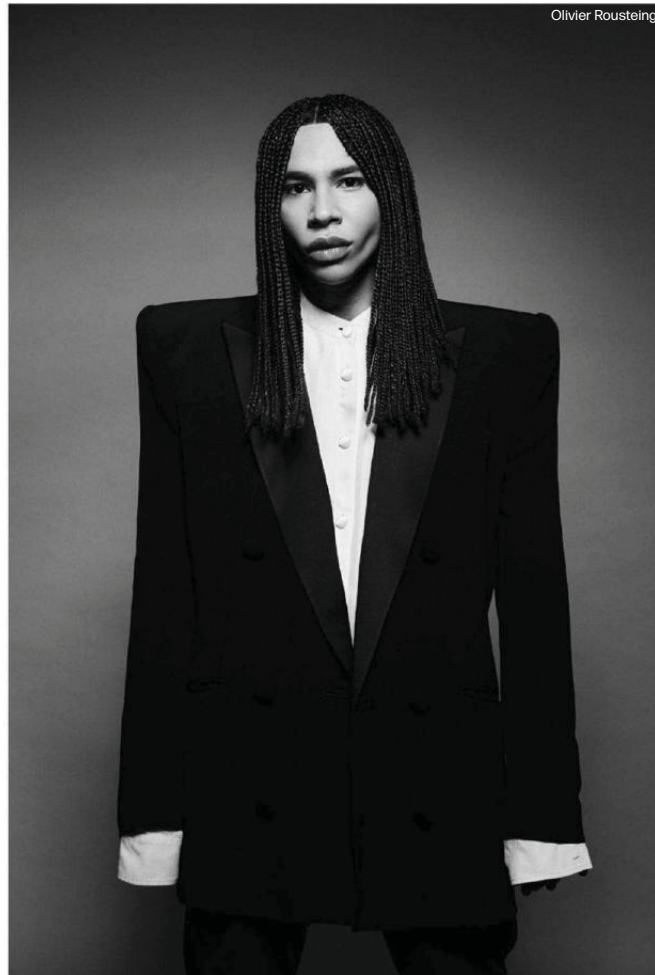
He's fond of saying, "I used to be a Balmain baby, and now Balmain is my baby."

Surveying the flurry of designer changes he's witnessed at other heritage brands, especially the unprecedented swirl of the last year or so, he observed that he's now something of an outlier with his longevity.

In a wide-ranging conversation with WWD, the designer opened up about his early career, his mentors, his sudden fame, and his yen for shaking up the status quo and moving the culture forward:

**WWD: Take us back to the early days of your career, at Roberto Cavalli, and what attracted you to Balmain in the first instance?**

**Olivier Rousteing:** I started at 18 years old as an intern at Cavalli. I didn't finish fashion school because I was obsessed with discovering the world of working. My years in Florence helped me to discover the craft and how clothes are made. I worked so hard on understanding the process of



fashion, the product, the fabrics, and later, the importance of fashion shows and working with celebrities, too. It was a truly 360-degree experience and my mentor, the person who inspired me the most there was Eric Wright. He had worked with Karl (at Chloé, Fendi and the Karl Lagerfeld brand) so I learned a lot from Eric.

And then around the age of 23 I arrived at Balmain, and I came for two reasons: First because I wanted to go back to my country, France. And the second thing is because, I have to say, I loved the aesthetic of rock 'n' roll-slash-glamour that Christophe Decarnin brought to Balmain at the time.

**WWD: Can you share a little bit about those years behind the scenes, what you learned, and what you contributed before becoming creative director?**

**O.R.:** I was the head of the studio, which was really small back then, and (Decarnin's) right hand at the same time, sketching for him, talking to suppliers, checking the prices, working on pre-collections, which were new then. I was also speaking a lot with the top management on the vision of the house and the strategy to understand what were

the requests from wholesale clients. So I was trying to really connect the business with the vision and the strategy of Christophe at the same time, working with the stylist at the time as well, which was Emmanuelle Alt before she went to Vogue.

I loved this moment of my career because Christophe was such an incredible visionary. He trusted me a lot so I could work with the team freely... He gave me the chance to be the person I am. I was trying to make him proud, and I was trying to make the top management proud as well.

Managing the studio was really interesting because I was much younger than most of the people working there, and that was really hard to get credibility with the team that I was supposed to manage. I have to say it was hard being so young, being a Black designer, the only one, not only in the studio, but I think all of Paris.

**WWD: It must have been a shock to be thrust into the limelight, and with so much responsibility on your shoulders. Was it a tough adjustment, or did you surprise yourself in your capacity to adapt?**

**O.R.:** I was not expecting to be appointed creative director, and I never tried to

become the creative director. It happened, and that's what we call meritocracy, because I was doing basically everything, so obviously they trusted me. I asked my team first before saying yes, because I told them I wouldn't be anyone without you guys. And they said, "We trust you, take it!" And that's how we started.

I was already doing so many things I was not scared to do the collections. The only thing that I didn't know was what it means to be under the spotlight.

**WWD: How do you feel when you look back on your early collections?**

**O.R.:** There are some collections that I loved, some collections that I don't like at all, but I love my younger self. I think I've been really resilient, and pretty brave going through a system that at the beginning didn't really accept me as a 25-year-old head designer, and a Black designer in a really white industry.

I think what saved me was that I was so interested in the numbers and it was me that was pushing the business so far, because I was so disappointed if we were doing only 20 or 30 percent increases. I was like, "We should do 40. We should do 50." If ever there were questions, the answer came from the clients who supported me.

I was not scared before my first show, but I got scared after, because I was so young and maybe too fragile to face the critics. But after that, I started to enjoy it more and more, and I started to say, "You know what, that's how fashion is, it's OK." That makes you stronger.

I cannot look at my early collections without thinking what I had to go through. But I'm proud of what I built with that kind of disruptive glamour, while respecting the vision of the house.

**WWD: When and how did you come up with the concept for the Balmain army?**

**O.R.:** When I started to have a lot of diversity in the casting, and when I started to play hip-hop music, some people started to question what I was doing, and saying, "Oh, is it really luxury?"

And then one day Rihanna came backstage and she looked at the casting, she looked at the fashion show, and she said, "I'm so proud of you. You're changing the rules of this fashion world." I told her the models were also messengers, carrying a strong message of inclusivity, of diversity, of revolution. And that's how it became the Balmain army, fighting against rules that have been imposed for so many years.

**WWD: You've also been a pioneer in leveraging social media, opening up your shows to the public, embracing technologies like NFTs. What's your secret sauce?**

**O.R.:** It was just instinct. My first selfie? I can't tell you how many calls I got from so many people telling me, "Can you please take it down, because social media is for cheap brands." And my retort was: "Are you happy with your e-commerce?" Because e-commerce was not supposed to be luxury, the internet was not supposed to be for luxury and now everybody's living on the internet. I challenged people to believe me that social media would be the future. It's better to be a pioneer than a follower. ▶

# MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80 **WWD**



Looks from the Balmain x H&M collection, 2015.



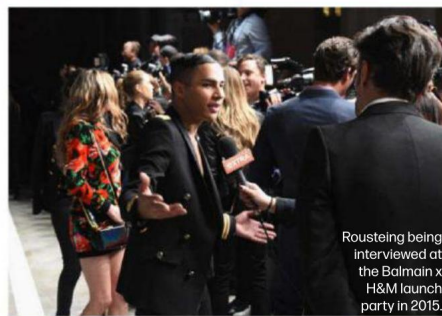
Justin Bieber and Olivier Rousteing at the Met Gala in 2015.



Rousteing at the spring 2021 finale.



Rihanna in Balmain's spring 2014 campaign.



Rousteing being interviewed at the Balmain x H&M launch party in 2015.



Beyoncé at Coachella in 2018.



Balmain, fall 2024

**WWD: Fashion is in the middle of a great game of musical chairs. Do you see longevity in your role as a pro or a con? Explain.**

**O.R.:** I really believe in long relationships. If someone wants my advice, you cannot build the DNA and the story of a house in one chapter. You need a lot of chapters to create the best book. And to create that book, you need trust, you need loyalty, you need respect, even when there is disagreement, even when there is no alignment. Because that's what brings the strength of a house, the tension.

If as soon as the tension happens, you just get rid of the designer, I think that's wrong, because you will never write a book. So I'm proud of this longevity. I hope that we're going to go back to this longevity soon at the various houses because it's just so nice to see people growing.

You need to take risks and take decisions quickly because the world's going to move fast. I said, "You have a creative director that is young, that is Black, that is really into pop culture, that is the witness of his time. So please follow my gut instinct."

That phase of my career became a bit more of a struggle because some people started to think I was more of a celebrity than a designer.

**WWD: What was the impulse behind Balmain Sur Seine?**

**O.R.:** It was during COVID, and I was so bored to not have shows and not to interact with the public. So I said, the only way we can do is offering a fashion moment to Paris. And that was it.

**WWD: At some point, you began talking more about the heritage of the house and Mr. Pierre Balmain. What switched that on?**

**O.R.:** It switched during the pandemic. When I took that barge down the Seine, I brought my clothes and I also brought the archives from Pierre Balmain from the 1950s. I had a sense that, with all the uncertainty in the world, heritage was going to be really important to create new pillars that the world didn't know about.

My strength has been to build Balmain's pop-culture relevance. But I think my second strength is to also to build Balmain into a heritage house. I'm not the founder and new generations might not know Pierre Balmain. So the tension between the two is really important.

**WWD: How would you describe the legacy of Mr. Pierre Balmain, its relevance and importance for the future of Balmain?**

**O.R.:** The only answer I can give you is he built a house after the Second World War, so bravery, resilience, audacity, right? He was ambitious, disruptive, it's part of his DNA. He started traveling to other parts of the world way before many other designers. He was fluent in English. He was friends with Gertrude Stein and Brigitte Bardot. He was close to Dalida, he dressed Josephine Baker. He had his own Balmain

army. All those incredible women are kind of like the muses of who I'm dressing today.

**WWD: You famously brought back a monogram that dates from the early '70s, and was used extensively during that era, and then vanished. What's the back story? Is it possible Karl Lagerfeld designed it?**

**O.R.:** We don't know and that will be always part of the mystery of this house. But I mean, don't forget that when Karl left Balmain, he went to another brand with an incredible monogram as well, but he was here before. Karl was the right hand of Pierre Balmain, in the same way that I was the right hand of Christophe Decarnin, so there's something really interesting about this equation.

I understood that this house was a sleeping beauty, and this monogram was part of it, and I woke it up.

**WWD: Did you ever talk to Karl about his time at Balmain, or did he give you any advice?**

**O.R.:** He was a mentor, for sure, more about my personal life because I was asking, you know, indiscreet questions, like "Karl, do have someone that you love? Is your love fashion?" I think he liked my youthful innocence, for some reason, because no one dared to go there. He answered, and obviously out of respect, I will never repeat what he told me, but he was giving me really great advice. And about Balmain, he said, "I learned a lot, but it was really time for me to go."

**WWD: In terms of fashion, what have you contributed to the Balmain DNA?**

**O.R.:** I would say craft, because this is a couture-esque house, and I brought pop-culture relevance. The beauty of Balmain is that you have that kind of really expensive craft and heavily embellished dresses and you also have a young audience buying T-shirts and jerseys. So there's this tension. My obsession is to be a real French couturier, be relevant in my time, but also timeless.

Fashion-wise, I brought a confident attitude, a confident silhouette for men and for women. The common point between Christophe (Decarnin) and I was our love of shoulder pads. I think I brought more jolie madame silhouettes, cinched at the waist giving that V, triangle shape. And I brought the gold buttons, creating an identifiable double-breasted jacket.

**WWD: Putting modesty aside again, what has been your proudest achievements so far in your Balmain career?**

**O.R.:** My collaboration with H&M in 2015. I'm really competitive with myself. I think that was one of my proudest moments, because my obsession since becoming creative director was to make sure Balmain would be relevant for youth and new generations. And when I saw that people were like crying, breaking windows, like queuing for days to get a Balmain piece, I was really proud.

I can also mention my collaboration with Beyoncé at Coachella (2018), the campaign with Rihanna (2014) and being seated in front of (French President Emmanuel) Macron and Brigitte Macron at the Élysée Palace. (It was a lavish dinner to kick off Paris Fashion Week in 2023).

**WWD: What challenges and ambitions have you put for yourself, or the company has put before you, as the house enters its ninth decade of operation?**

**O.R.:** Respecting the ambitions of Pierre Balmain, which is the ambition to be an international house while keeping its values.

Albert Einstein once said – I don't exactly remember the sentence – but basically a man of success is a man that sticks to his values. This is the most incredible sentence for me as a creative director, because there are many ways to get success, but if you don't respect your own values, I think it's a failure.

I'm proud of all what I have done here, with compromise. I'm proud for the future of the house, because this house deserves the resilience and to be brave always and not being scared. I think it's a house that I would call fearless.

**WWD: I understand you recently turned 40. Any advice you would give to your younger self?**

**O.R.:** I would say, no matter where you come from, choose your own destiny. There's going to be a lot of challenges, a lot of obstacles, but don't give up.

Be in competition with yourself, but don't hate yourself, because sometimes there are those moments where you create a direction, where you don't feel good with yourself. When you work in fashion, you have those hype moments, and you have those moments where you're not hype anymore. And I would say to my younger self, "Don't look for being hype, but look for being timeless, because there is nothing better than staying forever." ■

# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

## Balmain's Creative Directors Through The Years

From the founder's "Jolie Madame" elegance to the glamorous Balmain Army of the incumbent creative director, a look at those who shaped the French brand's style.

BY LILY TEMPLETON WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM TONYA BLAZIO-LICORISH

**Eighty years ago**, Pierre Balmain revealed his first couture collection to the press in his headquarters located 44 Rue François 1er, to this day still the house's flagship, in front of an audience that included Gertrude Stein and Cecil Beaton.

A key player in France's postwar fashion renaissance, the couturier came to define the "Jolie Madame" aesthetic that appealed as much to aristocrats and royals as it did to Hollywood leading stars.

When he died in 1982 at the age of 68, the reins passed to a succession of designers whose fortunes at the helm varied from solidly successful to spectacularly short-lived.

Below, a look back at the designers at the helm of the storied French house, from the founder to the current Olivier Rousteing, who has piloted the brand's renaissance, and every creative in between.

### Pierre Balmain (1945 - 1982)

Working out of a cramped Paris apartment at 44 Rue François 1er that he found soon after occupying German soldiers vacated the premises in the wake of Paris' liberation in August 1944, Pierre Balmain launched his label on Sept. 18, 1945 to overwhelmingly positive reviews.

Influenced by his architectural training, his silhouette was all about strict tailoring, cinched waists and strong shoulders. The moniker "Jolie Madame," which became the name of his first fragrance, described it best.

Having understood early the importance of establishing an international presence, Balmain toured the U.S. extensively and traveled to destinations that ranged from Afghanistan and Iran to Thailand and Japan.

Among his assistants was a young Karl Lagerfeld, who stayed for three years before leaving to lead Jean Patou in 1958.

During his time, the house began its fragrance business and a number of licensing deals were signed.

In his latter years, the couturier tapped French designer Dominique Morlotti to design the menswear line in 1979, a role he held until 1984.

Balmain died of cancer in 1982. He was 68.

### Erik Mortensen (1982 - 1990)

In the wake of Balmain's death, his right-hand man and a studio veteran of over three decades picked up the mantle by finishing the fall 1982 collection the late founder had begun sketching. The Danish designer, who was artistic director of haute couture, went on to win two *Dé d'Or* awards for his couture collection, for fall 1983 and fall 1987.

The high-end Balmain Ivoire

Pierre Balmain, left, Erik Mortensen, center, and model in a fitting for Balmain's fall 1972 collection in Paris on July 24, 1972.



ready-to-wear line was added to his responsibilities from spring 1988.

Under Mortensen, Peggy Huynh Kinh became artistic director for women's ready-to-wear and licenses studio for women's accessories and home goods in 1982, a position she held until departing for Celine in 1987. British designer Alistair Blair briefly succeeded her.

On the menswear side, Patrick Aubert served as creative director between 1985 and 1991.

### Hervé Pierre Brailard (1990 - 1992)

A graduate of the Ecole de la Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne, Brailard cut his teeth under Mortensen and perpetuated the house's reputation for elegance with solid, safe collections during his three-year tenure as director of ready-to-wear and haute couture. Brailard later relocated to the U.S. and went on to work for Oscar de la Renta and Carolina Herrera before designing gowns for U.S. first ladies.

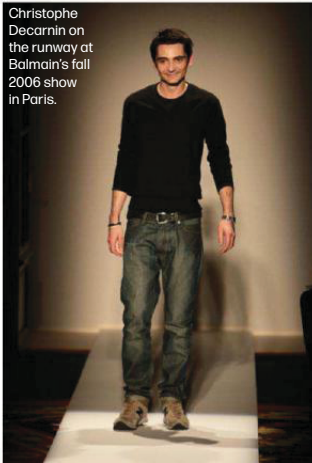
### Oscar de la Renta (1993 - 2002)

During a "fruitful, 10-year collaboration" as WWD later characterized it, de la Renta built the house into one of Paris' top-selling couture names, with then-president and chief executive officer Alain Hivelin saying that the house went from 30 dresses a season before de la Renta's arrival to as many as 300 outfits by the time he left. De la Renta also designed the Ivoire luxury ready-to-wear.

During his tenure, several designers were tapped for the brand's other lines. Bernard Sanz became creative director of menswear in 1993 and held the position until 1997.

Meanwhile, the ready-to-wear line saw Andrew Gn become artistic director, presenting a poorly received collection for fall 1998 before exiting. His successor was Gilles Dufour, who also had the licensed products studio under his purview and who designed three seasons for the house

Christophe Decarnin on the runway at Balmain's fall 2006 show in Paris.



that earned rocky reviews, WWD noted at the time. His contract was terminated after he sent out outfits emblazoned with "Whore" and "Bitch" in the fall 2000 show.

After that, the rtw was designed by a team supervised by managing director Georgina Brandolini.

### Laurent Mercier (2002 - 2003)

After winning the ANDAM award and other accolades for his own brand, Mercier was tapped as creative director to design Balmain's ready-to-wear collections starting with fall 2002. Two seasons later, he was named its couturier, but parted ways with the house following his first couture effort in January 2003.

### Christophe Lebourg (2003 - 2005)

A seasoned designer with a track record at Rodier, Joseph, Callaghan and Cacharel, Lebourg was brought on to design rtw, with couture still a question in the air.



Oscar de la Renta with a model in eveningwear from the Balmain spring 1985 couture collection.



Olivier Rousteing with a model backstage at his debut fall 2012 Balmain show in Paris.

Hivelin told WWD at the time that Lebourg had been chosen because his creative ability "responds to our expectations vis-à-vis our clientele."

### Christophe Decarnin (2006 - 2011)

Quietly joining the house in 2005, the French designer rebooted the brand into a hot-blooded fashion house that offered audacious and ultrasexy designs commanding a high price that sold like hot cakes. The term "Balmania" was first coined under his tenure.

In 2008, that expanded into menswear, where ripped jeans and tough leather blousons became a signature. His five-year tenure came to a screeching halt after the designer did not appear at the end of the fall 2011 show.

### Olivier Rousteing (2011 - PRESENT)

Already in charge of the design studio since 2009, Rousteing was thrust into the limelight by his 2011 appointment as creative director. The Parisian designer of Somali-Ethiopian descent became the youngest-ever head of a French house at the age of 25.

During his tenure, he has successfully re-established the codes of Balmain as part of the current zeitgeist and reintroduced its couture collections to a new generation of fashion followers and those in his Balmain Army. His designs have been worn by many celebrities, including Iman, Rihanna and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, who wore looks she and Rousteing co-created for her renowned "Renaissance World Tour" of 2023 and continues to collaborate with him on multiple projects. He has also partnered with Disney, Evian, H&M, Porsche, Puma and the Opera de Paris, among others, while leading Balmain Beauty into a new chapter.

80

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From Pierre Balmain's timeless vision to  
Olivier Rousteing's modern spirit,  
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# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

## Balmain and Fragrance Have Always Been Synonymous

Balmain relaunched perfume in August 2024 with Les Éternels de Balmain, a luxury collection melding past, present and future. BY JENNIFER WEIL

Les Éternels de Balmain fragrances.



**PARIS** — Perfume is in Balmain's DNA.

"Fragrance has always been a very critical part of the history of the house," said Jessica Wolfe, global interim general manager at Balmain Beauty.

The brand launched back into the world of scent in late August 2024, with Les Éternels de Balmain. Prior to that, its perfume business had been practically dormant since 2017, which gave something of a clean slate for Balmain and the Estée Lauder Cos., which revealed their beauty licensing agreement on Sept. 26, 2022.

Balmain creative director Olivier Rousteing had wanted to develop perfume for the house from the start. With Les Éternels, that dream became reality.

Rousteing's love of perfume harks back to his beginnings. "It's like la madeleine de Proust," the designer told WWD last year. "A funny story is that when I got appointed at Balmain in 2011, my grandma told me: 'You remember, I was wearing Ivoire?'"

That was an iconic Balmain scent from 1979. Another reason Rousteing wanted to work on beauty was that Pierre Balmain's story has always been intermingled with it. The fashion house began in 1945, then its first fragrance — Élysées 64-83 — came out in 1946, followed by Vent Vert in 1947.

"Mr. Pierre Balmain created incredible and iconic fragrances at the time," said Rousteing, who explained that he himself was always trying to reinforce the house's DNA through his own lens. Beauty was the last facet of Balmain's legacy Rousteing hadn't yet touched.

The designer said Guillaume Jesel, who oversees Balmain Beauty as president and chief executive officer, Tom Ford and couture brands at the Estée Lauder Cos., and the "group understood clearly the vision of the house. We wanted to bring the luxury and the quality in this journey."

They also collectively wished to break boundaries, create a love for diversity through beauty and express Rousteing's connection to pop culture.

In their first meeting, they sifted through boxes of Balmain archives, including past fragrances, documents and related books. Rousteing was struck by a lot — Ivoire's ultra-Parisian campaigns and how

the scent signified Pierre Balmain's new French style, for instance.

Élysées 64-83's name referenced the Balmain maison's phone number. Some of that fragrance bottle's elements were kept and others modernized with Rousteing's vision for Les Éternels.

He fell in love with Ébène, meaning Ebony, a Balmain perfume from 1983, too. Vent Vert, or Green Wind, struck a chord as symbolizing the spirit post-World War II. Pioneering, it was conceived by a female perfumer, Germaine Cellier.

Rousteing and Lauder wanted to begin with luxury fragrance, almost like couture. Coming out with a line of perfumes tapped into the fast-growing luxury perfume segment, within which people often buy a collection or multiple scents.

Rousteing went back to school to hone his olfactive skills and know-how.

The first eight genderless fragrances of the collection came out in late August 2024. Some, including Bronze and Rouge, were completely new creations, while the remainder were historical concepts, such

as the reimagined Ivoire and Ébène scents.

"The response has been staggering in terms of the love that we feel for the brand," Wolfe said. "We've been able to secure flagships and very top retailers, which have been critical to us establishing equity."

She noted also "the love that we see from the consumers and from the press." When Les Éternels was introduced, it garnered more than 30 billion social media impressions. WWD Beauty Inc last year named it Launch of the Year.

In March, Blanc Galaxie, a citrus fragrance, was added to the collection and today ranks third in the Balmain Beauty portfolio. And on Aug. 1, the brand released Cuir Élysées, the brand's first fruity leather scent.

Rouge and Carbone are the bestsellers today, generating more than half of the Balmain Beauty business. Balmain executives would not discuss projections, but industry sources expect the activity will generate \$70 million in retail sales during calendar year 2026.

Meanwhile, Les Éternels keeps growing in various directions.

"We want to emulate the standard that Balmain Paris has set for us, really being a brand for everybody, for all beauties," Wolfe said. So Balmain Beauty created eaux de toilette for Carbone, Rouge, Blanc Galaxie and Bleu Infini.

"That will make these a fresher expression, a price point that's very attractive for the younger consumer, allowing us to expand a bit distribution," Wolfe said of the fragrances, which are to retail for \$160 per 50-ml. bottle. The 125-ml. flacon will be priced at \$190.

The edts' launch in Balmain's iconic lozenge-shaped glass bottles will take place in September in the Europe, Middle East and Africa zone and the U.K. In October, they will be introduced in the U.S., Les Éternels' number-one market.

The eaux de parfums are currently sold in Balmain boutiques, plus on the brand's website in the U.S. and EMEA. Select retailers there and in the U.K. stock the scent, too. More doors will be added this fall, as well as new geographies, such as the Balkans and the Baltics, and in Israel.

Balmain Beauty looks to expand into other channels that target some of the younger Gen Z consumers. Travel retail is one of those, slated for fiscal year 2026.

"We will be launching these edts as we expand," Wolfe said.

Some Les Éternels bestsellers will stretch into the home category, around the holiday season. "I can't speak specifically to the category yet," Wolfe said. "Then, we will have a big bet coming later on this fiscal year."

When asked if Balmain would venture into makeup, as was teased on the runway of the fashion brand's spring 2025 fashion catwalk display, which opened with a minidress spangled with images of a ruby-red mouth and fingernails, Wolfe said couture fashion fragrance is a great way for beauty companies to help capture consumer desire and sentiment.

Balmain Beauty is relatively new since its relaunch. "So we have a lot more work to do to establish our dominance in fragrance," Wolfe said.

Rousteing is involved in each step of the perfumes' development.

"He has been really instrumental in helping us to draw the connection between what's happening in fashion to how that translates into beauty and into fragrance," Wolfe said. "In helping us to bring that to life."

Of Les Éternels, Rousteing said at the time of launch: "I feel like it's not going to be a new chapter only for Balmain, but it's going to be a new book, with beauty."

A vintage bottle of Balmain's Jolie Madame fragrance.



Olivier Rousteing



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# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

## The Celebrity Pull, From Josephine Baker To Beyoncé

From Pierre Balmain's golden age artists to Olivier Rousteing's Balmain Army, the brand continues to shape – and be shaped by – the famous faces of the moment. BY RHONDA RICHFORD

**Pierre Balmain** was one of the earliest designers to grasp the power of celebrity in fashion. The French couturier built close relationships with the superstars of his era, dressing them for the stage and screen – a legacy that continues under the house's current creative director, Olivier Rousteing.

When Balmain launched his namesake house in post-war Paris, he introduced a waist-cinched silhouette that quickly became a favorite among the celebrity set. He dressed icons such as Josephine Baker, Brigitte Bardot, Katharine Hepburn and Sophia Loren, helping define the visual language of 20th-century fame.

Baker became a longtime collaborator, with Balmain designing elaborate, symbolic and glamorous ensembles for her film and stage performances. One standout was the 1951 "Four Seasons" gown, paired with a velvet jacket featuring a dramatically tall collar. Their partnership endured until her final show in 1975, cementing her image as a fashion icon.

Balmain also collaborated with Bardot on several films. For "Her Bridal Night," he created a layered tulle wedding gown with floral appliques. "And God Created Woman" showcased Bardot's carefree persona in jumpsuits and feminine dresses, while "Love Is My Profession" introduced pencil skirts, wrap coats and signature LBIDs.

Though Audrey Hepburn is most closely associated with Givenchy, she wore Balmain for her 1954 wedding to Mel Ferrer, choosing a tea-length dress with a satin sash, ballgown sleeves and high collar.

For Katharine Hepburn, Balmain designed the wardrobe for the 1952 West End production of "The Millionairess," including an embroidered gown with matching beaded gloves. When the film was remade in 1960 starring Sophia Loren, Balmain again took the reins, designing a pink dress with extravagant jewelry that married cinematic elegance with star power.

His Hollywood connections continued with Jane Fonda, who wore Balmain in the 1964 thriller "Joy House," adding Riviera glamour to the film's intrigue.

Balmain's deeply personal, long-running collaboration with French superstar Dalida produced many of her most memorable stage and film looks – from the dramatic black velvet and gold Lurex cape ensemble worn in her 1983 Montreal concert to the ethereal white "Ziberline" gown of 1973.

In a tribute, Dalida once said: "Pierre Balmain, for me, was life in pink, in silk, in lace – and sometimes in rhinestones."

Several of her Balmain designs were later exhibited at Paris' Palais Galliera in a 2017 retrospective show.

From the '60s through the '80s, Balmain also designed extensively for Queen Sirikit of Thailand, creating more than two decades' worth of royal daywear and evening gowns – many combining Western silhouettes with modern Thai silk. These pieces are now preserved at the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles in Bangkok.



Audrey Hepburn and Mel Ferrer on their wedding day, 1954.



Josephine Baker at the Roxy Theater in New York, 1951.



Sophia Loren studies with her tutors on the set of 'The Millionairess', circa 1960.



Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit stand near Belgium King Baudouin I, 1960.

### The Rousteing Era

Olivier Rousteing has inherited and evolved Balmain's celebrity tradition, crafting red-carpet and arena-concert looks for a new generation of stars while forming his own "Balmain Army" of models and influencers.

One of the first luxury designers to use social media like a digital native, Rousteing embraced Instagram early on. He saw its potential not only as an advertising platform, but as a cultural divining rod to point to music trends and overall generational shifts. He has used social media to stay ahead of the curve by understanding the cultural moment before it happens.

He coined the term "Balmain Army" to describe his collective of models, musicians, actors and influencers who represent the brand. It became a cultural movement representing diverse beauty and style.

His vision merges high fashion with mass media, often blurring the line between runway and pop spectacle.

In 2022, Rousteing made headlines by bringing Cher onstage to close his stadium show – open to the public, in a bold move that merged fashion week with festival energy. It was a full-circle moment in Balmain's longstanding relationship with music legends.

At the 2018 American Music Awards, Taylor Swift wore a futuristic Balmain minidress and thigh-high boots paired with snake jewelry – a look that shattered her

"princess" image and aligned perfectly with her rebellious "Reputation" era.

For the 2022 Grammys, Rousteing worked with Lil Nas X on a fully custom Balmain wardrobe, including red carpet, stage and even backstage loungewear – showcasing the house's boundary-pushing vision.

But no modern collaboration has been more significant than Rousteing's ongoing partnership with Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, whom he calls his "forever muse." Their creative relationship began during her "Formation" tour and reached a peak at Coachella 2018, when Rousteing designed the wardrobe for Knowles-Carter and her 200-plus dancers and musicians. The performance, dubbed "Beychella," became a fashion and cultural milestone.

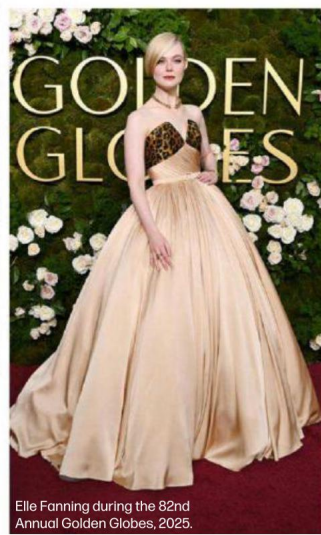
In 2023, they deepened their collaboration with a 17-look couture collection, codesigned by Rousteing and Knowles-Carter as a tribute to both her musical journey and the Balmain archive. The looks debuted at the Grammys and Brit Awards and have already been cemented as major fashion moments.

A master of media and timing, Rousteing

Beyoncé Knowles-Carter performs onstage during Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival Weekend, 2018.



Taylor Swift attends the American Music Awards, 2018.



Elle Fanning during the 82nd Annual Golden Globes, 2025.

has an instinct for choosing the right celebrity at the right moment. He doesn't just rely on established A-listers, he often works with talents before their big breakthroughs, which in turn helps create them.

Case in point: Tyla's sculptural Balmain gown at the 2024 Met Gala – a body-hugging wet look crafted to resemble poured sand – fit the "Garden of Time" theme, but rather than an expected floral, he approached it with a new twist. It immediately went viral and became a defining moment for the rising singer to cement herself as a fashion force.

The following year, Jenna Ortega wore a Balmain creation made from silver tailoring tape and metallic rulers, an avant-garde nod to the artistry of couture construction. The look was clever and played up both the young actress' star potential and her willingness to take risks just as she was emerging as a red carpet wild card.

What sets Rousteing apart is his sense of cultural timing, his instinct to see stars as storytellers and his ability to anticipate the culture, not just follow a trend, to carry forth the house of Balmain.



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# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

## The Rarely Told History of Balmain

From a would-be architect hailing from the French Alps to a global powerhouse bearing his name, Balmain's history spans eight decades.

BY LILY TEMPLETON



Pierre Balmain poses with models Suzette, left, and Praline, right, in Balmain furs at Victoria in London on Feb. 12, 1951.

**1914**  
Pierre Balmain is born in Saint-Jean-de-la-Maurienne in France's southeastern Savoie region of the Alps.

**1933**  
Balmain goes to Paris to study architecture but is soon drawn to fashion.

**1934**  
Balmain sells sketches to Robert Piguet.

The couturier is offered a job by Paris-based British couturier Edward Molyneux.

**1939**  
Balmain enters the studio of Lucien Lelong.

When World War II is declared, he is mobilized in the French Army Pioneer Corps as part of the Alpine defenses.

He meets Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas while in the Alps.

**1941**  
After France's capitulation, he returns to Paris and his position at Lelong, where he works alongside Christian Dior.

**1945**  
Balmain sets up his eponymous house at 44 François-Ier.

His first couture collection is presented to the press on Sept. 18.

**1946**  
Balmain launches the *Ellysées 64-83* perfume, named after the couture house's phone number, and created by nose Germaine Cellier.

The couturier creates eight dresses for Helena Rubenstein for the launch of a makeup line, which are

then reproduced and sold by the B. Altman & Co. department store in the U.S.

**1947**  
Balmain hires Ginette Spanier to manage his store, dubbed "Le Kiosque des Fantaisies."

The *Vent Vert* perfume launches at the Cannes Film Festival.

Balmain begins a tour that takes him from London to Australia, via Egypt, Singapore and Southeast Asia. On the way back, he stops in California, where he meets with Neiman Marcus, and New York.

**1948**  
Erik Mortensen joins the company.



A Pierre Balmain skirt with trousers, 1949 as seen in WWD.

**1949**  
Balmain visits the U.S. and opens his first ready-to-wear boutique in New York City as part of a joint venture that will last four years.

The house offers U.S.-specific designs and develops its boutique collection, a forerunner of ready-to-wear.

**1952**  
Balmain launches the *Jolie Madame* perfume.

**1954**  
After winning an award in the coats category at the International Wool Secretariat, Karl Lagerfeld is hired as an assistant and later apprentice to Pierre Balmain, staying until 1958.

**1955**  
Balmain receives the Neiman Marcus award in Dallas.



Balmain's U.S. wardrobe for Thailand's queen, 1960.

**▲ 1960**  
Queen Sirikit of Thailand orders a complete wardrobe from Balmain, ahead of an official tour across Europe and the U.S., fusing European styles and Thai textiles.

Revlon purchases the *Les Parfums Pierre Balmain* fragrance business of the house.

**1962**  
Balmain is made a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, France's highest civilian distinction.

**1964**  
Balmain publishes an autobiography titled "My Years and Seasons."

**1965**  
Balmain visits Japan for the first time. He goes on to dress Empress Nagako of Japan, grandmother of current Emperor Naruhito.

**► He designs uniforms for the TWA airline.**

**1966**  
The brand expands into menswear.

Balmain is made "Cavaliere Ufficiale del Merito Italiano" by Italy's president Giuseppe Saragat.

**1967**  
Balmain designs uniforms for Southern Airways.

**1968**  
He designs uniforms for the Grenoble Winter Olympics and for Singapore Airlines.

The *Miss Balmain* perfume is launched.

**1970**  
Balmain participates in a couture showcase organized by France's *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture* in Tokyo.

**1974**  
Balmain launches "Balmain Hair Couture" with Dutch wigmaker Dick Guliker, first offering wigs and later hair products.

The company inks multiple license deals: with a Hong Kong-based firm for ready-to-wear in the U.S., Canada, Australia and the U.K., and for anything from rtw and accessories to luggage and furs in Japan.

**1976**  
Longtime director Ginette Spanier leaves the company after 28 years.

The company gets financing from the French government's Institute of Industrial Development and private loans to finance the development of rtw.

The company inks a deal with Hattie Carnegie Jewelry Enterprises to manufacture fine and costume jewelry as well as belts, handbags, small leather goods, sunglasses and optical goods.

**1978**  
Balmain is elevated to Officer of the Legion of Honor.

TWA air hostess graduates pose in uniforms created by Balmain at the Place de la Concorde in Paris on Sept. 17, 1965.



Pierre Balmain, center, with guests attend Revlon and Balmain's *Ivoire* perfume launch at Galleries Lafayette on Nov. 19, 1979 in Paris.

**▲ 1979**  
The *Ivoire* perfume is launched.

Balmain signs licenses for men's outerwear and casualwear and launches the B Balmain diffusion line, designed by Christiane Bailly.

**1981**  
Balmain designs a uniform for France's first female police commissioner and another for French novelist and journalist Michel Droit, elected as a member of the Académie Française.

Revlon introduces the *Ivoire* perfume to the American market.

**1982**  
The company inks a deal with French rtw company Weinberg to produce Pret-a-porter Balmain.

Balmain sells his shares to the French government's Institute of Industrial Development, which are then resold to a group of French investors.

Pierre Balmain dies on June 29, aged 68.

His right-hand man Erik Mortensen steps up to finish the fall 1982 collection and lead the couture house.

Balmain is posthumously awarded the *Dé d'Or*.

**1983**  
Mortensen is awarded the *Dé d'Or* for his fall 1983 couture collection.

Launch of the *Ebène* perfume, the last on which the late couturier had worked.

A spring 1983 women's rtw collection is designed by Frédéric Hildebrand.

**1984**  
The Pierre Balmain SA company licenses a line of neckwear.

**1985**  
A six-month retrospective on Balmain's 40 years of creation opens at Palais Galliera.

Revlon sells *Parfums Balmain* to Belgian retailer Cobepa Group. ►

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# WWD MILESTONE: BALMAIN AT 80

Murjani International becomes licensee for apparel and non-apparel categories for U.S. distribution.

Canadian real estate developer Erich Fayer becomes chairman of Pierre Balmain international, the master licensor for all products in the Americas.

Licenses for watches and cigarettes are signed.

**1986**  
Canadian investment group Zanimob, the investment vehicle of enigmatic businessman Erich Fayer, acquires control of the Pierre Balmain International subsidiary.

**1987**  
Mortensen is awarded the Dé d'Or a second time, for his fall 1987 couture collection.

The Ivoire high-end rtw line launches, designed by Mortensen.

**1988**  
Balmain ends the deal with Weinberg, replacing it with Milan-based Mirta del Pineo to manufacture and distribute the diffusion line, renamed Miss Balmain.

New York-based accessories firm Swoboda is awarded the license for a line of handbags and belts.

**1989**  
Alain Chevalier, the former chairman of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, becomes president of Balmain.

**1990**  
Chevalier purchases a majority stake in the company.

The company taps Alistair Blair to design the Ivoire line.

The Pierre Balmain collection, under licensee Don Elliot Inc., launches in the U.S. and Canada.

**1991**  
Balmain goes through financial turmoil and is sold back to Fayer.

**1993**  
Oscar de la Renta is named creative director, initially for a three-year term.

**1994**  
Pierre Balmain SA licenses Societe Creations Michel Firer to manufacture and distribute a diffusion collection of women's rtw, starting with spring 1995.



Balmain's spring 2017 menswear show in Paris.

**1995**  
Fayer dies in Paris, reportedly at the age of 71.

Alain Hivelin joins the company as general manager of couture, quickly becoming president of a group encompassing fashion, fragrances and accessories.

**1997**  
Balmain buys back the license agreement from partners Cosmos, which made and distributed the line for Southeast Asia, and Delmakor Deltex, a Belgian company that did the same for Europe.

**1999**  
The company signs a distribution agreement with Hassan & Marwan al Kadri of Damascus, the largest textile manufacturer in Syria, to sell its men's, women's, children's and accessories lines in the country, with 10 stores on the cards.

**2002**  
De la Renta exits the brand to concentrate on his own brand and is succeeded by Laurent Mercier.

**2003**  
Christophe Lebourg succeeds Mercier.

**2004**  
The company files for bankruptcy protection in Paris and is given six months to turn the business around.

**2005**  
Hivelin becomes the main shareholder.

Balmain's turnaround sees it become profitable, the executive later told WWD.

**2006**  
Christophe Decarnin becomes creative director.

**2008**  
Licenses are trimmed down, with a dozen of them cut, according to Hivelin.

**2010**  
A short-lived Blue Label apparel collection is tested with French producer Balness.

**2011**  
Olivier Rousteing is named creative director.

The company inks a deal with the L'Amé group for the design and distribution of its eyewear, and with Italian manufacturer Ittierre SpA for its secondary Pierre Balmain line.

**2012**  
The company signs a license agreement with Interparfums SA.

**2013**  
The agreement with Ittierre for the Pierre Balmain line is terminated early.

**2014**  
Hivelin, the majority owner of the company, dies in Paris at the age of 71 and the company's ownership passes to private investors that include his family holding and company executives, with Emmanuel Diemoz becoming chief executive officer.

**2015**  
The H&M x Balmain collaboration launches.

**◀ 2016**  
The brand stages its first men's runway show.

A children's line makes its debut in June.

Its first freestanding store in America opens on New York's Wooster Street.

Mayhoola for Investments buys 100 percent of Balmain.

**2017**  
A limited-edition lipstick line in partnership with L'Oréal Paris launches.

The house's accessories collections are relaunched.

Early termination of the deal with Interparfums sees its beauty business go mostly dormant.

Massimo Piombini named CEO.

Balmain collaborates with Beats and Victoria's Secret on headphones and pieces for the lingerie brand's annual fashion show, respectively.

**2018**  
Introduction of a new logo and a monogram intermingling the letters P and B.

Pieces designed for Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's Coachella performance are released as limited-edition designs.

**2019**  
Jean-Jacques Guével, formerly at Zadig & Voltaire, named CEO.

The house returns to couture with a spring 2019 show.

Balmain turns its spring 2020 men's show in Paris into a runway-cum-concert.

The brand teams with Cara Delevingne for bags and later in the year, a 35-piece Puma x Balmain athletic collection.

Kylie Jenner and Rousteing develop a makeup capsule collection that is introduced at the spring 2020 show.

**2020**  
Akoni, a start-up based in Switzerland cofounded by industry veteran Rosario Toscano, becomes the new eyewear licensee.

The brand pivots to coed shows during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rousteing marks the end of the lockdown in France – and the eve of couture – by loading up a barge with models wearing recent and archive Balmain designs, plus French singer Yseult.

**2021**  
Balmain partners with digital gaming platform Zepeto for digital clothing, one of several projects around the metaverse and NFTs.

The spring 2022 show, dubbed Balmain Festival, features Doja Cat.

**2022**  
Fine jewelry launches with Adorisa Group, a jewelry specialist that is part of Alsara Investments Group, founded by Mayhoola's CEO Rachid Mohamed Rachid.

The company inks a beauty license collaboration with the Estée Lauder Cos. to

launch Balmain Beauty.

Balmain collaborates with Evian, Pokémon and Barbie.

The third Balmain Festival is capped by performances by Shygirl, CKay and The Blaze – and a surprise appearance by Cher.

Rousteing takes a turn as one-off guest couturier at Jean Paul Gaultier.

**2023**  
Around 50 pieces intended for Balmain's spring 2024 show go missing after a truck carrying the collection was stolen. Rousteing and team pull together a full collection in days.

**2024**  
Balmain's menswear returns to the runway in January.

Balmain taps Givenchy executive Matteo Sgarbossa as CEO.

The first Balmain Beauty offering makes its debut and the release of Les Éternels de Balmain launches the fashion house back into fragrance.

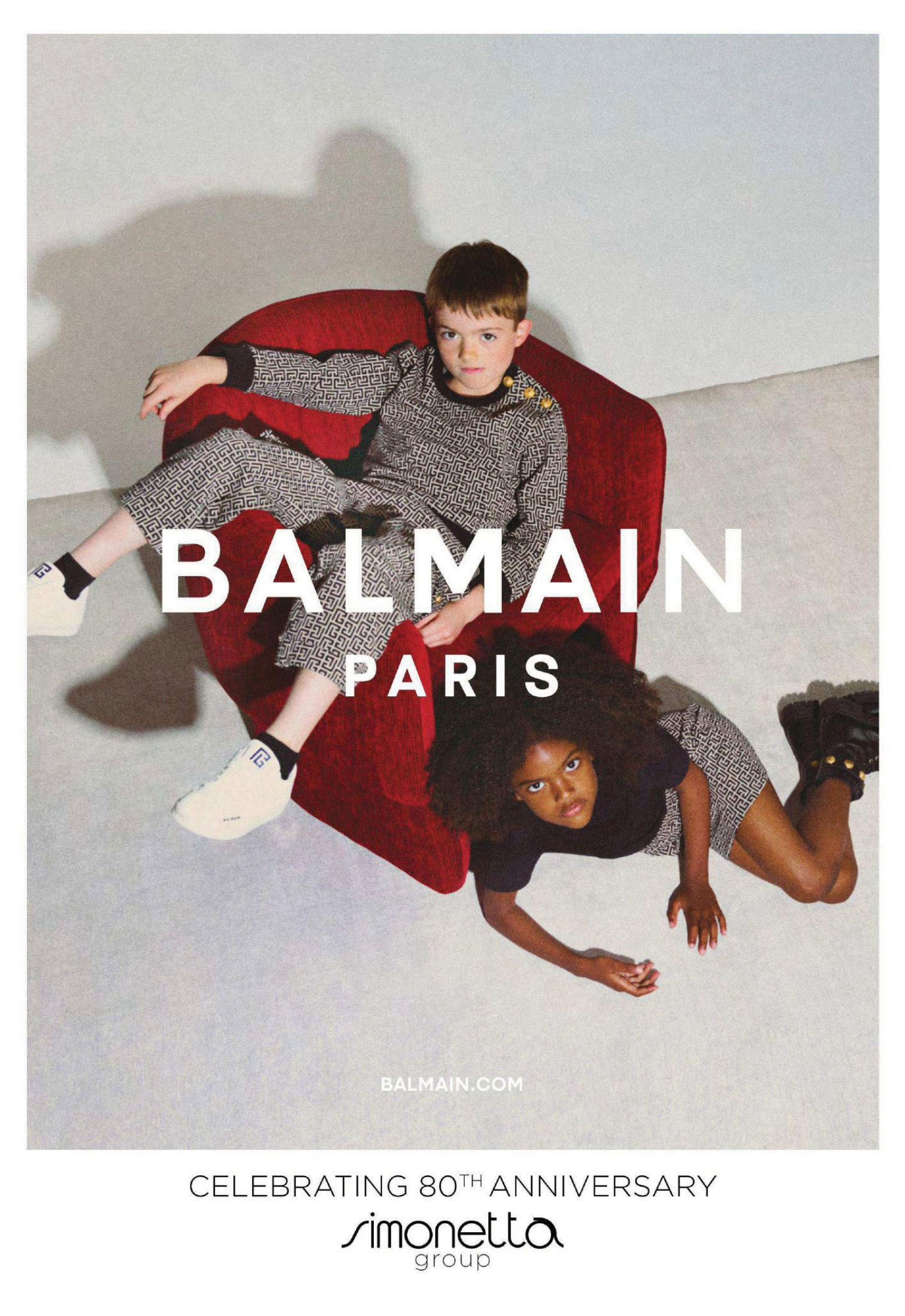
Balmain Hair celebrates its 50th anniversary.

**2025**  
Balmain stages a show during Tampa Art Museum's fundraising event.

Rousteing receives the 2025 Couture Council Award for Artistry of Fashion at the Couture Council of The Museum at FIT's annual luncheon. ■



Cher and Olivier Rousteing walk the finale of the Balmain spring 2023 show.



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## BUSINESS

## Jennifer Fisher Takes a Lifestyle Approach With Her New Madison Avenue Shop

● The jewelry designer marks 20 years in business with a new store and an evolving collection.

BY DAVID MOIN

**Jennifer Fisher**, best known for her high styled hoop earrings, extends her vision beyond jewelry by bringing a lifestyle approach to her namesake store, which opens Saturday on Madison Avenue.

The 1,410-square-foot shop, at 1157 Madison Avenue by 85th Street, marks the brand's second Manhattan location and third overall. Fisher's other stores are located at 400 West Broadway in the SoHo section of Manhattan and at 363 North Beverly Drive in Beverly Hills.

"As we enter the 20th year of the business, our Madison Avenue flagship is the physical representative of how our brand is evolving," Fisher told WWD. "This will be the first store that incorporates the lifestyle component of Jennifer Fisher; we're going to offer my new coffee and some of my favorite snacks in addition to our salt offering. We're going to be known for so much more than jewelry, and this is just the beginning."

Her intention, as she says, is to "bring jewelry, lifestyle, wellness, and community all under one roof." Alongside her signature hoops and fine jewelry collections, the store has a coffee bar café featuring Fisher's favorite anti-inflammatory snacks and her Jennifer Fisher Salad offered bi-weekly in collaboration with Bonberi. The salad

contains Romaine cabbage, avocado, marinated olives, radish, red onion, cucumbers, pepperoncini, and cashew almond feta, in a dill dressing made from avocado oil, Dijon mustard, garlic, dill, pepper, lemon juice and Fisher's spicy salt. Michelle Gerson Interiors designed the store.

This year, Fisher marks two decades since launching her business from her SoHo apartment. She quickly became the go-to jeweler for a range of celebrities, including Jennifer Lopez, Zendaya, Hailey Bieber, Rihanna and Tracee Ellis Ross. Her fashion and fine jewelry is often found on red carpets, magazine pages and social media. She has expanded her business with collaborations on home goods, fragrances, cooking salts and more. Last year, Centric Brands, a producer and licensee of dozens of brands, invested in the business.

Fisher celebrated the anniversary and the Madison Avenue opening, with friends of the brand, press, tastemakers and supporters, at the site earlier this week. Attendees previewed the new uptown destination and Fisher's latest fine jewelry offering, including the launch of the Fine Knot collection, which she describes as "a timeless evolution" of an archival motif reimaged in 18-karat gold. Guests included Martha Stewart, Jessica Alba, Katie Couric, Leandra Medine Cohen, Nicky Hilton Rothschild, Charlotte Groeneveld, Tina Craig, Gab Waller, Dani Stahl, Stacey Bendet, Kate Davidson Hudson, Jason Rembert, Paul Andrew, Prabal Gurung, Laura Kim, Gabriella Karefa-Johnson and Brett Heyman.

Here and below: Inside the new Jennifer Fisher store on Madison Avenue.



Jennifer Fisher and Martha Stewart



## FASHION

## Revolve's Cotton Shop Pop-up Arrives in Nashville

● Revolve continues to test new markets, leveraging its data to expand physical retail experiences.

BY RYMA CHIKHOUNE

**Revolve has teamed** with Cotton Incorporated for its second pop-up, bringing The Cotton Shop to Nashville.

It's a partnership with Cotton Incorporated, a not-for-profit founded in 1970 that conducts research to support all parts of the cotton supply chain and promotes cotton to increase its appeal and usage – funded by U.S. cotton growers and importers of products made with Upland cotton. To expand its reach, the organization has been partnering with Revolve for seven years, activating at events and hosting its first stand-alone pop-up with the multibrand retailer in Dallas last year.

"The partnership was born because they wanted to start to market to this younger consumer," said Raissa Gerona, chief brand officer at Revolve, of the enterprise.

The goal is to highlight high-quality, sustainable cotton sourced from the U.S., showcasing how different brands incorporate the material in their own unique ways. Some items are crafted in all cotton, while others incorporate blends.

Brands like Lovers & Friends, Grlfrnd, EB Denim, Free People, Éterne and Brixton will be available to shop in four merchandise categories: The Fabric of Western Chic (deep hues, animal prints, fall boho), Comfort (elevated basics and staples), Home (loungewear, sleep, home accessories, kids) and His Everyday (men's).

Opening to the public on Friday through Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. CDT, The Cotton Shop by Revolve is located in a 3,200-square-foot space inside The Mall at Green Hills (2126 Abbott Martin Road, space 153). The pop-up, which kicks off with a private party on Thursday, will offer perks all weekend,

including a 10 percent discount for college students and \$25 to \$200 surprise gift cards to the first 18 customers in line each day.

For Revolve, it's a chance to test out a new market and engage with the local community. The company carefully analyzes its shopper data to determine where to open new locations. It's how they landed on Aspen, followed by Los Angeles, to open the company's first physical stores.

"We have to make her happy, and we have to be where she is," Gerona said of their core consumer. "And that's really how we have chosen these locations. Dallas is a huge hub for Revolve. We have so much data on where our customers are, where we are shipping to, where we are getting traffic. And with Nashville, we use the exact same process."

Nashville has become a sought-after destination for bachelorette parties and weddings – both significant market opportunities for Revolve. The city has also experienced a notable influx of influencers in the last few years.

A pop-up experience "also allows Revolve to really come to different places and see the opportunity for potential long-term, permanent physical retail spaces, which I would say is our long-term focus right now," Gerona added.



A first look at The Cotton Shop by Revolve in Nashville.

FASHION

# FGI Reveals 2025 Night of Stars Award Winners



Backstage at Iris Van Herpen Fall 2025 Couture Collection at Paris Couture Week.

● The annual red-carpet gala will be held on Oct. 20 at the Rainbow Room in New York City.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

**The Fashion Group International's** has rolled out this year's honorees for its Night of Stars.

Scheduled for Oct. 20 at the Rainbow Room in New York City, the red carpet gala is being touted as "Artists & Icons."

This year's Fashion Visionary award will go to the inventive Dutch designer Iris Van Herpen, who weaves 3D printing, laser cutting, ultrasonic welding and other technology into haute couture. Another imaginative creative, the multidisciplinary artist and seven-time Tony award winner Jordan Roth, will be presented with the Fashion & Art award and Town & Country's popular editor in chief and editorial and brand director Stellene Volandes will be taking home the Media award.

Three key business forces will also be recognized. Sarah Wetenhall, the owner and chief executive officer of The Colony Hotel in Palm Beach, Fla., will pick up the Leadership in Luxury Lifestyle award. Another executive, who is accustomed to dealing with travelers is also among the honorees: Away and Trove's Jen Rubio will be saluted with the "Retail Trailblazer" award. And Commando's Kerry O'Brien will be given the FGI Founders' Award.

In January, Van Herpen said she would stage couture shows annually to take a deeper dive into research and development. She wasn't kidding. Her July collection involved creating a "living look" that incorporated 125 million bioluminescent algae. That endeavor

required eight hours of rest, eight hours of light – and a calm, cool environment in order to thrive.

Roth's artistic efforts have included owning five Broadway theaters, producing breakout shows like "Hadestown" and "Kinky Boots," collecting haute couture and, more recently, presenting the performance piece, "Radical Acts of Unrelenting Beauty," at the Louvre this past summer.

When Volandes joined the Hearst-owned publication in 2016, she became the second female editor in chief in the magazine's 177-year history. Since then, she has taken on double duty for the media conglomerate. She was also named Elle Décor's editorial director in 2002. In her expanded role as editorial and brand director, which was revealed earlier this year, Volandes leads the content and brand strategy across Elle Décor's print and digital platforms.

In line with the renewed interest in Rockefeller Center, thanks in part to Sam Yoo's Golden HOF and NY Kimchi, as well as the Weather Room, Naro, Jupiter, Lodi and Le Rock, FGI's gala is returning to the Rainbow Room at 30 Rockefeller Plaza for the first time, since 1999.

To help attract guests to this fall's gathering, which will be staged 65 floors above Midtown, the 2025 Night of Stars' host committee includes designers like Joseph Altuzarra, Jason Wu, Donna Karan and Dee and Tommy Hilfiger and other fashion forces like Bergdorf Goodman's Linda Fargo, "Project Runway" judge and Elle editor in chief Nina Garcia and Avenue Magazine's fashion editor Nolan Meader. The evening's co-chairs are Alyce Panico, CEO of the Luxe Collective Group, and another C-suite specialist, Claudia Poccia.

ACCESSORIES

# Jared Jewelers Airs 'A Diamond Is Born'

● Campaign face Antonia Gentry, designer Vera Wang, Jasmine Tookes and Jordyn Woods were among the attendees at the New York event.

BY JAMES MANSON

**New York Fashion Week** got a dazzling wrap-up, courtesy of Jared Jewelers.

To celebrate the brand's new short film, the Luc Jacquet-directed "A Diamond Is Born," and the concurrent launch of Jared's Storied collection and its accompanying campaign fronted by Antonia Gentry, Jared took over the Frick Collection in New York for cocktails, a screening and an intimate VIP dinner afterward on Wednesday.

Attendees included Gentry, executives from Jared and parent company Signet Jewelers, Vera Wang, Jordyn Woods, Karl Anthony Edwards, Jasmine Tookes and more.

Gentry, who's between Fashion Week and jetting off to film the fourth season of Ginny and Georgia, said the story of the collection drew her to the brand. "When they approached me about the Storied

collection, and explained that you can trace the origin of the diamond using blockchain [technology], I found it so fascinating," she said. "We shot near the Hamptons in Long Island, I got to wear the most gorgeous jewels."

Gentry, who made remarks before the screening started, alongside Botswana's Minister of Minerals and Energy Bogolo Kenewendo and Jared president Claudia Cividino, added that, "You can trace the origin of your diamond from where it's mined through the artisan's hands up until it gets to you in a jewelry box."

That mimicked the film, which highlighted a gem cutter in Botswana and illustrated the industry's economic impact on the country.

"In Botswana, diamonds are more than just precious stones to us. They are a gift that has transformed our country, given us destinies, changed many of our destinies and many of our dreams," Kenewendo said, addressing attendees. "Since the first discovery in 1967, diamonds have been the foundation of our nation's transformation."

The event was the culmination of a multipronged storytelling effort from Jared, which was years in the making. "This has



J.K. Symancyk, Antonia Gentry and Claudia Cividino.

been more than two years in the making, so bringing this to fruition tonight is super meaningful," Cividino said. "Not just for me, but for our entire leadership team."

Speaking of, J.K. Symancyk, chief executive officer of Signet Jewelers, said the screening was his proudest moment in the 10 months since starting at the

behemoth. "I think it's important for our company, and that is our evolution from being not only the largest seller of diamonds in the industry, but more importantly, to be a leader in this industry and to take that responsibility to heart," he said. "It all comes together to inspire us to be a part of and create legacy."



Mirage, a swathe of fabric made by Swedish textile designer Selma Wallbom at the Lake Como Design Festival.

## HOME DESIGN

## Niche Design Meets Experiential Tourism

● Lake Como Design Festival, Nomad and Alcova are at the forefront of a growing wave of itinerant design events, in which quality triumphs over quantity.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

**COMO, Italy** – “It’s OK, take it all in. Take your time,” Giovanna Massoni, curator of Lake Como Design Festival, said on Wednesday at Villa del Grumello, built in the 15th century as an aristocratic home overlooking the splendor of Lake Como. The view was indeed worthwhile as Mirage, a swathe of fabric made by Swedish textile designer Selma Wallbom, blew in the wind while offering a poetic, pixelated image of a soft hydroplane landing in the distance.

The founders of the Lake Como Design Festival, now in its seventh edition running Sept. 14 to 21, said Como-based hotels like Il Sereno, Hilton Lake Como and the Mandarin Oriental, combined with the influx of foreign residents to the lakeside towns, have helped boost the fair’s visitors.

“It’s really about building connections and less about visitors. In fact, we want to keep it limited,” said Lake Como Design Festival founder, independent photographer and creative director Lorenzo Butti, adding that the aim is to

avoid the long lines and crowds that form during Milan Design Week.

Lake Como Design Festival’s success is a testament to the ongoing rise of destination fairs around the world fueled in part by ultra-exclusive, invite-only itinerant art and design showcase Nomad Design Fair, whose first edition took place in 2017 in Monaco at La Vigie. This is a villa renovated and occupied by fashion legend Karl Lagerfeld in the ‘80s and used during key moments for Monaco’s ruling family.

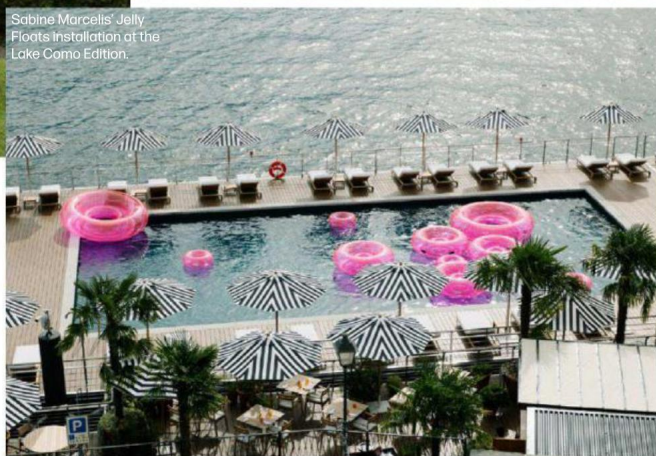
Nomad is gearing up to host the first Abu Dhabi edition in the former Terminal 1 at the Abu Dhabi International Airport from Nov. 19 to 22. The decision to expand there was motivated by the region’s ongoing social evolution catalyzed by the growing expat communities of Indians, Russians and British, Nomad cofounder Nicolas Bellavance-Lecompte told WWD. “It’s a country where you have a real base of collectors that has been collecting for quite some time now...and now you have these foreigners also living there that you don’t have yet in other countries.”

Nomad also locked in the Watermill Center in the Hamptons – an incubator of radical creativity founded by visionary artist and director Robert Wilson in 1992 for a brand new event June 25 to 28.

Alcova’s trajectory, for example, has also helped build the allure of the destination fair concept. Founded in Milan in 2018 by Valentina Ciuffi and Joseph Grima, it



Vico Magistretti’s armchair Piccy, one of his first designs from the 1940s, was presented by Campeggi at the Lake Como Design Festival.



Sabine Marcelis’ Jelly Floats Installation at the Lake Como Edition.

will unfurl Alcova Miami once again at the city’s oldest hotel, Miami River Inn in the South River Drive Historic District of East Little Havana.

Collectible design showcase Intrecci Intertwinings debuted on the scene Aug. 31 to Sept. 14 in Salve, a former hub of the Bronze Age, in Italy’s Apulia region with most of the showcases staged in an old Capuchin monastery.

In Como, Villa del Grumello is brimming with an intimate mix of rare art and collectible design dedicated to the overarching “Fragments” theme. The artwork of Enzo Cucchi, a key member of the Italian Transavanguardia, a late modernist movement that emerged in the ‘70s, is on display. A mix of organic sculptural forms and black and white sketches offer the viewers a glimpse into Cucchi’s abstract world.

Nearby, Brazilian luxury design firm Etel unfurled a retrospective of Brazilian designer Claudia Moreira Salles’ modernist creations imbuing Brazilian wood with sustainable earthy materials. Milan-based carpet firm Amini showcased carpets featuring designs from “Viaggio della Fantasia” (Italian for “Journey of Fantasy”), a series of graphics designed by Italian artist and graphic designer Bruno Munari while Italian furniture firm Campeggi showed off Piccy, a reissue of one of the first armchairs designed by Vico Magistretti and initially produced by the Fumagalli company of Meda starting from the second half of the 1940s.

Over the past year, Massoni interviewed and made a selection of 54 international designers for her curation of the Contemporary Design Selection, which was unfurled throughout the hilly gardens surrounding the villa.

Kyiv, Ukraine-based artist Lyuda Skrynnykova debuted a sculptural lighting piece, “Angels, Look Inside,” which was crafted from small fragments and porcelain mementos, evoking the emotional journey of Ukrainians fleeing war. “It’s always the small things that people take with them,” Skrynnykova reflected.

In the villa’s greenhouse,

Lebanese-French artist Lucie Gholam presented her “Plaster Ruins” collection in a greenhouse. Using salvaged materials from demolished buildings, she transformed them into sculptural furniture pieces, complete with mammal-like feet and intricate etchings. “It’s my first time here and I’ve already made a lot of contacts,” she said, noting the influx of international design curious and gallerists that passed by. In the garden, Italy-based designer Alberto Smaledone of Plasma-f studio explained how he fused fragments of marble together with screws to a crowd of British tourists, showcasing the stylistic possibilities of reuniting fragments of overconsumption.

Other key exhibitions included in the Lake Como Design Festival itinerary include a tribute to Italian architect and designer Aldo Rossi. Architecture by “Fragments,” curated by Chiara Spangaro in collaboration with the Fondazione Aldo Rossi, pays tribute to the renowned Italian architect. The exhibition was staged in another exclusive spot, San Pietro in Atrio, a former church repurposed as an exhibition space.

The allure of the design festival was also helped by rising star, Dutch New Zealander designer Sabine Marcelis, who unleashed her “Jelly Floats” installation in the pool of the Lake Como Edition hotel, which ran concurrently with the festival. Marcelis told WWD she was looking forward to discovering the new artists and designers within the event itself. “It’s the first time for me visiting the festival and I am very much looking forward to seeing what else will be on show. I love satellite and smaller design weeks. I recently visited design weeks in Vietnam, Bali and Mallorca where smaller events were held. I think these events can be very surprising and easier to manage than the larger ones,” she said.

According to Butti, niche design events like the Lake Como Design Festival not only promote local tourism but also highlight the storytelling potential of historic locations, fostering deeper connections with their cultural heritage. “This is about connecting with the territory and helping to create experiential tourism.”



The Contemporary Design Selection

# WWD lab

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FASHION

# Jonathan Anderson Opens A New Curiosity Shop



Here and right: Inside Jonathan Anderson's New Curiosity Shop.

● The store in London's Soho will stock a selection of Anderson's "obsessions," along with handmade furniture, fashion, objects for the home and pieces from his debut collaboration with Wedgwood.

BY SAMANTHA CONTI

**LONDON** – Jonathan Anderson has opened a window onto his world, and his customers are finding treasure in every corner. He's laid bare his love of craft, passion for the ancient world and for objects that endure, and the products have been flying off the virtual shelves of the new website.

The physical JW Anderson stores haven't even reopened, but the site has recently launched, with bestsellers including Murano jugs and sunglasses chains made from ancient Greek and Roman beads that the designer bought himself at auction.

The chains, which are hand-threaded in London, cost 510 pounds each, and have sold out entirely. The jugs cost 600 pounds, and have already been restocked due to demand.

"We have been selling everything from chairs to cashmere to jugs to ceramics. We have never done better – ever – in the history of the brand. The team has done an amazing job, and I am really happy," Anderson said in an interview ahead of the reopening of his Soho and Milan stores, which have been completely transformed, along with the brand.

"It's an exciting moment, things are changing and home has become more important than ever. If we sell something, I want it to be beautifully executed by the

right craftsman, by the right person," he added.

Anderson, who revealed his new, lifestyle approach in July, said there are more store openings planned in London, Paris and New York. All of them will be different and replace the brand's seasonal runway shows as a platform for newness.

"Each time we open a store, it will be like us doing fashion week. So we will have multiple different [iterations of the brand], different art and ceramics in each store," he said.

Fashion and accessories are still in the mix, but they're no longer seasonal, and the real focus is on one-off objects, limited-edition pieces and – in the designer's words – a "slow-moving feast" of creativity and ideas. "It's all my obsessions" in one place, he said.

Anderson, who will show his first womenswear collection for Dior on Oct. 1 in Paris, made the decision to reboot his own brand last year when he turned 40.

"I wanted to kind of work out, 'Who am I today?' I also wanted to consolidate everything I had done, and then add on all the things that I enjoy today, which is art and fashion and interiors and making," he told WWD in July.

The result is a minimalist, and amusing, website, with models who move around, sit on handmade chairs, fiddle with their hair, and play around with the clothes. There are also fun cameo appearances from celebs including Bella Freud, Ben Whishaw and Luca Guadagnino, who model the clothes or play with the crafty objects.

The website, Anderson said, "has been incredibly well-received. It's a really new take on how to deal with e-commerce. Each week, we are uploading different

things, and so it's starting to evolve and build. Since launching the website, we've already quadrupled" the projected sales.

Anderson is clearly having fun, but there's also a gravitas to the operation.

This fall, he's launching a special collaboration with Wedgwood to make a collection of teacups, coffee cups and saucers designed by the late British ceramicist Lucie Rie in 1964. They never went into production "because they couldn't make them the way that she wanted them to be done," Anderson said.

He approached Wedgwood with the idea of reviving Rie's original designs "making them locally, and with different craftspeople. It was a kind of anchor point for me to be able to do this collaboration. I wanted Wedgwood to do them as she wanted them," he said.

The collection has been colored in Wedgwood's signature Jasper blue with white inlays. Each piece is formed by hand, then high-fired to create a matte, tactile finish, according to Wedgwood.

Anderson describes Rie as one of the greatest potters of the 20th century. "I've been collecting her work for many years, and I think she would be thrilled to see these pieces finally brought to life, especially in a charitable context."

Emma Glynn, creative director of Wedgwood, said the main reason why Rie's pieces were never produced is because of the complexity of the white inlay technique they require.

"It's incredibly delicate and skilled work, but we've proven with this collaboration that those challenges can be overcome. It just takes time, care and a level of commitment that this project has really allowed us all to embrace," Glynn said.

Glynn had already worked with Anderson many years ago, and said he "has this ability to completely pull you into his world. He's a genuine collector of ceramics, but what makes him unique is his honesty. His ideas are instinctive, intuitive, and that's what makes them resonate." She said his "energy is infectious, and it's why this collaboration feels so relevant."

The collaboration is raising 200,000 pounds for the Lucy Rie estate, for a catalogue raisonné, and to support the work of the Lucie Rie and Hans Coper Foundation. Coper, a potter and ceramicist, was close friend and collaborator of Rie's.

The money will also go toward providing creative and academic scholarships and grants to support emerging artists in ceramics and related fields.

The collaboration will be available in



The teacups have been colored in Wedgwood's signature Jasper blue with white inlays.



China, Japan and the U.S., Harrods and Selfridges, wedgwood.com and at JW Anderson from Friday.

Anderson is also doing a separate project with Wedgwood that speaks to his fascination with the ancient world.

Wedgwood is creating a series of mugs inspired by fifth-century Greek creations selected from the designer's personal collection. They're done in bold color combinations such as chocolate brown and black, and contrasting shades of yellow.

Anderson said he's always loved Wedgwood and has long admired its founder Josiah Wedgwood, a designer, pottery manufacturer and abolitionist.

"He was probably one of the biggest modern thinkers of the 18th century. He changed the landscape in Britain, and was very important in the abolition of slavery. And the way in which he reinterpreted Greek mythology within ceramics was revolutionary," he added.

Anderson said he's been collecting different styles of Greek mugs for years, and is fascinated that "something which is thousands of years old can have such a contemporary edge. And I also wanted to do two shades of color because Wedgwood is very famous for doing these explorations on color."

Anderson has an endless love of craft.

During his tenure as creative director of Loewe, he let his passion for craft run free. In the past, he has worked with artists, sculptors, and even the Japanese animation experts Studio Ghibli on shows, campaigns and exhibitions.

In 2016, he established the Loewe Foundation Craft Prize, which pays tribute to the Spanish brand's roots as a leather-making collective and supplier to the Spanish royal crown.

He told WWD earlier this year that his aim with the new JW Anderson is to make the "perfect" cashmere sweater in Scotland, "and then understand the people behind it. I want to find things that I love, or what I wear myself, and then articulate them in the world we are in today."

Anderson also wants to look at "the imperfections in things, and make it a personal story."

Over the past year, he's been working with a variety of companies, including the London-based Postcard Teas on a new kind of dark roasted tea that tastes like coffee – another obsession of his – and with Fergusson's Irish Linen on a series of dish cloths with different messages and colorways.

Other products include Windsor chairs handmade in Lewes, East Sussex, England, by a company called Hope Springs; replica wooden Mackintosh stools made in Perthshire, Scotland, and vintage watering cans made from French copper and antique gardening tools restored by Garden & Wood Ltd.

BUSINESS

## To Survive, London Designers Forge Their Own Paths

● “It’s time for the industry to create space for designers to develop properly before throwing them into a system that’s designed to consume rather than nurture emerging talent,” said Olya Kuryshchuk of 1 Granary.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

**LONDON** — London designers are on the move, leaving their home city for various reasons to seek their fortunes in Paris, Milan, Berlin and Copenhagen.

In July, David Koma chose Berlin to showcase his new men’s collection, and online chatter about Berlin replacing London as the new fashion capital sparked a heated debate throughout the summer.

For the spring 2026 season, Knwls, the London-based brand cofounded by Charlotte Knowles and Alexandre Arsenault, is heading to Milan to present the collection. The duo called the move “a strategic and fitting moment for where the brand is.”

Fellow London-based Kiko Kostadinov will stick to its slot on the official calendar of Paris Fashion Week. The brand has been showing outside London since 2020.

In the eyes of Olya Kuryshchuk, founder of the 1 Granary, a fashion media, networking and consultancy platform born out of Central Saint Martins 12 years ago, some designers are no longer finding the platform they need in London Fashion Week.

Others appear stuck. “What horrifies me most is that I don’t see most London designers breaking away from the traditional London Fashion Week trajectory,” she said.

“Despite countless case studies clearly demonstrating that the current emerging designer pipeline is fundamentally broken, the majority persist in following the exact same, doomed route. They’re addicted to the applause, the validation of the runway moment, even when the business fundamentals are nonexistent,” Kuryshchuk added.

She believes that emerging designers today should be investing time in developing their foundational infrastructure, cultivating industry relationships, and understanding their customers before considering a runway debut.

“I believe it’s time the industry says ‘no’ more often, and creates space for designers to develop properly before throwing them into a system designed to consume rather than nurture emerging talent,” Kuryshchuk continued.

A growing list of designer brands, such as Chopova Lowena, Ashish and Ranra, a London- and Reykjavik-based label founded by Arnar Már Jónsson and Luke Stevens, are staying put but exploring alternatives to the runway, and forging their own paths, which are not tied to the traditional fashion cycle.

Chopova Lowena has been following the one-show-a-year formula for quite some time. The designers have been able to spend more time working on more meaningful projects, like a ‘zine starring Chloé Sevigny, and expand into new categories such as handbags and fragrances.

Last year, the brand was picked as the winner of the British Fashion Council/Vogue Designer Fashion Fund, taking home a cash prize of 150,000 pounds, or \$204,000, for “fearlessly marching to



Backstage at the Richard Quinn, fall 2025 fashion show.

the beat of their own drum, challenging conventional fashion system rules.”

For Ashish Gupta, who is set to unveil a multiseason democratic range with Debenhams on Monday as part of his main line’s spring 2026 show, London Fashion Week still plays a key role in helping the brand reach a global audience, but he no longer believes that runway shows are the only path to success.

“I think social media has changed everything. I also think that there’s a power in drawing back and using other media to communicate. I just think people should do shows when they want to do them, and they feel like it, when it’s exciting, when you have a story to tell,” Gupta added.

Ranra is another example of a new generation of London-based brands doing things entirely at their own pace. The label was rebranded from the more designer-focused name Arnar Már Jónsson to Ranra in 2022, in a bid to create a stronger visual identity to communicate with its audience.

The label focuses on outerwear and footwear offerings that balance craft and technical performance. Scandinavia and Germany are two top-performing regions, and the brand is gaining momentum in Japan and the U.S. this year. It has around 70 stockists globally.

Ranra staged a show during Copenhagen Fashion Week over the summer. The duo said the city aligns closely with how they want to work. The brand was awarded the Zalando Sustainability Award in 2022 during Copenhagen Fashion Week.

“Copenhagen has become a space where you can present work with freedom, and where sustainability and experimentation are a part of the system. For us, showing in Copenhagen was to show a bit more of the world we are creating with the brand, and we felt that doing that specific show there felt right,” they said.

Both of them were trained at the Royal College of Art in London and had some level of engagement with the British fashion industry. Stevens made his London Fashion Week debut in 2017 as part of Fashion East.

As for what London can do to stay competitive, the duo said there needs to be a deeper investment in long-term brand development, not just spotlighting new names for a season or two. They believe that there are more ways of building a career in fashion that don’t require burning out or chasing overnight success.

“London has the creativity, but it needs to build the frameworks that allow brands

to sustain themselves beyond the first breakthrough. Infrastructure, financial support and creative freedom are key; otherwise, the city risks losing the talent it nurtures to places where support structures are stronger,” they added.

Thousands of fashion students graduate each year in London, but few of them are truly prepared for the market reality. One can argue that it’s particularly due to the general absence of adequate business skills taught in their courses at fashion schools in London.

Cozette McCreery, an educator, consultant and cofounder of the knitwear label Sibling, believes London is currently in a cycle of cause and effect that is going to be quite hard to get out of “without some support, changes or downright bloody-mindedness from creatives.”

She thinks that London designers should start small and build up, and keep their distance from the star-making machine until they are ready.

“There’s this urgency to graduate and then get Newgen and arrive, which I advise any graduates or fashion students I meet to be wary of doing. For me, it has always been about building a strong foundation and finding your own crew,” McCreery said.

The designer revealed that she recently had a long conversation with the BFC’s chief executive officer Laura Weir about talent support revamp, as well as her

thoughts on shaking up the BFC mentoring program and supporting alumni.

“London Fashion Week is so focused on the new that those who perhaps are less so are often sidelined,” McCreery added.

In an interview, Weir acknowledged the changing relationship between the brands and fashion week, and said the BFC is ready to reflect and address these changes under her leadership.

“It’s not just about wholesale anymore. It’s about [direct-to-consumer], about new and innovative ways to showcase collections. You’ll see that from the schedule this season, which has appointments, film, digital and catwalk. Times have moved on, and we’re at the beginning of this new era, so I’m really excited about how my background in understanding retail can support the journey,” Weir said.

A major part of her vision for the BFC, revealed in July, is to “put designers at the heart, to make mentoring and business skills central to our offer, and to ensure our funding models result in long-term impact for the British creative economy.” To begin with, the BFC has waived fees for designer members showing physically this London Fashion Week.

Weir acknowledged that London is losing design talent to other cities because of a lack of infrastructure to support the designers to make, create, show and, importantly, to scale in this country.

With more brands moving away or opting for sporadic showcases, Weir said she’s walking a “delicate parallel track” between recognizing how brands and designers want to show up while also continuing to promote the creative and cultural relevance of fashion week.

Weir said she’s looking closely at “the pathway, the journey of funding” for designers and fashion industry workers in the U.K.

It starts, she said, with early-stage Breakfast Club creative events, moves on to the Fashion Assembly schools program, and then to scholarships. For graduates, there are programs such as Fashion East, Newgen, the Vogue/GQ prize and The Fashion Trust for more established designers.

Weir also knows there’s a cliff-edge when a brand reaches 600,000 pounds to 1 million pounds in annual turnover, and that needs to be remedied.

“I think there is also a broader conversation about scaling businesses. What does that pipeline look like? It’s all part of the strategic work that we’re doing,” she added.

Overall, Weir believes fashion week organizers in Europe have a collective responsibility to keep the fashion ecosystem thriving, and that’s about “recognizing the important role that London plays in that ecosystem.”



Ranra spring 2026 presented during Copenhagen Fashion Week.

## BUSINESS

## LN-CC Is Bucking Luxury E-commerce's Struggles

● The profit-making, debt-free retailer is celebrating its 15th anniversary with a series of activations featuring Lacoste, Umbro, Yohji Yamamoto and daughter Limi Feu, and emerging names like Ed Curtis, Gina Corrieri and Eden Tan.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

**LONDON** — LN-CC, the Hackney-based concept store with a global e-commerce operation, will celebrate its 15th anniversary with a series of activations during London Fashion Week and beyond.

There will be events featuring Yohji Yamamoto and his daughter Limi Feu; Lacoste 18te — a collaboration between the French brand and the New York-based artist Frank Dorey; exclusive drops from Rick Owens, Rier and Our Legacy, and in-store installations featuring London-based emerging talents.

Invisioned by its founder John Skelton as a one-of-a-kind blend of fashion, music and art, LN-CC, or Late Night Chameleon Café, was London's original experimental retailer, offering a curated fashion selection and a space tunnel-like installation by set designer Gary Card.

The niche retail concept has since morphed into a cult online destination under the ownership of e-commerce service provider The Level Group, which brought the once-struggling LN-CC out of administration in 2015.

Perhaps because it made its mistakes a decade ago, LN-CC has now found its groove as a fashion-forward platform that's part-boutique, part-creative agency,

and part-cultural activator.

According to Cristian Musardo, founder and chief executive officer of The Level Group, LN-CC, in many ways, is "the last man standing" in the independent retailer space. It has remained stable in size and is profitable despite a sharply contracting market over the past 18 months.

Musardo said that was achieved by a curated brand mix that drives sell-through and margin. Due to The Level Group's support, the retailer can also deliver a decent e-commerce experience at a fraction of the cost some competitors pay.

The Level Group is a global e-commerce services provider with more than 50 clients, such as Prada, Ferragamo, Ferrari, Intimissimo, and Calzedonia, in the luxury and contemporary space, and is the owner of fellow multibrand platforms that include Frankbros, Scarosso and LaDoubleJ.

"We have been disciplined about keeping our overheads low, and streamlining our operations across the board. The outcome is a healthier cash profile, a more resilient business, and the ability to honor our commitments to brand partners. We have virtually no bank debt and no overdue payables with our brand partners," added Musardo.

In addition to e-commerce gains, media and creative revenues are also growing quickly at LN-CC. Musardo believes that independence, focus and point of view are advantages in a consolidating landscape.

The reopening of its upgraded physical space in Dalston, East London, in March 2024 has expedited its activation pipeline, with brand partners showing great interest in connecting themselves with the LN-CC community IRL.

"What sets LN-CC apart is how we



The new LN-CC space in East London designed by Gary Card.

connect culture and commerce. We don't trade products in isolation; we build narratives with the brands and creators shaping the moment," he added.

Looking ahead, Musardo said the ambition is to cement LN-CC as the independent platform at the intersection of fashion and culture, while growing profitably, expanding creative and media footprint with activation-led experiences.

According to Reece Crisp, buying and creative director at LN-CC, the online business is evenly distributed between Europe, North America and Asia, while the U.K. represents around 10 percent of its revenue.

Top-performing brands on the platform tend to be those that are protective about distribution, such as Miu Miu, The Row, Moncler, Rick Owens, Stone Island, Lemaire and Toteme.

But Crisp said the trick to staying competitive is not only about brands with good numbers, but also about gut instinct for what's next.

"The data side of it always drives you to an extent that's always there. It guides us in appointments and with trends. On the other hand, it's the impulse that you get when you're putting these collections

together. Whenever we've been approaching the market, it's always been about taking educated risks and having a real sense of what we think an LN-CC should stand for," said Crisp.

LN-CC, from the very beginning, has been closely associated with supporting emerging talents. While it's become much harder to scout designers who have not been stocked elsewhere, Crisp and his team have signed on three young brands — Ed Curtis, Gina Corrieri and Eden Tan — to offer them a proper introduction to the market this fall.

Crisp said he was impressed with how Curtis has been developing his signature swirling details on hoodies into shirts and accessories for his pop-up. The Tottenham-based Corrieri, who is known for reworking vintage and secondhand materials into size-inclusive looks, has designed an exclusive capsule, including a few special tartan pieces.

Tan's award-winning Central Saint Martins graduate collection, featuring whole rolls of fabric attached to the garments, has earned him a great deal of media attention in the past two years. His LN-CC pop-up will feature backpacks repurposed from alpine-style jackets and ladies' handbags made from leather high heels.

## FASHION

## India's AK|OK Anamika Khanna Makes London Debut

● Some of the biggest names in Bollywood are expected to attend the AK|OK show, which is taking place at Hamleys toy store in London.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

**LONDON** — Anamika Khanna, one of India's most celebrated fashion designers, is set to bring her contemporary fashion offering AK|OK Anamika Khanna to London for a debut runway show at Hamleys toy store on Regent Street on Monday.

The label was set up in 2021 as a 60:40 joint venture between Reliance Brands, India's largest retailer in the luxury-to-premium sector, and Khanna. The deal was led by Isha Ambani, daughter of Mukesh Ambani, founder of Reliance Brands' parent company Reliance Industries.

The brand offers a modern wardrobe with a touch of Indian savoir-faire, with prices ranging from \$200 for a matching cotton shirt and trouser set to \$1,000 for a lace shift dress.

Khanna said AK|OK represents a carefree way of living, and has a universal

appeal that transcends the geographical boundaries of India.

"The brand started just after COVID-19. The world was looking for fashion, not taken too seriously. AK|OK offers something that goes from day to night without thinking too hard, something that could be versatile enough that you could do your own thing with it," said the designer, who entered the fashion business 27 years ago with little professional training.

The label now operates three stores across Mumbai, New Delhi and Hyderabad, and is available on its website and at 15 multibrand retailers in India. The brand is also stocked at Saks Fifth Avenue and is in talks to enter several more U.K.-based retailers.

Khanna was one of the first Indian designers to show during Paris Fashion Week in 2007, and her now-defunct diffusion label Ana-Mika, which catered to a Western audience, had more than 100 stockists globally at its peak.

As to why she chose Hamleys as the show venue, the designer said the toy retailer evokes a sense of nostalgia. "I have fond memories of Hamleys. I was there 20 years ago, and I still have a toy from there."

She said Hamleys was a perfect fit for the upcoming AK|OK spring 2026 collection. "In a way that you're bringing

back memories into present-day scenarios in various situations, and it just felt like a natural fit," she said.

While AK|OK is not as craft-intensive as Khanna's main line, which offers modern silhouettes and luxurious iterations of Indian traditional attire, the contemporary label has been able to use India's traditional techniques and supply chain to offer crafted pieces at a relatively competitive price point.

Khanna said she hopes the London show can be another example of how India can be a part of mainstream fashion narratives. Her sold-out collaboration with H&M last year already showed that there is a global interest in modern fashion designed and manufactured in India.

To drive awareness in the West and at home, it's understood that some of the biggest names in Bollywood are expected to attend the show.

"Because of my exposure internationally, I realized that Indian fashion, from the very beginning, was being treated as not mainstream. People looked at Indian fashion as a costume. So I look at India with everything that we have: textiles, crafts, heritage, and the people in today's context. To change things around so that it becomes relevant. Somebody in Europe can walk out on the street with it," added the designer.



Anamika Khanna



A sketch of a look from AK|OK Anamika Khanna's spring 2026 collection.

FASHION

# Ones to Watch for Spring 2026

● This season, WWD spotlights emerging designers Joshua Ewusie, Geordie Campbell, and Oscar Ouyang.

BY VIOLET GOLDSTONE

## Ewusie

Joshua Ewusie's label has been up and running since September 2024, but he hasn't rushed the full debut collection. Instead he's spent the past year homing in on who the Ewusie woman is, and experimenting with the designs that honor her.

"The woman is an amalgamation of so many different people I've met in my life – obviously, my mother and grandmother – but also the type of women I grew up around," he said. "The Ewusie girl is busy. She's making movements, hustling, and everything she's got, she's earned for herself."

The upcoming collection is filled with tough, sexy leather pieces, slinky backless dresses, and draped jersey, full of movement for a girl on the go.

Much like the woman he's designing for, Ewusie has been busy since graduating from Central Saint Martins' MA fashion design program in 2024, presenting a glitzy collection that celebrated his Ghanaian heritage.

Just when he thought he could take a breath, Chanel, which had funded his scholarship in partnership with the British Fashion Council, came knocking.

"I was still figuring out what I wanted to do, and if I was going to do my own brand," said Ewusie. "Then Chanel offered me a studio space that summer, which was such a blessing."

That could be why his inspiration this season draws, maybe wistfully, from his carefree childhood summers growing up in West London's Wormwood Scrubs.

"You always think London is this constantly busy place, but I felt like it was quite tranquil in those times growing up," said the designer. "When I was trying to find imagery to get that feeling, I found this book called 'Shining Lights,' which highlighted female photographers from the diaspora, who were capturing their own lived experiences in the 1980s and 1990s."

The work of photographer Eileen Perrier, who was featured in *Shining Lights*, struck a chord, and led Ewusie to create a collection that celebrates hardworking women – and leaves them looking cool, even during steamy London summers.

## Geordie Campbell

With an emphasis on tailoring and eye for color, Geordie Campbell said he's designing for British boys. What does that mean?

"One of the key points of the brand is this idea of boyishness," said Campbell. "When I was growing up, we had our school uniform – wool tweed blazers, shirts, little boy shorts, high socks and loafers. I remember running around a playground wearing these formal clothes while being so childish. I find that boyish nature quite entertaining."



A look from Ewusie's upcoming collection.



Designer Geordie Campbell wearing his label's "British Boy" T.



A look from Oscar Ouyang's fall 2025 collection.

While he might identify as a menswear designer, Campbell said there's a unisex quality to his brand – a blend of masculine and feminine that he hopes is enticing to everyone, regardless of gender. For his spring 2026 collection, titled "The Inconvenience of Differences," Campbell is leaning into the idea that opposites attract.

"The original idea came from everyone wearing athleisure, but no one actually wearing it for sports," he explained. "I was like, 'What is this idea of use? How can something be useful? How can something border becoming not useful?'"

Looking to artists Meret Oppenheim and Rachel Whiteread for inspiration, Campbell pushed the boundaries between

what separates formal wear (think: fine Italian suits and cummerbunds) from ultra-casual sports and loungewear.

He has zhuzed up 1980s-inspired athletic shorts with wool suiting, and stitched cummerbunds onto tank tops. The placket on a polo shirt is warped and elongated and utterly individual.

Here, stuffy childhood uniforms for class and physical education have been reclaimed in a charming, lighthearted nod to queer coming-of-age and self-discovery.

## Oscar Ouyang

Oscar Ouyang is dreaming up knitwear so fantastic, it's sure to ruffle a few feathers.

Titled "Don't Shoot the Messenger," his

upcoming collection plays with the idea of messenger birds (owls, eagles, pigeons, oh my) and what happens when the letters they carry – of war, peace, and everything in between – aren't delivered.

"If they get shot, and the message is not delivered, I thought about the chaos and miscommunication it would cause," he explained. "It kind of sums up the world we're living in right now, but we added a romantic touch to it."

"It's quite a poetic collection. It's still very textural as spring-summer knitwear, which is always a bit challenging for me. But I think this collection is going to show what my approach to that looks like," said Ouyang, teasing that he used breathable linen and silk yarn, as opposed to the brand's signature woolier winter knits.

There are also more structural pieces this season, which allow the designer to show off his distinct take on tailoring.

"I think my take on menswear is always a bit softer, with the texture, with the fabric choice, with the colors, and with the styling. It's not your typical super-masculine tailoring, it always has a little bit of a twist to it," explained Ouyang.

That takes shape in a lightweight hunting jacket, made from waxed Oxford cotton, and a pair of cheeky, miniscule chino shorts that feature an embroidered keyhole and key hanging from the belt loop.

The pièce de résistance? Ethically sourced feathers that Ouyang painstakingly patched together to create ethereal plumed collars and hems.

The brand is already stocked at Dover Street Market, and the designer is ready to take the next step.

"I want to build a proper team," he said, after being asked where he sees himself in two years. "I want to get everything more set around me, so I can grow and the brand can become more stable."

## BUSINESS

# Printemps New York Embraces Art And Circularity for Fall Promotion

- The New York-based retailer will bring a beekeeper from Sky High Farms to the store on Sunday as one of its activations.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

Printemps New York is leaning heavily into the sustainability message for fall.

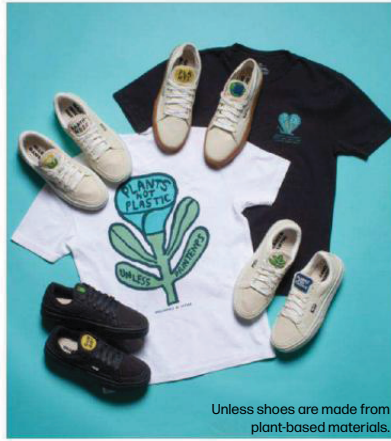
The retailer's fall initiative is titled "Art & Circularity" and is intended to provide a platform to artists who work with upcycled materials. It's the brainstorm of Silvano Vangi, creative and merchandising director at Printemps, who explained: "The goal of Printemps New York is to bring something different and exclusive to our clients." Rather than just another department store, the store was designed as a "beautiful French apartment" and 30 percent of its assortment is exclusive, he said.

To illustrate this messaging, the store has been transformed into an "immersive space" filled with art and fashion centered around circularity, Vangi said. But rather than just searching out sustainable product, Printemps took a different tack, bringing artists and brands together to develop special products that speak to "the power of circularity," he explained.

The storewide messaging includes installations, special events and lots of product. Among the most ambitious is Life on 5, a selection of niche brands curated by Victoria Grantham, a strategic circularity adviser, who brought in collections from



Honey from Sky High Farm.



Unless shoes are made from plant-based materials.

Sky High Farm, Mover, Finisterre, Clean, Better, Unless, Sees, Clean Waves, Rollr, Evolve Together, People of Earth, Crafting Plastics and Imagine5. These brands offer plastic-free performance apparel, lab-grown fine jewelry, home-compostable materials, toxin-free refillable beauty product, and ocean-positive designs.

Life on 5 references the fact that Earth is the fifth-largest planet in the solar system.

Outside of Grantham's curation, Printemps also hand-picked an exclusive capsule of handbags and accessories for the Art & Circularity initiative. They include Harpers Collective, a sustainable luggage brand founded by Jaden Smith

and Sebastian Manes which collaborated with artists Yutaro Inagaki and Jim Vision; Pinel, a luxury trunk brand which worked with artist Joris Ghillini; Au Départ, a trunk and leather goods brand that partnered with Talia Levitt, and French leather goods house Camille Fournet in collaboration with artist Fabrice Hubert.

The store will also launch exclusive, upcycled collections from Who Decides War and Glass Cypress.

Maurizio Donadi, the L.A.-based godfather of upcycled vintage apparel, will create Blue de Monde, an exhibition of rare archival pieces from France, Japan and the U.S. that will explore the cultural

and material legacy of denim.

In addition, The Falls, a Hudson Valley, N.Y.-based duo known for reworking antique and preloved garments and furniture, will collaborate with Alpha Industries on exclusive bomber jackets, outerwear and denim. And American artist Stefan Robert Meier created a capsule of upcycled hand-painted workwear pieces that is being offered for sale in the store.

Starting Sunday, Printemps New York will host a number of activations tied to the circularity message. The first will be centered around Sky High Farm, a nonprofit farm and apparel brand founded by artist Dan Colen and based in Ancramdale, N.Y., which will bring beekeeper Hannah Landy to the store to allow customers to explore the world of bees, learn how honey is made, and buy some honey.

Then on Wednesday, the retailer will hold a panel discussion featuring Sky High Farm, Unless, Mover, Yulex and Better and moderated by Imagine5, an Amsterdam-based sustainability-focused magazine. The panel will explore how circularity is driving innovation in design and materials.

Printemps' sustainability message is not only evident inside the store. It's also visible on the exterior thanks to textile and soft sculpture artist Elena Stonaker who was tapped to transform the store's facade into a garden of giant dolls made from upcycled fabrics, a message that continued on the interior with her tapestries and sculptures woven from repurposed materials.

Vangi said Printemps' decision to add artists to the mix is evident of the company's DNA. "We want to be a platform for artists," he said. "Sustainability is important but we want to offer our clients something unique, beautiful and elevated."

Art & Circularity will be on view from through Oct. 31.

## EXCLUSIVE

# Suppleness Is the Star of Cartier's Love Unlimited Design

- Available as a bracelet made of 200 miniaturized components or a ring, the Love Unlimited design is the latest addition to the collection introduced in 1969.

BY LILY TEMPLETON

Love comes in many forms but for the past 56 years, the one from Cartier was a solid oval band of metal with 12 screws that required a screwdriver – and a helping hand.

Now this iconic design has been recast as the Love Unlimited, a supple articulated ribbon that can be done with one hand.

At first glance, the bracelet's gadroons appear to be a decorative feature of the gold surface. The Cartier team imagined and assembled 200 miniaturized components as well as an invisible clasp system operated by a screw, which is pending a patent.

Two or more pieces can be attached together thanks to this novel element, forming necklaces or even belts. In addition to the bracelet, a ring featuring the same gadroon design and screws has also been created.

Arnaud Carrez, Cartier's chief marketing officer, deemed the Love Unlimited range

"a full testimony to the know-how, the craftsmanship of the maison," he told WWD.

"For all our icons, we have this duty, this commitment to continuously nourish them, infuse creativity and it's about reinventing your icon [while] at the same time being very true to what it is," he added. The jeweler is not averse to making significant changes to its signatures, as evidenced by the cushion-shaped Trinity models released in 2024 to mark the line's centennial.

While the jewelry house does not share figures on how many bracelets it has sold over the decades, he said the Love, "the iconic collection since 1969" has "been going through decades with a lot of success, being reinvented and also embracing, since the beginning, this idea of freedom of love sealed with a screwdriver."

The original Love bracelet was designed by New York-based Italian-born Aldo Cipullo, following an experience of heartbreak that led him to imagine a tangible reminder of romantic, unbreakable attachment.

From the initial two thin C-shaped pieces with 12 screws – a nod to the bezel of the Cartier Santos watch – two serve to lock the oval-shaped bangle around the wearer's wrist.

In its new incarnation, which continues to be unisex, the design celebrates "love in

all its forms," Carrez added.

For Pierre Rainero, the French jeweler's director of image, style and heritage, "it's very positive to think or to dream about a love that could be with no limits," he told WWD. For Rainero, that kind of flexible thinking was part of the original design and the Cartier way.

"When we have an idea of a new design – and that's what Love was – we retain that idea not only because it's different,

original and relevant but also because we think it's a strong design [that] can allow variations in the future," he told WWD.

Already in the 1970s, a number of variations were released, from different band sizes to versions set with diamonds and other gemstones. More recently, new types of screw mechanisms and hinges were also introduced.

Launching on Sep. 29 globally, the Love Unlimited bracelet will retail for \$9,400 for yellow and rose gold, while the white gold version will be priced at \$9,900. Rings will be \$2,670 for yellow and rose gold and \$2,860 for white.

Alongside the new designs, the brand is introducing a campaign starring a pair of lovers, watched over by the Cartier panther as they move between New York and Paris.



The new Cartier Love Unlimited bracelet and ring.

EXCLUSIVE

# Sandro Launches Prize With Maison Mode Méditerranée

- The new prize will go to a designer who works with traditional handicrafts, which will be awarded 10,000 euros and two years of mentoring by the brand.

BY RHONDA RICHFORD

**PARIS** – French accessible luxury brand Sandro is deepening its commitment to Mediterranean heritage and craftsmanship through a new partnership with Maison Mode Méditerranée (MMM), a nonprofit fashion organization and incubator based in Marseille.

The collaboration will see Sandro support emerging talent via the launch of the new prize, which will honor its first recipient in 2026.

“We wanted to support a meaningful cause that reflects who we are, that could carry our values,” Sandro founder and artistic director Évelyne Chetrite told WWD. “We thought, this is what we want to do – to pass something on, to share our craftsmanship, our industry knowledge, and our passion for this work.”

The Sandro prize will go to a designer who “perpetuates local or traditional textile know-how (weaving, embroidery, dyeing, knitting, sewing, etc.) in a contemporary, sustainable, collective, and territorial approach,” with ties to the region.

The winner will receive a grant of 10,000 euros and mentoring support from Sandro for two years, as well as media visibility and support for artistic and cultural projects organized by the MMM museum.

The partnership grew from a mutual relationship with French artist Louis Barthélémy, who collaborated with Sandro on a capsule collection in 2023. Barthélémy is a longtime friend of MMM president Jina Luciani.

They first joined forces during the 2024 European Heritage Days, when the brand donated one euro for every item sold in Europe to MMM’s newly established Endowment Fund. The fund was established to promote heritage preservation, craftsmanship and emerging talent in the Mediterranean and Africa.

The first partnership had a lasting impact, and the award stems from this work. “We wanted to go even further and support a talent, support an intention that aligned with that same direction, making it a collaborative act from both entities to push the initiative forward,” said Luciani.

The prize’s ethos echoes the founders’ personal histories and ties to the Mediterranean region, with Chetrite originally hailing from Morocco and Luciani from Lebanon.

“The country taught me a lot, and nourished me deeply through its art and colors – the colors of nature, the colors of fabrics – and the mindset of the people,” said Chetrite on her creative inspiration. “There is always a duty and a will to share: to share a good meal, to share in making a rug together, and that opened my mind a lot – even for working with teams here at Sandro.”

Luciani emphasized Marseille’s growing cultural importance, and MMM’s history of supporting emerging artists for 30 years. The museum hosts exhibitions focused on craftsmanship and design, alongside workshops for the public. She



“The country taught me a lot, and nourished me deeply through its art and colors – the colors of nature, the colors of fabrics – and the mindset of the people,”

ÉVELYNE CHETRITE, SANDRO FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

also highlighted MMM’s involvement with multiple Marseille institutions, including the Museum of Fashion and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

“Art, in general, is a cultural expression, and when we engage with art, we’re also engaging with the expression of a place. It’s inspiring, because we draw from that world to create something that, through textiles, becomes clothing,” she said.

Sandro’s partnerships with the art world extend beyond the prize. In addition to the collaboration with Barthélémy, it recently created a capsule with the works of Louise Bourgeois and staged its most recent fashion week presentation at the newly revamped Bourdelle Museum in Paris, framing its latest ad campaign as a gallery exhibit.

“Sandro is very connected to art,” Chetrite said. “It’s always for the same reason: I’m attached to artists who bring both heart and creativity, and transform something. It only works if it’s heartfelt.”

Chetrite insisted that the brand’s engagement with art is not merely a marketing strategy to stand out in the increasingly crowded fashion landscape.

“We’re not drawn to art just to become a well-known brand or create an identity – it’s because we truly love it. And that’s why this project with MMM interested me – because it resonates with my truth. And when something has meaning, I believe it can truly come to life and move in the right direction.”

The Sandro MMM Prize will emphasize advancing artistic creation and craftsmanship in contemporary ways. “When we take inspiration from art, and collaborate with Évelyne and her teams, we can bring projects to life that are grounded in authenticity and identity,” Luciani said. “We want a better tomorrow.”

Chetrite described the prize as a new kind of supply chain – a “chain of good values.” At its core, the prize aims to



preserve heritage, craftsmanship and know-how.

“There’s a link to design, because it’s tied to respecting things. If we’re respectful – whether it’s of people or creations – then hopefully, the person who wins the prize will go on to create something meaningful from the experience,” Chetrite said.

“There will be real follow-up with the creators, helping them reach a new stage – one that helps them grow and eventually create their own chain of transmission in their own communities,” Luciani said.

“There are very few houses doing this kind of work, and that’s why our teams here are so dedicated to supporting these creators.”

Both partners indicated their long-term commitment to the initiative, and hinted at future additions such as featuring prize-winning designs in Sandro boutiques.

Sandro’s next major presentation will take place on Oct. 6 at the National Library of France. “At the brand, we always try to do things that resonate with both fashion and world culture – especially because today, we read less and just look at our phones. So let’s promote the library,” Chetrite said.

There will be five MMM prizes in all, with Chanel’s 19M also backing one, as well as other prizes dedicated to heritage, fashion research and accessories and jewelry creation. Applications are open until Oct. 30.



Geoffroy van Raemdonck (2nd from left) with BCG's Christine Barton, Mrin Nayak and Pierre Dupreelle.

## BUSINESS

## Navigating the Luxury Market, BCG Execs Offer Advice

● Geoffroy van Raemdonck was part of a Boston Consulting Group forum for an audience of executives from Tom Ford, Jared, Akris and many other luxury brands.

BY DAVID MOIN

**"Building a drum beat.** It's the perfect moment now."

That's Geoffroy van Raemdonck, the former chief executive officer of the Neiman Marcus Group, suggesting ways businesses catering to wealthy consumers can adapt and gather some momentum amid the current luxury market slump.

Participating at a "luxury executive roundtable" hosted by the Boston Consulting Group at its offices in Manhattan's Hudson Yards earlier this month, van Raemdonck emphasized developing new initiatives and "holding people to a standard of agility that in luxury we've not had."

Van Raemdonck, who served as NMG's CEO for nearly seven years until Saks Global bought the business last December, is now a senior adviser at BCG, and was among several other BCG officials providing statistics on the luxury market, and thoughts on meeting the challenges of the sector.

In-store events, activations; exclusive offerings, often in the form of designer capsules, and clienteling were a big part of the program van Raemdonck brought

to NMG. Clienteling, he said, serves the "VIC" (very important customer) very well. "Statistics show that VICs on average shop nine brands, but they're recognized by two brands," he said. "Refocus on the relationship. Clearly, this is in the hands of the client advisers. It has to be human-led, but client advisers can be equipped with much more sophisticated insights on clients," through data and technology.

"Second, refocus the experience, and work on dedicated, much more exclusive, intimate-type experiences tailor-made with unique products. Figuring out what is the best way to do clienteling today, with the tools we have, is probably the best thing you can do to drive growth, but most importantly, to delight your customers.

"At Neiman's we [became] so much more agile and willing to try things, to test things. Our teams became much more incentivized and driven. What you can do the most for your brand, is bringing that sense of hope."

Veronique Yang, BCG's managing director, senior partner, and head of fashion and luxury for Asia-Pacific region, addressed what luxury businesses can do to offset the luxury slowdown in China. "Chinese consumers' global share of luxury has decreased from 33 percent in 2019 to one quarter last year, but 25 percent is still very significant in terms of scale," she said. "Chinese consumers are not really shutting down to luxury. It's the challenge of the macroeconomics that makes them more cautious in terms of their discretionary spending."

Rather than panic, Yang urged the audience of luxury brands and retailers to remain "patient" and plan for the long term. "China's GDP growth used to enjoy a very fast speed at the range of 6 to 10 percent before COVID, but for the past two years, it's around 5 percent and [consumer] consumption is slower than that. Their balance sheets got a serious hit after COVID. Consumers are becoming more sophisticated and demanding, and the retail landscape is also changing significantly." She said brands operating in China saw double-digit declines last year and most likely will see a single-digit decline this year.

However, sports-related products and affordable luxury are taking share from other categories in China, where consumers want clothes versatile enough to wear across different occasions. Businessmen "bond" participating together in sports such as skiing, golf, and running marathons, she said. "They want clothes that have functional and technical attributes they can wear to these outdoor events, and at the same time, wear back to the hotel for a nice drink or meal with their business partners," Yang said.

Shoppers in China are "super digital" she said, noting 95 percent of their purchases are digitally influenced. "And this is also the first year online become the first source of brand inspiration, surpassing brand offline stores."

Yang also said Chinese luxury malls and department stores are transforming, mentioning, for example, how activewear

and toy brands are moving into prominent first-floor positions, displacing some of the traditional placement of beauty. "You need to rethink your store format and store experiences," she advised.

Beatrice Lemucchi, BCG's managing director and head of fashion and luxury, Europe, Middle East and Africa, said brands "bombard" VICs with communications, whether by email, WhatsApp, newsletters or some other channel. "They receive on average, between 40 to 60 communications per month by different brands. So that's between one or two per day of any type. Clearly there is a big feeling of a being overwhelmed," and a feeling that brands need communications to be more tailored and personalized.

Lemucchi also said VICs when shopping stores are increasingly searching intimacy and privacy and spaces dedicated to new categories that weren't available before.

At the event, BCG released its latest findings from a survey last June of 7,000 luxury shoppers in 10 countries and regions, including VIC and CEO interviews, done in conjunction with Altgamma, the association of Italian luxury brands. The survey indicated that 35 percent of the respondents that fit into the aspirational shopper category have either curtailed or stopped their personal spend on luxury, and that personal luxury categories are "overexposed" to aspirational.

"High exposure to aspirational shoppers correlates with recent underperformance across the board," the study indicated.

The study also advised to "catch" more of the wallet from high net worth consumers, "you need to expand" into additional categories; adopt a "health as wealth" mindset; jewelry, watches and prestige beauty will have future growth, and that shoes, apparel and wines decelerated in the past 18 months, but should enjoy higher spend on the horizon.

WWD

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# Fashion Scoops



Jil Sander's HQ in Milan.

## Home Sweet Home

One of the much-anticipated debuts in Milan next week, Simone Bellotti's first collection for Jil Sander will be unveiled in a special location, WWD has learned.

The designer is bringing the brand back to its historic show space in Piazza Castello – a few steps from the city's landmark Sforzesco castle – inside a 19th-century building that also houses its headquarters.

The space, which was a movie theater prior to the 1950s renovations, is marked by off-white interiors and a minimal design. Wide windows overlooking the square make for a standout element, offering a stunning view on the medieval fortification built in the 15th century by Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan.

While details on Bellotti's inaugural collection are still under wraps, the venue makes for a telling choice with its contrast between essential and modern interiors versus the view on a storied building. The location's size – quite smaller compared to industrial locations the brand has chosen for its shows in the past few seasons – also signals a more intimate approach adopted by Bellotti – and likely fewer tickets available for the show scheduled on Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. CET.

The venue's back-to-the-roots symbolism can't go unnoticed, too. It builds on the moody music video the company released over the summer as a teaser of Bellotti's tenure and that was shot in Hamburg, where founder Heidi Marie Jiline "Jil" Sander launched the label in 1968.

Bellotti joined Jil Sander, under the OTB umbrella, from Bally in March, succeeding Luke and Lucie Meier. – SANDRA SALIBIAN

## Shop With Stella

British fashion designer Stella McCartney is launching an immersive, digital luxury shopping show featuring Eva Mendes, a friend and face of the brand's latest winter 2025 campaign.

Available to watch from Monday at 8 p.m. in London on the brand's official website, the show takes place at the brand's London headquarters.

Part QVC, part trunk show and part sitcom, the show started with Mendes driving up to the Stella McCartney office and pretending to apply for a job via McCartney, who gives a convincing performance as a multitasking receptionist.

Cut into the main part, McCartney and Mendes can then be seen going

through day-to-night pieces in the collection, as well as discussing the brand's sustainable innovations, such as new leather alternatives, including a vegan snakeskin made using mycelium, in a fictional corporate setting called Stellacorp.

McCartney said the experience goes beyond a conventional online trunk show.

"It's an exclusive insight into my headquarters and history – told by me, in my words," she said. "I want to bring everyone into my world, which is something we've never done for a collection, and really is pioneering a new way of digital shopping."

"Having my friend Eva Mendes there also brings the humor and heart. I wanted to show what we do here at Stella McCartney and everything we do

here to be conscious and mindful of our impact on Mother Earth and our fellow creatures," continued McCartney.

Fall 2025 marks the third season that Mendes has starred in a Stella McCartney campaign. She previously fronted the winter 2024 and summer 2025 campaigns.

Manufactured with 96 percent conscious materials, the winter collection features strong-shouldered dresses and Savile Row tailoring, alongside square-toed heels, laptop-sized Ryder totes and biobased eyewear. – TIANWEI ZHANG

## Jump For Joy

Marc Jacobs will take over the windows of Paris' Galeries Lafayette to celebrate a pop-up for his artist-led capsule collection Joy.

The capsule, created in collaboration with contemporary artists David Shrigley, Derrick Adams and Hattie Stewart, spans 55 limited-edition pieces ranging from reimagined leather handbags and small leather goods, cotton canvas tote bags, cotton ready-to-wear styles and plated brass jewelry, with items ranging from 55 to 329 euros.

Designed to reflect the artists' individual interpretations of the word "joy," the collection blends Shrigley's offbeat humor and banana motifs, Adams' vivid geometric patterns, and Stewart's Pop-Surrealist florals. Some pieces will be sold exclusively at Galeries Lafayette during the pop-up period.

Two dedicated retail spaces will feature the collection. A 325-square-foot space will welcome guests on the ground floor, while a 130-square-foot space nestled between Ami Paris and Versace on the second floor will also be part of the activation.

Galeries Lafayette will be home to a dozen exclusive creations, including a passport holder with a banana motif from Stewart; a handbag with a dice motif from Adams; and a floral dog carrier from Stewart.

The pop-up will include fun and immersive elements such as a gumball machine doling out prizes. Each weekend guests will have the opportunity to customize their handbags with portraits of their pets for purchases over 300 euros.

Jacobs also partnered

A design by David Shrigley exclusively available at Galeries Lafayette.



with brands such as Converse on shoes, Moleskine on journals and Maxbone on pet accessories for the collection.

The New York-based label, owned by luxury conglomerate LVMH Moët Hennesy Louis Vuitton (though rumored to be on the block), continues its strategy of experiential retail and art-driven storytelling with this latest series of store activations.

To wit, Joy is also rolling out in pop-ups at Nordstrom and The Standard High Line in New York City, and Isetan in Tokyo.

The Galeries Lafayette pop-up will run from Oct. 16 to Nov. 11.

– RHONDA RICHFORD

## Sale Agreed

Natura Cosméticos has entered into a binding agreement to sell its Avon International business to an acquisition vehicle affiliated with Regent.

The sale will not include the Avon Russian market or the brand and its operations in the Latin American region, the Brazilian beauty company said in a security filing on Thursday.

Natura is to receive a nominal consideration of 1 pound when the deal closes. Then it will get contingent payments

based on future results and certain liquidity events that are limited to 60 million pounds.

News of the deal sent Natura & Co. stock soaring more than 15 percent Thursday.

The company reiterated that it continues to explore strategic alternatives for Avon's business in Russia.

"The Avon International Sale [in addition to the sale of the Avon business in the Central America region] is another important milestone in Natura's effort to streamline its operations and continue its strategy to focus on its core business in Latin America," the company said.

As previously reported, on Monday Natura said it had entered into a binding agreement with Grupo PDC, a consumer goods company, to sell the Avon business located in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Honduras, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, or CARD.

As part of that deal, Natura agrees to continue to supply finished goods to Avon CARD and be the licensor of the Avon brand in the region.

Natura had – on and off – been exploring options for Avon's international business. The company has already divested Aesop and The Body Shop.

– JENNIFER WEIL ▶



Avon's Adapt Dream Cream.





The Sézane knitwear wall.

## Brooklyn Bound

Sézane will throw open the doors to its newest store Friday at 155 Wythe Avenue, marking the French brand's first location in Brooklyn.

The "Sézane Appartement" store brings the charm of Paris to one of the city's most creative and community-driven neighborhoods. The approximately 1,800-square-foot shop features a curated selection of ready-to-wear, including seasonal staples, signature silhouettes and timeless details.

"Since opening Nolita, we've been so moved by the connection we've built with our New York community," said founder Morgane Sézalory. "Williamsburg offers a different rhythm – creative, thoughtful and full of possibility. We're so excited to become part of it."

Sézane has had a store at 254 Elizabeth Street in Nolita since September, 2017.

The Sézane Williamsburg pop-up will be open from September through June 2026, with the possibility of extending the lease.

Sézane offers collection for women, men and children, along with homeware. There is Octobre Editions for men, Petit Sézane for children,

and Les Composantes for homeware. The shop will carry the new fall collection, including the Sézane x Baziszt collaboration, the leather goods collection, and the brand's iconic knitwear wall.

Retail prices range from \$10 up to \$495 for outerwear.

In October, Sézane plans to open a store in Atlanta at Ponce City Market. — LISA LOCKWOOD

## Blazer Library

Want to wear a Veronica Beard blazer to your next meeting in Washington, D.C.?

The Dupont Circle, part of The Doyle Collection, a female-led, family-owned portfolio of luxury and lifestyle hotels across Ireland, the U.K. and Washington, D.C., is collaborating with Veronica Beard on The Blazer Library, a first-of-its kind in-suite experience that brings Veronica Beard's blazer directly to its guests.

The Dupont Circle created the Blazer Library so its guests can travel lighter on their visits to Washington, D.C. Available exclusively to suite guests, the Blazer Library features the Miller Dickey jacket – the design that launched Beard's business – and

remains its most distinctive piece. Offered in black or navy with signature gold buttons, each blazer is arranged by the hotel's guest relations team and placed in-suite for use throughout the stay, with return upon departure.

Guests seeking a more personalized experience can request a private in-suite styling session with a Veronica Beard stylist, who will offer curated recommendations to own. The hotel will also coordinate with the nearby Veronica Beard Georgetown boutique to facilitate purchases and home delivery if the guest wants to make the blazer a permanent addition to their wardrobe.

Bernadette Doyle Callagher, chairman of The Doyle Collection, said, "At the Doyle Collection, our goal is simple: to create experiences that feel effortless, thoughtful and true to the way our guests live and travel today. As a female traveler myself, I know the importance of feeling both comfortable and stylish while on the move. That's why we're especially excited to partner with Veronica Beard, whose timeless aesthetic aligns so beautifully with our vision of modern hospitality."

Stephanie Unwin, president of Veronica Beard, added, "We design with the modern woman's lifestyle in mind – she's on the move, balancing business, family and everything in between. We are excited to partner with The Dupont Circle Hotel on the Blazer Library, as it gives us the opportunity to meet women on their travels, extending our vision of stylish living beyond the closet and into the hotel experience."

The program is available starting Oct. 1 and runs through Dec. 31. Guests will be able to book suites with this option starting next week. There is no extra cost for this option. Guests can secure this experience by booking The Blazer Library offer directly online or by calling the hotel. Reservations must be made at least 72 hours in advance. Quantities are limited, and only one blazer is available per stay. — L.L.

## Hunnam's Moment

Being the face of Mackage came in handy for Charlie Hunnam while he was filming Netflix's "Monster: The Ed Gein Story" earlier this year. "I shot the new season of 'Monster' in the dead of winter in Chicago, which was impossibly cold. My Mackage coats saved me," the actor told WWD via email. It was only natural for him to reprise his partnership with the brand, starring in its fall 2025 campaign.

The actor and supermodel Stella Maxwell first appeared as the star duo for Mackage's spring collection in February. For fall, they posed for a winter-themed photoshoot, showcasing their looks in a library and in snow-covered landscapes.

"I'm built for the cold. I love dressing for winter. Mackage really excels with their coats and jackets. Everything is so warm and comfortable, yet effortlessly chic," Hunnam said.

In the Netflix show, written by Ryan Murphy, Hunnam plays Ed Gein, the serial killer who stalked the fields of rural Wisconsin in the 1950s. "My role has been the greatest challenge of my career to date," the actor said. "Everything about the role felt foreign to me, so I had to do a great deal of preparation to understand the character. It was a very satisfying experience. I learned that the greater the challenge, the greater the reward."

According to him, the show is primarily about mental health. "That is a subject I feel needs far more attention than we give it, so this was a great opportunity. As a society

at large, I believe we face greater challenges with our collective mental health than ever before. I hope we can open up more discussion about this moving forward, to lessen the stigma surrounding the subject and hopefully find ways to allocate far more resources to people in need of help," he said.

While getting into character for the show, Hunnam, who is known for "Sons of Anarchy" and "Pacific Rim," lost almost 30 pounds and delved into extensive research. Needless to say, preparing for the Mackage photoshoot was "far more spontaneous," he said.

"I love Mackage's attention to detail. There's a philosophy of precision with everything they do. I also love the dual aspects of high aesthetics and functionality in every piece they make. It's fashion that is designed to support any environment," Hunnam said.

Mackage's fall 2025 campaign introduces the Le Monde Mackage, a collection anchored in architectural precision, crocodile-embossed leathers, reversible plaids and crafted tailoring, according to the brand.

Le Monde Mackage is now available on mackage.com. "Monster: The Ed Gein Story" will premiere on Netflix on Oct. 3. — RENAN BOTELHO

## Talking Shop

Responsibility and sustainability are talking points in the watch and jewelry space, and the Responsible Jewellery Council wants to ensure its members' stores spread the word, too.

Its first dedicated



Another visual available to RJC members.

retail campaign is launching Thursday in the form of a ready-to-use communication kit.

"Now more than ever, transparency and ethical practices are not optional – they are demanded," RJC chairman Dave Meleski told WWD exclusively. "Today's consumers want to know the full story behind their purchases: where materials come from, how they are sourced and whether people and the planet are treated with respect along the way."

Meleski insisted on the pivotal role of retailers as "the consumer-facing voice of these efforts" and the RJC's role in supporting efforts to deliver the message. "In doing so, technical compliance becomes more than a standard – it becomes a powerful value proposition that reinforces both product quality and the values modern consumers expect," he continued.

Available to its retail members, which include watch and jewelry retailers but also brands such as Boucheron, Cartier and Tiffany & Co., the communication kit comprises images that can be used on physical signage and social media as well as a handbook with information for retail staff.

"We want people to know that when they shop with an RJC member, they are supporting an industry committed to making a positive difference for communities, for the environment and for future generations," added John Hall, who serves as the RJC's interim executive director since the departure of Melanie Grant in January.

Dedicated #LoveResponsibleJewellery and #LoveResponsibleWatches hashtags have also been created.

In addition to the material from the campaign, which is offered on a voluntary basis, the 75 RJC members under its retail vertical can also access in-store support and workshops. — LILY TEMPLETON ■



Charlie Hunnam and Stella Maxwell



The Miller Dickey jacket from Veronica Beard.