

WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.



Special Time
Piaget has begun celebrating its 150th anniversary with a revamped Polo watch and new store concept. **Page 4**



Adam's Arcade
As his brand turns 10, Adam Lippes is planning a major expansion, with runway shows and lots more stores. **Page 5**



More Mugler
Casey Cadwallader showed Mugler's first official menswear collection in years as part of his pre-fall lineup. **Page 22**



Mountain High

Chairman and CEO Remo Ruffini has been investing in Moncler Grenoble, rebooting it as a high-performance brand, differentiating it from the Moncler Collection and Genius lines, and the impressive coed fall 2024 fashion show held last weekend in a Saint Moritz forest reflected his high ambitions, as he shined a light on the fashion as well as the brand's advanced technology. Here, an example of a look that blends comfort, function and style – and is fur-free. *For more, see pages 6 and 7.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY GIOVANNI GIANNONI

BEAUTY

Estée Lauder To Cut Up to 5 Percent Of Workforce

The Clinique owner just unveiled a restructuring plan.

BY KATHRYN HOPKINS

The Estée Lauder Cos. has revealed a restructuring plan, including layoffs, as it continues to tread water amid struggles in Asia and at home.

The owner of Clinique, Mac, Tom Ford and others will reduce its 62,000-strong global workforce by between 3 and 5 percent, starting June 30, as part of the plans. It is not yet known which departments will be impacted.

Its share price shot up by around 12 percent to close at \$150.28 on the back of the news, but this was still way below its peak of \$370 in January 2022.

The other components of the restructuring program are yet to be announced, but the company said the plan will focus on reorganization and rightsizing certain areas of the company, as well as

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BEAUTY

Cosmoprof Miami Off To a Hot Start

The conference, held Jan. 23 to 25, drew more than 19,000 attendees and 700 exhibitors.

BY JENNY B. FINE

It may have been 9 a.m., but the mimosas were flowing and the mood was festive at the opening ceremonies for the inaugural Cosmoprof Miami conference – and why not. With more than 19,000 attendees from 113 countries and 700 exhibitors from 40 countries, the event drew a larger crowd than anticipated, and looks primed to become a permanent part of the beauty schedule.

“We’ve exceeded all of our expectations, with thousands of retailers, distributors, investors and media from around the globe,” said Ed McNeill, Cosmoprof’s senior vice president, as he cut the opening ribbon with attendees including Miami Beach city commissioner Laura Dominguez.

Fifty-six percent of the exhibitors are new to Cosmoprof, looking to take advantage of Miami’s centrality to South, Central and North America, and the Latin American presence was double that of Cosmoprof’s existing Las Vegas event held annually in July.

“Cosmoprof North America’s expansion to Miami was a huge success,” said

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10


BUSINESS

Wall Street Watches as Tapestry's Buyout of Capri Draws Nearer

- Some are speculating that Tapestry could spin off Versace and Jimmy Choo to pay down debt from the deal.

BY EVAN CLARK

The megadeal to bring together Tapestry Inc. and Capri Holdings and build a \$12 billion giant should come into focus just a little more this week.

While it's still not clear exactly when the transaction will close, both the acquirer (Tapestry) and the acquiree (Capri) will report quarterly results on Thursday.

Before Joanne Crevoiserat, chief executive officer of Tapestry, sprung the deal on the market in August, the two companies were natural competitors with plenty of accessible luxury overlap.

But the zero-sum game between them has changed and soon, Capri's problems will be Tapestry's, as the former's brands (Michael Kors, Versace and Jimmy Choo) join the latter's (Coach, Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman).

Fiscal third-quarter expectations are low for Capri.

Analysts expect Capri's revenues to fall by just over 2 percent to \$1.48 billion, on top of the company's 6 percent drop a year

ago, according to FactSet. Earnings per share are likewise projected to decline, to \$1.73 from \$1.84 a year ago.

"Michael Kors' North America wholesale business remains under pressure and a slowdown in the luxury category is dampening growth of Versace and Choo," said Ike Boruchow, an analyst at Wells Fargo, in a research note.

"Looking at Coach versus Michael Kors specifically over the past four quarters, we see a large divergence in performance," Boruchow said. "While Coach trends have slowed, revenue growth has remained positive. Conversely, Michael Kors has seen trends remain starkly negative, though are expected to improve in the upcoming quarter."

That might be OK as Crevoiserat & Co. feel they have settled on a data-savvy operating model that works and can be applied to Kors.

Overall, analysts are looking for Tapestry's fiscal second-quarter revenues to rise by just over 1 percent to \$2.06 billion while EPS increases to \$1.46 from \$1.36.

But Tapestry still has a big job ahead. It's taken on some \$7.5 billion in debt to buy Capri and has the responsibility of successfully bringing the two companies together.

That has some thinking that Tapestry might not actually become a \$12 billion giant, but look to sell off Versace and Jimmy Choo to bolster its accessible luxury positioning.

After all, Capri's CEO John Idol was fielding interest from would-be buyers last year as Crevoiserat made her overture.

"We believe Tapestry's management could opt to sell off Capri's luxury brands and use proceeds to pay down debt/shrink the enterprise value of the business, which would potentially create greater upside," said Wells Fargo's Boruchow.

The analyst said the combined company – with all six brands intact – could be worth \$60 a share. But the estimate on Tapestry rises to \$70 a share if the company decided to spin off Versace and Jimmy Choo and used the \$3.5 billion in proceeds to pay down debt.

Such a move would let profits earmarked to pay interest fall to the bottom line instead.

Crevoiserat's deal to buy Capri might have been more than the biggest U.S. fashion deal of the year, it might have been the first domino to fall in a series of deals that will, once again, reorder the fashion scene.

BUSINESS

David Simon, Fashion's Bullish Landlord

- The CEO of Simon Property Group likes his position in a world with few new malls. He also sold off some of his stake in Authentic.

BY EVAN CLARK

Retail might still be a tough game, but David Simon likes where he sits – atop an empire of high-end malls in an age when few new malls are being built.

"There used to be 40 million square feet of retail real estate built every year," said Simon, who is chairman and chief executive officer of Simon Property Group, on a call with analysts on Monday. "Now there's essentially less than a few million here and there. And then there's been obsolescence, too, which makes the supply shrink as well."

"The importance of brick-and-mortar has never been higher," he said. "Don't get me wrong, e-commerce is critically important, but all of this stuff about e-commerce, cost of customer acquisition, returns, stickiness, et., it all continues to be a challenge. If you've looked at the [pure online] marketplaces, they run into problems, so they really need to be connected to a brick-and-mortar for survivability. So all of those things are pointing to a positive picture."

Simon was going over fourth-quarter results and also taking something of a victory lap after the company marked 30 years as a public company in December, having paid, as he noted, \$42 billion of dividends along the way.

The company started with 115 properties when it went public and over the years bought 300, developed over 50 and sold about 250.

That impulse – to have a portfolio and

manage it – is alive and well at Simon, which sold off some of its shares of Authentic Brands Group, cutting its stake to just under 10 percent from just under 12 percent.

"We will continue to look to monetize these investments," Simon said.

Authentic is a powerhouse acquirer and intellectual property owner that is led by Jamie Salter and operates brands from Barneys New York and David Beckham to Van Heusen and Vince Camuto.

The sale of the stake added \$117.4 million to Simon's bottom line, which saw net income rise 10.9 percent to \$747.5 million from \$673.8 million a year earlier.

In the third quarter, Simon logged after-tax gains of \$145.5 million, on paper, as it reduced its stake in the Sparc Group joint venture with Authentic that operates Forever 21, Nautica, Reebok and others. Simon's stake in Authentic was also diluted as fast-fashion giant Shein joined the mix.

Over the past decade, Simon ventured somewhat away from its sweet spot of owning and running malls to dabble in being a retailer – an effort that stepped up during the pandemic when so many chains went bankrupt. But retail has largely been a high-profile sideline.

Even though brick-and-mortar retail is enjoying a resurgence from the pandemic when consumers stayed in and ordered online, many lower-tier malls are still struggling.

Simon, however, has built a portfolio of top properties, including the King of Prussia mall near Philadelphia, Roosevelt Field on Long Island and The Galleria in Houston.

The company said its occupancy rate at the end of the quarter on Dec. 31 stood at



David Simon, CEO of Simon Property Group.

95.8 percent, up from 94.9 percent a year earlier. Minimum rent per square foot also rose to \$56.82, from \$55.13.

The CEO noted that new leases are coming in at about \$75 a foot while renewals are being priced at \$65 a foot.

Retailers want to be at the mall, but they're still having to work hard to drive interest in a touchy consumer economy.

Annual retail sales per square foot fell 1.3 percent to \$743 at Simon malls last year.

BUSINESS

Simon Porte Jacquemus to Receive Neiman's Innovation Award

● Jacquemus, along with two other creative directors, Dior's Maria Grazia Chiuri and Daniel Roseberry from Schiaparelli, will be honored by Neiman's during Paris Fashion Week.

BY DAVID MOIN

For his "revolutionary" approach to brand building, Simon Porte Jacquemus, founder and creative director of Jacquemus, will receive the 2024 Neiman Marcus Award for Innovation in the Field of Fashion.

In revealing the award, Neiman's credited Jacquemus for "distinct show presentation, marketing and merchandising" and cited the larger-than-life Jacquemus handbag-cars seen zipping through the streets of Paris last spring, his fall 2023 show set against the grandeur of the Palace of Versailles and the ephemeral "Jacquemus 24/24" vending machine pop-ups. His latest show, "Les Sculptures," presented an unusual perspective on fashion as art, Neiman's noted.

"Simon is a once-in-a-generation innovator whose vision, design skills, and business prowess have resulted in one of fashion's most imaginative brands that has

quickly resonated with our customers," Geoffroy van Raemdonck, chief executive officer of the Neiman Marcus Group, said in a statement.

"Simon has built a powerful brand rooted in French spirit with stunning fashion that intimately connects with his engaged brand loyalists," added Lana Todorovich, chief merchandising officer of Neiman Marcus. "His talent for design and storytelling, coupled with his ability to be both playful and luxurious in his design, has captured the attention of our new luxury clients."

In 2023, Neiman Marcus revived its annual awards program after a six-year hiatus, and expanded it with two new categories – innovation and creative impact – in addition to continuing the Neiman Marcus Award for Distinguished Service in the Field of Fashion. The award program was originated 87 years ago by the late, legendary Neiman Marcus impresario Stanley Marcus along with Carrie Marcus Neiman.

As previously reported, Maria Grazia Chiuri, creative director of women's haute couture, ready-to-wear and accessories collections for Dior, will receive the distinguished service award, and Daniel Roseberry, creative director for Schiaparelli, will receive the creative

impact award. The three 2024 award recipients will be honored during Paris Fashion Week on March 3 at the Ritz Paris.

"I am really happy to receive the Neiman Marcus Award. It's a beautiful recognition for the brand and my team," Jacquemus said in a statement. "As an independent designer, I was always keen on being innovative and creative in the design of my collections and also in my communication. It's always about communicating and creating experiences with our community in a unique way. Jacquemus was always supported by the American market, and especially Neiman Marcus since many years."

The Dallas-based Neiman Marcus started carrying handbags by Jacquemus in spring 2022 and has since grown its business with the French brand. Neiman's plans to increase the brand's points of distribution significantly over the next two years, including launching Jacquemus men's ready-to-wear this summer. In addition, Jacquemus will develop "an exclusive expression of the brand for Neiman Marcus customers." Neiman's indicated that it is currently Jacquemus' largest U.S. distributor.

Neiman's award program is intended to strengthen the retailer's partnerships with luxury designers and brands, generate greater business with them, and gain an edge on competitors such as Saks Fifth



Simon Porte Jacquemus

Avenue, Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom, which is particularly important in the current climate of softening luxury sales. The program can increase a designer's distribution across NMG's three selling channels – stores, e-commerce and remote selling – and augment NMG's strategy of "retail-tainment," which centers on developing innovative special events and activations in stores. Exclusives are typically part of the program.

BUSINESS

Stocks Plunge, Job Worries Cast Shadow on Lunar New Year Spending in China

● Bank of America Securities anticipated that Lunar New Year sales would increase around 4 to 6 percent year-over-year.

BY DENNI HU AND TIANWEI ZHANG

China's Lunar New Year, which will welcome the Year of the Dragon on Saturday, is expected to log 9 billion domestic trips this year, almost doubling the number taken during last year's holiday rush.

Widely considered the world's largest human migration, this year's official seven-day holiday begins on the day of the new year, but for a large number of people, the holiday can last for up to a month.

According to data from the travel booking platform Trip.com, bookings for outbound travel were 10 times the amount of last year, with Asian destinations – including Thailand, Japan and South Korea – the most popular. The National Immigration Administration recently told state media that outbound travel passenger traffic has returned to the pre-COVID-19

levels of 2019.

However, an uncertain macroeconomic climate in China has made investors wonder if a long-awaited rebound could unfold in the new year.

For the past few weeks, a floundering stock market – the CSI 300 Index, a capitalization-weighted stock market index designed to reflect the performance of the top 300 stocks traded on the Shanghai Stock Exchange and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, fell 5.49 percent year-to-date – has dampened hope across the board, including a pool of small Chinese investors, who make up around 25 percent of the market.

Shortly after the slump, China's Ministry of Finance pledged to maintain fiscal expansion at a "necessary intensity" to enhance "the positive trend of economic recovery."

At the same time, China's employment prospects are worsening as previous crackdowns on the tech and property sectors are trickling down to smaller firms. China's manufacturing activity contracted for the fourth straight month in January, while the nation's services activity expanded

at a slightly slower pace in the period.

Grappling with rising costs, consequences of geopolitical tensions, and a shrinking population, average monthly salaries in 38 major

Chinese cities dropped by 1.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023, the biggest quarterly decline since 2016, according to Zhilian Zhaopin, a job recruitment platform. The jobless rate in December for the 16-to-24 age group stood at 14.9 percent, excluding students, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Despite gloomy headlines, Goldman Sachs maintained a "constructive" view of China's economy.

"We forecast 18 percent and 19 percent potential returns for MSCI China and CSI300 in 2024, predicated on around 5 percent real GDP growth and assuming an effective policy put [into place], approximately 10 percent EPS growth realization, and moderate valuation recovery," said the report, published on Jan. 23.

Goldman Sachs also said that "a comprehensive and forceful easing package," "demand-side-focused stimulus," and "confidence-boosting policy targeting the private economy," "government backstop in the housing and stock markets," and "improvement and predictability in U.S.-China relations" are key catalysts to turn the current situation around.

During the Beijing "Two Sessions" meeting in March, China will unveil its 2024 GDP target. According to IMF forecasts, the economy will slow to growth of 4.6 percent in 2024 from 2023's 5.4 percent.

Bank of America Securities anticipated that Lunar New Year sales would increase around 4 percent to 6 percent year-over-year.

In terms of consumer segmentation, Bernstein believes that the country's "Premium Consuming Class," or the top 93 million earners, are expected to drive 5.4 percent sustained growth for the next three years, especially for high-end categories such as luxury leather goods, ultra-premium Baijiu, or Chinese white wine, international prestige cosmetics, and premium automobiles.

"We expect the cohort population to grow at a 5.4 percent compounded annual

growth rate from 2022 to 2027, adding an incremental 28 million members by 2027," Bernstein added.

"This exceeds the growth of the equivalent consumer cohort in India, Indonesia, and Vietnam combined," wrote Bernstein.

Bernstein also noted that a cluster of cities around the Yangtze River Delta and the Guangdong Bay Area, Fujian and Sichuan provinces, will play a dominant role in driving premium goods growth.

Bernstein favors premium brands that are investing in Shandong, Fujian, and Sichuan, which are "the most underappreciated Premium Consuming Class growth opportunities in China."

"We like brand owners showing a clear geographic focus," added the report.

Top-tier players have been busy pushing Lunar New Year-themed collections with a slew of experiential activations across key luxury retail destinations to sustain growth in a bearish market. Fendi, for example, put its largest pop-up activation for its Fendi x Frgmt x Pokémon three-way collaboration in Taikoo Li Chengdu, where Louis Vuitton and Gucci also put out dragon-themed installations to attract business.

In Taikoo Li's Guangzhou counterpart Taikoo Hui, working together with Penique Productions, the Spanish company that covered the Louis Vuitton spring 2024 show venue in orange, the Taiwan-based immersive experience creator Inception filled the giant glass ceiling at the top of the mall with a larger-than-life red balloon, where shoppers can go inside and explore the submerged dragon installation.

In Shanghai, the Fosun-owned shopping destination Yu Garden put on a dazzling lantern show with oversized mythical dragons and sea creatures jumping on the zig-zag bridge, where Lanvin hosted its spring 2021 show. According to local reports, it helped nearby restaurants achieve full bookings during the holiday period.

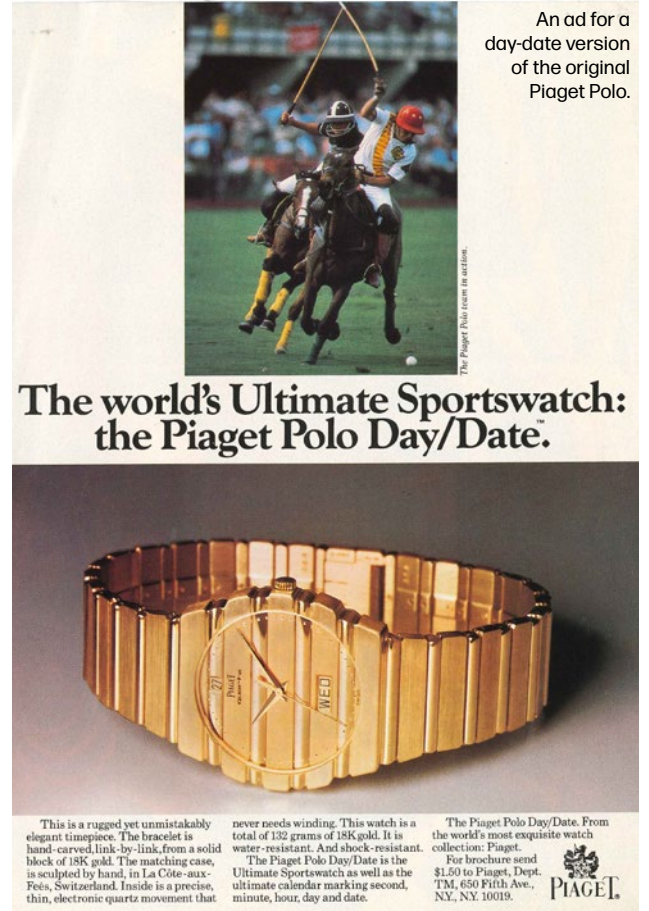


Tourists view a fish lantern at the Yuyuan Garden ahead of Chinese New Year, the Year of the Dragon, on Jan. 19 in Shanghai.

ACCESSORIES

Piaget Kicks Off 150th Anniversary With Revamped Polo Watch, New Retail Concept

The 18-karat Piaget Polo 79 marked the start of the Swiss brand's casual chic take on luxury.



● The Swiss watchmaker and jeweler is looking to leverage its double specialty and is tapping into Korea's power of influence to grow further in Asia.

BY LILY TEMPLETON

PARIS — Piaget wants to remind the world how vibrant it is at age 150, with the launch of the Polo 79 watch and a new retail concept as the opening gambits of its anniversary year.

“What we want to express here is the know-how of the brand both in craftsmanship and creativity,” said chief executive officer Benjamin Comar.

Launched in 1979, the original timepiece “changed the company culture, in the way they did business with small series and special orders to something more akin to ready-to-wear,” the executive continued.

A full-gold sporty elegant watch constructed from alternating polished gadroons and brushed blocks, the waterproof, shockproof model came with an integrated bracelet to match the demand of well-heeled clients who wanted a sportier alternative to the dress watches they usually reached for.

Yves Piaget “understood that trends had changed but also that there were differences between the luxury consumption of European and American [customers],” with the latter driving toward a casual chic interpretation of luxury, said head of patrimony Jean-Bernard Forot.

While hewing close to its predecessor, the 18-karat Piaget Polo 79 has received a number of updates, starting with a slightly bigger 38mm size and the use of an ultrathin 1200PI in-house self-winding calibre instead of a quartz movement.

Beyond the launch of a product embodying the house ideal of “past and present colliding into flamboyance,” it’s another piece in the brand-burnishing strategy that Comar has put in place since arriving at the helm in 2021.

It seems to be paying off, if the Piaget executive’s comment that the brand’s storytelling is “doing the job for us” is anything to go by.

Though its parent group Compagnie Financière Richemont does not break out results for individual houses, according to Morgan Stanley reports on the Swiss watch industry with consulting firm LuxeConsult, Piaget’s turnover rebounded from 2020’s low point of 181 million Swiss francs to an estimated 265 million Swiss francs in 2022.

Its estimated number of watches sold likewise increased by nearly a third, but remained lower than prepandemic levels.

While the Piaget executive did not comment on these figures, he noted that interest in the brand had markedly stepped up.

“Engagement rates are really improving and we are seeing more and more interest in our vintage pieces, at auctions and so on,” he said. “People are interested in what makes Piaget unique in the market: flamboyance, creativity but always being chic.”

Prospects are all the better thanks to Piaget’s position as both a watchmaker and jeweler. Comar remained confident that Piaget’s high-end positioning in watches and a very dynamic jewelry market would see it through current macroeconomic and geopolitical concerns.

“We have been improving our jewelry in the past 10 years, catching up with watches and staying on those two legs is very important for us,” he said, saying that jewelry had been part of the company since 1955. “We want to be balanced in the two [fields].”

High-ticket items are a likely area of growth but the executive insisted that Piaget has no intention of letting go of its entry-level offer, although prices may mechanically increase due to rising precious materials and labor costs.

Evolution in consumer habits, the reassurance offered by hard luxury but also the ever-rising price of apparel and accessories are likely to reinforce the dynamic. “Now you get a very nice piece of jewelry — durable, transmittable,

repairable — at the level of a handbag, and that puts jewelry in the mind of a wider population in general,” said Comar.

That widening “is a lot about geographics,” he added. In his opinion, age “doesn’t mean anything in today’s world” because people are selecting based on integrity, although that makes younger demographics more attuned to a brand’s authenticity.

While the brand has been seeing an emerging clientele in the U.S. and returned growth in its historic European home market, its strongest opportunities lie in markets whose appetites in luxury or for Western jewelry brands are more recent, such as Australia, Scandinavia or South Asia. Take Thailand.

“The culture of jewelry is very strong [there] and used to be reserved to local makers, but now it’s expanding to international brands,” Comar said. In September, Thai actor Nattawin “Apo” Wattanagitiphat was named the first friend of the brand for the region, and Piaget recently opened a boutique in Bangkok.

Vietnam, where it opened a second boutique, in Ho Chi Minh City, and India, which is showing “very good signs,” are also areas of focus.

As for the Korean market, “a very advanced market” for Piaget, according to Comar, being strong there means tapping into its impact on other Asian markets. “It has a lot of influence in terms of marketing and culture,” he continued.

In a bid to get the brand in front of more eyes, Comar said the focus would be “relooking rather than opening” boutiques in Piaget’s retail network of 140 doors worldwide, although that number could grow to 160. Paris, Hong and Tokyo were among the destinations he cited as being on the improvement list.

Hence the other statement Piaget is making to start this anniversary year: a new retail concept.

Unveiled at its address in the upscale Taipei 101 mall in Taiwan, it leans into the “House of Gold” facet of Piaget’s identity and was designed by New York-based

Benjamin Comar



architect and designer Rafael de Cárdenas.

Textured golden panels alternate with glass windows to play on contrasts for the facade, while murals inside in shades of green, blue and gold nod to the brand’s play on textures and ornamental stones across the retail spaces and VIP areas. Space has been made for curios as well as vintage pieces.

“We want to have the art of welcoming what we have and express that collision of past and present,” said Comar. “We have great stories to tell and maybe we didn’t tell them enough.”

Later in the year, the brand will further lean into this desire to be seen, rather than just sell itself, to a wider audience by opening the showcase of its next high jewelry collection to the public in Paris in June.

“The faster the world goes, the more luxury, [especially] the traditions and craftsmanship in its making, will be important,” Comar said, highlighting how interest in craftsmanship of all kinds ballooned during the COVID-19 pandemic and durably boosted the luxury segment. “We are very happy to show to the world what Piaget is about.”

FASHION

Adam Lippes Is Entering the 'Gold Dust' Phase of His Brand

● In his second decade, the Sarofim family-backed designer is planning runway, retail and more.

BY BOOTH MOORE

Adam Lippes will be kicking off New York Fashion Week early by hosting a 10th anniversary dinner party at Majorelle on Tuesday night, with a glittery list of Swan-like guests including Molly Ringwald, Ivy Getty, Tory Burch and Deeda Blair.

When reached Friday, Lippes hadn't yet had a chance to watch Ryan Murphy's new hit series "Feud: Capote vs. The Swans," but the designer's brand of understated luxury sportswear certainly evokes those ladies, though today's breed focus on much more than long lunches and gardening.

"We've really built the brand over the past 10 years in a very quiet-luxury way before quiet luxury was a thing. And I have really focused on the clothes and the customer," said Lippes, who has spent much of the last few years on the road for trunk shows. "As we're entering into this hopefully next 10 years, I want to focus on the sprinkling the gold dust of visual image, marketing, communication, PR, all that stuff we really haven't done."

In this next phase, he's planning on having a spring runway show at New York Fashion Week every September, and has an aggressive plan to open retail – 10 stores in the next five years.

His next store, following the first that debuted in New York's Brookfield Place in 2021, will open in March in the River Oaks neighborhood of Houston, home to his investors, the Sarofim family, and their fund-management empire.

"I chose Houston for a second store because we have such great support in the city. River Oaks is a beautiful shopping area, we're right across from Dolce & Gabbana, Brunello Cucinelli is a couple doors away, Balmain is opening nearby. And it's our first store that we are building from the ground up so that was an exciting process as well," said Lippes. "I was just in Greenwich looking at store spaces. We have a really active plan for stores."

Part of the success of Lippes' approach so far has been achieved through community building, and creating one-on-one relationships with clients. That will still be important, but so will the bigger picture. Lippes, who currently has 40 employees, has hired a PR firm, and started working with an art director to hone the brand's storytelling and create a new visual language.

"We presented our spring 2024 collection at The Crystal Charity Ball in Dallas last year, which was a huge thing and very customer facing. We're doing the Best Dressed luncheon in Houston this year in September, which is also a very big customer-facing show. And I will still be going out to some stores, but it's not really scalable," said Lippes, whose wholesale is 70 percent of the business. "Me going to 20 stores a season is kind of maxing out. So I still will be doing it but maybe not quite as active as before."

Lippes' career has had several chapters. He honed his skills at Oscar de la Renta as creative director between 1996 and 2003, before launching Adam Plus Eve loungewear, which blossomed into a contemporary label acquired by Kellwood. In 2012, after Kellwood pulled the plug, Lippes bought back his name. A year later,



Adam Lippes

he relaunched as a designer collection with a focus on timeless sportswear and occasion wear in exquisite florals and fabrications, made in New York.

Certainly, Lippes can always be counted on for a gala look, like the pleated black Delphos gown from the spring collection (indeed, dresses are his top-selling category), but he also wants to be selling bandeau tops and miniskirts to a different customer.

"There's more to our customer's wardrobe that we can be doing and we can also be dressing her daughter," he said.

Even as he grows the brand's retail footprint, he's still devoted to wholesale, which is key for smaller brands, and mentions Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus and Kirna Zabête as key partners. "I'm so proud of our positioning" he added. "When I go into Neiman Marcus, and we're sitting next to Dior, it's like wow, yeah."

Accessories, eyewear and beauty will come in due time, he hopes.

"My biggest challenge now as a brand is that no one's ever heard of us. But when she knows us, she loves us. And she buys a lot from us. But she's learned of me through me going to stores and we've been so quiet otherwise. Now's the time to change that."

Interiors are a huge inspiration for Lippes, whose homes in New York and the Berkshires have both been covered by magazines, and he'd like to delve deeper into the category.

He has a collaboration with British home retailer Oka on tabletop, and textiles and furniture are launching soon.

For fall 2024, Lippes is working with a stylist for the first time, Malina Gilchrist, and will be showing his collection at his studio next week.

But in future, he's looking to the runway for more exposure. The two shows he has had in 10 years both resulted in the brand's top-selling wholesale seasons.

"So they work," he said. "Just look at all the talk about the Galliano [Atelier Margiela] couture show. When they're done right, they resonate."

As a small, independent designer in New York, Lippes faces the same task as his peers – cutting through the noise – and competing with the bottomless pockets big luxury brands have to pay for attention through celebrities.

Currently, Lippes' business is at \$35 million.

"Dior does \$30 million out of one store," he said. "So we have to be creative about how we market things. Because if we compete on the same playing field as a super brand, we're gonna lose. My hope is that I can find a celebrity, or celebrities, whether music, or film and TV, that I can grow with...But I'm realistic that I may not be dressing the A-list because we can't afford it," he said, sharing his fantasy of dressing Amal Clooney.

"It's not just the celebrity thing, it's marketing in general, because the super brands can do so much of it. But there are smaller brands that have done a great job. I look at what Khaite has done, or Jacquemus. Their marketing has been pretty incredible, and they went by their own playbooks."

He's up for the challenge. "Getting the positioning right is really hard, making and selling clothes that resonate with a consumer is really hard. Staying in business in our industry is really hard. We've been able to get to the point now where we can invest in that gold dust to sprinkle on top of this little jewel of a brand. This is the fun stuff."



Adam Lippes, spring 2024



Adam Lippes, fall 2021

FASHION

Remo Ruffini Shines Light on Moncler Grenoble With Bold Vision

● The chairman and CEO has been investing in the brand and the impressive coed fall 2024 fashion show held in a Saint Moritz forest reflected his high ambitions.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GIOVANNI GIANNONI

SAINT MORITZ -Moncler Group chairman and chief executive officer Remo Ruffini knows how to drive his message home.

After rebooting Moncler Grenoble as a high performance brand, Ruffini has been working to differentiate it from the company's Collection and Genius labels, investing in the product offer, distribution and communication, with high ambitions. The Moncler Grenoble fall 2024 coed fashion show held here Saturday evening perfectly reflected his strategy, as he shined a light on the fashion as well as the brand's advanced technology with an event that made an impression on even the most jaded industry veterans - the show drew the likes of Anne Hathaway, Willow Smith, Kate Moss, Shaun White, Renzo Rosso, Carlo Capasa, Hwang Minhyun, Nina Dobrev, Olivia Palermo and Johannes Huebl, among others.

The event was also in sync with his constant goal to cement the brand's community and to offer special experiences.

"Moncler Grenoble is the result of extensive research, experimentation and development of fabrics and techniques, which leads to expertise and authority in a brand that is a pillar of our group, but now is the time to shine a light on it after focusing over the past few years on building the main Moncler Collection and Genius," said Ruffini ahead of the show.

To wit, Moncler Grenoble has been working for years with ski instructors at the best international ski schools in towns such as Gstaad, Kitzbuhel, Niseido, Verbier or Zermatt, to name a few. Brand ambassadors include marquee athletes who range from Shaun White and Xuetong Cai to Perrine Laffont and Richard Permin, who front a dedicated ad campaign launched at the end of last year. Called "Beyond Performance," the campaign was photographed in Switzerland by Jamie Hawkesworth, who captured high-adrenaline ski runs and intimate, off-duty gatherings among the athletes.

Touting Grenoble's technology, Ruffini said "it trickles down to the other group brands, improving lightness and performance of the materials and comfort."

Moncler Grenoble owes its name to the city that hosted the Olympic Games in 1968 when the brand was the French national ski team's official supplier.

"I am convinced we must be more precise, balancing fashion and luxury with our roots. I believe in creativity and that you can be stylish on the slopes, too," said Ruffini.

Fashion and luxury brands have increasingly been turning their attention to skiwear as a burgeoning category to deliver a rounded lifestyle offer. Examples range from Louis Vuitton and Chanel to Balenciaga, which have all launched skiwear collections. Fendi, Brunello Cucinelli, Bottega Veneta, Paul & Shark, Pollini and Golden Goose, among others, have hosted activations in tony destinations such as Cortina d'Ampezzo,



Here and right: Looks from Moncler Grenoble.



Anne Hathaway



Italy; Gstaad, Switzerland; Aspen; and Courchevel, France.

"Yes, this segment is becoming more crowded, but I am not worried," contended Ruffini, confident in the brand's expertise and its industrial capabilities. "We have set up a dedicated manufacturing plant [in Romania], and we combine style with high quality."

He highlighted that outdoor experiences after the pandemic have become increasingly more important, particularly in the U.S. and Asia, with the consequent boom in the outerwear category. Ruffini noted that the brand has been extending its offer to the summer with lighter-weight products.

Sales in 2023 of Moncler Group, which also includes Stone Island and is publicly listed in Milan, will be released on Feb. 28. According to the latest figures available, the group weathered the challenging macroeconomic, social and political challenges.

In the nine months ended Sept. 30, the group reported revenues of 1.8 billion euros, a 16 percent increase compared with 1.55 billion euros in the same period last year. Sales of the Moncler brand in nine months rose 19 percent to 1.49 billion euros.

Ruffini recalled that he said upon the group's initial public offering in 2013 he was aiming "to survive fashion." Now, he

underscored that this is "not banal," as consistency and staying true to the brand's roots is his mantra.

"Grenoble has allowed us over the years to keep a foot in the sports world, in the mountains, skiing, active sports, hiking and biking, a world that is becoming increasingly relevant, especially in the U.S., and we need to raise awareness around our product, around Grenoble, which comprises high performance, après ski, and performance and style, where we express our maximum creativity on the slopes, and I think this is still not very clear to the end consumer. We have always been committed to Grenoble, but we didn't really communicate this commitment." ▶



A key step in this direction was also the opening last December of the Moncler Grenoble boutique in Saint Moritz, the town where the bobsled was born and which for years has been known as a luxury winter destination for the jet-set. As reported, it has been undergoing a renaissance, with a renewed buzz.

Designed by the architectural firm Küchel Architects, the impressive 3,230-square-foot space with seven windows on the town's central Via Maistra pays tribute to the landscape of the surrounding Swiss Alps, with natural materials including wood, stone and marble juxtaposed with metal and futuristic design elements. A few steps away on the same street is the Moncler flagship.

Further highlighting the brand, the company has been investing in Moncler Grenoble pop-up stores.

As of Sept. 30, the network of Moncler directly operated boutiques comprised 262 units.

The first Grenoble collection was presented in New York in January 2010 during the city's fashion week. The last runway event held by the brand was in February 2017, a winter ball staged at Manhattan's Hammerstein Ballroom during New York Fashion Week.

However, Ruffini said the event in Saint Moritz was the "first true show for the brand," and that he saw more "itinerant experiences" for Grenoble going forward.

The fall 2024 collection was paraded in the Clavadatsch lodge and its forest with a view of the tony Swiss resort town. The idea of showing in the ski resort felt personal, as Ruffini explained before the show that Saint Moritz is a second home for both himself and Moncler, where the company opened its first store more than two decades ago.

Guests arrived at sunset and walked a few steps into the forest, where a snaking catwalk was carved out in the snow.

The step and repeat was surely unique – a group of life-size ice statues wearing puffers standing next to a giant Moncler logo, also in ice.

"It's magical," Hathaway said of the experience. "I wasn't raised being able to spend time in the mountains, to ski, to enjoy things like these, so I'm actually very moved," said the actress, who traveled to Saint Moritz for the first time and was on the slopes skiing a day earlier, admitting she did so cautiously and with an instructor. "I'm not very good yet but I'm having a lot of fun," she said, beaming.

Moss was also in great spirits and curious about what to expect at the show. "Everything has been kept as a closely guarded secret; I don't have any idea but the forest looks amazing, it's so magical," she said, concurring with Hathaway.

"Fashion meeting function, having



products that look great but perform even better, having the board and riding with everyone today on the mountains was perfect, amazing," said brand ambassador White. Moncler Grenoble has created its first snowboard design in collaboration with Whitespace, the brand founded by the three-time Olympic gold medalist and inspired by surfboards.

Nothing was left to chance – every guest wore a white Moncler cape and wireless headphones to listen to a soundtrack that ranged from opera airs such as "Casta Diva" to waltz excerpts as they walked into a fairy-tale landscape, streams of light dancing through the trees and piercing the darkness above the sloping ground. Concerns about the cold were quelled as the seats on wooden benches were heated and white wool blankets contributed to the cozy arrangements – Thermoses filled with warm wine or hot tea added to the comfort.

The production was there, sure, but it didn't take away from the comprehensive coed collection worn by 135 models, who ranged from Mariacarla Boscono and Vittoria Ceretti to Irina Shayk and Joan Smalls.

Through the application of wool flannel and corduroy, the brand's skiwear line was completed by outfits that are technical and can also be suitable for skiing.

Shirts turned into ski jackets, and flannel pants were laminated to be fit for the slopes. Stitch embroideries and maxi crochets landed on technical pieces and textures inspired by Fair Isle mixed fabrics



Here and left:
Looks from
Moncler
Grenoble.

and colors, which grew in complexity, reaching 1,600 components in a single jacket. Texture was also added thanks to embroideries and with a 3D effect.

The color palette for fall 2024 ranged from pale tones of snow and ice, to mixes of red, white and blue, as well as warm mustard and tree greens.

Intricate geometric intarsia reminiscent of traditional quilts were shown on both technical and sheepskin jackets. Quilting created the effect of Aran knit stitches on ski jackets. Apparel and duvets were fully fashioned in knits. Mixed media capes reflected the brand's expertise with materials.

Oversize, cocooning coats were made with shaggy strands of virgin wool and alpaca, which looked like furs but were not as the company has been fur-free since the fall 2023 season.

The brand showed puffers with multicolored boudins created with the help of artificial intelligence, and quilts inspired by '70s knits. Feminine looks were seen in cropped down jackets that hugged the torso and were worn over

puffer miniskirts.

Some of the looks were also fit for off the slopes, such as the roomy wool pants with twisted rib stitches ideal for snuggling in front of a fireplace with a hot chocolate. There was an abundance of accessories, from beanies to backpacks and bags, not to mention a plethora of boots and eyewear.

It resulted in a beautiful and comprehensive collection that mixed style, sophistication and technology, blending function and comfort.

Saint Moritz holds a special place in the heart of Ruffini, who has a house in the town and is passionate about skiing. Last year, through Ruffini's family investment vehicle Archive, which has a stake in Langosteria, Moncler partnered with Enrico Buonocore, founder of the Italian premium seafood restaurant, and opened its first high-altitude location in Saint Moritz.

The idea of showing in the ski resort felt personal, as Ruffini explained before the show that Saint Moritz is a second home for both himself and Moncler, where the company opened its first store more than two decades ago. ■

BUSINESS

Farfetch Bond Holders Take Fight To Cayman Islands Court, Seek Liquidation of Holding Company

- The long-term bond holders are intensifying their efforts to recover more than \$400 million from Farfetch, which was purchased by Coupang last month as part of a distress sale.

BY SAMANTHA CONTI

LONDON – Bond holders contesting the sale of Farfetch to Coupang have taken their battle to a Cayman Islands court, demanding more than \$400 million in funds and that the main Farfetch holding company be liquidated.

The bond holders, who are in possession of more than half of Farfetch's 3.75 percent convertible senior notes, due in 2027, have filed a "winding-up petition" on the grounds that Farfetch Limited is unable to pay its debts.

According to a petition filed on Friday, the group wants independent, provisional liquidators, namely Alexander Lawson and Christopher Kennedy of the professional services firm Alvarez & Marsal, to be put in place immediately.

They also want their money back, which they say amounts to about \$404 million.

They want the liquidators to take charge of Farfetch Limited immediately "and manage its interests in the interests of the creditors, which appear not to have been taken into account to date."

The group, which is filing its petition under the name Wilmington Trust, argues that Farfetch Limited does not have a functioning or independent board of directors, and that the interests of the creditors have been ignored.

The bond holders said the liquidators need to be appointed right away so they can gain "unrestricted access" to all Farfetch assets and property.

The group wants to conduct "a substantive and independent investigation into Farfetch's affairs, financial data and documentation and ensure the interests of the creditors" are protected.

"It is just and equitable that [Farfetch Limited] be wound up ... so that independent liquidators can take control of the company, investigate the circumstances of its apparent rapid and unexplained failure, and manage the company's affairs in the interests of its creditors," the petition said.

It added that the 2027 notes are "due and payable," and that they are owed about \$404 million.

"The company has not paid that amount. The company has said that it cannot currently pay that amount, and that it does not expect to be able to pay any of that amount in the future, including as a result of the consummation of the Coupang sale," the petition said.

WWD has contacted Coupang, which purchased Farfetch out of administration last year, for comment.

Last week, after the deal officially closed, the bond holders said they were exploring "possible litigation steps" as a result of the sale.

They argue that Coupang undervalued Farfetch, and that Farfetch was not transparent with regard to its financial difficulties in the months leading up to the fire sale on Dec. 18.

As reported, Farfetch was sold in a pre-pack administration deal that saw Coupang inject \$500 million into the troubled company and take 100 percent ownership. As a result, all shareholders, including founder José Neves, saw their investments wiped out.

A pre-pack administration in the U.K. means that a rescuer for a troubled business is found, and a sale is negotiated before the administrators step in.

Last month, the bond holders argued that "allowing this transaction to complete fails to maximize the value of the assets of the company at a time when at least three other credible parties were publicly reported to be interested in all, or parts, of the business."

The bond holders, who have combined assets under management of more than \$1 trillion, said they have appointed Pallas Partners as legal counsel and Ducera Partners as financial advisers to pursue their case.

Last month the group said it was working "to urgently evaluate options to protect its interests in the face of the value



A luxe look on Farfetch.

destruction that it believes will be effected should the Coupang sale go ahead."

As part of its action, the group declared a default of the 2027 notes, which means they are "immediately due and payable in full."

The default arose from the suspension of trading and delisting of Farfetch from the New York Stock Exchange, which was imposed by the NYSE as a result of the proposed sale to Coupang.

In addition, the bond holders group said it has "serious concerns" about how Farfetch went from guiding the market to fiscal full-year liquidity of more than \$800 million in August 2023, to a holding a distressed sale four months later.

It also noted that in August 2023, analyst consensus estimated Farfetch's enterprise value to be in excess of \$3 billion.

"As such, the group is seriously concerned by the rapid and unexplained deterioration in the financial position of Farfetch between August and December 2023," the statement said.

BUSINESS

Spanx Appoints Caroline (Cricket) Whitton CEO and Jeanne Jackson Executive Chair



Caroline (Cricket) Whitton

- Most recently Whitton was the brand's president and chief growth officer.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

Spanx, the global lifestyle and shapewear brand, has appointed Caroline (Cricket) Whitton chief executive officer and Jeanne Jackson executive chair of the board.

As CEO, Whitton succeeds Kim Jones, who left in July and is serving as the general manager of Blakely Ventures. Whitton has led the day-to-day operations since Jones' departure.

Whitton most recently served as Spanx's president and chief growth officer, leading all revenue and growth efforts globally. She has driven the brand's digital transformation since joining in 2017. Prior to Spanx, she drove digital growth at brands such as Design Within Reach, where she was head of digital marketing and e-commerce, and Wayfair, where she was general manager of AllModern.com. She will partner with Jackson and Spanx's all-female board to execute ambitious growth plans.

Jackson brings decades of executive leadership experience at leading apparel, retail and lifestyle brands to the role. She has been president of

Nike, CEO of Walmart.com and CEO of Banana Republic, in addition to holding leadership posts at Saks Fifth Avenue, Victoria's Secret and the Walt Disney Co. She is serving on the boards of Moncler SpA, Monster Beverage and Delta Airlines.

"I am so happy to announce Cricket as the CEO of Spanx. Her deep commitment to our brand gives me a lot of confidence in the continued success of our business," said Sara Blakely, founder of Spanx. "I am also thrilled to welcome Jeanne Jackson to the Spanx family. Her unparalleled industry experience will be invaluable as we enter this next phase of growth and innovation. Cricket and Jeanne make a powerful team and I'm looking forward to working closely with them both in their new roles."

"I am honored to continue leading the incredible team at Spanx in this new capacity during this critical growth moment in the company's journey," said Whitton. "I'm energized by the opportunity to partner even more closely with Sara, our visionary founder, and to collaborate with Jeanne."

Asked about the next phase, Whitton told WWD they are focused on "supercharging our digital transformation, building out our global footprint, and leveraging Spanx

technology to create even more category-transforming products.

"These have all been central to our success over the years and remain core to our future strategy," said Whitton.

"I have long admired the evolution and thoughtful expansion of the Spanx business," said Jackson. "It has grown beyond its roots as a category-creator in shapewear and is increasingly recognized as a performance apparel business that cannot be defined by a single category. The best is yet to come for Spanx, and I look forward to working with Cricket, Sara and the board to drive the brand to the next level."

Asked if Jackson's post was a full-time role, a company spokeswoman said she will play an active role on the company's board. The role of executive chairman is new.

The Spanx brand, founded by Blakely in 2000, was an early pioneer in the shapewear category and has since grown into a lifestyle brand offering activewear, apparel, denim, intimates, swimwear, leggings, shapewear and hosiery. Its products are sold in more than 50 countries.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Spanx has been majority-owned by Blackstone since 2021.

EXCLUSIVE

Luke Evans to Launch Men's Basics Collection, BDXY



Luke Evans in a piece from his new BDXY line.



Swimwear remains a key part of the collection.

- The Welsh actor has partnered with his life partner Fran Tomas and fashion stylist Christopher Brown on the line of Ts, underwear and swimwear.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

Luke Evans has played everyone from Gaston in “Beauty and the Beast” to Bard the Bowman in J.R.R. Tolkien’s “The Hobbit.” Now he can add apparel industry executive to his rich résumé.

The Welsh actor and singer has teamed with his life partner, architect Fran Tomas, and his fashion stylist Christopher Brown, whose other clients include Loewe, Burberry and David Beckham, to create BDXY, a line of foundational pieces inspired by the screen legends of Old Hollywood.

Evans said that although the three partners are from very different walks of life, they realized that when it came to their wardrobe choices, they were very similar.

“Over the years I’ve dabbled in fashion, I’ve been to lots of shows, I’ve been ambassador for different brands, from Bulgari to Police,” Evans said. “And I’ve always thought about what I would do if I made my own brand – what I would make and how I would do it. We came together a year and a half ago, and very quickly [realized] we all had a very similar opinion on what we thought about staple pieces of a men’s wardrobe.”

The initial idea was to start with swimwear, Evans said, because “whenever I’m not working, I find a beach or a pool

and some sunshine and I thought, ‘Well, wouldn’t it be interesting to see if we could create our own collection of swimwear.’”

They then realized there were other pieces they deemed just as essential, notably the T-shirt.

“Working as a stylist and with so many different clients, I’m always looking for the best T-shirt,” Brown said. “So it felt like a natural thing for us to create the best T-shirt that suits any body type and looks great on any guy. Working with all these guys I work with, you can have crazy fashion, but you always want to go back to a staple piece and effortless style.”

Evans said they started “deep diving on YouTube and Google for inspiration and we all kept migrating back to the ‘60s and ‘70s.” They scoured photos of celebrities such as Steve McQueen, Marlon Brando and Harrison Ford and were “enamored” by style that has never really gone out of fashion. “These pictures are so iconic, they would stand up to anything now on a billboard. And so that’s where our inspiration came from – Old Hollywood classic.”

BDXY’s first collection will be tight – 12 pieces that guys wear every day, including T-shirts and tank tops in lyocell and organic cotton; briefs and boxer underwear in lyocell and elastane; ‘80s-inspired swim shorts and briefs in recycled Seaqual polyester, and accessories including trucker or baseball hats, totes and beach towels.

“We’re really focused on each piece and put a lot of time and effort into curating it,” Evans said.

In fact, each piece was named as a nod

to Old Hollywood and film sets. So the T-shirt is “The Actor,” to evoke memories of Brando and James Dean, the underwear is either “The Unit” or “The Boom,” and the swimwear is “The Cameo.”

Once the idea was set, they set out to find a manufacturer and because Evans and Tomas live in Lisbon part of the time, they sought out some of Portugal’s top producers.

“We took a rainy train up to Porto one day,” Evans said. “We spent a day traveling around all the different manufacturers – some were very big, and they actually produced lots of brands that we know on the market. But then we visited a little factory in Porto run by a guy called Miguel and his sisters and his dad – his mother had started it in the ‘60s. It was a family-run business and all local women work in the factory. We immediately clicked with him and he understood what we wanted.”

Next up was to come up with a name. Evans suggested BDXY – the letters are pronounced – and explained that the first two letters are from the word “bold,” while the second two are from “sexy,” which he believes describes the aesthetic of the line. “It’s as much a feeling as a description of how one looks,” he explained. “You can feel bold and sexy in absolutely nothing, a ball gown, a tuxedo or any kind of attire you wear. Bold is a strong, confident word and sexy is something that is appealing in many different ways.”

Evans said the small size of the launch collection is intentional. “For us to have total creative control, we decided that we would keep the collection very small, and that I would finance the whole thing. So we’re all directors and we have shareholders, but it’s all my money,” he said, declining to reveal the size of his investment.

Prices range from 54 pounds for the hats and 150 pounds for the beach towels to 68 pounds for the Ts, 135 pounds for the swim shorts and 28 pounds or 30 pounds for the underwear. “It costs a little more because it’s sustainable,” Brown said. “We don’t want to be in the fast-fashion world.”

The line will launch online with a social media blitz and a marketing campaign featuring Evans, Tomas and three models, shot by Valero Rioja at their home in Ibiza as well as on a borrowed

1950s-era wooden boat.

Brown described it as “an homage to ‘90s Bruce Weber. When we first researched the brand and imagery, we were very aware that a lot of images now for underwear are quite over-sexualized. And we wanted to go back to the Bruce Weber days where, yes, there is a sexual undertone, but it’s not so in your face.”

“We wanted it to feel relaxed,” Evans added, “like they’re having a fun day out there on a boat.”

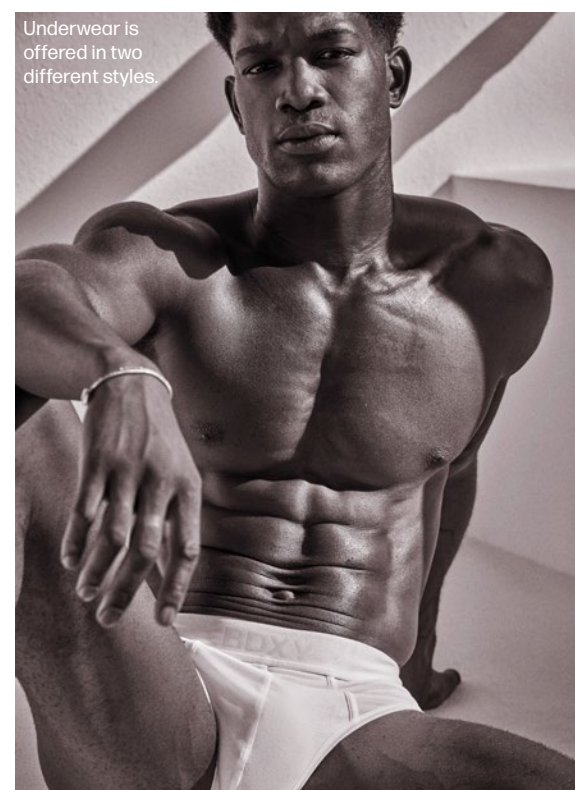
In addition to the apparel and accessories, BDXY offers a candle. Evans explained: “Fifteen years ago, when I was sent on my first job abroad on a movie, I was stuck in a crappy little hotel room that didn’t smell very nice. And I realized that a scented candle was going to change everything – it was going to create an ambiance and a smell that I liked. And also, there’s something about the flame. It’s as old as time.”

So he asked his partners if he could add a candle to the collection. The result is the “Salinas,” inspired by his home in Ibiza, an island surrounded by forest and flanking the Mediterranean Sea. It features top notes of olibanum and geranium and is housed in a ceramic jar the color of the sea and has a gold lid. It retails for 98 pounds. “It is such a nice complement to the collection and we hope for each new collection, we will have a different candle,” Evans said.

So what’s the goal for BDXY? Evans said, “We go to the world and hopefully the world buys it.” They will encourage feedback to determine future offerings. “We’re here to see what people like,” he said. “We don’t want to make things that don’t sell.”

But he’s confident it will pass muster. “We believe that our staple pieces of underwear, swimwear and T-shirts will do well and we’ll increase those collections with new colors and different shapes with different cuts.” Within a year, they hope, they’ll be able to guarantee 24-hour delivery in North America as well as parts of Europe.

Preparing for an aggressive global launch is not cheap, but Evans was committed to the project before the actor’s strike put him on hiatus for several months. “Remember that little strike,” Evans said with a laugh. “That wasn’t supposed to happen. It wasn’t great for actors or stylists. We were all twiddling our thumbs, but I was lucky enough to get a play. So during this last year and a half, I’ve been on stage every night and in the day, we’ve been fine tuning [this line]. We’ve been working 24 hours a day, but were all so passionate about this and want to build something we’re all proud of.”



Underwear is offered in two different styles.

Cosmoprof Miami Off to a Hot Start

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Cosmoprof's first Miami Beach conference was a rousing success.

Liza Rapay, vice president, Cosmoprof North America. "We stand ready to cater to an even broader network, with Las Vegas and Miami serving as pivotal hubs in our strategic network."

The show, held in the Miami Beach Convention Center from Jan. 23-25, also devoted about 23 percent of its overall space to Cosmopack, and for the first time in North America, machinery manufacturers were on the show floor.

Overall, almost 60 percent of the exhibitors were new to Cosmoprof North America, with makeup, skin care and fragrance representing 37 percent, hair at 32 percent and nails at 8 percent.

The guitarist playing Latin music during the opening ceremonies presaged the exuberance that attendees and exhibitors outlined when talking about the potential of South America as a key market for international beauty manufacturers.

Daniel Morimoto, vice president and general manager, Latin America, of Circana, outlined the key dynamics of the market during a in-depth presentation of key categories and geographies. Currently, the Latin American market as a whole entity is the fourth-largest beauty market, behind the U.S., China and the European Union. The largest countries in terms of prestige beauty sales are Mexico at \$1.5 billion, Brazil at \$1 billion, Argentina at \$880 million, Chile at \$480 million and Peru at \$180 million, Morimoto said, noting that most retailers in those countries sell both mass and prestige and that prestige is still a developing business.

Beauty overall grew 21 percent in the combined markets, with prestige growing in dollar sales and mass and mid-range



The show floor at Cosmoprof Miami.

sales increasing 27 percent, driving most of the growth.

In terms of channels, department stores account for half of total prestige sales and are growing double digits, Morimoto said, noting that the specialty channel, particularly in Brazil and Argentina, and

the pharmacy channel are the two that are driving significant growth.

Online accounts for about 20 percent of total sales in most Latin American countries, except for Brazil, where it is 31 percent.

Fragrance is the largest prestige category

in Latin America, representing 63 percent of sales. Unit sales grew 4 percent last year, but the average product price – \$107 – was up 13 percent. According to Circana, the key trends in fragrance include an increase in high concentration and luxury brands at one end of the spectrum and a boom ▶

in body and hair sprays driven by TikTok and Gen Z at the other. Morimoto noted that celeb scents, like Ariana Grande's offerings, are also performing well.

As elsewhere in the world, there has been a shift in why people are buying scents. "Seven out of 10 people said they choose scents because it lifts their mood and half say because it energizes them," said Morimoto. "They are choosing scents because they like how it smells for themselves."

Makeup is the fastest growing category at prestige in Latin America, representing 21 percent of total sales. Dollar sales rose 30 percent and unit sales were up 14 percent, with key trends including the skinification of makeup, the resurgence of lip products, TikTok and social media-inspired looks like Strawberry makeup and the popularity of multifunctional products.

"Innovation in makeup is driving growth and attracting consumers to stores," said Morimoto, noting that radiant foundation sales increased 73 percent, clear eyebrow gel rose 52 percent and lip gloss rose 66 percent.

Skin care represents 13 percent of the prestige beauty pie and was up 14 percent in dollar terms and 3 percent in unit sales, with an average product price of \$80. Body care has been a key driver, Morimoto said, growing twice as fast as facial skin care brands. Makeup brands, like MAC, that have introduced skin care have also found success in the market, and multifunctional products are also resonating.

Hair is a newer source of growth for prestige beauty, with a 3 percent share. The majority of that is done online, Circana reports, with fast-growing subsectors including heat protectants up 43 percent, scalp care up 39 percent, hair thinning up 32 percent and curly hair up 29 percent.

Brazil has always been a leading global market for hair diversity, and Circana reported that 2023 was a record year for exports in the category, with Brazilian hair products clocking 3 billion views on TikTok.

Morimoto was bullish on sales for the year ahead, noting that many countries are starting to recover economically and that foreign direct investment is growing, resulting in more brands coming in.

Consumers are ready. "Latinos are beauty enthusiasts," said Morimoto. "They are aware of innovation on a global scale and they want to buy products at the same time as the rest of the world."

In terms of innovation, there was much to see at Cosmoprof. BeautyStreams, the Paris-based consultancy, identified four key trends: frizz fighters and conditioning hair color in hair care, the preponderance of multibenefit lip formulas in makeup and in skin care, formulas that defend against external aggressors, and a trend it called

"Shield Up."

Mushrooms were the hot ingredient, and Neon Hippie, an L.A.-based skin-care brand founded by Nicole Ostoya and launched last year at Neiman Marcus, was one of the most buzzed about. It combines a proprietary 7-mushroom complex with various skin care ingredients, such as 20 percent vitamin C in Neon C, \$80, and plumping peptides in the \$25 Lucid Lip Serum + Peptide Cream, the brand's hero product.

Other brands generating considerable buzz among retailers included Project Reef, a mineral sunscreen brand from Maui, Hawaii; Jess Beauty, the Venezuelan brand founded by influencer Jessica Barboza whose Sun Drops Oil garnered raves, and Skincare Junkie, created by New York-based dermatologist Blair Rose.

"I've seen a lot of focus around mushrooms, some great innovation in hair, such as temporary hair color masks that last seven to eight weeks, and the trend of LED activation," said Jaclyn Diamond, omni buyer for Macy's. "In the past, we've seen brands that are first to market, but not always ready to scale. Here, there are a lot of brands that have done their due diligence in terms of who their customers are and their bestsellers, and they are ready for retail."

"The show was really good," agreed Mimi Udezue, a senior hair care buyer at Target. "Discover Brands had a lot of potential and I really liked the focus on Hispanic brands. In hair care, I saw some really cool packaging for the younger generation."

The Ulta Beauty team was focused on the tools section in particular. "The tool space was interesting as guests are looking for more at-home solutions for skin care and wellness," said Muffy Clince, senior director of emerging brands and initiatives, citing Medikube as a standout. In all, she called Cosmoprof Miami "time well spent for our team."

Executives from established brands were also on hand, walking the show floor and meeting with manufacturers and suppliers. "It's very purposeful to have everyone get together early in the year, as we're building out our ideas for 2025," said Martin Okner, chief executive officer of Fromm International. "The timing of this show is ideal. You're not butting up against budget deadlines late in the year and while plans are in place for 2025, there's enough time to adjust and have the flexibility to implement something new."

Tammy Fender, founder of the eponymous spa and skin care brand, was on the hunt for packaging suppliers. After focusing on expanding the service side of her business with a new spa in Delray, Fla., and expanding from 14 to 70 employees,



Neon Hippie products.

she's targeting growth in the European Union and hoped to find sustainable packaging options to facilitate that.

The manufacturing and supplier side also drew interest from the investor community. M&A activity is picking up in the sector, as investors look to capitalize on the growth of beauty as a category overall without the added risk of betting on a particular brand. "It's a large and highly fragmented market," said Brian Oleniczak, head of business-to-business consumer products at William Blair. "We're starting to see consolidation, where private-equity backed companies are looking to expand their reach and grow their platforms via accretive add-on acquisitions. There are many founder-led businesses in this space that are often good at one capability – like hair care or lip products – and have the available capacity to further scale but not the necessary capital or resources that larger private-equity backed platforms can bring to the table."

Coher Beauty was one such example. Created by the private equity firm Core Industrial, it consists of four manufacturers – Marianna Beauty, Arizona Natural Resources, Health Specialty Inc. and Contract Filling Inc. – which have been integrated to offer product formulation, manufacturing and packaging under one roof. Its primary categories are hair care, fragrance and skin care.

"We've put four manufacturers together, but have been able to maintain our customer intimacy at scale," said chief executive officer Christine Staples, noting that attendance at Cosmoprof Miami was strong. "It was a big unknown compared to Las Vegas, but our booth has been packed with a non-stop flow of people. There seems to be a strong slant towards skin care, which is one of our main investment areas."

Deborah Kilgore, the global director of skin care knowledge at Paula's Choice, was with her team looking for trends and innovations. "We've been talking a lot about the microbiome, the skin barrier and longevity," she said. "The education here has been great and it's an interesting environment to gather insights and information."

There were a number of different speakers under the CosmoTalks education umbrella, including a panel on unlocking insights into new product innovation with Janet Pardo of Clinique, Susan Akkad of the Estée Lauder Cos. and Agnes Landau and Susan Akkad from the Estée Lauder Companies in their panel was a major highlight – I worked with them for several years and learned everything from them; they are beauty icons, the best of the best! We came home energized, with many follow-ups to do." ■

Retailer's Faves

Some leading retailers share their favorite finds at Cosmoprof.

Buyer: Muffy Clince, Senior Director, Emerging Brands and Initiatives

Store: Ulta Beauty

Brands: Olivia Umma, Fount Society, Spilanthox Therapy

On Olivia Umma...

"Loved the inclusive and vegan approach to K-beauty glass skin essentials in fun whimsical packaging."

Buyer: Ian Ginsberg, President

Store: C.O. Bigelow

Brands: Project Reef, Jess Beauty, Neon Hippie

On Project Reef...

"Beautifully done and hasn't gone into retail yet – just hotels."

Buyer: Jaclyn Diamond, Omni Buying Director

Store: Macy's

Brands: Jess Beauty, Neon Hippie, Fatboy

On Jess Beauty...

"I've never seen a serum with SPF – this eliminates a step."

Buyer: CeCe King, Multichannel Beauty Buyer

Store: Nordstrom

Brands: Project Reef, Dear Dahlia

Buyer: Claudia Lloreda, Founder and General Manager

Store: Blush-Bar

Brands: Supermood, Skincare Junkie, Project Reef

On Supermood...

"This Finnish wild nature and holistic brand caught my eye."

de Hierro; and the evolution of retail with Wendy Liebman of WSL Strategic retail, Ulta Beauty's Clince and Ali Kole of Amazon.

"We loved the Cosmotalks focusing on retail evolution, packaging sustainability, and driving innovation in product development," said Lloreda, founder and general manager of Blush-Bar, which has more than 35 stores in Colombia, Chile and Mexico. "Seeing Janet Pardo, Agnes Landau and Susan Akkad from the Estée Lauder Companies in their panel was a major highlight – I worked with them for several years and learned everything from them; they are beauty icons, the best of the best! We came home energized, with many follow-ups to do." ■



Machinery was featured for the first time at Cosmoprof North America.

Credo Beauty's Top Products in December

Body care brands and skin care-infused offerings across categories are seeing outsized growth at the retailer. BY NOOR LOBAD

"Skinification" is in full force at Credo Beauty.

Body, hair care and makeup products which offer skin care benefits are on the uptick at the retailer, which onboarded a record-high number of body care brands in 2023 including Nécessaire, microbiome-focused Iota and refillable brand Uni.

"All of our categories have been in a healthy place for the second half, but what stands out is the growth in body year-over-year," said Elizabeth Albrecht, senior merchandise manager at Credo, adding that brightening products and liquid exfoliants have seen particular momentum within the category.

Albrecht also pointed to the prominence of "tried-and-true favorites" – for example, Ilia's overnight lip treatment – which have surged in momentum thanks to more nascent trends, like the rise in lip care.

Jennifer Anniston's Lolavie has "risen through the ranks nicely" since joining the retailer's assortment last summer, as has fellow newcomer Arey, which targets aging hair. "We didn't see [them] cannibalize the business because we're launching brands that address unique hair care concerns," said Albrecht, adding that the mounting number of brands which meet Credo's long-held clean standards – Circana reports "clean" beauty sales grew 22 percent in 2023 to \$5.9 billion, with makeup being the fastest-growing segment – has prompted the retailer to further evolve its merchandising approach.

"We're thinking about what's beyond [clean] – do you have patent-pending ingredients or formulas, is your sustainability approach above and beyond what else is out there from an innovation standpoint? We want to add brands that are truly outside of the box and innovative," she said.

The strategy appears to be paying off in carving out Credo's lane in the beauty retail realm, with Albrecht adding that three of December's top-performing products – Follain's eye cream, Gen See's mascara and Arey's scalp serum – are Credo-exclusive offerings. "In years past, these [top product] lists have skewed more toward offerings you can buy at other major retailers; December felt more tailored and specific to our customer."

The retailer, which added five new stores in 2023, will continue its rapid brick-and-mortar expansion into 2024 – including a first location in a yet-to-be-revealed state during the first half.

Credo's key product categories, and a bestselling stock keeping unit within each for the month of December.

Credo's key product categories, and a bestselling stock keeping unit within each for the month of December.



Eye cream
Follain Firm + Brighten Eye Cream, \$36



Cleanser
One Love Organics Botanical B Cleansing Oil + Makeup Remover, \$42



Facial cream
Marie Veronique Multi Retinol Night Emulsion, \$135



Serum
Ursa Major Mountain Glow Serum, \$84



Lip
Ilia Lip Wrap Overnight Treatment, \$26



Eye makeup
Gen See Spectator Sport Mascara, \$23



Complexion makeup
Westman Atelier Vital Skincare Complexion Drops, \$68



Body
Nécessaire The Body Wash, \$25



Hair care
Lolavie Restorative Shampoo, \$59



Scalp care
Arey To the Root Serum, \$54.66



Hair styling
Sienna Naturals Dream Curl Cream, \$28



Billie and Jameela Jamil Join Forces

The shave brand's new campaign reprises an infamous movie scene to promote its new body care collection.

BY NOOR LOBAD

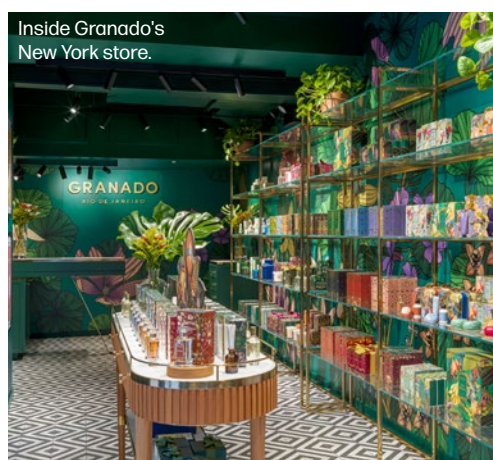
Shave brand Billie has tapped "The Good Place" actress and activist Jameela Jamil for its latest campaign.

Inaugurating its new body care collection, the campaign offers an empowering spin on Julia Stiles' beloved poem scene from the 1999 film, "10 Things I Hate About You," in which Jamil confronts exploitative beauty marketing tactics.

"We wanted to rewrite the poem and use it as our vehicle for our message, which is to encourage women to reject the kind of messaging you see too often in the world

about finding your body's flaws and this mindset that you need to 'fix' your body," said Billie cofounder Georgina Gooley.

Interpolating scenes of an adolescent Jamil navigating the body care aisle with those of her airing out her grievances with the beauty industry to a high school classroom, the campaign's ethos aligns with that of brand's new collection, which offers targeted care depending on a customer's skin needs and ranges from \$8 for body wash to \$13 for roll-on gel AHA deodorants.



Granado Goes Stateside

The Brazilian beauty brand has opened the doors to its 300-square-foot New York boutique. BY NOOR LOBAD

New York's Madison Avenue has a newcomer.

Brazilian beauty brand, Granado, has opened a new 300-square-foot boutique where consumers can shop an assortment of its signature perfumes, bath and body products and home fragrances.

The shop is Granado's seventh international store – the 154-year-old Puig-backed brand has opened outposts in Paris,

Lisbon and London, all within the last decade – and aims to bring Brazilian perfumery to the U.S. consumer in an experiential way.

"We always wanted the U.S. to be our first [international] stop – it just naturally happened that our international base became Europe," said director of marketing Sissi Freeman, adding that international expansion has proven fruitful in growing the brand's fragrance business – a key priority for the company.

Fragrance sales comprise 20 percent of Granado's business in Brazil, versus 54 percent of sales abroad, a disparity that can largely

be attributed to the brand's wholesale distribution of its bar soaps in its home market. "Because of that, it has been a project of dissociating our image from bath and shifting more toward fragrance," Freeman said.

To further support its performance in the fragrance category, the company is focused on rolling out tailored offerings to each of its markets.

"In Brazil, our fresher fragrances do well; in Europe we're seeing the woody scents are performing, and the U.S. consumer is a little bit more fruity and floral," Freeman said.

To commemorate the U.S. expansion, Granado is introducing a tonka bean-scented candle ("tonka is the Brazilian vanilla," said Freeman), retailing for \$50; the brand's dye-free perfumes will be available at the store for \$135 per 75-ml. bottle.

Estée Lauder to Cut Up to 5 Percent of Workforce

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



simplification and acceleration of processes. Once fully implemented, the program is expected to yield annual gross benefits of between \$350 million and \$500 million.

“We’ll look at everything as it relates to the restructuring and plans will be coming to us over the next couple of months and we’ll be approving those plans over the next several months,” said Tracey Travis, executive vice president and chief financial officer of Lauder, during an interview with WWD.

When asked if possible divestitures are being considered as part of restructuring talks, she said that is not a top priority right now, but “as we look at the right structure to increase our agility going forward, all things are on the table.”

The restructuring is part of the wider Profit Recovery Plan announced last quarter, which is now expected to drive incremental operating profit of \$1.1 billion to \$1.4 billion.

In a note, Erwan Rambourrg, an analyst at HSBC, said he hopes much of the savings will be reinvested in brand equity and market share “for some of the brands which have been at the heart of the issues for the company.”

He also reiterated his belief that a management shakeup would help further. “There has been no mention of any change in management; however, should there be a refresh to the management team, we think investors could view the next chapter of growth in a better light.”

The news came as Lauder released its

latest set of financial results. Net sales were \$4.28 billion for its second quarter ended Dec. 31, a decline of 7 percent from \$4.62 billion in the prior-year period. Organic net sales fell 8 percent, reflecting the expected challenges in Asia travel retail as well as ongoing softness in overall prestige beauty in mainland China.

Skin care net sales declined 10 percent, on the back of a decrease in its Asia travel retail business primarily due to the ongoing actions by the company and its retailers to reset retailer inventory levels. Net sales from Estée Lauder, Clinique and Origins all fell.

Elsewhere, makeup sales declined 8 percent, while fragrance sales were flat, as increases from luxury brands Le Labo and Jo Malone London were offset by a decline from Estée Lauder. Hair care net sales dropped 6 percent.

Net sales decreased 1 percent in the Americas, 14 percent in Europe, Middle East and Africa and 7 percent in Asia-Pacific.

Net earnings came in at \$313 million, compared with net earnings of \$394 million in the prior-year period. Adjusted diluted net earnings per common share declined to 88 cents, above Wall Street forecasts for 54 cents.

Fabrizio Freda, president and chief executive officer, said: “We are, encouragingly, at an inflection point. In the second half of fiscal 2024, we are positioned to return to strong organic sales growth and expand our profitability from the first half. Moreover, today we have announced that we are further expanding our Profit Recovery Plan, which benefits fiscal years 2025 and 2026, to include a restructuring program. We believe this now-larger plan will better position the company to restore stronger, and more sustainable, profitability.”

Excluding restructuring and other charges and adjustments, diluted net earnings per common share are projected to be between \$2.08 and \$2.23. Previously it was expecting \$2.17 to \$2.42.

Coty Inks Beauty License Deal With Marni

The partnership will begin with fragrance. BY KATHRYN HOPKINS

Coty is launching a beauty line with Italian fashion house Marni, beginning with fragrances in 2026.

The freshly inked licensing agreement to develop, produce and distribute a line of fragrances and beauty products will run beyond 2040, according to the two companies.

Sue Nabi, Coty’s chief executive officer, said: “Marni is highly recognized in the fashion industry, with particular brand strength in Asia and Europe. This licensing agreement aligns with Coty’s highly successful strategic direction of focusing on fashion driven licenses with multi-category potential that resonate across key markets.”

Barbara Calò, Marni’s CEO, added that the deal marks a pivotal moment in the evolution of Marni. “Through the introduction of fragrances and beauty products, that will seamlessly integrate into our brand universe, we’re redefining the brand’s boundaries, opening up new opportunities of affirmation for Marni.”

Through the agreement with Marni, Coty also strengthens its partnership with its parent company OTB Group, following the recent license renewal with Jil Sander.

“We are very glad to further consolidate our group’s strategic partnership with Coty and to invest in Marni’s successful ability to explore new, relevant business grounds. This long-term vision agreement gives Marni the opportunity to shape its values



The new Marni store at South Coast Plaza.

in new creative ways and to strengthen its luxury positioning by landing in the world of beauty and fragrances,” said Ubaldo Minelli, OTB Group CEO.

In prestige, Coty has licenses with Gucci, Calvin Klein, Hugo Boss, Marc Jacobs, Chloé, Davidoff, Tiffany & Co., Joop, Jil Sander, Roberto Cavalli and Escada among others.

“If you look over the last year, we have extended some of the very big partnerships

that we had with Hugo Boss, Davidoff, Marc Jacobs and more,” said Jean Holtzmann, Coty’s chief brand officer for prestige.

“It really fits with this idea of diversifying the portfolio, but also catering to different demographics. Marni has a very special place in the fashion universe. Fashion people say Marni is actually the fashion people’s fashion brand so I think there is really something unique,” he

continued. “It’s interesting that it’s also reinforcing our partnership with OTB, which is obviously with whom we have a long-standing relationship.”

At the same time, WWD understands that the Miu Miu license won’t be renewed. Coty Inc. and the Prada Group originally signed a deal to produce prestige fragrances under the Miu Miu label back in 2013.



Travis Barker



Barker Canna Co. lineup.

Travis Barker's Latest Venture Is a Cannabis Line

The Blink-182 drummer discusses his new brand Barker Canna Co. and his personal approach to THC.
BY EMILY BURNS

Travis Barker is riding high right now. Literally. Tuesday, the Blink-182 drummer is launching his latest brand, Barker Canna Co., a line of cannabis-based products, including Half Gram Live Rosin All-In-One Vaporizer, \$40; Full Gram All-In-One Vaporizer, \$24; Mini Barkies, \$36, pre-rolls, and five flavors of gummies, ranging from \$14 to \$15, including one formulated for sleep. To start, the line will be available at select locations of The Syndicate, a California-based dispensary.

The star, who recently welcomed a son with wife Kourtney Kardashian Barker, also has a line of CBD-infused topical and ingestible products called Barker Wellness

Co., which launched in 2022. Barker previously collaborated with Kardashian Barker on a line of bath products for this brand.

According to Barker, cannabis has always played a role in his life, though it has evolved. "Over the years, my relationship with cannabis has grown much more sophisticated, serving as a tool for physical recovery, mental well-being and creative stimulation," Barker said. "I always defer back to my wellness journey because I've seen firsthand how powerful cannabis' healing properties are. As it can be used in various ways, we wanted to create

something for everything." However, Barker, of course, has his own favorites from the collection. "I would say I am more of an edibles guy myself," he said. "Following my last surgery, I explored the use of cannabis for pain management and recovery, which offered a natural alternative to alleviating discomfort."

Furthermore, this launch comes at a time where consumers are rethinking their alcohol consumption and playing around with other substances like cannabis. "I'm observing a significant upswing in momentum within the cannabis industry as we approach our launch," said Barker Canna Co. cofounder

Ash Patel. "The evolving public perception and increasing acknowledgment of cannabis for both health and recreational purposes contribute to a favorable market environment." Barker added: "Our products align with the broader health and wellness movement by positioning cannabis as a tool for creativity and well-being." With the cannabis market having a wellness-centric moment, the team focused on providing a variety of products to welcome new THC users and aficionados alike. "By addressing the demand for premium cannabis items that prioritize well-being and cater to a diverse consumer base, we aim to carve a unique position in the market," Patel said. "This strategic focus aligns with the evolving preferences of consumers seeking a positive and inclusive cannabis experience."

Barker seconded this notion, adding: "It's for everyone."

Henry Davis Named CEO of Sakara Life

Davis succeeds cofounders Danielle DuBoise and Whitney Tingle, who acted as co-CEOs since the brand's launch in 2012. BY EMILY BURNS

Sakara Life has tapped a Glossier alum as its new chief executive officer. Henry Davis, who served as president and chief operating officer at Glossier from 2014 to 2018, succeeds cofounders Danielle DuBoise and Whitney Tingle as CEO. DuBoise and Tingle will remain as

founders and executive chairs, focusing on education and creative vision. "We came to the notion that it was time to step up, not step down," DuBoise said. "We're focusing on building the mission and vision, educating people, inspiring people...and making sure that Sakara

Life is at the forefront of the conversation when it comes to transforming lives with food as medicine."

"It was vital that we find a CEO who embodied this mission and lived our values," said Sakara Life board member John Replogle in an email. "With a wealth of experience in the direct-to-consumer category, Henry's appointment ensures continued growth while providing Danielle and Whitney the focus on nurturing and

building the Sakara community, enriching consumer-based content and advancing our overarching mission. This triumvirate is the perfect leadership team to fuel our business."

Since its launch more than a decade ago, Sakara Life has become a nine-figure business, according to Tingle. In May 2023, WWD reported that the business was on track to reach \$150 million by the end of the year, according to industry sources. Now, Davis joins the team on a mission to expand Sakara Life's reach further. "Very high on my agenda is [to] build a world class team," he said. "We've got a lot of talent in this business already....We want to add to that and put in place operators and leaders throughout the organization who can really take us to that next level." Concurrently, the company is announcing several other hires, including Kathryn Ordower, former Glossier general counsel, as chief legal and administrative officer, and Brian Buchanan, formerly of Leesa Sleep, as chief technology officer. While Sakara Life

is announcing several C-suite hires, WWD learned that the company underwent layoffs in November 2023. When asked about this and the current size of the workforce, Davis said: "We're very happy with where the business is at. We have incredible assets to build on. Every business needs to ensure that it's got the right alignment to its goals on regular intervals, and I feel very good about where we're at right now." In addition to key hires, Davis is also focused on innovation that will propel the brand forward. "[We're] investing in data infrastructure so we can better understand some of the things that are going on and make sure that we're responding," he said. Along with this, Davis says he has inherited several key strategies that the brand will continue to double down on, including buzzy collaborations with stars and like-minded brands – in 2023, Sakara collaborated with Tinx and Erewhon – and its ambassador program, which is the "biggest and most efficient marketing channel" according to Davis.



Danielle DuBoise, Henry Davis and Whitney Tingle

James Pecis Launches Blu & Green Clean Hair Care Brand

The celebrity hairstylist's high-performance products include a shampoo and conditioner in tablet form. BY JENNIFER WEIL

PARIS - Celebrity hairstylist James Pecis has launched Blu & Green, a clean hair care brand with newfangled product formats, such as concentrated shampoo and conditioner in tablet form, coming in sustainable packaging.

Wellness of people's hair and the environment have been at the core of his product development, as Pecis sets out to redefine hair care.

He's crafted runway and campaign looks for fashion houses such as Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent and Marc Jacobs, and hairstyles in editorial shoots at the likes of Vogue, i-D, Self Service and The Wall Street Journal.

While he was working with beauty brands including Oribé, Kérastase and Moroccanoil, people would ask if he ever wanted to launch his own line.

"I always replied 'no,' because I personally think there's enough beauty lines out there, that we don't need any more – both in hair and makeup," said Pecis.

However, he and his family surf and spend a lot of time at the beach and in the sea.

"Over the years, I find myself collecting so much plastic in the water and on the beaches," he said. "Then I go and do a show, and at the end, we're getting rid of 60-plus bottles of products."

"It's hard for me to live this life where I'm trying to be environmentally progressive, and then I'm going to work and I'm part of the problem," said Pecis. "So, I thought if I can create products to use on a professional level that are high-quality and not just another granola brand, and I could do it plastic-free, that would be the ideal situation."

Blu & Green – whose name nods to



Blu & Green shampoo tablets.

Pecis and his family's affinity with nature – ticks the boxes of must-haves for beauty brand entrants of today, including an eco-conscious formulation and packaging design that is also aesthetically pleasing.

Pecis' business partner for the new brand is his wife, Kim Norcott.

Prestige hair care is a rapidly growing beauty category. Last year, its sales increased 14 percent, versus mass-market hair care's 6 percent in the U.S., according to Circana.

Pecis included a solid oil billed to melt on hands, and a weekly repair cream mask for deep moisturizing, in Blu & Green's launch lineup.

Product formulations have premium plant ingredients and some bio-engineered compounds, such as coconut fruit powder, panthenol and saccharomyces ferment.

Blu & Green's formula ingredients eschew sulfates, GMOs, parabens, petroleum, cyclic silicones, synthetic fragrances, phthalates, SLS/SLES, PEGs or other harmful additives. Everything is vegan, cruelty-free and does not contain known toxins.



Blu & Green solid oil.

Pecis approached a few different laboratories. "Most labs actually don't want to innovate," he said. "They want to [put] 10 products in front of you, you pick the products, [add the fragrance] and call it a day."

However, a lab was found Stateside that specialized in clean beauty.

"They were into the challenge," said Pecis, who worked for about four years to develop a highly effective dry-format tablet that crushes in one's hand and foams under water. "It has a really beautiful lather."

"Then, we had to figure out the packaging side of it, so we did a deep dive into materials," he continued. "We looked at the most innovative material, from psyllium, mushroom, cork and bio-plastics."

Finally, the hairstylist homed in on what he considers the most environmentally progressive, easily recyclable materials to use – tin and aluminum. "Those can be recycled an infinite amount of times," said Pecis.

All of his brand's light, compact packaging is plastic-free. The shampoo comes in thin little tins each holding 50 tablets. For most hair types, one tablet is used per washing.

"It doesn't weigh anything," Pecis said of the container that thereby reduces the carbon footprint of transport. "For retail, it hardly takes up any space, because it's so small. It's easier for a salon to take in a new line because it's not taking up a bunch

of space fighting with the competitors."

It was tricky to conceive a tablet strong enough to withstand travel but also easily crushable during use.

"I have a very high standard of what I want for work," said Pecis, giving the shampoo as an example. "I wanted something that would be super, super moisturizing to the hair, but not weigh anything, so that when the hair is washed it just feels very, very clean."

He has used the shampoo on the full range of hair types, from fine and straight to dense and curly.

Price points for Blu & Green products run from \$32 for a 2-oz. tin of conditioner or shampoo to \$38 for a 150-ml. repair mask or solid oil.

What's the biggest challenge Pecis foresees? Shifting people's lifestyles.

"Anytime there's a new innovation, a new way of doing things, it's hard to get people to change their habits," he said, adding that educating consumers and retail partners is key.

Retail-wise, Blu & Green at launch is focusing on direct-to-consumer through the brand's own site, bluandgreen.com, and a highly select group of salons.

Pecis plans to continue concentrating on creating products he needs for work. Up next should be a concentrated shampoo and conditioner in a 100-ml. paint tube-like container, as well as a dry shampoo and texturizing dust.

Rennaï, a New Luxe Beauty Retail Concept In Montreal With International Ambitions

It's set to open its doors at the upcoming Royalmount development of retail, offices and hospitality spaces in Montreal in August. BY KATHRYN HOPKINS

A new retailer is looking to shake up Canada's prestige offerings before eyeing the U.S.

Rennaï will open its doors at the upcoming Royalmount development of retail, offices and hospitality spaces in Montreal in August 2024, with brands including Hermès, Diptique, Le Labo and Dermalogica already on board.

It's backed by L Catterton and Carbonleo, who want the 36,000-square-foot beauty and wellness space to be heavily focused on experiential retail.

Beyond the product offering, services will include traditional aesthetics, dermatology, nutrition, a fragrance zone and a retreat area where guests can extend their time by enjoying a self care space.

"[The investors] saw that today's consumer is really looking for more than just a product. They're looking for an experience that adds value to their day," said Rennaï president Christopher Novak. "What we're doing is creating a place for



A Rennaï rendering.

people to take a moment out of their busy lives to really reconnect with themselves through the lens of beauty and self care."

He continued that many more prestige partners will be revealed in the run-up to

the grand opening.

"Exclusives and never-been-seen-before experiences are the core foundation of what makes Rennaï so unique and timely," Novak said. "We will continue to announce

partners leading up to the launch that represent our brand spirit and promise – to offer our clients a complete one-stop experience both on location and through our complimentary virtual concierge experience."

Homegrown brands will be important too, with the selection including Watier Cosmetics, Apprenti Ôrganik, JB Skin Sävvi, Selv, Ruby Brown, Landish, and Camellia Sinensis Tea House.

Located in Montreal's Midtown, Rennaï will join Royalmount's 170 retail tenants – including luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Tiffany & Co. and Gucci – and more than 60 restaurants, alongside offices, a hotel and public green spaces.

Already present players in Canada's prestige market include Sephora, several department stores and Shoppers Drug Mart. The latter has over the years been gaining market share in the prestige beauty sector, which has only ramped up with the appointment of Gwennaëlle Varnier as vice president of prestige beauty in 2019.

But Novak, who previously worked for Canadian luxury retailer Holt Renfrew, doesn't just have eyes on Canada.

"We're opening in Royalmount this August and we do have plans for a nine-store rollout. We're looking for major cities across Canada and the U.S. to open a future location," he said.

MARKET WATCH

China's Beauty Market at A Turning Point in 2024

The world's second-largest beauty market will be marked by polarization, a fragmented retail landscape and new consumption needs. BY DENNI HU



The slowdown continues: 2024 is shaping up to be another challenging year for beauty players in China as consumers grapple with uncertain macroeconomic prospects.

In 2023, the world's second-largest beauty market registered a modest 5.1 percent growth, reaching 414.17 billion renminbi, or \$58 billion, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

The luxury category exhibited stronger growth of around 8 percent, driven by momentum in fragrance and makeup categories, according to Bain.

However, in the year ahead, Bernstein expects the mass market to advance around 10 percent, and outpace the premium segment's forecasted 5.6 percent growth in 2024.

"Consumption polarization should persist, with the mass segment outpacing premium cosmetics, indicating consumer preference towards affordable and value-for-money cosmetics," wrote Bernstein's Melinda Hu. Segment-wise, color cosmetics is projected to grow at 9.3 percent, faster than skin care's 7.7 percent, according to Bernstein.

A highly fragmented retail landscape, spread across offline retail and e-commerce platforms such as Tmall, Douyin, WeChat Mini Program and Xiaohongshu, is expected to help nimble local players maintain the upper hand over their global counterparts.

Last year, more than 20 foreign beauty brands, such as E.l.f. Cosmetics, Huda Beauty, Benefit and Japan's Amplitude disappeared from China's e-commerce market, even though some vowed to return shortly.

According to Qingyan Company, a Chinese beauty research firm, sales of C-beauty brands rose 21.2 percent year-on-year in 2023 to comprise 50.4 percent of the Chinese cosmetics market, overtaking foreign brands for the first time.

Smart e-commerce execution will continue to dominate market narratives in 2024, a shopping behavior that stuck after COVID-19.

"The demand for content creation has reached unprecedented levels across all platforms," said Franklin Chu, managing director of Azoya U.S., who said brands should take note of Tencent's WeChat



video account as an emerging social commerce player.

Douyin, which stands out in the current social media landscape, also deserves special attention, as beauty sales have surged over 60 percent to 1.9 billion in the first eight months of 2023, according to Shanghai Securities data.

For Isabelle Zhuang, general manager China at Augustinus Bader, 2024 will mark yet another "turning point" for the beauty market.

"As C-beauty brands quickly win over ground from foreign players, shoppers' habits have been reshaped in many ways and become more mature. That also applies to brands like us," said Zhuang.

According to the investment bank Jefferies, Chinese consumers are not only trading down and conditioned to purchase only during promotional holidays, but they are expecting services more than products. For Zhuang, that mean reevaluating the balance between online and offline.

Bader has found success with a celebrity method that comes with a localized twist. By working with socialite-turned-livestreaming star Teresa Cheung, sales at the brand scored more than 2.7 million renminbi, or \$378,300, in one of Cheung's multibrand livestreaming session. To better engage offline, Augustinus Bader has hosted pop-up shops in luxury shopping malls and is considering bringing its Skin Lab to China.

Taking a closer look at the market polarization trend, Euromonitor found in a recent survey that Chinese consumers' preference for lower prices surged in categories such as shampoo, facial

cleansers, moisturizers and foundations.

Scalp care, a nascent category in the market, has quickly gained traction as an overall awareness of self care extends beyond the face.

In 2023, domestic leaders invested money and effort in promoting brands in the hair-care category. Bloomage, the largest hyaluronic acid producer turned skin care leader, and

Proya, one of the largest beauty groups in the market, have both developed brands that target young consumers who are experiencing stress-related hair loss.

Market forerunners are also doubling down on fresh formulas to engage Chinese shoppers. According to Euromonitor's Health and Beauty Asia Insights manager Yang Hu, "bio-based materials" and "conceptual medical aesthetics ingredients" are two categories to watch.

"Consumers are placing increased trust in materials derived from the extension of the medical aesthetics concept. For instance, products such as micro-needle serum and the utilization of recombinant collagen hold significant potential," said Yang.

In December, L'Oréal launched the second generation of the L'Oréal Age Perfect Collagene Royal cream, which included recombinant collagen, an ingredient produced by Chinese company Kinbo Biotech. Bloomage's research on seven to eight types of collagen is also spurring new solutions in antiaging formulation.

According to L Catterton's Asia fund managing partner Scott Chen, some domestic players are even "better equipped than international ones at addressing these needs," noting a recent investment in Trautec, a domestic manufacturer of synthetic collagen.

New consumption patterns in the Chinese market are also emerging, especially among male consumers and Gen Alpha shoppers.

Euromonitor's Hu said that male consumers are becoming pickier and want more specialized products, ranging from "basic functionalities like oil control

or moisturizing to antiaging and sun protection."

Teenagers, or Gen Alpha, might not have the spending power, but Hu believes their consumption habits and preferences will influence market trends in five to 10 years. Case in point – Hi!Papa, a personal care company for 3- to 12-year-olds, recently completed a round of series A+ funding from L Catterton.

The usage of generative AI in e-commerce livestreaming could enter the mainstream in 2024, shaking up the key opinion leader landscape.

"Since Austin Li, also known as the 'Lipstick King' in China, had inappropriate speech and caused controversy among the public, brands and retailers realized that the AI anchors can mitigate such risk of influencing sales," said Chu. Last September, two months before Singles' Day, Li came under fire for criticizing a viewer who said a 79 renminbi, or \$11, Florasis eye pencil was overpriced. Even though Li and Florasis quickly apologized, sales at Florasis' Tmall store fell sharply, according to local media reports.

To avoid human errors like these, beauty brands like L'Oréal Paris, Helena Rubinstein, Olay and Lancôme have begun leveraging virtual hosts for livestreaming.

According to data from iResearch, the Chinese AIGC [artificial intelligence generated content] market is projected to surge almost fivefold to reach 43.6 billion renminbi, or \$6.3 billion, by the end of 2024.

Beauty in the travel retail market is also expected to decline. In 2023, sales of cosmetics in the Hainan duty-free market underperformed compared to the hard luxury category.

Based on the latest data released by Haikou customs, for the months of October and November, cosmetics and perfumes contributed 41 to 42 percent of total Hainan off-shore retail sales, which is lower than 52-56 percent for the same period in 2022.

According to Bernstein analysis, a consumption downgrade, consumer boycott of Japanese cosmetics, and crackdown on Hainan daigou, or surrogate shoppers, has exacerbated the issue.

"The decreased Hainan duty-free retail performance actually signifies a return to normalcy," said Hu. "This is attributed to adjustments in outbound tourism trends, with Chinese tourists increasingly traveling globally rather than solely to Hainan."

WELLNESS WATCH

The Deodorant Demand

With customers seeking total-body solutions, a crop of brands are launching new deodorizing products that can be used anywhere. BY EMILY BURNS

Deodorant is no longer just for underarms.

Consumer insights from many brands in the body care space, including Dove and Ban, have shown that people were often using their typical deodorant on other areas of their body, including the groin, feet and chest, leading to a new category of full-body offerings.

“We’re finding that people are just struggling with body odor in general,” said Megan Smith, senior manager of personal care R&D at Unilever. “Men, they’re focused around their chest and private areas, but for women, it’s under bras.”

Data bears out those observations. Spate reports that searches for body deodorant have grown 27 percent since last year. The #FullBodyDeodorant hashtag on TikTok has more than 23 million views.

Additionally, brands found that consumers’ day-to-day lives were impacted, as they struggled to find total body solutions. “There were a lot of compensating behaviors in the absence of having a full-body deodorant product,” said Andrea Wilkerson, vice president, P&G skin and personal care analytics and insights. “Some people were resorting to taking multiple showers a day, layering their clothes to mask the odor or applying different products like powders and sprays and perfumes, but most often they were avoiding close proximity to others.”

With all these factors in mind, a crop of brands have released total-body deodorant lines in an array of formats. Here, some of the new entries

Lumē, which launched in 2017, was an early adopter and driver of the category. Founder and OB-GYN Dr. Shannon Klingman discovered during her residency that women were often incorrectly diagnosed with bacterial vaginosis, when in reality odors were caused by bacteria on the skin combined with exposure to bodily fluids. She found that this could be solved with a deodorizing product infused with mandelic acid, a large molecule that acidifies the skin on the surface and eliminates odor.

Now, Lumē, which is available at Walmart and Target, has exceeded \$100 million in annual sales and is the top-searched brand alongside full-body deodorant, according to Spate.

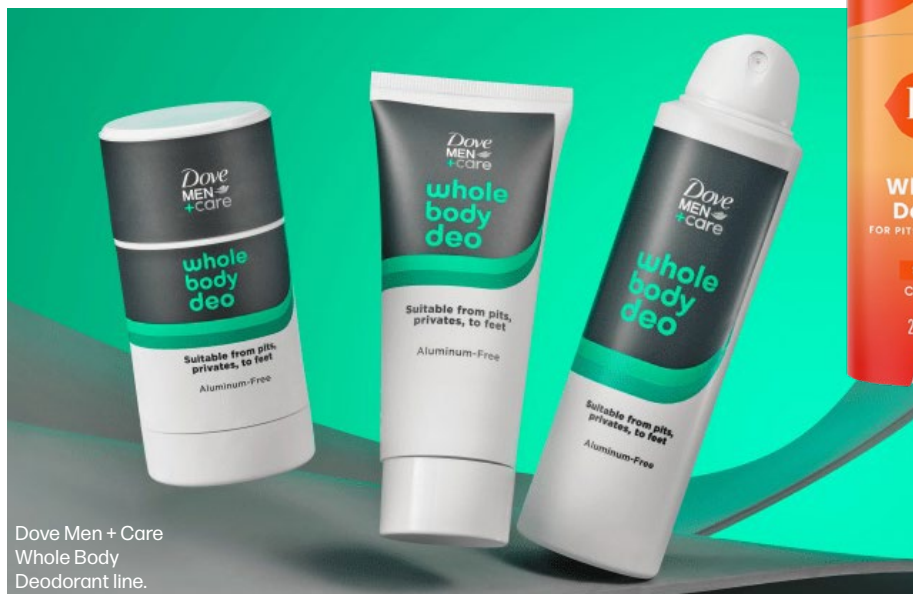
“It was our launch into retail one year ago that made everyone else aware that, ‘Hey, this is a very large white space’ and the way that we were talking about odor control was incredibly disruptive,” said Klingman.

The success of Lumē led Klingman to also start Mando, a full-body deodorant line with the same formulas but different packaging and scents targeted toward men.

While Lumē led the charge, heritage manufacturers, like Procter & Gamble and Unilever, are responding with versions of their own. At P&G, Secret, Old Spice and Native all have their own full-body deodorant lines.

“I’d credit this [popularity] to consumers themselves being willing to share an honest yet often hidden unmet need – one that affects a large portion of the population on a daily basis,” said Freddy Bharucha, president, North America personal care and beauty ecosystem at P&G Beauty, adding that social media and younger generations have been key drivers of the conversation around body odor.

Similarly, Unilever, the largest deodorant



Dove Men + Care Whole Body Deodorant line.



Lumē Whole Body Deodorant, \$15



Shea Moisture Whole Body Deo Cream, \$10



Old Spice GentleMan's Total Body collection, all \$13

Hume Supernatural All Body Deodorant, \$15



Supernatural launched a cream format, which is now available in more than 2,300 retail locations, including Sprouts and Kroger.

“This space is just exploding so much that a lot of the retailers now understand, ‘Oh, what is all-body deodorant and how do I get it into my store?’” cofounder and chief executive officer Jeremy Horowitz said at the time of launch. “We’ve been approached by more people than we ever have before.”

Although brands and retailers have found that consumers are seeking full-body deodorizing solutions, some experts argue they may be unnecessary.

“Bromhidrosis is when you get an overgrowth of bacteria in [an] area that causes a lot of unpleasant odor,” said New Jersey-based dermatologist Naana Boakye, adding at this point an antibiotic may be necessary. Additionally, these products are not antiperspirants

so they do not control sweating, though certain ingredients like corn starch, featured in Shea Moisture’s formulas, can help absorb sweat.

However, companies still identify a large growth opportunity in the category.

“Research from our Dove Men + Care brand in particular found that while only 2 percent of consumers are currently using whole-body deodorant, 76 percent of men want to try a whole-body deodorant,” said Pranav Chandan, Unilever’s category head of deodorants in the United States.

Unilever research also found that 15 percent of Americans overall were looking for a full-body solution.

“Body odor is one of those topics that when people find the courage to open up and discuss, it creates even more conversation and commonality,” said Bharucha.

manufacturer globally according to the team, has entered the space with collections from Dove, Dove Men + Care and Shea Moisture.

When it comes to full deodorants, there are two skin care-centric approaches to formulation that are prominent. There’s an acid-base for fighting bacteria and odor, and then there are more soothing, deodorizing formulas that use ingredients like coconut oil and shea butter.

Ban opted for the acid approach for a key reason.

“We knew women were using astringents under their arms to remove odor and that’s because there’s bacteria,” said Marissa Vallillo, director of marketing at Ban’s parent company Kao. Furthermore, alpha-hydroxy acids and beta-hydroxy acids have become increasingly common in traditional

deodorants over the past few years.

Although these brands differ in their formulations and marketing approach, one strategy is consistent: the need for different formats. While sticks and sprays are a mainstay in both traditional and full-body deodorants, the newer format featured across many of these lines is a cream or balm.

“That form lends itself well to precision application,” said Dr. Maiysha Jones, P&G personal care scientific communications director, adding people use it on their feet, groin area and bikini line.

According to Vallillo, a cream formula also lends itself to areas where consumers don’t want to continuously use the same applicator, specifically sites below the belt.

Akt London, which recently launched in the U.S., offers an all-over balmy formula. Late last year, Hume

EXCLUSIVE

Jisoo, Paul Mescal Among the Stars Of Cartier Trinity Centenary Campaign

● Along with fellow ambassadors Yara Shahidi, Jackson Wang and Labrinth, they form an ensemble cast celebrating diversity and connections of all kinds.

BY LILY TEMPLETON
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
THOMAS WALLER AND TIANWEI ZHANG

PARIS — You only turn 100 once, so Cartier is continuing the celebrations of Trinity's centenary with the reveal of a star-studded cast for its upcoming campaign on Tuesday.

This anniversary is “an extraordinary opportunity for us to celebrate love, all forms of love – friendship, family, fidelity,” said Arnaud Carrez, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of Cartier International, calling Trinity “a messenger of emotions and diversity.”

“We design beautiful objects with no preconceived idea of who is going to wear what,” the executive continued, pointing to the ongoing success of the three-ring design imagined by Louis Cartier in 1924.

To do justice to a “most universal and transgenerational collection” that is integral to its “cultural and emotional heritage,” the French jeweler called on Blackpink's Jisoo; American actress Yara

Shahidi; Irish actor Paul Mescal; rapper and member of South Korean band Got7 Jackson Wang, and musical artist Labrinth, who also signed the soundtrack of the campaign's film.

The quintet tapped by Cartier “expresses this diversity that Trinity embodies,” the executive said. “They are all Cartier ambassadors, they have strong characters, quite different personalities. They are also young, and this was one of the intentions for a collection that has existed for 100 years.”

Jisoo said she was “truly honored to be part of the grand journey” of the campaign, since “the meaning of Trinity – love, friendship, fidelity – strongly attaches to what I value the most in life.”

“I wish [for] everyone who sees the campaign to perceive and feel the brilliance of time and strength of Trinity,” she told WWD exclusively.

Although they did not know each other formally prior to filming in October, London-based Labrinth said the experience of “joining diverse worlds and creating exchanges and beautiful memories that bond us for life” during filming was both in line with his perception of Trinity but reinforced the parallel between his passion for music and Cartier's love of its crafts.

“This campaign was about connection with others and originality,” reflecting the “founding creativity” of the jeweler, added Mescal.

Shahidi said she perceived the collection's intention of “fostering connectivity while celebrating our differences,” adding that she was “grateful

to celebrate these qualities alongside [her] Cartier family.”

As for Wang, he felt that “Trinity's universality means everyone has a way to connect to it on a deeper level.”

That universality is one of the foundations of the Trinity line, according to Cartier image, style and heritage director Pierre Rainero. “It had extreme modernity because it could be worn by both men and women, a point of [difference] of Cartier,” he said. “It shows how we work for the sake of a beautiful object but also how the idea that beauty has no gender came very early in our history.”

After its print debut on March 15, the campaign will appear on billboards from April 1. Digital will follow on April 3 with the reveal of the full campaign film.

Carrez described the result as “the right level of emotion and authenticity” thanks to an ensemble cast that “played together and connected to one another in an authentic way, making the overall atmosphere light and rather accessible.”

Celebration kicked off last week in New York with a dinner at the Hotel Chelsea with global ambassador Shahidi; continued in London on Monday with another one at Ladbroke Hall attended by Mescal, Daisy Edgar-Jones and “Saltburn” star Archie Madekwe, and will conclude in Paris with a two-day event kicking off Tuesday.

But Trinity won't be anywhere near done with marking the occasion, Carrez revealed.

Some 100 artists, ranging from photographers and painters to filmmakers have been given carte blanche to interpret Trinity and the bonds of love. The resulting artworks will be presented in key cities around the world with details yet to be revealed.

“When we celebrate Trinity, we celebrate culture because love is one of the key pillars of culture,” said the jewelry executive. “It's a universal icon that transcends all frontiers so that's what we want to convey.”



ACCESSORIES

Mellerio Lands at Bergdorf Goodman

● The 411-year-old family-owned jeweler is taking its latest signatures, such as the “Color Queen” gem-studded rings housed in a Goyard trunk, to the U.S.

BY LILY TEMPLETON

PARIS — After three years of repositioning that included the launch of watches and a perfume, French jeweler Mellerio is ready for its next step – in the U.S.

The 411-year-old family-owned house, which counts the likes of Marie de Médici and Marie-Antoinette in its roster of royal clients, has landed at Bergdorf Goodman until October.

For Laure-Isabelle Mellerio, artistic director and member of the family's 14th generation, there is a natural fit between the American customer and the house's exuberant designs.

Among the pieces she expects to find traction are the Color Queen rings, with central stones such as tsavorites and sapphires the size of boiled sweets and meant to be collected – in a bespoke Goyard trunk like the one on display in its ground-floor corner.

“When [American consumers] come to

us in Paris, color and volume is what they love and that's what sets us apart from other houses,” she said. “We believe our relaxed outlook on jewelry will resonate and meet their expectations.”

Landing at Bergdorf Goodman was the ideal start to 2024, which general manager Christophe Mélaré defined as “a year of amplification of our international presence” that he hopes will lead to doubling its business in the next two years.

In addition to its Paris flagship, the brand counts less than 10 doors across Europe with high-end jewelry retailers and another eight in Japan, through a local partner.

The U.S. is “very strategic for Mellerio's future as a market of opportunity for the house but it's a demanding market where no one is waiting for us,” said Mélaré. “The idea is not to head over and open doors without building the required desirability.”

And that desirability materialized in the shape of the “Cabinet de Curiosités,” or curio cabinet, launched last year.

With its assortment of charms that range from 1,400 euros for a delicate filigree design to 27,500 euros for a complete bracelet and even 95,000 euros for the 18-karat gold “Talisman Soleil” medal encrusted with 10 carats' worth of gemstones, this epitomizes the historic

house's approach to fine and even high jewelry, according to Mélaré.

“We believe that the American clientele, who is more open budget-wise than the European client, will resonate with this,” he said. “It's jewelry to be worn every day, even when pieces are voluminous, embellished to the point where they feel like they could be costume jewelry.”

According to both executives, managing to convince a U.S. partner of the stature of the department store is the culmination of a three-year effort that included the launch of the lower-priced Muse fine jewelry line that draws from the archive; broaching the watch market with a Swiss-made ovoid M Cut timepiece that nods to its signature diamond cut, and even building a budding male consumer base, symbolized by its choice of ballet dancer Hugo Marchand as a face of the brand.

“This shows how much Mellerio had the potential to redeploy on the market,” said

the executive, who said the company had tripled its global turnover and doubled its Japan activity since his 2021 arrival, although the privately held company does not disclose its figures.

For Mélaré, the continued success of Mellerio from its Renaissance roots is its ability to be at once “a contemporary brand that appeals to clients of its time but a brand rooted in its heritage that has time before itself.”

In his opinion, the brand's price position in the U.S. market, where it will be between \$10,000 and \$250,000, places it as “rather reasonable and reasoned in the high jewelry market” but also “akin to a work of art that will appreciate over time.”

“We are convinced that we appeal to American clients,” continued Mélaré, adding that visitors to the Paris flagship hailed from Texas, California and Florida. “Now we have to start by winning the hearts of New Yorkers.”



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BUSINESS

Farm Rio, Brazil's Yawanawá Community Collaborate on New Fashion, Jewelry Capsule

- This is the seventh year the two have been working together.

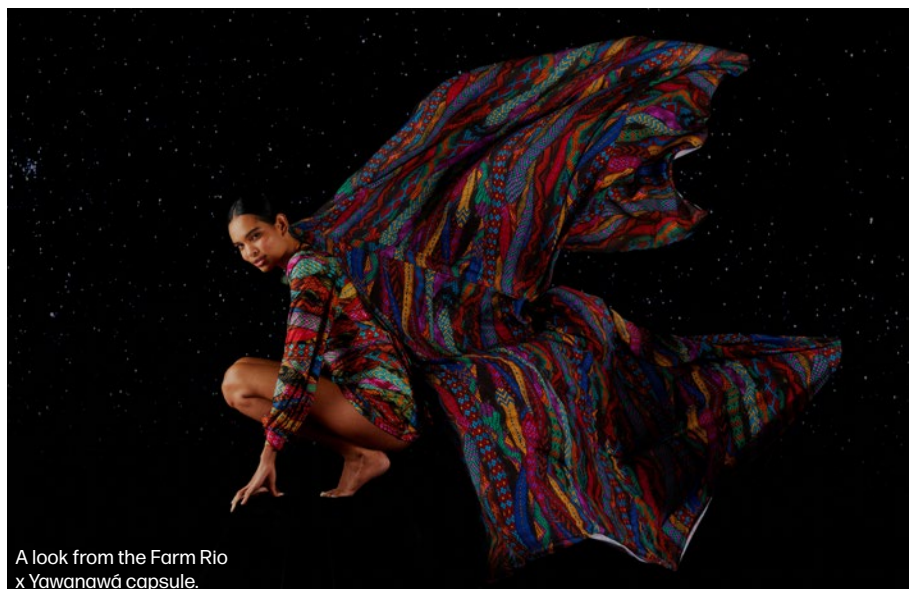
BY LISA LOCKWOOD

Brazilian apparel brand Farm Rio is partnering with the country's Yawanawá community for a capsule collection that pays homage to the Yawanawá's connection to nature and vibrant culture.

The Yawanawá are an indigenous people who live in Acre, Brazil; Madre de Dios, Peru, and Pando, Bolivia. The Yawanawá consist of 1,300 people stewarding their homeland of 500,000 acres of tropical forest, 95 percent of which is intact. The Yawanawá community and their allies are developing a model of sustainability that allows the Yawanawá to protect the rainforest and engage with the outside world on their own terms without losing their cultural and spiritual identity.

The capsule collection includes beaded jewelry crafted by Yawanawá women, as well as three exclusive prints Farm Rio's team crafted after talking with the Yawanawá women about their experiences in nature.

In the collection, Farm Rio will introduce 13 new styles, three exclusive prints and two beaded accessories meant to narrate the stories of the Yawanawá people. Each print, color and detail results from collaborative efforts, weaving a delicate fabric that resonates with the sacred plants, animals and communal spaces within the Yawanawá culture. The collection consists of 11 clothing pieces (three dresses, one skirt, three blouses, one short, one pant, one silk jumpsuit and one silk shirt) and one bracelet and one necklace.



A look from the Farm Rio x Yawanawá capsule.

"Meeting these female leaders, artists and guardians of the forest has forever transformed our relationship with nature and our feminine essence. Moved by this intention of mutual care, more and more, we connect with those who speak for their land as a place of healing, respect and love," said Katia Barros, cofounder and creative director of Farm Rio. "The Yawanawá word 'rauti' meaning 'ornaments of beauty and protection' says it all. It is a privilege for us to share their strength and sensitivity with the world, offering clothes and jewelry that embody what we feel as the heart of the Amazon," said Barros.

The beaded jewelry pieces are meant to symbolize the future for the Yawanawá community. The Farm Rio initiative has empowered 180 women with direct

income, and the brand has invested in local infrastructure. The collaboration supports festivals and reforestation projects and provides access to the internet for women's health programs.

Prices range from \$75 to \$315.

Prints for the collection were crafted through video conversations between the Yawanawá women and Farm Rio's design, marketing and partnership team members. Drawing inspiration from discussions about the Yawanawá culture and life experiences in the forest, Farm Rio's teams created the designs. During collaborative meetings, the Yawanawá added their touch, providing correction, validation and names to each print.

"The Yawanawá people and Farm partnership has become a successful collaboration model between an

A dress from the Yawanawá partnership.



indigenous community and a Brazilian private company. We have worked in cooperation, setting an example that is possible for indigenous communities to engage in business with true partners who share the same life mission as us – to preserve our forests and ancestral knowledge for the well-being of our people, Brazil and humanity as a whole," said Laura Yawanawá, who together with her husband Chief Tashka Yawanawá, leads the Yawanawá people in Acre, Brazil.

The capsule will launch Tuesday on farmrio.com, farmrio.eu as well as in the company's U.S. and London stores.

Farm Rio, which was founded in 1997, has three U.S. boutiques in New York, Miami and Venice, Calif., one in London, and more than 2,000 global retailers and branded spaces in Samaritaine, Le Bon Marché, Liberty, Rinascente, Bloomingdale's and Printemps. Farm Rio is a Certified B corp., and is part of Brazil's largest fashion retail group, Grupo Soma. From every purchase (online, in-store and through authorized retailers), Farm Rio donates one tree to be planted in Brazil.

ACCESSORIES

Grace Elizabeth Stars in New Cole Haan Campaign



Part of the Cole Haan "Reimagine Tradition" campaign.

- The campaign was conceived by creative agency General Idea, which has also worked on projects for Louis Vuitton, Coach and Lanvin.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

With a legacy that dates to 1928, Cole Haan has a rich history as one of the country's best-known heritage brands.

But one peek at the wall of its New

Hampshire headquarters proves the brand is not resting on its historical laurels. It reads: "Respect tradition enough to change it."

With that as its marching orders, the American lifestyle brand continually works to straddle the past and the present. And Tuesday, it will launch a new global campaign titled "Reimagine Tradition" that celebrates its history while seeking to engage a new generation of customers.

The campaign was conceived and

executed by multi-award winning creative agency General Idea – Louis Vuitton, Coach, Lanvin – led by Ian Schatzberg, chief executive officer and cofounder.

"We've known each other for more than a decade," said David Maddocks, brand president of Cole Haan. "And I've admired General Idea since he founded the agency. So when we were ready for this moment, he was the only phone call I made."

Maddocks described "this moment" as the right time for Cole Haan to reestablish its dominance, now that it is on a growth trajectory after several years of "ups and downs and twist and turns. But everything is now aligned, from a product, customer and brand sensibility. The only thing missing was how to bring it to life and communicate it to the marketplace."

That task fell to Schatzberg.

"It's been a privilege to work for such an iconic, American heritage brand," he said, adding that Cole Haan is the shoe most people choose when they're ready to "go out in the world. So we thought a lot about how to honor and respect a brand with this kind of history – with its American codes, its longevity, its sense of place – but also reinvent it. Cole Haan is always threading the needle between the past and present."

Reimagine Tradition will be released in six monthly parts between February and July. It features model Grace Elizabeth, who Schatzberg described as "a great muse" for the brand because of her "versatility as a woman. She can be strong but also graceful and soft."

The February chapter titled, "Master the Art of Walking," features Cole Haan's spring 2024 collection including the new

women's loafer styles and updated men's ZeroGrand Remastered Oxfords, which are celebrating their 10th anniversary this year. The women's loafers feature intricate braiding, colorblocking, and high-shine hardware. The ZeroGrand update includes a FlowerFoam outsole compound created with a minimum of 25 percent natural dandelion rubber.

"Cole Haan's legacy of style is rooted in our tradition of craftsmanship, design and innovation. But that's not what makes us iconic," Maddocks said. "We believe traditions begin with the courage to take something existing and give it new life. With this campaign, as with our products, we continue to inspire our customers, both existing and new, to see things in a new light and celebrate life's everyday moments."

The campaign was shot by Theo Wenner and styled by Alice Goddard. The March campaign will be titled "Dress for the After Party" and April's will be "Refresh the Morning Routine." The campaign will be featured on Cole Haan's social media platforms as well as in select magazines including Vogue and GQ.

Maddocks said taking a higher profile is increasingly important for Cole Haan as it celebrates the ZeroGrand anniversary and works to build its women's business. And the plan is to continue working with General Idea in the future to help it achieve its goals.

"We just got started," said Schatzberg. "The focal point for us is to consistently build the narratives and this sensibility season over season."

Maddocks agreed. "We want the thread to continue."



The alluring entrance to Layali Diriyah.



The Designlab Experience team: Managing partners Hibah Albakree and Mootassem El Baba; architect Jad El Baba, lead architect Marwan Maalouf.



A café at Layali Diriyah.

BUSINESS

A Bold Pop-up That Speaks To Saudi Arabia's Future

- The 484,000-square-foot Layali Diriyah on the outskirts of Riyadh offers a unique temporary mix of shopping, culture, food and entertainment, suggesting possibilities for the area's economic development in the years ahead.

BY DAVID MOIN

Technically, Layali Diriyah in Saudi Arabia is a pop-up, but such a designation doesn't do it justice.

Situated on the outskirts of the Saudi capital city of Riyadh, Layali Diriyah, which translates to "Diriyah Nights," is a large and exotic open-air cultural hub for retail, food and beverage, art, architecture and entertainment amid palm trees and shimmering lighting effects. Though it's a temporary destination, its design and range of experiences suggest possibilities for Vision 2030, the Saudi government's ambitious roadmap for economic development, diversification and increasing the population and quality of life in the region.

"We took 45,000 square meters [484,000 square feet] of this farm and transformed it into a guest journey that is very romantic, very organic, and blends into the environment," said Hibah Albakree, managing director and cofounder of Designlab Experience, which was selected by the Diriyah Gate Development Authority to produce Layali Diriyah.

"Diriyah is the most important spot in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia because it's the birthplace of the royal family. It's by a UNESCO heritage site, Al-Turiaf Riyadh, and is one of the most significant sites in Saudi Arabia for tourism and the culture and history of the country," Albakree told WWD.

Layali Diriyah, as she explained, is funded by the Saudi government in order to learn what activities and events, including shopping and dining, people are most interested in. Designs, attractions and concepts from Layali Diriyah potentially could be adapted into how the government permanently develops the area. It's the second year in a row for Layali Diriyah, which this year opened Jan. 11 and runs through March 10.

"Unlike other locations, where [the government] wants to modernize to a bit more of the future, when it comes to Diriyah, being the heart and soul of the kingdom, they're trying to always make sure that the guest journey there is very connected to the history, the culture and the Earth," said Albakree. "It's going to be one of the most sustainable locations in the world."

Layali Diriyah opens every day after sunset, and closes at 2 a.m. during the week and at 3 a.m. on weekends. The weather at night ranges between 48 and 55 degrees Fahrenheit, which is cold for Saudi Arabia. Retailers change every two to three weeks and are mostly local brands and designers with local products. Last year's Layali Diriyah drew 110,000 guests, or about 2,000 a day on average. The crowds are largely from Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and are multigenerational, though the bulk of the audience tends to be in their late teens to early 40s, and single.

"It's a casual environment. A lot of the brands for food are homegrown and the retail pop-ups are all up-and-coming Saudi brands that have become very trendy with their innovative designs," said Albakree. "Some of the brands have adapted Saudi cultural patterns on yoga mats, pouches and other items."

Historical regional architecture and design permeate the setting with engravings of traditional Diriyah doors, a grand entry with connecting arches like trapezoids zigzagging among palm tree

tops and inspired by the local Najdi style, and a market for local artisanal vendors with abstract interpretations of the courtyards of traditional Saudi homes.

Among the attractions are a luxury shopping village; an immersive, three-minute film journey on Diriyah architecture and nature; art installations inspired by the region's terrain and colors, and musicians, poetry readings, bread making, as well as shisha lounges, restaurants, cafés and kiosks for Saudi-style doughnuts, hot milk with ginger and other indigenous foods and snacks.

There's also a dramatic light installation simulating a bonfire. "In the winter time, people are always in the desert surrounding bonfires bringing them together," said Albakree. "Layali Diriyah is meant to bring people together." The entrance fee is \$40.

The Dubai and Riyadh-based Designlab Experience transforms spaces through temporary architecture. "We are very good storytellers through the journey we create," said Albakree. "The way we design always has a connection to the message our client is trying to relay. So whether we do interactive exhibits, private events such as weddings, which in this part of the world are extremely extravagant, they require a lot of temporary architecture to transform the space."

Among the firm's large projects launched last year were "Jardin d'Hiver" for a wedding reception where the interior of event venue Nayyara Hall became a botanical garden; "Masar Cityscape," a multimedia pavilion created at the Cityscape Global real estate event to depict the future of Masar, and Bujairi Terrace in Riyadh, a dining and entertainment destination with light installations and contemporary and traditional Arabic aesthetics. Designlab also creates the setting for the Saudi Cup horse races.

"We know how to quickly and efficiently turn projects around that look permanent, but they're all actually temporary,"

Albakree said. "There aren't a lot of people that build what we build in the short time we build it. We focus on that. We've done so many. There's always a need many governments have. We don't want to work with just permanent construction [firms] or those that don't understand the event industry. So we tend to be hired in these temporary projects and we tend to be hired as consultants as well.

"What's nice about these temporary projects is that you get to be a bit more playful and more of a risk-taker" without foregoing health and safety requirements, Albakree emphasized.

"Everything has to be environmentally friendly. We have all the expertise of any permanent architecture firm and we need to figure out how to do things in the most efficient way. We don't have the luxury of time, or to say, there's a delay on this project. We have deadlines we cannot miss by one hour because there's a scheduled opening, a launch, a wedding. So we don't have time to experiment with the technique. We can only experiment with the look."

The 17-year-old Designlab has a team of 75 including architects, designers, artists, engineers, strategists, project managers, lighting designers, graphic and interior designers and stylists, as well as those in financial areas. "We deliver a specific style of work. We always focus on delivering such a niche product," Albakree said.

"At Layali Diriyah, we've selected what the ushers are wearing, what the performers are wearing. We've made sure they adhere to the overall branding and look and feel." To some extent, Designlab has been involved in the merchandising, even the menus. "There's a lot of Saudi and traditional food, and a few international outlets," for a wider appeal.

"We also got involved in the retail pop-ups. We want you to discover new brands through Layali Diriyah. We don't want to create a platform for big international brands."

Designlab can't be pigeonholed as either an events company or a typical architectural firm. "We go into places nobody knew much about, create beautiful spaces that bring a lot of joy without the type of investments required for permanent spaces, and then we just withdraw," said Albakree. "I love it because I know it feeds into something with a bigger vision later."

FASHION

The Pink Shirt Couple: Behind the Breakup

● Alyssa Eckstein discusses her very public breakup and future plans – including continuing to wear pink.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

YouTube fans of the Pink Shirt Couple – who are famous for wearing matching shirts – were handed some troubling news recently – the pink-loving couple have parted ways.

In an interview Monday, Alyssa Eckstein sketched out what the future might look like for the former couple. She plans to transition the Pink Shirt Couple channels to her own identity, while former boyfriend Cayden Christianson has started “Pink Shirt Single” channels.

The now-divided duo may still do some collaborations together, but nothing is in the works at the moment, Eckstein said. “It will be a gradual process as I want to make sure it is done correctly while still understanding that fans and followers will need time to adjust to the changes,” she said.

The “Pink Shirt Couple” YouTube channel has nearly 20 million subscribers, and centers around inspiring people to be themselves. For Gen Z Eckstein, that means being a good role model for the upcoming generation.

The switch to singlehood will be explored with a new series on all social platforms, and look for more posts from Eckstein via “pinkshirtgirl” on Snapchat. Followers can find a pink baseball hat, a temporary tattoo and other emblems of

the devotedness on the pinkshirtcouple e-commerce site. T-shirts and polo shirts will be added to the mix in the next month or two, as well as her own site.

Despite her diehard fondness for bubble gum pink, the Minnesota-born Eckstein doesn’t follow fashion closely, and she only has a few pieces besides her go-to look, a pink shirt and khaki skirt. Even though she sewed her own senior prom dress, the only fashion brand that she is working on is her own. “There may be a series coming soon where I try to improve – ha ha!” she said.

Swift at numbers, Eckstein has a mathematics degree and competed in Minnesota’s high school state mathematics championships.

She and Christianson spent two months processing the breakup before sharing the news online recently. “It is definitely difficult seeing how sad the viewers are and all of the edits people make of them being heartbroken. But we have received so much support and respect on our decision which has made everything so much easier,” she said. “The key to announcing these big life changes online is to make sure that everything is handled in a mature, respectful way to all parties. Breakups don’t have to be a huge dramatic disaster.”

The two YouTubers hope “to show that it is OK to make some changes in your life, if you feel like that is what is best for you,” Eckstein said. “My greatest fear is to not give things my best shot.”

When deciding on their signature Barbie-worthy shade, they toyed with the



“The Pink Shirt Couple” in happier days.

idea of yellow, the other color that was flattering on Christianson. But the final choice boiled down to branding – “Pink Shirt Guy” sounds simpler than “Yellow

Shirt Guy,” and the breakup won’t shift Eckstein’s preferred color, she said – “I still love wearing pink and don’t plan on changing the color.”

The Reviews

Mugler



Mugler

pre-fall
2024



Mugler

Mugler is ready to dive back into the men’s market. For its first official pre-collection in five years, the house expanded its gender-fluid offering to include its first menswear collection in more than a decade. The label’s collaboration with H&M last year paved the way for the move, which fits in with creative director Casey Cadwallader’s nonbinary approach to dressing.

“For me, Mugler is always this really elastic expression of gender,” he said.

With storm clouds gathering on the economic and political horizons, his models were suited and booted in tough, glossy looks fit for “The Matrix.” A black rubber trenchcoat came with XXL shoulders that rivaled those of founder Manfred Thierry Mugler’s heyday, when he would photograph his extreme tailoring against New York skyscrapers or Soviet statues.

But while there were nods to the archives, including subtly notched lapels, these days the look is more about projecting inner strength, Cadwallader said. His jackets, which range from a boxy oversize style to an hourglass cut with curved sleeves, came with boning in the shoulders for extra definition.

“Mugler is about resilience under

pressure and finding your own personal energy and joy and beauty through moments of resistance, whether that has to do with your identity or your expression, and the tough stuff that the world can throw at you,” he said.

While this collection saw him easing away from the sporty pieces that have defined his tenure, the notion of comfort remained key. His corset top came with multiple buckles that can be worn tight, loose or dangling, depending on the wearer’s mood.

“It’s quite tough and protective and at the same time, it’s thoroughly adjustable to your curves,” Cadwallader said.

The strappy look was echoed in the decorative buckles framing a backless black evening dress, and crossing the spine of a black tuxedo jacket that engulfed the frame. Now that menswear is back in the mix, the designer wants to make tailoring a pillar of the label once again – and the good news is, it works for everyone.

“When we went to style this pre-collection, it really became everything in one room, both genders grabbing from both racks, which I think is just realistic these days,” he said. “It’s all one big happy mix over here.” – *Joelle Diderich*

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FASHION

Copenhagen Calls It The Season Of Sex, Cowboys and Uniforms



● The Danes are getting out of their beige comfort zones.

BY HIKMAT MOHAMMED

LONDON — It was out with the beige for the most part at the fall 2024 edition of Copenhagen Fashion Week and in with the cool of cowboys, sex and uniforms.

Remain's new creative director Martin Asbjørn presented his first runway show, which didn't shy away from cinched waists, embroidered sheer fabrics and knee-high boots.

"I still see Remain as a very contemporary brand, but you have got to offer something [new] because the market is so tough right now. For me, I'm talking to a more grown-up audience and talking about sexiness, which is

very new for Remain, even using that word. I cannot design anything without having an element of sexiness because I feel like women of all ages can be sexy in different ways," said the designer in a preview in January.

For Alectra Rothschild of Masculina, the first openly trans designer to show at Copenhagen Fashion Week, sex took a different meaning — it was about liberation and freedom rather than seduction.

Myriad PVC, latex, neoprene and diamanté looks sashayed down the runway featuring cut-outs, trains, chain embellishments and fringes.

"It's like I died and woke up on a beach in Ibiza in 1992," said Rothschild.

Rotate's cofounders Jeanette Madsen and Thora Valdimarsdottir aren't just the

designers behind their brand, but also the faces of it.

The duo attended their peers' shows across the city in stylish pieces, walking up and down for the street style photographers.

"We love to embrace the female body and be sexy. When we go out we don't really think about what the other girls are going to think looks cool. We're

like, 'what does a man think is sexy?' We love to dress up for a man," said Valdimarsdottir backstage, explaining that their collection referenced the '50s and Elizabeth Taylor, who was the muse for the eight brides coming down the runway in various wedding-dress styles: long, short, sequined, sheer, corseted and more.

At Baum Und Pferdgarten's 25th ▶

anniversary show, designers Rikke Baumgarten and Helle Hestehave showcased their bestsellers with seductive gestures: a navy waistcoat with knee-high shorts; a long sheer white dress with sequins and white cuffs, and halfway buttoned shirts.

Formal suit shirts became the staple item on the runways as each designer interpreted it in their own distinctive way.

Kristofer Kongshaug of Forza Collective paired a short-sleeve white shirt with a gray necktie and matching skirt; Sigurd Bank of Mfpen showed an easygoing white shirt held together by safety pins, while Stine Goya and her design team flooded the runway at the end in colorful shirts in shades of red, green, orange and blue.

The likes of Saks Potts, Gestuz and Munthe combined three unlikely movements into one: cowboys with a hint of glamour and sleaze.

Cathrine Saks and Barbara Potts focused on Kate Moss' 2010s outings at the Glastonbury Festival.

"Particularly in the early 2010s when she made all of her festival appearances wearing short dresses with big, chunky belts and long fringe boots. It was also the time when she designed her collection for Topshop, a period that we both remember as a highlight of our teenage years, as our interest was growing bigger and bigger," said Potts.

At Munthe, a big rectangular box projected videos of the Wild West, as well as horses galloping in the wild.

Designer Naja Munthe sent out silver fringed denim skirts and jeans; cowboy hats that borrowed their shapes from bowler hats, and pointy mid-calf cowboy boots.

Henrik Vibskov in his research for his collection based on therapy came across horse therapy, where participants can spend 30 minutes with a horse, cleaning, tending to the animal and petting them.

The designer incorporated the motif of moving horses with two legs knit onto sweaters and scarves. ■

Saks Potts



Alectra Rothschild / Masculina



Munthe

Rotate



Baum und Pferdgarten



Mfpen





Generative AI can create a more personalized shopping experience for consumers.

TECHNOLOGY

Harnessing Generative AI: The New Frontier for Fashion Retailers

- As fashion brands look to stay competitive, generative AI emerges as a game-changing tool.

BY ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ

As AI, generative AI and predictive AI continue to grab headlines, fashion retailers and brands are eyeing the technology to give them a competitive edge.

But what do retail executives and brands need to consider before making an investment in these technologies – especially the new kid on the block, generative AI? In the first of a series of stories on the topic, WWD looks to answer that question.

The Power of AI

Jill Standish, Accenture's global retail lead, said what sets generative AI apart is that it is the first digital technology to be truly human by design. "It has the ability to provide very relatable and relevant experiences, gives retailers new opportunities to get closer to consumers through 'conversational commerce,' a technique reflecting the fact that people are hardwired for more natural, conversational, human-to-human interactions, especially when it comes to

inspiration and product discovery," Standish said, adding that a recent survey from her firm showed that 76 percent of executives "see generative AI as more of an opportunity than a threat and more beneficial to revenue growth than costs reduction."

Shoppers are also on board. "Consumers are waking up to the possibilities, too," Standish said. "A recent Accenture survey found that two-thirds of consumers are already using, or would consider using, an AI shopping assistant that recommends other products that pair well with their purchase. A similar number say they are already using or would consider using an AI shopping assistant that recommends products within their budget."

Alyx Kaczuwka, director of AI product development at XY Retail, a unified commerce platform that works with global luxury brands such as Armani, Fender, Damiani, Isaia and Slowear, said AI has the potential "to revolutionize the retail industry, including store layouts and customer experience."

Kaczuwka said that by providing insights, speed and flexibility, "AI can help retailers create more intuitive, efficient, and customer-centric stores, using intricate consumer insights, rapid prototyping, and fast modifications."

Sounds like a dream come true. However, executives need to do a top-to-bottom assessment before writing a check. Shannon Wu Lebron, corporate vice president of retail industry strategy at Blue Yonder, has some pointers.

"Over the past year, there has been a push for accelerated AI adoption in retail, almost to a fault," Wu Lebron told WWD. "For instance, a recent Blue Yonder survey of retail executives found that many leaders claim to be very knowledgeable about AI, yet lack understanding about the different types of AI, or ways to utilize it. This suggests retail leaders are overconfident and may be missing crucial opportunities or deploying AI without a clear set of business objectives."

Wu Lebron said retail executives must consider generative AI solutions "based on the maturity and specific needs of their business units, whether it be for customer experiences, assortment planning, inventory placement, or pricing, etc. In addition, retailers should assess their organizational data management readiness. After all, AI won't yield good results without good data."

And lastly, Wu Lebron said not to underestimate the importance of change management with existing employees

and business processes when introduced. "In summary, retailers who can identify specific use cases linked to clear business benefits, implementing AI with good data management foundation and successfully navigating the change process will come out ahead in AI-enabled retail transformation."

What about the size of the business? Justin Honaman, head of worldwide retail and CPG at Amazon Web Services, told WWD that generative AI (GenAI) "will transform the retail experience, and the cloud is going to unlock it by providing tools for retailers of every size."

"From enhanced productivity and smoother in-store operations to unprecedented levels of personalization and revitalized shopping experiences, GenAI can offer unparalleled benefits for retailers and consumers alike," Honaman said.

When determining how to use generative AI, Honaman said retailers need to consider two main things: "What are the unique business objectives and customer experiences that GenAI can help them deliver, and the risk factors involved in emerging technologies, like tarnishing the trust they've built with their customers by not deploying GenAI in a secure and responsible manner?" ▶



Business Insights

Honaman said retailers and brands need solutions that are relevant to their business objectives. “We’ve all seen the chatbots and early experiments with GenAI, but retailers should be careful not to adopt technology that doesn’t make sense for their business or reflect what their customers truly want.” He said a direct-to-consumer e-commerce brand will likely have different objectives and uses of GenAI than physical stores, “as would a boutique retailer compared to big-box retailers. One company may struggle with efficiency while another may need assistance with design or customer service.

“For example, Adidas uses Amazon Bedrock to enable developers to get quick answers on everything from ‘getting started’ info to deeper technical questions, while The Very Group uses it to deliver interactive and personalized digital shopping experiences to millions of customers,” Honaman said, adding that there are many more use cases of generative AI in retail, “and we’re just beginning to scratch the surface so retailers must consider what’s going to bring them the most value before diving in head first.”

Orders From Above?

Aside from pressures in the market, retail leaders face internal pressure to jump on the AI bandwagon. Ahmed Naiem, president and chief revenue officer at Lily AI, said that many companies “have seen AI become a board mandate, something that is now required in a company’s tech stack.”

“However, business leaders know that they need to substantiate the ROI with legitimate, quantifiable proof points,” Naiem said. “It’s important that retail companies evaluate how quickly these investments can make an impact to their bottom line and how easily they can implement the AI technology into their current business model. The investment needs to be valuable for both their company and the end-user.”

Perhaps the primary issue when considering deploying generative AI is how it can enhance the customer experience (CX). Jadah Hawkins, senior vice president and global market leader for retail and e-commerce at Alorica, said when investing in and implanting generative AI, “retailers must take a multifaceted approach that is centered around the customer experience.”

Hawkins said it is imperative to prioritize CX. “Improving the customer experience needs to be the top priority

when implementing generative AI into any business plan,” Hawkins said. “A bad CX strategy can lead to frustration, loss of customers and a lackluster brand reputation. In retail, focusing on CX is especially important to remain relevant as consumer expectations evolve.”

Hawkins also suggests identifying customer pain points and preferences before introducing the technology. “Simply using AI to automate repetitive tasks will not be truly valuable for retailers in the long run,” Hawkins said. “Instead, retailers should use AI to improve pre-existing CX issues and to develop a better understanding of customer needs based on historical data and trends. This will enable brands to make data-driven decisions and personalize the customer journey.”

A Brand-new Game

Tim Christensen, senior vice president of product, digital, innovation and AI at Synchrony, said there are other issues to consider. “AI isn’t the only new development in retail – the entire consumer experience has changed,” he said. “People are shopping in new ways, from the search and discovery phase to the check phase. Effective generative AI tools have the potential to be able to parse these new consumer behaviors and enable retail leaders to respond.”

Christensen said despite enormous potential, “there are many issues with generative AI that must be addressed before businesses go all-in, including data privacy, lack of transparency, data reliability, and more. In many effective AI product integrations, consumers may never know they interacted with AI, pointing to the need to ensure the technology is tested internally before it is scaled to consumer-facing products.”

That’s not all. Christensen said for retailers and brands to realize the benefits of how AI may change shopping flows, “businesses must prepare to deploy it in a way that is ethical, responsible and safe. Preparations should include testing in-house, training employees to manage AI, and establishing a company governance structure to maintain consistent standards for AI use.”

Helena Salazar, business development manager at Remote Team Solutions, agreed and said the ethical use of AI is also a significant concern. “The technology should be used responsibly, respecting customer autonomy. Integration with existing systems is another consideration,

ensuring that AI complements rather than disrupts current operations.”

“Employee training is essential, as staff need to understand how to work effectively with AI,” Salazar said. “Additionally, considering the long-term scalability of the AI solution is vital; it should be adaptable to future trends and needs. Finally, a cost versus benefit analysis is necessary to ensure that the investment in AI is economically viable and aligns with the business’ strategic goals.”

Michael Rumiantzau, chief executive officer and cofounder of Narrative BI, the data analytics company that works with brands such as Coca-Cola and Pernod Ricard, has three suggestions when considering investing in AI.

First, Rumiantzau said retailers and brands need to understand the technology’s limits, “especially the concept of ‘AI hallucinations’ – when AI can get things wrong or misinterpret data. It’s important for retail leaders to recognize this and have checks in place to ensure AI’s quirks don’t lead to misguided decisions, especially when these insights drive customer interactions and business decisions.”

Secondly, Rumiantzau told WWD that the true value of AI in retail is its “role as a complement to human expertise, not a replacement.”

“AI can crunch numbers and identify trends, but it lacks the nuanced understanding of human decision-makers,” Rumiantzau said. “Human oversight is essential in retail, where complexity and subtlety are the norms. It ensures that AI-supported decisions are practical, realistic and align with the brand’s values.”

Lastly, Rumiantzau said the rapid pace of data change in retail should not be overstated. “AI systems need continuous updates and training to stay relevant. As consumer behaviors and market trends evolve, so must the AI models that analyze them. This adaptability is key to leveraging AI effectively in the dynamic world of retail.”

Making AI a Part of the Core

Accenture’s Standish said for retailers and brands, “generative AI offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity.” But success hinges on how the technology is integrated.

“Embedded into the company’s digital core – which includes cloud, data and security – it has the ability to optimize tasks, manage data, create faster insights, innovate with new experiences, augment front-line workers, and connect and communicate with customers,” Standish said. “While AI has long been central to retail forecasting and supply chain management, retailers recognize that generative AI offers something new and potentially much more powerful. It has the potential to materially impact and reinvent every facet of a retail organization, enhancing the entire value chain and driving both productivity and growth.”

Standish said companies need to invest in training people to work alongside generative AI. She said generative AI will not take anyone’s job, but those who know how to use generative AI will. “Right now, retailers are most frequently applying generative AI today for content creation, IT and assisted software development, knowledge retrieval, and customer service and contact centers,” Standish said. “However, the successful retailers will be those using generative AI to reinvent more strategic areas of the business.”

Dave Anderson, vice president of product marketing and strategy at Contentsquare, said as retailers and brands make plans to deploy generative AI, “they



Jill Standish

must understand that the path forward is going to be a lot of trial and error because the immaturity of the models that exist, and the people deploying them.”

“This means brands have to learn to adapt this technology for their own needs,” Anderson told WWD. “While the impact that generative AI will have on the overall customer experience will be seen not just in personalization but also in the speed and scaling of content creation overall, brands should be aware that the rules of engagement, oversight and regulation for AI are still unclear, and we may reach a tipping point where advancing AI at rapid speed can come into question.”

A Case Study

Irene Graham, cofounder of Spylix, the Android and iPhone tracker company, said before investing in generative AI at Spylix, “we carefully considered several factors to ensure the best outcomes.”

“Firstly, we assessed our specific business needs and goals to determine how generative AI could complement our existing operations,” Graham said. “This involved identifying areas where AI could enhance efficiency, such as in product recommendation systems or personalized marketing campaigns. Secondly, we evaluated the capabilities and limitations of available generative AI technologies. This included conducting thorough research on different AI models, algorithms and platforms to find the most suitable solution for our requirements. We also considered factors such as scalability, reliability and ease of integration with our existing systems.”

The company conducted cost-benefit analyses to determine any ROI of implementing generative AI. “This involved forecasting the expected benefits in terms of increased sales, improved customer satisfaction, or reduced operational costs, and comparing them against the upfront investment and ongoing maintenance costs,” Graham said.

Did it work? “After implementing generative AI at Spylix, we have seen significant results,” Graham said. “Our personalized recommendation engine powered by AI has led to a 20 percent increase in average order value, while our AI-driven chatbot has reduced customer service response times by 30 percent.”

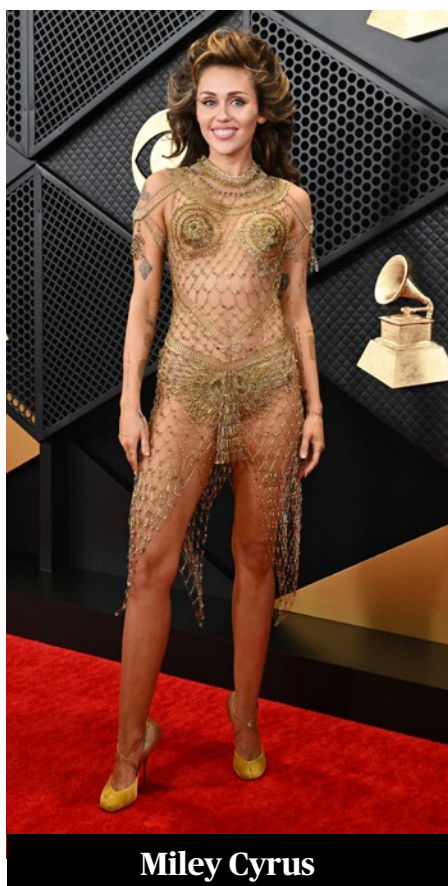
“These tangible outcomes demonstrate the value of investing in generative AI and highlight its potential to drive business growth and innovation,” Graham said. ■

An enhanced customer experience can drive online conversions.



Grammys Red Carpet 2024 Fashion: The Highs and Lows

Olivia Rodrigo and Victoria Monét won big while Jacob Collier and Jon Batiste stumbled. BY LEIGH NORDSTROM AND ALEX BADIA



Miley Cyrus

A She has it all going here. It's Cleopatra meets Barbarella under the genius of John Galliano for Maison Margiela, referencing a fall 1997 Galliano creation. It's only been hours but we're already positive this dress will go down in Grammys history.



21 Savage

B+ This is a great example of how to reinterpret a black-tie suit. The angular double-breasted shape together with the stud accents and leather gloves make a very sleek and modern look.



Doja Cat

B- It's a very ingenious idea to use the naked dress trend to enhance the hand-painted tattoos (including the designer's name on the forehead). Is this the new standard for logomania? We just wish the dress fit a little bit better – she looks uncomfortable and here's hoping she can breathe.



Olivia Rodrigo

A- The competition is fierce when it comes to access to iconic archival moments, and this 1995 Versace gown worn by Linda Evangelista is a clear example. On Rodrigo, it's also giving off Marilyn Monroe vibes, but the red lip and easy hair keep it cool and of-the-now.



Jon Batiste

C- He could be the fifth Beatle from the Sgt. Pepper era in this ensemble. Sadly, that time isn't remembered for its fashion splendor, and the effort feels costume-y and trying too hard. However, the look would be ideal for an intergalactic symposium.



Victoria Monét

A The bronze goddess was one of the big winners of the night, including with her Versace satin corset gown. The construction plus shine is giving Art Deco inspiration, and reminds us that Donatella Versace is a master of red carpet magic. The Bulgari Serpenti necklace provided the final seal of chic.



Jacob Collier

D This looks like we took fashion acid – and we're having a bad trip. The patchwork nightmare pants and matching blazer only got worse when paired with the Pepto pink turtleneck. And the hairspray is a bit heavy handed. For future, he could use the pants alone for a Blanche Devereaux "Golden Girls" festival.



Dua Lipa

B+ Lipa loves a metallic, and apparently holiday tinsel, too. The red hair is a beautiful contrast to the silver long-sleeve gown. The sexiness of the cleavage and the side cutouts is perfectly balanced with the slouchiness of the look. The megawatt Tiffany's necklace and hand bling work perfectly with the casualness of the outfit.



Inside Mika Tajima's 'Energetics' Exhibition at Pace Gallery in New York

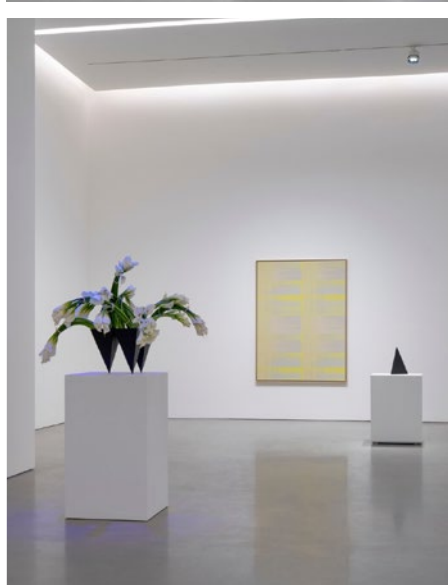
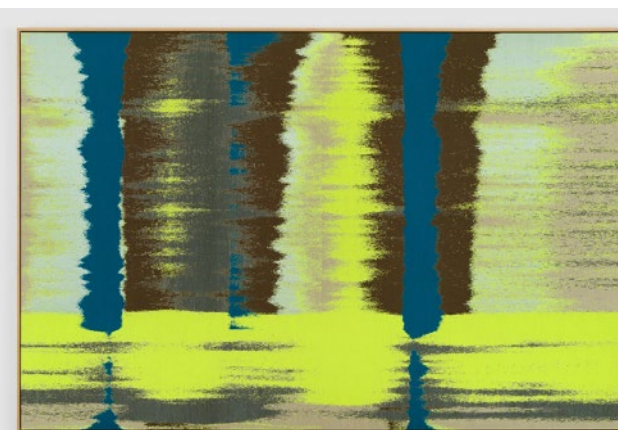
The exhibition explores the intersection of technology, time and physical depictions of energy. BY KRISTEN TAUER



Here, bottom left, bottom middle and bottom right: Installation view.

Top right: Mika Tajima, Negative Entropy (Deep Brain Stimulation, Yellow, Full Width, Exa), 2023, Cotton, polyester, nylon, and wood, 132" x 180"

(335.3 cm x 457.2 cm), MIXED MEDIA, #88223, Alt # W1078,



Mika Tajima is marking the passage of time with flowers.

She's currently several bouquets into "Energetics," her solo exhibition at Pace gallery. Each week, the artist returns to the gallery to swap out the dead and decaying arrangement from her ikebana vase, displayed underneath UV fluorescent lighting. "While they're dying and wilting, they're actually giving off this uncanny kind of glow," says Tajima of the white flowers propped inside the vase, "Three Mountains."

"In ikebana, the main tenet is that you can express the universe in three elements in an arrangement. So it's heaven, earth and human – past, present, future – and that these are always transforming. The concept of transformation is in the practice itself," says Tajima. In context of her show, the UV-aided performative piece is "also an expression of our relationship to technology," she says. "It aids us, it's enhancing our lives – but it's also killing us, controlling us, influencing us."

The exhibition, on view through Feb. 24 at the gallery's 540 West 25th Street location, is itself a marker of the eight years since Tajima's last solo show in New York. As suggested by the show's title, the works on view are all centered around the study of energy transformation and the attempt to render something physical out of the abstract, including imagery

from brain scans and a sculpture that encapsulates the emotional sentiment on social media from a specific day.

"What information is hidden or lost in the process of translation?" mulls Tajima, standing in front of one massive textile painting, part of her "Negative Entropy" series, the largest works on display.

The image is a portrait of an anonymous subject's brain activity, reflecting an individual fleeting cognitive moment. Tajima collaborated with a neurosurgeon to record the output from deep brain stimulation, a surgical intervention that aims to heal areas of the brain through electrical stimulation. The procedure generates a harmonic sound, which Tajima transcribed into spectrogram images and then wove on a large scale. There's a familiar quality to the works; she assigned colors to the images based on color trends seen in fitness apparel, a reference to performance and optimization.

"And then in front of that is this very oppositional piece," says Tajima, walking toward the glass-enclosed pedestal situated in the center of the room. Lodged into a rose quartz crystal is a small circular disc, a "5D memory crystal."

"It's the most advanced way of archiving massive amounts of data very stably," says Tajima of the material used for "Sense

Object." The data etched onto the disc is, more or less, a permanent archive: the information is stable for a billion years. In the case of "Sense Object," that data is sentiment culled from text-based social media within the U.S. on Jan. 1, 2023. Tajima points to the 24 squares lightly etched into the translucent disc, each representing an hour of data. "That's millions of people's emotional data, in front of the tiniest moment of a person's thoughts or brain activity," she says, gesturing back toward the textile works.

While her creative process is research driven and informed by algorithmic interpretations, Tajima adds that she's also driven by intuition. She was drawn to quartz's piezoelectric quality, commonly used in timepieces. "It's forged over millions of years, it comes from the Earth. The Earth is the tech, the power energy that's forming this thing," she adds. "There's something very magical, mystical, scientific and technological about something that's coming from the Earth – not unlike humans. Something very magical and mysterious about life itself."

A suite of larger rose quartz sculptures are situated in another corner of the room, each punctured by jacuzzi jet nozzles, creating tunnels within the material reminiscent of acupressure.

Smaller woven paintings reflect communal experiences: meditation at a temple in Tokyo, and a luxury meditation spa catering to the "tech bro-y" crowd. There's also a reading from a construction site in Yokohama and from an energy company in California working on fusion energy – the latter of which is the smallest work on view in the gallery.

"There's a lot of temporalities and scale in the show," she says. "We're having all these different expressions of energy being made or harnessed or captured and produced in the show. Human energy being the biggest one."

Later this spring, Tajima will debut another solo exhibition, "Super Natural," at the Hill Art Foundation in May, and will be part of a group exhibition at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles opening in the fall. The solo exhibition will feature more woven paintings, including one created from the sonic output from a sound bath.

Although her work is rooted in theory and deeply connected to digital technology, it's most salient when experienced in person. The exhibition space at Pace is scented, and the olfactory element underscores the sanctity of the physical experience, allowing visitors to appreciate the scale of her work at a visceral level outside of a screen.

"Then you can start to make that correlation between how you experience the world to: I'm an individual, I'm having this experience that nobody else could ever know, because it's me having this experience in the world, and I'm more than just a data set," she says. "I can feel myself being small in the world, but also the massive potential of myself in the world."

Fashion Scoops



Jessica Miller in Chloé's new portrait series.

Chloé

Chloé's New Crowd

Ahead of her big runway reveal on Feb. 29 during Paris Fashion Week, Chloé's new creative director Chemena Kamali is releasing a series of portraits of iconic women from different eras of the maison.

They include Jerry Hall, Jessica Miller, Natalia Vodianova and Liya Kebede, many of them pictured with the Eiffel Tower and Paris rooftops looming behind them.

The still campaign, lensed by photographer David Sims, plus a film by Frank Lebon, are to be released later Monday on Chloé's digital channels.

"I wanted to capture the emotion and energy of Chloé and the women who embody both its history and spirit," said Kamali, revealing the images and the concept exclusively to WWD. "They are effortlessly powerful, beautiful, free."

Hall and company are joined by a "new generation of Chloé women" including FeiFei Sun, Ornella Umotoni and Kristine Lindseth.

The portraits — featuring windblown hair, direct gazes and upturned chins — telegraph confidence, natural beauty and the dreamy femininity long associated with the Paris house, founded by Gaby Aghion in 1952.

All the models wear looks from Kamali's pre-fall collection, which was shown to buyers in December under the utmost secrecy, and suggest a return to floaty fabrics, looser silhouettes and a powdery palette.

The images also feature



Natalia Vodianova pictured in Paris.

Chloé

Chloé's new logo in a serif font inspired by the original from the '70s, when designer Karl Lagerfeld propelled the house to prominence.

The tweaked logo was recently revealed on the maison's Instagram account, which was wiped clean and is now being populated by Kamali, who wrote that she plans to build "on the vision that Gaby Aghion and Karl Lagerfeld defined early in the maison's history."

Lagerfeld's incomparable fashion career included two stints at Chloé: from 1974 to 1983, and from 1992 to 1997.

The maison's latest Instagram post flashes images of a young Lagerfeld and his famously frothy, lighthearted creations, along with runway snippets from other chapters of the brand, which has been designed by a succession of mostly female designers.

Born in Germany in 1981, Kamali studied fashion design at the Trier University of Applied Sciences and then graduated from Central Saint Martins, a constituent college of the University of

the Arts in London, in 2007, beginning her career at Chloé as part of Phoebe Philo's team.

She rejoined Chloé in 2012 as design director under Clare Waight Keller until 2016, when she departed to become Saint Laurent's women's ready-to-wear design director under Anthony Vaccarello.

Her résumé also includes stints at Alberta Ferretti and Strenesse. She also recently consulted for Los Angeles-based contemporary brand Frame.

As creative director of the new "Chloé portraits," Kamali conscripted Ashley Brokaw for casting, Lotta Volkova for styling, Damien Boissinot for hair, and Lucia Pieroni for makeup.

Sims lensed Chloé campaigns under two previous creative directors: Hannah MacGibbon and Natacha Ramsay-Levi.

— MILES SOCHA

Gucci on Cruise

Gucci has earmarked May 13 for the unveiling of its cruise 2025 collection. The show will be held in



Sabato De Sarno

London, but in sync with the industry trend of divulging the location at a later date and with a separate communication, details about the venue are still not available.

This will be creative director Sabato De Sarno's first cruise collection, after taking the helm of the luxury brand in January last year.

In a statement, the company said London "pays tribute to Gucci's profound connection to the British capital, intrinsically linked to the brand's heritage, and offers new opportunities to delve into the integral role the city has played in shaping the brand's narrative throughout its storied history as a world-renowned symbol of Italian craft, visionary creativity and innovative design."

Indeed, Gucci's history is linked to founder Guccio Gucci, who in 1897 was a luggage porter and lift boy at London hotel The Savoy. Observing the guests' luggage, he was inspired to start creating his own line of luxury suitcases and bags, founding his namesake house in Florence in 1921 and setting up the first Gucci store in the Italian city's Via della Vigna Nuova.

Last year, Gucci staged its cruise 2024 show at the Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul on May 16, marking the brand's 25 years in the country. That collection was designed by an in-house team, following the exit of previous creative director Alessandro Michele in November 2022.

The show was held in

front of Geunjeongjeon, the main hall of the Gyeongbokgung Palace, known for being the main venue for royal ceremonies and for receiving foreign dignitaries during the Joseon Dynasty (1392 to 1910).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Michele had selected unique locations for Gucci's then-called cruise collections: Arles, France, at the Alyscamps Roman necropolis, classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1981, for the cruise 2019 show. Before that, the shows were held in other culturally significant locations, including New York's Dia Art Foundation, Westminster Abbey's cloisters in London, Palazzo Pitti's Palatina Gallery in Florence and the Capitoline Museums in Rome. Gucci committed

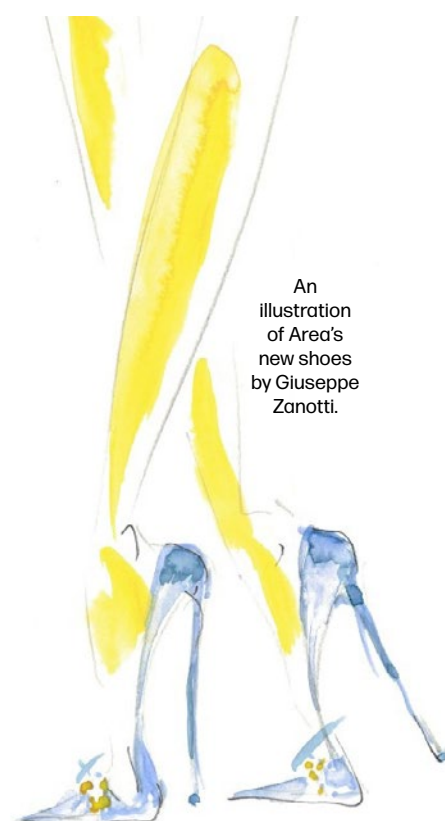
to preserve these storied sites.

What is known so far of the cruise calendar is that Chanel plans to present its 2025 line in the port city of Marseille on May 2. Louis Vuitton has scheduled its cruise show for May 23, and Dior has announced its show will take place on June 3 in an undisclosed location. Max Mara is planning to present its resort 2025 collection with a fashion show in Venice on June 11. — LUISA ZARGANI

Area Signs Zanotti

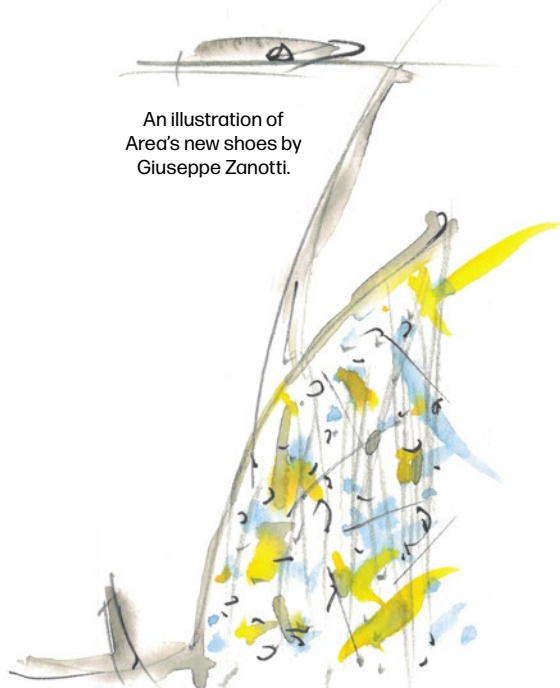
Ahead of its spring 2024 show on Sunday, Area has revealed a new footwear licensing partnership with Giuseppe Zanotti.

The multiseason deal will see the Italian luxury footwear label manage ▶



An illustration of Area's new shoes by Giuseppe Zanotti.

An illustration of Area's new shoes by Giuseppe Zanotti.



the design, production and wholesale distribution of the New York-based womenswear brand's shoe collection. The new category will debut during Area's New York Fashion Week see now, buy now show Sunday.

For its inaugural project, around 30 signature styles, including platforms, flats and pumps were developed within Giuseppe Zanotti's Italian production facilities. The styles will feature design elements that align with Area's spring 2024 collection inspiration: eyes. From vintage '20s cartoon googly eyes, Surrealist art movement fascinations with the eye, and graphic Pop Art, among others, the theme will be seen throughout the collection.

The footwear line will be immediately available for sale alongside the full Area fashion collection on the brand's website as well as at Bergdorf Goodman and Fwd, following the brand's spring 2024 runway show.

An illustration of Area's new shoes by Giuseppe Zanotti.

The next collection, fall 2024, will be shown to international wholesale clients starting later this month at the Giuseppe Zanotti showroom in Milan, as well as the Tomorrow showrooms in Milan and Paris.

Beckett Fogg, cofounder and chief executive officer of Area, said in a statement that the company is "proud" of this new "dynamic" partnership that aims to leverage Giuseppe Zanotti's Italian heritage craftsmanship and innovation to highlight Area's signature embellishments and techniques. "Together, we present a collection which expands the Area universe, aligned in a vision to become the new face of global luxury," Fogg said.

An illustration of Area's new shoes by Giuseppe Zanotti.

"I love Piotrek's and Beckett's multifaceted and evolving vision of

femininity, I think we speak to the same woman," Mr. Zanotti added. "Also, their passion for innovative embellishments and quality craftsmanship perfectly fit with our design DNA and time-honored expertise. The collection is vibrant, it's like the music we both love listening to for inspiration."

This is not the first time Giuseppe Zanotti has worked with another brand on shoes. In late 2020, Zanotti inked a footwear licensing deal with Alexandre Vauthier. The Paris-based designer — who is now in the third year of a licensing partnership with Zanotti — bowed his first shoe collection with the brand for pre-fall 2021. This is Giuseppe Zanotti's only other licensing deal, according to the Italian company.

Separately, the Italian shoe brand teamed up with designer Nicolò Beretta to develop a new footwear line dubbed "Nicolò Beretta mentored by Giuseppe Zanotti," which debuted for fall 2023.

Prior to working with Giuseppe Zanotti, Area worked with Sergio Rossi on a collection of shoes, starting in 2022.

— STEPHEN GARNER

Kanye Turns Up

Guillermo Andrade unveiled his 424 flagship to his entourage of friends on Friday.

Kanye West was among the guests, attracting attention — as he does — though his face was covered in a white mask.

"Something very important. The only GOAT," Andrade shouted to the crowd with his hands on West's shoulders. "The only GOAT," he repeated. "The only f-king GOAT. The only one."

The greatest of all time. It seems that's who West is to Andrade — who has admirers of his own. An innovator in streetwear, Andrade's former multibrand store on Fairfax Avenue, FourTwoFour, launched Jerry Lorenzo's Fear of God and supported the likes of Rhude and Vlone early on. It's now a new chapter for Andrade who has opened on coveted Melrose Place after closing the Fairfax location two years ago.

"I thought retail was over when I closed the Fairfax store," Andrade told WWD. "I always knew I wanted to be in this neighborhood, and it is the right time now."

It's a cave-like feel inside the basement-level space, which offers Andrade's label, 424. He introduced the line in 2015, launching with T-shirts, hoodies and trousers. It's grown since then, expanding into new categories and manufactured in Italy. Priced between \$115 and \$1,480, it includes tailoring.

"Now we work with fabric mills and make our own fabric from scratch," said Andrade. "We develop our own washes and our own treatments."

Those who came out to the party included rapper Westside Gunn, actress Sasha Calle, stylist Aleali May, Simihaze Beauty's



Awet Woldegebriel

Simi and Haze Khadra, actor-comedian DeRay Davis, stylist Ian Connor, designer Salehe Bembury and designer Reese Cooper.

— RYMA CHIKHOUNE

Áwet's Bigger Reach

In its second year, Áwet New York will expand its NYFW Showroom, which will include Black, Indigenous and people of color designers, at its store at 57 Bond Street from Friday to Feb. 13.

During this time, a curated group of

Black, Indigenous and people of color-owned women's brands across apparel, accessories and footwear will show in the 2,100-square-foot space. The brands include Áwet New York, which was founded by Awet Woldegebriel, a refugee from Eritrea, and which focuses on craftsmanship and community. The men's and women's collections feature luxury essentials.

The other brands are Esenshel, a classic American headwear brand reimagined and re-proportioned for the 21st century; Shekudo, under the creative direction of Akudo (Amy) Iheakanwa, which offers

footwear and accessories and produces in Lagos, and Dur Doux, a fashion label from the mom-and-daughter duo Majla and Cynthia Burt, who design ready-to-wear collections, drawing inspiration from their coastal upbringing in Florida.

In addition to these four brands headlining the showroom, throughout the week other brands will host pop-ins within the store.

During Black History Month, Áwet's goal is to do its part to offer designers an opportunity to focus on their creativity, art and fashion. The company believes that having a space where brands can meet with buyers and boutiques will impact their businesses. This latest event comes after a consistent effort to uplift the Black community, including last year's showroom event for Black-owned brands, hosting a dinner celebrating 17 other Black designers in 2022, and partnering with Kenneth Cole to host a holiday pop-up featuring 10 small Black-owned businesses in the Bowery in 2021.

Woldengebriel opened Áwet's first flagship at 57 Bond Street called Livewear in September, featuring an evolving roster of luxury designers of color, a first of its kind in New York City as a permanent fixture in the neighborhood.

— LISA LOCKWOOD ■

Kanye West and Guillermo Andrade

