



Arthur Yates and Phoebe Saatchi, founders of BRUTA

BRUTA



Botticelli shirt, £140 (bruta.eu)



Bosana shirt, £150 (bruta.eu)



Michaelangelo shirt, £130 (bruta.eu)

Below, shirt, £118 (sunad.com)

When Arthur Yates first conceived of his label Bruta in 2015, he couldn't have realised that he'd be at the vanguard of a new fashion movement. Always a collector of vintage shirts, which his girlfriend Phoebe Saatchi, 22, would periodically borrow, he spotted a gap in the market. Now the couple sell unisex versions, embroidered or appliquéed with Yates' hand-drawn designs. Shirts are the only fashion item they sell. 'Designing one product gives you both limitations and parameters to work within,' says Yates. 'I have always liked simple, classic products like Converse shoes or Guinness beer.'

In focusing his attention on a single item, Yates — whose creations sport quirky motifs ranging from Botticelli's Venus to spaghetti pomodoro for SS 17 — is part of a growing coterie of designers choosing to be masters of one. A similarly singular focus is the driving force behind three dedicated blouse brands: Spanish label Sunad, set up by two Madrid-born friends who met while studying at New York's Parsons School of Design; ex-Céline staffer Aude Castéja's Monographie; and model-turned-designer Marie Marot's eponymous Parisian label. Meanwhile Italian blazer specialists Blazé Milano — set up by stylist Maria Sole Torlonia and two Italian *Elle* colleagues Delfina Pinardi and Corrada Rodriguez D'Acri — is loved by Alexa Chung and Erin Wasson.

It's not hard to spot a link between this narrow focus — also found in the food world in the form of single-dish restaurants (Bubbledogs for hot dogs, Padella for pasta) and bars (such as whisky specialists Black Rock or gin enthusiasts The Distillery) — and the paralysing array of choices that the global marketplace offers. Not to mention the frenetic pace of modern life. Is it any wonder that in Germany, generation Y is known as the maybe generation: well-educated and highly connected, but so overwhelmed by possibilities they find it hard to commit to anything?

# MASTERS of ONE

A new generation of 'monobrand' is eschewing variety and focusing on one item only. *Katrina Israel* hails a fashion revolution



SUNAD

Below, from top, Curio platforms, £155; Fabl platforms, £145; Paper Planes platforms, £150, at [doverstreetmarket.com](http://doverstreetmarket.com)



PREMURY



BLAZÉ MILANO



Jacket, £1,580, at [matchesfashion.com](http://matchesfashion.com)



LE KASHA  
designer Mali  
Marciano

Cashmere  
cardigan, £688, at  
matchesfashion.com



MONOGRAPHIE

Shirt,  
£436, at  
harrods.com



‘Today we are bombarded with so much information, brands need to have a clear point of difference to cut through the noise,’ argues matchesfashion.com buying director Natalie Kingham. ‘I like when an outfit is close to a uniform,’ agrees Marot. ‘I think having too many choices confuses people and they lose their sense of style.’

French lifestyle house Le Kasha (founded in 1918), which remains dedicated to cashmere loungewear. In Rimini, parka brand Mr & Mrs Italy has recalibrated the humble khaki cover-up with hyper-hued fur linings. ‘Focusing on one specific idea or product category sends a signal to the customer that this is the most considered, high-quality version of a piece,’ says Browns buying director Laura Larbalestier. ‘It’s a very modern luxury.’ Over at Harvey Nichols, this winter’s outerwear success story saw the department store selling a Canada Goose jacket every 38 minutes. No wonder you can count them in the hundreds every Saturday on Portobello Road.

*‘Focusing on one specific idea sends a signal that this is the most considered, high-quality version of a piece’*



Cashmere jumper,  
£275, at  
matchesfashion.com

LE KASHA

It’s not just a matter of simplification, however. Blazé Milano’s Sole Torlonia and Rodriguez D’Acri point out that the niche brands offer a unique appeal that larger more all-encompassing brands can’t: ‘Starting from the mid Eighties and early Nineties, people began to be influenced by the social and psychological appeal of a fashion brand and expressed an identity through it,’ says Torlonia. ‘This made them feel like they were part of an “elite”’. Nowadays, though, the focus has shifted from wanting to buy into a brand’s empire to wanting to frame ourselves as distinct from the crowd. As Rodriguez D’Acri puts it: ‘We tend to individualise ourselves by breaking away.’ This was evidenced by the rampant customisation trend that charged through Bond Street’s designer flagships this winter — from monogramming to complete DIY personalisation. Similarly, these new niche, one-item-only brands tap into this mood perfectly, says Kingham. ‘By specialising, monobrand have a distinct advantage in this crowded marketplace. A product offering that is too wide can be overwhelming and dilute what made the brand interesting in the first place.’

Whatever the reasons behind it, the boom in fashion brands doing one thing well shows little sign of slowing. Being ‘niche’ is looking to hold the same cachet in 2017 as last year’s default buzz words ‘artisanal’ and ‘restorative’.

A fine example is Fern Fans, created by PR maven Daisy Hoppen who has teamed up with Danish print designer Amanda Borberg on a line of well-priced, vintage-inspired fans. ‘I love their historical context,’ says Hoppen, ‘plus the very real practical element as anyone who goes on the Central line in summer can vouch for.’ The project taps into the same boutique appeal as unisex sneaker brand Primury, which seasonally mines the childhood plimsoll, and Florentine footwear brand Avec Modération, whose flat, faux fur slides and shearling slippers were the runaway hit of AW16.

Maximalism may still be the order of the day on the catwalks but, for the new wave of fashion lines, less is definitely more.



Shirt, £220,  
at browns  
fashion.com

MARIE  
MAROT

Bora Bora slides, £285,  
at luisaviaroma.com



AVEC MODÉRATION

Raffia slides £305,  
at boutique1.com



Vail Pallet slides,  
£285 (avec-  
moderation.  
com)



Floral fan, £60  
(fernfans.com)

FERN FANS

